

Melina Lieb

**Everyday Rhythms:
Linear and Cyclical Temporalities
in 21st-Century British Nature Diaries**

Thesis presented to the Faculty of Translation Studies, Linguistics und Cultural Studies of the
Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of *Doctor of Philosophy*

July 2024

Accepted on 28th November 2024

on recommendation of the doctoral committee:

Prof. Dr. Alison E. Martin (University of Mainz, main supervisor)

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Angela Kölling (University of Mainz)

Prof. Dr. Uwe Küchler (University of Tübingen)

This work is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	i
Abstracts	ii
List of Abbreviations	iv
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. THE TEMPORALITIES OF NATURE DIARIES	21
3. ESTHER WOOLFSON'S <i>FIELD NOTES FROM A HIDDEN CITY</i>	41
3.1 Time Markers	54
3.2 Rehabilitating Rhythms	60
3.3 Deep Time in the Everyday	70
4. KAREN LLOYD'S <i>THE BLACKBIRD DIARIES</i>	76
4.1 Birds as a Constant in Time	85
4.2 Chores and Care	92
4.3 Time in the Landscape	100
5. MARK COCKER'S <i>A CLAXTON DIARY</i>	112
5.1 Meaning of Life in Repetition	124
5.2 All of Life in Any Encounter	135
6. DARA MCANULTY'S <i>DIARY OF A YOUNG NATURALIST</i>	148
6.1 Cycles of the Everyday	166
6.2 Filing Memories to Balance Everyday Anxieties	171
6.3 Times of Generations	176
6.4 Pausing Time	186
7. CONCLUSION	191
8. Works Cited	197

Acknowledgements

First of all, I'm enormously grateful to Prof. Alison E. Martin, my first supervisor and long-time teacher, for giving me the opportunity, the resources and the freedom to work in-depth on a topic I'm so passionate about. Thank you for believing in me and for supporting me in both heart and mind throughout the whole project.

I'm highly grateful to Prof. Angela Kölling, my second supervisor and colleague, for fresh perspectives, stimulating conversations and the enriching experience of joint projects in teaching and writing.

I'm grateful to Prof. Uwe Küchler for agreeing spontaneously and at exactly the right time to be my third supervisor and for taking the journey from Tübingen to Germersheim.

I'm deeply grateful to Dr. Dana Steglich, my colleague and friend, for always having an open ear and for her exceptional ability for providing feedback in both a professional and affectionate way. Thank you also for your hospitality, home-cooked meals and many cups of tea.

I'm grateful to my colleagues in the "Examenskolloquium for British Studies", especially Dr. Andrea Kyi-Drago, Mónica Martínez Gómez and Claudio Soltman, for accompanying my writing process in all stages with valuable feedback. I'm grateful to all the students I had the opportunity to teach, for enriching my thoughts with their perspectives on the topic of Nature Writing.

I'm deeply grateful to my fellow (PhD) students and friends, especially Nadine Müller, Andrea Schmidt and Dr. Joanna Clare Dobson, for their meticulous proof-reading and their heart-felt encouragement, and to Mélissa Buecher-Nelson, for motivating sessions in the library that carried me through the final phase of writing.

I'm also grateful to the Arcadiana community, the postgraduate blog of the European Association for Literature, Culture and the Environment, especially Katharina Kalinowksi, Julia Ditter, Veronica Fibisan and Rosanne van der Voet, for inspiring creative writing sessions and tips on how to navigate a PhD.

I'm grateful to the team and the participants of the ASLE-UKI Conference 2022 in Newcastle, who gave me the opportunity to present my work in person and listen to many inspiring papers. I was especially encouraged by kind feedback from Anna Selby and Dr. Jos Smith.

I'm grateful to Mark Cocker and Karen Lloyd, whom I had the pleasure of meeting in person and who kindly approved of my interest in their work.

I'm grateful to my family and my friends outside of university and to my therapist, who all provided stability and balance. I'm grateful to all the other living beings I encounter daily outside my door, especially the birds, who remind me of what really matters in life.

And finally, I'm eternally grateful to my partner Aaron, for his love.

Abstract (English)

This study investigates the temporalities of the everyday as they are presented in 21st-century British Nature Diaries. It highlights the everyday as a crucial starting point for the relationships between humans and more-than-human nature. The analysis follows the assumption that the everyday is comprised of both linear and cyclical temporalities, which exist in a certain tension with each other. The linear is defined as the capitalist, including notions of progress, consumption and apocalypse; the cyclical is defined as the natural, including notions of bodily rhythms, ritual and hope. While employing these abstract concepts, this study also seeks to detect concrete ways of cultivating sustainable relationships between humans and more-than-human nature. The format of the diary offers itself to this study as it reflects the temporalities of the everyday and constitutes a practical project.

This study focuses on four diaries: Esther Woolfson's *Field Notes from a Hidden City* (2013), Karen Lloyd's *The Blackbird Diaries* (2017), Mark Cocker's *A Claxton Diary* (2019) and Dara McNulty's *Diary of a Young Naturalist* (2020). These are examined in a close literary analysis, using Philippe Lejeune's framework for analysing diaries as well as theories on temporality by Henri Lefebvre, Rita Felski and Angelika Krebs.

The analysis revealed a set of common temporal themes in the diaries. On the linear side, they express critique at the capitalist imperative of progress, while also exhibiting a sense of urgency. On the cyclical side, they highlight the restorative potential of bodily and more-than-human rhythms. The authors offer practical everyday examples of alignment with these rhythms, while also situating the meaning of everyday encounters in evolutionary deep time and the realm of religion, concepts that transcend individual temporalities. Finally, in addition to emphasising the value of the cyclical, the diaries also demonstrate the value of pausing in the now.

Abstract (Deutsch)

Diese Arbeit untersucht die Zeitlichkeiten des Alltäglichen in britischen Naturtagebüchern aus dem 21. Jahrhundert. Sie versteht das Alltägliche als zentralen Ausgangspunkt für die Beziehungen zwischen Mensch und mehr-als-menschlicher Natur. Die Analyse folgt der Annahme, dass das Alltägliche sowohl aus linearen als auch zyklischen Zeitlichkeiten besteht, welche in einem gewissen Spannungsverhältnis stehen. Das Lineare wird als das Kapitalistische definiert, das Aspekte wie Fortschritt, Konsum und Apokalypse beinhaltet; das Zyklische wird als das Natürliche definiert, das Aspekte wie körperliche Rhythmen, Rituale und Hoffnung beinhaltet. Jenseits dieser abstrakten Konzepte will die Studie auch konkrete Wege aufzeigen, nachhaltige Beziehungen zwischen Mensch und mehr-als-menschlicher Natur zu kultivieren. Das Tagebuchformat bietet sich für diese Studie an, da es die Zeitlichkeiten des Alltäglichen reflektiert und ein praktisches Projekt darstellt.

Die Arbeit fokussiert sich auf vier Tagebücher: Esther Woolfsons *Field Notes from a Hidden City* (2013), Karen Lloyds *The Blackbird Diaries* (2017), Mark Cockers *A Claxton Diary* (2019) and Dara McAnultys *Diary of a Young Naturalist* (2020). Diese werden einer sorgfältigen Literaturanalyse unterzogen, bei der Philippe Lejeunes Konzept zur Tagebuchanalyse ebenso zum Einsatz kommt wie Zeit-Theorien von Henri Lefebvre, Rita Felski und Angelika Krebs.

Die Analyse hat eine Reihe von gemeinsamen Themen in den Tagebüchern aufgezeigt. Auf der linearen Seite äußern sie Kritik gegenüber dem kapitalistischen Fortschrittsimperativ, während sie gleichzeitig einen Eindruck von Dringlichkeit vermitteln. Auf der zyklischen Seite illustrieren sie das heilsame Potential körperlicher und mehr-als-menschlicher Rhythmen. Die Autoren bieten praktische Alltagsbeispiele für eine Ausrichtung auf diese Rhythmen; gleichzeitig situieren sie die Bedeutung von Alltagsbegegnungen in evolutionärer Zeit sowie dem Bereich des Religiösen, beides Konzepte, die individuelle Zeit transzendieren. Schließlich betonen die Tagebücher nicht nur den Wert des Zyklischen, sondern sie zeigen auch den Wert des Pausierens im Jetzt auf.

List of Abbreviations for Book Titles

<i>BD</i>	Karen Lloyd, <i>The Blackbird Diaries</i>
<i>CD</i>	Mark Cocker, <i>A Claxton Diary</i>
<i>DYN</i>	Dara McAnulty, <i>Diary of a Young Naturalist</i>
<i>FN</i>	Esther Woolfson, <i>Field Notes from a Hidden Planet</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

We live in troubled times. Life on earth is facing the challenges of climate change, of extinction, biodiversity loss and habitat destruction, of the depletion and pollution of air, soil and water. In fact, it has been argued that these crises are “in part a problem of time, with ecological, political and social systems thought to be out of sync or mistimed” (Bastian, “Engaging”). Hence, time has been recognised as central to ecocritical discourse. In 2022, the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment in the UK and Ireland held their biennial conference under the heading of “Epochs, Ages, and Cycles: Time and the Environment”, highlighting the different facets of the ecocritical discourse on temporalities. While the papers presented covered a wide range of genres, texts and centuries, a few common themes stood out among them.

Firstly, there was a noticeable focus on cycles and circular notions of time, as was already reflected in the conference title. Representations of cyclicity were detected both in contemporary poetry – as in Cristina Peligra’s paper on Dutch climate poetry (Peligra) – and fiction – as in Melanie Ebdon’s talk on Jon McGregor’s 2017 novel *Reservoir 13*, which paints “a vision of the human as just one of many species embedded within a subtly, yet perilously, shifting pattern of natural cycles” (Ebdon). Secondly, it was illustrated that “[o]ne of the most common narrative forms in Anthropocene literature is (post)apocalyptic fiction [, a genre consisting of] texts [that] frequently present linear timelines” (Dragt). Accordingly, a need to “resist the West’s nostalgic, apocalyptic self-absorption” (Carlill) was recognised. Starting from the diagnosis that “a focus on ending has created something of an impasse” (Ivry et al.), the call was issued to think beyond apocalyptic, linear conceptions of time and to explore which kinds of literature might allow us to do so.

My study posits that contemporary Nature Diaries offer answers to this call for new, forward-moving thinking, as they illuminate both cyclical and linear temporalities. In addition, diaries are reflections of the everyday, a realm that deserves renewed attention in times of crisis. In fact, I want to highlight the everyday as a specific point of connection to the more-than-human world. As such, it stands in some contrast to abstract temporal theories such as the concept of the so-called ‘Anthropocene’, and it offers more hopeful avenues for thinking through the troubles of our times.

Before I introduce in more detail the books on which my study focuses – Esther Woolfson’s *Field Notes from a Hidden City* (2013), Karen Lloyd’s *The Blackbird Diaries* (2017), Mark Cocker’s *A Claxton Diary* (2019) and Dara McAnulty’s *Diary of a Young Naturalist* (2020) –, I will clarify the concepts that constitute the basis for my research: firstly,

I will take a stance on the concept of the ‘Anthropocene’ and suggest alternative ways of framing the times we live in; secondly, I will offer a comprehensive definition of what I understand as ‘Nature Writing’, the field of literature that the diaries analysed in this study belong to; and thirdly, I will exemplify what I mean by ‘the everyday’, including its temporal implications.

Our Present Temporalities

The coinage of the term ‘Anthropocene’ can in itself be read as a reaction to the notion that conventional modes of telling time are no longer appropriate. Popularised in 2007 by environmental scientists Paul Crutzen, Will Steffen and John McNeill, the term is meant to describe a new geological epoch “in which humans and our societies have become a global geophysical force” (Steffen et al. 614). However, the beginnings of this ‘age of humans’ are not clearly defined: some situate them with the Industrial Revolution, others as far back as the onset of agriculture and deforestation about 5,000 years ago (Clark 1). There is a broader general agreement that it is linked to “the ‘Great Acceleration’ since 1945 in which human impacts on the entire biosphere have achieved an unprecedented and arguably dangerous intensity” (1). Not only has the world population doubled since the end of the Second World War, but the global economy, petroleum consumption as well as urban areas have also grown significantly. Due to the pressure on natural resources coming with these developments, “humans have changed the world’s ecosystem more rapidly and extensively [in the period from the 1950s to the 2000s] than in any other comparable period in human history” (Steffen et al. 617).

Despite its wide use, the term ‘Anthropocene’ can be criticised for its ambiguousness and its limits. It certainly has to be employed, as ecocritical scholar Timothy Clark warns, in “a self-critical” (Clark 3) manner. Firstly, the ‘human’ implied in the ‘Anthropos’ is neither a single entity nor a truly independent agent. It is not the whole human species that is driving the developments described above in an equal manner, but rather affluent, capitalist Western societies. As literary scholar David Farrier elaborates:

the ‘we’ of the Anthropocene is profoundly conflicted, composed of extremely mismatched orders of culpability and exposure. The experience of the Anthropocene is defined by privilege, marked by structural inequalities and huge disparities, in both consumption patterns and in the capacity to ride out the consequences of a changing climate. (Farrier, *Anthropocene* 16)

In this imbalance of actors and consequences, capitalism can be identified as a cause for many of the troubles of our times, hence suggestions of terming them “Capitalocene” (Haraway 47) instead of Anthropocene come closer to the core of the matter. The role of capitalist temporalities is one of the central motives of my study, as will be outlined further down.

Yet what also matters crucially to my considerations are the roles of all the more-than-human beings that an emphasis on the ‘Anthropos’ would neglect, and it is these beings that require our renewed attention. Instead of furthering a distinction between humans and other beings through abstract artificial terms, these troubled times require a moving-closer-together in a practical, everyday manner. More positive stories are also needed, stories that foster hope and meaningful action instead of feeding apocalyptic visions. Such stories cannot be told under the heading of the ‘Anthropocene’ as it “saps our capacity for imagining and caring for other worlds, [...] for still possible recuperating pasts, presents and futures” (Haraway 50).

Despite my critique, I recognise requirements formulated in the Anthropocene discourse that call for “a critical practice capable of thinking and reading across several scales” (Farrier, *Anthropocene* 20), that is, the ability to consider the complexities of both the local and the global and everything in between. Yet the realm in which I read across these scales would more appropriately be called ‘urgent times’, based on Donna Haraway’s understanding that “[t]hese times called the Anthropocene are times of multispecies, including human, urgency” (Haraway 35). She calls the troubles of extinction, extraction and climate change

urgencies rather than emergencies because the latter word connotes something approaching apocalypse and its mythologies. Urgencies have other temporalities, and these times are ours. These are the times we must think; these are the times of urgencies that need stories. (37)

Attempting to counterbalance apocalyptic narratives, my study seeks to explore these other temporalities that interplay in the urgencies of the 21st century. Implied in Haraway’s statement is also the need for stories, a need I recognise in my engagement with narratives. While in the perception of politicians and the general public, the role of the natural sciences, of statistics and technologies, has already been established as crucial to dealing with the urgencies of our times, the arts and humanities still need to be realised as just as important, as they shape our understanding of ourselves and the world. Therefore, my study hopes to contribute to a discourse that fosters the understanding that, as environmental humanities professor Ken Hiltner proposes, narratives “can write the future into being” (Hiltner 3). This means that not only an “applied-science”, but also “an *applied-humanities* approach” (5;

author's emphasis) is needed. This, in turn, would not only mean the study, but also the establishing of new practices by writing them (3). My study explores how current Nature Writing narratives write practices that engage with the complex temporalities of urgent times. As these complexities can often seem hard to grasp or even invisible – a characteristic that has also been ascribed to the Anthropocene condition (Falb 27) –, I furthermore consider it crucial to realise how these practices can be anchored in an everyday, physical world.

Defining 21st-century Nature Writing

The field of Nature Writing in the 21st century offers itself to this study, as one of its central tenets lies in “finding meaning not in the rare and exotic but in our common, unremarkable encounters with the natural world” (Moran 49). My thesis is based on the assumption that it is exactly the ‘common’ species and environments that are the very points at which people start to relate to more-than-human nature – both as readers of Nature Writing narratives and as participants in the living world off the page. The proximity of the ‘common’ might often render it unnoticed, overlooked, even boring or irrelevant. Something that is seen every day or almost every day is in danger of losing appeal and meaning. It is precisely this – often subconscious – process that Nature Writing wants to intervene in. The aim of its authors is to make their readers see their environments anew, train their perception and awareness and thus deepen their understanding of the world around them.

The focus of my study is on 21st-century British Nature Writing, which is also occasionally called ‘New Nature Writing’. The term was coined by Jason Cowley in a special issue of *Granta* in 2008, who used it to gather under one banner works like Robert Macfarlane’s *The Wild Places* (2007), Kathleen Jamie’s *Findings* (2005) and Mark Cocker’s *Crow Country* (2007) (J. Smith 3). Yet, the newness of ‘New’ Nature Writing is debatable – as is the term ‘Nature Writing’ itself. Many of the writers gathered under that banner wear it with a certain “anxiety and discomfort” (15). They rather prefer to simply “be known as writers” (Moran 50). This stance does not only stem from “the ambition and range of their work” (50), but also from the concern about an artificial border being drawn between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’, as that binary would “defuse [the] cultural and political power” (Stenning & Gifford, “Introduction” 1) of the respective texts. As acclaimed Nature Writer Richard Mabey emphasises: “Culture isn’t the opposite or contrary of nature. It’s the interface between us and the non-human world, our species’ semi-permeable membrane” (Mabey, *Nature Cure* 23). This understanding appears as absolutely crucial to writing in and about the field of Nature Writing.

Despite its shortcomings, I will retain the term ‘Nature Writing’¹ throughout this study. As Macfarlane notes in his respective critique, the label can at least serve “to animate a broader shared interest in cultural practice concerning landscape, nature, place, imagination, memory and ethics” (Macfarlane in Stenning 77). Though my focus is on texts published from 2013 and onwards, I will however drop the ‘new’, considering both the ever more rapid developments in this field of literature and the long-lasting traditions it builds upon. Instead, I simply refer to ‘Nature Writing of the 21st century’. Also, while it comes in a plethora of forms that, in some accounts, even encompasses poetry and fiction, I use the term only for non-fiction prose works which are characterised by a combination of scientific facts and personal, poetic language. In this, they exemplify what Cocker fittingly describes in a note on his own style: “[In *Crow Country*] I tried to unite a piece of genuine natural-historical research with a personal memoir in a hybridised format that I call ‘the poetry of fact’” (Cocker, *Our Place* xii). Here, Cocker also points to the autobiographical aspects of Nature Writing. The author’s emotions, memories and associations are often deeply woven into the natural-historical accounts.

The combination of autobiography, science and poetic prose can be traced throughout the history of British Nature Writing. Some of these historical aspects are worth highlighting for my study. To begin with, it can be claimed that Nature Writing could only develop after the rise of modernity in the 17th century, as contemporary German philosopher Jürgen Goldstein does: “Only the rigour of rational-economic modernity has generated Nature Writing as a distinctive language of subtle experiences and sensations” (Goldstein 13; my trans.). Modernity, as decisively influenced by the rationalistic philosophy of René Descartes, deprived other-than-human nature of its inherent meaning, objectifying and neutralising it, which facilitated its use as a resource for human use (31- 40). Hence, as Nature Writing is so closely linked with the history of modern capitalist economy, it is especially important to reconsider it in times troubled by capitalist practices. Across the centuries, Nature Writers have regularly positioned themselves against a simplistic and rationalistic view of other living beings and ecosystems. The concept of “a subtler language” (87)², for example, that Goldstein refers to in the above was coined in the 18th century by Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, who tried to cure a literature poisoned by hopelessness with the means of fantasy. For Shelley, creative writing about nature was an expression of a reciprocal “Resonanzverhältnis” (89), a

¹ To mark it as a particular form of writing, the term ‘Nature Writing’ is capitalized throughout this study, as is the related term ‘Nature Diaries’.

² First mentioned in 1818 in Shelley’s epic poem *Laon and Cythna; or, The Revolution of the Golden City: A Vision of the Nineteenth Century* (Goldstein 87).

relationship of resonance, for which the poet's language creates a space. With this poetic, subtle language, Nature Writing makes an attempt at correcting modernity (28) and it still does so today, a time in which it is probably needed more than ever.

Living at about the same time as the Romantic poets, in 1789, clergyman Gilbert White published his *Natural History of Selborne*, a series of diaristic letters in which he describes nature in and around his home parish. This book was “the first work on natural history to attain the status of an English classic” (“Gilbert White”) and its author is often considered the first proper British Nature Writer. As the *Natural History of Selborne* is still in print and being read today (Morton), it comes as no surprise that “[m]ore than any other single book it has shaped our everyday view of the relations between man and nature” (Mabey, “Introduction” viii). White illuminates the connections between all living beings and directs readers' attention to the disregarded and the overlooked, for example the role of earth worms in the cycle of life (Goldstein 110). Its form, its focus and its influence on the everyday make White's work relevant for the 21st-century authors considered in my study.

As it went through different stages from the Romantic era onwards, Nature Writing repeatedly realised the need to redirect attention to the common. In the Victorian era, natural history had developed into “a public obsession” (Mabey, *Oxford Book* 89). People were fascinated with the exotic that found its way from colonial expeditions into British homes, in cages and as stuffed collectibles. At the same time, as Richard Mabey claims, the sciences were ruled by ideas of “competition, natural hierarchies, and the male monopoly of scientific rigour” (120). In reaction against these trends, authors raised their voices to “celebrat[e] the commonplace and the untamed” (120). Among them was naturalist W.H. Hudson, who asserted that a winter gathering of gulls “has given to London a new and exceedingly beautiful ornament, of more value than many works of art” (Hudson 108). The 21st-century authors in my study also adapt that perspective of seeing the aesthetic in the common, and both Cocker and Lloyd actively refer to Hudson's depictions of the natural world (e.g. Cocker, *CD* 48; Lloyd, *BD* 101).

Nature Writing of the 20th century is also referenced in the diaries in my study, though this was a period when Nature Writing was faced with a number of challenges. This is, for example, reflected in the fact that only two anthologies were published in Britain during its course: Henry Williamson's *An Anthology of Modern Nature Writing*, in 1936, and Richard Mabey's *Oxford Book of Nature Writing*, in 1995 (J. Smith 7). During the early decades of the century, the natural sciences were further professionalised, putting laboratory experiments before fieldwork. After World War I, however, a new generation of naturalists revisited the old

values, getting out into the field again and being especially interested in the behaviour of wild beings and their interactions with their environment. As Mabey depicts it: “It was an atmosphere in which the dedicated amateur could play a role again, and the gap between the worlds of natural history and literature began to close” (Mabey, *Oxford Book* 154). Contained in this atmosphere are some of the central aspects of Nature Writing: It is not an exclusive domain of scientists, but of all kinds of people passionately engaged with the natural world, and it combines observable facts with literary language. However, during the middle of the 20th century, interest in writing on the English countryside waned again, for several reasons. It was not only associated with the dangers of nationalistic tendencies – like in later works of the aforementioned Henry Williamson – but also with “sentimental escapism, or a lack of philosophical sophistication” (Stenning & Gifford, “Twentieth-Century” 1). In the face of these developments, it seemed that,

[in] Europe at least, only a very few descriptive writers, such as Jane Goodall and J. A. Baker, seemed able to continue celebrating nature’s ‘minute particulars’ and yet convey, just under the surface, a real sense of its vulnerability. (Mabey, *Oxford Book* 154)

Baker’s *The Peregrine*, a passionate portrait of the eponymous bird published in 1967, can be placed next to US-writer Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, in that both works helped re-define nature as a complex, yet vulnerable network of interrelationships. In this way, they fostered a new way of ecological thinking and writing which also emphasises the responsibility and entanglement of humans in this interrelated network (Lilley 17-18). Carson’s appreciation of the ecological knowledge of common, local people (Bartel 67) and her “vision for a democratically based subversive ecology” (Kroll) that grew from this appreciation is a position also present in 21st-century Nature Writing, for example in Macfarlane’s *Landmarks* and Cocker’s *Our Place*. Also, Carson’s aim for a change of the public mind and her belief that scientific information and value judgements need not be separated from each other can be defined as general characteristics of Nature Writing.

In Nature Writing, the authors share their sense of the world so that their personal view serves as a lens on more-than-human nature and the meaning they find in it. In this process, they do not remain neutral or objective, as they are “inextricably and passionately involved” (Mabey, *Nature Cure* 15). Such emotional involvement does not require neutrality. Nature Writing, after all, reflects the human desire to find meaning and incentives for “a good life” (Goldstein 25; my trans.) in the natural world. Central to Nature Writing is the realisation that

this meaning is not to be found only in the exotic, rare and remote, but first and foremost in the local, the everyday and the seemingly ordinary – that is, in the common. As Goldstein notes, an intense experience of other-than-human nature does not depend on the exoticism or extraordinariness of the considered other, but on the ability to resonate (118). Nature Writing fosters exactly this resonance with more-than-human nature as it presents stimuli for a change of perspective.

This change of perspective also revolves around the concept of ‘the wild’. Especially in such a densely populated and built-up country like Britain, the wild might seem hard to find. In *The Wild Places*, Robert Macfarlane set out to find just this, only to realise that the wild is not a question of place, but of perspective (Goldstein 181-182;188). The Scottish Highlands or the Norfolk Coast might be considered the epitome of wilderness, but the wild can also be found in the woods behind one’s homes or the plants pushing through the cracks in the pavement. In her analysis of Henry David Thoreau’s work, one of the founding fathers of American Nature Writing, philosopher Jane Bennett offers a very fitting definition of the wild:

it is the exclusive property of neither natural nor cultural entities. It is lodged in a refined experience of all sorts of things. The Wild refers to the surprise element that lurks in every object of experience, however apparently familiar. (Bennett 94)

Thus, in helping us to find the wild in the common, Nature Writing broadens our perspective of the familiar and everyday.

In this, Nature Writing aims at stimulating all the senses. While we are better adapted to respond to visual and acoustic stimuli, smell, taste and touch should also not be neglected. Smell, in particular, can prompt a wealth of associations, such as the “ambiguous perfume” (Cocker, *CD* 91) of blooming hawthorn, which for some evokes the smell of sex, while reminding others only of the “fragrance of newborn babies” (93). Nature Writing is also greatly interested in touch and direct contact. In *Crow Country*, for example, Cocker describes a flint he always carries in his pocket, which is “about the size of a rabbit’s kidney, worn smooth by the action of water, crazed with a landscape of time-inflicted craters, grooves and scratches, immensely comfortable to the hand and black in colour like the rooks” (Cocker, *Crow Country* 75-76). Through the stone, natural history becomes tangible. Such tangible, substantial experiences of more-than-human nature act as an antidote to an “increasingly disembodied, atmosphere-controlled and electronically mediated” (Moran 54) existence that is a central condition of Western 21st-century societies. As a counterweight to the abstraction

that such an existence is often ruled by, Nature Writing places “details and intricacies” (54) in the focus.

While we are able to sense the details of the world directly, our cultural responses to it are always mediated through the filter of language. This could be seen as a hindrance, a boundary, but as Kathleen Jamie notes, language is our means of connection with the world (Lilley 19). Yet the important thing is to remain reflective about the language one uses. Such a reflective linguistic relationship with other-than-human nature, however, has increasingly become endangered during the 21st century. Not only the fact that we no longer work and live so closely with other-than-human nature, but also a decline of biodiversity entails shortcomings in our linguistic and cultural ability to phrase the natural world in words (Cocker, *Our Place* 300).³ As Goldstein diagnoses, ecological illiteracy is spreading (Goldstein 15). Through language, meaning and value are given to the natural world; when we lack this language, it becomes easier to exploit and destroy other-than-human nature (Strøksnes 129). For these reasons, Nature Writing has made it its objective to rescue, preserve and refine the language we employ towards the more-than-human.

Convincing Nature Writing is often a balancing act, as it needs “a willingness to admit both the kindredness and the otherness of the natural world” (Mabey, *Oxford Book* vii). While humans certainly share a lot with the other parts of life, we can never fully know them. Often enough, they exceed or subvert our human standards and criteria. Authors of Nature Writing have to be aware of the dangers of exaggerated romanticising or supercilious humanising, but also of the possibilities that nuanced and reflective anthropomorphism offers. Ultimately, we can never approach other-than-human nature without the filter of our own perception. Therefore, a sense of an “obdurate otherness” (Moran 57) of more-than-human nature also runs through a range of Nature Writing. However, this strangeness does not need to make us waver in believing that meaning can be found in the other parts of life. As Cocker expresses it: “I [do not] really mind that I shall never arrive at a definite understanding. That was never my intended destination. The journey, in truth, has been everything” (Cocker, *Crow Country* 189).

The journey of the Nature Writer also requires him or her “to navigate between joy and anxiety” (Cocker in Wheatley 26) – joy about the inherent beauty and found meaning in the

³ These shortcomings in our attention towards the natural world have been noticeably aggravated by the urgent crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic, highlighting an understanding of “the ecological crisis primarily as a crisis of attention and language” (Kölling and Lieb 176). How a practice of refocusing on an “ecology of the everyday” (181) can be fostered by means of a concrete teaching project is exemplified by Kölling and Lieb in their article “Teaching Eco-Translation”.

other parts of life, and anxiety about their fragility and human-induced demise. This navigating task is becoming ever more pressing as the plethora of ecological crises is accelerating. In order to find new ways of surviving and living together with the other parts of life, we need to care about them, and in order to care about them, we must know them in the first place.

Thus, Nature Writing in the 21st century is not only about aesthetics, but also about ethics. Some ecocritical voices, like the author and activist Paul Kingsnorth, believe that “a completely updated and upgraded moral perspective” is required from “author[s] on nature” – updated in contrast to the “simple descriptive approach” and “quasi-scientific detachment” that Gilbert White employed (Cocker, *CD* 1). It is an incentive for today’s Nature Writing to position itself against a rationalising culture in which the other parts of life are degraded to resources for exploitation. In this positioning, Nature Writing is inherently political. However, this does not have to be stated as explicitly as Kingsnorth demands it. Other authors believe in a more subtle approach that still relates back to White’s descriptive style, though without detachment. As Cocker explains in the introduction to *A Claxton Diary*: as it changes readers’ perspectives on more-than-human nature and, in the best case, serves as a starting point for action, the “simple act of recollection” (Cocker, *CD* 3) becomes an ecopolitical act. Goldstein phrases this aspect in slightly more drastic manner: Nature Writing aims at a “revolution”, obtained by the means of literature and culture, and, as such, it is “a sting in the flesh of our present culture” (Goldstein 252; my trans.). However subtle or explicit its political dimension, in its essence, Nature Writing can be read as “lyric activism” (J. Smith 205), as it draws the aesthetic and the ethical together.

Defining the Everyday

The discourse on the common and the everyday also draws together the aesthetic and the ethical. Also, just as ‘nature’ and ‘the wild’, the everyday sometimes presents itself as an ambiguous concept. Hence, to untangle the philosophical ambiguity of the term, I will first elaborate on the ordinariness of the common. In doing so, one has to navigate between two seemingly contradicting poles: on the one hand, the common is ordinary, mundane, characterised by its lack of remarkability. On the other hand, though, it harbours great potential for meaning, even mystery, in its very familiarity.

A synonym used widely both for the common and the everyday is ‘the ordinary’. This designates something without special or distinctive features, something mundane and unremarkable. Designations like “the neglected” as well as the “overlooked and unattended-

to” (Randall 599) could be added here. All of these designations are highly value-laden. This conception is reflected in discourses on the everyday, which, for many critics, is hardly a neutral term that simply describes a category of time. Though everyone lives in the everyday, it is often more closely associated with certain groups of people, “such as women or working class” (Felski 79). Many modern scholars equate the everyday with “a nonintellectual relationship to the world”, opposing it “to critical reflection and speculation” and to “the aesthetic” (79). The everyday is positioned as an opposite of “the exceptional moment: the battle, the catastrophe, the extraordinary deed” (80). In all these cases, it is “defined by negation” (80). It follows that “[t]he distinctiveness of the everyday lies in its lack of distinction and differentiation” (80), as it “seems to be everywhere, yet nowhere” (79). This seeming lack of distinction is also illustrated by art critic Richard Deming in his study of the aesthetics of the ordinary:

The ordinary is the ongoing situation of a life, the context within which living is located [...]. The ordinary recedes from thought because it is everywhere. The ordinary is not life in extremis but the opposite of this, and so it feels, in its untrammelled ways rather, even definitively, unremarkable. (Deming 27)

As it does not pertain to ‘life in extremis’ and thus seemingly displays “a lack of urgency” (28), the ordinary has also traditionally “been seen as having no bearing on higher philosophical concepts” (28). This attitude results from the assumption that “[b]y its very nature, the ordinary is not troubling. It makes no demands and no active claims for attention” (29). As “the language [surrounding and representing the ordinary] is not a point of crisis”, no “ethical obligations [seem to] arise” (30) from it.

This, however, is a faulty belief. The common and ordinary does make an appeal to ethical obligations. As literary scholar Liesl Olson, in her account of the ordinary and modernism, remarks: “the subjective realm is where ethical choices are made” (Olson 22). In their linkage of the aesthetical with the ethical, authors of 21st-century Nature Writing appear highly aware of this fact. In transforming our perception, Nature Writing helps us, like art and philosophy in general, to “reveal the capacity of meaning” (Deming 8) in the common. This is accomplished “not [by imposing] order but [by listening] carefully, look[ing] intently at what is to be seen” (8). Thus, “the ordinary [becomes] an aesthetic encounter” (12), an “act of looking” (6). Deming illustrates how this process unfolds:

[Works] of art help teach people to look at things. The relationship between seer and thing seen shifts, and with that the experience of the meaning of that thing. A viewer can look at the scene the way an artist does—feeling it full of potential significance. Through painting, the everyday remains the everyday—it is the attention to the everyday that transforms through art. That is to say, the everyday does not change because of art; we do. (Deming 7)

In short, it is not the object that is depicted which changes through art, but the viewer. The same can be said of Nature Writing and its readers. Perceiving the world “by way of other people’s responses” (8) makes us aware of new facets. In learning to look at the mysterious and meaningful in the everyday, we also defy its characterisation as “secular” that results from its presumed lack of opportunity for transcendence, its seeming severance from “the miraculous, the magical, or the sacred” (Felski 79). One of Nature Writing’s major contributions is the way in which it makes us aware of this miracle, the extraordinariness of the ordinary everyday.

Everyday Temporalities

A recognition of the everyday as both an “ethical project, which involves recognizing true reciprocity between individuals” and an aesthetic project which calls for everyone to perceive the world like an artist allows for a “transformation of everyday life” (Loftus xx), as French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre has envisioned it. Lefebvre, one of “the richest and most comprehensive theorist[s] of the everyday” (110), also leads us back to the topic of time and offers the groundwork for this study. He defines the temporality of the everyday in the following manner:

The everyday is situated at the intersection of two modes of repetition: the cyclical, which dominates in nature, and the linear, which dominates in processes known as ‘rational.’ The everyday implies on the one hand cycles, nights and days, seasons and harvests, activity and rest, hunger and satisfaction, desire and its fulfillment, life and death, and it implies on the other hand the repetitive gestures of work and consumption. In modern life, the repetitive gestures tend to mask and to crush the cycles. (Lefebvre, “The Everyday” 10)

Since the publication of this passage in 1987, the consequences of ‘modern life’ have certainly intensified, including the human pressures put on ecosystems and the cycles of nature. Nevertheless, it is worth revisiting Lefebvre’s considerations and using them as lenses to analyse our current urgent times. Political ecologist Alex Loftus did so in his 2012 book

Everyday Environmentalism, which develops the eponymous concept based on the recognition that “some of the most vibrant political ideas have developed when thinkers immerse themselves in the quotidian tumult of their worlds” (Loftus ix). Loftus recognises Lefebvre as one such thinker, although he criticises him for having worked “with an impoverished view of the environment” (xxv), in which he “was never quite able to see nature as an *ally* in the struggle for this better world” (110; author’s emphasis). Lefebvre’s concept of nature seems to have been a strenuous one, as nature, to him, “is that from which humanity emerges, that which it struggles against, controls, and then seeks reimmersion within” (119). So, while the French philosopher appears “not [to] provide much ground for us to build an ecological politics” (128), Loftus nevertheless claims that

There are strong grounds for demonstrating that Lefebvre’s model of cultural praxis could be applied to an understanding of the socioecological makeup of metropolitan nature. Let’s make this move and, in the process, turn a critique of everyday life into a critique of metropolitan nature by expanding the philosophy of praxis [...] that Lefebvre develops into the ecological. (129)

My study suggests a move further as it applies Lefebvre’s philosophy of praxis – more precisely, his definition of the temporalities of everyday praxis – not only to metropolitan nature, but to all kinds of environments. Furthermore, in contrast to Loftus, my study is not focused on politics and sociology, but on literature. In her 2017 article on the 18th-century journals of Gilbert White, literary scholar Rhian Williams has first demonstrated how Lefebvre’s concepts can be made fruitful for the analysis of ecological literature. In this, Williams also responds to Loftus’ call to “reformulate environmental politics on the terrain of the quotidian” (Loftus xxvii), as she recognises that it is exactly the quotidian that offers possibilities “to counter the alienating effects of apocalyptic-type environmental predictions” (Williams 434). In looking not at the published version of White’s *The Natural History of Selborne*, but at the original hand-written journals, Williams aims “to recover White’s ecology through what [...] Lefebvre identified as the radical rhythms of the everyday” (434). In her close reading of White’s notes through this lens, she is able to reinterpret his writing

as an ‘everyday project’— [...] a mode of environmental engagement that is responsive to changing patterns and circumstances, grounded in familiar, local knowledge and lived experience, and a rhythmic mode of attunement that brings many discourses together rather than privileging one perspective. (452)

Williams further suggests that White's project "might model a contemporary mode of ecological engagement" (452) that is grounded in the everyday. Indeed, as my study will show, such contemporary projects exist in the form of 21st-century Nature Diaries. Like Williams, I use Lefebvre's concept of everyday rhythms to uncover which practical answers the diaries in my study can offer for current ecocritical praxis. In my endeavour to apply this concept to the 21st century, it proved fruitful to extend Lefebvre's original framework with more recent scholarship on time and temporality, which I will elucidate further in the chapter on everyday temporalities.

Essentially, employing the distinction between cyclical and linear temporalities enables me to think through the complexities of our urgent times, though I take care not to render these too simplistic or binary, and instead read them as interplaying perspectives. The concept of the linear allows me to read the books in my study as accounts critical of modern capitalism, while the cyclical helps me to highlight the role of the bodily and the sensuous that Nature Writing posits against the disembodied effects of capitalist temporalities. Thus in 21st-century British Nature Diaries we might find what Williams has concluded for White's *Natural History*, namely ways of

resisting the capitalist processes either of commodification of land [...], or of nostalgia that makes land stand in for bourgeois ideology[.] White's 'everyday' attentions engage his environment, and the species that inhabit it, on its own terms of habit, rhythm and recurrence—the grounds through which losses and gains are most acutely *felt*, in the body. (453; author's emphasis)

The body, then, is our connection to time, as it is our reference for the rhythms in the world around us. As Farrier notes as well, "the body [is] itself a site of shifting temporalities" (Farrier, *Anthropocene* 34). While I am concerned with a literary analysis of texts, this physical baseline is never far from my considerations.

My Corpus

The literary form of the diary is especially suited to mapping the temporalities of the everyday, which does not at least result from its character as a practical project. Several Nature Writers have adopted it as their form of choice, and in the 21st century, there have been a number of British publications that contain diaristic elements. Many of these books appear to take one year as the frame for their narrative and are divided into monthly chapters, for

example Alice Vincent's *Rootbound: Rewilding a Life* (2020) or Helen Jukes' *A Honeybee Heart Has Five Openings: A Year of Keeping Bees* (2018). Both authors tell stories of finding an offset against their busy urban lives through connection with nature, though each with her specific focus: for Vincent, it is gardening and plants, while for Jukes it is beekeeping. Bees are also the focus of a very different kind of diary, Sean Borodale's *Bee Journal* (2012), which consists of a series of poems that depict the life and work around a bee hive in Somerset over the course of fifteen months. Borodale's poems – or “lyrigraph[s]” (Borodale xvi), as he calls them himself, meaning to signify “a transcript of live experience *of* the performance of writing” (xvi-xvii; author's emphasis) – are all dated with the day of the month, which gives his book the appearance of a proper diary.

The diaries chosen for my study distinguish themselves from these examples in a number of aspects. First of all, they all follow the structure of a proper diary, with not only monthly sections, but with each entry dated to the specific day of writing. As such, they map the everyday of their authors as precisely as possible and allow for a closer depiction of its temporalities than other narrative forms do. Secondly, while poetry, such as Borodale's, can certainly offer valuable insights into the temporalities of lived experience, I have chosen to focus on non-fiction prose, as it is more accessible to a wider public and also mirrors more closely the everyday experience of most people. Thirdly, instead of conveying a specific focus on certain living beings – such as bees or plants –, the diaries in my study consider a broader spectrum of species and ecosystems and thus offer a more diverse range of connection points in the everyday.⁴

Diversity of experience was indeed one of the central criteria in the selection of my corpus: it contains two male and two female authors at different stages of their lives – from McAnulty in his youth to Woolfson in her days as a grandparent. These authors live in different parts of Britain, hence their everyday is anchored in various environments: Woolfson's Scottish cityscape, Lloyd's rural garden in the hilly west of England, Cocker's watery flatlands in the east of England, and McAnulty's different places, both urban and rural, in Northern Ireland. Not only the spaces portrayed in these diaries are diverse, but also the times that are encapsulated: my corpus spans about a decade, from the narrated years of 2010 to 2019, and thus enables me to trace how perspectives on temporalities have changed or remained the same.

⁴ It should be noted that this everyday is not a universal one, as the species and ecosystems considered in my corpus and hence in my study are located in Britain. It follows from this that ‘the everyday’ I refer to in my study is predominantly a British and, by extension, a European and Western everyday.

Finally, the chosen authors and their books have received different scholarly attention to date and thus represent different points of entry in the ecocritical discourse. Esther Woolfson's oeuvre contains three books as well as a range of acclaimed short stories and articles on the relationships between humans and other beings. She is occasionally recognised by other figures in the field of Nature Writing, as in an article by Robert Macfarlane from 2013, in which he provides an overview of "the recent resurgence in nature writing" (Macfarlane 166) and mentions both her books *Corvus* and *Field Notes*, likening Woolfson's examinations of "interspecies relationships and the responsibilities we bear to the creatures that surround us" (167) to the 'land ethic'⁵ of influential US-American Nature Writer Aldo Leopold. Furthermore, British author Olivia Laing attests Woolfson to be "possessed of the two most vital characteristics in a nature writer: a gimlet eye and a curiosity almost as insatiable as that of her birds" (Laing, "What a Bird Brain"). Woolfson's books have routinely been reviewed in a range of publications, from *The Guardian* and the *Times Literary Supplement* to *Publishers Weekly* and *Booklist*. However, to date, there have been no academic articles on her work, hence my study makes a start at exploring the insights it offers for ecocritical scholarship.

Though the scope of Karen Lloyd's oeuvre is comparable to Woolfson's, her work has been less reviewed and is hence worthy of more attention. Lloyd is the author of three non-fiction books, a poetry collection and a range of articles for various magazines and blogs, including *The Guardian*'s "Country Diary" column, *BBC Countryfile* and the Royal Geographical Society. In addition, she has edited anthologies on curlews and wolfs, species she has a particular interest in. She has been described as a "writer of rare talent, always with a sharp eye and an open heart" (Darlington) and her work has been compared to that of her "former teacher, the Scottish writer Kathleen Jamie" (Norbury) as well as that of Romantic Nature Writer Dorothy Wordsworth (Greening). However, in contrast to the latter and many other writers on the Lake District, Lloyd "has perfected the knack of snagging our gaze and directing it to the lowlands, south of the National Park" (Norbury), thus presenting an original perspective in Nature Writing. Lloyd is currently Writer in Residence with the Future Places Centre at Lancaster University, where she is "looking at ways to build affiliations with communities, ecologists and scientists and others to inform new writing about the north-west"

⁵ "A land ethic expands the definition of 'community' to include not only humans, but all of the other parts of the Earth, as well: soils, waters, plants, and animals – 'the land'. In a land ethic, the relationships between people and land are intertwined; care for people cannot be separated from care for the land. Thus, a land ethic is a moral code of conduct that stems from these interconnected caring relationships" (Aldo Leopold Foundation).

(Future Places Centre), an occupation that demonstrates her focus on everyday praxis and liveable temporalities.

Of the authors in my corpus, Mark Cocker is the one with the largest oeuvre – with twelve books and a plethora of articles and reviews published – and probably the most prominent one in discourses on Nature Writing. He is certainly an active shaper of these discourses himself, as articles like “Death of the Naturalist” show, in which he contends that “new nature writing is quintessentially an urban literature with a primarily metropolitan audience, [for whom] engagement with nature is an act of remembrance rather than a daily, lived experience” (Cocker, “Death”). It is exactly this daily, lived experience that Cocker is interested in, which makes his work of particular relevance to my study. While some of his oeuvre has been the object of academic articles, such as Michaela Keck’s take on the lessons that can be drawn from his memoir *Crow Country* for human-animal studies (Keck), the book considered in my study, *A Claxton Diary*, has not yet received such scholarly attention. Its value lies in showing that a transformative everyday practice requires us to immerse ourselves in the natural world as much as possible and get in tangible contact with all the elements, because, as Cocker highlights, “what worth is there in words that have no real soil at their roots?” (Cocker, “Death”)

While Cocker, Lloyd and Woolfson could all be read as feeding into traditional models of Nature Writing, Dara McAnulty distinguishes himself from them through a number of features which enable him to contribute fresh new perspectives to the ecocritical discourse: he is a writer at the very beginning of his career, a young climate activist and a neurodivergent author. Furthermore, his writing is set in Northern Ireland and thus suited to “revealing [its] landscapes and natural abundance that are still overshadowed by the country’s political history” (Jamie). He has been embraced as a promising and important voice by other British Nature Writers, such as Robert Macfarlane, Chris Packham and Kathleen Jamie, and his literary talent has by many been described as extraordinary. In fact, McAnulty has also been recognised outside English literary studies, with reviews on his work published in health studies – in *The Lancet*, one of the most renowned medical journals (Clarke) –, education and sociology studies (Bowmann & Germaine) and German studies (Thiemann). Even more important to my consideration of his work, though, are his immersion in the everyday temporalities of a young person and his interest “in [common] creatures most of us wouldn’t notice” (Jamie). His work offers not only empowering points of connection for “nature-minded teens and those with or curious about autism” (Mondor 18), but it serves as a strong

reminder to all of us, “fatigued as we may be, [...] that simple joy can actually help save the world” (Jamie).

Structure and Method

Each of the four named authors and their respective books form the focus of a chapter of analysis. Laying the groundwork for these analyses is a theoretical chapter, in which I exemplify more closely the framework for my study that was indicated in the above. To this end, I firstly elaborate on the format of the diary, making theories on life writing fruitful for the study of Nature Writing, and illustrating the specific temporalities of the diary format. In the second part of my theoretical considerations, I return to Lefebvre’s definition of everyday temporalities, using it as a starting point to define my understanding of the linear and the cyclical – which I also term the capitalist and the natural, respectively – as well as their interplay in the everyday.

The structure of the theoretical chapter mirrors that of the subsequent analytical chapters, as I start each by determining the diaristic characteristics of the respective book before I explore the personal rhythms of the author and then the temporal themes with their implications of linearity and cyclicity. While I use larger philosophical frameworks as lenses for my reading, my method is essentially that of a literary analysis in the form of an emphatic close reading with the text. My object of study are non-fiction diaries, but, considering the features of Nature Writing outlined above, it appears valid to examine them with the methods of literary studies, such as interpreting style and vocabulary. In the spirit of Virginia Woolf, who believed that “the exploration of the minutiae of daily life” offers a way of evoking “the significance of the everyday” (Randall 598), I closely explore the minutiae of the daily writings of Woolfson, Lloyd, Cocker and McAnulty to show how their everyday interactions with their ecological entanglements carry significance.

In Woolfson’s *Field Notes*, I explore three temporal themes. The first is her engagement with different time markers, including such ‘natural’ time markers as seasons and weather, as well as artificial time markers like clocks and their capitalist implications. In regard to this theme, I also allude to the sense of doom that hovers over the book, and the linearity of this doom. From inanimate time markers I move, in the second thematic section, to the rhythms of animals and animal bodies and how a reconnection to these can also rehabilitate our human sense of time. The third theme in *Field Notes* relates to the dimension of ‘deep time’, the vast temporal scales that exceed conventional human conceptualisations of

time, which, in Woolfson's considerations, is expressed through the inanimate temporalities of granite and solar lights.

Lloyd's *The Blackbird Diaries* also contains three themes central to my research questions. The first is the depiction of birds – especially the blackbirds implied in the title – as constants in time. This depiction entails four aspects: blackbirds appear in Lloyd's everyday to such an extent that they appear to be woven into the very fabric of it; the birds encourage the author to embed older memories into her diary; they provide a soundscape with a particular rhythm to the everyday; and, through cyclical repetition, Lloyd's empathy for the birds has grown, leading her to grant them agency and personality. The second theme results from Lloyd's position as a mother and housewife, which entails the cyclical temporalities of family and care – temporalities often neglected in capitalist societies. While these first two themes illustrate mainly cyclical temporalities in Lloyd's work, the third theme highlights the tensions between cyclical and linear temporalities in the complex matters of landscape practices, conservation and climate change.

In the introduction to *A Claxton Diary*, Cocker himself offers two temporal themes on which I build my analysis of his book. The first is his emphasis on the fact that the meaning and value of life lies in repetition. I contrast this realisation with the symptoms of linear thinking he diagnoses in his diary, before I trace two exemplary aspects that highlight the meaning of repetition: Cocker's recurrent reflection on birdsong and his regular revisiting of the idea that all of life is made from soil and light. The second theme of Cocker's work is that all living beings essentially share in a common temporality, which consists in their evolutionary heritage, and he traces this heritage for humans as well as animals and plants.

McAnulty's *Diary of a Young Naturalist* offers a number of temporal themes, starting from its relations to different media – photos, maps and online media –, all of which contain temporal aspects worth illuminating. Secondly, similar to Woolfson, McAnulty highlights how animals, the seasons and mechanical clocks provide his everyday with time markers, allowing for an interplay of the cyclical and the linear. Thirdly, McAnulty's diary demonstrates how memories can be filed to balance out everyday anxieties – an activity especially valuable in times of climate dread. The conditions under which McAnulty's generation is growing up lead to another theme that entails notions of the transition from childhood to adulthood against the backdrop of ageing processes in more-than-human nature as well as reflections on intergenerationality and the connection with both human and other-than-human ancestors. Finally, McAnulty's everyday practice of connecting with nature

teaches us the value of slowing down, pausing and noticing, processes that interfere with the logic of linearity and might allow us to move beyond capitalist time.

2. THE TEMPORALITIES OF NATURE DIARIES

Life Writing and Diaries

Nature Writing as Life Writing

Diaries, the objects of this study, belong to the larger field of ‘life writing’, which serves as “a general term for writing that takes a life, one’s own or another’s, as its subject” (Smith & Watson 4). Life writing and Nature Writing are closely entangled, as literary scholar Alfred Hornung demonstrates: “[t]he pragmatic basis of autobiographical accounts, which rely on the correlation of an empirical and a textual self, provides a fertile ground for the examination of culture-nature relationships; for nature writing equals life writing” (Hornung x). With this highlighting of the ‘empirical’ and the ‘textual’, Hornung recognises Nature Writing’s central characteristic of combining observable facts with a literary depiction.

Though my study focuses on the format of the diary, some of the overarching features of life writing should not go unmentioned. If one wants to read Nature Writing through a life writing approach, one should be aware of the latter’s distinctions and history. First of all, as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson point out in their guide to *Reading Autobiography*, the term ‘autobiography’ should be used cautiously, as it refers considerably to “the traditional Western mode of the retrospective life narrative” (Smith & Watson 4). This has to do with its history as a “particular generic practice that emerged in the Enlightenment and subsequently became definitive for life writing in the West” (2). Following the Enlightenment ideals of “self-interest, self-consciousness, and self-knowledge” (3), an autobiography “privileges the autonomous individual and the universalizing life story as the definitive achievement of life writing” (3). This exclusive character renders the term “inadequate to describe the extensive historical range and the diverse genres and practices of life writing not only in the West but around the globe” (3) – and it can also limit the use of the term ‘autobiography’ in reference to Nature Writing.

In contrast to the autobiography, the older term ‘memoir’ not only historically designates “recollections by the publicly prominent who chronicled their social accomplishments” (3), but was also “often written by the socially marginal” (4). In contemporary understanding, a memoir is “characterized by density of language and self-reflexivity about the writing process” (4) and therefore has the “status [of] an aesthetic object” (4). Both historically and today, a memoir “often bracket[s] one moment or period of experience rather than an entire life span” (3), and it is overall a more fluid and “dynamic” (4) term than autobiography. As such an aesthetically written account of a certain period of life, ‘memoir’ would be the more fitting designation for most Nature Writing works. However, as

the term ‘life writing’ is rated by Smith and Watson as “more inclusive of the heterogeneity of self-referential practices” (4), it appears as the most fitting one to use for a study of Nature Writing.

Life writing borders on a few other genres from which it should be distinguished, that is, the biography and the novel. While life writing is based on subjectivity and “personal memories [as] the primary archival source” (7), biographies are written from an objective perspective, using “multiple forms of evidence” (6-7). Nevertheless, hybrids of the two forms also increasingly occur. This is also the case in Nature Writing, with one of the most prominent examples being Helen Macdonald’s *H is for Hawk*, in which she weaves a biographical account of author and fellow austringer T.H. White into her own life story.

Furthermore, in contrast to novels, which present a fictional world, life writing represents “the world beyond the text” (12). This means that readers expect life narrators to tell the truth – about themselves and the world – and in attending to these expectations, an “autobiographical pact” (11) is forged between author and reader. French scholar Philippe Lejeune, a pioneering researcher on both autobiography and diary studies, originally defined this pact as the claim that there is an identity of name between author, narrator and protagonist, hence that they all refer to the same person (Lejeune, *Der autobiographische Pakt* 25; 27). This also means that life writing texts are “referential texts” (39; my trans.) in that they assert to deliver information about a reality beyond the text. According to Lejeune, autobiographies are less defined by certain formal elements and more by the autobiographical pact which elicits a certain kind of reading (8; 51). By accepting this reading contract, a “dialogic exchange” (Smith & Watson 16) arises which “require[s] the care and active engagement of both readers and writers” (18). On part of the reader, this also elicits the need to maintain a healthy scepticism towards the self-positioning of the author, who is, according to Lejeune, both an actually existing person and the producer of a discourse (Lejeune, *Der autobiographische Pakt* 24).

Ultimately, “autobiographical truth resides in the intersubjective exchange between narrator and reader aimed at producing a shared understanding of the meaning of a life” (16). In this process, life writing pertains not only to an individual, but also to common values that have culture-shaping potential. In the 21st century, this potential might be phrased as follows:

At this cultural moment audiences look to the ethos of a narrator able not just to confess spectacular transgressions or harms but to reflect on, interrogate, and recognize something gained in the struggle to sort out the detritus of the everyday, the ever-faster pace of change, and the myriad personae or ‘lives’ we all must perform. (18)

This assessment speaks to the role of the everyday in 21st-century life writing and, subsequently, in Nature Writing. By sharing their life stories, individual writers can foster common values, values that are needed especially in the fast-changing times of ecological crisis. They also highlight that these values do not only spring from the ‘spectacular’ or extraordinary, but are to be gained from the everyday itself.

When reading life writing through an ecocritical lens, some of its central premises are inevitably called into question. The first is “the *individualist* premise that the *individual subject* is the reliable source, agent and narrator of such stories from real life” (Zapf 4; author’s emphasis). This premise has to yield to an acknowledgement of “the ‘nonautonomy’ of the individual subject, [which means] that all individuality always only exists as a relational phenomenon, as individuality-within-contexts and living interrelationships” (4). The Nature Diaries analysed in this study are not accounts of individual human subjects, but they are composed in an entangled context of relationships with other-than-human individuals who also call into question the agency of the human narrators, which, in turn, leads to an attitude of humility. This realisation necessitates the questioning of another traditional life writing premise: “the *anthropocentric* premise that the ‘life’ that typically becomes the subject matter of such life writing is exclusively defined as the life of human beings in their psychological and sociocultural existence” (4; author’s emphasis). It can be claimed that ecocritical life writing does exactly the opposite, as it regards all living beings as subjects worthy of narration.

Autobiographical Subjectivity

Following this ecocritical approach, the six facets of autobiographical subjectivity listed by Smith and Watson need to be reconsidered: memory, experience, identity, space, embodiment and agency. I highlight how these become apparent in Nature Writing and which potential they offer for a valuing of the common and everyday. The first factor of subjectivity in life writing are memories, “the source, authenticator, and destabilizer of autobiographical acts” (Smith & Watson 22). As such, they can be involved in two processes that also pertain to Nature Writing. Firstly, remembering is a collective activity. Depending on the cultural and historical context, different techniques for remembering are learned, different technologies for preserving memory are available and different things are considered worth remembering. Accordingly, memory has a deeply political dimension. (23-25) Life writing can therefore “signal and invite reading in terms of larger cultural issues and may also be productively read

against the ideological grain” (25). Nature Writing in the 21st century, certainly, can be read against the prevailing ideologies of capitalist logic. Memory in life writing, of course, does not only operate on such a public common level, but also on a more personal one. Quite a number of Nature Writing works can also be read as “scriptotherapy” (29), an act of autobiographical writing processing trauma, such as Amy Liptrot’s *The Outrun*, Katharine Norbury’s *The Fish Ladder*, Joe Harkness’ *Bird Therapy* and, as will be seen in this study, Dara McAnulty’s *Diary of a Young Naturalist*.

The second aspect of autobiographical subjectivity is experience. This is closely related to memory, as it “is already an interpretation of the past and of our place in a culturally and historically specific present” (31). Experience “is the very process through which a person becomes a certain kind of subject owning certain identities in the social realm” (31). Accordingly, experience is “discursive, embedded in the languages of everyday life and the knowledge produced at everyday sites” (32). Just as the cultural context influences what counts as memory, the everyday discourse influences “what counts as experience” (32). While this, at first glance, might mean that certain “human experiences [remain] outside discursive frames—feelings of the body, feelings of spirituality, powerful sensory memories of events and images” (32), these can be “retrospectively” (32) turned into discursive experience through storytelling. Both experience and memory can be connected not only to the temporal dimension of the common through which identity is forged from repetition, but also to the spatial dimension of the home that is defined by familiarity.

The third aspect of autobiographical subjectivity has already been indicated in the above: identity. As with memory and experience, “[i]dentities materialize within collectivities” (38). The recent concept of the “ecobiography” (Thiemann 157) recognises the environment and its ecosystems as one such identity-shaping collective. Furthermore, in reading life writing, it needs to be remembered that identities are “multiple” (Smith & Watson 39), fluid, highly context-dependent and “provisional” (38). As such, “they are not additive but intersectional” (41). While there is “potential for conflict between or among [...] identities” (38), their intersection might also be fruitful. As has been illustrated in my definition of Nature Writing, many authors of the field feel uneasy when being identified solely as a ‘Nature Writer’. Their understanding of their writerly identity is often much broader and multi-faceted, as becomes clear from a list Macfarlane recites when asked what he attempts to produce: “travel writing, natural history, documentary fiction, cultural history, chorography, biography, bio-geography, psychogeography, [...], memoir, folklore, [...] and embedded prose poems” (Macfarlane in Stenning 77). This also chimes with Andrew

Epstein's realisation, in his account on the everyday in contemporary culture, that "a poet can also be [...] an ethnographer, a collector, an archivist, an observer or witness, a curator of language, data, and material" (Epstein 35).

The fourth aspect of autobiographical subjectivity is space – a concept that, as I will demonstrate with Lefebvre further down, is closely connected to time and temporalities. For life writing studies, Smith and Watson divide space into two subcategories: "location and subject position" (Smith & Watson 42). While 'location' refers to the "geographical site" (42), which also "includes the national, ethnic, racial, gendered, sexual, social, and life-cycle coordinates in which narrators are embedded" (42), subject position pertains to "the ideological stances [...] adopted by a narrator towards self and others" (42-43). As these distinctions already indicate, space is not only a geographical, but often a highly socially constructed concept. In the process of human storytelling, "[s]pace becomes place [...] when one is conscious of where one lives and develops a 'sense of place' as a subject inhabiting a specific locale" (43). This attention to a sense of place can be made present in Nature Writing, as is, for example, reflected in the positive notion of parochialism as "attention to a particular span of known space" (Williams 435) that Williams formulates in her study of Gilbert White's journals. Another dimension of space in life writing relevant to my research are the "spaces of sociality" (Smith & Watson 44), in which it can be "explore[d] how a subject's narration of her or his life is implicated in and impinges on the lives of others and may encapsulate their biographies" (44). In Nature Writing, these implicated and impinged-on lives are usually those of other-than-human beings, who therefore play a crucial role for the narrator's sense of place.

Autobiographical subjects are not only situated in a space and place, but also in a body. Memory and thus autobiographical knowledge reside in this material body, which means that one's subjectivity can only be realised when one recognises one's own embodiment (49). Embodiment can be traced on multiple levels: on the neurochemical and anatomical, but also on the level of social beliefs and norms concerning the body (50). In addition, narratives of the body "remind us of our own embodiment [and] capture lived experience through all the senses and sensibilities of the writing subjects" (53). This second aspect is reflected in Nature Writing's special focus on sensory perceptions like sound, smell and touch. Furthermore, in recognising their own embodiment, humans can recognise themselves as animals. Both this notion and the role that the body plays in the reception of narratives I highlight further in my chapter on "The Cyclical/Natural".

Finally, “we tend to read autobiographical narratives as acts and thus proofs of human agency” (54). This notion links up with the autobiographical pact, by which readers believe the author to tell the truth and be in full control of their narration. However, agency cannot be equated with free will and autonomy, as many critics have remarked. Depending on the chosen perspective, agency might for example be located in everyday discourse, in system-changing acts or in imagination connecting the local with the global (56-57). From yet another, but also potentially fruitful angle, agency can be connected to social “performativity” (57) and the “vulnerability” (58) of the self. In line with Judith Butler’s approach, agency “might be said to derive from our willingness to narrate our opacity, our fragmentation, our limits of knowability” (58). In this way, “Butler [...] shifts the idea of agency from the exercise of control over one’s interpretation of one’s life to openness to the self’s opacity and its ethical obligation to the other” (58). There are clear parallels here with the characteristics of Nature Writing: the balance between kindredness and otherness, between joy and anxiety, and the recognition of ethical obligations towards other living beings could all be rated as acts of agency.

In considering all these aspects of autobiographical subjectivity, Smith and Watson come to the conclusion that life writing should be treated “as a performative act” (61). Life writing is indeed not simply an individual’s account, but rather relies on the discursive interaction between narrator and readers in shaping a form of truth. As such, it is embedded in historical, cultural and social contexts. That means that life writing also has a collective, shared and political dimension, while it represents, at the same time, an everyday practice that marries the ethical with the aesthetical.

The Diary

As a particular mode of life writing, the diary likewise features the above characteristics and does so in a way that renders it especially salient to my analysis. Diaries “capture the movement of time and the impact of daily experience” (Popkin 13) and are thus “fascinating performances of the everyday” (Rak 25). Moreover, they also demonstrate the “democratic potential of life writing” (Popkin 3). These quotes already speak to the potential of the diary for a valuing of the common. In addition, there is more to be gained from taking a closer look at their characteristics and functions.

Although it might seem a straightforward literary category at first glance, the diary is actually “a protean genre with no fixed definition” (Popkin 8), as Lejeune illustrates in his essays. In “On Composing a Diary”, Lejeune offers a list of defining features of the diary: It is

usually “[d]iscontinuous”, “[f]ull of gaps”, “[a]llusive” – that is, full of “mnemonic signs” which are not intended for any other reader than the person writing –, “[r]edundant and repetitive” as well as “[n]on-narrative” – which means, “written without knowledge of the ending”, in contrast to a narrative story (Lejeune, *On Diary* 170).

Despite this versatile character, there is one restriction that binds the diary: dating. “[I]f writers do not date their entries, they are not keeping diaries” (Popkin 6), as Lejeune remarks. It was only when people started to precisely note the date of their written entries that the diary was born – this happened during the 18th century, coeval with the flourishing of the (Western) autobiographical mode (8). The practice of dating the diary

is not a moral or aesthetic constraint, but an existential one: by recognizing the inexorable flow of time, the diarist confronts the inevitability of change, and ultimately of death, and finds in the practice of writing a way to cope with this realization. (6)

Lejeune highlights the positive aspects that arise from the diary’s special relationship with time: “it sculpts life as it happens” (Lejeune, *On Diary* 173) and “is always on the very crest of time moving into unknown territory” (208), which renders it “progressive”, “dynamic” and “forward-looking” (208). The diary is also able to make apparent the rhythms of the everyday. While both everyday experiences and the diary entries composed from them may appear discontinuous, “they are related to each other by rhythms of repetition and variation that may not be obvious to the writer but that appear when the diary is read” (Popkin 8). Diaries thus act both as “filters for” and “traces of” (Rak 24) everyday life. They necessarily make a selection of days and events to be narrated, but also highlight the patterns and rhythms which weave these events together. As such, diaries are a highly valuable narrative form for my analysis of everyday temporalities in Nature Writing.

It is also worth investigating who writes a diary and under which incentives. Lejeune identifies two types of diary writers: “those who write each day out of discipline or habit, who suffer when they skip a day and ‘catch up’ when they’re behind, filling in omissions” and “those who write, more or less regularly, when they need to” (Lejeune, *On Diary* 193). Functions of the diary can vary and also interlace, as one diary might serve more than one purpose. Lejeune detects the following four functions: The first is self-expression, which can either mean that the diary is intended “[t]o release, to unload the weight of emotions and thoughts in putting them down on paper”, or “[t]o communicate [, to] empty your heart out onto paper because you are alone, unable to pour it out to a friendly ear” (194). The second function is reflection, meaning the diary is used “to analyze oneself and to deliberate. [It]

offers a space and time protected from the pressures of life. You take refuge in its calm to ‘develop’ the image of what you have just lived through and to meditate upon it, and to examine the choices to be made” (195). The third function consists in “freez[ing] time”: with the mindset of the “collector”, the diary is used “[t]o build a memory out of paper, to create archives from lived experience, to accumulate traces, prevent forgetting, to give life the consistency and continuity it lacks” (195). Finally, the function of the diary might simply lie in the “pleasure [of] writing”, the creation of “an object in which you recognize yourself” (195). For Nature Writing, the third function is especially relevant: its authors often realise their task as one of archiving and preserving the memory of life forms who are under the threat of disappearance.

For an analysis of the diary mode, it is also necessary to return once more to its relationship with time. It is not only its discontinuous, repetitive and dynamic nature that makes studying the diary a challenge, but also the fact that a true diary cannot be finished – or rather, it only ends when the writer dies (172). However, Lejeune acknowledges the possibility of “partial diaries” which are “devoted to a single phase and organized around a particular area of experience”, for example “vacation or travel diaries, work or research diaries, or the journal of a spiritual retreat, a pregnancy, and so on” (189). Some of the Nature Diaries that I analyse can be understood as such partial diaries. Also, it is usually only parts of a life-time diary that get published. When it comes to ending and publishing a diary, its borders towards autobiography become blurred. Usually, there is a temporal distinction between a diary and an autobiography: while the former is oriented “towards the future”, the latter is “turned towards the past”, meaning that it is “virtually finished as soon as it begins, since the story that you begin must end at the moment that you are writing it” (191). To finish a diary, therefore, it must become somewhat autobiographical.

Lejeune lists three methods for developing a diary into “a constructed text” (173) that can be published: It can be “use[d] to write a narrative (that is, make something entirely different out of it, an autobiography or a novel)”, “sift[ed] and rewri[ten]” or turned into “a montage” (173). This also means that texts that end up as a published autobiography might have originated as a diary. While the books analysed in this study still appear in the guise of a diary, they have gone through such a process in order to be published. Therefore, it has to be taken into account which parts have or have not been included, and how much the original entries have been edited before publication. In any case, the diary can be regarded

as a force of opposition and renewal that challenges classical aesthetic models by introducing fragmentation, repetition, and especially its unfinished quality as dynamic sources of inspiration, and taps into a new type of relationship between author and reader, with a more active role for the reader. (209)

As such, the diary is not only a form of life writing that renders the rhythms of the everyday particularly visible, but it also has potential for lyric activism in Nature Writing. It enhances the value of repetition, highlighting it as a source of innovation and creativity. Also, as noted above, the process of diary writing itself is oriented “towards the future” (191). As a performative act, it therefore offers a way of adhering to Hiltner’s call to writing “the future into being” (Hiltner 3). The diary is usually not a utopic vision or a political pamphlet outlining concrete plans for a sustainable future, but it operates on an everyday level and is therefore relatable to many people.

Everyday Temporalities

The Linear/Capitalist

Lefebvre describes the everyday “at the intersection of two modes of repetition: the cyclical, which dominates in nature, and the linear, which dominates in processes known as ‘rational’” (Lefebvre, “The Everyday” 10). The temporalities that I term ‘linear/capitalist’ in this study do not focus specifically on the ‘rational’, but rather pertain to the following aspects: the influence of technology and industrial labour; mechanical, numerical and abstract measures; increasing disembodiment; a focus on consumption, newness and one-directional progress; and the concept of apocalypse.

At least the first three of these aspects are named by Lefebvre. In his writing, linear temporalities and capitalism become associated, an equation certainly rooted in his Marxist background. According to him, linear time “is imposed by technology and industrial labour and concerned with mechanical gestures of accumulation” (Lyon 25) as 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” (Lefebvre & Régulier 84-85). It is important here to note that linear repetition is comprised of ‘identical facts’. This distinguishes it from rhythm itself, which, according to Lefebvre, can only be “non-mechanical” (87). He also condemns the idea of “absolute repetition” as “a fiction of logical and mathematical thought” (Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis* 17). True rhythm develops organically and as such both includes and produces difference:

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. (Lyon 24; author's emphasis)

In capitalist temporalities, however, such difference-generating rhythm is neglected in favour of the abstract and quantifiable. In capitalism, the fore is given to “[r]ational, numerical, quantitative [...] rhythms” which “superimpose themselves on the multiple natural rhythms of the body” (Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis* 18). Writing in the 1970s, Lefebvre observed how capitalism was colonising everyday life and noticed “the invasiveness of capitalism into routine practices, in other words, how lived experience is appropriated through ever more abstract and linear conceptualizations of space and time” (Lyon 13). This observation can be connected to more recent scholarship in the 21st century, such as the concept of “chrononormativity” coined by critical theorist Elizabeth Freeman in 2010, which refers to “the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity” (Freeman qtd. in Hartmann 49). Referencing Lefebvre, Rita Felski, in her study of the everyday, adds that in a capitalist world, the natural cyclical rhythms of the body are degraded to “a problem [or] a riddle” (Felski 81), even “a threat to the modern project of self-determination [which subordinates] individual will to the demands of an imposed pattern” (84).

Such a pattern was partly imposed through the introduction of mechanical clocks, which project an artificial ordering grid onto the world, a grid that is not related to inherent natural rhythms (Krebs 120). I will not delve particularly deep into the history of clocks here, but will highlight some aspects from multidisciplinary artist and author Jenny Odell's study *Saving Time* that have fed into my understanding of linear temporalities. First of all, Odell reminds us that “[t]he actual story of how measurable, countable equal hours came into existence is not a straightforward one” (Odell 12), and that neither “a scrupulous accounting of time” (27) nor “mechanical efficiency” (28) are unique to capitalism. However, “standard time units [...] proved useful for imposing uniformity on workers, seasonal activities, and latitudes” (13). In capitalism, clocks become tools of “domination over the natural world” (13), including domination over cyclical rhythms, both in human and more-than-human bodies.

In addition to the elucidation of the connections between capitalism and clocks, there is a second aspect in Odell's book that is especially relevant to my study, namely her reminder that the “social and material roots of the idea that ‘time is money’” (xiii) need to be explored.

She illustrates that this equation is “as historically specific as any other method of valuing work and existence” (xiv), having emerged rather recently in human history with the widespread introduction of wage relationships in the course of the 19th century (21). Hence, it is not as natural and common as it might seem in the everyday of 21st-century capitalism. The time-is-money metaphor

represents what Allen C. Bluedorn calls fungible time, meaning that, like currency, it is consistent and can be endlessly subdivided. [...] As opposed to the duration of life or even the processes of the human body, one hour is meant to be indistinguishable from another—decontextualized, depersonalized, and infinitely divisible. (11)

This definition of ‘fungible time’ can clearly be connected to Lefebvre’s concept of linear time, with its emphasis on quantified, fragmented, abstract temporality that yokes bodies to the demands of work for profit. As Odell demonstrates, this kind of linear temporality is not exclusive to industrial labour and also not to Lefebvre’s specific time of writing, but the dehumanising, disembodiment effects of fungible time can still be detected in 21st-century work contexts, such as “low-wage workplaces” (8), for example an Amazon warehouse where employee’s every move is tracked and timed, but also increasingly – especially during Covid-19 – to (home) office jobs (9), “now augmented by algorithmic sorting and faster processing” (8) that allows for the policing of employee’s time even on their computers at home. Today, Lefebvre might find that capitalism’s colonisation of everyday life has exceeded his gloomiest visions.

In capitalism, then, time is monopolised by work for money, with work also being a pattern imposed on the body. As media scholar and anthropologist Veronica Barassi stated in 2015: “the temporality of life has now become governed by work” (Barassi 76). While during Lefebvre’s time, the mechanical clock still was the tool for imposing abstract patterns on natural bodies, there has been a change of tools, as Barassi continues:

Today, working routines are no longer dictated by ‘clock-time’ like in the factory, but by a self-regulating flexibility and by the deconstruction of the boundary between labour-time and leisure time. This [flexibility] is made possible by the increased pervasiveness of internet technologies in our lives [...], which are [...] also altering our sense of ‘temporality’. (76)

These internet technologies, then, “are key to the acceleration of capitalist accumulation” (76). While driving the increase of capitalist interests, the internet also crucially exemplifies a

decrease of other aspects of life: namely, it is highly involved in an estrangement from our organic bodies, which is a symptom of linear, capitalist temporalities and which was also already noticed by Lefebvre:

capitalism intervenes fundamentally in the relationship between man and nature, and this is felt in bodily process [...] that then establishes an ambivalence in everydayness. The gradual absence of rhythm denotes alienation from the body, even as everyday life engages the flesh as functionary. (Williams 440)

This disembodiment is also very much recognised in recent ecocritical discourse and in Nature Writing's function as an antidote to "a post-millennial culture that is increasingly disembodied, atmosphere-controlled and electronically mediated" (Moran 54). Disembodiment is also part of what American writer Richard Louv has coined "nature-deficit order", describing "the human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses" (Louv qtd. in Jones 9). US-psychologist Chellis Glendinning has even

diagnosed Western culture as suffering from 'Original Trauma', caused by our severance from nature and natural cycles. The symptoms, she wrote, are recognized symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder: 'hyperreactions; inappropriate outbursts of anger; psychic numbing; constriction of the emotions; and loss of a sense of control over our destiny' – all of which, she argued, we have come to accept as normal. (Jones 155)

The trauma might be numbed by consumption, which is something that such alienated human bodies can still do and that also appears as normal in our society. In the digital capitalism of the 21st century, production and consumption "are collapsing" (Kaun 100) into each other. Next to industrial labour, consumption is another aspect that Lefebvre defined as linear (Lyon 25) and part of how capitalism colonised everyday life (13). In 21st-century capitalism, this colonisation can be described as media scholar Anne Kaun does in the same volume as Barassi: "citizens—individually and collectively—are increasingly dispossessed in terms of time and space. Almost every waking hour is dedicated either to production (labour) or consumption" (Kaun 103). Thus, humans are increasingly cast as consumers, a feature that conforms to neoliberal market logic (Redden 129).

Linear consumption is also a driver for ecological crises, as world-wide capitalism "has made the depletion of resources so rapid, convenient and barrier-free that 'earth-human

systems' are becoming dangerously unstable in response" (Werner qtd. in Haraway 47). Not only does capitalist consumption make natural systems unstable, it also leads to a "division of the world into inventory or surplus" (Farrier, *Anthropocene* 52). As Farrier explains: "Arranging nature in the interest of capital requires a mass simplification: the reduction of all life into the categories of resource or waste" (52).

Perceived on a linear timeline, resources are simply consumed and used up, expected to "disappear when [their] usefulness is exhausted" (Farrier, *Anthropocene* 72). This view also implies "a mind-set that assumes the superior value of the new" (Felski 84). With my classification of this mindset as linear I move from Lefebvre's writing to more recent scholarship on capitalism. Granting the new superior value also means a devaluation of the old and the past, emphasising instead forward-moving progress. Yet, as media scholar Thomas Sutherland argues, in capitalism, this progress, with its "economic imperative of speed [which] is simultaneously a *moral* imperative" (Sutherland 26; author's emphasis), rests on a false promise:

efficiency and productivity are not looked upon as goals to be reached, but rather as limitless ambitions towards which we are supposed to strive, without any illusion that there is some horizon that might eventually be reached. This is teleology in its purest, most paradoxical form: a final cause that is not an endpoint, but the direction in which a particular process of becoming orients itself. (26)

This is one of two kinds of linear progress that I want to name here. The one described by Sutherland operates on an endless line of productivity with an aim that can never be reached. It is reflected in the capitalist tenet for ever more production, for ever more surplus and capital, and the acceleration that is often perceived as characteristic of our everyday in the 21st century. However, the problem is not acceleration and efficient production itself, but rather the aims to which these are put. As Sutherland phrases it: "there is [...] something deeply concerning about a society in which these abstract quantities are treated as ends in themselves, as instrumentalised duties or necessitations" (40). The notions of fungible time and of abstract, linear time are also reflected in this statement. Furthermore, Sutherland's observations open a link to another driver of linear temporalities:

The Christian narrativization of history as a linear trajectory [...] founded as it is upon a sequence of irreversible events and revelations beginning with God's creation of the universe and ending with a corresponding eschaton. (28)

Here, then, is yet another form of linear progress, one with a definite end, the ‘eschaton’. Before I extend on this, however, the connection between Christian faith and capitalism should be highlighted, as their forging of linear temporality has gone hand in hand at least since the 18th century, when Puritanism fostered modern capitalism (Odell 17). As Odell observes: “In our system of standard time units, grids, and zones, [...] one can still read the marks of the Christian, capitalist, and imperialist crucibles in which it was formed” (12). Sutherland also explains how capitalism appropriated Christian worldviews for its own profit:

Lacking any moral authority of its own (since accumulation of wealth cannot, on its own, be linked to any sense of a common good), capitalism must find justification by attaching itself to already prevalent beliefs and values derived from elsewhere. (Sutherland 33)

Yet, in addition to their emphasis on industriousness and productive work, these Christian world views could be said to have carried another baggage into the capitalist endeavour: the above-mentioned eschaton, “the end of time” (Landes), which, in some traditions of historical eschatology, is understood as apocalypse that equals the destruction of the world (Landes). In the discourse on climate change and biodiversity crisis in the 21st century, this notion of a world sliding inexorably into apocalypse has a strong presence, disclosing a sense of time that is noticeably linear. The German young activist movement ‘Letzte Generation’ (Last Generation) serves as just one example that uses this rhetoric, both in their name and their emphasis on a possible extinction of humanity (Letzte Generation). The global activist movement Extinction Rebellion argues in the same vein, claiming that “life itself is under threat”, that “[t]he clock is ticking” and that we are required to “[avert] disaster” (Extinction Rebellion). They also assert that “our governments are not doing enough to protect their citizens, our resources, our biodiversity, our planet, and our future” (Extinction Rebellion).

While I do not want to question the genuine motivations and possible impacts of these movements, and while I believe that they rightly blame capitalist governments, I am wary of the apocalyptic rhetoric they use. As For the Wild podcast host Ayana Young cautions, there appears to be “a hyper-fixation with climate collapse in terms of ‘end times’ rather than thinking about this moment as being a part of the Earth’s cycle” (Young in Ghosthorse). In an interview with Young, Indigenous activist Tiokasin Ghosthorse, member of the Cheyenne River Lakota Nation of South Dakota, criticises the “saviour mentality” of many non-Indigenous people, who seem to believe “that there is always going to be salvation for us as long as we follow the rules and regulations of an authority figure, religion, science, or

government” (Ghosthorse) – or, one could add, of an activist movement. Implied in that saviour mentality is the claim that the Earth is dependent on our saving and that humans are the ones with the agency to save the Earth – such a “possessive” (Ghosthorse) attitude can be read in the use of the word ‘our’ in Extinction Rebellion’s above-quoted demand to protect ‘our resources, our biodiversity, our planet’. One could certainly also argue that the saviour mentality has its roots in Christian faith and its concept of a great saviour who comes to avert the end of the world. Yet, in truth, it is the other way around, and humans need to humbly accept that the Earth saves them when they live in the right relationship to it (Ghosthorse) – in relationship to its cyclical temporalities, as I will illustrate in the next section.

To conclude my reflections on linear temporalities, I want to position myself along critical perspectives of an apocalyptic worldview. For example, Haraway’s reminder that “a position that the game is over, it’s too late, there’s no sense in trying to make anything better [forecloses the possibility of] having active trust in each other in working and playing for a resurgent world” (Haraway 3). Odell argues in the same vein: “a foregone conclusion is self-fulfilling: In any situation, if we believe the battle is over, then it is” (Odell xviii). Therefore, a different language about time is needed, one that would, for example, “bring climate justice and self-care together into the same effort” (xvii). These two aspects are more closely connected than one might assume at first glance, as both could present counterweights to the linear temporalities that are exemplified in the above and aptly summarised in this quote by Odell:

individual time pressure and climate dread [...] share a set of deep roots, and they have more in common than just fear. It was European commercial activity and colonialism that occasioned our current system for measuring and keeping time and, with it, the valuing of time as interchangeable ‘stuff’ that can be stacked up, traded, and moved around. [...] the origins of the clock, calendar, and spreadsheet are inseparable from the history of extraction, whether of resources from the earth or of [labour] time from people. (xvi)

Contained in this quote are all the aspects that I have defined as linear for this study: the ‘dread’ and ‘fear’ instigated by an apocalyptic worldview that assumes a definite end point in time; the consuming ‘extraction’ that craves for ever-new resources; and a ‘commercial’, capitalist system that imposes on the world an artificial order, characterised by fungible, tradeable, numerical quantities, a system that markedly leads to alienation from natural bodily rhythms.

The Cyclical/Natural

The different language about time that Odell calls for might be found in the concept of cyclical temporality. Lefebvre, too, offered his practice of rhythmanalysis as a “curative” (Williams 441) to the capitalist disturbances of natural rhythms. In fact, to him, the cyclical actually is the everyday’s “quintessential feature” (Felski 81), its natural state, so to speak. Following Lefebvre’s definition, cyclical time “is rooted in primordial nature” (Loftus 122), “cosmic and vital” (Lyon 25). That is, it has existed from the beginning of time and that, while it transcends any human measurement in its ‘cosmic’, universal character, it is the elemental, necessary basis of life. This interpretation certainly imbues the cyclical with great value. For my study, I want to look at four aspects that highlight this value of the cyclical: the connection to the bodily, the organisation of memories, the cultivation of ritual and tradition as well as the generating of hope.

One of the goals of Lefebvre’s rhythmanalysis was to open a way of “rehabilitating rhythm as an animating, bodily principle” (Williams 441). In the practice of rhythmanalysis, the body is not simply used as an object or a tool, but “as the first point of analysis” (Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis* 6). To feel rhythms and analyse them, we need a reference (Lyon 31), which we find, first of all, in the rhythms of our own bodies: our heartbeat, our breathing, our patterns of waking and sleeping. In the reconnection to their bodily rhythms, humans can also recognise themselves as animals. As Odell observes:

As planet-bound animals, we live inside shortening and lengthening days; inside the weather, where certain flowers and scents come back, at least for now, to visit a year-older self. Sometimes time is not money but these things instead. (Odell xv)

That is, time may not only be conceptualised as a monetary resource, but can also be perceived as a process of rhythms for which the body is the receptive: it is with the body that we grasp the length of a day, the weather or a scent in the air, and hence it is the body that allows us to understand these recurring phenomena as shaping our sense of time. The body is not only our connection to cyclical temporalities, but it is also important in our reception of narratives, as Alexa Weik von Mossner shows in her account of “embodied cognition”:

Both reading and watching are highly embodied activities not only in that we need our senses in order to be able to perceive things, but also in that our bodies act as sounding boards for our mental simulations of storyworlds and of characters [...]. we use our bodies not only to understand human characters, but also for our grasping of the environments that surrounds

them, including the deliberations, emotions, and actions of nonhuman agents [...]. embodied cognition plays an important role in the simulation of social experience and moral understanding. (Weik von Mossner 3)

I quote this at length, as it shows the central role that the body fulfils when it comes to our understanding and interpretation of narratives, a notion that should not go unmentioned in the literary analysis I am conducting. For the ecocritical discourse it is relevant that our bodies also help us to relate to other-than-human beings who we encounter in a text, and that our bodies have a part in shaping our moral attitudes. This alone is reason enough to honour our bodies more, especially in their cyclical temporalities. One could even state that there is a kind of cyclicity in the embodied cognition described by Weik von Mossner, as loops of simulation, cognition and emotion emerge between the reader and the text.

Human cognition is shaped by cyclicity in more than one way. Cyclical natural events have an inherent meaning to us. As German philosopher Angelika Krebs writes:

As we grow up, we learn new things all the time. The times of day and the seasons, however, recur again and again [at least before climate change]. We organise our memories in line with these recurring events and thus connect our own history with the course of the world [...]. In addition, recurring events remind us of past events. (Krebs 120; my trans.)

As diaries, the material of my study, are also tools for organising our memories, they depict these recurrences and show how they provide stability and orientation, both in our individual lives and in our relations to the wider world. In the connection of personal and social histories that Krebs describes lies a cyclical interaction, as both influence each other reciprocally. Also, Krebs points to the value of the past of which cyclical events remind us and which, in this way, is never completely past but constantly renewed with meaning – recycled, so to speak. This, in fact, is the opposite of a linear understanding of time in which the past is left behind and one only orientates oneself towards the future.

An opposite to the linear orientation towards the new is also presented by the modality of the habit, which Felski understands “not simply [as] an action but an attitude [that is] often carried out in a semiautomatic, [...] or involuntary manner” (Felski 89). Like Krebs, she recognises that repetition is in fact crucial to life as it both helps us organise the world around us and form our identity. We need routine “in order to survive in the world and get things done” (91). It is “a necessary condition [that] we typically conduct our daily lives on the basis of numerous unstated and unexamined assumptions about the way things are” (93). This does

not preclude, though, that “[h]abit is [also] the necessary precondition for impulse and innovation” (91). Instead, “acts of innovation and creativity are not opposed to, but rather made possible by, the mundane cycles of the quotidian” (84). This understanding that the cyclical not only provides stability, but also enables creativity and improvement has been cultivated by many human societies over long timespans:

For most of human history, activities have gained value precisely because they repeat what has gone before. Repetition, understood as ritual, provides a connection to ancestry and tradition; it situates the individual in an imagined community that spans historical time. It is thus not opposed to transcendence, but the means of transcending one’s historically limited existence. (83)

This approach demonstrates that transcendence is not to be found in a linear imperative, but in cyclical rhythms. Cyclical repetition counters evanescence and as such presents an antidote to the fear of death that characterises some of the linear temporalities outlined above. Furthermore, the cyclical is connective, as it brings individuals, ancestors and communities into relation instead of promoting the kind of individual competition that marks capitalist systems. Such a kind of cyclical tradition is also what shaped Lefebvre’s conception of *rhythmanalysis*: as he had an “early and enduring experience with the southern French peasantry and the erosion of peasant life” (Loftus 119), he defined the “rural” (Lyon 25) as cyclical. Yet it would be too restrictive to only remain with that definition, especially in a 21st-century world in which rural agricultural traditions are eroding more and more. It is necessary to acknowledge the cyclical in all areas of life, as in addition to orientation, stability, identity, connection and transcendence it offers a further element that is especially vital in times of apocalyptic discourse:

When we are familiar with the cyclical course of nature [...], then we feel with certainty that time always goes on in some form, and that there will always be changes, developments and, with that, new possibilities and chances. (Krebs 122; my trans.)

With this statement, Krebs implies that we can find hope in the cyclical, hope for renewal and endurance. It is a hope that grows from a practice of recurrence, not from a distant, possibly unattainable future point on a line. As is implied in Krebs’ quote, recurring events have occurred long before human existence and will occur long after it. Natural cycles connect the past, present and future in a vital process that gives time depth.

The Interplay of Linear and Cyclical

With the above, I have demonstrated how important it is to revive cyclicity to counteract the potentially fatal repetitions of capitalism. However, it would be too short-sighted to condemn linearity completely or to think the linear and the cyclical as exclusive opposites. Lefebvre also noted that “[c]yclical repetition and the linear repetitive separate out under analysis, but in *reality* interfere with one another constantly” (Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis* 18; author’s emphasis). Felski is even more cautious of a strict division between these two temporal categories, as it would render the world too dualistic. Hence, she points out that

many everyday routines cannot be easily fitted into either of these categories. They are neither unmediated expressions of biological drives nor mere reflexes of capitalist domination but a much more complex blend of the social and the psychic. (Felski 84)

An awareness of this social component is present in Odell’s reflections on clocks and the time-as-money metaphor that I have highlighted in the section on linearity. Along the same lines, German philosopher Norman Sieroka notes that the combination of the cyclical and the linear

has a coordinating and sense-giving (‘sinnstiftend’) effect – especially if ‘Sinn’ (‘sense’) is here understood as ‘Uhrzeigersinn’ (‘clockwise’), which on the one hand determines a set direction, and on the other hand causes the clock hand to cross the same points repeatedly. (Sieroka 84; my trans.)

In such a reading, the clock could even be understood as one of the points in which linear and cyclical temporalities merge, in which a ‘set direction’ and a repeated crossing meaningfully interplay. This resonates with Lefebvre’s observation that the two temporalities “exert a reciprocal action” (Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis* 18). It appears that this reciprocity is important to human life, as Sieroka elucidates:

A stable temporal orientation with cyclical and linear elements appears as existential for humans and their way of living. And it is questionable if such an orientation is present when the everyday [...] turns into a rut between office, gym and supermarket, in which days, months and years can hardly be told apart. (Sieroka 84; my trans.)

A crucial element that is neglected in this ‘rut’, which leads to temporal disorientation, is nature. Here the diaries in my study come into play, as they offer ways for reflecting on temporalities that provide a stable orientation in the world. As Williams does with Gilbert White, identifying in his journal “a proto-*rhythmanalysis*” (Williams 438; author’s emphasis), I read the Nature Writers in my study as *rhythmanalysts*. Their diaries enable insights into the interplay between the linear and the cyclical. While, as illustrated in the first section of this chapter, the literary form of the diary is directed towards the future, implying that it follows a linear approach, its cyclical aspects, its rhythms and repetitions, become apparent in the process of reading.

3. ESTHER WOOLFSON'S *FIELD NOTES FROM A HIDDEN CITY*

The value of the common and everyday is one of the central themes of Esther Woolfson's oeuvre, as she has shown in her earlier book, *Corvus*, which "stands as a serious corrective to the prevailing notion that only exotic and unfamiliar animals are worthy of attention or protection" (Laing, "What a Bird Brain"). Hence, she appeared to fellow writer Olivia Laing as "[a]n ideal candidate [...] for a larger take on urban wildness" (Laing, "Field Notes"). Woolfson accomplishes this take in her book *Field Notes From A Hidden City: An Urban Nature Diary*, which was "shortlisted for the Wainwright Prize and the Royal Society of Literature Ondaatje Prize" (Woolfson, "About") in 2014. The book was praised by critics for its "[i]ntensely poetic" (Madren) and "richly crafted" (Publishers Weekly) prose with which the author "bring[s] to our attention elements of the natural world often taken for granted" (Publishers Weekly). Though it bears the city in its title, *Field Notes* has been criticised for being "not even particularly urban", as what it describes "could be witnessed in any house and garden in country or town anywhere in the northern hemisphere" (Mabey, "Where the Wild"). Yet this critique actually is in favour of my argument that the diary offers points of connection for a broad Western readership, and not only for the "primarily metropolitan audience" (Cocker, "Death") that Cocker had identified as the target audience of Nature Writing in the 21st century. Also, while Woolfson "maintains a spirited sense of inquiry", she paints a powerful account of the "mood [...] of oncoming loss [...] and bafflement" (Laing, "Field Notes") that is characteristic for times of urgency.

Structure

Field Notes is set in the city of Aberdeen, where the author has been living for many years. The narrated time span comprises roughly a year, from 24th November 2010 to 2nd November 2011. As the entries are dated only with the day and month, the year is not obvious right away. Rather, it can be deduced from certain hints in the book, like the mentioning of the first anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon oil catastrophe. The missing specification of the year in the entry headlines could suggest that it might have been a year like any other, and that the events narrated in the diary might carry meaning beyond time. However, it was also a year of extraordinary events, as it entailed one of the most extreme winters in Scottish history: "The year had been one of superlatives – the lowest recorded temperatures, the heaviest snow, the wettest summer" (Woolfson, *FN* 3). The diary starts with the end of this very year, and with an exact clock time in the first sentence of the introduction: "It was almost four in the afternoon on one of the oddly quiet days of December" (3). This, also, is a specific placement

in time, albeit one that gestures to the familiar atmosphere of a winter day. So, right from the beginning, we find in the dating of the diary a polarity between universal and specific temporalities.

Specific, also, are the chapters into which Woolfson has divided her diary. Her table of contents presents the reader with the following sections: “Snow”, “Midwinter”, “Winter into Spring”, “Early Spring”, “Spring”, “Late Spring”, “Spring to Summer”, “Early Summer”, “Midsummer” and “Into Autumn”. Woolfson has not settled for a monthly order or even a simple seasonal one; hers is perceptibly more nuanced, probably stemming from and allowing for an appreciation of subtle changes in nature. It certainly also has to do with the fact that she lives in “a place where, like no other, one pays attention to the smaller changes of light and season, to solstice and equinox, the lengthening and the shortening of days” (27).

A straightforward association between calendar months and seasons is challenged by the structure of Woolfson’s diary. The sections do not adhere to the months, and some months stretch over several sections. They are also not of equal length or internal structure. The entries themselves vary greatly in length, ranging from a mere sentence to as much as twelve pages. The intervals between them vary just the same: there can be entries for several days in a row, but also larger gaps of more than a week. The number of entries for each month are not the same; while there are only three entries for February, April is granted eight entries dispersed over three sections.⁶ Overall, the structure of the diary has a fragmented quality.

However, there are also parts of it that read as a smoother whole, namely, a series of un-dated essays, which are inserted between the seasonal sections in uneven intervals. The “Midsummer” section even contains two essays, which are only separated by one single diary entry. Each of the essays is devoted to certain animals, including, in order of appearance, rats, spiders, pigeons, slugs, jackdaws, sparrows and squirrels. All of these are noticeably common British animals – except for the red squirrel – and they often dwell in cities. The essays can be seen as exemplary encapsulations of Woolfson’s agenda of valuing the ordinary and highlighting its complex facets, as I will outline below. As the essays have apparently not been published elsewhere, the diary has perhaps been used as a frame for publishing them. It can also be assumed that they have been written in the same year as the diary itself, hence it

⁶ The numerical quantification I employ in measuring the number and length of the diary entries could be read as a method of linear temporalities, according to what I have outlined in my theoretical chapters. Yet this method serves the analysis of the diary structures as it uncovers the “rhythms of repetition and variation” (Popkin 8) that emerge in reading a diary, that is, its cyclical rhythms. Furthermore, these rhythms allow insights into the type of diarist that the author embodies. My analytical approach here could thus be understood as a fruitful interplay of the linear and the cyclical on a methodological level.

seemed fitting to include them. They have likely been constructed from actual diary entries and only then rewritten into a smoother whole. There are also diary entries which show sketchy potential for similar essays, like a ten-page entry on gulls.

The essays disrupt the linearity that one might expect from both the narrated year and the diaristic writing process. They also sustain the notion that Woolfson's diary has been adapted to a readership that extends her own person. They include many pieces of information that one would not expect in a purely personal diary, such as scientific data, natural history or extensive quotes to illustrate points of argument. These aids for readers are not only found in the text itself, but also in the other parts that have been added at the end of the book: a Select Bibliography, Text Credits and an Index providing names of species, people, places and other phenomena. These typical ingredients of classical Nature Writing hint at the tradition in which Woolfson's diary can be placed.

Purpose

The fragmented quality of her diary hints at the type of diarist that Woolfson embodies: she can be placed in Lejeune's second category, belonging to "those who write, more or less regularly, when they need to" (Lejeune, *On Diary* 193). Her need for writing and the purpose of the diary are alluded to in the introduction placed before the actual entries. On the December afternoon mentioned, Woolfson finds a struggling pigeon fledgling in the snow and takes him⁷ home with her to recover. While she cares for the bird, the harshness of this particular winter lingers on her mind, and she reflects:

During the first snow, the quality of those strange, cold days seemed to require something of me. It was the necessity to record, to keep an impression of the time in some small way, a way beyond forgetting. Finding the bird only concentrated the feeling, and I knew if I should document our lives and time and place, I should do it now. As the bird watched me intently from his box, it felt as if it was the least I might do. (Woolfson, *FN* 8)

Woolfson's diary is meant as 'a way beyond forgetting', fulfilling the third function defined by Lejeune in his categorisation. It is used to "freeze time", to "build a memory out of paper, to create archives from lived experience, to accumulate traces, prevent forgetting, to give life the consistency and continuity it lacks" (Lejeune, *On Diary* 195). In this endeavour, the diarist

⁷ Throughout this study, I use the pronouns 'he/she' for other-than-human beings, which is mostly in line with how the authors of the studied diaries use them. With this decision, I recognise other-than-human beings as subjects with agency and personality, who would be unjustly objectified by the use of the word 'it'.

exhibits the mindset of a “collector” (195). The importance of this collection is emphasised by a quote from Loren Eiseley placed in the frontmatter of *Field Notes*. It is an extract from a poem in which he concludes: “we fall into an error if we do not keep our own true notebook of the way we came, how the sleet stung, or how a wandering bird cried at the window” (Eiseley in Woolfson, *FN* frontmatter). It is an error that Woolfson does not want to make. This, and the archivistic nature of her writing, will be illustrated in more detail throughout my analysis of her style and of the temporal themes in her book.

Field Notes also adheres to the second function defined by Lejeune, that of reflecting and analysing. Here, the diary is used “to ‘develop’ the image of what you have just lived through and to meditate upon it, and to examine the choices to be made” (Lejeune, *On Diary* 195). In Woolfson’s case, this reflection on behaviour and choices is extended from the author’s personal actions towards those of other people too. She frequently analyses and questions common attitudes towards nature. As she writes in her introduction, upon caring for the pigeon fledgling, she “began to think about wildness in relation to creatures who live in cities, about whether or not we consider them less wild than creatures living elsewhere, or think of them as somehow a lesser part of nature itself” (Woolfson, *FN* 5). This consideration includes both human and more-than-human beings. Woolfson contemplates “the value of any creature’s life and of the way in which we make judgements or calculate worth, of the complex gradations we apply to other species, the ones we use to approve or to condemn” (6). As indicated in its title, her diary makes a case for urban nature, casting cities as ‘wild’ spaces worth considering. The opposition between ‘the city’ and ‘the wild’ is a very common paradigm, one that “suggests that one set of moralities and inclinations is represented by what is urban while the rural, the ‘wild’, the non-urban, represents entirely another” (151).

This conception has led, for example, to the neglect of urban spaces in wildlife monitoring schemes (Woolfson, *FN* 149), leaving us ignorant of their natural potential. In his book *Writing a New Environmental Era*, ecocritic Ken Hiltner shows that studies on ecology and conservation have until recently been mostly conducted in areas without people, although three quarters of the ice-free landmass on Earth have been modified by humans (Hiltner 7). Hence, he points out: “if we are concerned about our global environment, we need to be as concerned for decidedly ‘unnatural’ places (like cities) as natural ones. In fact, in some cases arguably more concerned” (71). This concern is not at least due to the fact that in the 21st century, most people live in cities and suburbs. According to a UN report, in 2018 55% of the global population lived in urban areas, with the highest percentage of 82% in North America and 74% in Europe. The global percentage is projected to rise to 68% by 2050 (United

Nations). This means that for most people, their everyday environment is an urban one, a fact that ecocritical discourse must respond to.

Woolfson's diary does not only recognise this necessity for focusing more on urban nature, it also serves as a reflection on the value of the ordinary. The author realises that the relationship between her and the pigeon "felt both momentous and quotidian, the way most of life turns out to be" (Woolfson, *FN* 8). Her attitude towards the quotidian becomes clear in her description of the fledgling:

A wild bird but an ordinary one. I looked up the definition of 'ordinary' – *With no special or distinctive features, common, of ordinary rank, undistinguished, commonplace*. Who of us is any more or less? Whatever he was, this bird was beautiful. His new, fresh feathers were lavender and navy, shading to a fine line of black towards the tips of his wings, his eyes bright and watching. (6-7; author's emphasis).

We can take Woolfson's words here as a lesson in humility and an incentive to revalue the ordinary. Not only is the quotidian what we share with all other living beings – Woolfson's question in the quote above reminds us that no being ranks higher or lower in value – but it also holds rewarding beauty when we look closely at the details.

Interestingly, Woolfson has chosen to narrate the encounter with the pigeon fledgling in detail in the introduction, giving the justification and agenda of the book, but she only mentions the respective events briefly in the ensuing diary entries. We do learn that she found the pigeon on 11th December (33) and that he flies off on 22nd December (40), but these occurrences are only acknowledged by a brief paragraph each. While in the introduction it sounds as if finding the pigeon marks the start of her writing the diary, the first entry is dated 24th November, the day that brought the first snow of winter. This suggests that Woolfson has already been keeping a diary some time previously, and the pigeon encounter might have been her incentive for turning it into a publication.

Tradition and Style

In *Field Notes*, Woolfson aligns herself with the tradition of earlier naturalists, especially those who conducted phenology, "the study of the timing of recurring natural events" (89). She demonstrates that the study of such temporalities has had persisting significance throughout human history, not only for agricultural communities, but also for philosophers and scholars. By way of example, she lists Aristotle and Pliny the Elder, the 16th-century botanists Konrad Gessner and Ulisse Aldrovandi and 18th-century botanist Carl Linnaeus. For

each of the last three scholars, a paragraph with more information on their life and naturalistic achievement is provided. Thus, in the course of the respective entry, Woolfson offers a swift history of humankind's engagement with seasonal variation, from agricultural communities in China, Egypt and Mesopotamia over European scholars of various centuries up to the present day. After Linnaeus, she moves on to Gilbert White in the 18th century – even quoting a short passage from the “minutely observed and charming” (91) journal of this forebear of later English Nature Writing – and further to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Here she names people like the urban naturalists Richard and Alastair Fitter, who kept records over a span of 50 years, and T.H. Sparks, founder of the UK Phenology Network and “Britain's foremost contemporary phenologist” (92). Based on their long-term observations, both the Fitters and Sparks could show that the flowering of certain plants occurs significantly earlier than it used to. For example, Alastair Fitter concluded that “the average first flowering of 385 Oxfordshire plants [...] was happening 4.5 days earlier during the last decade of the twentieth century than in the years 1954 to 1989” (92). As we can glean from Woolfson's remarks at the beginning of her respective diary entry, she would like to make statements about the plants in her garden with equal precision. This wish and its temporal implications will be analysed further on in this chapter.

Apart from the phenologists introduced above, Woolfson also refers to a wealth of scientists and naturalists in her index and highlights some in her select bibliography, among them names such as Charles Darwin, Konrad Lorenz, Ernst Mayer, Gary Snyder and Annie Dillard. In the diary itself, she regularly includes quotes from other texts, which sometimes comprise as much as half a page. All of this shows that her diary can be considered part of a scientific conversation. Woolfson situates herself in relation to these scholars and becomes one of them, while at the same time she substantiates her observations and arguments with scientific evidence and data as well as other literature.

The influence of the natural historian tradition also becomes apparent in Woolfson's extensive use of scientific language. She frequently employs the Latin names of species when she introduces an animal, for example: “the bird peered from between my hands, a feral pigeon, a blue rock pigeon, *Columba livia*” (4; author's emphasis). Sometimes, she even uses the Latin denomination in lieu of the common name: “*Rattus norvegicus* has established a headquarters under the house” (63; author's emphasis).

In other instances, Woolfson presents scientific data and numbers, as in the following passage from an October entry about animal behaviour in autumn and winter: “In preparation for migration, birds' metabolism changes. They have to eat up to 30 per cent more than

usual”. (336) This is followed by two paragraphs in which she outlines whose brains and bodies grow – those of corvids and caching birds – and whose shrink – those of rodents, shrews and bats. To this end, technical terms and figures are provided: “their basal ganglia reduce by 29.8 per cent, their neocortex by 27.5 per cent” (337). Such data might read as overly precise or dry, but Woolfson manages to lighten the tone by injecting humour and by addressing readers directly through occasional questions. After stating how much the brain of a shrew shrinks for winter, she adds in brackets: “You may relinquish your more profound thoughts. Who needs them in winter, anyway? Hegel, anyone?” (337) Hegel serves here merely as an example of complex philosophical thought, the like of which can be abandoned to save physical energy.

In addition to the information on animal biology and physiology, Woolfson also employs a host of specific temporal adjectives: not only “the circadian, the 24-hour-cycle” (337-338), but also “the infradian, that once-in-28-days cycle of menstruation and tides” and “the ultradian, the one by which our heart beats” (338). In a different entry, she also writes of “hebdomadal” (171) occasions, referring to something that occurs every seven days. She thus equips her readers with an even more nuanced vocabulary for the cyclicity of our lives. It is not just one big cycle, but many cycles of varying sizes intersecting and chiming together.

Woolfson also adds more nouns to the dictionary of time: “*Zugunruhe*, that cosmic restlessness, the urge to migrate, and *Zeitgeber*, the external stimulus, most often light, that orders our internal clocks” (338; oe). She calls those two terms, which originate from the scientific study of animal migration, “stern Teutonic poetics” (338), thereby referring to the Germanic origin of the words and giving them an ancient ring, but also drawing attention to how deep they are inscribed in our instincts. In the same entry, she continues in that sombre tone by opening a linguistic reflection on Seasonal Affective Disorder, as she adds an extensive list of names for the phenomenon from different cultures, including “*kaamos*” (Finnish), “*somber*” (Dutch), “*finsternis*” (German), “*malinconia*” (Italian), “*skugga*” (Swedish), “*rudens depressija*” (Latvian and Lithuanian for “autumn depression”), “*Morbus Orcadiensis*” (Orkney and Shetland), “*perlerorneq*” (Inuit) – or “*depression hiemalis*”, “winter depression” (338) for them all together.

Considering that Woolfson is a studied philologist, her slightly imprecise treatment of foreign languages here is surprising; the German “*finsternis*”, for example, simply means intense darkness and implies no direct reference to Seasonal Affective Disorder. In this case, Woolfson seems to have forsaken scientific precision in the attempt to capture the phenomenon of winter gloom in words. Also, like the very precise scientific data she gives in

other instances, this list of names might exhaust the patience of the reader, and the author could be seen as exhibiting an overly scholarly, bookish air, something that is also part of the criticism by Mabey alluded to further down. On the other hand, an inspiring curiosity emerges from Woolfson's catalogue – a curiosity that she expresses herself in exclaiming “Such poetry of grim!” (338) – and her offering of so many terms fits the notion that the more words we have for the natural world, the better we can grasp it. Woolfson might be read as an archivist of words, as in her interpretation of the Chinese T'ang poet Du Fu: “I smell autumn from [his poem] but an autumn from the past, language as a reliquary, as the censer of which Du Fu writes, sending out the slow savours of time long gone” (339). We can consider that Woolfson also uses ‘language as a reliquary’, a repository for linguistic relics that carry surviving traces of naturalist knowledge, carry them through time, and thus offer connection points to the natural world in the now. This understanding of language is also in line with the archivistic, freeze-in-time function of the whole diary.

Woolfson's Personal Rhythms

In her diary, it becomes apparent that Woolfson's interests and background have influenced her relationship to time and nature, and her personal rhythms are shaped by both linear and cyclical temporalities. She gives indications of those in her entry for 28th September, where she writes about the beginning of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year:

I do it in the generally religiously unobservant way that notes ritual and time, that bows to the year that winds inside my head, only one single strand of the complex timelines of my life, one of the memories of outgrown lives that we all still carry with us, every pattern of the past, school terms and academic years, years of child-rearing and of work, the festivities and dates and occasions by which we mark our lives. (333-334)

This passage contains a number of human ways to mark time, all relevant to our individual experiences of it: religious and other festivities, school and university, family life. Rather than being defined by only one of these components, Woolfson's rhythms are woven from several ‘strands’, a metaphor that alludes to the complexity and interplay of different temporalities. In the following, I will trace a few of these strands, including Woolfson's growing-up shortly after the Second World War, her Jewish descent – which will lead us back to the circumstances of the above quote – and her education as a Sinologist.

Woolfson “was born a few years after the end of the war in Glasgow” (19), a city then feeling “bleak and blackened” and “perpetually dark” (19). Though it is much brighter and

cleaner today, when Woolfson visits, she is aware that “the past is still underlying the present as it always is, an indelible imprint of darkness” (19). However, she also recalls the lighter side of her childhood, which is referenced through a starling they kept at home, apparently her first pet and also the first bird species she came to know. Knowing this individual bird “increased [her] amazement” (55) at the flocks of starlings swirling over the city – flocks of birds that nowadays “are critically endangered in Britain” (56). One might infer from this endangerment that there is also a darkness underlying the future, a notion I will analyse further down in this chapter.

Apart from the wild pet starling, Woolfson’s childhood was apparently not much in touch with nature. Her interests and activities were influenced by her father, to whom *Field Notes* is dedicated, and who “had a romanticised attachment to the history of his time” (166), including a fascination for the United States, especially Chicago, and for “the literature and music of a more exciting age” (166). As the owner of a furniture shop, he also had a passion for good clothes, as well as for cars and flying. Indeed, Woolfson travelled a lot by plane as a child and her most-visited destinations were cities all over Europe.

The attachment to cities is, in fact, deeply tied into Woolfson’s family history. Her father’s family emigrated from Lithuania to Scotland around the end of the 19th century and “like virtually every other Jewish family both here and in the United States, settled in the city of first arrival” (167). For the emigrants, this would be the place where there was already an established community and where they found everything that their cultural and religious lives required. Settling in the established city community also answered the migrants’ “earnest desire for any small and welcome element of the familiar” (168). This phenomenon appears to have established the basis of a long-standing myth, namely that “to be Jewish (or Jewish and of European origin) is to be utterly urban” (164). Woolfson discusses this belief with her Jewish friends and family, who confirm the notion

that Jews in particular are, in some profound though inexplicable way, detached from the world of the countryside, exempt from the necessities and desires others seem to feel to take part in activities which will oblige us to engage with anything outdoors. (172)

However, Woolfson uncovers the temporal peculiarity of this myth, concluding that

it’s a matter of generation, and that the brief – in evolutionary terms anyway – history of Europe’s troubled relationship with its Jewish population has defined us, often wrongly, as

completely urban and that much of the perception, even our own, is based on observations, partial at best, of the history of the twentieth century. (165)

Prior to the First and Second World War, many Jews in Europe lived rural lives like any other group of people. Also, many of the migrants of the twentieth century came from the countryside, but as they arrived in their new country, it appeared safer to stay in the city. One reason for that was the already established emigrant communities; but the newcomers were also wary of the rules that might govern the foreign countryside, and, obliged to work and religious duties, had no spare time for excursions (169). Tellingly, Woolfson defines Judaism in its most orthodox form as an “all encompassing, total, every-minute-of-every-day, you’re-not-going-to-forget-it-even-for-a-second kind of religion” (168).

Woolfson compares the detached nature-relationship of Jews to that of African Americans, who are also often riddled by “fears of the outdoors” (170). The particular histories of both groups, histories full of violence and persecution, have led them to believe “that to be in the wilderness is a step backwards, a return to the primitive, and is against every lesson they have learned about progress and getting ahead” (170-171). In this notion, we can observe a linear conception of time: moving away from nature is considered the way towards the future, while being out in nature belongs to the past. Wilderness is associated with a past that needs to be shed, and progress can only be reached through a detachment from nature. As it is transmitted over generations, this conception even comes to seem natural, as can be read in Woolfson’s reflections on Jewish urbanity. However, Woolfson also shows us that it is rather a trick of time and memory, when she writes: “Immigration doesn’t make you new, it alters your view of the past” (169).

Despite the temporal peculiarities that appear to separate many Jewish people from nature, Woolfson does not suppress the fact that there have also been many renowned natural scientists of Jewish origin, and yet she observes: “it seems outdoors is more easily acceptable when it’s decently cloaked in the respectable, admirable cloak of academe” (173). In reading critiques on *Field Notes*, one gains the impression that there is a similar layer of academe in Woolfson’s own work. Mabey diagnoses her diary to be, in large parts, “a combination of fireside thoughts and textbook precis”, making it “as much armchair meditation as a collection of field notes” (Mabey, “Where the Wild”). Mabey, who positions himself in his review as an “‘edgeland’ [writer] who view[s] urban wildness as insurrectionary”⁸, misses

⁸ Mabey has emerged as such an ‘edgeland writer’ in his own seminal book, *The Unofficial Countryside* (1973), in which he documented wild nature at the fringes of urban areas.

more of the actual urban wilderness of Aberdeen, which he would seek in peregrines and neophytic lupins, aspects Woolfson “might have grasped [...] if she had ventured out of her study and into her home city more” (Mabey, “Where the Wild”). Instead, in Mabey’s opinion, her curiosity “too quickly scuttles off to the library”, leaving *Field Notes* “a tame book” (Mabey, “Where the Wild”).

This review might open up reflections on what kind of engagement with nature is considered right or wild enough. Woolfson’s diary certainly does contain the library knowledge detected by Mabey, but she makes no secret of that, and we also do not find her actively refraining from getting in touch with wild things, hence the tameness of her book remains debatable.⁹ Mabey’s criticism also evokes considerations of what kind of nature engagement constitutes time spent well – time outside, stalking a city for flowering riverbanks and circling birds of prey, surely has enormous value, but it can be meaningfully complemented by academic study. Also, for people as detached from nature as many urban folks, books might offer first doors for actual exploration. An awareness of the history of people’s relationships to the wild, as Woolfson has investigated it, can constitute a helpful signpost in this discussion.

In considering Woolfson’s own personal history, it is also relevant to note that she developed a close relationship to nature relatively late in life, only when she was an adult settled with husband and children and by chance given a couple of doves. Before that happenstance, as she elucidates in her first book, *Corvus*:

I knew nothing about birds. I could attach a name to a few, the most common, to fewer still a sound. I knew more about birds in literature than those surrounding me in every street and garden. My education had been partial, one-sided, left me with an odd, skewed, unlikely assemblage of knowledge, the perils of the academic degree. (Woolfson, *Corvus* 16)

Part of that assembled knowledge curiously contained the Chinese characters for a few bird species, symbols removed from the actual living creatures. Prior to becoming settled, Woolfson’s rhythms did not allow for a closer relationship to such. The travelling of her childhood continued into her adulthood: “For years I moved around between countries and

⁹ That Woolfson is far from squeamish can be read in an especially telling way in her essay on pigeons: When she joins a group for a bird walk, one of the participants complains about pigeons, especially their excrement. To this, Woolfson replies “There are worse things than bird shit” (Woolfson, *FN* 177). While uttered spontaneously, she becomes aware that this could be her motto, that it could be engraved on her coat of arms. These words, then, would “hint [...] at that laid-back, laissez-faire quality by which [she] would like to live [her] life” (178).

cities, a circumstance that prevented any thoughts of animal-keeping” (9). Her husband’s career as a doctor entailed “a cyclic routine of [moving every couple of years]” (9). This pattern might have laid some of the roots of Woolfson’s awareness of cyclicity that also becomes visible in her later engagement with animals, as will be analysed further down.

It was not only her “migratory” (10) existence that appeared to separate Woolfson from other creatures, but also her self-understanding of being “resolutely urban” (7). Nevertheless, there now speaks a great passion and insight for more-than-human beings from her books. It has been her life together with animals that has transformed her past attitudes completely. She makes this impressively clear in *Corvus*:

Of all of them, it has been the corvids [...] who have altered for ever my relationship to the rest of the world, altered my view of a hierarchy of form, intellect, ability; my concept of time. The world we share is broad, the differences between us negligible, illusory. That these relationships existed, or exist, surprises me no less [...], for nothing in my previous life, that now unimaginable birdless, pre-bird existence, presaged it. (7)

Woolfson might seem an unlikely Nature Writer, with her explicitly urban background, and her approach to nature not defined so much by the wild outside, but by close acquaintance with animals in her own home. While the second aspect appears indeed extraordinary, as not many people nowadays have the opportunity to keep such usually wild animals as crows and magpies in their house, her urbanity makes Woolfson relatable to an extensive group of readers from Western populations. Her life, as theirs, is perceptibly shaped by urban temporalities.

Despite this, Woolfson manages to look beyond such human rhythms, many of which have been illustrated in the above discussion of her family descent. Religion, for example, appears as an exclusively human concept. It has also been shown how history might, over generations, detach people from nature. However, Woolfson’s diary also contains a resolving of this detachment, a return, if one will, to the wild. At the end of her reflections on Jewish urbanity, set in the entry of 18th April on the festival of Passover, an entry that spans as much as twelve pages, human rhythms are connected back to the rhythms of more-than-human nature:

The moon is full as it always is on this first night of Passover, almost golden in the streaked lapis sky, and as I close the door behind the departing sage [Elijah the prophet], I know that the swifts will be back soon. (Woolfson, *FN* 174)

We can read from this note that Woolfson's present life is not predicated solely by past and religion, but also by the phases of the moon and the migration of birds, both powerful markers of cyclical time.

The natural time markers hinted at here will be discussed further down in this chapter. At this point, it is worthwhile to consider another strand of time that is woven into Woolfson's background: her education as a sinologist. Chinese and other East Asian philosophies offer a notable contrast to the linear temporalities inherent in Western monotheistic religions like Judaism. Towards the beginning of her diary, Woolfson revisits a book on Taoism, recalling "what [she] learned long ago" (31) during her time at university. She acknowledges that, according to Taoism, there is "polarity and balance, the existence of both in all things, ideas so much at variance with Western ideas of opposition and opposites, conflict and vanquishing" (31-32).

This contrast is also alluded to in an essay by Birgit Capelle on the autobiographical writings of Thoreau, one of the nature diarists most influential on later writers. Capelle argues that New England Transcendentalists such as Thoreau understood time, in the same way as East Asian philosophers, as "an intrinsic quality of Being as it dynamically and creatively happens and evolves" (Capelle 100) and "the world as an essentially temporal living reality that is marked by spontaneity [...] and multi-directional change" (100). Both philosophies exhibit "*non*-linear and *non*-abstract notions of time" (102; author's emphasis), and they perceive reality "as a cyclically recursive *poetic* happening" (105; author's emphasis).

Woolfson recognises what it takes to notice these cyclical temporalities when she considers the "central Taoist principle of '*wu wei*', translated and explained variously as 'masterly inactivity', 'not forcing', 'knowing when not to act'" (Woolfson, *FN* 32; author's emphasis). Insightful translations of the principle provided by Capelle also include "'non-action', 'doing by not doing', 'taking no unnatural action', 'not acting against the natural course of events'" (Capelle 103). As such, *wu wei* can be related to at least two notions formulated in 21st-century ecocritical discourse, namely, Kathleen Jamie's "serious noticing" (Jamie qtd. in Lieb) and Bayo Akomolafe's "slowing down in urgent times" (Akomolafe). While the former suggests that there should be a moment of serious attention before we do anything at all, be it writing, painting, or doing science – hence Jamie asks us "Why don't we just take an hour to look?" (Jamie qtd. in Lieb) –, the latter also recognises slowing down as "a function of presence" (Akomolafe) and an act that requires us "to witness, to 'with-ness';

to be with land, and community, and ancestor, and progeny, and children in a way that isn't instrumental" (Akomolafe).

Taoism also emphasises the importance of the now. In *Walden*, Thoreau tells the story of the Artist of Kouroo, who, by concentrating on crafting the perfect staff, got into the flow of the never-ending now. "As a consequence, he loses his sense of linear, chronological time and stays unaffected by its painful implications as, for instance, the process of aging" (Capelle 101). The artist thus "enters into a trans-temporal state of mind" (101). In reading her Taoist book, Woolfson is also reminded that 'now' is the only time, a notion that she understands as a suggestion for "putting aside for the moment all opinion, all knowledge except in the interpretation and acknowledgement of sensation, [...] to listen and see and breathe in a state without word or thought" (Woolfson, *FN* 32). While Thoreau's artist seems to have escaped such bodily processes as ageing through his focus on the now, we can also consider that it is exactly in the now that we are most connected to our bodies. When we concentrate only on sensation, as Woolfson suggests, and on simply focusing on our senses and our breath, the body becomes the space of the now and allows us to be present in urgent times.

3.1 Time Markers

Seasons and 'Natural' Time

As has been demonstrated in the description of her diary's structure, Woolfson demonstrates an acute awareness for the seasons, their nuances and their turning points. She usually keeps record of those, including "the year's midnight" (40) of the winter solstice on 21st December – which in the year of record also features a lunar eclipse – and the "ending of the first phase of winter" (48) on 18th January. She even pins exact times to these observations: "The day of Summer Solstice. The moment itself is at sixteen minutes past three on a damp Tuesday afternoon" (236). Here, she also makes "an attempt to be latitude-neutral, [remembering] that it's the day of the Winter Solstice in the Southern Hemisphere" (236). This can be considered a nod to the fact that seasonal cycles are also marked by place-specificity.

While winter solstice and summer solstice would be noticeable dates for most people, Woolfson shows even more detailed knowledge of seasonal occurrences, such as the day of Imbolc on 1st February, "the Celtic celebration of the lengthening of days, the midpoint between the Winter Solstice and the vernal equinox" (60). Both in the legend of St Bridget and for Woolfson personally, this date is connected to the arrival of the oystercatchers, back from their wintering grounds in the south. As such, it is not so much marked by weather

events but animal migration. How animals mark time for Woolfson will be seen later in this chapter in detail; here the point is to demonstrate her particularity about seasonal events.

There is a weather phenomenon that also warrants particular attention from Woolfson: snow. Snow is the natural marker of time that frames the whole narrative. The first actual diary entry after her introduction starts with “the first snow of winter” (13) on 24th November, and the last entry on 2nd November of the following year contains a reminder of this event: “Almost a year since the beginning of the snow” (343). In fact, this last sentence could have been placed at the beginning of the book as well. The impact of snow on Woolfson’s narrative framing might be explained by the weather events of the opening year, which, as has been mentioned in the above, has been an extreme one. The heavy snow “didn’t melt fully until late April and it snowed again in June” (13). The extraordinary winter Woolfson here refers to is presumably the one of 2010/2011, one of Scotland’s coldest winters on record (Kennouche). It appears to have been a year that markedly disrupted the common sense of seasonal time:

The year’s snow and rain foreshortened time, seemed to press it into less of a measure than it should take, into an altered, flattened dimension. The seasons themselves felt bent into unrecognisable shapes, lopped or stretched, lasting only days, flaring then dying back. (Woolfson, *FN* 14)

While seasons and weather events might be considered as natural markers of time, it here becomes apparent that they are also human constructs. Certain types of weather are used as an orientation to mark certain seasons on the calendar: cold and snow is winter, heat and sun is summer. If the weather and the calendar do not match, however, humans lose their orientation in a time frame that they usually consider as natural. Natural events are then perceived as distorting time, foreshortening, flattening and bending it.

This divergence between calendar-seasons and actual weather events is apparent throughout Woolfson’s entire diary. She acknowledges that the phases of the year are not always as clear-cut as suggested by her table of contents and that there remains space for ambiguity:

It’s been spring for a few weeks, if April and May constitute spring, if some fleeting, unexpected sunshine does, or even the sound of newly returned swifts screaming over the garden. [...] Spring has been as evanescent as it often is on this island of wind and rain clouds and indeterminate seasons. (203)

The lighter, warmer times seem harder to grasp in Aberdeen. Spring is barely there and summer ends early. On 10th August, Woolfson notes

the inexorable path from solstice to equinox has begun earlier than usual with the experience of waking to cloud and rain and almost darkness, wondering for a moment where exactly in the year we are. There's a sense of unease about a season incomplete or unexpected, a necessary adjustment of expectations and of one's place in the scheme of time. (311)

The expectations that have to be adjusted here also operate on a level of linear temporality. While it might be admitted that the seasons are cyclical, recurring every year, the progression between the individual seasons in the temperate regions is mostly perceived as linear: spring is expected to follow winter, summer is expected to follow spring, and so on. Hence it could even be argued that in the disruption of seasonal expectations, both linear and cyclical conceptions of time are challenged.

Clocks and 'Capitalist' Time

How the measures used by humans for temporal orientation could be questioned is highlighted in even greater detail by Woolfson's treatment of another marker of time. Taking another look at the beginning of the diary, it becomes clear that it does not start conventionally in January, but in November. As becomes apparent in the last few entries, the diary closes with the change of clocks, which occurred late in the year Woolfson writes about: "Even the change in clocks will be late this year. The darkness will have already caught up with time" (335). In addition to the snow, the clock thus lends itself as the second frame to the narrative. The reader is taken from clock change to clock change, from November to November. Initially, Woolfson reflects that clock time is an artificial order placed on the world:

We think that, as a species, *Homo sapiens* has moved beyond the immediacy of seasons. We alter clocks, play with time and light, forgetting that it is a mere adjustment, that both are within the workings of the larger world, both fixed and finite, ultimately unalterable. (335; author's emphasis)

Here, she chimes with Angelika Krebs who writes that we use clocks and calendars to place an artificial grid on the world to order it, instead of relating to the world's inherent order (Krebs 120). Time and light are inherent to "the workings of the larger world, both fixed and

finite” (Woolfson, *FN* 335) and as such cannot be altered by humans. That we still try to do so by changing the clocks can be read as symptomatic of the human relationship to natural time.

While Woolfson does admit to the artificiality of clock time, her entries on it also contain a further set of contradictions. She writes:

I prefer winter and welcome the clocks changing, the feeling of regaining that snatched and stolen time. My hour is precious and given back to me late this year [...] I'll savour the atavistic pleasure of moving very slightly back into the past, or regaining time, being given the gift of an hour, and darkness. (341)

In this passage, she uses a remarkable set of time metaphors: it is ‘precious’, it can be ‘snatched and stolen’ or ‘given back as a gift’. In this way, time is read as a material resource, similar to money. Sieroka demonstrates how such a conception could be problematic. While there are contexts in which time and money could be considered equivalent, for example when relating to working hours and hourly wages, Sieroka cautions us against mapping this equation one-to-one onto other temporal contexts. Reading time only as a material resource must be considered as a form of reductionism (Sieroka 101).

In line with this, I argue that a reading of time as a material resource is not only reductionist but also linear and capitalist, as it speaks to the high value that is assigned to fungible resources in capitalist systems. In such systems, one must take care not only to protect one’s ‘precious’ time against being ‘snatched and stolen’ but also to use it productively in order not to waste it. In another entry, Woolfson herself acknowledges that “[e]verything in our way of life is predicated on the idea of the necessity for progress and on what may be produced” (Woolfson, *FN* 235). Sieroka also highlights that the problems connected to metaphorizing time as money and material resource have less to do with time itself and more with what one would have done or liked to do in a certain time (Sieroka 101). Considering this, it can be wondered what Woolfson would have liked to do in the time that she considered ‘stolen’, the time that seemed lost to her.

Marking Lost Time

The sense of losing time reflected in the above is something that underpins Woolfson’s whole narrative. As Olivia Laing remarks, there lingers “a mood of oncoming loss” (Laing, “Field Notes”) throughout the diary. Although Woolfson claims that she savours the darkness, her lengthy meditation on Seasonal Affective Disorder, just shortly before the passage with the stolen time, carries less relish. As mentioned above, she lists a considerable number of terms

for this disorder – also simply known as winter depression – from different languages, compiling a “poetry of grim” (Woolfson, *FN* 338), to conclude that all these words entail the notion of

obscurity, or obscuring of oneself, the overshadowing of optimism or a sense of future, an ontological disappearance into the vast, incalculable maw of winter darkness, into the chill that is the negation of life, that echo and shadow of the darkness of death. (339)

This description of a common seasonal malady could also be read as a larger metaphor in the light – or gloom – of environmental crisis, where an ‘overshadowing’ of the future, ‘an ontological disappearance’ and an ‘echo and shadow [...] of death’ become perceptible throughout the whole year, not tethered to a certain period on the calendar. In a June entry (230-233), Woolfson uses her diary to reflect on data concerning climate change and rising levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere as well as the alleged epochal shift from the Holocene to the Anthropocene. Her local one-year journal thus also connects to larger scales, both spatially and temporally.

The feeling of time unhinged is especially visible in Woolfson’s repeated reflections on phenology. She comes to recognise the potential of this field of study in a way that resonates with Michelle Bastian’s suggestion to explore phenology as “a novel and fascinating avenue for thinking about the role of time in multispecies efforts to recuperate, repair and transform in a time of climate change” (Bastian, “Engaging”). Woolfson’s June entry that features the collection of climate change data opens with a personal anecdote. A Latvian friend of Woolfson has just told her that the cherries in her home country have ripened unusually early, musing “What’s happening?” (Woolfson, *FN* 230) Woolfson picks up this question:

What is happening? Again, I regret my failure to record natural events, first arrivals, final sightings, migrations, first falls of snow and frequency of rain. I didn’t because I wasn’t far-sighted enough or sufficiently aware of the fragility of everything around me. Perhaps I should have known that the year we moved here was significant, possibly the final time that the atmosphere of earth would be as it was, possibly at a moment beyond recall, when the balance of gases in the atmosphere would pass beyond the limits of their safety. (230)

Woolfson’s perceived ‘failure’ as a phenologist is already present earlier in her diary – hence the ‘again’ in the June entry. As she notices her garden hellebores blooming in March –

strangely unrelated to the dates implied in their common names, Christmas Rose and Lenten Rose – she ponders:

I can't remember if they always flowered at the same time but would know if I had noted dates and flowering times, and all the other significant moments in the natural life of the city and the garden, as people have done for the entire span of Man's life on earth. (89)

She wishes she had “inscribed everything [...] on oracle bones” (89) as the Chinese did 4,000 years ago in the Shang Dynasty or kept something like the “‘the Small Calendar of Xia’, a month-by-month commentary on the weather, plants, animals and stars of the Western Han Dynasty” (89) or employed any of the other recording systems used by agricultural communities all over the world for thousands of years. Now, Woolfson is not a farmer in a previous age but a city dweller with a garden in the 21st century, and one might ask how that changes which moments are considered ‘significant’. What might have been significant for a Shang Chinese farmer, such as “rainfalls and millet harvests” (89), shifts in relevance in the world that Woolfson and her readers inhabit.

Nevertheless, looking at Chinese traditions, one might glean possible answers to the question of significance. When Woolfson, in a December entry at the beginning of her book, reflects on the philosophy of Taoism, with its teachings of polarity and inaction, she becomes

far from sure [...] what significance there might be in snow, floods, rain. There's no way of knowing if one year's cataclysms of climate might be related, or even portentous but the words I read speak of wholeness and a different way of living, of perceiving the world and our actions in it. I don't know if even thinking about it is escape, or hope where there is none, or if trying to look equably at the world is doing the only thing one can. (32)

Despite this Taoist inspiration to view life as cyclical, Woolfson's sense of hope dissolves during the course of the year she is writing in, and she turns towards other notions of temporality. She also attaches significance to certain moments and aspects: as we can see in the June entry indicated above, it is the quality of the atmosphere that is imbued with importance.

Woolfson considers that the year of their move to Aberdeen might have been decisive, “possibly the final time that the atmosphere of earth would be as it was” (230). The phrase ‘the final time’ alludes to a point of no return, “a moment beyond recall” (230), as Woolfson calls it. The concept of such a moment signifies a linear conception of time. If a point is

passed on a line, one can no longer return to it – as opposed to a point on a cycle. We can also read from Woolfson’s words the desire to know when that point has come or been passed. In looking at a photo of her daughter in the garden, shortly after they moved to the property, Woolfson finds “nothing in it that could serve as an indication or a warning” (230). Despite their significance, changes in the atmosphere happen invisibly, unperceptively. They defy the human wish for a warning, the search for a definite marker in a linear time frame.

Woolfson tries to recall the exact moment in which she first became aware of significant changes, but can only phrase it as a question: “Had we recognised the moment when we might have done things differently – the minute, the year, the decade – what might we, as individuals, have done?” (234) Here, again, is the wish to pinpoint time, right down to the minute, and the wish to have been “far-sighted enough or sufficiently aware of the fragility of everything around” (230). In the passages described here, the impression of doom and finality overwhelms the narrative. Olivia Laing also encapsulates this process well in her review of *Field Notes*:

Over the course of a year, [Woolfson’s] sense that something has gone awry intensifies. It's too wet; the winter's untimely and summer barely lasts a week. Is this androgenic climate change, Woolfson wonders, and her growing anxiety infuses the book with a kind of hyper-attentive urgency, a desire to record exactly ‘the lives and time and place’ among which she finds herself. (Laing, “Field Notes”)

In the same light, I also understand Woolfson’s urgent wish to record natural events as a reaction against the sense of loss, against the sense of losing time. The way in which she records also could redeem her self-attested ‘failure’ and offer inspiration and hope in our times of urgency, as I will illustrate in the following.

3.2 Rehabilitating Rhythms

The Cyclicity of Bodies

There are things that can be done to offset the feeling of losing time, and these are present throughout *Field Notes*. As highlighted in my theoretical considerations, cyclicity can help us counter evanescence and reinstall the faith that time always goes on. Simultaneously, cyclicity connects us back to our bodies. In fact, not only to our human bodies, but those of all other living beings with whom we share natural rhythms. We find this rehabilitation of the bodily also in Woolfson, when she reminds us: “we’re all on the move. In every way, we are.

We change, all of us, human, bird, animal; externally, internally, in concert, in rhythm” (Woolfson, *FN* 336).

She here relates to the strategies that all living beings resort to when winter approaches. Essentially, it comes down to only three options: “migration, dormancy, or toughing it out” (335). That this recommendation stems from a US guide on northern animals and birds is secondary to Woolfson – after all, “[u]seful advice is useful advice” (335). Here, her witty pragmatism and dry humour comes to the fore. In drawing conclusions that might at first glance seem surprising, she points us to the core of matters:

We’re not as different as we think we are – if we don’t actually enter a state of torpor, the tug is there from desire, negation, reluctance to face the winter. There’s nothing spiritual, nothing mystical, unexplained, supranormal in the knowledge: we are one with everything else on this vast earth that sleeps and wakens as the course of the seasons makes it progress. (337)

Woolfson reassures us of the commonness of our seasonal inclinations. There is no need for extraordinary explanations for ordinary phenomena. It rather has to be acknowledged how ordinary and thus how natural they are. These inclinations are also what we have in common with the other living beings on earth. As humans, we are equally susceptible to the seasons – although, in the seemingly unnatural repetition of capitalist systems, this might only come to the fore as seasonal depression.¹⁰ Our seasonal susceptibility unites us with all of life.

This connection is also reinforced by the language that Woolfson uses in the respective passage. By employing pronouns such as ‘we’, ‘our’ and ‘us’, she includes all animals, both human and other-than-human, in her statements, dissolving our perceived borders. Furthermore, there is a distinct rhythm in her syntax:

We change, all of us, human, bird, animal; externally, internally, in concert, in rhythm, knowingly or unknowingly with our surroundings, our moods and inclinations. Our clothes, fur, feathers, metabolism change [...]. If we don’t have the urge to stay, to hide, to sleep, close in ourselves, we may experience the overpowering, irresistible urge to go, to fly, to embark

¹⁰ At the end of her reflections on Seasonal Affective Disorder, Woolfson introduces, in a bracketed paragraph, a related affliction: “SAM – Sunday Afternoon Malady – the thought of Monday and another week” (Woolfson, *FN* 339). A week that induces such disheartening moods is very likely a working week and thus tied to capitalist, linear time conceptions. As such, the malady might also stem from the inking that such capitalistically appropriated rhythms infer with our natural rhythms. Where, after all, would we find a reason for a five-day-working week with nine-to-five jobs in nature?

upon our annual, or biennial escape, for warmth or food [...]. We grow or we shrink. We store up for the winter, newly feathered or newly fattened. (336)

This passage in particular is marked by a wealth of parallelisms and anaphora: ‘to stay, to hide, to sleep, close in’; ‘to go, to fly, to embark upon’; ‘We grow or we shrink’; ‘newly feathered or newly fattened’. The many verbs all refer to physical, bodily actions. Both the structure and vocabulary thus indicate movement and rhythm. Simply by reading these sentences, one can feel the pull of the seasons. It is all happening ‘externally, internally, in concert, in rhythm’. There also is some of the urgency attested by Laing in the rhythm of Woolfson’s language, although here it is a uniting urgency, which springs from natural cycles. In following these cycles, we are not losing time, but synchronising with its natural, bodily rhythms.

Animal Rhythms: Home and Garden

In her records, Woolfson also synchronises her own rhythms with those of certain animals. Throughout her diary, these appear repeatedly or are granted especially detailed and long descriptions. They shape Woolfson’s sense of time and in this way demonstrate the importance of natural temporalities. It is also remarkable that most of these animals are relatively common: corvids, pigeons, gulls. That there is more to them than their stereotyped ordinariness becomes clear from Woolfson’s devoted and repeated attention. As this can be taken as one of the lessons to be drawn from *Field Notes*, it is worthwhile to illustrate these animal rhythms in the following.

In her daily life, Woolfson is nearly always surrounded by animals. This starts right in her home, as for large parts of her life, she has kept numerous pets. At the time of writing, her house mates include Ziki the crow, Chicken the rook and Bardie the cockatiel. The last two have been living in the house “almost as long as we [Woolfson’s family] have” (28), which is about two decades. As they are part of the family, it comes natural to Woolfson to record their birthdays – such as Ziki’s fourth on 10th August (312) – and also their deaths. On 1st May, she writes about Bardie, who used to belong to one of her daughters:

The first bird we ever got has died. He was 22 but looked remarkably little changed from the day we bought him when he was 11 weeks old. Birds have that advantage over us – it’s difficult, if not impossible, to tell their age. [...] Birds live for a long time, and their longevity increases the potential sorrow of this unique personal relationship. Parrots can share an entire lifetime; rooks a span that covers decades. (195-196)

This passage indicates that birds might live in temporalities that are inaccessible to humans, who find it hard to tell their age, and that, hence, it is impossible to impose human measurements on everything in nature. Yet Woolfson also finds shared temporalities with the cockatiel, as she dwells on the relationship that she had with him:

I evaluate his life. He was my daughters' childhoods. He was my lesson, a beginning, the first small, brilliant aperture into the vast place beyond humanity. When I bury him in the garden, it's with the sadness for the passing of an ancient. (197)

Some strands of Woolfson's personal rhythms have been woven in accordance with the birds who have lived with her, and as she identifies the cockatiel with an 'ancient', she recognises him as a teacher in more-than-human temporalities. Further on in her diary, as the moulting season comes to a close for Chicken the rook, Woolfson reflects again on the temporal peculiarities of birds:

Birds, I say to myself, are like this: unfixed, movable, imperceptibly altering moment by moment, even in such ways as volume, size and weight, and it is our own perceptions which make us interpret, one way or the other. I don't want to think that she might be lighter through age. [...] I don't know if I'm grateful that birds appear not to show, as humans do, the effects of age. (325-326)

In their apparent agelessness, birds seem to stay unaffected by time just like Thoreau's Artist of Kouroo, and in this way defy human conceptions of linear time. On the other hand, their rhythms imprint a cyclicity upon the life of their human contemporaries, thus forging close relationships.

The rhythms of the animals in Woolfson's house are, in turn, synchronised with those of the animals outside. Chicken has moulted at the same time as the corvids in the city (325). The interplay between her house rook and the wild birds outside leads to another marked example of how animal rhythms insert themselves into Woolfson's perception. In spring, nesting time begins, and that entails repetitive actions. Starting on 5th April, Woolfson reports of two such exemplary phenomena in parallel. The first one is a great tit, flying repeatedly against her study window, having done so already the days previous to the first written note. Woolfson "watche[s] him all one afternoon as [she] work[s] outside" (143). She notices the details of his flight and attack, his small size and slight weight contrasting with the

forcefulness and persistence of his actions. She is also aware that his behaviour is fuelled by the territorial instinct to protect his nearby nest from the “enemy in the window” (143), his own reflection that he is mistaking for a rival.¹¹ In her next entry, for 7th April, Woolfson muses further about this, as “[a]gain and again over the days of nesting and breeding the great tit is here, all day, throwing himself against the window” (144). She ponders: “his effort seems vast and I wonder what I can do to help him” (145). The most obvious step, covering up the attacked window to dissolve the reflection, would not necessarily be a solution, as has been shown in scientific studies: some birds just move over to other windows of a house or even keep assailing covered windows (146).

Woolfson uses the recording of the great tit’s repetitive actions to open a larger reflection on animal intelligence, urban challenges and the relationship between humans and other-than-human nature. Although the bird cannot recognise his own reflection – an inability he has in common with most species on earth¹² – the fact that he would keep attacking a covered window leads one to wonder, as Woolfson does, if he is “demonstrating ‘object permanence’, the ability to understand that objects remain even if one can’t see them” (145). While there might still be a lot to learn about the reasoning of birds such as this individual garden tit, it seems clear that: “He’s fulfilling a role, and even if it has been distorted by the human invention of glass, it appears more distraction than harm” (146).

Here we find a striking demonstration of how humans interfere with animal rhythms in a negative way. We exhibit a “historic habit of building cities, places full of glass and light, in the middle of their migration paths” (146). Windows are not the only urban challenge that animals are confronted with: “Light pollution affects birds, altering the time of their singing, their egg-laying and breeding behaviour” (148). These two examples illuminate how new inventions lead to shifts in ancient temporalities. Woolfson also reflects on this process of interfering:

Looking at this small bird, I wonder how long he has been here and what has affected his life since the great avian expansion of the Cretaceous period, how he fared during the ferocious egg-collecting and feather-wearing frenzy of the nineteenth century, the pesticides storms of the post-war years and now, the factors affecting his life about which we don’t even know.
(149)

¹¹ This behaviour is not unusual in suburban garden birds; it is usually not fatal and subsides once the breeding season is over (Mass Audobon).

¹² Of the species tested until the point of Woolfson’s writing, only “humans, elephants, a few of the higher primates and magpies” (Woolfson, *FN* 145) have recognised their own reflection.

In this passage, an individual animal – a great tit in a Scottish 21st-century garden – is used as a representative of his whole species, even his whole class, as it has evolved over space and time. Woolfson’s view here could be used as an example for thinking about the complex temporalities of animals, as ecocritical scholar Thom van Dooren does a few years later in his book *Flight Ways*, in which he tells “lively stories at the edge of extinction” (van Dooren 1), visiting such highly endangered species as albatrosses and whooping cranes. The great tit is much further from extinction than these birds, but Woolfson also writes in a context of loss, as illustrated above. In such a context, van Dooren prompts us to see species as “flight ways”, as

evolving ‘ways of life’ that are shared, produced, and nurtured in the world through the work of successive generations of living beings. Thinking in this way requires us to work across entirely different temporal horizons: to think about species in a way that acknowledges that they are vast evolutionary lineages stretched across millions of years, while not losing sight of the fleeting and fragile individual birds whose lives and labors both constitute and enable the continuity of this larger species. (22)

In her diary entry, Woolfson does consider the tit’s evolutionary lineage stretching as far back as the Cretaceous period, 145 million to 66 million years ago. She also factors in how much more recent human inclinations and inventions, such as egg-collecting, feather-wearing and pesticide-spraying, have affected these ancient lineages. At the same time, she keeps a keen eye on the individual bird in her garden, who could indeed be characterised as ‘fleeting and fragile’, while his unwavering ‘labor’, that is, the window-attacking, follows the instinct to protect his brood and thus ‘enable[s] the continuity’ of his species. Woolfson explicates here what Farrier phrases, based on van Dooren: “To see any particular animal is also to witness the *times* that animal ‘ties together’ along its flight way” (Farrier, *Anthropocene* 12; author’s emphasis).

Furthermore, Woolfson’s account does not only connect the past and present of an individual species, but it also illustrates the interwoven temporalities of several different species. As van Dooren highlights, the recognition of species as ‘flight ways’ must also include a consideration of their entanglement in multispecies communities and parallel temporalities (van Dooren 41-42). In Woolfson’s entry for 15th April, the great tit is brought into contact with the suffering of sea birds. Over the two pages at the beginning of the entry, Woolfson recalls the Deepwater Horizon oil catastrophe of 2010 – one year before the time of writing – that wreaked havoc over American birds right during their breeding season. Added

to this sombre memory, however, is also, a few blank lines later, another note on the great tit: “The week is turning into a fortnight. Every day I hear the sound of the bird at the window as I come downstairs in the early morning.” (Woolfson, *FN* 160; author’s emphasis). It is noteworthy here that Woolfson no longer refers to the great tit using his species name, but only calls him ‘the bird’, as she has also done in the previous entry for 10th April (157). This individual bird has become so familiar through his repetitive actions that it is clear also to the reader who is meant. His persistent presence is even honoured with an illustration, accompanying the start of a new chapter, “Late Spring”, on the page opposite the 15th-April-entry.

The great tit is not only connected to dead birds – his own species ancestors as well as the victims of the oil catastrophe –, but also with a living “knot [in] time” (van Dooren 29) much closer to home. While he is attacking the window outside to defend his nest, Chicken the rook inside the house begins her annual nesting ritual underneath the kitchen table, tearing newspaper apart and displaying noisily all the while. Even though she is without a partner, she lays an egg as well (Woolfson, *FN* 143-144). During the time of the great tit’s flinging, Woolfson also repeatedly reports on Chicken’s nesting activities. On 10th April, both the rook and the great tit are mentioned in the same paragraph, having Woolfson wonder “at the patience, the persistence of the behaviour, the tedium of sitting on eggs” (157). On 18th April, during Passover festivities, Chicken is still in the nest underneath the kitchen table (164). The next mention of the two birds occurs only about thirty pages later, when Chicken finishes nesting on 26th April. At the same time, Woolfson asks herself “if the great tit will stop his window-tapping soon” (195). He does indeed, on 3rd May. After almost a month, Woolfson had got “used” (198) to him and now “miss[es] his clicking” (198). While she pays special attention to each recurring breeding season, following its cycles, the flight path of this individual great tit has stood out in the year of writing, drawing through spring like a common thread, a golden line, a way of orientation in time.

Animal Rhythms: Out in the City

While she might miss this particular great tit, Woolfson can rely on other birds to guide her temporal orientation. With the end of spring, one might consider the nesting season as over, but we return to the topic in August:

This is gull season, even more than the other seasons in this sea-edge town [...]. All year round, gulls and their young are everywhere [...]. The sight and sound of them are as much a

part of the place as the stone or air but now is the culmination of the months of gull-preparation for nesting, egg-laying and hatching, months during which there have been calls from rooftops, [...] weeks when the fledglings were being fed in the nest. (314)

At this time of summer, gull fledglings can be seen all around Aberdeen, on school playgrounds, on pavements and roads. One might think that “August seems late in the year to see these young birds but gulls take time over the business of breeding, from early spring when they begin the finding, or re-finding, of their mates” (318). Woolfson dedicates the whole nine-page entry for 11th August – that is, one of her longest entries – to gulls, signifying the importance of their presence in town and also to her personal sense of place and time:

I’m glad of the sound of gulls now that the swifts are leaving, taking the essence and savour of summer with them. The oystercatchers have gone too although I still listen for them every evening at the moment when there should be that high and joyous calling. (320)

Just as the shrieking of the swifts and the piping of the oystercatchers, the coarse calls of the gulls have something reliable to Woolfson: “I always know I’ll hear them here [at an abandoned garden on the way home] because this is the same gull-nesting site that was described in a book about the wildlife of the city published 30 years ago” (321). Despite all the changes happening in the city and human life, these gulls have maintained their position, keeping faithfully to their familiar sites.

An even more familiar and faithful presence than the gulls are, in Woolfson’s diary, common pigeons of the species *Columba livia*. She considers them essential to the city – not only to Aberdeen, but any city. She can hardly imagine the place without them, as she has come to know the pigeons of her home town individually:

the pigeon family behind the plastic sign of a newsagent in Union Street [...], the ones I see nesting in the skylights of the vennels near Castlegate, the ones who stand proprietorially in the glassless windows of an abandoned warehouse, their lives and presence another of the markings of the day and year. (181)

As such markers of time, pigeons occur repeatedly throughout the diary, which even starts with Woolfson finding a pigeon fledgling in the snow. In the introduction, she characterises this bird as

future street-dweller, serial pavement-picker, underfoot obstacle, as familiar and ubiquitous as ourselves, one of the latest generation of the birds who resolutely populate the cities of the world, a parallel presence to our own, knowing, able, urban survivors, accepted and decried in varying measures. (4)

As can be read from this quote, the flight ways of humans and common pigeons have developed in parallel, both temporally and spatially, having us evolve in a multispecies community. Yet their commonness has rendered the various dimensions of this entanglement largely unnoticed: “our relationship with them seems changed by proximity, diminished by the very fact of their being here among us” (6). To remind us of the temporalities we share with pigeons, Woolfson devotes a whole essay chapter to the species, called “Angels in the Streets”. She illustrates that these birds have been “accompanying us closely through historical and mythological time” (181), fulfilling

many roles in our lives over the centuries as providers of both food and fertiliser or as vital messengers sent aloft from sieges, over trenches and battlefields [...]. They have provided for us the embodiment in avian form [...] of the Holy Spirit [as well as] a source of pleasure in their appearance, in their ability to fly at speed and to return, and in the calm fascination of their company. (182-183)

Woolfson has experienced this fascinating company for herself not only with the pigeons who roost behind the city’s plastic signs and abandoned windows, but also with the ones she has kept in the dovecote in her garden. Here, other temporal developments come to the fore. While Woolfson started hosting doves with the attitude that she “was happy to be an unsentimental keeper of semi-wild birds, believing that [she] favoured no species in [her] admirable recognition of the rights of all” (188) – be it the pigeons or the sparrowhawks hunting them – her relationship has changed over the years:

I feel more protective than I did when they were young and easily replaced. [...] age, theirs and mine, has, if not altered my general view, then affected my behaviour. If I could fly with them, usher them protectively into the sky while keeping a fussy maternal watch [...] I would. (188-189)

Through cyclical everyday interaction, the lives of Woolfson and her pigeons have become intrinsically entangled. She identifies with them and pictures herself in a motherly role, while ultimately, she is aware that her powers of protection are limited. She also detects a certain

paradox in the relationship to her doves when she narrates a visit to Venice with her granddaughter, where the pigeons

stood on our heads, our shoulders, our arms, our hands, and displayed, I have to admit, more trust and confidence than my lot have shown me in the twenty-odd years I've fed, cleaned, valeted, nurtured, acted as midwife and matchmaker, worried about and yes – even loved them. (There is a lesson there somewhere.) (190)

Through this close and regular contact with her birds, Woolfson might have trained herself to display a positive attitude towards any urban pigeon. She even shows a sentimental inclination towards the Venetian pigeons, who prospered as a tourist attraction for many decades until their numbers were reduced by the prohibition of bird-food-selling stalls. In memory of when the birds were still welcomed in the Italian city with open arms, Woolfson keeps one of the paper bags in which the food was sold, now “the relic of another age, the pigeon age” (192). Yet, as the passage above demonstrates, this investment of human emotion and commemoration might not be rewarded by the ones it is directed to – or at least, the inner worlds of the pigeons remain obscure to a persistent degree, no matter how much time one spends with them.

This lack of understanding, however, should not leave us ignorant towards the temporalities of other-than-human beings. One of Woolfson's July-entries can serve as a reminder of this. In this entry, she describes an urban rook roosting site at some old Victorian gardens, which are planned to be transformed into shops and car parks. Woolfson wonders where these rooks, who she has been watching for twenty years and whose roosting site might have been there for hundreds of years, will then fly. They might gather still on the future shop roofs and parking lots, like corvids in other towns do, because they “carry stories [and] memories” (285).

The corvid passage highlights that “[m]emory is part of cities but not only for its human inhabitants. Others remember” (284). These others have their own memory patterns. When US environmentalists John Marzluff and Tony Angell investigated crow gatherings at a seemingly unattractive parking lot, they found, as Woolfson recounts, that the site was once a food-providing rubbish dump, and hence concluded “that the gathering is clearly a crow tradition, a cultural practice handed on from one generation of crows to the next, over some 40 years” (285). In cutting down trees, levelling gardens, pouring out concrete and erecting buildings, humans are negating the possibility of such temporalities, “destroying everything

but the memory which is not destroyed in many of the species whose habitats they were” (285).

Place fidelity, the returning to traditional sites, is also not solely a phenomenon in other animals. Woolfson pairs her contemplations on bird roosting sites with an anecdote from Edinburgh: some years ago, the city closed its old hospital and replaced the complex with flats, a supermarket and a café. Yet still homeless people gather with their beer cans in front of where the Accident and Emergency Department used to be, as they have always done, “people with memory but no place” (286). With this paralleling of corvid and human memory, Woolfson highlights: “We are all so alike” (285). As living beings, we are alike in our necessary adherence to rhythm, its identity- and life-giving importance.

Throughout her diary, Woolfson has provided a wealth of examples for the temporalities of other-than-human beings. With the rooks of the Victorian gardens, we can circle back to the writer’s own home, where Chicken awaits her. Animal rhythms surround the writer like concentric rings: from the corvids and parrots at the centre of her house to the tits in her garden out to the gulls and pigeons in the city. Wherever she goes, she can rely on the temporal orientation provided through the sounds and sights of birds, marking both the current season and the cyclicity of their appearance throughout time.

Here is another answer to what “significant moments” (89) might be to a 21st-century city dweller and why she might want to keep record of them as previous phenologists have done. The rhythms of animals are significant because they provide orientation in time, as markers of seasons and daytimes. In this, they have an advantage over purely mechanical time markers. While clocks have their cyclicity, too, the units of clock time themselves present, as Krebs argues, no significant events in the world (Krebs 121). Natural rhythms, as those of the animals recorded by Woolfson, however, relate us to tangible events in the world and thus to its inherent cyclical order. They provide an antidote to the daily grind of a repetitiveness that is only structured by digits on a dial.

3.3 Deep Time in the Everyday

The notion of ‘flight ways’ introduced above touches upon another temporal scale that, on first glance, exceeds or opposes the everyday: ‘deep time’, that is, “the immense arc of non-human history that shaped the world as we perceive it” (Farrier, “Deep Time”). This concept was first introduced by 18th-century Scottish geologist James Hutton, who found that the Earth had to be much older than believed at his time – a mere 6,000 years, based on Biblical narratives. The term itself was coined only later, in 1981, by US writer John McPhee, and has

taken on special salience in the 21st century, where human interference with these deep time scales becomes ever more perceptible. The context of extinction, in which van Dooren writes about ‘flight ways’, is one of the most striking outcomes of this, as it “pitches us into deep time; into awareness of the richness of our inheritance from the deep past, and the depleted legacy we will leave to the deep future” (Farrier, *Anthropocene* 92). However, it is also considered a feature of the Anthropocene that deep time has now “become an astonishing and disorienting—and a familiar—element in the everyday” (6). As we use fossil fuels and plastic products on a daily basis, “we encounter the deep past and the deep future in the most ordinary situations” (16).

How “our enfolding in deep time [...] erupts continually in the midst of the everyday” (8) becomes also apparent in Woolfson’s diary. On 11th July, she starts her entry with the words: “This morning, I have a date with time” (Woolfson, *FN* 237). She is about to visit an abandoned granite quarry in the middle of Aberdeen, “said to be the largest man-made crater in Europe” (239). After having been worked for 200 years, providing most of the stone the city is built of, the quarry was closed in the 1970s and, filling with water, slowly slipped into oblivion, until at the time of Woolfson’s writing, it was put up for sale and bought by two Aberdonian businessmen, who want to preserve it “for its history, for its place in the life of the city” (244). Until the buyers made the quarry accessible, the present city inhabitants would indeed have been largely unaware of its existence, as Woolfson explains: “You could live here for a long time and have no idea what you’re passing because there’s nothing to be seen from the road, only the warning signs to indicate there’s something behind the bank of earth and trees” (238).

This ‘something behind the bank’ holds deep time in the form of granite stone. It also holds a juxtaposition of human and non-human time scales, as Woolfson recognises when she writes: “Old photos show plunging cavernous depths that look natural, like a deep, steep canyon, a place created by time and not by man” (241). Indeed, while humans have worked and shaped the quarry for two centuries, they have done so for only a blink of an eye in comparison with the history of the stone itself. Woolfson’s own house is built from this granite and touching its walls, she traces

what and where this stone has been, 500 million years to come to this, through the Precambrian, the Cambrian, through the movement of tectonic plates, when Scotland was somewhere south, part of the continent of Laurentia, how this stone underneath my hand has been through volcanoes and glaciers, melted, fused, folded. (240)

Just as Woolfson follows the flight ways of living beings, like the great tit in her garden, she here tracks the temporal developments of “nonlife”, which, as Farrier writes, “shaped the conditions for life to flourish” (Farrier, *Anthropocene* 16). Woolfson honours this bedrock of our being today, as she perceives at the quarry:

in this place, something speaks to you silently and warns you of the danger of forgetting, that granite is stone that seems to measure us, seems to find us slight, negligible, altogether too little when measured against the length of time. (Woolfson, *FN* 244)

Woolfson’s whole diary is an act of working against this ‘danger of forgetting’, forgetting all the other temporalities humans are surrounded by, temporalities of both life and non-life, and how these shape our very existence. This is what she recognises in her meticulous recording, and it is a recognition that asks us to be humble.

When we raise our eyes from the bottom of the granite quarry, we find another instance of deep time erupting in Woolfson’s everyday. It connects us back, also, to the important role that weather events play in her life, as has been illustrated earlier in this chapter. Her attention is tuned not only to weather phenomena that directly touch the Earth – rain, snow, wind, sunshine – but also towards occurrences much farther away. Early on in her diary, in a November entry, she writes: “Every morning as I sit down at my desk, before doing anything else – including beginning work – I check a website that will inform me if the aurora borealis, the Northern Lights, may be seen later in the night skies above us” (23-24).

Here she directs the reader’s attention towards a phenomenon that, like granite, is a result of non-life, but which, in contrast to the stone quarry, is a phenomenon much more recognised by the city’s inhabitants. When Woolfson and her family moved to Aberdeen, they “used to see the aurora. It wasn’t a frequent occurrence, but was more frequent than it is now” (24). Prior to her “quotidian checking” (24) of the ‘Aurora Watch’ website, in the days before the internet, Woolfson monitored the sky herself or was alerted by friends on the phone as to where the lights could be seen. At the time of writing, she has not seen in it in a long while, “even though the aurora is one of the things for which the city is known” (25). Years of keeping watch, of getting up at night at the hint of a shimmer, remain fruitless. Eventually, Woolfson begins to wonder “how common were sightings here? How often was it seen in the past?” (25)

Given its Latin name by Galileo in the 16th century, the aurora borealis had already long been part of northern peoples’ creation myths. It is also featured in a Scottish folksong called “The Northern Lights of Aberdeen”, as Woolfson recalls with some friends. She is led

to “wonder how long it takes for a natural phenomenon to be incorporated into the cultural history of a place” (26) – and also, what happens if this phenomenon no longer occurs:

The perception that there were simply fewer sightings wasn't, as I had suspected, just an incomer's perception – people who were brought up in Aberdeen commented on it too and we wondered if, for all of us, it was a trick of memory, a golden-age imagining of natural and altogether past perfection [...]. we all agree, city and country dweller alike, that there can be no doubt about the fact that the aurora was an established fact of Aberdeen life, and that none of us has seen any celestial dancing [...] for years. (26-27)

To reassure her and her fellow Aberdonians, this impression of the aurora's absence is not just a personal or mystical one, but it can be aligned with scientific findings, as Woolfson notes in her diary: “solar weather operates in cycles, and it seems that one is ending. It would just about coincide with the paucity of sightings” (27).

After this first introduction of the reader to her aurora watching, what follows is actually a remarkable silence on the Northern Lights in Woolfson's diary. Finally, she returns to it in two consecutive July entries, both starting with her daily checking of the Aurora Watch website. The sentences appear so casually that one can guess how much of a routine this quotidian action is for Woolfson. Also, she might not have mentioned it again until this point because the checking is usually performed with an “expectation of disappointment” (265). On 23rd July, however, the website announces the possibility of “minor geomagnetic activity” (265), getting Woolfson all excited and ready. As the day progresses, though, her excitement and the geomagnetic activity dissolve, the announcement disappears from the website. Nevertheless, she goes out in the evening to wait for darkness, still hoping. While the aurora does not appear, Woolfson recalls the Jewish tradition of “*havdalah*”, “the ritual at the ending of the Shabbat that happens with the first sighting of three stars in the sky” (266; author's emphasis). It is a ritual “meant to involve all the senses” (266) and “to remind you to appreciate the smallest aspects of your life” (267). For Woolfson, in that moment, this appreciation consists in breathing in “the scents of damp earth and leaves” (267) and indeed counting the first three stars. A large natural cycle – that of the aurora – might have ended, but there is hope and stability to be found in the much smaller, daily – or nightly – rituals of serious noticing.

Conclusion on *Field Notes*

Here we have one of the central messages of *Field Notes*: the meaning we can find in the small details of the everyday, like the scent of the earth on a July evening or the blink of a single star, serves as a counterweight to the losses we perceive on a greater scale. Loss usually operates on a linear time line, as has been demonstrated in my analysis of Woolfson's diary. How time might seem lost is visible in Woolfson's reflections on the clock change in winter, when something that she considered stolen is given back to her. In the respective passage, time is understood in a capitalist sense like money or other material resources, a supply that will end eventually and therefore has to be used productively.

We can also find this linear conception of time, which implies a definite end, in the historical eschatologies of Western monotheistic religions like Judaism, whose effects on people's relationship to nature have been illustrated in Woolfson's reflections on her Jewish descent. The idea of progress as something that moves away from the wild has been shown to have shaped generations and generated a persistent myth, which Woolfson sets in a different historical light, illuminating the briefness it has had on an evolutionary time scale. This can also be taken as a call to reflect on our individual and social temporal entanglements.

The influence of the past on the present and future is also addressed in Woolfson's reflections on the concept of the Anthropocene and the changes in the atmosphere that are ascribed to it. Here she ponders final times and points of no return, which slip past us often unawares, without the warning one might wish for. Only in hindsight might we try to pinpoint exact times for when the concentration of the atmosphere might have passed a critical mark. All these linear temporalities imbue Woolfson's diary with a sense of doom, a mood lingering like a collective Seasonal Affective Disorder, though one not tethered to a particular season.

Her sense of loss, as well as her awareness of the fragility of life, which is emphasised by the extreme winter that opens the diary, elicit in Woolfson a wish to record significant moments. She negotiates her recording in the tradition of phenology, which has been conducted by humans for centuries all over the world. Both the reminiscence of ritual traditions and the phenologist recording of recurring events imply cyclical temporalities. Noting rhythms, as Woolfson does in her diary, does not only lend us a sense of hope, it also connects us back to our bodies, our very own cyclicity which we share with all other living beings. This common connection has been illustrated in Woolfson's reflections on the seasonal susceptibility both human and other-than-human animals demonstrate with the advent of winter.

It has also been illustrated how Woolfson finds a wealth of recurring time markers in the natural life of her city, which gift her with temporal orientation and an appreciation of cyclicity. It is especially the rhythms of animals that Woolfson synchronises with: from the avian housemates – who have transformed not only her sense of time, but also her whole attitude to more-than-human creatures – to the nesting behaviour of the birds in her garden and to the persisting side fidelity and memory capacity of gulls, pigeons and corvids all over Aberdeen.

By meticulously noting them, Woolfson demonstrates how animal rhythms can help us orient ourselves in time and get a better sense of the different time scales that affect us. This includes the understanding of species as ‘flight ways’ through evolutionary time, appreciating the complex temporalities that are interwoven into any individual animal as it strives to continue its lineage. We might understand these flight ways also as lines that are comprised of manifold cycles, each represented by the life of an individual who contributes to the persistence of the line – or, probably more fitting, the spiral.

Field Notes not only addresses the temporalities of animals, but also those of inanimate nature, including snow, the Northern Lights and granite stone. Especially in the last two we find how deep time presents itself in our everyday, large cycles that both expand our sense of time and place our brief human existence on a much larger temporal scale. The concepts of deep time and ‘flight ways’ teach us both responsibility and humility, two values that shine throughout Woolfson’s diary as she reminds us of the value of the everyday. Her *Urban Nature Diary* serves to demonstrate that it is exactly the most ordinary animals that teach us how cyclicity imbues our life with meaning and provides a balance against linear doom. When we consider the apparent agelessness of Woolfson’s rook housemate Chicken, we might even get a glimpse of what it might be like to exist beyond any human concept of time, in the present state of the now.

4. KAREN LLOYD'S *THE BLACKBIRD DIARIES*

Karen Lloyd's *The Blackbird Diaries* can convincingly be read as an expression of the 'lyric activism' formulated by Jos Smith, as it evokes in poetic prose Lloyd's reflections on and actions for the ecosystems she is entangled with. Her writing is "a way of possessing her place more fully, of holding it close, an act of fathoming and fixing" (Feld). As space and time are inextricably linked, Lloyd's diary can thus also be read as a way of measuring and determining the temporalities of her home place. Indeed, her perspective is described as "quietly domestic" (Norbury), a quality that allows for a close mapping of the everyday. Yet, despite its quiet and "modest" (Norbury) tone, *The Blackbird Diaries* is also "a keenly observed historical log of the political and ecological decisions affecting Cumbria" (Norbury), exemplifying the combination of the aesthetical and the ethical that is the trademark of the best Nature Writing. At the same time, *The Blackbird Diaries* brings something new to the discourse, because, as Lloyd states in an interview, nobody else¹³ in the field of Nature Writing was writing about their back garden when she had the idea for the book (Lloyd, "Karen").

Structure

The Blackbird Diaries is set around the author's home in the town of Kendal in Cumbria's South Lakeland, and the narrated year is "the calendar year of 2015" (Lloyd, *BD* 2), as stated in the introduction. Like a classic diary, it starts on January 1st of that year and ends on December 31st. For each month, there is one chapter. However, these chapters are not given the name of the month, but they are numbered and each have their own title, like "Into the Light" for January and "Flood" for December. These titles speak to features of the month that Lloyd wants to highlight; in some cases, they are also direct quotes from her entries. Each chapter also features a small illustration beneath the title which shows an animal or landscape that the author encounters during the month, like puffins in July or a river bridge in December. These illustrations allow the reader to pause for a moment at the beginning of each chapter and thus influence the temporality of the narrative.

The monthly chapters vary in length and the number of entries, from just five entries for October to seventeen entries for both May and July. The intervals between the entries also vary: there are some for several days in a row, but there are also larger gaps, like between 4th

¹³ At least, no other Nature Writer at the time was focusing on their back garden as exclusively as Lloyd did. However, all the authors in my study have gardens that they write about in their diaries to varying degrees. Also, it needs to be considered that not all Nature Writers have gardens, one example being Amy Liptrot during the time that she wrote *The Outrun* (2016).

October and 30th October or between 2nd November and 16th November. While the October gap is not explained, the November gap might be justified by the fact that Lloyd had been “unusually ill” (218) which presumably prevented her from going out into nature or did not leave her enough energy to write. Ultimately, the varying number of entries calls into question Lloyd’s “daily act of homage” (240), leaving the reader to wonder if she really kept a daily diary or if entries have been omitted in the publishing process.

The entries themselves are titled with the day of the month. They, too, vary greatly in length. The first entry, for example, comprises as much as ten pages – which might be due to the fact that Lloyd uses this entry to provide the setting and larger context of her writing. Longer entries are separated visually by three small circles. These might indicate gaps in the writing process and highlight that some parts of the respective entries have been written at different times of the day. In contrast to the long entries, there are also those which consist of only one sentence, or, sometimes, of a mere fragment, like on 10th December, which reads the following: “Red kites, five seconds” (233). Such entries are mere glimpses into Lloyd’s everyday, but apparently glimpses worth noticing, and they also demonstrate the value of the smallest of pauses. At the same time, these glimpses can be read as the defining moment of the respective day, condensing and focusing it.

To the classic structure of Lloyd’s diary a few things have been added in publication. This includes two extra chapters: “Curlew Calling”, which, as we read beyond the title illustration, is set in “Early Spring” (57) – hence between the chapters for March and April – and “On Wolves and Eagles and Empty Fells” in early autumn, between August and September. The experiences narrated herein are not specified according to days, but the chapters are also divided into sections with the image of the three small circles. Both chapters focus on a conservation issue on which Lloyd has worked or researched, and which I will analyse in detail in the section on ‘Conservation’ towards the end of this chapter. In terms of the temporality of the narrative flow, these chapters appear not so much as an interruption, but rather as a deepening of certain times in Lloyd’s year.

The diary chapters are further framed by an Introduction and a Postscript. The introduction, dated to 2019, is divided into three parts: The first incites the reader’s attention by depicting an encounter from “[o]ne memorable spring” (1) with the focal species of the book, the blackbird; the second provides an outlook on the settings, contents and structure of the book; the third draws the attention back towards the blackbird and Lloyd’s everyday fascination with the species. The postscript also appears to have been added later, in 2018, as one can infer from Lloyd’s note that “the third anniversary of Storm Desmond has recently

passed” (240). In line with that anniversary, she uses the postscript to elaborate on the main theme of the December chapter, the storm and the catastrophic floods that came in its wake. Here, Lloyd also voices a clear call for political action, which will be analysed further down. The remembrance enacted in the postscript implies a cyclical temporality and it enables the reader to circle back to events that crucially shaped the times of the diary.

The remaining additions to the published diary include, before the introduction: the contents page; a dedication to Lloyd’s brother Andy and his two daughters, who appear in the diary as they are on holiday together with the author; and a quote by late-19th-century Italian poet Giovanni Pascoli,¹⁴ from an unspecified poem in its English translation. The main body of the diary is then followed by the Notes on works cited in the book, and the Acknowledgements – here, we also learn that “[s]ome passages were previously printed in the *Guardian* ‘Country Diary’” (252).¹⁵

Purpose

Pascoli’s quote at the beginning of Lloyd’s book gives the reader a first hint at the purposes of the diary. The addressee of the poem is invited to climb “the steep hill’s summit” and “here, in remote obscurity, reflect, think, learn” (Pascoli in Lloyd, *BD* n.p.). Reflection is one of the functions that the diary fulfils for Lloyd, as she explains in her postscript:

my intention was to spend a year paying close attention to my surroundings. I wanted to put myself under the obligation to take notice, to be vigilant in the way that I saw and interpreted the natural world around me. (240)

Lloyd’s sense of reflection is present here in her use of the word ‘vigilant’ and the sense of wakeful, attentive observation it implies. As Lloyd is aware that her interpretations of nature are filtered through a human lens, she remains watchful of her own thoughts. She holds true to that resolution as she often meditates on the motivations and limits of her interactions with more-than-human beings – which, in contrast to Pascoli, do less often occur in ‘remote obscurity’, but more often in the nearby everyday. An example of this can be found in the following scene in which Lloyd makes eye contact with a male blackbird in her garden and ponders:

¹⁴ Nature was a central theme in Pascoli’s work; also, he translated Wordsworth, Shelley and Tennyson into Italian (“Giovanni Pascoli”).

¹⁵ For a discussion of the ‘Country Diary’ column and its temporalities, see my chapter on Cocker in this study.

What is it, I wonder, that is understood in these moments of connection? Do the blackbirds recognise me as I do them? Do they know that I am the one who clucks softly at them whilst gently throwing raisins or cranberries towards them as they forage outside the kitchen door? Do they have any concept that my weak attempts to replicate their voice are a form of communication? And do they comprehend that this territory is shared, belonging equally to us both? I would love the insights of this knowledge, even for the briefest of moments. (80)

By asking questions instead of overinterpreting the birds' actions, Lloyd remains humble. She openly acknowledges her ignorance and lack of knowledge, while expressing the heartfelt wish for deeper insight and closer connection. Her quest is not one of mastery, but one of connection, as she seeks common ground with the birds. At the same time, she has to accept that she might never find answers to all of her questions. Furthermore, the questions allow the reader to pause and wonder about their own possible interpretations of the situation described by Lloyd.

The second function of *The Blackbird Diaries* also has to do with halting a linear temporal progression, as it consists in the freezing of time. This can be read in the continuation of the postscript quote where Lloyd commits herself to wakeful noticing:

By the close of the year there was sense of relief – that I was freed from the constraints of *having* to take notice – and the urge to write quickly before the memories faded. But there was also a sense of loss: I was no longer to perform this daily act of homage. (240; author's emphasis)

Her attempt to capture her memories before they fade is here related to a sense of urgency which situates her diary in the context of the urgent times of the 21st century. Furthermore, in setting herself the “obligation to take notice” (240), Lloyd prepared herself for a year of serious noticing in the course of which she would create an archive of memories, tracing not only her own actions, but also to a large degree those of the more-than-human beings surrounding her. She ‘takes notice’ in a double sense: Not only does she watch the natural world, she also notes down words about it on paper. She tries to write as fast as possible “before the memories faded” (240), striving for immediacy. This striving for immediacy might also explain those entries which consist of only single sentences and fragments. Also, it creates a sense of pressure of which she is glad to be relieved at the end of the year, while at the same time, she also feels that she is losing something in “no longer [performing] this daily act of homage” (240). Here is also a noteworthy choice of words: “homage” implies the

“respect of rank, worth, beauty, or some other quality; reverence, dutiful respect, or honour shown to someone or something” (“homage”) and as such describes an act of respect. By paying daily homage, Lloyd highlights the value of the common and creates a cyclical ritual of respect for the more-than-human world. Her diary thus comprises an archive of respectful reverence.

Tradition and Style

As critics have attested her, Lloyd composes “lyrical prose [which] is smooth, like a pebble softened by the tide” (Feld). It comes as no surprise that she has also published a poetry pamphlet¹⁶, as some of her diary entries do read like lines of poetry, and it seems as if she has polished them, like the tide softens a pebble, to present the moment in its very essence. In this way, for example, she concludes a half-page-long July entry: “By evening, rain. All was quiet. Nothing moved but the swifts” (Lloyd, *BD* 145). The shortness of these sentences causes a break in the reading process after each full stop, a series of noticings and pauses. Also, the rhythm of these sentences creates a sense of immediacy. Some entries even consist of only one lyrical line, like this one on 13th March: “Bee-hum. Summer’s sweet foragers had begun to wake, to work” (52). Contained in this short sentence are a wealth of stylistic devices – onomatopoeia, alliteration, metaphor, parallelism – which also attest to the density of Lloyd’s style. These poetic entries conjure “[t]he peculiar *now* of the lyric [which is] ‘not timeless, but a moment of time that is repeated every time the poem is read’” (Farrier, *Anthropocene* 102; author’s emphasis). In other words, poetry has a cyclical character, and this is also reflected in Lloyd’s diary.

Lloyd’s “quiet lyricism” (Cocker qtd. in Lloyd, *BD*, back cover), as Cocker calls it, goes hand in hand with her detailed descriptions of the natural world. This becomes very apparent in her depictions of blackbirds – while she repeatedly portrays them, she is always able to highlight new facets of their appearance. At the beginning of her diary, for example, she writes of “the cock bird’s sun-ringed eye, and [...] the quiet, soft, umbered grace of the hen” (3). In a later entry, she elaborates on the hen’s graceful attire:

Her tail is down and her head is turned to the side, a note of ochre yellow on the tip of her beak. She seems self-assured, her brown eyes calmly observant and her feathers puffed out to reveal that rich, autumnal brindling and stippling of golden tones beneath the more mundane browns. (17)

¹⁶ *Self-portrait as Ornithologist* (2020)

Her regular, repeated observations enable Lloyd to notice ever finer details – like the golden tones beneath the brown ones – and challenge her to hone her language to describe these. In this way, her cyclical valuing of the common influences her style, which, as the blackbird examples above show, is also rich in adjectives.

Another feature noticeable in Lloyd’s vocabulary is her use of religiously connoted terms that intersperse in particular, again, her descriptions of blackbirds. For example, she compares the blackbird’s evening song to “a private oratorio – of faith, of joy and of hope, of all the losses of all the world” (102). The motif of hope combined with dramatic events also appears in an entry after the devastating December flood, when Lloyd notices a male blackbird singing on a tree in town: “like the first decoration on a Christmas tree. [...] And it *was* a gift, I thought, this blackbird, on this day, belting out his heartening song of resurrection” (233; author’s emphasis).

Lloyd uses this religious vocabulary not only to describe the effects that the birds have on her, but also to muse about the bird’s reactions to herself. When she feeds a female blackbird with raisins, it seems to her that the bird is looking around “as if she was working out exactly where this manna had come from” (54). By using the word ‘manna’, Lloyd casts her bird-feeding as inciting a sense of miracle in the other creature. On the one hand, this might be a slightly overstretched human projection – while we cannot know the bird’s inner workings, we can only be sure that Lloyd herself finds them miraculous. On the other hand, in terms of temporal implications, these religious terms place Lloyd’s descriptions in the context of larger traditions and give them an element that exceeds a mundane everyday.

The ordinariness of the everyday is, however, also central to Lloyd’s writing. One of the features of her style that demonstrates this centrality is her frequent use of direct speech and dialogue, a device that is not found in such frequency in the other works in my study and thus appears as distinctive for Lloyd’s diary. It might be connected to her work as a journalist, and it fittingly illustrates the fact that Lloyd is routinely in conversation about nature with various people. Sometimes, she records whole dialogues that stretch over half a page or more, like a friendly exchange with another dogwalker (12-13), discussions on tree felling with tree surgeons and neighbourhood friends (50-51) or the sharing of their expertise by activists who show Lloyd the swifts they are caring for (169-173). In other instances, she gives snippets of direct speech to let people speak for themselves. For example, she cites the suggestions that a family of three-generation-farmers have on curlew conservation: “‘Make it easy for us,’ the son said, ‘make payments for not rolling and cutting. That way you get everyone on side’”

(65). The fact that Lloyd notes this proposition verbatim suggests that she takes the farmer's perspective seriously. Her familiarity with the local population also shows when she documents the idioms of sheep farmers, one referring to his absconded sheep with "Oh aye. The buggers" (123). Lloyd also frames short phone calls (168) or one-sentence comments of her son Cal – for example, "Cool" (102) in reaction to watching blackbird fledglings – as direct speech. In each case, this gives the reader the impression of being right there in the moment with the author, gaining a sense of immediacy, too.

As it appears, *The Blackbird Diaries* includes more direct quotes from people the author has spoken with than quotes from secondary literature. In the Notes at the end of the book, only fourteen sources are listed. In contrast to other authors¹⁷ in my study, Lloyd includes little bookish knowledge, as she appears to base most of her entries on direct observation and experience – the use of direct speech illustrated above attests to this basis. Where Lloyd does use secondary literature, she often does so to deepen her knowledge about birds, as when, after she has seen a group of magpies engaged in play, she looks for an explanation for their behaviour in a British Trust for Ornithology report (37), or when she adds to her notes the local names of birds – for example, for magpies (38) and siskins (71) – listed in a book by Francesca Greenoak from 1981. In this way, Lloyd also provides the reader with extra knowledge. In other instances, she quotes poetry that she associates with her own experiences, as a celebration of barnacle geese by Irish 20th-century poet Dermot Healy (42) or a line on curlews by Ted Hughes (64). Finally, Lloyd also fosters her reflections on the song of the blackbird with descriptions by Victorian poet William Earnest Henley (77) and 19th-century Nature Writer W. H. Hudson (101). With Hudson and Hughes, at least, Lloyd makes reference to prominent voices of the British Nature Writing tradition. However, despite the fact that she lives and writes in the same landscape as the Lake poets, these remain unmentioned in *The Blackbird Diaries*.¹⁸

Lloyd's Personal Rhythms

Throughout the diary, Lloyd's personal rhythms become apparent. Obviously, her temporalities are shaped by the place she lives in and the people she shares it with. In her acknowledgments, we learn that she and her family have lived in south Cumbria "since 1995" (252), which makes twenty years at the time of writing the diary. Her family includes her

¹⁷ Woolfson, in contrast, lists 24 sources in her Text Credits and 43 in her Select Bibliography.

¹⁸ There are reflections on the Lake poets, especially William Wordsworth, in Lloyd's more recent work, *Abundance* (2021), for example in her essay 'Viewing Stations'.

husband Steve and her two sons, Callum – called Cal – and Fergus, who are teenagers at the time of writing. Cal is the one who is mentioned most often, as Lloyd shares her blackbird observations with him; this interaction will be analysed in more detail in the section ‘Chores and Care’.

Lloyd also owns a dog called Milly – though most of the time, she is only designated ‘the dog’ – who accompanies her on many walks. The dog’s presence seems to be a silent one and sometimes it is not even clear that Lloyd is walking with her until she appears in a short side note. Apparently, she is also not a dog who frightens wildlife much, as Lloyd still spots many birds in her company. Furthermore, as a dogwalker, Lloyd is thus used to being out at all possible times of day and night.

Even without her dog, Lloyd takes excursions into the night, for example in the night from 27th to 28th September, when a “supermoon” (207) is expected, a phenomenon resulting from a combination of occurrences: the moon passing closest to the earth, an eclipse and a blood moon. For this occasion, Lloyd even heads out twice, first driving out to where the river Bela flows into Morecambe Bay, and then again by foot to the fells around her house as she cannot settle at home. Her diary also reports of other extraordinary night walks, as during her summer holidays on the Scottish Isle of Mull in late June, where she experiences the length of the northern days, noting that “the sudden light of dusk was surprising; checking my watch, it was after 10.30pm, the light perhaps of 8pm back home” (131). Here is a temporal shift that takes the author out of her everyday rhythms. Such a shift also happens when she goes on holidays, including her yearly visit to friends on Mull (128) or her family holidays a few weeks later in the same place (156). Obviously, she also leaves her home for conservation projects such as the one for curlews on the Shropshire Welsh border.

The rhythms of her home continue while Lloyd is away, sometimes to surprise her on her return, as when she is back from Mull after a week:

Back in Kendal, the foxgloves were suddenly as tall as Fergus. The cream *Scabiosa* ‘Miss Wilmott’ was in full dazzling flower at the bottom of the garden. Sweet peas no longer loitered around the base of their frames; they were up and reaching higher. (144; author’s emphasis)

Such reports about the state of her garden flowers are, in general, a regular component of Lloyd’s diary. While the rhythms of her garden are crucially shaped by birds, as I will elucidate in the next section of this chapter, plants also add their temporalities to these. A common example would be the ground elder that Lloyd frequently attempts to weed out (e.g., 109; 145), but which creeps back time and again, maintaining its ground. The fact that her

garden features so prominently in *The Blackbird Diaries* has led to the assertion that Lloyd's writing highlights "landscapes that rarely feature in nature writing" (Lloyd, *BD* back cover). She succeeds in demonstrating that the "ordinariness of our semi-urban garden" (108) is not to be disregarded.

Another rhythm is added to Lloyd's everyday by the fells and mountains of Cumbria that surround her garden. She regularly lists the names of these landscape features, starting in her first entry for 1st January, in which she spends about three pages describing and naming the area's fells and pikes as well as its rivers and tarns. This passage reads as follows:

Here, mountain shadows fall early: Kentmere Pike, Steel Rigg, Raven Crag, Goat Scar and Shipman Knotts. The Sprint falls further, washing over the gravel beds before singing itself underneath the packhorse bridge at Sadgill [...]. Now to the area's star attractions, the Kentmere hills: the illustrious summits of Froswick, Ill Bell, Yoke, Thornthwaite Crag and the summit of High Street, along with paler, more distant Red Pike. (7)

For a reader unfamiliar with Cumbria, these names might have little significance at first glance, but there is something in the rhythm of Lloyd's list that echoes of past times and oral traditions, of times in which it was common for humans to name and know the features of the land they lived with. In these traditions – and such are still cultivated in indigenous cultures throughout the world today – the environment could be understood as "Storied Earth" (Abrams 154), in which "the sensible, natural environment remains the primary visual counterpart of spoken utterances, the visible accompaniment of all spoken meaning" (139-140) and where "a field of discourse" (140) emerges between humans and land. In this field, as ecophilosopher David Abrams demonstrates with the example of the Western Apache of Arizona, pleasure can arise from simply speaking place names as they allow one to ride the landscape in one's mind (155). While Lloyd might not live in an indigenous oral culture, it is conceivable that she gains a similarly pleasant experience from her reciting of place names. Also, in addressing each fell and mountain with their name, Lloyd recognises them as meaningful 'counterparts' in the living story of her everyday. This is an act of respect that serves as one example of how she stays true to her incentive of paying homage to the natural world.

Her descriptions of the landscape are often interwoven with another feature of the natural world that influences the everyday with its rhythms: the weather. For example, the passage cited above continues after the list of mountain names with Lloyd recalling a memory from years ago:

That first summer, I must have spent hours looking out from the windows once Callum was asleep. I'd look up to the hills and, transfixed, watch the night sky shift from turquoise to midnight blue, the light evolving, becoming that particular luminous citrine sheen that lingers close to the rim of the hills. (Lloyd, *BD* 7)

Her fascination with the changes of sky and light has not diminished since this first summer in her house and Lloyd still continues to encapsulate these phenomena in her poetic, precise style. The shift of light has its very own temporality, which sometimes can be difficult to describe, but by looking at it for hours, like Lloyd did in a process of serious noticing, one can find the right words for the nuances of colour, like 'turquoise', 'midnight blue' and 'luminous citrine'.

This section has served to show the different temporalities in which Lloyd's everyday rhythms are embedded: those of her family members, including her dog, as well as those of natural phenomena, like night and day, garden plants, hills and fells and the shifts of weather and light. All of these serve as the context to a central rhythm around which the diary revolves: that of birds, especially blackbirds, as I will illustrate in the next section.

4.1 Birds as a Constant in Time

Birds as a Constant

In her diary, Lloyd makes visible the fabric of everyday life – not only of her everyday, but also of the everyday of the birds, who “travel [...] in constant two-way traffic” (3) between the town's gardens and the fell above. As busy as the birds may appear, their presence is actually a 'constant' in time:

In twenty-two years of living here, new neighbours have come and gone, but the one constant is that a handful of people have created, largely unintentionally, an environment that is a rich habitat for wildlife. Here, across the five gardens, literally on our doorstep, is bird-land – bird and bird-watcher heaven. (10)

In being located in such a 'bird heaven', Lloyd's home offers her the best starting point to notice and record the wildlife that is part of her everyday. The fact that this environment has been created by humans 'largely unintentionally' is also a hint at how much wild potential remains unnoticed in our familiar surroundings, and hence it might lead readers to consider their own everyday environments with new eyes. In addition, it can be found that certain

rhythms are connected to certain places, which is in line with Lefebvre's theories: To him, "rhythm is always spatial and temporal and offers a means of grasping space and time together" (Lyon 2). In Lloyd's example, the space of the gardens and the time of the birds clearly converge with each other to create the rhythms that appear as 'the one constant' in the author's life.

Presence Stitched Through the Everyday

The most prominent constant in Lloyd's everyday is the blackbird, which already becomes clear from the title of her work and the cover illustration featuring a simple, plain drawing of a male blackbird in his two characteristic colours – black and yellow –, who perches on a branch and looks at the viewer with an apparently keen eye. Already in the introduction, Lloyd elucidates why exactly this bird is so intrinsic to her life:

Yet it is to the blackbirds that my attention is drawn continually throughout the year. The common blackbird, a species whose presence is stitched throughout our urban and rural landscapes, beavers away in the background of our lives [...]. Every day I quietly revel in their proximity. (Lloyd, *BD* 3)

Lloyd here indicates the close connection with the blackbird by describing its 'presence [as] stitched throughout' the places humans live in and hence also through the times of their everyday, weaving into it strands of more-than-human temporalities. Blackbirds both live in the linear temporalities of the urban and the more cyclical temporalities of the rural. Lloyd encounters them not only in the city centre and on the roads of Kendal or the hilly country surrounding her home, but also on her travels to the Scottish Isle of Mull, where she observes them around her friends' house and even at the harbour at the island's capital, right next to the "fish-and-chip-queue" (135). As she writes above, her "attention is [continually drawn]" (3) to these common birds, wherever she is.

It is also no exaggeration when she states that she "revel[s] in their proximity" (3) every day, as the frequency of blackbird entries attests. They appear at least every few pages, and sometimes, whole series of entries are dedicated to them. They are not only in the title of the diary, but also in the chapter title for the month of July, "Gardening with Blackbirds". The diary is opened with their presence, and in the last entry on 31st December, Lloyd observes on her lawn "my four o'clock blackbird" (238). This designation of the bird to a certain time of the day demonstrates his function as a time marker to the author, a reliable constant in her

everyday, just as Aberdeen's gulls and pigeons are for Woolfson. The rhythms of the blackbirds thus crucially shape Lloyd's own.

Playing Into the Subconscious

Blackbird rhythms not only shape the year of the diary. They have clearly been influencing Lloyd's life for quite a long time:

Indeed, it was this music that played into my subconscious in the suburban avenues of my childhood home: a cock blackbird, singing after rain, somewhere in the old walled garden of a cottage. The garden is long gone, but the blackbirds themselves remain, ubiquitous, and enriching. (3)

Through repeated singing, the blackbird has created a rhythm in Lloyd's subconscious, enriching her with his ubiquity. This kind of memorising certainly happens in a cyclical fashion as it is characterised by and enabled through repetition. In providing the memory of her childhood blackbird, Lloyd also demonstrates how such repetitions help us make sense of the world. As Krebs notices: "We organise our memories in line with [...] recurring events and thus connect our own history with the course of the world [...]. In addition, recurring events remind us of past events" (Krebs 120; my trans.). In Lloyd's case, it is the blackbird who provides these recurring events and thus a connection between the author's individual temporalities and those of the world.

In *The Blackbird Diaries*, it becomes visible how memories provide orientation in the author's life. It is a "memory out of paper" (Lejeune, *On Diary* 195) in more than one sense. Certainly, the diary consists of memories, as those are "the source [and] authenticator [...] of autobiographical acts" (Smith & Watson 22). However, Lloyd does not only put down the events of the present day to conserve them in the archive that the diary represents, but she also frequently embeds previous events. Examples of this are memories of watching geese together with her ailing father (Lloyd, *BD* 45-46), a "reckoning" (113) of abundant lapwing flocks when hearing a solitary bird, or a recollection of spotting whales when no one else was watching (164). In this way, another temporal level opens up behind the temporality of the present entry. In following her associations from present moment to memory, Lloyd allows the reader to see how her sense of time is organised and how she connects present and past events. Often, this means that her encounters with the natural world attain more depth, showing that, for example, a certain animal does not only acquire meaning in the present moment, but repeatedly, its meaning being constituted through cyclical temporalities.

Providing Song

As shown above, it is one characteristic of the blackbird that especially engrains itself in memory: his “music” (3), as Lloyd calls it. Birdsong is one of those features of the more-than-human world that functions especially well as an orientation in time and space. As Cocker highlights in his own account of blackbirds: “Their song is a subliminal fixture in our collective story but also in the story of each of us as individuals. Birdsong thus becomes a way of measuring and narrating our lives” (Cocker, *CD* 77). Here Cocker expresses the same experience as Lloyd, for whom the blackbird’s song certainly is a ‘subliminal fixture’ as it has “played into [her] subconscious” (Lloyd, *BD* 3) over the years. How it is to her ‘a way of measuring and narrating’ her life has been suggested in the above, but deserves further attention. After introducing the blackbird and evoking her childhood memories, Lloyd continues with a description of his ‘music’:

The male blackbird’s song is variously spirited, aggrieved, cautious, wistful, melancholic. Amongst the first birds to sing in the morning, they offer the last of nature’s generous solicitousness at the closing of the light. (3)

It is demonstrated here that we can measure our everyday according to the blackbird’s rich song, as it both opens the day in the morning and closes it in the evening. Furthermore, the wealth of adjectives that Lloyd uses here – and in the descriptions cited above – is remarkable. In their familiarity and commonness, the blackbirds appear to have the ability to induce a whole range of emotions. On the one hand, they can be ‘spirited’, that is, “lively, animated [and] energetic” and characterised by “determined behaviour” (“Spirited”) – as they also are in Cocker’s breakfasting scene when they “hammered the fruits with gusto” (Cocker, *CD* 8). On the other hand, though, the birds also appear to exhibit a set of unhappy, resentful, longing or sad emotions, as can be read from Lloyd’s depiction. Thus, in their everyday music, we can find a reflection of the whole wheel of human emotional experience.

Birdsong does not only enable a measuring of a single day, but also of the whole year. With a keen ear, Lloyd highlights how the blackbird’s song changes through the course of the year. In April,

The blackbird’s full seasonal song has arrived. Every evening, the male’s nuanced music plays from his song-post on the top of the Scots pine. Described by Victorian poet William Earnest Henley in his poem ‘The Blackbird’ as like the playing of a box-wood flute, this evening song

is the blackbird's best, its most complex. It makes me stop and listen every time. (Lloyd, *BD* 77)

In this entry, the blackbird becomes a marker of the season, defining it with his song – a song that Lloyd rates as his 'best', thus placing a value judgement on it. What she likes about it is its complexity and nuance, and it speaks to the value of the common that she can discover this in an everyday bird's utterances. It regularly gives her pause, it stops her in whatever temporal plane she might be on when she becomes aware of the blackbird's song and puts her in tune with a different rhythm.

Lloyd's musings on that music also show that she is not the only one aware of that particular rhythm. In the quote above she refers to Victorian poet William Ernest Henley, and in a later entry on the same topic, she draws on 19th-century naturalist W.H. Hudson – who describes the blackbird's song as a favourite of many people (101). This referencing proves that birdsong has also been a way of narrating one's life for earlier Nature Writers and is part of a 'collective story' in which Lloyd partakes through weaving quotes with her own observations. Part of that story is also the association of the bird's utterances with human qualities. This is already visible in its comparison to music, to "box-wood flute[s]" (77), "xylophone[s]" (101) and "oratorio[s]" (102). It then becomes even clearer in passages like this:

In a male blackbird's full seasonal song, what I hear over and over again is the asking of questions – an uncertainty of song, if you like, as if the bird is questioning its own mortality. And simultaneously, with the artifice of a minor key, arrive the deepest, most affecting qualities of melancholia. How could we not connect – to this? (101)

The actions that Lloyd here bestows upon the blackbird – asking questions, dwelling in melancholia – are actions we would usually associate with humans, and it exceeds our limits of perception to attest them with certainty to other living beings. The blackbird here appears as a mirror of Lloyd's own sentiments: He prompts questions *in her*, as he repeatedly makes her wonder about his perspective on the world; he induces *her* with melancholia and with memories of the past. Yet, this kind of projection appears to allow a deeper connection between the human and the bird. It imbues Lloyd with confidence, as we can see in her continuation of the passage above:

I am in no doubt that it is the presence and the song of our ubiquitous blackbirds that offers us a sense of hope, and of rebirth. The notion of being able to pull ourselves back from the brink of irredeemable change, and the ability to accept, if only for a few moments, that we are all in this together: that we are, in our very essence, connected, and part of the whole. (101)

Here we find what Krebs has also noted about the cyclical course of nature: In its repetition, its ubiquity and familiarity, it gifts us with a sense of hope and the “certainty that time always goes on in some form” (Krebs 122; my trans.). The idea of rebirth that Lloyd adds in her account is even more clearly an idea related to cyclical temporalities. Furthermore, she recognises the very connectedness of all of life through shared rhythms. In recognising this connection, Lloyd’s focus is not exclusively narrowed to the blackbird, but she also frequently highlights the rhythms and songs of other birds, as they come to the rich environment of her garden:

I love the shenanigans of small birds and the subtleties of their articulation – the repetition of phrases delivered convivially or with an underscore of irritation [...]. These avian conversations enrich my work, my home. Every now and then, there’s some new song to tune into – the sweet dunnock singing companionably, or goldfinches holding high-pitched conversations up in the silver birch. In the grander scheme of things, it might be an unremarkable event, but the bird’s daily rituals nourish me, keep me connected to the world outside. (Lloyd, *BD* 71)

With her keen ear, Lloyd hears in the birds’ vocalisations not mere chatter, but true ‘conversations’ from which the birds’ moods can be read: high spirits and mischief in their ‘shenanigans’; cheerfulness in their conviviality; irritation in repeated phrases. In their variety and recurrence, Lloyd experiences the birds’ conversations as enriching and nourishing. Despite their possible triviality, their rituals also figure as a connection to the wider world, anchoring the listener in time. It is their reliability that gives the birds value. While flying and singing appear as such variable and fluid actions, they often occur in fixed, recurring patterns which turn them into markers and expressions of stability, a stability forged through cyclical temporalities.

More Than a Background Presence

As has become clear by now, birds are more than just a background presence in Lloyd’s everyday. While some layers of her relationship to them have been highlighted already, there

remain some that deserve further attention: namely, the agency and personality that Lloyd recognises in birds. These can, again, be best illustrated with the example of the blackbird. Lloyd opens her book by recalling in the introduction a “memorable spring [when] a pair of blackbirds was busy building a nest [in her garden]” (1). As Lloyd and her family were packing the car for a trip to Scotland, the birds collected and deposited nesting material, synchronising their movements with that of the humans: “Each time, they waited until the coast was clear, then darted inside the clematis that rambles in disorderly fashion above a wooden archway” (1). As much as she is looking forward to Scotland, Lloyd admits being tempted “to stay home and watch the blackbirds” (1). In this way, she makes an important point about the fascination of the common and everyday, which, in her mind, ranks as highly as a holiday in a remote and potentially wilder place.

When the Lloyd family returns from their holidays, “it felt as if we were invading the blackbirds’ personal space” (1). After a mere week of human absence, the garden has become more of a home for the birds than for the humans. In acknowledging the birds’ entitlement to the place, Lloyd accords them an agency equal to humans. This also becomes apparent in the vocabulary she uses for the blackbirds: She likes “to consider them our neighbours” (1), on a par with her human neighbours. In the same vein, she addresses the female blackbird like one would address a human neighbour: “Mrs Blackbird had been gardening in her usual untidy manner” (54). The animal does not remain just any random bird, but is personalised as ‘Mrs Blackbird’. This anthropomorphisation of the blackbird can be read as an expression of Lloyd’s “willingness to admit [...] the kindredness [...] of the natural world” (Mabey, *Oxford Book* vii), a quality that is called for in convincing Nature Writing. Acknowledging other animals as kindred beings allows for the insight that their temporalities also affect humans. At the same time, Lloyd manages to balance her anthropomorphisations of the blackbirds by also admitting their “otherness” (vii) throughout her diary. As highlighted earlier in this chapter, she often asks questions instead of imposing her interpretations on the birds’ behaviour. Lloyd’s personalisation of the female blackbird as ‘Mrs Blackbird’ can be read as a sign of respect, in line with her overall aim of paying homage to the more-than-human. This respect is surely deepened through repeated encounters and likely strengthened through the ritual custom of addressing the bird as a subject with a title. In *The Blackbird Diaries*, it becomes apparent how empathy grows from the common. As Lloyd explains in the example of the blackbird, it is an animal “with which humans often feel a deep sense of connection, forged entirely because of this close habitual proximity” (Lloyd, *BD* 2).

As much as Lloyd is invested in the blackbirds' life, the question remains how much the birds in turn gain from this relationship. It can be said that they do not only live close, they also do not flinch from human presence: "more than other garden species [they] will tolerate our presence in a way that might suggest that the relationship is two-way" (2). After having attributed to the birds their right of place and a level of agency akin to humans, Lloyd here, in a further step, alludes to the birds' consciousness – a quality that she repeatedly muses about in her diary. She depicts it as possible that the birds cherish contact with humans as much as these humans cherish contact with them.

The birds are clearly bestowed with personality and agency through the vocabulary that Lloyd uses. While in the example of 'Mrs Blackbird' this is plainly obvious, it more often is achieved in a subtler way, as in the following passage that is worth citing here again:

The common blackbird, a species whose presence is stitched throughout our urban and rural landscapes, beavers away in the background of our lives, providing a soundscape that is so familiar yet deeply affecting. [...] Amongst the first birds to sing in the morning, they offer the last of nature's generous solicitousness at the closing of the light. (3)

In this passage, Lloyd adds another aspect to the integral role of the birds when she describes them with verbs that imply deliberate action and, therefore, agency. The birds 'beaver away', that is, they "work hard for a long time" ("beaver away"), and while this effort often remains unbeknown to us, they in effect 'provide a soundscape' to our lives and 'offer the last of nature's generous solicitousness' at the end of the day. In this way, the birds appear not only hard-working, but also solicitous, caring about the feelings of other beings. This is an interesting shift of perspective: While the birds care about us, we might not care very much about them. The blackbirds in Lloyd's depiction could thus serve as an example of an attentive interspecies-relationship, a relationship that grows centrally from cyclical engagement.

4.2 Chores and Care

Times of Mothers & Housewives

In large parts of *The Blackbird Diaries*, Lloyd appears as a mother and housewife, roles which entail specific temporalities. As I have indicated in the definition of the everyday in my introduction:

some groups, such as women and the working class, are more closely identified with the everyday than others. Everyday life is not just a material by-product of capitalism, as Lefebvre argues, but also a term that is deployed by intellectuals to describe a nonintellectual relationship to the world. (Felski 79)

The assumption of a ‘nonintellectual relationship to the world’ is certainly not true for Lloyd, as should have become obvious in my analysis. More relevant here is the connection between women, the everyday and capitalism – or, phrased slightly differently, the tension between linear capitalist time and cyclical care time. Political activist and philosopher Angela Y. Davis writes on the lesser value ascribed to care time: “Since housework does not generate profit, domestic labor was naturally defined as an inferior form of work as compared to capitalist wage labor” (Davis 228). The specific temporality of domestic care work is also illustrated by social studies scholar Barbara Adam:

Research on women’s caring and emotional work demonstrates that times which are not convertible into currency have to remain outside the charmed circle. [...] That is to say, time-generating and time-giving activities have no place in the meaning cluster of quantity, measure, dates and deadlines, of calculability, abstract exchange value, efficiency and profit. (Adam 95)

The ‘meaning cluster’ described here very much comprises the characteristics of the linear temporality of capitalism as I have deduced them from Lefebvre. Cyclical care work is placed outside of this temporality, and its ‘time-generating and time-giving activities’ are dismissed as not contributing to the idea of progress, while, in fact, these are the activities – preparing food, providing fresh clothes, a warm bed and a clean home – that enable people to strive for progress in the first place. As they work “in the factory or the office”, they “daily consum[e]” (Dalla Costa & James 11) this care that has been invested in them.

While it would be too simplistic to link men exclusively with linearity and women with cyclicity, it is usually women who execute the care work just described, and this is one of the reasons why they are often associated with cyclicity. Lefebvre identifies “women’s association with recurrence [as] a sign of their connection to nature, emotion, and sensuality, their lesser degree of estrangement from biological and cosmic rhythms” (Felski 82).¹⁹ Their

¹⁹ Certainly, we can see in my study that also men – Cocker and McAnulty – exhibit the opposite of ‘estrangement from biological and cosmic rhythms’, as their accounts show that they are very much aware of natural temporalities.

existence “as embodied subjects, their biological nature never far from view [especially in] menstruation and pregnancy” (82)²⁰ is also one of the three reasons for linking women and cyclicity that Felski lists. However, in Lloyd’s diary, the body and embodiment are not addressed as explicitly as in the other books in my study. Felski’s third reason, the identification of women “with repetition via consumption” (82) is even less relevant for Lloyd. It is the second reason, women’s responsibility “for the repetitive tasks of social reproduction” (82), that is most clearly applicable to Lloyd and that shapes her everyday to a great degree. Hence, the association of women with the cyclical can be used to highlight aspects of cyclicity in Lloyd’s diary, as I will demonstrate in the following.

Working (from) Home

Lloyd’s connection to her home is twofold, as she not only lives, but also works, there. Furthermore, this work does not only include unpaid domestic labour, but also her actual job as a writer and journalist, which she conducts from her home office. This combination already complicates her role as a housewife, rendering it less inferior than many classical theorists of the everyday have assumed. In fact, it enables Lloyd to gain advantage from the situation by being able to scrutinise nature, visible from her office at home:

My study is a small building at the bottom of the garden with two windows looking out onto the lawn and the back of the house. [...] a third window offers a prospect over the four neighbouring gardens and toward the top of Kendal Fell. The fourth window, immediately in front of my desk, affords views of the Kentmere hills rising above the top of next door’s garage. Keeping an eye and ear on the business of the garden birds is easy from here – and a common distraction. (Lloyd, *BD* 80)

Essentially, Lloyd’s office – a rectangular human space surrounded by the cyclical space of nature – grants her a 360-degree view of the natural environment. With that view comes the ‘common distraction’ of the garden birds – a distraction that Lloyd happily welcomes and enjoys. For example, the male blackbird

comes frequently to land on the garage roof a few feet away [...]. Over the top of my computer screen I see him in profile, his head inclined towards me, hardly any distance between us. I stop work, look at him, and he in turn looks at me. (80)

²⁰ Woolfson refers to this rhythm of menstruation as “the infradian” (Woolfson, *FN* 338).

The blackbird here introduces pauses into the working process, adding his own rhythms to that of the author. Lloyd finds her work “punctuated by the intermittent” (103) appearance of the birds. However, this recurrence is not always one of distraction or interruption. Sometimes, it entails shared work, as when Lloyd is weeding the plants in her garden:

Head down, trowelling away, I sensed the hen blackbird buzz close, close enough for me to feel little bursts of air disturbed by her wings. Then she did it a second time, and I felt her feathers ruffle the top of my head. [...] Ever the opportunist, she was gardening herself, waiting for a turn of worms from the soil as I worked. (109-110)

In the existence as a subjective being with agency that Lloyd has ascribed to her, the female blackbird also attends to her work as a mother and caretaker. Her ‘gardening’, that is, her foraging for worms and insects, is her way of taking care of her family and could also be read as a daily chore, something that has to be done repeatedly. In terms of food, it is not only the side products of human gardening that the blackbird families profit from, but also from Lloyd’s active feeding:

Mrs Blackbird had been gardening in her usual untidy manner. [...] Later, she came close to the back door, and I enticed her closer still with raisins and dried cranberries; she was unable to resist. (54)

This way of feeding is not an expression of necessity, but it results from a desire for closeness on part of the humans. While Lloyd writes that she ‘enticed’ the bird who was ‘unable to resist’, this could also be said of herself: she was unable to resist the enticing prospect of luring ‘Mrs Blackbird’ as close as possible. This speaks to the role of the welcome distraction that the birds present in Lloyd’s everyday.

Daily Chores

Lloyd allows the birds to distract her not only from her office work and her gardening, but also from her household chores, and these are the ones she mentions most often in relation to observations of common wildlife around her home. On the one hand, one could assume that her tasks prevent her from engaging with nature, and this assumption is confirmed in some cases, as when she writes at the beginning of a September entry: “I’d left it late to set out. It had been one of those days when, despite the warmth and sunshine calling me out, life kept

getting in the way” (205). This feeling of ‘life getting in the way’, which can be supposed to mean ‘work and chores getting in the way’, can also be observed in other 21st-century Nature Writing books. For example, Moran highlights the connection between mothering and birding in Kathleen Jamie’s *Sightlines*, claiming that

Jamie’s investigations of the everyday natural world in her home town [...] are also compromised by her domestic entanglements, [including caring for her children, her own mother and her seriously ill husband]. (Moran 56)

The care that Lloyd has to invest in family is less demanding than in Jamie’s case, but as the quote above shows, the author of *The Blackbird Diaries* also finds herself compromised by ‘domestic entanglements’ which keep her from simply enjoying the natural world and which can seem never-ending and monotonous. Therefore, it comes as a release when she can finally disentangle herself. In a May entry, she expresses this in the following way: “After a morning dominated by shopping and chores that never seemed to end, I sat in the garden with a mug of tea” (Lloyd, *BD* 99). Sitting in the garden, she observes the rhythms of the familiar blackbirds as they feed their newly hatched brood.

While it might be more relaxing to watch wildlife while sitting and with a hot drink, it is also possible during household chores. This insight leads to the point I want to emphasise here: Namely, instead of always keeping her from engagement with nature, her chores actually often enable Lloyd to notice natural rhythms in the first place. Washing the dishes is the task that Lloyd mentions most often, yet no matter the time of the day and year, it offers her the opportunity to cherish “the small miracle of the goldfinches” (236) in her midwinter garden or admire an early-autumn view in which “two pale orange shreds of cloud were adrift, side by side, in a sea of yellow sky above the mountains” (199).

Sometimes, indeed, the pull of nature is too strong for her to remain at the sink. For example, when she is drawn to the backdoor by screaming swifts: “The dishes would have to wait” (90). Or when she goes to investigate a new bird call: “A curious and unfamiliar *seep, seep, seep* travelled in through the open kitchen window. [...] I abandoned the cooking, fetched the binoculars and headed into the garden” (153). Here we can see that Lloyd does not let her human routines command every part of her everyday. Instead, she has internalised the ability of “finding space to make a focus” amongst all her preoccupations and cultivates a “discipline of attention” (Gifford qtd. in Lieb). This can also mean that, in favour of a bright sky and perfect temperatures, she leaves her housework completely: “Ignoring the washing, the washing-up and all the other never-ending chores, I set off to the fell” (Lloyd, *BD* 119).

While some parts of nature can only be fully enjoyed away from the house, Lloyd's diary also shows the advantages of staying in a certain place for a sustained amount of time. In a series of May entries, she illustrates how her household chores and the rhythms of the blackbirds in her garden fruitfully intertwine. On 11th May, she notes:

The male blackbird was constantly at work in the garden. He foraged, then slipped back into the nest in the clematis and out again, flitting across the grass. [...] Later, washing up the dishes, I watched him hunting for snails [...] Our eyes met. I opened the kitchen window and pinged raisins and cranberries towards him, which he took, one at a time. Silently, we acknowledged each other's presence. (96)

As with the gardening female blackbird, Lloyd here also expresses a sense of co-working or shared working time with the male blackbird: while she washes up the dishes, he forages for food. Both actions follow certain repetitive patterns, and through Lloyd's eyes, the reader is introduced to the patterns of the bird, as he repeatedly moves between nest and grass. In addition, Lloyd also supports the cock's care work through tossing additional food to him.

About a week later, Lloyd reports on a series of days during which she repeatedly enters the garden space of the blackbird family to peg out her washing, which allows her to acquaint herself even more intimately with the birds' rhythms:

The chicks' response to food has changed. [...] Later, pegging out more washing, I heard the chicks again. [...] The sound is repetitive, whirring – the pulsating tone of a piece of clockwork – as if someone was turning the handle of a delicate Victorian automaton. (103)

It is interesting to note here that Lloyd compares the chicks' calls to 'clockwork', as indeed they become a time-marking presence to her, punctuating the temporalities of her everyday. Undertaking her chores has allowed Lloyd to record the rhythms of the blackbird family in great detail. That is, Lloyd's example proves that 'time-generating' activities can not only generate time for the workforce of capitalist progress, as described above, but they can also generate time for oneself to engage with wildlife. The word 'chore' originates from Old English *chare* or *char* for "turn, occasion, time" ("Chare"; "Chore"), hence it could be said that Lloyd has turned the time during her chores, turned it towards the rhythms of more-than-nature, turned her tasks into an occasion to notice and record.

Finally, Lloyd not only demonstrates the possibility of connecting chores with noticing nature, but also with art. An example of this connection can be found in the work of US artist

Mierle Laderman Ukeles who reconceptualised her care work as a mother – and all the repetitive tasks included in this role – into performance art. In the brochure for an exhibition of her project “Maintenance Art”, Ukeles states the following:

I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking, renewing, supporting, preserving, etc. Also (up to now separately) I ‘do’ Art. Now, I will simply do these maintenance everyday things, and flush them up to consciousness, exhibit them, as Art. (Ukeles in “Maintenance Art”)

Lloyd’s art is her writing, and she has distilled the observations she has made while conducting ‘maintenance everyday things’ into the poetic language of her diary. The artistic quality of this is, for example, expressed in the metaphor of the “delicate Victorian automaton” (Lloyd, *BD* 103) that she has conceived to illustrate the calls of the blackbird fledglings. In this way, Lloyd’s approach leads to the kind of “transformation of everyday life” (Loftus xx) envisioned by Lefebvre, because she perceives and presents her everyday like an artist, while at the same time remaining conscious of her ethical entanglements.

Family Care

Through sharing a common habitat, Lloyd has come to consider the blackbirds as even more than just neighbours. A July entry well illustrates her relationship to them. It begins with the following paragraph:

A fledgling feeding party, 7am. The cock and the three offspring were close to the back door, the three youngsters demanding food with their fruity call, only stopping momentarily when dad turned up a morsel. (Lloyd, *BD* 155)

Two aspects are noteworthy here. Firstly, Lloyd again refers to the temporality of the blackbirds’ rhythms by connecting them to her human watch, which shows ‘7am’ for this ‘feeding party’. Secondly, she uses a vocabulary that personifies the birds and bestows them with human qualities. This is already discernible in the word ‘party’, which we would tend to identify with a gathering of people, but which is even more apparent in the designation of the fledglings as ‘youngsters’ and the adult male bird as ‘dad’. This association with human families is continued in the respective diary entry, as Lloyd reports:

I grabbed the camera and pressed the shutter as the family gathered on the garden bench [...] The cock continued fetching snails from the clematis, the youngsters feeding – as if me being this close taking photographs was just a normal part of family life. (156)

While we cannot know what the blackbirds really made of the photographing, we can definitely infer from this scene that for Lloyd, they are ‘a normal part of family life.’ Taking photos of daily actions and displaying them around the home is something that many human families do habitually. To Lloyd, it comes naturally to include the blackbirds in this process. Certainly, photographs are also another means of freezing time in an archive, just like the diary.²¹ In the same way, they ensure that certain moments stay present throughout time, especially when, as Lloyd does, the photos are looked at regularly.

She does so, for example, with a picture she took in winter of the female blackbird on the doorstep of her house: “I have that photograph on my study wall. If my gaze wanders and I see it, I’m reminded of the birds I think of almost as family” (17). Here is the affirmation that Lloyd does not consider the blackbirds as separate from her human existence, or only as familiar neighbours, but indeed as kin, as part of the family. This status is mainly ascribed to the birds in her own garden, as they are the ones most common to her – however, she does also notice blackbirds in other places, like on the Isle of Mull, but watches “them more dispassionately [than the familiar blackbirds of home]” (140).

In her diary, Lloyd thus gives an account of the lives of two families interwoven across species boundaries – bird and human. This also entails the sharing of emotions, be they good or bad. As much as Lloyd experiences joy from watching the blackbirds – “I felt blessed that they had once again chosen our garden as their place to raise a family” (91) – she also, repeatedly, partakes in their struggles. For example, when in the neighbouring garden, where Lloyd suspects a nest, a tree is being felled: “The noise was deafening. Then the piercing alarm call of an adult blackbird sounded into the morning. Even for me, the stress was too much, and I headed off” (53). Later in the same day, she hears the cock bird calling for his young: “It was the sound of parental anxiety made manifest. I feared the worst” (54). Here it becomes apparent that Lloyd’s own experience as a parent feeds into her reflections, and she extends her care for family to the blackbirds. This can also mean that she feels “tired” (115) when thinking about the fact that in “a favourable year, blackbirds will lay up to five times, usually in the same nest” (115) or that she reacts with “almost [...] panic” (102) when the chicks in the nest are silent and the parents are absent for a longer period of time. There is a

²¹ For a more detailed discussion of the temporalities of photographs in diaries, see my chapter on McAnulty.

noticeable interplay between her temporal perception and her emotions, as in the following entry, two days after the ‘almost-panic’-scene:

Eating lunch in the garden. [...] The cock had been absent for hours [...]. I told Cal that I’d not seen the male blackbird for ages. ‘He’s probably in the pub,’ Cal said. A short time later the cock stormed back into the garden on the tail of one of the neighbourhood jackdaws, [...] delivering a crescendo of blackbird indignation. (105)

Here, Lloyd perceives a span of ‘hours’ as ‘ages’, as she is filled with tension during the blackbird’s absence – that is, the disruption of her familiar rhythms. She receives reassurance from another familiar being, that is, her son Cal, who, during the course of the year, starts to partake in her engagement with the blackbirds. As Lloyd phrases it, he “get[s] the blackbird bug” (110).

She realises this when he excitedly calls her out into the garden, having discovered a new fledgling. Later on, they watch together again, Cal showing growing expertise for the birds himself in distinguishing a feeding female from a fledgling (165). Even when Lloyd is away on the Scottish Isle of Mull, her son keeps her updated on the garden birds: “Then the phone on the car seat next to me burred. A text from Callum – my eyes and ears on the clematis had delivered: ‘There are *loads* of new chicks in the nest!’” (134; author’s emphasis) The behaviour of Lloyd’s son perfectly exemplifies how no explicit instruction or educational prompt is needed to raise awareness for more-than-human nature. It can suffice to witness someone else’s passion – in this case, that of his mother – to incite a spark of interest. From these close, familiar scenes, Lloyd also circles out into the wider environment where she touches upon a range of linear and cyclical temporalities, as I will show in the following.

4.3 Time in the Landscape

Buried Natural Histories

In the early autumn of the year of her diary, Lloyd is reminded by a newspaper article of a story she heard years ago, “about a cave on Kendal Fell where the bones of long-extinct animals had been found” (183). The most prominent of these animals was a wolf, the skeleton “unique” for its “unusually complete” (Kendal Museum) state, discovered and excavated in the late 19th century by amateur archaeologist John Beecham. Lloyd visits Kendal Museum, where the skeleton has been displayed “for over 100 years” (Kendal Museum); at the time of her visit, it is away at a restoration studio to be rearticulated, and in the process, it is carbon-

dated to a period “between 1139 and 1197” (Lloyd, *BD* 197). Hence, in this single wolf skeleton, different temporalities are encapsulated, spanning over 800 years: the time when the animal was alive, the time its bones have been found, the time it has been displayed in a museum.

To Lloyd, the time when the animal was alive contains the most fascination. Since first hearing the story, she has frequently been looking for the cave, and finally finds it after the museum visit, “a mere hole in the ground” (186). The cave itself might be unspectacular, but Lloyd enjoys the thought that the wolf might have walked where she walks now: “I like – no, *relish* – knowing for certain that wolves once roamed the land on my doorstep – that in all probability, they passed through what is now the garden” (188; author’s emphasis). It is the way in which the past weaves itself into her everyday that fascinates Lloyd. Like the granite quarry in Woolfson’s Aberdeen, the wolf cave is close and at the same time remains largely unnoticed to the humans of the area, though when they turn their attention towards it, they find how it reveals layers of time that make their everyday appear in a new light.

As the museum curators write, the Helsfell wolf can be considered a “nudge [...] towards [...] buried natural histories” (Kendal Museum in Lloyd, *BD* 197). Lloyd helps the reader to imagine what these natural histories would have looked like. When wolves roamed the now denuded Cumbrian uplands in the Middle Ages, the land “would have been a collage of grassland, woodland, wood pasture and glades kept open by grazing mammals” (Lloyd, *BD* 188). This diversity of habitats would have been accompanied by a diversity of plant and animal species, which Lloyd lists in over ten lines in her wolf chapter (190-191). In her considerations on tree planting on the uplands, she cites an ecologist who stresses that the seeds of native plants are always there, buried in the ground, waiting for the right time to germinate again (241).

Starting from these histories buried in earth and caves, it is possible to reimagine a more biodiverse future. As Lloyd walks fells with newly planted trees and bracken cover that indicates past forests, she writes that in the process of the landscape changing, “time will be its illustrator” (192). In this image, plants, animals and other beings would be the colours that time paints with. Lloyd looks forward to the possible pictures that are thus created and in which the wolf is an integral restorer of “balance” (187). This is why she relishes the thought of that animal, as it indicates the biodiversity that would be possible in her everyday.

Local Extinction Happening Now

As is commonly known, biodiversity is diminishing in the everyday of the 21st century, and this is also highlighted in Lloyd's diary. While the wolf has been extinct in Britain for several centuries, Lloyd portrays another animal who presents a case of "local extinction happening now" (64): the curlew. In the story of this bird, we find the more linear aspect of a timeline in danger of termination, proceeding towards a final point. Since the 1970s, British curlew populations have declined by at least 65 percent, making them one of "Britain's highest conservation priority bird species" (WWT).

In 2015, Lloyd was recruited by the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Landscape Partnership to "celebrate" (Lloyd, *BD* 57) curlews in the Shropshire-Welsh border area, together with a wildlife photographer, a sculptor and a music composer. The artists were engaged to give people hope instead of "bashing [them] over the head with the science and facts" (57). Accordingly, part of their engagement consisted in getting together with local people to sing Lloyd's poems and other songs. The sculptor, Bill Sample, led workshops for crafting curlew lanterns to enact a Shropshire folktale, in which it says: "when six curlews find the seventh [...] this will mark the beginning of the end" (63). While this story was invented likely when the birds in question were still abundant, Lloyd also acknowledges that "the tale is a folkloric attempt to reconcile death. And it is all the more prescient given the dire situation that curlews themselves now face" (63).

Thus, in the art project itself, linear and cyclical temporalities interplay. While the protagonists of the tale, the curlews, are probably heading to extinction on a linear path, the media their stories are told in – the oral quality of the poems and songs, and the visual quality of the lanterns – operate on different temporal levels. As media scholar Maren Hartmann writes regarding these different modes of communication: "orality is characterised by repetition and therefore a cyclical idea of time [...]. The image, however, brings things to a halt and affords a different engagement of its viewer than does the linear mode of reading" (Hartmann in Nyíri 122). As Lloyd reflects on the curlew project, all three of these temporalities are included in her diary. She thus also highlights that not only writing but also other forms of communication can be facilitated by Nature Writers to bring their message into the world.

Furthermore, while the celebratory character of the curlew project fits Lloyd's general agenda of paying homage to wildlife, she not only contributed to the artistic productions, but also met and talked to people involved in the conservation of the curlew. In this way, she

broadened her perspective and considered different aspects of this complex topic, including the various threats that curlews face – threats that all entail their own specific temporalities.

The first of these threats to be discussed here is nest predation, mainly by foxes, but also by ravens (Lloyd, *BD* 58-59). Ravens, in turn, had also been “on the verge of extinction” (59) in the Shropshire-Welsh borders a few years previously, but their numbers, just as those of red kites and buzzards, “have all increased on the back of protection” (64). This contrast between the conservation efforts for different species makes Lloyd wonder who decides about the intrinsic value of which species, a question that contains political dynamite, as can for example be seen in the “highly politicised and polarised” (67) debate on hen harriers and grouse moors.

Lloyd herself does not shy away from these debates, as she states: “Me, I don’t need my countryside wrapped up and cosy, a place where everything is a matter for wonder and nothing is political” (67). As soon as something is seen as political, the time factor comes into play, or, as Hartmann states: “The temporal is political” (Hartmann 47). In the case of nature conservation, this means that deciding about the value of certain animals also implies deciding about the value of certain temporalities. This leads to questions like: Which animals do we currently want to share our environment with? And, in turn, which animals do we want to invest time in? These are questions that might play into the background of her thinking, as Lloyd engages with the perspectives of different political actors, including scientists, farmers and a grouse moor manager. She meets and talks to these people, because she considers it “absolutely necessary to see the debate from both sides” (Lloyd, *BD* 68).

In fact, as becomes visible in Lloyd’s engagement with the topic, there appear to be more than only two clear-cut sides to the debate, and, with them, several temporalities. This is not only true for the specific case of the curlew, but also for matters of conservation in general. One of the questions that Lloyd herself puts forth in the discussion can function as a starting point to trace these temporalities: “What purposes should landscape perform?” (247)

Agricultural Times: Traditional

Many of the landscapes that Lloyd writes about have traditionally been shaped by agriculture. In Lefebvre’s categorisation, agriculture would be understood as cyclical, with its specific attention to “seasons and harvests” (Lefebvre, “The Everyday” 10). This can be considered to be true for some, but not all forms of agriculture, especially in the 21st century. However, the traditional agriculture that developed before the invention of modern farming practices surely adheres to certain natural rhythms. Lloyd illustrates at least two of these rhythms in her diary.

The first can be detected in her curlew project, as this bird has been recognised as an important part of the temporalities of agriculture before the 21st century: Its song, Lloyd muses, must have already been “stitched through [the] soundscape” (62) of ancient cattle-droving roads, and today, some traditional farmers cherish curlews like “long lost friends” (60) at their yearly return. However, another animal is much more pivotal to these traditional agricultural temporalities: the sheep. In her postscript, Lloyd acknowledges the everyday rhythms of sheep farmers: “[They] are some of the toughest folk [...]. They work hard, and live and work in hard terrain. They are in tune with their way of life, and of the life cycle of the animals they keep” (246). In sheep farming, cyclical temporalities are highlighted, as it is work in tune with bodily rhythms, both of the farmers and of the animals. In addition, time and space are closely connected in this practice, as the sheep “are *hefted* – having the ability to ‘know’ their place and how far to stray” (245; author’s emphasis).

The everyday cyclical practice of sheep farming has, over centuries, created a “cultural landscape” (244) which has, in turn, shaped human attitudes towards nature. These attitudes are expressed in the Lake District’s bid for UNESCO World Heritage Status, which Lloyd critically examines in her diary. On the positive side, she recognises that 18th-century Romantic commitment to the Lake District led to a “re-focuss[ing]” of “the relationship between humans and landscape” (245), building on “emotional engagement” (245), a process that finally resulted in “the development of modern conservation movements” (245), including the National Trust.

On the other hand, Lloyd highlights the negative consequences of sheep farming: overgrazed and deforested uplands devoid of biodiversity. As has been indicated above, the reintroduction of a top predator like the wolf and the regrowing of shrubs and trees would create a more biodiverse environment. Yet this is something that advocates of a sheep-shaped landscape do not like to hear. In the bid for World Heritage Status, it is argued that the uplands had been cleared of trees “since early man began to come in from the cold” (245) and therefore, that today’s people are not responsible for the loss of biodiversity. However, as Lloyd queries: “it is the presence of sheep [...] that has created and *maintains* the most significant amount of damage to the uplands” (245; author’s emphasis). Hence, the question is not about the first origin of the damage but about the process of its continuation. These differing views lead to Lloyd’s statement that sometimes, “the Lake District feels like a battleground” (190), with “[d]eeply-entrenched positions rooted in the idea of preservation, rather than conservation” (189) coming to the fore.

In the idea of preservation, a linear aspect of repetition can be detected, as preserving something in its state of existence would involve the continuation of a “series of identical facts” (Lefebvre & Régulier 84) that Lefebvre has named as defining for linear temporality – in the case of the Lake District, this means the attempt to keep the landscape identical to the Romantic ideals of past centuries. Preservation thus also implies treating “an ecosystem as if it were static” (Monbiot 221) and “freez[ing] living systems in time [by attempting] to prevent animals and plants from either leaving or [...] entering” (8). In such attitudes towards nature, the value judgements made about certain animals, plants and landscapes, including their specific temporalities, become most visible.

As ecocritical writer and journalist George Monbiot claims, conservation – or, in his case, rather rewilding – can only be sustainable when it recognises cyclical characteristics, realising that “nature consists not just of a collection of species but also of their ever-shifting relationships with each other and with the physical environment” (8-9). Real rhythm, as Lefebvre notes, must allow for difference to develop (Lyon 24). This allowance is also what Lloyd appeals to when she demands “more space for trees” (Lloyd, *BD* 246) and when she calls for a reconsideration of the values projected on landscapes and nature.

Agricultural Times: Modern

Yet another set of values is imposed on the landscape by modern farming practices in the 21st century: these have discarded many of the traditional methods which still thrived on a cyclical understanding of nature. The two other threats that the curlew faces in addition to nest predation are closely interlinked with linear capitalist temporalities. One is “peat extraction as fuel for power stations” (64), which, as Lloyd learns from curlew advocate Mary Colwell, “has, quite literally, removed curlew nesting grounds from the map” (64).

While she has only heard about this practice, another major threat is witnessed directly by Lloyd herself, leading her to more extended reflections. Her above-cited statement that she has no desire for an a-political countryside is also based on observations like this: “I’ve watched curlews looking for their fledglings the day after the contract mowers came” (67). Two pages before that statement, she explains why current farming practices are so out-of-tune with natural cycles that they lead to the eradication of bird families: “Agricultural land is often [...] managed by contractors who come in to roll, chain harrow and cut the grass, and they, and many farmers, have no awareness of nests, or are simply not interested” (65). Yet, as Lloyd reports also, some farmers do know what is happening there and have given it a fittingly drastic name: “May Murder” (64).

This murder in the season of May appears to be conducted by people with not much seasonal awareness. As these contractors do not live on the land that they work and thus have no everyday relationship to it, they cannot know the place and its rhythms like the traditional sheep farmers and their hefted animals do. In modern farming practices, time and space are not thought together. Cyclical natural rhythms are subordinated to the linear process of consumption. Consumption here is a key word, both the consumption of peat, fuel and energy as well as of agricultural products. In line with capitalist logic, some farmers ask for money to change their destructive practices. This makes Lloyd wonder: “And what is the price for ever-cheaper food? [...] the loss of some of our most iconic bird species. [...] is this a price worth paying?” (65) Yet, as I have already highlighted in my analysis of Woolfson’s *Field Notes*, it comes across as reductionist to equate time with money – in the case of paying farmers subsidies, the equation would be ‘money means more time for the curlew’. However, cyclical natural rhythms exist outside of this simple logic, as they are not mechanical and hence, not easily quantifiable.

That the matter of conservation is more complex is also apparent in another land use practice that Lloyd engages with in her curlew project: shooting estates. On the one hand, the sportive killing of vast numbers of grouse, pheasants and other birds on these estates could be read as a pure expression of consumption. Also, to enable this consumption, birds of prey like the hen harrier are persecuted to such an extent that they have become threatened with extinction in Britain.

Lloyd herself has always been “anti-hunting and shooting” (67) and finds herself uncomfortably “caught between the two worlds of grouse management and conservation” (68) when she visits an estate in Yorkshire where curlews and other endangered wading birds “are thriving on the back of predator control” (67). Despite her discomfort about the purpose this landscape has been made to serve, Lloyd describes the visited estate as “Eden” (68) in comparison “to the devastated Shropshire borderlands” (68) and notes that “over the breeding seasons, there are so many curlews, their heady, ebullient calls effervescing onto the moor in every moment of every day” (68-69).

Hence, on such grouse estates, an interplay of linear and cyclical temporalities appears to be in play: By ensuring the conditions for a linear consumption practice, the management of these environments allows for natural cycles like those of the curlew to thrive in everyday rhythms. This interplay might be an expression of the “grim reality” (67) that Lloyd detects in human relationships with nature, but she concludes that if grouse moors were the last possible habitats for curlews, she could live with that (69). It might give her the reassurance she needs

in her everyday that these birds still exist as markers of possible biodiversity, just as the wolf does in her vision of buried natural histories evolving into new futures.

Times of Climate Change

Apart from the issues of biodiversity and species conservation, there is another topic that pressures Lloyd to ask for a reconsideration of the purposes of landscapes. It is a topic that challenges all of the mentioned land use practices, be it traditional agriculture, modern agriculture or shooting estates: climate change. Especially her experiences in the final months of her diary year have caused Lloyd to reflect on this matter. As she writes in her postscript: “The year had come to a close with the dreadful events of December 5” (240) – that is, with Storm Desmond and the “biblical flood” (248) it brought in its wake.

In the main part of her diary, Lloyd illustrates that these events could be anticipated weeks previously. On 16th November, after “[t]wo weeks of Cumbrian downpours, which are nothing like mere rain”, there was first talk of floods, and a “collective sense of apprehension [could be felt] in the air” (218). On that day, Lloyd walks along the flood bank, in a watery landscape in which “birds were unusually absent” and where fields have turned “into vast lakes staked by telegraph poles” (219). The volume of water of two usually distinct rivers flowing into the bay had become so enormous that Lloyd at first thinks the tide is moving in, while in fact, it is moving out (220). In this observation, a first disruption of everyday rhythms – rhythms usually familiar and natural – is perceptible. Three entries and almost two weeks later – two weeks of even more rain – this disruption has become even clearer:

Between the bay, the river and the fields is an interplay of worlds. I thought of the topsy-turvy happenings of recent weeks: swans living on fields, sheep flood-bound on slight inclines, trapped between the familiar hedgerow and unfamiliar water. [...] Birds moved constantly in and out: in towards the redefined water-land, or out into the heave and flow of the bay. (224)

In the landscape here described, there is not only an ‘interplay of worlds’, but also an interplay of temporalities, as the rhythms of animals are inverted and some, like the sheep, are also confronted with the sudden unfamiliarity of their everyday. Here is also a landscape that has ‘redefined’ itself, having transformed beyond human control as its temporalities are no longer easily measured and quantified. This change is also indicated in Lloyd’s title for her November chapter: “The Land Remade” (217).

The December chapter, then, simply titled “Flood”, starts straight off with 5th December, the dreadful day. Lloyd opens the entry with the statement: “We knew it was going

to be bad” (227). This ‘we’ apparently also included her familiar blackbirds, because as she leaves the house in the morning, the male bird sweeps past, “calling his inimitable alarm call”, leading her to the conclusion that “it wasn’t just me that was rattled by that deeply worrying weather” (227). Lloyd details the happenings of that day over four pages, narrating it in clock intervals: “before breakfast” (227) – “8.45am” – “lunchtime” (228) – “2.30pm” – “5pm” (229) – “9pm” (230). For this single day, the clock time is mentioned much more often than in other entries. It thus reads like the attempt at giving at least some order to the chaotic developments of the day, imposing the artificial grid of the clock onto the natural world.

After breakfast on the next day, Lloyd and her family inspect the town, the damage to houses, roads and cars, and in the afternoon, they drive out to a vantage point from which they can see that their valley “had morphed from being merely flooded into a new waterland” (231). Just like in her first November entry on the flooded fields, Lloyd also notices the absence of birds and other animals in that suddenly unfamiliar landscape. The entry for 7th December then consists of “Stories from the flood” (232), involving humans, sheep, cattle and horses – some of the drowned livestock with mice on their backs. This entry demonstrates how times of crisis can bring humans and other beings into new forms of contact. Also, it is remarkable that the animals mentioned here are mostly those that have shaped the cultural landscape of the Lake District and the aesthetic values that its World Heritage status sought to preserve. However, in the temporality of the flood, the temporalities of previous centuries are washed away, negating the idea that a landscape can remain static over time. Her diary descriptions of the flood’s effect lend weight to Lloyd’s question in the postscript: “is it acceptable that those same ideals remain unaltered and unquestioned in the light of our rapidly changing climate?” (245)

She herself believes that there are “more pressing – no, urgent – issues” (246) than simply preserving a landscape shaped by sheep and Romantic ideals. To illustrate this urgency, she stresses in the postscript that the flood damages to houses and infrastructure had not been fully repaired three years after – which means that familiar everyday temporalities were still put on hold. Lloyd also highlights that a previous devastating flood in Cumbria in 2009 had been termed “a once-in-a-lifetime event”, but since then, “two more extreme flood episodes have occurred in that community” (241).

On the other hand, she also reports of local communities who could prevent flood damage to their villages by placing “brash and fallen trees across streams to slow the flow of water” (241) – Lloyd adds a fitting metaphor to these actions: “Humans behaving as beavers” (241). It is not only beavers that can provide “attenuation – or natural flood defence” (243),

but also, crucially, more trees, which stabilise the ground with their roots. Lloyd visits another valley in which a major tree planting scheme is being implemented, and where the local river “will be re-gifted its meandering form, so that the curves and lazy bends can behave in the way they are supposed to, to naturally slow the flow” (244). Previously, it had been “straightened” and “canalised” (244) into a linear form, which might have made it more quantifiable in capitalist terms. But, as it turns out, only its natural, cyclical flow will enable a continuation of life save from fatal damage.

The hope that comes with these cyclical rhythms is certainly perceptible in Lloyd’s diary. Three days after the flood, she perceives a singing blackbird as “a gift”, “belting out his heartening song of resurrection” (233). This description indicates that Lloyd finds in the bird’s song new hope and faith in the continuation of life and that she hears it as a sign of rebirth. After that, the actual flood is mentioned only once more in the main part of the diary, on 17th December when Lloyd observes herons flying over “fields from where the flood waters had receded” (233). In this entry, she has returned to her calm, descriptive style, and to an everyday rhythm that is recovering after catastrophe.

Conclusion on *The Blackbird Diaries*

Lloyd’s *The Blackbird Diaries* is a work that greatly honours the cyclical temporalities of a familiar everyday. In her ritual of daily writing over the course of a year, Lloyd develops a routine of paying respect to the natural world around her home, which in turn enables her to phrase this respect in engaging and poetic language. Her writing is situated not only in the immediacy of the moment, but also in larger traditions that humans have cultivated over time: religion and oral storytelling. This is visible in her use of religious vocabulary for memorable encounters with birds, in her recording of the oral utterances of the human beings she engages with and in her naming of landscape features like hills and mountains, which echoes a practice many humans have used in past times. In her treatment of these traditions, Lloyd distinguishes herself from Woolfson. While Woolfson shows in her reflections on Judaism how religion can inhibit the connection between humans and other-than-human nature, Lloyd employs religious vocabulary to depict moments of especially closely felt connections to nature. Also, in her embedding of direct speech from her conversations with locals, Lloyd presents informal, experiential education as a counterweight to the formal, bookish education expressed in Woolfson’s diary.

As is reflected in the practice of bestowing landscapes with stories, certain places are connected with certain rhythms. This is one of the central aspects of Lloyd’s *The Blackbird*

Diaries as the book illustrates the connection between her garden and the rhythms of birds, highlighting the bird's temporalities as central to the everyday of the human author. The blackbird makes frequent appearance in Lloyd's diary entries as well as in her memories, thus providing temporal orientation and greater meaning in her life, just as the gulls, pigeons and corvids provide it for Woolfson. With her reflections on the bird's song, Lloyd also situates herself within larger traditions of humankind that have recognised natural soundscapes as part of a collective story and as signs of hope, rebirth and the connectedness of all of life. Finally, this connectedness is also expressed in the way that Lloyd bestows agency and personality on her familiar birds, an acknowledgement that results from an empathy which has grown from their cyclical encounters.

Empathy is also a central characteristic in the times of care which shape the everyday of mothers and women working from home. The temporal implications of these roles are often neglected in the linear worldview of capitalism, in which only numerically quantifiable, productive acts are deemed valuable. However, Lloyd's practice of connecting her work at home with observing nature demonstrates that other values are to be found in times of care. The rhythm of her repetitive chores, like washing dishes or pegging out the washing, often enables Lloyd to notice the rhythms of the birds in her garden and to experience a sense of shared working time with them as the birds, too, carry out chores in care for their families. Lloyd recognises them equally as family members and shows how her human family, especially her older son, partake also in the rhythms of the birds.

While much of *The Blackbird Diaries* is concerned with the cyclical temporalities of Lloyd's familiar everyday, she also repeatedly widens her scope to times and places further away. In her reflections on the wolf, its extinction in Britain and possible reintroduction – an idea that entices thoughts of possible biodiversity –, Lloyd illustrates how the past can weave itself into the everyday, creating a connection to deep time, similar to the effects of reflecting on granite stone that Woolfson describes in her diary. Furthermore, extinction, which entails the linear temporality of final endpoints, is one of the aspects that is highlighted in Lloyd's engagement for conservation. Conservation, in turn, is shown in the diary as a matter deeply entangled in complex temporalities. In the author's reflections, an interplay of cyclical and linear temporalities can be detected on several levels. Firstly, in the art project for curlews that Lloyd co-creates with a group of artists and environmentalists, the cyclicity of orality – in the form of folktales and songs –, the pause of the image – in this case, photographs and sculptures – as well as the linearity of reading all play their vital role.

Secondly, Lloyd highlights the political dimensions of conservation, which are reflected in the value judgements made about certain animals and landscapes at specific times. In her humble manner, the author herself takes the time to ponder the different standpoints in conservation debates, which, as she shows, cannot easily be placed in the simple categories of ‘cyclical’ vs. ‘linear’. The cyclicity of agriculture – and thus, its connection to nature and the seasons – is called into question in practices that appear as static. On the one hand, Lloyd acknowledges that sheep farming, the most significant agricultural practice in her area, is an expression of cyclicity in its accord with bodily rhythms and its linkage of time and space. On the other hand, she also challenges the strict preservation of the cultural landscape created by sheep as a practice that risks falling into linear temporalities as it strives to preserve identical facts from centuries ago, not allowing for necessary variations in rhythm, which are called for in times of biodiversity loss and climate change. Lloyd also criticises 21st-century farming and land use practices, which have evidently already succumbed to linear thinking in their disconnection from seasonal rhythms, as becomes apparent in the example of the incidental eradication of curlew families through industrial mowing. In these procedures, natural cyclicity is subordinated to the linear process of consumption. Consumption also appears as a key factor on shooting estates, another party in the conservation debate that Lloyd visits to discover that they present another example of temporal entanglement: their linear consumption management allows for environments in which certain natural cycles, like the ones of curlews and other wading birds, can thrive.

Finally, Lloyd demonstrates how all of these human-shaped temporalities are challenged by the disruption of climate change, which has the capacity to suddenly introduce unfamiliarity into the everyday. While in Woolfson’s *Field Notes*, this unfamiliarity can be found in the abstract sense of doom that hovers over her entries, in Lloyd’s diary, it is depicted much more concretely. This is impressively illustrated in her recording of the flood of Storm Desmond at the end of her book, when times of crisis bring humans, other animals and the landscape into new forms of contact. These impressions finally leave the reader with a sense of humility as they demonstrate what happens when natural cycles are subdued to linear capitalist measures. Thus, both in its reflections on the wider environment and on the garden around her home, Lloyd’s diary emphasises the value of cultivating, at all times, human rhythms in tune with the rhythms of the more-than-human natural world.

5. MARK COCKER'S *A CLAXTON DIARY*

For a study of the everyday in British Nature Writing, one cannot neglect the “ordinary poeticism” (Morton) of Mark Cocker’s *A Claxton Diary: Further Field Notes from a Small Planet*. The book was published to huge acclaim, being cast as “a spellbinding nature diary that’s up there with the greatest” (Brown) – and indeed, some consider Cocker’s work to rank close behind that of Gilbert White, “the most-read natural history writer in English” (Morton). *A Claxton Diary* won the East Anglian Book of the Year Award in 2019, and was praised by the jury as “dazzling, rhythmic, evocative, energising and a welcome antidote to the political madness of our time” (Nice). Both its rhythmic quality and its restorative effect render the book suitable for the kind of temporal rhythmanalysis outlined in my theoretical considerations. Furthermore, it highlights the relevance and popularity of 21st-century Nature Diaries, as it was published as a follow-up to Cocker’s similar and similarly praised volume from 2014, called *Claxton: Field Notes from a Small Planet*. As both books are very rich and share many characteristics, I will only analyse the more recent one in my study.

Structure

In both Claxton diaries the entries are “arranged chronologically, with the day of the month privileged before the year, so that in any of the twelve chapters an article from 2018 may appear before one from 2012” (Cocker, *CD 2*). This means that, in contrast to the other works in my study, Cocker’s diary encompasses material not just from one year, but from several ones. *A Claxton Diary* mainly contains entries from the years 2012 to 2018; although there is also one entry from 2007 (151). If one imagines time as a line that only proceeds in one way, as an arrow from past to future, the structure of *A Claxton Diary* clearly appears as a disruption of linearity. That is, the diary’s structure immediately demonstrates that Cocker values cyclicity over linearity. In its construction, it makes the contained rhythms more obvious to the readers, while the rhythms of the other diaries in my study only emerge in the process of reading. Yet they are no less constructed than Cocker’s text, as all authors have edited their texts before publication and added elements that foreground certain temporalities, such as the nuanced seasonal sections in Woolfson, which highlight subtle changes in nature, the extra chapters in Lloyd, which deepen specific times in her year, and the seasonal introductions in McAnulty, which anticipate certain rhythms.

Cocker’s intention behind the structure of his diary was to “recreate a single-year cycle” (2) and convey “an unfolding sense of seasonal change” (2) in his home parish of Claxton, Norfolk. While the diary is titled after Claxton, there are also entries portraying

scenes from the surrounding villages and the wider Norfolk area as well as other counties, like Somerset (32-33), Wiltshire (26-27) or, more often, Cocker's childhood county Derbyshire, which means that the book can also serve to illustrate seasonal change in wider England.

Despite being comprised from several years, the diary has one chapter for each month, starting in January – with an entry from 1st January 2016 – and ending in December – with an entry from 29th December 2015. The number of entries per month is relatively consistent, ranging from eight to fourteen entries, which allows for the conclusion that Cocker values each month equally. The heading for each entry gives the day of the month and year as well as the place it depicts. Interestingly, some days feature twice – like 3rd February or 7th July – or even thrice – in the case of 1st September. This is one of the book's characteristics that clearly shows that the diary is composed from several years.

Just like the number of entries per month, the length of the entries themselves is relatively consistent, averaging one page. This structure can be ascribed to the fact that many of the entries have previously been published in the *Guardian's* "Country Diary" column, for which Cocker has been a contributor since 1987. On the newspaper's website, the series is introduced as "Daily despatches on the countryside and nature from the oldest newspaper column in the world" ("Country Diary"). There are two things remarkable about the choice of words in this description. Firstly, the word 'despatch' or 'dispatch' implies that something is "sent off promptly or speedily" ("Dispatch"), hence it can be connected to the idea of immediacy. Secondly, the term 'countryside' implies that the kind of nature that is represented in the column is mainly rural, as indeed it is in the works of Cocker and of Lloyd, who has also written for the "Country Diary". The column features more than a dozen writers, broadcasters, lecturers, environmentalists and biologists. There is one article for each day of the week, though instead of an article on Sundays, there are two every Monday.

Cocker's articles are usually published every second Tuesday. An exemplary comparison of seven entries from the published book shows that five of those have also appeared in the *Guardian*. Unlike the entries in the book, which simply bear the date and place in their captions, the articles have catchy titles hinting at their content, such as "Beyond the penumbra of fear" or "Heaven is a blackbird's song". Only some of them carry the addition "Country diary". All of the articles discussed are illustrated with one to three photos of the birds in question, often taken by Cocker himself.

When comparing the online articles with the versions printed in the book, there is no significant difference. On average, there are about ten changes in word choice and sentence length, with words being replaced, left out or added. In some of the articles, sentences are

noticeably shortened or contracted, possibly to ease the reading flow. Only three changes deserve further notice. Firstly, in the *Guardian* version of the entry for 3rd January 2017, Cocker gives further information on who J.A. Baker was – “the author of *The Peregrine*” – but shortens the given quote to just a “hot hoop of fear” (Cocker, “Beyond the Penumbra”). This is likely to make the *Guardian* passage more accessible to the general reader, while it can be assumed that readers of *A Claxton Diary* have a greater knowledge of Baker. Secondly, in the entry for 20th March 2018, there is a change of meaning in one adjective: While in the book the wind’s static is described as “relentless”, in the *Guardian*-article it is “intermittent” (Cocker, “Country Diary: A Landscape”), indicating a very different characteristic. As to why this change was made, no guess can be ventured. Thirdly, in the entry for 19th December 2017 a switch of pronouns occurs in the description of the observed blackbird: From an ‘it’ in the *Guardian* article (Cocker, “Country Diary: The Omnivorous”) to a ‘she’ in the book. This change accords with the individualisation of the birds that Cocker also expresses in other entries, such as the one for 3rd January 2017. It can be assumed that this choice of words was adjusted in the editing process of the book. In general, it would be interesting to learn which text version – the article or the book entry – is the one that Cocker first wrote; this knowledge would then allow for further analysis.

When asked in an online discussion about the possible overlap between Nature Writing and the poetic form of the haiku, Cocker replied that he might view his entries for the “Country Diary” as such, due to the circumstance of “having to compress an epiphany into 350 words” (Cocker, Gifford & Jamie). An even better comparison would be the haibun²², a prose paragraph rounded off with a haiku. The prose of this form is usually “concise yet detail-heavy”, and with the abundant use of “sensory details” it attempts “to evoke a sense of ‘being there’ within the reader; [...] making them feel as though they’re experiencing the events or sensory details [...] as they are happening” (“How to Write Haibun”). This way of involving the reader in immediate time is in line with the concept of the ‘despatch’ expressed in the description of the “Country Diary” column.

While, as just outlined, most of the diary entries are short and compact, there are also some longer entries in *A Claxton Diary*, for example one with four pages for 15th May 2016 – containing an extended reflection on birdsong, which has not appeared in the *Guardian* – or one with almost seven pages for 13th October 2007 – in which Cocker honours the birthday of

²² As suggested by Kathleen Jamie during the same online discussion round (Cocker, Gifford & Jamie).

distinguished East Anglian naturalist Arthur Patterson. It seems that these entries needed to be longer for Cocker to express his full message.

Apart from the diary entries themselves, there are a few additions to the published book. While the *Guardian* articles are accompanied by photographs and although Cocker is an avid photographer himself, the book version of *A Claxton Diary* contains no photos. Instead, it is illustrated with black-and-white woodcuts by artist Jonny Gibbs. One such picture is inserted on the left-hand page at the beginning of each monthly chapter, depicting animals or plants that feature in one or more of the subsequent entries. In addition, there is a woodcut on the front jacket of the hardcover version, depicting a singing male blackbird, one of the book's most prominent animals. He is portrayed in front of a background of trees and a hill with two houses, illuminated both by the crescent moon and the sun. The bird's characteristic yellow beak and eye-ring reflect the colour of the sunbeams, offering the only colour in an otherwise black-and-white picture.

On the occasion of a current exhibition, Cocker even includes a diary entry on his illustrator on 2nd April 2015, in which he characterises Gibbs' woodcuts in the following manner:

one sees his self-declared love of geometric and recurring linear patterns [...], but there is always a corresponding sensitivity to the flowing, liquid qualities of wild creatures or to the elastic shapes of foliage and trees. (Cocker, *CD* 58)

This means that the illustrations in Cocker's diary can in themselves be read as representations of the interplay between linearity – Gibbs' geometric patterns – and cyclicity – the flow and liquidity of living nature. In addition, on the cover image, there is also a disruption of a possible expectation of linear temporalities, as both the moon and the sun are depicted in the sky at the same time – which is actually a common phenomenon that shows that the border between night and day is not as clear-cut as one might assume. Furthermore, the woodcut illustrations allude to another temporal aspect, that is, to the cyclical temporalities of tradition. Woodcut printing is a technique that has been used for centuries and that requires a high degree of craftsmanship and experience grown from repeated actions. In contrast to photographs, which can be taken in an instant, woodcuts require considerable time to be created. Cocker's decision to include this form of illustration in his book enhances his emphasis on the value of the cyclical and also honours an art practice which connects humans to natural products and that is in danger of extinction in a fast-paced modern world.

Apart from the illustrations, *A Claxton Diary* contains a few textual elements that have been added to the diary itself. At the end of the book, the text is supplemented by an index which lists in alphabetical order the names of animal and plant species, place names, names of mentioned personalities and publications, such as ‘Mabey, Richard’ or the ‘Domesday Book’, as well as other phenomena, such as ‘bird migration’, ‘grouse shooting’ or ‘pesticides’. This list adds to the scientific outlook of the book and places *A Claxton Diary* in the tradition of natural history that Cocker comes from. Furthermore, at the beginning of the book, there is a dedication to Cocker’s wife, a simple contents page, an acknowledgments section and a four-page introduction. This introduction serves as a basis of my analysis of the diary’s purpose in the following section.

Purpose

As mentioned above, it was Cocker’s intention to convey the cyclical unfolding of a year in nature. He does so with a “simple descriptive approach” (1), which requires, as he finds, some justification in light of the current discourse on Nature Writing. Hence, Cocker starts his introduction by comparing his own approach with those of two of his colleagues: firstly, Paul Kingsnorth, who urges for “a completely updated and upgraded moral perspective” (1) in contrast to older Nature Writing; and secondly, Kathleen Jamie, who believes that readers require “some connective story, some fabric of human emotion, that gives the other parts of life their context and rationale” (2). Despite, in his own opinion, barely fulfilling these characteristics, Cocker is able to explain two reasons for writing his piece of Nature Writing, which can be connected to two of the purposes of a diary in Lejeune’s categorisation.

Cocker’s first message is that, even without an explicitly voiced moral perspective,

the business of transcribing nature and wildlife, remodelling them through the imagination, is by itself an honourable goal. Because something positive and unexpected occurs in that simple act of recollection. [...] Naming the parts of life becomes, at its best, a record of intimacy. (2-3)

In these acts of naming, transcribing and recollecting, a process of freezing time with the mindset of a “collector” (Lejeune, *On Diary* 195) can be detected. In his diary, Cocker “create[s] archives from lived experience” (195). Then, in his opinion, ‘something positive and unexpected’ can arise from these archives. He does not explain what exactly he means by that something, but a few paragraphs further down he shares his realisation that the “meaning and significance” (Cocker, *CD* 3) of an organism are not determined by its rarity or exoticism,

but that all life forms, even the common ones in his everyday, “are equally significant representatives of the processes of life” (4). Hence it can be said that the ‘positive and unexpected’ that reveals itself in the diary’s archive is the value of the common. This value is also encapsulated in Cocker’s use of the word ‘intimacy’, which signifies the affectionate familiarity and deep understanding that he captures and cultivates through his diary writing.

While *A Claxton Diary* thus partly has the function of freezing time, it might also enable the reverse process. As Cocker writes, “part of the exercise is that it taps into and evokes for the reader their own submerged experiences of similar places or encounters” (3). That is, this diary is not only about the memories of its author, but it also actively wants to speak to the memories of its readers, drawing and unthawing their own imaginative archives. This is a diary about relationships: the intimate relationships between the author and the living beings he transcribes as well as the relationships between the readers and their own associations. Clearly, also, there is a relationship between Cocker and his readers, whom he repeatedly addresses directly, as will be seen further in my analysis of his style. This relationship is also already apparent in the diary’s purpose as just outlined and this is one of the instances where it becomes apparent that this diary, as one reviewer of *A Claxton Diary* noted, was “written for publication and carries an evangelical note” (Brown).

Cocker certainly shares his message of the value of the common with enthusiasm, but also with humility. Here the second function of the diary can be found: that of reflection. By highlighting that all parts of life share equal significance, Cocker “seeks to make a larger political case. And it is a point addressed as much to [himself] as to anyone else” (Cocker, *CD* 3). That means that he also uses his entries to “meditate upon [life] and to examine the choices to be made” (Lejeune, *On Diary* 195). The conclusions that Cocker arrives at through this process of reflection are also what he wants to transmit to his readers, as an inspiration for their own reflections.

Tradition and Style

As could be seen in the introduction to *A Claxton Diary*, Cocker negotiates his own position with those of other authors in the tradition of Nature Writing. This applies not only to his contemporaries in the 21st century, but also to former writers. In the final paragraph of his introduction, Cocker invokes an author who has been most influential, not only on his own work, but on Nature Writing in general: 19th-century American naturalist Henry David Thoreau. Cocker takes one of Thoreau’s quotes as his “credo” (Cocker, *CD* 4): “The man of most science is the man most alive, whose life is the greatest event” (Thoreau). Stripping this

sentence of “its nineteenth-century patriarchal bias to include us all” (Cocker, *CD* 4), Cocker interprets it in the following way: “the more we enquire, the more we notice what is about us, living and related to us, the more fully and truly we shall live” (4). This connection of scientific enquiry and life is also reflected in the concept of biophilia coined by US biologist Edward O. Wilson. This ‘love of life’ can unfold best when one engages intensely with the other forms of life, as Cocker does. As he phrases it in his earlier book *Crow Country*: “studying the life of another living creature is [...] a way of being intensely alive, and recognising that you are so” (Cocker, *Crow Country* 209). In his studies and his writing, the naturalist realises his own aliveness.

Thoreau presents a role model to Cocker not only in his approach to life and science, but also in his form of writing. In an article about the books that have inspired him most, Cocker names Thoreau’s *The Journal, 1837-1861*, which he thinks of “like a living organism” and a “field guide for life” (“Country Files”). There are several aspects of Thoreau’s diary which resonate with Cocker. Firstly, the realisation that “commonplace facts” (“Country Files”) can have great poetic value. Secondly, the impact “which physical engagement with the natural world” can have on one’s writing, removing it of any unnecessary ornaments or “palaver” (“Country Files”). While Thoreau walked around Walden Pond and the woods of Concord and laboured on his bean field, Cocker walked the Norfolk Broads and laboured to turn an overgrown five-acre patch called ‘Blackwater’ into habitat-rich ground (Cocker, *Our Place* 1-5). Finally, Thoreau’s journal also presents “a powerfully political work” (“Country Files”) to Cocker, which especially appeals to him as a reader from a country in which most land and the beings living on it are bound by “ownership, control, class, money” (“Country Files”). To Cocker, the journal is about “belonging” and the “democratic greatness of our connection to the whole of life” (“Country Files”). Accordingly, it comes as no surprise that Cocker clads his own central political message in a diary format.

That Cocker recognises himself in a tradition of naturalists is not only apparent in his reflections on Thoreau. It also shows in the index to *A Claxton Diary*, in which he lists at least 53 other authors, naturalists, scientists and artists from various centuries. Hence, in a similar way to Woolfson, Cocker refers to a wealth of other people and their work. This might have to do with the fact that Cocker also works as a book reviewer and journalist, for *The Guardian*, *The New Statesman* and *The Spectator*. The respect and admiration that he has for most of the naturalists listed is also reflected in the contents of his diary, as some entries simply consist in a review of their life achievements, as in the long entry for Norfolk naturalist Arthur Patterson

(Cocker, *CD* 151-158) or in the entry about prominent 20th-century Nature Writer Henry Williamson (82-85).

Cocker himself is, in turn, placed in the tradition by critics commenting on his work. In comparing him to two more prominent writers, Richard Smyth illustrates in his critique of Cocker's 2018 volume *Our Place* how the author realises both the poetic and scientific dimensions of Nature Writing:

[he is] positioned [...] between two peregrines. [...] he has helped establish JA Baker's *The Peregrine* (1967) as 'the gold standard for all nature writing' (Cocker's words), and recent years have seen him experiment on occasion with a Bakerish baroque high style. But then there's another peregrine: Derek Ratcliffe's 1980 monograph *The Peregrine Falcon*, which drew on intensive ecological study to establish that the insecticide DDT posed an existential threat to the UK's peregrine population. It's the spirit not of Baker but of Ratcliffe that drives this impassioned and thunderingly necessary new book. (Smyth 48)

By comparing Ratcliffe's scientific spirit to Cocker, Smyth acknowledges the latter's great ability as a naturalist and observer of details and ecological connections as well as his public advocacy for more-than-human nature. The comparison with Baker, in turn, highlights his characteristics as a writer whose texts exhibit "a dream-like poetic edge, a touch of surreality" (Morton). Fellow Nature Writer Helen Macdonald reads Cocker's memoir *Crow Country* as "eccentric" and "the spiritual autobiography of a modern-day mystic" which "[a]t its most lyrical [...] matches the heights of [Baker's] deeply eerie work of avian obsession" (Macdonald 46). *A Claxton Diary* has less of that mystic ring, and the surreality often "tips over into gentle humour" (Morton), especially "the humour in man observing animals" (Brown). This variation prevents Cocker's prose-poetry from "being pretentious" (Mason). Craig Brown delivers probably the best description of Cocker's style of writing:

It is this pithiness that I so admire [...]: this ability to get straight to the nub of things and, at the same time, to find, as if by magic, the most pertinent analogies. He is brilliantly descriptive, but never airy-fairy, because he has so much detailed knowledge of his subject. (Brown)

How this style comes to the fore in *A Claxton Diary* can be illustrated by analysing a typical entry on one of the most prominent species in the book, the blackbird. The first scene with blackbirds that Cocker describes takes place in a patch belonging to a friend, who has built a

hide “that’s sunk into the ground so that the windows, which are fitted with one-way glass, look out at eye level over a nearby pond” (Cocker, *CD* 8). This hide offers “the most intimate ringside view of the wildlife while the latter, meanwhile, has no inkling of human presence” (8). The hide presents familiarity in two ways. Firstly, it is a place shared between friends who both enjoy an uninhibited view on wildlife. Secondly, it offers the chance for familiarity with this wildlife, an ‘intimate’ view, creating a space shared by humans and other beings.

Familiar also are the actions that Cocker describes: the blackbirds “breakfasted” (8) on apples that had been distributed especially for them. This choice of word is remarkable, putting the birds on a human level. They do not simply ‘feed’ or ‘eat’, but ‘breakfast’, marking this meal as something familiar. Breakfasting is a common action to many humans, and so the very word enables an instant connection. Cocker describes the breakfasting scene in great detail:

The birds hammered the fruits with gusto then they would pause, hammer again, sending white-flesh fids flying in all directions. Sometimes they sallied off completely, leaving a contrail of metallic sound ricocheting nervously among the trees. Silence descended; before they were all suddenly back at once. They gulped more apple, head up, then down, and then a pause for a personal squabble with more scraped-metal chiding; or more nerves and off they sailed. (8)

Two aspects make this description especially vivid: movement and sound. Clearly, these two aspects are also expressions of rhythm. The birds repeatedly ‘hammer’ the apples, implying that they use great force. As the verb is closely connected to the name of a tool that is used by humans, it also implies a certain intention in the action of the birds. Moreover, they perform their hammering with ‘gusto’, that is, with “relish [and] enjoyment” (“Gusto”). ‘Gusto’ is derived from the Latin word for ‘taste’ and thus also implies a certain intention and the ability to choose and enjoy. With their hammering, the blackbirds send ‘white-flesh fids flying’. This alliteration makes the movement of the apple pieces almost audible, the ‘f’-sounds implying sudden, forceful, repeated movements. A forceful movement is also indicated when the birds ‘sallied off’. Again, this is an interesting choice of words, as ‘to sally’ means, in a military context, “to rush out to make an attack” (“sally forth”). This stands in a certain contrast to the action described, as the birds rather retreat instead of attack, only coming back later to strike at the apples again.

Not only the movements, but also the sounds of the birds imply force and dynamism. In accordance with the motif of the hammer, Cocker describes the blackbirds’ calls as

‘metallic’, a ‘scraped-metal chiding’. The birds ‘chide’, that is, they scold, making loud, angry noises. Though as the word ‘squabble’ indicates, their dispute might be about something rather trivial – in this case, their breakfast. Yet at the same time as a breakfast might appear trivial and everyday, it is in fact quite essential to the life of every being to have regular meals. Hence the birds’ nervousness might be justified. Its vocal expression ‘ricochet[s]’ all around them – just like the apple pieces. In just one paragraph, Cocker lends existential weight and dynamic force to an everyday scene by using not-so-everyday vocabulary – like ‘gusto’ or ‘sallied off’.

In addition to the vocabulary, the syntax of the text mirrors the “staccato rhythms” (Cocker, *CD* 9) of the birds. This is effected both through short phrases separated by commas, such as “head up, then down, and then a pause” (8), and hyphenated compound words, such as “fruit-feeding” (8) and “leaf-flicking” (8) or “lemon-edged” (8). In describing an individual bird in exquisite detail, Cocker makes extensive use of the technique: “that sprung-loaded legs-out, chest-up posture that looked one part gun’s cocked trigger, one part coiled-spring for flight” (9). The hyphens generate short, repeated pauses in the reading flow, making the reader stop and then continue just like the blackbirds.

The discussed paragraph alone suffices to confirm what other critics have noted about Cocker’s language. He has in general been praised for his “remarkable ability to evoke landscapes and species” (Macdonald 46) and his aptitude for “conjur[ing] them back into life on the page” (Brown). In *A Claxton Diary*, many critics recognise “the breadth of his senses” (Mason) as his greatest gift as both a naturalist and a writer, as it enables him to create “holistic, almost tactile depiction[s]” (Mason) which transport the reader right into the described scene, directly conveying sight, sound, smell and touch. That is, Cocker’s style is very much grounded in the bodily.

In addition to this evocativeness, Cocker’s use of catchy syntax and extraordinary vocabulary alternates with rather generic wording, as in the following phrase: “fruit-feeding alternated with other jerky, leaf-flicking stuff” (Cocker, *CD* 8). Here now appears a very everyday word: ‘stuff’. Stuff can be a widely defined category, marking – or not marking – all kinds of ordinary things, possibly not worth further specification. At the same time, it might refer to the “basic constituents or characteristics of something or someone” (“stuff”). The ‘leaf-flicking stuff’ is a common characteristic of blackbirds. Their jerkiness also is typical, as Cocker demonstrates throughout the whole scene. The adjective ‘jerky’ has, like ‘stuff’, a more colloquial ring than other synonymous phrases Cocker uses in the same scene, such as ‘staccato’.

The phrase quoted above is one of two in this short diary entry in which Cocker employs the word ‘stuff’. It appears again towards the end of the passage. After he has described the birds’ behaviour, sounds and visual appearance in elaborate detail, Cocker simply concludes: “It was fabulous stuff” (Cocker, *CD* 9). This short sentence signifies two important things: While ‘fabulous’ refers to the extraordinariness and enchanting qualities of the blackbirds, the very common word ‘stuff’ brings the reader back down to earth, anchoring this enchantment in everyday life.

After Cocker has described the birds both from a distance and as a collective group, a change of perspective is incited when one bird comes so close to the glass pane of the hide that “[e]very detail was unmissable” (9). Not only could Cocker see the bird so clearly, but the visual contact seems reciprocal: “you felt sure she was looking at you as intently as you could see her” (9). In this moment, the bird turns from a group member into an individual, and she enters a shared sphere with the human narrator. The bird is identified as a female – ‘she’ – simply by a change of pronouns. Instead of elaborating on this identification, Cocker makes it seem quite natural that a bird should be attributed as a ‘she’ or ‘he’ instead of an ‘it’, an attribution which expresses a recognition of the bird as a subject with agency.

The pronoun also makes it easier for the reader to identify with the bird directly, offering a basis for trans-species empathy. This feeling is amplified by the use of another pronoun: ‘you’. Cocker does not speak of himself as an ‘I’ or ‘me’, but includes the reader by addressing them directly. This technique makes him as the narrator almost disappear – like the glass pane of the hide that seems to vanish while a connection between viewer and bird is forged. In this way, the reader becomes an essential part of the scene and experiences it in immediate time.

While Cocker has a great gift for drawing readers into the scene by a subtle use of language, he also likes to address them directly, as becomes apparent in an entry from 15th May 2016: “I ask you to rethink, say, the blackbird in your garden, when it starts to create that gloriously mellow sound tomorrow morning” (77). A reader of Cocker’s *Guardian* articles on the topic suggested the term “songosphere” (77) to describe the realm of music that the birds weave over the earth. While employing this term – and, in this way, honouring his reader –, Cocker reinforces his direct call to his audience at the end of the mentioned entry: “So I bid you now: stop reading and put down this page, go outside and tune into the songosphere. And give thanks for the greatest song on Earth” (77). Here it can be seen that Cocker not only relies on the belief that the simple recollection of detail suffices to conjure in the reader their own associations, but that impact can be created also through explicitly addressing the reader.

Cocker's Personal Rhythms

As Cocker admits in the introduction to *A Claxton Diary*: “Descriptive passages that are almost free from any sense of human story are often all I aspire to” (2). This means that, in contrast to the other books in my study, his diary contains less reference to the author’s personal rhythms, to his human everyday, his family or job. These aspects only occasionally shine through, so I will also only touch upon them briefly.

At the time of publishing the diary, Cocker had been living in Claxton for “eighteen years” (2), together with his wife Mary and their two daughters, Rachael and Miriam. In the acknowledgements, he reveals that they “are often implied by the use of the first-person plural in some of the stories” (ix). His daughter Miriam is apparently the only one mentioned by name in the book, as she is even listed in the index, and indeed Cocker reflects on an excursion with her in his entry for 1st May 2018. His family is also referred to in other instances, as when he opens an entry by writing: “As my poor mother’s eyes mist over with cataracts I give constant thanks for my own sight” (39). Here, then, is what Kathleen Jamie has asked for: connecting points for a human story and the emotions needed to engage the reader.

Cocker not only allows the reader occasional glimpses into his family life, but also into his working life. As a freelance writer, he has “always worked from home” (Cocker, *Crow Country* 9), and in *A Claxton Diary*, the reader learns a little about the view from his home office, as in this August entry:

[it] includes a junction box where five telephone wires converge at the top of a pole. For several years it has been a favourite gathering place for the season’s young swallows and they wreath this banal technology in the joyous rhythms of their movement and sound. (Cocker, *CD* 126-127)

In this image, there is also an interplay between the linear and the cyclical: between the lines of telephone technology and the annual cyclical rituals of nature. The cyclical, also, is what imbues the scene with life. A few sentences further down, Cocker repeats the image with even more lyricism: “blue birds clothe bare lines in a renewed vision of old summer” (127).

Cocker does not only rely on nature to come into view from his office window, but, in fact, his real office is the outdoors. As he explains in *Crow Country*: “The proximity of a natural landscape had been carefully considered when we made the decision to move [to the house in Claxton]. Since I write about nature and wildlife, such a habitat was my own kind of work space” (Cocker, *Crow Country* 19). This means that he also does a good amount of his

writing outside in the field, even when weather conditions are adverse, as in this passage from a March entry: “to write I have to stand feet planted apart, back hunched to the wind, the hail rattling loud on my down jacket” (Cocker, *CD* 46). In this way, he is able to capture impressions immediately in real time. In contrast, when he only starts writing after coming home, he notices how these impressions are diminishing: “By the time I click the computer and press the first keys, there is so little left of all that cold wind and wild bird blood except, perhaps, just enough for one short prayer” (44). In this situation, then, he is again surrounded by walls and confronted with a technological device, both of which make the cyclical rhythms of nature less tangible.

As can be seen, going outside is an essential part of Cocker’s personal rhythms. In the publisher’s description on the inside flaps of the dust cover of *A Claxton Diary* these rhythms are summarised:

For seventeen years as part of his daily routine [...] Cocker has taken a two-mile walk to the river from his cottage [...]. Over the course of those 10,000 daily paces he has learnt the art of patience to observe a butterfly, bird, flower, bee, deer, otter or fly and to take pleasure in all the other inhabitants of his parish, no matter how seemingly insignificant. (in Cocker, *CD* dust cover)

Here, it also becomes apparent that all dimensions of the common are reflected in *A Claxton Diary*: the ordinary, or ‘seemingly insignificant’; the temporal, as in ‘10,000 daily paces’; the spatially familiar, as in ‘his parish’; and the shared, as it is constituted by ‘all the other inhabitants of his parish.’ Which temporal themes can further be detected in this close engagement with the common will be illustrated in the following.

5.1 Meaning of Life in Repetition

Symptoms of Linearity

When he clarifies the purpose of the repetitiveness of his diary, Cocker reminds the reader: “Our society is sometimes too fixated with relentless novelty to appreciate that much of life is a routine” (Cocker, *CD* 3). This fixation with novelty is akin to the idea of “the superior value of the new” (Felski 84) that dominates in linear temporalities. In one of his other books, *Our Place*, Cocker also diagnoses this idea and its consequences for nature: “the real issue for the [...] environment is that the dominant pattern in our thought processes is not a circle, but a straight line” (Cocker, *Our Place* 290).

He observes a number of symptoms of this way of thinking in *A Claxton Diary*, for example when he visits Thetford Forest, “one of the largest timber plantations in southern England” (Cocker, *CD* 60), which he further describes in the following: “You can walk and walk and experience nothing but conifer block after block, made more monotonous by the gentle tilt of the ground and the confusing rectilinear grid of firebreaks” (60). In this forest, the linearity is not only an optical phenomenon, but it is also present in the way one has to move through the forest, having to follow these seemingly endless lines. Cocker describes the straight rows of trees as a kind of “marching and militarised nature” (60), and the walker appears to march with them. There is also a noticeable sense of violence in this choice of words, which highlights the damage that is inflicted by linear thinking upon living beings and ecosystems.

Cocker observes more acts of violence which not only result from a fixation with novelty, but also from a craze for tidiness:

So often now people prefer their lawns free of everything but short turf or, worse still, replace it altogether with tarmac, decking and bark chippings. In our civic space we seem to be obsessed with tidiness, as if the natural world around our homes should be an extension of our house interiors – free of any growth or disorder. (102)

In such cases, the environment is not only made linear, but it is also flattened, buried under and consumed by tarmac or other industrial materials. One might also imagine that an environment thus treated might be more easily quantifiable than a wild meadow or a tangle of brambles. Yet, as Cocker emphasises, nature needs no quantification. In opposition to the tidy civic spaces, he reminds us of what an exemplary wild species needs: “bumblebees thrive on neglect” (102). Despite his clear opinion against tidy gardens, Cocker is able to highlight how even they might be adorned with a touch of natural beauty. When they are clad in spider webs, he observes

the way that all those shining threads turn even our worst works – and I’m thinking of the lifeless gardens in many surrounding villages of wall-like leylandii and lawns shorn to look like pool tables – into multiple sheets of dewed silver. The desert is made momentarily fertile. (145)

To these ‘worst works’, one could also add other projects in civic spaces that Cocker reports in his diary. He warns against plans for a 300-vehicle car park on the UEA university campus,

which is not only used for recreation by countless people every day, but also plays host to some of the highest biodiversity in the region (134-135), presenting the fertile opposite of a desert-like garden. In a later entry, Cocker adds two more examples in which ecosystems are threatened by plans for buildings and roads, and he concludes: “In the three cases named the supporters of the development [...] seem to see nature as an abstract idea, a theoretical resource” (172). In other words, these supporters appear to exhibit that dominant linear thought pattern of Western capitalist societies.

Another case of nature as ‘theoretical resource’ and another form of violence is present in a further example of linear thinking that Cocker reflects on in *A Claxton Diary*. Like Lloyd, he critically ponders the practice of shooting gamebirds, but Cocker’s judgment is noticeably more scathing. About what he calls the “pheasant business” (188) – the word ‘business’ carrying capitalist connotations –, he writes:

One wonders if that audible violence, which is surely peculiar to the killing inflicted by industrial societies, also measures our alienation from the natural landscape. [...] I tried to imagine its key moment – that period at the end of the shoot when the guns walk down the rows of carcasses. Sometimes there are hundreds of birds. (188-189)

This example adds to the optical violence of rectilinear timber plantations and tarmacked gardens the ‘audible violence’ of gunshots. A shot certainly also represents a linear movement. However, in contrast to the silent arrows of “hunters from the Palaeolithic until the Middle Ages” (188), a bullet fired from a gun causes a noise that Cocker deems as distinctive of ‘industrial societies’. Such societies can be characterised as linear not only due to the mechanical, industrial noise that they produce, but also due to the value that they place on quantifiable numbers. This numerical aspect is also present in Cocker’s description of pheasant shooting, when he frames the final walk along the rows of dead birds as a “form of arithmetic ritual” and a kind of “killing as entertainment with numbers” (189).

Finally, there is another practice of treating ecosystems with a linear mind that Cocker comments on, and that is modern farming. In *Our Place*, he writes that England’s “arable areas are [so] stripped bare of wildlife [...] that it is almost meaningless to talk of it as *countryside*” (Cocker, *Our Place* 288; author’s emphasis). In *A Claxton Diary*, he describes this ‘countryside’ as “massively simplified”, a place in which “nothing but wood pigeons” (Cocker, *CD* 160) appears to thrive. Yet, just as with the desert-like gardens that are enhanced by spider silk, Cocker finds valuable encounters even in these environments. These can, for example, be created by the wood pigeons with their “coarse throaty song” and the “sublimely

beautiful [...] silver arc of their underwings” (159) when they descend as a flock unto winter fields. In another winter entry about the countryside, Cocker eventually observes an interplay of linear and cyclical temporalities:

There are precious few moments when modern farming seems at peace with nature, but this moment by the beet field under the winter sun was glorious. The constituent parts were entirely prosaic. There was a huge bright-red harvester going back and forth along the beet rows [aligning] its operations with a [...] tractor and trailer [...]. Enveloping all the agricultural action was a ceaseless flow of about 500 black-headed gulls. (194)

In this scene, the lines that the harvesting machines operate in and the circles that the gulls fly in coalesce into an apparently harmonious whole. Also noticeable here is Cocker’s use of the word ‘prosaic’, which implies that this ‘glorious’ impression resulted from commonplace, mundane elements, so in recording it, he also highlights the value of the common and everyday.

Renewed Sensitivity

While he repeatedly presents succinct examples of linear thinking, Cocker’s diary certainly has its focus on the cyclical. He realises that, in a society dominated by a mindset that enables the violent treatment and numerical abstraction of circular ecosystems, “[we] need somehow to recover a sense of responsibility for the non-linear structures of real life” (Cocker, *Our Place* 292). This responsibility starts with the realisation that life is made of routines. As Cocker emphasises in the introduction to *A Claxton Diary*:

We derive most from [life] when we learn how to revisit the same experience again and again, but with renewed sensitivity. No one will benefit from yoga by doing it once. Its meaning lies precisely in the repetition. It is the same with nature. (Cocker, *CD* 3)

In his diary entries, Cocker again and again revisits the same species and places and thus demonstrates what happens in this repetition. Which species he repeatedly reports on can also be inferred from the index of his book. For example, both barn swallows and bumblebees are mentioned seven times, oak trees and European robins eight times each, and rooks eleven times, but the blackbird tops them all with sixteen mentions. For the following analysis, I have chosen two exemplary species to illustrate how Cocker’s renewed sensitivity comes to the fore in their description. With its prominent role in the diary, the blackbird certainly offers

itself as a good example. Yet before I come to this species, I consider another one: although wigeon, a kind of dabbling duck, occur less often than the examples named above, with only five mentions in the index, their appearance can function as a frame to Cocker's book. They are portrayed in detail both at the beginning and at the end of the diary. Also, they live in huge flocks and are a common, widespread species, considered as "least concern" on the IUCN Red List ("Eurasian Wigeon"), hence they offer a fitting example of an everyday species during winter in England.

The first entry in which wigeon are mentioned in *A Claxton Diary* is dated to 6th January 2014, and it starts with the following words: "I was fascinated to observe the wigeon flock at this wetland site follow a distinct behavioural pattern as each day progressed" (Cocker, *CD* 9). Cocker traces these duck's behaviours through the respective day, from the morning, "which would find [them] slewed along the course of the [river] Yare" (9), to the afternoon, when the ducks' calls "had dwindled" (10), until "[by] mid-afternoon all were asleep" (10), and he finally adds a reflection on how they seem to feel safe in "the cloudlessness of our nights" (10). That Cocker is able to paint an image of the complete day of a wigeon demonstrates with how much dedication he has followed their rhythms, and he must have done so repeatedly to get a clear vision of a typical day in a wigeon's life.

In the subsequent entry, which is dated exactly a year later, to 6th January 2015, he observes the wigeon again, this time as part of "the soundscape in the last light" (10), and consequently he spends a whole paragraph describing their sounds. Finally, he returns to these ducks in December of the same year, dedicating yet another full entry to their behaviour. These three entries offer the possibility of analysing how Cocker approaches the ducks with renewed sensitivity each time. In the January 2014 entry, he portrays their looks as follows:

[they] were saturated in winter sun and it enflamed the horse-chestnut red of the drake's head. It flared in the softer lion beige of his crown. Then there were the glorious red-deer browns of the duck's breast and face. In truth the pleasure of wigeon – perhaps of all duck plumage – is that their feathers never create simple planes of colour. [...] what seems pale grey on a male's back and flanks is, in reality, a thousand sinuous charcoal lines over white. (10)

This description reveals Cocker's admiration for the ducks, whose plumage he experiences as 'glorious'. Also, the 'pleasure' of realising that their colours are not monotone planes, but composed of finest patterns, speaks to the value of watching with renewed sensitivity: surely it needs repeated observation to become aware of such details. In the December 2015 entry, Cocker adds another portrayal of the ducks, now in completely opposite weather, with "plain

grey overhead” (185) and the river having the hue of “leaden ooze” (185): “the colours of the males had a lapidary trueness even in this light: hand-cut lozenges of silica and white marble at the rear, the polished sandstone of their heads, that flake of brightness on the forecrown” (185). While he employs comparisons with other animals and plants to describe the ducks’ colours in the January scene – chestnut, lion, deer –, he now uses a vocabulary of minerals – lapidary, silica, marble, sandstone. This shows how repeated watching and recording can enrich our abilities to describe and imagine other beings. Additionally, that Cocker finds appeal in the wigeons’ looks both in sunlight and under drab cloud serves as a reminder that it is worthwhile to engage with nature in any weather.

There is another characteristic of wigeon that Cocker repeatedly describes: their sound. In the first entry, he defines it as a “clean wild piping that [always] surrounds them in an aura of innocence and comedy” (10). In the second entry, he adds to that description: “The individual note of each one has a slewed, trailing-away quality like a glass bottle skidding on thick ice. It also has an upwardly inflected interrogative tone, yet in concert the sounds created an answering reassurance for the whole flock” (11). Finally, in the third wigeon entry, he reinforces that portrayal: “A wigeon’s basic note is a companionable high whistle – *wheee* – with something of the child down a slide. It is contagious, passing to neighbours, [...] and occasionally the notes run together and rise over them as a high-silvered chorus of togetherness and panic” (186; author’s emphasis). The ‘innocence and comedy’ Cocker detects in the first description are reflected in the metaphors he uses later on: the comedy in the ice-skidding bottle and the innocence in the sliding child. Also, he not only repeatedly describes the birds, but there is also an aspect of repetition in the birds’ sounds: neighbouring ducks incite each other with their calls, repeating the piping, and they reassure each other ‘in concert’ by calling back and forth. Hence, in Cocker’s depictions of the wigeon, it is not only the value of renewed, repeated sensitivity on the side of the human observer that is highlighted, but also the meaning that repetition has for the birds’ lives.

Repetition in Birdsong

In his reflections on birdsong, which often either lead to or start with a note on blackbirds, Cocker clearly demonstrates how that meaning of repetition for all live forms plays out. In an entry from May 2016, he contemplates why “responses to the sounds of birds are [so] deeply embedded in almost all human cultures” (74). He identifies two possible reasons. The first is “the sheer range and power” (74) of bird sounds, enabled by the extraordinary “mechanics of the avian vocal organ, known as the syrinx” (74), which is “probably the most sophisticated

creator of sound in all nature” (74). To illustrate the “versatility” (74) of this organ, Cocker retells the story of an Australian lyrebird population. Lyrebirds rank among the birds with the greatest repertoire of mimicked sounds, including “note-perfect renditions of car-engines, camera motor-drives [or] petrol-driven chainsaws” (74). One particular lyrebird community in New South Wales had learned two Irish folksongs and passed them on from generation to generation, over a course of forty years. This story leads Cocker to the second reason for the enchanting quality of birdsong, now turning from the example of the lyrebird to a species closer to home, the song thrush:

Each bird you hear has learnt its repertoire of sounds from its near neighbours, and probably its own relatives. In effect, one song thrush generation passes on to the next a song torch peculiar to its species. What you are hearing, as you savour that first bird early in the new year, is not just the exquisite freshness of its performance. You are hearing all the song thrushes that have ever lived in your neighbourhood. You are blessed by a sound at once filled with a sense of the moment, but also latent with the past. (75)

The enchantment grows from the fact that birdsong both lets us experience the moment in its ‘exquisite freshness’ and simultaneously connects us with the past. Not just we humans, in fact, but also the birds are connected with their past, with their relatives and ancestors, from whom, one could say, they have learned their rituals and traditions. In addition, the metaphor that Cocker uses here to describe this process of repetition is noteworthy: he likens the song that is passed on from bird to bird to a ‘torch’, a bringer of flames and light and, as such, a sign of hope, which is a notion I will return to later on in my analysis. Apart from signifying hope, that torch also illuminates the cycle of life, its natural rhythms and recurring patterns, which birds make audible with their song: “Every year, probably for the last ten thousand, it has repeated the same pattern” (77). Through this repetition, birdsong has become

integral to our sense experience and [has] been so since the origins of our species. Their song is a subliminal fixture in our collective story but also in the story of each of us as individuals. Birdsong thus becomes a way of measuring and narrating our lives. (77)

Contained in Cocker’s assessment here is not only an observation on how repetition generates value, both for collectives and individuals, but also a comment on the connection through time, to ‘the origin of our species’, that birdsong enables, as well as the function of animals as time markers, a notion I also reflect on in the analysis of the other books in this study. To

Cocker, the voice of the song thrush not only illuminates vast scales of time, but also measures particular moments: “Just three repeated notes rang out with the volume of an alarm clock so that I was minded to check the time. It was 3.35 a.m.” (99). Here is one of the few instances in which Cocker relates a natural phenomenon to the measurement of a mechanical clock, that other narrator of our lives.

Before he comes to his above-cited conclusion on the role that birdsong plays in human stories, Cocker draws on the example of another thrush, the blackbird. Having learned from lyrebirds and song thrushes how natural music transcends time, the diary’s readers are now asked

to rethink [...] the blackbird [...] when it starts that gloriously mellow sound [in the] morning. Blackbirds, since they are so common and widespread, sing everywhere and almost all at once. They transcend our arbitrary geographical and national divisions. Millions of them harness their voices to the sun. And each blackbird, including the one near you, is part of an empire of music. (77)

In this example, it becomes clear that birdsong not only transcends time, but also space, which, as outlined in Lefebvre’s rhythmanalysis, need to be thought together, in any case. In being ‘so common and widespread’, blackbirds let the borders of space and time dissolve, creating their own ‘empire’ which is no subject to human rules and restrictions. At the same time, they offer a connection between humans from different countries – in another entry, Cocker notes that they do not only sing in Britain, but also in Turkey, Iran, Andalusia and Morocco (100). While this might render the everyday song of a (British) blackbird more exotic and mysterious, it also shows that what we take as common is also common elsewhere. Hence it is not for their extraordinariness that we should value another being, but rather for their essential part in our life. The common narrative that blackbird song creates is, as Cocker describes it, both ‘glorious’ and ‘mellow’ – the implication carried in ‘mellow’ of something “softened by age and experience” (“Mellow”) serves as another reminder of the value of repetition, as it renders the blackbird’s song softer and richer every time.

The qualities of blackbird song give Cocker occasion to pause and think repeatedly. As he writes in an April entry:

Every morning over the past few weeks and with the arrival of [...] dawn there comes to me the blended song from all of Claxton’s blackbirds. As I lie listening to the daffodil freshness of

it I try to separate out what makes their collective music so moving at such an early hour.
(Cocker, *CD* 64)

Here, again, is the sense of a collective story that arises from the ‘blended song’ of all these birds. Yet, in this example, their voices are not mellowed by age, but they ring crisp and new as expressed in the metaphor that Cocker uses here, ‘daffodil freshness’. It might read strangely at first, as daffodils do not sing, but they are of the same yellow as the male blackbirds’ beaks. In combination with the ‘freshness’ of the flowers, this metaphor creates images of early spring and dew-sprinkled mornings, anchoring the scene in a particular moment of the year.

The Elemental Cycle: Soil and Light

Apart from the transcending of time and space that birdsong offers in its repetition, it transports an additional kind of cyclicity. In wondering about the ‘moving’ quality of the blackbirds’ early morning music, Cocker realises

air must rush over each bird’s syrinx, in and out, as it makes music but also as it breathes [...]. That same stuff [...] serves as the medium bearing the sounds in waves across the garden and through the window to my ears. Yet it is also what I can hear passing in and out of me, as I lie listening to my blackbirds. It is our air – and only our air – that lets blackbirds sing and brings the music to me and which the bird and I share with every living thing wrapped around the world. (64-65)

The element of the air enables sound to be produced in a bird’s syrinx and carried over to a listener’s ear. Simultaneously, it allows both birds and human listener to breathe. In the acts of breathing, singing and listening, they all share the same medium. They are connected with it and through it. This connection through the repeated processing of a natural element is another pattern that can be traced throughout *A Claxton Diary*. In contrast to the repeated mentions of animal and plant species which can be inferred from the index, this pattern might not be identified at first glance, but it becomes apparent through reading the diary.

With his reflections on the unifying quality that air has for all of life, Cocker also highlights the value of the common: “most of the things we should value are in that infinitesimally thin air layer, perhaps 100 metres deep, where birdsong is best heard and where you and I usually sleep” (65). It is, therefore, this layer that we should turn our attention to, to hone our sensitivity for the cyclical in the everyday. In this passage, Cocker

also mentions an example of linear capitalist thinking, warning the reader to be mindful “when next astrophysicists bid us spend our billions venturing out into the dark vault of outer space” (65), where he expects “just darkness and the dead music of the stars” (65). All the hopes attached to space travel – knowledge, insight, epiphany – can be found down on earth, “coming out of the blackbirds’ beaks” (65). To Cocker, the birds signify both life and its very meaning. In this realisation, his description acquires an almost religious tone: “I know there is no such thing as angels, but were I ever allowed to name them, then all mine would be black with orange beaks” (65).

Although Cocker is critical of expensive space travel, he also cherishes what comes from outer space: the light of the sun, which makes life on Earth possible in the first place. His ‘angels’, the blackbirds, are also attached to that star, as they “harness their voices to the sun” (77) every morning. In one entry, Cocker relates sun light to “the wider flux of existence” (84), indicating its cyclical qualities, and in another entry, marvelling at dawn, he states the time span it takes for that light to reach Earth: “eight minutes” for a distance of “93 million miles” (191). In a reflection on wood warblers, he then elucidates the cycle of life that this fast-travelling light enables: “Think this: the light in the red spectrum is swallowed by all the chloroplasts that make [this forest] so green, then the leaf becomes moth larva and the caterpillar turns to muscle and surplus energy in a bird. Wood warbler and wood and song are all just light” (82). Sunlight turns into leaves, leaves turn into larva, larva turn into birdsong. All of these components and their place in a cycle are repeatedly highlighted in Cocker’s diary.

In November, he writes that “leaves feed the whole planet” (177), as they provide biomass and oxygen while absorbing carbon, and in December, he is mesmerised by a small cloud of winter gnats which are basically “leaf litter made into a dance” (197). In general, Cocker is fascinated by the role of invertebrates in the cycle of life, and he often connects them with yet another element: earth. In January, he reflects on the “relationship [of a kestrel’s] light-filled movements and that worm-fuel energy. All that elan was, in effect, earth-eaters and, thus, soil itself” (20). In the same month, he depicts the snipe’s call as “dirt made into noise” (11) and he portrays the woodcock as having “a heart and wings made from worms and, thus, of mud” (11). While wading birds like the snipe and the woodcock are more readily identified as insectivores and earth dwellers, Cocker shows that high-flying birds of prey, like the kestrel or, in a March entry, the buzzard, are also deeply connected to the earth through their feeding on worms and other invertebrates, which makes them “rooted creatures” (45).

Throughout the months of the year, Cocker portrays a whole suite of birds in their embeddedness in a cycle of light, soil and insects. In March, he finds it “[f]unny [...] to imagine [that] all lapwings are is processed invertebrates, [...] just soil turned to song and dance” (48). The latter part of that quote even provides the title of a review on *A Claxton Diary*, Brian Morton’s “Soil turned to song and dance” in *The Times Literary Supplement*, a circumstance that emphasises the significance of that motif for the whole book. At the risk of sounding repetitive, but taking Cocker’s reminder on the value of repetition to heart, further examples of the soil-invertebrate-bird-cycle include the following: in May, Cocker states that “[e]ven the nightingale’s exquisite music [...] is just invertebrate mash” (73); in August, he marvels how swifts are “based entirely on insects” (122); and in October, he thinks of the house martins’ calls as “made of insects” (150). In total, that makes for at least nine entries, distributed relatively evenly throughout the whole diary, which highlight that elemental cycle. In their frequency, they serve as repeated reminders on how the meaning of life can be found in its repeated processing of the same elements. One could say, even, that life itself practices ‘renewed sensitivity’ in each cycle.

Furthermore, we can find meaning for our human existence in these cycles because, as Cocker writes in *Our Place*, “Soul and soil are genuinely and fundamentally interconnected” (Cocker, *Our Place* 299). In the same passage, he adds: “Our imaginations are, in part, a result of ecological processes” (299). Cocker’s repeated reflections on the cycles of light and soil certainly show how his imagination has been shaped by the ecological processes he has been observing on a daily basis. The way in which Cocker’s imagination is fostered by repeated observation also proves Felski’s statement that “acts of innovation and creativity are not opposed to, but rather made possible by, the mundane cycles of the quotidian” (Felski 84). Finally, the practice of engaging with nature that is presented in *A Claxton Diary* is one that opens up ways of connecting back to the bodily, with the writing’s emphasis on the very elements and materials that our bodies – and those of all other beings – grow from. At the same time, Cocker does not neglect the incorporeal, as he recognises the soul’s connection to these elements. This recognition is also reflected in his introductory statement when he draws on the example of yoga to illustrate that the meaning of nature lies in repetition (Cocker, *CD* 3) – it is a fitting comparison, because yoga is essentially about the embodiment of the soul.

5.2 All of Life in Any Encounter

Human Heritage

Although Cocker prefers his narrative mostly “free from [...] human story” (2), he does not exclude humans from his concession that all living beings are equal agents of the processes of life. Hence, before I turn to the other beings that are foregrounded in *A Claxton Diary*, I want to analyse how the temporalities of human life play into the background of the book. There might not be many entries in which they are explicitly addressed, but on the occasions that they are, they shed an interesting light on Cocker’s perspective.

In the scene in which Cocker shelters in a hide to watch blackbirds breakfast on apples, which I analysed as an example of the author’s style earlier in this chapter, he shifts his tone in the last paragraph of the entry, moving from the enchanted immersion in the details of the blackbirds’ appearance to the following sobering statement:

As we sat and luxuriated in all this wild closeness you realised that we spend all our lives, not so much in shelter, but in a force field of fearsomeness that radiates from us into the world around. Our four-million-year-long heritage as top predatory ape has left us encircled by a dead penumbra of other creatures’ dread. (9)

In this scene, we – the humans – still ‘luxuriate’ in one moment in our shared space and familiarity with the blackbirds, having been totally immersed in their ‘wild closeness’. In the next, we become self-aware again, realising that the birds might not enjoy our presence as much as we do theirs. Our shared space does not consist only of positive connotations, but could also be filled with ‘fearsomeness’ and ‘dread’ on part of the creatures who have to share their habitats with us. It is our ‘heritage as top predatory ape’, carried over millions of years, that appears to separate us from the other forms of life. This is a heritage Cocker apparently would prefer to shed, and in this scene, at least, hidden from the birds by the hide, it “was grand to escape it just for a day” (9).

In a much later entry, Cocker comes back to that topic. When he recounts the story of a fox being rescued from a trap, he ponders: “It’s not just that we join the other animals in these moments: it is that we lose that human heritage, as old as a sharpened stick, that we all must own” (166). In this quote, two things become apparent: firstly, the violence that Cocker has recognised before, in the symptoms of linear thinking outlined above – like the numerically quantified killing of gamebirds or the commercial timber plantations that seem like rows of marching soldiers –, is also present in the metaphor of the ‘sharpened stick’ that symbolises

the human heritage as a threatening presence to other beings. Secondly, however, Cocker also hints at another possibility of relinquishing that heritage, not through hiding from the other animals, but through helping them, sharing time with them in a different way.

There are a few more instances in which Cocker reflects on how humans have been sharing their time with other forms of life. He considers another example in which humans exemplified their heritage as ‘top predator’ in its original sense, living as hunter-gatherers. However, this example is not taken from millions of years ago, but from the 20th-century account of naturalist Arthur Patterson, who recorded the “human ecology of the Breydon marshmen” (156) of Norfolk, whose “entire livelihoods” (154) were sustained by the local environment and, hence, depended on its natural cycles. In thinking about these people, Cocker admits: “Looking back from a different millennium I find it hard to believe that such a community of Britons had ever existed so close to our own time” (153-154). This statement is relatable, considering the alienation from natural rhythms that characterises the 21st century in capitalist countries like the United Kingdom, a process that was already well under way when the Norfolk marshmen still practiced their hunter-gatherer-rhythms.

Something that would also have shaped the rhythms of hunter-gatherers are the sounds of a wild environment. Cocker considers this aspect of audible rhythms in an early entry, when, on leaving his house, he is “always struck how, with a single click of the closing door, the entire audible routine of our house interior – the ticking clock, the even hum of the central heating or fridge, the slow breathing of all that other civilised stuff” (12-13) is replaced by the soundscape of the natural environment. Here he describes a transition from an everyday surrounding quantified by the linear temporalities of technology into a space created through cyclical rhythms, like the singing of birds or the change of the weather. While Cocker might be more easily immersed in such a soundscape in the rural Norfolk village where he wrote his diary, it should also be possible to experience that audible shift in most environments where humans live, although a city dweller might have to strain their ears more to pick up the “unpredictable music of nature” (13). There could be a real need to tune into that music, especially in the 21st century, as is reflected in Cocker’s following consideration:

What we perhaps require as an animal is release from that atmospheric certainty. [...] Perhaps it is this [natural soundscape] that restores the default settings of our species. We have been attuned to the Earth’s wild song for 100,000 generations; why should we cease to want or need it after just ten spent mainly indoors? (13)

Here he contrasts the long evolutionary history of humans that has developed with the sounds of the outdoors against the relatively short time span in which humans have become accustomed to an indoor environment. It appears to be Cocker's concern here that we reconnect with the longer part of our heritage, to 'restore' our species' 'default settings', which is interestingly a metaphor that evokes images of technical devices like computers or smartphones, as if modern humans were machines themselves. Perhaps, then, we need an immersion in a wild soundscape and, through it, a reconnection to our organic roots, to prevent that image from becoming a reality.

There is one more entry in which Cocker contemplates the dimensions of human heritage and the role that the senses might play in our relation to time. The sense alluded to in his first March entry is one that often appears underrated, especially in comparison to hearing and seeing: it is the sense of smell which, as Cocker shows, can be powerfully evocative. Upon smelling woodsmoke, he launches into a meditation not only on his personal memories but also on the past and future of humanity as a whole. Not only does he associate it with his travels through Nepal in his early twenties or childhood autumns, but he goes on to say:

It is not just my past that I can identify, but all of our pasts. [...] The smell of which I speak is, in a sense, the scent of all human culture. Not just the cave's thick atmosphere that blurred the Palaeolithic images flickering on the walls. It is the smell of cooked food, the smithy's forge and the combustion of steam. It is still there implied in all those things brewed by industry and now it is a smell about our entire future. It is the aroma that turned carbon into the dark cloud hanging over us all. It has just the faintest whiff of calving icebergs and even a vision of polar bears, all [...] sagging bones. (39-40)

In a broad sweep, Cocker here paints a swift history of human civilisation through the lens of woodsmoke. Just like the soundscape of the wild, this scent can connect us to past generations, as far back as to the Palaeolithic, who were likely more attuned to natural cycles. However, it also connects us to the developments of the Industrial Revolution and then to accelerated linear capitalism, which leads to a projection of our future, darkened by a carbon cloud that also melts ice and robs polar bears of their lives. Despite this gloomy culmination of that chain of associations, Cocker's sweep through human time also illustrates one of the central messages of his diary, namely that "all of life is entailed in any encounter" (4). However, although he is able to draw a tale of human history from a scent, Cocker appears more interested in the natural history of other living beings, as I will illustrate in the following.

Animal Heritage

One of the major messages of *A Claxton Diary* is to do with the temporalities of life on Earth that are visible in the everyday. While Cocker started his career as a naturalist by seeking out the most exotic and rare species in places as distant as possible, he has over time

come to realise that the extraordinariness in those species is also to be found here in oaks, common toads, blackbirds, brown hares, garden cross spiders, winter gnats. All are equally significant representatives of the processes of life that have a lineage stretching back for 3.8 billion years into an eon of the Earth's history known as the Archean. (4)

First of all, he makes a point here for the value of the species he encounters in his everyday on a regular basis. They are also extraordinary in the sense that they deserve just as much attention and reverence as any exotic species. A notion that appears to feed into that extraordinariness is the process of how species developed over time and the fact that they all share the same origin, which makes them equally valuable in Cocker's eyes. It is their lineage that makes the different species of life extraordinary. In analysing this lineage, however, it is important to keep in mind that it does not fall into the category of the linear defined in my theoretical considerations. Rather, understanding that lineage as a tight spiral comprised of manifold life cycles allows me to read it as cyclical, as I have already explained in my analysis of Woolfson's *Field Notes* and van Dooren's concept of 'flight ways'. In fact, Cocker adheres even more than Woolfson to van Dooren's call "to think about species in a way that acknowledges that they are vast evolutionary lineages stretched across millions of years, while not losing sight of the fleeting and fragile individual [beings]" (van Dooren 22).

When Cocker sees any individual animal or plant, it seems to be natural for him to think of their lineage. Throughout his diary, he repeatedly expresses his fascination with evolutionary heritage. To reinforce his realisation of the extraordinariness of common species, he writes on the last page of his introduction:

I am increasingly conscious how, on hearing the songs of toads or blackbirds, I am placed in an intimate connection with the life and time of the Jurassic age. In fact, it is now established that the latter is not just *related* to dinosaurs [...], it *is* a dinosaur. (Cocker, *CD* 4; author's emphasis)

In this quote lies an additional aspect that Cocker finds in the temporalities of other species: not only does their lineage make them remarkable and fascinating, it also allows for a feeling

of connection to past times, in this case to the Jurassic age of the dinosaurs. This connection can feel even more ‘intimate’ when one realises, as Cocker does, that the blackbird to whose song he is listening is actually an extant dinosaur. In one of his diary entries, Cocker draws upon that link again, illustrating how such shared temporality generates more meaning. When a heavy snowstorm hit the UK in March 2018, he reports that the land was clad in a silence that removed not only all sound, but also any traces of colour or “warm-blooded life” (47). Out of this mute, monochrome scenery, however,

swung a lone blackbird [...]. To see that bird, to know it was still here – that little feathered dinosaur, inheritor of the Jurassic, bringer of spring, announcer of dawn – among all that whitened silence, was as comforting as a flame in the dark. (47)

The first attributes that Cocker here ascribes to the blackbird again emphasise the animal’s heritage as a Jurassic dinosaur. In seeing blackbirds, the human viewer is reminded of their long existence on earth – during which, surely, they must have experienced and endured many snowstorms. That they survived and continue to persist, then, lends reason for hope. This hope is contained in several phrases that Cocker uses in this passage: the bird seems like ‘a flame in the dark’, illuminating an otherwise bleak scene. In addition, he is characterised as both the ‘bringer of spring’ and ‘the announcer of dawn’, heralding an end to winter and darkness.

Along with hope, there is an array of further emotions that the temporalities of evolutionary heritage inspire in Cocker. First, there is an amazement he expresses when imagining that, according to a study on “Britain’s prehistoric bird populations” (81), the country might have hosted “sixteen million wood warblers every spring” (81) after the end of the last ice age, while in 2015, only 35,000 of these small forest birds remained. Highlighting the contrast, Cocker starts his respective diary entry with the exclamation “What a world it must have been!” (81) A more abundant world, it seems. In his excitement for that past abundance, he is comparable to Lloyd, when she pictures the times when wolves still roamed a more biodiverse environment right around her home.

That same image can also conjure a sense of mystery, as Cocker shows in his continued reflection on wood warblers and how they “quarry out their notes from some mysterious Pleistocene hoard” (82). The term ‘Pleistocene’ elicits another glimpse into the wood warbler’s ice age heritage, while the words ‘quarry’ and ‘hoard’ imply that from that heritage, the bird extracts melodies from a collection of something valuable stored for future use. This facility to bring the past into the future or, in the instance of Cocker’s listening, into

the present, strikes him also as mysterious, transcending human understanding. Yet, this mystery might also contribute to the value of the bird's song.

In other instances, however, Cocker considers how human understanding might grow from interactions with other animals. In a reflection on house martins, he has the following insight: "It occurred to me, as they trafficked their annual construction materials, which they must have carried above our heads for more than a million of our shared cave-dwelling years, that maybe martins taught humans how to build houses" (90). This would be an example of sharing not only a genetic heritage, but also a cultural heritage that has developed through cyclical rhythms: in this case, the martins carried mud for their nests over human heads each year, until their repeated actions might have inspired those humans to emulate their behaviour. Something else that humans could still learn from birds today becomes apparent when Cocker contemplates an experience of watching a skein of geese approach over the sky in slow, measured flight. He realises then "that large birds in flight never rush" (187). From that thought, he ventures further:

My guess is that most large species – flamingos, cranes, geese – in their several million years evolving on Earth have not changed, unlike our own species, by so much as a metre per second in pace. Cranes from the Miocene would keep time with cranes today. (187-188)

It appears that this unrushed pace has sustained these birds over millions of years and that, in contrast to humans, no need for speeding up has occurred to them. This temporality, certainly, presents a counterweight to the relentless acceleration of many human societies in the 20th and 21st centuries. It might serve to balance the perceived urgency of our times, as Cocker highlights: "It is one of the things to learn from watching birds: to adjust to their timekeeping" (188). Here it becomes apparent how appreciating the temporal heritage of other species might also allow us to slow down and find a less urgent pace.

Inciting pauses in the everyday, imbuing it with both mystery and meaning, creating learning opportunities, sparking excitement and fostering hope – all these benefits that the engagement with other species' inherited temporalities can bring are to be found not only with birds, but also with other creatures. In Cocker's diary, two more groups of beings are most often addressed when it comes to these temporalities.

The first are the invertebrates, especially spiders, dragonflies and bumblebees. Spiders offer the opportunity to also reflect on human heritage, as we "are genetically programmed to detect [their] outlines rapidly" (144), so that an encounter with them also contains, as Cocker writes, "something of my own species' 100,000-year-old story on Earth" (144). At the same

time, that human heritage is exceeded vastly by the spider's heritage, a fact that Cocker finds "moving" (175) and hence he reminds the reader: "So when you encounter an orb-weaver web you are looking not only at the brief moment of this sphere, but also catching a glimpse of the Earth before even dinosaurs had walked it" (175). As fascinating as dinosaurs might be, this description extends our imagination towards the smaller beings who have been more enduring, surviving the extinction of the larger reptiles. Perhaps it is this survival that feeds into making their evolutionary temporalities so moving to Cocker. Sometimes, he does not even mention the emotions involved, but the simple statement of an animal's heritage seems to lend enough weight to his notions. This is the case with dragonflies, as when simply observing these insects, their flight and their eyes, Cocker repeatedly mentions their heritage, "spanning more than 300 million years" (124) or being "of the Carboniferous" (165).

Cocker's ability to think about a species both in the vast time scales in which they are embedded and in their individual fragility is illustrated in his reflections on another order of insects:

It is likely that bumblebees originated somewhere [in the mountains of Asia] and spread westwards into Europe, sixteen million years before the earliest hominids had even evolved. It is worth reflecting, when you next see one of these insects that, despite its fizzing aura of speed and busyness, you are witness to an immensely venerable lineage. Bumblebees probably pre-date our own species by thirty-five million years. (101)

This is another example of Cocker's repeated reminders of the time spans over which the different animals have existed and the fact that they populated the earth long before any humans. It also contains two noteworthy aspects that often characterise these reminders. The first is the direct addressing of the readers, posing questions to them – as when, in the spider example, Cocker asks "Is it not moving to recall that spider webs are spun from a fabric that evolved more than 350 million years ago?" (175) – and giving them incentives, actively prompting them to adopt Cocker's view on the world. In addition, as he does in the bumblebee example, he explicitly states the value of that view with the words 'it is worth reflecting'. That value is also expressed in the second characteristic feature of the given quote, which is the adjectives Cocker employs. He describes the bumblebees' lineage as 'venerable', implying that it is worthy of attention and respect precisely because of its great age. It is no surprise that this circumstance requires a reminder like Cocker's, as the individual insects often seem quite "fleeting and fragile" (van Dooren 22), a notion that he also expresses when explaining that any worker bee frequents dozens of flowers in any minute and only lives for a

few weeks. Yet, there is something to be taken from that observation, too: “Part of the joy of the insects [...] is undoubtedly that immense sense of now” (Cocker, *CD* 101). This juxtaposition of fleeting present and lasting past shows how different, complex temporalities can be embodied by a single being. It also shows that different kinds of speed might contribute to a species’ continued existence: while the large birds have survived with their measured flight, the pollinating insects have done so with their rapidity, which can allow them to extend their range in just a few years, as the tree bumblebee has recently done in Britain, expanding over large parts of the country in just twelve generations (98-99).

Plant Heritage

Contemplations on the interaction between pollinators and flowers lead to the third group of beings that cause Cocker to repeatedly reflect on their heritage: plants. Like birds and insects, they can “[let us] glimpse a fragment of the world once owned by dinosaurs” (119). Taking the example of bumblebees and yellow rattle flowers, Cocker reflects how that “mutually beneficial relationship between angiosperms and insects dates back to the Cretaceous” (119). This glimpse Cocker terms an “incidental payout” (119), using a monetary metaphor to highlight the value of the plant’s heritage. Yet, for Cocker, such a payout is not tradeable like money. It generates value in a different way, as is illustrated in another example on flower temporalities.

In a May entry, Cocker feels “instructed” (62) by a colony of sweet violets on his lawn, which have spread there over a ten-year-process in which the author and his family have defied the obsession with tidy gardens mentioned above: “Our only part in the transaction, which has blessed our garden with glorious colour, is to have done nothing: not cut, not sprayed, not worried, not intervened and not mown, but once” (63). From doing nothing, which can also be understood as a way of pausing and slowing down, he takes an instruction that alters his awareness: “the key lesson is not that the flowers themselves have done anything in a rush” (63). That is, the violets transport a similar message like the big birds in flight, providing another reminder of the value of slowness.

Just as Cocker honours the evolutionary heritage of animals, so he does that of plants, both small and large ones, without privileging a specific kind. In an entry on a 1,100-year-old oak, he widens the scope of human attention by highlighting also the admirable heritages of fairy bonnets, wasps and wood pigeons (176). That way of looking at the world equally allows Cocker “to realise that life’s three-billion-year-long heritage is there in that patch by the track” (131) when he walks along willowherb plants on one of his regular routes. This is

probably one of the examples in his diary that best shows how something considered ordinary and common can be imbued with meaning through the temporalities it contains. In a similar vein, Cocker depicts oak galls in a January entry:

What I find most moving about these quiet fragments of our landscape is their venerable heritage. [...] many gall wasps evolved in the Cretaceous [...]. So when one notes an old oak apple swaying on a January breeze, [...] one peers into deep time, back to an age when the Earth was peopled with reptiles the size of oak trees. (12)

The oak galls are as ‘moving’ to him as the spider webs, due to a heritage that is just as ‘venerable’ as that of the bumblebees. There is also an allusion to dinosaurs here, the tree-sized reptiles. In addition, a notion that Cocker adds is that of ‘deep time’. Even though he rarely mentions the term as he does here, he ‘peers’ into these temporalities constantly, as my analysis shows.

The final group of living beings important in Cocker’s diary are the ancient trees he regularly considers. In contrast to birds and insects, the time scales of trees have been recognised more clearly in human understanding, which is for example expressed in the names given to them, like the “Cathedral Oak” (26) that Cocker visits in a Wiltshire forest. On this visit, he contemplates the aspects that make this oak and its contemporaries so “beautiful” and “magnificent” (62):

Is it [...] that they contain all of our post-Norman human history in one wood stump? Or is it our time-lapse reflections on all those billions of other organisms that have lived and flourished in their complex embrace over the last millennium? Could it also be that they turn death into a living process? [...] And in their presence we can only stand and wonder at all that they have been and into what future they will journey still long after we have ceased to be. (27)

The answer to his contemplation is probably that these trees contain all of these aspects and are thus a living embodiment of complex temporalities. We might see human history in them, but also, surely, the venerable history of a myriad of other organisms that have ‘flourished’ in the tree’s ‘embrace’. We can also see in them an expression of the cycle of life and death which highlights that death need not be a definite endpoint on a line, but that it can be understood as a process, too. This can be read as a hopeful notion, as can Cocker’s conjuring

of the trees' future: while the individual human watching them might be gone, life on Earth continues.

While the age of a single tree can appear more graspable to humans, Cocker also identifies instances in which understanding for the venerability of woods is lacking. At least it is lacking in the 21st century, as Cocker demonstrates with the example of Wayland Wood, an ancient woodland in Norfolk that “is mentioned in the Domesday book and was probably many hundreds if not thousands of years old by the reign of William the Conqueror” (16). That it was mentioned in the Domesday book is already proof of a more conscious relationship that people had with that woodland in the past. That relationship is one of the two temporal facets that Cocker highlights in his entry on Wayland. He depicts the place as “a product of partnership between ourselves and the trees” as it “has been managed and harvested by human hand for more than a millennium” (16). This ‘partnership’ serves as a positive example of human interaction with the environment, because the harvested, coppiced trees “can live longer than their ‘wild’ unadulterated peers” (16). Overall, as Cocker states, “ecosystems that enjoy the same recurrent management over extended periods acquire both stability and diversity” (16). The prospering of these managed ecosystems illustrates the value of repetition and recurrent actions that form larger traditions over long time spans. It also shows the benefits that occur when humans develop sustainable rhythms together with other living beings and with the ecosystem as a whole.

When these rhythms and traditions are forgotten it also becomes more difficult to properly appreciate an ancient woodland like Wayland, so a reminder of the human-tree relationship as Cocker describes it could be a first step towards reconnecting with the larger temporalities of a particular ecosystem. Yet Cocker’s entry also highlights a second temporal aspect that shifts the focus away from the human and deepens awareness of the intrinsic value of other life forms. When he considers the difficulties that his contemporaries have in appreciating ancient woodland, Cocker claims: “We have no problem investing reverence, meaning and importance in something as old as Norwich Cathedral. We have more trouble understanding a site like Wayland [...]. Yet, in truth, we should see them as equally precious” (16). This preciousness does not arise from human management itself, but from the complex and diverse processes that have grown in and around these places over time, processes that transcend individual beings or actions. Continuing the comparison to Norwich Cathedral, Cocker reinforces this point at the end of the entry: “In ecology as in religious architecture, novelty and size count for far less than the slow accretion of tradition and the patient creative passage of the years” (17). The emphasis that Cocker repeatedly places on the value of

slowness is also present in this assertion. In addition, here time itself also appears as personalised, with its ‘patient creative passage’, which has a ring similar to Lloyd’s depiction of time as an “illustrator” (Lloyd, *BD* 192) of landscapes.

More conspicuous in Cocker’s reflections on ancient woods, however, are his allusions to religion. Wayland is not the only ecosystem that he likens to religious architecture. Considering the reverence afforded to cathedrals as shown in the TV series *Civilisations*, Cocker wonders if the nature reserve that he and his daughter sit in while discussing the programme, “wasn’t also a kind of cathedral, an endlessly renewed scene of biodiversity and beauty made by sunlight and fashioned from stardust” (Cocker, *CD* 70). The notion of religion might allow humans to consider temporalities that transcend their individual existence and that imbue life with meaning beyond personal judgement. Casting a tree or a woodland site as a ‘cathedral’ not only demands respect and humbleness, it also grants a kind of inviolability. This protected and protective status is also expressed in Cocker’s portrayal of ancient woods as “bastions of our living heritage” (17). Like ‘cathedral’, the word ‘bastion’ conjures an image of something inviolable, but it carries more of a forceful note, as if disregarding the value of an ecosystem’s temporality would equal an act of war. Instead of such violence, which I have read above as a symptom of linearity, Cocker champions the cyclicity of religious reverence and slow accretion in his depictions of ecosystems.

Geologic Time

As has been shown, Cocker tends to think in large time scales that allow him to make visible the complex temporalities in any individual moment and creature. His account is little concerned with clock time and he is aware of the artificiality of human time measurements. As he writes at the beginning of a November entry: “We know that at some level there’s no such thing as a season or month or week or even a day. There is just the liquid passage of time flowing across our lives that we chop and segment with these invented names to give it all clarity and structure” (179).

Despite this awareness, Cocker frequently employs an array of such ‘invented names’, particularly terms from geology: Archean, Carboniferous, Jurassic, Cretaceous, Miocene, Pleistocene. These words for geologic eons, periods and epochs have occurred noticeably throughout the passages I have analysed in the above. Some of them are also listed in the index to *A Claxton Diary*, which reinforces their structuring importance in Cocker’s text. However, the time spans that these terms describe often remain obscure to readers who are unfamiliar with geological specificities. Therefore, they do not lead to an exact, quantified

pinpointing on a time line, but rather conjure a sense of vast temporalities and deep time, of evolutionary processes and long heritage. As such, they strengthen Cocker's emphasis on the shared heritage of all life that is contained in a liquid, cyclical flow.

Conclusion on *A Claxton Diary*

Cocker's *A Claxton Diary* can be read as a definite counterweight against linearity and a hymn on cyclicity, both in its structure, its language and its content. As he has composed the diary from several years to illuminate the cycles of seasonal change, Cocker defies expectations of linear narratives and opens a perspective on life that is guided by repetition. His diary also demonstrates that the simple act of recording daily experiences can reveal the value of the common. It shows which fruits can be reaped from an everyday routine of observation as it is represented by Cocker's practice of walking and writing. This is a practice he has in common with Lloyd who also cultivates a ritual of simple daily recording in her diary.

Cocker's style of writing is markedly characterised by rhythm, as is visible in his detailed descriptions of movements and sounds or in his depiction of the everyday as a dynamic process. As I have highlighted, such rhythmic language is also employed by Woolfson, for example in her descriptions of the seasonal susceptibility of all living beings. Cocker's language also places a noticeable emphasis on the sensuous and the bodily. In addition, he has a practice of letting the reader partake in the immediacy and nowness of the moments that his diary encapsulates, an effect that can also be found in the short lyrical entries and the inclusion of direct speech in Lloyd's *Blackbird Diaries*.

Cocker repeatedly confronts the linear mindset which dominates capitalist systems and diagnoses its symptoms in the strict lines of timber plantations, the obsession with tidy gardens, the violence of grouse shooting and the monotony of modern agriculture. He points out how all of these practices reduce more-than-human nature to an abstract, quantifiable, fungible resource. Nevertheless, Cocker has the ability to find valuable encounters even in these linear contexts when they interplay with the cycles of nature, as when apparently lifeless gardens are adorned with spider silk in autumn, or when gulls dance with harvesting machines. Cocker's recognition for the interplay between the linear and the cyclical is also reflected in the woodcut illustrations in his book, which combine the linearity of geometric patterns with the cyclicity of the liquid flow of life.

A Claxton Diary contains two central temporal messages, namely that the meaning of life grows from repetition and that every living being stands as a representative of complex

temporalities. Cocker highlights how repeated encounters with more-than-human nature deepen our awareness for other living beings, revealing their essential value in the everyday and honing our abilities to describe, imagine and interact with them. In this, again, he is comparable with Lloyd, who has also honed her descriptive abilities through daily noticing, as I have demonstrated in my analysis of her style.

Furthermore, both Cocker and Lloyd reflect on the temporalities of birdsong. While Lloyd's reflections on the meaningful repetitions of birdsong remain on a more personal level, Cocker widens the scope to illuminate how these repeated rhythms generate value for collectives, connecting both humans and birds through past and present and thus transcending time and space. With another pattern that characterises his diary, Cocker adds a new perspective that distinguishes his diary from Lloyd's and Woolfson's, as he draws attention to the elemental cycle of life and how all living beings are linked through the repeated processing of air, light and soil.

In his understanding that their evolutionary heritage renders all living beings – humans, birds, invertebrates and plants – equally extraordinary and valuable, Cocker touches, like Woolfson with the great tit and granite stone, upon the concepts of species as 'flight ways', which embody both vast pasts and the immediate now, and of 'deep time', which we can glimpse when we consider the venerable lineages of living beings. *A Claxton Diary* presents a number of benefits that an engagement with these complex temporalities of more-than-human nature can bring: it reminds us of the value of old age, slowness and doing nothing, and it imbues our everyday with hope and the kind of meaning that transcends the limits of individualism. All of these benefits can serve as balancing factors in times of urgencies.

6. DARA MCANULTY'S *DIARY OF A YOUNG NATURALIST*

With *Diary of a Young Naturalist*, Dara McAnulty became the youngest ever recipient of the Wainwright Prize, the most important award for British Nature Writing. The jury of 2020 qualified his book as “assured, mature and sensitive [and] sure to break the mould of modern ‘nature writing’” (Wainwright Prize). Indeed, the diary was recognised for its “scampering energy” (Jamie) and its “torrent of pure, unmediated fervour” (Clarke 1965). It was also described as somewhat “shamanistic”, combining “a feeling of magical kinship with other animals and plants [and] a great store of detailed scientific knowledge” (Hart), which led one critic to conclude: “It feels like a huge privilege to be allowed to see out of someone else's eyes and experience their visionary view of the world so vividly for a few hours” (Hart). McAnulty's diary does not only adhere to the Nature Writing characteristics of scientific observation and immersive, emotional depictions, but also to the ethical component of being “explicitly political” (Bowmann & Germaine 79), as it is one example of how young activists express their “climate change ‘literacy’” (70) and “political agency” (78). Finally, *Diary of a Young Naturalist* also answers to the questions on temporalities posed in my study. While “moments of palpable urgency” (Fleming 39) are identified in it, it is even more often recognised for its cyclical elements: it “lays bare the process of finding out who you are against the backdrop of the seasonal cycle” (39) and the author's “sensing of landscape is repeatedly tied with bodily motifs” (Thiemann 162; my trans.).

Structure

Diary of a Young Naturalist “chronicles the turning of [McAnulty's] world, from spring to winter, at home, in the wild, in [his] head” and, at the same time, it “records the uprooting of a home, a change of county and landscape” (McAnulty, *DYN* 7). It begins on 21st March 2018 in County Fermanagh in the west of Northern Ireland and ends on 21st March of the following year in County Down at the east coast of the same country. The narrated year is not stated explicitly, but it can be inferred from the author's mentioning of his fourteenth birthday on 31st March. In his birthday entry, McAnulty even states the exact time of his birth as “11.20 am” (23), hinting at the importance that he places on clock time.

As indicated in the quote above, the diary starts in spring, with the first day of the season, the astronomical vernal equinox, on 21st March. As McAnulty usually titles his entries not only by date, but also by day of the week, readers learn that in 2018, this date fell on a Saturday. Before this actual first diary entry, however, a few things have been added to the published diary. First, there is the contents page, complemented by a full-page photo of the

author on the left. Then comes the dedication – “For my family” (6) – and a three-page prologue. In the prologue, McAnulty describes the aim of his book, as quoted above, and he supplies the readers with some introductory information on himself, his family and his environment. He also briefly reflects on the origins of the book, both in spatial terms – that is, where he first started writing, “in a very plain bungalow surrounded by families who kept their children behind closed doors and empty-nesters who manicured their gardens [...] with scissors” (7) – and in terms of the diary’s roots in an online blog – an aspect I will return to later on.

The diary itself is divided into four sections corresponding to the seasons. Just like the contents page, each seasonal section is introduced with a full-page, black-and-white photo²³ on the left-hand side and the name of the season on the right-hand side, written in bold longhand. Each seasonal section is opened with an introductory entry of about three to five pages, printed in italics. These entries appear to condense the essence of the season and the meaning it has to McAnulty, as well as an outlook on what it will bring for him. They are written in a poetic, often dream-like tone and contain many metaphors and comparisons. The seasons and their characteristics are likened to the author’s own development. For example, in autumn, he feels himself “rising from the darkness” and “burst[ing] open” (125) like the mushrooms. These introductory sections appear to have been written later than the actual entries and presumably have been added to the published diary as a structuring element.

The length of the entries themselves varies from approximately half a page to as much as seven pages. The number of entries for each season gradually diminishes over the year, with twenty-five entries for spring and only fifteen for winter. Sometimes, there are entries for several days in a row, but there can also be gaps as large as fifteen days. Explanations for these varying intervals will become clear later on in my analysis.

The internal temporal structure of the entries also varies; they are not always narrated in a linear manner. Some are written on the day of the narrated experiences, others the day after or a few days later. For example, McAnulty uses a Saturday entry to reflect on his first day and week at his new school, nestling these memories inside the frame of a family excursion to a river by the mountains (133-136). He sometimes also performs time jumps in narrating a single day, for example in a November entry that starts in the morning, but after just two sentences, the “day [...] blurs, fast forward” (155) to a scene later in the day, and in the next paragraph, McAnulty writes that he is “finally on the plane home” (156). Just after

²³ I will analyse these photos in more detail in my section on ‘Temporalities of Different Media’.

these first snap-shot impressions of his day, he catches himself in the third paragraph to construct a more linear narrative: “Back to the beginning... Mum and I arrived last night” (156).

On a different temporal level, the diary could be said to follow different calendars. As has been shown above, it expresses a sensitivity to astronomical dates like the equinox. It also emphasises the temporalities of Celtic traditions, as when McAnulty writes on 31st October: “It’s Samhain for us today, not Hallowe’en. The day when we celebrate the Celtic New Year – we celebrate [my brother’s] birthday on the ‘other’ New Year’s Eve” (152). These traditions have an inherent meaning for McAnulty and his family, as becomes apparent throughout the book. For example, he describes Samhain as “an opening up to the dark, lit by fires, warmed by the awakening of senses, and hopefully some space to think with the stark branches of winter” (155). The importance of these different approaches to the seasons will also become apparent in my analysis of the diary’s temporal themes.

Finally, with regard to structure, it is worth mentioning what has been added to the end of the published version. The first of these additions consists of a quote from a song by the British singer Johnny Flynn right after the last diary entry, complemented by a full-page photo from McAnulty’s family archive. After this comes a glossary of Gaelic terms used in the book, including their pronunciations and Irish spellings. Listed here are names of people – among them, McAnulty’s family members –, mythological figures, places and animals, but also geographical terms, such as “binn (BEN)” for “mountain peak” (215) or “callows (KALLOWS)” for a “river meadow” (216). The published book is then rounded off with an acknowledgments section.

Purpose

As has been stated above, part of the purpose of *Diary of a Young Naturalist* is to chronicle and record a year with its turning points and changes. However, it is more than just a simple record, as it fulfils at least three of the diary functions defined by Lejeune. The first is the freezing of time, the creation of “a memory out of paper, [...] archives from lived experience” (Lejeune, *On Diary* 195). McAnulty describes this archiving process in the following way: “I start filing away each moment in my head so that next week or next month, at some unknown point in the future, when I really need to feel happy, I can recall the details” (McAnulty, *DYN* 28). Here, the orientation towards the future that is a distinctive characteristic of diaries becomes visible. According to Lejeune, the presence of the future gives the writing of a diary its meaning and purpose, and it enables the diary to “program[...] its own rereading”

(Lejeune, *On Diary* 190-191). He likens the diary to “a radar signal that you project towards the future” (190). In McNulty’s case, it seems very clear that the diarist intends to reread what he has written and that he relies on this self-projected radar signal for his future happiness. The temporalities implied in this process are so important that I will delve into them more deeply in my subsequent thematic analysis.

The second function of McNulty’s diary is self-expression and release. This can be seen in the following quote: “If I didn’t write, if I didn’t have a way to sort through and filter the fluffiness, the haziness, the overwhelming noise that constantly surrounds me, I think I would implode” (McNulty, *DYN* 50). He crucially relies on his diary to, as Lejeune would phrase it, “unload the weight of emotions and thoughts in putting them down on paper” (Lejeune, *On Diary* 194).

This releasing act is closely intertwined with the function of reflection that the diary also fulfils. As Lejeune defines the reflective diary, it “offers a space and time protected from the pressures of life [, where you can] take refuge in its calm to ‘develop’ the image of what you have just lived through” (195). This would also be a very accurate description of McNulty’s writing process. As the young author puts it himself: “Writing it all down, spilling it out, helps me make sense of the world” (McNulty, *DYN* 193). What is more, it not only helps him make sense of the world, but allows him to become aware of its existence in the first place. This whole process of his writing becomes impressively clear in the following quote:

When people ask me why I experience nature so intensely, the truth is that I only know I’ve experienced it when I’m writing it all down later. The intensity gushes out and I feel everything again. I relive moments by scratching them out on paper or typing them up. (194)

McNulty needs the writing process to realise the intensity of his experience and to retrieve all the details that his brain has stored subconsciously. During the day, he is often confronted with “sensory overload” (204) which prevents him from processing his experiences properly, so he relies on relieving and sorting them through writing, which means that the diary also has a cyclical characteristic. McNulty also expresses this centrality of repetition when he describes that he saves the words that he feels “ricochet outside-in” (38) during his experiences and that he holds close until the opportunity to write arises. While McNulty prefers a dark, quiet room (204) to release his thoughts, he also meets his urge to write in other places and conditions, for example, in a hotel room in London, still wet from the rain that soaked him and the other participants of a demonstration (139-141); or, after another trip

to London, on the plane home, just before he “crash[es] out” (156). This only demonstrates further how huge his need for reflection and release are.

It is also interesting to look at the words he chooses to describe this releasing act: He “relive[s] the moment from scratch, spilling it all onto the page.” (204) While ‘spilling’ indicates a fluid, smooth movement, ‘scratch’ implies rougher notions. McAnulty uses this second word repeatedly; similar to the quote just given, he writes: “I relive moments by scratching them out on paper” (194). In another instance, he notes: “What started as scribbles and scratches on the page has grown into an essential shape in my days” (193). To scratch something means marking a surface with something sharp or rough, and to scribble implies hasty, careless motions. To describe his own writing as mere ‘scribbles and scratches’ appears to diminish its meaning, while on the other hand, these words carry the forcefulness that drives the release. All of these three words – spilling, scratching, scribbling – that McAnulty uses to depict his writing practice express an urge: The diary simply *had* to be written.

Tradition and Style

McAnulty writes in a distinctive style with a number of characteristic elements. The following quote serves as a starting point to illustrate this. In the respective entry, the author recounts a Celtic myth about jackdaws, then adds:

I do love these stories. They enrich my life as a young naturalist. Science, yes, always science. But we need these lost connections, they feed our imagination, bring wild characters to life, and remind us that we’re not separate from nature but part of it. Avian citizens! Why not? (45)

This reflection indicates how he brings together two different kinds of narrating natural history: science and mythology. McAnulty appears to have realised that it needs more than just scientific data to create a sustainable relationship between humans and more-than-human nature. He emphasises that we need myths to reconnect us to the wisdom and imaginative power of past societies. Furthermore, not only do mythological stories keep the past alive, they also enrich the natural world with meaning. As McAnulty notes in a contemplation on bioluminescence:

it’s wonderful to let the mind wander off with banshees and will-o’-the-wisps. Folklore and stories are so often inspired by the strange and the beautiful in the natural world, and all these stories bring nature, deeply, into our imagination. (41)

He here honours how imaginative stories connect us to the more-than-human in a meaningful way. Richard Mabey has found that in Nature Writing, a certain tension might occur between scientific accuracy and the human longing for meaning, but that myths which respond to this longing can be a legitimate part of the respective narratives, as long as they do not replace or overwrite the facts (Moran 58). McAnulty demonstrates in his diary how both meaning-making myths and scientific facts can fruitfully coexist, both serving their respective functions in the human understanding of the world. Also, myths can be seen as an expression of cyclicity as their retelling constitutes an important part of the cultures in which they have grown up. They might sometimes counter the linearity of scientific progress when they are still told despite new factual insights, operating on a different temporal plane. This need not be negative or backward, as demonstrated by McAnulty in his intertwining of the merits of cyclical myths and rational science.

Irish myths are one of the kinds of intertextual references in *Diary of a Young Naturalist*. The respective Celtic names and terms are collected in the glossary at the end of the book. While a glossary belongs to the typical paratexts of Nature Writing books, McAnulty's diary does not contain other such paratexts, like an index or a works cited list. Nevertheless, he does relate to other authors and their works. Firstly, this includes references to fiction, including Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. McAnulty connects quotes and motifs of these books to aspects of his own life, like Anne's appreciation of the month of October (McAnulty, *DYN* 145), or the reminder in *The Secret Garden* that more surprising things happen to people when they courageously foster delightful thoughts (109). He also notes, in reference to *Mrs Dalloway*: "my intertwining isn't with people but with the elements, with nature, and it has become inseparable from my daily life, my own story" (181).

The second way of connecting to other authors happens off the page, in McAnulty's real life, demonstrating that he is, after all, also becoming more intertwined with other people. While other Nature Writers routinely quote deceased authors from past centuries, McAnulty has the privilege of living at the same time as renowned writers and nature activists who are still alive and whom he can actually meet physically. Accordingly, his diary tells of these interactions: He is campaigning together with Chris Packham (138) and is gifted a hagstone by Robert Macfarlane – "A gift from one generation to another. An established writer to a novice" (141). The influences that McAnulty experiences as an author thus span different

dimensions of time, from the centuries of mythology up to the present day, which adds an intergenerational aspect to his diary.

Finally, another remarkable element of McAnulty's style is his language. While, as shown above, he does like to draw on science and indeed routinely weaves facts about plants, animals and ecosystems into his entries, he is also able to convey his enthusiasm for these facts and all of nature in a lively language. The linguistic feature that makes this probably most apparent, and that distinguishes his diary from the other works analysed in this study, is the exclamation mark. It can be found in the quote given at the beginning of this section – “Avian citizens! Why not?” (45) – and in many other instances (43; 46; 154). Often, it also accompanies affirmations that start with a “Yes” (43; 130). In addition to conveying the emphasis of McAnulty's sentences, the exclamation mark also gives pause to the reading process, a sense of surprise, as the reader feels directly addressed and called to think. As such, the exclamation mark interrupts the linear reading process, similar to the photos that the book is interspersed with. It points to the power of the present moment, and to the rhythms of intensive emotions experienced by McAnulty.

Temporalities of Different Media

Visual Material in the Book

Given that the visual aspects of the published book are so striking, it is worthwhile to place special emphasis on its materiality and its incorporation of different media. In this, I focus, firstly, on the visual material added to the published book, and, secondly, on the diary's relationship to the online blog that it originated from. The Little Toller hardback edition (2020) has a colourful cover, with illustrations of animals and plants on a vibrant yellow background marked with scraggly, coloured lines, and a larger illustration of McAnulty next to the title, walking away from the viewer, as if he is walking into the book. This visual language is continued inside the hardback cover, where a map of Northern Ireland is found on which key places of the narrative are shown. These places are connected with arrows that indicate movement – both the large house move from Enniskillen to Castlewellan as well as other travels, for example from Castlewellan to Belfast for the School Strike for Climate. Animals and plants also populate the map, most of them indicating the places where they appear throughout the narrative.²⁴ Considering the effect of the map itself on the reading

²⁴ It is interesting to note that this map has been changed in the Penguin paperback edition (2021), where it is less colourful and less populated, but clearer to read, with an added map for Rathlin Island, an important travel

process, it can be noted that readers are likely to consult it during reading, especially if they are unfamiliar with the geography in question, thus repeatedly interrupting the linearity of the narrative.

Another element that gives occasion to interrupt the reading are the photos included throughout the whole book. All of them are taken by the McAnulty family and all of them are black-and-white²⁵; some fill the page, others are smaller. The first full-page photo is placed opposite the contents page, showing the author jumping over a small crack in the ground, heading away from the viewer. Then each seasonal section is preceded by a large photo: For spring, it shows a close-up of a water bucket filled with plants and a branch. For summer, it is a picture of the author in front of a buddleia bush, with a butterfly perched on his palm. For autumn, it is a picture of McAnulty and his siblings hugging on a pebbly beach. And for winter, McAnulty is shown at a School Strike for Climate demonstration, standing in front of the other protestors in his school uniform, one fist in the air. The last two full-page photos are found at the end of the book, after the last entry: Facing the page with a quote from a song, McAnulty and his mother are walking away from the viewer on a path heading through open country with just a few trees towards low hills; by the flowers at the wayside and the hat McAnulty's mother is wearing, we presume it is summer. On the reverse of the same page is the last large photo, a close-up of a collection of shells and pods from the chestnut and sweetgum; this picture precedes the glossary. The acknowledgments are framed by two smaller photos, one of McAnulty and his two siblings and one of the author crouching on the ground, with his binoculars raised to his face.

There are a few noteworthy aspects regarding these photos. Firstly, as stated above, they give pause to the linear reading process. Secondly, they add elements of immediacy and authenticity, as most of them appear as snapshots and show everyday sights, like the water bucket in the garden or McAnulty's family members. As such, the photos give the reader additional insight into the private world of the author, complementing his written words with specific visuals. Thirdly, in line with one of the functions of the diary, the photos freeze moments in time, representing conserved memories. Furthermore, their relation to the text is present on several levels. Not only do they accompany it as actual material, but photographs are referred to throughout the text. For example, McAnulty notes that he looked through old photos of him as a kid holding slugs up to his squinting eyes (143). In addition to this factual

destination for McAnulty. This change of paratext is an indication of how texts themselves can change over time – in this case, already over the short span of one year.

²⁵ Most likely for publication reasons, considering the higher cost for printing coloured pictures.

level, photography crucially occupies a metaphorical level in McAnulty's writing. His "brain camera" (194) makes a regular appearance, an aspect I will come back to in my thematic analysis.

The Book's Relation to the Online Blog

Photos are also part of McAnulty's online blog – which might be one of the reasons for so many of them being included in the printed book. I now turn from this visual material to the relationship between the different channels through which McAnulty's writing appears. As he notes in the prologue, he has been writing an online blog since he was thirteen, which was enjoyed by a "good few people [who] said more than once that I should write a book" (9). He posted his first blog entry on 14th June 2016, consisting of three short paragraphs and two photos of his "patch" (McAnulty, "Welcome"), one of his most familiar pieces of land. In it, he already stated what would also be the mission of his book later on:

My challenge is to encounter more wildlife and also to chronicle my experiences [...]; to have a 'diary' of sorts to look back on and hopefully to inspire other young people to get more involved in the natural world. (McAnulty, "Welcome")

McAnulty kept up his blog for a little more than three years. In an entry from 10th July 2018, he mentions for the first time that he is working on a book, and in his last entry, on 2nd January 2019, he shares some insight into the writing process:

I'm in the throes of writing my book, one of the most intense, exhilarating, frustrating, joyous and terrifying experiences of my life, so far! It's a rollercoaster of emotions- particularly as it's written in real time, with real and raw emotions; all from the heart. (McAnulty, "Happy New Year!")

It is interesting here that McAnulty uses the notion of 'real time' to describe his book writing process, because "*real-timeness*" (Milan 57; author's emphasis) is understood by many scholars as one of the defining patterns of online social media, referring to the fact that "the content uploaded online usually appears on-screen in nearly real time, allowing for a quasi-simultaneity of the action or emotion and its representation" (57). Certainly, a book that first has to be fully written and printed before it can represent anything cannot provide such simultaneity. Hence, in the instance of his blog post, it seems that McAnulty has transferred the temporalities of social media onto the writing of his diary. This shows the pervasiveness of

online temporalities in 21st-century everyday experience. According to Barassi, these create the “ideological perception” of a “temporality of immediacy” that entails “a shared perception that the internet offers ‘real time’ connection with events and people” as well as the “impression that we live in a continuous present, a *hyper now*, where past and future are subservient to the logic of the present” (Barassi 76; author’s emphasis), while in truth, this perception is an illusion.

At least since this last blog entry, McAnulty’s social media presence has shifted to Twitter, where he appears still to be active. While this provides useful background context for my analysis, it would exceed the scope of my work to dwell on the details of McAnulty’s online activity further. Rather, I will remain focused on the instances in which his social media is mentioned in *Diary of a Young Naturalist* and investigate which temporal implications can be drawn from these. McAnulty’s online presence only features occasionally in the published book. As he admits in his last post that he has neglected his blog (McAnulty, “Happy New Year!”), it can be supposed that he separated the two forms of media while dedicating himself to his diary. While he still used the rhetoric of social media when referring to his book on his blog, as demonstrated above, it seems likely that it indicates a shift in his own writing temporalities: from short-term online posting to the longer-term project of working on a publishable book. He does not reflect on that change of modalities much, probably because the larger changes in his life, like moving house and school, attracted more attention.

Nevertheless, reflections on the benefits and disadvantages of social media can be found in the published diary. At an annual meeting of people engaged in hen harrier conservation, McAnulty experiences a mixture of feelings:

At all these gatherings, you see, well-meaning people tell me how inspirational I am. How my Tweets lift their day. How my blogs, campaigning, talks are ‘just amazing’ [...] and some even say how I’m a ‘fantastic role model to young people’. I hate it all. Honestly, I feel like an imposter. (McAnulty, *DYN* 110)

On the one hand, this quote shows how social media are part of the everyday, and that in this, they have the potential to lift and inspire people across time and space, thus creating cycles of motivation. On the other hand, the praise he receives repeatedly for his online presence throws McAnulty into cycles of discomfort. He does not want to be put in “the spotlight” (110); and he would prefer people to help others, like their own children, to engage in real action instead of just doling out words of approval. These ambivalent impressions of

McAnulty's public engagement also shed light on his role as an activist. The quote above shows how he is framed as a 'role model' for the activism of his generation, a portrayal I will come back to later in this chapter, in the section on 'Growing Up in Times of Climate Dread'.

Here, I proceed to base my analysis of McAnulty's online activities on Barassi's understanding that "it is *through everyday human practices that we construct specific temporalities*" and that we therefore "need to understand social media use as 'temporalizing practice'" (Barassi 79; author's emphasis). Social media have changed the temporalities of social and collective action. As Stefania Milan, professor of critical data studies, notes, they

redesign the process of identity building, but also the notion of what is collective in collective identity—that is to say, the experience rather than the belonging. I call this transposed identity building process 'visibility'. [...] Visibility communicates urgency and inexorable interpersonal exchange on the 'front stage'. (Milan 62)

This 'front stage' is where McAnulty does not want to be placed. When, as he outlines, people just congratulate him for his online presence instead of taking action in the physical world themselves, this hints at another aspect of identity building on social media as illustrated by Milan: "the cloud [...] demands less responsibility towards the collective component: in other words, it offers identification but comes with no strings attached" (66). This identification through experience and performed visibility also becomes apparent when McAnulty reflects further on the possibly negative aspects of social media. When he and his family visit Castle Ward, an estate famous from the TV series *Game of Thrones*, he notes:

And when we arrive, Lorcan groans at the sight of the tour buses and people walking around in costume. They all want their little bit of the screen magic! A selfie for Twitter or Instagram. I hope they know that magic exists everywhere. (McAnulty, *DYN* 196)

Here is an example of how media – in this case, both television and online media – can divert our attention from the outside world and direct our focus only towards specific things. It is also an example of how "the very publicity of participation rather than the sense of belonging [...] has become the defining feature of the collective action" (Dencik & Leistert 5). While the tourists come for the film setting with a preformed notion of what they will see – seeking visibility through displaying their experience online –, McAnulty and his family come for the natural surroundings of the castle, approaching it with an open mind and all their senses – and in this, they find a true sense of belonging. In his comment on magic existing everywhere,

McAnulty encourages us to widen our scope of attention and allow for the surprise in everyday occasions. One need not travel to a famous place to experience enchantment, that is the message here.

On a more positive level, however, the power of social media to draw attention to something specific can also be used in a beneficial way. McAnulty uses his online presence to encourage people to get active for nature, as when he helps promoting a People's Walk for Wildlife organised by naturalist Chris Packham "by doing videos and Tweeting lots", turning his social media into "a hive of activity" (McAnulty, *DYN* 138). The metaphor of the 'hive' implies the cooperative work of a group of individuals towards a larger goal, in this case, more care for more-than-human nature. Such online campaigning serves as one example of what a connection between the digital and the physical world can affect. McAnulty reflects on this linkage at the end of his book. For most of his life, he has been used to keeping his thoughts and emotions to himself and his family,

[b]ut now there are concentric ripples, rippling out through a digital, online world into the very real world of activism, social action and interaction. It keeps on rippling. I have to drift and swirl with it, but always I'll need to retreat, back to the foundation stones of myself. (208)

In the interaction between the digital and the physical, the cyclical can be found: It is in the metaphors of water that McAnulty employs, in the 'rippling' and 'swirling'. The given quote also encapsulates what is necessary for fruitful activism: both the forward-pushing, linear action of online posting and the repeated, cyclical return to one's own roots in the bodily world.

McAnulty's conclusion realises a circumstance that is in line with the limits – temporally and spatially – of online activism as pointed out by Barassi and other scholars. The performance of visibility that is assumed to have to happen in 'real time' and that is valued over belonging and the embodiment of real action "diminishes prospects and potentials for longer-term and sustained efforts towards emancipatory ideals" (Dencik & Leistert 5). That social media is not always an appropriate tool for fostering long-term action also has to do with the temporality of online posting, which "needs to be quick, short and immediate [as well as] catchy. This means that activists do not have the space and time to articulate their political reflections" (Barassi 83). A book, such as McAnulty's diary, offers this time and space for what cannot be elaborated sufficiently online. It thus has a temporal advantage, and it also alleviates the pressure of constant, 'real time' posting, which otherwise "leads to a great deal of anxiety [in the] everyday practices" (82) of activists.

This is not to disregard another benefit of online media referred to in *Diary of a Young Naturalist*. This is not unfolding on the larger social level of activism, as sketched above, but on a more personal level for the author himself. While acknowledging the “many bad things, [like] a source of anxiety, stress and hate” (McAnulty, *DYN* 144) that social media can involve, McAnulty also concedes:

For me, it has been a blessing. Because I’ve not been able to hold conversations dexterously in the ‘real’ world, platforms like Twitter have enabled me to be myself, allowed my heart and brain to speak with a clarity that would otherwise have been impossible. (144)

In this case, social media has become a catalyst for self-expression and a bridge towards the physical world.²⁶ How this can manifest itself is visible in the entry from which the above quote is taken. Here, McAnulty reports about a visit to the Ulster Museum in Belfast where he is presented as an “expert explorer” (144): a text he has written for the exhibition and a photo of him are being displayed next to “two *actual* experts” (144; author’s emphasis), one of whom McAnulty met on Twitter.

In this example, there is also an interesting juxtaposition of temporalities: that of the museum, which makes visible such deep time scales as the evolution of life, and the much more recent, faster-paced temporality of the digital. In his diary, McAnulty brings these different levels into dialogue, as it contains different media and memory objects. A further example of these that should not go unmentioned is the materiality of his actual diary. As indicated above, he had shifted from writing on-line towards on paper, which allowed for a more physical approach: “As I write at the end of the day, I press the oakleaves into my diary in good company with feathers and celandine, gentian and speedwell” (136-137). In preserving not only words, but actual natural objects, his diary becomes a small museum of its own, encapsulating a range of temporalities.²⁷

²⁶ The benefits of the internet that McAnulty describes here also have to do with his autism. As literary scholar Natalie Kruse notes: “the availability of technological gadgets has revolutionized and highly improved the potential of communicative self-expression and interaction for people on the autism spectrum” (Kruse 222). Also, the internet “uncover[s] the situationality of autistic ‘inadequacies’, which—while, potentially, becoming visible in face-to-face communication—often vanish with a change of communication medium, as some of the symptoms of autism are dependent on the environment” (20).

²⁷ However, there is no visual or material incorporation of these pressed plants in the published diary.

McAnulty's Personal Rhythms

Personal rhythms are central to McAnulty's narrative, particularly those woven into family life. His family includes his dad, who is a marine scientist, his mum Róisín, his younger brother Lorcan and his younger sister Bláthnaid as well as their rescue greyhound Rosie. As McAnulty writes in the prologue, they "weather the storms as a family" (7). However, they do not only face the challenges of life together, but also share the happy moments and their love for nature. In fact, McAnulty ascribes a large part of his own love for nature to his parents' home: "It might be innate, something I was born with, but without encouragement from parents and teachers and access to the wilder places, it can't bind to everyday life" (19).

The McAnulty family actively embeds the wild in their everyday life, even if they have to go to some length for it. Their house in Fermanagh, where they live at the beginning of the diary, is surrounded by agriculture, which provides for good views but not much wildlife (95). Hence, they often drive out to nearby nature reserves like Killykeeghan, which Dara also dubs as "McAnulty chapel" (96), for the moments of elation they celebrate there together. For example, when they spot their first hen harrier of the year, they cannot help but excitedly hug each other, because "that's what we McAnultys do. [...] We want to share our love and the joy we feel in a moment like this, share it with each other, with the place we're in" (95). Their excursions to wilder places contribute an important structuring element to the rhythms of the family – as McAnulty writes about the summer holidays, which are usually marked by projects and road trips: "We're never stagnant, unlike at school" (64).

But moments of shared joy are also facilitated at home, for example when the young garden birds fledge and are welcomed with screams of delight (54). In reference to the garden birds, it also becomes apparent how McAnulty's notion of family is broadened from his human relatives towards the more-than human. He denotes these birds as "our extended family" (19), which renders them deserving of care in the form of food and water. In return, the birds' rhythms are also incorporated into the everyday of the humans.

The family's appreciation for nature is transmitted both vertically and horizontally: from parents to kids and amongst the siblings. As shown above, McAnulty's passion has been crucially fostered by his parents. When he reflects on demonstrating in London, where he was amongst those who handed the 'People's Manifesto for Wildlife' over to government politicians, he writes:

It was another leg of a journey that started when I was a young child. Conservation has always been a topic discussed around our dinner table, on our walks, at bedtime. All the time. It is part of the fabric of my being. (140)

The circumstance that conservation has been an ever-present topic in the family's everyday shows how its habitual repetition has imbued it with great value. Naturally, this attitude towards nature has also been imbibed by Dara's siblings, and they can share it silently, as when Dara and Lorcan are content in watching long-tailed tits together, or when the three siblings are captivated by observing ducks on the river, "the three of us a trinity" (165). Also, McAnulty presents his sister as the embodiment of someone who still carries an unblemished love for all life. She keeps a so-called "'box of things', a memorial box of the once living [which] are alive in Bláthnaid's memory" (112). In the description of that box, McAnulty clarifies his family's attitude towards the more-than-human: "There is no living hierarchy in Bláthnaid's eyes, and therefore there is no living hierarchy in the world, not really. [...] To Bláthnaid, to me, they all are equal" (112).

All of the given examples show that *Diary of a Young Naturalist* does not only record Dara's thoughts and emotions, but also those of his family. The extent to which this happens distinguishes McAnulty's book from the other works analysed in my study. It affords more insights into other people's personal experiences with nature and shows how these experiences are unfolding in a shared space and time.

In addition to their love of nature, the rhythms of the McAnulty family are shaped by another crucial factor: Except for the father, they are all autistic (9). As stated on his website, exploring "the everyday challenges and joys of being autistic" (McAnulty, "About") comprises a considerable part of McAnulty's diary. It should be noted here that being autistic is not a uniform phenomenon, but it has to be approached as nuanced and varying.²⁸ As McAnulty elucidates in his book:

²⁸ As Natalie Kruse notes in her book on autism: "we cannot think about autism in singular terms as the spectrum [...] is just too diverse" (Kruse 225). She also gives a thorough definition of the condition: "People on the autism spectrum, clinicians, and scholars have long been occupied with the question whether autism is a disease, a disability, or rather a new form of identity and different way of being in this world. [...] A thorough investigation of the life-worlds of people on the spectrum, however, reveals that autism seems to be both: a condition whose causes lie in a sophisticated interplay of neurobiological and epigenetic processes and which is subject to a series of social and environmental factors that can affect the degree of severity and different expressions of autism to a considerable extent" (2-3).

Many people accuse me of ‘not looking autistic’. I have no idea what that means. I know lots of ‘autistics’ and we all look different. We’re not some recognisable breed. We are human beings. If we’re not out of the ordinary, it’s because we’re fighting hard to mask our real selves. (McAnulty, *DYN* 55)

In another instance, he draws on an animal metaphor to illuminate what it means for him as an autistic constantly to mask his real self in society. When he and his siblings watch goldeneye ducks on a river, he muses:

We rarely think of all that effort being made below the water, those webbed propellers whirring so the bird can glide with such ease and grace on the river. It’s just like being autistic. On the surface, no one realises the work needed, the energy used, so you can blend in and be like everyone else. (165)

In offering an analogy between the movements of ducks and the everyday experience of an autistic, nature bestows McAnulty with ways of phrasing his experiences in relatable language. Throughout his book, he depicts both the mental and physical aspects of being autistic. For example, he and his siblings all ‘stim’, “a word used to describe the self-stimulatory behaviours of those on the autistic spectrum” (184). He illustrates what this behaviour means:

It’s how our happiness bubbles out, and how our anxiety seeps. It’s just how we regulate our brains. You probably stim too, without realising. Ever bite your nails? Twirl your hair? Pull at your ear? Yep, thought so. Maybe we’re not so different at all. (184)

Stimming can be read as an expression of bodily rhythms, and even though it might be amplified in autistic people, McAnulty’s remark towards his non-autistic readers causes us to consider that such regulatory rhythms are part of natural temporalities. Another habit that helps McAnulty regulate his brain and that also entails repetitive actions can be read from the following quote:

When we (by ‘we’ I mean autistics) get interested in something, most people would call it an ‘obsession’. It really is not an obsession, though. [...] It’s liberating and essential to the workings of my brain. It calms and soothes: gathering information, finding patterns, sequencing and sorting out is a muscle I must flex. I prefer the word passion. Yes! (130)

In describing the actions entailed with his passion as a muscle that must be flexed, McAnulty again emphasises the bodily aspect of repetition. Muscles grow strongest through regularly repeated, slowed-down movement. As becomes apparent throughout *Diary of a Young Naturalist*, the same goes for engagement with nature: We need to do it frequently and we need to slow down and take the time for it, a notion I will come back to later on. In addition to the need for regulating rhythms, McAnulty's autism entails another temporal element:

Autism makes me feel everything more intensely: I don't have a joy filter. When you are different, when you are joyful and exuberant, when you are riding the crest of the wave of the everyday, a lot of people just don't like it. (64)

Interestingly, McAnulty's metaphor of riding the everyday like a wave also fits with Lejeune's characterisation of the diary format: As a diary is written, "it is always on the very crest of time moving into unknown territory" (Lejeune, *On Diary* 208). This correlation might allow for the claim that, at least for McAnulty, both his autism and his diary writing operate on similar temporalities. They foreground the experience of the now and how a person is carried by the flow of time.

Being different in one's experience of the everyday can, as McAnulty indicates, be a reason for dislike – or even outright bullying, which is another factor that has come to shape the author's personal rhythms. Only when he attends a new school after the family has moved, do these patterns begin to change:

An unfamiliar rhythm is beating, gentle yet raging. I have gone two weeks without being bullied. Two weeks. This is the longest period I've experienced without taunts and jibes or fists landing. [...] I had prepared myself for the worst, because that's what I've come to expect. (McAnulty, *DYN* 137)

It has not only been the bullies that have made school time tough for McAnulty, but also the very structures and strictures of the education system itself. School time exemplifies one of the central time markers of his life as a young person in a Western European country. Throughout his diary, he repeatedly criticises the respective system and its temporalities. There is a cyclicity to it, although of a negative, disembodied kind. In an April entry, McAnulty consternates: "The fourth 'report card' of the year has kept my feet from touching soil and grass, and locked me in a cycle of exams where freedom seems nonexistent" (33). The cycle here described is more akin to the repetitive gestures that Lefebvre defines as

characteristic of linear time in a capitalist system which is oriented towards quantifiable labour. In common Western European schools, as McAnulty portrays it, it has become more important to record and numerically quantify a certain kind of progress than adhering to and appreciating natural rhythms.

Spending time in and for school keeps McAnulty from spending time in and with nature. Often, he is left with no energy, but has to stick to the linear repetitive: “I’m exhausted by 3 pm. Yet, I must come home and do homework then set my alarm, and do it all again the next day” (78). Hence, especially during such demanding periods as exam time, he enjoys moments in which connection with nature is possible even more. When he is privileged to hold a wild goshawk chick, he describes his emotions as “a rare feeling, a sensation that most of my life (full of school and homework) doesn’t have the space for” (72-73).²⁹

As a consequence of his experiences at school, McAnulty calls for “an education system that acknowledges the natural world as our greatest teacher” (182). This is also a call for a system that endorses the natural temporalities of human learning. One such temporal aspect of learning lies in the circumstance that it rarely happens in a straight-forward manner. Considered from this perspective, it is no wonder that McAnulty cannot “think straight” (34) in his classroom, even though it is designed in a linear fashion. This linearity of the education system, as well as McAnulty’s most explicit critique of it, can be read from the following quote, in which he wonders about the meaning and purpose of it all:

Apparently, it makes us stronger. Better citizens. I’m not so sure. I think of all the technical advances humankind has made over the last hundred years, yet the way we’re educated has stayed more or less the same. With rows of bodies sat rigidly behind desks. Sitting still. [...] Yet, we accept it. Why? Conformity. Obedience. Duty. (78)

In this description, the disembodiment of current Western school systems becomes very clear, as well as its disconnection from certain temporal developments. Having to sit rigidly still obviously contradicts the expression of cyclically occurring bodily rhythms, like the stimming described above. Also, obeying and conforming to the dominant system allows people to remain quantifiable as required by a capitalist society, and those who follow these capitalist temporalities with their idiom of progress are cast as ‘better citizens’.

²⁹ As Lucy Jones shows in *Losing Eden*, not only the temporality of McAnulty’s life but those of many Western children is closely governed by school and homework: “In North America by the time you’re eighteen years old, you’ve spent 12,000 hours in the classroom. That’s 12,000 hours in a rectangular room separated from nature and that’s kind of what it takes, I think, to create an industrial society” (Scull in Jones 53).

6.1 Cycles of the Everyday

Familiar Nature

As outlined in my theoretical considerations, the inherent meaning of cyclical temporalities provides a sense of identity and helps us organise the world. One of the most important identity-shapers and time-giving animals for McAnulty is the blackbird, whom he also terms the “conductor of my day” (17). The bird has imbued his life with meaning since he was a little child, as becomes vividly apparent in the introductory entry to the Spring section of his diary. There he writes:

I’ve been told more than once that I was an aurora baby, always awake at dawn. I was born in spring, and my first mornings were accompanied by the sonata of the male blackbird, nourishing a growing body and mind. (14)

McAnulty illustrates how the singing blackbird was the first bird he got to know and how the bird provided a temporal structure for the author’s young life. The start of his song each morning induced “a sigh of relief” (15) in McAnulty, as it “meant that the day had started like every other. There was a symmetry. Clockwork” (15). The bird’s song established a personal time marker and daily rhythm for McAnulty. In honouring this attachment, McAnulty’s mother used for Dara the Irish name for the blackbird, “lon dubh” (7), as a nickname.

However, McAnulty also describes how he had to learn that natural cycles change over the course of the year. When he noticed the seasonal song of the blackbird end for the first time in his life, his world was shaken, its temporal symmetry ruptured. After that, he learnt to read, which enabled him to understand better the rhythms of the animals and plants around him. Also later in life, he is confronted with readjusting to the temporalities of animals. When he finds himself in the new house the family have moved to, waking up after dreaming of his old home and feeling enveloped in a fog of depression, he notices a “silky note breez[ing] through the window, [...] almost hoarse, familiar yet strange” (100). This sound, created by a blackbird on the lawn, helps to lift McAnulty’s depression. The scene is an example of how his familiar bird offers a reconnection to vital rhythms. The temporality of the blackbird’s song spans various spaces, as also illustrated in my previous analysis of Cocker’s *A Claxton Diary*, and thus provides comfort in a new home. McAnulty makes similar experiences with other bird species, too. A few entries later, he writes about his new morning routine of swinging outside in a hammock and watching the wildlife in the garden before breakfast. As he observes a couple of great tit fledglings in Mid-August, he muses:

It feels late for the baby season. It's typical for great tits to raise two broods, but having left Fermanagh some time ago, I'm not sure whether these County Down birds are on the first or second round of chicks. I need to tune in. It'll take time, but soon enough the seasons will tell me what I need to know. The turning of the year will reveal its secrets. (113)

This quote shows that natural cycles can only provide a stable temporal frame once we have taken the time to tune in to them. We need to familiarise ourselves with the familiar to realise its value. As McAnulty has demonstrated above, this also entails reading and gathering information about the temporal patterns of the respective animals, like the seasonality of the blackbird's song or the breeding intervals of the great tits. When they have become familiar, the birds' rhythms provide moments of fascination, as can be gleaned from several examples in McAnulty's diary. In June, he writes: "I lean out of the bedroom window and watch intently as the harrying shapes flit at two-minute intervals. Back and forth. Diligent parents. No rest. It's a joyful time" (50). At least, the rhythms of these intervals constitute a joyful time for McAnulty, while, as we should note, for the birds it might rather be busy and stressful. It is not only the rhythms of nesting that offer joy to McAnulty, but also those of migration. On 26th April, he reports: "As I sit finishing homework in my room, I feel a tingle. I pull open the curtain and push aside my doors. [...] I stand outside and cock my head to the sky and there it is. A screech. A swift! The first of their hundred-day residency" (35). Here it seems that McAnulty's senses are so receptive to the rhythms of nature that he has noticed the swifts even before he has seen them. Indeed, two entries later, he describes what it feels like to be so in tune with those natural temporalities:

I am buoyed by the life springing out everywhere, in the garden, in the school grounds, even on the streets around the house. My heart crashes less against my chest. I feel in rhythm with nature, and I start becoming immersed in every moment again, letting each wave hit me and seep in. (37)

This passage shows that McAnulty trusts the rhythms of nature to carry him safely through life, like a life buoy on the ocean. His familiarity with natural cycles gives him certainty and stability. Also, it is not only the rhythms of birds that provide orientation and joy in his everyday, but also those of other animals. The statement he places at the end of a reflection on the mating and hatching habits of dor beetles is a succinct encapsulation of this perspective: "Life cycles like this make me so happy! The beauty and logic of it all" (119).

As the given quotes have shown, it becomes very apparent in McAnulty's diary how cyclical temporalities carry inherent meaning and thus provide for stabilising time frames. This can also be seen in the following passage: "As the globe turns, there are things we reach for at certain times. Today, I wanted so much to hear the cuckoo – a need for seasonal 'firsts' is strong in me. The first of everything is very special" (42). Here, McAnulty again emphasises the special meaning of seasonal firsts, a notion that could also be read from the quote above on the first swift of the year. As the swifts or the cuckoos return, they mark the beginning of a new cycle and reinforce the hope that this cycle generates in human life. The birds are thus understood as markers and heralds of cyclical temporalities, of the ongoing cycle of life. Yet, this kind of repetition never becomes as monotonous as the linear repetitive could. This is highlighted in the following quote by McAnulty:

The ebb and flow of time punctuated by the familiar brings a cycle of wonder and discovery every year, just as if it's the first time. That rippling excitement never fades. The newness is always tender. (14)

As he does here and as could be seen from the examples illustrated above, McAnulty repeatedly underscores the excitement of the cyclical temporalities that comprise the familiar. Also, he emphasises the positive aspects of the familiar in showing that it is not dull and static, but

When you visit a familiar place, it's never stagnant. There's always change, and every new day brings a tilt, another view, something that previously escaped you. That something can be as innocuous as a stone wall. (40)

Here, a connection can be drawn to the theoretical thinking on the everyday as expressed by Felski, in which she also argues that familiar spaces are dynamic and that familiarity is produced in a temporal process (Felski 87). Also, McAnulty's nature diary provides an example of Lefebvre's assertion that rhythm does not consist of "absolute repetition" (Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis* 16), but that it "produces" and "gives birth" to "differences" (17). In his reflection on a walk, McAnulty writes:

I gaze down as the light passes over the path and realise nothing is motionless. Even a stone pathway can move and change with the light and the silhouettes of birds in flight. Each

moment is a picture that will never be identically repeated. [...] As you look closely, the moment sucks you in – again and again it’s a perfect moment. (McAnulty, *DYN* 22)

The stone pathway that he portrays here is not static, rather, it is animated by the light passing over it. The rhythms of light and shadow create a succession of different moments that each have their own quality, none exactly repeating the preceding one. Out of each recurrence, something new is born, and that makes the cyclical so ‘tender’ and exciting as McAnulty describes it.

Metaphorizing Time: Natural or Mechanical

In the above, different ways of metaphorizing time have been discernible. It has been conceptualised as a succession of cycles comprised of the rhythms of birds and as a thread spun of individual moments. It is also worth mentioning that McAnulty uses several metaphors that relate time to water, as in the “ebb and flow of time” (14) or when he describes that he is “buoyed” and “immersed”, “letting each wave hit me and seep in” (37). In this way, time is likened to a natural phenomenon and something outside the scope of human control. One can only go with the flow, so to speak. However, McAnulty also employs other conceptions of time throughout his diary.

This becomes apparent when considering how his rhythms are not only shaped by birds and other animals, but also by inanimate phenomena like the length of days and nights, light and darkness. As with the other authors in my study, he displays an acute awareness for the seasons and registers such dates as the summer solstice, which “starts at 3am” (67) on 21st June, or the winter solstice on 21st December. On the latter date, he writes: “I realised how much I embraced darkness, and from today this will start to fade away. It’s a turning point. [...] It might be the year’s darkest day, but there is always light. Darkness and light. Both needed for respite, for regeneration” (186). McAnulty’s appreciation of darkness and the regeneration it enables is an important reminder for the value of natural cycles. In contrast, on a line of constant progress, there is no time for respite.

McAnulty enables his readers to get a different perspective on winter and late autumn, seasons often considered as bleak and dark or causing Seasonal Affective Disorder, as is hinted at in Woolfson’s diary. On the contrary, McAnulty points out the aspects he cherishes about these seasons. In October, he marvels at how late autumn “reveals the structure of trees”, showing “what they really look like” (154). In November, he realises that “By stealing the day, night brings with it an urgency. It starts to snatch away the songs of the garden, but

also shows us places that have been hidden by the abundance of summer” (163). As McAnulty demonstrates, the turning of the seasons reveals formerly hidden aspects, like the bare structures of trees or new places to hide in. While in winter, the sounds of the garden birds are reduced, he also accentuates that “[m]ore darkness means more quietness in the evenings [...]. I can hear so much more between” (169). As winter allows him to pause and see things formerly hidden, McAnulty also perceives it as a season “of growth, of contemplation, connection with our ancestors and those that have passed” (169). I will come back to this connection with ancestors later on; here, the quote serves to emphasise McAnulty’s valuing of the cycle of the seasons. In his winter intro, McAnulty does not only cherish this specific season, but also the effects of darkness in general:

Rising in darkness is the hardest part for some, but I have always enjoyed it ever since those very early childhood mornings with Mum [...]. Often I rose alone, to trace the sounds before dawn, the ticking clock, the buzz of the oil heater [...], the creak of the radiators [...]. Cogs turning to set the day in motion [...]. Then a singing robin. [...] Getting ready in the still of the dark is the best way to prepare for the day, etching before daylight, making marks, watching the curtain of time open before the day unveils. (169-170)

This passage includes many of the mechanical metaphors which McAnulty uses throughout his diary to describe his sense of temporality. Here, he mentions the ‘ticking clock’ as well as the sounds of other mechanical devices in the house that function as ‘cogs’ setting the day in motion and raising ‘the curtain of time’. His morning routines serve McAnulty’s “clockwork neediness” (17), a term he first uses in his Spring intro. There, however, it refers to his reliance on the rhythms of the singing blackbird in the morning. This shows that his craving for a kind of clock is not only satisfied by mechanical devices, but also, crucially, by natural beings and phenomena, like the above-mentioned animals or the change of light and darkness. The blackbird, for example, could be said to provide a non-mechanical, organic clock for McAnulty.

Thus, in *Diary of a Young Naturalist*, the “reciprocal action” that Lefebvre has noted is happening between “cyclical repetition and the linear repetitive” (Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis* 18) becomes very apparent. In the morning dark, McAnulty orientates himself both on the linearly repeated ticking of the mechanical devices in the house and the cyclically repeated singing of the birds, like the blackbird or, in the quote above, the robin. His diary also serves to show that the combination of these two temporalities has the sense-giving effect of clock time noted by Sieroka (Sieroka 84) that I mention in my theoretical considerations. In the

given examples, it appears that, for McAnulty, there is no tension between the mechanical and organic time markers that he describes. He relies on both to intertwine and provide the rhythms for his everyday.

6.2 Filing Memories to Balance Everyday Anxieties

Filing Memories

As I have indicated in the section on the purpose of McAnulty's diary, the book fulfils the crucial function of creating an archive of memories that the author can return to later on when he needs solace and encouragement. As Lejeune would phrase it, "by writing today, you prepare yourself to be able to live tomorrow" (Lejeune, *On Diary* 188). In the following section, I will highlight how McAnulty files memories to balance everyday anxieties and enable himself to move through rough times. This filing action also implies the intention to halt the linearity of time by returning to memories. McAnulty phrases this slightly differently:

Amongst this onslaught of life, exams, expectations (the highest of which are my own) come these outpourings, and they are becoming a cog in the cycle between waking and sleeping and the turning world. (McAnulty, *DYN* 17)

Here he implies that it is not a line but a cycle that is interrupted by the writing down of his memories. However, I will argue that this cycle, this 'onslaught' of life and exams is rather a kind of linear repetition in opposition to which the return to natural cyclicity functions as a soothing antidote. I will start by illustrating how McAnulty depicts his filing of memories in the act of diary writing; after that, I will elaborate on his anxieties and their temporality to show how and why he relies on his archive.

In the first few entries of his diary, McAnulty records a memorable holiday on Rathlin Island at the northernmost tip of Northern Ireland, which the family undertakes at his fourteenth birthday. At the end of the first day, standing under a full moon, he is

storing the moment up with all the other memories I keep cached. When I'm ambushed by the anxiety army, when it comes stomping back, I'll be ready to fight, armed with the wild cries of Rathlin Island. (25)

The 'wild cries' he refers to belong to the seabirds around the island, including the gannets and kittiwakes he has seen on the respective day. Also, the given quote relates to birds in more than one way. It is interesting to note that McAnulty uses the verb 'to cache' when he refers to

storing the moment: ‘caching’ is something that many birds, for example corvids, also do regularly. While the birds store food, McAnulty stores memories, which can be interpreted as providing emotional nourishment for him. The emotional support and happiness that the archived memories afford him can also be read from the following quote, taken from an entry also written on Rathlin Island: “I start filing away each moment in my head so that next week or next month, at some unknown point in the future, when I really need to feel happy, I can recall the details” (28). Here, it is also implied that McAnulty knows that he will return to his archive of moments; he might not know the exact point of time yet, but he is certain that he will need his memories sooner or later.

In addition to the caching metaphor, he also uses other analogies to describe his freezing of time. On a mountain hike, he reflects: “The camera clicks in my head and there it will stay, like all these moments. Catalogued. Picture perfect” (152). He likens his process of memorising to taking photographs which can then be ‘catalogued’. Obviously, his published diary also contains actual photographs; the given quote thus further emphasises the importance that freezing time has for McAnulty. He employs the metaphor of the “brain camera” (194) again in a later entry, explaining that during the actual experience – in this case, another mountain hike – he is “not thinking”, only “feeling, observing” (194). The capturing and filing of memory images, be it in visual or linguistic form, allows for cyclicity as their revisiting interrupts a linear progression of time. For McAnulty, this possibility is a very important factor for navigating his life.

Furthermore, he displays remarkable memory capacity. In his winter intro, he recalls spotting an otter and a kingfisher on a snowy day when he was just three years old. He “wonder[s] if other people can remember this far back. To me these are the brightest memories, bell-clear, crisp as our footfall that afternoon” (170). In his recalling of that day, he continues:

And now, as I pass into the last quarter of my fourteenth year, I still keep the memory to pull out whenever the darkness becomes too much [...]. Inside, that’s where I store these moments, accumulated in a cabinet of noticings and happenings, brought out when I need them most, to illuminate. (171)

With the ‘cabinet’, McAnulty employs another metaphor that implies the storage of something, in this case, his memories. In being able to remember moments that have occurred long ago and revisit them repeatedly, one is also able to collapse the linearity of time. The ritual of memory creates a temporality that is inherently cyclical. Furthermore, in McAnulty’s

case, this ritual also contains the cyclical aspect of hope, as it helps to ‘illuminate’ his darker moments.

For McAnulty, this process does not only happen individually, but also in a social context. He and his family create memories together, which, for example, becomes apparent when, in the garden of their new house, they watch dozens of silver Y moths feeding at the buddleia at night: “another moment etched in our memories, to be invited back and re-lived in conversations for years to come. Remember that night, when fluttering stars calmed a storm in all of us” (104). The ‘storm’ indicated here refers to the stress and tension of moving house, from which the family is relieved by their encounter with the moths. McAnulty depicts this moment as being ‘etched’ into their memories, using a word that implies a similar process like ‘scratching’ in the way that it clearly creates a lasting mark. Finally, this passage also serves as a demonstration of the fact that *Diary of a Young Naturalist* is composed not only of the author’s individual memories but also of those of his family. In his entries, he freezes not only his personal experiences but also those of his family members, highlighting that “remembering is a collective activity” (Smith & Watson 25).

Everyday Anxieties

Such inner storms and tensions as hinted at in the passage on the family memory are what McAnulty intends to counter with his archive of memories. The essence of his struggles becomes apparent in his entries about the stay on Rathlin Island:

My childhood, although wonderful, is still confined. [...] Daily life is all busy roads and lots of people. Schedules, expectations, stress. Yes, there is this unfettered joy, too, but right now, standing in an extraordinary and beautiful place, so full of life, there is this terrible angst rising in my chest. (McAnulty, *DYN* 25)

While McAnulty enjoys excursions into natural places, his everyday is comprised of city traffic, the demands of other people, school work and other factors that intersperse it with stress and angst. Here, the tension between the cyclical temporality of nature and the linear temporality of capitalism is at its most obvious. As Lefebvre describes it, the connection to natural cycles is “crush[ed]” by the “repetitive gestures” (Lefebvre, “The Everyday” 10) of modern life in a capitalist society. McAnulty appears to be especially sensitive to this ‘crushing’, which means that even in moments that are ‘unfettered’ from his linear everyday, he feels worry rising in himself.

The pressure that the contrast between the cyclical and the linear creates for McAnulty is reflected also in the language he employs. As could be seen above, his cache of memories might serve him when he is “ambushed by the anxiety army” (McAnulty, *DYN* 25); then, he would be “armed with the wild cries of Rathlin Island” (25). Such fighting metaphors are prevalent throughout the diary, both in McAnulty’s reflections on anxiety and on acting for nature. This can, for example, be seen in the following quote:

Can I breathe and live and also fight? The natural world – which includes us – is facing such enormous challenges that it’s easy to become overwhelmed and depressed. But we must fix them [...] What is it that’s holding me back? Anxiety? Depression? Autism? These are the shackles. Surely, I can break free. (115)

The question McAnulty poses at the beginning of this passage echoes throughout his whole diary. In relation to it, he concludes in another entry: “To play my part in fighting for the natural world, I must start by smashing stereotypes” (100). As in the quote above, we find not only the notion of ‘fighting’, but also the idea that something has to be ‘smashed’ and that there are ‘shackles’ that have to be broken. In other instances, McAnulty grapples with imposter syndrome, questioning if he is fighting enough for wildlife and realising that he cannot do more because “my body and mind just won’t let me” (99). Sometimes, his body and mind will not even allow for keeping his diary. After the family has moved house, there passes a gap of fifteen days until McAnulty pens a new entry, in which he admits:

I haven’t had the impetus to write. I hear the word ‘depression’ a lot but don’t know if that’s what I’m feeling right now, or if this is a normal reaction to the changes in my life. The effort of the everyday is like wading through treacle. Anxiety has been spiralling, and the energy spent on the battles is towering like the Mourne Mountains that now surround our home. (97)

The interval between this entry and the one before indicates that the temporality of McAnulty’s diary entries can also mirror his mental state. Depression and anxiety could be perceived as occurring cyclically, though this raises the question if that could be considered a natural cyclicity in the framework of Lefebvre’s classification. On the one hand, this question could be answered with a yes, as depression and anxiety are bodily phenomena and shaped by stress reactions that happen on a physiological, organic level (Nagoski 5). On the other hand, mental problems occur when natural bodily reactions are suppressed, as they often are in capitalist societies, and the stress cycle cannot be completed, which leads to an

unhealthy repetition of patterns (8-10). These patterns, then, would be more akin to Lefebvre's linear repetitive, as they are "monotonous" and "tiring" (Lefebvre & Régulier 85). Also, when the body is in stress response, we are "focusing on short-term, here-and-now thinking" (Nagoski 5). This can be connected to the urgency that is carried in linear temporalities when they are understood as having an end point beyond return; therefore, such urgent feelings like fear and panic could be located on a linear plane which stands in contrast to a cyclical temporality which enables hopeful recurrence and a consideration of more large-scale, long-term contexts. The effects that the kind of stress that capitalist societies produce has on our perception of time can also be connected to phenomena like climate anxiety, as I will illustrate further down in the section on growing up in times of climate dread.

McAnulty has his methods for disrupting the linear repetitive of stress. In his diary, he recalls an instance when he was bullied at school and escaped to a cupboard where he squatted down:

I started to breathe and the images and words seemed to slip away a little, allowing my body to relax, the pain to fade a little. It wasn't a cure, not then, and it isn't a cure now. But it does allow me time to gather the pieces and go back onto the battlefield and try again. (McAnulty, *DYN* 158)

The metaphor of the 'battlefield' used here could be extended from the schoolyard to McAnulty's activism, too. As has been shown above, he often depicts himself as fighting a fight for nature, on the battlefield of society, so to speak. In this reading, he uses breaks to become stronger and more productive afterwards – productive in the sense that he is doing more, striving towards an ideal of enough. However, as artist and community activist Tricia Hersey highlights, if we use breaks only to be more productive, we are in danger of remaining stuck in a capitalist context, a "cult of busyness" (Hersey 63) which relies on the assumption that we are never doing enough and have to put all our energy into labour. In Hersey's view, breaks should be taken for their own sake, and rest is a fundamental aspect of being alive (62). Hence, also in the seemingly simple act of taking a break, a tension can be detected between natural and capitalist temporalities. I will return to how this is negotiated by McAnulty later on in my analysis.

McAnulty continues to use his method of squatting and breathing – allowing for the natural cycle of breath – in other stressful moments in his life. In addition, it is not only the free flow of his own bodily cycles that can counter the linear repetitive, but also the cycles of animals that lend him strength. This can, for example, be read from the following quote:

“When I start to worry about school and all of the newness – of people, of classrooms – I think about the resilience and determination of swallows” (121). Their resilience allows the swallows to return in the cycle of migration every year. In turn, noticing the cycles of the swallows and other beings in nature allows McAnulty to return to a life of hope and joy.

As has been illustrated above, in order to notice these cycles, it is necessary to pause and stop and to halt the linear repetitive. This can be done, as McAnulty demonstrates, by filing memories to return to in a cyclical fashion. He also teaches this philosophy to others, not only through his writing but increasingly also through talking and taking action. At his new school in County Down, he founded an ‘eco group’ with the other students, at whose first meeting he talked about

how I even store the tiniest noticing so I can retrieve it on demand to help me navigate everyday life, and why, because of this, I want to stand up for wildlife, shout loudly about the wondrous things I’ve seen and learnt, all the magic that we can see if only we stop and look. (161)

Here it becomes apparent how McAnulty’s diary has helped him realise the value of the more-than-human in everyday life as his records support him in his struggles. This realisation is what he carries into his engagement with other people of his age, an engagement that serves as a fitting transition to the next section of this chapter, which illuminates what growing up in times of biodiversity crisis can entail.

6.3 Times of Generations

Maturing with Nature

In *Diary of a Young Naturalist*, McAnulty repeatedly reflects on his process of growing-up and on how the experience of nature has changed through time for different generations. As noted earlier, his diary starts around the author’s fourteenth birthday on 31st March and comprises one year. Towards the end, McAnulty writes: “The vernal equinox has come and gone, and I’m now on the cusp of my fifteenth birthday, midway between late childhood and adulthood. Everything and nothing has changed” (208). Conventionally, growing up and maturing would be understood as a linear progress, but McAnulty’s diary shows that this process might not be so straightforward, as he repeatedly shuffles and negotiates between expressions of childhood and the wish to be an adult, which is also implied in his notion that ‘everything and nothing has changed’.

His childlike side often comes to the fore when he is on excursions with his family, playing with his siblings and running around. On such an occasion, he writes: “I skip, forgetting that I’m a teenager. I run and laugh and shout, and we all run together and there it is, childhood, still hanging on” (88). At a later date, he and his siblings “play at being knights and kings and queens, because I’m still a kid and need a battle to get my energy out” (151). While in these examples, he enjoys his childish side, he censors it in other instances, as in the following passage:

I imagine myself covered with grasshoppers, butterflies, beetles, damselflies and hoverflies – [...] and because of their imaginary tickles on my skin, I laugh out loud until my eyes open and my body lurches upright, shaking itself suddenly and purposefully out of such a childish notion. [...] I’m still a kid really, but there’s this piece of me that wants to be treated like an adult, and to behave like an adult. It’s this ‘maturing’ self that for some reason starts worrying what others think. (94)

The ‘maturing self’ he alludes to here is not only the one who worries, but also the one who increasingly takes to action for wildlife and who grows stronger through the narrated year. In his intro to the autumn section, McAnulty compares his development to the mushrooms now sprouting all around: “I am rising from the darkness too [...]. Like them, I have burst open” (125). In raising his voice to help nature, he has found more meaning and purpose in his life, and he is determined to continue with that, even though he might encounter obstacles: “they won’t stop me, just as you can’t stop fruits bursting from tree and soil. [...] I can grow. Sapling stage is ending, it is time to grow thicker branches and mature” (127). Here it appears that McAnulty is finally leaving his childhood behind, his ‘sapling stage’, and his diary can be read as a reflection of this process. The given quote is also an apt example for how he uses nature metaphors to reflect on his personal development. Also, his human ageing process is set against the ageing processes of other species, especially plants. In spring, he finds a wood anemone, which “grows a mere six-foot spread every one hundred years” and, as it appears in a city park, “can now reach out again, open minds, touch lives in this century” (39). A few entries later, another flower is portrayed in a similar fashion:

A bluebell wood takes much longer than our time on earth to get to this carpet of bloom. It is precious and ancient and magical. And it arrives like clockwork, if left alone, casting a charm on so many open hearts. Here since the Ice Age, the bluebell takes five whole years to grow, from seed to bulb. A labour of slow and perfect growth. (42)

As these examples show, McAnulty illustrates how much value can be found in slowness. In addition, in highlighting the repeated appearance of the bluebell, he cherishes the cyclicity of the plant's ageing process. His reflections also allow us to think about the temporalities of ageing in a different way, not in a straight line, but in a spiral of cycles. In addition to the above passages, this can also be read from McAnulty's portrayal of an oak tree:

Three hundred years to grow, three hundred years living in fullness and three hundred years to die. The thought of it makes me feel as small as the ants scuttling up the skin of this mighty creature. It has been supporting ants and hundreds of other species for nearly five centuries.
(51)

Reflecting on such ageing processes as the ones of trees and flowers opens up new perspectives on the different temporalities that influence life on earth. As I will illustrate below, McAnulty is entangled in these temporalities in a number of ways.

Growing Up in Times of Climate Dread

In the first paragraph of the prologue of his diary, McAnulty introduces himself in the following manner: "I have the heart of a naturalist, the head of a would-be scientist, and bones of someone who is already wearied by the apathy and destruction wielded against the natural world" (7). The last characteristic is remarkable in someone who is only fourteen years old, but it speaks to the times in which this young person is growing up: times tremendously shaped by ecological crises, most prominently including climate change and biodiversity loss. In the following, I illustrate the temporal implications of two developments the author's generation is stretched between: the disconnection from nature on the one side and, on the other, a growing activism for the natural world.

Early on in his diary, after hearing a farmer and RSPB warden talk about the corncrake, a critically endangered bird, McAnulty laments:

There is loss everywhere. Loss of habitat, loss of species and ways of life. [...] it's such a complicated matter. I don't feel qualified to understand it or pass judgement. I know it unsettles me, though. (31)

This quote contains allusions to different kinds of knowledge about loss: While McAnulty admits he cannot grasp it rationally, not rating himself qualified enough for judgement, he

does comprehend it emotionally, being aware of his unsettled feelings. This contrast can be connected to the temporal framework I employ in my analysis, which detects the tensions between a rational, linear approach to the world and an approach that focuses on the cyclical and the bodily – as emotions are entailed in physical processes in the body, I place the emotional in the cyclical category.

McAnulty also engages with the change of rhythms that occurs during his lifetime. When he finds some celandines blooming unusually early on 13th January, he “couldn’t celebrate them. Not really. It was as if they were growing in the shadow of a planet out of sync” (192). In another example, it becomes even more apparent how it is the linear, capitalist thinking of certain humans that throws nature out of sync. In returning to the case of the corncrake, McAnulty notes how the change in agricultural practices, which is also illustrated in Lloyd’s reflections on curlew conservation, “conflicts with the birds – and the unthinkable happens, a life is cut short by the blades. Imagine it. Every egg cracked. The future of the species in this place, in any place, is broken. Gone. A human in the driving seat, of course” (49). The violence of this disruption of the rhythms of life is also mirrored in McAnulty’s syntax here, with its short, chopped sentences. That the linear practices of modern capitalism disrupt the cyclical rhythms of the natural world and thus potentially lead to the erasing of possible futures also means that McAnulty’s generation will no longer know and experience species that previous generations have, like the corncrake, which “was once so common that it could be heard in inner-city Dublin and every field and farm across the British and Irish isles” (49). However, it is not only agricultural developments that lead to a disconnection from the rhythms of the natural world, as becomes apparent in the following reflection on McAnulty’s living situation in the town he lives in at the beginning of the diary:

We can’t access nature the way my parents’ generation could. Our exposure to wildlife and wild places has been robbed by modernity and ‘progress’. Our pathways for exploration have been severed by development and roads and pollution. Seriously, you take your life into your own hands if you choose to cycle anywhere in Enniskillen. [...] We always have to travel to forest parks or nature reserves for our dose, returning to the starkness of concrete and manicured lawns. (56)

This passage shows that especially in urban environments – and we recall here that, according to Lefebvre, the temporality of the city is a linear one (Lyon 25) –, it is difficult to detect and follow natural rhythms. The symptoms of linearity that Cocker diagnoses in his diary are present in McAnulty’s life, too: ‘manicured’, tidy gardens and a dominance of concrete and

roads over wildlife. While these symptoms might be viewed as signs of ‘progress’, they also signify a move away from nature on a linear timeline which denies the cyclical returning of McAnulty’s generation to the experiences of former generations. As the young author emphasises, “this is a big deal for us kids” (56). By referring to ‘us’ and ‘our’ in the quote above, he links his individual experience to the collective of his generation.

The diminishing of access to nature that McAnulty’s generation experiences can also be supported by numbers from social studies. As journalist Lucy Jones reports in *Losing Eden*: “Fewer than one in ten children regularly play in wild spaces now, and the area around a child’s home where they can explore unsupervised has shrunk by nearly 90 per cent since the 1970s” (Jones 55). Jones also shares the alarming observation that “[t]hree-quarters of children (aged five to twelve) in the UK now [in the year of 2016] spend less time outdoors than prison inmates, who require, according to UN guidelines, at least one hour of exercise in the open air every day” (55). Such circumstances lead to phenomena like “nature-deficit disorder”, a concept coined by American writer Richard Louv in 2005, which “describes the human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses” (Louv 36). In addition, the extinction of species, especially common ones in people’s everyday surroundings, is connected to an “extinction of experience” (Pyle 53), as American ecologist and lepidopterist Robert Pyle predicted in the 1970s.

Such a lack of experience is another factor in the disconnection of young Western people from nature that McAnulty mentions in addition to modern agriculture and urban life. On an autumn day, he observes the following scene: A little boy is playing in the forest and picks up a conker; while he marvels at it, his mum snatches it away, declaring it to be dirty. The scene makes McAnulty sad and angry:

I think about all these tiny wrongdoings, everywhere in every season, the tiniest crimes. The things grown-ups do without thinking. The messages they send angrily into the world. The consequences ricochet through time, morph, grow, shapeshift. What’s so wrong with a conker?
(McAnulty, *DYN* 147)

The scene gets a happy ending, because when the mother of the little boy is turned to her phone again, McAnulty gives him a new conker. This might open a new temporal pathway for the child and his relation to nature. As Jones reports: “If a child is introduced to the natural world before the age of twelve, the chances are they’ll continue the relationship and its benefits into adulthood” (Jones 56). In reflecting on how the ‘tiny wrongdoings’ that are

performed by grown-ups everyday can evolve through time, McAnulty also draws attention to how actions in the present will influence the future. Here it can be added that the fostering of cyclical rituals – like the collecting of conkers in autumn – is an important factor in nourishing a positive relationship to the natural world.

As in the above example, McAnulty repeatedly reflects on how actions echo through time. On blissfully watching a large evening gathering of jackdaws and rooks, the word ‘abundance’ pops into his mind, but then he wonders:

But is this what abundance looks like? When everything was in better balance than it is today? [...] Are we wrong to assume that our ancestors had a stronger connection to nature? [...] But if we were so connected in the past, what went wrong? Why did our ancestors let this happen? Was it the supermarkets? The massive corporations? The vested interests and hidden agendas? (McAnulty, *DYN* 148)

Here McAnulty calls into question an image of the past in which humans lived in closer connection with the natural world, because to him such a strong and harmonious relationship seems to contradict the disastrous developments that followed. Like Woolfson, he wonders about the specific point in time at which things started to go wrong, which would entail the assumption that the process of disconnection happened in a linear fashion with a clear break. In the above quote, a certain blame is also put on ‘our ancestors’ as they have seemed to let the bad developments happen. Also implied are consequences of capitalist practices, like ‘massive corporations’ and ‘vested interests’. McAnulty takes up this notion in a speech he holds at the first Extinction Rebellion meeting in Ireland. In his diary, he recollects the thoughts he voiced:

those in power do nothing. Those in big business just carry on making obscene amounts of money. [...] Flocks of curlew and lapwing were commonplace when the destroyers were children, like me. But unlike me, they do not see the world as I do now. Now, however, they are in denial. [...] The world is still hurtling too fast. My generation will experience the worst of it. (159)

The consequences of the actions and inactions of those in power that McAnulty’s generation will experience include, as he lists them in his speech, rising sea levels, acid oceans full of plastic, unprecedented extinction rates and toxic soil. These are the urgent future perspectives that lead young people to activism. As McAnulty demonstrates, in their actions they might not

only struggle with these catastrophic predictions for the natural world, but also with their own age. While it feels good to be speaking out publicly and protesting on the streets, McAnulty wonders how effective his actions might be as he is still so young: “I feel like the child I am, powerless and inept. Yet, I shouldn’t be feeling this. This weight on my chest has been unfairly dumped” (160). He also refers to the unfair treatment that people of his age receive in another entry, in which he expresses his frustration about being invited to political events and sharing his ideas without these actions resulting in tangible effects. Consequently, he complains:

And it’s my generation that is labelled ‘apathetic’, ‘self-indulgent’, ‘less focused’! Whereas the adults, who are actually in control of our access to wildlife [...] carry on making decisions and spending money in conflict with nature. (198)

Despite McAnulty’s initial discomfort with being cast as a role model and mouthpiece for his generation that I have highlighted earlier, he also often presents himself as such a spokesperson. This can be seen in the above quote as he attempts to revise the reputation of ‘my generation’. It is also visible in his reflections on speaking to a government advisor after a Walk for Wildlife demonstration, where he claims: “They weren’t just my words. They are the feelings of so many of us, young and old” (141). Throughout the year of the diary, McAnulty seems to have grown more confident with being a representative of his generation’s thoughts and feelings on ecological matters, a confidence that is also reflected in the photo he has chosen to open the winter section of his diary, which depicts him chanting at a Fridays For Future demonstration.

In trying to get to terms with the present decisions of adults, the past actions of their ancestors as well as the future consequences of these, McAnulty’s generation is confronted with temporalities that appear to exceed their grasp. They experience something that I have also detected in Woolfson’s diary: an eruption of deep time in their everyday and the realisation that extinction makes us aware of “the richness of our inheritance from the deep past, and the depleted legacy we will leave to the deep future” (Farrier, *Anthropocene* 92). For McAnulty’s generation this experience of temporalities has a greater urgency than for previous generations, and he repeatedly voices this urgent feeling, as when he declares:

The gap is ever-widening. It feels like a ticking time bomb to extinction. Is it any wonder that almost a quarter of young people are experiencing mental health difficulties? Our world is increasingly divided between attainment, materialism and self-analysis. We’re at a tipping

point in the relationship we have with ourselves, with each other, and our world. (McAnulty, *DYN* 198)

Also implied here is the notion of a ‘tipping point’ beyond which there is no return, a point that is therefore located on a linear timeline. At the end of that line, there dawns extinction, and, in McAnulty’s depiction, the annihilation appears to be announced by the mechanical ticking of a time bomb. Yet, from the passage above, one cannot be entirely sure whose extinction is referred to here – that of humankind, other species or all of life together? It might be simply the sense of extinction as a temporal phenomenon in itself, an ending of time as we knew it.

Despite highlighting these unsettling notions, McAnulty thinks of himself that he cannot be “a doomsday prophet”, because he “see[s] so much beauty every day” (200). As has been demonstrated earlier in this chapter, his noticing and cherishing of the magic of the familiar saves McAnulty from succumbing to despair. The temporalities of his everyday function as a balancing weight against the potentially disconcerting temporalities of a vast past and future. Yet, he is also able to find encouragement from the ‘richness of our inheritance’ from the past, as I illustrate in the following section.

Connecting to Ancestors

Towards his ancestors, McAnulty does not only express puzzled blame, as indicated above, but often he also connects to them in a search for support and reassurance or out of a sense of gratitude. On the winter solstice, for example, he compares his own rituals to those of past humans: “I went for a walk in a dark wood; the Druids gathered mistletoe and burnt the yule log” (186). Later on the same day, he pays his ancestors tribute again. After he has seen a robin at eye level on the school yard, he celebrates it in the following fashion: “I stop in my tracks, run back on a whim to hug the beech tree and thank the elders that have watched over me these last four months, the best four months of school I’ve ever had” (187).

While with the Druids, McAnulty refers to a time of about a few thousand years ago, he also travels further back in his connection to past humans, as can be seen here:

I sit down on the Silurian hornfels – the roughness of this rock is softened by lichen and the thought that they’re over 400 million years old, the result of colliding continents and marine life recovering from extinction. [...] Several wren chicks come skipping over the rocks, drowning each other out with attention-grabbing chirps. [...] This is the music of our ancestors too, waves in one ear, wren siblings in the other. (106-107)

The fact that these rocks are millions of years old opens up the possibility that the ancestors here referred to might have been the earliest humans to walk on Irish soil, long before the Druids gathered for their cyclical rituals. In these two examples, McAnulty considers scales of deep time in a way that allows for a feeling of reassurance instead of being overwhelmed. While deep time might be too vast to be grasped rationally, it can be felt in the bodily connection to the natural world, as when touching the rocks or tuning into the changing rhythms of day and night.

McAnulty uses the term ‘ancestors’ quite liberally. As could be seen so far, his mentions throughout his diary can refer to vastly different pasts, ranging from the times of the earliest humans to the ancient Celts to those people who still experienced an abundance of corncrakes and finally to the generation of McAnulty’s parents which includes those people now in power. All of these temporalities appear to be summed up in his poem “Anthropocene”, which is included in the diary as the entry of 7th August.³⁰ It starts with the words “When we began, our feet trod lightly | Bare upon the earth, we were weightless” (108). The impact of the earliest humans was a light one, but, as McAnulty continues in the second verse: “Forging through millennia, we kept on | Adding endless weight” (108). In the word ‘millennia’, his awareness of the vast time scales that have shaped the earth is apparent. In the fourth verse, he refers to the possible futures of other species which are destroyed by capitalist practices: “Decimating pathways once bountiful” (108). With the penultimate verse, McAnulty arrives in his own time, where he can “hear hope” (108), and in the final stanza, he wonders what the future will bring: “Will my generation see the rightful | Rising?” (108) To promote such a temporal shift, McAnulty was invited to recite his poem at a Walk for Wildlife demonstration (138), an act that supports his position as a lyric activist.

While McAnulty’s ‘ancestors’ often remain abstract and unnamed, he also foregrounds one ancestor that plays a prominent role for him – and who could be considered a ‘rightful’ person: the Irish saint St Kevin, who lived in the sixth century, founded the monastery of Glendalough, which became a place of pilgrimage, and is often portrayed with a blackbird nesting in his hand. McAnulty feels a close kinship with St Kevin and likens his own development to that of the saint, as in this passage from the end of his diary:

³⁰ The poem is left almost uncommented by McAnulty. He only mentions it again in the entry for 21st September (138), where he writes that Chris Packham has asked him to recite it after McAnulty has posted it on Twitter, receiving much positive feedback.

I thought of Kevin and his long journey from solitude to community, from being alone to being with others, and the way he must have found a space for both his own learning and the hospitality he offered to anyone who wanted it. I wondered how he balanced his need for silence with public work, and how his time with the elements and nature, with stone and wing, changed as more and more people came here. (207-208)

From this passage, a cyclical understanding of time can be inferred, as McAnulty finds the developments of the saint's life repeated in his own life, an idea that he takes hope and strength from. It is interesting to contrast this notion to another one that stems from the same entry as the example above. After reflecting on his pilgrimage to Glendalough, McAnulty recalls another excursion from a few years back, to Caldragh Graveyard on Boa Island in Fermanagh, where he placed his hands on some 2,000-year-old Janus stone figures and

felt a rumbling ancestral roar. It was the sort of sound your mother might make if she were scolding you to warn that your life was in danger. Urgent. Pleading. I felt the heat of it when I placed my hand on my cheek. (209)

Here, Mother Earth is understood as an ancestor, too, the oldest one that McAnulty mentions, and she is personified as expressing a warning. That is, here, again, the notion of urgency that the author's generation feels comes to the fore, a notion connected to a linear sense of time. One final example in which McAnulty expresses his conception of time serves to conclude this section on age and ancestors. On 1st December, he writes:

I keep visualising time as a length of string, with a flame burning at one end that represents the present, where we can act and be most alive. The ashes are the past, the intact string is the future. The string splits every time something happens. The dead are ashes: they still exist and never leave us. I can feel the string descending, still blazing in parts, but mostly it is crisp and brown and stretched out ahead. (173)

McAnulty feels the described 'string' pull him along on a walk to a stone circle that functioned as a neolithic burial ground. When he arrives at the circle, he continues his musings:

That's the peculiarity of time. The string can split into an infinite number of possibilities. The ancient human remains buried here, disturbed by excavation, have had their cremated ashes

scattered out. [...] Those that left us so long ago still exist in something. [...] Granny believes that the dead live in robins, or that their souls do. (174)

First of all, the concept of time that McAnulty develops here has linear features. The ‘string’ appears to stretch from the past to the present, and as the past string burns to ashes, there seems no way of turning back. In addition, the image of the burning flame gives this temporal concept a sense of urgency, too. However, it is more complicated than that: By implying that the string of time ‘can split into an infinite number of possibilities’, McAnulty adds a perspective that seems not to fit easily into my theoretical framework; to the ‘line’ and the ‘cycle’, it adds a kind of ‘web’ or ‘mesh’ woven from countless strings of time.

On a second glance, McAnulty’s approach to time also includes a notion of cyclicity. He writes that the dead have not departed completely, but ‘still exist in something’, their ashes nurturing new life in trees and birds. His grandmother’s belief that the souls of the dead continue to live in robins equals an idea of reincarnation. Such an approach, certainly, can infuse a sense of hope, as it does in McAnulty. In the same entry, on recalling a family funeral, he also states: “in Ireland we’re not afraid of death, we embrace it” (175).³¹ This statement raises the question: If McAnulty is not afraid of death itself, what then gives him the sense of urgency he repeatedly expresses in relation to the prospect of extinction? It might be that different concepts of time can be held by one person simultaneously, and depending on which one employs at a given moment, it influences the reaction to the world. This speaks to the complexity of thinking about time in general. Nevertheless, one can consider another approach to extinction, one that does not place it exclusively on an urgently progressing line: Building on the hopeful idea that the dead return in new organic forms, that they exist in a cyclical temporality, we might be able to fear less about the future.

6.4 Pausing Time

As I have indicated in the section on ‘Everyday Anxieties’, pauses might offer another way to balance the feeling of being caught on a line of urgency and extinction. This notion deserves further notice as it is also reflected on by McAnulty. Confronted with his sense of urgency, he wonders as he watches birds in the garden of his new home if it is enough to notice and “tend to” one’s “small corner” (114) of the world: “Is noticing an act of resistance, a rebellion?” (114) Indeed, the act of noticing could be assessed as an act of resistance. Noticing can be

³¹ A similar approach to life and death can be found in the ‘box of things’ which McAnulty’s sister keeps and which I have described in the section “Personal Rhythms”.

read as a form of rest, and rest, as Tricia Hersey understands it, is resistance against the grind culture of repetitive capitalism (Hersey³²). Also, as Cocker stresses in *A Claxton Diary*, the “record of intimacy” (Cocker, *CD* 3) that results from noticing and recording the natural world “is by itself an honourable goal” (2). Both aspects are reflected in McAnulty’s practice of engaging with nature, as can also be seen in this quote: “Wildlife is my refuge. When I’m sitting and watching, grown-ups usually ask if I’m okay. Like it’s not okay just to sit and process the world, to figure things out and watch other species go about their day” (McAnulty, *DYN* 53). In showing that it is ‘okay’ to pause and process, McAnulty is able to resist the imperative of linear productivity.

Taken one step further, pauses are not just okay, but absolutely necessary for really becoming aware of the rich life that exists in the everyday. When McAnulty detects a buzzard that lands on prey in a seemingly lifeless field and is then illuminated by a single ray of sunlight, he phrases this realisation in the following way: “Nature is constantly surprising us. Only by looking can we challenge our own prejudices, clearing them out and making way for possibilities” (96-97). A distinctive example of McAnulty’s practice of noticing can also be found in the following example, in which he ponders the mythological and ecological meaning of the sparrows whom he passes everyday on his way home from school. He wonders “how many people look at sparrows and feel that depth of connection [...]. Is this connection really diminishing to the point of no return?” (177) Then he realises what could stop the proceeding disconnection:

Noticing nature is the start of it all. Slowing down to listen, to watch. Taking the time, despite mountains of homework. Making a space in time to stop and stare, as the Welsh poet W.H. Davies wrote in ‘Leisure’ [...]. I don’t see it as ‘leisure’, though. This is good work. Heart work. (177-178)

It is interesting to dwell here for a moment on McAnulty’s use of the words ‘leisure’ and ‘work’. His concept of leisure appears to give it lesser value than productive work, and hence it operates on a linear time frame. However, leisure can also be considered on another temporal level, as Odell illustrates in her reflections on Josef Pieper’s *Leisure, The Basis of Culture*. According to Pieper, leisure “is not refreshment-for-work but something completely different that exists for its own sake” (Odell 93) and, “[in] marked contrast to an experience to be consumed or a goal to be met, [it] is something closer to a state of mind or an emotional

³² This is the central argument of Hersey’s book and reflected in its full title.

posture” (93). Furthermore, it “involves a mixture of awe and gratitude” (93) and “opens onto, and finds peace in, chaos and things larger than the self” (93). As such a transcendent and hopeful state, leisure can be understood as cyclical. Also, McAnulty’s phrasing of his noticing and pausing as ‘heart work’ very much echoes Pieper’s definition of leisure as ‘an emotional posture’. Throughout his diary, McAnulty repeatedly highlights that his ‘heart work’, this

Caring for nature and for ourselves can happen anywhere and everywhere: gardens filled with life, nature reserves, resting spots, feeding spaces, nourishing places. Focusing in on the activity and behaviours of wildlife in our garden is so satisfying, for the mind, for the heart. (McAnulty, *DYN* 180)

This quote encapsulates the approach that has been the very starting point of my study of contemporary Nature Writing and its focus “on finding meaning [...] in our common, unremarkable encounters with the natural world” (Moran 49). The fact that noticing and caring for nature can happen anywhere and at any time is one of the central messages that can be taken away from the studied diaries.

Finally, taking breaks to notice nature not only allows us to halt repetitive, linear temporalities, but it might allow us to forget time altogether. I have concluded my chapter on Woolfson with the idea that engaging with the rhythms of animals can carry us beyond human notions of time and lets us enter the present state of the now. The same process can be observed in McAnulty: When he sits at the open patio door and watches the garden birds, he is unaware of how the rain soaks his trousers, as he is in “[his] trance world yet again. Time passing in a vacuum of watching” (McAnulty, *DYN* 180). That is, his leisure has allowed McAnulty to “[find] peace in [...] chaos and things larger than the self” (Odell 93) as it offers him a cyclical practice in an urgent world.

Conclusion on *Diary of a Young Naturalist*

McAnulty’s *Diary of a Young Naturalist* offers rich material for a temporal analysis. As it is clearly intended for re-reading and aiding his author in darker moments to come, it presents a succinct example of how diaries are oriented towards the future and, at the same time, entail a cyclical practice of returning to memories. The material characteristics of McAnulty’s diary distinguish it from the other books in my study, as he is the only one who has added photographs and maps in his publication. Especially the photos open various avenues for temporal analysis: they interrupt the linearity of the reading process and they freeze time

while also providing a sense of immediacy and authenticity. Furthermore, in contrast to the woodcuts in Cocker, which stem from a centuries-old physical tradition, the photos are products of modern technology. Above that, they hint at the target audience of McAnulty's book, which can be assumed to be younger than that of Cocker, Lloyd and Woolfson.

This generational difference is also reflected in the fact that McAnulty's book has grown from an online blog, a fact that allows for a reflection on the temporalities of social media and the online realm which is very much part of the everyday in the 21st century. McAnulty negotiates both the benefits and disadvantages of this phenomenon, showing that sustainable activism requires both the linear, forward-moving action of the online world and the cyclical return to the body in the physical world.

The bodily is a central motif in McAnulty's diary. In his depictions of how his autism shapes his everyday, he demonstrates how bodily rhythms are part of natural temporalities, a notion comparable to Woolfson's reflections on how the season of winter affects both human and more-than-human beings. Furthermore, like Lloyd, McAnulty highlights what happens when natural cyclical rhythms are suppressed in linear capitalist systems. While Lloyd illustrates this on the level of landscapes in climate change, McAnulty demonstrates at the example of his experiences in school and city life how the suppression of individual bodily rhythms can lead to anxiety, short-term thinking and an increased sense of urgency.

McAnulty illustrates how his own generation, the children and teenagers of the 21st century, is especially confronted with this sense of urgency and disembodiment. He bemoans how capitalist and linear practices have been leading to the extinction of both species and experience, and he gives examples of how young people are no longer experiencing more-than-human nature like previous generations have – these previous generations include Woolfson, Lloyd and Cocker, who also already notice the losses of species from their childhood. Yet McAnulty also highlights the growing awareness and actions of his generation as they struggle against their own age. Furthermore, his own life offers one of the best examples of the profound, time-shaping effects of an early connection to more-than-human nature, which is being nourished and encouraged by his whole family in their everyday, a phenomenon that receives considerable attention in his diary and lends it a unique character as a record of both individual and family records.

McAnulty's reverence for natural cycles is very present throughout his diary. Like Lloyd, he recognises the blackbird as a crucial temporal constant in his everyday, and overall, the life cycles of birds, insects and plants provide him with stability and certainty. Like Cocker with his reflections on renewed attention, McAnulty also emphasises that there is

always something new to discover in familiar cycles. Yet his temporal orientation is not only guided by natural cycles, but also by mechanical devices like the clock, which speaks to his recognition of the interplay between the linear and the cyclical.

As McAnulty reflects on time in his diary, he employs a wealth of metaphors for it, variously understanding it as being comprised of cycles, flowing like water or being directed by mechanical cogs. He also offers the interesting definition of time as a burning string, an idea that does not only contain linear – the string burning away in just one direction – and cyclical aspects – the ashes of the dead still exist in their nourishing of new life –, but that also casts time as a mesh of strings splitting into an endless number of possibilities. There is a hopeful notion contained in this mesh of possibilities. Hope is something that McAnulty also takes from intergenerational interaction, as he repeatedly reflects on ancestors from different pasts, both human and other-than-human.

Finally, McAnulty highlights the value of pausing and slowing down. He does so when he illustrates how winter and darkness enable necessary respite and regeneration and, in this process, reveal things formerly hidden. He does so also in his practice of pausing in his everyday to just notice and observe more-than-human nature around him, something that especially Lloyd and Cocker do as well. This practice of pausing can both be understood as an act of resistance against the linear imperative of capitalist production and as a way offering peace and hope in urgent times.

7. CONCLUSION

With this study, I set out to analyse how the everyday, in its interplay of linear and cyclical temporalities, is depicted in four contemporary British Nature Diaries. I did so in an attempt to explore ways of thinking through current ecological crises and of connecting to more-than-human nature in a practical and sustainable manner. In this endeavour, I recognised the need to think beyond apocalyptic visions of time and heeded Rhian Williams' suggestion that it is exactly the quotidian which provides resources for this need (Williams 434). Like Williams, I used Lefebvre's concept of rhythmanalysis for my study, though while she applies it to an 18th-century Nature Writing text, I examined how this analytical frame can be brought up-to-date for the 21st century.

This also required me to add a few facets to Lefebvre's original thoughts. While he already identified the linear with capitalism and defined it according to its focus on industrial work, consumption, mechanical and numerical measures as well as alienation from the body, I also align the idea of a coming apocalypse with this set of linear characteristics, as it casts an image of time as proceeding on a fixed line towards a definite, possibly devastating, end. In contrast to the abstractness of the linear, the cyclical foregrounds a rootedness in natural and bodily rhythms, a quality that prompted Lefebvre to highlight the body "as the first point of analysis" (Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis* 6) that enables a rehabilitation of "rhythm as an animating [...] principle" (Williams 441). I have complemented this notion with thoughts by two more scholars: Krebs' suggestions that the cyclical carries inherent meaning to humans as it aids us in organising our memories and our sense of the world and provides us with hope for meaningful recurrence, and Felski's reminder on the central value of rituals, tradition and ancestry. Furthermore, not only has my study made these temporal concepts fruitful for ecocritical research, but it has also illustrated the rewards of studying the diary format in this field. While the diary might be more readily identified as a tool "to create archives from lived experience" (Lejeune, *On Diary* 195) – a quality of special salience in times of biodiversity loss –, I have also highlighted its future-oriented character that makes us "able to live tomorrow" (188).

The diaries analysed in this study did all, to varying degrees, allow for reflection on the interplay between linear and cyclical temporalities in the everyday. At the same time, they also revealed other concepts and levels of time, which do not fit neatly into a simple binary of linear vs. cyclical, but instead emphasise the complexity of temporalities that all living beings are entangled with. Yet there is a number of core themes that my analysis has revealed. It is also noticeable that these themes recur throughout the ten-year period that the diaries cover

together, indicating that instead of a trend towards new issues in the more recent works, there is rather a repeated – so-to-speak cyclical – highlighting of central notions regarding the relationships between humans and other-than-human nature.

The first aspect the diaries in this study have in common is that they all cast a critical eye at the effects of a linear conception of the living world. They openly criticise modern agriculture and industrial mowing, shooting estates and timber plantations, the public obsession with tidiness and the consumption of wildlife habitats through paving and overbuilding. These developments can be subsumed under the idea of progress as a move away from the wild, which is most clearly scrutinised by Woolfson in her reflections on Jewish urbanity. As one of the Western monotheistic religions that assume an eschaton, an end of time, Judaism points towards a second common temporal theme in the diaries. This is a sense of urgency, which also originates from an image of time as a unidirectional line. It hovers especially over Woolfson's and McAnulty's writing and, following Haraway's propositions, I have named it in my introduction as characteristic of the sense of temporality prevailing in 21st-century capitalist societies. Urgency makes Woolfson and McAnulty wonder about an invisible point of no return that they might have missed; urgency is metaphorized in McAnulty's definition of time as a string on fire; and urgency is exemplified both in the growing anxieties and activism of McAnulty's generation, the teenagers of the 21st century, and in Lloyd's haunting, minutely detailed record of a devastating flood in her area that illustrates how pressing actions for more resilient ecosystems are.

Thirdly, the diaries illustrate how living bodies are susceptible to various rhythms and temporalities. They show on different levels what happens when natural cycles are suppressed. Lloyd demonstrates this on the level of larger ecosystems, for example in her reflections on floods and how they could be prevented through letting rivers run their natural course. McAnulty approaches the suppression of natural cycles on the individual level of a young human who feels disconnected from nature by the restrictions of school and city life, a disconnection that may lead to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. On the other hand, the diaries also demonstrate the strong pull of natural rhythms. Woolfson highlights the seasonal sensitivity of all living beings in her musings on how both the behaviours of other-than-human animals and humans themselves synchronise with the specific time of the year, as during the nesting period or in the darker months. Cocker traces the notion of the temporal susceptibility of bodies on a grander scale as he repeatedly highlights the shared evolutionary heritage of all living beings and their partaking in an

elemental cycle of soil, air and light, a notion that provides for a reconnection to the value of cyclicity.

It is also on a grander temporal scale that the concept of ‘deep time’ operates, a concept that has emerged as relevant in my analysis and that is being recognised as significant in ecocritical discourse. While I had not included it in my considerations from the start, I would now consider deep time as a temporality that defies linearity and the capitalist ideal of the ever-new, as it shows the often surprising cycles that things and beings can enter. Looking through the lens of deep time allows us to realise how long-ago pasts manifest themselves in the present and how events in the present continue to have a lasting effect on the future. While Woolfson contemplates deep time in the form of granite stone, the authors in my study more often touch upon it in regard to animals and plants. When Woolfson and Cocker appreciate certain animals, such as great tits or bumblebees, as both individuals in their fragility and nowness as well as representatives of a species lineage that extends into deep time, they resonate with van Dooren’s concept of “flight ways” (van Dooren 22), which expresses precisely this understanding of living beings as embodiments of complex temporalities.

The way in which other-than-human beings represent and offer a sense of alternative temporalities is another common theme to the diaries in this study. Noticing them allows the diary authors to highlight “alternative temporal conventions that are already at work within the same Western culture dominated by an abstract clock time, and which may better serve us” (Bastian, “Fatally” 45). Woolfson, Lloyd, Cocker and McAnulty demonstrate what happens when we resist an exclusive subsumption of our lives under abstract time markers like clocks and the linear imperative of progress and production, but instead align it with the rhythms of more-than-human beings. Their repeated and poetic depictions of these rhythms emphasise the value of temporalities which have an inherently cyclical nature. This value is reflected in Woolfson’s humble appreciation of how the most ordinary urban animals, such as pigeons, gulls and corvids, have changed her sense of time and help her orient herself throughout the year. An appreciation of cyclical temporalities is expressed in Lloyd’s honouring of the rhythms of the birds in her garden, especially the blackbirds, which enrich her life and housework with a sense of connection to the wider world and with signs of hope. Cocker, also, presents birds and other beings as respectable bearers of hope, foregrounding in vivid language his daily encounters with them, which never become boring for revealing finer details every time he directs his attention at them. The joy of discovering both the variability and stability of the cyclical rhythms of nature is a central motif in McAnulty’s writing, too, who highlights the sense of relief and tranquility that can originate from tuning into the

temporal patterns of all kinds of beings, from birds to trees to insects. Together, these authors show what it means to cultivate daily rhythms in tune with the rhythms of more-than-human nature, and they do so in a way that appears easily applicable to everyone's everyday.

While this temporal attunement has a concrete, physical anchor in the bodies of living beings, the diaries in this study also set it in a more abstract, transcendent context. They all make reference to religion, either with their vocabulary or through concrete examples of religious traditions, buildings or personalities. Woolfson, as indicated above, critically reflects on how Judaism in the 20th and 21st centuries has entailed a tradition estranged from the wild, but she also places her appreciation of small everyday moments in the context of Shabbat rituals. Lloyd's vocabulary appears tinted by religious terms, such as 'manna', 'oratorio' or 'resurrection', and she also finds this idea of resurrection mirrored in the song of her adored blackbird. Cocker likens ecosystems to cathedrals to highlight that nature's cycles deserve just as much – or rather more – reverence and humbleness as human constructs, and he compares blackbirds to angels, honouring them in a similar way to Lloyd. McAnulty expresses a practice of paying tribute to religious ancestors, as when he thanks the Celtic druids for a good time at school or when he muses on the similarities between his own life and that of the Irish saint St Kevin, who was known for his close relationship with more-than-human nature. In all the diaries, such references to religion occur especially in instances where nature offers hope and where the authors feel a close connection, a connection to something that transcends human time, a world beyond our own. This shows what kind of belief system lies behind these Nature Diaries: the belief that nature connects us to something more than ourselves. It is, in part, this sense of transcendent connection that allows for a sustainable transformation of the everyday.

Though my study has acknowledged that the linear and the cyclical cannot be separated into clear binaries in real life and that there exists a more complex entanglement of temporalities in the ostensibly ordinary, it seems that the authors of the analysed diaries tend to be more in favour of what I termed cyclical in my original definition. They illustrate the benefits of synchronising with natural bodily rhythms, both on individual and ecosystem levels; they articulate the restorative, calming and hope-instilling effects of cultivating daily routines in rhythm with other-than-human beings, effects that ameliorate a sense of urgency; and they situate these daily rituals into larger, religious traditions that transcend the times of generations. Yet it should not remain unmentioned how the diaries also depict a meaningful interplay between the linear and the cyclical. Such a notion, at least, is expressed by McAnulty, who equally relies on mechanical devices and natural time markers for his

temporal orientation, and who highlights the advantages of linear, progress-oriented online activism when it is practised in balance with the cyclical return to the physical world.

It is also through the analysis of McAnulty's work that I have realised a further way of being in time that occurs to me as a highly valuable ecocritical practice in the everyday of the 21st century, just as valuable as tuning in with the cyclical. It is the practice of pausing and just being in the now. McAnulty shows that this practice is often disregarded, as when adults wonder why he just sits and looks at, for example, a flower, but he also emphasises that it is exactly this focusing-in on another living being that enables us to relate and form a connection. In hindsight, such acts of pausing are also recognisable in the other diaries. They are indicated in Woolfson's reflections on the Taoist principle of *wu wei*, or non-action, that inspire her to just reside in the sensation of a moment without prejudices. Lloyd's everyday is punctuated by the pauses brought by the appearance of her familiar blackbirds that might make her drop whatever task she has at hand, taking on more importance than human affairs. Blackbirds, and especially their song, also make Cocker pause repeatedly and muse on the meaning they have for human life; and Cocker also practices non-action in his garden which he allows to grow freely and surprise him with new bloom. All these instances show that, like the cyclical, the pause of the now defies the forward-moving imperative of the linear.

As such, the temporality of pausing offers another "curative" (Williams 441) to the capitalist disturbances of natural rhythms that has not been included in Lefebvre's original theory of rhythmanalysis. The concept of the pause itself is only brushed by him in his remarks on leisure or "*free time*" (Lefebvre, *Everyday Life* 53; author's emphasis), which he defines as "a temporary break with everyday life [;] a generalized display: television, cinema, tourism" (54) as well as being "produced (and productive)" (Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis* 42). That is, Lefebvre reads leisure in the context of capitalist production, as it is either opposed to or serving productivity. In his conception, pauses are also filled with consumption in the form of entertainment media and travel, and as I have highlighted, consumption operates on a linear time frame.

While Lefebvre's understanding of pausing has thus still been very much rooted in capitalist temporalities, the diaries in my study demonstrate that pausing enables us to realise temporalities that are not defined by the linear capitalist practices of work, production and consumption. Instead of understanding pauses just as "refreshment-for-work" (Odell 93), McAnulty, Cocker, Lloyd and Woolfson illuminate the value that pauses have in establishing meaningful and sustainable connections with more-than-human nature. Through extending Lefebvre's original concepts, my study has thus unearthed another everyday practice for

fruitful ecological relationships. Like the cyclical, pauses can anchor us in times that seem apocalyptic and urgent, and in this anchoring, both of these temporal practices allow us to take a different and potentially more positive perspective on the time we share with more-than-human nature.

8. Works Cited

- Abrams, David. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. 1997. New York, Vintage Books, 2017.
- Adam, Barbara. *Timewatch: The Social Analysis of Time*. Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995.
- Aldo Leopold Foundation. "The Land Ethic." *Aldo Leopold Foundation*, 2023, <https://www.aldoleopold.org/about/the-land-ethic>. Accessed 6 May 2024.
- Akomolafe, Bayo. "Dr. BAYO AKOMOLAFE on Slowing Down in Urgent Times/155." Interview by Ayana Young. *For the Wild Podcast*, 22 Jan. 2020, <https://forthewild.world/listen/bayo-akomolafe-on-slowng-down-in-urgent-times-155>. Accessed 23 June 2024.
- Barassi, Veronica. "Social Media, Immediacy and the Time for Democracy: Critical Reflections on Social Media as 'Temporalizing Practices'." *Critical Perspectives on Social Media and Protest: Between Control and Emancipation*, edited by Lina Dencik & Oliver Leistert, London, Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, pp. 73-88.
- Bartel, Robin. "Place-Speaking: Attending to the Relational, Material and Governance Messages of Silent Spring." *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 184, no. 1, 2018, pp. 64-74.
- Bastian, Michelle. "Engaging with Phenology to Understand More-Than-Human Climate Change Temporalities." *ASLE-UKI Conference 2022 Abstracts of Papers*, <https://asle.org.uk/events/northumbria-2022/abstracts/>. Accessed 6 May 2024.
- . "Fatally Confused: Telling the Time in the Midst of Ecological Crises." *Environmental Philosophy*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2012, pp. 23-48.
- "beaver away." *Cambridge Dictionary*, Cambridge UP, 2024, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/beaver-away>. Accessed 22 Dec. 2023.
- Bennett, Jane. *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics*. Princeton UP, 2001.
- Borodale, Sean. *Bee Journal*. 2012. London, Vintage, 2016.

- Bowman, Benjamin & Germaine, Chloé. “Sustaining the Old World, or Imagining a New One? The Transformative Literacies of the Climate Strikes.” *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*, vol. 28, 2022, pp. 70–84.
- Brown, Craig. “A Spellbinding Nature Diary That's Up There With the Greatest.” *Mail on Sunday*, 8 Nov. 2019, pp. 22-23. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/event/article-7336863/A-spellbinding-nature-diary-thats-greatest.html>. Accessed 19 May 2021.
- Capelle, Birgit. “Asian Aspects of Temporal Experience in Transcendentalist Life Writing.” *Ecology and Life Writing*, edited by Alfred Hornung & Zhao Baisheng, Universitätsverlag Winter, 2013, pp. 99-108.
- Carlill, Alice. “Ecological Grief and Anticipatory Mourning in Jessie Greengrass’s *The High House*”. *ASLE-UKI Conference 2022 Abstracts of Papers*, <https://asle.org.uk/events/northumbria-2022/abstracts/>. Accessed 6 May 2024.
- “Chare | Char, N. (1), Sense I.1.” *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, Dec. 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8945484641>. Accessed 1 Mar. 2023.
- “Chore, N. (2), Sense 1.” *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, Mar. 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2799437196>. Accessed 1 Mar. 2023.
- Clark, Timothy. “The Anthropocene: Questions of Definition.” *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2015, pp. 1-28.
- Clarke, Rachel. “Nature and Nowness Under Lockdown.” *The Lancet*, vol. 395, 27 June 2020, pp. 1964-1965.
- Cocker, Mark. *A Claxton Diary*. Jonathan Cape, 2019.
- . “Beyond the Penumbra of Fear.” *The Guardian*, 3 Jan. 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jan/03/beyond-penumbra-fear-birdwatching-blackbirds-country-diary>. Accessed 26 May 2021.
- . “Country Diary: A Landscape Coming in from the Cold.” *The Guardian*, 20 Mar. 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/mar/20/country-diary-landscape-coming-in-from-cold-claxton-norfolk>. Accessed 26 May 2021.
- . “Country Diary: The Omnivorous Blackbird Shares a Family Taste for Blood.” *The Guardian*, 19 Dec. 2017,

- <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/dec/19/country-diary-omnivorous-blackbird-taste-for-blood-norfolk>. Accessed 26 May 2021.
- . *Crow Country*. 2007. London, Vintage, 2016.
- . “Death of the Naturalist: Why is the ‘New Nature Writing’ so Tame?” *New Statesman*, 17 June 2015. <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2015/06/death-naturalist-why-new-nature-writing-so-tame>. Accessed 1 Aug. 2019.
- . *Our Place: Can We Save Britain’s Wildlife Before it is Too Late?* Jonathan Cape, 2018.
- Cocker, Mark, Terry Gifford & Kathleen Jamie, panellists. Panel discussion. “Virtual Discussion: ‘The Everyday in British New Nature Writing’”, 8 June 2021, online.
- “Country Diary.” *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/series/country-diary>. Accessed 27 May 2021.
- “Country Files: Nature Writers on the Books that Inspired them.” *The Guardian*, 30 Apr. 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/30/country-files-nature-writers-books-inspired-them>. Accessed 25 May 2021.
- Dalla Costa, Mariarosa & Selma James. *The Power of Women and Subversion of the Community*. London, Falling Wall Press, 1972.
- Darlington, Miriam. “Reviews of The Blackbird Diaries.” *Saraband*, 2024, <https://saraband.net/sb-title/the-blackbird-diaries/>. Accessed 6 May 2024.
- Davis, Angela Y. *Women, Race, and Class*. New York, Vintage, 1983.
- Deming, Richard. *Art of the Ordinary: The Everyday Domain of Art, Film, Philosophy, and Poetry*. Cornell UP, 2018.
- Dencik, Lina & Oliver Leistert. “Introduction.” *Critical Perspectives on Social Media and Protest: Between Control and Emancipation*, edited by Lina Dencik & Oliver Leistert, London, Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, pp. 1-12.
- “Dispatch | Despatch, N., Sense II.8.” *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, Dec 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2768919635>. Accessed 01 Mar. 2024.
- Dragt, Kennedy. “Apocalyptic Visions: Medieval Mysticism as Future-past Speculative Hope in Two Contemporary Novels.” *ASLE-UKI Conference 2022 Abstracts of Papers*, <https://asle.org.uk/events/northumbria-2022/abstracts/>. Accessed 6 May 2024.

- Ebdon, Melanie. “‘At Midnight When the Year Turned’: Shifting Cycles and the Pastoral Posthuman in Jon McGregor’s ‘Reservoir 13’.” *ASLE-UKI Conference 2022 Abstracts of Papers*, <https://asle.org.uk/events/northumbria-2022/abstracts/>. Accessed 6 May 2024.
- Epstein, Andrew. *Attention Equals Life: The Pursuit of the Everyday in Contemporary Poetry and Culture*. New York, Oxford UP, 2016.
- “Eurasian Wigeon.” *IUCN Red List*, 2017, <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/22680157/111892532>. Accessed 9 Feb. 2024.
- Extinction Rebellion. “Why Rebel?” *Extinction Rebellion*, <https://rebellion.global/why-rebel/>. Accessed 12 Mar. 2024.
- Falb, Daniel. *Anthropozän*. Verlagshaus Berlin / Edition Poeticon, 2015.
- Farrier, David. *Anthropocene Poetics: Deep Time, Sacrifice Zones, and Extinction*. University of Minnesota Press, 2019.
- . “Deep Time’s Uncanny Future is Full of Ghostly Human Traces”. *Aeon Magazine*, 31 Oct. 2016, <https://aeon.co/ideas/deep-time-s-uncanny-future-is-full-of-ghostly-human-traces>. Accessed 2 Mar. 2023.
- Feld, Kate. “The Gathering Tide.” *Caught by the River*, 7 Mar. 2016, <https://www.caughtbytheriver.net/2016/03/the-gathering-tide-around-the-edgelands-of-morecambe-bay-karen-lloyd-kate-feld/>. Accessed 24 Jan. 2024.
- Felski, Rita. “The Invention of Everyday Life.” *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture*, New York UP, 2000, pp. 77-98.
- Fleming, Hannah. “Dara McAnulty. Diary of a Young Naturalist.” *The European Journal of Life Writing*, vol. IX, 2020, pp. 37-40.
- Future Places Centre. “Our People.” *Future Places Centre Lancaster University*, 2024, <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/future-places/people/>. Accessed 2 May 2024.
- Ghosthorse, Tiokasin. “TIOKASIN GHOSTHORSE on the Power of Humility /237.” Interview by Ayana Young. *For the Wild Podcast*, 9 June 2021, <https://forthewild.world/listen/tiokasin-ghosthorse-on-the-power-of-humility-237>. Accessed 23 June 2024.

- “Gilbert White.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 14 July 2019,
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gilbert-White-English-naturalist-and-clergyman>.
 Accessed 9 Dec. 2019.
- “Giovanni Pascoli.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2 Apr. 2023.
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Giovanni-Pascoli>. Accessed 24 Oct. 2023.
- Goldstein, Jürgen. *Naturerscheinungen: Die Sprachlandschaften des Nature Writing*. Matthes & Seitz, 2019.
- Greening, John. “Owl Sense/The Blackbird Diaries.” *Country Life*, 7 March 2018, p. 92.
- “Gusto, N., Sense 2.” *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, July 2023,
<https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8866090067>. Accessed 01 Mar. 2024.
- Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chtulucene*. Duke UP, 2016.
- Hart, Christopher. “Nature’s Boy Wonder.” *Daily Mail*, 6 May 2020, p. 36.
- Hartmann, Maren. “The Normative Framework of (Mobile) Time: Chrononormativity, Power-Chronography, and Mobilities.” *Mediated Time: Perspectives on Time in a Digital Age*, edited by Maren Hartmann, Elizabeth Prommer, Karin Deckner & Stephan O. Görländ, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp. 45-65.
- Hersey, Tricia. *Rest is Resistance: Free Yourself from Grind Culture and Reclaim Your Life*. London, Aster, 2022.
- Hiltner, Ken. *Writing a New Environmental Era: Moving Forward to Nature*. Abingdon, Routledge, 2020.
- “Homage, N., Sense 3.a.” *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, Mar. 2024,
<https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1174374871>. Accessed 24 Oct. 2023.
- Hornung, Alfred. “Ecology and Life Writing: Preface.” *Ecology and Life Writing*, edited by Alfred Hornung & Zhao Baisheng, Universitätsverlag Winter, 2013, pp. ix-xix.
- “How to Write Haibun Poetry: Tips for Writing Poetry.” *MasterClass*, 8 Nov. 2020,
<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-haibun-poetry#what-is-haibun-poetry>. Accessed 16 June 2021.
- Hudson, W. H. *Birds in London*. 1898. London/Toronto, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1923.

- Ivry, Henry, Jos Smith, Julia Jordan, Maria Sledmere & Ben Smith. “Without End: An Interim Ecology of Forms (Roundtable).” *ASLE-UKI Conference 2022 Abstracts of Preformed Panels and Roundtables*, <https://asle.org.uk/events/northumbria-2022/panelabstracts/>. Accessed 6 May 2024.
- Jamie, Kathleen. “His Family and Other Animals.” *New Statesman*, 11 Dec. 2020-7 Jan. 2021, p. 89.
- Jones, Lucy. *Losing Eden: Why Our Minds Need the Wild*. London, Allen Lane, 2020.
- Kaun, Anne. “‘This Space Belongs to Us!’ Protest Spaces in Times of Accelerating Capitalism.” *Critical Perspectives on Social Media and Protest: Between Control and Emancipation*, edited by Lina Dencik & Oliver Leistert, London, Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, pp. 89-106.
- Keck, Michaela. “Of Birds and Men: Lessons from Mark Cocker's ‘Crow Country’.” *Multispecies Futures: New Approaches to Teaching Human-Animal Studies*, edited by Andreas Hübner et al., Neofelis Verlag, 2022.
- Kendal Museum. “Object of the Week: Helsfell Wolf.” 23 June 2022, <https://kendalmuseum.org.uk/object-of-the-week-helsfell-wolf/>. Accessed 14 Dec. 2023.
- Kennouche, Sofiane. “Scotland’s Coldest Winters on Record.” *The Scotsman*, 19 Nov. 2015, <https://www.scotsman.com/regions/scotlands-coldest-winters-record-1489229>. Accessed 2 Mar. 2023.
- Kölling, Angela & Melina Lieb. “Teaching Eco-Translation: Reclaiming the Climate Crisis Discourse in Times of Coronavirus.” *Voicing Absences/Presences in a Damaged World*, edited by Jessica & Marc Maufort, John Benjamins Publishing, 2022, pp.175-195.
- Krebs, Angelika, Stephanie Schuster, Alexander Fischer & Jan Müller. *Das Weltbild der Igel: Naturethik einmal anders*. Basel, Schwabe Verlag, 2021.
- Kroll, Gary. “Rachel Carson – Silent Spring: A Brief History of Ecology as a Subversive Subject.” *Reflections*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2002, Oregon State University Newsletter of the Program for Ethics, Science and Environment.
- Kruse, Natalie. *Temple Grandin and the Mediation of Autism Debates at the Interface between Life Writing and the Life Sciences*. Universitätsverlag Winter, 2021.

- Laing, Olivia. "Field Notes from a Hidden City by Esther Woolfson – Review." *The Guardian*, 2 Feb. 2013. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/feb/02/esther-woolfson-field-notes-review>. Accessed 29 Apr. 2024.
- . "What a Bird Brain." *The Guardian*, 24 Aug. 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/aug/24/scienceandnature1>. Accessed 29 Apr. 2024.
- Landes, Richard. "Eschatology." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 03 Feb. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/eschatology>. Accessed 07 Feb. 2023.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *Everyday Life in the Modern World*. 1984. London, Routledge, 2017.
- . *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*. London, Bloomsbury, 2013.
- . "The Everyday and Everydayness." *Yale French Studies*, vol. 73, 1987, pp. 7-11.
- Lefebvre, Henri & Catherine Régulier. "The Rhythmanalytical Project." 1985. *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, by Henri Lefebvre, London, Bloomsbury, 2013, pp. 82-92.
- Lejeune, Philippe. *Der autobiographische Pakt*. 1975. Suhrkamp Verlag, 1994.
- . *On Diary*. University of Hawai'i Press, 2009.
- Letzte Generation. "Klimakatastrophe zulassen = Verfassungsbruch." *Letzte Generation*, 2024, <https://letztegeneration.org/verfassungsbruch/>. Accessed 12 Mar. 2024.
- Lieb, Melina. "Humility and Serious Noticing: Résumé of a Discussion Round on 'The Everyday in British New Nature Writing'." *Arcadiana*, 21 Sep. 2021, <https://arcadiana.easlce.eu/2021/09/21/humility-and-serious-noticing-resume-of-a-discussion-round-on-the-everyday-in-british-new-nature-writing/>. Accessed 25 June 2024.
- Lilley, Deborah. "Kathleen Jamie: Rethinking the Externality and Idealisation of Nature." *Green Letters*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2013, pp. 16-26.
- Lloyd, Karen. "Karen Lloyd: The Blackbird Diaries." Interview by Annie Wright. *YouTube*, uploaded by Big Lit, 15 Oct. 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSE6LUMbA90>. Accessed 30 Apr. 2024.
- . *The Blackbird Diaries*. 2017. Saraband, 2019.

- Loftus, Alex. *Everyday Environmentalism: Creating an Urban Political Ecology*. University of Minnesota Press, 2012.
- Louv, Richard. *Last Child in the Woods*. Chapel Hill, Algonquin Books, 2008.
- Lyon, Dawn. *What is Rhythmanalysis?* London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.
- Mabey, Richard. "Introduction." *The Natural History of Selborne*, by Gilbert White, London, Penguin Classics, 1987.
- . *Nature Cure*. 2005. London, Vintage, 2015.
- , editor. *The Oxford Book of Nature Writing*. Oxford UP, 1995.
- . "Where the Wild Things Are. Reviewed: Field Notes from a Hidden City by Esther Woolfson." *New Statesman*, 28 Feb. 2013, <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/nature/2013/02/reviewed-field-notes-hidden-city-esther-woolfson>. Accessed 2 Mar. 2023.
- Macdonald, Helen. "Coming Home to Roost." *New Statesman*, 20 Aug. 2007, pp. 46-47.
- Macfarlane, Robert. "New Words on the Wild." *Nature*, 13 June 2013, pp. 166-167.
- Madren, Carrie. "Field Notes From a Hidden City: An Urban Nature Diary." *Washington Independent Review of Books*, 10. Apr. 2014, <https://www.washingtonindependentreviewofbooks.com/index.php/bookreview/field-notes-from-a-hidden-city-an-urban-nature-diary>. Accessed 29 Apr. 2024.
- "Maintenance Art." Exhibition Brochure, Queens Museum, 2016/2017.
- Mason, Ian Garrick. "'A Claxton Diary: Further Field Notes from a Small Planet', by Mark Cocker – Review." *The Spectator*, 20 July 2019.
- Mass Audubon. "Birds Attacking Windows." *MassAudubon*, 2023, <https://www.massaudubon.org/learn/nature-wildlife/birds/birds-attacking-windows>. Accessed 2 Mar. 2023.
- McAnulty, Dara. "About Dara." <https://daramcanulty.com/about/>. Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.
- . *Diary of a Young Naturalist*. Ford, Dorset, Little Toller Books, 2020.

- . “Happy New Year! Nature Notes from the Mourne Mountains.” 2 Jan. 2019, <https://daramcanulty.com/happy-new-year-nature-notes-from-the-mourne-mountains/>. Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.
- . “Welcome to my Blog!” 14 June 2016, <https://daramcanulty.com/day-one-welcome/>. Accessed 23 Jan. 2023.
- “Mellow, Adj., Sense II.5.” *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, Sep. 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/4397678831>. Accessed 13 Feb 2014.
- Milan, Stefania. “Mobilizing in Times of Social Media: From a Politics of Identity to a Politics of Visibility.” *Critical Perspectives on Social Media and Protest: Between Control and Emancipation*, edited by Lina Dencik & Oliver Leistert, London, Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, pp. 53-70.
- Monbiot, George. *Feral*. 2013. London, Penguin, 2014.
- Mondor, Colleen. “Diary of a Young Naturalist. By Dara McAnulty.” *Booklist*, 1 Mar. 2021, pp. 17-18.
- Moran, Joe. “A Cultural History of the New Nature Writing.” *Literature & History*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2014, pp. 49-63.
- Morton, Brian. “Soil Turned to Song and Dance.” *The Times Literary Supplement*, 29 Nov. 2019, p. 36.
- Nagoski, Emily & Amelia. *Burnout: Solve Your Stress Cycle*. London, Vermilion, 2020.
- Nice, Liz. “Revealed - the East Anglian Book of the Year 2019 winner...” *Eastern Daily Press*, 15 Nov. 2019, <https://www.edp24.co.uk/lifestyle/20767684.revealed---east-anglian-book-year-2019-winner/>. Accessed 29 Feb. 2024.
- Norbury, Katherine. “The Blackbird Diaries.” *Caught by the River*, 24 Jan. 2018. <https://www.caughtbytheriver.net/2018/01/the-blackbird-diaries/>. Accessed 29 Apr. 2024.
- Nyíri, Kristóf & Maren Hartmann. “It Began with an Interview... and Ended with a Text.” *Mediated Time: Perspectives on Time in a Digital Age*, edited by Maren Hartmann, Elizabeth Prommer, Karin Deckner & Stephan O. Görland, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp. 113-125.

- Odell, Jenny. *Saving Time: Discovering a Life Beyond the Clock*. New York, Random House, 2023.
- Olson, Liesl. *Modernism and the Ordinary*. Oxford UP, 2009.
- Peligra, Cristina. "Past, Present and Future in Zwemlessen voor later (Swimming Lessons for Later). Dutch Climate Poetry and the Representation of Time and its Cycles." *ASLE-UKI Conference 2022 Abstracts of Papers*, <https://asle.org.uk/events/northumbria-2022/abstracts/>. Accessed 6 May 2024.
- Popkin, Jeremy D. "Philippe Lejeune, Explorer of the Diary." *On Diary*, by Philippe Lejeune, University of Hawai'i Press, 2009, pp. 1-15.
- Publishers Weekly. "Field Notes from a Hidden City: An Urban Nature Diary." *Publishers Weekly*, vol. 260, no. 42, 21 Oct. 2023, p. 40.
- Pyle, Robert Michael. "The Extinction of Experience." 1978. *Through a Green Lens: Fifty Years of Writing for Nature*, by Robert Michael Pyle, Oregon State UP, 2016, pp. 53-58.
- Rak, Julie. "Dialogue with the Future: Philippe Lejeune's Method and Theory of Diary." *On Diary*, by Philippe Lejeune, University of Hawai'i Press, 2009, pp. 16-26.
- Randall, Bryony. "A Day's Time: The One-Day Novel and the Temporality of the Everyday." *New Literary History*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2016, pp. 591-610.
- Redden, Joanna. "Social Media Protest in Context: Surveillance, Information Management and Neoliberal Governance in Canada." *Critical Perspectives on Social Media and Protest: Between Control and Emancipation*, edited by Lina Dencik & Oliver Leistert, London, Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, pp. 127-143.
- "sally forth." *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english-german/sally-forth>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2021.
- Sieroka, Norman. *Philosophie der Zeit: Grundlagen und Perspektiven*. München, C.H.Beck, 2018.
- Smith, Jos. *The New Nature Writing: Rethinking the Literature of Place*. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.
- Smith, Sidonie & Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

- Smyth, Richard. "The State of Nature." *New Statesman*, 12 Apr. 2018, pp. 48-49.
- "Spirited, Adj., Sense 2.a." *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, Mar. 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1268456080>. Accessed 16 Dec. 2021.
- Steffen, Will, Paul J. Crutzen & John R. McNeill. "The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?" *Ambio*, vol. 36, no. 8, 2007, pp. 614-621.
- Stenning, Anna. "An Interview with Robert Macfarlane." *Green Letters*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2013, pp. 77-83.
- Stenning, Anna & Terry Gifford. "Introduction: European New Nature Writing." *Ecozon@*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2015, pp. 1-6.
- . "Twentieth-Century Nature Writing in Britain and Ireland." *Green Letters*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2013, pp. 1-4.
- Strøksnes, Morten A. *Das Buch vom Meer oder Wie zwei Freunde im Schlauchboot ausziehen, um im Nordmeer einen Eishai zu fangen, und dafür ein ganzes Jahr brauchen*. München, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2016.
- "stuff." *Lexico*, <https://www.lexico.com/definition/stuff>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2021.
- Sutherland, Thomas. "The Categorical Imperative of Speed: Acceleration as Moral Duty." *Mediated Time: Perspectives on Time in a Digital Age*, edited by Maren Hartmann, Elizabeth Prommer, Karin Deckner & Stephan O. Görland, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp. 25-43.
- Thiemann, Jule. "Natur- und Selbstbeobachtung im Tagebuch: Dara McAnultys *Diary of a Young Naturalist* (2020)". *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für Kinder- und Jugendliteraturforschung gkjf 2022*, pp. 154-164.
- Thoreau, Henry David. "May 6, 1854." *The Journal of Henry D. Thoreau: Vols. I – VII (1837 – October, 1855)*, edited by Bradford Torrey & Francis H. Allen, New York, Dover Publications, 1962, p. 725.
- United Nations. "68% of the world population projected to live in urban areas by 2050, says UN." *United Nations*, 16 May 2018, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html>. Accessed 7 Oct. 2020.

- van Dooren, Thom. *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction*. Columbia UP, 2014.
- Wainwright Prize. “Nature Writing Shortlist 2020: Diary of a Young Naturalist.” *Wainwright Prize*, 2024, <https://wainwrightprize.com/previous-winners/diary-of-a-young-naturalist/>. Accessed 13 June 2024.
- Weik von Mossner, Alexa. *Affective Ecologies: Empathy, Emotion, and Environmental Narrative*. Ohio State UP, 2017.
- Wheatley, Jane. “‘It’s my Job to Navigate Between Joy and Anxiety.’” *Country Life*, 26 Aug. 2015, p. 26.
- Williams, Rhian. “Gilbert White’s Eighteenth-Century Nature Journals as ‘Everyday’ Ecology.” *ISLE*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2017, pp. 432-456.
- Woolfson, Esther. “About Esther.” <https://www.estherwoolfson.com/page3.html>. Accessed 24 May 2024.
- . *Corvus: A Life with Birds*. 2008. Granta, 2018.
- . *Field Notes from a Hidden City: An Urban Nature Diary*. 2013. Granta, 2014.
- WWT. “Eurasian Curlew.” *Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust*, <https://www.wwt.org.uk/discover-wetlands/wetland-wildlife/species-factfiles/eurasian-curlew>. Accessed 22 Dec. 2023.
- Zapf, Hubert. “Cultural Ecology, Literature, and Life Writing.” *Ecology and Life Writing*, edited by Alfred Hornung & Zhao Baisheng, Universitätsverlag Winter, 2013, pp. 3-25.

Melina Lieb *23.11.1993

Bildungsweg

04/2020 – 07/2024	Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, FTSK in Germersheim	Promotion Englische Literatur
10/2017– 03/2020	Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, FTSK in Germersheim	Master of Arts Translation: Fremdsprache Englisch
09/2014– 01/2015	University of Southampton, England	Erasmus-Semester
04/2013 – 03/2017	Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main	Bachelor of Arts Hauptfach: English Studies Nebenfach: Geschichte und Philosophie der Wissenschaften

Berufliche Erfahrung

04/2020– 03/2024	Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, FTSK in Germersheim	Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin und Dozentin am Arbeitsbereich Anglistik
08/2019– 11/2019	Stab Kommunikation der Senckenberg-Gesellschaft für Naturforschung, Frankfurt am Main	Praktikum
03/2019– 07/2019	Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, FTSK in Germersheim	Wissenschaftliche Hilfskraft am Arbeitsbereich Anglistik

Fort- und Weiterbildung

09/2021– 03/2024	<i>Hochschuldidaktische Weiterbildung: Vermittlung wissenschaftlicher Arbeitstechniken</i> , Schreibzentrum/ZQ der Gutenberg-Universität Mainz	
---------------------	--	--

Publikationen

"Teaching Eco-Translation: Reclaiming the Climate Crisis Discourse in Times of Coronavirus." (with Angela Kölling) *Voicing Absences/Presences in a Damaged World*. Eds. Jessica and Marc Maufort. John Benjamins Publishing, 2022. p.175-195.

"Humility and Serious Noticing: Résumé of a Discussion Round on 'The Everyday in British New Nature Writing'." *Arcadiana* 21 September 2021.

<<https://arcadiana.easlce.eu/2021/09/21/humility-and-serious-noticing-resume-of-a-discussion-round-on-the-everyday-in-british-new-nature-writing/>>.

"Birches Like Barcodes: Responses to Robert Macfarlane's Masterclass." (with Katharina Kalinowski) *Arcadiana* 22 January 2021. <<https://arcadiana.easlce.eu/2021/01/22/birches-like-barcodes/>>.

Lieb, Melina. "Teaching Creative Nature Writing and Translation." *Arcadiana* 8 September 2020. <<https://arcadiana.easlce.eu/2020/09/08/teaching-creative-nature-writing-and-translation/>>

— "Lehrprojekt: Nature Writing und Übersetzung." *Arcadiana* 8 September 2020.

<<https://arcadiana.easlce.eu/2020/09/08/lehrprojekt-nature-writing-und-ubersetzung/>>.