# '*PAST-PAST TIME*': ANTHROPOCENE ARRHYTHMIA AND REPARATIVE PHILOLOGY IN ULRIKE DRAESNER'S *DOGGERLAND* (2021)

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Abstract

This article is concerned with the long poem *Doggerland* (2021) by Ulrike Draesner, which we read here primarily in its relationship to the temporal disorder of the Anthropocene. We will explore some specific manifestations of what we term "Anthropocene arrhythmia" in Draesner's text, in particular through its engagement with linearity and cyclicality. We conclude by suggesting that Draesner's use of language both produces and demands a kind of philological practice that is tilted towards recovery and creativity. Our article illustrates the ways in which this "reparative philology," working at the intimate scale of a single poem, can cultivate care and attention not just to the rupture of the Anthropocene, but the possibilities for recovery in human and geological history, interspecies relationships, and a sense of place across time.

*In diesem Artikel geht es um das Langgedicht* Doggerland *(2021) von Ulrike Draesner, das wir hier vor allem in Bezug auf die zeitliche Unordnung des Anthropozäns analysieren. Wir untersuchen einige spezifische Erscheinungsformen dessen, was wir in Draesners Text als „anthropozäne Arrhythmie" bezeichnen, insbesondere durch seine poetische Auseinandersetzung mit linearen und zyklischen Zeitkonzeptionen. Abschließend stellen wir fest, dass Draesners Sprachgebrauch eine Art philologische Praxis hervorbringt, die auf Erholung und Kreativität ausgerichtet ist. Unser Artikel veranschaulicht die Art und Weise, wie diese „reparative Philologie", wie es hier auf ein einzelnes Gedicht angewendet wird, über eine reine Beschreibung der zeitlichen Unordnung hinausgeht und Möglichkeiten für die (Wieder-)Herstellung menschlicher und geologischer Geschichte darstellt, sowie für die Beziehung zwischen Menschen und anderen Lebewesen, und die Empfindsamkeit für Ort und Landschaft über einen langen Zeitraum hinweg.*

Keywords: Anthropocene, temporality, Ulrike Draesner, philology

Introduction

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | sie haben sagen wir an uns | |
| | gedacht sie haben sagen wir sehen | *ancestor* |
| | sie fast – haben uns, zerstören nichts | |
| | pflegen mit zartheit *past-past* legen | *beast* |
| | finger getaucht in heidelbeersud | |
| *Muse, Mut* | mit asche vermischt in jene leere | *empty* |
| | die für uns blieb. ihre zeichen schmaler | |
| | als unsere treiben bald | |
| | über roten strichen | |
| | vier dunklen köpfen wir mit ihnen | *hole* |
| | der heißeren sonne zu | *whole* |
| | der steigenden see[i] | |

What might it mean to set the recent political history of Europe, from National Socialism to Brexit, against geological and natural timespans: the times of environmental change, sea level rises, habitat loss and extinction? Can we read human history in the context of geological time – and what is the impact of trying to rethink time relationships in this way? The historian Dipesh Chakrabarty has famously argued that the proposed new geological epoch known as the Anthropocene means 'the collapse of the age-old humanist distinction between natural history and human history'.[ii] There is growing research on the idea of the Anthropocene as a form of rupture which is specifically temporal.[iii] As Chakrabarty argues, the concept of the Anthropocene casts into disarray accepted ideas about the passage of time, and on the form and functions of memory, archives, and lineage. The linear thinking which underwrites ideas about human history becomes just one temporal frame, and is shown to be in dialogue (indeed, sometimes in conflict) with other times, including other linear times such as geological time, but also the complex times of non-human entities as well as natural cycles of seasonality, migration, birth and decay.

In this article, we will argue that the multilingual, experimental long poem *doggerland* (2021) by Ulrike Draesner not only reflects but also generates new types of temporal thinking for the Anthropocene which account for this disturbance of rhythms. Inherent in this claim is the notion that literary texts, and the philological approaches which enrich them with meaning in different times and

places, can help us (re-)think time in the context of anthropogenic environmental crisis. We theorise this as 'reparative philology', drawing on Eve Kofosky Sedgewick's influential theorisation of 'reparative reading', a hermeneutic which rejects the critical 'paranoia' which characterises much modern philological practice, including (but not limited to) approaches drawing on post-structuralist theory.[iv]

In the following, we will introduce the poem, outlining how we think that poetry in general, and *doggerland* in particular, can be helpful in its braiding of temporalities in both form and content: we identify the concept of *Anthropocene arrhythmia* as an articulation of the temporal rupture of the Anthropocene which poetry is particularly well-placed to explore. The term arrhythmia refers to a disturbance or irregularity with regard to rhythm; if rhythm is a pattern that allows for a degree of predictability and stability, arrhythmia is a breakdown in established patterns. We will explore some specific manifestations of this Anthropocene arrhythmia in Draesner's text, in particular in its engagement with linearity and cyclicality. Finally, our contribution illustrates the ways in which philological practice, working at the intimate scale of a single poem, can cultivate care of and attention to human and geological history, species evolution, and the denaturalisation and domestication of human cultures and languages.

## Ulrike Draesner's *doggerland*

The poem is a book-length exploration or imaginative reconstruction of the lost space of Doggerland and, importantly, its imagined prehistoric language(s), and thus is intimately concerned with questions of the historical and geological past. Doggerland is the name given to the submerged landmass which lies between the east coast of Britain and northern coast of the European mainland. It is sometimes referred to as a 'land bridge', as though its primary function would have been to enable passage between the spaces which are now England and those which are now the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany.[v] This is anachronistic and misleading: as recent research emphasises, Doggerland existed and was inhabited by early humans for tens of thousands of years, on the scale of geological time (between the Pleistocene and the Holocene) - for far longer than the history of all nation states

combined - and a convincing case has been made for the territory not as a liminal space but rather as the centre of meso- and neolithic Europe.[vi] Modern Northern Europeans live on its periphery. The archaeological and palaeobotanical research which established the existence of Doggerland dates to the early part of the twentieth century, but the very late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have seen a significant resurgence of interest, fed by new seismographic and archaeological data that are the result of deep-sea and subsea extraction (trawler fishing, oil wells).[vii] Over the last two decades or so, Doggerland has provided various writers and thinkers with a means by which to explore some of the central preoccupations of Northern European late modernity.[viii] Indeed, David Matless calls Doggerland an 'Anthroposcenic' landscape, for its ability to stage these complex issues.[ix]

The poem consists of eight long sections, resembling chapters. There is an overarching narrative which progresses temporally across the 'deep time' of millennia, telling the story of the emergence and transformation of modern human civilisation (that is, that of *homo sapiens sapiens*). In parts one to three (entitled 'erstes bodenleben', 'die gängige mär' and 'die fremden'), we meet an apparently matriarchal society in the process of transitioning from nomadism to settled domesticity, inhabitants of a wild and unforgiving landscape. The group appears threatened - as early humans were - by reproductive failure, possibly as a result of either malnutrition or in-breeding, and new men (Neanderthals?) are sought from an 'out-group'. In part four, 'die suche nach dem habicht', a woman leaves this settled community on an apparently spiritual journey and encounters a man whom she brings back with her. In part five, 'fell fellow klov', agriculture, narrative and the domestication of animals appear to emerge. Water ebbs and flows throughout the poem, representing both a source of threat and a route to safety. The weather is a close and vital force. Parts six and seven reveal a landscape of growing danger, with part seven ('book of songs') taking the form of a sequence of shorter lyrics, presented as though salvaged from the ruins of a lost society. Some of these appear to allude to the Storegga Slides which devastated Doggerland in the Mesolithic period. The final section, 'post-drown - moments of glory' again features a series of short lyrics, framed as the words of AI observing humans (164) - before ending with the word 'UNS', suggesting the continuity between early, contemporary and future humans.

Draesner's multilingual text, which blends modern English and modern German with old English, old Nordic, Anglo-Saxon, Middle High German and proto-Indo-European reflects her long-standing interest in etymology and linguistic history, grounded in her training as a philologist and medievalist. The text is printed vertically across each two-page spread and has a columnar layout, described in more detail below, in which the central text is flanked by words in modern German on the left and modern English on the right. The main text is multilingual, with traces of multiple languages, as noted above, but nevertheless generally legible as modern German and using modern German grammar and syntax. The central text is written entirely in lower case, and with limited punctuation, but Draesner makes use of typographical effects, such as spaces between letters, line breaks, and italicization to indicate emphasis or speed of reading (e.g. 124). The overall effect is challenging to the reader; Frieder von Ammon remarks that it is not clear which philological specialism is charged with interpreting Draesner's poem - Germanists? Anglicists? Comparatists? - before concluding that the poem requires knowledge from all three areas, and also ancient history, linguistics, biology and philosophy.[x] The framing introduction, afterword and several appendices signal Draesner's interest in Doggerland's imagined ancient linguistic landscape: 'Unter der Sprache von heute dass Flussnetz der Sprachen von einst' (161). For Draesner, Doggerland is the 'Herz Europas' (5) which invokes a sense of northern European ethnic identity and all its troubling implications.[xi]

In parallel with the emergence of language, the poem explores the emergence of subjectivity ('Hörbar wird ein Innenraum, der erst im Sprechen entsteht', the notes explain (160)), of a corresponding sense of otherness (of the object, the 'du'/'you' and of nature, 160) and attendant social structures ('Regierung und Regeln, die Abstammung, Zeugung […] und Erbe […] Sanktionen und Belohnungsystems, formale und verbale Codes, um Emotionen zu kanalisieren […] eine Rechts-, eine Sozial- und eine Liebespolitik', 156). At the same time, historicity and literacy also emerge. Section five, in which the protagonists appear to settle, make laws, cultivate land and domesticate animals, presents the words 'Vergangenheit' and 'Erzählung'– and later, 'Kunststück'– in the German marginal gloss. The text begins to cohere into tercets, and the section ends with a first-person song or lyric set apart from the previous flow of language. The English and German side-glosses do not

persist through the entire text: they come and go, tending to disappear entirely the more the text resembles a contemporary lyric poem with regular lineation and a lyric speaker, as at the end of section five. All this implies a connection between an emergent sense of historicity, perhaps connected with the emergence of agriculture and other forms of social organisation, and the formalisation of artistic expression.

However, while the poem follows a chronological trajectory in a named geographical space, it also asserts its own fictionality and thus its status as a record of (linear) history: the juxtaposition of modern German and English lexes in the margins interrupt the emergent sense of historicity, reminding the reader of the poem's artifice, since we know those words cannot literally have emerged in the order given. Events narrated in the poem, such as the leaving of hand-prints, play on speculations by archaeologists about the possible significance or ritual purpose of early art, creating a fictional possibility that resists proof or disavowal. The references to seasonality reinforce a sense of mythical timelessness in invoking ancient texts before the codification of chronological time. Thus, the apparently linear emergence of historical thinking, alongside linguistic forms enabling linear narrative, is far from the only mode in which the text thinks or presents time. On the contrary: the emergence of modern historical consciousness is undermined throughout by a self-conscious fictionality and aesthetic self-reflexivity, creating looping, irregular and non-linear time structures that push against a stable sense of the historical and chronological. The relevance of the Anthropocene concept for the text as a whole is clear: Draesner's afterword refers to the 'Deep Field der Zeit' and section eight of the poem, in a sub-poem entitled 'print-EMPS', refers to '[die] höhe des diskurses chtulu-netz-än' (140), punning on Donna Haraway's proposed concept of the Chthulucene as an alternative to the Anthropocene.[xii] Churning beneath and alongside the current of history, the poem asserts, are other ways of thinking time in art and language.

The poetic voice is both heterodiegetic and disembodied and intimately connected to the embodied actions as the inhabitants of Doggerland move energetically through the text. Sometimes the reader is brought in close, following the thoughts of a single person; at other times, the description is of the weather and the actions of the group. Direct speech is not marked, so that the poetic voice is

often interchangeable with figures in the poem; reading together with the glosses in the margins, the sense is of a clamour of voices, interrupting and overlaying each other with meaning.

## Anthropocene arrhythmia

Rhythm is a central element of poetry, including Draesner's *doggerland*; the poem has no formal metre, but makes use, as Frieder von Ammon has pointed out, of syncopated rhythm, what he describes as the 'Zusammenspiel of Regelmäßigkeit und Reibung.'[xiii] Von Ammon sees Draesner's poem as symptomatic of a break with the kinds of rhythm generally studied under the category of 'Metrik' and suggests a new term for her regular/irregular patterns: 'Groove.' Key to his notion is the sense of rhythm, of groove, that is enacted by the body during performance, and felt by the poem's audience ('es groovt'). Our argument builds on von Ammon's suggestion that *doggerland* suggests a new kind of rhythm: we connect the break he identifies in the poem's formal qualities in terms of metre to the text's themes of environmental change and civilisational collapse. Rhythm is poetic timing: it gives language its shape in a particular temporal context; and just as a rupture in understanding time might call for new rhythms in poetic language, so too might new poetic rhythms offer new understandings of time. The form and content of Draesner's *doggerland* reflect something fundamental in the way that time and timing work together, a kind of arrhythmia, a disturbance of the temporal order, and it is the reasons for, as well as the articulations of, for this disturbance that we want to explore.

In von Ammon's reading of Draesner's poem, he notes the way that its rhythms are articulated through the author's body in its performance, a patterning that can also be discerned by the listener. Feeling the 'groove' of Draesner's long poem in its written form is a more complex undertaking, but there is a way in which its arrhythmia is embodied also in the act of reading. The experience of reading these three columnar texts in two dimensions – up and down each column, left and right across the page – allows complex networks of semantic and phonetic elements to emerge gradually, in the manner of an excavation or archaeological dig. (One might also say 'organically', as

a network.) Making sense of the poem is a physical experience, which cannot be achieved in a single, linear reading, but requires a slow, circuitous engagement over time, with stopping, taking breaks, doubling back and re-reading.[xiv] Draesner includes some preliminary notes about how to read the poem, which advise that the two adjoining 'Gleise[...] können voraus-, mit-, oder nachgelesen werden; sind Begleitung, Echo, Kommentar. Leise als die Mitte sprechen sie von der Seite hinzu' (7). 'Wie Stangen einen Gong halten, halten diese beiden vertrauten Lautschienen den zentralen Klangkörper des Gedichtes' (7), the notes explain. Draesner's invocation of a gong also suggests the musical and rhythmic function of the anti-linear reading.

We suggest the term arrhythmia to describe the poem's relationship with temporality on a formal level; arrhythmia draws on von Ammon's interplay between 'Regelmäßigkeit und Reibung,' but without the musical associations of his 'groove.' Rather, we take arrhythmia to be an articulation of disturbed rhythm, a symptom of time that is out of order. Taken together with the content of the poem, its formal arrhythmia points towards the rupture of the Anthropocene, with its tangled timelines, as the cause of the trouble.

## Interrupting linearity

Draesner's poem is not non- or anti-linear: there is a definite linearity to each column as well as the perpendicular lines of left and right. However, it is a multiple and contested linearity, struggling for or against alignment. In this way, the text's form raises questions about time, memory and history in the Anthropocene, since (as Chakrabarty's work implies), the temporal crisis prompted by the idea of the Anthropocene is caused, at least in part, by the idea of linearity itself, as it underpins notions of historicity. Both the modern conception of geological time and the secular Euro-Western idea of history, are fundamentally linear, progressing irreversibly from past to future via the present. The past may interrupt the present in the form of memory, and the future may be legible in the present via projection or imagination, but time's arrow moves only forward. This presents particular problems in

a context where these two linear temporal trajectories - that of human and that of planetary history - appear misaligned or incompatible, so disparate in scale that their relationship is thrown into crisis.

Rhythm (and its disturbance, arrhythmia) are both linear and cyclical, able to capture multiple dimensions of temporality. A blend of linearity and cyclicality marks our experience of time at a phenomenological level: the seasons, daily, weekly and monthly rhythms; and in the times of the non-human: patterns of budburst and leaf drop, species migration and breeding. Draesner's text explores this tension between the linearity and non-linearity or cyclicality of time and temporal rhythms, while also offering new insights into the disruption of these rhythms. Neither entirely linear, nor entirely non-linear, the text is instead, at a formal and thematic level, interested in the overlap of multiple timelines, the creation of a temporal multi-linearity - and the rupture of linear time. This applies both to the poetic structure, according to which the three linear flows (those of the two marginal glosses, and those of the main text) interact dynamically, sometimes in synch and other times quite disjointed; and to the structure of memory itself explored in the poem.

Formally speaking, the poem contains both cyclical and linear elements. Linearity is inescapably constructed by the form of the written text, which is always linear at the level of the sentence. The cyclicality is invoked in the repetition of certain key phrases or passages, including one regularly repeated refrain which establishes the weather as an active presence in human and animal existence: an immanent, life-defining force which must always be reckoned with. Here, in an iteration in section six, where there are no side glosses:

> es regnet es stürmt es donnert bebt blitzt es ist kalt es
> windet es weht kippt bäume schleudert vögel in den himmel
> es holt luft es zischt treibt peitscht es schmerzt
> es reißt nasen ab reißt lungen aus es hört schlagartig auf
> es dampft es nieselt es riecht es steigt es scheint
> es scheint es wird warm flügel gewünscht

(110)

or, even more dramatically, in section three:

> es weht es stürmt die kälte bricht – *give it a*
> *rest* es regnet vom meer es regnet vom fluss
> es regnet vom anderen fluss es regnet aus wolken
> es schüttet eis – es hämmert auf sie
> ein

es schlägt erschlägt – das löscht sie nicht aus
das nicht

(66)

The text invites us to imagine the impact of bad weather on neolithic humans and non-human creatures. Linearity and cyclicality push up against one another in these excerpts: repetitive seasonal weather patterns are juxtaposed with the gesture towards the finality of mortality, or another kind of respite, either in the 'warm flügel' of section six or the '*give it a / rest*' of section three. Linearity is emphasised, too, here and elsewhere, by the thick vertical lines which demarcate these sections on the weather. These appear ~~which also appear~~ at the end of the seventh section of the text ('book of songs'), which can be read as a series of salvaged songs or poems produced by pre-deluge inhabitants of Doggerland:

*doggerbank doggerland*

*(those are pearls that were their eyes)*

*with the mermaids we yee sing*

(138)

A series of intertextual references (in English) including a direct reference to Shakespeare and an indirect echo of T. S. Eliot - also important interlocutors elsewhere in the poem - culminates in this gradually shortening sequence of lines which appear as the last words from Doggerland, the final one broken as if to imply a missing or lost utterance, the interruption of history. Thus, the poem's emphasis on rising seas and climate threat undermines linear temporal thinking and promotes thinking in terms of rhythm (and its absence). The text implicitly demonstrates that what seemed, to Doggerland's inhabitants, the end of the world is about to recur in the readers' present; and this recurrence of the apocalyptic deluge has the potential to rupture linearity altogether. When Timothy Morton observes that 'the end of the world has already happened', he has in mind the proleptic

obsolescence of a global imaginary which underpins existing social and political structures.[xv] Draesner's poem - its arrhythmic form and its narrative content - reminds us that there is a more literal sense in which the end of the world has already happened, for civilisations and communities like the prehistoric inhabitants of Doggerland, as a consequence of a changing climate.

## Kinship time and archival traces

Drasener's poem stages the emergence of a Euro-Western model of temporal linearity and in so doing, draws attention to its historical contingency and the existence of alternative temporal models. These alternatives exist in several religious traditions, but also in the various traditions of Indigenous thought around the world, those which have been largely effaced or colonised by what Mark Rifkin calls 'settler time'.[xvi] Kyle Powys Whyte emphasises the importance, in Indigenous thought, of 'kinship time', which he characterises as 'an ethic of shared responsibility' which extends across time and is grounded in relationships of 'mutual caretaking and mutual guardianship', a clear counterpoint to the apparent urgency with which linear time regards climate change as problem to be solve, as a 'ticking clock'.[xvii] Whyte's comparison implies that the sterile rhythms of 'clock time' sit in opposition to the more fluid and complex rhythms of kinship, between and across species and generations.

Kinship time is much in evidence in *doggerland*'s depictions of the non-human world.[xviii] Throughout the text, humans are seen forming and negotiating kinship groups - from the breeding crisis of the earlier sections to the formation of settled society complete with pets and animals in section five. In the early sections of the poem, as the matriarchal community battles the elements and searches for potential sexual partners for reproductive purposes, the boundaries between human and animal time are entirely blurred: the relevant temporalities and rhythms are those of the changing seasons, the diurnal cycle, pregnancy and reproduction. There is no sense of human historical temporality; rather, the temporality is that of the pack, the animal equivalent of the kinship group.

Later in the poem, alongside the emergence of history, we also see artistic practice emerge as a means of enabling kinship relations across generations. In the course of the poem, we encounter women leaving their handprints on the wall of a cave:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Blende* | *we-men* tauchen hände in zuber | *blend* |
| *Zauber* | drücken röthel *(muttering)* an die | |
| | höhlenwand striche vogeltritten gleich | |
| | in schnee - auf stoff *(matter)* druckt sie | *stuffing* |
| | um die beine hüften sich schlingt | |
| | zur hatz | |

(46)

The handprints are described as ephemeral (*vogeltritten gleich in schnee*), and suggests that they are not intended to be everlasting, but the cover of the book, which depicts the so-called 'Cave of the Hands' in Argentina, a work of prehistoric cave art created over multiple generations between 7,000 BC and 700 AD, reminds us of the survivals of such material traces. In part six, the poem, having swept through the millennia from the emergence of early humans and interactions with Neanderthals, takes us back in (its own) time to the same handprints:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | gewaltiger höhlen über mammut und | |
| | mufflon zwei reihen abdrücke | |
| | hände flammenfarben von eisenstein | |
| | unten vier oben viele zwischen ihnen | |
| | glänzender kalk glatt zerrieben | |
| *Frühbrüstler* | nackt. sie haben sagen wir an uns | |
| | gedacht […] | *ancestor* |

(111)

Slipping between reality and representation, this extract seems to describe a material trace transformed into a work of art: a cave-painting depicting two rows of handprints above images of mammoths and mouflon. Like the paintings in the 'Cave of the Hands', which are deep red and rusty brown, formed by tracing or blowing the outline of human hands using coloured pigments, this work also consists of overlapping shapes of different colours, rendered in iron oxides and chalk. The plural lyric speakers express the assumption that these works of art were created with future generations in mind, a physical reminder of Whyte's 'kinship time'. This is picked up by the marginal keywords: *Frühbrüstler*, Draesner's neologism, emerges as a sort of multilingual pun on 'ancestor' - anc(h)estor, perhaps. Subsequent lines appear to interpret the message from these ancestors as a plea for care and gentleness:

[….] sie haben sagen wir sehen *ancestor*
sie fast – haben uns. zerstören nichts
pflegen mit zartheit *past-past* […] *beast*

(111)

Two forms of care are hinted at in parallel here: in the context of the main flow of text in the central column, this responsibility to care is towards the past (or rather the *past-past*), human and civilisational memory: here in English, rather than as the German *Vergangenheit*, perhaps as a bilingual pun with the German *passt* ('it fits', 'it's okay'). At the same time, the half rhyme generated by the word 'beast' in the English-language gloss, coming after '*ancestor*' suggests an extension of this care to the non-human environment.

The subsequent lines describe in greater detail the process of artistic creation, accompanied in the margin by a dual allusion to '*Muse, Mut*'. Again, comparisons and contrasts with the ancestors are used to make sense of present existence, in keeping with the idea of kinship time:

[…] ihre zeichen schmaler
als unsere treiben bald
über roten strichen
vier dunklen köpfen wir mit ihnen *hole*
der heißeren sonne zu *whole*
der steigenden see

(111)

These final lines invoke, in an echo of the poem's refrain of weather images, a changing climate appropriate to the Doggerland setting, here as a shared concern of past and present: 'wir mit ihnen'.

The poem suggests various forms of archive - geological, archaeological, biological - that allow traces of past landscapes and human cultures to survive across deep time. The archive is a record of time-as-matter which enables the formation of transtemporal kinship relations, of the kind Whyte sees as essential to an ethics of care; the archive records moments or processes that allow the past to be accessed, imagined, recreated. The handprints, and the artefacts produced by the inhabitants of Doggerland, for example tools made of bone, are examples drawn from the archaeological archive. The poem also references the geological archive, as here in part two:

*Glanz* fels rot geschichtet ragt ab-ab- *blend*
sonderlich *crust dust* nun knochenland : bruch

sammelt winzige schuppen (samen, *sea-men)*
sie. feuerstein glänzt wie einst-einst die
see die sie von hinten oben unten um-
spült : wetter ist. wetter trifft.

(38)

The rhyming English words *crust* and *dust* are suggestive of geological change, of an eruption from within the Earth's crust. The German compound noun *knochenland* perhaps implies a previous incarnation of the landscape in which there was no vegetation. Feuerstein, flint, is itself archived time, in that it testifies to past geological processes (in this case the interaction between rock and water in the form of diagenesis), and the importance of flint tools to prehistoric humans make flint into a potential double archive. Contemporary understandings of Doggerland itself - as a submerged landscape - are reliant on geological and archaeological archives.

Another form of archive already hinted at in the passage cited above is that contained in 'samen, *sea-men*': both the botanical archive, in soil, fossilized plants and pollen, and in the form of DNA in human semen. The encounters between Mesolithic homo sapiens and Neanderthals in the Doggerland poem (in particular in section three), resulting in progeny, is a reminder of the way in which DNA serves as a continuous archive. Recent research has established that up to two per cent of humans of European descent have Neanderthal DNA.

## Reparative philology

These various forms of material archive interact with the immaterial archive of language. The articulation of language in flux, of semantic and sonic interferences between different speakers and moments in time serves to show up the way in which spoken language functions as an immaterial archive. A cryptic bracketed interjection in section six reinforces this: 'schwarzer schlund weicher rauch / in wessen memory (*s-mar*, *s-mer*)'. *s-mer* is thought to be a proto-Indo-European root word implying reflection, care, remembrance, and *s-mar* is an abbreviation for the so-called 'scaffold-matrix attachment region', a feature of DNA sequences which enable organisation of genetic material.

These six letters, then, enfold a vast span of human history, from ancient language to contemporary science; they link ideas about the transmission of information in human language and as biological information. These two forms of what one might reasonably call 'memory' speak to notions of kinship, language and philological practice - structures of organisation, knowledge, and the transmission of information across time. Temporally speaking, these are the structures which provide many of the rhythms of human life, those which are discernible beneath the now-disrupted hegemony of linear time.

In the previously-quoted section describing the emergence of artistic practice in the form of the cave painting, the proximity of *muttering* and *matter* recreates this relationship between physical traces and the way that language can preserve the immaterial past through the act of speech.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Blende*<br>*Zauber* | *we-men* tauchen hände in zuber<br>drücken röthel *(muttering)* an die<br>höhlenwand striche vogeltritten gleich<br>in schnee - auf stoff *(matter)* druckt sie<br>um die beine hüften sich schlingt<br>zur hatz | *blend*<br><br><br>*stuffing* |

(38)

An attention to 'muttering matter' is at the core of Draesner's philological project, and the multilingual pun on 'Mutter' ('mother') suggests a matrilineal or matriarchal form of kinship. As well as recreating the voices of Doggerland's inhabitants, the text also presents various forms of linguistic or literary archive in the shape of what appear to be poems written, sung or spoken by past and future humans. The first clear example comes in section five - also the section in which '*Vergangenheit'* and '*Erzählung'* appear in the German marginal gloss. The lines of the text cohere into regular quatrains and tercets over a number of pages (104-108) before a passage with a first-person narrator which appears as a standalone poem containing regular rhythmic patterning, including repetition of imagery. It begins:

> bin wer im schnee, leb in kreis
> schlafenden steinen gleich zuckt dort
> ein ohr eine pfote da streckt sich
>
> der körper

(108)

There are no marginal glosses in either English or German, and the passage appears to represent a standalone voice (that of an animal) participating in an act of artistic expression.

Later, in 'Book of Songs', the text's function as an archive of lost literary and oral poetry is even more obvious: here, the poems are set as short lyrics, each with a title in bold, each some kind of 'song' ('love song', 'flip song', 'moony song' etc.) In the final section, 'post-drown – moments of glory', the text again takes the form of a collection of shorter texts with their own titles, apparently the poems created by sentient AI observing humans from a distant future (cf. 164). Draesner's book-length work, then, is partly a narrative of societal collapse, partly a philological investigation into the origins of language and partly an imagined literary archive. Her artistic and scholarly interest in language histories and philological practices shapes the whole text, as her essay accompanying the poem explains: her work is an attempt to imaginatively reconstruct the language(s) of this lost space. This project of linguistic archaeology allows the poem to be read as a means of understanding early human stories, rituals, habits, modes of thought and behaviour and forms of artistic expression; and, through the examination of their collapse, of connecting us with our present predicament via language.

Through the representation of these practices of reading and writing, and attention to linguistic archives, the poem represents philology (in the sense of a love of language, an attention to language across times and cultures) as a practice which generates shared responsibility and an ethic of kinship similar to the one Whyte describes.[xix] This form of what one might call 'reparative philology' reflects Draesner's critical writing on literature's relationship with the natural world:

> Literatur […] übersetzt in greifbare, erlebbare Wirklichkeit. Sie gibt (spricht) sich uns zu, Dolmetscherin aus einem Reich flüsternder, zeitzerkratzter, nacktherziger Stimmen. Unterhaltung der Ausgewanderten, polyglott. Umschreibungen eines Zuhauses für uns. Zärtlich der Ernst ihrer immer schon verschobenen, die Leere umtanzenden Liebe zur Welt.[xx]

This process of 'translating' into language the polylingual, temporally-diverse voices of the non-human world is also how Draesner thinks of 'nature writing', preferring the German term 'Schreiben nach der Natur', which foregrounds a temporal understanding of writing as coming after, and as secondary to, nature itself. In this way, Draesner conceptualises writing about nature as a wild kind of philology which promotes care, attention, and ultimately love for the world.

## Conclusion

Draesner's poem is an exploration of a geographical place - Doggerland - but in its articulation of the temporal (dis)order of the Anthropocene, we read it here as a poem about time rather than about space. Draesner's Doggerland refutes any simple ideas about the relationship between past and present, memory and archive, linearity and lineage. *Doggerland* captures this temporal disorder on a formal level, through its play with rhythmic patterns and their disruption, and explores the disruption of linear temporality through its interleaving of alternative ideas of time. The Doggerland of the poem is a place that exists in the past, now, in the future, that will return over and over, arrhythmically, in material traces, in communication across deep time, in animal prints and pollen, a fraught and fragile space of respite, before the waters rise once again.

The poem's (re)creation of space and temporality through its complex use of language suggests philology as a reparative practice; one that does more than draw attention to the disruptions of the Anthropocene. Sedgewick rejects the 'dogged, defensive narrative stiffness of a paranoid temporality […] in which yesterday can't be allowed to have differed from today and tomorrow must be even more so, [which] takes its shape from a generational narrative that's characterized by a distinctly Oedipal regularity and repetitiveness'; instead, she urges the embrace, in reparative mode, of different forms of kinship which are 'additive and accretive, [which want] to assemble and confer plenitude on an object that will then have resources to offer to an inchoate self'.[xxi]

Read in this spirit, Draesner's expansive use of languages and lexes is not just disorientating but reorientating, finding possibilities in rupture to express forgotten continuities and to reinvigorate kinships. This is not to imply that the poem is merely advocacy for philology as a noble humanistic practice, nor that it makes the claim that language itself, or the study of it, can set disrupted times back in some kind of primal rhythm. *Doggerland* is generative in suggesting multiple ways of thinking time, and in articulating shared relationships of time and space. The various concepts of time that unfold in the poem suggest a splintering off from a dominant sense of time as progression, and a gathering together of alternative time-concepts in rhythmic disturbance, in cycles, as the reanimation

of other voices and materials, and as a form of kinship time that reaches across generations. These different, sometimes conflicting concepts are laid out with - and call for - painstaking philological attention, articulating the rupture of the Anthropocene with a wild, open-ended arrhythmia that suggests that rethinking time can renew our critical and conceptual resources.

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[i] Ulrike Draesner, *doggerland. Gedicht* (Penguin, 2021). Subsequent references to the poem are given in-text.

[ii] Dipesh Chakrabarty, ‘The Climate of History: Four Theses’, *Critical Inquiry*, 35.2 (2009), pp. 197–222 (p. 201), doi:10.1086/596640.

[iii] See, for example, Dipesh Chakrabarty, ‘Anthropocene Time’, *History and Theory*, 57.1 (2018), pp. 5–32, doi:10.1111/hith.12044; Franklin Ginn and others, ‘Introduction: Unexpected Encounters with Deep Time’, *Environmental Humanities*, 10.1 (2018), pp. 213–25, doi:10.1215/22011919-4385534; Zoltán Boldizsár Simon, Marek Tamm, and Ewa Domańska, ‘Anthropocenic Historical Knowledge: Promises and Pitfalls’, *Rethinking History*, 25.4 (2021), pp. 406–39, doi:10.1080/13642529.2021.1985224.

[iv] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, ‘Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You’re So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You’ in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and others, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 123-151.

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[vii] Bryony J. Coles, ‘Doggerland: The Cultural Dynamics of a Shifting Coastline’, *Coastal and Estuarine Environments: Sedimentology, Geomorphology and Geoarchaeology*, 175.1 (2000), pp. 393–401, doi:10.1144/GSL.SP.2000.175.01.27.

[viii] See, for example, Elisabeth Filhol, *Doggerland. roman* (Gallimard, 2020); Julia Blackburn, *Time Song: Searching for Doggerland* (Jonathan Cape, 2019). See also Maria Adolfsson’s series of Doggerland crime novels, starting with Maria Adolfsson, *Felsteg* (Wahlström & Widstrand, 2018).

[ix] David Matless, ‘The Anthroposcenic: Landscape in the Anthroposcene’, *British Art Studies*, 10, 2018, doi:10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-10/dmatless.

[x] Frieder von Ammon, 'Groove' in *Gegenwart Aufnehmen: Zum Werk und Wirken von Ulrike Draesner*, ed. By Monika Wolting and Oliver Ruf (Brill, 2024), pp. 153–54, doi:10.30965/9783846767979_013.

[xi] Although Matless notes that Doggerland, in the English cultural imagination, has emerged as a 'counter-nationalist' configuration, 'Europe's lost world' (369), Draesner by contrast highlights in her introduction the German-language tradition of reading Doggerland in ethno-nationalist terms, as 'arisch' (5).

[xii] Donna Haraway, 'Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin', *Environmental Humanities*, 6.1 (2015), pp. 159–65, doi:10.1215/22011919-3615934.

[xiii] Ammon, p. 158.

[xiv] The physical experience of reading the poem is not limited to the words on the page. One hardback edition of the book is 'haptisch besonders' (02:21) as André Hatting remarks in a podcast interview, and the cover feels as if it is made of animal skin; his interlocuter remarks that Hatting 'hat das Buch nicht nur gelesen, sondern erfahren' (00:21). deutschlandfunkkultur.de, 'Ulrike Draesner: "doggerland" - Man meint, Tierhaut zu spüren', *Deutschlandfunk Kultur*, 2021 <https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/ulrike-draesner-doggerland-man-meint-tierhaut-zu-spueren-100.html> [accessed 27 August 2024].

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[xvii] Kyle Powys Whyte, 'Time as Kinship', in *The Cambridge Companion to Environmental Humanities*, ed. by Jeffrey Cohen and Stephanie Foote, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 39–55 (p. 42), doi:10.1017/9781009039369.005.

[xviii] It is worth noting that the application of Rifkin and Whyte's thinking to a European context is not straightforward; the models of North American Indigenous thought cannot and should not be imported to Europe (perhaps especially to Northern Europe, Britain or Germany) with adequate scrutiny. Draesner's text has ideas of indigeneity, the connection between people and place and human origin stories at its core, but her accompanying essay notes that early humans migrated from Africa to Europe (including Doggerland), implying a complex indigeneity. Whyte's concept of kinship time is useful in thinking about the relationship Draesner's work proposes between mesolithic humans and their ancestors; further nuance would be required in extending this dynamic forward into modern history.

[xix] We again note that to do so in a Northern European context is not entirely straightforward. The connection Draesner posits is between human beings across the world and their Mesolithic ancestors, who were (as she emphasises) cultures of migration and hybridisation, rather than insular groups with an essential connection to land and place.

[xx] Ulrike Draesner, 'Vom zärtlichen Ernst der Welt. Nature Writing' in *Grammatik der Gespenster: Frankfurter Poetikvorlesungen* (Ditzingen: Reclam, 2018) pp. 155-189, p. 189.

[xxi] Sedgewick, p. 149.