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TBLR/ESSCS “Living Together”

Abstract:

Posthuman Forms of the *Idiorrhythmic*: Artificial Intelligence in Spike Jonze’s *Her*

With the advent of self-driving cars, self-regulating homes and smart assistants like Amazon Echo, artificial intelligence (AI) seems increasingly likely to enter our everyday lives on a mass scale. In light of Roland Barthes’ seminar on ‘living together’, how can these technological developments of the last decade contribute to our contemporary understanding of the *idiorrhythmic*? How can humans live together with technological counterparts, how can we develop relationships with AI? This paper explores a recent cinematic negotiation of ‘living together’ with AI: I will analyze Spike Jonze’s 2013 science-fiction drama *Her* and argue that it thoroughly complicates the idea of posthuman togetherness, going far beyond the trope of a robot revolution overtaking mankind.

In *Her*, the human protagonist chooses to test a new device that runs a highly developed AI and quickly begins a romantic relationship with it. The operating system, which has no physical embodiment and only communicates via an earpiece and a human-like voice, at first resembles a ‘perfect’ companion: always there when needed, simply turned off when not. In connection with other examples of contemporary representations of AI in film and TV (e.g. *Ex Machina*, *Westworld* or *Black Mirror*), I will examine *Her* and other posthuman forms of living together. Specifically, how they relate to Barthes’ *idiorrhythmic* topos of the home as a site of family life and everyday routines. The entities of AI, whether as technological prosthetics as in *Her* or complete robotic embodiments, on the one hand aid and automate these routines, on the other hand disrupt them and cause errors. Simultaneously, relationships between AI and humans pose wide-ranging questions about intimacy and challenge traditional notions of family, bringing the possibility of a posthuman *idiorrhythmic* into view. These representations will be contextualized in our current moment of continuing digitalization and the burgeoning internet of things, parsing out implications for our manifold relationships with technology today.

[*PhD project*: ”Associative Narration and Digital Network Structures in Contemporary Film”]

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Abstract:

Photographic reflections on the modern city in the 1950s in Keld Helmer-Petersen's work

Danish photographer Keld Helmer-Petersen (1920-2013) formulated a new way of representing the city in his photographs from the 1950s: although formalist and part of a modernist movement within photography at the time that focused on abstraction, structures and patterns in the urban fabric, his photographs maintain a visual and thematic connection to the built environment, to everyday objects and places where life unfolds – and in this way he combines an almost abstract graphic imagery with representations of the city; its architecture, dynamics, rhythms and signs. Helmer-Petersen wandered through the city of Copenhagen and transformed everyday objects, trash on the ground, architectonic details and industrial decay to photographic imageworlds. The motives remaining partly recognizable, partly transformed to something new.

In a critique of postwar formalist photography photohistorian Abigail Solomon-Godeau argues that the formalist photographers simply repeat the formal strategies of the avant-garde of the 1920s, but that the revolutionary aspects of the avant-garde's efforts are gone; it has become pure form and style (Solomon-Godeau, 1990). In this paper I suggest a reading of Helmer-Petersen's work in light of Barthes' concept of *idiorrhythmy* and Walter Benjamin's idea of the urban wanderer as one that goes 'botanizing on the asphalt'. Through these ideas I wish to read against this notion of pure form and instead argue that the city, although in fragments and abstractions, is a *topos* in Helmer-Petersen's work that reflects on the city as both a perceptual and metaphorical space – as a real place with traces of history and lived life and as a potential space for an abstract imageworld.

[*PhD project*: "Tactile Structures – The photography of Keld Helmer-Petersen in the 1950s"]

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The Potentiality of No-Be at Home in *Home*

Abstract: In this essay, I will analyse documentary theatre *Home* (2016) to explore the political critical aspect of potentiality of not-be (friends, at home) following Agamben, in response to Barthes' topos of home. In *Home*, under the guidance of dramaturge Li Yinan, the third year students of theatre literature in Beijing Central Academy of Drama interviewed young migrant workers for a few times in Beijing who were around their ages and who came from the same hometowns or home provinces as theirs during the one-year course on dramaturgy. The focus is home— what does home mean to them; what are their ideal homes; what do their homes (past, present) look like etc.. Echoing Barthes' topos, home is not only a shelter or family, but also a place that connects to individuals' sense of self and sense of belonging. As the documentary theatre progressed, the students became more familiar with their interviewees, but at the same time, they felt unsettled by some issues looming large between them and the latter: could they ever be friends with the latter as they claimed to be? They came to realise that the class difference between themselves and the migrant workers stood in the way. The students asked themselves: were they exploiting the latter in another way, as content providers and affect labourers; how could this uncomfortable inequality manifested in this conception and production of

Home and in the society at large be turned into language and performance that could trigger reflection and affect with criticality? Furthermore, I ask, how does the potentiality of language in *Home* perform, and how does the students' potentiality of not-be friends with migrant workers, and that of not-be at home in *Home* play out, and how the uncanny moments of “living together” occur during the performance?

[*PhD project*: ”Criticality of Socially Engaged Art Concerning Urbanisation in China”]

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Working *with/through* AND: a mode of inquiry of how to live together

AND consists of an operative mode that results from the research of Brazilian anthropologist Fernanda Eugénio, partially out of her four-year-collaboration with Portuguese choreographer João Fiadeiro. AND is a way of *thinking-doing* that instantiates, namely, as a game of structured improvisation and composition (as in *positioning-with*). The AND player responds according to a set of conditions that entail the mapping of just (as in justness) correspondences between the possibilities-qualities of the player and those of the event, or, in other words, a just correspondence between affordances and affects. In contrast with Real Time Composition, the improvisation method devised by João Fiadeiro, it does not privilege a specific body and it precludes the production of performances as spectacles or commodities. It is an ethical-aesthetic approach with transversal applicability, far more preoccupied with investigating ways of inhabiting encounters (‘using’ the accidents that interrupt us, feeding events). By favoring the in-betweenness of relations, it eschews preconceived ideas, egotistic and authorial authority, it problematizes and temporarily suspends binaries such as subject-object (and all its subsidiaries), and it tries to respect the agency of all things. This “situated performance of the encounter” (Eugénio), this particular awareness in the way we inhabited the encounter, it will be argued, may allow for the emergence of a connection between the players of the game that is not dependent on any kind “affirmation of identity” but, instead, “a solidarity that in no way concerns an essence” (Agamben). This co-habitation of the encounter results in what we might call, at this point, “compearance” – “something of a more originary order than that of a the bond” -, to use a word by Jean-Luc Nancy that emphasizes the betweenness, and allows for a potential “coming community” (Agamben) or “inoperative community” (Nancy).

[*PhD project*: “By means of metonymy: The construction of continuity of performance related artistic work” (Provisional)]

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Deaf Culture: The constant threat of extinction

In Ancient Rome, deaf poor children were thrown to the Tiber river. Deaf couples were not allowed to marry until the twelfth century. Deaf Culture has been under threat for centuries. It all culminated with the Milan Congress, a meeting of educational professionals became known to the Deaf as The Deaf Holocaust, because it dictated a set of resolutions that reinforced the oppression already inflicted on the deaf before 1880. Coincidentally, by this time, eugenicists plotted to eradicate the “deaf variety of human race”. This power display was predominantly exerted through prohibition and punishment on the use of signed languages in schools. Moreover, the medical discourse disseminated a conception of deafness as a pathology and scientists were solely determined in finding its cure, culminating in deaf children undergoing a variety of painful treatments, arduous therapies and rehabilitation processes. In the last three decades, geneticists found data on deaf genes and the wish to eliminate hereditary deafness startled the eugenics terror once again. Despite facing social difficulties and communicating through translation with the hearing - in a constant mediation between vocal and signed languages - the Deaf intelligentsia has grown stronger educational-wise, becoming aware of the colonization process on Deaf communities and deconstructing it in a conscientious way.

This paper aims to explore the fear of extermination experienced by Deaf communities and the consequent Deaf resurgence that emerged despite of social asymmetries. Furthermore, it demonstrates the importance of respecting difference, of learning how to live together, with our idiosyncrasies, despite cultural differences. Also, it is relevant to look upon the progressing upheaval processes undertaken by the Deaf communities against such historical oppressive dynamics, by gathering theories from Deaf Studies and Cultural Studies. All in all, the Deaf communities and Deaf Culture are no longer a passive bystander on the brink of extermination.

Keywords: Deaf Studies; Eugenics; Milan Congress; linguistic minority; signed languages

[PhD project: “Deaftopia: Community Dreams in the United States and Portugal”]

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Acting Together in Public Space

There is a raising awareness of the necessity of preservation the public space as a space of dialogue and democracy (Bauman, Lefebvre, Mouffe, Holmes).

We can observe an expansion in the field of critical interventions in the public space, which are closely linked to artistic/culture/social activism. This paper will explore the current role, limitations and potentials of (urban) public space and it will contribute to an understanding of the causes of political passivity.

Public space serves interventions in multiple intertwining aspects: as a physical space and a medium for critique, but above all as a space of human interaction, for it has always had a primacy of the greatest humanity, mobility, sensibility – this is where an individual meets the other, the different, the unfamiliar and this is where a new parlance is invented. »Urban« is revolutionary, asserted Lefebvre and explained the »right to the place/city/space« as a novel form of (revolutionary) citizenship, which is based on such encounters between people that diminish and bridge the distance between them.

Existing architecture is designed for pseudocommunities, it isolates individuals and does not release them from surveillance. Technology enables the transmission of messages of spectacle in such way that they can constantly and ubiquitously invade an individual's isolation/solitude – with its images, which achieve their dominance through the very same isolation. Capitalist urbanism organises life in a way that persuades people that they cannot change anything in their space, but above all it isolates and discourages them from any participation.

Barthes was opposed to one-sided and simplified glorification of participation and community. He enhances our understanding by including a subtler dimension of idiorrhythmy, a concept referring to the individual's dilemma of »what distance must I maintain between myself and others if we are together to construct a sociability without alienation.« It steers us to researching the tension between individual's autonomy versus belonging to the community, in relation to which it emphasises also the individual's difficult and complex relationship with Powers.

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[*PhD project*: "Critical interventions in public space: Subversion of creative industries for socially engaged participation"]

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Abstract for paper Living Together

Date: 26th May 2018

The reciprocal relationship between the architecture of homes and actors' interaction

This paper explores the home to people living in shared assisted residential care. It's a theoretical exploration since my Ph.D.-project still is in the planning stage, with 1th September 2017 as starting date at Department of Sociology, Nord university. The thesis question is currently "How does the architecture of the home influence the quality of service for people who receive services after helse- og omsorgstjenesteloven § 9-5, b and c?". The Norwegian special law, helse- og omsorgstjenesteloven chapter 9, regulate the use of force and power against people with intellectual disability (also referred to as learning disability) and challenging behavior (harm to one self or other persons). By defining architectural factors that prevent challenging behavior, hopefully, the project can reduce use of force and power.

I see the home as a place for body and soul. Through this dichotomy, the home is a physical place, where the body is both constrained and protected by roof and walls; and for the soul, the home is a place to thrive, experiencing safety, and in Goffmans terms; ease the management of information. For the residents in my study, it's not that easy. Paid professional helpers and the use of force and power, characterize their homes, and make it unlike other "normal" homes. Social workers can lawfully lock doors, impound food and personal items, or physically restrain residents. Previous research have shown that good relationships between residents and social workers reduce challenging behavior, and such, interaction becomes a central focus. The papers limited focus is therefore "How does the home shape interaction and how does interaction shape the home?"

Offhand, I define the chosen student-paper topic to be "(2) a paper stemming from the PhD student's ongoing dissertation work, [...] lifted out of the dissertation-writing process for particular, critical attention". Continuing offhand, I see Barthes "ideorhythmy", Foucaults *Birth of the clinic*, Derridas "inscribing" and Bakhtins "chronotope" as relevant concepts to explore for answers.

[*PhD project*: "Hjemmets arkitektoniske faktorer for utøvelse av tvang og makt overfor personer med utviklingshemming"]

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Abstract:

'Living Together' in the Form of Children's Festival

The "Pippi's Festival" – inspired by Astrid Lindgren's story *Pippi Longstocking* – is defined by involvement of multiple cultural backgrounds. The festival affects the intricate functioning of the community in the whole region. As a media event, the festival touches wider community as well. Hence, it represents a framework of Barthe's "koinobiosis" interacting with "idiorrhymic mappings".

[Festival link: The Pippi Longstocking festival is the biggest children's festival in Slovenia, app. 100.000 visitors in seven days, the website link is www.pikin-festival.si.]

The research will treat children's festival as the aspect of cultural education in view of intra-sectoral, intergenerational and intercultural integration. The integration operates through knowledge spreading, acquiring new practices and expanding the fields of cognition. Interdepartmental integration is becoming an important area of the organizational structures of the festivals as well as of other cultural projects, since it represents the foundation for the expansion of the knowledge of the expertise covered by the institutions.

Socialization and education long ago shifted to the institutional sphere. The intergenerational cooperation is increasingly becoming the subject of formal and organized activities. Therefore, it is being actively installed in the field of children's festivals. Within the augmenting globalization in all areas of commonality, including in the fields of art and culture, the work of an agency of unification of the cultural tendencies and trends is noticeable.

International interaction allows multiple diverse responses to artworks and it engenders new ideas. At the same time, it impacts the verification of its own signifying production in the context of the international artistic sphere.

Modern life forms seem to accelerate a need for mass gatherings. Mass events in the form of festivals are significantly on the rise and, as such, are increasingly becoming the themes of the humanities research. Different forms of symbiosis ("bios praktikos") within the children's festival are propagating resurgence of desires that "lurk within you" (Barthes: p. 6) and so they are inscribed in the sphere of signifiers of idiorrhymy.

[*PhD project*: "The concept of man in the social transformations of the 21st century"]

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Living Together

August 14th – 18th 2017

Bergen, Norway

Paper proposal:

Social landscapes of European crisis representation

This paper focuses on the visual representational practices regarding the recent economic crisis in the European context. It analyses the ways in which photographers and filmmakers have positioned their work within the visual environment and interpreted the social impact of the crisis. The common observation and motivation behind these representations has been the prevalence of abstract financial language and centrality of the representations of conflict within the media and public discourse. In order to contribute to a more inclusive view of particular societies and Europe in general, stories of living through the crisis came to be told through the representations of peripheral, decayed landscapes, and everyday experiences of impoverishment in ‘silent’ contexts. While there exists a tendency of focusing on the ‘other’ Europe; the inhabitants of the ‘islands’ in the margins of cities and nations (Bhabha, 1994) or private domestic spaces; the critique for ‘othering’ in the history of representation (Sontag, 2003; Rosler, 2004) has caused a necessary transformation in the ways of representing the social experience and engaging with the society through practice.

Guided by the central idea of Derrida (1992) about difference as a necessary element of European identity, the objective of this paper is to analyze the social divisions and encounters within the visual representations and practices in order to reflect on the ways in which the economic crisis has impacted and transformed social living. It is an investigation into one of the central themes of [my work-in-progress] PhD dissertation “Crisis Images and Politics of Visibility – Social landscapes of recession-era Europe” that focuses on contemporary representation of the social impact of the economic crisis in conjunction with the history of representing poverty and social injustice.

[PhD project: “Crisis images and politics of visibility – Social landscapes of recession-era Europe”]

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Abstract:

(Im)passive forms of Labor, Life and Literature in Light of Dave Eggers' *A Hologram for the King*

This paper focuses on the literary portrayal of a life shaped by immaterial labor conditions. Immaterial labor is the result of the shift from the “manufacture of durable goods” to “services and information” (Hardt 1999: 90). While immaterial forms of labor are not the most common among the world’s population, they nevertheless dictate “social production” (Hardt/Negri 2004: xv). “Production today,” as Hardt and Negri claim, “has to be conceived not merely in economic terms [...] but also [in terms of] the production of communications, relationships, and forms of life” (ibid.). Immaterial forms of labor actively form the rhythms and patterns as well as the emotions and affects of contemporary life and “living together.”

Dave Eggers’ novel *A Hologram for the King* chronicles the production of life within a post-Fordist, globalized economy. Its protagonist Alan Clay travels to King Abudullah Economic City, Saudi Arabia – a real-life desert city founded in 2005. His task is to sell holographic teleconference equipment to the king. The king never arrives. Alan waits day after day, moving from hotel room to presentation space in a numbing rhythm. He ultimately accepts his impasse not as a temporary condition but rather as a potentially permanent form of life.

In reference to an essay entitled “Form-of-Life” by Agamben, I speculate whether this is in any sense a political form of life. I also use the concept of ‘impasse’ to signify a cluster of connotations that relate not merely to the character Alan Clay but also to contemporary forms of labor and life, impassive national and class divisions, and the narrative’s performance of stylistic (im)passivity. Eggers’ novel processes the intersection between immaterial forms of labor and life not from a removed position but rather as a cultural product that is enfolded and implicated in the intersection it describes.

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[*Postdoc project*: “Working Lives in U.S.-American Literature: Transformations in Forms of Labor, Forms of Life, and Narrative Aesthetics from Industrial to Post-Fordist Capitalism”]

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The failure of empathy in *Enjoy Poverty*

We are living in a time that demands us to reconsider how we might relate to each other. The distant *other* exists mostly through ambiguous, filtered and mediated images to which we tend to fail to empathize with. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag states that the moral problem of the ‘educated class’ lies in “our failure (...) of imagination, of empathy: we have failed to hold (...) reality in mind.” (Sontag, 2003: 8) Given the role of photography as producing documents of reality one would have thought that it should promote emotional identification with others. Instead, its commodification has led not only to what has been considered as the resourceful exploitation of images by bourgeois society but also to a resistance of empathy in discourse and practice.

This paper proposes a close reading of the documentary film *Enjoy Poverty* (2010) by Dutch artist Renzo Martens and it aims to analyse how the film might inform the notion of empathy as it has been addressed by several authors (H. Arendt, 1990; M. Smith, 1759; M. Slote, 2007; A. Lobb, 2015) The presentation will focus on the relation of empathy established between filmmaker and subject, and between filmmaker and viewer. In making this film, Martens travelled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo – a country as big as the western part of Europe and a reservoir for violent conflict. After 500 years of western colonization, imposed patriarchal power structures, forced labour, and extreme poverty, the challenge of how to talk about the Congo truthfully required that Martens acknowledged *our* own collective stake in the “other’s” lives and, more specifically, in their suffering in the making of his confronting film. Martens’ film reveals how a system of production and reception of images of suffering functions in western developed countries, and how after hundreds of years of slavery and colonization they still continues to exploit the people who are subject to poverty and suffering in the Congo through the distribution of media. Because of that, Martens claims that the Congolese should be able to take control of the means of production of their own images and to resist and compete with the dominant institutionalized practice of western societies. Yet, Martens’ mission to ‘empower’ the Congolese to document and circulate their *own* images of their *own* suffering revealed itself to be a failure.

[*PhD project*: “Contemporary Documentality: Theory and practices of reflexive documentary” (Working title)]

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Anthropology in the Margins of Life: The Case of the Mapuche People

Anthropologists continue to track and engage with emergent relationships and transformations in the different ways of being human and the worth of different human lives. They cater for the interests of a wider readership when their efforts merge with those of research scientists, professionals, community organizers, and citizens throughout the world. This paper reviews trends in anthropological analysis of the beginnings and endings of life. It encompasses the production and attenuation of personhood, the boundaries of life and death that constitute and disassemble social and corporeal bodies, and the subject-making powers of states and corporations. Victor Turner's concepts of *liminality* and *communitas* and Robert Hertz's insights into death and bereavement rituals have guided anthropologists in thinking about thresholds and borders, the sacred and the secular, and social production and cultural facts. Through and beyond Foucauldian hermeneutics and the work of Georges Canguilhem, ethnography has responded to shifting politics, ethics, and discourses about the margins of life. Technologies of life and death and notions of self and citizenship are central to these concerns. Anthropologist Magnus Course situates the Mapuche within broader debates about identity politics and the politics of identity in Lowland South American anthropology. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose configure contemporary biopolitics at the level of life itself, where corporeality becomes a site for knowledge production and political forms of regulation. From this perspective, the *vital* character of the existence of the Mapuche confers value and infuses choice in and of itself. This paper further engages with selected works of Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Derrida, parsing their relevance for anthropological research concerning life and death in general and the case of the Mapuche people in particular.

[*PhD project*: "The Importance of Being an Artist: The Politics and Aesthetics of the Serbia Underground"]

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Agamben's Kafka: Readings of the Law and the Coming of the Messiah

“Kafka's *oeuvre* lends itself to everyone but answers no one.” The formulation is taken from Roland Barthes' essay, “Kafka's Answer” (1960), and might well apply to the authorship of Giorgio Agamben, who repeatedly returns to Franz Kafka's literature in his philosophical investigations of the law.

In *Homo sacer* (1995), Agamben draws on Jacques Derrida's and Massimo Cacciari's deconstructive readings of Kafka's “Before the Law” (1915), as well as Gershom Scholem and Walter Benjamin's correspondence discussing Kafka, especially Scholem's notion on the law as *Nichts der Offenbarung* (‘the Nothing of Revelation’), which in Agamben's view refers to the law as being in force without significance. Here, Kafka seems to present the law as pure ban, i.e. the law in its purest form, a point in which it affirms itself without prescribing anything.

What these readings overlook, holds Agamben, is the Messianic dimension of Kafka's literary representation of the law. He develops this argument in *Potentialities* (1999): unlike the state of exception—the times in which we live—the time and state in Kafka's literature belong to the domain of the Messianic state of exception, which, in turn, fundamentally challenges the law's function and potentiality.

This paper will explore another piece of short prose by Kafka, namely “Jackals and Arabs” (1917), following Agamben's line of thought. The story takes place in a desert's oasis, where a travelling European—the narrator—sets camp. There, he is approached by jackals demanding that he put an end to the Arabs and thus to their suffering, rendering the narrator a Messianic figure by calling for violent intervention. This paper argues that the story sheds light on the Messianic idea and its relation to the law, but in so doing, “Jackals and Arabs” simultaneously draws attention to the more corporal and brutal aspects of prophetic intervention.

[*PhD project*: “Law and Desire in the Works of Franz Kafka”]

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Tectonics as an entry to mediate deep time: the desert as metaphor in *Medium Earth* (2013) by The Otolith Group



Screenshot from *Medium Earth* (2013) by The Otolith Group

This paper represents a section of my ongoing PhD research through a case study that is pivotal to my subject. My presentation will respond to theme of deep time by way of the analysis of an art work—an essay film—that explores the movements of the earth. My theoretical framework will be Steven Jay Gould’s *Time’s Arrow, Time’s Cycle* and more specifically his decree to think deep time through metaphors. I will argue that *Medium Earth* functions through the open-ended nature of metaphors, choosing the figure of the desert as a paradigm of vastness. The film essay by the London-based artistic duo attempts to grasp the vastness of time, that has become synonymous with the imagery of geology, through a filmic exploration of the Californian desert. The desert stands in the film as a symbol of enormity, taking manifold forms. As vast parts of California were “reclaimed” from the desert, the artists chose to feature, for instance, many parking lots, which The Otolith Group approaches as concrete deserts, as anti-environments. In this sense, the film confronts us with the large-scale—that of deep time and space—through small-scale encounters with this vast phenomenon, one of the new realities the Anthropocene is urging us to face. This is why The Otolith Group chose to collaborate with an earthquake sensitive, a person who has the capacity to feel the seismic incidents from a distance and can therefore communicate an experience beyond the prevailing human realm. Through an exploration of the lithic as palpable and alive, rather than cold and inert, (JJ Cohen, *Stone, An Ecology of the Inhuman*), *Medium Earth* is a first step to integrate the geological into our vocabulary and thus visualise and experience it.

[*PhD project*: “On Deep Time: The Geological Imaginary in Contemporary Art (2002-present)”]

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Living together in a patriarchal context – codes of coexistence

In frame of project “In 2016: How it felt to live in the Arab World five years after the ‘Arab Spring’”¹, The study of everyday life obtains fresh material appearing in Egyptian social media to express views from “below” by creating a visual and cultural register. This article considers the role that YouTube channels play in representing counter discourse to main stream media. As Egyptian youth seek ways to push social and cultural boundaries, humorous YouTube videos are created and shared widely in social media which potentially act as a form of popular culture. The tension between reproductions of power via main stream media versus alternative discourse on YouTuber, presents a phenomenon of contesting over meaning and culture codes by framing issues and events. The rivalry between the two narrations is illustrated in a multimodal analysis of a sample of YouTube parody videos. Three techniques are employed by YouTubers to express bottom up cultural values and perceptions in contrast with top down values. Naming, alternative framing and consciousness-raising are in play to perform culture of anti-patriarchal. Exploring the notion of idiorrhymic in Egyptian society reveals the coexisting of number of codes that are vivid in every day experience and illustrated in media production. I will discuss three pairs of codes: authority versus individuality, freedom versus constrains and voice versus silence or visibility versus invisibility. The paper will present these cultural codes as suggested trend to understand Egyptian society after series of uprisings.

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[*PhD project: ”In 2016: How it felt to live in the Arab World five years after the ‘Arab Spring’”*]

¹ <https://www.hf.uio.no/ikos/english/research/projects/the-arab-world-five-years-after-the-arab-spring/>

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How Do We Live with Ourselves: Animal Life-Forms in Agamben and Derrida

The paper examines different strategies for understanding coexistence (or the lack thereof) between human and non-human animals in Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Derrida. The essay takes Roland Barthes' concept of *idiorrhhythmia* as its starting point, i.e. that which bridges the urge for solitude with a sense of community by making room for the life rhythms of others. How can we begin to think animality from the vantage point of living together, or put differently: how can we live with our animal selves, as a society encompassing more than one species?

The paper sketches out some of the interconnections between, on the one hand, Agamben's ambiguous *homo sacer* figure, located in the example of the Germanic bandit outlaw or *vargr*, included into society by virtue of his very expulsion; and, on the other, Derrida's chimerical term *l'animot*, a monstrous hybrid of word, animal and different *animaux*, at once singular and plural, a creation that embodies the fictitious and mythological status of non-human animals.

For Agamben, what happens when bare life is politicized, i.e. caught up in the affairs of the *polis*? The bandit *vargr* is locked in a state of non-arrival, never fully animal or human—a hybrid being otherwise found in works of art and literature. Similarly, Derrida asks that we consider the implications of the animal gaze, shattering in its otherness, in living with other animals. In retelling his encounter with his cat, there emerges a problem of perceiving the cat as an individual animal, as a singular being, without also making it a representative for an entire species as the story is relayed.

Storytelling is thus crucial—simultaneously a problem and a solution—to any animal encounter, making literature a fruitful locus for any investigation into animality.

[*PhD project*: "Readings under the Influence: Posthumanism and Intoxication in Vladimir Sorokin"]

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Abstract:

Theorizing national identity in relation to language policy and linguistic ideologies

The present paper stems from a thesis chapter that outlines the theoretical foundations of my research on the discursive construction of linguistic ideologies in the language-related political debates in today's Russia, where the dominant language is being used as an ideological tool to create and consolidate group membership. Having defined the concepts of language policy and ideology that are central to my work, I will focus on *nation* and *nation-building* and the role of the state language policies in the production and regulation of group identities. The relationship between language and national identity is seen by most researchers in the field of linguistic ideologies as problematic, as are the notions of *nation*, *identity* and even *language* as such. It is therefore necessary to differentiate between identity as a widely critiqued analytical category and a category of social and political practice, as well as between "inhabited" and "ascribed" identities promoted or imposed by the state. I will reflect on whether such differentiation is sufficient or whether it is necessary to move "beyond" identity and employ alternative terms such as identification, belonging, or positioning to develop a conceptual framework suitable for the analysis of a nation-building project of the political elites as a discursive process and its implications for ethnolinguistic diversity without essentializing the link between language, ethnicity, and nationality. Furthermore, I will consider the applicability of the existing concepts to the particular context of the Russian Federation, where the current nation-building agenda has been characterized in terms of a unique form of "civilizational" nationalism.

[*PhD project*: "Language Ideologies in Today's Russia: The Area of Tension between the Federal Center and the Republics"]

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Paper abstract:

The development of the medical institution motif in Knut Hamsun's authorship: Hamsun's final work, *On overgrown paths*, read in light of his earlier sanatorium works

My paper concerns the “sanatorium” part of the TBLR course, and aims to give an overview of the medical institution motif throughout Knut Hamsun's authorship. As a lecturer at Volda University College, my research focuses primarily on the intersection between literature and illness, and my paper will explore how variations of the sanatorium/medical institution motif points towards Hamsun's autobiographical final work, *On overgrown paths* (*På gjengrodde stier*). In doing so, I will introduce some little used perspectives on Hamsun's work borrowed from the interdisciplinary field of *medical humanities*. The paper will discuss three of Hamsun's later works, *The last joy* (*Den siste glede*), *Chapter the last* (*Siste kapittel*) and *On overgrown paths* (as well as a short story, “*Udi søden sommer*”) in a theoretical framework containing the insights of Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Susan Sontag. How does the institution motif develop throughout the authorship, and in what way does Hamsun's concluding work process this motif? When the earlier sanatorium novels portray the medical institution as a contradiction to an authentic way of life, how do the structures of power and the portrayal of illness develop as Hamsun describes the institution from an autobiographical angle, through the veil of being considered imprisoned for treason against his own country during World War II? I will discuss these literary works in light of Barthes' lectures on how the self and the individual navigates within the institutional community, and how the medical institution combines isolation with coexistence, and thus enables an arena where opposites and contrasts visibly become part of the same structure, the hierarchy of the medical institution.

[*Planned project* on comparative analysis of Knut Hamsun and Amalie Skram's autobiographical works on involuntary hospitalization. The works as *pathographies* within the theoretical framework of mainly Michel Foucault and Susan Sontag.]

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“Living Together”

Paper abstract:

A Sanatorium in the Wilderness

My paper application is primarily inspired by the topos of the SANATORIUM, but also bears relevance to several other key notes within the other topoi outlined in the CFP, especially the ones enlisted under the DESERT, such as *margins* and *withdrawal*. Writing my PhD on the Swedish writer Stina Aronson, more specifically her so called wilderness texts, I will turn the attention toward an important topos within my PhD-project; the “Sanatorium in the Wilderness” (“ödemarkssannatoriet”). Within Aronson’s texts the sanatorium, placed at it is on the outskirts of the human society, appears to be a place where the *border* between civilization and nature is highlighted. The walls of the hospital demonstrate a distinction between the culture inside and the nature outside. The human beings making up this hospital's interior, however, problematizes this boundary. Bodies formed by generations working on the north Scandinavian highlands are enclosed behind modern, transparent windows. Thus, the sanatorium can be interpreted not only as an artificial element in the natural landscape, but even a place where the work of nature in the bodies are prevent or expelled. However, the fact that nature is palpable and present outside the window glass as well as in the diseased bodies, makes the hospital with all its connotations of advancement and civilization appear insignificant within a greater context unaffected by any individual life. What I want to investigate in this paper more specifically is how this questioning of the human perspective is being expressed through the particular context of the sanatorium within (some of) Aronson’s short stories? What shapes do nature take on when perceived from inside the hospital, and to what degree does the “traces of wilderness” affect on the “idiorrhymic” of the sanatorium life?

[*PhD project*: ””inför ödemarkens ansikte” – Natur og menneske i Stina Aronsons fortellinger fra polare landskap”]

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The production of trans bodies as placeholders:

Rhetorics of subjection by full-body scanners at U.S. airports [Updated 28th July]

Drawing on the works of Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, and Judith Butler this paper performs a close-reading of a webpage titled “Transgender Passengers” on the website of the U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA). The webpage is concerned with treatment of transgender people during automated security scans at airports. I propose to read this website as a response to feminist critiques of such surveillance that depart from a notion of privacy..

As part of what is commonly known as a ‘full-body scan’, an “officer presses a button designating a gender (male/female) based on how you present yourself” (www.tsa.gov). In this paper I question how this machine “looks at the anatomy of men and women differently” (www.tsa.gov), and in so doing produces a *placeholder* for the body that presents itself. Doing so implies that the machine has an already gendered body to compare the bodies of passengers to, in the form of code or data, or that the judgment by the officer is central to a judgment made by the machine.

Arguing that the full-body scanner functions as a site into which responsibility is deferred away from those operating and in charge of these machines, I propose that it may be time to regulate them in such a way as to make them capable of misrecognizing the human body without as a result branding it as a potential threat. I stage a productive confrontation between the webpage and the concept of *placeholder* in order to critically re-think the ways in which digital doubles are produced at the airport. I argue against a critique of the full-body scanner from the perspective of privacy as a human right, and aim for a kind of critique that reads the machine as an object of psychoanalysis instead.

The object is the following webpage: <https://www.tsa.gov/transgender-passengers>

[*PhD project*: ” The body as placeholder: incorporated subjects in digital art (Digital Bodies as Placeholders)”]

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Roland Barthes' Covert Science: Idiorrhymy as Bathmology

Roland Barthes's 1977 lecture course *How to live together* is both a culmination of his intellectual career and a revisitation of several decade-spanning unresolved reflections on language, society, and his own profound desire for "intimate distances." In my research paper I would like to qualify the ongoingness of these concerns by highlighting some relevant precedents to the ideas that he presented at the *Collège de France*. Specifically, I will summarise four sections from my dissertation chapter about Barthes' writerly life: 1) his lifelong commitment to a complex notion of neutrality, 2) his existential tendency towards drift and prolepsis, 3) his pedagogical experiments during the other years at the *Collège*, and 4) a literary mourner of his mother's death. In my dissertation I have approached these scenes as instances where Barthes could establish intimate distances through a 'covert' science that he had occasionally hinted at but never really developed in a more programmatic way. He called this science *bathmology*, which refers to a "logic for measuring the degrees within discourse." Similar to the concept of idiorrhymy that he found in his studies on monastic culture, bathmology can best be considered a meta-analytic, one that can clarify many statements about the nature of writing in a society that prefers consumers rather than producers of Text. Both idiorrhymy and bathmology point towards a mode of living together that is not defined by agreement or consent, but by singular dances around personal needs. Writing, as it turns out, shows us precisely how this dance can be realised.

[*PhD project*: "Essays and Measure: Apprenticeships in Genre (Essayism at the Dusk of Catastrophe: Limit Experience, Subjectivity, Form". (– About the history and actuality of essayism, specifically in relation to concepts of measure and precision)]

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Abstract, PhD researcher-training course, 'Living Together':

'Familiar before I even knew them': Feeling 'at home' when you are not

This paper will explore French novelist Marcel Proust's (1871-1922) depiction of temporary living spaces, through the example of the hotel in the fictional garrison town of Doncières, visited by the narrator-protagonist in the third volume of *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927). The hotel in Doncières stands out among the other unfamiliar dwellings of the novel in that the narrator feels instantly at home in his new living quarters. While the protagonist normally associates new bedrooms with feelings of anxiety and isolation, these rooms immediately inspire a sense of familiarity in him. Using the hotel sequence from *Le Côté de Guermantes* (1920-21) as my starting point, I ask how feelings of being 'at home' are brought about, experienced and communicated in *À la recherche*.

The hotel in question is one of several 'enchanted dwellings' in Proust's novel. Such dwellings are houses where the rooms and the objects in them have acquired a sort of life. Giving the impression of being 'as real as a colony of people', these lodgings should not be regarded as mere containers for the human being's existence at the moment, but as spaces enabling encounters between the subject and his surroundings – surroundings that are at one and the same time something foreign to the subject and a mirror image of his interiority. In my doctoral thesis, I consider the sequences depicting such 'enchanted dwellings' as tableaux forming part of a Proustian 'theatre of introspection'. The paper will shed light on the concept of the Proustian tableau while at the same time hopefully contributing to the summer course's overall discussion concerning the topos of *home*.

[*PhD project*: "Entrances, Exits and Enchanted Dwellings. The *Mise En Scène* of Interior Space in *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927)"]

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Abstract 'Living Together'

Between the Caverns and the Court: Theatre, Judgment, and Fantasies of Community in H el ene Cixous' *The Perjured City*

In the late 1980s France was confronted with what has become known as the 'Infected Blood Scandal:' the French National Blood Transfusion Centre had knowingly distributed blood products contaminated with HIV to Hemophiliac patients. Charges were brought against the main suspect, the director of the Centre, and his deputy, and later against former ministers involved in the case as well. At the time, the French government conducted protectionist economic policies, prioritizing the development of French blood screening methods over the purchase of existing American ones and refusing to waste \$40m dollars worth of French 'produce'. French blood, and by connotation France's nationalist imaginary of purity, stood at the center of the case.

The Perjured City was H el ene Cixous' theatrical response to the scandal. Written between December 1992 and September 1993, after the health officials involved in the case had been convicted in a first trial, the play opens up a parallel judicial scene. It revolves around the question whether a legal procedure could do justice to the crime that had taken place, given the complicity of state representatives in the affair and the public's consequent crisis of faith in the legal establishment. In this context, the play 're-tries' the case outside of state courts, in an imaginary cemetery guarded by the Greek tragedian, Aeschylus, in which the play's main protagonist, the Mother, appeals to forgiveness. The literary re-trial fails to come to a conclusion, however, and the play thereby undermines any final answer in the debate that opposes retributive and restorative forms of justice. Instead, in the final scene, the play raises the question how theatre itself, as a form of art, relates to the desire for justice by reflecting on its own space as one that remains open for re-imagination *and* that is oriented towards a real audience. It does this through the Greek mythological figure of the Furies.

This paper focuses on the spaces which the play presents – the courtroom, the cemetery, and the stage – and analyzes them for the different fantasies of community they imply, taking its cue from Roland Barthes' spatial reading in his seminar, *How to Live Together*. My question is concerned with the fundamental relations between law, theatre, and politics, as raising the question of community and the community's space at the level of representation as well as that of collective action. The Furies are a critical figure in my reading: as they haunt the primal scene of the legal establishment, how do the Furies relate the *mise-en-sc ene* of the collective unconscious to the public stage of collective action?

[*PhD project*: "Where Justice Can Seen to Come: Other Judicial Scenes in the Margins of the Criminal Court"]

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The Myth of Guojia: Nationhood, Kinship, and Individual in Sinophone Cinema

In this paper I seek to explore the problematic concept of guojia (国家) by touching on its definition in Chinese language and culture. Distinguishing between guo (nation/state 国) and jia (family/home 家) in a semantic sense, I call attention to an isomorphic tendency of guo and jia in ancient Chinese philosophy and religion. This isomorphism, I contend, is one of the essential claims inculcated through the institution of Confucianism, one that has been inscribed into the fabric of everyday life in contemporary China. More than a linguistic transition, the conjunction of guo and jia is perpetuated as a historical consciousness which serves as the ideology of homeland. Centered on statehood, kinship, and individual, the ideology of homeland operates as a grand narrative in Sinophone cultural production, creating corporeal and emotional bonds between individual and nation-state. With a study of three films produced in the post-Cultural Revolution era, this paper aims to illustrate how the ideology of homeland is manifested in cinematic representations. All these titles, including *The Herdsman (Mu Ma Ren)*, Xie Jin 1982), *Comrades: Almost a Love Story (Tian Mimi)*, Peter Chan 1996), and *Mountains May Depart (Shanhe Guren)*, Jia Zhangke 2015), allow for an investigation on the embodiment of Chineseness bound by language, nationality, and ethnicity. This paper takes into account how cinema as state ideology apparatus consolidates the notion of Chineseness as the myth of the Chinese nation. Meanwhile, I argue that cinema is a site of negotiation between hegemony and agency, where the ideology of homeland can be fractured and disowned. By scoping into one's physical and psychic displacement, I tend to look at how the sense of belonging can be either upheld or resisted in one's lived experience.

[*PhD project*: "Sinophone as Method: Reimagining Chinese Cinema in the Global Era"]

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(2) Museums sites; historical settings and presenting the past

From my research on museums displays of authors' life and literature there seems to be a close connection between the authors' homes and the placing of their respective museums. This paper will be a draft to a chapter in my dissertation where I investigate the historical contextualization of the sites where the museums of Knut Hamsun (1859-1952), Sigrid Undset (1882-1949) and Olav H. Hauge (1908-1994) are placed. By historical context I mean the time period where the author lived in the house where there now is a museum or close by the museum building. While reasons as local initiative and cultural politics can be interesting viewpoints to get more knowledge about how these museums became a part of their local society, I am especially interested in a broader perspective for how these places becomes what anthropologist Sharon MacDonald calls "Memorylands" (Macdonald, 2013). The authors' home, and his or hers belonging to the place seems to be of importance for these museums. Furthermore I believe that the connection between the authors' lived life and the sites where there today is a museum have effected how they are represented in the exhibition and building. I believe that the museums sites intertwine with the exhibition design, and that there is a connection between the interior, exterior and surroundings at these museums, but before I can make an argument out of this hypothesis I will contextualize the museums sites of the *Hamsun center* at Hamarøy (2009), Undsets former home *Bjerkebæk*, at Lillehammer (2007) and the *Hauge-center* in Ulvik (2014). The ambition of this paper will be to give knowledge about the historical background as a context to understand how these places have become "Memorylands" based on concepts such as belonging, authenticity and atmosphere.

Macdonald, S. (2013). *Memorylands: Heritage and identity in Europe today*. London: Routledge.

[*PhD project*: "Representasjon og utstillingspraksis på forfattermuseer" [Representation and exhibition practices at authors' museums]]

