

## **SENSITIVE OBJECTS: MOTION AND EMOTION IN MATERIAL WORLD**

Conference hosted by Agderforskning, Kristiansand, Norway,  
at Inter-University Centre, Dubrovnik, Croatia, 23 – 25 April 2014

### *Conference organizers:*

Jonas Frykman, Agder Research, Norway  
Kirsti Mathiesen Hjemdahl, Agder Research, Norway  
Nevena Škrbić Alempijević, University of Zagreb, Croatia  
Maja Povržanović Frykman, Malmö University, Sweden  
Nils Gilje, University of Bergen, Norway

### **PROGRAMME** (version of 27 March)

#### **WEDNESDAY 23 April**

Morning session chaired by Jonas Frykman

9:00-9:30

Kirsti Mathiesen Hjemdahl, Jonas Frykman, Nevena Škrbić Alempijević  
Welcome, introduction, practical information

9:30-10:15

Katie Stewart (University of Texas, Austin) *Worlding matters*

10:15-10:30 Break

10:30-11:15

Nils Gilje (University of Bergen) *The role of moods in philosophy and cultural studies*

11:15-12:00 General discussion

12:00-14:00 Lunch

Afternoon session chaired by Nevena Škrbić Alempijević

14:00-15:00 (presentation and discussion)

Jonas Frykman (Lund University) *Done by inheritance*

15:00-16:00 (presentation and discussion)

Orvar Löfgren (Lund University) *Emotional baggage: packing a suitcase*

17:00 (to be confirmed)

Guided tour (optional) through the Old Town of Dubrovnik (guide: Ivana Soldo from *Dalmatina aeterna* agency; the cost of 680 kn will be shared among the participants)

## **THURSDAY 24 April**

Morning session chaired by Kirsti Mathiesen Hjemdahl

9:00-10:00 (presentation and discussion)

Maja Povrzanović Frykman (Malmö University) *Affects in narrative accounts of humanitarian aid in Sarajevo under siege*

10:00-11:00 (presentation and discussion)

Stef Jansen (University of Manchester) *Sarajevo yearnings in the meantime*

11:00-12:00 (presentation and discussion)

Nevena Škrbić Alempijević and Sanja Potkonjak (Zagreb University) *Tito affect – tracing objects and memories of socialism in post-socialist Croatia*

12:00-14:00 Lunch

Afternoon session chaired by Nils Gilje

14:00-15:00 (presentation and discussion)

Britt Kramvig (UiT: The Norwegian Arctic University) *Reconciliation, social science and ethics in the affective turn*

15:00-16:00 (presentation and discussion)

Kirsti Mathiesen Hjemdahl (Agder Research, Kristiansand) *Sensitive innovations*

16:00-17:00 (presentation and discussion)

Sarah Holst Kjær (Agder Research, Kristiansand) *Scandinavian things and Chinese taste*

18:00 (to be confirmed)

Visit to *War Photo Ltd* gallery (optional; tickets 30 kn)

## **FRIDAY 25 April**

Session chaired by Maja Povrzanović Frykman

10:00-11:00

Summarising comments by Katie Stewart, Nils Gilje and Jonas Frykman

11:00-12:00

General discussion

## ABSTRACTS

### WORLDING MATTERS

Katie Stewart (University of Texas, Austin)

I am thinking about affective materiality as a compositional mode of worlding. Experimenting with ethnographic writing and nonrepresentational theory I try to recompose brief moments of worlding in such things as the color red, a town line, a walk, or a freezer stocked with food. I approach these as singularities. They are compositions, events, and nodes of distributed agency. Through them things jump into relation but remain unglued and prismatic: trees, a sensory attachment, an iconic image, the taste of an apple. Grasses, a form of light, an uncurtained window, or the threat of depression have qualities that emerge, accrete, dissipate. They pop with significance like the raised knap of corduroy or a paper doll cut out of a dreamworld.

The writing in this piece hones down to very short descriptions/evocations of singular objects or scenes. For example:

#### *Place*

Place presents in singular but not accidental things. The timeless granite, the Dunkin' Donuts sign, a common hand gesture, the biting air in January. It's two-dimensional and it's three. All talk and icon and then the taste of a Macintosh apple. Less a structure than a prism, less a grammar than a collective search engine, it's like scratching on a chalkboard already overcrowded with lines and erasures. And that means it has a body. It weighs, hesitates, sticks out like the raised knap of corduroy. If it endures, it lays down an infrastructure of energies. It promises all the details of habit and mood.

#### *My Town*

In the town I come from, there's a threat of a kind of depression captured by the failed gesture of a curtained window, a loud town accent, a few pansies stuck in a window box in the spring. People say the beach is grey in the winter (and windy in a bad way). The woods are dark. It was weird but made some recognizable sense when midnight mass was finally canceled to keep out all the drunks with all their falling down and giggling.

#### *The American Road*

Is a national macadam of living form. A live detritus of the family vacation, the road trip, living on the street. A heartless sprawl, a realist bore, an infrastructural problem, it's all speedy glide, gridlock and drift, the spectral sight of black bodies floating. Opportunistic gifts to its potential are made in the form of a giant spinach can/paper cup/milk bottle/roller skate. It's a hinge opening onto a Vermont I walked one cold dark night, the footsteps following me in the woods, the sudden appearance of the aurora borealis across the sky, or that winter that defeated New England, the snow piles narrowing the roads to one tentative lane with corners you couldn't see around, the rooftops collapsing under the weight of the snow in Connecticut.

#### *Pop's House*

Pop's house was an infrastructure of matter and practice standing upright like a model life. The same can-opener mounted on the kitchen wall for forty years, a bottle-opener in the pantry you clamped the bottle onto and then pulled a lever over in one smooth motion that plunged the corkscrew down and pulled out the cork. A tool to core tomatoes, another for strawberries. A pan for poaching eggs. Soup bowls with silver rims that had to be washed by hand every day. Tiny bowls for the potato chips that

occasionally replaced the oyster crackers with the soup at lunch. He kept an inventory, revised monthly, of the food stocked in his freezer in the basement: barbecue sauce (1), barbecue (4), marinara sauce (1), chili beans (1), chicken broth with chicken (5 quarts), chicken broth pints (8), yellow squash (2), green peppers (1), mixed greens (17), vegetable soup (2), chicken and vegetable soup (14), turnips (4), chicken and pasta soup (9), deer sausage (1), deer steak (2), chicken legs, long (10), chicken legs, short (8), deer steaks ground (1), pork ribs (2), sirloin steaks (1), sweet potatoes (22), biscuits (30), rolls (1 box), chicken and broth (5), sugar cake (1), turkey and broth (3), spaghetti sauce (27).

### *New England Red*

When color caught on in New England it happened in the sensibility of red. Red houses and red barns became architectural poppies in a landscape animated by the primariness of color. Redness sparked from red leaf to red barn to red apple against super green grass, white snow, dark, dark ocean, lakes, ponds, eventually the white red blue of flags everywhere, the buntings, the yellow light passing out of windows to yards. Redness set in motion an ecology of sharp, crisp color popping into relief against things less striking, perhaps less buoyant or promising. It became iconic of a region, a regional worlding on a scenic register. The life of redness itself etched onto the landscape as a flickering resource that came, in certain ways, to be lived.

## **THE ROLE OF MOODS IN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURAL STUDIES**

Nils Gilje (University of Bergen)

It is well known that emotions and moods play a significant role in modern philosophy, especially in the so-called “existentialist” tradition from Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Heidegger and Sartre. This philosophy itself is situated in what Otto Friedrich Bollnow has called a basic mood – or more precisely a certain *Stimmungsboden*. We are no longer in the cool and distanced attitude of theoretical reason, but rather confronted uneasy and gloomy human experiences like anxiety, fear, despair and boredom. In the 1840’s Kierkegaard published works like *Fear and trembling* (1843), *The concept of anxiety* (1844) and *Sickness to death* (1849). Anxiety is a key concept in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, and certain moods are clearly present in Albert Camus’ *La Peste* (1947) and Sartre’s *La Nausée* (1938). To be in the world is always to be in a certain mood. My presentation will be focusing on how such basic moods disclose reality and how they can play an important epistemological role in the cultural and social sciences. I will also dwell into Heidegger’s thesis that certain epochs are characterized by fundamental *Stimmungen* that are articulated by artists and thinkers, using Hölderlin, Obstfelder and Camus as examples. Finally, I will discuss the difference between emotions and moods: emotions seem to have an intentional object while moods seem to lack an intentional object.

## **DONE BY INHERITANCE**

Jonas Frykman (Lund University)

How everyday objects are made into items for affects and emotions becomes most visible when an inheritance is to be divided in the family. While economically valuable parts of the estate, like houses, cottages, bank accounts and other assets are regulated in detail by law, things that once made a home or were personal belongings of the deceased can neither be appropriately valued in an inventory, nor can they be understood outside of the intimate circle of relatives. This paper focuses on the affective dimension of such things - like mother’s table silver, the Sunday-china, and her jewellery; grandfather’s portrait, the family album, daddy’s veteran car kept in the shed and his most cherished

fishing rod. Objects like that not only once made up a home and constituted a life-line, but they become invested with agency at the very distribution among those left behind. They were getting power to reinforce as well as destroy, to question old patterns and create new.

Analytically this paper is taking its point of departure from what Bourdieu (1977) implies with the notion of *situated praxis*, and the importance of how an event can function as a *space of appearance* (Arendt 1958). Theoretically the inspiration comes from phenomenology in general (Heidegger 1975), and post-phenomenology in particular - taking philosophy “down from the commanding heights to the trenches” (Ihde 1993, c f Ahmed 2006, Frykman & Gilje 2003, Frykman 2012). The influence from the affective turn (Halley & Clough 2007, Stewart 2007) as well as non-representational theory (Thrift 2007) is presented as useful in the understanding of inheritance and objects, and so is actor- network-theory (Latour 2005).

### **EMOTIONAL BAGGAGE: PACKING A SUITCASE**

Orvar Löfgren (Lund University)

How do you approach an elusive phenomena like “travel fever”, the kind of mixed feelings travellers experience, hovering between anxiety and exhilaration? In an ongoing study of such links between motion and emotion I have worked with different arenas, above all the production of shared or contested moods and atmospheres in transit spaces. Here, I would like to try another approach: the suitcase. It is an object into which emotionalities and materialities are thrown or neatly packed, entangled in interesting ways.

The suitcase is not only a container for stuffing objects, but also emotions, dreams, anxieties and ideals. It can be many things: a condensation of the future, an icon of mobility, a last resort, a threatening or comforting object, a defense against a hostile world, a transitional object in Winnicott’s terms.

I will look at this travel item through a bricolage approach, mixing history, popular culture, field observations, art and fiction. My aim is to discuss the specific kind of throwntogetherness of materialities and emotionalities that a suitcase offers.

### **AFFECTS IN NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS OF HUMANITARIAN AID IN SARAJEVO UNDER SIEGE**

Maja Povrzanović Frykman (Malmö University)

During the 1992-95 war, the vast majority of people in Bosnia-Herzegovina relied on international humanitarian assistance for survival. Indeed, material goods sent as humanitarian aid were a crucial matter for the civilians trapped in Sarajevo under siege.

My paper is based on 13 pilot interviews conducted between November 2013 and January 2014, with men and women of different generations who lived in Sarajevo in the course of the 1990s war. The interviews were truly explorative; the question on what they remembered about receiving humanitarian aid enabled the interviewees to take up any issue they found relevant. Their narratives suggest that war events have staying effects on emic perceptions of collective positions in the hierarchies of power at different scales. These hierarchies will be related to issues concerning post-war

aid, and pursued in a research project to be developed with partners from the Sarajevo Centre For Refugee and IDP Studies.

In this paper, however, I attempt a different reading of the same material, guided by the literature on affect and directed towards affects as revealed in the collected narrative accounts. This reading suggests that affects can be, and need to be, traced both in *what* the interviewees talked about (namely their humanitarian aid-related experiences), and in *how* they did it (since affects were revived in the act of remembering twenty years later). It is the affective unity of what and how, of then and now, that I hope to be able to explore. My material offers several examples of how "to have your attention being gripped by the goodness or badness of your circumstances, (...), is to be gripped by what *matters* to you, by something you *care* about, and – crucially – in a way that essentially involves and appreciation of that mattering" (Helm 2009:253; emphasis in the original). This pertains to the war situations as much as to their narrative re-construction.

The relation between the tears shed in the course of interviews, and the crying people recalled when telling about the war, seems especially worth exploring. So are the vivid and often captivating descriptions of sensual experiences concerning humanitarian aid – of tastes and smells of food and clothing items received from distant donors, and of the lingering sensual effects those experiences still have today. Even when wrapped in the empowering shield of humour, a tension clearly emerges in the narratives, between loss and resilience, between humiliation contained in dependency on aid, and pride for the inventive agency involved in how aid items were used. Furthermore, the preliminary reading of the material suggests the importance of the interviewees' age (in war), as it seems to be clearly related to the differences in affective charging of their narrations.

The interpretations offered in my paper will be tentative; I look forward to feedback that will help me to complete this barely started work-in-progress. So far, I follow a couple of leads that enable me to put the materiality of humanitarian aid in focus, such as Bennett et al.'s (2013) outline of the relations between habit, body and affect; Navaro-Yashin's (2009) description of intimate involvement with the abject or abjected material; Stewart's (2007) attention devoted to fragments of sensory experience, and to the sudden awareness of the 'edge of the ordinary' triggered by things that resist routine uses. In the effort to understand affects in narrative accounts of humanitarian aid, I also observe Fischer and van Kleef's (2010) claim that social dimension of emotions is fundamental, and connect it to Richard and Rudnyckij's (2009) emphasis on the relationality and mobility inherent in affect – its transactional and intersubjective character that forges new subjectivities and new collectivities.

## **SARAJEVO YEARNINGS IN THE MEANTIME**

Stef Jansen (University of Manchester)

Based on long-term ethnographic research in an outlying apartment complex in Sarajevo this presentation addresses affective-political questions in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). It starts from an empirical finding that I consider to stand for a key dimension of life in BiH today: a widely shared sense of collectively being stuck, of existential immobility understood to be in contrast with previous forward movement. My research found that numerous metaphors circulated to evoke this experience—e.g. 'we are running in circles', 'we are pattering in place', 'nothing starts moving from the dead point'. While this experience of disruption of what is retrospectively seen as predictable collective forward movement has been identified across Europe and North America, in the case of

BiH, I argue, it culminates in a veritable sense of living in a 'Meantime' between a 1992-1995 war that is experienced as not-quite over and a 'Road into Europe' that has not-quite been embarked on.

My intention is not, in the style of policy reports, to assess BiH's 'progress' according to specific performance indicators. Instead, I aim to disentangle some key characteristics of such life in the Meantime. In dialogue with existing writings on hope, I suggest that the notion of 'yearning', coupled to the emic category of remembered and projected 'normal lives', allows us to grasp a key affective-political dimension of contemporary life in BiH. This, in turn, will lead me to reflect critically on the potential contribution of recent writings of the 'post-human' and 'non-representational' genre, and particularly of those that foreground the term 'affect'.

### **TITOAFFECT – TRACING OBJECTS AND MEMORIES OF SOCIALISM IN POST-SOCIALIST CROATIA**

Nevena Škrbić Alempijević and Sanja Potkonjak (University of Zagreb)

This paper deals with memories of socialism and the affective power of socialist material culture in the aftermath of memory cleansing in post-socialist Croatia. Objects that we analyze are associated with the image of Josip Broz Tito, a life-long ex-Yugoslav president, materializations of whom have a potential to affect people more than thirty years after his death. Pondering upon motifs that previously had been celebrated and mythologized, and ended to be concealed, exposed to silence and reserved to the private sphere during the 1990s, we aim to show that the materiality of socialism continues its afterlife by triggering extraordinary affects. We argue that, in the context in which socialism is exposed to social forgetting, these objects tempt reflexive, individual and private acts of remembering. In comparison to the concept of titostalgia, related to the sunny side of memory (Velikonja 2008), titoaffect encompasses a whole span of differently charged reactions to objects bearing the image of Tito. By this term we address a variety of emotional, bodily and intellectual responses, sensory experiences, narrative expressions and social practices.

In our research we focus on different modes of contact with the materiality of socialism and point to the affective dynamics related to Tito. We will present three case studies and accompanying types of titoaffect. In the first case study the appearance of Tito's picture unexpectedly "trashes" a birthday party, providing us with an insight in the affects of indignation, shock and repugnance. In the second case study we observe how the Tito lettering, shaped by rosebushes in a public park, is enveloped in introspective silence and clandestineness by tenants of nearby buildings. The third case study casts light on flea markets where people trade images of Tito and exchange mostly positively connoted memories of one's own past.

### **RECONCILIATION, SOCIAL SCIENCE AND ETHICS IN THE AFFECTIVE TURN**

Britt Kramvig (UiT: The Norwegian Arctic University)

What does the affective turn call for, when it comes to method? And what does it call for in order to conduct research in indigenous communities in the area of the postcolonial? The Sami scholar Rauna Kuokkanen (2010) highlighted the responsibility of the academy to do its homework more than fieldwork, still in a condition where we need to rescue empirical work: and honor it, as framed by Spivak (1993). In this paper I will draw attention to multiple ways of doing homework in line with what Kuokkanen asks for and by that being accountable for the complexities and differences in

epistemic practices as well as the ethical concerns that come with it. I will draw upon different fields- as well as homework done on reconciliation events in multiple Sami communities.

The idea is...to keep track as persistently as possible of what it is that alters when matters, terms, and aims travel from one place to another (Mol 2000:8).

## **SENSITIVE INNOVATIONS**

Kirsti Mathiesen Hjemdahl (Agder Research, Kristiansand)

This paper is based on my ongoing research on tourism, cultural and creative industries (TCCIs) in Norway. The field in itself has been hard to establish as an arena for anthropological/ethnological applied research in general and for the study of affects and emotions in particular. The most established different research-teams are mostly made up of economists, who are very apt to describe and measure parameters in abstracted, scientific terms. The outcome of the creative industries is more easily measured than the incentives by which creativity is spurred. After being within this world for some time as an ethnologist, I can notice how I myself start to use a similar language of business models, profits, turnovers and regional outcomes.

Creativity and innovation within the field of culture is often a matter of the unspoken, of experiences and emotions – often joy - in relation between the body and a material surrounding, *Umwelt*. It is, as Heidegger points to in “The Origin of the Work of Art”, in the actual *doing* that creativity is brought forth. Not in any meticulously prepared training or economic calculation done by the artist and her milieu. What impressions and circumstances are triggering or hindering the ideas from being materialized? How does the new look and feel? How does failure and risk materialize? Mostly this implies a meticulous study of the affective and material preconditions of single entrepreneurs. How the interplay between the entrepreneur and her *Umwelt* is being articulated in the sort of creative industries is at the core of my presentation. More than so, the power to persuade that is invested in the discourse of economics is a field of study in itself. Not on me only as much on the social understanding what creativity is all about.

## **SCANDINAVIAN THINGS AND CHINESE TASTE**

Sarah Holst Kjær (Agder Research, Kristiansand)

This paper thus discusses how regional Scandinavian tourism- and experience industry worked on becoming appealing to the Chinese leisure consumer around the turn of the century. With participant observation it is studied how the cultural encounter between Chinese tourists and Scandinavian guides, tour-operators and staff worked on handling and communicating leisure tokens and cultural things in order to become desirable in the eyes of the foreign tourist.

In general, three very important emotions in the tourism experience are curiosity, authenticity and kindness. These emotions are often materialized in attractions and sights, foods, hospitality, goods and services. But how ‘tasteful’ were Scandinavian experience products - local, ordinary or extraordinary, things on offer in the eyes of this tourist market? How were things - food, souvenirs, clothes, snap shorts and sceneries, gifts, artifacts or historical replicate items valued? Which parts of Scandinavian regionalism could be customized?