



Call for papers

Workshop “Out of step – Idiorrhythmy as a Narrative Concept in Literature and Culture”

02-04 February 2022, University of Tübingen – organised by Sara Bangert & Quintus Immisch

Deadline for proposals: 1 December 2021

How to Live Together? And how to narrate it? In his 1976/77 lecture *Comment vivre ensemble*, Roland Barthes bundles these questions in the concept of *idiorrhythmy*, sketching a coexistence of asynchronous life rhythms: as “the utopia of a socialism of distance”, idiorrhythmy is thought to reconcile individual life design with community building. Having received surprisingly little attention in literary studies, this concept holds high potential for the investigation of narrative phenomena and figurations and at the same time addresses social theory and cultural studies as it raises questions of community, belonging, and living together.

As a ‘phantasm’ of successful coexistence in “the paradox, the contradiction, the aporia of bringing distances together” (Barthes), idiorrhythmy captures a cultural technique at the intersection of the individual and community and enables innovative approaches to phenomena from literature and theatre, political theory and urban planning, music, dance, and art. Thus, the interest in idiorrhythmy is decidedly transdisciplinary and can be connected to research in rhythm, recent tendencies in literary theory and cultural studies as well as concepts of rhythmisation, synchronicity, temporality and (aesthetic) ‘proper time’ (‘ästhetische Eigenzeiten’). At the same time, it pertains to questions of belonging and community in a globalised world.

In coining the term idiorrhythmy, Barthes draws on literature: he locates his concept “in the novel” and uses a “literary corpus” including Defoe, Gide, Thomas Mann, and Zola to examine a cultural imaginary in which the practices of gliding, strolling and regulation encounter the topoi of room, monastery, and grand hotel. Idiorrhythmy, moreover, can enter into a “negative relationship to power”, because “the first thing that power imposes is a rhythm”. In this context, the idiorrhythmic becomes a cipher for “something moving, mobile, fluid, the form of something that lacks organic consistency”.

We would like to take this flexible notion as a starting point and invite you to work together on the concept of ‘idiorrhythmy’ in order to shape it as a far-reaching analytical tool that offers access to narratives, motifs, and figures, but also to models of life, ‘self-rhythms’, and forms of community-building: Can idiorrhythmy capture plot-guiding and structuring aspects of literary texts? Where do narratives, and where do literary figures get out of step? How can stumbling and wandering characters, the ‘resisting’ verse, the idiosyncratic narrative, or the unsteady form be read as idiorrhythmic phenomena?

A first panel devoted to theoretical and conceptual dimensions of idiorrhythmy could, for example, address the following topics (without being confined to them, of course):

- trans- and interdisciplinary potentials of the concept of idiorrhythmy
- *idiorrhythmy* and *rhythmos* as fluid, indistinct concepts of form
- idiorrhythmic spaces, temporalities, and concepts of ‘proper time’
- idiorrhythmic dimensions of community-building and belonging, intersectionality, and global epistemologies
- rhythms of body, nature and technology, as well as idiorrhythmic practices of body and culture.

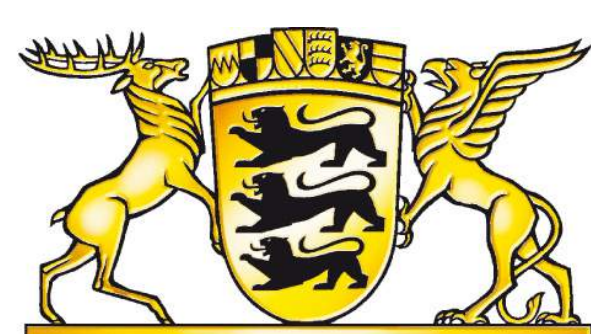


For a second panel, we encourage case studies of narratives, scenes and scenarios, as well as of topoi and practices of idiorrhythmy. Possible investigations could relate to the following topics and aspects, but here, too, we would like to invite further thinking on:

- narrating *idio-rhythms*,
- mediality, rhythmic modes of writing, metrics, and narrative rhythms
- social and aesthetic norms, rules, regulations, and idiorrhythmic deviations in spaces of one's own
- rhythms of machines and clocks, discourses of synchronicity and acceleration
- poetics of subversion towards the power of rhythm (denial, withdrawal, dream, intoxication)
- idiorrhythmic figures such as artists, strollers, dandies and tramps, idlers, dropouts and vagabonds
- idiorrhythmic metaphors of walking, stumbling, dancing, and ticking, as well as poetics of walking.

Proposals for 30-minute contributions with a systematic-theoretical interest in the concept of idiorrhythmy are welcome, as are those on concrete readings of idiorrhythmic conceptions and models; historical perspectives can refer to (textual) examples of all genres and periods. We explicitly encourage young scholars, especially doctoral students, from the fields of literary studies and philology, comparative literature and cultural studies to apply. Contributions from neighbouring disciplines, e.g. art history, musicology, media studies and linguistics, but also sociology, political science, history, ethnology and philosophy are also welcome. Conference languages will be German, English, and possibly French. The workshop is planned as an attendance event at the German Department of the University of Tübingen. Support for travel expenses can be provided. Depending on the pandemic situation, the workshop may take place as a hybrid or online event. The publication of the conference contributions, possibly with further contributions, is planned. Please submit short abstracts (up to 5,000 characters) and a short biobibliographical note by **December 1, 2021** to sara.bangert@uni-tuebingen.de and quintus.immisch@uni-tuebingen.de.

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