

Panel "Diachronicity in Literary Studies and Linguistics"

Anglistentag Mainz 2022, 2-5 September 2022

chaired by **Monika Fludernik (Freiburg)** and **Olga Timofeeva (Zurich)**

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SESSION 1 (SATURDAY 13.00-15.00)

13.00-13.15 **Introduction** (Monika Fludernik, Olga Timofeeva)

13.15-13.40 **Claudia Claridge** (Augsburg): "The Reader in the Text: Creating Involvement in Late Modern English Texts".

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13.40-13.50 Discussion

13.50-14.15 **Alexandra Effe** (Oslo): "Autofictional Modes of Masking and Masquerade: From Pseudo-Disguise to Explicit Displacement".

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14.15-14.25 Discussion

14.25 -14.50 **Dorothee Birke** (Innsbruck): "Diachronic Perspectives on Digital Reading Culture".

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14.50-15.00 Discussion

SESSION 2 (SATURDAY 16.30-18.15)

16.30-16.55 **Christine Elsweiler** (Munich) "The Conventional Organisation of Request Sequences in Scottish Letters (1570–1750)

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16.55-17.05 Discussion

17.05-17.30 **Anne-Christine Gardner** (Lausanne) "From Petition to Letter: On the Diachronicity of Poor Relief Applications in Late Modern England".

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17.30-17.40 Discussion

17.40-18.05 **Gerd Bayer** (Erlangen): "'Epistolary Frames: Restoration Fiction and the Making of Lettered Truths".

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Discussion 18.05-18.15

(overtime, but there is nothing scheduled for Saturday night)

SESSION 3 (SUNDAY 15.45-17.30)

15.45-16.10 **Hilary Duffield** (Trier): "Cognitive Approaches to the Diachronic Analysis of Plot".

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16.10-16.20 Discussion

16.20-16.45 **Andrew James Johnston** (FU Berlin) "Staging Diachronicity: Literary History and Linguistic Change"

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16.45-16.55 Discussion

17.00-17.30 Final Discussion of Diachronicity in Literature and Linguistics

19.00 Conference dinner

SESSION 1 (SATURDAY 13.00-15.00)**Introduction**

Monika Fludernik (Freiburg) and Olga Timofeeva (Zurich)

While historical linguistics has traditionally focused on sound shifts and developments in morphology, syntax and the lexicon, the study of literary developments in the field of *Literaturwissenschaft* has on the whole focused on *genre* and on the influence of history on literary production and form. This panel is meant to mediate between the insights acquired in historical linguistics in the area of historical pragmatics and analyses of literary texts from a diachronic perspective which focus on the linguistic and textual properties of literary texts. Historical pragmatics has analyzed issues such as the changes in the use of second-person pronouns, the changing forms and functions of politeness markers and strategies (of politeness), or the evolving forms of greetings

and apologies. Such developments lend themselves to a comparison with literary texts and the manner in which they acquire new ways of doing certain things, or how they continue to employ particular textual strategies, whose function has become obsolete, and repurpose these for more up-to-date uses. Questions regarding long-term developments in the pool and the deployment of textual and linguistic elements are already being studied in diachronic narratology, but could be equally fruitful for drama or poetry.

The introduction to the session will sketch models of diachronic development from a linguistic perspective and from the perspective of literary studies, especially narratology.

Monika Fludernik is Professor of English Studies at the University of Freiburg in Germany. Her main areas of specialization are narratology, language and literature studies, postcolonial theory and criticism, law and literature studies and eighteenth-century aesthetics. Her most recent monograph was *Metaphors of Confinement: The Prison in Fact, Fiction and Fantasy* (Oxford University Press, 2019), and her most recent edited volume (with Stephan Packard) *Being Untruthful: Lying, Fiction, and the Non-Factual* (Ergon, 2021).

Olga Timofeeva has taught at the Universities of St Petersburg, Helsinki, and Zurich where she has been Professor of English Historical Linguistics since 2011. Her early specialisation was in Old English syntax, and she has since published widely on a broad range of subjects, including Old and Middle English lexis, language contact and second language acquisition in the Middle Ages, historical sociopragmatics, and the evolution of legal register in early English. She is the author of *Non-finite Constructions in Old English* (Société Néophilologique de Helsinki, 2010) and *Sociolinguistic Variation in Old English: Records of Communities and People* (Benjamins, fc 2022).

The Reader in the Text: Creating Involvement in Late Modern English Texts

Claudia Claridge (Augsburg)

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Both fictional and non-fictional texts may refer to or address the reader directly in the text, which foregrounds the interactive and interpersonal process that writing is. Using the *Corpus of Late Modern English Texts (1710-1920)*, the paper charts the distribution

of this stylistic device across genres and time in the search for developments or patterns. Further aspects to be covered against the generic and temporal background are:

- what is the distribution of reader reference vs reader address across texts and how do they functionally differ?
- in which local contexts, e.g. which speech acts, do *reader* occurrences function?
- what is predicated or implied about the reader, e.g. by accompanying adjectives such as *intelligent* or *gentle*?

As these uses are cases of simulated interaction, the question of how much involvement is actually created can only be speculated about.

Claudia Claridge is professor of English linguistics at the University of Augsburg, Germany. Her research interests include the history of English, discourse studies, historical pragmatics, phraseology, and figurative language. She is one of the compilers of the *Lampeter Corpus of Early Modern English Tracts (1640-1740)* and has authored two monographs (*Multi-word Verbs in Early Modern English*, 2000, and *Hyperbole in English*, 2011). Currently, she is involved in a project on the use of intensifiers in the historical courtroom (with M. Kytö, E. Jons-son) and working on the development of history writing in English.

Autofictional Modes of Masking and Masquerade: From Pseudo-Disguise to Explicit Displacement

Alexandra Effe (Oslo)

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Autofictional texts usually present some kind of portrait of the author, and reveal things about them and their life. Autofictional texts also, however, usually render things ambiguous, challenging the relation between author and narrator or character, or the referential truth-status of the account. This paper charts a development of modes of autofictional ambiguity from pseudo-disguise to explicit displacement over the course of the period from the early eighteenth century to the twenty-first.

Focusing on what a given text disguises or ambiguates, through which means, and to which effects, the paper shows how certain literary strategies disappear or are replaced, and how others are transformed to take on new functions. Through select examples (including Delarivier Manley, Alexander Pope, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Eliza Lynn Linton, Christopher Isherwood, Philip Roth, Christine Brooke-Rose, and

Ben Lerner), the paper traces a development from eighteenth-century underdetermined texts, signaling neither fiction nor autobiography, to subtle indications of autobiographical and fictional status, common throughout the nineteenth century, and ultimately towards blatantly overdetermined texts, boldly stating belonging to novelistic and autobiographical modes simultaneously, as they become common from the second half of the twentieth century onwards. In terms of functions, we see that textual ambiguation begins as a safety measure and develops towards serving as acknowledgement of the unattainability of ultimate truth, aiming to unsettle reading modes, and exploring—perhaps even creating—alternative versions of past, present, and future. These diachronic developments, the paper argues, can be summarized as from pseudo-disguise to explicit displacement, or from masking to masquerade.

Alexandra Effe is Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Oslo, where she teaches anglophone and comparative literature. She specializes in narrative theory, cognitive literary studies, life writing, autofiction, and postcolonial and world literature. She is the author of *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Narrative Transgression: A Reconsideration of Metalepsis* (Palgrave, 2017), co-editor of *The Autofictional* (Palgrave, 2022) and of a special issue on “Autofiction, Emotions, and Humour” (*Life Writing*). She has published articles on narrative and cognitive theory, contemporary literature, and postcolonial literature in *Journal for Narrative Theory*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, and *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. As Visiting Scholar at the Oxford Centre for Life-Writing, she co-convened the project “Autofiction in Global Perspective.”

Diachronic Perspectives on Digital Reading Culture

Dorothee Birke (Innsbruck)

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The last two decades have seen fundamental changes in the production, distribution and reception of literary texts – in sum, in the development of what Simone Murray (2018) calls the “digital literary sphere”. A component of this sphere that still has not received much attention on the part of literary scholars is the rise of a new reading culture on social media, where on platforms like YouTube, Instagram and Tiktok, we can see the formation of “bookish” reading cultures (“BookTube”, “Bookstagram” and “BookTok”).

This talk advocates using a diachronic approach to study in what ways these platforms do indeed, as popular perception has it, change the act of literary reading in fundamental ways, making it more social, more affect-driven and more distracted (see e.g. de Léon 2018). I will argue that the scholarship that exists on these phenomena, often conducted by media scholars who consider them specifically in the context of digital culture, tends to overestimate their “newness”, and that this bias can be corrected by setting these practices into a broader context of long-standing traditions of literary reading culture. One important step towards such a diachronic perspective is the analysis of discourses *about* reading at various points in history, in order to trace how reading practices are conceptualized and evaluated. As my main example, I will use the notion of reading as an affect-driven process. My discourse-analytical and media-ecological analysis will compare the relationship between affect and literary reading in 18th-century sources (in particular in relation to the concept of the ‘sentimental’ and its shifts in meaning) with its conceptualization in ‘booktalk’ by practitioners of digital reading culture in the 21st century.

References

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Dorothee Birke is Professor of Anglophone Literatures at the University of Innsbruck. One of her main research areas is the study of reading as a cultural practice in a historical perspective, most recently with a special focus on the media ecology of the 21st century. She has also, together with Eva von Contzen and Karin Kukkonen, published an article on diachronic practices in narratology (*Narrative* Vol. 30, No. 1, January 2022). This talk is a way of connecting her theoretical work on diachronicity as a method with her focus on digital reading cultures.

SESSION 2 (SATURDAY 15.45-17.30)

The Conventional Organisation of Request Sequences in Scottish Letters (1570–1750)

Christine Elswailer (Munich)

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Letters of the early and late modern periods tend to follow epistolary protocols in respect of their overall structural organisation and the linguistic realisation of set parts, such as salutations and closing formulae (e.g. Nevalainen 2001, Whyman 2009: 21–22). Moreover, epistolary conventions also inform the organisation of speech act sequences. Letter-writers generally do not use speech acts such as requests in isolation, but organise them into larger sequences, so-called macro-speech acts (van Dijk 1980: 184; Félix-Brasdefer 2014), where pre- and post-moves support the core illocutionary goal, as is illustrated in the following example from a Scottish letter dated to 1700:

it is a great loy to me that your La: (=‘Ladyship’) keeps your health so well I pray the Lord continve it so and it incourages me to hop ye will not be feard to make another lournay ye have bein so littil the wors with this. (Mary Maule to Margaret Hamilton, 1700)

The letter-writer first expresses her joy at the addressee’s good health, to which she joins the wish that it may continue. These two hearer-oriented expressive speech acts prepare the ensuing tentative request, which is realised as a prediction statement that the addressee will have the courage to “make another lournay”, presumably to come and see the writer. The request is further supported by an assertive speech act pointing out the lack of health issues as a good reason to venture on this journey. This sequence shows that writers employ different speech act types to support requests, e.g. speech acts furthering harmony with the addressee and assertive speech acts providing justification.

The proposed paper seeks to explore patterns in request sequences in Scottish personal letters from the late 16th, 17th and early 18th centuries drawn from *ScotsCorr* and *HCOS*, totalling ca. 60,000 words. Specifically, it aims to (a) investigate which speech acts typically function as pre-moves and which ones as post-moves for requests and why, and (b) trace possible changes in the organisation of request sequences over the period under investigation. The request sequences were retrieved

manually and annotated for speech act type and function. These annotated data will be analysed using a mainly qualitative approach.

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Christine Elsweiler is a lecturer at LMU Munich. She received her PhD from the University of Erlangen in 2009. In 2019 she completed her habilitation project entitled "From Shared Meaning to Divergent Pragmatics: A Comparative Study of the Modal Auxiliaries *May*, *Can*, *Shall* and *Will* in Scottish and English Letters (1500–1700)". Her research covers language variation and change in different historical periods of English, from early Middle English up to Late Modern English. She specialises in Scots and its historical stages, also from a comparative perspective with other varieties of English, focussing in particular on the intersection between Historical Pragmatics and Historical Sociolinguistics. In her current project, she is developing a speech act annotation scheme for a corpus of 18th-century Scottish letters.

From Petition to Letter: On the Diachronicity of Poor Relief Applications in Late Modern England

Anne-Christine Gardner (Lausanne)

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Established in 1601, the Old Poor Law aimed at providing support for English citizens who lived below subsistence level. In the eighteenth century the migrating poor in distress began to write applications to the overseers of their parish of legal settlement in order to receive relief outside the parish. Most of the letters date from the period between 1795 and 1834, when modifications to the Poor Law and increased poverty of

the population resulted in a higher number of poor-relief applications. However, a small number of letters has survived from the 1730s onwards (Sokoll 2001, Jones & King 2015, King 2005, King 2019).

This paper investigates stylistic variation found in pauper letters, adopting a diachronic perspective by considering letters from three subperiods: (1) 1730–1759, (2) 1774–1799 and (3) 1807–1834. The letters show significant variation, some writers preferring the more formal petition style using the third-person voice and subscriptions like “as in duty bound shall ever pray”, others adopt a more oral epistolary style in the first person. Over time, the petition style declines in usage, although it is still upheld in contemporary letter-writing manuals. The diachronic change towards letter-style at the expense of petition-style also goes hand in hand with a change in forms of address as well as subscriptions at the end of the applications.

The paper also discusses the production process of the letters – in the case of autographical texts, whether they were individual or communal efforts, and in the case of non-autographical letters, to what extent the applicant was involved in the formulation of the letter. A case study on six individuals reveals that those who wrote their own letters rarely varied their salutations and subscriptions, whereas letters by those who relied on helping hands contain a much wider range of formulations, probably reflecting the choices of the different scribes. In closing, the paper argues that, while the labouring poor were aware to varying degrees of epistolary conventions, their limited educational opportunities (Vincent 1989, Stephens 1998, Crone 2018) restricted the stylistic choices available to them, as evidenced in their applications for out-relief.

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Anne-Christine Gardner is a senior researcher at the University of Lausanne in the SNSF-funded research project “The Language of the Labouring Poor in Late Modern England”. Her research interests include qualitative and quantitative approaches to (historical) sociolinguistics, dialectology and word-formation, with a focus on the uncovering of unheard voices, speaker choice and identity construction in the past. Her publications include a monograph on *Derivation in Middle English. Regional and Text Type Variation* (2014), articles on lexical change in Old and Middle English, as well as articles on self-corrections and identity construction in Late Modern English handwritten ego-documents.

Epistolary Frames: Restoration Fiction and the Making of Lettered Truths

Gerd Bayer (Erlangen)

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Restoration fiction existed at a historical moment when generic conventions had not yet been fully conventionalized. Writers engaged in various forms of experimentation across all aspects of what would slowly develop from the somewhat incoherent tradition of early-modern narrative prose fiction into the eighteenth-century novel. International phenomena such as *The Portuguese Letters* (France, 1669) inspired various writers in England to employ epistolarity in the process of actively creating factual forms of representing reality. Prior to the establishment of the epistolary novel as hyperrealist through the publication of such books as Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740), letters appeared quite frequently in Restoration fictions, albeit with ambiguous degrees of authenticity. Existing at the threshold between private and public forms of publication, the letter, much like the parallel development of magazine publication, relied on complex strategies of framing that invited and enticed readers to approach epistolarity as a literary strategy that openly blended fact and fiction. Drawing on textual examples by writers including Aphra Behn, Margaret Cavendish and others, this presentation will demonstrate that Restoration writers actively sought to create frames of veracity: they endowed epistolary moments with an aura of authenticity that suggested that these

letters belonged not so much with the textual reality of the books in which they appeared but instead, in a substantial moment of metalepsis, with the actual reality of their readers. Unlike the format later employed by Richardson and his followers, which attached to epistolarity a heightened sense of emphatic attachment during the moment of reception, Restoration writers addressed their readers' sense of curiosity, making their world-making visible. Building on early modern traditions of embodying performance and voice – strategies through which ballads corporeally embraced their audiences by being read out aloud – epistolary moments in Restoration prose fictions attempted to move beyond the mere referential quality of printed letters into the lived experience of their readers. This shift, echoing epistolarity's double existence in both the public and private domain, relied substantially on textual gestures drawn from both the printer's shop, use of different fonts, page setting, or imitation of handwriting, and the toolbox of stylistics, including shift in tense, change of tone, or breaks in register. Taken together, these aspects of Restoration epistolarity made visible that textual realities were merely created and that their sense of reality was an active creation at the very moment of textual reception.

Gerd Bayer teaches English literature and culture at the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg. He has published on contemporary and early modern literature, including *Novel Horizons: The Genre Making of Restoration Fiction* (Manchester UP, 2015) and on Holocaust literature and film. He recently co-edited *The Ethics of Survival in Contemporary Literature and Culture* (Palgrave, 2021).

SESSION 3 (SUNDAY 15.45-17.30)**Cognitive Approaches to the Diachronic Analysis of Plot**

Hilary Duffield (Dannenberg) (Trier)

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The paper will report on the criteria used to analyze plot in two separate diachronic research projects. Project A (Coincidence & Counterfactuality) analyzed different manifestations of two plot patterns in Anglophone narrative fiction from the Renaissance to the end of the twentieth century; project B (Invasion Narratives) analyzes the rise and rapid diversification across multiple subgenres of realist and non-realist narrative fiction and (subsequently) film narratives from 1871 to the present day.

The paper will demonstrate that while the analysis of plot commences from a story-based focus, its cognitive investigation studies the depiction of character responses in key narrative segments and their vicarious effect on the reader/viewer; here emotional responses are central so that crucial input for the analytical parameters is taken from psychological and neuroscientific literature. In the case of project A, relevant input comes from psychological literature on facial recognition in parent-child relationships (for the coincidence plot) and on the variety of emotions triggered by different forms of counterfactual thought experiment. In the case of project B, neuroscientific research on the processing of threat and fear responses in the brain provides the framework for an analysis of the effects and diverse narrative configurations of the invasion narrative as well as providing input for the analysis of different narrative patterns of othering. The paper will outline the different parameters with reference to individual narrative examples and give a summary of key diachronic findings for both projects.

Hilary Duffield is Professor of English Literature at the University of Trier, Germany. She has current research interests in cognitive approaches to narrative, invasion narratives, and narratives of environmental crisis. She has published articles in journals including *Poetics Today*, *Narrative*, *Current Writing*, *Journal for the Study of British Cultures*, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *Interventions* and *Sprachkunst*. Her book *Coincidence and Counterfactuality: Plotting Time and Space in Narrative Fiction* (published as Hilary Dannenberg) won the George and Barbara Perkins award for the most significant contribution to the study of narrative in 2010.

Staging Diachronicity: Literary History and Linguistic Change

Andrew James Johnston (FU Berlin)

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As an increasingly neglected subdiscipline of literary studies, literary history is fraught with problems both methodological and theoretical. What do we consider to be ‘change’ in literary history and how can we identify change? Does literary change have to coincide with linguistic change or with change in other cultural and social spheres? And how self-conscious does literary change have to be? This paper seeks to investigate the problem of diachronicity in literary studies as a self-consciously performative issue. Taking its cue from the debates surrounding the dating of *Beowulf*, on the one hand, and Chaucer’s ironic forms of raising the question of diachronicity in some of his poems, on the other, this contribution asks how diachronicity in literary texts may in some cases be a carefully contrived effect that tells us just as much about notions of tradition and concepts of history as it does about actual change in literary forms, styles and genres. Indeed, one might ask whether textual experiments with diachronicity, whether a deliberate staging of textual elements suggesting different layers of history within a text may even serve as a marker of a heightened sense of the literariness of a given text.

Andrew James Johnston is Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English Literature at the Freie Universität Berlin. He is the author of *Performing the Middle Ages from Beowulf to Othello* (Brepols, 2008). His co-edited collections include *The Medieval Motion Picture* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, with Margitta Rouse and Philipp Hinz), *The Art of Vision: Ekphrasis in Medieval Literature and Culture* (Ohio State University Press, 2015, with Ethan Knapp and Margitta Rouse), *Love, History and Emotion in Chaucer and Shakespeare* (Manchester University Press, 2016, with Russell West-Pavlov and Elisabeth Kempf) and *Material Remains: Reading the Past in Medieval and Early Modern British Literature* (Ohio State University Press, 2021, with Jan-Peer Hartmann). He is one of the two co-directors of the Cluster of Excellence 2020 “Temporal Communities: Doing Literature in a Global Perspective”.

FINAL DISCUSSION