Max Kade Conference 2024 "**Rewriting Literary History With Algorithms**"

Department of Germanic Studies, University of Illinois at Chicago, November 14 & 15, 2024

Conference venue: Behavioral Sciences Building, 1007 W Harrison Street, Suite 153, MC 206, Chicago, IL 60607

Thursday, November 14, 2024

2:00-2:30 p.m. Coffee & Welcome

>José Camacho, Director, School of Literatures, Cultural Studies & Linguistics, UIC
>Susanne Rott, Head, Department of Germanic Studies, UIC

2:30-3:15 p.m. Keynote

>Katrin Dennerlein, Julius-Maximilians Universität Würzburg/UIC, "Emotions in German Drama from the 17th to 19th Century: New Perspectives on Literary Evolution"

3:15-4:45 p.m.

>Julian Schröter, Ludwig Maximilians Universität, Munich, "Contextual perspectival modeling: Tracing political practice and conceptual incomprehensibility of literary genres"
>Perspective modeling, as developed, for example, in Ted Underwood's *Distant Horizons* (2019), is a powerful method for studying literary genre change based on machine learning. However, with respect to the semantic change of loosely ordered genres, a significant modification of perspectival modeling is needed at the methodological level. Starting from a brief outline of the historical situation of the nineteenth-century German novella, which is often regarded as a strictly defined genre while at the same time sometimes considered by others as a genre that does not even exist, some of the challenges as well as the value of a deeper understanding of loosely structured genres are discussed. Based on this outline, a comprehensive model is presented that takes into account two aspects relevant for a historical understanding of loosely structured genres: (1) algorithmic models of the vague conceptual structure and thus the limits of conceptual comprehensibility of literary genres in terms of their textual features; (2) a contextual – and thus non-textual – algorithmic model of literary genres that helps to explain the regularities in the use of genre concepts not as textual genres but as political practices. Finally, both types of models are discussed with regard to their value as innovative modifications of existing perspective models.

>Matt Erlin, Washington University, St. Louis, "Geotopes: Situating Postcolonial Bestsellers in the Global Literary Marketplace"
>The vexed relationship between postcolonial literature and the market has featured prominently in a range of work in postcolonial studies in the past two decades. Many scholars have expressed concern over the homogeneity of works made available by the postcolonial culture industry, operating on the hypothesis that metropolitan readers would be confronted with a different, perhaps less "exoticizing" perspective on the countries and cultures for which postcolonial authors have been presumed to speak were they to read

other works, for example, those produced for a "domestic" audience. In this presentation, I will discuss a project that attempts to evaluate and concretize this hypothesis by way of a computationally assisted comparison of English-language novels written by authors of South Asian descent with a corpus of contemporary fiction translated from South Asian languages into English. Using a series of quantitative proxies for two of central criteria of distinction adduced to by scholars— literariness and cosmopolitanism — we aim to establish 1) whether and how the works of the authors writing in English can be seen to constitute a coherent corpus vis-à-vis the translated works and 2) whether and how the former converge with literary fiction translated from two languages considered to possess high literary capital: French and German. By situating postcolonial bestsellers within this broader context, we hope to provide a starting point from which to understand more fully the ways in which pressures exerted by the "otherness industry" influence literary production as well as how reader perceptions of South Asia might be different if they were exposed to a broader range of texts.

4:45-5:00 p.m. Coffee Break

5:00-6:45 p.m.

Katherine Elkins, Kenyon College, Gambier, OH, "Is Formal Innovation Really a Key Marker of the Modern Novel?"

Graduate Students in the Department of Germanic Studies, UIC – Short Presentations on "The Language of Emotions in German Drama Around 1800: Key Words and Expressions"

In *The Modernist Novel* (Cambridge UP 2011), Steve Kern writes that "modernism is primarily a set of new ways of seeing and interpreting the world, and narrative forms are the literary interpretations of those ways." Unlike the cultural turn of the 80's and 90's, which focused on the unique historical and cultural contexts of individual narratives, Kern's approach argued for a tight unity between content and form, with formal innovation directly reflecting innovation in the representation of new types of experience, identity and values. Kern's approach makes sense intuitively if modernism is seen as a movement in which diverse art forms are interconnected. In the realm of modern painting and music, for example, it's hardly revolutionary to argue that formal innovation is one of the key markers of the period. So too, the sometimes radical innovations in the content of modern narrative, from Proust's opening scene of falling asleep--hardly a page-turning subject--to Woolf's gender-fluid and time-traveling character Orlando. One would imagine formal innovation to reflect the kinds of material changes evident in narrative content. And yet, is the modern novel really as formally innovative as we believe? While we are just beginning to accumulate the data to be able to answer this question, emotional arc offers one way to evaluate narrative innovation. Many more modern novels need to be mapped, including far more narratives from the Global South. But our preliminary research suggests that many modern "innovative" narratives retain fairly traditional structures: formal innovation does not always follow functional innovation in subject matter. That said, our research does offer glimpses of formal innovation astonishingly different from what has been mapped in earlier narratives, at least to date. These findings suggest that formal innovation may be less common in the modern novel than once believed, but there are limited instances in which formal experimentation seems to indicate a clear attempt to break free of past strictures.

8:00 p.m. Conference Dinner

Friday, November 15, 2024
8:30-9:00 a.m. Coffee & Breakfast

9:00-10:30 a.m.

Jo Guldi, Emory University, "Digital Text Mining Insights: Bridging Digital History and Literary Studies"

Susan Brown, University of Guelph, "Making Feminist Literary History with Boundary Objects"
Can the concept of boundary objects, grounded in an understanding of knowledge as situated, usefully inform the digital pursuit of literary history? Boundary objects have strong temporal qualities, span multiple perspectives, contexts, and communities of practice or knowledge, are both specific and abstracted, and yoked to power relations and the systems through which we understand and organize the world, both materially and culturally. They bear comparison with the kinds of entities--whether authors, texts, publishers, genres, or events--that are frequently the focus of recuperative or revisionary literary histories that draw their evidence from multiple contexts in which that entity signifies or operates differently. This paper reports on initial work using boundary objects to direct inquiry into a feminist literary historical knowledge graph derived from the heterogenous, multi-perspectival data of the published textbase *Orlando: A History of Women's Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present* (2006-). The features of mainstream boundary objects as well as prominent examples from feminist literary history provide a starting point for investigating whether these can guide the way to interesting entities whose literary historical significance may have been overlooked. Graph visualization offers great potential for interactive exploration, but can make it difficult to disentangle markers of significance from unevenness in the data. Semantic queries have the potential to prune graphs to surface entities associated with a multiplicity of contexts. The question is whether it is helpful to consider context diversity alongside, and perhaps even at times as a counter to, standard social network analysis measures of importance. An approach to literary history guided by a search across disparate datasets for boundary objects offers considerable potential, while bringing with it immense challenges with respect to data linking and harmonization.

10:30 a.m.-10:45 a.m. Coffee Break

10:45 a.m.-11:45 a.m.

Thorsten Ries, University of Texas, Austin, "Re Writing Time, Processing Time, and Literary History: On Digital's Chronotope Shift"
This talk examines the temporal disjunctions—writing time, processing time, and archival evidence—that arise in the digital composition process, as it impact the concepts of reconstruction of literary history. By exploring the "chronotopical shift" of archival born-digital evidence, and the effect of "paragenesis" and "Taktung" of the processor (see also "Zeitkritik", E. Ernst), it becomes clear how the project of rewriting history in the age of AI is not just a matter of Digital Humanities methods and data mining literature - ist is a matter of technological time, technology history, as far as literature is concerned. This can be observed not only at the level of genetic criticism, but also on the level of AI, model development, historical representation (see also Offert), and temporal questions

related to AI-driven research (reproducibility, explainability, representation). This inquiry seeks not only to expose current methodological limitations but to propose pathways for a more nuanced integration of temporal analytics in digital literary historiography.Patrick Fortmann, UIC, "Literary Summary from Epitome to AI: Reflections on Past and Present of a Minor Form"

12:00-1:15 p.m. Lunch Buffet

1:15-3:00 p.m.

Leonard Konle/Merten Kröncke, Universität Würzburg/ Georg-August Universität Göttingen, "The Shape of Literary Change: Insights into German Literature, c. 1850–1920"

Christof Schöch, Universität Trier, "Genre Analysis in Computational Literary Studies: The first ten Years"
For many years, the computational analysis of literary genres has been a key focus within what is now known as Computational Literary Studies. Researchers have aimed to identify both the defining features and the subtle distinctions that differentiate various genres and subgenres. This talk will provide a critical reflection on my own journey through the more recent stages of these efforts, offering insights into how my collaborative work in this field has evolved over the past decade. Throughout this time, I have worked with a diverse group of researchers, bringing together interdisciplinary expertise to address the challenges inherent in this line of inquiry. While methodological innovation has always played a central role in our collaborative investigations, it is equally important to critically reflect on the insights we have gained in our broader understanding of literary subgenres within the context of literary history. This retrospective will cover a range of projects and initiatives, starting with my work in the early-career researcher group Computational Literary Genre Stylistics (CLiGS) at Würzburg University, extending to investigations conducted as part of the pan-European COST Action Distant Reading for European Literary History, and concluding with more recent projects such as Mining and Modeling Text and Zeta and Company at Trier University.

3:00 p.m. Reception

Contact Information

PD Dr. Katrin Dennerlein, Max Kade Visiting Professor, Department of Germanic Studies, UIC / Julius-Maximilians Universität Würzburg, kdenner@uic.edu

Patrick Fortmann, Professor of Germanic Studies, UIC, fortmann@uic.edu

Zoom

For Zoom-Participation please write an E-Mail to Patrick Fortmann, fortmann@uic.edu