

## **CFP: 19th Annual German Graduate Symposium, Oxford/Hybrid (07.04.2022)**

Discussion published by Sarah Fengler on Wednesday, March 23, 2022

### **CFP: 19th Annual German Graduate Symposium: "Space, Time, and Direction"**

Friday, 06.05.2022, and Saturday, 07.05.2022, University of Oxford (/Hybrid)

Abstract Submission Deadline: Thursday, 07.04.2022

Organisers: Alexandra Hertlein (Oxford), Sarah Fengler (Oxford)

Space and time are a long-standing union in the description of our world and its past. When Herodotus, the 'Father of History', gives an account of the Persian campaign of conquest in the 5th century BC, he starts with a mythical timeline, and follows up with a description of the different Persian dynasties involved in the war. The entire narrative, however, is interspersed with accounts of the regions they travel through, mapping out the world that is transformed into *historia* under his eyes. While in antiquity, time is often conceptualised as a sequence of individual rulers, later periodisations rely on absolute reference dates such as the 'year 0'. Our understanding of the term 'antiquity' itself is a result of a teleological periodisation, culminating in what we call modernity today. The term modernity is formed with the word 'modo', meaning 'just now', and becomes paradox in derivations like 'post-modernity' as 'now' per definitionem always is 'just now'. Once 'modernity' is embedded in a narration, and mediated by a narrator, we are invited to contemplate what has previously been labelled as 'now' and speculate what will be the next 'now', rendering our present at the same time the future of the past, and the past of the future. The present is always the chronological hinge of both past and future, not least because it relies on the spatial idea of presence.

The common feature of almost any of the different concepts of time and space is their contiguity: in all of the models, either time is explained through space, or space through time. Which of the parameters is chosen as prerogative often depends on the political interests underlying the time-space narratives. Topoi from the European Enlightenment like the 'Noble Savage' support the idea that indigenous people in the contemporary Americas embody the European past, suggesting that this past is still present, but in a spatially removed way. Terms like 'Lebensraum', which were heavily instrumentalised in colonialist and fascist discourse, suggest that a certain population has a legitimate claim on specific territories based on their ancestry, their 'race' and 'blood'. These examples show that the specific structure of time-space narratives is prone to subjectivity and not least also ideological exploitation.

Our workshop sets out to explore historiographic, literary, and other artistic representations of space, time, and direction. We aim to analyse how historical perceptions and constructions of time and space have shaped the emergence of texts and other cultural artefacts, and how they have developed over time and through the movement from one space to another, emphasising the role of direction in such processes. Historiographical texts and their strategies of visualising time, e.g. in timelines, calendars or ancestral charts, provide a rich source to explore the concepts of time in different

epochs. In this context, the idea of a 'cultural memory' will be of particular interest, focusing on how shared experiences create both spaces and a specific sense of time. This ties in with the question of how (literary) communities rely on categories of time and space to refer to shared knowledge. In addition, it will be helpful to take a look at phenomena that transgress these categories, such as the idea of the 'generation', which has the potential to transcend national or religious identities, referring first and foremost to a specific time span, while it is pointing at the same time to the family as a conventional tool of measuring time (cf. Old Testament).

Moreover, we seek to explore how space and time (both narrative and narrated) can be translated from one language into the other, and how translations of literary texts are shaped by the time and space in which they are created. In this context, we aim to look at the emergence of language communities and how they interact with one another through translation. The path which a certain text takes through different languages and areas demarcates questions of linguistic and cultural prestige, illuminating pragmatic features of both texts as objects and language in performance. Looking at the visual and literary representations of time, we are interested in the motifs and allegories used to express scientific and religious ideas of time. Religious concepts of the netherworld, utopian and dystopian spaces, and narrative experiments in the context of sci-fi literature equally challenge conventional time-space relations. While the focus of our workshop is on textual sources, we welcome perspectives from other disciplines, for instance from (intellectual) history, physics and art history.

Papers can address but are not limited to the following topics and questions:

#### I) Visualisations of Time in Text and Image

- How are ideas of time visualised in different disciplines? How is data measured and arranged (ordinal/discrete/continuous; linear/cyclical...)? Which types of visual media have influenced the popular image of time? (time lines, ancestral charts,...)
- How do scientific concepts of time influence the visual conventions in historiographic disciplines?
- Which conventions of visualising time are mirrored in narrative strategies/literary motifs?
- How is time visualised in the fine arts? Which motifs and allegories of time are manifest in different iconological traditions (e.g. the seven ages of man) How are time sequences depicted, e.g. in a continuous or separate fashion (kontinuierende/ distinguierende Darstellung)?

#### II) Spaces and Times of Comparison and Translation

- How do translations create spaces that delineate a congruent field of meaning between two distinct texts?
- How do cultures with different calendars within one historiographic tradition bridge temporal gaps and uncertainties?
- How can space and time be translated from one language into the other?
- How can space and time be translated from literature into the visual arts and the other way round?

#### III) Memory and Historiography

- How do the notions of space and time relate to memory and historiography?
- What role do time and space play as critical categories in history?
- How does the notion of Zeitgeist relate to memory and historiography?

#### IV) Utopian and Dystopian Spaces

- How are religious utopian and dystopian spaces, e.g., the Everafter, and their timelines depicted in literature?
- What is the relation of spatial and temporal remoteness?
- What is the role of space and time in utopian and dystopian genres, e.g. science fiction?
- How do literary adaptations of myth from the Middle Ages to the present model time and space?

#### V) Literary Communities Beyond Time and Space

- How does the concept of the 'generation' transgress ideas of the 'nation', 'gender', 'class', based on their shared experience of having witnessed specific time periods and influence factors? And how, on the other hand, are these distinctions re-enforced by the concept of 'the generation'?
- How do time and space determine and challenge the notion of the canon?
- How do Eurocentrism and the 'exoticising gaze' construct colonial time-spaces in literature from the Early Modern Period to the present day?

#### VI) The Language of Direction and Dimensionality in Literature

- Which linguistic strategies are employed to equip a specific text with a sense of space and direction? How is the gaze of the reader directed in different kinds of 'text-worlds'?
- Which metaphors rely on spatial concepts and how are they employed in different literary texts? How does the directionality of metaphors create a sense of shared experience?

The workshop will be conducted in English. Please submit your abstract of not more than 250 words together with a short biography to [alexandra.hertlein@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:alexandra.hertlein@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk) and [sarah.fengler@modlangs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.fengler@modlangs.ox.ac.uk). Presentations should be around 20 minutes long. The deadline for abstract submissions is **07.04.2022**, and notification of acceptance will be given by 14.04.2022. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with the organisers if you have any questions.

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