

The Aesthetic Vocabulary of the Premodern Era. New Approaches to Historical Semantics

Interdisciplinary conference of the CRC 1391 *Different Aesthetics* in Stuttgart, 21st to 23rd of March 2023

Concept

The CRC 1391 explores the aesthetics of texts, pictures and objects of pre-modern Europe. The aim is to rediscover the role 2000 years of cultural history has had in shaping our understanding of ‘the aesthetic’, as well as illuminate its relevance for current debates on art and society. To this end, 16 subjects ranging from archaeology to art and musicology, as well as classical and modern philology to history and theology, have been cooperating in an interdisciplinary environment.

In this context, project B3 is dedicated to the semantics of the aesthetic in German literature of the Middle Ages. It assumes that the vocabulary with which texts attempt to grasp their own origin, design or effect forms an access point to contemporary understandings of the aesthetic. For this reason, the project would like to compile such lexemes as are relevant in the context of literary self-description and explore their aesthetic meaning. Within the framework of the CRC 1391 *Different Aesthetics*, the aim is to evaluate the extent to which aesthetic semantics in medieval and early modern texts refer to the autological, creative as well as to the heterological, social dimension of acts and artefacts (Gerok-Reiter / Robert 2019 and 2022). According to the proffered hypothesis, this is where a specificity in pre-modern aesthetic vocabulary might be located.

The conference takes this hypothesis as a starting point. Given the approach and aims of the CRC 1391, we hope to broaden the range of source texts and passages studied so far, for example to include ‘Gebrauchstexte’ (functional texts, Müller 2007). It is also important to expand our understanding of the duality of autology and heterology on various levels. Therefore, the conference would like to examine words (e.g. *bilde, fröude, glanz, milte, schîn, trôst; lûter, rein; dænen, klingen, lachen*), word combinations (e.g. *singen unde sagen, schæne unde guot*), parts of speech (communication verbs such as *loben* or *singen*, cf. Braun 2022), concepts (e.g. sense and sensibility, appearance, value and evaluation, seeing and recognising), as well as types of texts (e.g. didactic or religious poetry), which particularly

navigate the dynamic exchange between the autological creative form and heterological social pragmatism.

Methodologically, the exploration of pre-modern aesthetic vocabulary can be conducted along a range of established lines within medieval German literary studies, particularly according to principles established within linguistics for (historical) semantic work. Semantic theories based on action, discourse and the history of knowledge posit that meaning can be deduced by taking a historical perspective and examining the ways and co- and contexts (collocations, sentence, text, theme, discourse, knowledge) in which words are used (Busse 2005 and 2008; Fritz 2005 and 2006). Semasiological and onomasiological approaches, word and word field history must be integrated here (Blank 1997; Dicke / Eikelmann / Hasebrink ed. 2006; Koch 2001), therefore the semantics of aesthetically relevant individual words such as *glanz*, *schîn* or *schœne*, and lexemes associated with a concept or world field, as well as (pleasant) sound, appearance or wonder, should be taken into consideration. This can also be historically related to frame semantics (Barsalou 1991; Fillmore 1982; Minsky 1974; in summary, Busse 2012), which considers the cognitive representation of concepts (on *triuwe* see Schultz-Balluff 2018). This approach opens up new forms of communicating and visualising research, with the use of digital corpora, as it allows for the depiction of word networks (on representation forms of historical semantics, see Fritz 2020).

Consequently, the conference would also like to involve digital technologies. These have developed rapidly in recent years, and they offer the opportunity to fundamentally change the field of historical semantics. The possibility of working with large digital corpora and thus statistically underpinning the history of meaning (Braun / Reiter 2018) is particularly noteworthy. These new quantitative methods can be usefully combined with conventional qualitative ones (Braun / Darilek ed. 2022). Digital tools make it possible to advance historical-semantic work beyond the limits of human reading capacity, thus expanding the corpus of texts to be evaluated beyond conventional canons and presenting more precise and objective information on frequency of use. Co-occurrences can also be comprehensively recorded and evaluated using language technologies. While related disciplines such as history and linguistics are increasingly supporting conceptual-historical work digitally, medieval German studies have fallen behind. The conference therefore encourages an expansion of existing methodologies.

We therefore invite (1.) historical-semantic explorations of aesthetic vocabulary in a wide range of sources. (2.) Analyses of the dual autological-heterological significance of

aesthetic words. (3.) Studies that illustrate how research on aesthetic semantics can be conducted using methods within the Digital Humanities. Every contribution may choose its focus within the outlined fields, and contributions which combine the given considerations are particularly welcome. All contributions should be related to the aesthetic vocabulary of the pre-modern era. The conference is constructed to be interdisciplinary; literary, linguistic and philological contributions are therefore all welcome, as well as comparative approaches or studies within Digital Humanities.

Research Questions

A. Expansion of sources

- Which genres should be re-evaluated when it comes to the aesthetic significance of words?
- Do discursive and narrative texts differ, as far as the aesthetic meaning of specific words are concerned?
- What aesthetic vocabulary can be found in didactic or religious texts?
- Do technical texts also use words with aesthetic implications?

B. Autological-heterological correlation

- How are aesthetic usages of a lexeme differentiated from other usages?
- Do specific aesthetic semantics emerge in connection with different text genres and discourses? Can we observe interaction and transfers of meaning between different subject areas?
- To what extent does an aesthetic concept that focusses on the intersection between creative form and social aspects change previous conceptions of an 'aesthetic' vocabulary?

C. Methods of historical semantics in the digital age

- What methods can be used in researching aesthetic vocabulary?
- Where are there gaps in historical-semantic research into aesthetic language? How can we address these?
- How can the aesthetic meaning of words be determined?
- Can metaphors be understood through digital methods?

- Which existing corpora could be relevant to historical semantics using digital methods? Which should be collated in the future?
- How can qualitative approaches in conceptual-historical research be combined with quantitative ones and vice versa? For example, how can co- and contexts be understood and represented through digital methods?
- How can traditional hermeneutical approaches in historical semantics profit from digital methods, both in data collection and evaluation and the presentation of research?
- Can historical-conceptual studies be evaluated using digital methods?

Participation and Registration

The conference will take place in Stuttgart from the 21st to the 23rd of March 2023 and aims to publish a collected edition of contributions. To ensure a concise discussion and a speedy publication of the articles, the conference will be held after **pre-circulating the papers**. This means that contributions will be sent to all participants in advance so that the conference can be entirely concerned with discussion. We therefore ask that **contributions be submitted by the end of February 2023**, so that they can be sent to all participants in good time. We shall also present the collection of contributions at the evaluation of the CRC 1391 at the beginning of March 2023.

We ask that you send in the **titles and abstracts (300 words) of your presentations** by the **4th of October 2022** to marion.darilek@uni-tuebingen.de. Proposals will be reviewed swiftly, so that decisions will be communicated in October 2022.

Organisers

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Literature

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