Conference

Metaphérein – Theories and Methods of Stemmatology,

organized by Michael Stolz (Bern) with the support of Chris Howe (Cambridge),

Yii-Jan Lin (Yale), Philipp Roelli (Zürich)

Congressi St. Franscini, Monte Verità (Ticino, Switzerland), 12th to 15th May 2024

Introduction

Stemmatology (or: stemmatics) is defined as a part of textual criticism "dealing with the genealogical dependencies between witnesses of text" in handwritten or/and printed traditions (Philipp Roelli, Introduction, in: id. ed., *Handbook of Stemmatology: History, Methodology, Digital Approaches*, Berlin / Boston 2020, pp. 1–8: p. 3). As a base of critical textual editions, stemmatic relationships are often represented in a genealogical tree: a *stemma codicum* (cf. ibid.: p. 3–4). Stemmatology is closely linked with the name of the 19th century German philologist Karl Lachmann (1793–1851), although he wasn't a stemmatologist in the proper sense. In fact, Lachmann's practice of critical editing (considering witness relationships), used for his editions of the New Testament, of classical and medieval (vernacular) texts, was expanded by followers who established the stemmatological method of 'Lachmannism', i.e. the almost 'mechanical' reconstruction of an 'archetype', representing the starting point of textual transmission, by identifying 'copying errors' in the preserved manuscripts (as demonstrated by Paul Maas, and refined especially in Italy by Giorgio Pasquali, Sebastiano Timpanaro, Cesare Segre, Paolo Trovato a. o.). A major challenge and therefore cause for critique of this method is the fact that its results are problematic in case of hybrid textual traditions, i.e., when scribes or printers use several different exemplars for producing their texts (of which the Lachmannians try to reconstruct the 'archetype').
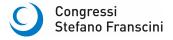
In recent time, the Lachmannian method gained new interest and further development under the influence of digital editing. In this context, the collaboration of textual critics with scientists, especially in molecular biology, became essential, as cladistic computer programs designed for phylogenetic analysis turned out to be useful also for philological purposes (cf. the seminal article by Adrian C. Barbrook et al., "The phylogeny of *The Canterbury Tales*", in: *Nature* 394 (1998), p. 839; and more generally Christopher Howe et al., "Parallels between stemmatology and phylogenetics", in: *Studies in Stemmatology II*, ed. by Pieter van Reenen et al., Amsterdam / Philadelphia 2004, pp. 3–11). In this context, it even turned out that molecular biologists struggle with

problems similar of those of stemmatology, as they equally have to cope with the phenomenon of hybridisation in genetic lineages (called 'lateral gene transfer'). For this reason, stemmatologists, molecular biologists, and computational scientists from different European and American countries are sharing their respective approaches and individual research results in occasional colloquia (cf. the network of Studia Stemmatologica: http://cosco.hiit.fi/stemmatologica/ and https://www.uib.no/en/rg/medievalphilology/137768/studia-stemmatologica). However, a more thorough theoretical and methodological reflection with regard of the mutual epistemic interchange of both fields is still a desideratum.

The ground of this kind of exchange is yet well prepared. In 2016 the theologian Yii-Jan Lin presented her thesis on the historical and contemporaneous influence of biological concepts on textual criticism especially in bible studies (Yii-Jan Lin, *The Erotic Life of Manuscripts. New Testament Textual Criticism and the Biological Sciences*, Oxford 2016). She showed that the metaphors of 'erotic life' (in a 'generative' sense), such as 'reproduction', 'family (tree)', or 'genealogy' that came up in textual criticism since the 18th century are borrowed from biological terminology. The role of metaphoric language and its impact on methodological concepts in the humanities and the sciences was also subject of a conversation of Christopher Howe and Michael Stolz in 2019 (published as Michael Stolz, "On the Borderline of Disciplines – Concepts of Reproduction and Copying in Molecular Biology and in the Humanities. A Conversation with Christopher Howe [Molecular Biology, Cambridge]", in: Kulturwissenschaftliche Zeitschrift 4 [2019], Heft 3, pp. 101–113: https://content.sciendo.com/view/journals/kwg/4/3/article-p101.xml). Moreover, the evaluation of stemmatics, its history and methodology has virtually boomed in most recent years with the publication of fundamental reference books (Paolo Trovato, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lachmann's Method. A Non-Standard Handbook of Genealogical Textual Criticism in the Age of Post-Structuralism, Cladistics, and Copy-Text*, Padova 2014, 2nd ed. 2017; Philipp Roelli, ed., *Handbook of Stemmatology: History, Methodology, Digital Approaches*, Berlin / Boston 2020) as well as with conference proceedings on Karl Lachmann and the method of textual criticism named after him (cf. Anna Kathrin Bleuler and Oliver Primavesi, eds., *Lachmanns Erbe. Editionsmethoden in klassischer Philologie und germanistischer Mediävistik*, Berlin 2022 [Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie. Beiheft 19]; Martin Schubert and Judith Lange, eds., *Editionspraxis in der Altgermanistik*, Berlin / Boston 2023).

Focus and key topics

This state of research is the ground for the Studia Stemmatologica conference organized on Monte Verità (Ticino) from 12th to 15th May 2024. The idea of 'metaphor' inherent in Lin's book and in

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the conversation of Howe and Stolz mentioned above will form the basic concept of the meeting – *metaphérein* in the original (broader) sense of 'transferring' and 'transmitting'. The phenomenon of transfer is essential in historical and current stemmatology on different levels:

1. Lachmann and the Lachmannians were influenced by contemporaneous epistemological concepts of "descent with modification" as expressed in Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (published in 1859).

2. Stemmatics is a method 'beyond Lachmann' from the very beginning: Whereas Lachmann never drew a stemma himself, the Lachmannians transferred his editorial practice into a proper stemmatic method using the biological figure of a stemma growing out of a (reconstructed and therefore hypothetical) 'archetype' as a basic idea.

3. In current stemmatology, the exchange between concepts in molecular biology and stemmatology continues, as scholars in both fields use cladistic computer programs for analysing phylogenetic and textual data. A crucial question is however, if both disciplines share these methods on a factual or only on a metaphorical level (or perhaps on a portion of both).

4. In this concern, a re-examination of distinct metaphors and their semantic fields, as they are to be found in stemmatology (including problematic occurrences such as 'contamination' for the above-mentioned hybridisation, or textual 'corruption'), is important. As a common aphorism has it: "The price of metaphor is eternal vigilance" (Richard Lewontin, *The Triple Helix. Gene, Organism, and Environment*, Cambridge MA / London 2000: p. 4, attributed to Arturo Rosenblueth and Norbert Wiener).

The conference will consider this precaution in the broader sense of metaphor as a mode of transfer. The parts of the conference are structured in four sessions:

1. Lachmann, Lachmannism, and the evolutionary ideas of the 19th and 20th centuries.
   The interrelations of non-linear and linear concepts of genealogy in science and linguistics (J.-B. de Lamarck, Ch. Darwin, A. Schleicher) – environmental impact and 'local texts' (B.H. Streeter) – the ideas of a 'living text' and 'narrative textual criticism' (D.C. Parker).

2. Stemmatology beyond conventional textual criticism: interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary aspects.
   Stemmatology in musicology, art history, folklore, library studies (reading frequencies) – stemmatology transcending homogeneous texts (e.g., Virgil's *Aeneid*) by including translations in other languages, or adaptations in art and music.

3. Stemmatology and digital editing.

    The impacts of the use of cladistic software on phylogenetical and stemmatological concepts – technical challenges and limitations – terminological biases and constraints – the construction of (un-)rooted trees as a base of digital editions.

4. 'Familiy' – 'tree' – 'corruption': a critique of stemmatological metaphors.

    Diverse metaphorical fields (family relationship and descent; classification: 'species', 'tribes', 'races'; deterioration: 'contamination', 'corruption'; communication: 'transcription', 'translation') – 'stemma' as metaphor – potentials, limits, and risks of using metaphors for knowledge purposes.

Main objectives

The conference will gather scholars who in their research have shown interest in the historical and methodological interchange of stemmatology and the natural sciences. The concept of *metaphérein* will stimulate the scholarly 'transfer' between diverse academic fields and will promote future collaboration on an international level. The idea of metaphor also involves the fact that we are bound to inherited traditions of disciplinary, institutional, and national thinking that needs reflection in exchange with others.

Participation of early-career scholars

A group of early career scholars from Swiss and other universities will be invited to the conference; on the afternoon before its proper start, they will join an introductory meeting on interdisciplinary aspects of current stemmatology, guided by post-docs of the University of Bern. Early career scholars will also have the chance to give short presentations and feedback during the after-dinner session of the second evening (for encouraging them to get involved in the conference discussions themselves, if not yet done so).

Application and funding

Scholars from both the sciences and (digital) humanities are encouraged to send an abstract (PDF of max. 1 page) for a paper of 30 minutes with distinct attribution to one of the four sessions named above by **Friday 17th March 2023** to: michael.stolz@unibe.ch. The organizers will try to provide funding for active participants.

Venue address

Fondazione Monte Verità, Congressi Stefano Franscini
Strada Collina 84, CH-6612 Ascona, Switzerland

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Program schedule

	SUNDAY 12th May	MONDAY 13th May	TUESDAY 14th May	WEDNESDAY 15th May	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Morning (9:00 – 12:30)	Arrival of organizers and early career scholars	Session 1: Lachmann, Lachmannism, and the evolutionary ideas of the 19th and 20th centuries 9:00–10:30: Paper 1 and 2 10:30–11:00: Coffee break 11:00–12:30: Paper 3 and 4	Session 3: Stemmatology and digital editing 9:00–10:30: Paper 1 and 2 10:30–11:00: Coffee break 11:00–12:30: Paper 3 and 4	Departure after breakfast Optional guided tour on Monte Verità before de-parture			
Lunch	12:30–13:30	12:30–14:00	12:30–14:00				
Afternoon (14:00 – 18:00)	Arrival of conference participants Pre-conference for early career scholars 13:30–15:00: Part 1 15:00–15:30: Coffee break 15:30–17:00: Part 2 17:00–18:00: Short guided tour on Monte Verità	Session 2: Stemmatology beyond con-ventional textual criticism 14:00–15:30: Paper 1 and 2 15:30–16:00: Coffee break 16:00–17:30: Paper 3 and 4	Session 4: 'Familiy' – 'tree' – 'corruption': a critique of stemmatological met-aphors 14:00–15:30: Paper 1 and 2 15:30–16:00: Coffee break 16:00–17:30: Paper 3 and 4 17:30: Summing up and discussion of future plans				
Dinner	18:00–20:00	18:00–20:00	18:00–20:30				
Evening	20:00–21:00: Introducing keynote	20:00–21:00: Presentations and comments by early career scholars	Informal evening				