

Writing Emotions Literature as Practice (19th to 21st century)

International Conference
University of Graz, 18-20 May 2016
Call for papers

After a long period of neglect, emotions have become an important topic within literary studies. But literature is not the only center of interest when dealing with the question of emotion. Within the humanities, disciplines like film studies, history, anthropology and philosophy have made influential contributions while in the realm of natural and social sciences brain studies, biology, sociology and psychology have been very active as for the topic of emotions. Given the considerable involvement of such a great variety of disciplines, one should pose the challenging question of whether it is appropriate to speak of an "emotional turn" (Anz 2006) or better of an "affective (re)turn" (Keen 2011), and as such to put the question of emotion in relationship to the 18th century aesthetic of sentiment or the concept of empathy/"Einfühlung" as discussed in the 19th and early 20th century.

It is certain that the study of emotions needs to be an interdisciplinary endeavor. Emotions have to be considered from a variety of different perspectives: as neurological, physical, cognitive, medial and cultural phenomena and systems. Consequently, studies of literary resp. aesthetic emotions necessarily have strong ties to the above mentioned disciplines. Thus, we understand linguistically formed emotions in literature, as well as emotions triggered by literary texts, as being always embedded in discourses dealing with physical, cognitive, cultural, medial and/or poetical models of human perception of self and other (including things and objects) and of human agency. Emotions are strongly connected to communicative competences, socio-political contexts and models of knowledge within social, cultural and linguistic groups.

Against this background, the **symposium aims at a discussion of the complex link between aesthetic and non-aesthetic emotional patterns and components by focusing on the process and practice of writing.** The emphasis on writing as a practice means that the relation of writing and emotion is not understood in the traditional sense of authorial sensitivity or empathy and therefore takes the author and his/her text as a guarantee of poetic truth. Instead, the act of writing is considered an agency within an environment, a practice within life as well as a life-practice. Writing is neither understood as a synonym for style nor as a metonymy for the text.

Visibly strong ties between notes, letters, manifestos and literary texts are only one example for authorial strategies in order to stress writing as agency and simultaneously the modern complexity of the dichotomy of life and writing/literature. Other examples of the importance of considering the practical and processual side of writing are the intense discussions about authorized versions, different editions, the authenticity of authors and texts. By considering pre-textual and post-textual agency as a part of literariness and literature as life, or by simply refuting established categories (like the avant-garde), literature itself becomes a form of process and *pratique* (Roland Barthes).

Departing from the approach to writing, text and literature sketched above, we understand literary emotions not only as textual and poetic strategies with receptive consequences or effects but also as being effective outside of language and text. Emotions are thus seen as formative within the aesthetic process and as indicators that the aesthetic moment is not reduced to the text alone. As latest research in writing has shown, literature is in- and outside, before and after the text. **Therefore, we ask for**

contributions that deal with literature in its context of practices of writing, and with the impact of emotions as agency as well as a part of texts and their effects.

It is the purpose of the symposium to confront writing and emotion by asking the following questions:

- Which roles do emotions play within writing as an aesthetic process?
- Where and how do emotional moments of the practice of writing leave traces within the text?
- How do authors play with this emotional impact?
- Where and how do authors explicitly deal with emotion and writing or with writing as an emotional practice within the texts?
- What kind of role do intermedial strategies play?
- Where does intertextuality come in?
- How is the topic and context of media devices incorporated (language, writing tools, photography, film, the digital etc.)?
- What kind of theoretical models do we have for analyzing forms of emotion in modern literature?
- What are the interfaces and borders between socio-cultural as well as scientific concepts of emotion and aesthetic emotions in the context of writing as agency?
- Which kinds and types of emotion and which forms of literary emotions can be found in the context of writing as agency?

The symposium welcomes different epistemological, theoretical and empirical approaches. We encourage contributions with a strong theoretical impact.

Keynote Speakers:

Prof. Patrizia Lombardo (Geneva)

Prof. Gesine Lenore Schiewer (Berne/Munich)

Submission:

Please submit **an abstract (250 words) of your proposal in English** as well as **a short biography and a list of your publications** to lukas.waltl@uni-graz.at

The submission deadline is 31 December 2015.

You will receive our reply by 31 January 2016.

Concept and Organization: Prof. Dr. Susanne Knaller, Center for Cultural Studies, University of Graz

Organization-Team: Doctoral Program Culture-Text-Act(ion) (part of the European PhDnet “Literary and Cultural Studies”) at the University of Graz, including Elisabeth Baldauf-Sommerbauer, Eva Fauner, Ingeborg Jandl, Karin Kraus, Stella Marie Lange, Sabine Schönfellner, Gudrun Tockner and Lukas Waltl