

SAUTE 2013 (including CUSO workshop)
April 19-20/21, University of Lausanne

Emotion, Affect, Sentiment: The Language and Aesthetics of Feeling

THE THEME:

Studies on 'feeling', 'affect', 'sentiment', and 'emotion' are on the rise across the humanities and social sciences as scientific evidence has revealed the fundamental connections between emotion, rational thinking, and good judgment (e.g. Damasio 1994, Goleman 1995). In line with these insights, emotional phenomena invite fresh and challenging perspectives on fundamental research questions such as the dichotomies between the body versus mind, individual evaluation, and judgment versus social norms and morality, or the biological versus cultural bases of meaning (Wilce 2009). Moreover, investigations into human emotionality ask for interdisciplinary contact between disciplines from the humanities and cognitive sciences. This also opens new routes for research in English literature, medieval studies, and linguistics.

After the linguistic and then the "historical" turn, scholars of English literature have begun recently to explore "The Affective Turn." With its perceived potential to create critical links between emotion, bodies, matter, and technology, the notion of "affect" has taken on a key role in the current research landscape. The critical power of the term lies in its ability to permit researchers to look at agency and impact: the *effects* of affect. In other words, affect is a way of thinking about embodied consciousness and aesthetic performances that invites theorizing relationships, movement, interdependence, and above all, what art does to spectators and readers. In cultural and literary studies, affect has been a means of theorizing the social effects and mediations of language and art.

The Foucauldian notion that emotions and sentiments have a history has inspired a growing body of scholarly works that conceive "emotions as habits that can be produced through cultural scripts" (McNamer 2010). The medieval period, particularly the later medieval rise of affective piety, has been fertile ground for a study of social and cultural changes in emotional behaviour. In this context, emotion, spirituality, gender, and the body intersect in a complex manner: emotions are intrinsically linked with the mystical, and affective spirituality is equated with feminine piety. Caroline Walker Bynum, Rachel Fulton and, most recently, Sarah McNamer have addressed these issues, but much still needs to be done in order to reconstruct how emotion and affect influenced the construction of the individual and informed his/her social interactions in the medieval period.

Although traditional terms such as 'connotation', 'expressive meaning' or 'expressive function of language', 'affective stance', 'language attitude', or '(im)politeness' point to the evaluative dimensions of linguistic structures, language use, and meta-linguistic judgments, the complex connections between language and emotion have not yet been systematically explored in English linguistics. This is surprising as human beings are not able to engage with one another, let alone communicate or learn a language, without showing a fundamental, if not innate, sense of empathy (Malloch and Trevarthen 2009). Thus, human language and emotionality seem to be fundamentally intertwined. For research in English linguistics this offers interesting perspectives on the role of emotions and affect in interaction, the verbal expression of feelings, or emotional components of meaning. Moreover, it permits to investigate the linguistic construction of evaluations in different types of discourse as well as the cultural and historical relativity of emotional language and emotion concepts.

- Damasio, A. 1994. *Descartes' Error. Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*. London: Penguin.
- Goleman, D. 1995. *Emotional Intelligence: Why it Can Matter More than IQ*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Malloch, S. and Trevarthen, C. 2009. *Communicative Musicality. Exploring the Basis of Human Companionship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McNamer, S. 2010. *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Wilce, J. M. 2009. *Language and Emotion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

THE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:



CONFERENCE PAPERS:

We invite conference presentations that address the following issues:

- Affect and the so-called “affective turn”
- Emotions and reader response/reception theory
- Literary history/history of aesthetics relating to emotions
- Sentimentalism and/or melodrama
- History of emotions
- The aesthetics of ecstasy, rapture, and/or transcendence
- Queer affectivity
- Verbal expression of emotion (emotion words, interjections, intensifiers, affective stance marking, etc.) in English
- Expressive/affective/emotional meaning
- Emotions in interpersonal pragmatics: politeness, impoliteness, relational work
- Emotionality in discourse (media, political discourse, advertising, etc.)
- Language attitudes and language judgments
- Multimodal displays of emotion and feeling
- Emotional expression in social, regional, historical varieties of English
- Emotional factors in first and second language acquisition
- The linguistic construction of emotion concepts (linguistic relativity of emotional vocabularies and emotion concepts)
- Affective piety
- Emotion and gender
- Emotion and the body, embodied emotions
- Emotion and performance, inscribing one’s body with meaning through an emotional demonstration
- Textual or visual props as emotional triggers
- Affectivity and medieval religious orders
- Policing emotion: accepted and rejected emotional behaviour
- Public / private emotion: the publicity of emotion
- Emotional communities

Abstract submission deadline: January 15, 2013

For all other information please consult the conference website: <http://www.unil.ch/saute2013>