A Question of Style: individual voices and corporate identity in the Edinburgh Review, 1814-1820

Conference or Workshop Item

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A Question of Style: individual voices and corporate identity in the *Edinburgh Review*, 1814-1820

Francesca Benatti and David King
Research question

Did the *Edinburgh Review* create a “transauthorial discourse” (Klancher 1987) that hid the voices of individual contributors behind a corporate style?

Funded by the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals Field Development Grant (January-October 2017)
The Edinburgh Review

Most influential British periodical in early 19th C.

Edited by Francis Jeffrey, who could make alterations to any article

All articles published anonymously
Planned Corpus

*Edinburgh Review:*
- 325,000 ‘words’
- 60 articles

*Quarterly Review:*
- 175,000 ‘words’
- 20 articles

Chosen from reviews of books of literature, travel writing, history, biography
Corpus preparation

Extend corpus:
  - Finding appropriate texts

Developing previous work to:
  - Semi-automate post-OCR correction
  - Semi-automate TEI markup
  - Semi-automate quotation detection
Two interpretations of style*

Style as fingerprint
Unconscious elements in the way we write
(e.g. Van Halteren et al. "Existence of a human stylome." (2005))
Reflected by use of **Most Frequent Words**

Style as signature
Conscious choice of words, sentences, tone
(e.g. Van Dalen-Oskam *Riddle of Literary Quality* project)
Still **unsure** how to identify with stylometry

* as defined by Sarah Allison at DH2016, Stylistics workshop, 12 July 2016
MFW vs TF:IDF

Both attempt to remove the influence of content over style in the analysis

**MFW**

Frequent words

Choose what to *include* in the analysis

Unconscious style?

**TF:IDF**

Significant words

Choose what to *exclude* from the analysis

Conscious style?
TF:IDF only pruning 70 words
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Project blog: http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/styleproject/