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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MFW</th>
<th>TF:IDF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequent words</td>
<td>Significant words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose what to <em>include</em> in the analysis</td>
<td>Choose what to <em>exclude</em> from the analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconscious style?</td>
<td>Conscious style?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TF:IDF only pruning 70 words