

Epistula narrans

Narrative Modelling in Latin Epistolography

International Graduate and Early Career Conference

Tübingen, July 5–7th, 2018

Confirmed Keynote Speaker:
Prof. Dr. Roy Gibson (University of Manchester)



Call for Papers

In the morning, we are woken up by a voice from the radio reading the news, getting to work by train we read the latest novel by Paul Auster, afterwards we report in a business meeting how statistics of the last quarters developed, back at home in the evening our children tell us the events of their day. Stories are everywhere. Every day, we are narrating stories on countless occasions and in most different contexts. That's because stories explain our world and make sense of it. They not only give us access to reality, they even model it due to their performative force. Storytelling is an anthropological constant and a basic element of human communication (cf. KOSCHORKE 2012). Accordingly, it is obvious to assume that stories also appear in the most common and standard pre-modern communication medium par excellence, in letters. Actually, letters are full of accounts, reports, and explanations, in a word, full of stories. Thus, it is all the more astonishing that narratology has avoided and neglected letters almost completely so far, not at least ancient Latin epistolography, even though more recent studies have transcended genre boundaries (cf. NÜNNING/NÜNNING 2002) and extended analyses to narrative texts in a broader sense, e.g. to historiography (cf. WHITE), lyric poetry (cf. HÜHN/KIEFER 2005), and elegy (LIVELEY/SALZMAN-MITCHELL 2008).

The conference wants to face this research desideratum. It seeks to examine Latin epistolography reaching from Cicero to Late Antiquity from a narratological approach. Therefore, papers concerning the following questions, topics, and problems are in particular, but not exclusively, welcome:

- In which respect(s) are letters narrative?
- What is told in these narratives?
- Which realities are evoked or modelled? (eg. imperial, network, aristocratic, literary, Christian, women's, literary, self-realities, etc.)
- Which literary and narrative techniques and strategies can be identified?
- Which inner- and extratextual functions do these narratives have?
- Are there any differences, parallels, links, etc. between factual and fictional letters when dealing with the questions above?
- May intertextual analyses open ways of a better understanding of the points mentioned? Are 'realities' re-modelled in later text?
- How may this kind of engagement with letters provide possible new perspectives and approaches to further studies on narratology and epistolography?

We welcome abstracts of up to 300 words for 20-minute papers. Each paper will be followed by 10 minutes of discussion. To submit a proposal, please send an English abstract of your paper to epistulanarrans@philologie.uni-tuebingen.de by September 24th, 2017. Notification about participation will be emailed by October 15th. Abstracts should include name, title of proposed paper, affiliation, position, and a brief curriculum vitae. English serves as conference language.

