

Between Re-, Per- and Deception: Perspectives on Perspective An Online PhD Workshop

1.10.2021 - 2.10.2021
Mainz University

Perspective plays an essential role in narratives of all kinds: it is what positions us in the story, it is “from where” we perceive things, a supposedly predetermined angle. Of the three big traditional genres, prose – with its various, often straight-forward narrative voices and hence viewpoints – appears to pose the smallest challenge, while matters already become more difficult when locating the sometimes rather vague voices in and of poetic texts. Drama seems to challenge this notion most as perspective rarely takes on a “substantial form” in this genre. But does that mean the “set angles” are absent from drama? Does poetry really leave us with so little guidance when it comes to perspective(s)? Is point of view quite as overt in prose as it often seems?

First the colours.
Then the humans.
That’s usually how I see things.
(Zusak 13)

Lines

Leaves are grey-green,
The glass broken bright green.
(Williams)

Chorus: [...]
Onely this (gentlemen) we must performe,
The forme of Faustus fortunes good or bad.
(Marlowe A3r)

What is certain is that perspective does not stop at the end of the page.

In this book, I argue that typography, broadly conceived, was mobilized creatively by printers, publishers, playwrights and other agents of the book trade to make the extra-lexical effects of performance [...] intelligible on the page. (Bourne 2)

Irresistible. Holds a mirror up to the here and now. (Mail on Sunday, review excerpt on book cover, *The Power*)

Perspective includes the reader, the viewer, the listener – they all bring their own perspective, their point of view, to the story. Arguably, taking on a perspective is what makes the field of literary studies a field in the first place – looking at the canon from different angles and, in the process, reevaluating it, broadening it, questioning it. And then there are also the non-expert readers and their ways of perceiving texts – is their angle a different one? Does it shape the text they read? And does the text, in turn, change their perspective?

In this PhD workshop, we want to think about the role perspective plays in our projects on different kinds of narratives and genres. Whether your interest lies in the role perspective plays within texts, especially texts that have less obvious narrator figures (if any) and hence viewpoints, whether you work with such texts that emphasize or problematize perspective, or whether your project deals with reader/viewer reception, perception and – possibly – deception: we are excited to bring together various ideas and angles.

We intend the workshop to focus on work-in-progress, and are therefore looking for projects in the making. Half-finished ideas, open questions and raw potential are what we want to bring to the table and put up for discussion. We want to engage in genuine dialogue, sharing and exchanging our own perspectives.

To apply, we ask you to submit a 300-word abstract on the role perspective plays in your PhD project as well as a text example that illustrates your point and/or position. The text example should be no longer than half a page and can be a literary text, a piece of your own writing, a passage from a journal article, a reader response, etc. Additionally, we are interested in your personal motivation to participate, so please add another two to three sentences describing your expectations for this workshop as well as one challenge you are currently dealing with in your project.

As is the current reality of our world, this workshop, too, will happen digitally. We will do everything we can to guarantee a format that allows a fruitful exchange of ideas and prevents the tiresome effect of on-screen monologues. We welcome participants from all fields of literary studies focusing on literatures from all linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Should you be planning to join us from outside the MET zone and have any restrictions time-wise, let us know in your application so we can find a solution.

Please send your abstract, text example and personal statement to both Laura Eyselein (eyselein@uni-mainz.de) and Mirjam Haas (mihaas@uni-mainz.de) by June 30, 2021.

Works Cited

Bourne, Claire, L. *Typographies of Performance in Early Modern England*. Oxford University Press, 2020.

Mail on Sunday. Review excerpt on book cover. *The Power*, by Naomi Alderman. Penguin, 2016.

Marlowe, Christopher. *The Tragical History of the Horrible Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*. Written by Ch. Marl. London, By. George] Eld] for Iohn Wright, and are to be sold at his shop at Christ Church gate, 1611. ProQuest, <https://www.proquest.com/books/tragical-history-horrible-life-death-doctor/docview/2240884385/se-2?accountid=14632>.

Williams, William Carlos. "Lines." 1919. *Poetry Foundation*, www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=14363.

Zusak, Markus. *The Book Thief*. 2005. Black Swan, 2018.