

PROGRAMME

International and interdisciplinary scientific conference The Chronotope: Concept and Potential of a Figure of Thought

Technical University of Chemnitz
Professorship of Modern German and Comparative Literature

27-29 September 2024
Altes Heizhaus

PARSIFAL

Who is the Grail?

GURNEMANZ

That cannot be said;
but if you yourself are called to its service
that knowledge will not remain withheld.

And see!

I think I know you aright;
no earthly path leads to it,
and none could tread it
whom the Grail itself had not guided.

PARSIFAL

I scarcely tread,
yet seem already to have come far.

GURNEMANZ

You see, my son,
time here becomes space.

– Richard Wagner –

Friday, 27 September 2024

9:30-9:40

Greeting words: Prof. Dr. Bernadette Malinowski,

Director of the Institute for German Studies and Intercultural Communication,
holder of the Professorship for Modern German and Comparative Literature at Chemnitz
University of Technology

9:40-9:45

Welcome and opening: Dr. Eugen Wenzel, A.d.L.,

Research assistant at the Chair of Modern German and Comparative Literature
at the Chemnitz University of Technology, head of the conference

Bakhtin's concept of the chronotopos and its localisation

9:45-10:30

Prof. Dr. Michael C. Frank (English Studies, Zurich)

Real and Imagined Spaces?

Bakhtin's Theory of the Chronotope in Light of the Spatial Turn

[moderation: Malinowski]

When I suggested a new edition of the “Chronotopos” essay in German translation in the mid-2000s, I tried to convince the Suhrkamp publishing house with the topicality of the text. In the course of the so-called spatial turn, as proclaimed by the American geographer Edward Soja in 1989, a lively interest in spatial approaches had developed across disciplines. Bakhtin’s essay was indeed republished with reference to its new relevance. But to what extent are there parallels between the social constructivist spatial turn à la Soja – which was essentially based on Henri Lefebvre’s book *La production de l’espace* (1974) – and Bakhtin’s idiosyncratic statements, in which an actual theory of space is developed at best implicitly and allusively? Are there really similarities beyond the mere interest in the topic of space?

In my contribution, I would like to answer this question in the affirmative. I see overlaps between Soja’s concept of a real-and-imagined space (which has been further developed in literary studies in Bertrand Westphal’s ‘geocriticism’, for example) and Bakhtin’s dual interest in real and imagined spaces. Bakhtin uses the term ‘chronotopos’ to describe both a literary and a non-literary phenomenon. In the very first paragraph, he refers to a real historical time and a real historical space and suggests a complex relationship of correspondence between these realities and their ‘appropriation’ in and through literature. It quickly becomes clear that Bakhtin does not think of real chronotopoi as pre-found containers, but as culturally characterised (and thus context-specific) products of a necessarily limited perception of reality. Even before their fictionalisation in literature, chronotopoi are therefore both real and imagined.

10:30-11:15

Prof. Dr. Markus May (Modern German Literature, Munich)

Dialogicity – Carnival – Chronotope:

On the localisation of the theory of chronotope

in the thinking of Mikhail M. Bakhtin. A sketch Skizze

[moderation: Malinowski]

If we look at the respective theoretical foundations of Mikhail M. Bakhtin's writings, the chronotopos theory occupies a special position, as it is not based on a metalinguistic argumentation (as in the theory of dialogicity), nor does it have a cultural-semiotic foundation (as in the concept of carnival and carnivalised literature), but rather develops a metaphorical transfer of a scientific term. The question therefore arises as to the positioning and relation of Bakhtin's considerations with regard to the spatio-temporal organisation of narrative literature to the other complexes of his theoretical structure. Where do their methodological points of contact and intersections lie? What terminological and argumentation-structural constellations are recognisable? And finally: What does the chronotopos theory achieve in conjunction with Bakhtin's other theoretical modelling?

[Coffee break]

11:45-12:30 Prof. Dr. Rainer Grübel (Slawistik, Oldenburg)

***The 'chronotope' ('time-space') according to Bakhtin
as an epistemological and hermeneutic concept in cultural studies***

[moderation: Malinowski]

Based on Bakhtin's note that the term 'chronotopos' (Χρονοτοπ) forms 'almost a metaphor', the term is initially placed alongside Bakhtin's category of dialogical communication as a lifeworldly mode of behaviour towards the world as a phenomenon of ambivalent (typological and individual) spatiotemporal (aesthetic) reference to the world and, together with it, is related to a phenomenological philosophy centred in event and action. The fact that historically, in addition to Husserl's phenomenology, Einstein's theory of relativity and Uchitn's physiology also formed relevant contexts of stimulation is taken into account.

Space-time coordination includes specific ways of merging and breaking the relationship between its components and is characterised by them. On the one hand, this involves the epistemological prerequisites that go hand in hand with the work on the figure of thought that establishes time and space as an indispensable link and, on the other hand, the processes of meaning-making that enable the figure of thought to be applied to different (literary) media. It is important to note that each artefact, through its space-time coordination, relates specifically to the historical development of the respective genre and, in addition to textual chronotopoi, also chronotopoi of the addresser and the addressee offers. In addition, chronotopoi enable both intra-cultural and extra-cultural references, i.e. chronotopic interculturality.

The focus will be on the profiling of this design in correlation with the concept of event and action (e.g. chance, metamorphosis, adventure, biography, grotesque, idyll) in relation to alternative designs, for example in Bachlard's spatial poetics (e.g. house and space, nest, angle, shell, etc.) but also in relation to the context of German development (Lessing-Goethe-Misch, but especially against Heidegger's 'Dasein'). In addition to the already announced epistemology and hermeneutics, phenomenology will also play a role, since for Bakhtin any possible meaning is necessarily based on spatio-temporal coordination. Concepts (including those of space and time and their interrelation) vary their meaning and significance in the context of different chronotopoi. Like the space-time relations themselves, their theories are ultimately in a dialogue with each other.

Simultaneous chronotopes and entangled parallel worlds

12:30-13:15 Dr. Antonius Weixler (Modern German Literature, Wuppertal)

***“But the art is to make the visible word visible.”
Simultaneity as the chronotope of aesthetic modernism***

[moderation: Arich-Gerz]

The classic treatise on the chronotopos is deliberately subtitled ‘historical poetics’, as Michael M. Bachtin examines the ‘real historical chronotopos’ in a specific stage of development in literary history. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, in turn, recognises ‘a chronotope of simultaneity’ for the specific historical developmental stage of ‘high modernism’, as he calls the period of ‘aesthetic modernism’, in his study of the cascade-like sequence of modernist concepts. Hans Robert Jauss also analysed the epochal change of 1912 in terms of the creation of an ‘evidence of the simultaneous’.

In the first section of my talk, I will first present some selected uses of the term ‘simultaneity’ in the period of aesthetic modernism and then attempt to systematize the uses of the term in a second section. Since simultaneity as one of the dominant discursive phenomena of time can only be explained through the entanglement of time and space, there will be a double justification for the title-giving formulation of the chronotopos simultaneity for the period of aesthetic modernity: simultaneity is the dominant chronotopos of time and simultaneity can only be described as a chronotopos.

[Lunch: Hotel Chemnitzer Hof]

14:45-15:30 Prof. Dr. Zofia Kolbuszewska (American Studies, Wrocław)

***Entangled Bakhtinian multiverse chronotopes
in “Accursed Inhabitants of the House of Bly” by Joyce Carol Oates,
“Flights” by Olga Tokarczuk, and Thomas Pynchon’s novels***

[moderation: Arich-Gerz]

In the paper I am going to examine three variations of entangled Bakhtinian multiverse chronotopes as well as embodied subjects inseparable from them. The chronotope of the short story “Accursed Inhabitants of the House of Bly,” an adaptation of Henry James’s novella “The Turn of the Screw” by Joyce Carol Oates, emerges as a polarized double of the chronotope of James’s text. In Olga Tokarczuk’s novel “Flights”, the chronotope assumes the form of the entanglement of fragmented sites, spaces, and bodies linked by the nonlinear neobaroque temporality of a Wunderkammer, while Thomas Pynchon’s novels evince complex multiverse chronotopes where entangled temporalities – often contradictory, reverse or possible – are enacted by engaging the same sites. The complexity of the investigated entangled chronotopes both gives expression to processes of inexorable destruction and bespeaks utopian hope for empathetic attitude towards the contingency of fragile embodiments shaped by chronotopic dynamic.

Travelling to remote areas

15:30-16:15 Prof. Dr. Christoph Fasbender (Medieval Studies, Chemnitz)

„do slugen sie die unde“

Structuralism and chronotopos in the Brandan tradition

[moderation: von Wulfen]

The article first outlines in some detail the relationship of Old German Studies to the chronotopos discourse, which emerged, as it were, in the heyday of neo-structuralism (Walter Haug) and had to be categorised against this background. Using a concrete example, I will then attempt to evaluate the potential of Bakhtin's concept in terms of its compatibility with structuralism. No other text is as suitable for this as the 'Navigatio' or 'Journey' of the Irish abbot Brandan: a pan-European text that has been disseminated in countless languages and versions since the early Middle Ages. I will try to show that the German and Dutch versions in particular are wide open to interpretation on the basis of Bakhtin's chronotopos concept ...

[Coffee break]

16:45-17:30 Dr. Bruno Arich-Gerz (Modern German Literature, Aachen)

*A Sea of Islands and Bakhtin's (Non)Suitability for the Blue Humanities.
On the 'oceanic chronotope'*

[moderation: Kolbuszewska]

German contemporary novelist Felicitas Hoppe, on traveloguing in the seasteps of Ferdinand Magellan's chronicler Antonio Pigafetta (1480-1531), describes the passage through the Pacific Ocean as a curious deviation from conventional arrangements of time, space and herself as a journeying human: "But are we making any progress? Is the ship moving? Am I not saying that the islands are passing by? So we stand still and the world moves around us at a speed of eighteen knots."

The quotation is indicative of a chronotope which Bakhtin, in his reading of canonized Western narratives, leaves unmentioned. It is at the same time anthropocentric – a seafaring (wo)man as locked in spatial stasis – and spatiotemporally dynamic: islands and 'the world' pass by the observing human at a defined speed of eighteen space-units per one time-unit.

Hoppe's musing, embedded as it is in the ordinary setup of a travelogue of 1999, resonates in Oceania's modes of perceiving (= voyaging, verbalizing and navigate-narrating) the sea. Pulling the islets from a fixed and seemingly timeless position on the sea in order to proceed with the journey is a characteristic of étak, the craft of navigation in the archipelagic time-space of the Pacific. My talk will draw on Epeli Hau'ofa's concept of 'Sea of Islands' (as opposed to non-fluid, easily journeyable and conquerable land-mass) and writers-cum-critics such as Craig Santos Perez (Guam) in order to probe possible lines as well as the limits of integrating the Oceanic chronotope in Bakhtin's framework.

17:30-18:15 Prof. Dr. Hasso Spode, M.A. (Sociology, Berlin)

TraumZeitReise – Chronotopia and tourism

[moderation: Malinowski]

Independently of literary studies, the explanatory term ‘chonotopia’ has found its way into historical tourism research. It refers to the temporalisation of knowledge and perception (still valid today), which led to the development of the tourist journey in the 18th century – in contrast to travelling for a specific purpose. In the context of a new, evolutionary concept of time, the heterotopia of the Other became the chronotopia of the beautiful yesterday: a romantic journey backwards in time.

[Dinner: Turm-Brauhaus Chemnitz]

Saturday, 28 September 2024

Rites, taboos and chronotopes

9:30-10:15 PD Dr. Christoph Grube (Modern and Comparative Literature, Chemnitz)

Cellar and attic – aspects of a chronotopography

[moderation: von Wulfen]

In literature, the vertical architectonics of the house is tied back to the dimensions of time as well as to the human capacities of remembering, dreaming, fantasising, thinking and feeling. Whoever talks about the house always talks about the past, the present and the future, about memories and plans for the future, about realities and possibilities, about the conceivable and the inconceivable. The house, or more precisely: the image of the house, is an image of the ‘topography of our intimate being’ (Bachelard). The liminal space of the ‘attic’ is also of particular relevance here. Using selected examples, the article is dedicated to this particular chronotopos, enquiring into its form and functions.

10:15-11:00 Prof. Dr. Stefan Feuser (Classical Archaeology, Bonn)

***Bakhtin’s concept of chronotope in classical archaeology.
Understanding religious festivals in ancient Athens***

[moderation: Wenzel]

In ancient Athens from the 7th century to the 4th century BC, religious festivals and processions were an important element of urban life. They shaped both the urban time and the urban space. Archaeological evidence, literary sources and inscriptions allow us to reconstruct their spatio-temporal development and their organisation. Against this backdrop, I would like to demonstrate in my lecture how Bakhtin’s concept of chronotope may be utilised to situate religious festivals in ancient Athens in social terms and to understand their significance for the structuring of space and time.

[Coffee break]

Places of education and play

11:30-12:15 Prof. Dr. Antti Rajala (Educational sciences, Neuchâtel)

Adopting Bakhtin's theory of chronotope in educational research methodology

[moderation: Oswalt]

In this presentation, Antti Rajala discusses the uptake of Bakhtin's theory of chronotope in educational research. The presentation articulates methodological foundations for using chronotope to research the space-time relations of learning and education. In particular, Rajala shows how different aspects of Bakhtin's dialogical theory can make visible often implicit educationally relevant phenomena.

12:15-13:00 Dr. habil. Tomasz Majkowski (Polish Studies, Krakau)

Playable Chronotopes of Action and Adventure

[moderation: Fasbender]

In the talk I will present the current state of the art regarding applicability of Bakhtinian concept to the study of digital games. While obviously distinct from literature, the constituting quality of digital games is their ability to produce tangible, digital environments with their own, complex spatiotemporal relationships, combining the chronotope of the narrative and with the time and space of the gameplay. The tension between those two is especially present in the action-adventure genre, introducing further distinction between chronotopes of action and exploration. My aim is to analyze how internal tension between various spatiotemporal configurations, unique to action-adventure digital games create distinct ways of understanding the genre with game series such as Tomb Raider, Uncharted, Last of Us, and Assassin's Creed.

[Lunch: Hotel Chemnitzer Hof]

Chronotopoi in the age of world wars and totalitarian systems (I)

14:45-15:30 Paul Oswalt (Modern German Literature, Berlin)

The totalitarian chronotopos: aspects of time and spatiality in George Orwells 1984

[moderation: Wenzel]

With its name the genre of utopia has an elementary relatedness to space: as the place (*topos*) that is not (greek: *ouk* abbrev. u, 'not') and the potential of fully exploring the possibilities of world-building. The narration of an idealized social system being its original objective, it is comprehensible that literature concerning the utopian and its bother, the dystopian genre has pointed out that the works from Thomas More's *Utopia* to Aldous Huxleys *Brave New World* are well suited to observe the sematification of the spacial.

This phenomenon is also observable in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. What makes the post-war novel, which was written under the impression of the totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany and soviet communist Russia, interesting is that it also reads as a reflection of time in societies which aim at the abandonment of the individual.

The contribution focuses to show on how time and space are interrelated in the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, how they form different chronotopos and how these chronotopos condition the possibility of rebellion in a totalitarian world.

[Break with refreshments]

16:15-18:15

– LECTURE WITH ARTISTIC PERFORMANCE –

Time and the Human Condition

– Prof. Dr. Viktor Jerofeev –

[moderation: Arich-Gerz]

[Dinner: Ratsstube Chemnitz]

Sunday, 29 September 2024

Chronotopoi in the age of world wars and totalitarian systems (II)

9:30-10:15 Prof. Dr. Marina Ortrud Hertrampf (Romance studies, Passau)

***The military hospital as the ‘other’ chronotope of war.
Reflections on the concept of the chronotope
on the basis of German and French anti-war literature of the First World War***

[moderation: Oswald]

War and space are directly and mutually interrelated: wars take place in spaces and reorganise national spatial boundaries. Wars reshape spaces not only in territorial terms but also in cultural terms, insofar as they sometimes massively change existing cultural spaces through destruction and conversion. Wars and their spaces are also always tied to a specific time. Consequently, wars form very specific time-space complexes, which can be described as chronotopes with reference to Michael Bakhtin’s theoretical model. The most paradigmatic chronotopes of the (First and Second) World War are battlefields and trenches. In addition, wars also create numerous other chronotopes, which have also been dealt with in fictional narratives. With a view to the First World War, the lecture examines the chronotope of the military hospital as a very special chronotope in Bakhtin’s sense, which, following Foucault, also represents a heterotopia. On the basis of analyses of narrative texts by German and French war authors, the special features of the military hospital as a chronotope are worked out.

10:15-11:00 Dr. Eugen Wenzel, A.d.L. (Modern German and Comparative Literature, Chemnitz)

***Metamorphoses of times and spaces:
The Mechanism of the Cauldron (Stalingrad)***

[moderation: Fasbender]

The Battle of Stalingrad, which together with “Auschwitz and Hiroshima is one of the crystallisation points of modern catastrophic experiences in the 20th century” (Kumpfmüller), represents a clearly defined phenomenon in terms of time and space and, with its third and final phase, or more precisely: with the encirclement of the 6th German Army, forms the epitome of the ‘Kesselschlachten’ (encirclement battles), is beyond all doubt a striking historical chronotopos. It stands in a reciprocal relationship to the people who are inside and outside this phenomenon: He constantly changes them and they change him at the same time. The dynamics articulated therein are reflected in the numerous works of German and Russian-language Stalingrad authors from more than eight decades. Making the functioning of these literary representations conceptually comprehensible therefore means gaining insight into “the literary appropriation of the real historical time and the real historical space” (Bakhtin), which will be demonstrated in the lecture using selected text examples.

[Coffee break]

11:30-12:15 Prof. Dr. Stefan Garsztecki (Historical Sciences, Chemnitz)

*Bakhtin’s chronotopos as an approach to historical remembrance
using the example of Warsaw*

[moderation: Kolbuszewska]

Using Bakhtin’s understanding of chronotopos, I would like to use the example of Warsaw to examine whether there is a historical space-time narrative in Warsaw’s memorial landscape (in the 20th century) that can be analysed differently with the help of chronotopos than, for example, with Nora’s concept of places of memory. A few places of remembrance will be selected as examples.

12:15-12:45 *Closing discussion and farewell*

Directions

Accommodation

Super 8 by Wyndham Chemnitz
Stefan-Heym-Platz 3
D-09111 Chemnitz
(breakfast is included)

Location of the conference

Altes Heizhaus
located in the Backyard of and accessed through
Böttcher Building (Böttcher-Bau)
Chemnitz University of Technology
Straße des Nationen 62
09111 Chemnitz

Restaurants

Lunch (Friday and Saturday):
Hotel Chemnitzer Hof
Theaterpl. 4, 09111 Chemnitz

Dinner (Friday):
Turm-Brauhaus
Neumarkt 2, 09111 Chemnitz

Dinner (Saturday):
Ratsstube
Johannispl. 1, 09111 Chemnitz

