

## PROGRAM

### Constructing the self Linguistic and historical perspectives on identity and authenticity in egodocuments and other writings 'from below'

Interdisciplinary colloquium 25 April 2015

<<http://languageandhistoryfrombelow.wordpress.com>>

9:00	9:30	<b>Welcome and registration</b>
9:30	9:45	<i>Opening words</i> Rik Vosters, Vrije Universiteit Brussel
9:45	10:15	<i>Voices of Authority Reconstructing the aural experience of trial at the Old Bailey (1780-1840)</i> Tim Hitchcock, University of Sussex
10:15	10:45	<i>On the historical names of some English and Scottish non-stately homes</i> Laura Wright, Cambridge University
10:45	11:15	<i>On the Challenges of Anachronism in the History of Dutch "from below"</i> Rob Howell, University of Wisconsin – Madison
11:15	11:45	<b>Coffee break</b>
11:45	12:15	<i>Finnish Peasant Poets at the interface of orality and literacy</i> Anna Kuismin, University of Helsinki
12:15	12:45	<i>Constructing language history Historical Dutch from below and from above</i> Gijsbert Rutten, Universiteit Leiden
12:45	14:00	<b>Lunch</b>

		<b>Room 1</b> <b>Chair: Jacques Van Keymeulen</b>	<b>Room 2</b> <b>Chair: Griet Vermeesch</b>
14:00	14:20	<i>Ideologies, Institutions, Ethnography and Selves</i> Tony Fairman, Independent Researcher	<i>Account for yourself. Constructing the self in criminal court (Antwerp, 1750-1820)</i> Elwin Hofman, KU Leuven
14:20	14:40	<i>Linguistic hybridity in nineteenth-century lower-class letters: a case study from Bruges</i> Jill Puttaert, Vrije Universiteit Brussel	<i>Identity and self-construction in Belgian pauper letters from the First World War</i> Dominique De Groen, Universiteit Gent
14:40	15:00	<i>The effectiveness of early nineteenth-century spelling and grammar regulations on language use in the Northern Netherlands</i> Andreas Krogull, Universiteit Leiden	<i>La parole populaire face à la justice à la fin du Moyen Âge</i> Aude Wirth-Jaillard, Université Catholique de Louvain
15:00	15:20	Homogeneity through teaching: language-in-education-policies, 1750-1850 Bob Schoemaker, Universiteit Leiden	<i>Using citizens' letters to authorities in studying popular political opinions</i> Sami Suodenjoki, University of Tampere
<b>15:20</b>	<b>16:00</b>	<b>Coffee break</b>	
16:00	16:20	<i>Intercultural identities in the late Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867-1918)</i> Anja Iveković Martinis & Anita Sujoldžić, Institute for Anthropological Research, Zagreb	<i>Can 'strange' be authentic? Roma folklore in the diaries of a Finnish labourer</i> Kati Mikkola, University of Helsinki
16:20	16:40	<i>Emotion, gender &amp; discipline in egodocuments of juvenile detainees (1927-1939)</i> Laura Nys, Universiteit Gent	<i>Early Modern Dialogue Pamphlets from the Habsburg Netherlands. A preliminary analysis of the corpus</i> Hans Cools, KU Leuven
16:40	17:00	<i>Dragomanni, Bailo and Merchants' egodocuments in the Archive of Venice: Communities of Practices and Self Representation</i> Cristina Muru, University of Tuscia	

<b>17:00</b>	<b>17:15</b>	<i>Closing words</i> Maarten Van Ginderachter, Universiteit Antwerpen
<b>19:00</b>		<b>Conference dinner</b>

## ABSTRACTS

### **Voices of Authority Reconstructing the aural experience of trial at the Old Bailey (1780-1840)**

*Tim Hitchcock*  
University of Sussex

In the years following the Gordon Riots in 1780, the courtroom at the Old Bailey in London was rebuilt repeatedly. This rebuilding occurred in dialogue with the evolution of the modern 'adversarial trial', and forms a component of the history of the bureaucratisation and professionalisation of criminal justice. In the process this theatre of justice was transformed from one in which the victim, defendant and jurors, formed the lead actors, into a set that placed barristers centre stage. This paper and the project it reports uses the construction of 3D models of the courtroom in its evolving form, to explore the roles of all the actors involved - to model how their voices were heard in the courtroom.

### **On the historical names of some English and Scottish non-stately homes**

*Laura Wright*  
Cambridge University

House-names are under-studied from a sociolinguistic point of view, even though houses tell us about the social standing of the original owners in terms of date, wealth, region and social aspiration. This may be because there are no convenient databases of house-names, either historically or in the present day, and so tracking specific names involves considerable archive searching and contextualisation. Here, for example, is a typical newspaper report: the top twenty house-names in the Halifax (a building society, or mortgage-lending company) House Name Survey of 2003 - with no indication as to whereabouts in the UK, how many names surveyed, whether new names or already given, and so of little use to historical linguists (although historical linguists will note the nostalgic, rural semantic fields):

1. The Cottage, 2. Rose Cottage, 3. The Bungalow, 4. The Coach House, 5. Orchard House, 6. The Lodge, 7. Woodlands, 8. The Old School House, 9. Ivy Cottage, 10. The Willows, 11. The Barn, 12. The Old Rectory, 13. Hillside, 14. Hillcrest, 15. The Croft, 16. The Old Vicarage, 17. Sunnyside, 18. Orchard Cottage, 19. Yew Tree Cottage, 20. The Laurels

I focus here not on stately homes owned by the rich (Knowle, Croom, Sissinghurst, although their names are interesting too), but on a) the hundreds of thousands of inter-war 20th century houses built in fields which became the outer London suburbs; and b) Scottish working farmsteads and their dependent homes, known historically as 'steadings'. Taking 16th and 17th century legal texts, 18th century shop-bills, and 19th century post-office directories as primary evidence, I look at the social ups and downs of one name in particular, which turns out to have a surprisingly long history and wide geographical reach.

### **On the Challenges of Anachronism in the History of Dutch “from below”**

*Rob Howell*  
University of Wisconsin – Madison

Historical sociolinguists face a number of challenges in untangling the social motivations for language change that occurred centuries ago. Not the least of these is the fact that the sources of linguistic change are located in constantly evolving vernaculars but our sole source of actual

linguistic data is written texts, which by their very nature are always mediated --- under no circumstances do texts provide an accurate picture of spoken vernaculars.

Historians of Dutch are nonetheless blessed with an unusually rich body of textual data resulting from a high degree of literacy in the general population from the Early Modern period onward. The interpretation of this textual data in its social contexts can provide a window on the nature of the locus of linguistic change, spoken vernaculars. Nonetheless, the researcher faces a range of difficulties in interpreting textual data and the social context, not the least of which is the anachronistic imposition of twenty-first century ideological and methodological assumptions onto Early Modern contexts.

The methodological baggage weighing on the historical sociolinguist is evident even in the apparently harmless term “from below”, which has very specific meaning in the terminology of classical variationist sociolinguistics. Traditional historical linguists have long assumed that linguistic change derives from conscious attempts by lower-class individuals to adapt their speech patterns to those of their prestigious social superiors (“change from above”). However persistent evidence that linguistic change for the most part originates in the vernaculars of common people forced sociolinguists to posit a second type of unconscious adoption of lower class speech patterns as possessing “covert prestige” (“change from below”).

Using examples from the history of Dutch, this contribution problematizes many widely employed constructs in the traditional sociolinguistic literature (e.g., prestige, social class, correlation as causation) and suggests more ideologically-neutral approaches to the problem of the social motivations of language change. Special emphasis is placed on the crucial contributions of social historians to historical sociolinguistic research.

### **Finnish Peasant Poets at the interface of orality and literacy**

*Anna Kuismän*  
University of Helsinki

During the past ten or fifteen years, there has been a fair amount of research in Nordic countries on the processes and practices of literacy, and previously untouched material has been unearthed from archives and libraries. For example, a catalogue compiled by Kaisa Kauranen lists information on devotional texts, secular verse, diaries, personal letters, memoirs, stories and hand-written newspapers, written by farmers, crofters, rural craftsmen, church wardens, farm hands and even beggars.

In addition to giving a short overview about my research on life writing *from below*, my presentation will focus on nineteenth-century ‘Peasant Poets’ for whom the newly acquired skill presented both challenges and opportunities. For example, learning to write is depicted in many poems, and there are recurring formulas referring to the act and implements of writing. Apologies for poor writing are explicitly expressed, and the metaphor ‘ploughing with the pen’ appears in many texts. I set these meta-poetic references in the context of the conditions in which the writers practiced their craft. For one thing, moving a pen on paper was hard, especially after a week of rough work of physical work. A sign of cultural awareness lies in the pleas for an expansion of the use (and the power) of the Finnish language. In addition, linguistic self-consciousness is reflected in some of the poems, and there are interesting references to the literary tradition in the making.

For Finnish literary scholars, the texts of the Peasant Poets have not been literary enough, whereas in folklore studies they have been regarded unauthentic, not proper folk poetry. The interest of these early writers lies in the fact that they operated at the fascinating interface of oral and written.

Anna Kuismän is Docent of Finnish and Comparative Literature, University of Helsinki. She is the founder of a research network focusing on the processes and practices of literacy in nineteenth-century Finland and has coordinated the Nordic research project *Reading and writing from below: Toward a new social history of literacy in the Nordic sphere during the long 19th century*. She is also

the Principal Investigator in *Exploring social boundaries from below: Class, ideology and writing practices in nineteenth century Finland* (Academy of Finland). Her recent publications include the following:

Building the Nation, Lighting the Torch: Excursions into the Writings of the Common People in Nineteenth-Century Finland. *Journal of Finnish Studies* 16 (2012:1).

From Family Inscriptions to Autobiographical Novels. Motives of Writing in Grassroots Life Stories in 19th-Century Finland. In: *White field, black seeds: Nordic Literacy Practices in the Long Nineteenth-Century*. Ed. by Anna Kuismin & M. J. Driscoll. Finnish Literature Society, 2013.

'I can sing Hallelujah!' Hymn as non-elite women's genre in nineteenth-century Finland. In *Vernacular literacies – Past, present and future*. Ed. by Ann-Catrine Edlund et al. Umeå University, 2014.

From Public to Private: a Curious Chronicle from Nineteenth-Century Finland." In *Past and Present in Medieval Chronicles*. Ed. by Mari Isoaho. *COLLeGIUM* (forthcoming in 2015).

### **Constructing language history Historical Dutch from below and from above**

*Gijsbert Rutten*  
Leiden University

In this talk, I will show how a perspective “from below” on language history forces us to reconsider and reconstruct existing linguistic histories. Specifically, I will discuss a range of case studies taken from the history of Dutch that focus on the linguistic repertoire of lesser-privileged writers. The data come from the Leiden-based *Letters as Loot Corpus*, a digital collection of private letters from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, written by men and women from the lower and middle ranks of society. The case studies will show the added value of an approach from below by identifying Early and Late Modern writing practices that were hitherto either unknown or considered to be typically Middle Dutch. At the same time, the corpus reveals patterns of variation that seem to recall the traditional view “from above”, or seem to be in line with the traditional view of top-down standardization associated with the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I will argue that we need to reassess the concept of standardization in order to be able to reconcile these seemingly divergent corpus results. The main argument here will be that the unilinear and unidimensional concept of standardization needs to be replaced by a multiplicity of writing practices or instances of supralocalization. One consequence is that a strong influence of standard language ideology need not be assumed for the period under investigation.

#### *References*

Rutten, Gijsbert & Marijke van der Wal. 2014. *Letters as Loot. A sociolinguistic approach to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Dutch*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Rutten, Gijsbert, Rik Vosters & Wim Vandenbussche (eds.). 2014. *Norms and Usage in Language History, 1600-1900. A sociolinguistic and comparative perspective*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

### **Constructing themselves: English and Welsh paupers and their letters 'home' (1770-1840)**

*Steven A. King*  
University of Leicester

The English and Welsh poor law of 1601 created a national welfare system funded by local taxes and administered by annually elected local officials. It gave no legal rights to relief; rather this was a discretionary system in which the need for economy and fairness to taxpayers had to be balanced

with custom, humanity, paternalism, practice elsewhere and the moral integrity of individual paupers. By necessity this was a system in which officials and paupers created, acknowledged and operated within an agreed space of contestability. For those living away from their parish of settlement, to claim, maintain and contest welfare required the writing of pauper letters and the assemblage of evidence to support such letters. This paper will explore the complex meaning of the English and Welsh pauper letter. It will focus on three core areas: First, how were letters constructed, what is the authorial voice and how can one read their contents. As well as standard questions of reliability, nature of rhetoric and representativeness, we will consider the question of whether these narratives can in fact even be regarded as letters; Second, we will ask how paupers balanced the construction of themselves as they were with the construction of a version of themselves that the receiving official might want. We will argue in this sense that the broad landscape of contestability implicit in the discretionary system that was the Old Poor Law, truly facilitated a construction of the self not an alternative self; Finally, the paper will investigate regional difference in the construction, language and meaning of pauper letters, with a particular focus on important dichotomies such as English/Welsh, Urban/Rural and Eastern England/Western England.

### **Ideologies, Institutions, Ethnography and Selves**

*Tony Fairman*

Independent researcher

For c.300 years linguists have assumed that print manifests all significant written language. One 'uneasy' linguist assumed (Lass 1987: 6), another stated (Greenbaum 1988: 36) that a printed Standard is a whole language and Crystal (2003: 256ff) acknowledges that handwritten language exists but not that it might differ from printed language. The 'autonomous [Lass 1980: 117] Standard ideology' (Milroy 2001) has been constructed to support that assumption — an ideology because it is now 'held implicitly or adopted as a whole and maintained regardless of the course of events' (OED). Recent events include the study of handwritten language by historians and linguists, who find it varies in itself and from the Standard, because writers of all ranks and schooling produce 'grassroots', (Blommaert 2008) handwritten language, whereas only the higher ranks schooled in 'grammar' produce print. Using sources in England 1750-1850, this paper argues first that applying to handwritten language an ideology created to account for printed language devalues ('non-Standard'), misdescribes ('accidental' Millar 2012: 87) and ignores differences. Secondly, scholars construct selves which lower-rank writers didn't construct for themselves. To describe variety and change in written language, this paper hypothesises that ontologically language is a 'social institution' (Searle 2012: 109). This hypothesis entails that historical linguistic research must relate linguistic structures ethnographically (Blommaert) to relevant social factors, like ranks, economy and literacies.

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- Searle, John, R. 2010. *Making the Social World*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

## **Linguistic hybridity in nineteenth-century lower-class letters: a case study from Bruges**

*Jill Puttaert*

Vrije Universiteit Brussel

This presentation focuses on linguistic hybridity in a small corpus of nineteenth-century pauper letters, written by lower-class scribes from the West-Flemish town of Bruges, in current-day Belgium. We argue that these writings from below do not exclusively display standard language norms, nor are they a direct written manifestation of a local dialect.

To describe this so-called linguistic hybridity, we will analyse two features: schwa apocope and h-procope (and hypercorrect h-insertion). Through a corpus study of these forms, we will show that dialect variants of these features do occur, but they are remarkably rare. Nonetheless, we do find a considerable amount of instances where older regional (i.e. more widespread) variants are used. This leads us to conclude that these writers were somehow aware of the fact that, when putting pen to paper, formal or supraregional communication was desirable. In their actual writing, however, they neither follow standard language norms nor local dialect forms consistently, drawing on a fairly elaborate linguistic repertoire to produce complex and inherently hybrid varieties.

We aim to demonstrate that the written hybridity in these letters should therefore be regarded and evaluated as a form of a language manifestation in its own right, rather than as a watered down version of the predominant standard language.

## **The effectiveness of early nineteenth-century spelling and grammar regulations on language use in the Northern Netherlands**

*Andreas Krogull*

Leiden University

The introduction of the first official spelling of Dutch in 1804 (codified by Matthijs Siegenbeek in his "Verhandeling over de Nederduitsche spelling ter bevordering van eenparigheid in dezelve") and the first authorized grammar in 1805 (Petrus Weiland's "Nederduitsche spraakkunst") can be regarded as a decisive turning point in the standardization of the Dutch language. For the first time, orthographic and grammatical issues were regulated on a national level. However, it has yet to be investigated whether and to what extent the codified norms actually had an influence on language practice.

My PhD research is part of the project "Going Dutch. The Construction of Dutch in Policy, Practice and Discourse, 1750-1850", which is currently conducted at the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics (LUCL). On the basis of a diachronic multi-genre corpus of approximately 420,000 words, I examine the effectiveness of language norms and associated language-in-education policies on actual usage in the Northern Netherlands. The newly compiled Going Dutch Corpus (GDC) comprises data from three different types of authentic text sources, i.e. newspapers, private letters and diaries, and sheds light on the use of written Dutch before and after the official standardization in the early 1800s. The selected eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts cover seven regions and, in the case of the two ego-document genres, are written by men and women.

In this talk, I will first introduce the outline and aims of the Going Dutch project and my PhD subproject in particular. Then, I will mainly focus on the compilation of the multi-genre corpus, presenting its structure and text sources as well as some major methodological considerations and challenges. In more general terms, I will also discuss how my quantitative corpus-based approach can both access and assess variation and change in actual language use.

## **Homogeneity through teaching: language-in-education-policies, 1750-1850**

*Bob Schoemaker*

Leiden University

The project 'Going Dutch: the construction of Dutch in discourse, policy and practice' at Leiden University seeks to incorporate a 'from below'-perspective in the study of Dutch language history. Focusing on societal debates, educational policies and practices and the written production of the



lower strata of society, we hope to open up new perspectives on the outlook and development of the Dutch language in a time of rapid state and nation formation.

My own research focuses on the role of educational policies and practices in the spread of standard norms in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the late 18th and early 19th century, language-in-education policies became central in the formation of Dutch national citizens. The first school laws listed reading and writing of the national language as primary goals of education, and an official spelling and grammar was prescribed for use in schoolbooks and the classroom. Within European language history this instrumentality of education on the diffusion of standard languages has been widely acknowledged, yet historians and linguists alike have paid little attention to the details and everyday practices of language-in-education.

Drawing on examples from my own and other research, I will argue that the study of educational history can greatly enhance our understanding of language history, and vice versa. In doing so I will draw attention to some of the research themes and questions that guide my own research, and introduce some of the sources that I'm working with, such as school inspection reports, schoolbooks, teachers' manuals and magazines, and pedagogical and didactical handbooks.

### **Intercultural identities in the late Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867-1918)**

*Anja Iveković Martinis & Anita Sujoldžić*  
Institute for Anthropological Research, Zagreb

The last phase of the Austro-Hungarian Empire is commonly approached through the prism of the process of national identity construction and the conflicts that it entailed in a multinational empire maintained by a complex set of power relations. In contrast to this, this paper, which is part of a larger project on transnationalism and intercultural dialogue in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, focuses on the plurality of cultural resources for personal and collective identity construction available to ordinary people at the time, which often resulted in ambiguous and shifting loyalties, undermining any essentialist concepts of national identity. In what is now Croatia, defined as a modern nation-state, the late Austro-Hungarian period was a time of great cultural and linguistic diversity, with constant transnational migrations, intense trade and cultural exchange. Consumption of imported products, attendance at cultural and social events and simple everyday interactions between people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds all contributed to creating intercultural identities. In some areas, it was often difficult or even impossible to clearly categorize individuals, families or wider social groups according to ethnicity or even "language of use" (a category used in imperial censuses). By turning to the micro level of ordinary people's everyday lives, we hope to gain insight into how personal and collective identities were negotiated in this complex and dynamic environment and to reconstruct multi-perspective worldviews and ideologies. The most useful primary sources will be private correspondence, diaries and autobiographies, of local-born people, as well as immigrants and travelers passing through the region, as anthropological resources of a particular space and private time of people during the transition from the 19th to the 20th century.

### **Emotion, gender & discipline in egodocuments of juvenile detainees (1927-1939)**

*Laura Nys*  
Ghent University

In the context of the doctrine of 'social defence' and the Belgian Child Protection Act of 1912, the discipline section of the state welfare institutions for female juvenile delinquents (Établissement d'Éducation de l'État pour filles difficiles et indisciplinées) was founded in Bruges in 1927. The minors' personal case files offer a wide range of egodocuments: letters to the institutional authorities or the juvenile judge, (restrained) letters to family members, a rare diary and intercepted clandestine letters. These egodocuments not only give insight in the detainees' relations towards the authorities, but also among themselves, making these sources incredibly rich and unique. Among a range of fascinating topoi such as the girls' coping with past and future, their

gender constructions and experiences of the punishments within the institution, most remarkable is the frequent and explicit expression of emotions in the clandestine letters.

The emotional discourse in these clandestine letters shows remarkable differences with the discourse in letters written in a rather 'public' context, indicating the need to analytically distinguish between a 'public' and 'hidden' transcript (Scott, 1990). Building on Scott's 'infrapolitics' and Reddy's 'emotional regime' (Reddy, 2001), I argue that the correspondence community of the detained girls is to be interpreted as an 'emotional refuge', formulating other emotion norms as a counterweight to the repressive emotional regime advocated by the institution. For instance, where the prevailing emotion norms expected women to show a heterosexual, 'passive' love and feminine sensitivity, the detained girls wrote love letters where they expressed a passionate same-sex love and showed keen curiosity to explore bodily affection. Moreover, while the institution's emotional regime demanded an all-time rigid self-control of the detainees, the clandestine correspondence expressed deep and intense emotions. These emotional expressions are to be linked with specific bodily practices such as songs and enduring shouting, performed collectively by the girls and being intrinsically linked to the discourse.

The remarkable differences in coping with emotion in 'public' and 'hidden' discourse, suggests that some girls were well aware of the expected norms in the 'public' and 'hidden transcript' and were capable of consciously discerning between the two. Whereas some girls demonstrated their knowledge of the emotional norms in their letters in the public realm (especially when making a request), the billets clandestins offered them a hidden realm where they could express a discourse contradictory to the prevailing norms. One girl even explicitly described her emotional expression as the only realm where the authorities could not control her, thereby opening the question of interpreting some emotional discursive practices as a form of resistance.

### **Dragomanni, Bailo and Merchants' egodocuments in the Archive of Venice: Communities of Practices and Self Representation**

*Cristina Muru*  
University of Tuscia

The Republic of Venice imposed its control over the Mediterranean sea mainly from the 15th century. The commercial and territorial expansion and the defence of the Oriental lands against the Turkish people were the main activities in which Venice was to be involved, at least until the 16th century.

During this period a huge network of contacts was created and the correspondence between the merchants and between the high offices in Venice and Constantinople bear witness to these exchanges. Dragomanni (translators), notaries, witnesses, scribes and merchants are the main protagonists of this correspondence.

Through reading a will kept in the Archive of Venice in Italy (Bailo a Costantinopoli, 347) we come to know that Marco de Dalisman, a dying Venetian living in Galatà (next to Constantinople), asked his barba (uncle) to find three Venetian witnesses and 'il Greco' to whom he dictated his will. Hence, Marco de Dalisman asked the three witnesses to testify that the will that the Greek had written was his last. Some months later the barba to deliver the will to the notary and the Bailo (Governor) had to instruct someone to translate the text from Greek into the Lingua Franca (Schuchardt 1909, Venier 2009). The reason why the Venetian Marco dictated his will in Greek in front of three Venetian witnesses we will never know, however we can reconstruct the socio-historical context in which Marco was dying, the linguistic contacts people had in that specific area and in that historical period and what their linguistic and communicative repertoire were.

This is what the study of the thousand of egodocuments kept in the Venice Archive can help us do. This perspective from 'below' allows the application of those research procedures which we normally apply to spoken languages in order to investigate language variation, both from a sociolinguistic and ethnolinguistic perspective.

Indeed, the linguistic variation available at the graphic and linguistic level in these kinds of documents helps us to understand the multilingual context within which people during the 15th and 16th centuries lived in the Mediterranean area where monolingualism was rare.

The added value of these 'Venetian egodocuments' is given by the fact that they demonstrate that the idea of a social or institutional variety of language to which scribes and others referred in order to express their 'Self' did not exist. Indeed, the intrinsic instability and variability shown in these texts prove how much the people were engaged in some common endeavours. Although, the relationship between language and the 'Self' representation of identity is quite strong (Barth 1969, Fought 2006), these 'egodocuments' seem to show a community of practice which played an important role in forming their members' participation in the world around them. Thus, instead of a 'Self' representation of a specific identity, the linguistic practices emerge as a function of the link between the individual, the group and the place in the broader social order (Eckert, 2006) where language usage is a fluid and constant negotiation of the speaker's and hearer's identities (Le Page Tabouret Keller 1985, Joseph 2010).

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## **Account for yourself. Constructing the self in criminal court (Antwerp, 1750-1820)**

*Elwin Hofman*  
University of Leuven

Conceptions of self alter over time. Scholars in the history of the self often emphasize the importance of change in the late eighteenth century, observing a greater stress on individuality, authenticity and self-discovery. To map these changes, they commonly rely on learned tracts, novels and other printed texts, and autobiographical writings: sources mainly produced by elites and middle groups. Few research has been conducted into how people in the margins of society were affected by these new conceptions of self. Did they too stress their individuality, strive for authenticity, claim to have a true, inner self?

Traditionally, philosophers have privileged voluntary self-reflection as a source of the self. An alternative philosophical tradition, however, posits that the self was formed primarily as a response to an accusation. Among others, Nietzsche, Foucault and Butler have argued that the reflexive self had its origin in institutions of punishment. In these institutions, people are tied to their deeds and must account for them. They thus emerge as reflexive subjects. This seems to be an invitation to study historically what kinds of selves were formed in these institutions of punishment, not in the last place in criminal courts. Historians have, however, not yet taken up the challenge.

Using criminal court records allows to put the traditional narrative of the making of the 'modern self' in the late eighteenth century in perspective. As all social groups, but particularly lower social groups, appeared in criminal court, we can test the valence of the models that appear in other texts. Suspects were interrogated and their answers were written down. While these are not 'pure' reproductions of their words, they may allow to discover their conceptions of self. Using 60 murder cases judged by the courts in the city of Antwerp between 1750 and 1820 as a test case, I will investigate the conceptions of self in the accounts people gave of themselves. Can we find references

to authenticity, interiority and individuality? And are there changes between 1750 and 1820? This approach may shed new light on the construction of the self from below.

### **Identity and self-construction in Belgian pauper letters from the First World War**

*Dominique De Groen*  
Ghent University

As part of my PhD-project, ‘Social justice, identity construction and national identification: A social history of war nationalism in Belgium, 1914-1925’, I am investigating requests for aid sent to public and private charities. The overall research project examines the concrete uses, meanings, and functions of national identification-as-practice within the specific social context of occupied Belgium during the First World War, focusing on lower and middle social groups. These letters, which can be positioned within the rich research tradition on pauper letters, offer a uniquely valuable perspective on issues of identity construction within a strategic discourse.

While the focus is on national identity, which in the context of the occupation became an omnipresent discursive feature, it is impossible to separate this type of identity construction from other forms of identity, with which it is intensely intertwined. For instance, loyalty and duty to the household and to the ‘fatherland’ (which is often referred to through metaphors relating to the family) often blend into one another. This relationship is sometimes paradoxical, but not necessarily so: often, both forms of identity converge and amplify each other. Thus, different types of identification, such as identity based on nation and identity based on class consciousness, stand in a complex relationship to one another, sometimes clashing and at other times strengthening one another.

Aside from positive identification, these letters are also rife with identity construction through the exclusion of a demonised Other. Surprisingly, the persons or groups being Othered are overwhelmingly internal Others; the German occupier is rarely explicitly mentioned. Their position as ‘enemy’ is so obvious it does not need explicit affirmation. It is precisely where the boundaries between Us and Them are most unclear, that the latter are most reviled. This is the case, for example, with wartime profiteers, or those who are perceived to receive more aid than they are entitled to. Such behaviour is strongly condemned in moral and national terms, and serves to strengthen the writer’s claim.

Such letters, then, constitute a unique source for studying (national) identity in occupied Belgium. Obviously, they have to be read as pieces of strategic writing, and not, therefore, as pure expressions of authentic feelings and opinions: however, even when the letters do conform to a certain dominant discourse (which, surprisingly, is not always the case), they still tell us a lot about prevailing contemporary approaches to, and (moral) perceptions of, identity.

My research, finally, is fundamentally interdisciplinary: while it consists mainly of a qualitative close reading of the letters, a quantitative analysis of the letter writers and their positions in the social landscape is also crucial.

### **La parole populaire face à la justice à la fin du Moyen Âge**

*Aude Wirth-Jaillard*  
Université Catholique de Louvain

Pour la fin du Moyen Âge, plusieurs types de sources judiciaires en français contiennent des transcriptions de paroles : procès, chirographes, actes notariés, documents comptables, etc. S’ils ne constituent pas exactement des documents « from below » puisque s’inscrivant dans une longue tradition discursive et rédigés par des professionnels de l’écriture, ils présentent cependant l’avantage de nous donner accès à une parole « from below », autrement inaccessible, sans censure apparente (les propos transcrits sont parfois très crus ou témoignent d’une grande violence verbale) malgré ce double filtre. L’intérêt de telles attestations, pour l’historien comme pour le linguiste, est donc évident.

Leur intérêt, réel, ne doit cependant pas masquer leurs limites respectives : le contenu des propos rapportés tout comme le contexte de rédaction diffèrent en fonction du genre textuel. Parmi les

questions importantes qui apparaissent également figure celle de l'authenticité de ces paroles, du degré de fidélité de leur mise à l'écrit.

Cette présentation tentera d'apporter des éléments de réponses à ces différents points. Elle proposera, entre autres, une comparaison des principaux types de sources de la pratique judiciaires définissant leurs caractéristiques et leur intérêt respectifs pour le linguiste comme pour l'historien s'intéressant à la parole populaire durant le bas Moyen Âge. Des éléments présents dans les textes eux-mêmes seront également analysés (gloses d'insultes, reprises des paroles rapportées d'une même affaire à différents endroits du document ou dans plusieurs, etc.), et la théorie linguistique convoquée, à travers notamment le modèle de proximité et de distance développé par P. Koch et W. Oesterreicher (1985, 2001).

### **Using citizens' letters to authorities in studying popular political opinions**

*Sami Suodenjoki*  
University of Tampere

The paper discusses the problem of tracing popular political opinions through letters sent by ordinary people to state authorities. This problem has been widely debated among historians and sociolinguists who analyse this type of 'writings from below' of the past. Most scholars point out that because the letters to authorities were characterised by conventional and formulaic language and because the senders typically appealed to the authorities in order to advance personal (often material) interests, their assertions of loyalty and subservience to the regime should not be taken at face value as evidence of their deep and individual views. The awareness of the tactical nature of the deferential language used in the letters does not and should not, however, prevent social and political historians from employing these letters in their attempts to reveal something of lower-class people's worldviews and political identities.

The paper is based on my ongoing study on Finnish rural people's letters to the Russian imperial administration in 1898–1905. During this period, the Russian government launched measures to integrate the Grand Duchy of Finland more closely to the rest of the empire, and my study argues that this integration policy drew ordinary citizens to contact the imperial administration with various appeals, complaints and denunciations. The senders of these letters were largely lower-class people, many of whom uneducated and barely literate. In their letters, they typically presented themselves as loyal supporters of the tsarist regime, while at the same time they presented complaints against local powerholders or solicited for material or legal aid from the government.

The paper argues that if the study is based only on analysing a corpus of citizen's letters to a single governing body or person, the meaningfulness of trying to grasp the senders' personal political opinions is indeed questionable. However, if we instead analyse how the same people wrote to different levels of authorities and how they acted and presented themselves in other arenas, for example in public meetings, in court or by writing to newspapers, we can draw considerably more conclusions on their political stances. Obviously, due to lack of sources and the amount of work, this kind of microscopic analysis can only focus on a rather small number of individuals. This raises questions about the representativeness, but even if the the individuals under scrutiny are 'unrepresentative' or 'exceptional', a focus on them make prove fruitful in making wider claims about popular conceptions, as many microhistorical classics indicate.

### **Can 'strange' be authentic? Roma folklore in the diaries of a Finnish labourer**

*Kati Mikkola*  
University of Helsinki

In my paper, I will look at the folklore collections in the archives of the Finnish Literature Society (FLS) from the point of view of the borders of Finnishness, with particular attention to archival materials on the Finnish Roma. The few Roma materials that ended up in the archives in the 19th and early 20th centuries were not a result of the active policies of the FLS, but rather came about due to pure chance and the amateur enthusiasm of a few individual collectors. Thus, my paper

points to the surprising nature of the archival materials: materials that were not purposefully collected have also made their way to the archives.

The main focus of my analysis will be on one collector, Matti Simola, an uneducated manual labourer, who sent to the FLS Roma folklore in the late 1950s. In his cover letter, Simola indicated that he had been drawn to the Roma since childhood, and written down into diaries the folklore of this “tribe of wanderers” for two decades in different parts of Finland. The people working at the archives were surprised and bemused at Simola’s materials, as they did not seem to fit the categories and themes of Finnish folklore. Simola’s materials did however generate enough interest to be welcomed into the collections of the Archives. However, for decades there has been unofficial information among the staff of the Archives, that one should be reserved when approaching Simola’s materials. Despite this, Simola was a kind of forerunner. It was not until late 1960s, the Finnish Literature Society for the first time started to intentionally collect the folklore of the Roma.

### **Early Modern Dialogue Pamphlets from the Habsburg Netherlands. A preliminary analysis of the corpus**

*Hans Cools*  
University of Leuven

Ever since Habermas’ seminal publication *Structural transformation of the public sphere*, research into the origins of the ‘public sphere’ flourishes. Apparently, such a public sphere existed already in the 16th century Netherlands. However, the Dutch Revolt resulted in the partition of the Netherlands. In the north a decentralized republic took shape, whereas in the south the Habsburg monarchy reconquered power. Throughout the next decades, an impressive amount of pamphlets were printed in the Dutch Republic. Recently they have received a lot of scholarly attention, both from historians and from literary scholars. According to them these prints shaped public opinion, especially at times of political crisis. In the Dutch Republic, a so-called ‘discussion culture’ prevailed. Therefore pamphlet authors often used the form of imagined dialogues, in which the participants were convinced of the appropriate opinion in the course of the discussion constructed in the pamphlets. Crucially, such pamphlets consisted of lengthy dialogue sequences. This caused a sense of immediacy with the readers, as if they witnessed the interaction themselves. Even though such pamphlets contained fictional representations of dialogues, they offer modern-day observers a glimpse of early modern spoken language.

In the Habsburg Netherlands, the production of pamphlets dropped. However, it certainly did not disappear. Pamphlets continued to play a role in the permanent debates between secular and religious authorities on the one hand and urban middle groups on the other. Authorities sensed the opportunities the printing presses offered to them and used pamphlets to win over their subjects. Although in the Habsburg Netherlands the ‘public sphere’ was reduced, it thus continued to function. In that ‘reduced sphere’, pamphlets circulated widely and these prints fostered discussions. Therefore the concept of a ‘discussion culture’ is also a valuable one for the Habsburg Netherlands, although it took a different shape there than in the United Provinces.

In contrast to the work that has been done for the Dutch Republic, up to now dialogue pamphlets from the Habsburg Netherlands have hardly been studied. A preliminary analysis of the available corpus makes clear that it can be divided into two 17th century clusters and an 18th century one.

The first cluster contains pamphlets that were printed in the 1620s and 1630s, after the war with the Dutch Republic had resumed. Their main purpose was to convince the public of the policy choices made by the Habsburg government, notwithstanding the ensuing military disasters.

The second cluster consists of pamphlets that were printed in the second half of the 17th century. Their subject was religion. As contacts with the Dutch Republic had been restored after 1648, the authors of these prints instructed the faithful how to deal with Protestants from an orthodox catholic stance. Nearly simultaneously the same techniques were used to address the Jansenist controversy.

Clearly, the pamphlets in these two clusters were sponsored by the authorities and they fitted into the confessionalisation process. Their purpose was to enhance support amongst the public for official policies.

At first, the dialogue pamphlet seemed to disappear in the 18th century. However, throughout the political turmoil of the 1780s and '90s, an impressive amount of dialogue pamphlets were printed. In contrast to the two previous clusters, most pamphlets in this third cluster couched an opposition stance, often in rather explicit terms. They show us how seditious citizens appropriated the genre of the dialogue pamphlet in order to foster support amongst the wider population.

Evolving political circumstances thus influenced whether pamphlets were used and how they were framed. In this paper I offer an overview of early modern dialogue pamphlets from the Habsburg Netherlands. Moreover, I compare the results of this preliminary research with the findings for the Dutch Republic. Thereby I hope to foster research on dialogue pamphlets from the Habsburg Netherlands and to learn from the ensuing discussions with book historians and scholars in language and literature.