ONAMA

Ontology of the Narratives of the Middle Ages. An onomasiological perspective on narratology via the Middle High German Conceptual Database

With the database REALonline (Institut für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit), a research platform of the Institute for Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture, and the Middle High German Conceptual Database (University of Salzburg 1992–), an onomasiological dictionary of Middle High German, two long-term research projects on the culture, language and art of the Middle Ages are carried out at the University of Salzburg. Meanwhile, these projects are based on graph technologies. Ontologies and Vocabularies such as Ontolex (McCrae et al. 2017) and SKOS (Miles and Bechhofer 2009) form the basic framework of MHDBDB. A dictionary article consists of several meanings formed by concepts of the conceptual system. In addition, morphologic and grammatical information is given. All corpus texts are lemmatized and tokens are connected to the matching meaning in context. In REALonline, images are described using scene graphs including the objects and persons shown in an image.

To link these two databases, the project ONAMA – Ontology of the Narratives of the Middle Ages (Hinkelmanns et al. 2019–), funded by the Austrian Academy of Sciences, was launched at the beginning of 2019. The aim of the project is the semantic connection of literature and paintings of the Middle Ages. Narratives serve as nodes between onomasiological concepts, scene graphs and text editions. The project will be realized on the basis of a self-developed OWL ontology, which will be anchored in the Semantic Web with references to CIDOC-CRM (Le Boeuf et al. 2017).

The questions and positions discussing the functional principles of such narratological elements are concentrated in interdisciplinary publications like the edited volume "Zur Bildlichkeit mittelalterlicher Texte" (Wandhoff 2008) or in Wenzel 1995 or in works on the visual narrative (e.g. Kemp 2017, 1996, 1992; Speidel 2013; Niehr 2015; Ranta 2014; Wolf 2011, 2003; Belting 1985; Belting et al. 1983). German studies equally focus on comprehensive questions regarding narratological structures, for instance the contribution by J. D. Müller (Müller 2007) or the articles within the recently edited volume "Narratologie und mittelalterliches Erzählen" (Contzen and Kragl 2018) as well as narrative motifs (Birkhan et al. 2009). Research projects on Ontologies in the field of narratives include studies of Nakasone and Ishizuka 2006; Damiano and Lieto 2013; Zarri 2014; Fisseni et al. 2014; Damiano and Lombardo 2016; Ciotti 2016; Lei et al. 2017; Gius et al. 2018; Dimpel 2018.

A narrative is described by the project as an elementary element describing an action that mediates between a previous and a subsequent state. Based on semantic roles, we describe actors and participants of the action and a setting that sets the framework of a narrative. By including literary archetypes, specific narratives such as "[Siegfried] [kills] [the dragon]" or "[Tristan and Isolde] [staying in] [the *Minne* Cave]" can be abstracted into common basic narratives – i.e. "[Hero] [kills] [Monster]" or "[the lovers] [at] [locus amoenus]". This makes it possible to discover parallels and disparities in the realization of narratives in images and texts. Thus, onomasiological concepts are no longer only associated with text witnesses, but can also be investigated in their pictorial implementation.

The project aims to provide a new tool for art history, linguistics and literary studies on the European Middle Ages that simplifies comprehensive research and thus promotes interdisciplinary cooperation.

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