

An exploration of computational stylistics as applied to encyclopaedic and polemical literature

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My general interest is in the applicability of -based approaches to literary stylistics and narratology. First, I illustrate how tools for text mining are useful for the study of encyclopaedic fiction. My case in point will be Alexander Kluge's literary output, which abounds with referentiality. His texts prove to be highly amenable to automated named entity recognition; this brings me to speculate on whether we can establish a measure for assessing a text's degree of 'documentaricity'. In a second case, I will explore whether some basic clustering techniques can contribute to the study of literary polemics and/or other polemical text types. Literary polemical texts afford both challenges and opportunities, because it is to some extent quite mechanical and predictable (resting on tried and trusted polarities, as well on quantitative aspects of language usage), but at the same time they are also very context-reliant, implicit and rich in rhetorical variation/amplification. Current 'bag of words' approaches have proven to be fruitful for answering matters of institutional import (such as authorship and genre appurtenance)? But can they reveal meaningful rhetorical narrative patterns as well? I will primarily discuss my own modest progress in this relation, and hope to learn more from other participants.