



# **School of Humanities & Communication Arts**

## **Summer Scholarship Research Program 2020**

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## **Project 27: Attitudes to Indigenous Australian motherhood in Australian writing**

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Principal Supervisor

### **Project description**

The project focusses on the work of Jessie Litchfield, a journalist in the Northern Territory whose values are typified as politically conservative, and who was often outspoken on matters relating to Aboriginal people. The existing scholarship on Litchfield ranges from hagiography to criticism of her racist beliefs. My preliminary research into Litchfield, whom I encountered through my own research on a contemporary of hers who was an occasional correspondent, suggests that Litchfield's views are difficult to pinpoint. To either exalt her or dismiss her as racist misses some of the complexities of her attitudes, which in turn reflect attitudes current in her time.

The project will begin with a thorough literature survey of the current secondary sources (of which there are not many), as well as an analysis of Litchfield's writing, which spans personal letters, memoir, journalism, poetry and short fiction. Litchfield's floreat was the interwar period, which was also the high point of maternalist feminism among white Australian women. Their attitudes to Indigenous motherhood ranged from the radical to the conservative, and many points in between. The project will therefore situate Litchfield and possibly other women writers in this context.

Although this research relates to my larger research interests, it is a stand-alone project.

### **Project Aims**

- To develop historical knowledge of Litchfield, who is well-known to historians in the field, but in a broad and general way.
- To examine closely Litchfield's views in the context of Australian women's maternalist values as they pertained to race, particularly in the interwar period.
- To add significantly to work on this somewhat under-researched writer.
- If there is sufficient time and scope, to compare Litchfield's views with those of other Australian women writers of the period.
- To gain a clearer understanding of attitudes to Indigenous motherhood in the sector of white Australian women, i.e., writers, who articulated their views in prose, be it letters, fiction, non-fiction or poetry.
- To contribute to existing scholarship on Australian maternalism and maternalist feminism by teasing out different maternalist values, particularly among conservative women.
- To publish a journal article of 5000-8000 words on the findings of the project.

### **Project Methods**

Beginning with the literature survey, the methodology will be to compile a critical analysis of the state of the current scholarship on Litchfield in particular, but more broadly on the topic of white Australian women writers on the subject of Indigenous motherhood. This will involve skills in both historical research and literary studies.

Following on from this will be setting the parameters of the project so as to fit within the designated timeframe, and to identify a series of primary and secondary sources to be critically analysed.

### **Opportunity for Skill Development**

The project offers the opportunity for the student to build on existing skills of research and writing to produce work exceeding the scope of undergraduate requirements for history and literary studies. It offers them the opportunity to begin to develop expertise in a specific area of Australian history, which has the potential to be recognised in the professional discipline. These skills would give the student a head start in a number of directions, whether planning to undertake further studies, to work in a research capacity in a university, or to seek employment in such areas as museums or public policy.

### **Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply**

Students need excellent writing skills, and strong research skills (commensurate with Level 3 of a History major), or the demonstrated capacity to develop these skills quickly.

## **Project 28: The Modern Folksong in response to COVID-19 (in Australia)**

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Second Supervisor

### **Project description**

Folksongs can communicate “even to those who can’t read and write” (Denselow 1989) and American writer, John Steinbeck, remarked that “the greatest and most enduring songs are wrung from unhappy people” (Steinbeck in Fowke and Glazer, 1973). While the ability to read and write may not be a major issue in Australia in 2020, unhappiness, doubt, anxiety and stoicism are being experienced by many. This project investigates songs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic which are and have been disseminated online, whether parody, arrangement or original, examining the lyrics and the issues they address, such as mental and physical health and virus protection, education including home life and home schooling, work and the broader social response to the pandemic. These lyrics provide us with what historian Roy Palmer (1974) calls “the touch on the times”. The project is also interested in songs whose original lyrics have been changed and whose meaning, therefore, has been adapted to fit the pandemic environment, reflecting Street’s (2006) statement on “how particular times and experiences become incorporated into the music”. The project looks at what emotions and/or aims are conveyed through these modern folksongs - humour, pathos, satire, seriousness, tragedy, didactic - and how the music conveys these. To engage the student in the current pandemic environment, they will create a suite of modern folksongs, and provide written documentation on the relevance of the songs to the current circumstances.

### **Project Aims**

1. Investigate songs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to lyric content and topic;
2. Investigate songs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to music: musical approach (parody, arrangement, original); mood of the song (humour, pathos, satire, seriousness, tragedy, didactic); how music conveys the mood;
3. Create a suite of modern folksongs about the COVID-19 pandemic on work, education and social response issues relevant to the creator, thereby focusing the student on Palmer’s (1974) notion about the modern folksong reflecting “the touch on the times”.

### **Project Methods**

1. Analysis of songs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and found online is at the heart of the project. The analysis will investigate:
  - a. Lyric content and topic;
  - b. Musical approach (e.g. parody, arrangement, original);
  - c. Mood of the song (e.g. humour, pathos, satire, seriousness, tragedy, didactic);
  - d. How the music reflects the mood of the song.
2. Adopt an autoethnographic approach to determine where the newly-composed songs’ lyric content and topic, musical approach and mood are drawn from in the student creator’s life in this time of COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Opportunity for Skill Development**

- Conduct a literature review: on folksong, in particular folksong of the 20th-21st centuries – modern folksong; on music composed in a time of pandemic or crisis; and to a lesser extent, literature on music and its relevance to everyday life.
- Engaging with autoethnography and some practice-led research;
- Learning to write within an autoethnographic framework about their songwriting/compositional thinking in relation to the newly-created songs;
- Analyse the songs in relation to lyrics and music;
- Write a draft paper, with the supervisor, on the topic for presentation at a musicology or music education conference in the future;
- If time, record the songs and put them online, following copyright principles and procedures.

### **Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following prerequisite(s) to apply**

Students are required to have some music performing skills – any instrument, any voice range - and can be from any stage of their degree.

## **Project 29: Food, Health and the Health Food Industry: A Database Pilot**

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Second Supervisor

### **Project description**

This project is a pilot for an exciting new venture involving a team of Western Sydney University researchers based in NICM and the School of Humanities and Communication Arts. The wider team aims to explore the history and development of ideas around food and health across the entire modern period (1450 to present), with the aim of better understanding the origins, development, impact, practices and health outcomes of today's multi-million-dollar health food industry and popular discourses around health food and complementary medicines. Such research is pressingly needed if we are to understand contemporary practices of self-medication and the origins of popular doubts about 'expert advice', resistance to medical recommendations, and government guidance such as during the current COVID pandemic. In addition, the research may result in new medical or complementary medical knowledge, in uncovering past practices and ideas worthy of further investigation by today's medical professionals or pharmaceutical companies.

The summer scholarship project represents the first stage in the team's attempts to develop a deep time approach to the subject, by studying popular ideas around food and health before the full professionalisation of modern medicine around 1750-1800 and the emergence of the Health Food industry in the later nineteenth century. The summer scholarship student will research book titles relating to food and health and enter details of such works into a purpose built database before digitally and visualizing the data in partnership with the supervisors. They will also assist in developing a website resource for the presentation of the project and its findings, and subject to progress, participate in writing up those findings for a conference presentation or journal article.

### **Project Aims**

The aim of this project is to undertake a preliminary title level analysis of the printed primary resources available for the study of links between food and health across the entire period 1450-1800.

The project objectives are:

1. To create a database of works whose titles in combination with other metadata about authors or production indicate their subject matter is connected to questions of food and health.
2. To conduct preliminary digital analysis of the corpus of titles and bibliographical metadata in these titles to identify key trends, topics and preoccupations within this literature, using analytical and data visualisation tools such as graphs and wordclouds.
3. To present key findings through a preliminary project website, and conference paper or journal article

The project will serve as one of the starting points and pilot methodology for a wider study of the history of the Health-Food industry as it developed from the period c.1850 to the present, and the

ways in which the emergence of this industry drew and perpetuated earlier bodies of knowledge and discourses around the food, bodily health, and self-medication.

## Project Methods

The project utilises the Digital Humanities Research Group (DHRG) at Western Sydney is in possession of bibliographic metadata for every book produced in English in the period to 1800. This project involves:

1. The construction of a pilot database and
2. The metalevel preliminary analysis of its contents.

Access to the metadata is provided courtesy of the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC), University of Helsinki, and participation in the British AHRC-project 'Libraries, Communities and Cultural Formation',. This metadata, cleaned and structured by the University of Helsinki and Western Sydney, is housed in a customised database on the Heurist platform, and tools already exist for moving records across from this database to similar Heurist databases developed by Professor Burrows. Thus the technology and resources for the project already exist.

The project database records will import bibliographic records from an existing database of English Short Title Catalogue records in the possession of the DHRG. Amounting to around 400,000 records, the ESTC data covers every known and extant work published in English or in the British Isles before 1800.

The project will advance through a series of methodologically discrete stages.

**Stage One:** the student will be required to work with the project's ESTC heurist database to develop a methodology to identify titles relating to food and health using a variety of techniques, including isolating productive keywords. This is a method that has been used with success by Professor Burrows' previous students, most notably Dr Jennifer Ann Skipp, whose work with ECCO corpus titles expanded the known body of British eighteenth-century erotic literature by almost 50%. Relevant records will then be imported from the ESTC database into the 'Food and Health' database.

**Stage Two:** the student and supervisors will work together to run some preliminary analysis and visualisation of the titles entered in the Food and Health database, using standard digital tools (some of which are available through Heurist). This will include analysis by keyword and date and place of publication to identify themes and trends, as well as eras when interest in food and health seems to have been particularly intense.

**Stage Three:** the student and supervisors will work together to create a project website (again through Heurist) and, subject to the progress of the project, to prepare conference paper or print publication of the work. The student will gain authorial credit for the database and website content, both of which will be published through Heurist, and for any methodological contribution, conference paper or article to which they have contributed.

We note here that this is a pilot project and that the database and its content are likely to need further development beyond the life of the project: we are not expecting the database created by the student to be comprehensive. It is also possible that during the life of the project we may link the database to the ECCO and EEBO corpus of English texts, allowing us to digitally analyse the contents of the texts behind our title database. The database to be prepared by the student will serve as a gateway to this material.

## **Opportunity for Skill Development**

The student will gain skills in:

- Bibliographic searching and evaluation of results
- Database construction and implementation
- Digital analytics
- Data visualization and presentation
- Digital Humanities
- Website development
- Reading historical sources
- Reporting Research Findings
- Working with a team of researchers
- Time Management

## **Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following pre-requisite(s) to apply**

The essential skills required are:

- Experience in reading and understanding historical English – the project involves working with titles dating back to the Shakespearean period and beyond, so it is essential students have some familiarity and confidence with texts from this era, whether through success in studying Shakespeare in high school English or at University level
- Experience of using databases and searching library catalogues
- Initiative and lateral thinking

Beyond these baseline requirements, the project is suitable to any upper level undergraduate student since it is by nature interdisciplinary. However, a background or interest in any of the following would be helpful: medicine and health, history / humanities, English literature, the history of science / medicine, website design, digital analytics, digital humanities, data visualization. However, it is not expected that the appointed student will be able to offer skills in more than one of these areas and all necessary training will be provided.



## **Project 30: A song of language and society: Constructing social identities with fictional language**

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Third Supervisor

### **Project description**

A fundamental paradox exists at the centre of language and cultural research. Our tacit understanding of how language relates to social knowledge is built from our exposure to language and speech communities; however, fictional forms of language have been traditionally discarded from investigation due to their alleged inauthenticity and unworthiness as empirical objects of study (Stamou, 2018). The ideological premise that authentic language must be “unmediated” (Coupland, 2001) fails to recognise texts and performances as highly significant objects of discourse that shape social stereotypes. Specifically, texts and performances serve as “metapragmatic activities” (Agha, 2003), that contribute to the “enregisterment” (Agha, 2003, 2007) of sociolinguistic diversity. Writers across the modalities of text and visual performance must draw upon community stereotypes to construct engaging characters which can connect with the audiences’ knowledge and experience with real life languages and cultures. Despite the significance of examining fictional language as an object of social construction, no empirically-based models exist to explain how fictional language communicates and constructs social stereotypes and practices. This has significant and wide arching implications regarding the successful portrayal of people in fiction. The inaccurate portrayals of stereotyped language risks backlashes against authenticity which can lead to revenue loss, discrimination, and the alienation of audiences (Badami, 2016; Heblich et al., 2015; Sigeo, 2020). Furthermore, the investigation of fictional language possesses the ability to additionally contribute to a central goal of sociolinguistic investigation, which focuses on speakers’ capability to use language as a tool for the construction of identities, stances, and personas (Eckert, 2008; Eckert & Labov, 2017; Podesva et al., 2015). With this in mind, the aim of this proposed project is to identify the language features that are most successful in the construction of engaging and socially meaningful characters.

If successful, the results of this project will make significant contributions to the areas of linguistics and literary theory. Crucially, understanding the language features that are most successful in the construction of multidimensional and socially meaningful characters has immediate practical applications for educators, students, and professionals in the literary, film, and television industries.

The project will address the following research questions to address the scientific gap discussed above:

1. What variations in language practice are recruited in fictional language?
2. What are the potential socially-indexed meanings of these recruited practices?

## **Project Aims**

1. Collect and format text based fictional language for electronic corpora
2. Perform concordance analyses on corpora
3. Identify associated social categories from the respective characters
4. Relate findings to current literature

## **Project Methods**

The corpus analyses and sociolinguistic techniques to be employed in the current study will be based on the methodology used in Bednarek (2012). The dialogue of 12 characters from George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, will be compiled into electronic corpora. George R. R. Martin's series is an award-winning body of work that has sold in excess of 12 million copies world-wide, has been translated into 40 different languages, and has been adapted into a television series titled *Game of Thrones*. As a combination of historical and speculative fiction, *A Song of Ice and Fire* offers a unique opportunity to examine fictional language that was constructed by an out-group speaker of the English dialects depicted; that is, the writer is a native speaker of American English who draws upon British English language and, potentially, stereotypes of the dialect. The characters that will inform the corpora represent a 3 × 2 × 2 sample targeting three key speech correlates for membership in demographic categories; namely, socioeconomic status (upper, middle, lower), age (child, adult), and gender (male, female). Concordance and keyword analyses will be performed on the twelve corpora to examine all instances of speech practices in each corpus (see Research Question 1). Variations in practices will be collated with "textual cues" (Culpeper, 2001) to demarcate potential socially-indexed meanings from correlations with demographic categories and locally meaningful social groups (Research Question 2).

The student will be engaged in every step of this process. They will begin with a literature review of the key studies that are used to inform the theoretical background and design of the current project. They will then be trained in collecting and preparing fictional language for concordance analyses. Instruction for how to perform concordance analyses will then be provided to complete the data analyses. With the analyses completed, the student will then be guided through the process of writing up the study and its findings as a report that will serve as both a final report and a journal paper draft.

## **Opportunity for Skill Development**

The benefits for the intern are threefold. Firstly, the intern will have the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they learn as part of a linguistics major to a rigorous sociolinguistics project. Secondly, the intern will gain valuable skills in research design and data analysis. Thirdly, the ability for the intern to participate in creating research output in the form of a journal article is an effective method of training and development for students who may be considering postgraduate study and/or academic careers.

## **Students are required to have the following skills/meet the following prerequisite(s) to apply**

Completed the units "Introduction to Linguistics", "Structure of Language" and "Sociolinguistics"