

## Acts of Writing: Cultural Practices, Knowledge Construction, Authorship

4th – 6th of June, 2025

Symposium at the GCSC/GGK, Otto-Behaghel-Str. 12, 35394 Giessen, Germany

When thinking of writing as a practice, one might imagine a lone author with shoulders bent over a desk, frantically looking over messy handwritten notes and typing away on a laptop. What ideas are behind this image, and how do practices of writing actually look like?

Writing is not only a literary practice –in the traditional sense– but one linked to various professions and institutions, making it a cultural practice. From drafting laws to journalistic writing, the practice unfolds under very different conditions and in specific environments – collaboratively on Google Docs, alone in a library, or during an interview in a café– all of which shape how and what we write. Similarly, in their handbook on work practices in cultural studies, Ute Frietsch and Jörg Rogge make a compelling case for examining how different discursive and material spaces shape how we as researchers understand, create, and disseminate knowledge, whether that involves taking notes in noisy classrooms or mobile writing sessions on the train.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout history, as well, writing has never only been characterised by one type of act, but of many: Compilation, revision, and translation have shaped some of the world's most read written works, including the accumulated Hindu *Upanishads*, Confucius' edited poetry collection of *Shijing (Book of Songs)*, and the various versions and translations existing of the Bible, the Qur'ān, and the Buddhist Canons. In the nineteenth century, the idea of authorship evolved in Western countries: instead of relying on the patronage of the aristocracy, writing became a profession as we would recognise it today thanks to the consistent income people received for writing serially for magazines and journals.<sup>2</sup> Today, academic writing is impossible to think of without first drafts and more collaborative writing, including the more recent synergistic practices in branches of anthropology as well through co-authorship and peer review.<sup>3</sup> And, whether we like it or not, the use of Large Language Models such as ChatGPT force us to reconsider notions of authenticity in writing processes and what it means to be an author in our digital day and age.<sup>4</sup>

This symposium seeks contributions that will provide new perspectives on the acts or practices of writing. We want to foster a creative and collaborative dialogue amongst our participants and are specifically looking for papers that not necessarily focus so much on what is *in* a published text, but the individual, cultural, and material processes that precede and produce it. Themes that may be discussed include, but are not limited to:

<sup>1</sup> Ute Frietsch and Jörg Rogge, *Über die Praxis des kulturwissenschaftlichen Arbeitens: Ein Handwörterbuch* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Joanne Shattock, 'Authorship', in *Culture, Literature, and the Arts: Long Nineteenth Century* (Routledge E-Book Collection), 23. August 2024, <<https://routledgelearning.com/rhr-cultureliteratureandthearts/essays/authorship/>> (accessed 11.12.2024).

<sup>3</sup> Michael A. Peters, Tina Besley, and Sonja Arndt, 'Experimenting with academic subjectivity: collective writing, peer production and collective intelligence', *Open Review of Education Research*, 6:1, 2019, 26–40 <https://doi.org/10.1080/23265507.2018.1557072>

<sup>4</sup> Ahnaf Chowdhury Niloy et. Al., 'Is ChatGPT a Menace for Creative Writing Ability? An Experiment', *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 40:2, 2024, 919–939.

- Historical perspectives on writing and writing professions
- The work of *Aufschreibesysteme* (Friedrich Kittler's 'discourse networks')
- Writing cultures and professions
- Didactic, cognitive, and material/technological processes of writing
- Ideas of authorship and the performativity of writing
- Serial writing, collaborative writing, and (cultural) translation
- The 'spaces' of writing, i.e. the field, the desk, the library, etc.
- The power and politics of writing acts, i.e. disruptive or founding texts such as the American Declaration of Independence
- Acts of Writing in religious traditions (script, scripture, sacred text)
- New forms of publishing, self-publishing
- Multimodal writing
- The advent of AI and writing in the digital world
- Changes to and in academic writing

Options to present at this symposium includes presenting a poster during our poster session or a 20-minute paper presentation. Please submit a 300-word abstract (indicating whether you will prefer a poster or presentation) along with a short, maximum 200-word bio note to the email address [acts.of.writing@uni-giessen.de](mailto:acts.of.writing@uni-giessen.de) by the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2025. Notification of acceptance follows mid-April 2025.

Organisers of the symposium include:

- International PhD Programme (IPP) "Literary and Cultural Studies" (IPP)
- International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC)

For questions, please contact Dr. Isabella Maria Engberg and Dr. Jens Kugele at [acts.of.writing@uni-giessen.de](mailto:acts.of.writing@uni-giessen.de).