Abstract/short presentation

**Revisiting the authorship of Henry VIII’s *Assertio septem sacramentorum* through computational authorship attribution**

Presenters: Marjo Kaartinen, Aleksi Vesanto, Anni Hella

One of the great mysteries of Tudor history through centuries has been the authorship of Henry VIII’s famous treatise *Assertio septem sacramentorum adversus Martinum Lutherum* (1521). The question of its authorship intrigued the contemporaries already in the 1520s. With *Assertio*, Henry VIII gained from the Pope the title *Defender of the Faith* which the British monarchs still use. Because of the exceptional importance of the text, the question of its authorship is not irrelevant in the study of history. This paper contributes to the conference theme *History*.

For various reasons and motivations each of their own, many doubted the king’s authorship. The discussion has continued to the present day. Many possible authors have been named, Thomas More foremost among them. The Academy of Finland funded consortium Profiling Premodern Authors (PROPREAU) aims at giving new light to the question of Assertio’s authorship. We have begun with examining the possibility of More’s authorship, and the first tentative results will be revealed at the conference.

Our consortium puts effort into developing more efficient machine learning methods for authorship attribution in cases where large training corpora are not available. This paper will present the latest discoveries in the development of such tools. These include simpler, linear classifiers and more complex neural networks. Support vector machine, a linear classifier produces fairly accurate early results, though they alone are most likely not enough. Due to this, we also use a convolutional neural network to reinforce the results to make more solid interpretations.

Select Bibliography:

Betteridge, Thomas: *Writing Faith and Telling Tales: Literature, Politics, and Religion in the Work of Thomas More*. University of Notre Dame Press 2013.

Brown, J. Mainwaring: Henry VIII.’s Book, “Assertio Septem Sacramentorum,” and the Royal Title of “Defender of the Faith”. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 1880, 243–261.

Nitti, Silvana: *Auctoritas: l’Assertio di Enrico VIII contro Lutero.* Studi e testi del Rinascimento europeo. Edizioni di storia e letteratura 2005.