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Horace Walpole and his correspondents : social network analysis in a historical context

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Horace Walpole and his correspondents

Social network analysis in a historical context

Horace Walpole (1717-1797) was not only a politician, author and patron of the arts, he was also one of the most prolific letter writers in all of English history. Many of the letters which he sent and received have been collected, edited and published. They are a treasure trove of information on eighteenth-century politics, arts and society. However, the current study rather focuses on Walpole's social network and the language as contained in the letters of the network members.

Although Walpole and his correspondents wrote their letters during a period in which the standard language was being established and written down in grammars, this book challenges the view that the language use of these members of the upper class was uniformly standard. Several case studies are used to map linguistic variety in the network and demonstrate the functionality of social network analysis in a historical context. The aim is to establish network structures in order to explain usage variation within the network. The author provides an overview of earlier and more recent work on the historical application of social network analysis, and furthermore suggests an adaptation of the model for improved functionality when used with historical data.

This book is of interest to sociohistorical linguists studying Late Modern English and historical linguists with an interest in social network analysis, as well as to anyone interested in Horace Walpole and his correspondents.

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