

T.B.C.

*Aaron Ecaj, University of York**

In this talk I will explore an ongoing project to use quantitative syntactic data to assign dates of composition to Old English texts. One of the primary texts of interest in this regard is the poem *Beowulf*: though it survives only in a manuscript from ca. 1000, most linguists and scholars from other disciplines hold the opinion that the text is actually much older, from the 8th or early 9th century. After surveying evidence from a variety of syntactic features of OE, we observe that syntactic evidence is in line with this view (and lends further weight against proposals in the literature that *Beowulf* has a later date of composition). Turning to more abstract questions, I will aim to illustrate how a traditional philological question like the dating of texts can be recast first in terms of “digital humanities” and then in terms of statistical algorithms. Projects which span these domains of scholarship have the potential to enrich the field and provide an opportunity for young researchers to develop their own perspective on venerable research questions.

*Presenting joint work with Susan Pintzuk and Richard Zimmermann