

*Longitudinal variation in verb inflection in Mary Ann Wodrow Archbald's writings*

This presentation explores ways in which the ego-documents of a Scottish migrant woman are suitable to discuss historical intra-writer variation 'from below', and how a longitudinal perspective can be applied to discuss variation in verb inflection over the course of a lifespan. The presentation thus addresses several of the conference's key questions, i.e. which material is suitable to explore intra-writer variation, how such variation evolves over the lifespan of individual writers and which factors influence variation.

The data for this study are drawn from the *Mary Ann Wodrow Archbald papers*. This collection comprises ego-documents such as diaries and letter books, that cover over 50 years of the life of the Scottish migrant Mary Ann Wodrow Archbald. Archbald spent her childhood, adolescence and early adulthood on Little Cumbrae, a small island in the Firth of Clyde, before emigrating with her young family to America in 1807, where they settled in New York State. She kept diaries and letter books, which detail her thoughts and everyday activities, prior to and after emigration. Together, they comprise more than 440,000 words, making it an unusually comprehensive material given the fact that Archbald remained as a daughter and house wife on the family's different farms throughout her life. By analysing her texts, this study contributes to a language history 'from below'.

In this presentation, I start by giving a brief overview of the material, before discussing how it can be utilized to explore longitudinal changes over the lifespan of one individual writer. More specifically, I focus on features of Modern Scots verb inflection in Archbald's writings. Selected features, such as the syncretism of past tense and past participle in words like *wrote/written*, the use of present tense -s for all persons, preterites like *caught, eat, kept*, and the past tense marker 'd in examples like *employ'd, awaken'd*, can be traced through 50 years of Archbald's texts. They decrease in frequency, and several different factors might have contributed to this change, among others the new speech community Archbald encountered after emigration.

This study demonstrates that intra-writer variation can be found across Archbald's lifespan, thereby indicating that longitudinal perspectives on variation can be applied to women migrants' ego-documents. Furthermore, this study exemplifies how variation in verb inflection can evolve over the lifespan of a historical writer, and which factors might have contributed to such variation.