Friday, 9 February

9:00 introduction

9:15 Panel I
Identity, Hybridity and Ideology


*Laura Lojo Rodríguez: Border Experiences and Liminality in Andrea Levy’s Short Stories*

10:45 coffee break

*Noemí Pereira Arns: Sartorial Borders and Border Crossings in Contemporary Muslim Women’s Short Stories*

*Nicole Falkenhayner: Cultural Translation or Poetic Ideology? Leila Aboulela’s Short Story Collection Coloured Lights*

12:15 lunch: pretzels and cake

13:15 Panel II
Images of Liminality and Liminal Space

*Christiane Hansen: The Indifferent Border: Liminal Spaces in Sarah Hall’s »Bees« (2011)*

*Carmen González Varela: Borders and Spaces in J.G. Ballard’s Short Fiction*

*Julia Ditter: Human into Animal: Post-Anthropomorphic Transformations in Sarah Hall’s »Mrs Fox«*

15:00 coffee break

15:30 Panel III
Border Experiences in Global Conflict

*Stephanie Bender: Telling the Invisibles into Existence: »Counting Down« and »Expect Me« by Olumide Popoola*

*Ulrike Zimmermann: A Permeable Fortress: European Tales of Global Conflict*

20:00 dinner
Kleiner Meyerhof, Rathausgasse 27

Saturday, 10 February

9:30 Panel IV
Taboos and Moral Boundaries: Spaces of Negotiation

*Regina Martínez Ponciano: The Boundaries of Affection: Oscar Wilde’s The Happy Prince and Other Tales (1888) and A House of Pomegranates (1891)*

*Sina Menrad: Talking Taboos: The Classroom as a Third Space*

11:00-11:30 concluding discussions
Telling the Invisibles into Existence: »Counting Down« and »Expect Me« by Olumide Popoola
Stephanie Bender

Within European debates on mass migration, open and closed national borders, and terrorism, whose stories are being told, by whom, and how? How do these representations and stories affect the value and visibility of lives and to what extent the loss of these lives is grievable or not? "Counting Down" and "Expect Me" are fictionalised stories of refugees on their journey into the UK, which make their lives visible and raise issues of representation and justice.


Human into Animal: Post-Anthropomorphic Transformations in Sarah Hall’s »Mrs Fox«
Julia Ditter

In Sarah Hall's short story »Mrs Fox« (2013) a woman transforms into a vixen during a stroll through the woods with her husband. The story relates the struggles of the husband after the transmogrification of his wife by constructing encounters in liminal spaces in which the boundaries between wilderness and civilisation, human and animal, reality and surrealism are blurred. I will interrogate the ecocritical stance of the story which resists anthropomorphic descriptions and offers new post-anthropocentric perspectives on the relationship between humans and animals in a world in which natural landscapes are increasingly endangered by processes of modernisation.

Cultural Translation or Poetic Ideology? Leila Aboulela's Short Story Collection Coloured Lights (2001)
Nicole Falkenhayner

Leila Aboulela, who refers to herself as ›Scottish Muslim‹ writer, gained some prominence with her debut novel The Translator at the beginning of the 2000s. She has produced four novels since and received a number of literary awards. Aboulela is a writer of high lyrical skill, but the stance behind much of her literary production might be controversial, especially her devout, timid female heroines. Are we reading examples of cultural translation, or do we enter a lyrically embedded Pan-Arabist ideology? In this talk, I would like to ask questions about the analytical stance with which to assess Aboulela’s writing, and I will focus on her short story »Radia’s Carpet« – a science-fiction utopia of a just caliphate.

Borders and Spaces in J.G. Ballard's Short Fiction
Carmen González Varela

Taking as my starting point James Graham Ballard’s short fiction and, more specifically, some of Ballard’s science fiction writings, the aim of this paper is twofold. On the one hand, I will be examining the distinction between what Ballard has termed ›inner and outer spaces‹ as related to the operations of science and technology on them, placing special emphasis on the question of borders through the lens of science and technology studies. On the other hand, this paper will also explore the influence of scientific and technological developments on Ballard’s characters inhabiting those spatial categories, drawing from posthuman reflections on the topic.

The Indifferent Border: Liminal Spaces in Sarah Hall’s »Bees« (2011)
Christiane Hansen

My paper will examine Sarah Hall’s short story »Bees« (The Beautiful Indifference, 2011) and its use of the English Borders as an image of liminal space. Tracing the negotiations of borders in this story, it will focus on two interrelated aspects: (1) the intersections of spatial distinctions with structures of time, and (2) the significance of these structures for questions of emotional involvement and (aesthetic) indifference. Both aspects, as I will show, are central to the concept of (gendered) (regional) identity and individuality as developed in this text.

Border Experiences and Liminality in Andrea Levy’s Short Stories
Dr Laura Lojo Rodríguez

Andrea Levy’s work is characterised by a critical negotiation with ethnicity, national identity and culture of the Jamaican diaspora in the UK, the »fabled Mother Country« (2014: 6). This paper will examine Levy’s only short-story collection to date, Six Stories & An Essay (2014), where the writer deals with Britain’s Caribbean narratives, violently
In patriarchal societies, which structurally require and enforce the principle of compulsory heterosexuality, the distinction between desirable and disagreeable male homosocial behaviour is necessarily unstable. This tension is incessantly refracted as conflicts between and within forms of male and female subjectivities, sexual conduct, and emotional relationships, compete for legitimacy within the larger social order. In other words, the boundaries of affection are not only under constant (self-)scrutiny, they are also highly dynamic and permeable.

This paper aims to analyse the boundaries that circumscribe affective relationships in Oscar Wilde’s short story collections *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888) and *The House of Pomegranates* (1891), which were written expressly for his sons, Cyril and Vivian, shortly after Wilde’s first homosexual encounter with Robert Ross. This analysis will show how Judeo-Christian ideals of fatherhood, Irish traumas of orphanhood, or Greek principles of *paideia*—which celebrate the spiritual, erotic, and didactic love of an older for a younger man—are under strain in these moral tales. At once radical and conservative, Wilde’s fairy tales present different courses of action for his characters to challenge or accept these boundaries.

**Talking Taboos: The Classroom as a Third Space**

Sina Menrad

Sexuality… Violence… Illness… Literature deals with all these and many more topics we don’t normally speak about in public places. Topics which count as taboos in our society: even though society claims enlightenment, these unpleasant notions are being veiled or described euphemistically (Schröder, Mildenberg, 2012). Although, in the classroom, teaching literature, language, cultural or film studies we are easily able to broach these taboos. We are able to bridge cultural, political and societal differences. I want to argue here that the classroom takes the form of a third space, where we are free to try out/on new opinions and those taboo topics are suddenly not quite so taboo anymore, in the correct context. The classroom is a safe zone where the arguable opinion is valid and those things that cannot be said, thought, felt or even known can be discussed (Schröder, Mildenberg, 2012).


**Sartorial Borders and Border Crossings in Contemporary Muslim Women's Short Stories**

Dr Noemí Pereira Ares

Especially in the last decades, the Muslim dressed body has come under a global spotlight, with most debates concentrating on the dressed bodies of Muslim women. Grounded in a particular interest in literature as a cultural phenomenon which is embedded and simultaneously intervenes in social and cultural realities, this paper seeks to examine the representation of the female dressed body in contemporary short stories by Muslim women writers. A clear outward signifier of ethnic, class and gender identity in a number of texts, dress emerges as a means of expressing processes of border crossing, but it also features as a material element which proves itself capable of creating invisible borders.

**The Boundaries of Affection: Oscar Wilde’s *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888) and *A House of Pomegranates* (1891)**

Regina Martínez Ponciano

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Ethnic Consciousness in *Closures* (2015): Contemporary Black British Short Stories

Dr Jorge Sacido Romero

*Closures* (2015) is a collection of – as the subtitle reads - »Contemporary Black British Short Stories« published by the Peepal Tree Press and edited by Jacob Ross. The identity category »Black British« is an ample one as it applies to those »writers[s] ‘of colour’ born, raised, living, or [that] have lived in Britain and ‘self-identify’ as Black British« («Call for Short Stories Peepal Tree Press» 2013). Formally flexible and thematically diverse, *Closures* is, in itself, a crucible of multi-ethnic voices through which different experiences of a Britishness ‘of colour’ are fictionally articulated. The choice of title is, as the editor recognises, ironic («We chose it precisely because it undermines itself. […] Literary fiction] is concerned with the opening up of possibilities« [Ross 2015: 11]). The virtue of the short story to respond urgently to historical change and sopen up new possibilities is combined with the ancestral and transcultural nature of the short form as »simply the *de facto* narrative mode across human cultures and times« (Ross 2015: 9). While the novel is a modern invention, ‘humans have always understood and valued its [the short story’s] role as a way of making sense of the world, and their place in its (Ross 2015: 10; my emphasis).

The same ironic spirit inspired the title of a previous anthology of new black writing in Britain, *IC3*, »the police identity code for Black«, a multi-racial label that editors »hope[d] we never need to use […] again . . .« (Newland and Sesay 2000: x-xi). Jacob Ross locates the new anthology in line with *IC3*, but perceives in the pieces collected in *Closures* a lesser degree of ethnic consciousness than in the more politically vindicatory *IC3*: »There is [in *Closures*] less of an attempt by writers – overtly or through their characters – to self-define« (Ross 2015: 11). This paper will focus precisely in instances of ethnic consciousness in some of the stories in *Closures*, and the ways conflicts related to racial and cultural difference are presented and negotiated. Black Britishness may be, indeed, just an implicit or absent theme in many of the pieces, where it figures, as Ross argues, as simply »a lived reality that is like air or breath or blood« (2015: 11). But in other short stories, this is not the case. I will begin by contrasting the vicissitudes of the Black British protagonist of two stories by the same author, Koye Oyediji, one from *IC3* («Home: The Place Where You Belong (Memoirs of a Modern-Day Slave)») and another collected in *Closures* («Six Saturdays and Some Versions of the Truth»). In the remarkable »An Age of Reason (Coming Here)«, Valda Jackson condenses a history of an immigrant family of Caribbean origin through a series monologues in the second person addressed to one of the daughters/sisters that is presented as a liminal character in terms of ethnic identity. Raman Mundair’s »Day Trippers« is the story of how a woman’s and a man’s respective life projects of moving away from then ethnic (Hindu) backgrounds fail and they end up together embracing the rejected practices and beliefs to make their life enjoyable and meaningful. Finally, Pete Kalu’s »Getting Home: A Black Urban Myth (The Proofreader’s Sigh)« directly debunks the ideal of a harmonious multicultural society by presenting the series of episodes of racial prejudice suffered by a Mancunian protagonist as he walks home late at night.


A Permeable Fortress: European Tales of Global Conflict

Ulrike Zimmermann

Conflicts do not stop at borders. While most parts of Europe are enjoying the longest periods of peace in their history, it has become abundantly clear that reverberations of global struggles for resources, but also the consequences of natural disasters or political upheaval, terrorism, and war, make their presence felt on a global scale. Short stories from around the turn of the millennium acknowledge this fact on many levels and in many modes of representation. This paper will deal with (British) short stories featuring protagonists engaged in missions of border-crossing, or in watching other people cross borders. Borders in these cases seem fluid, imagined spaces, whose harsh realities tend to be cleverly veiled in the stories, and ongoing bloodshed is pushed to the margins in a conscious effort. The protagonists become harmless travellers, who nonetheless all carry terrible burdens by which they are driven from their places of origin. Thus the narratives produce alienating effects, metamorphosing the factual borders between peaceful and war-torn regions into almost imaginary, potentially even arbitrary boundaries. The borders between war and peace, between a safe everyday life and a life on the run become paper-thin in the process.

Short stories included will be by Ian Parkinson («A Belgian Story», 2016), Nicholas Shakespeare »The Death of Marat«, 2009), and possibly by Kamila Shamsie («The Desert Torso», 2009).