Kindly supported by

GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITÄT
GÖTTINGEN

S | E | P

Erasmus Mundus Master of Arts
EUROCULTURE

Funded by
DFG Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft
German Research Foundation

Institut für Kulturanthropologie / Europäische Ethnologie

Border
Narratives
Brexit, Europe, and the UK

5 - 7 May 2021

Organisers: Lars Klein and Kirsten Sandrock

Wednesday, 5 May - Conference Day 1

15:30	Conference Opening

16:00	Keynote 1	*Chair: Kirsten Sandrock*

Kristian Shaw (Lincoln, UK)

"'This Blessed Plot': BrexLit and the Island Mentality"

17:00	Break

17:15	Panel 1: BrexLit and Borders	*Chair: Kristian Shaw*

Caroline Lusin (Mannheim, Germany)

"Homeric Warriors and Ancient Rites. (R)Evoking Borders in Michael Hughes' *Country* (2018) and Sarah Moss' *Ghost Wall* (2018)"

Wolfgang Funk (Mainz, Germany)

"'The Last Line of Defence': The Politics of Border Control in Contemporary English Fiction"

Mark Schmitt (Dortmund, Germany)

"'No Happiness without (B)order': Brexit, Collective Ecstasy and Transgression in Niall Griffiths's *Broken Ghost*"

18:45	Break

19:30	Annual Lecture in European Ethnology	*Chair: Regina Bendix*

Cris Shore (London, UK)

"'How Did it Come to This?' Britain, Brexit and Euroscepticism from an Anthropological Perspective"

Organized jointly with Institut für Kulturanthropologie/ Europäische Ethnologie and the Centre for Global Migration Studies

20:30	Online Socializing

Thursday, 6 May - Conference Day 2

10:00	Keynote 2	*Chair: Brigitte Glaser*

Astrid Fellner (Saarbrücken, Germany/UniGR-Center for Border Studies)

"The Border Turn in Literary Studies: Border Poetics and Figurations of Border Crossings"

11:00	Break

11:15	Panel 2: Between Us and Them: Lanchester's *The Wall* and BritLit
	Chair: Sabina Fazli

Victoria Herche (Köln, Germany)

"Of Boats and Walls: Migrating Iconographies in John Lanchester's *The Wall* (2019)"

Dunja M. Mohr (Erfurt, Germany)

"'Who knows what old hatreds will loosen across the land now?' Border Stories and Brexit in Contemporary British Literature"

12:15	Break

14:00	Panel 3: Borders of the Nation: Ali Smith's Seasonal Quartet
	Chair: Jens Elze

Lena Steveker (Université du Luxembourg, Luxembourg)

"Fenced Off and Walled In: Narrating British Borders in Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016) and John Lanchester's *The Wall* (2019)"

Dennis Henneböhl (Paderborn, Germany)

"The Representation of External and Internal Borders and their Interaction with National Identity in Ali Smith's 'Seasonal Quartet'"

15:00	Break

15:30	Panel 4: Adaptation and Resistance	*Chair: Cora Övermann*

Anja Hartl (Konstanz, Germany)

"A Continent unto itself: Regionalism in the Post-Referendum Poetry of Yorkshire"

Gioia Angeletti and Maria Elena Capitani (Parma, Italy)

"Europeanness, Border Aesthetics and Resistance in David Greig's anti-Brexit Plays"

16:30	Break

17:00	Keynote 3	*Chair: Barbara Schaff*

Barbara Korte und Christian Mair (Freiburg, Germany)

"Sybille Berg's *GRM Brainfuck* as a Dystopia of Bordered Britain"

20:00	Reading by Nele Pollatschek and Sam Byers, co-organized with Literarisches Zentrum Göttingen

Friday, 7 May - Conference Day 3

10:00	Keynote 4	*Chair: Ralf Haekel*

Katharina Rennhak (Wuppertal, Germany)

"The Kinopolitics of Irish Border Novels: Facts, Fictions and Affect"

11:00	Break

11:15	Panel 5: Bordering and Rebordering in Ireland	*Chair: Anca Radu*

Joachim Frenk (Saarbrücken, Germany)

"There's Him There: Northern Irish Border Narratives in the Works of Glenn Patterson"

Ralf Haekel (Leipzig, Germany)

"'over the road', 'over the water' and 'over the border'" – Political, social, and mental borders in Anna Burns's *Milkman*"

12:15	Break

13:30	Panel 6: Digital Revolution and Migration	*Chair: Lars Klein*

Marcin Galent (Kraków, Poland)

"How a Digital Revolution Dismantled the Borders of the British Polity During the Brexit"

Luiza-Maria Filimon (Constanta, Rumania)

"'They met with a bunch of migrants in Calais…': Reviewing the Use of Dog Whistles in the Tory Discourse Surrounding Immigration"

14:30	Concluding Remarks & Publication Plans

Borders have played a decisive role in the Brexit referendum. The decision to leave or remain in the EU was often framed in the national media as a border referendum and political scientists agree that the vote gives evidence to widespread public opposition to open border policies in the UK. The conference "Border Narratives: Brexit, Europe, and the UK" seeks to shed light on these issues from a literary and cultural studies perspective. We are particularly interested in investigating narratives of borders in relation to Brexit and the ways in which recent border debates interact with greater historical, cultural, and epistemological border stories.

Guiding conference questions are: How are the UK's borders negotiated in literary and cultural works? Is there a particular border aesthetics in recent works of art? How do material, political, geophysical and economic contexts feature in border narratives? And, vice versa, how do border narratives become relevant for the larger political, economic, and ideological context? Where can the field of border studies help theorizing border narratives in Europe and the UK, and where are other tools necessary for this context?

Border
Narratives
Brexit, Europe, and the UK

5–7 May 2021

Kristian Shaw

'This Blessed Plot': BrexLit and the Island Mentality

Britain's recent exit from the European Union on 23rd June 2016 signalled an unprecedented historic moment for the nation and has resulted in a form of political isolationism unthinkable at the turn of the millennium. The years leading up the EU referendum witnessed a sudden and violent shift towards right-wing populism, hostility towards supranational forms of cosmopolitical democracy and global interdependence, extensive opposition to open border policies, discontent with the cultural implications of globalization, and a xenophobic resistance to both immigrants and transnational mobility more widely. Such developments call for a re-evaluation of how Europe is narrated in Britain and the impact of 'national' literature on the cultural imaginary. Beginning with a brief analysis of Brexit and its immediate consequences, the paper will then provide a timely close reading of post-Brexit fictions – forming a literary genre which I have termed 'Brexlit' (Shaw 2016) – including *Spring* (2019) by Ali Smith, *Exit West* (2017) by Mohsin Hamid, *Breach* (2017) by Annie Holmes and Olumide Popoola, and *The Wall* (2019) by John Lanchester.

The paper will also argue that British antipathy towards the European project and the ongoing construction of an island mentality was already evident in the late twentieth-century British fictions of Kingsley Amis, Tim Parks and Malcolm Bradbury, which betrayed a Eurosceptic resistance to immigration and the renegotiation of borders, casting the British as 'reluctant Europeans' – inhabitants of an inward-looking island resisting cosmopolitan imaginaries and the worst excesses of globalized society. In comparison, selected post-Brexit works will be shown to envision potential European political futures and conceptualize new cosmopolitan forms of belonging across borders. In so doing, the first wave of Brexlit indicates literature's potential to engage with emergent geopolitical realities and anticipate the fate of the nation.

Caroline Lusin

Homeric Warriors and Ancient Rites: (R)Evoking Borders in Michael Hughes' *Country* (2018) and Sarah Moss' *Ghost Wall* (2018)

If literature has always been a key medium of cultural self-reflection, contemporary fiction in English shows itself especially concerned with the isolationist ideology at the core of the Brexit vote. The notion of borders in particular as well as their transgression feature very prominently in a range of recent novels, such as Michael Hughes' *Country* (2018) and Sarah Moss' *Ghost Wall* (2018). Against the backdrop of different historical contexts, both novels explore the drive towards social, cultural, and ethnic division fuelling the Brexit debate. In *Country*, Michael Hughes transposes the story of Achilles from Homer's *Iliad* to the Irish border in 1996 during the 'Troubles'. *Ghost Wall*, by contrast, takes its readers on an expedition to rural Northumberland in the 1990s shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, where a group of characters try to emulate the life of iron age Britons, the so-called 'bog people', in an area shaped by Hadrian's Wall. Both novels thus incorporate historical perspectives that lend themselves well to exploring the questions of nationalism and collective as well as individual identities at the heart of border debates. This paper will investigate into how the novels shed light on Brexit by staging historical borders: Which plot elements, topoi, leitmotifs, images and metaphors do the authors employ to set in scene their border narratives? What is the role of ancient myth and history? What do the novels reveal concerning the nature of borders? And, last but not least, how and to what effect do they link their historical border narratives to the Brexit debate?

Wolfgang Funk

'The Last Line of Defence': The Politics of Border Control in Contemporary English Fiction"

Despite its publication in 2003, when Brexit – both as a word and an idea – was blissfully inexistent, Tony Saint's novel *Refusal Shoes* throws into sharp relief many of the issues around which the social, political and cultural fragmentation in Brexit Britain have crystallised, most importantly of course the question of immigration, which Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson so successfully managed to heave onto the centre stage of public discourse in the run-up to the Referendum of June 2016.

Set among the Immigration Service at Heathrow Airport (a world which Saint as a former Immigration Officer knows all too well), the novel chronicles the attempts of protagonist Henry Brinks to keep both his personal and his professional life on the straight-and-narrow, a task significantly complicated by the institutional racism and private spitefulness of his colleagues. In the first part of my paper, I will illustrate how the novel anticipates contemporary discussions on, among other things, the free movement of European citizens, the question of what makes an individual into a legal or illegal immigrant, or what it takes to be 'real' Brit or Englishman.

In the next step, I will briefly illustrate how other pre-Brexit novels – Julian Barnes's *England England*, James Hawes' *Speak for England* and, most significantly, Rupert Thomson's *Divided Kingdom* – use the depiction of borders to identify the hitherto invisible faultlines in British society (along issues of age, location, privilege, lifestyle…), which Brexit eventually revealed in such spectacular fashion.

In the final part of my paper, I will look at how these issues are reflected in examples of so-called Brexlit, i.e. literature written after the watershed of June 2016. My main example in this context will be John Lanchester's *The Wall*, which symbolises the current nationalist Little-Englandism pervading British politics by way of a massive wall surrounding the 'precious stone set in a silver sea'.

Mark Schmitt

"No Happiness without (B)order": Brexit, Collective Ecstasy and Transgression in Niall Griffiths's *Broken Ghost*

The work of Welsh novelist Niall Griffiths addresses the urgent political questions which result from the gradual devolution of the Welsh and Scottish nations. His novels anticipate what Tom Nairn has famously called the gradual "break-up of Britain" (1981) and imagine the possibilities and dangers of "post-British" (cf. Gardiner 2004) communities. Far from being exercises in literary utopianism,

however, Griffiths's novels do not simply highlight the inter-national divisions within the British nation-state, but also point to the intra-national fault lines within Wales that complicate idealised notions of devolved national unity. His first post-referendum novel, *Broken Ghost* (2019), focusses on the additional challenges of Brexit for a nation that is not only divided over the question of EU membership, but also by stark class differences.

In *Broken Ghost*, the spectral vision of a woman floating over the Welsh hills becomes the catalyst for social and political tensions to violently erupt in Brexit Britain. For the novel's central character-narrators – social outcasts who are severely affected by the social and political fallout of austerity politics and the Leave vote – , the vision becomes a source of hope and optimism. As people from all over the United Kingdom go on a pilgrimage to the site of the apparition at Lake Pendam, political detractors fear that the collective craze over the alleged apparition will destabilise the nation on the verge of leaving the EU and will empower "Remoaners", "illegal immigrants" and social "filth". As one commentator in the novel says, there is "no happiness without order" (57). This "order" relies on the maintenance of political and social boundaries that are challenged by the transgressive potential of collective ecstasy and counter-hegemonic action.

In my paper, I will demonstrate how Griffiths's novel interrogates the social and political divisions of Brexit Britain by juxtaposing two potential images of a future Britain after Brexit: the first scenario – "a glimpse into how life could, should be" (311) – is an ecstatic collective spectacle that prefigures a utopian post-British future which will unite the socially marginalised and overcome the bordering construct of the nation-state. This utopian scenario is contrasted with the bleak prospect of a corporate Britain ordered by private property laws and proto-fascist police brutality against transgressors of these laws. In my talk, I argue that the novel stages this collision of ideas by employing focal and narrative strategies that unsettle temporal and spatial order and thus challenge the boundaries necessary to maintain images of national unity.

Cris Shore

'How Did it Come to This?' An anthropological perspective on Brexit, Euroscepticism and the rise of 'angry politics'

When the history books about Brexit are written one of the key questions asked will be '*how* did this happen*?*' How did the UK – once renowned for stable governments, pragmatism, diplomacy, and over four decades in which EU membership had become the cornerstone of domestic and foreign policy – descend into such chaos and produce an outcome seemingly so harmful to its own economic interests and international standing? In this lecture I explore events surrounding the referendum and its outcome. Conventional explanations highlight internal struggles within the Conservative Party, failures of the 'Vote Remain' campaign and weaknesses of the UK's 'winner-takes-all' electoral system. Yet other factors were also important, including decades of neoliberal policies, growing mistrust in government, fears about immigration, the rise of populism and neo-nationalism and increasing media hostility towards the EU and the liberal establishment. These elements produced a 'perfect storm' of discontent for which bumper-sticker slogans like 'take back control' offered a simple and appealing solution. However, none of these factors explain the widespread Euroscepticism that underpinned the Brexit vote. In this talk I offer some anthropological reflections on Brexit and trace the roots of Britain's troubled relationship with the EU. Following Kathryn Verdery (1999), I argue that we need to examine the politics of Brexit in terms of 'enchantment' and what Maskovsky and Bjork-James (2021) call 'angry politics'. If Brexit provides an anthropological window for analysing deeper fault lines in contemporary Britain, it also highlights problems in the EU, particularly its democratic deficit and the legacy of its austerity policies.

Astrid Fellner

The Border Turn in Literary Studies: Border Poetics and Figurations of Border Crossings

This talk will focus on the role borders have played in literature. Showing how writers have engaged in the negotiation of borders through aesthetic practices, I will argue that the border has become an important paradigm in literary studies. Border figurations have especially become important in narratives of migration and cultural crossings. As I want to show, the newly emerging field of Cultural Border Studies offers theories and methods with which to approach these border narratives. Tracing a series of theoretical concerns and concepts which have been used in order to theorize borders, I will focus on the concept of bordertextures, a concept whose genealogy is rooted in conceptualizations of the border as a hybrid zone of inter-woven and continuous existences. Most crucially, bordertextures entail the creativity and the energy that emerges from subaltern subject positions. They engage what Walter Mignolo has called "border thinking" and have the potential of offering a powerful tool for the analysis of alternative forms of knowledge, which often rest hidden in border narratives, and which can be carved out through decolonial readings of these texts.

Victoria Herche

Of Boats and Walls: Migrating Iconographies in John Lanchester's *The Wall* (2019)

The current debate about the fortification of European borders signals the return of the literal and symbolic wall in contemporary politics worldwide. Anxieties about changes instigated by the influx of migrants from the European continent into Britain in recent years played a major part in the Brexit referendum. It is in this context that John Lanchester's acclaimed dystopian vision of a world destroyed by climate change, *The Wall* (2019), investigates the power of iconographies connected to migration in an age of global anxieties, exploring the social and cultural implications of the wall and the boat as transnationally available symbolic currency and as materiality. Lanchester's futuristic vision of a wall around Britain to safeguard against intruders (arriving by boat) from the sea calls upon a historical and cultural network of walls and boats and points towards the relationality between the wall and the boat as complementary symbols of inside/outside divisions, which have been politically instrumentalised throughout history. The novel thereby draws on a rich intertextual web, not predominantly in terms of direct references, but more so by using triggers, such as images, symbols, narratives and genres, which are invested with a rich associative field in different cultural contexts. In this sense the novel critically engages with questions about universalizing the particular/individual by showing how the wall and the boat as images and materiality travel in memories and are translated into media. At the same time the novel also explores the limits of this physical and psychological control and the power of unforeseen situations generating possibilities and new associations. The novel thus presents a counter-narrative that – by exploring the complexities involved in processes of signifying and re-configuring the image of the wall and boat in national imaginaries – discusses how fiction is a critical tool to destabilize dominant cultural tropes.

Dunja M. Mohr

"Who knows what Old Hatreds will loosen across the Land now?": Border stories and Brexit in Contemporary British Literature

After decades dedicated to overcoming borders and differences fiction following the vision of a world without borders, culminating in the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990, material and symbolic wall-building have become a "global phenomenon" (Vallet 2014) in the 21st century. In politics, the U.S. and several European countries follow a border-wall rhetoric of power, enclosure, exclusion, and demonization and engage in building border barriers or heavily patrol the maritime borders of the EU. In fiction, George R.R. Martin's acclaimed fantasy series *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996-) popularized for a global audience in the spectacular HBO

series *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019) uses the ultimate border metaphor, the Wall, in a number of allegorical ways, as a physical protection of the North from the invasion of the others and the return of the dead within an allegorical Anthropocene setting. In the era of climate crisis, borders change not only in terms of geopolitics or for ideological reasons, but climate change literally alters the physical geography of borders, undermining vulnerable communities worldwide. Against this background, my talk reads John Lanchester's *The Wall* (2018) both as a Brexit narrative of the future and as a fictional take on migration caused by a global climate catastrophe, as it critically engages with the shifting of borders and their arbitrariness, the process of othering, the generational rifts, and the resulting aesthetic depletion. In a second step, I hope to contrast Lanchester's projection of the future with Kazuo Ishiguro's mythical Arthurian take on othering, historical tribalism, the ambivalent effects of establishing differences in *The Buried Giant* (2015).

Panel 3: Borders of the Nation: Ali Smith's Seasonal Quartet

Lena Steveker

"Fenced Off and Walled In: Narrating British Borders in Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016) and John Lanchester's *The Wall* (2019)"

Both Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016) and John Lanchester's *The Wall* (2019) explore the cultural repercussions of the British vote for Brexit. Set in the fall of 2016, Smith's *Autumn* is a 'condition-of-Britain' novel which traces the divisory lines running through British society in the post-referendum period. Lanchester's *The Wall* is a dystopia which not only negotiates twenty-first-century anxieties about climate change, but also comments on the debates on immigration and British identity which have fed into the Brexit vote. I suggest reading these two novels as border narratives, and I take my cue from their shared strategy of using physical means of demarcation as metaphors for the cultural impact of the Brexit referendum: in *Autumn*, an electrified steel fence – complete with razorwire and security cameras – is built on common land, without any explanation as to its initiators or its purpose. In *The Wall*, Britain is surrounded by a gigantic concrete wall built in reaction to

rising sea levels and increasing numbers of immigrants. In my paper, I will analyse how the fence in Smith's novel and the wall in Lanchester's novel serve to narrate different, and indeed competing, stories of Britain and its borders, both physical and cultural. As I will argue, *Autumn* rejects the idea of borders as lines of territorial enclosures in favour of the notion that borders, in particular those of Britain, are historical and cultural contact zones. In contrast to the open, outward-looking and inclusive notion of borders put forward in Smith's novel, *The Wall* conceptualises British borders as closed, inward-looking and exclusive. I will show that despite the novel's dystopian vision of its titular wall, which reviewers have interpreted as a warning against isolationism, *The Wall* in fact continues the narrative of Britain as an 'island story', its culture best flourishing within the borders established and patrolled by the 'grand narratives' of patriarchy, Christianity and the canon of English literature.

Dennis Henneböhl

The Representation of External and Internal Borders and Their Interaction with National Identity in Ali Smith's '*Seasonal Quartet*'

Borders play a constitutive role in the formation of national identity as they contribute to the construction of a nation as an 'imagined community' that is inherently limited (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 6-7). Brexit can be understood as foregrounding such (external and internal) borders drawn in Britain – and this view is also taken by Smith's *Autumn*, which was hailed as "the first post-Brexit novel" (Kavenna, "*Autumn* by Ali Smith Review", *Guardian* 23 May 2019). This paper will analyse how the four novels of her 'Seasonal Quartet' highlight the central role of borders and boundaries in the context of Brexit. As part of this analysis, constructions of British national identity and its larger ideological contexts as well as the economic and geophysical contexts addressed in the novels will be taken into consideration. All four novels feature references to the exclusionary force of both national and European borders, e.g. in the context of migration. Whereas *Autumn* and *Winter* deal with the exclusion of migrants in Britain in a more indirect way, this is foregrounded in *Spring* and *Summer* as they are dealing

with refugees being detained in an Immigration Removal Centre. This can be read as constituting a border drawn (spatially) within the nation, as it forms a world of its own, with a hedge around it. Indeed, the 'Quartet' also explicitly features the creation of new internal borders within the United Kingdom, e.g. through the leitmotif of fences that serve as a metaphor for divisive tendencies in contemporary British society. Moreover, *Summer*, the last novel in the series, already engages with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on border issues. I will use a combination of methods from cultural and literary studies in order to analyse the representation/critical reading of external and internal borders in the four novels.

Panel 4: Adaptation and Resistance

Anja Hartl

Adaptation as Border-Crossing Practice in Ali Smith's *Autumn*

Ali Smith's *Autumn* (2016) is preoccupied with the phenomenon of the border both thematically and formally speaking, as these concerns are negotiated through the novel's specific approach to adaptation. Creating a complex adaptive network, the novel interrogates aesthetic 'borders' between different texts, genres and media, eclectically combining references to and citations from canonical fictional works ranging from Shakespeare to Dickens to Achebe and boldly crossing the boundaries between literature and the visual arts as well as fiction and reality through the device of ekphrasis. Critically examining the implications of the novel's adaptive approach, this article investigates how *Autumn* creates a kaleidoscopic perspective on British history and culture as well as an experience of openness, fluidity and connectedness within the literary and cultural imaginary as an antidote to current sensibilities of narrowness and exclusivity exposed by the novel. Erasing rather than erecting epistemological and aesthetic borders, *Autumn* demonstrates that

adaptation may represent a privileged cultural practice for the post-Brexit moment.

Gioia Angeletti and Maria Elena Capitani

Europeanness, Border Aesthetics and Resistance in David Greig's anti-Brexit Plays

In 1992, responding to the impact of the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the climate of tension generated by the Yugoslav wars, Derrida wrote that "something unique is afoot in Europe, in what is still called 'Europe' even if we no longer know very well what or who goes by this name". Throughout his *opera omnia*, from the early 1990s onwards, the Scottish playwright David Greig has staged characters who encourage the audience to reflect upon or rethink of what Europeanness and European identity may mean. By engaging with the so-called "refugee crisis" and the problem of integration (*Europe*), confronting past traumas to understand the present (*Dr Korczak's Example*) and representing the encounter with the Other (*Damascus*), Greig's theatre addresses topics and issues that can be related to the British "Brexit" vote. In particular, one can identify a border aesthetics in his works that becomes an act of resistance against totalitarian and fundamentalist ideological apparatuses. Therefore, the aim of our joint paper will be to show how Greig's plays, all deeply informed by his interest in Brechtian dramatic theories and in Modernist European theatre, represent a reaction to the current Euroscepticism and the provincial populist outlook underlying the Brexit phenomenon. Greig's drama conveys an idea of cultural and (trans)national identity which involves permeable crossroad or border situations, while resisting against the resurgence of essentialist conceptions of nationality fixed on pre-determined defining terms and Self-vs.-Other dichotomies. Ultimately, the paper will provide evidence of what Greig once declared: perhaps the theatre cannot change the world, but, "if the battlefield is the imagination, then the theatre is a very appropriate weapon in the armoury of resistance".

Keynote 3

Barbara Korte and Christian Mair

Sybille Berg's *GRM Brainfuck* as a Dystopia of Bordered Britain

Brexit Britain appears to have become a parable for a bordering and bordered society. This idea is pursued in Sibylle Berg's novel *GRM Brainfuck*, a darkly comical novel which is set in a near-future Britain – closed off by external borders as well as haunted by internal divisions. Brexit has increased nationalism and xenophobia. Austerity has corroded the social fabric. Chipping the population ensures control of borders and a semblance of internal peace – at the high cost of stifling creativity and cross-border mobility. Resistance is put up by four young outsiders who rally around the aesthetics of grime culture and turn the surveillance system against itself.

Borders are not only a major theme in Berg's novel, but also inform its aesthetics, which crosses back and forth between traditional novelistic form and the disruptive techniques of grime. In the context of the conference, Berg's view from across the Channel – a potentially provocative border-crossing in itself – should raise awareness of the growing integration of visible physical and invisible technological borders in contemporary Europe.

Keynote 4

Katharina Rennhak

"The Kinopolitics of Irish Border Novels: Facts, Fictions and Affect"

In his *Theory of the Border* (2016) Thomas Nail emphasizes that "the border is not merely a derivative product but a primarily productive process" (21) and establishes a movement-oriented "kinopolitics" of the border, which regards "the basic and common structure of the border as a limit junction of social circulation" (35). Drawing on Nail's concept of "border kinopolitics", I will demonstrate how recent Irish fiction contributes to contemporary Irish border discourses in stories that tell of territorial, political, cultural and economic processes of 'bounding' and 'bordering'. Focusing on Anna Burns's *Milkman* (2018), Jan Carson's *The Fire Starters* (2019), Michael Hughes's *Country* (2018) and Ruth Gilligan's *The Butchers* (2020), I will compare different narrative approaches to contemporary Irish border issues and discuss how these four novels play with literary traditions and employ narrative strategies in their attempts to kinopolitically 'move' borders by affectively 'moving' their readers.

Panel 5: Bordering and Rebordering in Ireland

Joachim Frenk

"There's Him There: Northern Irish Border Narratives in the Works of Glenn Patterson"

After the Good Friday / Belfast Agreement of 1998, only very few in Ireland north and south will have deluded themselves about the deep scars the 30-year-conflict of the Troubles had left behind and about the continuing precarious state of the Irish border for the foreseeable future. Glenn Patterson (*1961) was born and still resides in Belfast, and he has arguably become the go-to cultural correspondent of post-agreement Belfast, not only in Ireland and the UK but also, increasingly, on the European mainland. He is a prolific journalist, fiction writer, and professor of creative writing at the School of Art, English and Literature at Queen's University Belfast. A self-confessed germanophile, Patterson has visited a number of German educational institutions, his favourite German location being Berlin, the German city that probably most closely resembles Belfast in its partitioned and violent history. In my talk, I want to discuss some of Patterson's contributions to the Irish border debate from a Northern Irish perspective. I will discuss some articles that were published in Irish and British newspapers as well as *Backstop Land* (2019), his extended eyewitness account of the Brexit negotiations and their consequences for Northern Ireland and its border, and his latest novel *Where Are We Now?* (2020), which offers a coded comment on matters (Northern) Irish via the story of a middle-aged Belfast man in crisis.

Ralf Haekel

"'over the road', 'over the water' and 'over the border'" – Political, social, and mental borders in Anna Burns's *Milkman*"

Borders play a central role in Anna Burns's award-winning novel *Milkman* (2018). Set in Northern Ireland at the height of the troubles, the text traces the restrictions and limitations created by mental, physical, and political borders. The novel's reduced and abstract style mirrors the claustrophobia and anxiety of a life defined by these visible and invisible borders. Identity – which is created by and through the definition of self and other – becomes blurred as all the nameless characters are reduced to their relational function: middle-sister, almost boyfriend, third brother-in-law, etc. Thus, the life of every individual is defined by endless mirrors of borders: the political border to England – the country 'over the water' – is repeated in the opposition of 'renouncers' and 'defenders of the state', i.e. republicans and unionists. This, in turn leads to an unbearable restriction of the lives of every individual trying to act and appear 'normal' – in itself a highly problematic term. This norm is synonymous with being invisible in a society characterized by anxiety and terrorism, and anyone who fails to act accordingly is deemed 'beyond-the-pale'. Burn's novel thus shows how the life of every individual is defined by political but even more so by social, mental, and linguistic border: it is no longer defined by social reality but rather by rumour and the gossipy creation of facts – turning *Milkman* into arguably the most important novel of our post-factual age.

Marcin Galent

How a digital revolution dismantled the borders of the British polity during the Brexit referendum campaign.

In 2017, Oxford Dictionaries declared the term 'post-truth' as their international word of the year for 2016. The inspiration for this decision was a conviction triumphantly expressed by one of the main managers of the campaign to leave the Union European Union. He had stated that in contrast to the supporters of the Remain cause, who focused their discourse on hard facts and expert opinions, the campaign for Brexit cause chose a strategy based on the impact on emotions. Suddenly, public discourse became filled with words previously used only by hermetic groups of specialists and geeks, such as: bots, netbots, fake news, deep fake news, psy ops, micro targeting, psychography, blind posts, big data, astroturfing, etc. Today, one can admit that the Brexit referendum campaign became a testing ground for the effectiveness of new political communication techniques that have had a huge impact on the presidential election in the USA and subsequent political campaigns in Europe and all over the world. Since then, these phenomena have become the subject of careful scrutiny by many researchers, journalists, and experts, thanks to which, social self-awareness and expert knowledge about the types and shapes of these profound transformations of the public sphere in the contemporary world has grown significantly. Alas, it has turned out that the hopes and ideas associated with the development of communication mediated by digital developments, instead of serving social emancipation through rationalization of social communication understood in the Habermasian spirit, has given way to fears of manipulation, unauthorized interference, and irrationalisation of the decreasingly transparent public sphere. Moreover, in the course of the referendum campaign, new challenges related to the determination of polity boundaries arose. There are many reasons to claim that during the campaign, many of the very active actors involved operated illegitimately by breaking the fundamental concept of political citizenship, but also by not obeying many specific rules regulating political campaigning. These actors not only acted from outside of the UK, but they were also able to bypass British electoral law when carrying out their operations. It turned out that a huge share of the social communication in the UK took place on platforms located outside of the country. Thereby, this aspect of British polity has become a subject to processes of institutional deterritorialisation and debordisation.

The presentation will focus on these two specific developments, as well as the consequences they have for the condition of the contemporary public sphere and democratic representation.

Luiza-Maria Filimon

"'They met with a bunch of migrants in Calais…': Reviewing the Use of Dog Whistles in the Tory Discourse Surrounding Immigration"

There are many underlying causes that have put the United Kingdom on the path to leave the European Union (EU): some of them are economical (austerity) and technological (microtargeting) in nature, others can be traced to an embryonary Euroscepticism built into the very fabric of the accession process to the EU, but above all else, the Brexit would not have been possible without being endorsed by mainstream vectors. In this case, the main architect and chief enabler being the Conservative Party. While UKIP may have overseen the campaign to stoke nationalist fears prior to the referendum, the Conservative Party had also engaged in a discriminatory rhetoric often times framed as appeals towards strengthening the national economy or the security of the state. After all why entertain the prospects of a potential Brexit if there was no "probable cause" to undertake such an initiative to begin with? The refugee crisis from 2015 exemplified such practices: while Prime Minister Cameron promised that "UK will fulfill its moral obligations" (Sparrow 2015), Home Secretary Theresa May talked about how the asylum policy in place at that time was flawed given that it was seen to be in the service of those she described as "[the] wealthiest, the luckiest and the strongest" (*BBC News* 2015). Rebordering efforts were soon to follow: the one kilometer long and four-metre high Calais border wall was completed in December 2016 even though the refugee camp from the region had already been dismantled prior to the construction of the security barrier. The article examines the discursive framing on immigration employed by the Conservative Party in the period leading to the referendum and afterwards as well as the extent to which the party engaged in dog whistle politics in light of the party's voter base views on immigration. Finally, it takes into account the material effects (rebordering) such discourses can have on policy-making.

BORDER NARRATIVES: BREXIT, EUROPE AND THE UK

Organisers: Lars Klein and Kirsten Sandrock
Conference assistants: Cora Övermann and Akash Saxena

HISTORISCHE STERNWARTE   GÖTTINGEN

I.
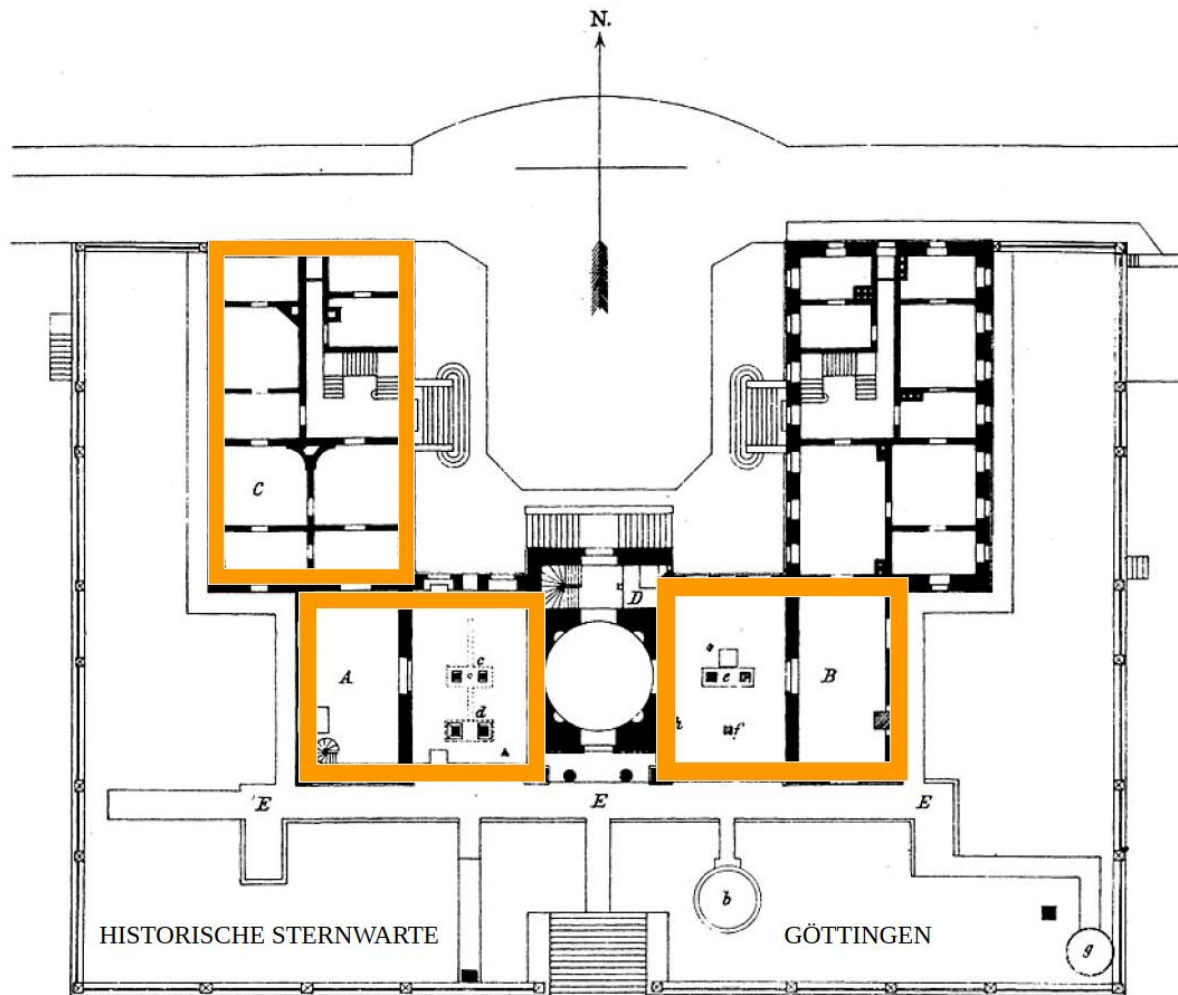
You are welcome to join one of the following breakout rooms:

A. The Parlor: This is where you and fellow participants can have a coffee, or a tea, and of course, a chat.

B. The Study: You want to talk more about the panel you just attended? This way, please.

C. The Library: If you have any questions or comments regarding literature, this is the room for you.

D. The Ice Box (outside): Need a break from the screen just to cool down for a while? Go do it!

Georg-August-Universität Göttingen