OOC DTP AHRC INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 15 - 17 SEPTEMBER 2025

Theme: 'Borders and Boundaries'

The Queen's College, University of Oxford

Contents

Session 1 Monday 15th September 14:00-15:15

Panel 1: 'Exploring Disciplinary Boundaries' (Chair: Matilda Eriksson)

Suren Maz Pahlevan (University of Cambridge), 'AI, Music Production, Ethnomusicology, and the boundaries of multiple rapidly changing fields.'

Ethnomusicologists are no strangers to interdisciplinary study; they constantly challenge and disrupt the boundaries of multiple different fields simultaneously within their work. Nonetheless, when ethnographically researching innovations in music AI, it becomes clear that this rapidly emerging realm of inquiry currently contains needlessly divided scholarly approaches and modes of knowledge. Whilst they all study 'music AI' in some way, the methodological, thematic, and institutional borders that ethnomusicologists, computer scientists (in music), computer music researchers, music technologists, and AI ethicists have created around their own disciplines has stifled our understanding into how music producers are using – and desire further development of – ethical music AI tools to enhance their creativity. The overly restrictive disciplinary boundaries between these fields hurts them all in creating AI that works for the good of humanity, and especially for the good of musicians. Ethnographically studying music AI thus requires a greater understanding of where multiple disciplinary borders meet but do not often mix.

Whilst conducting ethnographic study into how music AI tools are changing digital audio workstation production – interviewing 24 producers including multiple multi-platinum certified producers (who have produced for artists including Drake, Kendrick Lamar, The Weeknd, and Kanye West) – it becomes clear that ethnomusicological study in this area has not evolved to the point where it stands alone as a sub-discipline. It is largely restricted by its own disciplinary boundaries. In developing the foundations of the sub-discipline of 'ethnomusicology of AI', it is vital that we push our current borders and incorporate works from the fields of computer science, computer music, human-computer interaction, AI Ethics, music technology, sociology, and the emerging field of 'Music AI Studies' (Born, 2025). In this paper, I present my ethnographic findings, and explain how by venturing across disciplinary boundaries we can better map the future of music AI innovations and research.

Amy Wells (University of Oxford), 'Sentence first, verdict afterwards: the impact and influence of disciplinary boundaries on interdisciplinary research'.

Despite an increase in the encouragement of interdisciplinary work, the logistical realities of academic work continue to make demands for a defined specialisation; "which field are you contributing to?" is a question persistently asked of researchers. This paper shall look at the impact and influence of disciplinary boundaries on a project that is inherently interdisciplinary, bridging book history with childhood studies to ask how children have

historically interacted with books in English country houses. Rather than focusing solely on texts or reading practices, the research adopts a holistic approach centred on the concept of "bookhood" to consider books as evolving, interactive objects. This perspective allows for an exploration of how books were revisited over time, used in unconventional ways beyond reading, and how the lives of books interacted with the lives of their owners.

A recurring challenge in this project has been the question of disciplinary belonging: does my research contribute more to book history or to histories of childhood? This question is further complicated by my own academic background, which spans three degrees across three different disciplines. Additionally, I often encounter histories of children acting in ways that transcend conventionalised understandings of child/adult categories. While academia often encourages a specialised focus, this paper argues that research grounded in interdisciplinarity—particularly when dealing with a large body of collection-based primary sources—can yield deeper insights into lived experiences. By crossing disciplinary boundaries, I aim to demonstrate that an approach unconstrained by rigid specialisms offers the most authentic understanding of human interactions with books. In discussing the challenges and benefits of working across fields, this paper ultimately advocates for a research model mirroring the complexity of human lives that do not fit neatly within disciplinary categories.

Natasha Jenman (University of Oxford), 'Medieval Borders; Modern Boundaries: What Jews in Medieval England Can Reveal About Conflicting Identities in the Twentieth Century'.

Borders and boundaries are often assumed to be endemic in medieval England, particularly as exclusionary forces against minority groups, such as Jewish people. Yet the strength of these boundaries between a Christian majority and the Jewish communities of England (c.1066-1290) has been the subject of great debate in the 20th century. Influenced by modern social, political and even academic divides, the medieval Anglo-Jewish scholarship reacted to the rise of Nazism, navigated the dust settling in the post-war period, and today is visible in the distinction between 'Jewish Studies' which may have a historical focus, and 'History' which may have a Jewish focus.

My PhD research is a study of networks and connections - relationships that superseded the boundaries of medieval England - but, in this paper, I will explore how these historical borders have resonated in contemporary scholarship. Using the case study of medieval Lincoln, which was the site of a notorious ritual murder allegation against the Jewish community, I will compare the presence of borders and boundaries in the contemporary Chroniclers' accounts (which should notably be taken with a grain of salt), and the public and scholarly fascination with this tale in modern times.

This approach lowers the imagined border between the historical subject and the act of studying it, acknowledging that the modern socio-political landscape has been, and continues to be, projected onto the medieval sphere. Do modern, academic boundaries between the categorically 'Jewish' and the 'general history' still serve us? Medieval and

twentieth century commentators were influenced by the world they lived in, so as products of our own society, what does this reflection on borders and boundaries suggest about identity and history in our own time?

Panel 2: 'Boundaries of the Body' (Chair: Andrew McNey)

Helena Constance Aeberli (University of Oxford), 'Dissolution and Disgust: Collapsing Bodily Boundaries and the Seventeenth-Century "Great Eater of Gray's Inn'.

In 1653, 'Old Marriot, of Gray's Inn (the great eater)' was buried. William Marriot had been a recognisable figure in Interregnum London, a veteran lawyer who had achieved infamy the previous year when an anonymous pamphlet entitled 'The Great Eater of Grayes-Inn, or the Life of Mr Marriot the Cormorant' depicted him as a grotesque glutton with 'more gutts than braines' who eats, shits, and vomits his way through London. The pamphlet paid close attention to the visceral materiality and sensory encroachments of Marriot's body, its various orifices, their ingestions and excretions. In doing so, it deliberately weaponised the affect of disgust in order to denigrate its subject. Incontinent and undisciplined, Marriot was shown as unable to control his 'ungodly' appetite or the boundaries of his leaky body.

This paper will examine the numerous unstudied satires, pamphlets, and poems about Marriot, arguing that the great eater's grotesque body, with its lack of respect for distance, boundaries, and distinctions, provided an opportune image for writers disturbed by the collapse of appropriate order and hierarchy within England's body politic. Here, this paper follows Mary Douglas's influential insight that bodily 'boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious', and thus 'the orifices of the body symbolise its specially vulnerable points'. By 1652, England had endured a decade of civil war, the upending of social order, including the rise of radical sectarianism, and the still-recent shock of regicide. The ancient metaphor of the body politic, long the guiding principle of proper order and governance, had been violated, decapitated by regicide and dismembered into warring parts. Through close analysis and contextualisation, this paper will argue that precarious borders and collapsing boundaries offered a potent imaginary, one in which Marriot's body, like the body politic, was in need of humiliation, discipline, and control.

Elliot Koubis (University of Oxford), 'Queer Bodies, Queer Boundaries: Literary and Personal Transgressions in French and Greek Writing'.

What challenges emerge while pursuing a queer DPhil across two rarely compared cultures? Is it possible, or even advisable, to challenge academic boundaries by shaping one's research questions around issues of one's own queer becoming?

This talk reflects methodological and personal issues raised during the writing of my thesis, which uses the work of Édouard Louis to explore queer identity and kinship in what I call the 21st-century 'queer moment'. Louis and his contemporaries ask what queerness and kinship mean when, despite greater visibility, the so-called 'progress' of LGBTQIA+ movements has proved to be precarious. I will explain how my research focus and corpus emerged from personal struggles I had around queer identity and belonging. What is more, I will stress that this unorthodox approach, which contests the boundary between academic literary criticism with autoethnography, brought about fruitful comparisons.
In my paper, I compare two French authors, Édouard Louis and Constance Debré, with the Greek author-activist Maria Cyber. I will explore how these authors transform themselves by crossing boundaries between classes, sexual identities, genres and nations. Central to my analysis is how these authors curate a queer body or self, even survive, through bodily practices, writing and the use (or abandonment) of kinship communities. I will stress how the precarious context of LGBTQIA+ communities necessitates survival strategies that question the meanings of queer kinship and identity.

I will conclude by demonstrating how comparing two seemingly disparate literary cultures can yield interesting results. I will also compare my own use of writing to mediate my own queer transformation to that of my authors. In so doing, I explore the possibilities and limitations of a personal, autoethnographic approach to comparative queer literature and question the capacity of academic writing to speak to the personal dimensions it often suppresses.

Nienke Groskamp (University of Cambridge), 'Spiritual Anaesthesia: Religion, Medicine, and Childbirth in Nineteenth-Century America'.

This paper addresses the entanglement of religion and medicine, focusing on Christian Science and childbirth in the nineteenth-century United States. From 1879 Christian Science functioned as a religion and a healing practice, training thousands of women excluded from most mainstream medical colleges. The founder Mary Baker Eddy made reproduction central to her vision, offering obstetrics as the sole specialisation at her college. Published testimonies and personal correspondence reveal that the promise of pain-free childbirth was an important part of the appeal of Christian Science. While mainstream obstetricians increasingly turned to chemical anaesthetics, Christian Science reimagined childbirth as a natural and divine process to be made painless through mental discipline and prayer. Historians of childbirth trace the assertion that fear, not physiology, causes pain to the work of obstetricians Grantly Dick-Read and Fernand Lamaze in the 1950s. However, I argue that Christian Science introduced such methods decades prior to the rise of scientific theories on psychological pain relief. Crucially, these methods originated from a religious framework and were designed for use in the home. Opposing the growing materialism in professional medicine and its exclusion of women, Christian Science promised spiritual, intellectual, and physical liberation. Examining its obstetric practices illuminates how boundaries between

science and esotericism were constructed during a period when spokesmen of science pressed expansive claims to authority.

Panel 3: 'The Limits of Settlement' (Chair: Benjamin Anderson)

Daniel Gallano (Universität zu Köln), 'The Uncanny within the City Boundary'.

This paper explores the relationship between boundaries and familiarity in the idea and experience of the city. Spatial boundaries define us and our position at different scales, from the body to the home to the city. Human societies create familiar, safe and controlled interiors by modifying their environments through building and inhabiting practices. I will examine whether Kaika's analysis of the modern home as a line separating the domestic inside from the social and natural processes outside can be applied to the urban scale. Relating to my own PhD project, I argue that the city produces the idea of the human controllability of the world and establishes the conceptual boundary between the 'human' and the excluded 'nature'. First, I will compare the ideological construction of the urban boundary with that of the home, discussing what each excludes or hides and what part of social and natural processes is included in the idea of the city. I will describe the urban boundary as a de iure decision that is de facto enacted and maintained through constant control, a labour of concealment and technologies of exclusion. Secondly, following Kaika's concept of the 'domestic uncanny', I will reflect on the disturbance of the familiar and the disruption of the idea of control within the urban boundary. My aim is to reveal the ambiguity of the familiarisation process, the illusory character of the boundary, and the uncontrollability of nature not only in times of disaster, but also in the everyday urban experience.

Pablo Scheffer (University of Oxford), 'The Farm and the Forest-Man: Conceptualising borders in medieval Iceland'.

This paper will explore how borders are conceptualised – and problematised – in the medieval Icelandic family sagas (Íslendingasögur). The Íslendingasögur are forty-or-so pseudo-naturalistic narratives about the lives of Iceland's first European settlers, and are rooted in a cosmography that differentiated firmly between an innangarðs ("inside the fence") and an útangarðs ("outside the fence"). The innangarðs was the well-known, social, human world; the útangarðs, broadly speaking, was the dangerous, unknown wilderness, where beasts and monsters roamed. In Iceland, a society devoid of any urban development, these two spaces had clear analogues in the landscape. Each farm was surrounded by a fence that separated the infield, which contained the farm buildings and was used for intensive fodder production, from the largely untilled outfield beyond. In this paper, I will consider how the sagas engage with borders across these two conceptual scales.

My reflections will revolve around the figure of the outlaw. Outlawry was the harshest punishment in medieval Iceland. Those convicted were banished and forced to dwell away from human society, in the útangarðs; medieval Icelanders referred to them as skógarmenn ("forest-men"). Yet in the sagas, these forest-men rarely stay in the wilderness. We encounter them instead around the margins of the social world: in secret cellars under farmsteads, in small patches of birch woodland, on islets off the coast. Some skógarmenn are praised as heroes; others are represented as rogue, semi-monstrous criminals. This paper will think about the sagas' treatment of these outlaws in the context of the innangarðs/útangarðs divide. In doing so, it will shed light on how medieval Icelanders thought about the physical boundaries that punctuated their landscape, as well as the conceptual boundaries that marked the limits of their society.

Eva-Katharina Keblowsky (Universität zu Köln), 'Settlement Borders and the Negotiation of Social Norms in Archaic Greek Literature'.

In ancient Greek literature, boundaries and transitional spaces appear not only as geographical features of settlements but also serve as symbolic frameworks for negotiating social norms. Using the recurring motif of bride abduction, I explore how the edges of settlements become spaces where society reflects on its own internal boundaries. Bride abduction – with wellknown examples such as the abduction of Europa by Zeus or Persephone by Hades – occupies a morally and socially ambivalent space. These actions, which go against established norms, often take place in locations that mark the transition between the inhabited world and the natural environment. Such liminal spaces are especially suited to acts that challenge or renegotiate social expectations. I argue that these border areas are used in narratives to explore the limits of what is socially acceptable. This analysis is part of my research in Ancient History, which focuses on early settlement development and its reciprocal relationship with social structures. In this context, I examine how both symbolic and geographical boundaries are represented and charged with meaning in archaic literature.

Panel 4: 'Imagined Borders' (Chair: Alexander Lynch)

Jéssica Andrade Tolentino (Australian National University), 'Fiction at the border: liminal childhoods and the crisis of representation in Lost Children Archive'.

Fiction confronts ethical and aesthetic boundaries when representing humanitarian crises, particularly those involving vulnerable subjects. Valeria Luiselli's Lost Children Archive (2019) navigates this treacherous terrain by addressing the deportation of children at the Mexico–United States border. Deeply concerned with both literal and conceptual borders,

her work blurs the boundaries between genres (novel, documentary, life writing), fiction and reality, and personal and collective histories.

Through a close textual analysis of Lost Children Archive, this paper examines how the novel challenges traditional paradigms of representation. Focusing on the portrayal of children, both as subject matter and as a narrative perspective, I analyse the text through the lens of affect (Ahmed, 2004). Children in Luiselli's work operate within a dual logic of presence and absence: while the narrator's own children accompany her throughout the narrative, the migrant children at the border remain physically absent, presented mostly through news reports, maps, statistics, fragments from apocryphal works, and as the objects of the narrator's concern. These absent figures generate affective intensities that unsettle dominant discourses on migration and open up representational spaces beyond conventional narrative.

I argue that childhood—itself a liminal and bordering condition (Turner, 1969)—becomes a powerful site for interrogating the representational and ethical dilemmas of storytelling in contexts of crisis. In this sense, Luiselli's meta-literary engagement with childhood positions her work within a contemporary post-representational sensibility (MacLure, 2013), where the impossibility of fully capturing certain experiences becomes part of the narrative's ethical and aesthetic strategy. This paper ultimately demonstrates how contemporary literature, such as Luiselli's, is developing innovative aesthetic strategies that acknowledge representational boundaries while still ethically engaging with urgent humanitarian concerns, suggesting new paths for fiction in an age of global crisis.

Holly Rowe (University of Oxford), '"A sort of novel": Montesquieu's Persian Letters (1721) and the eighteenth-century periodical essay'.

This paper considers how Montesquieu's hugely successful epistolary novel Persian Letters (1721) relates to the literary form of the essay. In the letters, two Persian noblemen in Paris recount their impressions of French society, institutions, and customs – many of which appear curious, absurd, or contradictory. The Persian Letters are a satirical critique of French society during the reign of Louis XIV and the Regency. Through the Persians' observations on French culture, government, and religion, Montesquieu (1689-1755) – a magistrate, historian, and political philosopher – reflects on questions of power, justice, reason, and freedom.

The Persians' journey from Isfahan to France serves a narrative and critical function. As they travel, moving through the urban environment and Parisian polite society, they observe, encounter, and record; their letters combine descriptive accounts with philosophical reflection and introspection. The travellers' reflections are dependent on their interaction with French society, but also the unfamiliarity of their surroundings. The Persians' distance from Isfahan and separation from their correspondents is the

precondition of their writing.

This method recalls the urban wandering that characterises the early eighteenth-century periodical essay, in which the observations of a peripatetic narrative persona serve as a pretext for social commentary and reflection. My paper argues that the critical mode of the Persian Letters, which relies on movement and observation across geographical and cultural boundaries, should be understood in relation to the literary method of wandering, thinking, and writing that is typical of English periodicals such as The Spectator.

Montesquieu described his work as 'a sort of novel', defending the epistolary form as facilitating 'digressions' and 'reflections' that wouldn't be possible in conventional novels. By examining how Persian Letters combines travel literature, letter-writing, and the essay, my paper reflects on the boundaries that separate different literary genres, and how we define a research corpus on this basis.

Emma Lambrecht (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), 'Exploring the Intersection of Speech and Writing in 19th-Century West Flemish Pauper Letters and Judicial Statements'.

Given the absence of audio recordings in a significant part of history, written texts often remain the sole resource for historical sociolinguists investigating past speech (cf. Martineau 2013: 130). Although these documents rarely constitute verbatim accounts of the spoken word (cf. Serwadczak forthcoming), a comparison of various text types which differ in their proximity to spoken language allows to make inferences about historical speech events (Rissanen 2000: 188). Therefore, this study aims to contribute to a better understanding of past spoken vernaculars by juxtaposing two distinct speech-related text types: a speech-like and speech-based one (cf. Culpeper & Kyto 2010). In doing so, we will consider how these kinds of documents navigate the boundary between spoken and written language. Specifically, we will examine a dual corpus of West Flemish pauper letters and judicial statements, written between 1837 and 1890. These text types respectively represent a substitution of spoken communication (speech-like) and a written rendition of a speech event (speech-based). Even though the pauper letters are not private correspondence - the prototypical example of speech-like texts - previous research has established that they encompass many elements reflecting the spoken vernaculars alongside more formal and epistolary features (cf. Puttaert 2019). We will determine the distance of each text type to spoken language by empirically focusing on three linguistic variables: (1) lower mean word length, a rough and relatively indirect marker of orality; (2) the use of paratactic structures with en ('and'), a common speech phenomenon; and (3) the retention of West Flemish endings (-e,-t,-en) in first-person singular present indicative verbs (e.g. ick hoope 'I hope' v. ick hoop), a specific marker of West Flemish dialects. To count the occurrence and distribution of these three features within each text type, we will conduct a quantitative analysis, considering both synchronic variation and diachronic

trends. Subsequently, the results of the pauper letters and criminal records will be compared. Our findings indicate that the pauper letters preserve overall more features associated with spoken language and exhibit greater linguistic variation. The judicial statements, conversely, show a stronger adherence to standardized and formalized norms. From a sociolinguistic perspective, this contrast may reflect differences in writing practices: while the scribes of the pauper letters appear to have held a certain freedom in their writing, those of the criminal records seem to have conformed more closely to conventional written norms – suggesting that a speech-like text type may offer a more truthful reflection of past spoken vernaculars than a speech-based one.

Session 2 Monday 15 September 15:45-17:15

Panel 5: 'Perspectives on Methodology' (Chair: Professor Laura Wright)

Kaleigh Woolford (University of Toronto), 'Drawing borders in the lexicon: wrangling the non-discrete nature of word meaning to uncover lexical variation and change'.

When faced with our boundless and constantly evolving lexicon, there is no shortage of questions concerning the human propensity for language variation and change. Why do we use the specific words we use? When faced with multiple options, why do we choose one word over another? Why do some words become 'fashionable' and exhibit rocketing frequencies over time (e.g., weird), while their other synonyms decline in use (e.g., strange) or remain relatively infrequent (e.g., bizarre, peculiar, odd) (see, for example, Chambers, 2001; Sankoff, Thibault & Bérubé, 1978; Tagliamonte & Brooke, 2014; Tagliamonte and Pabst, 2020)? The answer to these questions is not that processes of language variation and change are random. Since the emergence of variation linguistics, an analytical framework for investigating the factors that influence language in use, an immense body of work has shown that individuals' alternation of linguistic forms is systematic and patterned (see Labov, 1966a; Labov, 1972; Weinreich, Labov, & Herzog, 1968). Indeed, innumerable studies have demonstrated that linguistic variation is an inherent part of language, involving a set of principled organizational systems. Moreover, it is possible to uncover language-internal and language-external factors (such as gender, social class, and age) that constrain individuals' language use (e.g., Labov, 1966b, Tagliamonte, 2012). Although language variation has been extensively examined across levels of the grammar, ranging from phonological (e.g., running vs. runnin') to morphological (quick vs. quickly) to syntactic (e.g., give her an apple vs. give an apple to her), questions concerning the nature of variation and change in the lexicon, such as those posed above, remain relatively unexplored (but see Thibault 1991). A main stumbling block concerns the non-discrete nature of word meaning. That is, as the borders between meanings are blurry at best, it is difficult to adhere to the variationist procedure of defining closed sets of competing forms that are "two [or more] ways of saying the same thing" (Tagliamonte 2012:4). In the case of

the lexicon, the goal is to identify lexical fields or sets of alternating words that express the same underlying meaning. However, as exact semantic equivalence (or 'true synonymy') is rare or even non-existent (Cruse 1986), the decision of which words to include in a given analysis is not simple or straightforward. How similar is similar enough? While it is perhaps easy to assert that strange and weird are two ways of saying the same thing, what about curious or uncanny? In addition, the borders of neighbouring lexical fields are often blurred, meaning that words may not fit clearly in one field over another. For instance, does eerie belong with strange and weird? Or rather with words such as creepy and spooky? These questions become problematic in the context of linguistic change. The fuzziness at the boundaries of word meaning challenges any clear-cut answers to these questions. The main aim of this work, which is situated within a larger project examining the effect of meaning on lexical variation and change, is to address the challenge of fitting lexical variation into the bounds of quantitative analysis given the non-discrete nature of word meaning. By comparing a novel method of detecting lexical fields in corpus data to other existing approaches, I will show that the decision of where to draw the boundary around a lexical field is largely methodological and motivated by the aims of the analysis, rather than reflecting a true discrete boundary between meanings in the lexicon. I will argue that constructed borders around lexical fields ultimately enable analysts to understand systematic patterns of lexical variation, offering new insight into the complex and borderless reality of meaning in the lexicon.

Manuel Standop (Universität zu Köln), 'Borderland Economies: Fieldwork at the Frontiers of Law, State, and Trade'.

As part of my PhD in the DFG-funded project 'Smelling the Wild', my research examines the illegal extraction and smuggling of African sandalwood (Osyris lanceolata), a frontier commodity that substitutes overharvested Indian sandalwood (Santalum album). During six months of fieldwork in peripheral northern Kenya, I traced how state, market, criminal, and community actors constitute a dense meshwork that continuously renegotiates legal, cultural, and ecological meanings. African sandalwood connects remote pastoralist communities to the global luxury scent market, shifting local economic boundaries and generating longterm ecological risks. With limited state presence, communities assume gatekeeper roles under "legal pluralities", locally conferring harvesting rights to smugglers. Those highly professional smuggling networks intersect with law enforcement networks in these zones. Community members are often courted by both sides to become informants. Enforcers facilitate smuggling with state vehicles, while smugglers pose as undercover agents, blurring jurisdictions. These dual roles are weakening the distinguishability, giving rise to a mutually infiltrating meshwork, an interpenetrating assemblage, where boundaries are porous and power relations fluid. My paper reflects on the epistemic and methodological challenges of fieldwork in such contested terrains. It raises the question of how research can be effectively carried out when the researcher is perceived not as an outsider, but as an enforcer, smuggler, or spy – thus becoming embedded in the very power

dynamics under investigation. By crossing political ecology, anthropology, law, and environmental science, the research develops a fluid, dynamic approach navigating through the complexities of illicit economies.

Joanne Wun (Universität zu Köln), 'Contesting the Borders by Pushing own Boundaries: A Phenomenological Confrontation with Empirical Sciences'.

This presentation unfolds the dynamic interplay between borders and boundaries among different disciplines by bringing forth a philosophical-phenomenological confrontation with empirical sciences. Whereas borders are pre-established "from without", traditionally presupposed and taken for granted, boundaries are fluid, delineated "from within" and allow repeated examinations and extensions. I argue that phenomenology ventures to review and challenge its own boundaries so as to i) articulate the unexamined borders in empirical sciences, ii) examine them critically, and iii) respect more authentically the borders as unimpeachable otherness. This will be demonstrated under the rubrics of a) the unconscious and b) relationship between therapist and patient. Neuroscience and empirical psychology implicitly assume a border between consciousness and nonconscious(ness) in their studies of the unconscious. In their research of priming and subliminal perception, the unconscious is tacitly defined as the negation or privation of conscious awareness and is reduced into "non-conscious". By pushing its own boundaries to the investigation of the Grenzproblem (Limit-problem) of the unconscious, Husserlian phenomenology contests this border between consciousness and non-consciousness. It turns out that rather than something "outside of consciousness", the unconscious is a dimension belonging intrinsically to consciousness itself. Through the clarification, the distinction between conscious and non-conscious will acquire a more sophisticatedly delineated border to be respected. In psychiatry and clinical psychology, there is another unexamined border between therapist and patient – namely, the border known philosophically as the subject-object dichotomy. Therapist tends unreflectedly to treat patient as an objectified entity, a malfunctioning brain-apparat, and to intervene completely for the patient. This border should be challenged philosophically by drawing boundaries for oneself as therapist or neurotypical persons so as to respect the unimpeachable otherness of others. This is best illustrated through the Heideggerian distinction between leaping-in for (einspringen) and leaping-ahead (vorausspringen) in self-others relationship.

Matthew Richard Jordan (University of Cambridge), 'Breaking out of the Silo: Legal Boundedness, Lived Experiences, and the Liminal Self'.

Law operates in a siloed fashion, relying on the objects of regulation fitting within bounded categories to function effectively. Though this approach is pragmatic and strives to generate legal certainty, such frameworks do not always map cleanly onto the lived experiences of the persons they govern. Indeed, too strict a commitment to legal boundedness risks

overlooking the lived and embodied experiences of marginal beings who occupy the spaces 'in-between'.

Contemporary legal scholarship presents law's proclivity for legal boundedness, and the consequent gaps between the conceptual basis of law and the realities experienced by the objects it regulates, as incidental. This paper adopts a stronger position. Drawing upon linguistic and jurisprudential theory, it argues that categorisation is essential, performing valuable organisational and social ordering functions. Moreover, drawing upon systems theory, it argues that divergences between law and social reality are inevitable. Both law and social reality are autopoietic systems which abstract information using wholly internal terms of reference. As such, the two systems will imbue the same terms with different meaning.

If categories are an essential feature of any legal order, but can never be all-inclusive, the task at hand becomes that of reducing the dissonance between law as written and law as lived. This paper argues that liminality, an anthropological concept concerned with the importance of transformation on the human experience, has explanatory and exploratory power in this regard. Three contributions that liminality might make to 'solving' the legal boundedness problem will be proposed. Liminal analysis helps to identify marginal entities and gaps between law and social reality to our attention; the dissonance between law and social reality might be reduced if legal understandings of personhood and transition were reframed with liminality in mind; and law should act as a Master of Ceremonies who guides liminal beings through their transitions.

Panel 6: 'Instituting Boundaries' (Chair: Emma Arthur)

Holly Hiscox (Open University), 'Transcending the boundaries of the "miniature world": The imperial spaces of Rugby School, c.1828 – 1850'.

A key role of nineteenth-century British public schools was to provide training which shaped future imperial ruling elites. This training was woven into varied aspects of the complex tapestry of institutional life: for example, through the curriculum which provided symbolic and cultural capital, and the monitorial disciplinary regime which existed as a practice in the exercise of authority and offered instruction in how to both obey and command.

This paper uses a different lens to consider Rugby School's function as a site for elite training and pupil engagement with imperial themes: that of the physical spaces that constituted the boarding school environment, and the pupils' relationships to them. Exploring the institution from this perspective can uncover the significance of a range of boundaries that shaped pupils' lives, and illuminates the complexity of relational borders

between the school other spheres of life, such as those between family and school, youth and adulthood, the private and the communal, individual and institution, and, ultimately, school, nation and empire.

Consideration of the domestic and spatial elements of public school life can provide insights into the extent to which the experiences of the 'society of boys' transcended the institution, reflecting broader national and imperial themes and providing a crucial training ground for adult life. This paper argues that the physical dimensions of the school provided an important preparatory arena for adulthood in various ways. Furthermore, whilst pupils' time at school encompassed shifts in temporal and emotional boundaries – such as independence from the family home and leaving childhood behind - it is argued that certain borders were never fully transcended. Rather, the physical spaces of the school were replicated in a range of ways later on in life, which reaffirmed identity and facilitated imperial careers, as in the social life of boardrooms, barracks and clubs.

Kirill Goriachok (University of Cambridge), 'Women Filmmakers and Institutional Boundaries in the early Soviet non-fiction film'.

This paper examines the largely unacknowledged contributions of women to the development of early Soviet documentary film during the 1920s and 1930s. While the Bolshevik regime publicly promoted gender equality, the reality within the Soviet film industry was one of persistent structural and cultural boundaries that shaped the experiences of women behind the camera. My research draws on both institutional and personal archives to reconstruct the professional trajectories of women who worked as directors, editors, and assistants in state documentary studios. Their names and works have been largely omitted from canonical film histories.

Although some women documentary filmmakers were officially recognised and even decorated during the Stalin era, their creative autonomy and artistic vision were consistently undermined. The industry remained profoundly male-dominated, and women's contributions were often limited to technical roles or dismissed outright, despite the critical importance of their work to the film industry. Even prominent figures such as Esfir Shub were forced to return to low creative positions, or even were removed from the industry altogether. Lesser-known yet significant figures like Arsha Ovanesova, Olga Podgoretskaya, and Lidiya Stepanova also navigated these contradictions receiving professional acclaim while facing institutional marginalization.

Framing this inquiry within the conference theme of "borders and boundaries," I explore how gendered constraints operated both ideologically and materially in the early Soviet documentary field. At the same time, I highlight how these women negotiated and, at times, subverted such boundaries through form, labor, and political engagement. By recovering these overlooked histories, the paper addresses a critical gap in Soviet film scholarship and

contributes to broader discussions on gender, authorship, and historical visibility in documentary cinema.

Mikaela Springsteen (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), 'Formalization as Boundary-Making: Figure skating and the creation of junk DNA'.

What are the effects of formalization and quantification on creativity? While the positive effects of robust measures—including an increase in conceptual precision and the facilitation of easy communication—are readily apparent to their advocates, the modern world's increasing reliance on quantification has resulted also in a persistent fear of the rationalizing and even dehumanizing effects of these ever-encroaching numbers as well. Such ill effects of number can often be felt particularly as they divide phenomena by the high garden walls of 'quantifiability', such that the easily measured resides on one side of these ever-growing boundaries, while that which resists quantification—including such phenomena as artistry, emotion, creativity, and innovation—is cast out on the other.

This study examines the case of competitive figure skating, where a major scoring change following the 2002 Winter Olympics ushered in an era of increasing quantification in the sport. While well-defined jumps, spins, and step sequences became more important and impactful than ever, under the new scoring regime connecting steps and artistic sequences became the 'junk DNA' of the sport—maneuvers which are important in connecting one 'gene' to the next but which have, in and of themselves, no apparent scoring function. This study, a mixed-methods examination of figure skating from 1988 to 2022, particularly aims to explore how the kinds of quantitative measures employed in figure skating have resulted in the kinds of effects observed, and to therefore understand how quantification can result in the establishment and reinforcement of such boundaries—and how, in time, it may even overcome such boundaries in turn.

Amy Hemsworth (University of Oxford), 'Doctrinal Boundaries in Judicial Review of Administrative Systems'.

In many ways, law is all about boundaries. Much of law is concerned with the division of human activity into categories: not only the obvious labels of 'lawful' or 'unlawful', but also the doctrinal categories of different legal rules. However, doctrinal boundaries can be hard to demarcate with clarity or certainty. Legal questions frequently turn on fine distinctions, and it is the role of courts to determine these questions. In common law systems like the UK's, much of our law comes from precedent cases which are decided by the courts and then applied in subsequent cases on the basis of analogical reasoning. In simple terms, common law courts operate by deciding whether Case B is sufficiently like Case A for the reasoning from Case A to be applied to Case B. If the answer is yes, the case falls within the doctrinal boundary; however, if the answer is no, it falls outside. In future, a new doctrine may develop to encompass these outsider cases, with its own set of rules and reasoning.

This paper examines a case in which the UK Supreme Court redrew the boundaries of a doctrine that had been developing in the lower courts for almost twenty years. In R (A) v Home Secretary, the court held that in this particular legal space – judicial review of administrative systems – there existed not one unified doctrine of 'systemic unlawfulness', as previously thought, but rather two distinct doctrines that had been wrongly blended together. The question that now faces us is how to reliably identify the boundary between the two doctrines and determine how future cases should be treated. In light of the ruling in A, which approved different tests for unlawfulness under each of the doctrines, this question is of paramount importance, yet the answer is far from obvious.

Panel 7: 'Belonging Between Borders' (Chair: Alexander Lynch)

Samantha Pérez Rodrígues (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), 'Spanish outside its native borders: Maintenance and vitality of Spanish as immigrant minority language in Brussels.'

Recent demo-linguistic studies have identified nearly 5.5 million Spanish speakers with a migratory background living in Europe (outside of Spain; Loureda Lamas et al., 2023). Despite this demographic relevance, research on the social and linguistic processes that the Spanish language and the Hispanic community undergo outside of its native borders remains remarkably scarce within the continent. In Brussels, diverse migration waves from Spanish-speaking countries have given rise to widespread and well-established Hispanic communities. This has resulted in Spanish becoming Brussels' fourth most-spoken language, only after co-official French and Dutch, and English (Saeys, 2024). Furthermore, the latest language barometer revealed that 6.4% of the city's population (about 80,000 people) speak Spanish as a home language (Saeys, personal communication 4 February 2025, based on the forthcoming results of the latest language barometer survey).

Through an exploratory investigation on self-reported linguistic repertoires and language practices of the Hispanic population in Brussels, this presentation aims to provide a snapshot of Spanish maintenance and vitality in the city, contributing to bridging the research gap in its study as an immigrant and heritage language in Europe. Online questionnaires revealed a highly multilingual sample, with 60% of participants speaking four or more languages. Among these, participants displayed a quick incorporation of the city's most spoken languages while still retaining high levels of Spanish proficiency all the way through to the third migration generation, with an average self-reported level of 2.73 out of a 3-point scale. In terms of language practices, while generational comparisons show a steady decrease of Spanish use in most domains, practices in the language are still maintained sporadically among friends and family by the third generation. This is also accompanied by a prompt assimilation in the use of Brussels' majority languages, particularly in more formal and public contexts. Such patterns of language transmission,

use, and integration highlight the communities' adaptability while still maintaining a connection to their heritage. As such, the results do not only emphasize the need for further research on Brussels' Hispanic communities, but they also reveal how immigrant minorities can negotiate the space between language maintenance and shift through multilingual practices. In this line, the investigation challenges traditional minority-majority dichotomic perspectives in language maintenance studies and advocates for further approaches in multilingual contexts.

Zuhri James (University of Cambridge), 'Entropic landscapes: Marjory Allen and the transfiguration of post-war London'.

The English landscape architect Marjory Allen was a pioneer of London's twentieth-century adventure playgrounds. Constructed from all kinds of waste materials—car tires, damaged furniture and loose planks of wood—these playgrounds marked a distinctive approach to the production of urban space which sought to design-with the abandoned, the unwanted and the discarded. Critically, many of these playgrounds were designed for children with disabilities, whom Allen felt had been ubiquitously sidelined within urban planning discourses. In this presentation, then, I want to reflect upon Allen's geographical imagination as it sought to radically shift the emphasis within landscape architecture and urban design at the time towards the question of children's play and, relatedly, children's happiness within the post-war metropolis. Specifically, we consider how Allen's centring of the young and most vulnerable stands in marked contrast to the state of children's playgrounds today, which have been splintered by austerity and the ever-rampant privatisation of London's public spaces. In this light, it will be argued that Allen's playgrounds ultimately diverge from dominant, utilitarian approaches to landscape design, exposing us to the fringes or boundaries of an avant-garde urbanism.

Benedict Turner-Berry (University of Cambridge), 'Sounding Displacement: Sonic Kinship and the Remaking of Urban Borders in Bordeaux.'

Ethnographic studies on forced-migrant experiences in France often focus on cities in the north and south (Calais, Paris, Marseille), overlooking how long-term displaced communities engage with sound and media after resettling elsewhere. While scholars have examined how diasporic communities in France navigate and resist restrictive migration policies through sonic practices (Echchaibi, 2011; Tan, 2024), research on creative sonic practices within settled forced-migrant communities remains limited, particularly in Bordeaux. When studied, forced-migrant music-making is often framed within moments of active transit rather than resettlement. This paper examines how forced migrants now settled in Bordeaux use their craft in sonically creative ways to transform the urban landscape. Drawing on fieldwork conducted in Bordeaux, I explore the multifaceted — and often intimate — ways in which forced migrants respond to shifting personal, professional,

and political pressures through sound and media. I analyse how migration-related issues in French politics, particularly droitification, are contested in Bordeaux via local community initiatives, fostering spaces of musical allyship across the city. Building on Janet Carsten's (2020) concept of kinship as doing, I propose sonic kinship as a dynamic framework for understanding the intricate interplay of relationships through sound. Informed by the works of Edward Said (1993) and Naomi Waltham-Smith (2023), my analysis listens contrapuntally to Bordeaux, reflecting on its colonial legacies through its present-day audible infrastructures (Western, 2021). By centring the sonic practices of its long-term forced migrants, this paper reveals the creative ways in which those in displacement challenge systemic obstacles and discrimination while shaping their new lives.

Session 3 Tuesday 16 September 9:30-10:45

Panel 8 'Transmission and Transcription' (Chair: Professor Freya Johnston)

Sofia Warkander (Stockholms Universitet), 'Transmissions across borders of time, nation, and language: Reworkings of the Early Modern novel'.

I demonstrate the transmission of the woman authored novel in Early Modern France, as it travels from a feminocentric hub of informal learning and generic experimentation through time and space. In my analysis, I show how the lowly and uncodified novel in the 1600s was developed by women who have since been erased from literary history, particularly one: Madame de Villedieu's novel Mémoires de la vie de Henriette-Sylvie de Molière (1672–1674) was the first epistolary pseudo-memoir, creating several new and subsequently highly influential genres at once. I trace the path of this astounding novel across borders and boundaries of time, nation, and space.

Only a decade after its original publication, and seven years after its quick translation to English, Aphra Behn wrote a novel based on Villedieu's highly original work. Sixty years later, Pierre de Marivaux also reworked Villedieu's novel, like Behn without revealing his source. The two later works have been used to define a national literature, as Marivaux and Behn hold canonized positions. What does it mean for the definition of such a canon, or a national literature, when we uncover an unsuspected source – one, in the case of Behn, located in another nation? The boundaries of language and nation come into play both here and with Marivaux, whose authorship was far less controversial than the subversive Villedieu's.

These works are all centered on the letter, raising further questions about boundaries between the spoken and the written word in the context of the developing novel.

David Arun Sridharan (Universität zu Köln), 'Scripted Borders. Language, Limits, and the Literary Form of the Screenplay: Reading Eric Heisserer's Arrival'.

Denis Villeneuve's Arrival (2016) is a film deeply concerned with borders and boundaries —between nations, species, and languages. Its story centers on attempts to communicate with an alien species whose written language challenges linear perception and reality itself. While film studies often emphasize the audiovisual experience, this paper shifts focus to a largely neglected yet foundational medium: the screenplay. This paper offers a literary reading of Eric Heisserer's screenplay Arrival, adapted from Ted Chiang's short story Story of Your Life (2002). The screenplay is a medium defined by boundaries —its strict formatting conventions, industrial function, and hybrid status between text and performance. Yet Heisserer's script transcends these limitations. As a text fixed in written language, the screenplay not only prepares a visual experience but reflects the film's central concerns: the constraints and possibilities of language, the tension between determinism and free will, and the reconfiguration of time and identity through narrative form. Positioned at the intersection of screenwriting studies and literary theory, this paper argues that Arrival's screenplay is not merely a production tool but a content-driven narrative form. Its very structure embodies the thematic borders it seeks to dissolve, making it an ideal case study for exploring how screenwriting can engage critically with linguistic and formal boundaries.

Eva Windbergs (Universität zu Köln), 'Borders and boundaries between spoken and written language: reflections on the linguistic method of transcription'.

Spoken and written language are distinct modalities: the former uses the auditory-vocal channel (mouths and ears), the latter the manual-visual channel (hands and eyes). Lexical and grammatical differences between them are now largely seen as reflections of varying degrees of formality. Formal spoken language (e.g., rituals) can be as complex as formal writing, while informal writing (e.g., text messages) can include short utterances like informal conversations. More recent research suggests processing speed to be the key difference: speaking is faster than writing, whereas writing allows more time to plan longer utterances. Cross-modal events, such as reading aloud a pre-written speech or transcription, blur these boundaries. The latter is the focus of this PhD project. Linguistic analysis of spoken language usually depends on transcripts of audio or video recordings, a methodology that both enables and constrains the research process. Though open considered objective, transcription is highly subjective, influenced by prescriptive factors like formal education. Transcribers, whether linguists or native speakers, often write what they consider correct, and omit spoken language phenomena like gestures and hesitations. Substantial variation can exists between transcripts of the same recording. In language documentation, it is often overlooked that grammatical analyses of spoken language depend on the cross-modal process of transcription. This talk explores the conceptual and methodological borders and boundaries between written and spoken language and the challenges of working with transcripts. It discusses that while categorial distinctions may

serve our understanding of spoken language, a closer look reveals those boundaries might also obscure it.

Panel 9: 'Crafting Boundaries' (Chair: Matilda Eriksson)

Anna Wanqi Li (University of Cambridge), 'Between and Beyond: Intermedia and the Politics of Cinematic Hybridity'.

This paper explores the concept of intermedia as a radical strategy for challenging the borders and boundaries that traditionally separate artistic disciplines, media forms, and cultural hierarchies. Coined by artist and theorist Dick Higgins in the 1960s, intermedia describes practices that blur or dissolve the distinctions between established art forms, creating hybrid expressions that exist between media rather than within them. This approach not only fosters formal experimentation but also reflects a broader cultural resistance to rigid systems of classification—what Higgins critiqued as a "feudal" mindset embedded in the Great Chain of Being, where order and hierarchy dominate.

Artworks such as Charles Eames' multi-screen Glimpses of the U.S.A. (1959), Nam June Paik's silent Zen for Film (1964), and Tony Conrad's Deep Fried 4-X Negative (1973) demonstrate how intermedial practices can simultaneously pursue complexity and simplicity. Whether through technological layering or minimalist reduction, these works reimagine the act of creation and reception, often transforming the viewer into an active participant. Even found objects—like Conrad's pickled filmstrips—serve as intermedia, defying categorical purity by virtue of their intentional ambiguity.

By moving between and beyond media, intermedial works questioned the social and cultural boundaries that shaped postwar art and society. The rejection of "pure" mediums aligned with a broader countercultural ethos, one that sought to break down class structures, embrace individual freedom, and imagine alternative ways of being. While Higgins' vision may have been utopian, the intermedial turn remains a powerful framework for understanding how artistic innovation can reflect and catalyse social transformation. This paper argues that intermedia is not merely an aesthetic choice but a critical tool for dismantling entrenched divisions—between art forms, between creators and audiences, and ultimately, between systems of power and the possibilities of liberation.

Octavia Young (University of Cambridge), 'Art, Craft, Artists, and Artisans: The Weavers of Morris & Co. and the Making of Art'.

The term "Arts and Crafts" both crosses and creates boundaries. Even as it draws the concepts of "art" and "craft" together, it asserts, through the use of two different words, that

there is a distinction between them: craft is not art and vice versa. The problem of borders and boundaries is thus embedded in the very name of the Arts and Crafts Movement and, this paper will argue, some of the Movement's most influential practitioners were characterised by this struggle of definition.

The design firm Morris & Co., founded in 1861 by William Morris and partners, was immensely successful in its own time, and the designs and objects it produced have remained enduringly popular. Crucial to the company's achievement was its self-definition as "artistic". At the same time, its working practices promoted the idea of craft, with its connotations of tradition and skilled manual labour.

Morris & Co.'s association with the realm of the fine arts has most often been discussed in relation to William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, famous men whose work in other spheres raised the status of the firm. However, the working-class artisans who made Morris & Co. objects were equally involved in the drawing and crossing of boundaries between art and craft. This paper will take the weaving workshops of Morris & Co. as its primary focus, looking at their division into two main groups: male weavers who produced tapestries, and female weavers who produced carpets. This distinction was the product of a belief in superior male artistic power.

Looking at these workshops and the objects they produced, this paper will ask how art is defined by those who created it, and how practitioners as well as the objects themselves have worked to both reinforce and subvert these boundaries of perception and value.

Vera Maria Monus (Stockholms Universitet), 'Poetry – Where sound becomes music'.

The element of sound is key in poetry analysis. When taking a poem apart, one examines meter, rhyme, tone and diction, and looks at the poetic form – all sounding qualities. The poetic voice and timbre are also often defining aspects of a poem. Even the visual layout of a poem can have profound influence on how one reads the poem; the white of the page indicate silence, which of course is a crucial component of sound, since it marks the limits of it.

The question I am interested in is however: in poetry, where does one draw the line between sound and music? A classic definition of music is "organized sound". All words in poetry are carefully selected by the author, curated – organized – hence, every sound in poetry has a musical potential in them. But when does "musical potential" become music? Music can of course thematically occur in poetry, but apart from that – can music truly exist in poetry? Is it possible to write music solely with words?

Apart from addressing these questions, this presentation will include a brief historic retrospect of the relation music-poetry, enlightening examples of musical traits in selected poetry and a discussion of music as a metaphor. It will also develop thoughts on the academic field of musico-literary studies, having an intermedial research material and the borders and boundaries between music studies and literary studies.

Panel 10: 'The Borders of Community' (Chair: Professor Christian Spies)

Qiqi Huang (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), 'Between Tongues: Navigating Linguistic and Generational Borders among Chinese Heritage Speakers in Flanders'.

Chinese communities in Flanders today display strong heterogeneity as a result of the multiplicity of migration waves and diversity of geographic origins, socio-economic and educational backgrounds, and economic activities (Latham & Wu, 2013; Baldassar et al., 2015; Braeye, 2016), reflecting significant socio-economic changes that have shaped the linguistic practices of the Chinese diasporic community. However, language sociological research in Belgium has predominantly focused on the dichotomy between the officially recognized majority languages—Dutch and French—while heritage languages, particularly Chinese as a heritage language (CHL), remains underexplored. Existing CHL research has centered mainly on Brussels (Guo & Vosters, 2020; Li et al., 2022; Li & Shen, 2023), Belgium's most multilingual city, due to its official bilingualism (French and Dutch) and its status as a hub for international migration. In contrast, Flanders, the northern Dutch-speaking region of Belgium, has received far less scholarly attention as a migration destination for the Chinese diaspora. To explore how Chinese heritage speakers in Flanders navigate the linguistic borders between heritage languages such as Mandarin, Cantonese, and other regional Chinese varieties, in addition to the dominant societal language (Dutch), this study employs a distributive quantitative approach to map the diverse sociolinguistic profiles of Chinese immigrants in Flanders across generations and domains (i.e., family and friendship domains). In this presentation, I will report on the first results from an exploratory survey, currently being carried out. By centering on the lived experiences of Chinese heritage speakers in a multilingual European context and analyzing the tensions and negotiations involved in language use across generational lines and across interactional domains, this research seeks to contribute to our understanding of how linguistic boundaries are maintained, challenged, or reconfigured within the multilingual lives of Flanders' Chinese immigrants.

Rhoel Tupaz (University of Cambridge), 'The Crossroads of Language: Creoles, Chavacano and the Epistemic Borders of Linguistic Knowledge'.

Chavacano, a Spanish-based creole language spoken in the Philippines, is a product of both literal and linguistic border-crossing. Emerging from centuries of colonial contact, Chavacano is placed at the crossroads of indigenous Philippine languages and Spanish, yet remains on the periphery of both Ibero-Romance and Philippine linguistic traditions. Drawing on previous data, this paper explores how Chavacano and creole languages more generally can disrupt modern assumptions of language contact and change, and challenge the boundaries that separate the colonial and the native, standard and non-standard,

change and continuity.

I position Chavacano as a case study in how disciplinary boundaries have limited our understanding of creolistics, often viewing creoles as static languages to be studied historically and not as the dynamic, constantly evolving languages that they are. Theoretical syntax, creole studies and Philippine and Ibero-Romance linguistics have often operated in isolation, producing fragmented accounts of Chavacano's structure and history. This reflects a broader epistemic challenge: how institutional and methodological borders can obscure what hybrid or "border" languages can reveal. Engaging with Chavacano's structure from a rigorous, interdisciplinary perspective, combining elements from both syntactic theory and cultural studies, allows us to grasp the full complexity of contact languages.

This paper addresses several dimensions of borders: first, it reflects on the spatial and temporal borders that shape colonial linguistic legacies; second, it questions how research is shaped by disciplinary constraints and tradition; and finally, it asks how we might reframe our scholarly frameworks to better account for transgressive, hybrid, and marginalised forms of knowledge. In doing so, I argue that studying languages like Chavacano is not just about documenting linguistic diversity, but about confronting the boundaries, be it conceptual, institutional, and colonial, that structure the humanities themselves.

Diane Ahn (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), '"Our Japanneries": the Japanese Village in London (1885-1890)'.

This paper traces the transcultural impact of the Japanese Village in Knightsbridge on British and American art in a series of British prints produced in the late 19th century. The Japanese Village exhibited one hundred native Japanese people creating artisanal crafts, playing music, serving tea, wrestling, and performing martial arts for over 250,000 Brits within four months of its opening. Magazine and newspaper prints produced for the duration of the Japanese Village counter the notion that the exhibition was a form of frivolous entertainment. The Village challenged both fundamental conceptions of British art and British modernity in a global sphere. The Japanese Village also influenced the development of a traveling Japanese Village in the US, thus igniting a similar crisis of artistic and national identity stateside beyond British boundaries.

Panel 11: 'Transcending Boundaries' (Chair: Professor Catrin Norrby)

Vishal Sangu (Open University), 'Sikhs: The Nation State and a Stateless Nation'.

This presentation seeks to trace how the colonial project of Partition displaced Sikhs (Dusenbery and Tatla, 2011) from their homeland of Panjab, surgically dividing the land between the modern states of India and Pakistan. Focusing on the role of Sikhs within British society, despite Sikhs being viewed as a 'model minority' (Sian, 2017), stemming from perceptions of Sikhs as a 'Martial Race' (Singh, 2020) under Colonial rule. Despite this, Sikhs have had to fight for their rights. The campaigns for Sikh identity include the Turban disputes, the carrying of the Kirpan, and recognition as an Ethnicity (Mandla v Dowell Lee, 1982), these campaigns often transcended borders.

My research focuses on how Sikhs have been recognised as a diaspora (Ballantyne, 2006), following their migration after the Partition of India (Chatterji, 2019), and how they can be considered a 'stateless nation' (Shani, 2005). To understand this displacement from Panjab, this presentation will feature interviews with contemporary British Sikhs who comprehend their displacement from Panjab and their struggles within British society. My participants navigate issues of race, caste, gender, and identity. They often regard an understanding of decoloniality as a solution to the challenges in their day-to-day lives. Finally, this presentation examines the calls and articulations for a separate Sikh statehood, under the concept of Khalistan. It reflects on the narrative presented in a British governmental report that labels this campaign for statehood as 'extremism', addressing the government's and media's portrayals of Sikhi in Britain and India, where Sikh activists are often targeted as troublemakers. This talk builds towards understanding Sikh narratives of decolonisation.

Julia Gerdner (Stockholms Universitet), 'Crossing the Dnipro: Rewriting Borders in the Poetry of Iya Kiva'.

In contemporary Ukrainian literature, the notion of boundaries and borders has become increasingly charged. In times when borders are violated and radically redrawn, Ukrainian authors have set out to uphold familiar boundaries or to imagine new ones. At the same time, many writers have themselves been forced to flee, particularly those coming from Eastern regions. Although displaced within their own country, these authors attest to the experience of crossing an invisible line, conventionally symbolised by the river Dnipro. The journey from East to West has thereby come to symbolise a complex traversal of linguistic and cultural boundaries, accompanied by a shift in identity and expression. In this paper, I analyse the representation of borders and boundaries in the poetry of Iya Kiva (b. 1984). Following the outbreak of war in Donbas, Kiva fled her native Donetsk to Kyiv, and had to relocate once again to Lviv after Russia's full-scale invasion. This Westward journey is mirrored in her own poetry, not least because it has been accompanied by a linguistic shift from writing in Russian to Ukrainian. Through her translingual practices, she not only crosses but also questions the boundaries between languages, probing the very limits of language itself. Her poetry conveys the difficulty of finding a new language in the liminal space between the erased borders of Donbas and invisible boundaries in the West. However, as my analysis suggests, it is by letting go of internal barriers that her poetic subject begins to reclaim a voice and a sense of belonging.

Chontida Poonpipat (University of Oxford), 'The Concept of Orthodoxy as a Boundary in the Study of Meditation Transmission'.

In Buddhist meditation practices, the concept of orthodoxy has shaped the boundaries of both practice and academic discourse. It influences: the selection and deselection of techniques, their public disclosure, and their modes of transmission. Practitioners are more inclined to adopt and transmit meditation traditions regarded as orthodox in their time. In the public sphere, they are also more likely to promote, advertise, and speak openly about these orthodox traditions. Consequently, these become the primary sources of information available to scholars and researchers.

However, orthodoxy does not entirely prevent practitioners from engaging with less orthodox approaches. My research has found that practitioners do engage with these, sometimes adopting them as personally preferred methods or teaching them to select students. Yet they tend not to speak openly about this or promote such practices publicly. These transmissions often occur in more concealed, underground, or esoteric ways.

What is significant for scholars is that some of these less orthodox methods appear to be remnants of what were once widespread practices in Theravāda Buddhism. In fact, their marginalisation often reflects shifting definitions of orthodoxy—shaped by political and social forces—which evolve over time.

This presentation shares my findings, which contribute to understanding the transmission of a meditation tradition that once constituted a major practice within Theravāda Buddhism. This form of meditation, studied by earlier scholars, is referred to as boran kammaṭṭhāna (ancient meditations)—the oldest form of Theravāda meditation for which we currently have evidence. My research continues this line of inquiry by tracing its border crossing from Thailand to the UK, where it now persists—fragmented and adapted—among Buddhist meditators, Christian clergy, and spiritual practitioners. This raises broader questions regarding such dynamics within Buddhism, and perhaps by pushing these kinds of boundaries, we may challenge the limitations of what is currently known.

Session 4 Tuesday 16 September 11:15-12:30

Panel 12: 'Speaking of Borders' (Chair: Andrew McNey)

Sofya Gollan (Australian National University), 'Communing with the Monsters: Sign Languages as Uncanny Boundary Transgression on Screen'.

This paper examines the use of sign language in film as an uncanny mode of communication that transgresses boundaries between human and non-human entities. Drawing on Freud's

concept of the unheimlich—something simultaneously familiar yet estranged— I analyse how sign language creates liminal spaces that destabilise ontological hierarchies in films. This corpus, in which Deaf or nonverbal signers interact with monstrous or supernatural beings, includes Guillermo del Toro's The Shape of Water (2017), the French series La Révolution (2020), the Norwegian film Viking Wolf (2022), and the US Godzilla Vs Kong (2021). All depict the Deaf or mute body as having uncanny abilities to commune with a monstrous Other.

I argue that these screen texts position sign language as a paradoxical boundary device that both reinforces and subverts conventional constructions of linguistic alterity. Whereas speech is considered uniquely human, manual-visual communication is capable of traversing seemingly impermeable borders between humanity and monstrosity. Sign language thus becomes an uncanny threshold space between animalistic body and rational intellect.

All these screen texts are by non-signing filmmakers who appropriate sign language with limited understanding of its linguistic complexity and cultural significance. Rather than situating signing as a legitimate linguistic system within deeply humane and complex social networks, these films reduce it to a primitive, pre-linguistic code practiced by an isolated individual as a narrative device, rendering the Deaf body itself uncanny in the cinematic frame. Through close textual analysis of key scenes where signing mediates between human and monstrous realms, this article injects critical Deaf theory discourses into film scholarship's understanding of monstrosity, interrogating the cultural anxieties about language, embodiment and alterity that these boundary-crossing communications reveal. This critical approach reveals how the deployment of sign language in monster narratives simultaneously challenges and reinforces ableist assumptions about embodied communication and 'invisibly different' bodies.

Julie van Ongeval (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), 'The linguistic impact of the Fall of Antwerp (1585) from macro- and micro-social perspectives: community-wide trends and individual developments'.

According to Dixon's punctuated equilibrium model (1997), the historical development of languages is characterized by extended periods of equilibrium, which are from time to time punctuated by catastrophic events causing accelerated linguistic change (p. 67). For the history of English, Dixon's model has already been empirically validated, as studies by Raumolin Brunberg (1998) and Nevalainen et al. (2020) have demonstrated how the English Civil War, Norman Conquest and Black Death triggered heightened rates of linguistic change. Research focusing on other languages remains, however, relatively scarce. This study extends Dixon's framework to the history of Dutch by examining to what extent the Spanish recapture of Antwerp (1585) during the Eighty Years' war impacted the dialect contact processes in Early Modern Antwerp. These contact processes emerged following Antwerp's massive influx of immigrants and subsequent explosive population growth

(1526-1568), when the city was flourishing as one of Europe's most important harbor centers. The Spanish recapture in 1585 drastically altered this situation, leading to significant social decline and a sharp population decrease due to large-scale emigration (De Meester 2011: 15-35). To evaluate the linguistic impact of both the positive and negative net migration, we conducted a corpus-based analysis using the newly compiled Early Modern Antwerp Corpus (1564-1653), which comprises 432 handwritten letters totaling 271,748 words. The letters are written by both men and women, who have diverse professional backgrounds and exhibit varying degrees of geographical mobility. In these letters, we investigated how the rate and/or direction of 2 morpho-syntactic changes (clause negation and verbal cluster order variation), 2 morpho-phonological changes (schwa apocope, ge-prefixing in past participles) and 2 orthographic changes (spelling of word-final /k/, spelling of /ɣ/ in onset) differed before versus after the Spanish recapture of Antwerp. We not only examined how this event impacted the linguistic community as a whole but also assessed whether similar effects were observable across different (clusters of) individual letter writers present in the corpus. This was achieved by comparing community-wide trends with individual lifespan changes, and by focusing on both inter- and intra-individual variation, thereby bridging the boundaries between the three waves of sociolinguistic research (cf. Eckert 2012). While the findings of this study indicate that the rapidly shifting social and geographical context in Early Modern Antwerp broadly coincided with a period of accelerated linguistic change at the community level – thus lending support to Dixon's model (1997) – this pattern was not uniformly reflected in the behavior of individual language users, among whom significant variation in linguistic progressiveness was observed. These divergent trajectories underscore the importance of combining macro- and micro-perspectives to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of language change.

Shreyasi Sharma (Open University), 'Writing the Crisis: Crossing the borders of Climate Education using Creative Arts'.

Climate crisis in India has been impacting education in myriad ways. My project is particularly attentive to the experiences of girls in navigating the boundaries of climate education. In my presentation, I will be dwelling on the constraints of the current curriculum in India where there is a lofty focus on framing climate education as a knowledge of the science. Through a collaborative creative writing project developed with girl teenagers in Delhi, I intend to explore how girls make sense of climate crisis, by teasing out disciplinary borders that studying climate crisis is supposed to fit in. This is significant to my project as studies have reported that knowledge deficit is not one of the major factors affecting climate action.

As an educator and writer from Delhi, my practice engages directly with transforming spaces. Using tree walks, interviews, fieldnotes, and participatory workshops, the writings will foreground experiential knowledge, affective connotations around nonhuman life, unquantifiable damages, and arts-based approaches that are often neglected in climate education. This is directly linked to the ways in which everyday life knowledge networks

connect and challenge textbook materials.

By working at the intersection of creative practice and climate action, this project inspects the impact of having fixed disciplines. Instead, it showcases alternate ways of crossing disciplinary boundaries by using creative arts. I believe such a methodology when adopted in the school curriculum enriches adolescents' voices, creates new experiences, and enables learners to make sense of boundaries in everyday climate crisis. Overall, this presentation reflects on affective dimensions in climate education and offers creative arts as a method to resist, respond, and create knowledge about climate crisis.

Panel 13: 'Reimagining Spaces' (Chair: Vida Long)

Elena Trowsdale (Open University), 'The permeable membrane of museum experience: exploring the relationship between physical visitors in Oxford Gardens, Libraries and Museums and written feedback'.

I propose that the visitor experience of Gardens, Libraries and Museums is a Deleuzian 'Rhizome' of texts, behaviour, history, speech, and feeling. To capture the holistic moment of visiting a place brimming with heritage is to engage in a fluid sociolinguistic landscape, a shared languaging which creates identity as it continues to exist.

This talk will run through how understanding visitor behaviour in conjunction with written feedback as a combined language, or literary text, will bring us closer to understanding the complex experience of engaging with the fraught history of colonization with flows through Oxford's streets. I will use written and ethnographically observed examples to portray how visitors bring their identity, and the identity of others, to the forefront when given the opportunity. This self-fashioning is what creates 'Oxford', the fluid concept of a city full of history, full of potential.

To break down the barriers between 'visitor' and 'museum', is to break down concepts of class, hierarchy, and gatekept privilege. Sociolinguistic analysis, both computational and in-depth, micro and macro, is the way to cross between.

Sabrina Hogan (University of Oxford), 'Threshold spaces in Maurice Scève's Microcosme (1562)'.

The lyonnais poet Maurice Scève's Microcosme (1562) is a poetic retelling of the Genesis creation story, of the Fall and its immediate consequences. This dense, syncretic tripartite work eludes fixed categorisation; it is at once a Christian, philosophical and encyclopaedic epic. In the second book of this tripartite work, Adam, banished from Eden and afflicted by the loss of Cain and Abel, is granted a dream from God, in which he learns about the future

of humanity's creative and scientific endeavours. He shares this dream knowledge with Eve in the third book, shaping a message of personal consolation into one of universal salvation. Following Thomas Hunkeler's Dantean reading of the Microcosme's structure as representative of a journey through Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, I contend that the dream occupies a liminal place between the darkness of the first book and the light of day permeating the third. Like a veil, the dream both connects and divides. Purgatory is the place of waiting, containing the potential for absolution and reconciliation and the dream accordingly becomes the site for redemption. Breaches to the boundary between Adam's prophetic dream — a meta fiction, indeed a microcosm of Scève's poem — and the frame narrative, between waking and sleeping, probe the relationship between poetry and philosophy and between fiction and revelation. I also draw on theory by Gérard Genette (Seuil, 1987) to shed light on Scève's characteristically playful and elusive paratexts. I read these opening and closing sonnets and epigrams as a textual presence that is 'entre le dedans et le dehors' (1987: 8). In so doing I consider how such textual and cognitive thresholds inflect our experience of reading Scève.

Panel 14: 'The Boundaries of Faith' (Chair: Alexander Lynch)

Marlene Schilling (University of Oxford), 'Overcoming Devotional Boundaries: Bilingualism in Late Medieval Prayer Books from Northern German Female Convents'.

One of the most striking features of prayer books from female religious communities in Late Medieval Northern Germany is their bilingualism. These prayer books, written primarily in Latin and Middle Low German, present prayers for the entire liturgical year and consistently feature both languages, even within individual manuscripts and text passages. This paper argues that bilingualism in these prayer books served as a means of overcoming boundaries to religious participation for women.

The prayer books in question form a corpus of over 40 manuscripts, produced in or for female religious communities in Northern Germany during the second half of the fifteenth century. Latin prayer books were written by nuns for personal use, while vernacular manuscripts were intended for lay sisters or secular female relatives, facilitating comprehension of the Latin liturgy. Thus, bilingualism dismantled linguistic barriers, enabling broader devotional engagement. I examine the relationship between the Latin and vernacular prayer books and explore how the interplay of languages within individual manuscripts allowed women to shape their devotional practices.

As a case study, I focus on one of the defining elements found in both Latin and vernacular

texts: the personifications of major liturgical feast days. These points in the liturgical calendar are personified through repeated addresses, making them dialogue partners for the recipients. Such personifications fostered an immediate, personal relationship with the divine, bypassing clerical mediation and emphasizing individualized devotion.

Ultimately, I argue that the distinctive bilingualism of these prayer books served a dual purpose: it bridged the divide between Latin, the sacred language, and the vernacular, while simultaneously overcoming institutional boundaries that limited women's religious participation in the Late Middle Ages. Through this, the prayer books enabled a particular form of female devotional agency.

Aamir Kaderbhai (University of Oxford), 'Beyond Sublime: Literature as Transformative in a Sanskrit Philosophical Epic'.

One of the most influential figures in classical Indian aesthetic theory, Abhinavagupta, believed literature could offer a taste of transcendental liberation (úântarasa) precisely because of the essential boundary between the world of the text and the world of the reader. A sad poem, he argues, is pleasurable and not distressing because its sadness is experienced from a distance; and when refined, the aesthetic experience can momentarily dissolve the ego, offering a glimpse of the selflessness characteristic of liberation (mokṣa). The Mokṣopāya, however, offers a striking alternative: a text may offer a taste of liberation by breaking the boundary between text and reader—inviting the reader to perceive her own world aesthetically, as if it too were a literary construction.

This paper explores that claim through an analysis of three narratives from the Mokṣopāya, a 10th-century Kashmiri philosophical epic written in Sanskrit. An understudied text, it offers a wealth of intricate and mind-bending stories that have not yet been examined in relation to its explicit goal: bringing the reader to liberation. After introducing and contextualizing the Mokṣopāya within the wider Indian epic tradition, I examine three previously untranslated stories, highlighting how twists, fourth-wall breaks, and frame narratives create a world of dreams within dreams wherein the reader's own world is implicated. This is reinforced by the text's frequent reflections on its own reception: it foregrounds the reader's spontaneous visualisation of its fictional worlds, only to claim that the "real" world arises through the same process.

In this way, rather than producing a moment of selfless aesthetic rapture, the Mokṣopāya facilitates a taste of liberation through inviting its reader to perceive what she takes to be real as her own dream. Breaking the text-reader boundary is thus the first step to breaking the boundary between reality and imagination that prevents our liberation.

Signe Rirdance (Stockholms Universitet), 'On the borderline: Situating vernacular Bible translations in 17th century Livland within their Nordic context'.

Research on vernacular Bible translations in the Nordic region during the 16th and 17th centuries typically centers on Swedish, Danish, Icelandic, and, to a lesser extent, Finnish. This proposal aims to demonstrate how the Latvian and Estonian Bible translation projects were positioned within the broader Nordic Bible translation tradition and the context of Sweden's territorial and cultural expansion in Livland. As in other Nordic contexts, Bible translations played a central role in shaping the written forms and literary languages of Latvian and Estonian. These translations also functioned as tools of governance, education, and identity formation, promoted by both state and ecclesiastical authorities, and continued to exert cultural influence well beyond the end of Sweden's imperial presence. Mirroring developments in other parts of the Nordic region, the state-commissioned full Bible translations into Latvian and Estonian were preceded and made possible by earlier translation efforts inspired by Luther and Reformation. Specifically, the study will consider three 17th century translations of the Proverbs of Solomon into Latvian, aiming to identify and compare the translation strategies employed by its non-native translators into Latvian in the context of ideologies informing their work. By examining how individual translation efforts were shaped by the ideological boundaries of their time, one hopes to contribute to a broader discussion on negotiating linguistic, religious, and cultural borders in the 17th century, a formative period in defining the cultural boundaries of the Nordic region, with translation practices playing a key role in that process.

Session 5 Wednesday 17 September 9:30-10:45

Panel 15 'Crossroads of Identity' (Chair: Professor Sali Tagliamonte)

Marco Pakas (University of Oxford), 'At the Edge of Empire: Local Experiences and Loyalties in the Borderlands of the Venetian Republic'.

The paper explores the perceptions and experience of living at the boundaries of the Venetian Republic in the early modern period, through two case studies: the Italian city of Brescia and the Greek island of Crete. The Venetian Republic, whose territorial possessions spanned across Northeastern Italy, the Dalmatian coast and numerous islands and port cities in the Eastern Mediterranean, has recently began being reconsidered by historians as an early colonial empire, rather than simply a maritime trading republic. This is due to the presence of several colonialist elements in how Venetians ruled their territories, including systematic economic exploitation and limited local autonomy. However, historians have also pointed out how different the experience of Venetian rule often was between the Venetian holdings in the Italian mainland (Terraferma), and the overseas colonies (Stato da Mar), where local populations were ethnically, linguistically and religiously diverse compared to Venetians. This has prompted the question of whether the colonial framework

fits evenly across the Venetian empire, or perhaps only describes the experience of non-Italian territories.

In this context, the paper engages with microhistorical literature and methods to analyse primary documents from Venice's state archive, reconstructing a bottom up picture of the different social, cultural and political realities of the diverse populations living at the extremities of this early modern European empire. The two selected areas, one in the Terraferma and the other in the Stato da Mar, were facing different geopolitical threats (Ottoman and Spanish respectively), different sociopolitical challenges and different government structures, leading them to develop –according to contemporary accounts and subsequent historiography– very different stances and loyalties towards their Venetian rulers.

This topic provides the backbone for a doctoral research project on the emergence of surveillance and vigilance cultures in Venetian border territories, which will be engaged with throughout the paper.

Henrike Carolin Bohlin (Stockholms Universitet), 'Negotiating Linguistic Borders: Rural Youth in Northern Germany'.

In the age of digitalisation, it can be assumed that the boundaries between urban and rural areas are becoming blurred: the affordances of social media enable new encounters, connections and language contact situations that serve as a catalyst for language change. This rich language variety (see also the discussion about language and superdiversity, cf. e.g. Blommaert & Rampton 2012, Vertovec 2023) have so far been adopted primarily in urban areas (cf. e.g. Wildemann 2002). Partly due to the assumed language dynamics and superdiversity in (sub)urban areas, previous research findings in the field of youth language and culture have focussed primarily on (sub)urban areas. This presentation aims to counteract this and examine how teenagers and young adults in rural areas (in this case exemplified in Northern Germany) position themselves with regard to the use of language in (sub)urban areas and which language ideologies underlie their positioning (cf. Spitzmüller 2013, Spitzmüller 2022). This often involves the negotiation of boundaries that are co-constructed in the interaction: Demarcation both from urban areas and boundary marking of the authentic North German speaker. This qualitative study is based on data from questionnaires and focus group interviews, which are contextualised with data from Linguistic Landscape Studies. The results of the analysis show that the adolescents distance themselves from the use of language that they associate with urban areas and the associated lifestyle and thereby draw borders between the urban areas and the environment they live in. The focus group interviews with the young adults in particular makes it clear how North German identity is co-constructed interactively and how (geographical) boundaries of the authentic North German way of speaking are drawn.

Debora Nancupil Troncoso (Universität zu Köln), 'Beyond Borders and Boundaries: Chilean Composers and Musical Networks in Exile'.

Dictatorships impose strict physical and ideological boundaries that restrict movement, suppress dissent, and control cultural expression. After the 1973 Chilean military coup, thousands were forced into exile, including musicians and artists who had to navigate new geopolitical borders and unfamiliar cultural and professional landscapes. This paper examines how three exiled Chilean composers redefined their identities and sustained creative production through transnational networks. Drawing on unpublished personal correspondence, I analyze how these networks, built through letters, artistic collaborations, and institutional affiliations, offered practical, professional, and emotional support. More than logistical tools, they became symbolic spaces of resistance and belonging, enabling composers to challenge the isolation of exile and maintain political and artistic agency across borders. These networks reveal how displaced artists negotiated language, nation, and discipline boundaries in their host countries. They also illustrate how exile fostered alternative community and creativity beyond the nationstate. By foregrounding the social and material infrastructures that sustained cultural work in exile, this paper contributes to broader conversations about the boundaries that shape artistic production and how these limits can be crossed, reshaped, or strategically mobilized under conditions of political displacement.

Panel 16: 'Sacred Spaces' (Chair: Vida Long)

Molly Judd (University of Cambridge), 'On the Border of Wilderness: Interpreting the Romanesque Sculpture of a Fen-Edge Church'.

The church of St Kyneburgha, Castor (c. 1120) occupies a threshold on the boundary between contrasting landscapes: expansive watery fenland to the east and dry uplands to the north and west. Positioned precisely on the 'fen-edge' – an ecotone marking the transition between environments – this liminal site mirrors the boundary-crossing function of the church's remarkable series of 24 Romanesque capitals. Located in the chancel arch, these sculptures themselves occupy a liturgical border between nave and sanctuary, between laity and clergy, between earthly and divine realms.

My paper explores how this double liminality – both geographical and liturgical – influenced the creation and reception of these capitals. The fen-edge position of the church shaped not merely its physical construction but embedded the concept of border-crossing directly into its visual rhetoric. The capitals' placement at the threshold of the chancel reinforced this liminal quality, creating a ritual boundary that parishioners encountered both physically and visually.

Traditional interpretations of Romanesque sculpture rely predominantly on iconographical readings divorced from environmental context. My methodology challenges these disciplinary boundaries by examining the landscape – defined both through its physical components and its constructed character in relation to cultural memory – as an alternative interpretive framework. By analysing how local communities may have understood these sculptures through their lived experience of boundary spaces, I reveal how medieval artistic reception was entangled with environmental consciousness.

This case study demonstrates how the study of borders and boundaries can illuminate not only medieval artistic practice but also enhance our understanding of how communities negotiated their relationship with liminal landscapes through visual culture.

Catherine McNally (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), '(Dis)union Carved into Stone? A Material Manifestation of Interconfessionalism in Late Antique Northern Mesopotamia'.

In 1975, an eighth-century CE sculptural fragment entered the collections of the Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University as part of an 161-object donation from the prominent Armenian antiquarian Hagop Kevorkian. A small, greyish-yellow marble block with an inner recessed cavity, its facade features an arch framing a stylised cross from which two flower-topped, foliate branches emerge and two Syriac inscriptions on either side. Looking closely at the stylistics of the cross, its typology seems reminiscent of khachkars; however, this hallmark of medieval Armenian architecture does not emerge as a distinct form until the ninth century CE, which would then mark this design as a prototype.

Whereas several scholars have mentioned in passing the perceived connection between Armenia and Syria vis-a-vis architectural ornamentation evidence to substantiate this claim has remained largely in the realm of speculation. The postulation of this object's cross design as a precursor to the khachkar will provide the framework from which to excavate "the social, political, and religious conditions that informed" its production in Late Antique Northern Mesopotamia. As a frontier zone among the competing imperial authorities of Byzantium, Sassanian Iran, and the Umayyad caliphate, Northern Mesopotamia and its architectural traditions are often trivialised in favour of grand narratives on architectures of power. Operating as competing confessional factions of the Monophysite faith by this period, their unification as dhimmi may have offered them new means of interaction through the region's gradual Islamization. Adaptations in artisanship here may reflect its communal adherence made manifest in tangible form. It is my intention with this approach to shift the study of Late Antique Northern Mesopotamian cultural production from a position of nuanced theological explication to one that holds consideration for inherited craftsmen tradition.

Karina Tucunan (Australian National University), 'The Landscape of Emotion and Memory: Negotiating Borders and Boundaries in Postcolonial Java's Sacred Spaces'.

Across the globe, heritage sites are not preserved solely through policies or monuments; they endure through ritual, longing, and lived emotional connection. This paper explores how spaces imbued with memory, blessing, and spiritual continuisty—such as the pilgrimage landscapes of Sunan Giri and Ampel Graveyards in postcolonial Java, Indonesia—challenge formal heritage and urban planning systems rooted in materiality, regulation, and state control. It examines how acts of ziyarah (pilgrimage) and haul (commemoration) sustain sacred cultural landscapes that resist rationalized interventions and colonial logics of space.

Building on critiques of authorized heritage discourse and expanding beyond Western-centric understandings of space, the paper proposes the Landscape of Emotion and Memory as a conceptual framework for negotiating tensions between technocratic planning and humanities-informed interpretations of sacred urban landscapes. Sacred Islamic graveyards are examined as emotional landscapes that defy linear historicism. These spaces have hosted multi-generational rituals since the 1600s, wherein communities do not merely commemorate the past—they inhabit it. Through this lens, heritage is not an object to conserve but a relationship to be felt, enacted, and continually renewed.

Using ethnographic methods—including interviews with state officials, site managers, and local communities—this research identifies and analyses three critical types of boundary negotiation observed within emotional landscapes: crossing disciplinary boundaries to recognize memory and ritual as legitimate urban knowledge; carefully navigating epistemological divides between technical data and lived experience; and respecting spiritual boundaries sustained through ziyarah, haul, and the pursuit of barakah, thereby requiring spatial planning practices to accommodate sacred emotional geographies rather than subordinating them to technocratic zoning principles.

Recognizing emotional landscapes invites a paradigm shift toward an affectively-aware, decolonially-informed model of urban planning—one where memory, longing, and faith endure as living infrastructures of the city, and where the voice of the humanities must be heard loudly in shaping spatial futures.

Panel 17: 'Writing Borders' (Chair: Professor Rik Vosters)

Emma Flärd (Stockholms Universitet), 'Masculinity within the boundaries of marriage: literary representations of men, family and intimacy in Swedish romantic fiction circa 1930–1950'.

This paper suggests that during the decades around the mid-20th century, popular culture offered spaces to explore the boundaries of men's roles within romantic relationships and family life. While this era has often been characterised by the ideal of the nuclear family, traditional views on marriage were increasingly clashing with new expectations of intimacy and mutual affection. These themes were at the centre of a genre of popular fiction called 'marriage novels'. The paper focuses on the representations of men as husbands, companions and lovers in the imagination of readers and critics. Through reviews and publisher's marketing, the novels were explicitly and implicitly and linked to contemporaneous discourses on intimacy, gender and 'the family' man as a masculine ideal.

Furthermore, this paper raises methodological questions on the use of popular fiction and reception studies as a historical source on intimacy and everyday life. My research aims to combine the empirical norms of historical research with insights from cultural studies and sociology of literature and thus traverse the boundaries between history literary history ('litteraturvetenskap') that traditionally have been a part of the Swedish academic context.

Rebecca Seewald (Universität zu Köln), 'Imagined transgressions: Epistemological borders and their crossing in Latin American literature'.

This paper explores the literary negotiation of epistemological borders and the potential for their transgression in two Latin American novels: Roberto Bolaño's 2666 (2004) and Pola Oloixarac's Mona (2019). Through a decolonial lens, it examines how these texts stage the contradictions and exclusions of modern knowledge systems, particularly with regard to race, gender, and geopolitical hierarchies. In Mona, the protagonist becomes a figure through whom multiple epistemic tensions are articulated: between the global North and South, body and mind, cultural marginalisation and economic interests. In 2666, Bolaño traces a connection between academic micro-violence and global macroviolence, suggesting that both forms of aggression are intrinsically linked to the clash between hegemonic perspectives and 'othered' modes of understanding. Drawing on theoretical frameworks by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2021) and Walter Mignolo (2012), this paper asks how both novels critique the universalising claims of Western intellectual systems while exposing the violence of their excluding mechanisms. Rather than proposing a clear outside to institutionalised knowledge, 2666 and Mona engage with the complexities of inhabiting and subverting its structures from within, opening up imaginaries for embodied, situated, and affective forms of sense-making that resist assimilation. This paper argues that literature, as exemplified by these works, can operate as a site of epistemological crossings—an imaginative terrain where alternative ways of knowing, being, and narrating can emerge in response to the ongoing 'coloniality of knowledge'.

Maria Wiegel (Universität zu Köln), '"This is an Elephant": Borders and Boundaries in Nathan Hill's The Nix (2016)'.

Donald Trump's second term as president of the United States, more even than his first, shows how significant borders are for his populist politics. Yet, he constantly oversteps boundaries. Since Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's book Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (1985) at the latest, populism became disenchanted by being exposed as having empty signifiers as its kernel. Still, populism is on the rise all over the world and borders become more and more secured and strengthened; physically and figuratively. Populism, as I argue, runs by an us-vs.- them doctrine that does not merely consist of belonging to a nationality, a class or a political view, but also to a specific generation. In my talk I will elaborate on the relationship between borders, boundaries and ideologies by also including the concept of generations. On the example of Nathan Hill's The Nix (2016) – which describes conflicts between generations (on the micro and the macro level) – I show how what is often termed the generation gap should also be seen as an imaginary border. I argue that the novel shows how the construction of generations helps building borders between demographical characteristics, while concealing ideological intergenerational unison that could help people with similar ideological views to set boundaries between themselves and the politics they are opposing. I believe that The Nix shows how building borders between generations functions as a breeding ground for populism and makes it more difficult for the people to set boundaries.

Session 6 Wednesday 17 September 11:15-12:30

Panel 18: 'Unmapping Borders' (Chair: Alexander Lynch)

Isabel Steele Bailey (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), 'Tracing Circulation: A Historiography of Beringia'.

The history of the geographical region known as Beringia is one of circulation. The term Beringia is currently used to denote, in its broadest definition, a region that stretches from the Lena River in eastern Siberia to the Mackenzie River in western Canada, and from the Chukchi sea in the North to the Kamchatka Peninsula's southernmost point. The Bering Strait runs between eastern Siberia and Alaska, cutting the continents of Asia and North America, dividing Russia and the United States. Long before the names of nations or even continents began to categorize the complex contours of this region, however, Beringia emerged in the Pleistocene epoch as an enormous land bridge "twice the size of the state of Texas" that formed a link between these contemporary divisions. While much of Beringia became once again subsumed under rising sea levels as surrounding ice sheets melted at the close of the Pleistocene, its deep past is indicative of the region's transformative, circulatory present. Historical narratives of the region, however, have previously aimed to contain this circulation, setting boundaries for Beringia by writing its geography into

nation-binding and human-centric frames from the disciplinary zones of Russian or United States history. An emerging discourse on Beringia in the last roughly five years, however, written by geographers, environmental historians, archeologists, and scholars of indigenous studies alike have made exciting breakthroughs in this historiography that are, I argue, most emblematic of Beringia's plurality as a geography and a space of habitation. These newer texts explore multidirectional migration within and across Beringia's land and sea, human and non-human patterns of transit, as well as the ever-transient nature of ice and permafrost from the perspective of indigenous lifeways and resistance to imperial settlement. In these latter histories, nations (and empires) are necessarily woven into, but do not necessarily define, the narration of the region. Indeed, this "orbit" of Beringia is carried further to portray the region as a living, breathing, everyday place above and below sea level where ice and whales play as big a role as merchant ships. My essay will trace an historiography of Beringia that offers a critical stance on the literal and figurative borders, both geographical and disciplinary, that have long strained Beringia, presenting instead an emerging discourse on the fluid nature of ice and permafrost, human migration, and animal movement that brings Beringia's circulatory nature further into discussion.

Gillian Daniel (Australian National University), 'Making Waves: Reframing Maritime Pictures of Colonial Singapore'.

The rise of the British seafaring empire in the 18th and 19th centuries was mirrored by an explosion of the artistic genre of maritime pictures. As in many formerly British colonised territories, maritime pictures spread to Singapore through itinerant professional and amateur artists. Works were taken back to key European institutions, but some also remained in private collections in Southeast Asia that formed the basis of contemporary state and national institutions.

In museum displays and academic literature, maritime pictures of Singapore are still typically activated within nationalist narratives that reaffirm colonial-era ideas of environmental control, commercial expansion, social formation and knowledge production. Works commonly featured include views of first contact, flourishing ports and picturesque landscapes, as well as portraits of gentlemen sailors, naval heroes and wealthy traders. These works create the impression that British colonisation was achieved smoothly and surely. But in reality, the colonial enterprise required the taming of many actors and the help of others, whose traces are more difficult to find. Through a painting, a print and a photograph, this paper draws attention to the more-than-human actors of the coastal landscapes of the Malay Peninsula, as well as the working-class subjects who made up an intricate network of labourers unique to the colonial-era Asian maritime world. The case studies speak to an intentionally broad lens across the boundaries of time period, medium and geography, adopted in a wider project seeking to uncover obscured but critical perspectives in colonial archives. Through this, the project proposes that colonial-era maritime pictures of the Straits of Malacca and Singapore can offer new insights into a pivotal period of the region's history and that a re-engagement with this material can open

up contemporary methodological and historiographical possibilities for the writing of Southeast Asian art histories.

Kelcey Gibbons (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), 'Fugitive Cartographies: The Slave at the Center of the World'.

Traversing intellectual boundaries to address epistemic racism within the history of American technology, this paper takes up Cedric Robinson's and Toni Morrison's challenge to write from an Africanist perspective, where "the social and historical processes that matter, which are determinative…" are Black (Morrison 1992; Robinson 2020, 67). Centering Blackness, I explore the positionalities of the fugitive slave by re-narrating a critical event in the history of modernity—the 1851 Hyde Park World's Fair—from the perspectives of three fugitive slaves who staged an anti-slavery demonstration in June of 1851 in Machinery Hall. I critique both whiteness and technology by using William Wells Brown's art, his poetry, his play Clotel, and the work of Black female authors like Eliza Potter—who wrote from the slave markets of St. Louis and New Orleans—to emphasize the queerness of race along the Mississippi River and in the machinery of production and reproduction. Instead of the precision and purity of machine-cut marble, and the gendered and raced subjectivities that accompanied these symbols, the disorder and cannibalistic nature of fathers selling daughters, and sons powerless to ease their mothers' suffering, I argue, reveals the queerness that underlies organized systems of control, where constructed boundaries and geographical borders are traversable, and hierarchies are unstable.

This argument draws on the work of Beth Coleman and Ruha Benjamin who argue "that race is a technology," by examining how these individuals, fugitives of the machine constructed and distributed their own lessons for Victorian audiences composed of landed elites, merchants, factory workers, and representatives from the colonies. I bring together the concepts of co-construction and self-fashioning to describe the ways in which race is tethered between the intimacy of the individual and the systemic.

Just a few months after the passing of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, William Wells Brown, Ellen Craft, and William Craft contrasted themselves against the machines of American industry—drawing attention to the limits of color, gender, and class as mechanisms of social control across geography: the rivers, valleys, and continents traveled to pursue freedom, and also within the mind. The juxtaposition of the tools of a modernity obsessed with mechanical production and reproduction—as represented by their own formerly enslaved bodies, by the new sciences of mechanical production, and by Powers' statue The Greek Slave—with the instrumentality of Victorian mathematics, particularly geometry, for cultivating worthy minds and reinforcing order, brought together threads that were deeply provocative for audiences engaged in their own negotiations of power, identity, and liberation across.

Panel 19: 'The Boundaries of Authority' (Chair: Professor Rik Vosters)

Alice Hilder Jarvis (University of Cambridge), 'Boundaries of the mind: the foundations of psychiatric taxonomy'.

This paper explores how boundaries are drawn between 'normal' or 'healthy' minds, and minds which are diagnosed with some psychiatric condition or pathology. The paper addresses the question: when does a psychiatric diagnosis have a legitimate place in our taxonomy of psychiatric conditions?

I argue that three features are necessary and sufficient for a diagnosis to have a rightful place in a taxonomy of psychiatric conditions. First, the diagnosis should track facts about the mind. This places an ontological constraint on psychiatric diagnosis, ensuring that our taxonomy is populated only by diagnoses which pick out real phenomena. It also constrains the subject matter diagnoses, requiring that they concern the mind and mental phenomena. This safeguards the disciplinary integrity and coherence of psychiatry as a branch of medicine.

Second, the diagnosis should have utility for the patients who receive it. This utility may be direct or indirect: patients might be benefited in the diagnostic moment, by the experience of receiving the diagnosis, or utility for the patient might be mediated by the utility which a diagnosis has for researchers or clinicians.

Third, the diagnosis should be applicable in practice. It should be possible in principle to develop tests assessing whether a diagnosis should be made in any particular case, and clinical professionals should agree with a sufficient degree of reliability on whether the diagnosis should be given in particular cases.

I argue that these criteria are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for a diagnosis to have a legitimate place in our taxonomy of psychiatric conditions. I then sketch the implications of this view for widely-accepted psychiatric diagnoses, for historical psychiatric diagnoses now considered ill-founded, and for contemporary psychiatric diagnoses which invite considerable controversy.

Hugo Till (University of Oxford), 'Corporate Sovereigns: Asset Managers as Private Government'.

The 'Giant Three' Asset Managers: BlackRock, Vanguard, and StateStreet now own a combined 21.9% of S&P 500 companies, casting 27.5% of votes in annual shareholder elections. And their ownership is only increasing: if current trends continue, they will own 35.6% of the S&P by 2038, casting 43% of votes. Moreover, the Giant Three are being increasingly muscular in their governance activities, using their voting power to pass and block shareholder motions on a range of issues from environmental sustainability targets, to workforce diversity programmes, to corporations' political spending. Corporate

governance scholars have begun to sound the alarm bells on this unprecedented level of corporate concentration, warning that the Giant Three will take advantage of their monopoly position to raise prices and lower wages. As detrimental as the Giant Three might be to the welfare of workers and consumers, focusing on such effects misses a crucial dimension of the problem. Namely, that a handful of people now exercise extremely significant control over the operation of the world economy. As Charlie Munger, has put it: 'We have a new bunch of emperors, and they're the people who vote the shares in the index funds.' Here, I give voice to this concern, and argue that the Giant Three are acting as illegitimate corporate dictators, governing the world economy without the requisite democratic authority. Legitimizing their power requires either breaking these index funds up, or subjecting them to the sorts of democratic constraints that regulate states – or so I will argue. My presentation relates to the conference's theme of 'borders and boundaries' in two ways. First, it challenges the boundaries of conventional legitimacy critiques, which typically take for granted that only the state must be held to stringent democratic standards. By suggesting that the 'Giant Three's' power must checked in ways similar to the state, I challenge this orthodoxy. Second, and relatedly, I examine how our concept of legitimate authority must evolve when applied beyond the territorially-bound authority of states, and to the border-transcending power of international asset managers.

Léa Miranda (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), 'Contestations at the Boundary: Photographic Media as Property'.

"To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed." With this claim, Susan Sontag foregrounds an undeniable acquisitive function of the medium. The invention of photography must be understood not only as a technical triumph, but as the birth of a socio-visual regime in which visibility became a form of possession. More than documents, it provided visual evidence, showing that what could be seen could be owned, and acknowledging the acquisition of the depicted object that has already been acquired. From Henry Fox Talbot's The Pencil of Nature, in which photographs served to catalogue some of his collections of chinoiseries, to Queen Victoria's photographic views of her real estate properties, the medium was, from its earliest iterations, enlisted in the service of ownership. This paper, thus, aims to demonstrate that photography has historically functioned as a tool for asserting and visualizing property, not just in the literal sense of documenting material possessions, but also in terms of social identity, self-representation, and power.

Building on the intersections within the notions of photography and property, this paper is organized around key moments of rencontre—fixing the acquisition, possessing the image, and confirming property—which eventually culminate in the performance of property. The first argument expands on the dynamic between the photographer and the subject, and the photographic moment. It traces the origins of photography as a political invention shaped by national interests and personal ambitions, revealing early associations between image-making, ownership, and power. It further argues that the photographic moment—and the

act of "pressing the button"—has always been more than a mechanical process; it is a symbolic assertion of possession. The second section examines how, in the context of the nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution, photography emerged not only as a tool for recording ownership but also as a medium that endows objects—and thus, their images—with evidentiary and representational value. The final section demonstrates how photography serves as both a confirmation of property, within the external viewer's gaze, and a site of resistance, where visual representation functions as a social performance that legitimizes ownership, class distinction, and assertion of power—yet also holds potential for subversion. This paper eventually argues that resisting the visual logic of possession might include practices such as self-representations as acts of self-possession, or through the poet Édouard Glissant's notion of "the right of opacity," the refusal to be photographed at all.

Panel 20: 'Performing Boundaries' (Chair: Emma Arthur)

Ben Anderson (University of Cambridge), 'The blending of the mainstream and the margins at Ormesby Hall, 1920-1950'.

From the 1920s through to the 1950s, Ormesby Hall in Middlesbrough was instrumental to a variety of theatrical productions: public performances both in the grounds of the house and in the surrounding Middlesbrough area. The work was facilitated by Ruth Pennyman, who owned Ormesby Hall along with her husband Colonel Jim Pennyman.

The theatrical work made by professional and avant-garde artists in the interwar period has been well-documented. This paper will examine how the theatrical activities at Ormesby Hall offer a different way of understanding the impact of these works, through a focus on the idea of the creation of a locally popular theatre. While this work might have included a few professionals it was often largely amateur.

How popular theatre could be produced for local audience can be examined in both form and content. The plays staged at Ormesby demonstrate a combination of older theatrical traditions alongside more modern work and ideas from both the British theatrical avant-garde and mainstream. Therefore this paper will explore how the rhetorical boundaries between the avant-garde and the mainstream are far more permeable in their practical interpretation. Equally, that the projects involved people of all classes and politics show how common ground was able to be found politically. The location of Ormesby Hall also helps to create a picture that ideas were taken up quickly around the country, complicating any sense of intellectually or geographically isolated practices. In doing so, Ormesby Hall is presented not as a central hub in any network but as a waypoint that benefitted from a proliferation of new ideas and, combined with an ideological pragmatism, created a space for theatrical experimentation.

Marzieh Azhini (Universität zu Köln), 'Dancing in the Margins: Bodily Agency and the Politics of Movement in Iran's Informal Performance Spaces'.

This paper investigates how informal performance spaces enable oppressed, abjected, and socially invisible bodies to reclaim agency through movement. Focusing on contemporary physical theatre within Iran's informal performance scene, it examines how artists use choreographic strategies to challenge political, cultural, and moral boundaries. "Informal" here refers to performances presented publicly without seeking state approval. The inquiry stems from my participation in two recent performances—Ghoulek: The Image of a Clown Depicted as a Demon in a Dancing Posture on a 10th-Century Nishapur Bowl (March 2025) and Family's Gothic (February 2025)—both directed by Iranian artist Morteza Bakhtiari. These works rely on experimental forms, intimate settings, and embodied storytelling, where the dancing body becomes a site of resistance, testimony, and reclamation. Drawing on theories of the abject (Kristeva)[1], performativity (Butler)[2], and embodiment (Schneider)[3], the paper explores how dance re-inscribes presence onto marginalized bodies, making them visible within an otherwise censored cultural landscape. Using a critical phenomenological methodology that combines performance analysis and interviews with the director, I examine how bodily movement negotiates visibility, risk, and expression. What does it mean to dance when the act itself is at the margin? How do informal stages become spaces of both vulnerability and power? In line with the conference theme of Borders and Boundaries, this paper explores dance's subversive potential to reclaim space and subjectivity under institutional and cultural suppression, repositioning liminality as a site of generative possibility.

Daniel Brew (Open University), 'Electricity and Acousticity: Reconciliation and Optimism in the work of Bjørn Fongaard (1919-1980)'.

This paper explores the convergence of multiple disciplinary boundaries within the practice of Norwegian composer, Bjørn Fongaard, and is centred around a discussion of the facilitative role and influence of the electric guitar in shaping both the theoretical and aesthetic dimensions of his music.

In 1967, Fongaard completed his thesis entitled The N-tone Universe and its Properties as Musical Building Material – a new tonal theory exploring the compositional possibilities of infinite divisions of the octave. The timeline of Fongaard's corresponding compositional output alongside the completion of this thesis highlights the electric guitar as having played a central role as an investigative tool. His N-tone-inspired works blurred the boundaries between pitch and timbre, positioning Fongaard as a notable precursor to the Spectral music movement that emerged in the 1970s. Furthermore, an emphasis on live performance distinguishes his work within the broader context of electronic music discourse and is evidence of his great optimism regarding the expressive potential of future

electronic development in music.

The merging of disciplinary boundaries in Fongaard's work also extends beyond the sonic realm. Notably, his work reflects an attempt to reconcile Biblical narratives of creation with scientific theories concerning the Earth's formation. Using Biblical texts in a number of his works Fongaard also employed units of geologic time to determine form and timbre, and the graphical evolution of his scores reflects influences from nature and astronomy, shaped in part by his background in technical drawing.

Despite being an incredibly productive composer and one of the most significant proponents of the electric guitar within the field Western art music, Fongaard's work fell largely into obscurity following his death in 1980. This paper re-evaluates his work, emphasising the convergence of disciplinary and aesthetic boundaries as central to his distinctive contributions to contemporary music.