

CONSTRUCTING COHERENCE IN THE BRITISH SHORT STORY CYCLE

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While the American short story cycle has recently been the object of extensive critical discussion, the same can hardly be said of its British counterpart. Still, thematically unified short story cycles would appear to constitute an established feature of the British literary landscape: recent specimens include Graham Swift's *Learning to Swim*, Salman Rushdie's *East, West*, Julian Barnes's *Cross Channel*, Adam Thorpe's *Shifts*, Sara Maitland's *Moss Witch*, A. L. Kennedy's *What Becomes*, and Kazuo Ishiguro's *Nocturnes*. By reference to these and other British examples of the form, this conference aims to explore the generic characteristics of the short story cycle alongside and against those of the novel and the short story collection, pursuing questions such as:

- What are specific effects of a story cycle's coherence as against that of a novel on one end of the spectrum and a story collection/compilation on the other?
- How can the construction of coherence in the short story cycle be situated generically vis-à-vis other narrative cycles (e.g., in television, film, comics, web videos, etc.)?
- How do readers participate in the production of such coherence? Does reader participation in the short story cycle differ qualitatively from the creation of coherence in other genres?
- What aspects, other than recurrent themes or characters, can serve as agents of coherence?
- If the cycle relies on recurrent themes and characters, how is their function enhanced by use in a story cycle rather than a novel or other longer narrative genres?
- What insights are to be gained from comparisons between the short story cycle in the British Isles and in other literatures?
- What are forms and functions of paratextual features in short story cycles?
- Which economic or other material aspects have (had) a decisive impact on the development of the genre in Britain?

We invite twenty-minute papers on these or related questions. Please send a 250-word abstract along with your institutional affiliation and a short biographical blurb to <patrick.gill@uni-mainz.de> and <florian.klaeger@uni-wuerzburg.de> **by March 15, 2015**.