

Dunja M. Mohr

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

After decades dedicated to overcoming borders and differences fiction following the vision of a world without borders, culminating in the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990, material and symbolic wall-building have become a "global phenomenon" (Vallet 2014) in the 21st century. In politics, the U.S. and several European countries follow a border-wall rhetoric of power, enclosure, exclusion, and demonization and engage in building border barriers or heavily patrol the maritime borders of the EU. In fiction, George R.R. Martin's acclaimed fantasy series *A Song of Ice and Fire* (1996-) popularized for a global audience in the spectacular HBO series *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019) uses the ultimate border metaphor, the Wall, in a number of allegorical ways, as a physical protection of the North from the invasion of the others and the return of the dead within a allegorical Anthropocene setting. In the era of climate crisis, borders change not only in terms of geopolitics or for ideological reasons, but climate change literally alters the physical geography of borders, undermining vulnerable communities worldwide. Against this background, my talk reads John Lanchester's *The Wall* (2018) both as a Brexit narrative of the future and as a fictional take on migration caused by a global climate catastrophe, as it critically engages with the shifting of borders and their arbitrariness, the process of othering, the generational rifts, and the resulting aesthetic depletion. In a second step, I hope to contrast Lanchester's projection of the future with Kazuo Ishiguro's mythical Arthurian take on othering, historical tribalism, the ambivalent effects of establishing differences in *The Buried Giant* (2015).