

Keynote 3

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Sybille Berg's *GRM Brainfuck* as a dystopia of bordered Britain

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

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