

**Extended Call for Papers: Gender and Queer Identities in Australian Speculative Fiction – A Guest Edited Issue of *Gender Forum*, by Bettina Burger (University of Düsseldorf), Lucas Mattila (University of Düsseldorf) and David Kern (University of Cologne)**

The field of Australian Speculative Fiction thus far remains an underappreciated and therefore notoriously undertheorized field of cultural production. Yet its very diversity and range means that it hosts a site of productive potential for literary scholars from a number of different theoretical orientations. Postcolonial, ecocritical, inter- and transcultural approaches to Australian Speculative Fiction offer fruitful avenues for critical exploration. Scholars concerned with migration, diaspora, Asian Anglophone literature, and Indigenous Australian writing will find ample material to analyse within the broad genre of Australian speculative fiction, consisting of such genres as fantasy, science fiction, gothic, horror, magic realism, dystopian writing and many others. Often overlooked, these genres might offer unique insights into the dynamics of often marginalised gender and sexual identities – perhaps all the more so, because these genres are, by definition, open to experimentation and subversion, which lend themselves to challenging heteronormative structures.

This guest-edited issue of *Gender Forum* aims to account for Australian Speculative Fiction at its intersection with gender and queer studies, which we consider a particularly fruitful approach because gender and sexual identity seem to be frequent concerns of many writers of Australian Speculative Fiction. The prominence of female writers of Australian fantasy, for example, has been noted by scholars and fans alike, but there are a variety of other ways in which Australian Speculative Fiction can be approached through a lens of gender and queer studies.

From Joan Lindsay's classic *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and its queer subtexts, amplified by its most recent adaptation, to the movie *Babadook*'s exploration of motherhood, the genre has displayed and continues to display a marked interest in questions related to gender and sexuality. The topic also extends from Alexis Wright's explorations of toxic masculinities and the dysfunctionality of colonial, white heteronormative systems of governance in *The Swan Book*, to Ellen van Neerven's and Claire G. Coleman's work foregrounding queer and non-binary identities. It is also notable that many Australian Speculative Fiction texts by female authors tend to include male homosexual characters, most often as side characters (e.g. in Lian Hearn's *Tales of the Otori* series, Kylie Chan's *Dark Heavens* series, Ambelin Kwaymullina's *The Tribe* trilogy, and Trudi Canavan's *Magician's Apprentice* trilogy, to name but a few) or occasionally as protagonists (e.g. C.S. Pascat's *Captive Prince* trilogy).

We welcome articles that focus on newer fantasy texts, geared towards adults, young adults, or children, as well as explorations of more traditional examples of Speculative Fiction such as Nevil Shute's *On the Beach* or Greg Egan's science fiction novels. The Australian Gothic also provides ample ground for analyses of gender and sexuality, be it with a focus on modern authors such as Kaaron Warren or Alan Baxter or on the colonial Australian Ghost story, as collected and critically addressed by scholars such as James Doig and Ken Gelder.

Themes and possible topics by may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Gender / Sexuality / Queerness in early Australian Speculative Fiction texts
- Queer readings of Australian Speculative Fiction
- Queer characters in Australian Fantasy literature
- Issues of Gender, Sexuality and Queerness and the Australian literary market

- Women in Australian Fantasy Literature
- Gender roles in Speculative Fiction - Australia vs. worldwide
- Masculinity / Femininity in Australian Speculative Fiction
- Intersections between representation of gender / sexuality in East Asian Anglophone (Australian) Speculative Fiction and Australian Speculative Fiction
- Intersections of racism and gendered forms of discrimination in a postcolonial context
- Indigenous takes on gender and sexuality
- New concepts of gender in Australian Speculative Fiction
- Intersectionality in Australian Speculative Fiction
- Queer Speculative YA Fiction and short fiction
- The role of anthologies in promoting queer speculative short fiction in Australia (Kindred OzYA, Kaleidoscope etc.)
- Australian Speculative Fiction as a unique site for addressing gender and sexuality-based configurations
- Changes in the depictions of gender / sexuality in the history of genres
- Challenging heteronormative structures and/or concepts of masculinity in early Australian Science Fiction and Fantasy

We invite proposals of up to **300-350 words** for scholarly essays focusing on gender, sexuality and queer identities in Australian Speculative Fiction. The above topics are suggestions for proposals, but we are happy to accept different ideas as well. Proposals should be **formatted in MLA 8** and are due on **23 July 2021**. Proposals should include a short **bio note**. **Please send your submissions to both**

gender-forum@uni-koeln.de

australianprojectnrw@gmail.com