

Call for Papers

Speculative Narratives Beyond Consensus Reality:

Navigating the Senses from Wonder to Horror

International Interdisciplinary Conference

29th – 30th June and 1st July, 2026

Venue: Department of Languages and Cultures, University of Aveiro, Portugal

Conference Organisers: Popular Culture Group

We invite scholars, researchers, and artists to submit abstracts for the upcoming academic conference, *Speculative Narratives Beyond Consensus Reality: Navigating the Senses from Wonder to Horror*. This event will explore the transformative potential of speculative narratives – across literature, film, visual arts, and other media – in breaking free from the boundaries of “consensus reality.”

“No Martians”, explains Margaret Atwood in *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination* on what separates her writing from science fiction (2011: 6). Instead, locating herself in the sphere of speculative fiction, she describes it as the narrative of “things that really could happen but just hadn’t completely happened” (2011: 6). Promoted by Marek Oziewicz as a “meta-generic fuzzy set supercategory”, speculative fiction sets itself against “consensus reality” as a cultural and literary tool of investigative exploration which rejects mimetic approaches (2017: 1).

Despite their conceptual slipperiness, the term and field of speculative fiction are now mature. The term “speculative fiction” itself made its first appearance in Robert A. Heinlein’s “On the Writing of Speculative Fiction” in 1947 and today the umbrella of speculative fiction covers a wide variety of literary traditions from which various hybrids have emerged and continue to do so. Feminist speculative fiction, like other types of spec-fi, thrives in the undecidability of its identity, taking advantage of the porous boundaries between fields such as science fiction, fantasy, and horror. In the Introduction to *Sisters of the Revolution: A Feminist Speculative Fiction Anthology* (2015) by Ann Vandermeer (editor of the horror magazine *Weird Tales*) and Jeff Vandermeer, with whom she has co-edited recognised collections such as the *Steampunk* series (2008, 2010 and 2012) and *The New Weird* (2007), promote what they describe as “an ongoing conversation” which is fraught with contradictions (2015: 1). Speculative fiction’s political value has proven to be immense, and it has been making contributions not only to feminist literature but also to indigenous literature, refugee and migration fiction, cli-fi, and anti-globalisation writing. Dwelling in a cultural cross-genre third space, speculative work uses gothic elements, re-animating vampires, ghosts and zombies; it creates dystopian post-apocalyptic futures, fractures fairy tales,

revises the past through alternate/alternative histories (e.g. Winepunk on Port wine powering a monarchy in the North of Portugal), and materialises trans and posthuman aspirations. Speculative fiction embodies a worldwide political response of human creativity, attempting to imagine potential futures during a significant shift towards a globalised human experience. In imagining/making these futures the responses navigate between anxiety and hope (Braidotti 2011, 2019), but the urge to create these speculative imagined communities cannot be repressed.

We encourage scholars and researchers from various disciplines to submit proposals related but not limited to:

The Limits of Reality: Horror, Weird Fiction, Slipstream, and Magical Realism

Feminist Pasts, Feminists Futures in Speculative Fiction: Gender, Power, and Liberation

Brighter and Darker Futures in Punk Nations: Steampunk, Biopunk, Dieselpunk, Solarpunk, Winepunk, and others

Cybercultures and Futurisms: Digital Futurism, Retrofuturism, Afrofuturism

Superheroes in the Age of Crisis: A Cultural and Critical Approach

Alternate Histories and Reclaiming the Past: Identity, Memory, and Power

Critical Animal Studies and Speculative Narratives

Care and Social Justice in Cli-fi and Crip Theory: Ecoability and the Intersection of Disability, Critical Animal Studies and Environmental Futures

Globalisation and Mobility in Speculative Fiction: Transnational Identities and the Politics of Movement

Economic, Social and Eco-Sustainability in Speculative Fiction: Post-Capitalist Speculative Economies

Intersectionality in Speculative Fiction: Navigating Race, Gender, and Power

(Post)-Apocalyptic Narratives: Survival, Ethics, and the End of the World

Dystopia and the Politics of Control: Visions of Totalitarian Futures

Speculative Fiction as a Reflection of Technological Anxiety: From Cybernetics to Artificial Intelligence

Radical Futures and Dys/Us/Utopian Thought in Speculative Narratives

Speculative Fiction and the Ethics of Posthuman Life

Posthumanities and the New Frontiers of Medical, Environmental, and Digital Futures

Keynote speakers

Ana da Silveira Moura/AMP Rodriguez, author, founding member of Invicta Imaginaria, co-coordinator of the Creative Europe project Hypothesis You Preserve (Portugal, Spain and France), University of Vigo

Camilla Grudova, author of *The Doll's Alphabet* (Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2017), *Children of Paradise* (Atlantic Books, 2022), *The Coiled Serpent* (Atlantic Books, 2023)

Michael Lundblad, Professor of American Literature and Culture, University of Oslo

Nelson Zagalo, Professor of Multimedia, University of Aveiro

Website: under construction

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 15th April 2026

Notification of acceptance: 30th April 2026

Accepted Formats: Papers may be submitted in a variety of formats, including individual papers, panel proposals, posters, and creative presentations

We welcome proposals in English of around 300 words which should be sent to cllc-speculativeconference.aveiro@ua.pt along with a short bionote (150 words). Presentations should be approximately 20 minutes in length, with time for discussion to follow. For further details contact Maria Sofia Pimentel Biscaia, University of Aveiro (msbiscaia@ua.pt) and António Oliveira, The Porto Accounting and Business School (ajmo@iscap.ipp.pt).

We look forward to seeing you in Aveiro.

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