Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, we have decided to extend the deadline for submissions to the 1st of June 2020. We fervently hope for a time of post-apocalyptic rebirth in November, when we will again be able to travel and meet each other! However, we continually monitor the situation; should we be unable to hold the conference physically as planned, we consider digital solutions that will allow the conference to take place anyway. A final decision as regards the format of the conference will be announced by mid-August, at latest.

Just like the Roman god Janus, speculative fiction looks into both the past and the future in its attempt to make sense of the bewildering clutter of events, phenomena, and ideas which constitute the present. Traditionally, science fiction has been the arena for speculating about the future, while the past has been the domain of the fantasy genre. However, fantasy may also take place in the present, as testified by the increasingly popular urban fantasy genre, and even the future can accommodate fantasies, such as Nalo Hopkinson's Brown Girl in the Ring. Meanwhile, subgenres such as alternative history or steampunk may be said to constitute science fictions of the past. In the shape of "creation stories," speculative works such as J. R. R. Tolkien's Silmarillion and C. S. Lewis’s The Magician’s Nephew narrate the beginning of history, whereas the apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic genres speculate about the end of history—and what comes after. And many forms of speculative fiction often portray the evil that comes from the past to threaten the present, whether in the guise of an ancient vampire, a Dark Lord returning, or an alien roused from its aeons-long sleep.

The nature of time itself is also the focus of many speculative works. Adventurers into Faerie may find that years have passed after their one night away, and space travelers who go faster than the speed of light may experience the same. Normal temporal relations and principles are turned on end in time travel narratives such as H. G. Wells's The Time Machine, Philippa Pearce's Tom's Midnight Garden, or BBC's Doctor Who; and in Michael Ende’s Momo, the pivotal struggle between good and evil does not concern the fate of the world, but that of time.

Speculative fiction as a mode of literature has deep historical roots, roots that are very much alive in contemporary texts. Whether they are ancient myths and epics, Gothic novels of the seventeen and eighteen hundreds, or pulp fiction from a century ago, the precursors and forerunners echo in the literature of today. On the other hand, as ecocritic Timothy Clark (2014) suggests, speculative fiction may be the literary mode best suited for dealing with "the collapse of distinctions between the trivial and the disastrous, nature and culture" which are likely to characterize our future in the Anthropocene epoch.

For Specific 2020: Time and History, we welcome proposals for papers on any of the multitude of ways in which speculative fiction, in any media, interacts with, comments on, and relates to time and history. We also welcome proposals for papers on the history, present state, and predicted future development of the speculative genres themselves, or of speculative fiction as a field of academic study.

We are delighted to present keynotes from Edward F. James, Emeritus Professor of Medieval History at University College Dublin and Merja Polvinen, University Lecturer in English Philology at University of Helsinki.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- History of the speculative genres
- Future development of the speculative genres
- The representation of different historical epochs in speculative fiction (the middle ages; the 19th century etc.)
- Posthumanism
- Alternative histories
- Time travel
- Work and futurism
- Fantasy and modernity
- Fantasy with future settings
- Speculative fiction and the avant-garde
- Speculative fiction and the anthropocene
- Speculative fiction and globalization
- Utopias/dystopias of the past and the future
- Post-scarcity futures

All proposed papers should connect, in some way, to the theme "Time and History." Submissions should consist of a 300-word abstract and a tentative bibliography together with a short biographical note. They should be sent to michael.godhe@liu.se by June 1, 2020. Possible acceptance letters will be sent on June 21 at the latest.

In case of a virtual conference, please note that it will take place during normal office hours CET (Central European Time).

Conference homepage: https://www.kau.se/kufo/aktiviteter/specific-2020