

## Spectres of the Anthropocene: The Ecogothic in Australian climate fiction

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My paper will examine Australian fiction about environmental degradation that makes use of Gothic elements to express a contemporary crisis. The so-called concept of ‘cli-fi’ (climate fiction) draws attention to the emerging corpus of fictions dealing with climate change.<sup>2</sup> However, cli-fi cannot be understood as a genre in the accepted scholarly sense, since it does not organise narrative along plot formulas or stylistic conventions, but rather denotes a general theme.<sup>3</sup> The critical lens of the ‘Ecogothic’ is fascinating to apply here, as unlike much of speculative fiction, it does not necessarily situate climate change into the distant future, but connects it to the present and past by animating the history of environmental damage with spectres of various kinds, or by staging it as the return of the repressed. This way, the Ecogothic draws attention to “complex temporal antecedents,”<sup>4</sup> bringing together past experiences of environmental degradation with the present and future imaginings of anthropogenic climate change. My paper will attempt to define the ‘Ecogothic’ aesthetic in relation to the (post)colonial Gothic genre and discuss the usefulness of these concepts for an understanding of climate fiction. Indigenous as well as settler Australian perspectives will be invaluable to this discussion.

### Bio

**Kathrin Bartha** is currently undertaking her PhD on the Ecogothic in Australian fiction within the Joint PhD programme between Monash University (Melbourne) and Goethe University Frankfurt. She graduated from Freie Universität Berlin and wrote her Masters thesis on the significance of ‘nature’ in the Australian (post)colonial Gothic. She spent one year at Melbourne University studying for her Masters degree and researching her thesis, which was also conceived as a joint project with double supervision in Melbourne and Berlin. As a student, she worked as an assistant in the research project “Shylock in Germany: The Reception of Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* after 1945” and has published on the significance of the sublime, beautiful and grotesque within this play.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. For example: Dan Bloom. “Confession of a ‘cli-fi freak’.” *San Diego Jewish World*, 21.09.2015. <http://www.sdjewishworld.com/2015/09/21/confession-of-a-cli-fi-freak/> (accessed December 2015.).

<sup>3</sup> Adeline Johns-Putra. “Cli-fi novels humanize the science of climate change—and leading authors are getting in on the act.” *The Conversation*, 26. November 2015. <https://theconversation.com/cli-fi-novels-humanise-the-science-of-climate-change-and-leading-authors-are-getting-in-on-the-act-51270>, (accessed December 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Sharae Deckhard. “Ghost Mountains and Stone Maidens: Ecological Imperialism, Compound Catastrophe, and the Post-Soviet Ecogothic.” *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches*. Elizabeth DeLoughrey et al (eds). New York: Routledge, 2015, p.288.