

Call for Contributions: “Queer Ruralisms.” Special issue of the journal *AmLit – American Literatures*. Deadline: June 1, 2023.

AmLit – American Literatures invites contributions to a journal special issue titled “Queer Ruralisms,” guest-edited by Ralph Poole and Benjamin Robbins.

Near the end of Andrew Holleran’s 1978 novel *Dancer from the Dance*, which evokes the hedonistic gay scene of 1970s New York, the narrator establishes distance between the metropolitan queer community and the rest of the United States, which he names “that inscrutable past west of the Hudson ... in the hills of Ohio or Virginia” (244). For the narrator, the queer population of New York has succeeded in divorcing itself completely from its rural roots. However, it would be too easy to accept this disparagement of the rural at face value as reflective of modern gay life and its embrace of the liberating possibilities of the city. The novel in fact concludes with an exchange between two framing narrators, one of whom is based in the Deep South and who describes a scene of queer rural contentment and pleasurable detachment from the urban: “I wanted a real porch, a real front yard with real live oaks and real flowers in real pots—and that is what I have now ... content with the quiet pleasures of life” (253). This special issue on “Queer Ruralisms” will pay attention to queer attachments to rural space in literature, which have often been obscured by the privileging of the urban in cultural depictions of queer lives.

Queer studies scholarship has worked to overcome the urban bias to reveal the diversity of queer lives within rural environments. For example, Jack Halberstam has argued that the casting of the urban as queer people’s “natural environment . . . occludes the lives of nonurban queers” (15), and Scott Herring challenges the investment in the “metropolitan as the terminus of queer world making” (4) by instead highlighting the potential of the rural as “a premier site of queer critique against compulsory forms of urbanization” (6). A number of sociological, geographical, anthropological, and literary and cultural studies approaches to queer ruralism have worked to address the general invisibility of LGBTQ+ rural experiences in queer theory. This aim of this special issue is to make a new contribution to this scholarship through an original focus on literary manifestations of queer ruralism in terms of narrative form and within the contexts of transmedial and transnational exchange. First of all, it will consider the particular narrative structures and textual features that have been used to depict queer rural life across the literatures of the Americas. It will additionally explore how queer rural texts travel across borders creating connections between global non-urban communities. Finally, it will investigate the relation of literary depictions of queer ruralism to those found in other media, including film, visual art, and digital platforms.

The editors of this special issue invite contributions that engage with depictions of queer ruralism in the literatures of the United States, Canada, and Latin America (whether prose, poetry, or drama). We would particularly welcome essays that consider queer ruralism within its transnational and transmedial contexts. Contributions may engage with—but by no means have to limit themselves to—the following questions, topics, and concerns:

- How does queer rural literature challenge the travel narrative of metronormativity that “demands a predetermined flight to the city” (Herring 15)? What journeys do queer rural subjects take that resist or ignore the pull of the urban?
- What kind of relationship between the rural and the urban is established in these texts?

- What narrative structures, tropes, and conventions do writers of queer rural experience appear particularly attracted to? Examples may include the use of “romantic pastoral conventions within the homosexual literary imagination” (Shuttleton 123) or evocations of rural “homotextual space” in which characters “flee oppressive space by seeking out the marginal space of the open countryside” (Stockinger 143).
- What role have rural environments played in the lives of queer writers?
- What rural communities have particularly given rise to the production of literature on the theme of queer non-urbanism?
- How do experiences of the rural differ for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and non-binary communities?
- How do intersecting categories of identity, such as race, ethnicity, class, age, or disability, shape the lives of rural queers?
- What forms of migration does queer rural literature explore and how do such movements create connections between global rural environments?
- How have queer rural literatures interacted with other media through adaptation, allusion, homage, or parody?
- How have queer rural literatures embraced “plural rural sexualities [as] liberating utopia” (Keller and Bell 518), and/or how have they addressed the sometimes dire, lonely, and even violent realities of queer rural lives?

We invite interested authors to submit abstracts of 300-400 words and a brief biographical statement of no more than 100 words to the editors via email for initial feedback: Ralph.Poole@plus.ac.at and Benjamin.Robbins@uibk.ac.at . Authors would then be invited to submit full essays of between 5,000 and 10,000 words by **June 1, 2023** via the Open Journal Systems platform on www.amlit.eu .The special issue is due to be published in April 2024. *AmLit* follows a double-blind peer reviewing process.

Works Cited

- Halberstam, Jack. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York UP, 2005.
- Herring, Scott. *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism*. New York UP, 2010.
- Holleran, Andrew. *Dancer from the Dance*. Vintage, 2019.
- Keller, Julie C., and Michael M. Bell. "Rolling in the Hay: The Rural as Sexual Space. " *Rural America in a Globalizing World: Problems and Prospects for the 2010s*. Eds. Conner Bailey, Leif Jensen, and Elizabeth Ransom. Morgantown: West Virginia UP, 2014. 506-522.
- Shuttleton, David. "The Queer Politics of Gay Pastoral." *De-Centring Sexualities: Politics and Representations Beyond the Metropolis*. Ed. Richard Phillips , Diane Watt and David Shuttleton. Routledge, 2000. 123-42.
- Stockinger, Jacob. "Homotextuality: A Proposal." *The Gay Academic*. Ed. Louie Crew. ETC Publications, 1978. 135-149.