

## Special Issue Call for Papers

### Planetary Fiction: African Literature and Climate Change

Guest Editors: Nedine Moonsamy (Johannesburg) and David Shackleton (Cardiff)

Deadline for Submissions: 1 February 2025

*MFS Modern Fiction Studies* invites essay submissions for a special issue on “Planetary Fiction: African Literature and Climate Change.” At the 2020 World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Ugandan climate justice activist Vanessa Nakate was cropped out of an *Associated Press* photograph that shows other young activists (Isabelle Axelsson, Greta Thunberg, Loukina Tille, and Luisa-Marie Neubauer). As the only Black African activist in a photo with white Europeans, Nakate commented: “You didn’t just erase a photo. You erased a continent” (69). Indeed, political ecologist Malcom Ferdinand contends that the erasure is typical of much of the Global North’s environmentalism, which seeks to account for the climate crisis without addressing issues of colonialism and race and thereby perpetuates modernity’s “colonial . . . fracture” (41). By contrast, this special issue turns to African literature to develop what Ferdinand calls a “decolonial ecology”—one that promises to transform the conceptual and political implications of the climate crisis. It recognizes African literature as the site of ecological thinking, which provides resources for what Ferdinand calls “world-making” (51): ways of living with human and non-human others on the Earth.

In literary studies, critics are increasingly turning to climate fiction, or “cli-fi,” to address global warming during a time of climate breakdown. By imagining future climate-changed worlds, writers and filmmakers can help us to understand the risks of global warming and associated phenomena, including extreme weather events, droughts, flooding, biodiversity loss, and species extinctions. Climate fiction also provides models for environmental activism, which can give a sense of agency in responding to the climate crisis. While climate fiction is most often studied from a Euroamerican perspective, this special issue turns to African literature to rethink the climate crisis. In doing so, it builds on work in the emerging fields of the African environmental and energy humanities, including Cajetan Iheka’s positioning of Africa as “the ground zero of the energy humanities” (10). It seeks to identify urgent topics of environmental concern and develop new collaborative methodologies and interdisciplinary approaches. It welcomes further theorization of the key term “planetary fiction,” which might initially be understood to include many genres and media (including orature, novels, short stories, poetry, film, and drama), and to refer to those works of fiction that register the planetary transformations associated with global warming. Ultimately, this special issue uses such fiction to explore the conditions of what Achille Mbembe calls “planetary habitability” (115).

We invite essays that address any aspect of African literature and climate change. Topics might include but are not limited to the following:

- African futures: scenarios, pathways, and planning
- Speculative fiction: Africanfuturism, science fiction, and fantasy
- Energy transitions: fossil fuels and renewable energy
- Extractivism: fossil fuels, transition minerals, and sacrifice zones
- Global warming and the uneven distribution of environmental risk
- Drought, water infrastructure, and hydropolitics

- Imperial ecologies: colonialism, race, and climate colonialism
- Climate finance and global capital: sustainability, resilience, and climate resilient development
- Chinese development and the One Belt, One Road Initiative
- Narratives of environmental crisis: Anthropocene, African Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Racial Capitalocene, Plantationocene, and Necrocene
- Climate and environmental activism
- Planetary politics and habitability: decolonial ecologies, loss and damage, reparations, multispecies flourishing, and global climate justice

Essays should be 7,000–9,000 words, including all quotations and bibliographic references, and should follow the MLA Handbook (9th edition) for internal citations and Works Cited. Please submit your essay via the online submission form at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/mfs>. Queries ahead of submission are welcomed, and may be directed to Nedine Moonsamy ([nedinem@uj.ac.za](mailto:nedinem@uj.ac.za)) and David Shackleton ([shackletond@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:shackletond@cardiff.ac.uk)).

### Works Cited

Ferdinand, Malcolm. “Decolonial Ecologies: Beyond Environmentalism.” *Handbook of Critical Environmental Politics*, edited by Luigi Pellizzoni, Emanuele Leonardi, and Viviana Asara, Edward Elgar, 2022, pp. 40–57.

Iheka, Cajetan. *African Ecomedia: Network Forms, Planetary Politics*. Duke UP, 2021.

Mbembe, Achille. *La communauté terrestre*. La Découverte, 2023.

Nakate, Vanessa. *A Bigger Picture: My Fight to Bring a New African Voice to the Climate Crisis*. HarperCollins, 2021.

### About the Guest Editors

Nedine Moonsamy is an associate professor in the English Department at the University of Johannesburg. She is currently writing a monograph on contemporary South African fiction, and otherwise conducts research on science fiction in Africa. Her debut novel, *The Unfamous Five* (2019), was shortlisted for the IHSS Fiction Award (2021), and her poetry was shortlisted for the Sol Plaatje European Union Poetry Award (2012) and the New Contrast National Poetry Prize (2021).

David Shackleton is a senior lecturer in English Literature at Cardiff University, having previously taught at the University of Exeter and the University of Oxford. He is the author of *British Modernism and the Anthropocene: Experiments with Time* (2023) and is currently writing a book on climate change and speculative fiction.