

FROM CRISIS TO CATASTROPHE: RESPONSES TO (UN)CERTAINTY IN FRENCH AND FRANCOPHONE LITERATURES

Catastrophes and (Im)possible Futures: Writing (Un)certainty in French and Francophone Literatures

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Section language:

French

Call for Papers:

The current socio-political context compels us to rethink the notion of catastrophe in contemporary French and Francophone literatures in its broadest sense: ecological, political, social, colonial, sanitary or intimate. The aim of this thematic section is to consider catastrophe not only as an event, but as a structural condition, embedded in historical regimes of violence, extraction, and the hierarchization of lives within colonial, capitalist, and heteropatriarchal modernity. We therefore propose to explore this notion through a triple critical framework: ecocriticism and ecopoetics, decolonial feminist and/or queer epistemologies, and Afro-futurist and Indigenous-futurist imaginaries.

The idea is to approach (un)certainty not as a universal abstraction, but as a situated experience, unevenly distributed and produced by regimes of power that organize the vulnerability of bodies and territories. Catastrophe thus emerges as a mode of governing life, in which racialized, queer, feminized, colonized existences are rendered precarious, even disposable. These relatively recent literary fields produce new forms of subjectivity, memory, and futurity.

Our reflection will focus on three main research axes and approaches:

First, ecofeminist and/or decolonial queer perspectives, which interrogate the links between the exploitation of bodies and the destruction of territories while challenging dominant norms. The aim is to think of catastrophe as that which disrupts norms of embodiment, gender, and temporality, but also as a tool that reinforces certain exclusions.

Second, ecopoetics and ecocriticism as modes of reconfiguring relationships between humans and non-humans. Natural and ecological disasters (extractivism, ecosystem collapse, environmental violence) are inseparable from histories of land appropriation and the dehumanization of populations. Literature thus enables the observation of how these forms of violence are narrated and transformed. It brings into view alternative ecologies, relational modes that escape extractivist logics, and ways of being that reconfigure the boundaries between human and non-human.



Finally, Afrofuturism and Indigenous futurisms reinvent temporalities and imaginaries beyond dominant Western frameworks. More than a genre, they function as devices for reclaiming time and imagination, enabling Black and Indigenous subjectivities to move beyond confinement to catastrophe and traumatic past. By rearticulating memory, technology, and speculation, they open up futures in which existence is no longer defined by death or survival, but by possibility, creativity, and power.

This section aims to demonstrate that contemporary French and Francophone literatures do not merely represent collapse as a destructive power; they constitute spaces of struggle and creation in which new ways of inhabiting the world, rethinking the living, and imagining the future are continuously (re)invented.

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Associated Research Groups:

Inter-University Research Group ECO/EGO

The group brings together researchers in French and Francophone literature from three Polish academic institutions (University of Warsaw, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, and Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun). The team's work focuses on research in the fields of ecocriticism and ecopoetics, particularly on first-person narrative forms and representations of subjectivity in poetry, which reflect shifts in the perception of subjectivity in the context of the environmental crisis. The corpus under study consists of works from the French and Francophone regions written after 1980.

