



A JOURNAL OF THE  
SOCIAL IMAGINARY



# Shifting Imaginaries amidst the apocalyptic present: African Eco-fiction and cosmologies of connection

Alessandra Manzini

amanzini@iuav.it

*Urban Planning | University IUAV of Venice*

Oladele Madamidola

omm1@st-andrews.ac.uk

*Modern Languages | University of St. Andrews*



## Abstract

The paper addresses the emergency characters of environmental imaginaries looking at cosmological issues behind them: the place humans have arrogated themselves in relation to ecosystems. The analysis starts deconstructing the Western 'cosmogony': the economic and political system that has cannibalized the entire world since 1492, culminating with the partition of Africa. African ecocritical fiction helps to envision the scale and urgency of the threat. Fictional representations of ecological realities in sub-Saharan Africa are analysed using *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament* and *How Beautiful We Were* as representative texts. Perspective analysis is framed by the postcolonial ecocritical postulations of Rob Nixon and Cajetan Iheka, questioning the anthropocentric view of the environment which reinforces the nature-culture divide. Contributions from different perspectives discuss the power of cosmologies and speculative imagination to envision alternative planetary futures and the fabrication of new imaginaries.

## Keywords

Environmental Imaginary | Anthropocene | Post-Colonial African  
Ecocriticism | Africa World | Cosmology



## 1. Introduction

An installation of the artist duo Geissler and Sann, "How Does the World End (for Others)?" found in the exhibition 'Everybody talks about the weather' at Fondazione Prada in Venice, inspired the opening of this introduction. It consists of 37 literary fragments, progressively disposed on a timeline into the future till 2393, culled from the emerging Cli-fi genre, a subgenre of speculative fiction that concerns itself with the effects of climate change on human society. One of these fragments: depicts times in 2054, a future where things have clearly gone awry:

The vegetation and the ground are coloured with unnatural shades of red and grey, people are facing different pandemics and their repeated waves - with many living in isolation, by choice or owing to the growing paranoia - and deep fakes are so widespread that no one believes in anything. In fact, in this society, images are considered mere comfort objects to be experienced through holograms or sophisticated retinal chips. Three friends go on a road trip into the past. On the journey they rediscover lost biodiversity. How could this all have disappeared? (*Everything will change*, 2021 directed by Marten Persiel in Geissler-Sann, 2023, "How Does the World End?").

The last fragment is set in 2393, and the planet is almost unrecognizable:

Clear warnings of climate catastrophe went ignored for decades, leading to soaring in temperatures, rising sea levels, widespread drought and finally the disaster known as the Great Collapse of 2093. The disintegration of the West Antarctica Ice Sheet led to mass migration and a complete reshuffling of the global order. Writing from the Second People's Republic of China on the 300th anniversary of the Great Collapse, a scholar presents a gripping and deeply disturbing account of how the children of the Enlightenment - the political and economic elites of the so called advanced industrial societies - failed to act, and so brought about the collapse of Western civilization. (Naomi Oreskes, and Erik M. Conway, 2004, *The Collapse of Western Civilization* in Geissler-Sann, 2023, "How Does the World End (for Others)?")

The fact that thus far, only speculative fiction has come to consistently embrace climate change as inescapable reality of daily 21-century has been a key factor in Amitav Ghosh's influential argument concerning the 'Great Derangement' of our time, one that faults the mainstream of cultural production to remain blind towards the most extreme human challenge of humans' history in three hundred thousand years (Ghosh, 2016; Geissler-Sann, 2023). Decrying humans' refusal to fully acknowledge and utilise the potency of prose fiction, Amita Ghosh sees humanity's collective failure to address human mischief on the environment as rooted in our inability to properly imagine the scale and urgent nature of the threat. The extreme nature of today's climate events, Ghosh asserts, asks us to imagine other forms of human existence—a task to which fiction is the best suited of all cultural forms (Ghosh, 2016).



The paper aims to nurture a reflection on the multiple crises of our times namely global warming and species extinction, addressing the emergency characters of environmental imaginaries. This paper first tries to set the theoretical ground to answer the question from our first guest writers from the future re-connecting Cli-fictions with decolonial ecofeminist theories and postcolonial ecocriticism found in African speculative fiction. The analysis starts to interrogate the singularity of Western history: the economic and political system that has cannibalised the entire world since 1492, culminating with the partition of Africa. The same system that tried to erase organic cosmologies of premodern times in the name of Illuminism. The second section analyses the emergent voices of the ecocritical movement aimed to deconstruct the dominant mainstream paradigm of neoliberalism in a globalised era.

The third part attempts to put the analytical approach into practice. It therefore examines fictional representations of ecological realities in sub-Saharan Africa using In Koli Jean Bofane's *Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament* and Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* as representative texts. A perspective analysis of the texts is framed by the postcolonial ecocritical postulations of Rob Nixon in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, and Cajetan Iheka's *Naturalizing Africa: Ecological Violence, Agency, and Postcolonial Resistance in African Literature*. In examining how these writers represent ecological realities in the texts, we question the anthropocentric view of the environment which reinforces the nature-culture divide, causes the displacement of humans and other living beings, and consider how the writers portray the effect of the exploitation of nature and the resultant environmental change. The fourth part fuels the debate on how to shift towards new imaginaries. Contributions from contemporary Afrofuturistic philosophies of the entanglement, decolonial feminism, and ecocritical speculative fictions, each one developing its own narrative while nonetheless coming together, lead the way towards the fabrication of new imaginaries amidst the apocalyptic present.

Concluding remarks suggest how theories and discourses could answer the question: "What might alternative scenarios for the present and the future look like?"

## 2. Deconstructing Western cosmogony

Observation of socio-ecological phenomena shows problems in human psychological responses to the anthropogenic climate crisis, suggesting that there is probably another issue at the cosmological level: the place humans have arrogated themselves in relation to other Earth's species and ecosystems they belong, considering that humanity appears doggedly resolved to work against them. These socio-ecological dynamics are processes initiated and sustained by humans' activities since the beginning of the Western singularity: extraction of fuels, gas, and minerals; carbon emissions; domestication of habitats and ecosystems for humans' exploitation; soil consumption via urbanisation and sprawling processes; depletion of megafauna; commodification of natural resources; and so on. They are all causing anthropogenic climate change (droughts, fires, heat waves, desertification, extreme



weather events, sea level rise). The scientific literature (Zalasiewicz et al., 2019) embraces the 'Anthropocene' hypothesis, defining it as a new era in which the impact of human activities on the planet has been (and continues to be) so significant as to require a change in the chronology of Earth's history. It is recognised that the planet has crossed the threshold of the Holocene (which lasted about 11,700 years), the era of wellbeing, stability and biodiversity richness and entered a new geological era with a new name – the 'Anthropocene'.

Observing the evolutionary parabola of global warming and gases introduced into the atmosphere, led political thinkers to conceive the less anonymous term 'Capitalocene' (Moore, 2017), recognising geographical and cultural differences in 'humanity'. The period of great acceleration in human history (1945-2015), in fact, coincides, according to these studies, with the period of decolonisation in states dominated by European imperial powers and the takeover of a new institutionalised social order in Western countries. This order was gradually established in all the territories that embraced the 'cosmogony' of unlimited economic growth and capitalism, or whose itinerary was directed towards forms of globalised modernisation: towards a superficial conception of nature as a commodity, ancillary to human life on earth (Escobar, 2008).

Comparative planetary studies open a perspective that monitors human action on the planet and identifies it as the cause of this transition to a new geological era. ESS (Earth System Studies) theorise the existence of three histories within which events are defined by different time scales: the history of the planet, the history of life on the planet, and the history of the globe made up of extractive imperial logics, capitalism, and technology (Chakrabarty, 2021).

Indeed, the Western neo-liberal system has taken possession of the thesis of environmental emergency and climate change, transforming it into a hegemonic discourse and using it for legitimizing itself and its reproduction with some variations. The language of global environmentalism has been dominated by Western policy and science. Other voices, experiences, and solutions have been submerged, such that postcolonial scholars have critiqued the inherent whiteness of the 'Anthropocene'. While there has been an increasing focus on the environmental ruins of the African continent because of the unfriendly treatment of the environment, there is only a hand-full of research produced by Africans to date on African eco-fiction which may have led to the slight attention being given to African understandings, explanations, alternative imaginings, and solutions. This dearth of interchange of ideas has resulted in the continued imposition of Global North solutions on issues requiring indigenous resolution.

In this essay, West means what Europe has become since 1492: an economic and political system that has cannibalised the entire world, culminating with the partition of Africa in 1884. Since the mercantilist era, European forces imposed unequal relations towards the African explored territories. With the imposition of extractive patterns in the territories of Global South (Gudynas, 2015), the relations between the colony and the centre of the empire during colonialism marked a point of no return.





The same system nowadays is taking possession of the environmental crisis thesis and producing the global mainstream policy of the 'green transition' as a new field of economic recovery, driven by the keywords of growth and development reproducing the same patterns of governmentality of the past. This leads to retracing European steps in history and to analyse the Western singularity: the imposition of an interpretation of reality where man alienates himself from nature and the universe and imposes his domination on other species and non-human entities. It is a work well demonstrated by the ecofeminist philosopher Carolyn Merchant who shows how, from modernity, a masculine project has prevailed and from Europe, was going to conquer the world rejecting everything that is nature and imposing a totally new order to the living system, killing the nature and de-animating the Universe and the Cosmos (Merchant, 2020; Kondjo Grandvaux, 2021; Manzini, 2023). The cosmos inhabited by the mediaeval European peoples was devitalized and transformed into an order governed by mathematical laws, where non-humans have been de-animated (Merchant, 2020; Kondjo Grandvaux, 2021, Manzini, 2023). As Merchant studies show, central to the organic theory was the identification of nature, especially the earth, with a nurturing mother: a kindly beneficent female who provided for the needs of mankind in an ordered, planned universe. But another opposing image of nature as female was also prevalent: wild and uncontrollable nature that could render violence, storms, droughts, and general chaos. Both were identified with the female sex and were projections of human perceptions onto the external world." (Merchant, 2020:2).

The ecofeminist perspective sustains that gender is a crucial variable, in relation to class, race, humans/non-humans' relations and other important dimensions of political ecology life, especially the economy of ecological resources.

Women in the Global South generally showed a great 'distrust' of feminism: because they did not know it or found it unsuitable for their situation, or because they considered it too flashy, too political. Fatou Sarr adds that: "feminism as a social movement has met with great reluctance on the part of African women, who have often worried about the dangers of establishing a single model, making feminism a dogma (Sarr, 1998)." This is why Global South researchers propose an openness to diversity, giving feminism a plural dimension" (AFARD, 1983 "Feminism as a Social Movement"). Françoise Verges, one of the prominent afro-descendent decolonial feminist, in her book *Decolonial feminism* states that: "If feminism remains grounded in the division between women and men, a division that predates slavery, but does not analyse how slavery, colonialism and imperialism act on this division, nor how Europe imposes its conception of the women/men division on the peoples it colonises, or how they create other divisions, then this feminism is racist" (Verges, 2020). Ifi Amadioume in her best-known book: *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* emphasises the impact of colonialism and its religion (Christianity) on gender, which in the pre-colonial matriarchal era enjoyed an organic plasticity and fluidity derived from the conditions for its flourishing that animist religions, including the cult of the ancestors, offered (Amadioume, 1997; Amadioume, 1987; Anta-Diop, 1989).

Consequently, African feminism is shaped by African women's resistance to Western hegemony and its legacy within African culture. It has grown out of a history of women's integration in corporate and agrarian based societies, which had strong cultural heritages, but were however disrupted by colonialism (Muthuki, J.M. 2006). African feminisms hold the view that the erosion of women's power is caused by the intrusion of foreign systems with different gender orientation and new paradigms of power organization (see Amadiume, 1987; Arndt, 2002; Kolawole, 1997; Mikell, 1997; Mohanty, 2003; Narayan, 1997; Oyewumi, 1997 in Muthuki, J.M. 2006). Oyewumi (1997) points out that colonial practice stemmed from the worldview of the human over the non-human or subhuman and the masculine over the feminine and the modern or progressive over the traditional (Muthuki, J.M. 2006). Oyewumi (1997) also points out that colonization was a process in which male hegemony was instituted and legitimized within African societies (Muthuki, J.M. 2006). Colonial rule was therefore characterized by the exclusion of women from the newly created colonial public sphere. Therefore, an African ecological perspective needs to interrogate the role of historical circumstances such as colonial rule on the socio-ecological systems and gender roles. Such a perspective requires an integrative approach to gender which involves an examination of how organizations work at the community level based on gender defined roles and relations.

Decolonial feminist theories of Global South make a parallelism between extractive activities as an expression of colonial capitalism and feminicide as an expression of patriarchy (Lugones, 2010). If territory and feminine are part of the same superorganism, similarly extractive activities and feminicide are the two systemic declinations of the same model of aggression, which has the sole purpose of dominating bodies and the Earth (Lugones, 2010; Cusicanqui, 2020; Lagardes, 1999; Verges, 2020, Manzini, 2021).

Ecofeminism and ecocriticism have a common angle when it comes to understanding how the concept of wilderness and nature changed over time, or how the metaphor of land influences the way humanities treat it. Both are posing questions on differences between man and woman writings about nature.

Ecocriticism was first developed in the nineties as "the analysis of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty, 1996: XIX). In addition to class, race, and gender with ecocritical perspective, 'place' emerged as a new critical category. It was originally "an earth-centred approach to literary studies" (Glotfelty, 1996: XIX), but it quickly enlarged its field of interest, including human representation of nature, and the relationship between human and non-human, also critically analysing the term humanity (Garrard, 2012: 5). Glotfelty opines that all ecological criticism shares 'the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it' and that 'ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnectedness between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artefacts of language and literature,' and as a 'theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the nonhuman' (21). Although ecocriticism is a movement that has influenced the Humanities over the past few decades, as Lawrence Buell notes, it was only in the 1990s that it began to gain momentum, first in the United



States and in the United Kingdom, as literary scholars began to raise questions regarding the field's contribution to human understanding of environmental crises such as pollution, global warming, deforestation, overpopulation, waste disposal (including nuclear), climate change, ozone layer depletion (Buell, 2011: 89).

Since its inception, however, the field has been contentious not just because ecocritics do not have a univocal view in terms of definition and scopes, but also because many sub-fields have emerged. In his attempt to determine what counts as ecocriticism, Lawrence Buell suggests four criteria for literature inspired by environmental and ecological concerns. The first criterion is that environmental writing, in contrast to nature writing, links natural history to human history. He further opines that genuine environmental texts must consider the nonhuman and their 'interests,' sometimes privileging a non-androcentric world and its distinct evolution and history. He is also of the view that environmental writing should show an ethical orientation that makes human beings responsible and accountable for the environment as well as its well-being and continuation. Finally, the environmental text should present the developmental order of nature and critique or avoid a static model of natural change and ecological transformations (Buell, 1995:7-8). In view of these criteria, one may be curious to know if texts by African writers demonstrate similar concerns and what have been the responses of eco-critics from Africa on the debate. Importantly, it is crucial to ask if there is African ecocriticism at this point and if there is, should it as a sub-field of ecocriticism align with Buell's criteria?



### 3. Is There African Ecocriticism?

In their 'Introduction' to *African Literature Today*, Cajetan Iheka with Stephanie Newell announces, 'the arrival of an African ecocriticism' and claims that 'the field is growing rapidly as there is now a rush to adopt ecocriticism in African literary and cultural studies' (Iheka & Newell, 2020: 1). The critical responses on African ecocriticism are reactions to William Slaymaker, who is arguably the most contentious voice on ecocriticism. Slaymaker in his 2001 essay, *Ecoing the Other(s)*, accuses the Black African writers and critics of a lack of responses to the call for global green and consequently dismisses African ecocriticism (Slaymaker, 2001: 132-134). The reason for what Slaymaker sees as the weak response from black African writers, according to him, is that 'environmentalism and ecologism threaten to dominate global economic policies in the new world order enforced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund' and that sustainability, biodiversity, population control, and land responsibility will be defined by Western world's financial and scientific centres (133). Whether this might be the reason for black African writers' scepticism will remain debatable as one would ordinarily expect that such influence would have fuelled a response from Africa as the continent has been known for her postcolonial writings which resist any form of oppression or injustice.

Following William Slaymaker's declaration, African scholars have attempted to define African Ecocriticism in ways that differentiate it from the Euro-American



conception of ecocriticism. This is because African Ecocriticism is a multifaceted field that encompasses a range of perspectives and approaches. It goes beyond the narrow focus on environmental justice, incorporating the agency of nonhuman and spiritual materialities in nature-human relations (Egya, 2020). This perspective is rooted in a uniquely African environmental theory that emphasizes the interconnectedness of humanity and the natural environment (Falola, 2017; Iheka, 2018). It also draws on African environmental ethics, which recognize the importance of indigenous people and their relationship with the natural habitat (Chemhuru, 2019). In the context of literature, Caminero-Santangelo argues that African Ecocriticism expands the scope of ecocriticism to include a broad array of African texts, highlighting the interconnectedness of social struggles and ecological transformations (2014). The field also offers a local-developed solution to environmental issues through the concept of eco-communitarianism, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals, communities in socio-ecological systems (Ab and Gomez-Tagle Leonard, 2018). African Ecocriticism is further enriched by the inclusion of non-Western epistemologies and the exploration of alternative narratives in African literature (Caminero-Santangelo and Myers, 2011).

Looking at Slaymaker's claim from a slightly laidback perspective, however, the fears that led to the weak responses from Black African writers may have been out of their volition given the elevated level of politicking involved in global environmental policymaking. How do we explain that Africa has been a target for waste disposal and Western policymakers such as Lawrence Summers had justified and covered up environmental damage and its complex historical causes in Africa? (Nixon, 2011: 1) According to Caminero-Santangelo, the cover-up or 'erasure' 'has often caused mainstream conservationists to overlook environmentally destructive extractive industry in Africa (driven by foreign economic interests) and facilitated the creation of conservation reserves for tourists from which local communities are evicted and excluded (Caminero-Santangelo, 2014: 2-3). Caminero-Santangelo further argues that such exclusion is linked to a narrative depicting Africans as lacking the proper environmental responsiveness and knowledge to care for valuable biodiversity hotspots which suggests that environmentalists' efforts in Africa need to be conceived and led by non-Africans (3). As far back as 1996, Melissa Leach and Robin Mearns explain that the 'received wisdom' about Africa holds because it helps to promote 'external intervention in the control and use of natural resources' (Leach & Mearns, 1996: 19-20). The common ground here is that the exclusion of African voices was a cover-up mechanism for the exploitation and degradation of African environments by the Global North. As Nixon explains in *Slow Violence*, such a cover-up implies that there will be no opposition by Africans to exported pollution onto African soils (Nixon, 2011: 2).

About half a decade after Slaymaker's 2001 controversial publication, he showed a massive understanding of African literature when he acknowledges that 'Nigerian literature is a treasure trove for the ecocritics and literary environmentalist' in his 2007 essay (Slaymaker, 2007:130). The issue for Slaymaker was that unlike white-African writers including J. M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer, Black African writers



and critics have focused so much on colonial issues at the expense of the global environmental crises. Asempasah et al., however, aver that the argument can also be made that if African literature and literary criticism have been anthropocentric, as Slaymaker claims, it is because African writers and critics have focused attention on 'interrogating postcolonial issues that caused the environmental crises rather than tackling the environmental issues head-on or in isolation' (Asempasah et al., 2022: 2).

That African writers prioritize other issues should not be a case of subordination of nature or non-humans to human activities in African Literature. Should African writers idolise nature when their people battle with hunger, or should they talk about non-human protection when even humans are not protected? Black African response reflects the preoccupation of the postcolonial state which focuses on the material benefits of nature at the expense of its ecological value to the ecosystem. In essence, any discussion of African ecocriticism should adopt a postcolonial approach which allows for connecting the sufferings and environmental degradation of Africa to the over four hundred years of European imperialism (Iheka and Newell, 2020: 4).

In line with the foregoing, our analysis of Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were* and In Koli Bofane's *Congo Inc.* in this paper is anchored on the postcolonial ecocritical approaches of Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence" and Cajetan Iheka's idea of "Naturalizing Africa" to illuminate how environmental degradation gradually inflicts harm on marginalised communities, resulting in displacement and profound socio-economic consequences. Nixon and Iheka's propositions are apt for our analysis because of their postcolonial approaches to the discussion of the environmental crisis.

Nixon's central argument in *Slow Violence* is that environmental violence is not always immediate or spectacular in nature, as is often depicted in media and popular culture. Instead, it often takes the form of slow, incremental processes that occur over extended periods of time. This slow violence is less visible and, therefore, less likely to capture public attention and outrage. It affects marginalized communities, particularly the poor, who lack the resources and political power to address or mitigate the consequences of environmental degradation (Nixon, 2011). On the other hand, Iheka's central argument revolves around the idea that postcolonial African literature serves as a critical space for contesting and dismantling the "naturalizing" of Africa. He argues that African writers employ various narrative strategies to unveil the ecological violence committed against the continent, shedding light on the environmental degradation and resource exploitation perpetuated by colonial and neocolonial forces (Iheka, 2018).

#### **4. Textual Representations in In Koli Jean Bofane's *Congo Inc.* and Imbolo Mbue's *How Beautiful We Were***

What seems to distinguish eco-fiction from Africa is the distinct representation of the impact of colonialism and how its metamorphosis continues to impact the earth



of colonized territories. This echoes Caminero-Santangelo's view that "African environmental writing tends to prioritize social justice; lived environments; livelihoods; and/or the relationship among environmental practice, representation of nature, power, and privilege" (Caminero-Santangelo, 2014: 7). This is what obtains in the two novels. In Koli Jean Bofane's *Congo Inc.*, for instance, the character of Old Lomama, whose attachment to the forest and respect for the animals resonates in the narrative, epitomises the harmony of culture and nature in traditional African societies (Bofane, 2018: 128-131). The old chief, who is the custodian of his community, seeks the permission of the tiger in a bid to hunt in its territory (129) and after the cold-blooded murder of the tiger – king of the Ekonda forest (Nkoi Mobali) – by a coalition of warthogs, Old Lomama eulogizes the tiger and blames its death on globalization (lvi: 130-131). This sort of relationship is what Iheka calls 'aesthetics of proximity' in *Naturalizing Africa* (Iheka, 2018:21-56). For Old Lomama then, foreign interference (imposed globalisation) is to blame for the disconnect between humans and non-humans in Africa (lvi: 22, 99-101).



#### **4.1. *Congo Inc.* (English Translation, 2018) – In Koli Bofane**



**FIG. 1 – Kinshasa Great Market Area by night** (Source: AI fotor generator)

*Congo Inc.* is a novel about the contradictions of globalisation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo which could be extended to the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. It conveys the plights of a people in the face of internal conflicts that make many homeless, children without parents as the reader is presented with the devastating effects of capitalism and colonialism – the sort that brings back memories of

Bismarck and Leopold II of Belgium. At the centre of the plot is 25-year-old Isookanga, a Pygmy from the Ekonda clan, who is supposed to replace his uncle (Old Lomama) as the chief of his village and become a transporter of their tradition into the future. While Old Lomama detests globalisation because it interferes with the traditional ways of life where culture and nature are intertwined, Isookanga celebrates it. He dresses like a Westerner and admires Western civilisation as he moves from his village to the country's capital, Kinshasa, and joins forces with street children, warlords, and a Chinese friend who becomes a victim of the same globalisation he tells Isookanga he does not believe in.

To become globalised is to embrace the use of technology. Therefore, rather than tending the forest, Isookanga prefers to spend his time playing an online game (on a laptop he steals from a Belgian ethnologist) called Raging Trade, which reveals the workings of hard power and the mischiefs of world corporations. Acting as multinational corporations, players compete for the resources of 'Gondavaland' to gain global dominance, by any means necessary. These means happen to be nuclear missiles, stealth planes, guerrilla warfare, and even genocide which leave the environment degraded. Although Isookanga's Congo Bololo (which represents Africa) stands its ground in the face of competition, it could not cope for too long because of the involvement of international regulatory bodies such as the IMF and the UN (Bofane, 2018: 7). In the foreword to the novel, Dominic Thomas states that 'journeying alongside Isookanga, we discover the striking correlation between the online game and the challenges confronting the DRC on the larger geopolitical landscape of globalization...' (Bofane, 2018: xv). Africa simply does not stand a chance against the ferocious forces of the Global North which are bent on exploiting the continent's natural resources regardless of what it takes.

It is when Isookanga gets to Kinshasa to seek his fortune as a 'globalisation advocate' who wants to «be in the mainstream, get involved in high technology, communicate with the world, be in trading, stuff like that», despite his uncle's warning that «those who talk of modernity want to eliminate us» that he realizes the value of living in the relative peace that being closer to nature offers (Bofane, 2018: 4). He takes a riverboat to the city, only to find himself among a group of shégués, street kids, and like them, he becomes homeless and faced with the cruel reality of the globalization he seeks and then doubts, he asks: "would the now established globalization drive people to veiled behaviour even in everyday life, to a ghostlike secrecy?" (Bofane, 2018: 29). Here, we see the kind of internal and external colonialism which Ken Saro-Wiwa talks about at play (Saro-Wiwa, 2012: 16)<sup>1</sup>.

In the final chapter of the novel 'Game Over', we see how the notorious warlord turned administrator – Kiro Bizimungu also known as Commander Kobra Zulu – meets his brutal death at the hands of a mob who administer jungle justice on him (setting him ablaze) for his role in terrorising the masses (Bofane, 2018: 175-179). As



<sup>1</sup> Ken Saro-Wiwa calls attention to two forms of colonialism which combine to oppress the exploited communities in Africa – the internal and the external. While the external is obvious, he sees the operations of the internal (government, local chiefs) in collusion with the international corporations as devastating on the oppressed.

Bizimungu breaths his last, he remembers his Rwandan root, being a Tutsi who had to flee his motherland because «people were hounded and slaughtered with machetes as if they were cattle», he remembers the mischiefs of the foreign bodies and how «telephone calls flew back and forth between Paris and New York», and how «at that moment, the magic of the Whites intervened» and his life takes a turn he never wanted (171-173). As he thinks about his role as a mere pawn in the game of chess, he remembers that:

The algorithm Congo Inc. had been created at the moment that Africa was being chopped up in Berlin between November 1884 and February 1885. Under Leopold II's sharecropping, they had hastily developed it so they could supply the whole world with rubber from the equator, without which the industrial era wouldn't have expanded as rapidly as it needed to at the time.

Loyal to Bismarck's testament, Congo Inc. more recently had been appointed as the accredited supplier of internationalism, responsible for the delivery of strategic minerals for the conquest of space, the manufacturing of sophisticated armaments, the oil industry, and the production of high-tech telecommunications material (Bofane, 2018: 174-175).

While he has been used and is now implicated as a small fish in the ocean of international politics, the narrator makes it clear that «they had continued to perfect the algorithm somewhere between Washington, London, Brussels, and Kigali» (Bofane: 175). As Bizimungu is facing an agonising death, Isookanga is arrested alongside his Chinese friend, Zhang Xia, and jailed for being found in the office of the mobbed Bizimungu whom he is supposed to meet to perfect plans on how to access the mineral resources under the earth of his village. He is released to go with his uncle, Old Lomama, and plans are made to return him to the village. Armed with the map of raw materials burned onto a digital disk, Isookanga asks Old Lomama: «Did you know there's gold, bitumen, and diamonds in the Ekonda soil?» When his uncle answers in affirmation he is angry that his uncle had never told him about it as the future chief. Old Lomama, however, makes it clear that: «men being what they are, if you tell them about such things, good-bye calves, cows, pigs: nobody will want to work anymore» (Bofane, 2018: 183).

Old Lomama's response is particularly insightful because governments in most countries in sub-Saharan Africa have become lazy and overdependent on their natural resources at the expense of human resources. The abandoned humans – the masses left uncatered to by their governments – have in turn embraced social vices and the young populations have become what I call 'criminals by circumstances' in countries with huge disregard for the rule of law. The irony of it all is that the Global North countries who feed on the chaos of Africa do not condone lawlessness in their countries. The point here is exemplified by the response of Colonel Mosisa at the headquarters of the Rapid Intervention Police, when Isookanga goes back to see Zhang Xia, his Chinese friend in jail:



We received information about him from his embassy. He's dangerous and being sought by the police in his country. A firing squad is almost certainly waiting for him there. He has corrupted functionaries, and in his country, corruption is officially outlawed. The governor intends to maintain a good relationship with the Chinese. They asked us politely and we've extradited him (Bofane: 184).

If corruption is outlawed in China and other Global North countries, why should they indirectly encourage corruption in Africa by colluding with politicians and government officials to impoverish their people and subject their land to environmental degradation? In the final paragraph of the final chapter (before the Epilogue), the narrator asks:

In an environment polluted by the deadly waves of uranium, cobalt, columbite-tantalite, what can one expect from any individual who has passed through the centrifuge and is developing in the context of a next-generation nuclear reactor? (Bofane, 2018: 186)

His simple answer to that question is: «...permanent radiation doesn't bring innocence back; it leads to rage». He adds that the sensitive souls of the land cannot escape the eventuality of climate change because the concentration and fission of environmental degradation is their state capital, Kinshasa, which the narrator describes as the «laboratory of the future and, incidentally, capital city of the nebula, Congo Inc» (Bofane, 2018:186). In essence, the people of Kinshasa and indeed, people living in countries with extraction sites in Africa cannot escape the dangerous effects of what Nixon calls 'slow violence'.

#### **4.2 How Beautiful We Were (2021) – Imbolo Mbue**



**FIG. 2** – *Black Oil Gardens* (Source: AI fotor generator)

The novel is an exploration of the plights of a people whose ancestral land is blessed with oil. Their blessing, however, becomes their woe as their government gives an oil corporation, Pexton, the right to explore oil and share the profits as it is done in most oil-producing countries in Africa. Set in the fictional Cameroonian land of Kosawa and moving back and forth between happenings in Bezam (the state capital) and America, the multiple narrators – collective and singular, children, and the elderly – take turn to narrate the ordeals of the Kosawa people. They tell the tales of how the contamination of their land, water, and air causes the death of children and shortens the lifespan of their people; of how all these affect their economy and sources of livelihood (predominantly farming and fishing):



We remembered those who had died from diseases with neither names nor cures—our siblings and cousins and friends who had perished from the poison in the water and the poison in the air and the poisoned food growing from the land that lost its purity the day Pexton came drilling (Mbue, 2020:7). ... three decades before, in Bézam, on a date we'll never know, at a meeting where none of us was present, our government had given us to Pexton. Handed, on a sheet of paper, our land and waters to them. (Mbue, 2020: 14)

The suffering of the people of Kosawa is compounded by the failure of the community leader, Woja Beki, to speak and stand for his people. This is characteristic of leaders in Africa who enrich themselves at the expense of their people's welfare:

Pexton had bought his cooperation and he had, in turn, sold our future to them. We'd seen with our own eyes, heard with our own ears, how Pexton was fattening his wives and giving his sons jobs in the capital and handing him envelopes of cash (Mbue, 2020: 8).

The collusion between the government and the oil corporation is so obvious that the leader of Pexton could speak on behalf of the government. He affirms that 'Pexton and the government are your friends,' and 'even on your worst day, remember that we're thinking about you in Bézam and working hard for you' (Mbue, 2020:10). This relates strongly to Nixon's assertion that 'confronted with the militarization of both commerce and development, impoverished communities are often assailed by coercion and bribery that test their cohesive resilience' (Nixon, 4).

Tired of their helplessness and the lies they have always been fed, the youths threaten: 'We'll march to Bézam and burn down your headquarters... We'll hurt you the same way you're hurting us' (Mbue, 12). Nixon, however, highlights the helplessness of such communities as Kosawa when he asks: 'How will that community negotiate competing definitions of its own poverty and long-term wealth when guns, the bulldozers, and moneymen arrive?' (Nixon, 4). Following Thula's story in the part titled «Thula», one is likely to empathize with the children of Kosawa for

not getting to see how beautiful their community was before the arrival of the oil corporation. (Mbue, 2020: 30,34) The neo-colonial and neoliberal capitalistic approach to life makes Thula's father question the rationale behind being human: «Wasn't man's ability to recognize his fellow human what made him better than dogs? It was sad how the love of money was corrupting many; truly sad». (Mbue, 2020: 40) One of the child narrators added:

I once overheard about the ocean, which none of them have ever seen, how it's bound to dry up someday because of American people like the ones at Pexton, because of all the toxic wastes they're dumping into rivers which will flow into the ocean and choke it dead (Mbue, 2020: 79).

This sort of situation is what Nixon refers to as slow violence – «a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all» (Nixon, 2011: 2). Nixon's argument is that serious attention should be paid to such slow violence as environmental degradation caused by the activities of the Global North on African soil just as it is paid to the invasion of foreign territories with weapons of mass destruction (Nixon, 2011: 3). The mass destruction of the Kosawa land and people and their efforts to call the attention of the United States to their inhuman activities which became even more detrimental to them is an indication of the hypocrisy behind the idea of social justice at the world level. Africans who are the recipients of the injustice are «discounted as political agents, discounted as long-time casualties...of slow violence, and discounted as cultures possessing environmental practices and concerns of their own » (Nixon,2011: 2). Policies that emanate from such actions that favour the Global North are indications that the value placed on human life is not equal – some are protected humans, others are environmentally-afflicted poor who are «terminally invisible, disposable people» (Nixon, 2011: 278).

*How Beautiful We Were* particularly touches on issues of failed leadership, corruption, lack of trust in the judicial system, colonial influence and exploitation, displacement, the death of traditional belief systems, the helplessness of ordinary people, and the vulnerability of children in the face of environmental degradation. The narrators movingly reveal the efforts of the people to take back their land from the oil corporation and their government, and how their resistance has led to more suffering, bloodshed, and the death of their heroes – young and old alike. Through the happenings in and around Thula – who falls in love with education, gets a scholarship to a school in America, and returns to fight for the restoration of the rights of her people and the purification of their land and then dies in the struggle without her body being found – the reader is moved to tears for the people of Kosawa as their land is taken-over and they become displaced people carrying the memories of their land and culture only in their hearts (Mbue, 2020: 360).



## 5. Cosmologies of connections: towards new imaginaries of Earth and Cosmos

The debates on the fabrication of new imaginaries amidst the apocalyptic present was well nurtured by *Ateliers de la Pensée* (ADLP), among the large planetary laboratories active in the Global South, founded by Achille Mbembe, a Cameroonian historian and philosopher, and Felwine Sarr, a Senegalese economist and writer, outstanding for the creative force of the Afrotopian literary, artistic, philosophical, and aesthetic movement. Launched in 2016, the ADLP have become, within a year, a veritable 'think tank of ideas,' bringing together leading thinkers, writers, and academics from Africa and the diaspora in Dakar and St. Louis to reflect on new issues raised by transformations in the contemporary world and to revive the project of an Afro-diasporic critical thought. The aim of these workshops was to uptake the theoretical initiative and cast a plural gaze on the realities of the African continent and the futures that are emerging, starting from one place: Africa. *Ateliers de la Pensée* (ADLP), debates major topics, one of them is the planetary condition and the politics of the 'living'. ADLP invites us to rethink the quality of the bonds, to ask what community bonds are and who is included in them. And how, through the quality of these bonds between all living beings, we produce new forms of life. The search for alternative ways of inhabiting the planet and relating to the living brings us closer to some of the new emerging African paradigms from which to start a conception of new imaginaries reinforcing the Africa-World message (ADLP, 2016).

Achille Mbembe, in *Essai sur l'Afrique décolonisée* pays homage to Frantz Fanon by reflecting on decolonization from an autobiographical account that focuses on the emergence of a cosmopolitan African modernity that the author calls 'Afropolitan' i.e., the emergence of a complex Creole universe from the continuous socio-cultural reassembly and incessant displacement of men and cultures within the continent and in its multiple diasporas (Mbembe, 2010). The current of critical studies of Afropolitanism emerged from a movement of self-generation or self-explanation of which the *Ateliers de la Pensée* are a multiplier. The aesthetics of entanglement conceptualized in *Out of the Dark Night* is another pivotal point of his thought (Mbembe, 2008). The gaze in the mirror is of the African in diaspora, dispersed, floating, and real, revealing the richness and sensibility acquired between dispersion and immersion as an Afropolitan citizenship (Mbembe, 2008).

In his latest book, *la commonauté Terrestre*, Mbembe's thought gains momentum by proposing a paradigmatic shift in global politics in which humanity rethinks its planetary communal condition (Mbembe, 2023). He proposes to move from *droit de gens*, a right based on land occupation, to *droit de vivant* rights of the living beings. He thinks of the Earth as the home of all living beings by proposing the Earth community as the 'ultimate utopia'. He proposes a project for the revitalization of planetary consciousness, beginning with a rethinking of the human beings bonded to the Cosmos and all living beings, drawing on African animist metaphysics (Mbembe 2023, Manzini, 2023b). The right to a home in Africa is accompanied by the right to birth,



far beyond the Western *jus soli*, with explicit recognition of belonging to a cosmic ecosystem (Manzini, 2020). Based on the animist Bambara and Dogon cosmogonies of Mali, Achille Mbembe draws a political ecology in which humans are embedded into the Earth community with all living beings and rediscovers their cosmic dimension. A utopia for which inhabiting the world necessarily means living together and making space for others (human and non-human) and initiating the politics of the living beings, which implies a primary right to breath and fundamental right to life based on the rule of interdependence and African hospitality (Mbembe, 2023).

*Ateliers de la Pensée 2022* questioned how cosmologies can help address the *deliason*: the social, economic, and political disconnection of humans with nature that plagues the modern age. Accordingly, to Felwine Sarr, there are cosmologies that can teach us something about how to connect to other living beings to reinvent the human-not-human-more-than-human relationship and address the planetary challenges originated by the ecological crisis (Manzini, 2023d). In an interview made during the last *Ecole Doctorale des Ateliers de la Pensée 2022*<sup>2</sup>, Sarr answered a question on how to reconcile hard sciences born during the illuminism revolution with the organic beliefs systems of premodern times:



In the exact sciences there is an attempt to understand the real and the relationship within different elements of reality and to systematise them into intelligible and clear theoretical propositions that explicate laws of nature. In the domain of cosmology or cosmovision there is first and foremost a relationship with the imaginary and the explanations that communities develop about the origin of the Cosmos and their relationship with the Earth. This production of imaginaries has practical consequences in the production of everyday life: the way of fishing, farming, using trees, organising the political community, the use of collective resources, and in the relationships of reciprocity and mutual aid of the populations that update them. Science should document, especially in the domain of social and political productivity, what major changes have occurred in cosmology and consequently in the relationship with nature. There are explicit cosmologies such as the mechanistic cosmogony, which considers nature an object to exploit, it's linked to a developmentalist, mechanical, rational view. It's a palpable cosmogony: some people dominate it, others suffer it. The economy is organised around this cosmogony. The idea which drives the new paradigm of an economy of the living beings is to do the opposite, to reconstruct narratives that infuse awareness at different scales, linking gestures toward nature to new emergent cosmologies. There are at least two important levels of engagement in this sense: the creation of narratives and the spaces for experimenting with other ways of connecting with living beings. We are in the process of elaborating these cosmologies: recognizing them, thinking about them, and reformulating them.<sup>3</sup>

2 Interview with Felwine Sarr in Manzini A. (2023d), "Reinventare l'immaginario relazionale per un'economia del vivente", *Equilibri Magazine*.

3 Interview to Felwine Sarr (Manzini 2022) during *Ecole Doctorales des Ateliers de la Pensée*.



In the short essay "*Habiter le monde. Essai de politique relationnelle*" Felwine Sarr expresses his concern about the crisis of humanity's relational imaginary: "Relationships have become the place par excellence of struggle and predation, (...) instead of being mutually helpful, mutually fruitful or experienced as a positive-sum game." Sarr expounds his thoughts on the political dimension of relationship: «Managing human plurality in shared planetary space is the task of politics (...) along with improving the process of humanization», which in his view remains incomplete (Sarr, 2017). The creation of a *société du vivant*, represents for Sarr the challenge of our time. His political thought questions, on a global scale, the ways in which resources, places and spaces are appropriated and privatized (capital, proximity and geography, precedence, etc.) and proposes to limit these processes of resource grabbing for the good of the greatest number of people (Sarr, 2016).

Another intellectual behind the *Ateliers de la Pensée* the philosopher Severin Kodjo-Grandvaux argues that it is the conception of ecology based on the ontological separation between man and nature that is the knot to untie to get out of the planetary crisis that Western modernity itself has caused. Kodjo-Grandvaux proposes to start again from the Cosmos to rediscover humanity's interdependence and belonging to the *Tout Vivant*. She explains: «Situating the ecological question on the cosmic level, allows us to see the ecological crisis as a crisis of resonance, expressed in the breaking of the link between human beings and the Cosmos. Regenerating this bond would allow Western 'civilisation' to face the planetary challenge and return to caring for the planet in common» (Kodjo-Grandvaux, 2021). This gesture presupposes a paradigmatic change supported by actions of awakening, listening, and attention so that humanity can once again vibrate with the *Tout Vivant* (Kodjo-Grandvaux, 2021). The proposal that Severine Kodjo-Grandvaux makes in "*Devenir Vivant*" is to return to a completely different conception of matter and the universe (Kodjo-Grandvaux, 2021). It is about re-inhabiting the Cosmos and re-interrogating the duality living matter/inert matter by asking what life (and therefore death) is (Kodjo-Grandvaux, 2021). The inert is not necessarily inanimate. «Some African and Amerindian philosophies say this, but so does also quantum physics. Our world is solid only because the heart of the atom is in constant motion. Hence the proposal to make cosmology a new philosophy, reintegrating a cosmos that is a life-generating ecosystem. Everything in the universe has allowed life, as we know it, to appear on a planet, the one we inhabit» (Manzini, 2023c; Kodjo-Grandvaux, 2021).

The imagery evoked by Malcolm Ferdinand, 'decolonial ecology is understood as a way out of the grip of the modern world, providing a double key that translates simultaneously into another way of thinking about decolonisation and another way of thinking about struggles against the environmental degradation of the earth' (Ferdinand, 2019:293). The emergence of decolonial thinking was made possible by the anti-colonial and represents not only the outcome of a process of subjectivation, but a project of humanity (Mbembe, 2008; Manzini, 2023b).

Francoise Verges brought the decolonial African feminist contribution into the ADLP debate. In her essay *Utopies émancipatrices* found in the collective work of ADLP: *Ecrire l'Afrique-Monde*, (ADLP, 2016: p.253) Verges discusses the concept of

daring to imagine a future that goes against the ideologies of hegemonic powers. She speaks of utopian practices in history that break so radically with the order of coloniality that they continue to carry within them the idea of the possible – as maroonage mentioning also utopian literature. Maroon utopian feminism depicted by Verges referred to the fugitive slaves in search of freedom and new communities where to live - keeping constant the assumption of relationality, but also that of displacement and the imagination of spaces of freedom. This undocile and resistant feminism drew the traces of decolonial feminism (Verges, 2020). In her essay Africa is presented as a paradoxical place, both a name of absence and a source of unlimited riches for the construction of the West. Africa is seen as a fertile space for developing new utopias, especially as it challenges the ideology of lack and the economy of absence on which the concept of development is based. Afrofuturism, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, is seen as a response to the narratives of lack and absence, aiming to create temporal complications and disrupt the linear progress defined by the West (ADLP, 2016). Afrofuturist artists imagine utopias and dystopias, seeking to correct the errors of the past by looking to the future. Afrofuturism is a source of inspiration, and Verges proposes to investigate African utopian practices and experiences to imagine alternative futures that embrace Africa's potential for abundance and progress.



## 6. Conclusions

Imbolo Mbue and In Koli Bofane's *How Beautiful We Were* and *Congo Inc.* respectively sheds light on the intricate relationship between environmental degradation, displacement, and their socio-economic consequences. These novels challenge us to recognize the enduring, slow-burning violence of ecological harm, which disproportionately affects marginalized communities and perpetuates socio-economic disparities. Thus, through the lens of literature, we are called to confront the urgent need for environmental justice and the alleviation of socio-economic inequalities perpetuated by slow violence in a globalized world.

To reimagine the apocalypse of the African environment and the socio-economic and even psychological effects on both human and the non-human alike is to recall the huge disconnect between human and nature, owing to the neoliberal activities of the globalised world. It is important for humanity to look back and see that the problem like in ecocriticism is that of erasing histories and epistemologies of indigenous peoples by the colonial conquest that disrupted notions of wilderness and rooted dwelling. This form of retrospection is important because the African future is very much linked to its past. The pain of the continent is such that it emanates from the loss of what can never be regained. If the loss of the past cannot be regained, it is not in the best interest of humanity to lose what is left of human connection with the natural world. In essence, the transformation and future of Africa and its masses, and indeed the world as a global village, depend on the activities of activist groups, the media, and the political will of governments to check

the excesses of globalisation and take true ownership of what is theirs. To achieve this, however, the writer-activist must continue their role as the conscience of society and storyteller of covered-up stories of injustice and resource exploitation across the continent.

Overall, it is a work of rediscovery of the African souls and heritages: partly indigenous, partly hybridized, or projected in the future, understanding their diversity including religious, artistic, social, and political utopias. A work aware of the process of transformation and interweaving that, despite globalization, manages to keep alive some cultural levers for the African renaissance as envisioned by the ADLP's collective. The intuition of the founders of the Afrotopian movement is that this legacy to be awakened is identified with the land from which the 'African at the mirror' can gain new ground for the future. The land is the practical (experimental) domain of transversal solidarities that invite transcending ethnicity and race despite difficult legacies: solidarities that take on transcendental value when they venture into the cosmogonic territories of religion and worship. These solidarities inspire mobilization toward a spirituality of liberation, an aesthetics of life and the arts that becomes a democratic foundation, toward the trans-nationalization of civil society institutions, far beyond provisional 'free trade spaces'. They inspire a legal militantism that builds institutions capable of rising to the African challenge, guaranteeing individual rights, movement, circulation, and the permanence of societies inclusive of the non-human and more than human.



## Bibliography

Bofane I.J., De Jager M. (2018), *Congo Inc: Bismarck's Testament*, Global African Voices, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Mbue I. (2020), *How Beautiful We Were*, New York, Random House.

Ab S. and Gomez-Tagle Leonard N. (2018), "Eco-Communitarianism: An African Perspective", *Environmental Science: An Indian Journal*, 14, 1–9.

Achebe C. (2010), *The African Trilogy: Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease, Arrow of God*, Everyman Paperback Classics.

Adhiambo-Oduol.I, 2001. The Socio-Cultural Aspects of the Gender Question. Constitution of Kenya Review Commission: Nairobi.

Amadiume. I, 1987. Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society. London: Atlantic Highlands.

Amadiume I. (1997). *Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, religion and culture*. London: Zed Books.

Anta Diop., Cheikh (1989), *The Cultural Unity of Black Africa, The Domains of Matriarchy and of Patriarchy in Classical Antiquity*, Karnack House

Ateliers de La Pensée, (2016). *Écrire l'Afrique-Monde*. Dakar, Saint, Louis, Philippe Rey.

Armbruster K., Wallace K., eds. (2001), *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press.

Asempasah R., Aba Sam C., Abelumkemah B.A. (2022), "A Postcolonial Ecocritical Reading of Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* (2016) and Kwakuvi Azasu's *The Slave Raiders* (2004)", *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 9.1, p. 2.

Bateson G. (1999). *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Bracke A. (2019), *Climate Crisis and the 21st-Century British Novel*, London; New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 10.

Buell F. (2003), *From Apocalypse to Way of Life: Environmental Crisis in the American Century*, New York, Routledge.

Buell L. (2011), 'Ecocriticism: Some Emerging Trends', *Qui Parle*, 19.2. 87–115 (89).



Caminero-Santangelo B., Myers G.A. (2011), *Environment at the Margins: Literary and Environmental Studies in Africa*, Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Press.

Caminero-Santangelo B. (2014), *Different Shades of Green: African Literature, Environmental Justice, and Political Ecology*, Charlottesville; London, University of Virginia Press.

Caminero-Santangelo B. (2015), "Witnessing the Nature of Violence: Resource Extraction and Political Ecologies in the Contemporary African Novel," in DeLoughrey, Elizabeth M., Jill Didur, and Anthony Carrigan, (eds.), *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches*, Routledge Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Literature, 31, New York; London, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 226–241.

Chakrabarty D. (2021), *The climate of history in a planetary age*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Chemhuru M. ed. (2019), *African Environmental Ethics: A Critical Reader*, The International Library of Environmental, Agricultural and Food Ethics (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), xxix.

Cusicanqui S. R. (2020), *On Practices of Decolonization*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

De Smalen R.E. (2019), "Reading Poetry for Policy: A Study of Spurn Point", *Green Letters*, 23.4.

Death C. (2022), "Climate Fiction, Climate Theory: Decolonising Imaginations of Global Futures", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 50.2.

Egya S.E. (2020), "Out of Africa: Ecocriticism beyond Environmental Justice", *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, 11.2, 66–73.

Egya S.E. (2021), *Nature, Environment, and Activism in Nigerian Literature*, London, Routledge.

Emenyonu E.N., Iheka C., Newell S. (2020), *ALT 38 Environmental Transformations: African Literature Today*, Boydell and Brewer Limited.

Escobar A. (2008), *Territories of difference. Place, movements, life, redes*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Eze M.O. (2017), "Humanitatis-Eco (Eco-Humanism): An African Environmental Theory", in *The Palgrave Handbook of African Philosophy*, ed. by Adeshina Afolayan and Toyin Falola (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US), pp. 621–32.



Ferdinand M. (2019), *Une écologie décoloniale*, Paris: Edition de Seuil.

Garrard G. (2011). *Ecocriticism* (2nd ed.). Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203806838>

Geissler & Sann, (2023), "How Does the World End (for Others)?" Part of Exhibition curated by Dieter Roelstraete, *Everybody talks about the weather*, Fondazione Prada in Venice.

Ghosh A. (2016), *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, The Randy L. and Melvin R. Berlin Family Lectures, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 20.

Glotfelty C. (1996), "Ecocriticism: literary studies in an age of environmental crisis" in Glotfelty C., Fromm H. (eds.), *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Athens, University of Georgia Press, 21.

Gudynas E. (2015). *Extractivismos. Ecología, economía y política de un modo de entender el desarrollo y la Naturaleza*. Cochabamba: Centro de Documentación e Información Bolivia/Centro Latino Americano de Ecología Social.

Howarth W, (1996), "Some Principles of Ecocriticism", *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, Glotfelty, Cheryll, and Fromm (eds.), Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Hlongwane G. (2022), "Review Essay on African Ecomedia and Teaching Postcolonial Environmental Literature", *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, 9.3, 435–38.

Huggan G., Tiffin H. (2010), *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*, London; New York, Routledge.

Iheka C. (2018), *Naturalizing Africa Ecological Violence, Agency, and Postcolonial Resistance in African Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Kerridge R. (1998), "Introduction" in Kerridge R., Sammells N. (eds.) *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, London, Zed Books.

Kodjo-Grandvaux S. (2021), *Devenir Vivants*, Paris: Philippe Rey.

Lagarde M. (1997), *Género y Feminismo. Desarrollo y democracia*. Madrid: Horas y horas.



Leach M., Mearns R., eds. (1996), "The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment", *African Issues*, Oxford, Portsmouth, N.H: International African Institute in association with James Currey; Heinemann.

Leopold A. (1987), *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There*, New York, Oxford University Press.

Lugones M. (2010), *Toward a Decolonial Feminism*, Wiley on Behalf of Hypatia, 25(4), 742–759.

Manzini A. (2021), "Il ruolo femminile nelle pratiche di resistenza contadina dei territori Diola Kasa", *Contesti, Città, Territori, Progetti*, 2(2), 59–76.

Manzini A. (2023d), "Reinventare l'immaginario relazionale per un'economia del vivente", *Equilibri Magazine*.

Manzini A. (2023c), "La crisi ecologica è una frattura tra l'essere umano e il cosmo", *Equilibri Magazine*.

Manzini A. (2023b), "Mbembe: pensiero planetario e politiche del respiro", *Equilibri Magazine*.

Manzini A. (2023a), "Ateliers de la Pensée laboratorio di cultura per sfide planetarie", *Equilibri Magazine*.

Mbembe A. (2023), *La communauté terrestre*, La Découverte.

Mbembe A. (2010). *Out of the Dark Night Essays on Decolonization*, Columbia University Press.

Mbembe A., Sarr, F., (2017), *Ecrire l'Afrique Monde*, Jimsaan/Philippe Rey, Dakar, Paris.

Mbue I. (2020), *How Beautiful We Were*, New York, Random House.

Merchant C. (2020), *The Death of Nature*, Harper Collins.

Mies M and Shiva V. (1993). *Ecofeminism*. London: Zed Books.

Mikell G. (1997). *African feminism: The politics of survival in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Mikell G. (1997). *African feminism: The politics of survival in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press



Mohanty C. (2003). *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham: Duke University Press

Moore W. J. (2017), *Antropocene o capitalocene? Scenari di ecologia-mondo nella crisi planetaria*, Verona: Ombre Corte

Muthuki J.M. (2006), *Rethinking ecofeminism: Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement in Kenya*.

Moretti F. (2014), *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature*, London, Verso.

Nakate V. (2021), *A Bigger Picture: My Fight to Bring a New African Voice to the Climate Crisis*, Basingstoke, One Boat.

Naess A. (2010), *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess* (English Edition), Catapult.

Nixon R. (2011), *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press.

Rigby C. (2015), "Dancing with Disaster: Environmental Histories, Narratives, and Ethics for Perilous Times", *Under the Sign of Nature: Explorations in Ecocriticism*, Charlottesville; London, University of Virginia Press.

Saro-Wiwa K., Soyinka W. (2012), *A Month and a Day & Letters*, New edition, Banbury [England]: Ayebia, An Adinkra symbol meaning, Ntesie matemasié, A symbol of knowledge and wisdom.

Sarr F. (2016), *Afrotopia*, Paris, Dakar: Philippe Rey/Jimsaan.

Sow F. (1985). Muslim families in contemporary Black Africa. *Current Anthropology*, 26(5), 563–570.

Sow F. (1993). Les initiatives féminines au Sénégal : une réponse à la crise ? *Africa Development/Afrique et Développement*, 18(3), 89–115.

Schneider-Mayerson M. (2018), "The Influence of Climate Fiction", *Environmental Humanities*, 10.2, 473–500.

Slaymaker W. (2001), "Ecoing the Other(s): The Call of Global Green and Black African Responses", *PMLA/Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 116.1



Slaymaker W. (2007), "Natural Connections; Unnatural Identities: Ecocriticism in the Black Atlantic", *Journal of the African Literature Association*, 1.2, 129–39 (130).

Slovic S., Rangarajan S., Sarveswaran V., eds. (2015), *Ecocriticism of the Global South: Ecocritical Theory and Practice*, Lanham, Maryland, Lexington Books.

Sudarkasa N. (1986). The Status of Women in *Indigenous African Societies*. *Feminist Studies*, N°1, Spring, Volume 12, 91-103

Thornber K. (2012), *Ecoambiguity: Environmental Crises and East Asian Literatures*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 5.

Trexler A. (2015), "Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change", *Under the Sign of Nature: Explorations in Ecocriticism*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press.

Touré M. (2011). La recherche sur le genre en Afrique: quelques aspects pistmologiques, thoriqes et culturels. *Genre et Dynamiques Socio-Conomique et Politiques En Afrique*. Series Sur Le Genre Du CODESRIA 8, , 105–126

Verges F. (2020), *Il femminismo decoloniale*, Verona: Ombre Corte.

Vasudevan P., Ramírez M.M., Mendoza Y.G., Daigle M. (2023), "Storytelling Earth and Body", *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 113.7, 1728–44.

Vital A. (2008), "Toward an African Ecocriticism: Postcolonialism, Ecology and Life & Times of Michael K", *Research in African Literatures*, 39.1, 87–106.

Wynter S. (2003), "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument", *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 3.3, 257–337.

Zalasiewicz et al. (2019), "A General Introduction to Anthropocene", in C.W. Jan Zalasiewicz, *The Anthropocene as a Geological Time Unit. A Guide to the Scientific Evidence and Current Debate*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1–4.

