Call for Papers

Special Issue: Writing (About) Literature While the House Burns Down

As the climate house that allows for what we call “civilization” burns down, business as usual in the Global North keeps on fueling the fire. Indeed, the more climate change is talked about, the more greenhouse gas is emitted into the atmosphere.

As Greta Thunberg famously put it, “They’ve now had 30 years of blah, blah, blah and where has that led us?” Cleary, there is something wrong with the way we talk about the climate crisis.

This special issue of *Twentieth-Century Literature* will consider the relationship of that wrongness to literature and literary study. That might include questions like:

1) By most measures, literature and literary study related to the climate crisis have thrived. If there is something wrong with the way we represent the climate crisis, in what ways do literature and literary study help us understand what that wrongness is? In what ways are they implicated in that wrongness? In what ways have they tried to resist or challenge it?

2) To what extent, and how, has the work of climate literature and of ecocriticism grappled with the question of what’s at stake in the attempt to “know” and write about the crisis?

3) To what extent, and how, has the challenge of “posing anew questions of what criticism and literary interpretation are for” (Timothy Clark) informed the thriving of ecocriticism or of climate literature itself?

4) What would it look like to speak beyond the blah blah blah of discursive business as usual? What may (or have) representational modes beyond sci-fi and realism and Global South, multispecies, and/or Indigenous/racialized perspectives offer to such discussions?

These overlapping questions derive from the special issue’s central question: what does it mean to produce or write about literature in the middle of a burning down house?

We’re interested in essays that engage some aspect of that question.

Please send abstracts of about 300 words to Lee Zimmerman, at englzz@hofstra.edu and Claudia Sadowski-Smith, at c.sadowski-smith@asu.edu by July 21, 2023. Complete papers will be due November 15, 2023.