

Special Issue Title: Long Modernism, Altered Natures

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Deadline for Abstracts: 30 November 2025

Deadline for Manuscripts: 31 July 2026

In 1965, Lyndon Johnson's Presidential Science Advisory Committee published a dire warning on the state of the global environment: "Through his worldwide industrial civilization," the report concluded, "Man is unwittingly conducting a vast geophysical experiment." The report is a cultural marker of what historians J. R. McNeill and Peter Engelke call the Great Acceleration, a rapid expansion of growth and production in the postindustrial Global North. The roots of this planetary transformation can be traced even earlier, however. Already in the late nineteenth century, a moment that Andreas Malm pinpoints as the consummation of steam power, literary texts were beginning to conduct experiments of their own through representations of the fraught relations between humanity, technology, and ecology. In what Elizabeth Carolyn Miller calls the "long exhaustion" of extractive capitalism, authors began recognizing "the emergence of a society that was, in a new way, unsustainable for the long run." This new, unsustainable society gave rise to striking literary impressions of environmental crisis and rupture within the experimental aesthetics of modernist writing as well as contemporaneous genre fiction, such as the Gothic, horror, science fiction, and the weird. Furthermore, the affinities between modernist writing and genre fiction reveal a generative dialogue between aesthetic developments occurring in literature—from the canonical texts of modernism to the "new weird" fictions of N.K. Jemisin, Carmen Maria Machado, China Miéville, and Jeff VanderMeer in the twenty-first century—and conceptual dimensions of critical and literary theory, especially those attempting to think planetary crisis. The current special issue identifies this generative dialogue as indicative of a *long modernism* reaching from the long exhaustion to the Great Acceleration and beyond, into the strange new realities of the postnormal twenty-first century.

We invite papers that examine links between emerging socioecological concerns and the experimental and speculative trends within this long modernist context. While contributors may focus on specific authors and historical moments within this extended temporal frame, the issue as a whole aims to build compelling throughlines between early-twentieth-century texts and the literary inheritors of modernism from the postwar era to the present, including those that venture deeper into speculative territory. Potential essays might consider the following questions: How has the literature of this long modernist period shown an interest—even implicitly or unconsciously—in accelerating climate change, environmental crisis, and other deep time metamorphoses of the planet? In what specific ways and toward what particular ends do these texts represent the accelerations of the Anthropocene? How do these narratives imagine other worlds or histories that help reimagine our own, especially by exacerbating the extent and effects of climate crises? How do they engage with or anticipate contemporary climatological concerns and literary tendencies? How does imagining the nonhuman mitigate anthropocentrism in characterization and narration? How do various genres and forms creep into—and sometimes clash within—the literary fiction of this period? How does recent literature and criticism draw on and repurpose the forms and ideas from the literary past? Essays are encouraged to examine lesser-known works or consider works whose engagement with these topics has been overlooked.

Contributors are invited to pursue any of the above questions and other related topics, including:

- Narrative engagements with alternative terminologies of the Anthropocene (e.g. Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene, etc.)
- Texts that address specific manifestations of ecological or environmental change (e.g. deforestation, pollution, soil/water contamination, biodiversity loss, sea level rise, heat waves, intense storm seasons, etc.)
- Configurations of the nonhuman within ecological narratives
- Narrative depictions, impressions, intimations, or representations of extinction
- Patterns of displacement, occupation, oppression, and genocide as they accompany or are intertwined with processes of ecological disruption
- Reassessments of various modernist periodizations (e.g. High Modernism, late modernism, Cold War modernism, postmodernism, etc.) in the context of ecological and environmental change
- Expressive, figurative, allegorical, or otherwise implicit treatments of ecological topics in texts that are not ostensibly about the environment
- The dynamic between the so-called built and unbuilt worlds, including ways this distinction is often difficult to identify
- Intersections between ecology, energy, and economy
- Redefinitions of ecology and/or environment as imagined by the literary output of long modernism

Essays that seek to retheorize central terms (modernism, genre, speculation, nature, Anthropocene, acceleration, weird, etc.) are welcome, as are essays that put texts in conversation with each other in rich and provocative ways.

If you are interested in contributing an article to this special issue, please submit a 300–500-word proposal/abstract by 30 November 2025 to Matthew Gannon (mgannon@holycross.edu), Patrick Whitmarsh (pwhitmarsh@holycross.edu), and Kate Marshall (kmarshall@nd.edu). Final 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.