Call for Papers

AmLit: American Literatures; Special Issue on

"Speculative Cultures and the Metamodern Turn"

This special issue of *AmLit: American Literatures* explores the role of 21st-century speculative fiction as a central site for metamodern cultural production in contemporary Anglophone literature and media. Robin van den Akker and Timotheus Vermeulen define metamodernism "[a]s a structure of feeling that emerged in the 2000s and has become the dominant cultural logic of Western capitalist societies (4). The prevailing accumulation of global crises, political instability, rise in xenophobia and fascism, and growing socioeconomic and social injustices has engendered an ontological force that compels us to contemplate what it means to be human in times of epistemic uncertainty. Speculative fiction, with its inherent capacity to imagine otherwise, has become a crucial arena in which writers and artists negotiate these forces—conceptualizing cultures in extraordinary worlds that both warn of collapse and imagine possibilities of hope, care, and resilience. At the same time, metamodernism has emerged as a key framework for understanding the post-postmodern cultural moment, emphasizing oscillations between irony and sincerity, skepticism and optimism, detachment and affective engagement. As speculative modes increasingly move beyond traditional genre confines—now fluid hybrids of science fiction, fantasy, horror, memoir, autofiction, gaming, film, and digital media—they also embody the central tensions and oscillations of metamodernism.

This joint special issue invites interdisciplinary and intersectional work that brings together two complementary perspectives: Speculative Cultures and Metamodern Turns. Under the first lens, contributors are encouraged to move beyond the culture-Nature binary and to critically engage with representations of culture that criticize the dissociation from Nature and the more-than-human. Such imaginaries position post- and non-human cultures and societies alongside more-than-human relations, cultures of care, and forms of kinship. Under the second lens, contributors are asked to consider how these speculative representations enact the metamodern condition, marked by a return to narrative meaning, affect, and ethical or political seriousness, while still allowing room for play, ambiguity, or formal experimentation. By merging these strands, the issue foregrounds speculative fiction as a site of cultural imagination where politics, ethics, and metamodern aesthetics converge, offering new cultural imaginaries for the future.

We invite papers that consider how metamodern aesthetics shape 21st-century speculative narratives that navigate cultural tensions, reframe crisis, and imagine futures of care, survival, and radical possibility. How does speculative fiction—literary, cinematic, televisual, or digital—mediate between metamodern hope and crisis, between the collapse of meaning and its affective reconstruction? Understanding *speculative cultures* inclusively, we welcome contributions that engage with representations of techno-scientific cultures of colonialism and exploitation as well as those concerned with cultures of care and kinship that interact closely with, or are considered part of, Nature. In light of our metamodern condition and the speculative construction of metamodern futures, possible topics include (but are not limited to):

- Metamodern aesthetics in contemporary speculative fiction
- Metamodern theory, genre blending, and the breakdown of speculative taxonomies
- Media archaeology, speculative temporalities, and time as a culturally defined concept in metamodern speculative narratives
- Speculative fiction as a mode of cultural critique or epistemological experimentation
- Decolonized world building, diaspora and Indigenous experiences in metamodern speculative imaginaries
- (Post-)scarcity, dystopian, and utopian societies through the oscillatory lens of metamodernism
- Coexistence and conflict in metamodern speculative worlds
- Americas' speculative fiction in dialogue with metamodern cultural theory
- The speculative turn in visual, interactive, or digital media shaped by metamodern aesthetics

Considering the Americas at large, we invite papers that engage with anglophone 21st-century speculative narratives—literary, cinematic, televisual, or digital—from Native and Indigenous, U.S. American, Canadian, Latinx and South American authors, whereby an intersectional approach is encouraged and methodologies from African American Studies, Ecocriticism, Marxist Theory, Postcolonial Studies, and Queer Theory may be employed and combined.

Please submit abstracts of 250-300 words by **January 18, 2025**, to the guest editors: Vasileios Delioglanis (deliogla@enl.auth.gr) and Aylin Dilek Walder (aylin-dilek.walder@tu-braunschweig.de). Feedback on your proposal will be provided by February 9, 2026. Completed manuscripts and a short bio (max. 200 words) are then due **April 12, 2026**. Final essays for the special issue should be between 5,000 and 8,000 words (including 200-word abstract, 5-7 keywords, and bibliography).

Following a double-blind peer review, the initial version of the special issue, including an introduction by the guest editors, is then to be sent to *AmLit: American Literatures* by September, 2026. Publication is expected one year after in October, 2027.

Works Cited

Akker, Robin van den, and Timotheus Vermeulen. "Periodising the 2000s, or, the Emergence of Metamodernism." *Metamodernism Historicity, Affect, and Depth After Postmodernism*, edited by Robin van den Akker, Alison Gibbons and Timotheus Vermeulen, Rowman and Littlefield International, 2017, pp. 1-19.