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Nota di contenuto	Front matter -- Contents -- Acknowledgments -- Introduction: Late Modernism and the Anthropological Turn -- 1. Modernism and Metropolitan Perception in England -- 2. Insular Rites: Virginia Woolf and the Late Modernist Pageant-Play -- 3. Insular Time: T. S. Eliot and Modernism's English End -- 4. Becoming Minor -- Notes -- Index
Sommario/riassunto	This book describes a major literary culture caught in the act of becoming minor. In 1939, Virginia Woolf wrote in her diary, "Civilisation has shrunk." Her words captured not only the onset of World War II, but also a longer-term reversal of national fortune. The first comprehensive account of modernism and imperialism in England, A Shrinking Island tracks the joint eclipse of modernist aesthetics and British power from the literary experiments of the 1930's through the rise of cultural studies in the 1950's. Jed Esty explores the effects of declining empire

on modernist form--and on the very meaning of Englishness. He ranges from canonical figures (T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf) to influential midcentury intellectuals (J. M. Keynes and J.R.R. Tolkien), from cultural studies pioneers (Raymond Williams and E. P. Thompson) to postwar migrant writers (George Lamming and Doris Lessing). Focusing on writing that converts the potential energy of the contracting British state into the language of insular integrity, he argues that an anthropological ethos of cultural holism came home to roost in late-imperial England. Esty's interpretation challenges popular myths about the death of English literature. It portrays the survivors of the modernist generation not as aesthetic dinosaurs, but as participants in the transition from empire to welfare state, from metropolitan art to national culture. Mixing literary criticism with postcolonial theory, his account of London modernism's end-stages and after-lives provides a fresh take on major works while redrawing the lines between modernism and postmodernism.
