

Call for Papers: Nature Remembers: War, Trauma, and Environmental Postmemory in Contemporary Anglophone Literature and Culture

War leaves lasting marks not only on people and communities, but also on the natural world that witnesses, and endures, its violence. Long after the fighting has stopped, landscapes shaped by destruction remain living archives, bearing the aftereffects of conflict: damaged forests, polluted rivers and seas, and disrupted ecosystems that continue to hold its traces. These ‘trauma ecologies’ pass on the legacy of war from one generation to the next, forming what we call ‘environmental postmemory.’

This edited volume seeks to expand Marianne Hirsch’s concept of postmemory—originally developed to describe the relationship the “generation after” has to a previous generation’s traumatic experiences—by applying it to the concept of environmental memory described by Lawrence Buell (2016) and others. We ask how non-human agents and ecosystems participate in and challenge cultural narratives of war and trauma. In doing so, we engage a range of influential theoretical frameworks: Rob Nixon’s notion of “slow violence” (2011), which illuminates the incremental and often imperceptible destruction of ecosystems; Stef Craps’ call to decentre trauma theory through more global, transnational perspectives (2018), as well as his recent concept of “planetary amnesia” (2024) concerning society’s forgetting of environmental loss; insights from material ecocriticism such as Jane Bennett’s “vital materialism” (2010) and Stacy Alaimo’s “trans-corporeality” (2010), which reconceptualise the agency of matter and the entanglement of human and non-human bodies in processes of memory; and Malcolm Ferdinand’s concept of “decolonial ecology” (2019), which explores human and non-human solidarities emerging both in witness of and in resistance to colonial violence. By bringing these approaches together, the volume will frame environmental postmemory as a critical nexus of trauma, ecology, and memory studies.

As we face the challenges of the Anthropocene, contributors are encouraged to consider how the traumatic memories of war and conflict haunt contemporary imaginations of environmental degradation: How do contemporary Anglophone literary and cultural narratives account for this haunting and articulate the afterlives of war in the natural world? How does the climate generation rewrite earlier environmental and anti-war activism, particularly in addressing the environmental legacies of war and conflict? How do the ecological impacts of war complicate protest and war propaganda narratives? How do the long-lasting environmental impacts of war challenge the human-centred focus of postmemory, and what new frameworks can help us understand the connections between war, ecological trauma, and non-human memory?

We seek to examine these intersections by exploring how representations of war-torn environments, non-human witnesses, and ecological recovery reshape—and sometimes challenge—our understanding of postmemory. We are especially interested in how such work speaks to resilience, environmental justice, ethics, and possibilities of reconciliation with the more-than-human world. Contributions engaging with these and related questions are warmly invited.

Works Cited

Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Indiana University Press, 2010.

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press, 2010.

Buell, Lawrence. "Can Environmental Imagination Save the World?" *A Global History of Literature and the Environment*, edited by John Parham and Louise Westling. Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 407–422.

Craps, Stef, et al. "Memory Studies and the Anthropocene: A Roundtable." *Memory Studies*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2018, pp. 498–515.

---. "Remembering Earth: Countering Planetary Amnesia through the Creative Arts." *Dynamics, Mediation, Mobilization: Doing Memory Studies with Ann Rigney*, edited by Astrid Erll, Susanne Knittel, and Jenny Wüstenberg, vol. 41, De Gruyter, 2024, pp. 313–18.

Ferdinand, Malcolm. *Decolonial Ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean World*, trans. Anthony Paul Smith. Polity Press, 2022. [Originally published as: *Une écologie décoloniale: Penser l'écologie depuis le monde caribéen*, Editions du Seuil, 2019.]

Hirsch, Marianne. *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. Columbia University Press, 2012.

Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press, 2011.

Suggested Themes and Topics

We welcome contributions that address, but are not limited to, the following areas and questions:

- Landscapes of Memory: How do battlefields, nuclear test sites, or deforested war zones operate as *lieux de mémoire* carrying the scars of conflict?
- Postmemory and Non-Human Witnesses: What kinds of non-human witnessing do literary and cultural texts stage, and what do these perspectives disclose about loss, endurance, or responsibility?
- Anthropocene and Slow Violence: To what extent can narrative make the slow, long-term environmental harm of conflict legible—especially in relation to broader Anthropocene crises?
- Intergenerational Trauma and Ecological Inheritance: How is the memory of conflict passed on through damaged environments and the stories communities tell about them?
- Postcolonial Ecologies and Environmental Justice: What does environmental postmemory look like when reframed through postcolonial, Indigenous, or decolonial approaches to environmental justice?
- Silenced Environmental Histories: Which war-related ecological traumas remain marginalised or forgotten, and how do cultural texts bring them into view?
- Resilience and Reconciliation with Nature: How do texts imagine ecological recovery after conflict, and what ethical forms of care or reconciliation do they propose?

We encourage submissions examining a diverse range of contemporary Anglophone cultural texts—from literature and film to visual art, digital media, and beyond. Innovative and cross-disciplinary approaches are welcome, including comparative perspectives and case studies that incorporate Indigenous narratives or non-Western contexts. While the focus is on Anglophone literature and culture, we are keen to include voices and examples that broaden the scope of discussion.

Submission Guidelines

Please submit an abstract of 300-500 words, outlining your proposed chapter's topic, approach, and main arguments. Include a tentative title for your contribution. Along with the abstract, provide a short author biographical note (around 100 words) listing your affiliation, research interests, and any key publications.

Deadline: 30 April 2026 – Please send your proposal by this date for full consideration.

Submission Method: Online submissions only. Email your abstract and biosketch (as a single Word or PDF document) to ultrapostmemoria@gmail.com. Please include “Environmental Postmemory CFP Submission” in the email subject line.

Publication Timeline: Accepted contributors will be notified shortly after the deadline. Full chapters (approximately 6,000–8,000 words) will be expected by late 2026. The edited volume is projected for publication in early 2027. We are in discussion with major academic publishers (such as Palgrave Macmillan or Routledge) to secure a reputable home for the volume.