BEYOND POSTMEMORY

September 2026

Conferences & Events

“Minor Revolutions”
Beyond Postmemory at EAAS 2026

University of Bologna
1 - 4 September

Members of the Beyond Postmemory research project took part in the 36th Biennial Conference of the European Association for American Studies (EAAS), “1776-2026: Visions of Freedom,” held at the University of Bologna from 1 to 4 September 2026.

Cristina Pividori, David Owen and Nicholas Spengler presented the roundtable “Minor Revolutions: Viet Thanh Nguyen and the Unmaking of American Freedom,” looking at how the Vietnamese American writer and scholar challenges dominant American narratives of freedom, in particular what critic Phuong Tran Nguyen calls the post-Vietnam “politics of rescue,” the demand that Vietnamese refugees repay their admission to the US with gratitude and uncritical silence.

Taking Nguyen's recent Norton Lectures, published as To Save and to Destroy: On Writing as an Other (2024), as their starting point, the three papers read refugeehood as a standpoint from which the exclusions built into national narratives of liberty become visible. Nguyen's notion of the "minor," the vulnerable, marginalised or dismissed subject, gave the panel a shared way of thinking about the forms of freedom that can emerge from histories of displacement and violence.

Each paper took this in a different direction. David Owen's **"Drivers, Detours, and Detonations: Unfreedom and Masculinity in 'Someone Else Besides You'"** looked at patriarchal domination and its limited forms of resistance within the Vietnamese American family, reading responsibility and care as tentative alternatives to inherited models of masculine authority. Nicholas Spengler's **"Sympathy for 'Nothing': Doubleness and Freedom in Viet Thanh Nguyen's The Sympathizer"** focused on double consciousness in the novel and its unsettling reworking of "independence and freedom," asking how sympathy might emerge from violence and dispossession. Cristina Pividori's **"Ghosts of Freedom: Just Memory in Viet Thanh Nguyen's 'Black-Eyed Women'"** read haunting as an ethical form of remembrance, tracing the narrator's movement from repression and the expectation of refugee gratitude towards what Nguyen calls "just memory."

The roundtable also raised a further question the group wants to keep pursuing: how refugee narratives might challenge models of transmission built mainly around generational memory, and open up other ways of thinking about displacement and freedom.

Andrea E. Sáenz's Thesis Defence

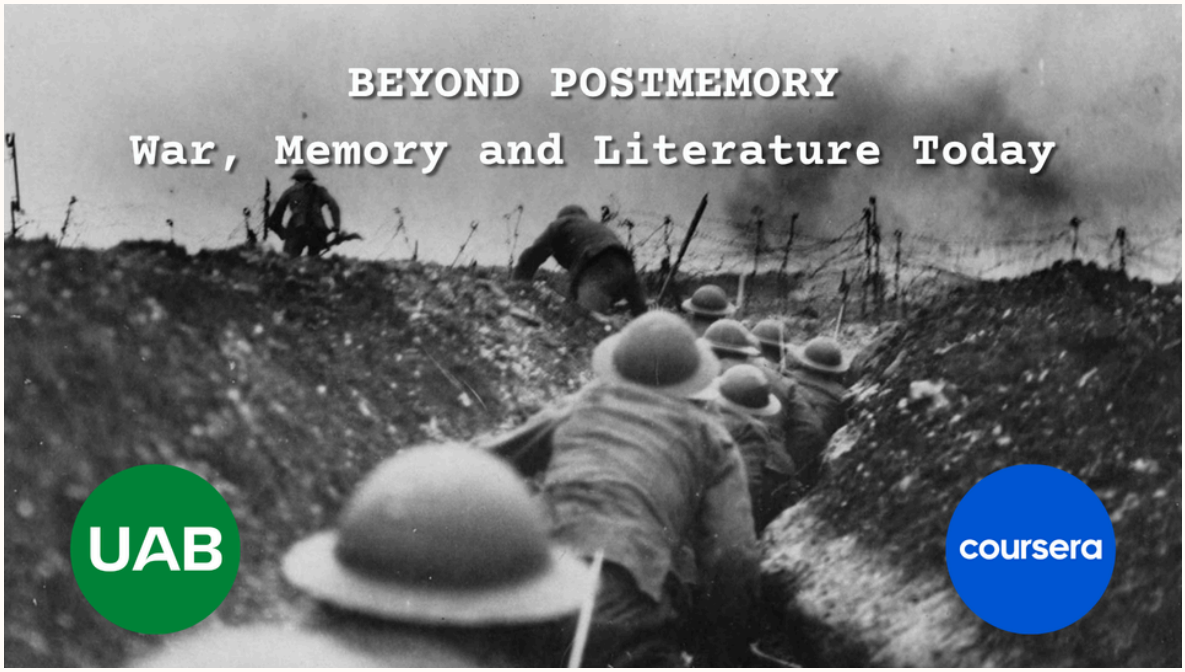
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
17 September

Andrea E. Sáenz, under Prof. Andrew Monnickendam's supervision, defended her thesis, entitled *Reassessing War Writing in Virginia Woolf's Late Fiction: The Temporal and Spatial Borders of War. In her dissertation, Sáenz explores the representation of both World Wars in Woolf's late writings. The project argues that Virginia Woolf was a war writer, and thus, her novels The Years (1937) and Between the Acts (1941), should be considered significant works of war writing.*

By focusing on silence, memory, anticipation, and the impact of conflict on everyday life, the study demonstrates how war permeates Woolf's fiction through indirect yet powerful forms of representation. Drawing on modern theories of war literature, the dissertation highlights Woolf's innovative portrayal of civilian experience and challenges conventional definitions of the war novel, reaffirming her relevance to both modernist and war studies scholarship.

Beyond Postmemory MOOC accepted by the UAB Escola de Formació Permanent

Our proposal for a massive online course (MOOC), titled ***Beyond Postmemory: War, Memory and Literature Today***, has been accepted by the UAB's *Escola de Formació Permanent*. The course will be recorded in January/February 2027 and is expected to be available online, through the Coursera platform (https://www.coursera.org/), by the end of the 2026-27 academic year.



The MOOC has been designed as a fundamentally communicative initiative: its purpose is to make the central questions that inform our research directly accessible to a wide, non-specialist audience. The course explores how contemporary literature represents memories of war, inherited trauma, displacement and postmemory, while offering clear and engaging tools for ethical reading and public understanding.

Structured in four modules, the course introduces participants to key questions about war, memory and literature; different ways of remembering beyond direct experience; the places where war memory lives — bodies, landscapes, objects, homes, performances and digital archives — and the ethical challenges involved in reading narratives of suffering, trauma and loss.

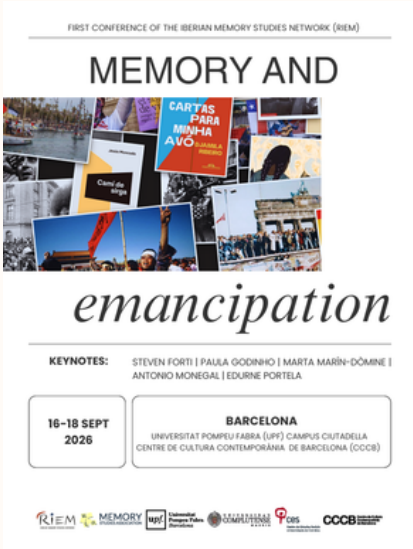
Through the Coursera platform, the MOOC will allow us not only to present the objectives of Beyond Postmemory in a clear, dynamic and memorable way, but also to explain the broader contextual issues that motivate the project: conflict, trauma, displacement, refugee experience, cultural memory, postmemory, representation, responsibility and education for peace.

This initiative offers an exceptional opportunity for a humanities-based research group to contribute to the transfer of knowledge to society, showing how literary and cultural analysis can help wider audiences think more carefully about the afterlives of war and the ethical responsibilities of remembrance.

Elvira Aguilera at the 1st RIEM Conference: "Memory and Emancipation"

Universitat Pompeu Fabra
16-18 September

Elvira Aguilera attended and presented at the first conference of the Iberian Memory Studies Network (RIEM), held from 16 to 18 September 2026 at Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona. The inaugural conference, under the theme of "Memory and Emancipation," explored the tensions and dialogues between memory and emancipation as means to rethink our past, present, and future.



Aguilera presented the paper entitled "Home(land), Ongoing Memory, and Emancipation in Isabella Hammad's Enter Ghost." In her intervention, Elvira Aguilera argued that memory processes represented in contemporary Palestinian diasporic Anglophone fiction by second- and later-generation authors illustrate imaginative representations of memory dynamics characterised by an interdependence with the material world that appears in such narratives. Focusing on Isabella Hammad's Enter Ghost, Aguilera suggests that, in the novel, material spaces of home and homeland do not merely preserve Palestinian memory but actively mediate ongoing and cumulative forms of remembrance, enabling a mode of emancipation grounded in historical and spatial belonging.

The centrality that matter has in the context of settler colonialism becomes clear when one recognises the cyclical and constant practices of erasure and dispossession that have taken place across the territory of Palestine since the Nakba in 1948 and continue into the present day, exemplified, for instance, through the destruction of habitational space (Siegfried, 2020).

The effects of these cyclical practices on Palestinian community memory work have been theorised as 'ongoing memory' (Saloul, 2009, 2012) and 'cumulative memory' (Jayyusi, 2007), which, unlike concepts such as 'postmemory' (Hirsch, 2012) or 'prosthetic memory' (Landsberg, 2000), emphasise not only connection to a situated past but the continuity of events as processes unfolding in the present.

Elvira Aguilera examined, through a close reading of Enter Ghost informed by memory studies and materialist criticism, how domestic, urban, and territorial materialities shape the protagonist's negotiation of memory, return, and belonging within the context of diaspora and ongoing settler-colonial violence. The material world of the narrative and the memory processes it triggers become a mode of emancipation within the context of colonial matrices, enabling the protagonist of the novel to recognise herself not as a stranger to a relatively distant history, but as part of an ongoing history that remains alive in the family's and community's imaginaries as well as in the material world of the present, one that resists historical, cultural and ethnic erasure.

News

Russo-Ukrainian War: Conflict May Expand to the EU and US

Experts warn that the Russo-Ukrainian war may soon extend beyond Ukraine's borders. American and Danish intelligence services report that Russia is planning targeted killings and a limited military attack against Europe and the United States.

U.S. federal authorities have announced charges against five individuals who remain at large. According to an indictment unsealed in Manhattan federal court, a network linked to Russian intelligence paid—and attempted to pay—people in the United States and other countries to surveil selected targets with the intent to kill them. The indictment also states that Russian collaborators were recruited to carry out acts of terrorism against civilian and military infrastructure in European nations allied with Ukraine.

Manhattan Federal Courthouse
Source: New York Post

At the same time, the Danish defence service warned of a low but increasing risk that Russia could launch long-range attacks against NATO infrastructure supporting Ukraine or even carry out a limited incursion into a neighbouring country. This report became public only hours after a Starlink satellite station in Poland caught fire, which local authorities described as sabotage and an act of hybrid warfare. Starlink satellites provide internet connection for a number of institutions, including the Ukrainian army. Danish intelligence has suggested that Russia might be testing NATO's Article 5—the alliance's commitment to collective defence—suspecting that the United States would not support its European allies in a potential war against Russia.

Growing tensions between Europe and Russia were also evident in a meeting between German and Russian foreign ministers in New York. The Russian diplomat Sergey Lavrov dismissed Germany's calls to ease escalation toward Europe and accused Germany of being Ukraine's principal sponsor. Lavrov further suggested that Germany's ambitions to be Europe's leading military power could lead to an outcome similar to that of World War II.

Foreign Ministers Sergey Lavrov (Left) and Johann Wadephul
Source: Reuters Connect

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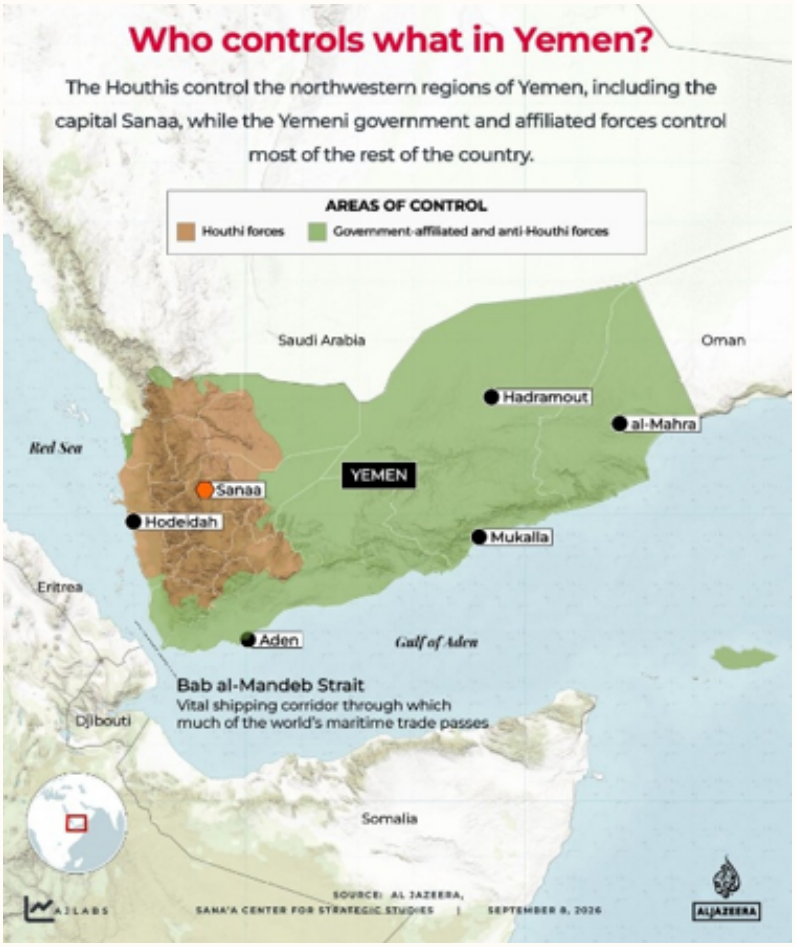
The Houthi-Yemen Conflict Resurges After Twelve Years

Yemen has re-entered the global spotlight as the Houthi movement advances along the Red Sea coast, marking the most significant escalation since the UN-brokered 2022 truce between the Iran-aligned rebels and the Saudi-backed Yemeni government. In early September, the Houthis seized Yemen's entire Red Sea coastline, an operation that has caused hundreds of casualties, displaced thousands, disrupted global trade, and driven up energy costs. Their gains in western Yemen include the capture of Mocha, Mayyun Island, and the Bab al-Mandeb strait—one of the world's busiest shipping routes linking the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean and a strategic lifeline for Saudi Arabia.



Source: Al Jazeera

The Yemeni government has responded by calling for a general mobilisation to push back against the Houthis. Rashad al-Alimi, head of the Presidential Leadership Council, has issued a national call to arms and offered immediate amnesty to defecting Houthi fighters.

Saudi Arabia now faces mounting risks as Houthi attacks intensify, with Riyadh reporting the interception of six ballistic missiles aimed at Yanbu and Taif in the past 24 hours. Continued strikes threaten the kingdom's ability to export oil through the Red Sea—a route that has become essential since Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz following the US-Israel war on Tehran. In response, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan have convened an emergency meeting under their Mecca Joint Defence Agreement, though the extent of any intervention in Yemen remains uncertain. While the Houthis claim they will keep Bab al-Mandeb open and limit attacks to Saudi vessels, Yemeni officials warn the group is using maritime security as leverage, endangering global supply chains. Riyadh has announced a new Red Sea naval coalition, but its scope is still unclear, and the Houthis have reportedly assured the European Union that EU-linked ships will not be targeted—an apparent attempt to isolate Saudi Arabia diplomatically.

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Don’t Miss...

Language, Memory and Diaspora
Xiaolu Guo and Xisi Sofia Ye Chen

Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona
18 October

Chinese-British writer and filmmaker Xiaolu Guo and Catalan filmmaker Xisi Sofia Ye Chen talk to Carles Prado Fonts about migration, language and memory through two generational experiences of displacement.

Click on the image for more info!

What is lost and what is transformed when we change languages? Is it possible to translate an experience, an identity or a way of seeing the world? How is the memory of displacement passed on to generations that have not experienced it first-hand?

In the written and visual work of Xiaolu Guo and Xisi Sofia Ye Chen, translation emerges as a linguistic, emotional, cultural and political question. In the film *She, a Chinese* (2009) and the novel on which it is based, *I Am China* (Penguin Random House, 2015), Guo explores exile, failures of communication and the difficulties of understanding others. In conversation with Ye Chen, director of the award-winning documentary *La noche de la infancia* (2025), she will reflect on how identity is constructed when belonging is no longer tied to a single place, language or history.

Xiaolu Guo Presents

I am China / La Xina soc jo

Llibreria Finestres
17 October

Xiaolu Guo is published in Catalan for the first time. La Xina soc jo (Angle Editorial) revolves around a persistent, difficult question: is it worth risking the personal life one is building—love, art, the future—to fight for uncertain ideals?

Click on the image to register!

In London, translator Iona Kirkpatrick begins working through a bundle of Chinese documents: real letters, notes, and diaries. Two lovers, Mu and Jian, have been forcibly separated. Jian appears to have been expelled from China for distributing subversive propaganda at one of his band's concerts and now drifts across Europe seeking asylum. Meanwhile, Mu has embarked on an artistic tour in the United States. As Iona translates their story and unravels their identities, dramatic family histories emerge, shaped by the starkly different social classes they come from. Outside China, the two lovers experience a newfound freedom, yet they also feel a deep nostalgia for the cultural world, the environment, and the references they have lost.

La Xina soc jo is a multifaceted exploration of politics and culture across three continents. Booklist described it as "a bittersweet tale of love and politics, with a touch of obsession, unfolding through the contrasts between East and West… truly a finely crafted novel, with characters that linger in the memory long after."

Ukraine: The Meaning of Writing

Sofia Andrukhovych, Volodymyr Yermolenko and Tetyana Ogarkova

Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona
17 October

What is the meaning of writing amid war and destruction? Through literature, thought and activism, Ukrainians Sofia Andrukhovych, Volodymyr Yermolenko and Tetyana Ogarkova join journalist Margaryta Yakovenko to reflect on the place of literature in the context of the conflict.

Click on the image for more info!

Can words restore the memory of a people under constant threat and give meaning to an existence marked by violence? In both Sofia Andrukhovych's novel Amadoca. *La historia de Romana y Uliana* (Salamandra, 2026) and the philosophical testimony *La vida en el límite* (Libros del Asteroide, 2026), by Tetyana Ogarkova and Volodymyr Yermolenko, writing becomes a means of resisting oblivion and rebuilding the connections between memory, territory and identity.

In her sweeping historical novel, Andrukhovych explores the scars that war, totalitarianism and silence have left on the bodies and generations of Eastern Europe throughout the 20th century. In their powerful philosophical reportage, intellectuals and activists Ogarkova and Yermolenko take us to the harsh reality of the war front and turn their humanitarian journeys into 'an art of loving their land'.

In conversation with writer and journalist Margaryta Yakovenko, herself the author of a story about family memory, we examine the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and reflect on the place of literature in the face of violence and destruction.