



2025 Annual Conference
Wednesday 23 - Friday 25 April
University of Manchester



PLENARY

Vron Ware

WEDNESDAY, 25 APRIL 2025
13:30 - 15:00

LETTING THE LAND SPEAK

If we are to grasp the multiple crises we face today, we might do well to begin with the ground beneath our feet, wherever we find ourselves. If the soil itself can promise a rich source of knowledge about the social, cultural, environmental, political and economic ordering of planet earth, how might this perspective also offer shared understanding of the multiple crises that threaten the diversity of all life forms? A focus on the local, the small place, can, for example, lead to discoveries about the sediment of wars past and current as well as the likely impact of organised violence to come. It can also lead directly to the urgent question of what we are to eat and how to feed each other in a society that, in Murray Bookchin's words, has gone mad in its need to grow.



Vron Ware's 'lifelong project has addressed the politics of gender and race, colonial history, national identity, militarism, peace, the cultural heritage of war, and ecological thought.' She is a writer, photographer and researcher with an international reputation for her work on race, gender, peace, militarism and ecology. She is currently a visiting professor at the Department of Gender Studies, London School of Economics.

Her recent books include *Return of a Native: Learning from the Land* (Repeater Books, 2022) and *England's Military Heartland: Preparing for war on Salisbury Plain* co-authored with Antonia Dawes, Mitra Pariyar and Alice Cree (Manchester University Press, 2025).

[*England's Military Heartland: Preparing for war on Salisbury Plain*](#) is the first in-depth study of everyday life in the environs of one of the largest army bases in the UK. By investigating the military footprint on the unique ecology of Salisbury Plain, the book illuminates the ways in which the drive to war is fostered at home.

[*Return of a Native: Learning from the Land*](#) challenges the dominant meanings of the word 'rural' as an idea that contains and conceals a vast amount of history. Central to fantasies of English ethnicity in the anglophone world of settler colonies, today the question of rurality animates divisive expressions of national identity, not least in the politics of food, farming and environmental harm. And while there is an expanding literature on the phenomenology of place, the cultural power of landscape, and the importance of being attentive to the natural world, we are often left with a depiction of the English countryside that overlooks decades of struggles over belonging, exclusion and recognition. Written in experimental form, *Return of a Native* views the world from a small place in southern England. From the soil to the horizon, it offers an ecological reckoning with the country's future as well as its deep history, from Bronze Age ruins to the fall-out from Brexit.

Chair: Vanessa May, University of Manchester, BSA Publications Trustee