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Narrating Conflict: Ethics, Identity, and the Stories We Tell

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In *We're Doomed. Now What?*, American writer and academic Roy Scranton sees conflict as the internal force shaping the “unimaginable multitude” of ideologically informed social structures, “down to the individual human soul, in conflict with itself” (48). It is the force preventing “the entire human species [from moving] together in one direction” and making “the human way reactive, improvised, ad hoc” (48-9). The mechanism that we have developed for coping with the instability of the world is, Scranton claims, our impressive ability of telling ourselves “the stories that we want to hear” (49). This, of course, raises a series of ethical questions regarding the narrative approaches to and representation of conflict. Coming from a different direction, narrative theorist Erin McGlothlin supports a similar thesis by examining the modes in which narratives can appear to resolve conflicts, “particularly in ways that fulfill the reader’s expectations and produce a satisfying sense of completeness” (111). While Scranton is critical of the (self-)deluding potential of creating narratives to manage conflicts, McGlothlin dismantles the importance of closure provided by narrative, which brings up its paradoxical nature.

Since conflict – in the most generous understanding of the term – affects people’s sense of self and of the world and thus contributes to shaping the way in which collective and individual identities emerge, this issue seeks to explore its role in the configuration of the storied self and the storied world. We understand conflict as both a thematic and structural phenomenon that cuts across various temporal, cultural, and geographical contexts, a phenomenon which could yet reveal new critical understandings of the self, society, and the non-human world. Literature should and does act as a site where conflict is performed, rehearsed and (sometimes) solved, and where its strategies become both instruments and objects for interpretation. We, therefore, welcome papers addressing any aspect

of the theme of this issue, and we encourage a wide range of critical and theoretical approaches, including insights from recent developments in critical theory, narrative ethics, world literature studies, the digital humanities, and ecocriticism. Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- the ethics of conflict;
- ideological clashes;
- the conflicts between tradition and modernity;
- tensions and struggles within identity politics;
- conflict, trauma, memory;
- tensions in and around migration, colonialism, and globalization;
- the relationship between cores, peripheries, and semiperipheries;
- conflict, protest, war, violence;
- nonviolent solutions to conflict and crisis;
- environmental crises & climate degradation;
- human vs artificial intelligence conflicts;
- human vs non-human conflicts.

Indicative bibliography:

Butler, Judith. *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind*, Verso, 2020.

Cobb, Sarah. *Speaking of violence: The politics and poetics of narrative in conflict resolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Falke, Cassandra; Fareld, Victoria; Meretoja Hanna (eds.), *Interpreting Violence. Narrative, Ethics and Hermeneutics*, Routledge, 2023.

Martinez, Angelica R. and Richard E. Rubenstein, "The Truth of Fiction: Literature as a Source of Insight into Social Conflict and Its Resolution," *International Journal of Conflict Engagement and Resolution*, Volume 4, No 2 (2016), 208-224.

McGlothlin, Erin. "Narrative Mastery over Violence in Perpetrator-Authored Documents: Interpreting Closure in *The Stroop Report*" in Falke, Cassandra; Fareld, Victoria; Meretoja Hanna (eds.), *Interpreting Violence. Narrative, Ethics and Hermeneutics*, Routledge, 2023, 104-118.

Scranton, Roy. *We're Doomed. Now What? Essays on War and Climate Change*, Soho Press, 2018.

Submission deadline of completed essays: May 15, 2026. Articles should be written in English and should adhere to the stylistic and bibliographic requirements outlined in the journal's stylesheet:

<https://studia.reviste.ubbcluj.ro/index.php/subbphilologia/article/view/6341/6042>.

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