



UNIVERSITATEA BABEȘ-BOLYAI
BABEȘ-BOLYAI TUDOMÁNYEGYETEM
BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITÄT
BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
TRADITIO ET EXCELLENTIA



STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS BABEȘ-BOLYAI PHILOLOGIA

Horea str. no. 31, 400202 Cluj-Napoca, ROMANIA

Contact: philologia.studia@ubbcluj.ro

CALL FOR PAPERS

Disposable Bodies and the Aesthetics of War: Representations of Vulnerability, Violence, and Resistance in Literature and Culture

3 / 2027

Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai. Philologia

philologia.studia@ubbcluj.ro

Guest Editors:

Dr. Andrea Roxana Bellot

Associate Professor, Department of English and German Studies

Rovira i Virgili University (URV), Tarragona, Spain

andrearoxana.bellot@urv.cat

and

Dr. Nóra Máthé

Assistant Lecturer, Department of Applied Linguistics

Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, Târgu-Mureș, Romania

mathenora@ms.sapientia.ro

Description of the CFP:

Wars have been a recurring feature of human history. They have shaped territories, identities, and political orders, and they continue to do so today. From large-scale invasions and civil wars to drone strikes and digital surveillance, armed conflict remains a constant global reality. In a world marked by ongoing warfare, from Europe to the Middle East, from Africa to the Pacific, its human consequences can no longer be treated as distant or exceptional. Contemporary wars demand renewed attention to the ways violence renders certain lives expendable, invisible, or ungrievable. This special issue of *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai Philologia* explores how modern and contemporary wars produce disposable bodies and how cultural and literary forms expose, question, or resist that disposability. We invite contributions that examine how conflict constructs hierarchies of human worth and how artistic practices challenge the political, military, and media narratives that normalise the loss of particular lives.

The notion of the “disposable body” has become central to analyses of power, violence, and vulnerability. Thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, Achille Mbembe, Judith Butler, and Lauren Berlant have shown how modern systems determine whose lives are protected and whose can be neglected, sacrificed, or forgotten. Drawing on these frameworks, from Foucault’s biopolitics (1976) to Agamben’s bare life (1998) and Mbembe’s necropolitics (2003), as well as Butler’s notion of precarious life (2004) and Berlant’s concept of slow death (2011), this special issue examines how contemporary systems govern bodies, distribute vulnerability unevenly, and expose certain populations to intensified forms of harm and disposability.

While these debates emerge in diverse contexts, they converge on a fundamental insight: political orders are sustained through the unequal distribution of exposure to death. War intensifies these logics. Soldiers may be treated as resources rather than persons; civilian casualties often disappear into statistics; racialised, colonised, or displaced populations are framed as collateral; and wounded veterans may become invisible once they fall outside military utility. Contemporary warfare, including remote and automated forms of killing, further distances the public from the bodies affected by violence.

Literature and cultural production play a crucial role in making these processes visible. As Jean Colleran suggests (2003), today’s “disposable wars” are often mediated through images that turn violence into spectacle. Yet literature, theatre, film, visual art, and digital media can interrupt this spectacle by returning specificity, presence, and dignity to those positioned as expendable. Through narrative detail, embodied performance, aesthetic disruption, testimonial force, or digital counter-archiving, cultural texts help audiences confront the human costs of war. They reveal the mechanisms that erase certain lives, and they also imagine alternative modes of witnessing, remembering, and valuing.

Thus, this special issue asks:

- How do cultural and literary representations make visible the production of disposable bodies in wartime?
- How do aesthetic forms resist, reproduce, or complicate narratives of expendability?
- What happens when we understand war not only as geopolitical conflict but as a system for managing human disposability?
- How do different media intervene in the processes that decide whose suffering matters?
- What alternative memories, narratives, or futures emerge from artistic engagements with wartime violence?

We welcome contributions from literary studies, cultural studies, performance studies, war studies, memory and trauma studies, gender studies, media studies, and digital humanities, among others.

Suggested Subtopics:

- The biopolitics and necropolitics of war: theoretical and cultural representations.
- The expendable soldier: race, class, and coloniality in military hierarchies.
- Civilian casualties and the politics of ungrievability in war narratives.
- Bodies as testimony: trauma, injury, disability, and the aesthetics of the wounded body.
- Spectacle, media, and the visual erasure of wartime suffering.
- Veterans, memory, and postwar disposability.
- The transformation of spectatorship into witnessing in theatre, film, and performance.
- Gendered and sexualised disposability in wartime representation.
- Digital warfare, drones, and the distancing of bodily harm.
- Commemoration, memorial practices, and racialised hierarchies of remembrance.

Selected Bibliography:

- Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.
- Banita, Georgiana. *Plotting Justice: Narrative Ethics and Literary Culture after 9/11*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012.
- Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Buelens, Gert, Samuel Durrant and Robert Eaglestone, eds. *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*. Abingdon/Oxon: Routledge, 2014.
- Butler, Judith. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London: Verso, 2009.
- . *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso, 2004.
- Colleran, Jeanne. "Disposable Wars, Disappearing Acts: Theatrical Responses to the 1991 Gulf War." *Theatre Journal* 55, no. 4 (2003): 613–632. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25069333>
- Douglass, Ana, and Thomas A. Vogler, eds. *Witness and Memory: The Discourse of Trauma*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Erl, Astrid. "Media and the Dynamics of Memory: From Cultural Paradigms to Transcultural Premediation." In *Handbook of Culture and Memory*, edited by Brady Wagoner, 305–324. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Engberg-Pedersen, Anders, and Neil Ramsey, eds. *War and Literary Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023.
- Favret, Mary A. *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978. (Originally published 1976.)
- Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. "Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War." *Signs* 8, no. 3 (1983): 422–450.
- Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- . "The Generation of Postmemory." *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (2008): 103–128.
- . *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.
- Huyssen, Andreas. "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia." *Public Culture* 12, no. 1 (2000): 21–38.
- Ignatieff, Michael. "The New World Disorder." *The New York Review of Books*, September 26, 2014.
- Landsberg, Alison. *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Lury, Celia. *Prosthetic Culture: Photography, Memory, Identity*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Mbembe, Achille. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 11–40.

- McLoughlin, Kate. *Authoring War: The Literary Representation of War from the Iliad to Iraq*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Nordin, Astrid H. M. and Dan Öberg. "Targeting the Ontology of War: From Clausewitz to Baudrillard." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 43, no. 2 (2014): 392-410.
- Rigney, Anne. "The Dynamics of Remembrance: Texts between Monumentality and Morphing." In *Cultural Memory Studies*, edited by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, 345–353. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008.
- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003.
- Van Alphen, Ernst. "Second-Generation Testimony, Transmission of Trauma, and Postmemory." *Poetics Today* 27, no. 2 (2006): 473–488.
- van Dijck, José. *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007.
- Wagoner, Brady, ed. *Handbook of Culture and Memory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Wertsch, James V. "National Memory and Where to Find It." In *Handbook of Culture and Memory*, edited by Brady Wagoner, 259–281. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Winter, Jay. *War Beyond Words: Languages of Remembrance from the Great War to the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- . "Thinking about Silence." In *Shadows of War*, edited by Efrat Ben-Ze'ev, Ruth Ginio, and Jay Winter, 3–31. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Languages Accepted: English

Deadlines and Selection Procedure

- September 15, 2026 – deadline for paper proposals (abstract of 200 words, 7 keywords, minimum 5 theoretical references, author's bio note of 150 words);
- October 30, 2026 – notification of acceptance;
- February 28, 2027 – submission of full articles (the required format for referencing can be found at:
http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/serii/philologia/pdf/Instructions_En.pdf);
- September 30, 2027 – publication of the special issue.

Proposals and completed articles should be sent to the following addresses:

- philologia.studia@ubbcluj.ro
- andrearoxana.bellot@urv.cat
- mathenora@ms.sapientia.ro

Double-blind peer review: All articles that pass the first screening will undergo anonymous evaluation by two external reviewers following the journal's standard peer-review procedures.