



CALL FOR PAPERS

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

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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 Babeş-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.

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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:

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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.