

[Special Issue on War and Conflict in North American Autobiographical and Documentary Narratives](#)

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Our age is one of refugee crises, of wars where the civilian population is more exposed than ever before, and of terrorist attacks that can produce more victims than organized combat. Today, information about all of these events circulates faster than ever, particularly outside of traditional media outlets. Witnessing and reporting about destruction has never been easier, and cultural memory and social responsibility are more mobile and more complicated as a consequence. Similarly, at this time, our understanding of categories such as “victim” and “perpetrator” are unsettled by terrorism and the refugee crisis, news stories about American veterans who return home to perpetrate mass violence, as well as revelations about the treatment of war prisoners by the American military, and other human rights abuses within the military itself. In addition to this, memory and representation now circulate not only among cultural and national groups, but also among genres and media, in a constantly shifting hierarchy that is only partly reflected by traditional media. The mobility of memory and the recent growth of its transcultural dimension should have, it seems, worked towards increasing a sense of responsibility towards the fate of the more vulnerable, those who live in warzones or are fleeing conflict areas, but instead the effect seems to be much more ambiguous, as recent political and social developments indicate.

We welcome submissions that examine narratives that memorialize participation in war and conflict in a variety of North American auto/biographical and documentary genres (diary, memoir, autobiography, reportage, documentary film, oral testimony etc.) and media (traditional writing and reporting, but also multimodal media such as comics, video, and digital media etc.) in order to explore the complicated mobility of individual and group memory, as well as the complexities of witnessing, recording, and reacting to one another’s suffering. In a world where the United States is still perceived as one of the main players on the political, military, and cultural scene, as well as an increasingly selective refuge for those fleeing war and conflict across the globe, an analysis of American autobiographical and documentary narratives that bear witness to conflict and destruction (from both within and without US borders) is essential for the understanding of transcultural identity and memory, as well as the narrative patterns through which they are expressed.

This special issue asks questions such as: in the process of memorialization, how are concepts such as grief, trauma, and survival translated across cultures? How can the classification of participants in war and conflict into “victims,” “perpetrators,” “bystanders,” as well as “soldiers” and “civilians” be refined so that it contributes to a better understanding of what makes ordinary people commit evil deeds (Waller 2002)? How do mainstream definitions of concepts such as “genocide,” “heroism,” or

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“war crime” influence the way people experience and remember war and conflict? What counter memories are produced as a consequence? How do Western tropes of storytelling, suffering, and healing influence the narratives of both American and non-American stories? How do the requirements of a particular genre (such as memoir or documentary film) influence the way certain events are memorialized? What blind spots exist in the memorialization of war and conflict? How does suffering become sellable? Last, but not least, how do gender and sexuality play out in the context of war and conflict?

This special issue is co-edited by Dragos Manea and Mihaela Precup. Please submit all inquiries, as well as full articles to mihaela.precup@lls.unibuc.ro and dragos.manea@lls.unibuc.ro.

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Contact Email:

mihaela.precup@lls.unibuc.ro

URL:

<http://www.intersections-journal.com>