

Letter from the Issue Editors

The articles included in this issue of the *Linguaculture* journal are a selection presented in the Conference *Wounded Bodies – Wounded Minds: Intersections of Memory and Identity*, held in Iasi in April 6-8, 2011. Participants from two continents have tackled the different aspects of this generous topic as they are reflected in various types of discourses: literature, cultural studies, gender studies, performance studies or visual arts.

The initial choice of the conference topic was influenced by the contemporary interest in the relationship between body and mind seen as carriers of cultural codes, and identity markers, being conditioned or transformed by historical or theoretical contexts. Violence, torture, wound, or suffering leave the body scarred and the mind traumatized, affecting individual identity and interpersonal relationships. Moreover, they also emerge as cultural traces that speak of past traumas, historical conditioning, (painful) memory or (willed) amnesia, power relationships as well as submission and oppression. Beyond pain and suffering, however, “wounded minds, wounded bodies” also refers to cure, hope, reconciliation or recovery, reshaping one’s identity and reconstructing the past, remembering the violence and integrating it in a healing process. The complexity of this phenomenon has led to various challenging investigations and has highlighted intriguing interconnections among different types of approaches, from the medical to the artistic, from the psychological to the literary, from the historical and social to the cultural, reflecting the variety of interests of the journal contributors.

Violence to the body whose scars appear as cultural marks, but whose story is, for different reasons, silenced, repressed or forgotten, is symbolically represented in different semiotic systems that penetrate and undermine ideological borders or power roles. Thus, **Lisa Hopkins** dwells on the meaning of jewels in Renaissance art and literature. Though apparently some of the most appealing ornaments for the human body, these carefully crafted objects with their beautiful gems can also become metaphors of disfiguring marks, scars or sites of trauma. In the same line of investigation, **Maureen Daly Goggin** shows how a typically feminine, and rather homely activity, such as stitching, or needlework can turn into a special type of textual space in which a woman can cross the barriers of imposed silence and confess of daily activities, as well as of physical and psychological abuse, or suffering. Moving to a different type of illustration, **Jim Welsh**’s article examines the possible purpose (rhetorical or

emotional) or justification (in terms of either morality, or national memory, or cultural identity) for the use of violence in American films. All these papers are united by the transfer of representation from the violence inflicted on the human body to a form of artistic reflection of the trauma that has the power to point not only to the abuse itself, but also to the mechanisms underlying it.

One of the most commonly analyzed sites of violence and abuse is the woman's body or mind, as evidenced by Lisa Hopkins's and Maureen Goggin's papers. The search for and construction of female identity is very often a history of violence, abuse and forced silences. Following this type of investigation, **Ulla Kriebner**'s article analyzes the identity crises of the protagonist in Margaret Atwood's *Edible Woman*, who wants to find her true self in a maze of inadequate roles proposed to her in a patriarchal society and expresses her identity crises through violence to her own body, manifest by eating disorders.

Society is, for many of its dwellers, a site of pain and suffering. Many groups are marginalized, excluded from active participation in the community's life or even threatened into obedience. Social status, age or ethnicity are only some of the factors that contribute to the creation of disembodied communities, that deny and even oppress some of its members to the comfort and well-being of the others. **Cynthia Miller**'s paper probes into a strange and unfamiliar world, that of the wounded bodies and minds of the homeless, who are placeless, unwanted and invisible, but who, besides their marginalization by society, have their own stories to tell, and their own vision of the place we all inhabit together. A project that includes the "memories of no place" of the homeless in America through their own photos or essays reveals a whole new form of existence at the margins of our own communities, a world of relationships formed in spite of isolation, degradation, fear and loss. **Heidrun Moertl** turns to the elderly in the American and Canadian Indian communities. Old age often comes with inadequate income, health care or housing conditions, a sense of uselessness, isolation and despair, but many Indian communities show that it is possible to see old age in a positive light as well, as a period to be looked for, when the elderly/elders are respected as grandparents, healers, educators, keepers of traditions.

Literature is a mirror of the society in the sense that it reflects and examines, among other aspects, its shortcomings, its aberrations, its impositions. Thus, sometimes, the relationships between the literary text and the world that receives it may be problematic, as is suggested by the intrusion of politics in art, in the reception of literature and even into the writer's life. This is what **Dana Bădulescu** shows in her approach to the complicated reception of Salman's Rushdie's books in the Muslim world (and not only), with special reference to his *The Satanic Verses*. Finally, **Iulia Milică**'s paper analyzes the literary reflection of the relationship between violence and identity constructions by dealing with two lynching episodes involving a black victim and an alleged

accusation of rape and set in the American South of the 1930's, having clear roots in the realities of the time.

This collection of papers, despite its wide array of approaches, does not aim to exhaust the subject, or to give definitive answers to a series of questions revolving around the effects of violence on individual or collective identity. Instead, it hopefully manages to offer its readers a variety of perspectives that reveal the richness of the topic and open new paths for further investigations.