

Beyond Recovery: The Wounded Body as a Site of Knowledge and Power in the Americas

“For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge / For the hearing of my heart— / It really goes” (8), writes Sylvia Plath in her poem “Lady Lazarus” (1965), criticizing how her suicidality and its corporeal as well as emotional aftermath were sensationalized by her audience without a profound understanding of her complex subjectivity as a survivor. Yet, what would such radical empathy have to look like that takes root neither in a detached rationalization of wounds nor in a universalizing rhetoric that risks glossing over how the survivor’s scars are unique and potentially transformative? In this sense, this special issue takes its cue from Audre Lorde’s insistence that revolutionary change can only happen when “the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices” (113). This vision that she expressed when she openly self-identified “as a Black lesbian feminist” at New York University (Lorde 110) contrasts what Eve Tuck (Unangax) and K. Wayne Yang identify as “a teleological trajectory of pain, brokenness, repair, or irreparability—from unbroken, to broken, and then to unbroken again” that still informs how settler colonial social sciences prioritize narratives of pain over the narratives of desire that “othered” subjects voice (231). Against this backdrop, the question must be posed how scholarly knowledge and analytical tools can help contextualize experiences within a cultural continuum that does not halt before academics. After all, Shoshana Felman reminds regarding Holocaust poetry that “[i]t is beyond the shock of being stricken, but nonetheless within the wound and from within the woundedness that the event, incomprehensible though it may be, becomes accessible” (34) to listeners-turned-witnesses. What therefore changes for non-Americans when we cease to exoticize, for example, the collapsing World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 “as a catastrophe version of the snuff porno movies” (Žižek 17) but as something that implicated us as well? Especially in an age where both experiences and representations of genocidal including femicidal violence are overabundant even in everyday lives as well as digital technologies of testifying and seeking support, how can Susan Sontag’s criticism of the lack of “moral charge” be countered when consumers are served “the satisfaction of being able to look at the image without flinching” along with “the pleasure of flinching” (41)? Perhaps the only way for survivor-witnesses of structural and institutional wounding that targets their bodies as political signifiers is to craft a new storytelling voice through “the reparative process” that the children’s psychoanalyst Melanie Klein summarized as “love,” according to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (128). As someone “living with advanced breast cancer” herself (Sedgwick 148), she described an alternative to paranoia as “the position

from which it is possible in turn to use one's own resources to assemble or 'repair' the murderous part-objects into something like a whole—though, [...] *not necessarily like any preexisting whole*" (Sedgwick 128, italics in original). Against this backdrop, the concern of this special issue is how authors artistically create a narrating voice that both reflects and transcends their wounded bodies for communal empowerment.

Possible contributions may include (but are not limited to):

- Essays on literature by and about individuals who interweave personal with communal wounding and healing
- Creative writing that mediates experiences with violence or uses wounding as a metaphor
- Interviews with trauma survivors or anti-violence workers that employ writing for healing in different societal contexts
- Reviews of scholarly discussions or multimedia depictions of related firsthand experiences

Please send your proposals for contributions to woundedbodies@gmail.com by December 31st, 2025. Proposals must include contact information, an abstract of 250-300 words, a bio note of 200 words, and 5-7 keywords. Notifications of acceptance or rejection will be sent out by January 6th, 2026. If accepted, please submit your original contribution of 5000-10000 words, including notes and bibliography by March 1st, 2026. With regard to formatting and MLA citation style, please consult the following links:

<https://amlit.eu/index.php/amlit/about/submissions> and

https://amlit.eu/public/journals/1/_A_Instructions_for_Contributors_Update_June_2022.pdf.

Contact e-mail:

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Works Cited

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