

## ***Vulnerable Times: Exposure and Agency in Canadian Literature***

Call for Papers for a Special Issue of a major international peer-reviewed journal  
Guest edited by Eva Darias-Beautell (Universidad de La Laguna)

The twenty-first century has seen the rise and development of vulnerability studies as a powerful field for the reconfiguration of social and political relations. Judith Butler has led the work of many other feminist scholars towards the deconstruction of a notion of vulnerability away from the binary structure *powerful/powerless* that had traditionally underlain it. “[U]nderstood as a deliberate exposure to power,” vulnerability for Butler “is part of the very meaning of political resistance as an embodied enactment” (22). In this scheme, vulnerability is not opposed to resistance, but embedded in it as “an incipient and enduring moment” of resistance. This same approach would inform the complex relation between vulnerability and agency (25).

In the Humanities, vulnerability studies has been seen by some as the logical extension and redirection of trauma studies in that it contributes a forward vision, “an open-ended temporality” to the retrospective emphasis of trauma (Hirsch 80). Marianne Hirsch coins the expression *vulnerable times* to refer to the possibilities opened up by that shift in focus towards the recognition of the porosity of memory and the simultaneity of diverse temporalities. *Vulnerable times* is produced *creatively* and is both retrospective and anticipatory, since

to envision such different possibilities instead of a linear history would mean to envision different temporal trajectories and conflicting truths that would lead to alternate futures, and, counter-intuitively perhaps, to alternate pasts as well. Indeed, each past envisioned its own future in response to its own vulnerabilities, therefore vulnerable times can encompass many different historical moments and temporalities. If we think of vulnerability as a radical openness toward surprising possibilities, then we might be able to engage it more creatively—as a space to work from as opposed to something only to be overcome. (Hirsch 80-81)

This special issue calls for articles that investigate the relation between vulnerability and agency in Canadian literature. The very notion of Canadianness has been traditionally associated with certain forms of vulnerability, be they historical, geographical, cultural, or ecological. At the same time, many Canadian texts seem to engage with modes of exposure that, in their radical openness, may produce complex and often unexpected spaces of responsiveness, both *within* the creative work and *between* the text and the reader.

We specifically encourage original research on Canadian texts that inhabit Hirsch’s vulnerable times, positing the creative possibilities of a notion of vulnerability across diverse temporalities and in its connection with resistance and agency. This call is for literature in a broad sense, including fictional and non-fictional forms, poetry, drama, graphic novels, and so forth. Possible topics of interest include: resilience, precarity, Indigeneity, activism, ecology, sexuality, migrancy, hospitality.

All submissions must be original, unpublished work and should follow the SAGE Harvard Reference Style and the general style guide attached to this CFP. **Articles should be between 6000 and 7000 words**, including endnotes and works cited.

Submissions should be sent by email as an attached word file to the guest editor Eva Darias-Beautell ([edariasb@ull.edu.es](mailto:edariasb@ull.edu.es)) by the deadline of **December 20, 2019**. All articles will go through the journal's peer review process.

#### **References**

Butler, Judith. "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance." *Vulnerability and Resistance*. Ed. Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, and Leticia Sabsay. Durham: Duke UP, 2016. 12-27.

Hirsch, Marianne. "Vulnerable Times." *Vulnerability and Resistance*. Ed. Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, and Leticia Sabsay. Durham: Duke UP, 2016. 77-96.