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Michael Elm, Kobi Kabalek, Julia B. Köhne. *The Horrors of Trauma in Cinema: Violence Void Visualization.* Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014. XIV, 340 S. ISBN 978-1-4438-6851-8.

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M. Elm u.a. (Hrsg.): The Horrors of Trauma in Cinema

The physical and psychological effects of images on audiences had been widely researched after the Second World War. This postwar interest emerged as a response to Nazi film propaganda. Films such as âDer ewige Judeâ (1940), âIch klage an!â (1941) and âJud SÃ¼Ãâ (1940) had seemingly succeeded to arouse revulsion and tangible fear among audiences toward the perceived âenemiesâ of the German âReichâ. In contrast to the study of such affects the specifically visual construction of the traumata, the non-representability of denial or repression, has rarely been deconstructed as a âmeaning-makerâ within historical, social, and more significantly political contexts. Perhaps, paradoxically, it is the non-representable empty space in narrativity related to what psychoanalysis defines as the psychological and physical impact of trauma that is crucial here.

The origin of the anthology is an interdisciplinary conference which was held at Ben-Gurion University in Israel in 2012. âThe Horrors of Trauma: Violence, Reenactment, Nation, and Filmâ. International and interdisciplinary conference at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Beer Sheva / Israel, 2012, May 13â15th; both the book and the conference have been funded by the Rosa-Luxembourg Foundation in Israel, (08.07.2015). The volume goes beyond the merely subjective to explore the articulation of physical and psychological expressions of trauma â the void â resulting from violence âas an analytical tool to investigate the production of âcultural meaningââ (p. 4). It aims to decode the non-representable state of the psyche as a mosaic of forgotten expressions and repressed memories which come back to social consciousness via physical images. In this regard, the volume explores the film narration, dramaturgy and aesthetics e.g. camera angles, lighting, montage, shots, sounds in which trauma was concealed and âintegrated into the psyche of narrations, history, mythology or ideology of the nationâ (p. 9).

The book negotiates fundamental questions in the study of trauma in cinema by intertwining the analysis of film language and style with cultural psychology â both on a national and individual level â thus articulating the motivations and implications of violence and its representation. The interpretive analysis covers a diverse range of film types and genres such as documentaries, avant-garde and mainstream cinema and prompts a reevaluation and interpretation of the horror of trauma in different contexts, nations and periods.

Nevertheless, under the theoretical âmeta-narrative" of âcultural trauma,â See Jeffrey C. Alexander, Trauma. A Social Theory, Cambridge 2012. it also obliterates the empirical distinctions of each experience and produces a homogeneous treatment and decoding of what might be regarded as quite different and distinctive traumata. For example: Trauma of Holocaust survivors, and the Jewish memory of their German past were brought into discussion with stories about traumatized Israeli soldiers. No distinction was made between male and female soldiers, who had voluntarily served in the Palestinian territory, and Israeli-Arab directors who felt dis-

criminated and fled the country. All are captured as equal representatives of the notion of trauma. Concerning this point, Wulf Kansteiner and Harald WeilnbÃ¶ck provide a counterpoint to the trend prevailing in this anthology, stressing that âpost-traumatic symptoms of various sorts can be caused by many different factors, including seemingly ordinary and pedestrian experiences, but that fact makes it all the more important to differentiate empirically and conceptually between different forms of violence and their social and psychological consequences.â Wulf Kansteiner / Harald WeilnbÃ¶ck, Against the Concept of Cultural Trauma, in: Astrid Erll / Ansgar NÃ¼nning (Eds.), Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook. Berlin/ New York 2008, pp. 229â240, here p. 236.

Another general feature in the theoretical basis of the anthology is the psychoanalytic therapeutic approach to trauma, suggesting that repetition or the re-emergence of a horrific event could stimulate a sense of relief by reenacting, and in this way being able to âhandleâ trauma. While elaborating on various trauma theoreticians, among them Cathy Caruth (1996), the introduction misses a critical affirmation of Caruth's approach on this point, in which she warns âthat any efforts to verbalize and integrate traumatic experiences will inevitably destroy the valuable precision of trauma.â Ibid. p. 233.

Covering film production from the 1960âs to the present, the volume contains sixteen articles (chapters) from various scholarly fields. It mainly put emphasis on classic examples of âtraumatized societiesâ â Israel/Palestinian, North America, and Germany. However, it also covers cases from France, Great Britain and the former USSR. Overall, the book is well-structured, the articles are engaging and well written, and it has many excellent illustrations that convey the atmosphere and mood of the films and characters discussed.

Part I âHorror in Trauma Cinemaâ explores the notion of trauma as an artificial construction of societies (p. 47). While the films here are categorized within the genre of horror films the representations are situated within the context of historical traumas. Thomas Weberâs analysis of âCACHÃâ (2005), Michael Elmâs contribution on a selection of films by Roman Polanski (âThe Fearless Vampire Killersâ 1967; âRosemaryâs Babyâ, 1968; âNinth Gateâ, 1999), and Christiane-Marie Abu Sarahâs extended analysis of the modification of Nazi iconography in Hollywoodâs horror cinema (âFlesh Eatersâ, 1964; âBlood Creekâ, 2009; âRatlineâ, 2011) integrate rich filmic references to elucidate the role and power of the mass media in shaping, and even creating, traumatic memories as a bridge between different periods, events and historical memories. The first two sections also contain brief references to the effects of the 9/11 attacks and the âwar on terrorismâ in the imagining of violence.

Part II âNazism and Warâ, primarily centers recent North American and mainstream cinema. This section discusses films in which past memories are displayed only by scattered fragments and thus, like a dream, resist attempts of being fully comprehended.

Dania HÃ¼ckmann presents a dialectical interpretation of âInglorious Bastardsââ (2009) âact of revengeâ through Freudian thought and through Tarantinoâs ârevenge fantasyâ which disrupts the classic conventions of Holocaustâs representations.

Daniel MÃ¼ller deals with lost identity in Duncan Jonesâ âSource Codeâ (2011) and explores how contemporary cinema helps to cope with strategies of traumatic war experience. Kerstin Stutterheimâs contribution examines the dramaturgy and aesthetics in Scorseseâs film âShutter Islandâ (2010). By drawing artistic parallels to âIvanâs Childhoodâ (1962) by Andrei Tarkovsky, Stutterheim illuminates the ability of both directors to intensify either characters who are driven by trauma or to intensify those who may be ânon-developing characters â (p. 128).

Part III âMemory and Traumaâ, deals with the sometimes contradictory perceptions of individual subjects, challenging the obvious ascription of certain experiences only to perpetrators and others only to victims. Examining the discourse of trauma and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) within the construction of national identity in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), Pablo Fontana explores how traumatic memories became a symbol of moral self-abnegation and resilience in DEFAâS so called âTHAWâ films âThe Adventures of Werner Holtâ (1965) and âStory of a Murderâ (1965). Jeanne Bindernagelâs contribution on âThomas Harlanâs Stories of Fathersâ (âWundkanalâ and âNotre Naziâ from 1984) shows how, in attempt to come to terms with the past, the transposition of horror and guilt extends the empty space âof the stage of history,â (p. 170) and within transgenerational perspectives, âHarlan finds no other image for distancing himself from the perpetrators than that of a victimâ (p. 176). Hinderk M. Emrich explores Imre KertÃ©szâs novel and the photo-film âFiascoâ (2010). Emrich engages with KertÃ©sz writing on the psychic state of traumatization and its requirement to adjust with the âconcrete,â the ârealreal-realityâ as the only solution for

a breakdown of the self. In this regard, Emrich questions: âTo what extent are these photos [in âFiascoâ] essentially âtrauma pictures,â covered by replacements about the reality of the traumatic past?â (p. 183)

Parts IV and V focus on trauma in Israeli-Palestinian experience and space. Danielle Schwartz reflects critically on the âabsent memoryâ of a Palestinian ruin in âParatroopersâ (1977) and attempts to integrate the Palestiniansâ traumatic past into the discourse on the Israeli identity crises during the 1970âs.

Isaac (Itsik) Rosen deals with paranoia and trauma from the âhere and nowâ as it is represented in Haim Bouzagloâs âZeitgeistâ film âDistortionâ (2004), produced during the second âIntifadaâ. He explores the aesthetics and narrative formation of the âcinema of urban nightmareâ through Ecoâs labyrinth model and Foucaultâs panoptical structure as a postmodern maze. Peter Grabher presents aesthetic strategies in films made by Ula Tabari (âPrivate Investigationâ 2002; âJinga48â 2009) and Elia Suleiman (âThe Time That Remainsâ, 2009) drawing on what Gilles Deleuze defines as âminor cinema.â Struggling against hegemonic discourses, Tabari and Suleiman construct their own Palestinian identities and memories as second-generation descendants to the historical trauma of 1948. This essay is followed by a transcribed conversation between Tabari and Peter Grabher in which she relates her subjective political and ideological thinking to art and the history within.

Sandra Meiri discusses unconsciously transferred traumas of female victims of sexual violence during the Holocaust and the affective responses to violence in a trans-generational perspective. The chapter explores the way in which a certain nightmare or fantasy of sexuality can function as a âservice of destructionâ (p. 284) reflected in K. Tzetnik novels from the 1950âs and later during the Eichmann trial as it appears in âStalags: Holocaust and Pornography in Israelâ (2007) and the âBurning Mookiâ (2009). Raya Moragâs perpetrator in âSob' Skirtâ (2002), a subjective post-traumatic filmic confession of an ex-female Israeli soldier, is reinterpreted in a contemporary Israeli cultural-historical context.

The final chapter by Marcella Simoni, deals with personal testimonies of Israel Defense Forces soldiers in two recent Israeli films by Nurit Kedar (âWastedâ, 2007; âConcreteâ, 2011) and by Shlomi Elkabetz (âTestimonyâ, 2011). Simoni attempts to explore whether, in course of time, these personal testimonies and the trauma they contain could engage in the formal national and political experience âas a symptom of historyâ (p. 317) and thus help reshape the collective memory.

There is a general worry that the treatment of the definition of trauma and the context in which trauma originated is insufficiently explored, contested or problematized. The anthology doesnât explore or represent perspectives which would challenge its perspective and there is no discussion of the sort of critical approaches to âcultural traumaâ that one finds acknowledged by Kansteiner and WeilnbÃ¶ck. However, while it opens an interesting and welcome line of inquiry, it also leaves space for further analyses of and debates on the processes it aims to explore.

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