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# Interrogating Trauma: Collective Suffering in Global Arts and Media

Edited by Mick Broderick and Antonio Traverso, Routledge, 2011.

Reviewed by John Trafton

In *Interrogating Trauma: Collective Suffering in Global Arts and Media*, Broderick and Traverso acknowledge the contributions that the field of trauma studies has provided to inter-disciplinary fields over the last two decades, and, through this collection of essays from media scholars across the globe, highlights the many ways that trauma studies has contributed to cinema and media studies from a twenty-first century vantage point. Covering a wide array of topics and approaches, from Iraq War narratives to the plight of indigenous Australians, this work offers up a broad range of discourse on representing and working-through trauma that is useful not only to film and media scholars, but also to those working in a broad range of disciplines (History, Sociology, Psychology, Terrorism Studies, and many others).

Central to this work is an examination of both how the various modes used to represent trauma, directly or indirectly, are employed, and how the concept of trauma may be altered by these different approaches. The phrase 'interrogating trauma,' therefore, means that the authors contained in this work are focused on interrogating not the traumatic events themselves, but rather the effectiveness of the means used to project this trauma on screen. In the wake of one such traumatic event, the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, mass, digital media has become more ubiquitous and liberalised, and as such, this evolving technology has brought its own strengths and weaknesses to trauma representation, one such approach under 'interrogation' in this book. This book documents how the dynamics of trauma studies have shifted in a world dominated by digital video cameras, mobile phone cameras, and a multitude of screens through which to mediate the resulting images.

The strengths of this book lie in the questions posed rather than the answers given. What does it mean to be an ethical witness? How is the psychology of the perpetrators and victims of state violence effectively rendered? How can trauma from a localized event be dispersed worldwide? The range of questions raised in this book testifies to its application across a broad range of fields and its usefulness to scholars working on a variety of topics pertaining to historical and recent events. If trauma theory holds that traumatized individuals take a self-preserving distance from the source of trauma, then characters contained in films

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analyzed in this book (fiction or non-fiction) are agents of this theory, and, as such, can be provide a useful analytical focal point for scholars wishing to further explore these or related film texts. My own work has been influenced by some of the ideas and questions raised in this book, and it is for this reason that I recommend it.