

Trauma, Memory and Religion

Representing Memories of Killing in Film

In the last few years, two influential films were released that dealt with the memories of men who had killed people a very long time ago. Although *DAS RADIKAL BÖSE* (DE/AU Stefan Ruzowitzky, D 2013) and *THE ACT OF KILLING* (Joshua Oppenheimer, NO/DK/GB 2012) re-enact massacres performed in countries distant from each other, the works show astonishing similarities. In both films the killers were haunted by images popping up in their nightmares, depicting the angst and despair of their victims. Is this kind of reaction by the killers a universal human phenomenon when faced with such horrible events? Or is it a cinematic device to express the sense of guilt? How is the memory of the traumatic experience of killing represented in film?

DAS RADIKAL BÖSE, which won an award at the Jerusalem Film Festival in 2014, focuses on the question how ordinary German soldiers could become the murderers of Jewish civilians, including men, women and children. During their military campaigns in Eastern Europe in 1941 and 1942 they killed two millions people with rifles and pistols.

THE ACT OF KILLING received the BAFTA Film Award for the best documentary in 2014. It uses the technique of role-playing to allow the feelings of the murderers to come to the surface. Two years later, Joshua Oppenheimer made a second film, *THE LOOK OF SILENCE* (NO/DK/GB 2014), in which he recaptures the same killings but from the perspective of the victims.

Both in *DAS RADIKAL BÖSE* and in *THE ACT OF KILLING* a religious dimension is discernable, in which apparently a certain difference comes to light: depending on the religion tradition, different strategies to express the responsibility of the killers are presented. In *DAS RADIKAL BÖSE*, which is embedded in the Protestant Lutheran tradition, the actors speak about feeling guilty, while in *THE ACT OF KILLING* the actors, mostly Muslim Indonesians who also have some roots in local indigenous religions, relate to God's inevitable punishment. Which role does

religion play in this context? Is it religion that introduces differences between the ways of coping with massacres?

This issue of **JRFM** is devoted to films in which trauma, memory and religion are interwoven and encourages interdisciplinary approaches to this topic with particular consideration for psychology, film studies and comparative religion. We are inviting articles that

- analyse the religious dimension in the above mentioned films or in other productions from all over the world,
- address intercultural dimensions and/or gender differences in films dealing with the topic of trauma, memory and religion, and / or
- focus on the role of sound in this kind of films and its religious significance.

The issue has also an open section for articles on other topics linked to the profile of JRFM.

Contributions of 25,000-30,000 characters (including spaces) should be submitted online for peer review by November 28, 2017 through the journal homepage www.jrfm.eu. We kindly ask authors to register. Publication is scheduled for May 2018.

For any questions regarding the call for papers or the submission and publication process, please contact the office manager of JRFM (gerda.weinzerl@uni-graz.at).