

Perpetrator Trauma in Current World Cinema

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Abstract : This paper proposes a new paradigm for cinema/trauma studies - the trauma of the perpetrator. Canonical trauma research from Freud's Aetiology of Hysteria to the present has been carried out from the perspective of identification with the victim, as have cinema trauma research and contemporary humanities-based trauma studies, climaxing during the 1990s in widespread interest in the victim vis-à-vis the Holocaust, war, and domestic violence. Breaking over 100 years of repression of the abhorrent and rejected concept of the perpetrator in psychoanalytic-based research proposes an uncanny shift in our conception of psychoanalysis' trajectory from women's 'hysteria' to 'post-traumatic stress disorder'. This new paradigm is driven by the global emergence of new waves of films (2007-2015) representing trauma suffered by perpetrators involved in the new style of war entailing deliberate targeting of non-combatants. Analyzing prominent examples from Israeli post-second Intifada documentaries (e.g., Ari Folman's *Waltz with Bashir*), and post post-Iraq (and Afghanistan) War American documentaries (e.g., Errol Morris' *Standard Operating Procedure*), the paper discusses the limitations of victim trauma by the firm boundaries it (rightly) set in order to defend such victims of nineteenth and especially twentieth-century catastrophes; the epistemological processes needed in order to consider perpetrators' trauma as an inevitable part of psychiatric-psychological and cultural perspectives on trauma, and, thus, the definition of perpetrators' trauma in contrast to victims'. It also analyzes the perpetrator's figure in order to go beyond the limitation of current trauma theory's relation to the Real, thus transgressing the 'unspeakableness' of the trauma itself. The paper seeks an exploration of what perpetrator trauma teaches us not only as a counter-paradigm to victim trauma, but as a reflection on the complex intertwining of the two paradigms in the twenty-first century collective new war unconscious, and on what psychoanalysis might offer us in the first decade of this terrorized-ethnicized century.

Keywords : American war documentaries, Israeli war documentaries, 'new war', perpetrator trauma

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