

varyieren stark in ihrer Qualität. Auffallend ist, dass sie ursprünglich für unterschiedliche Adressatengruppen konzipiert wurden. Dies wird auch durch die fehlende Einheitlichkeit im wissenschaftlichen Apparat deutlich. Neben Beiträgen mit Belegangaben in den Fußnoten stehen Unterkapitel, die am Schluss auf ausgewählte Literaturtitel und Quellen verweisen. Im vierten Kapitel verzichtet der Autor sogar auf beides.

Aufgrund der Heterogenität der einzelnen Bestandteile kann man die Veröffentlichung nicht vorbehaltlos empfehlen. Auch ist es dem Autor trotz der Zusammenstellung der einzelnen Beiträge zu Kapiteln nicht gelungen, seinem Werk einen roten Faden zu verleihen. Gut recherchiert und interessant geschildert sind aber die Inhalte der Publikation, die sich mit Verfolgungen und anhaltenden Benachteiligungen der russland-deutschen Minderheit befassen. Hier ist es Krieger gelungen, ein gemeinhin wenig beachtetes Kapitel der sowjetischen Geschichte spannend zu beleuchten.

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**Stef Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2013, xi+170 p., 54,54 € /77,92 €, ISBN 978-0-230-23007-1**

Craps offers a postcolonial critique of European-centered concepts of trauma. He does not aim at delegitimizing the experience of trauma itself but wants to expand and saturate the established canon of trauma theory with the experiences of communities that have suffered long-term and chronic abuses due to the effects of imperial and colonial histories. Trauma does not need to “be abandoned,” he writes, “but can and should be reshaped, resituated, and redirected so as to foster attunement to previously unheard suffering” (p. 37).

Craps, who directs the Center for Literature and Trauma at Belgium’s Ghent University, supports and illustrates his theoretical discussion with ample examples from literary works (mostly novels). Stating that standard explanations of trauma

neglect the effects of “cumulative trauma suffered by victims of racism or other forms of structural oppression” (p. 4), he offers conceptual suggestions that attend to the experiences of non-Western subjects. He identifies three major issues that narrowly limit dominant trauma theory: first, current trauma theory focuses on the idea of a single catastrophic event that shatters a person’s or a community’s sense of stability; second, it remains centered on the medical and psychological dimension of traumatic experiences; third, it claims to be trans-historical and universal. What, one may ask, is problematic about these assumptions?

First, the event-based model, according to Craps, is too narrow because it understands traumatic rupture as singularly catastrophic; from there, it is easy to leap to the assumption that particular events, like the Holocaust, are unique. This neglects, however, the possibility that trauma may be an ongoing experience because the original source of injustice has never been addressed or restored. Consequently, destructive or even lethal repercussions continue to linger in a community’s life. The history of slavery would be one such example: the original traumata of dislocation, severe violation, and sustained cruelty are replicated in social structures of racism and discrimination today. Whereas the single event-model works well, for example, to understand the trauma of the Holocaust, it does not account adequately for long-term experiences of subjugation and abuse that continue into the present (like slavery or racism). The “everyday life...of subordinated subjects,” Lauren Berlant observes (and Craps quotes her approvingly), “is an ordinary and ongoing thing that is underdescribed” in traditional trauma theory (p. 126).

Second, conceiving trauma mainly in medical and psychological terms is problematic insofar as it neglects the structural dimension of social and historical injustices. Limited in this way, it echoes a “Freudian model” (p. 31) that requires therapeutic intervention of working through the damaging effects of a traumatic event. But such a model does not adequately address the “collective nature” of historical trauma of

“formerly colonized and enslaved” people (p. 63). Historical scars cannot be reduced to a psychological “working through” since the wounds remain open under present conditions. Hence, Western-based ideas of trauma therapy, when imported to non-Western countries, may inadvertently re-inscribe asymmetric power relations rather than contribute to healing. Craps refers here particularly to the technique of witnessing, in which the retelling of traumatic memories is encouraged in the presence of an empathetic listener—a “central tenet of Western trauma counselling” that can undermine indigenous and “local coping strategies” (p. 23). This witnessing technique assumes, for one, that “working through” is possible because a past traumatic event can be integrated into a stable present; yet, for oppressed communities the present is anything but stable. It further assumes that “bearing witness,” in which an empathetic listener becomes a “vicarious victim” (p. 42), as suggested by Felman and Laub, relieves the burden for the primary witness (the traumatized person). According to Crap, this model depoliticizes the act of witnessing: it diminishes the political agency of the traumatized person and also diffuses a “sense of political urgency” (p. 42) that may call us into an ethical obligation of political activism.

Finally, the tendency to universalizing trauma and claiming it as transhistorical experience risks “being culturally insensitive and exclusionary” (p. 3). Craps points to several works of seminal trauma theorists (Caruth, LaCapra, Felman and Laub, Hartman) which do not live up to the stated promise of being comparative and of transcending European history (like the Holocaust). Hence the urgent need to rethink “trauma theory from a postcolonial perspective in a globalized world” (p. 7).

Crap makes a compelling case for the need to expand the current event-based model to “alternative conceptualization of trauma” (p. 4) proposed by postcolonial critiques, such as “insidious trauma,” “continuous traumatic stress,” “cumulative trauma,” or “oppression-based trauma.” He illustrates successful renditions of such alternative models in (mostly) fictional literary works, such as South African Sindiwe

Magona's *Mother to Mother*, British Caribbean writers on the Middle Passage as well as black/Jewish suffering (David Dabydeen, Fred D'Aguiar, Caryl Phillips), and Indian novelist Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay*. His skillful analysis of these texts is particularly relevant for scholars of literature, but Craps also weaves into his readings insights gained from the theoretical literature, such as LaCapra's distinction between "loss and absence" (p. 32), Derrida's ethical claim that the work of mourning requires "to learn to live with ghosts" (p. 61), Andreas Huyssen's insight into "screen memories" (p. 79), Michael Rothberg's "ethics of comparison" that differentiates between asymmetrical claims to traumatic memories (pp. 87-88), and, finally, Caruth's observation (despite Craps' earlier critique of her work) that "trauma itself may provide the very link between cultures" (p. 101).

After reading Craps' fine study, I am left with two questions prompted by his constructive criticism of trauma theory. These questions go beyond the bounds of the study itself: they speak to core assumptions of his scholarly project and remain, in my view, themselves undertheorized.

First, given his argument that standard trauma theory must be read as something "invented" (p. 20) within a narrow European-centric historical frame, I am concerned about his own reliance on fictional literary work as a kind of proof text for his theoretical critique. Craps assigns these novels an almost unquestioned moral authority to represent adequately a post-colonial witnessing of trauma. But do they? Aren't these novels themselves historically situated and "invented" according to the limited perspectives of their authors? I am left wondering whether a novelist's presentation of reality coincides with trauma research in the field, such as by ethnographers, anthropologists, cultural historians, or cultural-sensitive social and clinical psychologists.

Second, and related, I wonder whether Craps' project is not itself based on a binary of Western/ non-Western, in which "Western" functions as an operational category over against which one needs to define oneself in order to arrive

at alternatives. Another starting point could have been to look at cultural ways of coping with severe and sustained suffering from within different traditions themselves. What a Western-trained mind might recognize as symptoms of trauma, other cultures might recognize under different names and taxonomies. But does it really matter what we name it? By studying different cultural coping mechanisms, at the center of our attention would not be contested definitions of trauma but, instead, an inquiry into how different cultures recognize, diagnose, and treat experiences of severe affliction that disintegrate, or threaten to disintegrate, the self and the community.

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**Jürgen Werbick (Hg.): *Sühne, Martyrium und Erlösung. Opfergedanke und Glaubensgewissheit in Judentum, Christentum und Islam*, Paderborn u.a.: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag 2013 (Beiträge zur Komparativen Theologie 9), 195 S., kart. 29,90 €, ISBN: 978-3-506-77417-0**

Dieser von Jürgen Werbick herausgegebene Band enthält die Beiträge einer im November 2011 in Münster abgehaltenen Tagung im Rahmen des Münsteraner Exzellenzclusters zu „Politik und Religionen“ zu den, wie der Hg. im Vorwort ausführlich, „befremdlichsten Seiten der religiösen Praxis“ (S. 7). Die gewählte Methodik der „komparativen Theologie“ basiert auf dem Versuch, Erfahrungen und Verfahren aus der interkonfessionellen Begegnung auf die interreligiöse Ebene anzuwenden. Im Rahmen einer „mikrologische[n] Vorgehensweise“ (S. 184) werden Vertreter von Judentum, Christentum und Islam, eingeladen aus ihrer jeweiligen Sicht zum komplexen Themen- und Problemzusammenhang des Opfers im weitesten Sinne zu sprechen. Dabei machen sie die Erfahrung, dass die Überzeugungen und kognitiven Operationen der jeweils anderen Seite bezogen auf die zu diskutierende Detailfrage als nachvollziehbar und bereichernd erscheinen können, ja,