



Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation

Michael Rothberg

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How to approach the Holocaust and its relationship to late twentieth-century society? While some stress the impossibility of comprehending this event, others attempt representations in forms as different as the nonfiction novel (and Hollywood blockbuster) *Schindler's List*, the documentary *Shoah*, and the comic book *Maus*. This problem is at the center of Michael Rothberg's book, a focused account of the psychic, intellectual, and cultural aftermath of the Holocaust. Drawing on a wide range of texts, Michael Rothberg puts forth an overarching framework for understanding representations of the Holocaust. Through close readings of such writers and thinkers as Theodor Adorno, Maurice Blanchot, Ruth Klüger, Charlotte Delbo, Art Spiegelman, and Philip Roth and an examination of films by Steven Spielberg and Claude Lanzmann, Rothberg demonstrates how the Holocaust as a traumatic event makes three fundamental demands on representation: a demand for documentation, a demand for reflection on the limits of representation, and a demand for engagement with the public sphere and commodity culture. As it establishes new grounding for Holocaust studies, his book provides a new understanding of realism, modernism, and postmodernism as responses to the demands of history.

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