

***The Scene of the Mass Crime: History, Film and International Tribunals.*** Edited by Christian Delage and Peter Goodrich. London and New York: Routledge, 2013. Pp. 227. US\$42.95 paper.

Long before the now-familiar phrase ‘teachable moment’ entered public discourse, Hannah Arendt famously cautioned against any attempt to turn the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann into some sort of grand, cathartic history lesson. As quoted by William Schabas in his lucid essay in this new collection, Arendt insisted that ‘the purpose of the trial is to render justice and nothing else; even the noblest of ulterior purposes...can only detract from the law’s main business: to weigh the charges brought against the accused, to render judgment, and to mete out due punishment’ (23-24). The question of whether criminal trials in the aftermath of armed conflict or atrocity ought to be viewed as opportunities for establishing an indisputable historical record or for other didactic purposes (in addition to holding responsible individuals accountable for their crimes) is one that is explored imaginatively in some of the strongest essays in this volume. In the eclectic series of papers that opens the book, post-Second World War prosecutions of Belgian collaborators; the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and Rwanda (ICTR); and the *Gacaca* courts in post-genocide Rwanda are all examined in relation to continuing debates about what the editors describe as ‘...the role that these trials play in the constitution of a shared collective memory and so in the writing of history’ (3).

Complementing these thoughtful studies, the book also contains several contributions that engage specifically with the role of victims – and with visual representations of victim experience – in judicial processes aimed at bringing perpetrators of war crimes and other atrocities to justice. In one of the finest essays in this collection, Henry Rousso focusses on a particularly charged moment in the 1997-98 trial of former Vichy official, Maurice Papon who was charged with having been directly responsible for the deportation of some 1600 Jews from the Bordeaux region between 1942 and 1944. While the court’s president had allowed some images of key documents relevant to the case to be screened during courtroom proceedings, his refusal to accede to lawyer Arno Klarsfeld’s request that ‘photos of the vanished’ (47) be displayed while a survivor recounted the story of his mother’s disappearance prompted a remarkable interchange between Klarsfeld and the court president which Rousso deftly explicates. Rousso rightly argues that this crucial exchange, where Klarsfeld ‘...refused to accept the rules established by the president and tried literally to take the power within the courtroom “on behalf of the survivors”’ (43) should prompt serious reflection on the ways in which the display of powerful, emotive images in such criminal proceedings might ‘...dramatically change the nature of the narratives provided in a tribunal...’ (41). Rousso skillfully points up the hazards of moving a trial well beyond the task of determining the individual guilt or innocence of the accused and effectively aiming ‘...to transform the courtroom into a place for memory and mourning’ (50). In a later section of the book addressing some of these same questions in relation to the work of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia, Brice Poirier’s essay on victim participation in the much more recent trial of Duch (director of the Khmer Rouge’s S-21 detention center in Phnom Penh) provides a stimulating counterpoint to Rousso’s chapter.

The phenomenon of the ‘show trial’ – the very deliberate construction of a kind of judicial or pseudo-judicial theatrical event for the express purposes of ideological education or history-

making - is the subject of a quartet of fascinating pieces included in this collection. One of the most impressive is Anne Kerlan's analysis of how the very public 1980-81 trial of the 'Gang of Four' provided the Chinese authorities with the chance to create and disseminate an '...official history of the Cultural Revolution...' (96) – a carefully shaped narrative presenting that epoch as a kind of aberrant moment in Communist Party history and a spectacle that simultaneously '...allowed the leaders to erase many questions about the nature of the political regime, the leadership and the ideology that ruled and is still ruling China' (96-97). Another excellent contribution is Johann Chapoutot's account of the Nazi People's Court – centering on the regime's determination to ensure that the trials of those involved in the failed July 1944 plot against Hitler be '...staged as a major propaganda event' (105). Chapoutot's discussion of the way in which the almost unimaginably cruel, outrageous behaviour of the head of the court, Roland Freisler, throughout these proceedings actually backfired and subsequently led to Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels banning the distribution of what was to have been '...the jewel of a propaganda treasure...' (109) makes for gripping reading. The leading player in this especially sinister production turned out to have grotesquely overplayed his part.

While never less than interesting, the series of essays on 'visual memory' that make up the concluding section of this volume move this book in a somewhat different (if related) direction. These contributions, dwelling principally on the imagery of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York, are always thought-provoking, but rather feel as if they belong to another book. The book's earlier, tighter focus on the specific relationship of film and photographic imagery to a variety of legal or pseudo-legal processes where history is 'being made' gets a bit lost here. It might have been more appropriate to extend the book's core discussion further with the inclusion, for example, of a group of essays engaging critically with the growing catalogue of feature films and documentaries that attempt to dramatize or chronicle various efforts to achieve international criminal justice or facilitate truth-telling after war or other atrocity. As these sometimes much-heralded and widely-viewed films may well play a role in shaping public perception of international justice and of the historical events they investigate, this is a subject which would seem to have been highly relevant to the book's central preoccupations. Films such as Stanley Kramer's Oscar-winning *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961); John Boorman's *In My Country* (2004) and Tom Hooper's *Red Dust* (2004), both dealing with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission; and Hans Christian Schmid's *Storm* (2009), set at the ICTY in The Hague, all invite closer critical scrutiny by transitional justice scholars. These dramatic works, as well as documentary films such as Rebecca Richman Cohen's *War Don Don* (2011), about the trial of Issa Sesay at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, arguably have considerable impact on how the media, educators and the general public think and talk about accountability after war or other atrocity. Nevertheless, this is a timely and readable collection that certainly merits the attention of both human rights scholars and practitioners, and some of the outstanding contributions highlighted above definitely deserve a place on reading lists for related human rights and film studies courses.

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