



Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation

By Omer Bartov

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War endlessly tries to mask itself. The myth of the heroic soldier testing his individual courage stands in stark contrast to the reality of mass, anonymous death and the suppression of individual actions. *Murder in Our Midst* shows that this fundamental tension reached its natural conclusion in the Holocaust, and that disguising it has required an ongoing effort to misrepresent war and the Holocaust as something other than industrial killing.

Examining a broad range of the representations of war's horrors, from scholarly depictions to those in popular literature, poetry, art, and the movies, Omer Bartov finds they have some things in common. Societies and cultures have attempted to form coherent images of horrific events, to draw didactic lessons from them, and to exploit them to legitimate ideological or political positions.

Made up of interconnected essays, this book is both a scholarly and an often personal and passionate examination of the emergence, implementation, and representation of industrial killing. Bartov draws out the links between recent revisionist attempts to minimize and deny the Holocaust, and Hollywood's ongoing fascination with National Socialism and Hitler's "Final Solution." Arguing that the modern predicament reflects the effects of the Nazi genocide on current perceptions of war, history, and memory, this book is a plea for compassion and commitment in an increasingly violent and indifferent world.

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Editorial Review

Review

"By articulating new conceptual categories and identifying unexpected connections, Omer Bartov has made a profound and original statement on the links between war and genocide, representations of violence and its enactment, industrial killing and the crisis of modern European civilization."--Saul Friedlander, *University of California, Los Angeles* and *Tel Aviv University*

"Thoughtful and thought-provoking, Bartov's essays offer disturbing reflections on the capacity for genocide in modern society."--Ian Kershaw, *University of Sheffield*

"In *Murder in Our Midst*, Omer Bartov provides a searching, informed, and impassioned view of the origins and aftermath of the Holocaust. Few other writers have brought to bear the combination of historical learning and contemporary social awareness with which Bartov addresses this subject."--Berel Lang, *State University of New York, Albany*

"...this book is well worth reading, both for its originality and its capacity to provoke thought on a compelling subject."--*American Historical Review*

"...absorbing reading..."--*National Forum*

From the Back Cover

Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation examines the emergence, implementation, and representation of industrial killing, an inherent and crucial component of modernity whose most extreme manifestation was the Holocaust. The mechanized, impersonal, and sustained mass destruction of human beings, organized and legitimized by states, scientists, jurists, and intellectuals, is rooted in the industrial slaughterhouse of the Great War. In *Murder in Our Midst*, Omer Bartov argues that the Nazi death factories are best understood in the context of modern warfare, beginning with the First World War. He shows how the way we understand ourselves reflects the ambivalent effects of the Holocaust on our perceptions of war and violence, history and memory, progress and barbarism. Analyzing a wide array of historical texts, works of fiction, films, and museums, Bartov leads the reader from ancient myths of heroism to the trenches of the Western Front, from Thomas Mann's romantic vision of war to Primo Levi's stark depictions of genocide, from colonial war museums to the visual art of the Holocaust. These representations of killing share some of the same important features. They attempt to form coherent images from horrific events, to draw didactic lessons from them, and to use them for political ends.

About the Author

Omer Bartov is at Rutgers University.

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