

Middle East - Topics & Arguments

Call for Papers

Trauma

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The peer-reviewed online journal *Middle East – Topics & Arguments (META Journal)* is calling for submissions for its issue on the topic of **Trauma**.

The history of trauma—as a disorder of the railway, as shell shock, as a psychoanalytic concept and then post-traumatic-stress disorder (PTSD) in biomedical psychiatry—is entangled with war, technology, science, and suffering. Following the rise of feminist and peace movements in the United States and the lobbying of veterans from the Vietnam War, a renewed interest in trauma led the Diagnostic Statistical Manual III (DSM III, 1980) to agree on the existence of common forms of reaction to diverse traumatic events and include all symptoms under one category and diagnosis: PTSD. Since then, trauma has attracted new interest and dissemination in theory and in intervention, especially with the incorporation of psychological care and therapy in humanitarian interventions.

The dissemination of trauma, however, has not been confined to scientific and humanitarian discourses alone, but has entered everyday discourse. Trauma as discourse transforms existing conceptions and assumptions about the world, the self, cultural memory, and articulations of suffering. In the Middle East and North Africa, these dynamics have been further reinforced by two interrelated developments: the rise in the number of armed conflicts and the subsequent humanitarian and psycho-medical interventions. Although a great number of historic events and situations (colonialism, the Palestinian Nakba and Naksa, the Algerian resistance, the Lebanese Civil War, the Gulf Wars, the “War on Terror”, state authoritarianism and dictatorship) have already partly been interpreted as a social trauma by some Arab psychologists and intellectuals, research on trauma in the humanities related to the MENA region is a quite recent phenomenon.

This special issue contributes to a deeper critical understanding of trauma in the societies, cultures, and histories of the Middle East and North Africa. We would like to bring together perspectives from the social sciences, humanities, and cultural studies, not least by exploring the narrativization of suffering or its non-verbal expression both in social reality and cultural production. We invite explorations and critiques into trauma as a science, practice of care, and a frame of suffering from war and violence, drawing from historical and contemporary cases. On a different level, we consider it important to pay particular attention to the materiality of suffering and the politics of trauma in specific contexts. To be recognized as a traumatized person/community/nation can entail manifold consequences, including material recompense, being granted asylum, or gaining public sympathy. On the other hand, labeling refugees as traumatized has justified repressive migration politics, as in the case of some Gulf States: One of the arguments behind the denial of entry for Syrian refugees into some Gulf States was their alleged traumatization. Thus, expressions and claims of trauma are

closely linked to questions of political interest, in/justice, victimhood, guilt, revenge, reconciliation, and redemption.

We welcome inquiries into alternative representations of suffering from violence and war. Drawing on empirical data, personal narratives, and theory that responds to the reality of a devastated social fabric, of living-in-violence and human suffering, we also invite approaches searching beyond the trauma model. We welcome papers that address the following topics:

- **History of trauma in the Middle East:** War, science, and care
- **Violence, suffering, and the social fabric** (e.g. prison and torture, military conflicts, gender-based violence, etc.)
- **Narratives and testimonies of trauma in social reality and its cultural production**
- **Reading and witnessing trauma:** Reception, response, and resonance of traumatic narratives among readers and listeners
- **Trauma in modern and contemporary Arabic literature, film and the arts:** How does cultural expression contribute to processes of (mis)understanding or (mis)representing certain traumatic histories?
- **Gendered suffering:** Trauma and the making of masculinities/femininities, feminist approaches to trauma
- **Humanitarianism, refugees, and trauma:** Mental health, humanitarian psychiatry, governance
- **Trauma politics:** Victimhood, moral claims, political interest
- **The body in pain:** Trauma and mind/body dualism
- **Materiality of trauma:** Political economy, the material existence of trauma and/or PTSD (its subjects and objects, its bodies and cognitions), semiotics of suffering
- **Trauma from the margins:** Experts and intellectual debates on suffering; universalism/locality; who subscribes to trauma?
- **Beyond trauma:** Alternative readings and experiences of violence and suffering

In recent years, critical attempts to decolonize trauma studies have been among the most productive endeavors to prevent trauma theory from continuing its Eurocentric, often homogenizing and at times exclusive readings of social reality, human suffering, and cultural imagination. Middle Eastern Studies and related fields have much to contribute in theorizing, deepening, and critically scrutinizing the emerging field of transregional and interdisciplinary trauma studies.

For this issue of *META Journal*, we call for contributions from a broad array of disciplines, including cultural and media/film studies, the humanities, social science and psychology, science & technology studies, as well as (international) law and political philosophy.

Most articles of *Middle East – Topics & Arguments* are published in the **FOCUS section**. Submissions relate to the issue's focus topic and reflect original research. Articles in this section are typically between 2,800 to 4,600 words. In addition to papers for the main section, we call for contributions for *META Journal's* special sections:

The **META section** also relates to the issue's focus topic, with the papers in "meta" discussing the main topic from a theory-centered perspective. Regional scope is not limited

to the Middle East, but may also consider theoretical approaches involving other world regions. Article length is 2,800 to 4,600 words.

The **CLOSE UP section** features a short written portrait of a person who has a special relation to the issue's main topic, e.g. a researcher who has constitutively contributed to the field. It links that person's biography with their contribution to the field. Article length is 1,500 to 3,000 words.

The **ANTI/THESIS section** juxtaposes two rivalling positions that highlight different lines of argument, pros and cons, and/or competing narratives. These can be presented either by one author together, or by two different authors in two different articles. Article length for each paper is 1,500-3,000 words.

All articles that fall into the general framework of the journal, but do not relate to the special topic *Trauma*, will be taken into consideration for the **OFF TOPIC section**.

Prior to developing a complete manuscript, authors are asked to submit an abstract (300 words max.), a short CV (150 words max.), and 3-5 key bibliographic sources. Please clearly indicate the research question, the method to be used, and the empirical material your research will be based on. Papers are accepted in English only.

The deadline for abstract submissions is December 15th 2017

The deadline for article submissions is April 15th 2018

Proposals, manuscripts, and other editorial correspondence should be sent to:

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