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Nota di contenuto

Title Page; Contents; Acknowledgments; Introduction; 1: Cinema, Masturbation and Peter Pan: A Non-Victim Approach to the Holocaust; 2: Amorous Discourse and 'Bolts of Annihilation' in the American Poems; 3: Mourning and Annihilation in the Family Sonnets; 4: The Fragility of Memory; 5: Culture/Barbarism Dialectics in Harrison's Poetry; Bibliography; Index

Sommario/riassunto

This book argues that Tony Harrison's poetry is barbaric. It revisits one of the most misquoted passages of twentieth-century philosophy: Theodor Adorno's apparent dismissal of post-Holocaust poetry as 'impossible' or 'barbaric'. His statement is reinterpreted as opening up the possibility that the awkward and embarrassing poetics of writers such as Harrison might be re-evaluated as committed responses to the worst horrors of twentieth-century history. Most of the existing critical work on Harrison focuses on his representation of class, which occludes his interest in other aspects of historiography. The poet's predilection for establishing links between the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the prospect of global annihilation is examined as a commitment to oppose the dangers of linguistic silence. Hence Harrison's work can be read fruitfully within the growing field of Holocaust Studies: his texts enter into arguments about the ethics of representing traumatic incidents that still haunt the contemporary. Harrison's status as a 'non-victim' author of the events is stressed throughout. His writing of the Holocaust, allied bombings and atom bomb is mediated by his reception of the events through newsreels as a child, and his adoption and subversion, as an adult poet, of traditional poetic forms such as the elegy and sonnet. This book also discusses the ways in which Holocaust literature engages with a number of concepts challenged or altered by the historical events, such as love, mourning, memory, humanism, culture and barbarism, articulacy and silence.