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Book review

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Kerry Carrington, *Feminism and Global Justice*, Routledge: New York, 2014, 204 pp. (including index): 978-0415711128, \$47.95 (pbk)

Kerry Carrington's *Feminism and Global Justice* is ambitious in both its scope and its aim, which she describes as attempting to 'persuade a new generation of scholars, criminologists, activists and policy makers sympathetic to the quest for global justice to push the envelope, to step out of their comfort zones and typical frames of analysis to gaze at a world full of injustice against the female sex, much of it systemic, linked to culture, custom and religion' (p. 3). Put differently, the book is a provocation, or a challenge to critical and feminist criminologists, to develop a truly global feminist criminology which does more than simply export theory and analysis from the major metropolitan centres of Europe and the USA. It also, in the final two chapters, articulates a need for feminist criminologists to engage more seriously in analyses of male-on-male violence, particularly the high levels of violence among men working in what Carrington labels the 'anomic spaces of super-capitalism' (p. 101) and the issues of violence by women, both interpersonal and political or terrorist violence.

The book's seven chapters cover a wide range, both in terms of content and geography. A short introduction sets up the book's primary contentions, outlined above, as well as establishing its provocative tone, through repeated warnings that readers will be divided between those who find the book 'refreshing and illuminating' and those who find it 'irritating or even repugnant' (p. 1). The second chapter makes the case for globalizing feminist criminology, relying heavily on Connell's (2007) *Southern Theory* for its analysis and argument. The third and fourth chapter share a title: 'Violence against women and women's struggles for justice', focusing on first Asia and the Middle East and then Latin America. The fifth chapter examines global capital, men and violence in mining towns in Australia and gang violence in Latin America. The book then moves on to female violence, torture and terrorism before finishing with suggestions for new directions in feminist criminology.

The scope and ambition of this book, written by a significant figure in contemporary criminology, make it an important intervention in current debates, particularly among critical and feminist criminologists. However, given that the book is relatively short, it can seem overly ambitious, inevitably sacrificing nuance and depth for the breadth of its coverage. For me, the book's most successful and interesting chapter – 'Masculinity Matters', looking at masculinity, violence and

capitalism – is the one which engages most heavily with Carrington’s own empirical work in remote Australia. At the other end of the spectrum, the chapter ‘Violence Against Women and Women’s Struggles for Justice: Asia and Middle East’ attempts to cover all of Asia, including the Indian subcontinent, and the Middle East, as well as to develop an argument about the impacts of fundamentalist Islam and Hinduism on women’s rights. The range of issues covered by the chapter is huge, from *sati* to trafficking to honour killings, and the arguments are based almost exclusively on secondary sources.

While Carrington appears to see her role as shifting the attention of metropolitan/Western feminist criminologists toward the global south, the book raises questions about the best ways to do this, as well as about the value of local, embedded in-depth research. Particularly in the two chapters on violence against women, it seems that a more effective way to accomplish Carrington’s aims would have been an anthology allowing researchers, activists and policymakers to present their own expertise. Despite Carrington’s acknowledgements that the areas covered are politically, socially and culturally diverse, covering them in a single short chapter treats them as a bloc and, at times, homogenizes the significant differences between countries such as Pakistan, Iraq and Indonesia, or even different regions of India.

This is a problem given the fraught history of Western feminist activism in these areas. I found that in the sections on Islamic societies particularly, Carrington tends to reduce complex debates about post-colonialism and Western feminism to a binary between feminists and human rights activists who seek to protect or promote women’s rights, and others who avoid these issues, taking refuge in ‘cultural relativism’. There is little acknowledgement here of strong traditions of activism and academia that seek to promote the rights of women while also criticizing exoticizing or colonial legacies in Western feminist and human rights discourses, or the ways in which totalizing representations of Muslim women as victims of violence can play into neo-colonialist logics, as in Lila Abu-Lughod’s (2013) recent work. Similarly, while Carrington critiques what she sees as Western feminists, and feminist criminologists especially, lack of engagement with these regions, there is little consideration of what Wendy Hesford (2004) amongst others has described as the tendency for Western feminists to be fascinated with the ‘spectacle of distant suffering’, the suffering of women often positioned as less enlightened or as requiring rescue. While Carrington’s overall point about the need for feminist criminology to look beyond the Metropole is important and strongly made, the book at times misses opportunities to engage with the complexity of global solidarity and global justice, particularly for Western feminists.

These points of concern do not, however, detract from the significance of this book for feminist criminology, but rather reinforce the importance of Carrington’s contribution in raising these questions and challenging us to make them central to our thinking about gender and justice. They also reinforce her implicit point, made just as powerfully, that we must confront controversial or difficult issues, such as female violence and global patterns of violence against women, and in doing so, we must be prepared to have arguments and disagree. This is far preferable to the

current state of neglect of these important topics. The book is overall highly successful in its primary task, as a provocation for critical and feminist criminology to become more global and more intersectional.

References

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