

Ponzanesi, Sandra (ed.), *Gender, Globalization and Violence: Postcolonial Conflict Zones*, New York/ Abingdon, Routledge, 2014, (281 pp.), ISBN: 978-0-415-81735-6 (hbk).

Reviewed by: Barbara Grabher, Utrecht University, Netherlands

The edited volume 'Gender, Globalization and Violence: Postcolonial conflict zone' offers a space for the discussion on the gender dimension in war and conflict. The contributions refer to a variety of geopolitical contexts and circumstances of conflict. Thus, the book combines a rich range of research examples engaging with the question of "how racialized and gendered bodies have played a crucial role from colonial to current global conflicts" (p. 1). It attempts to move beyond dualistic interpretations of active/passive roles of female participants in circumstances of violence. The authors address the issue of the underrepresentation of women's contributions in both the media and academic investigation by engaging with critical intersectional and postcolonial perspectives on the contributions of women. In doing this, Sandra Ponzanesi, develops a platform for new theoretical and analytical approaches with regard to gender and violence. In this sense, the book contributes to genealogical interpretations of the participation of women in conflict and war.

The book is divided into three parts, with the thirteen chapters broadly categorized in different theoretical perspectives, practical attempts and directions for the future. Part one engages with critiques on gender and violence from a feminist and postcolonial perspective. The main focus is the transition from colonial to postcolonial formations. In her chapter 'Thin Ice: Postcoloniality and Sexuality in the Politics of Citizenship and Military Service', Vron Ware discusses the interconnections between military and civil society. She argues that the military institution has social and political responsibility in a country. Ware's research focuses on the negotiation of multiculturalism and gender equality in the military. She suggests that military institutions are crucial fields for investigations of citizenship and national identity, particularly in relation to categories such as gender, ethnicity and religion. She uses as

examples, cases of female soldiers in the UK military and draws attention to how minority groups (related to categories such as gender, sexuality, citizenship, family obligations and their intersections) negotiate military service in the precarious setting of the military system. According to Ware these forms of negotiations are related to civil society. The media play a crucial role here, since the manner in which these negotiations are communicated greatly influences the image and the legitimacy of the armed institution. When it comes to the negotiation of identity categories, media communications and public reception are all part of an entangled system that circulates conceptualizations of nation state, national identity and citizenship.

Marc de Leeuw and Sonja van Wichelen also consider issues related to citizenship in their contribution, 'Doing Integration in Europe: Postcolonial Friction in the Making of Citizenship'. Their contribution is part of the second section of the book, which focuses on conflict zones within Europe. While discussing multicultural Europe, they challenge the political framework of European identity through the inclusion of a gender perspective. In particular, Leeuw and Wichelen engage with Dutch integration ideals presented in the video 'Naar Nederland'. They explain the contradictory tendencies of negotiation in the nation state – between “modern normative frameworks and postmodern realities” (p. 145). Such material highlights a culturalization of secular liberalism with a particular focus on gender, sexuality and ethnicity that institutionalizes and shapes the view of “new migrants” (p. 146). They argue that secular neoliberalism forms a “(neo) nationalism” (p. 146) that disciplines the “globalizing flexible citizen” (p. 146). In discussing these structures and tendencies Leeuw and Wichelen exemplify the paradoxical tension between “political commitment to cosmopolitanism and political complicity with new exclusionary regimes” (p. 145).

In the final section, the theme encompasses realities and alternative solutions of conflict situations. Marta Zarzycka in her chapter 'On Love and Shame: Two Photographs of Female Protesters' engages with the medium of photography and its potential for political intervention in conflict situations. Her contribution addresses perspectives similar to those discussed in Ware's chapter. Photographic representations shape the perception of civil subjectivities. Zarzycka analyses how gender is performed and presented in images of the 2011 protest in Cairo. The potential of the image for political intervention is demonstrated through her focus on the representation of shame and love/ affection, negotiations with emotions, citizenship and the social recognition of the presented subjectivities state.

While the structure of the book, with its division into three sections might help to orient the reader, the contributions overlap and exceed the sections in which they are inscribed. Since the three themes are broad, the individual chapters could have been arranged differently, depending on research approaches, areas of conflict and conditions etc. The structure of theoretical discussion, practical endeavours and directions for the future are included in most of the chapters. The variety of case studies and perspectives constitutes the major strength of the book.

As discussed above, the book aspires to go beyond the binary understanding of active and passive in relation to the participation of women in circumstances of conflict. Through the variety of contexts in the contributions, the authors offer multiple engagements with the topic of active female participation. The collection of articles counter the notion that women are absent in war and conflict, but do not treat active/passive as dualisms. As a result, even though many contributions, including the introduction refer to the underrepresentation and

assumed passivity of female subjectivities in the context of violence and war, the reasons for this are not discussed.

In conclusion, the topics of citizenship and national identity in relation to the categories of gender and ethnicity constitute the main focus of the book. The contributions provide and suggest investigations of these themes in the context of conflict struggles. In this edited volume, Ponzanesi facilitates an academic discussion across disciplines such as feminist research, conflict studies and media studies. However, the book offers not only a rich engagement from an academic perspective, but engagement with contemporary conflicts and open a critical discussion of current media representations and public debates.