

**Review of *Gender Violence at the U.S.-Mexico Border: Media Representation and Public Response*, edited by Héctor Domínguez-Ruvalcaba and Ignacio Corona, Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2010.**

*Gender Violence at the U.S.-Mexico Border* offers a rich examination of the ways in which violence, place and gender interact in media representations of the U.S.-Mexico boundary. Domínguez-Ruvalcaba and Corona critically interrogate the politics involved in portraying gendered violence in contemporary Mexico, or in their own words, “how such violence is the object of (re)presentation in a diversity of texts” (2). Using qualitative and quantitative analysis, the nine contributors to this edited volume expose the role of media as a structural generator of sociopolitical instability in the country. In other words, they reveal the ways in which newspapers, broadcasts, films and novels present decontextualized and fragmentary images and discourses that cultivate a widespread ethos of alarm and violence among the population.

The book is divided into four parts. Each part scrutinizes a specific form of communication. Part One deals with oral testimonies. In Chapter 1, Castillo, Rangel Gómez and Rosas Solís explore the horrendous cruelty and marginalization endured by transgender sex workers in Tijuana. In Chapter 2, Ravelo Blancas examines the emotions and political consciousness of the mothers of murdered women in Ciudad Juárez. Building on oral accounts of research subjects, these two chapters demonstrate that testimonial narratives are crucial in challenging the naturalization of uneven relations of power and envisioning tactics to bring about social justice and change.

Part Two takes up the exploration of audiovisual representations. In Chapter 3, Domínguez-Ruvalcaba examines the ways in which television news reports produce a hegemonic alarming narrative on how to perceive violence and induce “a paralysis of any political project intended to fight terror” (65). In Chapter 4, Tabuenca Córdoba provides an analysis of the murder and disappearance of women in the cinematic imagination about Ciudad Juárez. As this author contends, many films and news reports portray the murders of women and social turmoil as a testament to a deterioration of conservative family values and traditional gender roles. In so doing, they deem women responsible for their own deaths and deny the role of the state in preventing and solving these crimes.

Part Three explores print media as a ubiquitous medium that propagates panic and induces sociopolitical paralysis and immobilizing fear. In Chapter 5, Corona discusses the processes of textualization, representation, and communication enmeshed in the making of “violent journalism” (106). Throughout these processes, due to gender ideologies and capitalist demands, newspapers are complicit in re/producing a politics of fear. In Chapter 6, López-Lozano examines novels depicting the Juárez femicides and argues that even though these works represent foreign or outsider characters as morally superior, they bring to the forth the intersection between gender discrimination and global capitalism as key factors in intensifying gender-based violence on the border.

Finally, Part Four investigates the legal status of femicides in international courts. In the last chapter, Harrington employs the supranational legal concepts such as ‘due

diligence' and 'state tolerance' to render either the Mexican state or specific individuals accountable for the perpetration of, negligence, injustice and silence towards women's assassinations in Ciudad Juárez.

This book does a good job in demonstrating that media representations do not simply depict, but produce influential versions of reality (81). While the general intention of this volume is to combat gender inequalities as well as advance a politics of antiviolence and anti-impunity in Mexico (11-2), the book accomplishes more than that. First, readers find a subtle, but complex analysis of gender-based violence. Even though the focus of the book is on the murder and disappearance of women, the book incorporates a discussion about violence against transgendered individuals in Tijuana. Thus readers are compelled to consider gender disparities and injustices in broader terms. Likewise, even though Ciudad Juárez is the main site of research, the authors consistently confront border stereotypes, and in so doing they contest notions of "geographic exceptionalism" (2). By arguing that gendered violence is hardly contained in discrete and exclusive areas, these scholars avoid the stigmatization of the border zone. Consequently, they succeed in deconstructing essentialist approaches to violence and impel us to further investigate the construction of particular geopolitical locations as "violent sites". What is more, despite the widely circulated perception that sexualized killings are individual, isolated acts, the volume sheds light on the structural, economic, and political factors underpinning them. All authors suggest that they have resulted from rapid economic transformations, regional economic integration, and neoliberal globalization on the U.S.-Mexico perimeter.

This volume addresses a timely set of questions about the interplay of gender, brutal force and the hegemonic power of global mass communications, especially at a time when some Juárez activists described in Chapter 2 are suffering persecution and death due to their political participation, and some journalists recently signed a ten-point code for covering violence in Mexico (an issue that resonates with discussions in Chapters 3 and 5). At present "border violence" has exceeded its supposedly confined geographical limits, and the entire "Mexico" is depicted as a dangerous place in national and international news coverage. In view of this, this collection of articles provides analytical tools to contemplate and dismantle what the editors identify as the "tropological substitutions" (3), through which particular places have become perceived as inextricably linked to certain (negative) characteristics at varying times.

In sum, the authors raise sharp critiques against misuses of media, but they also recognize that media can be a powerful instrument to fight against sociopolitical insecurity and volatility. Some chapters are more theoretical, and others are more descriptive. Yet each of the contributions is equally thought-provoking and invaluable. The book should be welcomed by students, teachers, practitioners and researchers who are interested in media politics, gender-based violence and the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

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