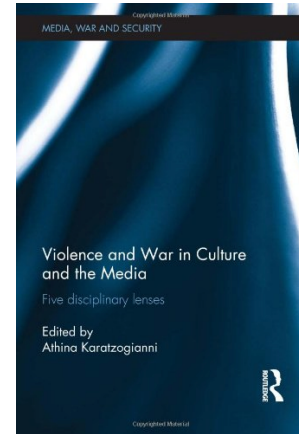


Athina Karatzogianni (Ed.), **Violence and War in Culture and the Media: Five Disciplinary Lenses**, New York: Routledge, 2012, 280 pp., \$39.95 (paperback).

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The concept of violence in the media is slippery to define at best. Young adult novels like *The Hunger Games*, images of torture from Abu Ghraib, or advertisements for the popular video game *Grand Theft Auto* are all subjects that could fall under the heading of "violence in the media." Add "war" and "culture" to the list of topics under discussion, and you have a concept that could easily fill encyclopedias. In *Violence and War in Culture and the Media: Five Disciplinary Lenses* (2012), the authors do an excellent job speaking to the range of topics that make up the phenomena of "violence and war." Edited by Athina Karatzogianni, a lecturer in Media Culture and Society at the University of Hull, UK, the book features articles by historians, sociologists, film studies scholars, activists, cultural studies theorists, and criminologists.



This edited collection organizes its essays around five disciplinary approaches: historical, cultural, sociological, political science, and gender studies. Each of these essays is an exercise in interdisciplinarity, and from Karatzogianni's introduction, it is clear that these divisions are somewhat arbitrary. Her goal is to "move beyond closed boundaries of specific disciplines, and to upset their standing as privileged focal points" (p. 2). For Karatzogianni, the subject of violence and war is too broad to belong to any one discipline, and it is her hope that this collection will bring together the academic conversations about violence and war that have proliferated in the last 15 years.

The first section of the book features chapters that examine perceptions of violence and war through a historical lens. In Chapter 2, Peter Wilson looks at the way the experience of the Thirty Years War in the 17th century created a shift in European attitudes toward violence. Wilson argues that the war accelerated the communications revolution, and the resulting increased ease and spread of communication over great distances contributed to a sense that the war caused uncontrollable devastation. In Chapter 3, Angela Kimyongür uses a textual analysis of Patrick Pécherot's 2005 novel *Boulevard des Branques* to demonstrate how French attitudes toward the Occupation and the Vichy regime have changed. As more information about the realities of life in Vichy France has emerged since the 1970s, many in France have become ambivalent or outright pessimistic about the French resistance. In the final chapter of the historical section, Jenel Virden uses extensive archival research to reconstruct the campaign against indecent literature undertaken by U.S. Army chaplains. Although this chapter is largely descriptive, Virden does an excellent job telling the story of these chaplains' work, allowing readers a glimpse at a group of service personnel that profoundly impacted army policies and regulations. Each of these chapters differs greatly from one another in terms of scope, historical time period, method, and type of archival material. Grouping them under the historical lens does little to illuminate the thematic connections between each of

these three essays. Where these chapters converge, however, is in their focus on historical perceptions of morality.

The second section, which features pieces that discuss violence through a cultural lens, opens with a chapter written by Keith Tester. Using the writings of Hannah Arendt as his theoretical grounding, Tester examines why certain incidences of conflict and suffering are more visible than others. Tester relies heavily on metaphors of light and darkness to discuss the ways conflicts either receive or are obscured from the light of the public sphere: either from lack of information, establishing credibility gaps, or overexposure of the conflict via generic news reports. Ultimately, Tester complicates the relationship between making conflict visible and communicating suffering. In Chapter 6, James Aston discusses how the film *Little Big Man* (1970) worked to exonerate "typical" Americans of the guilt they experienced about the Vietnam War. Aston discusses the parallels between the events of the film and the Vietnam War to make the case that the film uses Native Americans as a metaphor within a revisionist version of U.S. history that absolves the average American citizen of the violence committed by the government. The final chapter of the cultural section, written by Sarah Harper and Majid Yar, looks at imagery with BDSM motifs in popular culture. These popular representations often conflate BDSM with actual violence, thus ignoring the importance of consent to BDSM practitioners. For the authors, these inaccurate representations contribute to the pathologization and criminalization of BDSM and as such are cause for concern. Each chapter in the cultural section takes seriously questions of representation and visibility, and the authors' arguments are based upon the belief that representations can have material effects within societies.

In the sociological section, each chapter deals with a different aspect of contemporary terrorism. In the first chapter of the section, authors Cristina Flesher Fominaya and Rosemary Barberet discuss the political and cultural understandings of victimhood and how these frameworks affect the commemoration and compensation victims receive. Through a comparative analysis of news reports about the 9/11 attacks in New York and the 3/11 attacks in Madrid, the authors determine that in the United States there is a much broader conception of who qualifies as a victim. These case studies reveal that in both the United States and Spain there exist hierarchies of victimhood that are dependent on cultural narratives about victims and terrorism, legal frameworks, and political agendas. In the chapter that follows, which also uses a comparative method, Michael S. Drake looks at the politics of mourning in the United States and the UK as it relates to the antiwar movement and the militarization surrounding the "war on terror." Drake critiques Judith Butler's writings on mourning for their overly simplistic affective moralism and offers instead Gillian Rose's politics of grief as a more productive model for thinking about U.S. and UK military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the final sociological chapter, Lucy Michael examines how British Muslims have responded to the framing of the Iraq War and the "war on terror" in the British media. She bases her analysis on communications made on social networking websites and in both open and closed Web forums. For Michael, these conversations are valuable as sites where mass media frames are interpreted alongside semipublic constructions of citizenship.

The fourth section features four chapters that take a political focus to their discussions of violence and war. In Chapter 11, authors Raphael Cohen-Almagor and Sharon Haleva-Amir present a critique of the Winograd Committee, which was established to investigate the events of the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war. In the authors' view, justice could not be reached by a committee whose members were appointed

by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, one of the officials under investigation. The authors indicate that the Hezbollah war and the resulting Winograd Committee exemplified Olmert's failure to live up to his campaign promises about bringing peace to Israel and ultimately contributed to the premature end of his term. In Chapter 12, Maria Touri uses prospect theory, a theory from political psychology, to investigate the relationship between media coverage of an event and political decision making about that event. Touri argues that prospect theory is useful for a discussion of the influence of media on decision making because it offers a framework for understanding risk propensity in relation to perceived gains or losses. Using President Clinton's decision making about Bosnia as her case study, Touri is able to show that news coverage likely encouraged Clinton to perceive intervention as necessary in order to avoid a loss both for the United States and for him personally. In the following chapter, Andy Robinson uses Paul Virilio's theory of vision to explore the relationship between visual technology, media, and war. This chapter is instructive for readers unfamiliar with Virilio's theories. Robinson offers a thorough account of Virilio's continuities between regimes of viewing in the military and popular culture as well as a critique of what Robinson describes as Virilio's pessimism about the activist potential of new technologies. In the final chapter of the political section, Athina Karatzogianni differs from the other authors in the volume by writing about conflict in cyberspace, specifically the media portrayal of Russian hackers following cyber attacks. She focuses her discussion on cyber attacks in Estonia in 2007, in Georgia in 2008 and the 2009 "Climategate hack" that occurred at the University of East Anglia. For Karatzogianni, much of the international media coverage of these cyber attacks recuperates Cold War rhetoric, with the Russian hacker standing in for the figure of hardworking, incredibly skilled Soviet spy.

The final two essays in the collection are written from a gender studies approach. Using feminist theory, Gillian Youngs writes about the challenges of accounting for pain in a disembodied public sphere. Youngs advocates for a radical transformation of the public sphere, one in which the public/private binary is overcome and pain becomes a central way of understanding politics. For Youngs, when pain becomes meaningful it can inform politics and better help us to move toward a more peaceful world. The final chapter of the collection addresses the high incidence rates of rape in South Africa. Author Bev Orton uses opinion polls, testimonies taken from rapists, news reports, and statistics on rape incidence to demonstrate that overwhelmingly rape narratives in South Africa place the blame on the victim. Sexism, homophobia, and racism all present challenges to eliminating rape in South Africa.

One of the strengths of this collection is the breadth of regions, methods, and time periods that are covered by the essays. Scholars writing about violence or war in any capacity will be sure to find at least one chapter that speaks to their own work. Because each of these essays is grounded in a case study of violence or war, the chapters are relatively accessible to readers outside of each author's discipline. This range of topics, however, causes the book to feel disjointed. Without a conclusion or editor's introduction for the sections, the reader is left to make his or her own connections between each of the chapters. The collection demonstrates the variety of methodological approaches that exist under the headings of "historical approach" or "gender studies approach." And this methodological variety both within and between each of these disciplinary lenses opens up space for conversations across disciplines on the subject of violence and war.