

Representations of Peace and Conflict, (Rethinking Political Violence Series)

Edited by Stephen Gibson and Simon Mollan, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Pp.308. UK £60.00 hardcover.

This diverse volume emerged from the conference 'Repertoires of Violence: Multidisciplinary Analyses of the Representation of Peace and Conflict', held at York St John University, UK, in July 2009. The chapters span a wide number of topics, timeframes, and locations. The multidisciplinary nature of the conference is well-represented in this book, edited by Stephen Gibson and Simon Mollan, with contributors from a wide-range of humanities and social science disciplines. Perhaps not surprisingly, the majority of the contributors are from the UK, but there are also contributors from the Republic of Ireland, USA, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Brazil.

The editors, Gibson and Mollan, were careful not to dictate too heavily to the contributors the manner by which peace and conflict were to be represented. Rather, as explained in the introduction, their focus is a consideration of 'representation' itself. Gibson and Mollan contend that 'the study of representations is the study of *meaning*, and in particular of how shared meanings are culturally produced, diffused and contested' (3, italics in original). Things gain meaning by how they are represented, through the words used to describe them, the stories told about them and the images used to depict them. One cannot study peace and violence without engaging with how these concepts are to be represented. Understood in this way, Gibson and Mollan argue that it is easy to see how representations are foundational to the study of humanities and the social sciences.

The editors also, as a context to the subsequent chapters, consider the concepts of peace and conflict. Over time, peace studies have expanded to include the study of violence and conflict, which reflects the understanding that peace is more than simply the absence of conflict. The suggestion here is that by studying the causes of cultures of violence, they can more easily be replaced with cultures of peace (7). Gibson and Mollan contend that a focus on peace and conflict can move us towards the UNESCO goal of living in a world at peace (13).

The fourteen chapters of the book are grouped into five themes. They are wide-ranging and reflect the multidisciplinary spread of the contributors. Part I is focused on Peace Movements and Resistance. There are chapters on images of peace in Israel, conscientious objectors in the United Kingdom during World War I and World War II. Jon Stewart's chapter, 'What's Going On: Anti-war and Pro-war Hits on the Billboard Singles Charts during the Vietnam War Era (1965-1975) and 'War on Terror' (2001-2010)' explores the music charts and the popularity of anti-war songs during these two conflicts. Stewart explains that despite the fact that both wars were unpopular domestically and internationally, the Vietnam era saw a flourishing of anti-war protest music, demonstrated by success in the Billboard singles chart. In comparison, reaction to the recent 'war on terror' did not result in the same kind of sustained, purposeful stance toward anti-protest music. This can be explained in part by changes within the music industry, resulting in a more conservative cultural climate and changes to the distribution of music have moved protest music from the charts to an online presence.

Part II of the book, comprising three chapters, focuses on aspects of Military Institutions and Personnel. The first chapter, by Rachel Woodward and K. Neil Jenkins, is a fascinating exploration of the use of photographs taken of, and by, soldiers in armed conflict, particularly those in the British Army. The photographs themselves 'mark the transformation from civilian to soldier', as well as providing tactical, surveillance purposes (105). Woodward and Jenkins have used in-depth interviews with 16 military personnel, and their personally selected photographs, to explore the soldiers' representation of self. One of their conclusions is that the notion of 'peace' and 'conflict' being 'separate and distinct categories' are dispelled in the photographs that the soldiers presented (116). Part III includes two chapters on the Psychological Dimensions of peace and conflict. The second of these chapters, 'Unexpected' and 'Inclusive' Social Identities in Intractable Conflict: The Case of Northern Ireland', by Robert D. Lowe and Orla Muldoon, explores the dualist representation of the conflict in that region. The chapter challenges the received dualistic social identity during 'The Troubles'. Lowe and Muldoon demonstrate that the complexity of identity in Northern Ireland goes beyond the Catholic-Protestant split. The recognition of a common identity, that of Northern Irish, potentially better reflects the complexity of life on the ground in that region.

Part IV, includes two chapters which look at the Religious Dimensions of peace and conflict. The challenge here is not to read religion in simple terms, but to take it a step further and 'look to examples of religious peacemaking to inform secular attempts at conflict resolution' (16). The island of Ambon, Indonesia is the feature of the chapter by Lucien van Liere entitled 'representing 'Religious Violence': Understanding the Role of Religion as Simplifier and Magnifier of Violent Conflict'.. Religious icons of Orthodox Christianity frame the chapter, 'The Sacred Icon: Confronting the Anthropocentrism of a Secularized World' by Pauline Kollontai.

The fifth and final section of the book focuses on the role of Memory and Memorialization in peace and reconciliation. The three chapters in this final section of the book are particularly relevant as we observe the centennial of the commencement of World War I this year. The ways we remember and commemorate are going to come under greater examination and scrutiny in this period. A caution comes from Neil Young's Chapter 'the Representation of Conflict in Modern Memory Work'. Young warns that there is a danger that memory work is used as 'myth-making', that is inventing or reinventing the past as a plaything or consumable' (260). The chapter by Corrina Peniston-Bird, 'War and peace in the Cloakroom: The Controversy over the Memorial to the Women of World War II', looks at the controversy surrounding the design of the British Memorial to The Women of World War II, unveiled in London in 2005. Peniston-Bird observes the 'dynamic interplay between time periods which meet through the commemoration of an event, the design chosen, through the date of the conception and execution and the responses provoked' (263). As a Historian who worked on the New Zealand Memorial unveiled in London in 2006, I was interested in the behind the scenes tensions between different communities seeking representation on this memorial. The final chapter, by Annelies Verdoolaege, considers the archive of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa and the role the commission and the creation of a material archive played in dealing with historical conflicts to lay the foundations for a more peaceful future.

Representations of Peace and Conflict incorporates a wide-range of contributions from across the humanities and social sciences. The subject matter

varies from the historical to the contemporary, and touches on a wide-variation of geographical locations. This collection reflects an increasing propensity for a multi-disciplinary approach to the topics. For those interested in the topics of peace, conflict, and memory this volume brings together a wide-range of voices writing on diverse topics, across various timeframes and geographies.

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