

Carrie A. Rentschler

Second Wounds: Victims' Rights and the Media in the U.S. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011. 273 pp.

J. Scott Kenney

Canadian Victims of Crime: Critical Insights. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2009. 280 pp.

In light of the Conservative government's law-and-order approach, which assumes that victims ineluctably want their perpetrators to be harshly punished, *Second Wounds* and *Canadian Victims of Crime* reveal the complexities of the impact of crime on victims' lives and the variability of victims' responses. Carrie Rentschler and J. Scott Kenney offer insightful analyses of the experiences of victims and victims' rights movements in the United States and Canada. While a considerable amount of criticism of victims' rights discourse has been produced, both books show why it remains important to study the category of the victim as a form of political and activist subjectivity.

Second Wounds is split into two sections. The first traces the genealogy of victims' rights discourses through the victims' rights movement in the United States. In the first chapter, Rentschler analyzes the dominant law-and-order orientation of victims' rights activism and how this particular discourse developed and shaped the language of the activism. The second chapter examines how the relationship between the victims' rights movement's hegemonic law-and-order framework and its other political genealogies has been scripted into activist training texts. In the second section of the book, Rentschler engages with the victims' rights movement's mainstream media strategies, its appropriation by news and entertainment media, and activists' reappropriation of those tactics. She reveals how national organizations made victims' rights discourses available to their own advocates and to media organizations.

In chapter three of *Second Wounds* Rentschler discusses how victim organizations perceive news media and talk shows as victimizing agents, but also as agents of healing that enable victims to testify to their experiences of victimization before a large listening public. The fourth chapter examines how the media-oriented training of victim advocates mobilized some American journalism schools to develop victim-centered curricular materials. Chapter five analyzes a news genre engendered by journalists' trauma training that commemorates the lives of people killed in major acts of mass victimization. In the sixth chapter, Rentschler reveals the life-and-death struggles that take place through victims' rights discourse of profiling victims' and convicted killers' lives. Here, Rentschler focuses on the advertising campaigns launched by the clothing company Benetton and the non-profit organization Parents of Murdered Children, which struggle to portray the humanity of death row inmates and murder victims, respectively.

Rentschler's *Second Wounds* relies on feminist and poststructural thought to analyze the manifold forms of victims' rights discourse in the United States. Guided by Foucault, she argues that victims' rights discourse constitutes what is "sayable" about crime and criminal justice and by whom. It makes some victims

and secondary victims visible in the media and obscures others whose “skin color, sexual orientation or class status, appear less innocent in the moral economies of crime” (p. 13). Furthermore, Rentschler carefully documents how this discourse emerged in the United States through a “get tough on crime” perspective. She also points out that victims’ rights advocacy is a contested terrain waged by a number of actors; it is not reducible to those advocating a law-and-order agenda. She shows, for example, the alternative discourses centered on anti-death penalty advocacy. In addition, she contends that victims’ rights discourse both invented and revised the feminist concept of secondary victimization centered on the family as crime victim.

Rentschler’s work on victims’ rights discourse is informed by several sets of textual materials including victims’ movement publications, media planning texts, and policy reports. Rentschler relies on training texts from the National Center for Victims of Crime and the National Organization for Victim Assistance. Beyond analyzing these training texts, she conducted interviews with communication staff and directors at these organizations. Using these materials, Rentschler approaches the victims’ rights movement as “middle range” or activists’ labor, shifting analysis away from what appears as singular in mainstream media representations and seeing these representations as an epiphenomenon of the largely invisible work done by activists. Rentschler analyzes the labor involved in the representations of victims of crime, specifically, the work that goes into the construction and deployment of these representations.

In *Canadian Victims of Crime: Critical Insights*, J. Scott Kenney argues that victims of violent crime are poorly understood, and that the institutions and services set up to help them often have unintended and possibly harmful effects. Primarily guided by symbolic interactionism, Kenney starts with the emotional changes in self that result from victimization. Through this lens, he examines the initial effects of crime, the social dynamics encountered by victims in their families and informal social settings, as well as gender roles and coping attempts. Kenney’s assertions are buttressed by various sources of data, including qualitative data from a research project on the experiences of families and loved ones of murder victims; data from public and private victim services programs in Nova Scotia; and an ethnography of restorative justice sessions for youth.

Following the introduction to the book, Kenney begins the substantive chapters with an analysis of the impact of criminal victimization. He explores how victims negotiate the label of “victim,” the dimensions of the loss of self that follows victimization, and when and how victims articulate these dimensions interactionally. The third chapter examines the social dynamics experienced by victims of violent crime outside formal institutional contexts. Chapter four delves into the experiences of crime victims within the criminal justice system and related institutions.

Chapter five (co-written with Karen Stanbridge), my favorite chapter of the book, explores the role and strategic management of emotions in relation to a victim’s place in the criminal justice system and the emergence of the victims’ rights movement in Canada. The authors offer an insightful analysis of the salience of emotions in the rise of the victims’ rights movement, and how the movement

uses emotions in the media to resocialize members and the general public around responsiveness to victims' issues. In the sixth chapter, Kenney reviews the role played by public and private agencies set up to serve victims of crime. He shows the often-counterintuitive effect of encounters with victim support programs. Drawing on an ethnography with Don Clairmont, chapter seven provides a critical engagement with a youth restorative justice program, showing how traumatic, shaming emotions are dramaturgically mediated in restorative justice encounters by the rhetorical use of the victim role. The authors elaborate on how shaming management can facilitate ostensibly meaningful outcomes, undermine them, or result in agreements based more on realpolitik than on reintegration. In the final substantive chapter, Kenney (with Alfredo Schulte-Bockholt) compares the Columbian and Canadian responses to victims of crime. The concluding chapter offers a synopsis of the book and lines for future inquiry.

Both of these books will appeal to academics and practitioners interested in victims' rights issues. Both are written in accessible language and offer insights into contemporary problems regarding crime victims. The two texts complement each other: Rentschler's text offers more insight into media issues regarding victims of crime; Kenney's text is more wide-ranging in scope as it pertains to victims' issues relative to the criminal justice system and related agencies. Both of these texts should be welcome additions to the library of anyone interested in victims and victimization.

Dale Spencer
Assistant Professor
Department of Sociology
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Philip Girard

Lawyers and Legal Culture in British North America: Beamish Murdoch of Halifax.
Toronto: Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History/University of Toronto Press, 2011. 304 pp.

Despite its primary title, this book deals mainly with one lawyer, Beamish Murdoch (1800–1876). Following his career, however, does reveal much about the developing Nova Scotian legal profession up to Confederation and about provincial society more generally. Murdoch emerges as a likeable man, benevolent and principled, and as a good lawyer who was also an influential writer and politician. He supported Joseph Howe against the establishment in the famous libel trial of 1835. However, he later refused Howe's offer of what would probably have been a safe seat in the Assembly, as he disapproved of party politics. Murdoch lived during a period of rapid expansion. Girard notes that only thirteen lawyers operated outside the capital in 1820. By 1830, that number had grown to forty-two, and