Bree Carlton and Marie Segrave (eds.) (2013) *Women Exiting Prison: Critical Essays on Gender, Post-release Support and Survival*. **London: Routledge, 212 pp (ISBN 978-0-415-63076-4) £80 Hbk**

This volume brings together a collection of critical essays exploring the relationship between women's criminalization and imprisonment and the implications for post-release policies, practices and experiences. The contributions, by academics and activists from Australia, the UK and North America, explore the impact of neo-liberal policies on women's experiences of criminalization and its consequences, including the recent and rapid growth in female imprisonment and the expansion of control through the increasing use of community interventions as an alternative to imprisonment and on release.

Several of the contributors observe how the development of gender responsive services and programming, while notionally well-intended, has provided a justification for the expansion of penal practices within the prison and beyond and has served both to hold women responsible for their criminalization and imprisonment and divert attention from structural disadvantage that is associated with processes of criminalization and an enduring feature of women's lives. As Kristin Bumiller (Chapter 1) observes, the fundamental premise of gender responsive re-entry programmes is flawed because most prisoners have occupied the margins of mainstream society and their imprisonment is a consequence of compounded disadvantage. In Chapter 3, Bree Carlton and Eileen Baldry draw on the experience of the 'Better Pathways' strategy in Victoria, Australia to argue that gender responsive programmes have served to increase women's imprisonment and reincarceration rates by failing to address women's needs following release at what is a "period of heightened precariousness" (p. 61). As Kelly Hannah-Moffat and Nathan Innocente (Chapter 4) found in their analysis of parole decision-making in Canada, the failure to address barriers to women's reintegration appears to reflect a concern with individual needs such as relationships and substance misuse, rather than 'structural necessities' such as accommodation and employment.

As many of the contributors note, the impact of neo-liberal policies has been felt more acutely by women whose lives are intersected by other forms of oppression and disadvantage. The increase in female incarceration in the US, for instance, has impacted disproportionately on African American women caught up in the 'war on drugs'. In Chapter 5, Eileen Baldry discusses the experiences of indigenous women in Australia whose lives have been shaped by patriarchal colonialism reflected most poignantly in the enforced removal of children. The rate of imprisonment of indigenous women is 22 times higher than that of non-indigenous women and, while the former experience higher levels of unemployment, homelessness, disability, physical and sexual abuse and separation from their children, they are less likely to receive appropriate and acceptable support. Baldry argues that concepts such as throughcare and desistance, though their individualistic focus, fail to recognise the relevance of systemic factors which mean that indigenous women "experience the criminal justice system in a uniquely destructive manner" (p.100). The contribution by Jacqueline Kerr and Linda Moore (Chapter 6) on Northern Ireland considers the particular post-release challenges faced by imprisoned women in a transitional society emerging from conflict. Here, moreover, the needs of imprisoned women have been especially marginalized as a result of the small size of the female prison population and this is also reflect in the availability of appropriate services following release.

A key theme to emerge from this volume is the implication of increased private and third sector involvement in the punishment and supervision of women. As several contributors note, there has

been an enormous growth in re-entry services – especially but not exclusively in the US - with other organisations undertaking the controlling functions that were once the responsibility of the state. A key concern, as Katherine Kendall highlights in Chapter 2, is that the advocacy and support work of voluntary organisations will, through the need to compete for services and demonstrate that 'outcomes' have been achieved, be replaced by a focus on 'risk management' and market relations. By way of illustration, Mary Corcoran and Claire Fox (Chapter 7) discuss how, while official policies were to some extent 'subverted' by staff at a women's centre in England through focusing on social needs as well as individual needs, they nonetheless gravitated ultimately towards an emphasis on compliance, attendance and engagement.

In her chapter Kristin Bumiller argues that activists acting on behalf of and alongside criminalized women "have the potential to lead reform that convinces politicians, not only that mass incarceration poses unsustainable costs but also fundamentally violates our social contract" (p. 30). The theme of activism is taken up again in the final two chapters of the book. First, in Chapter 8 Debbie Kilroy and her colleagues discuss the work undertaken by activist and abolitionist service providers in Queensland (Sisters Outside) and Victoria (Flat Out) Australia that aim to support women in prison and following release while advocating for social and structural changes to reduce the number of women in prison. They argue that prison-based programmes are experienced by women as coercive and controlling and incapable of bringing about the transformative change that is more likely to be achieved through a women-centred approach combining advocacy, activism and support in the community. The tensions that arise through adoption of an abolitionist stance while advocating reform are acknowledged by Kilroy et al. and further explored by Cassandra Shaylor and Erica Meiner (Chapter 9) who outline the various ways in which social policies in the US discriminate in particularly invidious ways against criminalized women and describe steps that have been taken towards addressing employment discrimination, working with women in prison and building coalitions focused on decarceration.

There a number of recurring themes that run through the contributions to this volume including the invidualizing of women's needs and their conflation with risk in the context of a responsibilizing agenda, the impact of a receding welfare state, especially in times of fiscal crisis, and the failure of governments to acknowledge the relevance of structural factors both for understanding women's criminalization and for responding appropriately to it. In highlighting these and other issues, this book makes an important contribution to critical scholarship on gender and justice.

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