**Television Antiheroines: Women Behaving Badly in Crime and Prison Drama, Milly Buonanno (2017)**

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Milly Buonanno’s anthology, *Television Antiheroines: Women Behaving Badly in Crime and Prison Drama,* explores depictions of unconventional womanhood in twenty-first-century television. It investigates how heteronormative ideologies of gender are challenged as female characters transgress feminine norms of passivity, purity, motherhood, goodness and caring. Split into four sections with thirteen contributions, the book sets out to analyse the figure of the antiheroine in international programming by investigating the transgressive possibilities enabled when characters’ refuse to socially conform to the laws of society, gender and the criminal underworld.

Buonanno’s introduction serves to outline the categorisation of the antiheroine. She convincingly highlights the relevance and scholarly importance of considering this figure. As she asserts, antiheroine television “addresses a feminist agenda in a fundamental and uncommon way” (2017: 4) and creates the space to explore the social and cultural debates that surround the representation of transgressive women and ‘normative’ femininities more broadly. Engaging with American, French, British, Italian, Dutch, Latin American and Australian programming, the contributions in this anthology offer a wide-ranging look at the changing roles, positionings and representations of female characters. More importantly these chapters invite an in depth consideration of the various feminist shapes and/or guises contemporary television offers.

Although the introduction provides a substantial definition of the antiheroine and the importance of this figure’s liminality, many of the chapters could have spent more time outlining how the characters identified in each programme reflect Buonanno’s definition. Consequently, the reader is at times left to wonder, what specifically makes these characters antiheroines? While chapter thirteen, ‘Taming Pussytown: How Post-feminism Domesticated *Underbelly: Razor*’ (Redhead), considers how *Underbelly: Razor* (2011) fails to depict the antiheroine, this chapter most clearly links back to Buonanno’s definition of the antiheroine. Several of the chapters take the representation of the antiheroine for granted by largely focusing on what the authors regard as the transgressive aspects of the characters. This is particularly evident in chapter six ‘Really Bad Mothers: Manipulative Matriarchs in *Sons of Anarchy* and *Justified*’(Lotz), were the focus on the mothers’ villainous acts against their own children seems to confuse the division between antiheroine and villain.

The four sections, ‘Mafia Women,’ ‘Drug Dealers and Aberrant Mothers,’ ‘Women in Prison’ and ‘Villainesses and Anti-Antiheroines,’ consider the depiction of criminal women and/or women involved in crime. While the introduction suggests that these sections are respectively divided based on their evaluation of: women in organised crime; mothers who are criminals; female characters’ transgressive behaviours and/or sexualities (i.e., female characters who challenge the norms of femininity by refusing to conform to the expectations of women as innocent, good, nurturing and socially conforming); and female characters who don’t quite fit the categorization of antiheroine, the common currents of motherhood, nationality and (transgressive) sexuality run throughout each of these contributions. The dominance of the figure of the mother is particularly interesting and well addressed not only throughout the second section but also in chapters one (Buonanno), twelve (Williams and Press) and thirteen (Redhead). The compelling and complex arguments made throughout the anthology regarding motherhood could have been enhanced by fully addressing this trend in the anthology’s introduction, or by using motherhood as part of the anthology’s frame. This was in my view a missed opportunity.

Nonetheless, these chapters make a significant contribution to a consideration of transgressive femininities and the potential of television to facilitate such depictions. Part of the anthology’s strength is its detailed consideration of the alternative space television and the crime genre afford when depicting transgressive femininities. For example Chapter four, ‘Paying the Price: *Penoza –* Combining Motherhood and a Career (in Crime)’ (Hermes), provides a fascinating overview of Dutch crime drama by outlining how the conditions of production, culture and national consumption play a role in the formation of *Penoza* (2010-2015)*.* In so doing, the chapter gives insight into the cultural landscape in which the antiheroine, Carmen, takes shape. Each chapter’s account of the various national and cultural conditions in which these fierce female characters emerge enhances a nuanced and enriched understanding of how these characters embody or breakaway from ‘normative’ expectations within their respective cultures. Chapter seven, ‘La reina del sur: Teresa Mendoza, a New Telenovela Protagonist’ (Rivero) and chapter eleven, ‘Women and Criminality in Brazilian Telenovelas: Salve Jorge and Human Trafficking’ (Joyce and Pastina) are also examples of how the anthology convincingly links the construction of alternative female roles to the societies, politics and production strategies of their respective nations.

The anthology also offers a detailed and considered exploration of the gender roles and sexual identities female characters pursue, embody, challenge and reimagine. In so doing, each contribution highlights the social challenges faced by women in relation to social and economic norms. Where chapter five, ‘“Really Good At It”: The Viral Charge of Nancy Botwin in Weeds (and Popular Culture’s Anticorps)’ (Giomi), investigates how the antiheroine’s sexuality is used as a tool as well as a source of pleasure, chapters seven, ‘La reina del sur: Teresa Mendoza, a New Telenovela Protagonist’ (Rivero), nine, ‘Top Dogs and Other Freaks: Wentworth and the Re-imaging of Prisoner Cell Block H’ (Turnbull), and ten, ‘Lesbian Request Approved: Sex, Power and Desire in Orange is the New Black’ (Walters) explore the transgressive possibilities and limitations of female sexuality and solidarity. These chapters draw attention to the different narrative functions female sexuality serves within contemporary television and the role female sexuality plays in the crime genre.

While at many points in this anthology I found myself wishing for further discussion of the antiheroine and her construction within each programme, this anthology nonetheless offers an engaging, relevant and timely consideration of transgressive female characters. It highlights the space where these women can be found and points to the boundaries that might be pushed further as representations of femininities in contemporary television are challenged and reimagined.