



NEW BOOKS

Women and Crime

October 1988-October 1990

After the sudden rush of pathbreaking books published on women and crime in the mid 1980s, the last two years have seen what is, by and large, a maturer output. Building on previous studies, recent theoretical work has gone beyond the mere description of 'difference' experienced by women in the criminal justice system, to an elaboration of the diverging and converging modes of differentiation related to gender (Smart, 1990; Worrall, 1990), gender, class, age and racism (Carlen, 1988) and gender and adolescence (Cain, 1989). Investigative and policy-oriented work has continued with a detailed investigation of the remand experience at Holloway prison (Casale, 1989) and the realistic alternatives to women's imprisonment (Carlen, 1990). The already vigorous and predominantly feminist research which focusses upon women as victims of crime has been strengthened by a plethora of studies.

For feminist theorists, undoubtedly the most important work on women and the criminal law in the past couple of years has been Carol Smart's **Feminism and The Power of the Law** (1989). This book is extremely good value. In addition to analysing legal responses to rape, pornography and issues involving civil law, the author conducts a sophisticated discussion as to whether or not a feminist jurisprudence is either possible or desirable. And she ends with a warning to women that they should approach the law with caution; that even when their claims are rooted in legislation which could be expected to right women's wrongs, 'once enacted, legislation is in the hands of individuals and agencies far removed from the values and policies of the women's movement' (Smart, 1989:160). But such a warning may be of only small comfort to the very concerned women (and men) professionals who actually work within the system and who too often find it extremely difficult to make sense of those female lawbreakers who do not 'fit' any of the clinical categories or professional discourses. For them, Anne Worrall's **Offending Women** may provide some new theoretical insights supported by analyses of many of the very familiar and complex situations which criminal justice

personnel confront daily.

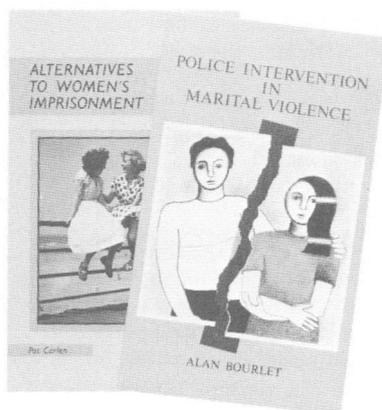
For a European and comparative perspective, both theorists and practitioners should read Maureen Cain's **Growing Up Good** (1989). This is a unique collection of articles on the regulation of young women in Western Europe and is valuable primarily for two reasons. First, most of the articles (from England, Spain, Italy, Germany, Holland and France) provide rich and varied evidence in support of the editor's contention that there is a 'continuity between the ways in which women and girls are pressured and schooled to conformity by the criminal justice system and the ways in which they are controlled by a myriad of other institutions and structures in society at large' (p1). Second, it contains a variety of ideas for professionals who would like to experiment with a more 'feminist' practice with their female clients.

Coming now to the study of women as victims of crime, we note a wealth of good new books. In **Women, Policing and Male Violence** Hanmer, Radford and Stanko (1989) deal specifically with policing responses to violence towards women. They bring together a number of international studies which present an

practitioner. Bourlet, a practising police officer, provides a sympathetic, yet honest and critical, insight into police policy and practice. His research was modest, but it is presented with commendable clarity - and brevity.

By far the most exciting new additions to the 'women as victims of violence' literature are books by Lee Ann Hoff (1990) and Amina Mama (1989). Both provide excellent in-depth studies of women's experiences of violence and of the ways in which they survive it. Although Hoff's **Battered Women as Survivors** is based on American research, the knowledge it offers is readily transferable to a British context. Moreover, the text itself proves (if proof were needed) that studies of women as victims of crime are now as methodologically and theoretically sophisticated as those concerned with women as offenders.

Finally, Amina Mama's **The Hidden Struggle**, an investigation into responses to violence against black women in the home, was commissioned by the London Race and Housing Unit, a now defunct offspring of the Greater London Council. Based on over a hundred interviews with women of Caribbean, Asian and African descent who had been violently attacked, it provides a searing indictment of housing and welfare provision in Britain, and is essential reading for everyone concerned with the interface of racism and sexism in our society.



uncompromising view that 'an acceptance of gender inequality, and the ideology on which it is based, is the foundation for the present police treatment of women' (p8). Susan Edward's **Policing 'Domestic' Violence** (1989) and Alan Bourlet's (1990) **Police Intervention in Marital Violence** concentrate, as their titles suggest, on domestic violence, and though the former book is the more scholarly of the two, the latter may be more attractive to

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