

Reviews

Book Review

Cultural criminology: An invitation (Second edition)

By Jeff Ferrell, Keith Hayward and Jock Young

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This is the second edition of a ground-breaking and influential book by three distinguished, internationally renowned professors. It draws upon a wide range of criminological and sociological theories in order to cast new light upon the issues of crime and criminal justice. The introductory chapter explains that cultural criminology is concerned with the ways in which people act together creating meaning and forming identities. This symbolic environment does not exist in a theoretical space, but has real world implications, intertwining with structures of power and inequality. It is a process that is dynamic, evolving and constantly negotiated. A vivid example is given in the opening pages of the book focussing on the Occupy movement, which emerged following the financial collapse of 2008 and the subsequent period of economic austerity and recession, calling for fundamental reforms and contesting capitalism itself. Activists took to wearing 'Guy Fawkes' style masks, which were inspired by images from dystopian graphic novel *V for Vendetta*,¹ which subsequently became a successful film.² Closer analysis not only reveals the cultural

appropriation of this image from mainstream, commercial entertainment, but also reveals deeper capitalist structures. The image is owned by the Time Warner corporation, who therefore gain additional profit, and the company licenced to produce the masks uses non-unionised workshops in Mexico and Brazil. This story therefore reveals not only how cultural products are contested, but also how resistance can be commodified and enlisted by powerful financial interests that benefit from it.

The chapters in this book cover the intellectual and theoretical origins of cultural criminology as well as chapters focussing on specific issues including media representation. A particularly enlightening chapter describes everyday experiences of crime and criminal justice. It takes a diary of an ordinary day and illustrates the ways in which we all encounter the representations and reality of crime and criminal justice, whether that be the increasing securitisation of public spaces, media coverage and also criminal chic used in fashion and advertising. The book also addresses research approaches that can draw out the cultural aspects of criminology, particularly qualitative approaches such as ethnography. Each chapter ends with a helpful section that recommends books, articles and websites, but also films and documentaries that reflect the themes, an excellent resource that rightly illustrates how popular culture is a site in which criminology is enacted.

I read this book at the same time as reading legal journalist,

Jeffrey Toobin's account of the OJ Simpson trial.³ At the time, the trial was an event of seemingly unprecedented intensity, a bewitching confluence of celebrity and crime. The apparently insatiable appetite for the trial generated huge media coverage. The fact that the trial was broadcast and participants spoke openly to the press simply fuelled the obsession. This also played out in the courtroom, with theatrical gestures by lawyers seeming to be aimed at viewers as much as the jury, most notoriously when Simpson was asked to try on the gloves found at the murder scene. Toobin's account also shows how the lawyers and judges responded to media coverage on a personal and professional level, becoming acutely conscious of their own media image. The trial took on an almost unreal quality, as if it was a vast and unfolding entertainment rather than being concerned with a brutal double murder. At the same time, the trial became embroiled with social problems that went beyond the events themselves, raising public issues about gender, including domestic violence and the problematizing of female behaviour, issues of race, in particular regarding the discrimination in the criminal justice system, and issues of wealth and power, including whether those with resources could avoid accountability for their actions. Following Simpson's acquittal many of the lawyers, witnesses and jurors went on to write books, benefiting from lucrative publishing deals, and move on to successful media careers. The trial has now, itself taken on a mythical status, recently being successfully recreated as a fictional

1. Moore, A. (1988) *V for Vendetta* New York: Vertigo.

2. *V for Vendetta* Dir. James McTeigue (USA, 2006).

3. Toobin, J. (2015) *The run of his life: The People V OJ Simpson* London: Random House.

television show⁴ featuring high profile stars, marking the final transition of real deaths into a commercial, entertainment product. This is only the most high profile example of the relevance of cultural criminology and the entangled relationship between representation and reality.

Critical Criminology is an outstanding book that is essential reading to anyone concerned with issues of culture, whether that be the behaviour of groups, popular representation, or the construction of social values.

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Book Review

The Justice Women: The Female Presence in the Criminal Justice System 1800–1970

By Stephen Wade

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(paperback)

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In *The Justice Women: The Female Presence in the Criminal Justice System 1800–1970*, Stephen Wade explores the challenges faced by women, in gaining professional status in the criminal justice system. He traces the introduction of women to a number of professional roles within the British criminal justice process; from voluntary, unpaid work through to professional status, whilst highlighting the struggle these women faced against gender inequality and discrimination. As professional roles within the criminal justice system, like many other professions had simply not been accessible to women until the First World War, and then the

implementation of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919, this book reflects not only the rise of women within this field but arguably the rise of women more broadly within British society.

Stephen Wade is a historian of crime and law, and author of predominantly non-fiction books; he has spent time 'writing as a worker in prisons,' and is a part time lecturer at the University of Hull. He begins this book by exploring how through women working in voluntary and unpaid roles within the criminal justice system, women's interest in this type of work was highlighted (Chapter One), before continuing with an insight into the gender related battles women faced as law students and lawyers (Chapter Two). The book is structured in such a way that each chapter is devoted to a profession; professions which include policewomen, jurors and magistrates and prison officers and the lesser known roles of the probation officers, lady detectives and sheriffs, Lord Lieutenants and coroners.

By drawing on a diverse spectrum of roles, this book encapsulates the social history of the Criminal Justice System, through the biographies of women who contributed in part to its reform; describing both the challenges and the battles women faced as they entered the legal and law related professions within a male dominated institution. In doing so, Wade brings the social history of the criminal justice system to life, when he describes the women who experienced the battles of discrimination and inequality. By drawing on the biography of Sybil Campbell for example the, 'first woman judge in a full time capacity, being appointed and serving as a magistrate at Tower Bridge in 1945;' (p34) Wade describes the objections she faced and in particular the

'questions that were asked regarding whether a woman was a fit person to do such work,' (p35). By interweaving the biographies of women, throughout the book, who experienced the battle to enter the legal profession, with developments within the social history of the legal system, Wade depicts the on-going struggle confronting these women through their own eyes, relating to first-hand accounts and experiences. Crucially whilst Wade acknowledges that a tremendous amount of progress has been made during the period on which this book covers, he also acknowledges that he is, 'astonished that more progress has not been made' (p147).

This book is well researched, as Wade draws on a broad range of biographies from both the Old Bailey and provincial sources. For example, the matron's journal at Lincoln Castle Prison dated October 1868, describes the care given to a particular prisoner with a baby whilst awaiting execution, (p75) however as Wade acknowledges, such sources are fundamental to the insight of fact, but fail to provide a crucial insight into the emotional struggles such women working within the criminal justice system undoubtedly encountered.

During his introduction, Wade describes that a woman's place in the 'legal system up to the turn of the nineteenth century had been limited to prison matrons and wardresses,' (pviii) and in doing so, disappointingly fails to acknowledge the crucial role of the jury of matrons. The jury of matrons were called upon by the court in a number of instances, but primarily in cases to establish whether a woman was, 'quick with child' in women who had pleaded their belly, whilst facing a capital punishment. However, this does not detract from the fact that the book presents a thorough representation of women's experiences within the criminal

4. *American crime story: The People V OJ Simpson* (US, 2016).