

justice system in gaining professional status.

This book provides a refreshing perspective on the developments of the criminal justice process from the viewpoint of women, who experienced the challenges and battles of entering a male dominated profession. Overall this book demonstrates a thorough insight into these issues through the diverse spectrum of professions, and the personal challenges the women faced in gaining professional status within the British criminal justice system. The style of this book allows an inter-connectedness between events in social history and the biographies of women, bringing history to life, making it an ideal read for students.

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Book Review

The Monster of Myra Hindley

By Nina Wilde

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The subject of this book, Myra Hindley, needs no introduction. Even though she has been dead for 14 years she is still, aside from perhaps Rosemary West, one of the best known female offenders in England and Wales. Charged and convicted with Ian Brady for the murder of five children, she served 36 years in custody. The fact that she did serve such a long period in custody and is still characterised as one of 'the UK's most notorious serial killers' (p.17) is the focus of this book. The author, Nina Wilde, describes herself as 'a very close friend' (p.17). They first met in Cookham Wood Prison when Wilde was conducting research

there in 1993 and their friendship continued until Hindley's death through subsequent visits and letters. Over this time Wilde got to know Hindley well and the book is an attempt, I think, to show the reader perhaps a different side to Hindley than has previously been expressed. This is also done through the publication of letter extracts which over the years Hindley had sent to Wilde.

The crux of the book is to show the unfairness which Hindley suffered at the hands of the state. Hindley was the first female to be convicted of murder following the abolition of the death penalty in England and Wales. Despite this, the mood and temper of the country was still punitive, especially when it came to a child killer, which is why the media throughout her lifetime painted her as the 'most hated woman in Britain' (p.100). At the time that Hindley was sentenced to life, the period of time which she had to serve was imposed by the Home Secretary and it was not until 1982 that a minimum sentence of 25 years was suggested for her. By this stage she had already served 16 years and had been refused parole once. In 1985 the Local Prison Review Committee recommended that Hindley was suitable for release, but her parole was knocked back by the then Home Secretary, Leon Brittan, who imposed a provisional tariff of 30 years. This was further extended to a whole life tariff in 1990 by the then Home Secretary David Waddington. Throughout her time in prison and up until her death she tried to challenge this whole life tariff, taking her case to the Court of Appeal in 1997 and the House of Lords in 2000. Ten days after Hindley died, on 25 November 2002, the House of Lords ruled that the Home Secretary could no longer set the tariff for life sentenced prisoners and that it should be a matter which rests with the judiciary.

The book has two main arguments. Hindley was treated as she was first because she was a woman and consequently what she did was worse because she was a woman. Second the unfairness she experienced was because the press would not leave her alone and continually brought up the story and the evil nature of her character. In most press articles the same photograph of her was used—platinum blond—when in actual fact Hindley spent most of her life as a brunette. The author claims that in the 1990s 'any tabloid editor could have told you that he could guarantee sales by putting one of two women on the front page: the other was Her Royal Highness Diana, Princess of Wales' (p. 101). This is therefore a good example of how much influence the media and the press can have on political decisions.

In terms of these arguments I think Wilde is right on both counts. Interestingly she cites examples of other female killers who were not given the same notoriety as Hindley and who frankly I had not heard of. Again this shows how it was the press which was the largest contributor in this story. Despite agreeing with the main arguments in the book I felt that the author wanted me to feel some level of pity for Hindley. She continually reminds the reader that Hindley did not actually kill any of the children and that she was convicted for being an accomplice of Brady. I didn't feel this pity, but nor did I react to the arguments with dismay (p. 17). Overall the book is written well and makes the above arguments well. It thus serves as a reminder that tariff decisions on life imprisonment should be decided upon by the judiciary and that they should be carried out without political bias or influence.

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