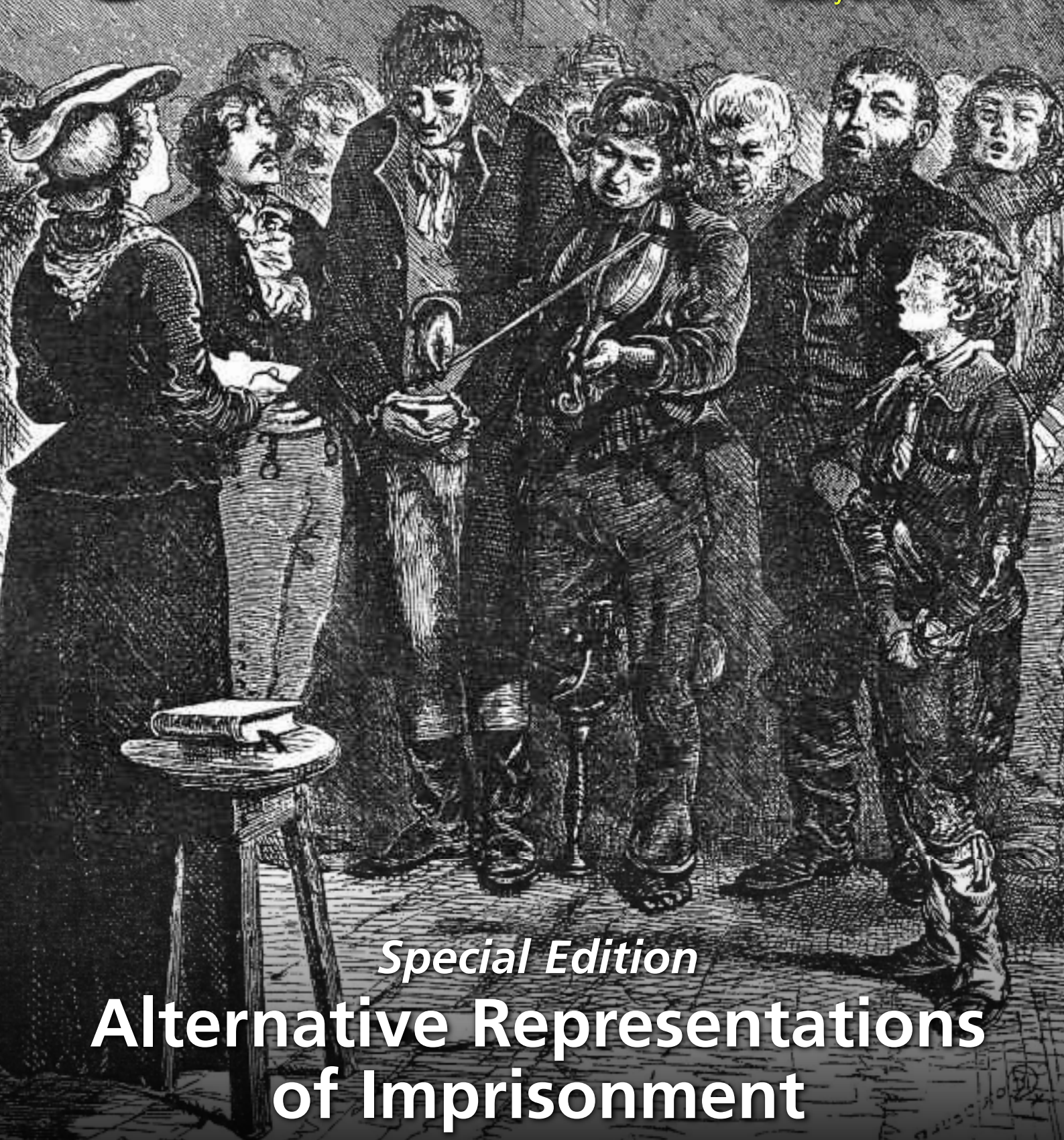


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Special Edition

**Alternative Representations
of Imprisonment**

Reviews

Book Review

Looking for Laura: Public criminology and hot news

By David Wilson

Publisher: Waterside Press (2011)

ISBN: 9781904380 702 (paperback)

Price: (paperback)

Over the last decade, David Wilson has carved out a niche for himself as a media criminologist, exploring how to introduce complex ideas into popular discourse. In this book, Wilson discusses 'public criminology' in terms of engaging with the public through tabloid media, rolling news, TV entertainment and documentary, and popular books. The criminological content of his work is based on controversial and high profile cases, such as serial killers and paedophilia. He uses these to explore complex social issues such as power and inequality, the construction of childhood, consumerism and media representation.

This book does not attempt to provide a comprehensive survey of public criminology. It is neither a critical evaluation of different strategies nor is it a dense theoretical exposition. Instead it is a personal account of "'engaging with journalists who want to ask some toe-curlingly specific and not at all respectable questions'" (p.xv) and a reflexive account of the "'threats and opportunities that using such a strategy entails'" (p.xix).

The high profile cases that Wilson uses here include those on which he has commented, which include the disappearance of teenager Laura Stainworth with a 49 year old man she met on the internet; the serial killings by Steve Wright in Ipswich; the self-inflicted death of Mike Todd, former Chief Constable of Manchester Police; spree killings by Derrick Bird and Raoul Moat; and the production of the TV show *Banged Up*. Wilson uses extracts of articles

and interviews to illustrate his approach and then discusses the ethical and practical challenges presented as well as unpacking some of the relevant sociological issues in each case.

The book is loosely structured and free-flowing. The cases will be sufficiently familiar to readers that they will be able engage with the attempt to move beyond surface media representation into an exploration of deeper ideas about the process of news making, Wilson's particular strategy and approach, and the ethical context.

This book is hard to categorise. It is part academic criminology, part autobiography and part true crime. Such a deeply personal and unconventional publication is likely to illicit different reactions for readers. However, it is full of observations and insights that reward careful reading, but more than a source of reflection, it is also an attempt to inspire, incite and provoke criminologists into action.

Jamie Bennett is Governor HMP Grendon & Springhill.

Book Review

Media and crime (Second edition)

By Yvonne Jewkes

Publisher: Sage (2010)

ISBN: 978-1-84860-702-6

(hardback) 978-1-84860-703-3

(paperback)

Price: £70.00 (hardback) £23.99

(paperback)

Yvonne Jewkes, Professor of Criminology at Leicester University, has produced a book that is intended as a "'one stop shop'" for students but also has the ambition to "'move key debates forward, develop existing knowledge and offer new and

innovative ways of thinking about relationships between media and crime'" (p.4).

The book's ten chapters are each helpfully structured with an overview; key terms; summary; study questions; and further reading. The first chapter provides an introduction to the main theoretical approaches including the debates on effects, Marxist analysis and cultural criminology. Next Jewkes discusses the construction of news, including the values and processes of selection and production. This is followed by a discussion of the specific theory of 'moral panics', an overused phrase but one that still has relevance. Chapters four and five focus on the representation of children and women respectively, revealing how these are linked to wider issues of power. The sixth chapter considers the police, offenders and victims in the media, including the symbiotic relationship between the police and the media. This is succeeded by an examination of the enduring popularity of crime and prison films, which interestingly uses as a case study the remake of the film *The Taking of Pelham 123* to illustrate how values change. The eighth and ninth chapters consider the growing role of surveillance and the role of the internet, respectively. Both of these have been added since the first edition and indicate new directions and dimensions in the study of media and crime. The book closes with a chapter that reconceptualizes the relationship between media and crime, conjuring up a virtual world of imagined communities bound together by distorted representations of reality.

This book is an outstanding starting point and source of reference for those with an interest in the subject. The author's effortless command of the material makes this book a joy to read. It is more than a synthesis of existing material, full of bold and imaginative ways of looking

at the issues and encourages a broad, inter-disciplinary approach to the subject. An excellent book that comes highly recommended.

Jamie Bennett is Governor HMP Grendon & Springhill.

Book Review

Public criminology?

By Ian Loader and Richard Sparks

Publisher: Routledge (2011)

ISBN: 978-0-415-44549-8

(hardback) 978-0-415-44550-4

(paperback)

Price: £ (hardback) £23.99

(paperback)

This book has been authored by two highly regarded, intellectual heavyweights, Professor Ian Loader of Oxford University and Professor Richard Sparks of Edinburgh University. It is a bold and sophisticated theoretical work discussing the role and purpose of criminology and its intersection with policy and practice.

The book starts by describing criminology sitting in the paradoxical position of being a 'successful failure'. By that they argue that as an academic discipline, criminology has rapidly expanded and has attracted growing numbers of students, however, at the same time, it has appeared that public policy and practice has been becoming detached from such expertise and has instead become more populist and emotive. As a result, there is a particular challenge for how criminologists engage with politicians, professionals and the public so as to inform the debate, without being marginalised, enlisted or having their work misused.

The authors set out five broad models for current approaches to public criminology. The first is that of 'scientific expert', using quantitative research in order to explore the

distribution, causes and costs of crime, the motivations of offenders and the effectiveness of programmes. The second is that of 'policy advisor', which relates to those criminologists who work with agencies to develop their policies and practices informed by research. The third is 'observer-turned player', where academics take up posts with agencies or criminal justice organisations so as to play a direct role in delivering and developing services. The fourth, 'social movement theorist/activist' are particularly concerned with issues of power and inequality and often work directly with marginalised groups in an attempt to empower them and also work with campaigning organisations to highlight their concerns. Finally, there is the 'lonely prophet', who focuses on 'the big picture', understanding, describing and analysing major social changes. Their work is usually focussed on publications, but these are often widely read and influential.

Loader and Sparks go on to discuss how criminologists adopting these various approaches engage more widely in the current climate. As a metaphor, they describe the 'warming' nature of public discourse, as the heat is intensified by emotive, populist and punitive elements. Some take a direct approach, including activists, critics and prophetic interpreters, so addressing this head-on. However, others deploy 'cooling devices' so as to calm and dampen discussion, emphasising issues such as legality and justice, scientific evidence, bureaucratic rationality.

In order to draw together these approaches and suggest an underpinning rationale and strategy for public criminology, Loader and Sparks deploy the notion of 'democratic under-labouring', developed from the work of John Locke. By this they argue that criminology should not be deployed narrowly but should be situated more broadly. They suggest that:

'There are, rather, reasons for thinking that criminology might

engage with public life not only in an effort to reduce crime, or make communities safer, or enhance effectiveness or accountability of the criminal justice system, but also at the same time to contribute to a better politics of its subject matter' (p.121)

There are three major aspects to this notion of democratic under-labouring. The first is that criminology should be directed towards the generation and application of knowledge. The second is that it should be 'institutional-critical', in other words it should have an appreciation of the economic, social and cultural context in which criminal justice is situated and the ways that it intersects with and contributes towards wider social issues. The third aspect is that criminology has a normative task; that is that it is deployed with an understanding that more is at stake than crime alone. The nature of criminal justice is a reflection and a shaper of the community as a whole. The authors suggest that by adopting such an underpinning set of values, not only can each of the five strategies be strengthened but also there is the possibility of a more coherent and pluralistic approach to criminology.

Although this is a short book, at around 150 pages, it is dense and weighty, fired by two powerful intellects. This book is ambitious and challenging for the criminology community asking difficult questions about the uses of criminology and its engagement with the criminal justice system. At the same time, it offers the prospect of a different future with criminology making a more coherent and effective contribution not only to specific policies and practices but also to the wider political landscape. Its arguments deserve careful consideration, reflection and response.

Jamie Bennett is Governor HMP Grendon & Springhill.