

Andrew M. Jefferson

Editorial

Welcome to another issue of Outlines. This issue features five articles by scholars of a critical criminological persuasion. Issues of crime, justice, deviance and social control are no strangers to these pages and we welcome the opportunity to illustrate aspects of Outlines' trans-disciplinary profile. Such issues and the way they are constituted often institutionally in the form of state security apparatus (police, courts, prisons etc.) present vivid examples of the interplay of politics, policy implementation and social science and as Michel Foucault has shown, they are key sites for the constitution of subjects. The papers illustrate the diversity of criminology but what ties them together is the affiliation of four of the five authors to the *European Group for the Study of Deviance and Social Control*, a network of activist-minded scholars, whose main institutional activity is an annual conference (www.europeangroup.org). Characterised by Van Swaaningen as aiming to reform criminology 'into a critical discourse on state-organised social control' and made up of 'progressive academics and activists alike' (Van Swaaningen 1997: 83), this network, whilst perhaps not responsible for any hugely groundbreaking theoretical advances, has been an important nurturing context for many a young researcher with critical if not radical inclinations. It also played an important role in the internationalisation of critical criminology (*ibid.*).

Academic disciplines are never ideology-neutral and criminology of the non-critical variety is no exception. Indeed criminology is arguably exemplary of the way in which state ideology and academic scholarship can dubi-

ously become partners. Tied, apparently irrevocably, to abstract conceptions of crime, and to state agendas and practices that frame such conceptions, criminology, like psychology has been accused of neglecting context (Hillyard and Tombs 2004), including the conditions of its own existence: 'The questions asked and the answers reached within criminology have always been subservient to, if not determined by, power' (Whyte and Tombs 2003). Neglecting the subtle ways in which the criminological field is produced at the intersection between state policies, academic theorising, and people's everyday lives and ignoring the ways in which crime and the criminal are constructed within social, political and economic structures, dominant criminology has left itself open to critique and deconstruction. Titles such as *Criminology at the Crossroads* (Daly and Maher 1998) and *Beyond Criminology* (Hillyard, Pantazis, Tombs and Gordon 2004) hint at the space that does exist for rethinking in and on the borders of the discipline. The papers presented here are part of the ongoing redefinition of criminology as a discipline and criminological knowledge as practice.

It may be that an editorial apology is in place for the over representation of voices from the United Kingdom. However, perhaps it is apposite to listen to critical voices from the UK given the ease with which political trends and tendencies are flowing around Europe at present. The reader should be warned that some of the articles are quite country specific. Forewarned is forearmed. Yet specificity and particularity are surely one of the hallmarks of critical scholarship. It will be up to the

discerning reader as always to determine to what degree the analyses might be relevant in other contexts. Does Beckmann and Cooper's call for a commonly voiced 'nous accusons' resonate? Does their disturbing comparison of current political developments in the UK with Nazi Germany, including the silencing of dissenting voices give us goose bumps, merely get our hackles up or send us out to man the barricades? How do we respond to Pember-ton's analysis of the sensitive topic of deaths in police custody? Is he able to make a case for a link between the rise of neo-liberalism and increasingly repressive state policies in relation to the marginalised? Or should we look to "police culture" independent of politics for clues as to why citizens are occasionally literally mortified whilst in the custody of the state, the very authority charged with their protection? Sollund presents us with some practical challenges associated with conducting research aimed at bringing about change, with concrete reference to ethnographic research amongst the police. Here "police culture" and the dilemmas associated with piercing it, revealing it and potentially transforming it are discussed in the context of relations between police and ethnic minorities in Norway. Ballinger's detailed historical analysis of the way in which women who killed their partners are denied agency during their trials by prosecutors, defenders and expert witnesses is a compelling study of institutionalised patriarchal power dynamics reproducing the prevailing patterns of domination that created the conditions for the "crime" in the first place. What do such nuanced readings of the complex dynamics that unfold as the state makes itself felt in the lives of its citizen-subjects do for our concepts of justice and our sense of the role of critical social studies? Finally, does Carlen's short essay, a balanced hymn in praise of a self-critical critical criminology, see us rushing to the altar or fleeing the church? Are we raising our eyes to the heavens or rolling our eyes? What can

a critical criminological lens contribute to our understandings of the way persons participate in and constitute everyday social practices?

These articles present, though can hardly be said to represent, critical criminology. Death, the police, the marginal, the role of critical research and dissent – these are some of the emergent themes of the current issue. To stimulate, provoke, inspire, transform – these are our aspirations. Read, dissect, disagree and appropriate – such is the readers privilege!

References

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