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*Censure, Politics and Criminal Justice* edited by Colin Sumner, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1991. Paperback, \$32.95 (RRP)

*Censure, Politics and Criminal Justice* seeks to develop a theoretical perspective in criminology which utilises the concept of censure. The first three chapters (by Colin Sumner) set out the framework of such a perspective, while the remaining chapters (by various authors) analyse particular issues including reform of the magistrate's courts, political trials in South Africa, the suffragette movement, the role of television drama, and reactions to political dissidence in Britain during the early 1970s.

The book revolves around work conducted at the Institute of Criminology, Cambridge during the 1980s. Sumner is eager to renew theoretical debates in the formulation of a socialist paradigm in criminology. He positions his own theoretical contribution in distinction from the "romantic formulations of the 'new criminology' of the late 1960s" and also from "any simplistic analysis of criminal law as an instrument of class rule". Sumner also seeks to distance himself from the "realist" group on the left. While he recognises that socialist criminology in Britain has rightly emphasised research and policy in relation to Labour-led local authorities, he is concerned with the limitations of such an approach. Sumner notes that such an alliance, not underpinned by revolutionary theory, runs the risk of ending in the "cul-de-sac of a social democratic, parochial reformism which is not so far away from neo-positivist, administrative criminology" (p3).

Sumner emphasises his disagreement with the tendency in "realist" criminology to unproblematically accept that the definitions of crime in criminal law are based upon social consensus. The so-called "rational core" of criminal law is for Sumner an ideological abstraction. He is particularly critical of those socialist criminologists who accept that criminal behaviour is a form of behaviour separate from state definitions. For Sumner, the "realist" position has ignored a basic proposition in socialist criminology, which is that individuals become "criminals because the state criminalises them".

The theoretical base for Sumner's position is the concept of censure. The categories of deviance are first and foremost forms of censure which have social, moral and political characteristics. Censures are inadequate behavioural categories despite whatever authority they possess as legal categories or as pseudo-scientific categories within the welfare agencies. Indeed, following Foucault and Donzelot, it is necessary to study the development and legitimation of censures within the networks of "discipline" and "tutelage".

For Sumner, what is censured as crime reflects the political economy and culture of a society. The censures are culturally and historically specific. Further they "make no sense" outside the sectional ideologies which constitute them and the economic, political and cultural contexts "which generate, sustain and precipitate their use" (p17). The program for a sociology of crime and deviance is one then that is a sociology of social censures: "their structural roots, institutional forms, discursive and practical meanings, systems and policies of enforcement, hegemonic functions, effects and significance for 'offenders', and normative validity" (p26).

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The remaining chapters in the book offer particular analyses. Richard Volger analyses the struggle for democracy in the magistrate's courts in England and Wales between 1886 and 1986. Volger focuses on the way the system has survived 150 years of attempts to open it up to democratic participation. Cathy Albertyn and Dennis Davis analyse the role of political trials in South Africa by focusing on two such trials: the trial of 156 leaders of the Congress Alliance on the charge of treason in 1956, and the trial of 16 members of the United Democratic Front on the charge of treason in 1985. Richard Sparks looks at one aspect of the media through a specific analysis of the crime drama with its images of crime and law enforcement. As he acknowledges, the crime drama has become one of the major generic categories of fictional TV series. Alison Young analyses the strategies of censure employed against the suffragette movement. The chapter focuses on the women of the Women's Social and Political Union and the forms of resistance and control which was used in opposition to their militant campaign. It also brings out how the normative prescriptions of an idealized femininity underpinned the application of censure. The final chapter in the book by Sumner and Sanberg interprets the media responses to the political demonstrations in Britain during early 1973.

*Censure, Politics and Criminal Justice* is an interesting book, partly because of the theoretical approach adopted, partly as a result of the intrinsic interest of the subject matter. More importantly the book seeks to regenerate debates within Left criminology as to the basis of an adequate theoretical position. It is also interesting that this contribution derived from the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge, which Sumner notes "is not known for its role in the development of socialist criminology".

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