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## **Criminology, Social Theory and the Challenge of Our Times**

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Contemporary criminology inhabits a rapidly changing world. The speed and profundity of these changes are echoed in the rapidly changing character of criminology's subject matter—in crime rates, in crime policy, and in the practices of policing, prevention and punishment. And if we look beyond the immediate data of crime and punishment to the processes that underpin them—to routines of social life and social control, the circulation of goods and persons, the organization of families and households, the spatial ecology of cities, the character of work and labour markets, the power of state authorities—it becomes apparent that criminology's subject matter is centrally implicated in the major transformations of our time.

The questions that animate this collection of essays concern the challenges that are posed for criminology by the economic, cultural, and political transformations that have marked late twentieth-century social life. The restructuring of social and economic relations, the fluidity of social process, the speed of technological change, and the remarkable cultural heterogeneity that constitute 'late modernity' pose intellectual challenges for criminology that are difficult and sometimes discomfiting but which are ultimately too insistent to ignore. To wish them away, to carry on regardless, to pursue the conventional agendas of criminological enquiry in the accustomed way, would be to turn away from some of the most important issues that face contemporary social thought and public policy. It would also be to depart from the canons of clarity, perspicacity and relevance that worthwhile criminological work has always observed. Ever since its emergence in the industrialized, urbanized world of the mid-nineteenth century,

criminology has been, or has sought to be, a contemporary, timely, worldly subject. Criminologists—particularly those who draw upon a sociological tradition—have always sought to ground their analyses in a nuanced sense of the world as it is, and as it is becoming, not least because the phenomena of crime and disorder have so regularly been traced to the effects of social upheaval and dislocation. As the essays in this collection demonstrate, the social transformations of late modernity pose new problems of criminological understanding and relevance, and have definite implications for the intellectual dispositions, strategic aims and political commitments that criminology inevitably entails.

How then might criminologists come to terms with the kinds of variation and change that characterize their twenty-first century world? Are criminology's frameworks of explanation adequate to the changing realities of crime and criminal justice and to the expansive hinterland of political, economic and regulatory activity that encircles them? If not, what kinds of adjustment need to be made? What kinds of question must be brought more clearly into focus? How should the scope of our analyses change? And if we are to develop modes of theorizing and forms of empirical enquiry that respond to the social world *in a fully contemporary idiom* then on what kinds of intellectual resources can we draw and in what corners of contemporary thought might these be discovered?

### **Criminology and 'Crime Talk'**

We have already referred to 'criminology' and 'criminologists'. We do so in full recognition of the fact that these are problematic and permeable categories: indeed part of our intent in this volume is to problematize them further and render them more permeable yet. We adopt this approach in a constructive, curious spirit rather than a nihilistic one. At this point in the subject's development there is little to be gained by replacing the term 'criminology' by some more cumbersome or contrived locution. The disinvention of criminology is not by itself a particularly rewarding project and it has been attempted often enough—generally by criminologists themselves—to discourage further efforts in that direction. But it also seem to us that defending the disciplinary identity of criminology against incursions from 'elsewhere' is now as unfeasible as it is undesirable—at a minimum a disdirection of effort, at worst a category mistake. For reasons we outline below,

the conception of criminology as an autonomous and self-standing discipline is one that belongs to an earlier stage of its historical development, and the conditions of existence of that particular disciplinary formation are ones from which we are now increasingly and irreversibly cut off. This might mean, as John Braithwaite argues in this issue, that students of crime and crime control will have to learn to think beyond the confines of 'criminology' as it is currently constituted. But whether or not criminology is a subject 'destined for decline' (as Braithwaite puts it), it must be a subject that constantly reconstitutes itself if it is to come to terms with the social and legal worlds that it aspires to comprehend and in which it intends to intervene.

Such claims doubtless ring oddly in view of the scale, embeddedness and, in quantitative terms at least, rude health of contemporary criminology. Measured by the number and size of academic conferences, university departments, enrolled students, research institutes, research grant income, governmental and commercial consultancies, specialist journals and scholarly publications, the subject has never been healthier. But the bullishness and even boastfulness that accompanies the apparent vitality of criminology as an academic discipline (Zahn 1999) is at odds with criminology's more limited success in shaping the public discussion of 'its' issues and its faltering influence on public policy and decision making. The plain historical fact is that the social significance of crime and its control is so pervasive, so complex, and so contentious that no scientific discipline can ever dictate the ways in which these matters will be understood or addressed. Crime and punishment play such integral roles in the politics of contemporary societies, are so densely entangled with our daily routines, so deeply lodged in our emotional lives, so vividly represented in our cultural imagination, that they easily escape any analytical box, however capacious, that criminology may develop for their containment. Given the centrality, the emotiveness and the political salience of crime issues today, academic criminology can no longer aspire to monopolize 'criminological' discourse or hope to claim exclusive rights over the representation and disposition of crime.

It follows that at least some of the intellectual strategies and institutional assumptions that served earlier generations of criminologists well may be becoming less appropriate today. As we will discuss in a moment, the social changes of the last few decades have already prompted a rethinking of the assumptions that were characteristic in the middle years of this century when academic criminology first

developed as a specialism. But some of our most contemporary habits of thought also need to be reconsidered. To give an obvious example, changing social arrangements and legal relations have recently effected a change in how criminologists think about questions of regulation and public authority. The continuing erosion of clear-cut distinctions between the public and the private realms of crime control, together with the displacement of the criminal justice state from centre stage in the production of security and crime control, have had a major impact on the ways in which criminology now addresses questions of regulation and control. Criminologists of all stripes—whether engaged in the study of police, or prevention, or criminal justice, or victims—have begun to think ‘beyond the state’ in ways that reflect this changing terrain. The result is not just a criminology that is better able to address the regulatory and ethical issues thrown up by this redistribution of social authority—though this in itself is a considerable advance. In the process of rethinking these difficult questions, criminologists have also become better able to conceptualize some of the most fundamental issues of social control and social order—a fact to which several of the essays here attest.

Another effect of the changing social world is that the longstanding division of labour in the academic world is beginning to break down and allow new forms of intellectual exchange to occur. One important instance of this is that two forms of criminological work that were usually considered as separate, if not indeed opposed to one another, are increasingly being brought together and ‘thought’ together. The opposition between (i) a criminology that is interested in social and political theory, in the reflexive sociology of criminological knowledge, and in the testing or transgressing of disciplinary boundaries and (ii) a criminology that has empirical bite and strategic relevance—is an opposition that can no longer be sustained. If, as Zygmunt Bauman (1990: 6) has argued, the aim of the social sciences is to develop ‘responsible speech’ about their objects of inquiry, then we are obliged to consider how contemporary conditions bear upon that obligation and to be reflexive about the position from which we choose to speak. The reconceptualizations that criminologists are presently undertaking in this regard take place in parallel with sociology’s re-readings and reappraisals of the contemporary relevance of its founding or ‘classic’ texts (See Sparks 1997; Turner 1996). Indeed such is the centrality of many criminological issues to the social organization, governance and everyday life of contemporary societies that these activities of reappraisal

cannot really be thought of as separate. (In addition to the essays collected here, see Taylor 1999; Young 1999; Bauman 1998; Wacquant 1999; Garland forthcoming).

## **Criminology in Its Contexts**

We might best approach the criminological present by saying something more substantive about its past. In a recent memoir, one of British criminology's founding fathers, Sir Leon Radzinowicz, looks back over the development of criminology in the twentieth century. For the most part, he expresses quiet satisfaction at the discipline's growth and institutional development, but on the last page of the book he strikes a more discordant, disappointed note: 'What I find profoundly disturbing is the gap between "criminology" and "criminal policy", between the study of crime and punishment and the actual mode of controlling crime . . . The stark fact stands out that, in the field of criminal justice, in spite of the output of criminological knowledge, a populist political approach holds sway.' (Radzinowicz 1999: 469).

Radzinowicz is not the first person to notice this development: there has been a lot of commentary about 'populist punitiveness' ever since Tony Bottoms coined the term a few years ago (see Bottoms 1995). And Sir Leon perhaps overstates the problem a little. Criminological expertise now plays a bigger role in local crime policy than it has ever done before—in crime prevention, crime audits, community policing and in private security—and in Britain at least there is currently more government funding for 'crime reduction' research than ever before. But the divergence between national penal policy and criminological research findings is certainly striking, and it is a divergence that characterizes the USA as much as the UK. Over the last decade, as governments have adopted a more heated form of law and order rhetoric, introduced mandatory minimum sentencing and encouraged a greater use of imprisonment, there has appeared to be a growing gap between expert criminological advice and enacted public policy.

We invoke Radzinowicz's account here not because it is especially original or profound but because it puts the present situation into an interesting historical light, measuring it against what he and his generation had expected. The institutional founders of modern academic criminology, working in the middle decades of this century, quite reasonably supposed that as criminological knowledge became more refined and more robust it would come to play an increasing part in

government policy. It is a something of a surprise therefore, to discover that, in some respects at least, the reverse is true. Elsewhere, Radzinowicz (1991) has written about ‘Penal Regressions’, giving the sense of the reversal of a developmental pattern—a system that has been maturing, becoming more civilized, more modernized, has suddenly regressed. Its development has been arrested, its evolution blocked. This rather unexpected reversal, and the disparity between criminology’s success in the academy and its declining role in public life—particularly in national penal policy—provides us with a problem through which we can think about criminology’s development over the last 100 years. It provides a point of departure not for a history in the conventional sense but for a history of the present, using the resources of history to reflect upon the problems of our time.

Criminology, in its broadest sense, consists of our organized ways of thinking and talking about crime, criminals and crime control. If we think of it in this way, academic criminology is only the best-elaborated and most scientific sector of a discourse that includes everything from the working categories of penal institutions to the crime images that circulate in common sense and popular culture. Criminology is not just a creature of the academy. It is also located in other social and institutional settings and these other settings have shaped much of its development. To simplify a complex picture we could say that criminology is inscribed in three major social settings or matrices. It is located in (i) the world of the academy—of social science and scholarly discourse, (ii) the world of government—of crime control and criminal justice, and (iii) the world of culture—including mass mediated popular culture and political discourse. These three matrices are loosely linked and mutually conditioning though they are not reducible one to the other. Criminology is nowadays more closely tied into the first than to the others, though 100 years ago, the situation was the reverse. And although academic criminology has attained a degree of autonomy—becoming an activity pursued for the sake of form, as Paul Rock, echoing Georg Simmel, recently put it—it continues to be influenced by government and popular culture.

When we think of the history of criminology we typically think of the development of theory and research within the academy. We cannot begin to describe here the profusion of ideas that has developed in the last century, particularly since the expansion of the academy in the late 1960s. Criminology has been a focal point for most of the intellectual currents of the last 30 years: Marxism, feminism, post-structuralism,

postmodernism, all the strands of sociology, social psychology and cultural studies, not to mention occasional incursions from genetics and neurobiology—in incursions that will in all likelihood increase in frequency and insistence in the near future. We have seen grand theory and focused empiricism, radical critiques, consultancy work and policy-driven inquiries. If criminology is a '*rendezvous* subject', as David Downes once put it, there has been a great crowd of very diverse people meeting up and passing through, sometimes establishing fruitful exchange, sometimes merely rubbing shoulders in the crowded passages of textbooks and conferences.

But criminology can also be thought of in its other contexts. Its history can be viewed in relation to the world of government and crime control, or in relation to the wider cultural and political universe. We can look at its role in the institutional field, as an element of governing, as a form of knowledge for power, supplying strategic advice for crime control and directing the power to punish. We can also view it as part of popular culture, a constitutive (and constituted) element in the collective experience of crime, a repertoire of frames and narratives through which we make sense of that experience. For present purposes, we will focus on the history of criminology as a functioning element in the field of crime control and, to a lesser extent, in relation to popular culture. We want to ask questions about these two social matrices and about criminology's place within them. Understanding how these matrices have changed in the last 30 years is, we believe, the key to understanding the situation that we currently find ourselves in.

## **Modern Criminology**

When we refer to 'modern criminology' we do not intend to refer to criminological ideas that are up-to-date or contemporary. We are not here concerned, for example, with the 'criminologies of everyday life' or the choice and control theories that have come to prominence recently (Garland 1996, 2000). By 'modern criminology' we mean the framework of problems, concepts and styles of reasoning that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, produced by the confluence of medical psychology, criminal anthropology, statistical inquiry, social reform and prison discipline—a framework that provided the coordinates for the penal-welfare institutions that developed during the next 70 years (Garland 1985). Modern criminology is no longer quite 'up to the minute', but it was the formative, hegemonic discourse for the first

two-thirds of this century. For all their disagreements, the founders of modern British criminology were all proponents of this basic framework. Hermann Mannheim at the LSE, Max Grunhut at Oxford, Leon Radzinowicz at Cambridge, Tom Lodge at the Home Office, Edward Glover and Emmanuel Miller who, along with Mannheim founded the *British Journal of Delinquency*, the forerunner to the *British Journal of Criminology*—all of them shared the same basic commitments. (A reading of American criminology up to and including the President's Crime Commission Report (1967) reveals similar themes.) And although subsequent generations would revise its terms and question its commitments, this version of criminology played a crucial role in establishing the discipline in the academy, in government and in popular culture.

So what was modern criminology all about? With its faith in instrumental reason, its vision of the technocratic state and its commitment to social progress and social engineering, this criminology was emphatically *modernist*. Punishment in general, and retributive punishment in particular, were viewed as irrational and counterproductive, as remnants of pre-modern practices based upon emotion and superstition. Even the traditional liberal principles of proportionality and uniformity were tainted by archaic thinking. The proper management of crime and criminals required individualized, corrective measures adapted to the specific case or the particular problem.

For modern criminology, crime was a social problem that presented in the form of individual, criminal acts. These criminal acts, or at least those which appeared serious, repetitive, or irrational, were viewed as symptoms of 'criminality' and 'delinquency'. They were the surface signs of underlying dispositions, usually to be found in poorly socialized or maladjusted individuals. These underlying dispositions—and the conditions that produce them—formed the proper object of criminological knowledge. They also formed the preferred target for correctional intervention, with penal treatment being focused upon the individual's disposition, and social policy being left to deal with the wider causes. For modern criminology the maladjusted delinquent was the problem and correctional treatment was the solution. As a consequence, the overwhelming mass of minor and occasional offenders were largely neglected by correctionalist practice, which never reached down to the lower levels of the system to deal with routine, petty offending. This perhaps explains the puzzling fact that one of the most frequently used sanctions of the post-war period—the fine—was com-

pletely devoid of rehabilitative pretensions, and commanded hardly any criminological attention. It also explains why this criminology was so favourably disposed to decriminalizing minor offending and disorderly behaviour once crime rates began to rise sharply in the 1960s.

This criminological mind-set involved a form of causality that was long-term, dispositional, and operated through the formation of personality traits and attitudes. It focused upon deep-rooted causes, distant childhood experiences and psychological conflicts. Its tendency was to neglect proximate or immediate events (such as temptations or criminal opportunities or victim behaviour) and to assume that surface meanings and conscious motivations are necessarily 'superficial' and of little explanatory value. To this way of thinking, occasional, opportunistic, rationally motivated offending was of little interest—however much it contributed to overall rates of crime—because the conduct involved spoke to no particular pathology and offered no opportunity for expert treatment or correctional reform.

The theories that shaped research changed over the course of the century. At first they were predominantly drawn from medicine and abnormal psychology; later they drew more upon sociology and social psychology. If there was a central explanatory theme, it was the welfareist one of 'social deprivation' and subsequently of 'relative deprivation'. Individuals became delinquent because they were deprived of proper education, or family socialization, or job opportunities, or proper treatment for their social and psychological problems. The solution for crime was a welfare state solution—individualized treatment, support and supervision for families, and the enhancement of the plight of the poor through welfare reform. What is most noticeable, in retrospect, in this criminological scheme, is the relative absence of any substantive interest in crime events, criminogenic situations, victim behaviour, or the social and economic routines that produce criminal opportunities—all of which are becoming central concerns in present-day criminology. Nor was it substantively focused upon primary or secondary crime prevention, since this was assumed to flow from social reforms and community development rather than criminological intervention. These absences, together with its principled opposition to punishment and its focus upon motivation rather than control, meant that this criminology differed considerably from what came later, and, indeed, from what went before.

Although it presented itself as neutral and outside of politics, it was clear that modern criminology combined its faith in scientific expertise

and professionalism with a liberal reform tradition. In political terms the discipline was clustered at one end of the spectrum ranging from left to centre left, from revolutionary socialist to middle-of-the-road technocrats. There was never a ‘right wing’ in British criminology—although radicals tended to treat the more pragmatic reformists of the Cambridge Institute and the Home Office as though they were establishment reactionaries. The real conservative opposition was actually outside of criminology, and consisted of those magistrates, politicians, and sections of public opinion who continued to think of crime in common-sense terms—as straightforward wickedness that ought to be punished or as signals of an incipient moral decline that had to be stopped. The politics of modern criminology were essentially Fabian, technicist and state-centered, typically offering top-down expert solutions for social problems and disorders. The assumption was that the criminal justice state held the solutions to the crime problem and was chiefly responsible for their implementation. Crime policy was best conducted outside of electoral politics, in a bipartisan mode that delegated policy-formation to professionals and practitioners. Policy was to be based upon research findings about the causes of crime and the most effective treatments, not upon political considerations, electoral advantage or irrational public sentiment. Day-to-day decision making was increasingly to be transferred from judges and politicians to criminological experts. This was a criminological framework well suited to a modernist, welfare-oriented social democracy, particularly one in which problems of crime and insecurity were perceived as localized and manageable. If criminal justice was able to become professionalized, self-contained, and somewhat autonomous of the political process, this was precisely because its political assumptions were so closely in tune with the prevailing political culture.

### **Modern British Criminology and Twentieth-Century Modernism**

For the first three-quarters of the twentieth century, modern criminology became progressively more embedded in academic and governmental settings. Beginning from a tiny base in the 1950s, with only a few centres at places like the London School of Economics, Cambridge and Oxford, academic criminology expanded rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s and again in the 1990s until virtually all the universities came to offer criminology courses of some description. In the last 30 years, the

subject has expanded exponentially to become a thriving field of study and a sizeable, independent discipline. No one can doubt that criminology has 'arrived' as an academic subject. (For a discussion of the growth of American criminology, see Zahn 1999). Its courses are popular, its research attracts funding, its academic credentials are no longer in doubt.

For most of the century, a similar pattern occurred in the sphere of government, as criminological knowledge became an integral part of policy making and criminal justice practice. The Criminal Justice Act of 1948 permitted government funding for criminological research. In 1957 the Home Office Research Unit was formed to commission and to undertake research. The 1959 White Paper *Penal Practice in a Changing Society* announced that henceforth, crime and penal policy were to be based upon research findings. The same year, the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge was established with considerable government support. From 1944 until the arrival of Mrs Thatcher in 1979, the reports of the Advisory Council on the Treatment of Offenders and then the Advisory Council on the Penal System formed direct conduits between the criminological community and government.

Up until recently, the same story could be told with respect to the penal process. The abolition of the death penalty was a major development that was certainly influenced by the force of criminological opinion. (Nearly every criminologist in Britain joined the abolitionist campaign, using their scientific credentials in the service of liberal reform.) So too were the growing use of indeterminate sentences, parole boards, and social inquiry reports, the welfarist practices of juvenile justice, children's hearings, social work and probation; the development of reformatory prison regimes, particularly for young adults; training prisons; intermediate treatment; and of course the much-remarked rehabilitative ethos, often honoured in the breach, but always observed in official discourse—all of which accorded with the practical programme of modern criminology.

The idea of a science of criminology even began to influence popular culture. Ever since the BBC ran a popular radio series featuring Cyril Burt on 'the modern approach' to juvenile delinquency, the criminologist-as-social-scientist has emerged as a familiar public figure, displacing an earlier image of the criminologist as Sherlock Holmes. Over the years it has become routine for journalists to contact criminologists for comments on crime incidents, crime trends and policy questions. Criminological science, loosely defined, now constitutes one (but only

one) of the voices that make up the standard public conversation about crime.

In obvious and important respects, this brand of criminology appeared to be an integral part of modern society—part of the modernist scheme of things. It fitted with the increasingly rationalized and disciplinary character of the modern social order and its governmental institutions. It enjoyed intimate links with the criminal justice system and the welfare state, and with the more general project of engineering an orderly, peaceable, well-administered society. Until very recently, everyone from Michel Foucault to Sir Leon Radzinowicz imagined that the future was more of the same. Foucault (1977) may have utterly transformed how some of us regard ‘criminological reason’ and its practical effects, but his work gave no hint that this way of thinking was already in decline, or that the immediate future would be shaped more by anti-modern forces than by modernist ones. It is therefore something of a surprise to discover that in the 1990s, as criminology flourishes in the academy, its influence in national penal policy appears to be diminishing. It is even more surprising to discover that penal policy is increasingly based not upon research findings and expert advice, but instead upon highly politicized articulations of public sentiment that strike many criminologists as ill-informed, explicitly punitive, and downright anti-modernist in character. And it is disconcerting to realize that many of the most talked-about initiatives of crime control—from situational crime prevention to commercial policing and private security—have emerged from outside of modern criminology and its standard repertoire of social solutions.

What has happened to change the fate of modern criminology? What makes a ‘modern’, ‘social’, ‘scientific’ account of crime appear so much less relevant than before. To answer that question we need to alter how we think about modern criminology. We need to see it not as a scientific basis for effective policies, nor even as a species of power/knowledge that is indispensable to a disciplinary society. We need to view it instead as a specific kind of discourse inscribed in a particular set of institutions at a particular historical conjuncture. Modern criminology took shape as an element of the postwar welfare state. It developed as part of a governmental response to a specific problem of order, a certain collective experience and a definite set of class relations. It was a small part of the social solution to the problems of industrial society. Its fortunes have been tied up ever since with the fate of the social, the politics of welfare, and the dynamics of the criminal justice state. When

we think about modern criminology's place in government and culture we should bear in mind the conditions of existence on which it relied. Among these we would mention the following: (i) a social democratic form of politics, a cross-class solidarity and a civic narrative of inclusion; (ii) economic conditions that were favourable to welfare provision, public spending, and the development of social services; (iii) the credibility and influence of the new social service professionals and the broad support of political and social elites for the social-welfare style of problem solving; (iv) confidence in the validity of correctionalist ideas and the effectiveness of its practices; (v) the absence of any serious public or political opposition.

These conditions obtained in Britain and elsewhere, to a greater or lesser degree, up until the 1970s. In retrospect, the decade of the 1970s appears as a watershed, in which the intellectual, institutional and political assumptions of modern criminology were challenged, often in the name of a more radical social politics. It was during this decade that there arose a more critical and reflexive style of criminology, and a more explicit questioning of criminology's relation to the state, to criminal justice, and to the disciplinary processes of welfare capitalism. Criminology became, at least for a while, concerned to link its ideas and analyses to the broader themes of social thought and less concerned to be an applied discipline. It became more enamoured of sociological theory and more critical of criminal justice practice. In these years, criminology's centre of gravity shifted a little, becoming more reflexive, more critical, and more theoretical. As it happens, this was a short-lived moment (albeit a crucial one for criminology's subsequent intellectual range and forms of engagement) and one that was more fully developed in Britain than elsewhere, although it had (and still has) important corollaries in continental Europe and North America. And to the extent that criminology began to draw upon social theory, it was the classic sociology of modernism that formed its chief intellectual resource. The work of Durkheim, Marx, Mead and Simmel—and eventually that of Foucault too—provided criminologists with tools to think the modern world and crime's place within it, though of course the world these theorists described was a 'modern' one that was already undergoing further processes of change. The explanatory tropes developed by the more sociological criminologists were typically those of the sociology of modernity, and the relation of criminology to its social world exhibited all the ambivalence characteristic of modernist knowledge. Thus while one style of criminology immersed itself

in the world of criminal justice, constituting itself as a tool of reform and an instrument of social engineering, another more radical approach explicitly distanced itself from these institutions and adopted the mode of utopian critique.

This broadening of criminology's horizons was preceded (and largely prompted) by that convergence of intellectual, cultural and institutional events that is now evoked by the idea of 'the Sixties', as well as by more specifically criminological developments, such as the collapse of confidence in correctionalist criminal justice. The moment did not last long. Before long, new post-correctional forms of crime control emerged and criminology became immersed in applied questions once again—albeit applied questions of a different kind and in a different practical setting. But the critical, theoretical strands that opened up in the 1970s persisted as a continuing (if subordinate) theme in an increasingly diverse and multifaceted field. And, more profoundly, the influence of 'modern criminology' with its institutional affiliations and its epistemological commitments, was greatly diminished. Since that time, the social organization and political culture in which criminology is located have been further transformed by structural changes in ways that have undermined its expert authority and limited its public impact.

### **From Modernity to 'Late Modernity'**

The world that we inhabit today is no longer quite the same as the world out of which modern criminology emerged, nor even the world that the sociology of modernity was developed to explain. The profound social, economic and cultural changes of the last few decades have seemed to undo the certainties of modernist social theory and make their relation to the world much more problematic. Social theorists differ among themselves as to how to characterize these new forms of life. They talk of the emergence of post-modernity, or late modernity, or high modernity; of the coming of the risk society and post-industrialism; of the disorganization of capitalism, of post-Fordism and New Times. All of these terms are problematic of course—perhaps inevitably given the inexactitude of such large-scale generalization and periodization. But what seems clear is that the transformations that they each, in their different ways, attempt to signal will necessitate some intellectual response on the part of criminologists. At the very minimum, this social and intellectual context requires that all of us—

even unreconstructed modernists—develop a new level of reflexivity, and ask ourselves how we are to respond to the challenge of change and upheaval.

Several of the essays contained in this collection suggest that the social matrices within which criminology operates have changed in quite dramatic ways with major consequences for the position of the discipline, the credibility of its instrumental rationality, and the applicability of its social solutions. We might gloss this argument, and simplify these processes rather drastically, by suggesting that in the last 30 years there have been two intertwined transformative dynamics that have changed the way we think and act upon crime (for a more detailed account, see Garland 2001; also Taylor 1999; Young 1999). The first of these dynamics is the cluster of social, economic and cultural changes that we might call, with some imprecision and much question begging, the coming of late modernity. Many of these changes are narrated in the chapters of this collection, so perhaps a telegraphic summary will suffice here. By ‘the coming of late modernity’ we mean to refer to the social, economic and cultural configuration brought into being by the confluence of a number of interlinked developments. These include (i) the transformative dynamic of capitalist production and exchange (the emergence of mass consumerism, globalization, the restructuring of the labour market, the new insecurity of employment); (ii) the secular changes in the structure of families and households (the movement of women into the paid labour force, the increased rates of divorce and family breakdown, the decreasing size of the average household; the coming of the teenager as a separate and often unsupervised age grade); (iii) changes in social ecology and demography (the stretching of time and space brought about by cars, suburbs, commuting, information technology); (iv) the social impact of the electronic mass media (the generalization of expectations and fears; the reduced importance of localized, corporatist cultures, changes in the conditions of political speech) and, (v) the democratization of social and cultural life (the ‘desubordination’ of lower class and minority groups, shifts in power ratios between men and women; the questioning of authority, the rise of moral individualism.)

The second great transformative force was the reorganization of class (and, in the USA, race) relations that occurred in the wake of late modernity’s massive disruptions. This was made possible by the shifting economic interests of the skilled working class, the welfare state’s self-destructive tendencies, and the economic recessions of the 1970s

and 1980s. In the end though, it was the political 'achievement' of leaders like Thatcher and Reagan, with their reactionary mix of free-market economics, anti-welfare social policy, and cultural conservatism. Together these dynamics changed the collective experience of crime and welfare and the political meaning of both. Late modernity brought with it new freedoms, new levels of consumption and new possibilities for individual choice. But it also brought in its wake new disorders and dislocations—above all, new levels of crime and insecurity. The political reaction of the 1980s and 1990s has shaped the public perception of these troubling issues, persuading us to think of them as problems of control rather than welfare; as the outcome of misguided social programmes; as a result of an amoral permissiveness and lax family discipline encouraged by liberal elites who were sheltered from their worst consequences; as the irresponsible behaviour of a dangerous and undeserving underclass—people who abused the new freedoms and made life impossible for the rest of us.

As one of us has argued elsewhere (Garland 1996), the combination of high rates of crime and the failure of the criminal justice state produced a predicament for government that has prompted the volatile and contradictory policies of the last two decades. But more importantly, the experience of high crime rates as a normal social fact has led to the formation of a distinctive culture that has grown up around crime—a culture that changes the conditions in which criminology and criminal policy operate. This cultural formation—which might be called the 'crime complex' of late modernity—is characterized by a distinctive cluster of attitudes, beliefs and practices. High crime rates are regarded as a normal social fact and crime-avoidance becomes an organizing principle of everyday life. Fear of crime is sufficiently widespread to become a political reference point and crime issues are generally politicized and represented in emotive terms. Concerns about victims and public safety dominate government policy and the criminal justice state is viewed as severely limited in its impact. Private, defensive routines are widespread and there is a large market in private security. A high level of 'crime consciousness' comes to be embedded in everyday social life and institutionalized in the media, in popular culture and in the built environment.

The development of a 'crime complex' produces a series of psychological and social effects that exert an influence upon politics and policy. Citizens became crime-conscious, attuned to the crime problem, and many exhibit high levels of fear and anxiety. They are caught up in

institutions and daily practices that require them to take on the identity of (actual or potential) crime victims, and to think, feel and act accordingly. This enforced engagement with crime and crime prevention tends to produce an ambivalent reaction. On the one hand, a stoical adaptation that prompts the development of new habits of avoidance and crime prevention routines. On the other, a measure of irritation and frustration that prompts a more hostile response to the danger and nuisance that crime represents in daily life. Sections of the public became less willing to countenance sympathy for the offender, more impatient with criminal justice policies that are experienced as failing, and more viscerally identified with the victim. The posture of 'understanding' the offender was always a demanding and difficult attitude, more readily attained by liberal elites unaffected by crime or else by professional groups who make their living out of it. This posture increasingly gives way to that of *condemning* criminals and demanding that they be punished and controlled. The prospect of reintegrating the offender is more and more viewed as unrealistic and, over time, comes to seem less morally compelling. New criminologies emerge that echo and reinforce these concerns—stressing increased social control and situational prevention, rational choice and disincentives, incapacitation and punitive exclusion.

In these circumstances the rules of political speech change quite dramatically. So does the relationship between politicians, the public and the system's professionals. What was once regarded as a routine bipartisan task that could be delegated to officials now becomes an urgent political priority, freighted with emotional intensity and electoral consequences. From the point of view of politicians, crime and punishment become too important to leave to criminologists. The primary themes of the new penal policies—the expression of punitive sentiment, concern for victims, public protection, exclusion, enhanced control—are grounded in a new collective experience from which they draw their meaning and their strength. They are also rooted in a reactionary thematization of 'late modernity', prompted not just by rising crime but by the whole reactionary current of recent politics. This current, which has been prominent since the late 1970s, characterizes the present in terms of moral breakdown, incivility and the decline of the family, and urges the reversal of the 'Sixties' revolution and the cultural and political liberation that it ushered in. The mobile and insecure world of late modernity has given rise to new practices of control and exclusion that seek to make society less open and less mobile: to fix

identities, immobilize individuals, quarantine whole sections of the population, erect boundaries, close off access. (For a discussion of these themes, see Bauman, this issue.)

## **Criminology and Contemporary Culture**

These social changes have produced a situation in which criminology's grip upon the form and content of our thinking about crime is becoming less rather than more monopolistic. In a culture that is now saturated with images of crime and fear of crime, criminology can no longer hope to dominate the ways in which these issues are analysed. Even within the academy, criminology becomes only one of many settings in which crime is discussed. Feminism, cultural studies, economics, town planning, architectural design, film, political science, risk analysis, social theory in its various forms—all of these now take crime as a central theme in their analyses, a central problem in their research. In the new social world, crime has much greater salience than it previously had, and has become much more difficult to contain within the traditional bounds of criminological analysis. In this new political culture, a criminology that disavows emotive and punitive policies, that echoes welfarist rationales and social solutions, that seeks to de-dramatize crime control and delegate it to professional expertise—such a criminology has little affinity with the values and calculations that shape government decisions.

In this new context, criminology has some strategic choices to make. It can see itself as a kind of specialist underlabourer, a technical specialist to wider debates, providing data and information for more lofty and wide-ranging debates. (This is the role that is often assigned, by the culture, to criminological experts. It is also, probably, the one in which many academics are most comfortable.) Or it can embrace the world in which crime so loudly resonates and engage the discussion at this level too. The social and cultural centrality of crime today is an opportunity for criminology to embrace a more critical, more public, more wide-ranging role. Criminological knowledge—the insight and understanding that comes from close and critical study of crime and our institutional responses to it—has never been so relevant, however much governments resist its findings. The circuits for its use and exchange have never been so extensive and so deeply entwined with our social organization and the culture as a whole. One can understand the disappointment of Leon Radzinowicz, and share his frustration at the counter-productive and irrational aspects of present public policy. But

there is, in the end, little point in being dismayed when governments behave politically. It is, after all, what they do. Governments do not always listen to reason, and certainly not only to criminological reason. They operate within a context that is defined by instrumental rationality but also by emotions and values, insistent demands and political imperatives. Governments were doing just this in the heyday of modern criminology, but criminologists did not always notice because they shared its politics and took its gestures for real commitments.

The social changes that have marked the last three decades mean that we can no longer 'think' criminology in the institutional contexts and intellectual thought-styles in which it was previously located. For most of its existence, criminology has been located, for all practical purposes, within the institutions of the criminal justice state. As our discussion of modern criminology already suggested, this institutional setting created a specific epistemology that structured how it was that criminology viewed the world and in particular how it theorized the problem of crime and its control. Today the viability of that institutional epistemology has been undercut by a whole series of developments. The revival of private policing and commercialized security; our new awareness that crime is an embedded, generalized, normal feature of the contemporary social world; new sources of knowledge about crime and victimization that do not rely upon the processes of criminal justices; and criminologies that address the crime problem in terms of redesigning systems and situations rather than the prosecuting and punishing individuals—these and similar developments undermine the assumptions from which criminological inquiry has previously been launched. Together they require us to rethink the criminological enterprise and to bring it more into line with the way that crime is experienced, represented and regulated today.

Criminology now has an opportunity—and a responsibility—to engage public discourse in order to address a central issue of our time. If it is to do so, it must understand the terms in which these wider debates and discussions are being discussed and how crime and crime control feature within them. It must also develop a self-consciousness about its intellectual assumptions and its social situation, above all about its links to government and to culture. Criminology's fate is to be redefined by the political culture of which it forms a part. If it is to play a role in shaping its own future then understanding that political culture will be an important first step. It is as a contribution towards that understanding that the present collection aspires to be of value.

The world that we confront in the first months of a new century has changed if not utterly then at least significantly from the one that previous generations of criminologists confronted. For principled modernists like Radzinowicz this can be understood only with dismay and indignation, as the eloquent closing pages of *Adventures in Criminology* make clear. Whilst there continue to be institutional spaces in which criminologists can work, and policy audiences sometimes ready to listen to criminological evidence, the variance between the rationality proposed by modern criminology and the rationales for policing, punishment and control now in ascendancy is striking and perhaps irrevocable. If crime issues have always been a *rendezvous* for various kinds of interests, they are nowadays attracting a much more diverse crowd of people—politicians and interest groups as much as academics and policy makers—whose encounters are frequently abrasive and mutually uncomprehending. Not the least reason for this more emotionally charged and politically divisive conversation is that crime and punishment are now among the most topical, urgent and contentious social questions of our times.

## About This Book

It would be claiming too much to suggest that the contributors to this collection share a common set of concerns, topics or diagnoses. The open-textured debate that we wish to see would scarcely be furthered by such uniformity; and in any case the very variety and complexity of the contemporary contexts of crime and justice militates against shared agendas and easy consensus. However, it does seem plausible to argue that there is a new curiosity amongst at least some criminologists about the ways in which their traditional fields of study are currently being reconfigured. Students of state punishment and its surrounding forms of political and moral enterprise have been conscious for some time now that their field is one in which longstanding orthodoxies are being reversed as new techniques, vocabularies and social and economic interests begin to attach themselves to the business of punishing. Similarly, scholars of policing know that the institutions they study are now chronically prey to technological, organizational and political innovations, some of which threaten to render all but obsolete the traditional terms on which questions of effectiveness, accountability and legitimacy have been discussed. And those interested in victims' rights, public safety and the economical management of risk increasingly

recognize that these are now pervasive concerns that refuse to fall neatly into the jurisdiction of any particular criminal justice agency or criminological specialism. Meanwhile, the remarkable pace of change that characterizes this field—with its endlessly elaborated regulatory regimes, its fast-developing technologies, its constantly changing managerial vocabularies, and its shifting political salience—combine to create conditions that can easily escape our conceptual languages and make our long-established research agendas seem outmoded and irrelevant. Under such circumstances the special tasks of social theory include those of raising new questions, making new sightings, and seeing connections between apparently unconnected phenomena in ways that allow substantive research to grasp more perspicuously the particularities of its current environment.

None of this is intended to promote or excuse a merely modish questing after novelty, nor the pointless spinning of empty conceptual structures after the manner that Bourdieu scathingly calls ‘theoretical theory’. Indeed the renewal and invigoration of contemporary criminological discussion may in certain respects require a work of *recovery* and a reconsideration of ‘classical’ themes (Bourdieu in Turner 1996). Neither is it our intention to castigate criminology for a lack of interest in theoretical enquiry—a common allegation but one that in our view has often been couched in excessively sweeping and dismissive terms. Instead we hoped to enliven an ongoing discussion by asking a number of scholars—many of whom are not ‘criminologists’ but whose work seemed to us to bear fairly directly upon issues of criminological concern—to join in the conversation. As this collection shows, many of the most interesting sociological accounts of the present give a prominent place in their analysis to crime, fear of crime, and the calculations of risk and measures of repression to which these give rise. With this in mind, we challenged our contributors to reflect from their various vantage points upon a field that is deeply implicated in the social currents that they had written about in their work, but which also discloses certain unique features and intractable problems of its own. We think that the results contained here suggest the value of this encounter. They lead us to hope that such an engagement can be of mutual benefit in helping us refine and extend our ways of thinking. Perhaps the concrete questions of crime and crime control can provide one measure of the relevance and validity of social theories. Perhaps criminology can replenish its intellectual resources by engaging with the theoretical work of contemporary social theory. To that extent, the aspiration beyond this

volume is to continue the supple movement between theoretical reflection and empirical inquiry, between criminology and social theory, between scholarly analysis and the lived social world.

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