



Remembering Roger Matthews (1948–2020) and Editors' Introduction to “New Times” and “Environmental Crimes”

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Roger Matthews, one of the influential group of “Left Realists” and a leading contributor to several areas of study in critical criminology, died on April 7, 2020. Over the years, Roger had faced and fought various periods of illness but was unable to recover from COVID-19.

Roger was born in 1948 into a working-class family in North London and never forgot his roots. While not academically inclined at school, he later flourished as a student, first at Middlesex Polytechnic (now Middlesex University), where he earned a degree in Social Science, following this with a Masters from the University of Sussex, and a PhD on the subject of prostitution from the Department of Sociology at the University of Essex. It was at Sussex that, as his former colleague John Lea recalls, he studied critical theory and encountered the “realist” philosophy of Roy Bhaskar, which he sought to incorporate into his book on *Realist Criminology* (2014). This intellectual background is important, being broad and sociological: Roger was never a narrow criminologist. Nor was he insular or fixed in his views, although famously, he enjoyed hearing the perspectives of others with whom he disagreed, so that he could engage in a good debate. As his former student, John Pitts (later Professor of Criminology, University of Bedfordshire), puts it, “Roger enjoyed an argument and didn’t mind antagonising people who didn’t agree with him. He inspired admiration in those who knew his work and love in those who knew him.” Jayne Mooney, now a Professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York, but a one-time graduate student and Lecturer at Middlesex, remembers Roger’s support throughout her PhD research on domestic abuse and kind encouragement when she gave her first ever lecture to one of his classes. Jayne also recalls that for Jock Young, Roger was someone who was always “bloody good fun”—even if they did often disagree.

Roger spent much of his career at Middlesex (1977–2004), rising from Lecturer to Professor, with a secondment at Leicester University along the way. At Middlesex, he was one

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of the key staff, with John Lea, Jock Young and others, teaching on the pioneering MA in Deviance and Social Policy. This was one of the first graduate level qualifications in critical criminology in the United Kingdom (or anywhere) and an inspiring experience for many. As John Pitts remembers, “Roger (and Jock) taught me how to think: it was (quite literally) life changing. Roger was very encouraging, albeit not in the usual way. He would just say things like ‘We’re doing this book on “such and such”; you can do the chapter on youth justice.’ This was terrifying, but after numerous impromptu discussions in pubs and restaurants around Islington, the job would finally be done.” Roger was able to help many others in similar ways, providing opportunities, building confidence and “just having time for people,” as with the Common Study Programme in Critical Criminology, to which he contributed for many years and where, as Jayne Mooney says, “he will be remembered for his wit, commitment and mentoring of students, staying up to talk to them way into the night.”

After moving from Middlesex, Roger held professorial positions at London South Bank University and finally, from 2011, at the University of Kent. Throughout this long career, he maintained that it was important that criminologists should have something of value to say that could be beneficial to a cause, useful for progressive policy, or inspiring for students and activists—and preferably all of the above. He was no fan of work presented in “language that is opaque and impenetrable” that was “inward looking,” or “of interest to very few people outside academia” (Matthews 2014: 5). He revisited long-standing interests over the years, including communities and crime prevention; prostitution, policy and law reform (in 2014, he was an advisor to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Prostitution and the Global Sex Trade); and critical penology (his book *Doing Time: An Introduction to the Sociology of Punishment* (Matthews 2009) became an internationally respected key text). Roger also identified significant but under-researched criminological subjects, editing collections on informal justice (Matthews 1988) and on privatization (Matthews 1989), and carrying out studies of armed robbery. After an initial project funded by the Home Office (published in 1996), the search for funding for a larger investigation showed how, characteristically, he could be very realistic and practical. The most obvious funders seemed to him to be those affected, so he approached the British Bankers Association and they duly supported the successful project that became Matthews (2002). Not many critical criminologists could venture into the boardrooms at the heart of financial capitalism and walk out with a check.

Roger was a keen and sharp commentator on developments in criminological theory and also, of course, a major contributor to the shaping of the discipline through his writings on “realist criminology.” A “Left Realist” perspective emerged from the Middlesex group in an amazingly lively period for British criminology (see Matthews 2017b; Mooney 2012: 26–28), spurred, in part, by the election of the Thatcher-led Conservative government in 1979, and the recognition that the Left needed to engage with what Hall (1980) called “the drift into law and order society.” As Roger wrote in his introduction to *What Is To Be Done about Crime and Punishment?*, much “criminological investigation is poorly conceived and researched. ... This material tends to be theoretically weak, methodologically inadequate and has little or no policy relevance” (Matthews 2016:2). For Roger, the lessons for a realist criminology were to avoid becoming so entrenched in theory that the real consequences of crime for ordinary people, particularly the working class and powerless, were forgotten.

Roger enjoyed meeting friends, students and colleagues around the world, most recently developing research links in Latin America, but he remained always a North London local. He was a dedicated follower of the Tottenham Hotspur Football Club and enjoyed cars and

driving: the title of one of his essays, “False Starts, Wrong Turns and Dead Ends” (Matthews 2017a), echoes this and also reminds one of us (Nigel) of Roger at the wheel, on a 1978 post-conference overnight journey from Bremen (Germany) to London that probably should not have been attempted non-stop! He was down to earth, generous and supportive of others. As John Lea recollects, he was “prolific in terms of advice, writing references, and helping to create opportunities. He was never one to ‘pull up the ladder’ for those who came after him.” Roger was fun, talented and good company— “a working class bon viveur,” as John Pitts remembers—and despite illnesses, always interested in social events, good food and music. John Lea recalls that he was at one time a keen amateur jazz musician, with both of them attending jazz classes in the early 1980s at the extra-mural department at Goldsmiths, University of London: “I still have a memory of Roger trying to get his tenor sax to make the right sound,” says John.

As John Pitts notes, Roger was “one of the most astute and original thinkers in contemporary criminology,” and he will be greatly missed by many. One of his last pieces of work was published in open access form in this journal, appearing Online First on March 9, 2020. It seems only fitting, then, to begin this issue with this article.

In “New Times, New Crimes: Notes on the Depillarization of the Criminal Justice System” (Matthews 2020), Roger draws on the work of Foucault (1977) and his provocative argument that the modern criminal justice system should be considered in terms of a “triangulated” relationship between three structures or pillars—the prison, the police and the “criminal classes.” From here, Roger describes the subsequent “depillarization” of the criminal justice system, making the case for how each of these structures or pillars has become “seriously weakened.” In this part, Roger’s incisive analysis of “the crisis of imprisonment” flows into a meditation on “the end of policing,” followed by an important exegesis on “the decline of crime.” The third part of “New Times, New Crimes: Notes on the Depillarization of the Criminal Justice System” contemplates three “new crimes”—cybercrime, environmental crime and terrorism. Here, Roger examines how the strategies that have been and continue to be developed to respond to these crimes entail significantly different responses than those that had been traditionally employed to address “normal crime” and “street crime.” Roger concludes by thinking through how these developments have raised questions about the relationship between victims and offenders, as well as “the explanatory value of the existing array of criminological theory.” Roger urges us to consider “whether we are moving away from a system of “class justice” to a more diverse and extensive system of crime control.” “Or is it the case,” he asks, “that the regulation of these new crimes will generate a new layer of intervention that will simply overlay and complement the existing system? In addition, will the traditional focus on crime be replaced by a preoccupation with security?” Roger’s closing observation is as insightful as ever: “There can be little doubt,” he writes, “that that which we might call, the ‘old criminology,’ with its preoccupation with the poor and the propertyless, is undergoing profound mutation as new forms of transgression are coming to dominate aspects of social and political life, creating new dangers and risks in a world that appears, in many respects, to be becoming more unpredictable and ungovernable.”

We have organized the rest of this issue as an homage to Roger by including articles that center on the second of Roger’s “new crimes”—“environmental crimes.” While Roger was not a green criminologist and while many of these articles do not make explicit reference to Roger’s work, Roger was always adept at seeing connections where others did not and keen on drawing people with disparate interests together. It seems appropriate, then, to carry forward the ideas and spirit of “New Times, New Crimes: Notes on the Depillarization of the Criminal Justice System” with this group of thematically focused articles.

The first two articles, “Animals, Women and Terms of Abuse: Towards a Cultural Etymology of *Con(e)y*, *Cunny*, *Cunt* and *C*nt*,” by Piers Beirne (2020), and “Wildlife Management, Species Injustice and Ecocide in the Anthropocene,” by Ragnhild Sollund (2020), focus on speciesism and related injustices to nonhuman animals. The next three articles—“Water Theft Through the Ages: Insights for Green Criminology,” by Alexander Baird and Reece Walters (2020), “Big Fish, Small Pond: NGO–Corporate Partnerships and Corruption of the Environmental Certification Process in Tasmanian Aquaculture,” by Paul Bleakley (2020), and “Tapping into Environmental Harm in Brewing: An Exploration of Pollution and Waste in Beer Production,” by Travis Milburn and Favian Guertin-Martin (2020)—center on issues of water and wastewater. From here, we turn to three articles dealing with intensive land use(s): “Seismic Risks: a Criminological Analysis of European Investment Bank Support for the Castor Project,” by Daniel Beizsley (2020), “Farming Intensification and Environmental Justice in Northern Ireland,” by Ekaterina Gladkova (2020), and “Waste Crime and the Global Transference of Hazardous Substances: A Southern Green Perspective,” by Reece Walters and Maria Angeles Fuentes Loureiro (2020). These are followed by three articles addressing ways of preventing, responding to or resisting environmental harm: “Ecologically Unequal Exchange, Transnational Mining, and Resistance: A Political Ecology Contribution to Green Criminology,” by Laura Bedford, Laura McGillivray and Reece Walters (2020), “Utilising Principles of Earth Jurisprudence to Prevent Environmental Harm: Applying a Case Study of Unconventional Hydraulic Fracturing for Shale Gas in the United Kingdom,” by Jack A. Lampkin and Tanya Wyatt (2020), and “In and Against the State: The Dynamics of Environmental Activism,” by Olivia Hasler, Reece Walters and Rob White (2020). We conclude this issue with five book reviews of monographs or edited volumes on various topics of environmental crime and harm.

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