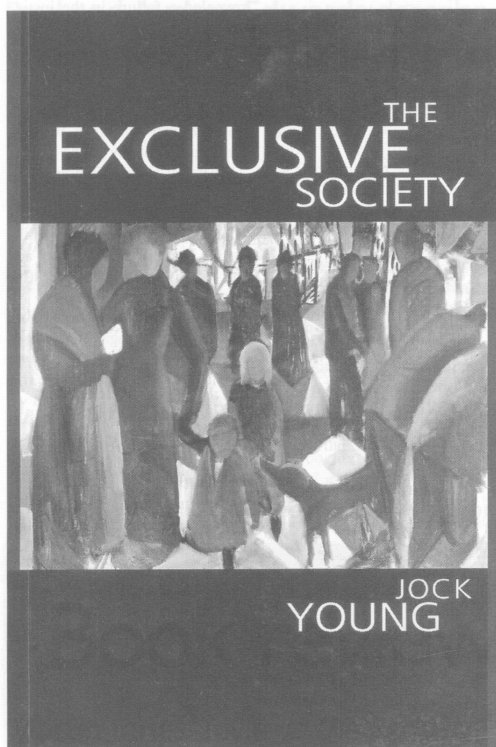


# Book review

**Martin Innes** reviews *The Exclusive Society: Social Exclusion, Crime and Difference in Late Modernity* (1999) by Jock Young, published by Sage.



Over the past decade the emergent perspective of New Left Realism has demonstrated an increasing degree of influence over contemporary debates on crime and the criminal justice system. It has progressively been established as a serious alternative to the discourses of Administrative Criminology and actuarialism. In *The Exclusive Society* Jock Young, arguably the key proponent of the New Left Realist position, seeks to develop and expand the scope and focus of the perspective, and to situate it within the conditions of late-modernity.

Drawing upon the work of Anthony Giddens and others, the central tenet of Young's thesis is that with the advent of late-modernity there has been a fundamental shift in the master patterns of social control. He argues that under the conditions of modernity, although mechanisms of exclusion (such as the prison and the mental asylum) were part of the institutional apparatus of social control, they were organised and directed with the objective of facilitating the re-integration of the deviant. However, with the shift to late-modernity, this re-integrative function contained within the discourses and practices of the principal mechanisms of social control has been lost. There is now, Young suggests, a tendency for the exclusion of 'the dangerous population' to become the end of criminal justice policy, rather than exclusion being a means to the ultimate end of re-integrating the deviant.

The way in which Young develops his thesis is, though, more complex than it might initially appear. Drawing upon Levi-Strauss' concepts of anthropophagic and anthropoemic societies, he suggests that metaphorically we can be thought of as living in a 'bulimic' society; one that both consumes and expels. By this he means that the master patterns of control are not directed solely towards exclusion of the deviant; rather, there is a double movement of exclusion and inclusion. Exclusion is reserved for certain forms of deviance, in particular violence, whilst at the same time other 'less serious' forms of deviant behaviour are increasingly tolerated.

Theoretically Young draws on a vast array of sources to develop his argument. In particular he seeks to map out the influence of symbolic interactionist and phenomenological sociologies in post-modern theorising. It is his use of interactionist labelling theory that forms the base of his explanation of the reinforcing logic of exclusion and toleration. Utilising Goffman's notion of 'Umwelt' he seeks to show how, beset by the uncertainties of life in late-modernity and the 'ontological insecurity' that this induces at the level of the individual (Giddens, 1991), people are increasingly demanding that the condition of 'uneventfulness'

be established as a moral right of citizenship. As such, the contemporary demand for security and the aversion to risk is identified as a complex response to social change and the spread of diversity.

In contrast to more orthodox arguments, Young suggests that the discourse of multiculturalism that has resulted in response to the increased sense of diversity does not celebrate difference. Rather, it forms the basis of 'essentialism' and it is this that provides the necessary conditions for the 'demonisation' of the deviant and the creation of a 'criminal master status'. This in turn forms the basis of popular and political support for punitive and exclusionary criminal justice policies.

In the hands of less able authors, many of the ideas forwarded would have been overly simplified, but Young is too aware of the complexities of social life to allow this to happen. As he states:

The forces that would create an exclusive society are widespread and well founded, yet they are far from pushing in one direction: they have both positive and negative moments. (p. 192)

And in the exposition of his thesis he is careful to plot out the contradictions and ambiguities that surround the central ideas and master patterns with which he is concerned. Although it is not always 'easy reading', the book does demonstrate the author's elegiac turn of phrase. For example, considering the vandalism and disorder seemingly endemic to some inner-city areas, he terms these 'the slow riots' that are: ...invariably contained: they involve the destruction of the local community, the rage is directed implacably rather than explosively. (p.21)

There are, though, a number of limitations to the work, that are worth outlining briefly. One such limitation is Young's invocation of a 'golden age' within modernity, where the logic of the discourses of control was predominantly inclusionist. Reflecting back to the concerns of *The New Criminology* (Taylor, Walton & Young, 1973) it does appear that any such emphasis was firmly constrained by the existing patterns of class stratification. As it is, this historical dimension within *The Exclusive Society* requires further

clarification.

A further criticism concerns Young's sympathetic reading of the involvement of a number of academics who have influenced the Zero Tolerance policing movement. It is a reading that contradicts what I would take to be the ethos of 'realism', and seemingly reflects the tensions identified by Stan Cohen (1998) in contemporary radical criminology, between an 'antirealist' intellectual scepticism and a more 'realist' demand for political involvement and influence. For whilst Young is keen to stress the importance of being 'realistic' in relation to the causes of crime, he is, in the case of Wilson & Kelling's *Broken Windows* theory, less realistic about the influence of academic work on policy prescriptions. It is arguably the case that following Foucault (1988), academia has to be realistic about the potential uses (and abuses) to which theories can be put by policy-makers in 'the real world'.

In the concluding chapter Young argues that the dystopian vision he has set out can be altered to achieve a more inclusive, meritocratic and ordered society. In response to which one might be tempted to side with Isaiah Berlin's (1991) less utopian, 'agonistic' liberal doctrine of objective pluralism, which questions the assumption that 'the great goods of humanity' are necessarily commensurate and compatible.

This is an ambitious work that seeks substantially to develop the theoretical base of the New Left Realist perspective and map out the connections between criminal justice policy and other areas of governance and state intervention in the late-modern age. It combines an astounding breadth of knowledge with a subtlety of argument that both stretches the reader and rewards them. There are limits to the analysis, but that is only to be expected from a book that tries to achieve so much and it must be said that any flaws are provocative and thought-provoking. This work significantly advances our understanding of the role of crime and criminal justice in contemporary society.

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#### References:

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## CCJS Web Watch

If you are a regular user of the Centre's web site then you will already be aware of the Internet service available. With a multi-agency criminal justice events diary, hundreds of criminal justice links, news and publications, there are information sources for all. One of the most frequently used and praised areas of the site, is our links section 'Justicelink'. Within Justicelink there are literally hundreds of criminal justice resources at your fingertips and new web site links are added daily.

A number of recently launched criminal justice Internet sites are also proving extremely useful to those working and researching in the criminal justice arena. The HM Prison Service Web site is just one example of how effective the internet medium can be. With regular news updates and prison statistics the site is invaluable. Visit the site at:

[www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk](http://www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk)

A range of criminal justice government sites can be found from the Home Office web page: [www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk) (The Research, Development and Statistics Directorate and Youth Justice Board to name a couple). A Probation 2000 Awards web site has recently been launched and the Trust for the Study of Adolescence is also now on-line.

All the web site's mentioned here and many more can be found in Justicelink at [www.kcl.ac.uk/istd/justicelink](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/istd/justicelink) If you have any comments about the Centre's web service or would like to add information to the Criminal Justice Events Diary or Justicelink please contact Anstey Aizlewood at the Centre. Email: [anstey.aizlewood@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:anstey.aizlewood@kcl.ac.uk) Tel: 0171 401 2425.