



Goodbye Vincenzo

Vincenzo Ruggiero passed away in his adopted 'home' city of London on Saturday 2nd February 2024 with his partner and his daughter at his side. Vincenzo was the Renaissance Man of international criminology - a critical polymath and scholar of politics, economics, sociology, history, literature, languages and art - all of which, in unique style, he brought to his original and stimulating essays, books, lectures and wonderful conversations over food and wine.

Born to Neapolitan parents in Ferrara, Italy, in 1950, his family, like so many southerners, migrated to the north of the country for work but remained deeply rooted in their Neapolitan heritage. He lived for many years in Torino where he studied and taught and, in the 1970s, was a dedicated political activist along with many of his friends during the period of social conflicts and unrest that came to be known as 'The Years of Lead'. In this decade he moved between London, where he worked as a porter at University College hospital, and parts of Italy, where he was involved in penal reform campaigns. In 1976 he founded a bi-annual paper on prison issues, coordinating a network involving prisoners, their families and reform activists and in 1977 established a new publisher - 'Senza Galere' ('Without Prisons') - later renamed 'Ruggiero Edizioni'. The press mainly published fiction and poetry and all authors were either prisoners serving a sentence or ex-prisoners. As Vincenzo suggested, this was surely an early example of 'Convict Criminology'. In the following years, between 1979-1983, he published his first academic books, on prison issues and drugs debates, writing about communities he saw as marginalised but engaged in resistance and it was important to him that he had undertaken this research and advocacy from outside the formal bounds of the university system. Between 1986-1990 he studied for his Doctorate in Sociology and Criminology at the University of Bologna but in the early 1990s settled in London, feeling an affinity to bohemian Fitzrovia and Soho. He took up posts as, initially, a visiting fellow at the London School of Economics and then a Research Fellow at Middlesex University, subsequently - and swiftly - becoming a Reader and then Professor (1996) at Middlesex, contributing to its rich tradition of being a centre for critical criminology. In 1998 he undertook a secondment to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna leading pathbreaking research on Transnational Organised Crime and contributing to the study of human trafficking at a point when its significance was still only emerging. In Vienna he also founded a journal, *Forum on Crime and Society* and was among the organisers of the 2000 UN 'Congress on Crime and the Treatment of Offenders' (writing most of the official papers for conference deliberations), as well as contributing to the formulation of the UN Convention against Organised Crime, launched in Palermo in 2000. He was a long-standing member of many professional associations and took on committee roles for the European Group for the Study of Deviance and Social Control (1986-1993), and the American Society of Criminology Divisions on International Criminology (2016-2017) and Critical Criminology (2017-2018). He also served as Director of the Centre for Social and Criminological Research at Middlesex University. Vincenzo was not only one of the leading theorists within our field but also an innovator in the use of multi-methods approaches to data-gathering - very often in contexts that are among the most hard to research - the worlds of organised criminals, corrupt politicians, traffickers, and political activists. He could be the classic lone scholar - disciplined in sitting at his desk, working his way through his piles of books and papers, then launching into a new writing project but he also led various funded research collaborations and initiatives and was a great co-author and co-worker, sociable and inspirational. Vincenzo loved to write, to set down ideas and engage with his peers and students and in doing so he was astonishingly productive. He spoke and published in Italian, French and English and his work was also translated into German, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, Lithuanian, Turkish and Mandarin Chinese. His many publications include numerous academic articles and pieces of journalism as well as books such as: *Western European Penal Systems* (1995), *Eurodrugs* (1995), *Organised and Corporate Crime in Europe* (1996), *The New European Criminology* (1998), *Crime and Markets* (2000), *Movements in the City* (2001 Winner of the 'Premio Nazionale G. Arena - Città di Aciri'), *Economic and Financial Crime in Europe* (2002), *Crime in Literature* (2003), *Crimes of the Economy* (2013), *Punishment in Europe* (2013), *Power and Crime* (2015), *Dirty Money: On Financial Delinquency* (2017 Outstanding Book Award, American Society of Criminology, Division on White Collar and Corporate Crime), *Organised Crime and Terrorist Networks* (2020), *Visions of Political Violence* (2020), *Critical Criminology Today: Counter-Hegemonic Essays* (2021). In 2016 he received the Lifetime Achievement Award of the American Society of Criminology, Division on Critical Criminology and Social Justice.

He completed his latest book just two months before his death and was able to choose a cover design while in hospital. Appropriately the book is a survey - in inimitable style - of *Keywords in Criminology: A cultural dictionary* (Routledge, 2024).

Vincenzo leaves behind a daughter, Lucia, and his partner Cynthia, with whom he formed a civil partnership after 33 years together - as well as an international family of friends, students and admirers who will all remember Vincenzo as embodying *gioia di vivere* - he will be missed so much. Please raise a glass.

Nigel South



Forte Personalita Pubblica, Leone Gentile

With continuous disbelief we mourn the loss of our friend and comrade Vincenzo who's analytical and critical insights into the interrelationships between power, socio-political inequalities and 'crime' will be greatly missed. The loss of his intellect and depth of knowledge leaves a big hole.

Last year in Turku at our annual conference he eloquently presented 'Criminology against war' which showed his deep passion and his aspirations for a criminology that: "...will have to generate a new social invention..." replacing the invention of war as part of the cultural imagination and ideological stable. Not a small feat but an illustration of his inspiring vision for and commitment to critical criminology.

We will miss his vibrant, warm and sensitive personality, his infectious laugh and cheeky smile.

Andrea Beckmann and Amelie Beckmann—Cooper



Photo: Andrea Bekmann. The photo was taken at our conference dinner with Louk Hulsman's camera which Vincenzo appreciated and why he made the sign.

I first knew Vincenzo Ruggiero in one of his many arenas of activist critical criminology, in the European Group for the Study of Deviance and Social Control. His talks were always inspirational, and Vincenzo also became one of the pioneers of green criminology although he did perhaps not think of himself as such to start with. I don't think many would accuse Vincenzo of being overly modest about his work, and rightly so, but I recall wandering the streets of Vienna with him during the 2000 UN 'Congress on Crime and the Treatment of Offenders', and that he said "Can you imagine we are here!?". He was referring not so much to the place but to his role in arranging the congress and the journey he had made to get there, an important event to which he had generously invited me as an expert.

When we arranged the conference of the European Group in Oslo in 2013, Jock Young was meant to be the keynote speaker, but had to cancel at short notice because of the illness that took his life. With little time to prepare, Vincenzo kindly agreed to replace him, and gave one of his many inspiring speeches, honouring the man he replaced and for whom he expressed so much admiration.

Vincenzo Ruggiero will be deeply missed in the European Group, not only for his personal legacy but also because he represented an area of activist criminology whose representatives we keep losing, from whom we can all learn in our academic endeavours.

I met Vincenzo at one of the European Society of Criminology conferences – in Budapest, I think – at the book presentation of a colleague, where Vincenzo acted as one of the critics.

He addressed me saying: "Don't tell me you are yet another Italian working on the mafias, there are so many other interesting topics out there to research, if you are interested in addressing power!". Quite straightforward for a person I had never met before, I thought.

But so was Vincenzo. (Luckily for me, my work has never been on organised crime, which, I suspect, gained me Vincenzo's sympathy from the start.) Since then, I have seen Vincenzo at many other European Society of Criminology conferences and other events. I would be alerted to his presence either by a cloud of smoke surrounding his persona, or by a voice in my back saying "Di Ronco!" in a rather authoritative yet familiar and friendly tone, followed by a big smile (and a cloud of smoke, of course). Vincenzo was extremely supportive of early career scholars like me; in my case, I will always be grateful to him for his encouragement of my research on the criminalisation of dissent and social movements, which he believed to be a very important agenda within critical criminology. We will never forget Vincenzo – and his foundational critical criminology scholarship will help us keep in communication with this brilliant man and his ideas.

Ragnhild Sollund

Anna Di Ronco



I was greatly saddened to hear of the death of Vincenzo. He was a true cosmopolitan criminologist, who stood for the best in comparative research, notably into penal systems and the trade in illegal drugs. He had great insight into the way the drugs trade mirrored capitalist development, in 'just in time' marketing particularly. He campaigned ceaselessly for radical penal reform. In 1991 it was through Vincenzo that I met Massimo Pavarini and spent six months' sabbatical at the Istituto Giuridico in Bologna, a great stimulus to my own work in the field. Vincenzo was a wonderful host with whom I stayed for a few days in Turin. We often met when he settled in London and he made a big impact on British criminology. He made a lasting contribution to criminology in its broadest sense and will be hugely missed.

David Downes

We didn't know Vincenzo as well as most of you, but nevertheless thought of sharing our memories, mostly for his close family and friends to add to what we are sure is a long list of fond memories. About a year ago, we asked Vincenzo to contribute an article to a themed section of the *Community Development Journal* on Abolition and Community Development. We all had read Vincenzo's unapologetically abolitionist writing and enjoyed its intellectual scope, so amongst other scholars and activists, he was on our wish list of contributors. Vincenzo replied quickly and enthusiastically and the draft article was ready not long after that. We now realise that when we returned to Vincenzo with requests for final edits, he must have been unwell and nevertheless he stayed on course and kept his promise to us. We are so very grateful that he shared his ideas with us and with the CDJ readership through that wonderful article.

Katharina Swirak, Liz Kiely, Rosie Meade



Photo: Francesca Vianello

For a week I have been reading heartfelt memories of Vincenzo, each one corresponds to me in restoring the irreplaceable atmosphere he knew how to create, in front of a book or a bottle of red wine. His books are available in Italian, those that are not will have to be reprinted: it is a commitment that we make, with the forces that we can put into play. Here I just want to remember him as a friend by retracing our first meetings with an anecdote. Met for the first time in Onati in 1996, it was at my first European Group conference that I really got to know him. 1997, Poland, having arrived late at night by bus with Beppe Mosconi in the rural surroundings of Kazimierz Dolny, I discovered to my great surprise - and a certain personal discomfort - that the conference program foresees at 9 pm the following day that each "national" group sing around the fire ("9pm: bonfire") a song from his own country. This is how the next day I found myself with Vincenzo and Beppe, the only Italians, singing around the bonfire "The wind whistles and the storm rages, broken shoes and yet we must go...", a famous partisan song on the melody of the famous song popular Soviet Katyusha. From then on it was all downhill: we met again over the years, at the EG's annual conferences, at our Masters in Critical Criminology, in London where I last met him. I leave a photo, in memory, of this last meeting. Broken heart, yet we must go.

Da una settimana leggo ricordi sentiti di Vincenzo, ognuno mi corrisponde nel restituire l'atmosfera insostituibile che sapeva creare, davanti ad un libro come a una bottiglia di vino rosso. I suoi libri sono disponibili in italiano, quelli che non lo sono dovranno essere ristampati: è un impegno che ci prendiamo, con le forze che riusciremo a mettere in campo. In questa sede voglio solo ricordarlo come amico ripercorrendo con un aneddoto i nostri primi incontri. Incontrato per la prima volta ad Onati nel 1996, è però alla mia prima conferenza dell'European Group che l'ho davvero conosciuto. 1997, Polonia, arrivata a tarda notte in autobus con Beppe Mosconi nei dintorni campestri di Kazimierz Dolny, scopro con mia grande sorpresa - e un certo disagio personale - che il programma della conferenza prevede alle ore 21 del giorno successivo che ciascun gruppo "nazionale" canti attorno al fuoco (ore 21: falò) una canzone del proprio paese. E' così che il giorno dopo mi sono ritrovata con Vincenzo e Beppe, unici italiani, a cantare intorno al falò "Fischia il vento e infuria la bufera, scarpe rotte eppur bisogna andar...", celebre canzone partigiana sulla melodia della famosa canzone popolare sovietica Katjuša. Da lì in poi è stato tutto in discesa: ci siamo ritrovati negli anni, alle conferenze annuali dell'EG, al nostro Master in Criminologia critica, a Londra dove l'ho incontrato l'ultima volta. Lascio una foto, in ricordo, di quest'ultimo incontro. Cuore spezzato, eppur bisogna andar.

Francesca Vianello



I'm very saddened to hear of Prof. Ruggiero's passing. His works were (and are) a huge influence to my research, and his legacy will surely live on. Since you mentioned that we could e-mail you pictures of his or related to him, I remembered that I took some during the EG annual conference in Oslo (2013). There are three (attached to this message) that I particularly love: a casual conversation, after one of the proceedings, between Vincenzo Ruggiero, Thomas Mathiesen and Nils Christie - the date and timestamps are in the filenames. I think that they capture so much in representing Criminologists so dear to us, that I simply had to share them now. Feel free to use and share these pictures however you see fit, as that memory is far too good to be buried in old files in my computer.

Felipe Heringer Roxo da Motta



Photo: Felipe Heringer Roxo da Motta



Photo: American Society of Criminology

Vincenzo was loved in the criminological world of the so-called Global North, but also in the Global South, where we study his translated work with passion and excitement. When I came to Europe for the first time in 2018, after years of teaching and research in Argentina, I could not believe that I was meeting all these amazing criminologists that I had only known through their work. Of course, Vincenzo was one of them! What a surprise to meet such a gentleman, without a mobile phone, who knew what was going on at conferences by word of mouth, who was constantly working on new projects and topics, and who was happy to present his new work in panels with very young scholars, with whom he discussed on an equal footing! Since that first meeting, we have continued to communicate by email and at criminology conferences. He was always focused on how he could help me advance my career (e.g. he was the one who encouraged me to approach Ian Loader about publishing a special issue on critical criminology in the Howard Journal of Crime and Punishment, for which he himself wrote an article). The established joke was that he called me "maestra" with tenderness and pleasure, and mocked me for not having time to talk to him now! It will be very difficult to be at the ESC, the Common Sessions or the ESC without him, but his work will continue to illuminate our scholarly paths.

Valeria Vegh Weis

I deeply appreciated Vincenzo for the impeccable quality of his work, his unswerving commitment to political economic inquiry at a time when macro-structural analyses were no longer central to much of critical criminology, and for his kindness to me whenever we had a chance to talk at meetings.

Ray Michalowski



I can't recall the first time we met. It was a while ago at a European Group Conference. Vincenzo has been a constant comrade ever since. Initially, I felt intimidated by his seriousness, intellectual capacity and exacting scrutiny in every conversation. Over time I realised that he had a fine, dry sense of humour. I loved the uncompromising title of one of his papers: 'It was the Economy, Stupid! Classifying Power Crime'. On a lighter note, we often discussed my regular trips to teach in Padua and the contrasting progress of our soccer teams.

More recently, I compiled a special issue for Social Justice, the critical Journal of Crime, Conflict and World Order. Much published, his reputation widely recognised, I didn't think he would have the time to write. The issue focused on Penal Abolition and Penal Reform. Yet his article arrived ahead of schedule: Utopian Action and Participatory Disputes. I share the abstract: 'Is abolitionism a utopian posture in the face of social events, problems, and their solution? After specifying the type of utopianism implicitly embraced by penal abolitionism, this article traces some key features that constitute the religious, philosophical, and political underpinning of this school of thought. It then discusses how proponents of abolition theory view alternatives to penalty, rather than alternative penalties, within the debate around restorative justice.' (Social Justice Vol. 41, No. 3. 2014). An excellent, challenging essay, and I hesitated before editing. It stands as a fine contribution to the debate – just one article in Vincenzo's major canon of work. When we next met I asked, 'Do you know how demanding it is to suggest edits to your work?' He replied with a typically mischievous smile, 'Well, that's the editor's role!'

Thank you, Lucia, for your lovely email. Much love, comradeship and solidarity to your family and his close friends. We will miss him.

Phil Scraton



Photo: Valeria Ferraris

Vincenzo, at least in my perception, had always been an enviable incarnation of the classical ideal of *mens sana in corpore sano*; so vigorous, athletic, and such a sharp mind and critical intellect, not to mention the broad range of his expertise and his incredible skills as an organizer, editor, and above all writer.

I remember how, more than a handful of years ago, he introduced me to the pleasures of sipping an Aperol Spritz in front of the Bar Nazionale at the Piazza delle Erbe in Padova, and also his hospitality in London and his beautiful short statement on abolitionism at the European Group's Ljubljana meeting just a few years ago. Yes, he was a great public speaker, too, and coming to think of it, his book on Penal Abolitionism and his article on the Legacy of Abolitionism will always be among the very best things ever written on this important subject.

While I sense an immense loss and the fear of an impoverishment of critical criminology, I suddenly also feel so grateful for having come across this beautiful person a few times in my own life, and while I wish retrospectively that our contact had been closer, there will always be a chance to catch a glimpse of his soul in his writings. May our great teacher, colleague, and friend Vincenzo Ruggiero rest in peace.

Sebastian Sheerer

These are extremely sad news. I first met Vincenzo in person at the EG conference in Lesvos in 2017. He was a friendly person, a welcoming and sharp academic. This is a huge loss. My thoughts are with his family.

Roxana Cavalcanti



We miss you Vincenzo