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Book Review

Michael Fiddler, Theo Kindynis and Travis Linnemann (2022)
Ghost Criminology: The Afterlife of Crime and Punishment. New York: New York University Press

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Tea Fredriksson

Stockholm University, Sweden

Offering new perspectives on what otherness, haunting and time can mean for social life, *Ghost criminology: The afterlife of crime and punishment* sets out to explore criminological topics and criminological thought as areas in need of exorcism. The book is full of creative approaches to theory, data and method. For example, it frequently turns to artistic exhibitions to illustrate its points and new forms of knowledge production (e.g., Biber 2022; Fiddler 2022). The volume also explores novel ideas, such as what happens if we merge quantum physics and notions of dis/continuity with sociological thinking (Campbell 2022), the presence of tentacular horror in state violence (McClanahan 2022), how graffiti tells stories of secrets and those long gone (Kindynis 2022) and what spending the night in spaces that have experienced violence might teach us (McKay 2022).

Throughout, *Ghost criminology* treats haunting as a social experience of 'time out of joint' (to quote Philip K. Dick (1959/2012)). The book contemplates how we can see (seemingly) empty spaces in new ways and how things that are both *no longer* here and *not yet* present in the here and now might inform our thinking. Being a postdoctoral researcher at the time of writing this review, I find that the liminal, haunting concept of being both *no longer* (a PhD candidate) and *not yet* (secure in the academic field) makes an immediate, uneasy sense. I think most of us can relate to being suspended in similar kinds of social in-betweens. But what do such *no longer*s and *not yet*s mean for criminological thought? While criminology has engaged with liminal spaces before, *Ghost criminology* adds new perspectives by addressing how a rhetoric that takes uncanny, 'dis-eased' time as haunting into account creates new avenues for criminological exploration (Fiddler, Kindynis and Linnemann 2022: 15). Using visual and visceral methods and materials, the book covers a broad range of topics, including white supremacy, state violence, murders, lethal disasters, artistry and archives. With this range, the book makes a compelling case for the usefulness of imaginative engagement with criminology's different subject matters.

Exploring what ‘haunting’ means for criminological thought also begs the question of what criminology itself is haunted by. Here, the book grapples with what insights criminology overall has been resisting. In this sense (and to continue the book’s play on haunting metaphors), *Ghost criminology* performs a sort of disciplinary shadow work. By unearthing what has been buried, disappeared, or ingrained into the foundations of the discipline—disappearing into shadows where it has become difficult to define and critique—the book adds to the project of untangling relationships between criminology and the harmful criminal justice processes it often studies (Fiddler, Kindynis and Linnemann 2022). The clearest aspect of this reckoning with criminology’s own ghosts is found in the book’s critiques of criminology as part of white supremacist oppressions (Brown 2022). Here, *Ghost criminology* provides a compelling engagement with what lies beneath criminological thought and asks whether the discipline must be pulled out by its roots so that new, less harmful forms of both criminology and criminal justice can take root instead. While such critiques of power are an important project—and one suited to metaphors of haunting and monster-making—the phrasing of some of the work in this collection is perhaps unnecessarily jargon heavy at times. As it pertains to questions of supremacy, this begs the question, who can take these important, critical perspectives to heart if we, while researching social harms, complicate our findings? At this point, I must confess that I am most likely throwing stones from inside a glass house, and I think that this common, academic jargon issue is part of the central problem *Ghost criminology* addresses: it is hard to tear a disciplinary haunted house down from within, and we have to think outside the (sometimes radioactive) box to do so (Fiddler 2022).

Ghost criminology deals largely with seeing the hitherto unseen and with new ways of exploring what lacks can show us about both presences and absences. Because of this focus on the disappeared, I cannot help but notice some of the things missing from this collection. The book repeatedly merges with questions relevant to green criminology—(un)natural disasters, radiation, pollution, colonialism—but this link is not quite fully unearthed. It is clear, however, that there is a liminal, undefined grey area between the ghostly and the green where criminology is concerned, and this offers interesting grounds for further exploration. There are also some areas of research that have drawn on ghostly metaphors but are surprisingly absent from the book, such as desistance scholarship and prison studies—both often concerned with liminal questions of things that are both *no longer* and *not yet*. Another, less surprising absence is that of quantitative approaches. Because the book repeatedly asks criminology to reckon with its own ghosts, it would be interesting to see this brought into contact with how and what we (think we) measure. Yet, there are no quantitative methods present in this collection, nor, to my knowledge, in the ghost criminological perspective. Does this mean that ghost criminology is unsuited to quantitative pursuits? Or that quantitative researchers have yet to add their perspectives to this growing field of imaginative criminological engagement? For example, reconceptualising what is traditionally viewed as ‘risk’ as a form of future haunting would enable new insights, focusing on the powers that define, fear and assess risk, rather than on hypothetical future ne’er-do-wells. A quantitative criminology sensitive to future haunting would confront us with how risk assessment deals with contemporary apprehension about the future. Shifting our focus from an outside risk to an inside or internal anxiety could be one way to make space for new forms of criminological knowledge production about both deviance and measurement—knowledge production that might be less in line with the white supremacist, othering legislations that *Ghost criminology* rightfully insists that we address. Overall, *Ghost criminology* has opened a fascinating door, and I, for one, look forward to seeing what other creations will follow through it.

Correspondence:

Dr. Tea Fredriksson, postdoctoral researcher and lecturer, Department of Criminology, Stockholm University, Universitetsvägen 10C, 114 18, Stockholm, Sweden. tea.fredriksson@criminology.su.se

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