Book Review/ Compte rendu

Malloch, M. and B. Munro (eds), *Crime, Critique and Utopia*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan. 2013, 212 pp. £60.00 (978-1-137-00979-1).

Biocriminologists are making an active comeback today in prominent venues such as *Criminology* and the American Society of Criminology. Criminology and criminological theory generally are not only facing these conservative trends but meanwhile have lost touch with left-leaning and radical scholarship more prevalent in the 1960s. *Crime, Critique and Utopia* provides a much needed critical shot in the arm to criminology and criminological theory. Stemming from a meeting of the Conference of the European Group for the Study of Deviance and Social Control, *Crime, Critique and Utopia* reinvigorates this tradition in criminology with chapters on topics such as critical theory and the Frankfurt School tradition, utopia, anarchism, and praxis.

Margaret Malloch and Bill Munro begin with a review of social and political theories of utopia and critique. Malloch and Munro show how these theories are put to work in criminological claims-making. The authors emphasize abolitionist and anarchist struggles for "changes in the entire mechanism of the distribution of punishment" (12). Malloch continues her engagement with these themes in the next chapter, which examines the relationship between utopia and justice, socialism, and community. She looks at how crime and criminalization are addressed in these three clusters of inquiry, arguing that "our critiques of criminal justice should lead us to propose alternatives that go far beyond current limited responses to 'crime', focusing instead on the eradication of social systems based on inequality and sustained by practices of criminalization" (40). Next, Munro examines meanings of crime, utopia, and critique in Frankfurt School expositions. He reflects on the impact of *Punishment and Social Structure* by Georg Rusche and Otto Kirchheimer and expands on its Frankfurt School foundation. Munro shows that subsequent Frankfurt School thinkers (e.g. Bloch, Lukács) tried to move beyond economic determinism offered and nuanced conceptualizations of utopia, class, critique, and culture.

In the subsequent chapter, Michael Löwy investigates the relationship between Jewish messianism and psychoanalytic contributions to critical criminology. He considers Talmudic influence on early social

science, and then explains Erich Fromm's influence on theorizations of justice and punitiveness. Vincenzo Ruggerio follows up by examining libertarian and anarchist understandings of utopia and aspects of criminal justice such as "penal violence" (86). He explores anarchist and abolitionist thinking in Italy between 1890-1914 such as the work and organizing of Errico Malatesta, but also engages with the ideas of Bakunin and Kropotkin. David Scott then traces these themes into the contemporary period, finding them in the work of Stanley Cohen. He provides an exegesis of Cohen's work, comparing it to abolitionist projects. Scott concludes his chapter with reflections on abolitionist praxis, and a call for a moratorium on prison building. Then, Lynee Copson investigates dystopian and utopian criminology. Reflecting on the work of Ruth Levitas, Copson also offers an assessment of critical pedagogical ventures that engage with utopia as a concept.

The final few chapters turn to more empirical matters. Sarah Armstrong examines narratives of penal change. She comments on the supposed "objectivity and reasonability" (144) of quantitative accounts of rising incarceration rates. Policymakers have the power to reduce the number of people going to prison as well as how long they end up there, she contends. She then draws from the writings of Zygmunt Bauman on utopias to argue that the goal of an abolitionist criminology is to cause imminent events to conform to the more just future we desire. Mike Nellis explores how police and state agencies attempt to know and control populations through technology such as satellite tracking. He claims that critiquing punishment and imprisonment today requires careful analysis of the technologies that enable them. The final contribution is a chapter from Loïc Waquant's *Punishing the Poor*, in which he argues "the knee-jerk recourse to incarceration to stem urban disorders is a remedy that, in a good many cases, only aggravates the malady it is supposed to cure" (196).

This volume will appeal to graduate students and professors in criminology and criminal justice. Because of its critical approach, sociologists who study criminalization, liberty, freedom, and the political should also be interested in reading this short but satisfying volume. However, *Crime, Critique and Utopia* is marked by a few limitations. First, there is little empirical engagement with actual, ongoing anarchist and abolitionist projects. There is no review, for instance, of the work of the Anarchist Black Cross, and no assessment of the proceedings of the International Conference on Penal Abolition. These groups and clusters of scholars and activists are engaged in many activities that deserve to be recognized in a collection on crime, critique, and utopia. Second, not all authors are successful in their attempts at escaping the trappings of crime control

talk. Some scholars tread carefully around concepts such as crime and criminals only to replace these with medical metaphors that are equally pathologizing, which occurred in Wacquant's chapter. Finally, the notion of utopia in *Crime, Critique and Utopia* connotes left-leaning, critical or radical stances, yet this conflation fails to position criminology itself and its emphasis on control as a utopian enterprise. Much criminological work imagines a crime-free world where liberty is achieved through policing and imprisonment. That vision, as conservative and revanchist as it may be, is still utopian, and continues to animate projects of social defense (see Carrier and Walby 2014). It is utopian desire that stimulates the work of contemporary biocriminologists and their calls for genetic testing, gene therapy, and population control. This shadowy side of the utopian impulse and the variations of criminology it enlivens today deserve more academic attention too.

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References

Carrier, N. and K. Walby. 2014. Ptolemizing Lombroso: the Pseudo-Revolution of Biosocial Criminology. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Criminology* 6(1): 1-45.

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