

Whither Criminology: Its Global Futures?

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Abstract This paper takes as its starting point the recent interventions of Jock Young (2011) on the contemporary state of criminology. In adding to these observations those made by Connell (2007) and Aas (2012), the case will be made, following de Sousa Santos (2014), for a criminology of absences. In endeavouring to uncover these absences, the paper will consider how the ‘bogus of positivism’ (Young 2011, chapter 4), its associated presumptions and related conceptual thinking, manifest themselves in two substantive areas of contemporary concern: violence against women and violent extremism. With the first of these issues I shall consider the ongoing controversies in which the bogus of positivism is most apparent: the powerful influence of the criminal victimisation survey as the data gathering instrument about such violence. In the second area of concern, this bogus of positivism is most apparent in its ‘nomothetic impulse’ (ibid: 73). Both of these discussions will expose different, but connected absences within criminology. In the final and concluding part of this paper, I shall return to the questions posed by the title of this paper: whither criminology, and in the light of this discussion, offer some thoughts on the place of Asian criminology within criminology’s global future(s).

Keywords Violence against women · Violent extremism · The future of criminology

Introduction

Saturday April 4th, 2015. I am meeting my youngest daughter in Chester for lunch. (This is a city, in the North West of England, popular with tourists because of its historical heritage and about 25 miles away from where I live). I park the car and start to walk the short distance to the city centre. My attention is distracted by a vehicle sounding its horn at another vehicle that has cut across its path at a road junction. Within seconds the male driver of the ‘offending’ vehicle is out of his car, swearing loudly, and ready to accost the other male driver who has stayed in his vehicle. The rest of the traffic is momentarily brought to a standstill. When satisfied with the verbal assault meted out,

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the driver of the ‘offending’ vehicle returns to his car: traffic and pedestrians return to their own pre-occupations.

This paper takes as its starting point the seminal work of Jock Young. In his last book, *The Criminological Imagination*, published in 2011, he laid down a challenge for the future of the discipline. In this book, the third volume of a trilogy (the other two volumes being, *The Exclusive Society* published in 1999 and *The Vertigo of Late Modernity* published in 2007), Young presents a thorough critique of what he understands as scientific criminology. This brand of criminology, he argues, has underpinned and leant support to, criminal justice policies resulting in wide practices of othering. Reflecting on this vision of criminology and its resultant practices, Young invites us to reconsider the relevance for the discipline of the seminal work of C. Wright Mills. In extending this invitation, he is centrally concerned with unravelling the implications of Mills’ observations about the dangers of abstracted empiricism. In Young’s view, these dangers have been ignored in criminology and have resulted in a discipline tainted by the ‘bogus of positivism’ (Young 2011: chapter 4). Much of his attack on the bogus of positivism is directed towards the ‘most influential criminology generated by the most atypical society’ (Young 2011: 80). For him, this kind of criminology is dominant in North America. Indeed, his passionate pre-occupation with the nature and influence of American criminology is evident throughout this book. This bogus of positivism characterised by a ‘fetishism with number’ does not just have a strong presence in American criminology. Its presence is found elsewhere and as such takes its toll on what counts as criminology. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, this version of criminology rests on a number of dubious assumptions about the nature of social reality and the capacity for number to capture that reality. This is the point of entry for the concerns addressed in this paper.

Further to the interventions of Young, Connell (2007) and Aas (2012) also offer some reflections on the nature of social scientific knowledge that pose fundamental questions for criminology. Connell (2007), for example, proffers some insightful observations about the nature and impact of what she calls ‘Northern theorising’. In particular, she pays detailed attention to the way in which theoretical assumptions about globalisation have led commentators to conclude that the processes of globalisation take their toll on all of us, in the same way, and to the same extent. In making such assumptions, the Westo-centric bias of this kind of theorising has become reified with the resultant effect that the ‘systematic violence of the metropole’ (Connell 2007: 378), and the toll that takes on those deemed peripheral to the metropole, is overlooked. Theoretical blinkers like these assume a linear progression from a pre-modern, to an industrial, to a world risk society, and have three consequences: other voices and visions of social processes are excluded, non-metropolitan experiences are erased and the gathering of data from the ‘periphery’ becomes framed and informed by Northern concepts and methods (ibid. 380). Similar observations, though less fundamentally challenging, have been made by Messner (2015), who calls for the development of concepts more sensitive to non-Western societies, and by Braithwaite (2015) who points to areas in which the West could learn from Asian societies. In a critique more focused on criminology, Aas (2012) reflects on observations such as these and asks the discipline to think about the importance of geography. Here, she observes:

The global does therefore not present itself as a smooth, unified surface, a plane of immanence accessible through a zoom function, but rather as a dynamic multiplicity of surfaces and tectonic boundaries. It is in these meeting points and frictions between the global north and south, between licit and illicit worlds, that criminology has an opportunity to gain (and provide other social sciences with) invaluable insight into the nature of the contemporary world order’. (Aas 2012: 14).

In line with this trajectory of thought, de Sousa Santos (2014) calls for a ‘sociology of absences’. This sociology ‘is a transgressive sociology because it violates the positivistic principle that consists of reducing reality to what exists and to what can be analysed with the methodological and analytical instruments of the conventional social sciences’. (ibid.172). It is a sociology, and for the purposes of this paper, I am also taking this to apply to criminology, that demands two imaginations: the epistemological and the democratic. These imaginations ask that we think about knowledge and the knowledge production process, as diverse, complex and relational. Put simply, they imply challenging positivism and linearity, recognising difference and different ways in which it is possible to be productive, and understanding that ‘what is the local is not reducible to the concept of hegemonic globalisation’ (ibid. 179). If the implications of this sociology of absences are embraced, ‘The future can thus be found at the crossroads of different knowledges and different technologies’ (ibid. 200). Taken together, the work of Connell (2007), Aas (2012) and de Sousa Santos (2014) amongst others add some considerable weight to the call made by Young (2011) of the need for criminology to rethink its engagement with the bogus of positivism. Or as he puts it:

The nomothetic impulse [that] is at the heart of positivism: the search for generalizability which is independent of nation or locality. (ibid: 73)

The question remains: what might such a rethinking comprise?

In endeavouring to uncover the absences generated by the bogus of positivism, this paper will consider how its presumptions, and related conceptual thinking, manifests itself in two substantive areas of contemporary concern: violence against women and violent extremism. To be clear from the outset, my position in relation to each of these issues stems from my long standing engagement with victimology. In putting violence against women and violent extremism side-by-side (two areas of investigation normally explored as separate and separable), the paper assumes that these two phenomena co-exist along a continuum of violence (see also Barberet 2014). Building on Galtung’s (1969) observations about structural violence and implicitly recognising the work of Kelly (1988) on sexual violence, Cockburn (2013) puts what Young (2007: 267-8) calls the ‘paradigm of violence’ into an inclusive conceptual frame. She elucidates her understanding of this continuum by suggesting:

‘For instance, a continuum of scale of force: so many pounds per square inch when a fist hits a jaw; so many more when a bomb hits a military target. A continuum on a social scale: violence in a couple, in a street riot, violence between nations. And place: a bedroom, a street, a police cell, a continent. Time: during a long peace, pre-war, in armed conflict, in periods we call ‘post conflict’. And then type of weapon: hand, boot, machete, gun, missile.’ (Cockburn 2013)

So, from the outset, and in the spirit of feminist analysis stretching from Frances Power Cobbe (1878) to Brownmiller (1975) in connecting the private world of domestic terrorism to the public world of international terrorism, this position lays bare that in many different circumstances, ‘the irony is that what we most fiercely condemn we most wholeheartedly embrace’ (Young 2007: 167). Moreover, rather as in the vignette cited at the beginning of this paper, as victims, offenders and onlookers, we are all implicated in what transpires as violence.

Each of the issues to be considered here has spiralled up policy and criminological agendas in different ways in recent times. The self-evident moral and cultural connections between them, and the knowledge(s) generated about them within criminology, are each differently tainted by the

issues discussed Connell (2007), Aas (2012) and de Sousa Santos (2014). The implicatory denial (Cohen 2001) within criminology of the connections between these issues is, arguably, more than ironic (qua Young 2011) as hopefully what follows will illustrate. This discussion falls into three parts. In the first, I shall consider the ongoing controversies in understanding and responding to violence against women. Here, the bogus of positivism is most apparent in the powerful influence of the criminal victimisation survey as the data gathering instrument. In the second, I shall consider violent extremism in a similar vein. Here, the bogus of positivism is most apparent in its ‘nomothetic impulse’. Both of these discussions will expose different, but connected, elephants in the room: issues that have a vital presence in which the connections between them are unspoken. In the final and concluding part of this paper, I shall return to the question posed by the title of this paper: whither criminology, and offer some initial thoughts on the place of Asian criminology within criminology’s global future(s).

Thinking About Violence Against Women

Criminological, and more recently victimological, engagement with violence against women has been a persistent area of controversy. For those committed to feminism, the victimological engagement with (sexual) violence against women has been particularly problematic because of the presumed victim blaming connotations associated with the concept of victim precipitation deployed in early analyses of, for example, rape. Nonetheless, it goes without saying that both victimological and feminist voices have contributed to raising the profile of violence against women as a problem with global dimensions. (See for example the observations of the United Nations 2010; Ljungwald 2010; Letschert and Van Dijk 2011). However, the shape and form of that impact remain controversial. Drawing on the work of Latour (1987), I have recently explored why this might be the case (Walklate 2014) and for the purposes of this paper, and by way of elucidating the issues referred to in the Introduction, it is worth reiterating some aspects of that discussion here.

Latour (1987), rather like de Sousa Santos (2014), asks us to unpick the black box of scientific practices. In other words, he asks us to consider what it is that has been taken for granted in the exploration of an issue, how knowledge has been and is produced about that issue, then how that knowledge production becomes the foundation on which further knowledge is built. In the context of understanding of the nature and extent of sexual violence, this generates four questions fundamental to how thinking about such violence is constructed: what to count, how to count, who to count and what is to be done on the basis of that counting. Put simply, Latour’s (1987) approach ask us to consider what has become embedded in criminology’s, but in this context, particularly victimology’s, black box about sexual violence on the basis of which knowledge claims has been and continue to be made. A brief review of the implications of asking these questions follows.

In asking what to count, it is important to remember that violence has substantial subjective as well as objective features. Violence is an act with meaning, and the meaning assigned to it is situated within particular cultural settings, as in the vignette cited at the start of this paper. One person’s friendly gesture may well be thought of as an act of violence by another (Kelly 2011). Recognition of such meaning has led to two different ways of counting violence: one framed by the law, the other framed by the individual’s definition of violence. These different ways of counting have translated into two different methods of counting: the criminal victimisation survey and empirical work by women, with women, for women. The latter having exposed significant problems with the former. (See *inter alia*, Kelly 1988). Despite increasingly

sophisticated definitional nuances associated with the recent use of the criminal victimisation survey in this area, particularly those informed by feminist voices, (see inter alia Walby and Myhill 2001; Walby et al. 2011), tensions remain around what counts: what women themselves say or what the definition of the measuring instrument says?. Thus Kelly (2011: xxi) observes:

‘...few surveys, even when they are cast as on VAW [violence against women] and/or health, ask about the everyday intrusions in which women’s personal and being with their self is intruded upon: what is measured counts, and not counting means that the everydayness of violence is again hidden, minimised and trivialised’.

This tendency to silence everyday violence in what to count is compounded by the tendency to even out cultural differences around what to count as violence both within and outside national boundaries (Machado et al. 2010). Here, it is possible to discern the echoes of the epistemological observations made by de Sousa Santos (2014). Such tendencies become inextricably entwined with question number two: how to count such violence.

It is without doubt that the criminal victimisation survey has increasingly become the preferred method for measuring the nature and extent of violence against women. Such surveys ask questions about whether or not individuals have been a victim and what they have been a victim of. It is at this juncture that the presence of the bogus of positivism becomes apparent. This alerts us to (at least) two problems: the fallacies of the data generating process (Hope 2007) and the problem of Occidentalism (Walklate 2008a). Criminal victimisation surveys presume that crime (in this case sexual violence) is an event, rather than a process and, as an event, it can be measured. Hope (2007) has pointed out that this results in a data generating process subject to at least five fallacies: the ecological fallacy (making observations about individuals on the basis of aggregate data); the contextual fallacy (not measuring variables appropriately); the aggregation fallacy (using aggregate data as though it might measure variables appropriately); the individualistic fallacy (taking what individuals say out of context); and the selection composition fallacy (selecting and constructing a sample that produces a self-fulfilling prophecy). Whilst Dekeseredy (forthcoming) makes a cogent case for a more imaginative use of such surveys in this area, his is a voice in the wilderness. Internationally, and in Europe in particular, the pressure to standardise such surveys (Van Dijk 2010: 646–7), for the purposes of policy, is considerable. The problem of Occidentalism lies herein.

To explain, the drive to produce questions and data that are standardised comes at a cost. Using the Anglo-American speaking axis as the ‘gold’ standard for the kinds of questions that, for example, international criminal victimisation surveys ask, erases the specificity of cultural context. The answers to the questions asked in these surveys become the measuring rod against which ‘other’ countries (the non-Anglo-American) are compared, measured and judged. This smoothing out of culture and cultural difference I have exemplified elsewhere (Walklate 2008a) has also been detailed by Machado et al. (2010). These black box assumptions belie victimology’s Occidentalism (paralleling that of criminology, see Cain 2000) and speak of hegemonic epistemological claims to knowledge (de Sousa Santos 2014). Such epistemological assumptions frame who can speak, who can listen, in what terms and what about (Aas 2012). Indeed, such issues may well be part of the reason why ‘the conduct of victimization surveys in developing countries has stalled’ (Van Dijk 2010: 647). Nonetheless, the bogus of positivism (Young 2011) has a strong implicit presence in these practices: a presence that opens up as well as closes down opportunities for the discipline and the issues on which it lays claim.

The third black box question is who to count. Historically, feminist work and criminal victimisation survey work have adopted different stances on the question of who is to be included and excluded for the purposes of measurement. Feminist work, as has been stated above, has been informed by the desire to engage in work that has inimically taken as its focal concern, women. Contemporarily, there is greater awareness of men as victims of both sexual and domestic violence even if, in the context of the latter issue in particular, the problem of understanding what counts as violence remains. (See for example the work of DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2011). However, heteronormative tendencies remain and these tendencies can erase other realities (Ball 2013).

A subsidiary question, though nonetheless an important one to the question of who to count, is, at what point in a relationship does such counting, count? For example, there is increasing evidence to suggest that some points in a relationship are far more dangerous than others. In this respect, the work of DeKeseredy and Rennison (2013) highlights the process of exiting a relationship as being both likely to provoke violence and being most likely to be hidden from public counting procedures. Of course, there are contexts in which individuals are conventionally excluded from being counted within a criminal victimisation survey: those in private/state care/custody; those homeless, disenfranchised or hidden by a wide range of institutional ‘protocols’. Moreover, whilst sexual violence in conflict ridden societies does not lend itself easily to this kind of measurement (Barberet 2014), it should be noted that Hagan and Rymond-Richmond (2009) used an innovative type of victimisation survey to document the nature and extent of violence (including sexual violence) in Dafur. That work was very much committed to gathering evidence so that wider international community might recognise genocide in Dafur. This affords a link with the last black box question: what to do on the basis of counting.

I have offered an analysis of the shape and form of the ‘what is to be done’ question elsewhere (Walklate 2008b). In making the distinction between the law in theory and the law in practice, that analysis asked questions about the predominance of the criminalisation approach to tackling sexual violence (despite repeated and consistent evidence to the contrary concerning its efficacy) and the tensions between this strategy and the interests might be served by it (see also the observations made by Sharma and Brazilli 2014, on the Dehli rape case). There, I suggested that:

‘[in such policies it] may appear that the needs of women as voiced by feminist campaigns have been so imagined. But have they? A deeper analysis might suggest that these imaginings have rather been the needs of the criminal justice process itself alongside those that inhabit this space. (Walklate 2008b: 49).

These kinds of observations point up the hegemonic project of the knowledge production process and the way in which that knowledge forms the basis for further knowledge and action. For example, Demsey (2007) reminds us that in 1994, the United Nations required member states to show ‘due diligence’ in punishing acts of violence against women. Indeed, this requirement, alongside European human rights legislation, afforded the opportunity for such violence to be put on the agenda in a meaningful way in some countries, the aforementioned problems associated with counting notwithstanding. However, the challenge was then, and still is now, to shift behaviour. The contributions of D’Cruze (2011); McGregor (2011), and Bell et al. (2011) taken together suggest that, despite evolving understandings of sexuality and sexual norms, the intractability of the historical traces of being ‘thrown down’ (a historical reference to being sexually assaulted) reach down the centuries and remain with us today. (Indeed, in some parts of the world, historical practices and laws have re-emerged in the name of religious purity, see Carrington 2015). It is in these traces that the tensions between the recourse to changing

the law, the drive for standardisation in offering an evidenced case for changing the law, the associated problems of policy implementation, cultural specificity and what we might call ‘women’s real lives’ become most apparent. It is here that it is possible to discern the ‘monoculture of knowledge’ (de Sousa Santos 2014) that renders other voices inferior and residual. These become what de Sousa Santos calls a ‘waste of experience’ (ibid. 174).

Consequently, Stanko (2007) has commented that despite all the efforts and interventions directed towards bringing offenders to justice, she observes more continuity with the past than change. In a similar vein, Mooney (2007) asks how is it that domestic violence can be such a public anathema yet at the same time such a private common place. Both of these commentators are referring, in different ways, to the ‘lived reality’ of sexual violence. Mooney (2007: 169) goes on to suggest that the values whereby men’s violence to women is sustained in the face of public imperatives otherwise ‘exist throughout the width and breadth of popular culture’. For example, in order to understand the ‘Delhi rape case’ and the response to it, it must surely be pertinent to understand the context in which that occurred. Such an understanding would inevitably include religion, caste, demography and changing socio-economic processes as well as gender relations, the call for a robust criminal justice response notwithstanding (Sharma and Brazilli 2014). It is at this level of understanding that it is possible to appreciate how violence becomes ‘folded into everyday life’: an ‘intertwining of the descent into the ordinary’ in which ‘ordinary people become scarred’ (Das 2007: 14). This is the ordinary violence of everyday life. It is this ordinariness (as in the story of the start of this paper) that is rendered absent from the criminal victimisation survey. It is also absent from the conceptual understanding that underpins policy. It is this violence that is silenced (Jordan 2011): in the bedroom, on the street, in a children’s home; in a prison, on a continent. This is the criminal victimisation survey’s elephant in the room: that which is present but unspoken.

In opening the black box of victimology’s commitment to the criminal victimisation survey, the discrepancies and uncertainties with the knowledge claims associated with such surveys have been exposed. In asking the questions, what, how, who to count and what to do on the basis of this counting, it is possible to discern at least a partial answer to the question posed by Mooney (2007). It is within the silences generated by this black box and its assumptions that violence can be both public anathema and a private common place all at the same time. Kelly (2011: xxiv) suggests that recognition of this silencing demands ‘conceptual maps which enable us to make sense of the paradoxes of violence against women in the twenty-first century’. Indeed, as the preceding analysis has intimated, one place to start in developing such conceptual maps might be in unpacking the black box of victimology and the criminal victimisation survey in order to expose those issues which have faded from view. However, different conceptual maps might also demand different methods. This question will be returned to below. For now, it is sufficient to observe that the questions posed by Young (2007: 166) ‘How do normal/decent people do evil things?’ is one of the threads connecting violence in the ‘private’ sphere to violence in the ‘public’ sphere, and it is to that issue that we shall now turn.

Thinking About Violent Extremism

The first 15 years of the twenty-first century have undoubtedly been marked by the impact of international terrorism (Finnane 2013). That which Roach (2011) has called the ‘9/11 effect’ has tentacles that have reached out into the far corners of the world (Howie 2012). Leaving aside the question of what it was about the particular events in September 2001, rather than any other like

events, that provoked the response that they have, it is beyond dispute that they have posed serious questions for criminological theory and practice. They threw into sharp relief the questions of who is a victim, who is an offender and what is to be done about them. These questions re-assert the importance of reflecting on how we understand the ‘violence of the metropole’ (Connell 2007) and that of geography (Aas 2012). For example, the political rhetoric and policy practices that flowed from the 9/11 moment presuming that ‘we are all in this together’ emanated from the USA and wider Westo-centric thinking. Connell (2007) has made some astute observations about this narrative and its intimate relationship with Northern theorising. In particular, as she suggests, it implies a shared knowledge about the world and our existence in it, which is questionable. For example, harm from terrorist attacks is firmly put in perspective when set against the harm caused by malnutrition and starvation (Jackson 2005). Moreover, Wilkinson (2009: 96) points to the fact that more people die every day from diarrhoea than were killed in 9/11 serves as ‘a graphic and worthwhile reminder that the scale of discussions about many Western “catastrophes” still pale in comparison with daily conditions in less economically developed parts of the world’ (Wilkinson 2009: 96). As de Sousa Santos (2014: 179) states, and was quoted earlier, ‘what is the local is not reducible to the concept of hegemonic globalisation’. Connell (2007) goes on to suggest that these presumptions about globalisation lead commentators like Giddens and others to resort to analyses that invoke the ‘dark side’ of globalisation to explain terrorism. This resort is evident in the criminological efforts to make sense of events of this kind and the behaviours associated with them.

In a recent contribution to this debate, Cottee (2014) accuses criminology of three biases: the secular, the religious and the liberal. Arguing that a focus on the secular reflects a domain assumption of the discipline, Cottee (2014) suggests that whilst this has resulted in work on the crime prevention aspects of religion, there is much less of a concern with its crime inducing aspects. This view is tempered by Tivalli et al. (2013) who point out that for some subgroups, religion acts as a support mechanism for persistent criminality rather than having a deterrent effect. However, they also go on to suggest that their findings suggest quite a complex relationship between religion and the propensity for particular kinds of criminal behaviour. A relationship that is rendered more complex when it is seen to be oriented towards encouraging violent action against mainstream values (see also Akers 2010). This is particularly the case when such actions are deemed to be replete with transcendental rewards (Routledge and Arndt 2008). Against this general backdrop what follows is a brief overview of current criminological understandings of violent extremism/terrorism.

These understandings can be loosely grouped into four main approaches: the ‘lone wolf’ approach, strain theory, subcultural approaches and those that take a more structural orientation. The lone wolf approach looks to make sense violent extremism as it might be generated by the inherent characteristics of the individual concerned. Much has been made of Anders Breivik that fits well with this kind of understanding (see inter alia Billig and Stalne 2012). In a similar vein, Bhui et al. (2014) report a link between mild depression, expressed support for violence and tendencies towards radicalisation/violent extremism. The extent to which this kind of approach fits with the available evidence pertaining to violent extremism motivated by religion is moot since suicide attacks prevent subsequent psychological analysis. It is also important to remember that 95 % of suicide bombers also belong to, or are affiliated with, organizations. This makes the attribution of psychological factors alone difficult (Pape 2006). Those working with strain theory draw together psychological and sociological approaches. Agnew (2010) has recently made some important interventions in this regard. He argues that ‘collective strains’ have a high impact on individuals, when they are seen to be unjust and when they are seen to be the result of powerful others ‘with whom the members of the strained

collective have weak ties' (Agnew 2010: 136). Under these conditions, those individuals with a psychological propensity for violent extremism will be particularly vulnerable. However, strain theory cannot account for why only a small minority of people exposed to such strains and/or material/cultural deprivations turn to violence as a response (see for example, Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010: 801.) A further theme is illustrated by Cottee's (2011) own work. He considers the importance of both 'sub-cultural style' and structure in understanding commitment to Jihadism. This subcultural approach centres social networks, personal bonds, the construction of shared meanings and understandings about the world. The importance of networks in promoting and/or undermining violence has also been noted by Hamm (2009) in what he refers to as prison Islam. However, subcultural processes do not exist in a vacuum, and structural approaches, the final theme to be found in the literature, offer an additional frame of reference. Structural approaches focus on factors such as material deprivation, social inequality and disenfranchisement and have been used to make sense of the emergence of extremist violent subcultures. However, as with the other approaches outlined above, the efficacy of these analyses are subject to considerable debate. For example, many extremely impoverished Palestinians do not engage in political violence (Kreuger and Maleckova 2003), and in some cases, it is those who are not socially deprived who do so (Post 2007). The 19 members of the so-called Hamburg Cell responsible for the 9/11 attacks were largely university educated and predominantly from largely middle-class family backgrounds (see Riedel 2008). This suggests it is equally mistaken to presume that structural factors operate in a simple and or straightforward manner too. (For a fuller explication of these different approaches, see Walklate and Mythen 2015, chapter five).

To summarise, it is possible to view these different explanations as potentially complementary. It is certainly the case that they are each concerned with different levels of analysis—from the individual to the cultural to the structural. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the search for the nomothetic in each of them differently mutes the role of religion and religious belief. As Cottee (2014: 985)

'...the reluctance of criminologists to seriously address the myriad human rights abuses that are currently perpetrated in the name of religion or the oppressive systems of social control within religious communities in the secular democracies in which most criminologists live and work is quite remarkable. Evidently, criminologists are far more at ease in exposing and critiquing the demonization of religious minorities by the secular liberal capitalist state' (ibid. 985)

They also share other features in common, notably the inability to develop understandings that appreciate the biographical experiences of the perpetrators of violent extremism: to listen to their voices. Some efforts have been made to do this utilising so-called 'martyr' videos and other like data though, for the most part, analyses relying on this kind of data are happening outside of criminology rather than within it. Nonetheless, these silenced voices expose another muting within criminological approaches to violent extremism: international foreign policy. Putting these two silences together, Young (2007: 171) suggests:

Idealism may be the last thing anyone wants to hear about when we countenance the vicious murders in the underground of London the railways of Madrid, or the twin towers of New York. Yet if we do not understand the idealism behind these horrors we will never understand them.....but unless you understand the world from this perspective, see it through their eyes, you will never understand terrorism'.

A constituent element in understanding this idealism lies in pulling the blinders off the criminological bias' of which Cottee (2014) speaks: the denial of religion as a crime inducing motivator, the denial of the role of belief in projecting violent extremism, alongside the search for generalizable explanations for such violent extremism. When these issues are taken together, they contribute to the consequent denial of understanding the situated life experiences and biographies of those driven towards violent extremism. These denials pose fundamental questions about the liberal bias of criminology itself and the connections between this bias and the conceptual agenda that frames the explanations over-viewed above. This demands more than a reworking of concepts to better fit the context in which they are being applied (Messner 2015). It demands a reorientation of what is valued as the knowledge base of the discipline on which further knowledge is built. This is a further elephant in this particular criminological room: something that remains unspoken.

Conclusion: Whither Criminology?

In exploring these two aspects of violence that have become pertinent issues for criminology across the globe, as part of a continuum of violence routinely but differently experienced in people's everyday lives, I have been concerned to offer a criminology of absences in relation to them. This offering has exposed both conceptual and methodological problems with the way in which these issues have been addressed within contemporary criminological agendas. In each of them, it is possible to see the space for the imaginations of which de Sousa Santos (2014) speaks: the epistemological and the democratic. Indeed, in many ways, the adoption of the former seeps into the latter. If criminology is to make sense of violence in such a way that the discipline is equipped to make a difference to the way in which violence impacts on peoples everyday lives, then this implies looking to methods of data collection and ways of thinking that offer spaces for the voices of those so afflicted to be heard. Such spaces are not routinely present in much mainstream criminological endeavour. Their absence leaves the discipline repeatedly exposed to the likelihood of Cohen's (1979) 'last seminar'. As in the last seminar, violence against women and violent extremism are not separable and separate phenomena even though the discipline might construct them as such. Neither are these constructions not to do with 'us'. They certainly are. This raises questions that are more ontological than methodological (Ferrell 2014).

Bateson (1989: 73) states:

'...the most creative thinking occurs at the meeting places of disciplines.....At the edges where the lines are blurred, it is easier to imagine that the world might be different'.

Of course, the observation above applies to many disciplinary areas, not just criminology, but in relation to the substantive issues that are the focus of concern of this paper, it is an observation that is particularly pertinent. Indeed, the disciplinary 'ownership' of such topics, like war, terrorism, security, that recent world events have brought to the fore, are becoming more blurred. However, in order for a different epistemological imagination to unfold and take root demands more than the blurring of boundaries between disciplines, it demands that criminology takes a long hard look at itself and its ontological orientation: a long hard look that is also political. This is the democratic project. This project can give space to drawing on different ways of doing criminology. For example, personal testimonies, testimonios, photographs, video footage, the archives and data of campaign groups all provide a different methodological and conceptual starting place to explore some of the issues addressed in this paper (see McGarry and Walklate

2015). However, this starting place, also by implication affords space to different voices (see Carrington 2015 on the ‘subaltern’ voice and the possibilities of a ‘southern’ criminology, for example) and by definition, implies a resistance to the implicit Occidental (and colonial) heritage which taints much of contemporary criminological work.

If criminology to make sense of the issues prescient across the globe, in concert with Young (2011), it needs to loosen the conceptual and methodological shackles of the bogus of positivism. I use the word ‘shackles’ as a deliberate reference to slavery, but in this context, a slavery induced by the ‘most influential criminology generated by the most atypical society’ Young (Young 2011: 80, and cited at the beginning of this paper). In recognising these shackles, it becomes possible to address the major contradiction generated by the bogus of positivism. This contradiction is a projection of American (liberal) values, particularly concerning individualism, on criminological endeavour everywhere. The embrace of positivism embeds these values within the discipline, contributes to the nomothetic impulse (ibid. 79), and implies a denial of ‘specificity’ (ibid. 77). This liberal vision of knowledge and its production process not only denies culture, it also facilitates the comfortable and comforting liberal analyses of othering and/or demonization found within criminology that are certainly prescient in thinking about violence. This is a thinking that generates presences and absences about violence in all its form. This is criminology’s mammoth in the room.

Body-Gendrot (2012) has asked how different the social sciences might look and feel if writers and researchers in Africa, Asia and South America were afforded an equal platform to speak about world affairs in Anglophone books, websites and journals. Good questions indeed and ones which criminology would do well to reflect upon. Asian criminology, in being neither here nor there (Carrington 2015), stands at the positive intersection of the north-south and east-west in terms of geography and culture. It is well placed to think differently, both conceptually and methodologically, about the criminological enterprise and the debates that such different thinking might generate. The discipline as a whole may benefit (Braithwaite 2015) from this but, at a minimum, and echoing Cottee (2014) and the story with which this paper began, surely we can talk about this? Indeed, we must.

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