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Version: Accepted Version

Article:
Churchill, D (2019) History, Periodization and the Character of Contemporary Crime Control. Criminology & Criminal Justice, 19 (4). pp. 475-492. ISSN: 1748-8958

https://doi.org/10.1177/1748895818811905

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History, Periodisation and the Character of Contemporary Crime Control

Abstract

In recent decades, several highly influential studies have sought to articulate the changed and changing character of contemporary crime control in its historical context. While the substantive claims of these studies have attracted close scrutiny, there has been remarkably little analysis of the historiographical apparatus underpinning them. As a result, criminology has neglected to develop a valuable, critical vantage point on how crime and justice in our own times are understood. This article advances discussion of contemporary crime control by critically assessing the historiographical foundations of existing studies. Furthermore, it outlines a new approach to analysing the governance of crime through time, which might facilitate a more empirically robust and satisfactory characterisation of contemporary crime control. More broadly, the article signals the significance of history and historiography for contemporary criminological scholarship, and reflects upon the advantages of developing a more fully historical criminology.

Keywords

Historical criminology; historiography; historical theory; governance of crime; late modernity; epochalism.

Word Count: 9105

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The last three decades have seen an accelerating movement away from the assumptions that shaped crime control and criminal justice for most of the twentieth century…Today's practices of policing, prosecution, sentencing, and penal sanctioning pursue new objectives, embody new social interests and draw upon new forms of knowledge, all of which seem quite at odds with the orthodoxies that prevailed for most of the last century. (Garland 2001: 3)

If, in one respect, the function of history expresses the position of one generation in relation to preceding ones by stating, 'I can't be that,' it always affects the statement of a no less dangerous complement, forcing a society to confess, 'I am other than what I would wish to be, and I am determined by what I deny.' (Certeau 1988: 46)

Introduction

We are fast arriving at a new epoch in crime control: that, it seems, is the conclusion of a series of impressive and eminent studies, appearing around the turn of the last century. This '*fin-de-siècle* criminology' (South 1997) advanced what might be called the 'discontinuity thesis' – the idea that 'modern' criminal justice is gone (at least as we knew it), and has been replaced by a new, 'late modern' landscape of crime control, characterised by pluralised, preventative and punitive responses to crime. Surveys of macro-level change in crime, control and social order (Taylor 1999; Young 1999; Garland 2001; Lea 2002; Ericson 2007; Reiner 2007) were accompanied by more specific studies of emergent developments in policing, security and punishment (see, amongst others, Reiner 1992; O'Malley 1992; Feeley and Simon 1992, 1994; Bayley and Shearing 1996; Ericson and Haggerty 1997;

Sheptycki 1998; Pratt 2000; Hallsworth 2002). This was a somewhat diffuse body of work – scholars disagreed on the precise nature of change taking place, and still more on its causes. Uniting them, though, was a common emphasis upon change of a fundamental, structural and historic kind. One leading scholar discerned 'the break-down of modernist conceptions of the state and the emergence of new ways of organizing security.' (Garland 2004: 163) His peers perceived a 'paradigm shift' in penality (Feeley and Simon 1994: 173), a new 'paradigm' in security (Johnston and Shearing 2003: 13-17), a 'watershed' moment in policing and crime control (Bayley and Shearing 1996: 585; Lea 2002: 104), even 'the end of criminal law' (Ericson 2007: 213). Each situated these developments within the broader social transformations charted by leading contemporary sociologists, notably Anthony Giddens, Ulrich Beck, Zygmunt Bauman, Scott Lash and John Urry (see Savage 2009). Hence, *fin-de-siècle* criminology was shot through with novel characterisations of the contemporary social world – 'postmodernity', 'late modernity', 'liquid modernity', 'post-Fordism', 'risk society', 'market society', 'neoliberalism', and so forth. The notion of a new epoch in the governance of crime led some to an equally significant claim – that the tools of modernist social science would have to be adapted, reconfigured or reimagined as a result. New times necessitated new theory (Garland and Sparks 2000).

The success of the discontinuity thesis demonstrates the allure of grand claims of structural transformation within criminology. Several scholars were drawn to make such claims seemingly against their better judgment: some later curtailed the scope of their argument (Simon and Feeley 2003); others engaged in auto-critique (O'Malley 1997, 2000); others still, though determined to refrain from making such sweeping claims, were nevertheless criticised for doing so (Garland 2001, 2003;

cf. Loader and Sparks 2004). Yet the basic argument – that some momentous change had taken place, fundamentally altering the character of crime control – took hold. It reappears in leading work on the governance of crime (for example Schuilenburg 2015), and still approaches to the status of common sense within the wider field. *Fin-de-siècle* criminology serves as a contemporary cannon – a new set of 'classical' texts, offering a 'big picture' within which more focused studies can locate themselves (see Davis 1986). It both coalesced with and contributed to the widely-held sense that we criminologists live in much-altered and especially challenging times (Rock 2005).

The principal accomplishment of *fin-de-siècle* criminology was to characterise contemporary crime control in terms of change. The argument was not that everything had changed, but that change was sufficiently transformative that contemporary formations of crime control are best understood in contrast to earlier systems. This is more than an historically-informed sociology of the governance of crime – it is an essentially historical argument, predicated on a particular mode of periodisation. It posits a temporal break separating the modern from the contemporary in the governance of crime, and thus elevates the contemporary to the status of a distinct historical epoch ('late modernity'). Thus, *fin-de-siècle* criminology sought to characterise contemporary crime control by periodising it. In ordering historical time, periodisation shapes how we approach the present – it serves 'to confer identity and selfhood' upon a time by situating it in the broader sweep of history (Blix 2006: 57). As Michel de Certeau (1988) suggested, such a temporal identity entails dissociation from certain pasts, and so denial of particular lines of inheritance. Thus, periodisation is central to framing contemporary social enquiry: it helps to orient research fields by providing a sense of 'where we are', and by

indicating which topics may be especially 'timely'. Despite this, modes of periodisation are very rarely subject to serious, critical scrutiny in criminology.

This preliminary discussion raises major questions concerning the history of crime control. How has this history been periodised? Does this mode of periodisation accommodate the findings of empirical research? What does it reveal about the character of contemporary crime control, and what might it obscure? These questions have yet to be addressed in systematic fashion. Criticism of the discontinuity thesis has focused largely on substantive matters: the dimensions of recent change (Jones and Newburn 2002; Matthews 2005; Crawford 2006; Reiner 2010: 14-22; White and Gill 2013); the persistence of continuities underlying change (Garland 2003; Rigakos and Hadden 2001; Hutchinson 2005; Dodsworth 2015); and the historical antecedents of contemporary developments (Braithwaite 2003; Zedner 2006). By contrast, there has been remarkably little scrutiny of its historiographical underpinnings. This issue is discussed chiefly in review articles; only a few authors have ventured broader reflections, rarely with reference to the literature as a whole (see Garland 2003; O'Malley 1997; Stenson 1998; Zedner 2006). Thus, we have powerful critiques of specific characterisations of contemporary crime control, but little scrutiny of the historiographical means of characterisation. Given the influence of *fin-de-siècle* criminology, this absence is at once striking and unsettling. It suggests a lack of reflexivity concerning the terms on which criminologists engage with the contemporary world, how these terms are established historiographically, and their consequences for the construction of criminological knowledge.

This article provides the first sustained analysis of the mode of periodisation underpinning leading characterisations of contemporary crime control.[1] By importing into criminology insights from historiography and historical theory, it offers a critique of *fin-de-siècle* criminology *as an historiographical enterprise*, and outlines an alternative approach to characterising contemporary crime control in its historical context. To accomplish these tasks, the article situates accounts of contemporary change in longer-term perspective. The discontinuity thesis embraces an historiographical grammar of breaks between old and new which structures accounts of crime control across the modern era; hence, it behoves a critical analysis of late-modern 'epochalism' to confront the epoch-making claims of modernity too (Osborne 1995: ch. 1). First, the article demonstrates that the received history of crime control – which narrates the rise and fall of the criminal justice state – is founded upon a stadial model of history, in which discrete episodes of disruptive change ('transitions') are separated by periods of continuity ('stages'). Second, the article reveals that work based upon this model faces acute difficulties in accommodating the complex and varied evidence gleaned from the historical record. And third, the article outlines a more nuanced and flexible approach to long-term analysis, founded on a pluralised conceptualisation of historical time, a variegated understanding of crime control as a social field, and a collaborative mode of historiography. This new approach may lead us fundamentally to rethink the character of contemporary crime control, with potentially far-reaching implications for criminology.

[1] The focus here is on British criminology and histories of crime control in Britain, though aspects of the analysis are applicable more broadly.

Stages and Transitions in the Governance of Crime

While there is no consensual interpretation of crime control history, one can assemble a composite narrative from the existing literature which is widely recognised within criminology. This 'received history' fuses classic studies of modernisation and criminal justice (Silver 1967; Christie 1977; Spitzer and Scull 1977; Spitzer 1979) with the 'new classics' of *fin-de-siècle* criminology detailed above.[2] The result is a narrative centred on the rise and fall of the monopolistic criminal justice state (Churchill 2014). According to this account, the governance of crime before the nineteenth century fell chiefly to local communities and private individuals: prosecution was a private responsibility; formal policing was driven by volunteers; state punishments, though exceptionally severe, were sparsely deployed. This 'early modern' mode of control gave way to a 'modern' system in the first half of the nineteenth century: professional police forces superseded communal self-policing; the burden of prosecution passed from the public to the police; bodily punishments yielded to the penitentiary; and penal logic shifted from deterrent terror to disciplinary reformation. This modern settlement has been characterised as the 'policed society' (Silver 1967), 'policeman-state' (Gatrell 1990) and 'criminal justice state' (Zedner 2006). Ultimately, late in the twentieth century, crime control departed from this modern inheritance, a shift marked by: the dispersal of disciplinary controls beyond institutional bounds; the pluralisation of policing and security provision; the 'responsibilisation' of new actors in crime control; the turn to risk-based and pre-emptive modes of governance; and the rise of penal populism. The result was a

[2] Stanley Cohen's *Visions of Social Control* (1985) articulates between these two bodies of scholarship, tracing both the formation of modern institutional control in the nineteenth century and the emergent 'dispersal of discipline' in the later twentieth century. See also Lea (2002).

plural, preventative and punitive system, characterised as the 'new penology' (Feeley and Simon 1992), 'culture of control' (Garland 2001), 'postmodern policing' (Sheptycki 1998) or 'postmodern penality' (Pratt 2000; Hallsworth 2002). Thus, the received history of crime control pass through three distinct epochs: communal crime control; the criminal justice state; and plural crime control. Passage between them is punctuated by two major transitions: an early nineteenth-century 'modernisation' phase and a late twentieth-century 'late modernisation' phase.[3]

This received history evinces a 'stadial' view of history, whereby change occurs through a series of transitions separating one 'stage' of history from the next (see Corfield 2007: ch.6). Variants of the stadial model include the professional historian's shorthand for macro-historical development (ancient – medieval – modern) and Marxian analyses of economic change (feudalism – capitalism – communism). It is most closely associated with historians of the Scottish Enlightenment, who charted the progress of commerce, manners and civilisation through successive phases of development (Burrow 2007: ch. 21). The received history of crime control lacks such a teleological perspective – a vision of history as the progressive unfolding of some ultimate purpose or end ('telos'). Yet it shares the same essential, stadial form – a specific grammar which periodises history according to a sequenced succession of stages and transitions.[4] It carves up historical time into distinct epochs (stages) and

[3] Note David Garland (2001: ch. 2) posits two modernising ruptures in crime control: a late eighteenth-/early nineteenth-century break in law-enforcement and a late nineteenth-/early twentieth-century break in penality.

[4] Just as stadial histories need not embrace a teleological perspective, so teleological accounts of history are not necessarily stadial in form – as more fluid, evolutionary accounts of penal progress/regress demonstrate (for example Radzinowicz 1991).

identifies each with a specific regime of control; in this way, it ties particular *times* to specific *types* of control. The stadial model owes its status in criminology partly to the continued appeal of classical models of social transformation (Davis 1986) and to the 'epochalist' framing of prominent work in contemporary sociology (Savage 2009; Valverde 2014: 380-2). Perhaps a less obvious conduit for its influence is the work of Michel Foucault. Foucault's historical enquiries foregrounded successive episodes of emergence – of techniques of penality, for example, or modes of government. Though he did not overtly identify these phenomena with the periods in which they emerged, the sequenced form of Foucault's genealogies superficially resembled the stepped progression of stadial histories. When fused with a sociological sensibility – more strongly inclined to typologise past time – some criminologists came to posit a harder connection between time and type of control, and so to embrace a stadial scheme of periodisation (Stenson 1998; cf. Garland 1997: 176-8; Garland 2014).

The stages of crime control history are typically identified with fairly homogeneous and internally consistent regimes of control. Sometimes these regimes appear static and fully-formed, sometimes they appear emergent; either way, their basic patterns and premises are usually quite simply characterised. That said, special emphasis is often placed on the heterogeneity and internal diversity of contemporary crime control, in a manner which reinforces the claim to a decisive recent break with the past. The stages of crime control history map onto distinct phases in societal formation: communal crime control is rooted in face-to-face, paternalist social relations, the criminal justice state in urban-industrial capitalism, and plural crime control in a post-industrial consumer society. As a result, these histories are typically preoccupied with episodes of structural transformation: transitions take the form of sharp and sudden ruptures – or at least critical turning

points between distinct patterns of development – rather than gradual, evolutionary changes (cf. Hallsworth 2002).

Notwithstanding its influence as an overarching narrative, each section of the received history has been subject to searching criticism based on empirical research. Through detailed archival work, historians have propounded an interpretation of eighteenth-century crime control as characteristically 'modern', emphasising the logic and sufficiency of policing, the rationality and coherence of judicial decision-making, and the increasingly formal and rigorous mode of criminal justice administration. No longer, it seems, does the eighteenth century evince a pre-modern world of communal self-policing (see, amongst others, Shoemaker 2004; Lemmings 2011; Beattie 2012). Others have stressed the participatory, voluntarist and vernacular qualities of nineteenth- and twentieth-century policing and punishment: no longer, for these scholars, does this appear the age of a monopolistic criminal justice state (see, amongst others, Cox 2003; Bailey 2014; Churchill 2017). Furthermore, criminologists have used empirical research to query purported shifts in contemporary crime control – from the 'transformation of policing' (Jones and Newburn 2002) to the 'punitive turn' (Matthews 2005).

There is always a degree of tension between overarching interpretations of history and specific research findings – yet with the received history of crime control, the disjuncture is systemic. It results from adherence to a model of history which produces characteristic difficulties of interpretation in the face of complex and heterogeneous empirical material. The stadial model manifests a deductive approach to history: it fits empirical materials into a highly prescriptive scheme of periodisation. As Fredric Jameson observes, the idea of the modern 'does not begin with the earliest facts and data like an archaeologist, but rather frames a global

notion of the modern in the here-and-now, which is transferred wholesale to the past before…chronological doubts and discriminations…can begin to appear' (Jameson 2002: 75). Hence, critical scrutiny of the discontinuity thesis must delve beyond substantive issues to its basic historiographical premises. The following section develops a critique of the stadial model of history, exposing its structural limitations, before surveying four characteristic difficulties – four 'pathologies' of stadial history – evident in histories of crime control.

The Pathologies of Stadial History

The core limitation of the stadial model is its narrow and rigid conceptualisation of how historical time flows. In the received history of crime control, change is concentrated in short bursts, separated by long periods of continuity. This poses major problems for historical interpretation. It fosters a conception of historical change as unidirectional, simultaneous and transformative – in which any significant change proceeds along a common trajectory, occurs in contained (transitional) periods, and results in epochal shift. Furthermore, as change and continuity are assigned to discrete phases ('transitions' and 'stages'), and the historian must decide whether a given stretch of time is essentially one of dislocation or of stability. The substantive criticisms levelled at the received history (outlined above) signal the difficulty of accommodating empirical research findings within this framework, despite nuanced and skilful attempts to do so. Change in crime control is divergent, staggered and incremental at least as often as it is unidirectional, simultaneous and transformative. Equally, crime control history advances not as a simple succession of discrete movements, but rather as a complex concurrence of distinct rhythms.

The rigidity of stadial histories leaves them dangerously exposed to revised understandings of the past. Established historical interpretations are continually unsettled by new assessments, whether due to new perspectives, concepts, methods or data (Koselleck 2002: 65-71). This applies not just to the content of historical accounts (when and why 'modernisation' in crime control occurred), but also to their form (whether any such transformation occurred at all). This mutability in the *shape* of history means that stadial accounts tend to weather badly the winds of historical revision; indeed, those attached to *any* rigid, *a priori* model of history face the impossible task of fixing a mutable past in a particular form of representation (see Koselleck 2002: 68-70; Jordheim 2012: 158-160). Furthermore, the work of revision does not just operate from present to past – it also recoils from past to present. History-writing entails a 'double movement' (Le Goff 1992: 18-19): present conditions shape our engagement with the historical record, and that engagement in turn prompts us to rethink present conditions. This double movement frequently destabilises claims of epochal transformation in contemporary time: new concepts, formulated to make sense of a perceived break with the past, are repurposed retrospectively to produce revised interpretations of history, which in turn undermine the sense of separation between past and present upon which the concepts were originally formulated (see Certeau 1988: 79-80; Calhoun 1993; Dodsworth 2015).

Four pathological tendencies stem from the rigidity of the stadial form, which pose difficulties in sequencing continuity and change or in accommodating diverse trends and patterns. The first is the tendency to flatten sections of the past to produce settled stages. The clarity of stadial narratives depends upon rendering rich worlds of experience into simple staging posts in a sequence – for all their energy and dynamism, they are made to be still (Koselleck 2004: 240-1). Transformative

ruptures are fashioned by pacifying the preceding time, and thus making 'the new visible through juxtaposition against the old' (Savage 2009: 218; see also Calhoun 1993; Corfield 2007: 129-131). Furthermore, when a rupture is posited in contemporary time, the division of new and old assumes an overtly epochalist character. What de Certeau claimed of historical writing in general applies most directly to this epochalist variant: it 'speaks of the past only in order to inter it… [it] makes the dead so that the living can exist elsewhere' (Certeau 1988: 101; see also Jameson 2002). David Garland's *Culture of Control* (2001) is liable to criticism on these grounds – for exhibiting 'the new' in late-modern penality by flattening his account of the modern into a reductive portrait of welfarist rehabilitation (Zedner 2002; Hutchinson 2005). Most striking, though, was Jock Young's characterisation of the modern world as one of 'monoculture, moral certainty and absolute values…the uncontested, the unambiguous, the unequivocal and the undebated' (Young 1998: 292). Plainly, the modern experience was infinitely more dynamic, variegated, fluid and contingent than this staid 'modernity' of late-modern condescension (see for example Berman 1983). These flattened pasts are sometimes elevated into abstract 'types' (of social formation, or regime of control), which are readily cross-tabulated and contrasted with each other (Young 1998: 277-8; Taylor 1999: 11), and which may even succeed one another in any given sequence (McLaughlin and Murji 1999: 227). Yet history is not a succession of states of being, it is a totality of process; in reifying periods as interchangeable 'types', one abandons the task of interpreting relations between particular times, and with it the project of a properly historical characterisation of the contemporary (see Osborne 1995: ch. 1).

The second pathology is the tendency to telescope the past to preserve points of radical discontinuity. Scholars who struggle to discern abrupt ruptures separating

one stage from the next often posit more protracted transitions, allowing major change to seep out of its tight temporal bounds and wash across a broader timeframe. Several scholars have permitted the formation of 'modern' policing such a loosened chronology: what earlier studies (for example Spitzer 1979) portrayed as a generational transformation has been extended over more than a century (for example Reiner 2010: ch.3). However, extending transitions in this way poses interpretational difficulties. Transitional periods are understood in terms of the transition they contain – in terms of their emergent properties. Hence, the longer they are extended, the greater portion of the past is *telescoped* as 'transition', and the more the stages – which had provided the basic referents of periodization ('modern', 'late-modern', etc.) – are compressed within the overall narrative. A marked example is provided by Simon Hallsworth's account of 'postmodern penality', which construes historical change as a gradual process of emergence, rather than as rupture. Hallsworth claims this obviates the need for 'a periodizing hypothesis ordered around dualisms that need proclaim modernity is dead and we are all postmodern now' (Hallsworth 2002: 160). Yet the result is a grossly schematic account of history, which telescopes vast expanses of time in terms of singular processes of emergence: thus, the period from 'around the 17th century' to the mid-twentieth century is consumed by the coming of 'modern penality' (Hallsworth 2002: 148, 160). Rather than dispensing with periodisation, Hallsworth simply shifts its locus from stages to transitions. Telescoping the past in this way is also likely to lead to teleology, as extending transitions inflates those portions of history characterised not in themselves, but in terms of future points in the sequence.

The third pathology is the tendency to write off evidence which cannot be accommodated within a stadial framework as exceptional. Positing 'exceptions'

serves to reconcile contradictory developments with the search for a straightforward, 'master' pattern of change. Yet, as de Certeau suggests, such evidence is bound to haunt narratives of sweeping transformation, undermining the divisions they erect between new and old: '"resistances," "survivals," or delays discreetly perturb the pretty order of a line of "progress" or a system of interpretation' (Certeau 1988: 4). For example, Garland's account of the displacement of penal-welfarism by the culture of control has been challenged for marginalising female offenders (Gelsthorpe 2004); as he subsequently acknowledged (Garland 2004: 175-6), placing women at the centre of analysis would result in a more complex layering of penal transformations with persistent patterns of control. Similarly, John Lea's account of the modernisation of crime control jettisons responses to whole categories of offending – including business crime and domestic violence – from the 'general' trend towards state monopolisation (Lea 2002: 52). Lea discusses these areas in detail, yet he deliberately situates them outside the basic arc of his narrative. Permitting such significant exceptions as these brings the status of any 'general' trend into question. As Pat O'Malley argues regarding 'postmodern penality', 'we cannot isolate prisons as definitive of penality, and privilege them over many other developments in criminal justice that do not seem to match the criteria' (O'Malley 2000: 156; see also Bottoms 1989; Braithwaite 2003). On what basis may one take some locales, domains or institutions as definitive of crime control, and write off others as exceptions? Very often, putative 'exceptions' could serve perfectly well as the basis for alternative narratives.

The fourth pathology – an alternative to admitting exceptions – is the tendency to universalise claims regarding change. Claims of transformation in crime control often derive from enquiry into the rationalities and resources of governance,

rather than its everyday practice (see also Crawford and Hutchinson 2015). The reason for this is partly methodological: it is relatively easy to reconstruct long-term shifts in rationalities (through published primary sources found in reference libraries) or resources (via institutional histories); by contrast, reconstructing practices of control usually requires extensive, sometimes painstaking empirical research. Yet long-term histories frequently 'read-off' transformations in governmental practice from discursive or legislative developments (see O'Malley 2000: 160-61; Penna and Yar 2003: 472). This results in a unduly 'top-down' perspective, but moreover in narratives 'overdetermined by structural shifts', which pay insufficient regard to how governmental strategies are received, repurposed and resisted in everyday life (O'Malley 2000: 162; see also Stenson 1998; Loader and Sparks 2004: 16-17; Matthews 2005: 182-185; Cheliotis 2006). Schematic accounts of transformative rupture are fashioned by gliding over messy, everyday realities.

All this indicates that substantive shortcomings in the discontinuity thesis partly reflect inherent problems with its historiographical architecture. To counter these difficulties, one must find an alternative approach to characterising contemporary crime control in its historical context. Previous suggestions – to write history for its own sake (Braithwaite 2003), on the past's own terms (Loader and Sparks 2004) or based on primary documentary sources (Knepper and Scicluna 2010) – provide helpful starting points. Each signals the value of sustained, immersive engagement with the historical record. Yet none seems likely to furnish histories well suited to characterising contemporary crime control. According to the foregoing analysis, an alternative approach to long-term historiography would have to accommodate complex and contradictory evidence of historical development, while also providing a global interpretation; it would have to fuse an (empirically

robust) understanding of the past with an (analytically useful) understanding of passage from past to present. The next and final section outlines a new framework for writing long-term histories of crime control – one with the potential to provide a more satisfactory account of change, and thereby a more compelling characterisation of contemporary crime control.

A New Framework

To overcome the rigidity of the stadial model, an alternative historiographical approach must embrace a broad and flexible conceptualisation of historical time. Of interest here is the work of historical theorists who argue that historical time is plural or multi-dimensional. For some, time always flows according to multiple rhythms – as continuity, incremental change and radical rupture (Corfield 2007; cf. Braudel 1980: 25-54). More richly, Reinhart Koselleck argues that history is formed of multiple 'layers of time' (*Zeitschichten*), which flow at different velocities: there is no single track which paves its course, but rather a multiplicity of paths criss-crossing, some long and others short, some deep and others shallow, some winding and others straight (Koselleck 2002, 2004; Zammito 2004; Jordheim 2012). This pluralised historical temporality is fundamentally antagonistic to the stadial model's allocation of continuity and change to discrete phases of history (as stages and transitions); once one admits multiple layers of time, the apparatus of stages and transitions breaks down. As Kathleen Davis notes of the medieval/modern break in historiography: 'this periodization…requires a singularized Middle Ages: as soon as we begin to pluralise the "medieval" in any meaningful way, we begin to undermine the condition of possibility of the periodizing operation.' (Davis 2008: 5)

A pluralised notion of historical time also demands a radically different approach to characterising the contemporary in its historical context. Rather than seeing contemporary crime control as the latest stage in a sequence, irrevocably separated from earlier periods, one would regard it instead as the confluence of several streams of historical time. Currents of past regimes of control flow in the river of the now, such that several streams of time wash and run together. This would lead to a characterisation of the present not in opposition to antiquated pasts, but in terms of its diverse relations to multiple pasts – how it preserves, diverts and stops various streams of time. Where stadial historiography implies a division between living and dead time – between current and previous stages of history – the new approach would be concerned simply with the durations of particular flows of time. Equally, it would posit the contemporary not as a regime of control, but the current configuration (*in* the same time) of diverse historical flows (not *of* the same time – Bevernage 2016). Thus, contemporary crime control might manifest 'early modern', 'modern' *and* 'late modern' currents, exemplifying what Koselleck called 'the contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous' (Koselleck 2004: 239; cf. O'Malley 1997; Stenson 1998). Reconceiving the contemporary in this way would not succumb to the tendency – noted above – to reify 'the modern' (for example) as an abstract type of control regime. Rather, such temporal categories would retain their periodising function, not in referring to discrete stages of history, but instead in connoting ongoing historical processes, and so specific relations of the present to several pasts.

The task of capturing these relations between historical times would be aided by a pluralised conceptualisation of crime control itself. Viewing crime control as a homogeneous totality promotes a totalising view of its history, in which grand

structural shifts (from one totality to the next) predominate. Thinking of crime control instead as a *field* of governance – a social space constituted of diverse relations between multiple actors – makes it easier to capture the complex web of relations between formations of crime control across times (see Bevernage 2016: 15-16).[5] Others applying the field concept to analysis of crime control have focused specifically on 'late modern' responses to crime, rather than producing a framework for long-term research (Garland 2001; Abrahamsen and Williams 2011; Diphoorn and Grassiani 2016).[6] What follows briefly outlines how combining social theories of 'field' (Bourdieu 1993) and 'ecology' (Abbott 1988) with recent work on 'jurisdiction' (Valverde 2011; 2014) might benefit a new approach to crime control history.

Conceptualising crime control as a field of governance means regarding it as a semi-autonomous social space, composed of relations between multiple *agents* consciously engaged in the governance of crime. These agents assume *positions* within the field based on their differential capacity to govern. Agents' governmental capacity varies by several factors, including: access to resources; ability to deploy techniques; rationalities informing action; and the visibility of crimes and criminals to them (cf. Garland 1997; Johnston and Shearing 2003: 7-8; Valverde 2011).[7] Endowed with these various capacities – and thus positioned in the crime control

[5] Other theoretical frameworks which embed plurality in crime control, such as 'nodal' and 'networked' governance (Johnston and Shearing 2003; Dupont 2004), have more specific connotations which make them less amenable to long-term research.

[6] This emphasises plurality and diversity in contemporary crime control specifically, reinforcing the separation between old and new (see Garland 2001: 170-1).

[7] These factors are distinct, but not necessarily independent: certain rationalities (for example, 'zero tolerance') may promote certain techniques (stop and search); equally, specific techniques (for example, installing surveillance cameras) may alter the visibility of specific offences/offenders.

field – agents claim *jurisdiction* over the response to specific bundles of offending.[8] The reach of these jurisdictional claims is limited by a number of factors, including: the time of offending; the (generic) space and (particular) place of offending; the characteristics of the offender; and the relation between agent and offender (cf. Valverde 2011). Different jurisdictional claims may clash and collide, yet the same bundle of offending might also be shared between multiple agencies – between agents of equal standing, for example, or between a dominant and a subordinate agent (Abbott 1988: 69-75; Liu and Emirbayer 2016: 68-71). Taken together, these jurisdictional claims form a multi-layered web of governance, the parameters of which delineate the bounds of crime control as a sphere of conscious practice. This is an essentially synchronic model of social action – a 'structure-in-moment' (Abbott 2016: 34); the task for historical analysis would be to reconstruct in detail the changing configuration of the field through time, both locally (trajectories of individual agents, jurisdictional change within specific sectors, etc.) and globally (overall composition of the field, aggregate pattern of jurisdictional claims, etc.).

To speak of crime control as a field is not to suggest that it constitutes a sphere of action divorced from wider practices of regulation, normative ordering or social control. Fields are analytical constructs – which isolate particular varieties of social action for dedicated analysis – rather than descriptions of pre-given divisions in the social world.[9] Those designated 'agents' in the crime control field are individuals and

[8] This assumes that individuals, groups and institutions become social actors ('agents') upon entering the field, and in turn make jurisdictional claims. Alternatively, one might suppose that agents are not pre-given, but are formed from emerging boundaries between jurisdictional claims (Abbott 1995).

[9] One must decide how best to carve up social action into fields, and the designation of any particular field (including the crime control field) is open to critique.

institutions which *at some moment* come to act consciously in the governance of crime; many will pass in and out of the field in everyday life, rather than establishing themselves in it (in the manner of professionals or specialist agencies). Conceiving of crime control as a field simply implies that it is partly differentiated from other forms of social action – that those who respond to crime are exposed to specific pressures and influences, confronted with particular 'rules of the game', and perhaps inclined to a distinctive conception of 'what should be done' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Martin 2003). The degree to which crime control is differentiated from other forms of social action varies over time, contingent in part on the efforts of professionals, experts and institutions to construe the governance of crime as a specialist domain (cf. Bourdieu 1993: 112-113).

The key advantage of the field concept for long-term analysis is that it pluralises crime control, and thus facilitates thinking about multiple flows of historical time. As such, it provides a route around the pathological tendencies of the stadial model. One can easily posit major shifts in particular jurisdictional claims, or in the positions of particular agents, without generalising change across the wider field. Equally, one can accommodate divergent trends in crime control across localities or between groups of offenders, without writing off one or other as exceptional to a purported master pattern. The field framework also obstructs attempts to conjure some past regime of control as a simple foil against which to establish the novelty of the contemporary. Instead, it invites systematic analysis of the many and varied tracks of time leading back from the present configuration of the field. Finally, it provides scholars with a rich set of indicators of emerging patterns of change in crime control. Besides the central dimensions of change examined in *fin-de-siècle* criminology – who governs (composition of agents) and how (their resources, rationalities and

techniques) – the field model invites more sustained enquiry into the *quality* of jurisdictional claims. Is there a trend towards stronger or weaker claims? Are the bounds of jurisdictions increasingly distinct or increasingly blurred? Are we seeing increasing jurisdiction-sharing or jurisdictional conflict? How 'connected' is the system of jurisdictions – how far does change in one sector affect the field as a whole? How is the aggregate web of jurisdictions changing in scale or in shape? Does aggregate expansion result from jurisdictional claims over new bundles of offending? (See Abbott 1988: 108-10; Krause 2018.)

The basis of a new approach to long-term history, then, comprises pluralised understandings of historical time and crime control. But how is such a history to be written, such that it can adequately characterise the contemporary governance of crime? The typical mode of historiography to-date is that of the lone scholar, heroically bringing order to the jumble of existing research, and using this synthesis to characterise the present. However, the analytical demands of the new approach would surely exceed the capacity of any single author. To write such a history, one would need not just a capacious grasp of developments across the crime control field over hundreds of years, and the multiple rhythms of change they manifest, but also – as has been stressed throughout – a sustained engagement with the empirical record of the past. It is through such engagement that the 'double movement' of historiography is accomplished – that new readings of the past, forged in light of present concerns, return to reshape understanding of the contemporary situation. No individual scholar could satisfy these demands. Instead, a collaborative mode of historiography, based upon review and synthesis of existing historical and contemporary research, might prove fruitful. Positioned between the schematic history of the criminologist and the archival craft of the historian, such a 'meta-history'

would require collaboration between specialists in particular topical domains and historical periods. Thus, it would entrench both a concern for the specificities of contemporary crime control (amongst criminologists) and experience of in-depth engagement with the historical record (amongst historians). Any resulting interpretation would doubtless be subject to critique by specialists; yet through sustained, collaborative scholarship, we could reasonably aspire to refine and reconstruct long-term histories of crime control in the revisionist spirit which has hitherto been lacking (cf. Garland 1997: 205).

The approach outlined above would allow scholars to chart significant contemporary change without pinpointing discrete, watershed moments at which the governance of crime shifted from one epochal configuration to another. It would guide them in working at the more subtle (and empirically satisfying) task of tracing the shifting contours of its component jurisdictions and hence discerning multiple flows of historical time.[10] Of course, the approach outlined above is predicated on certain assumptions: that historical time is composed of multiple layers, which never converge to a single seam; that crime control is always distributed between several actors, and never wholly mastered by a single agent. Yet crucially, by contrast with the stadial model, it does not prescribe the form in which historical passage occurs. By allowing scholars far greater historiographical flexibility, it might therefore elicit long-term histories which are responsive (rather than resistive) to ongoing revisions to historical interpretation. Finally, by characterising the present in terms of shifting relations to multiple pasts – rather than as an emerging new stage of history – this approach is likely to avoid the fatalistic sentiment which critics discerned in *fin-de-*

[10] Though the appeal of the conventional approach will doubtless persist, given the cachet attached to such bold and commanding narratives.

siècle criminology's assessment of the contemporary condition (see O'Malley 2000; Zedner 2002; Matthews 2005).

Conclusion: Historical Criminology and the Character of Our Times

History matters to criminology: it is a key resource through which we criminologists make sense of our times.[11] It can be used to explain contemporary phenomena (Lawrence this issue) and to critique them (Garland 2014).[12] In contemporary criminology, though, history has perhaps been most influential as a means of *characterising* the present – by revealing 'where we are' in the sweep of history. The work of characterisation is invaluable to a field preoccupied by a fleeting present and an open future: it lends stability to the terms of contemporary enquiry, and allows scholars to draw connections and identify common themes across diverse areas of study. From revised characterisations of the present arise new research questions and programmes. Yet precisely because they help set the agenda for criminological research, we must attend closely and critically to how works of historical characterisation are accomplished. This article has exposed some common difficulties and limitations in historical studies of contemporary crime control. It has scrutinised the historiographical basis of *fin-de-siècle* criminology and critiqued its adherence to a stadial view of history. In its place, the article has recommended collaboration between criminologists and historians – based upon a shared understanding of historical time as plural and of crime control as a multi-jurisdictional field – to reformulate the received long-term account. This approach has potential to

[11] This even though relatively little published work in criminology is overtly historical (Lawrence 2012).

[12] Further on the functions of historical research, see Yeomans (this issue).

rectify the shortcomings of existing work by mediating between the empirical and the theoretical, the particular and the general. In providing the basis for a new history of crime control, it also presents an opportunity to see recent developments with new eyes – to see in them new parallels with, and departures from, several pasts.

This exploration of the historiography of crime control raises two broader issues concerning the role of historical scholarship in criminology. First, it suggests the advantages of developing a more thoroughly historical criminology, and especially of embedding dedicated work on historiographical concepts, methods and approaches. Given the fruits of historical scholarship can have major effects on its research, criminology needs to develop space for sustained, critical enquiry into modes of historical scholarship. Historiographical techniques matter not just to those interested in the past, but also to those studying the present – after all, there can be no clarity regarding what is contemporary outside of an historical frame of reference. An intellectual field which neglects to interrogate how such frames are established deprives itself of a vital resource of critical and reflexive scholarship.

Second, this article suggests the need to rethink the relation between historical and theoretical enquiry in criminology. *Fin-de-siècle* criminology emerged in close connection with new developments in social theory, with several scholars convinced that new times called for new analytical techniques (Ericson and Haggerty 1997; McLaughlin and Murji 1999; Pratt 2000). As David Garland and Richard Sparks concluded, late-modern social changes 'require us to rethink the criminological enterprise and bring it more into line with the way that crime is experienced, represented and regulated today.' (Garland and Sparks 2000: 201-202) Such calls to re-evaluate the criminologist's theoretical toolkit, though in many respects fruitful, lacked a revisionist impulse: a disposition to redeploy new theories

to interrogate critically the supposed break between past and present. History is not fixed – it moves as a sort of shadow of the present. It has the power to surprise us, to disturb settled perceptions of the past and to challenge the pretentions of the present (Braudel 1980: 36-37; Knepper and Scicluna 2010: 414). A more fully historical criminology would profit from cultivating a keen revisionist impulse – channelled through the historiographical 'double movement' from present to past and past to present – with the potential to subvert the historical premises upon which new waves of theorising are often based. By striving to rediscover the past, we obtain original perspectives on crime and justice today, and on the theoretical requirements of contemporary scholarship. Understanding crime and control in 'new times' may require new theories – but it certainly requires us to revisit history.

Acknowledgements

Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the 'Experiencing Justice' conference (Brussels), British Crime Historians Symposium (University of Edinburgh) and British Society of Criminology conference (Sheffield Hallam University). I am grateful to the attendees on each occasion, and to Adam Crawford, Paul Lawrence, Tim Newburn, Zoltán Boldizsár Simon, Henry Yeomans and two anonymous reviewers for their comments on previous drafts.

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