Editor's Introduction

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Last week, a jury in Minnesota found former Minneapolis police officer, Derek Chauvin, guilty on all three counts (second-degree murder, third-degree murder and manslaughter) in the killing of George Floyd, a Black man whose death in police custody on May 25, 2020, was captured on video, setting off a wave of protests calling for racial justice and changes to law enforcement's treatment of people of color. It seems only fitting, then, to begin this issue with articles discussing issues of policing and race: “Kettle Logic” by Mark Neocleous (2021), “‘It Often Feels Like You Are Talking to a Wall’: Police and Private Security Responses to the Campaign to Protect Pont Valley Against Opencast Coal Extraction” by Nathan Stephens-Griffin, Jack Lampkin, Tanya Wyatt, and Carol Stephenson (2021), “‘Cops and the Klan’: Police Disavowal of Risk and Minimization of Threat from the Far-Right” by Taimi Castle (2020), “Object not Agent: Reflexivity and Violence in Police Research” by Kaitlin M. Ball (2020), and “Racial Threat and Crime Control: Integrating Theory on Race and Extending its Application” by Justin Smith (2020).

As we know all too well, George Floyd was not the first Black man to be killed by a White police officer. He has not been the last. In fact, two weeks ago, Kimberly A. Potter, an officer in the Brooklyn Center Police Department, shot Daunte Wright, a twenty-year-old Black man, some ten miles from the Minneapolis courthouse where Chauvin was on trial. Potter has been charged with second-degree manslaughter, but whether she will be convicted, as Chauvin was, will not be known until after this issue goes to print. Thus, whether we are witnessing a “huge paradigm shift,” to quote Nekima Levy Armstrong, the Minneapolis-based civil rights lawyer and social justice activist, remains to be seen.

In an interview, Chris Stewart, a lawyer for George Floyd's family, said, “normally, I say justice by video is the only way that African Americans ever, you know, get prosecutions in this type of case” (quoted in King 2021; Martin and King 2021). “[I]f there were no videos,” Stewart continued, “if there were no bystanders screaming, get off him, if—you know, if no one was paying attention, we never would have heard of this case. I never would have even been brought in, and the world wouldn't have made it go viral” (quoted

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in King 2021; see also Martin and King 2021). Stewart added that Walter Scott was fatally shot on April 4, 2015, in North Charleston, South Carolina, by Michael Slager, an officer in the North Charleston Police Department—a death that was also captured on video. Stewart, who represented the family of Walter Scott, recalled that the shooting generated widespread controversy and that coverage was “huge” (quoted in Martin and King 2021). “It was worldwide for about a month. And then people moved on. You know, you got back to work. You got back to your family. You got back to life,” Stewart explained (quoted in Martin and King 2021).

So, what (has) made George Floyd’s death different?

Stewart submits that COVID-19 may have played a role: “when George Floyd happened, we were all trapped in our homes. You couldn’t move on. You know, there was no going to work. There was no leaving the house. And so people that normally wouldn’t care about the death of some Black man in Minnesota cared” (quoted in Martin and King 2021). Stewart’s suggestion is certainly plausible: confinement in our homes created a certain commonality among people; it slowed down the pace of our daily existence, while also affording us the opportunity to appreciate life and mourn its loss—whether from Derek Chauvin’s knee on the back of George Floyd’s neck or from irresponsible actions of the Trump Administration in response to the pandemic—the subject of Valeria Vegh Weis and Brittany Magnin’s article (2021).

In “Essential Crimes? Essential Punishments? Rethinking Essentiality in the Midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic,” Valeria Vegh Weis and Brittany Magnin explore how the COVID-19 pandemic has helped illuminate how certain crimes and harms, while injurious to many, are “essential” to the perpetuation of the status quo by the powerful. As they maintain,

certain acts and omissions . . . are integral to the success of powerful sociopolitico-economic entities. . . . [T]hey are *essential* to the maintenance of an order that benefits these elites: they are “essential crimes” for the powerful to (commit to) remain powerful. And during the COVID-19 pandemic . . . many of these acts and omissions—many of these “essential crimes” by states and corporations—were laid bare. [emphasis in original]

Vegh Weiss and Magnin assert that the Trump Administration’s actions and inactions with respect to the COVID-19 may have constituted “state crimes of omission” and “crimes of globalization,” and they also describe “state-corporate crimes and harms” and “corporate crime” perpetrated in and during the COVID-19 pandemic. These “crimes of the powerful,” as they are known, are analyzed in the two articles that follow that of Vegh Weiss and Magnin.

In “Plastic Waste and the Environmental Crisis Industry,” Smith and Brisman (2021) explain how some governments have used the cover of the global pandemic to roll back environmental protections. At the same time, they point out, the plastic industry has framed the use of plastic straws, plastic bags and other single-use plastics as “socially *responsible*” (emphasis in original). Thus, just as “[t]he planet appeared to breathe a sigh of relief as flights were grounded... and cars remained parked on driveways during the COVID-19 lockdown of 2020,” Smith and Brisman (2021) lament, governments and industries found ways to diminish these modest environmental gains.

Anamika Twyman-Ghoshal’s (2021) article, “State Co-offending: The Case of the Recolonization of the Chagos Archipelago and the Forced Eviction of the Chagossians,” based on research conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrates how “state crime” is not a recent phenomenon. Twyman-Ghoshal analyzes how the recolonization of the Chagos Archipelago (in the Indian Ocean) and the forced eviction of its Indigenous

population in the late-1960s to early-1970s involved the collusion of two powerful countries—the United States and the United Kingdom—causing extensive social harm to the Chagossians in violation of international law.

“When powerful countries co-offend,” Twyman-Ghoshal (2021) elucidates, “they normalize human rights violations under the guise of security and public good. These narratives become more readily accepted when countries, especially powerful ones, act in concert. The result is a culture of impunity....” The relationship between narrative and power is explored further in the final four articles of this issue, albeit in very different ways. In “‘Like Fetching Water with a Bucket Full of Holes’: High-Profile Cases and Perceptions of System Failure,” Nicholas Chagnon and Nickie D. Phillips (2021) examine public discussion following the verdicts in the “Stanford rape case” in 2015 and the killing of Philando Castile by Officer Jeronimo Yanez in Minnesota in 2016 (a death that may have augured that of George Floyd), finding that both cases elicit different narratives, including those calling for individualized justice, penal populism, and transformative justice.

Chagnon and Phillips’ article is followed by two pieces by Rafe McGregor. In “James Ellroy’s Critical Criminology: Crimes of the Powerful in the *Underworld USA Trilogy*,” McGregor (2019) presents Ellroy’s *Trilogy* as a critical criminological enterprise—in the sense of offering a convincing explanation of the cause(s) of social harm—specifically, those committed by various agencies of the American government from the late 1950s to the early 1970s. As McGregor reveals, the *Trilogy* uses literary devices to establish a counterfactual vision of America during the 1960s and to represent the lived experience of perpetrators of state-sponsored social harm. In “The Urban Zemiology of *Carnival Row*: Allegory, Racism and Revanchism,” McGregor (2021) analyzes *Carnival Row*—an urban fantasy television series that explores racism, alienation and decivilization. Drawing on Frederic Jameson’s (2019) model of fourfold allegory, McGregor elucidates how the allegorical dimensions of *Carnival Row* reveal a particular combination of causes that contribute to the replacement of a “cosmopolitan ideal” with a “revanchist reality,” articulated by Gareth Millington (2011) in his theory of the “racialized global metropolis.”

In the final article of this issue, Sara Skott, Sara Nyhlén, and Katarina Giritli-Nygren (2020) examine narratives by professionals working on preventing gender-based violence in Sweden through a Gothic lens. Drawing on interviews with authorities responsible for preventing gender-based violence in one region of Sweden, they explore the way national policies are translated into regional action. Their analysis reveals how the “reel” is adopted by the professionals and becomes a part of the “real,” resulting in implications for policy. By looking at the participants’ narratives through a Gothic lens, Skott and her co-authors argue that local-level professionals working to prevent violence frame gender-based violence as a problem of two “othered” groups: the “Immigrant Other” and the “Rural Other.” Through a narratological strategy of illumination and obscurity, Skott, Nyhlén and Giritli-Nygren explain, these groups of offenders are rendered both uncanny and monstrous by the respondents in their study—a monstrosity that obscures any violence occurring outside this framing. The problem of gender-based violence is thus relegated from the site of the mundane to the sphere of the monstrous.

This issue concludes with five book reviews: Erica Bower’s (2021) analysis of Eric Madfis’ *How to Stop School Rampage Killing: Lessons from Averted Mass Shootings and Bombings* (2020); Giuseppe Maglione’s (2020) assessment of Judith Butler’s *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind* (2020); Kenneth Sebastián León’s (2021) consideration of Simon Springer’s *Fuck Neoliberalism: Translating Resistance* (2021); Brian Pitman’s (2021) engagement with Maya Schenwar and Victoria Law’s *Prison by Any Other Name: The Harmful Consequences of Popular Reforms* (2020); and Stephen T. Young’s

(2021) insights on Victoria E. Collins and Dawn L. Rothe's *The Violence of Neoliberalism: Crime, Harm and Inequality* (2019). These reviews—and these books—serve as reminders of the extent of the injustices in the world and the need to expose and counter them.

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