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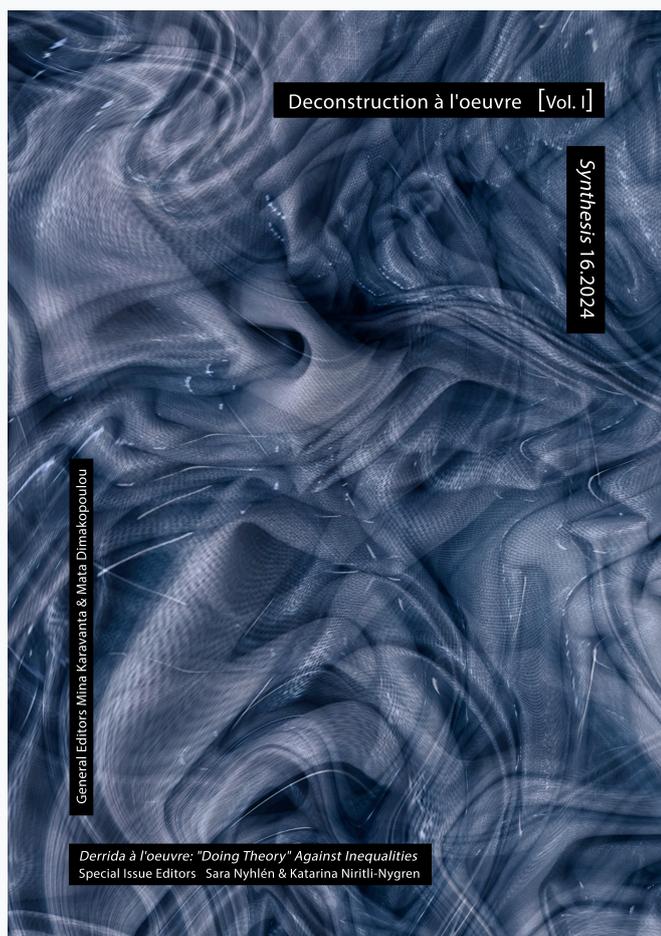
The Spectropolitics of the Swedish People's Home: Tracing the 'no longer' and the 'not yet' in the Swedish 2022 Election Campaign

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Abstract

Drawing on Jacques Derrida's concept of hauntology, this article develops a hauntological framework to trace the *no longer* and the *not yet* in the uprising of punitive populism in the Swedish electoral campaign of 2022. Our analysis is based on speeches made by party leaders from the three largest parties in Sweden and their election manifestos. The aim of this article is to demonstrate how the spectropolitics of the 'Swedish People's Home' (*Sv. Folkhemmet*) with its inherent contradictions is haunting our past as well as our future. Resting on a critical analytical tradition, we argue that election campaigns are important to analyse due to their potential power to shape the wider public understanding. Through the spectre of safety and the spectralisation of individuals engaged in 'gang criminality,' the Swedish People's Home assumes a spectralising power in politics, both left and right, that produces a punitive populism calling for the persecution and 'exorcism' of certain racialised groups. The shadowy downsides of the dream of welfare in Sweden is haunting; its hidden violence emerges in the politics of punitive populism.

Introduction

This article traces the *no longer* and the *not yet* in the uprising of punitive populism in the Swedish electoral campaign of 2022. Drawing on Jacques Derrida's concept of hauntology in *Specters of Marx,* we develop a

hauntological framework to perform a critical reading of the electoral campaign, demonstrating how the spectropolitics of the 'Swedish People's Home' (*Sv. Folkhemmet*), with its inherent contradictions, is haunting our past as well as our future. Through the spectre of safety and the spectralisation of individuals engaged in the so-called phenomenon of gang criminality, the Swedish People's Home assumes a spectralising power in politics, both left and right, that produces a punitive populism calling for the persecution and 'exorcism' of certain racialised groups.

The term hauntology, coined by Jacques Derrida in *Spectres of Marx*, refers to the fluidity of time, where the present is disrupted and destabilised by the past and by the future. The figure of the spectre disrupts the fictional or illusionary continuity of past, present and future and becomes symbolic of the "ultimate disjointedness of ontology, history, inheritance, materiality and ideology" (Del Pilar Blanco & Peeren 7). As such, this term gestures to multiple ways by which our present can be haunted by the apparitions of past injustices as well as by ghosts of lost futures. It refers to the traces of voices, epistemologies and temporalities that stalk history and lurk in the shadows of our awareness, where the past, present and future come together and collide, and form an ontological and temporal disjunction through which images of the past are projected in our present and onto the future. We argue that the use of Derrida and the hauntological perspective that we flesh out from his work, reveals how this election is the fulcrum by which populism now tilts politics by conjuring a falsely shared past and stoking anxieties about the future, a phenomenon that is apparent in so many places in Europe. We argue that using a critical hauntological lens goes beyond other sociological analyses by providing a perspective that engages with a dis-ease of temporality, exploring issues and phenomena which hover between absence and presence, where linear time is disrupted (Fiddler, Linneman & Kindynis). This enables us to temporally (de)contextualise this othering, exploring its temporal disjointedness, tracing the past inheritance as well as the future indebtedness in current political discourse and policies. The figure of the spectre also enables innovative and subversive methodologies that explore different forms of violence and harm as it triggers a temporal disjointedness that provides an opening of meaning, allowing us to "see what we feel haunting us" (Fiddler et al. 2, emphasis in original). This analysis invokes a more sensitive kind of seeing that goes beyond the order of the visible to make the un-seen and the in-visible become manifested. Democracy is always contested and always revisable by the manifestation of the un-seen and the in-visible; albeit confounded as an object of philosophical analysis, it is precisely the ambiguity

that the idea of democracy shelters within it that Derrida's analysis brings to the forefront (Derrida "Autoimmunity").

Hauntology and spectrality thus refer to "a trace that marks the present with its absence in advance" (Derrida & Stiegler 39). Such traces can only be distinguished indirectly; they resist immediate apprehension, operating in the fault lines of received knowledge and authorised histories. As identified by Fisher, hauntology can be conceptualised as having two different directions; the *no longer* and the *not yet*. As Fisher explains, the *no longer* refers to that which is no more but still lingers on, a haunting presence of something persevering throughout the past, and still affecting the present. The *not yet*, by contrast, refers to that which has not happened but still affects the present, the imagery of feared futures that may come to pass (Fisher 19-21). Both are to be understood as spectres that haunt the present in their very non-being.

Criminal policy in Sweden (and in many other Western countries) has been considered to have taken a punitive turn since the mid-1980s (Hermansson), but the period before the election in 2022 further reinforced this phenomenon. The election campaign of 2022 had criminal policy as one of its leading issues (Novus n.p.), and Ekengren-Oscarsson, an expert on Swedish elections, marks the 2022 election as 'unique' since no previous Swedish election campaign has ever been so focused on "combatting crime" (Strömberg n.p.). Our own approach, inspired by Derrida's hauntological ideas, is not to frame this crime-centred focus as something new but rather to explore it as a continuation of the past that intensified during the election in order to examine how it may affect our future.

Prior to the 2022 election, the punitive populism of criminal policymaking in Sweden had been communicated through a "declining confidence in rehabilitation; declining trust in government; reduced belief in experts; a positive view of punishment and the justice system; and an increase in the political exploitation of the crime problem in general and of the crime victim in particular" (Hermansson 24). This included the increased use of symbolic politics and alarmist rhetoric, leading to stricter punishment and moral condemnations (Garland; Hermansson; Tham). As we will argue, much of the punitive populism currently rising in Sweden rests on the notion of the Swedish People's Home. Like the *no longer* and the *not yet*, this notion operates in two directions. The first concerns that which in actuality no longer exists but is able to haunt as a virtual entity, while the second refers to that which in actuality has not yet occurred but takes place in the realm of the virtual, as an anticipation. In both cases, the virtual realm has a power to produce certain actions.

Historically, the Swedish welfare state was designed as this People's Home, a construct that can be traced back to the social democrat Per Albin Hansson's People's Home speech in 1928 (Hansson). The Swedish welfare state was affectionately referred to as a home, thus inspiring feelings of warmth, safety and trust and promising security and well-being after a long period of poverty and instability (internal and external), including emigration and class conflicts. While the idea of the Swedish People's Home is deeply ingrained in Swedish social and political culture and usually defended by left- and right-wing parties alike, the actual construction of this welfare idea was developed with the use of some ethically problematic building blocks. For example, racial purity was an important principle during the first decades of the Swedish People's Home, evident in the sterilisation policy between 1934 and 1975 directly conducive to the imaginary of a healthy and racially pure community of people. As Broberg and Tyden note, the Roma people and travellers were particularly exposed to this; it also had a direct impact on the Sami population, together with Tornedal Finns, who were forced into the processes of cultural and linguistic assimilation during the heyday of the People's Home (Catomeris; Hübinette & Lundström).

Resting on a critical analytical tradition, we argue that election campaigns are important to analyse due to their potential power to shape wider public understanding. Regarding the empirical methodology we use, our hauntological inquiry is based on speeches made by party leaders from the three largest parties in Sweden and their election manifestos. By identifying the symbolic statements that occupy a central position in the party campaigns, we explore hauntological motifs. In line with Derrida's notion of hauntology, we study the spectral traces of the past in the present and the demands this past makes on our futures. In the next section, we consider the hauntological perspective in more detail. This is followed by our reading of speeches and election manifestos as haunted texts exploring what this reading can add to our understanding of Swedish punitive populism.

The hauntological reading

The use of the spectral and ghostly as conceptual metaphors and theoretical motifs has been part of a 'spectral turn' of the fields of sociology and, more recently, criminology (cf. Fiddler, Kindynis, & Linneman). This changing shift of focus is often seen as a reaction, and perhaps remedy, to "our alleged age of amnesia" (Del Pilar Blanco & Peeren 16); it highlights how the past lingers in the present and makes demands on our future. This turn towards spectrality

is often traced back to Derrida's concept of hauntology in *Spectres of Marx*, where the concept of the ghost becomes symbolic of the "ultimate disjointedness of ontology, history, inheritance, materiality and ideology" (Del Pilar Blanco, & Peeren 7). Derrida conceives of the ghost as an always already absent presence. Ghosts—or ghost-like things—are entities or events that are both present and not present. They exist, or appear, at the interstices of absence and presence, of the material and the immaterial, of the knowable and the unknowable. Ghosts can trigger ontological and epistemic disjunctures; they confound knowledge, certainty and categorisation.

A "spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of communism" writes Derrida (*Specters* x), unpacking the legacy of Marx via the opening line of *The Communist Manifesto*. Derrida follows the long trajectory of the spectre of communism that has travelled from the *not yet*, the terrorising danger that spooked Marx's European contemporaries, to the *no longer*, the ghostly remnants lingering in the post-1989 aftermath. Yet, as with any ghost, this spectre may be resurrected, repeat itself and come back to haunt us once again. Indeed, Derrida (157) describes the figure of the spectre as something unknowable, as something we can see yet not comprehend, watching us from "a space of invisible visibility" (157) sometimes unseen. Different from a spirit, explains Derrida, the spectre in its very apparition speaks of "something disappeared, departed in the apparition, itself as reapparition of the departed" (5).

As such, the spectre may be conceptualised as a haunting entity that keeps arriving, a ghostly revenant of something *no longer* or *not yet* which irrupts into and disrupts the present with its absent presence, placing time out of kilter. Equally, though, the spectre may also be conceptualised as a body which has become *spectralised*, displaced and dislocated from time and context. While the spectre is to be considered a carnal apparition of the spirit—there can be no spectre without flesh—the spectre is also the subject of "spectralising disincarnation" (51). The spectre is in possession of a body, but a body without any inscribed rights. This muted spectre, rendered voiceless by the powers of spectralisation, is also the subject of persecution and exclusion; this is why Derrida writes that "one is only occupied with ghosts by being occupied with exorcising them, kicking them out the door" (176).

In our analysis, we utilise both these conceptualisations of Derrida's notion of the spectre. In this exploration of the haunting of the Swedish People's Home, we trace the apparitions of the *no longer* by exploring the spectre of safety that keeps haunting the construction of the Swedish People's Home. Then, we explore how the use of the term gang criminality creates

spectralised bodies of the *not yet* and how this relates to the spectralising power of the constructed idea of the Swedish People's Home. We employ the conceptual metaphors of spectres and ghosts for our hauntological reading of the election campaign because they offer important theoretical tools. As Kindynis states, "such motifs furnish us with the theoretical language necessary to explicate how memory and trauma become inscribed literally, symbolically, affectively and atmospherically in space and place" (39).

The metaphorical concept of the ghost is already symptomatic of a fluidity of time relating to the ideas of hauntology, as a figure who returns, repeats and is resurrected from the past to make an impact on the future to come. The ghost may then be conceptualised as someone or something that has been rendered invisible, shadowed or silenced "in a present haunted by both the past and the future" (Fiddler, Kindynis, & Linneman 5). To perform a hauntological inquiry is not only about illuminating spectres and making ghosts visible; it is also about engaging with these ghosts, to engage an ethical and political critique as they are forced into the light.

This engagement with spectres can be achieved by theoretically interrogating the texts, informed by Derrida, and Fisher's conceptualisation of the *no longer* and the *not yet*, as well as by considering texts that are 'haunted' or are 'in distress' in line with Rashkin's ideas (47-48). As Rashkin suggests, late modern texts may contain traces of cultural injustices of which the authors are unaware, yet haunt the main text, affecting its expression and meaning. By unearthing the spectres that may be hidden within such texts, discourses and social practices—which obscured the cultural trauma in the first place—these can be illuminated, providing new, contextualised meanings. Such use of hauntology can thus enable critical, deconstructive ways to explore haunted texts carrying important cultural meaning of the *no longer* and *not yet*.

Haunted by apparitions of the no longer: The spectre of safety

As mentioned, our hauntological reading of the 2022 Swedish election campaign focuses on campaign texts connected to the three largest parties in Sweden: the Social Democrats (S) from the left, and the Moderate Party (M) and Sweden Democrats (SD) from the right. We have read the printed versions of the speeches published on each party's web page together with the election manifestos also available there. The speeches include the official national speeches at the 'politicians' week' in Almedalen and summer

speeches made by the party leaders Magdalena Andersson (S), Ulf Kristersson (M) and Jimmy Åkesson (SD). Held annually in July since 1968, on the island of Gotland, the politician's week in Almedalen is the largest political event in the country, while the party leaders' summer speeches are seen as the start of the final sprint of the campaign.

The Social Democrats have a democratic socialist ideology, and the Moderate Party has a liberal conservative ideology; the Sweden Democrats generally describe themselves as social conservatives with a nationalist foundation, although the party has also been described as national-conservative, anti-immigration, anti-Islam and far-right (Mulinari & Neergard). While the ideological underpinnings of these parties differ, the call for a punitive turn in Swedish criminal policy looms over the political texts of all three. The Social Democrats were in power prior to the election of 2022, which was won by the right-wing parties led by the Moderates, who are now in power supported by the Sweden Democrats.

All three parties build their narratives or storytelling around the idea that Sweden is broken, that it is a society in decay and degeneration. While narrated in slightly different ways, the three parties share this baseline of the narrative. The Social Democrats' election manifesto was called 'Sweden Can Do Better' (Socialdemokraterna), the Moderate manifesto was "Let's Get Sweden in Order" (Samlingspartiet Moderatema) and the Sweden Democrats' manifesto was "Vote for Something New for Sweden" (Sverigedemokraterna). The labelling of the manifestos thus signalled that something was wrong in Sweden, and in all the texts and speeches, as elaborated below, there was an assumption underlying the different party programs that something quintessentially Swedish had been lost.

The major narratives in the speeches of Kristersson (M) and Åkesson (SD) were that Sweden had been a great country and could be again, but it was currently in decay. This is demonstrated by the stark contrast between how Sweden used to be and what Sweden has become. Kristersson, we observe, uses a rhetoric that affectively installs himself in Swedish history through his middle name, which he inherited from both his grandfathers: "My maternal grandfather was called Hjalmar, my paternal grandfather was called Hjalmar and I am of course also named Hjalmar" (Kristersson *Sommartal*). He continues with references to the Swedish welfare system and the values on which it was built. As illustrated by the quotation below, the conservative right can therefore be described as welfare nostalgic:

> I got not only my names from my family. From my grandfather and my mother, I also took with me the values from the time of the big class journeys. Values about community—but also the pursuit of independence. The importance, indeed, the duty, to always make an effort, to always do the right thing for oneself. Don't be a burden on anyone, as grandma said. These are also values that characterised Swedish welfare from the beginning. The security systems were based on the line of work, you get—and you.

The Moderate Party's claim is that Sweden is in decay due to irresponsible immigration, soft politics and people not wanting to contribute to society but instead using welfare institutions irresponsibly or even illegally (ibid.). Sweden Democrats build their arguments on the same tropes but with the addition that they frame themselves as the only party in parliament that has no responsibility for the current situation, since they have been kept out of the ruling party coalitions and never been part of the ruling government (Åkesson *Summer Speech*). This decay and loss, resonating in all three of the party leaders' political agendas, is inherently linked to the idea of safety (emphases added):

> For more than 50 years, we moderates have consistently fought for more personal freedom. But never in modern times has freedom in Sweden been as limited as it is today, by violence and crime. *Safety* has become the great freedom issue of our time (Kristersson *Sommartal*).

> And I am proud to be Swedish. But like many Swedes, I also know that Sweden can do better. I see how much of the very best of Sweden—*safety*, equality, welfare and nature—is under threat (Andersson *Sommartal*).

> The *safety* and security of Swedish citizens will be our absolute top priority when we enter government negotiations after September 11 [election day]. A lot has changed in Sweden in a very short time (Åkesson *Summer Speech*).

These quotations from the party leaders' summer speeches all illustrate how safety—and its loss—constitutes a major theme in the electoral politics. This relates both to "national and international safety" as expressed in the Moderate Party manifesto, but also to the issue of making Sweden "safe again," ensuring that parents can let their children play outside or walk home alone from football practice (Samlingspartiet Moderatema). As these texts demonstrate, each of the party leaders engage in nostalgia over Sweden's "safe

past," mourning its loss and the lost futures this loss threatens. As such, a spectre of safety haunts these speeches and texts, emerging as a recognition of the presence of something that is no longer, but which still remains as an affective and sometimes irresistible force in the world.

This spectre is also intrinsically linked to the idea of the Swedish People's Home, as the contemporary loss of safety is contrasted with the welfare nostalgia surrounding the idea of the People's Home of the past. For instance, Andersson (S) often refers to the Swedish People's Home and its people, as exemplified below:

> In just a few generations, we have built Sweden from overcrowded housing with outdoor toilets to prosperity and paid holidays. And we have based this construction on the values of community and trust. In Sweden, we stand up, we help each other, we trust each other. That makes Sweden, the country we love, a country worth fighting for! (Andersson *Almedalen*)

At the same time, Andersson also acknowledges that Sweden and the values of the Swedish People's Home are "under threat," and while Sweden is good, it can always be "better." While this stance may seem unsurprising considering she was the leader of the party in power at the time, the referencing of a safe past which is effectively no longer also invokes a spectre of safety that informs the understanding of the past as well as the future.

In a similar vein of welfare nostalgia, Åkesson's (SD) speeches make references to the contemporary failings of the social contract underpinning community building, which is identified as an exclusionary contract. Åkesson argues thus:

> [C]ommunity building is based on a social contract. It is a model built with consideration, imbued with solidarity, but also associated with limitations and duties. The social contract, for example, does not at all fit together with an uncontrolled and demanding mass immigration. (Åkesson *Almedalen*)

Here, the loss of past values associated with the Swedish People's Home is used as a call to restore it, to stop the decay evident in Swedish society and make Sweden safe again.

Manifestly, the narratives of all three political party leaders evoke the idea of the decay and deterioration of the Swedish People's Home as well as the safety that it harboured, thereby invoking a spectre of safety. This spectre of safety, which is no longer, yet still lingers as an eerie apparition of the

Swedish People's Home of the past, haunting the political election campaigns and, as all spectres, has an injunction: it *demands*, undergirding the call for punitive populism. Only by implementing the punitive policies suggested by the parties in their respective election campaigns can the lost safety of the Swedish People's Home be restored and Sweden made safe again.

The spectralisation of gang criminality: the punitive *not yet*

"The gangs are Sweden's domestic terrorists—and the legislation must be adapted accordingly so that more are held accountable and disappear from the streets" (Samlingspartiet Moderatema). The quotation above is from the election manifesto of the Moderates, where the party lists the actions they are planning to take if they win the election. These proposed actions include making membership of a criminal gang a criminal offence; introducing double sentences for gang criminals; increasing the minimum sentence for serious weapon offenses (from the previous two years in prison to six); introducing visitation zones (so that the police have better opportunities to search for weapons); and allowing anonymous witnesses (so that more people dare to testify in court). The Moderate Party further proposes to deport gang members who are not Swedish citizens (regardless of whether they have been convicted of a crime); confiscate the gangs' money and introduce a reverse burden of proof (to seize the gang members' luxury goods); introduce a grant freeze for gang criminals and make it easier to evict them; limit opportunities for parole generally and for gang criminals in particular; and to introduce a completely new option for long-term electronic monitoring using foot shackles. As these proposed measures suggest, the main focus concerning criminality is on organised crime or 'gang criminality'. The legitimisation of anti-democratic actions that violate freedom in the service of securing the very democratic principles that ostensibly prohibit such anti-democratic practices, triggers the phenomenon of what Derrida calls the autoimmune syndrome of democracy. This phenomenon refers to the systems of protection or defence (against foreign invasion, misunderstanding, recontextualization, dis-ease) that mysteriously generate their own hazards and risks, that is, the means for their own undoing (Derrida *Rogues*).

This was also true for the other two main parties, whose efforts to increase Sweden's declining safety are equated with a crack-down approach on gang criminality. Just as the Moderate Party wants to criminalise merely the membership of a criminal gang, Sweden Democrats propose "double punishments" for criminality conducted by gang members

(Socialdemokraterna 2022)—and the idea that there is something wrong with Sweden and that control needs to be 'taken back' is echoed again in the 2022 election manifesto of the Social Democrats. The first six prioritised areas or suggestions in their manifesto are all about combatting crime and criminality, such as increasing the number of police officers, introducing harsher punishments and implementing policies to stop the recruiting processes of criminal gangs. Quoting Derrida, it's possible to say that "the 'great criminal' voyou thus rises up, in an insurrection of countersovereignty, to the level or height of the sovereign state; he becomes a counterstate to rival the sovereignty of the legal or putatively legitimate state, which is in a position of monopoly and hegemony" (*Rogues* 68). Indeed, the Social Democrats argue for harsher criminal punishments across the board:

> Serious crime undermines Swedish security, the trust we have in each other and that society can keep us safe. We see criminal gangs terrorising entire residential areas, that sell drugs and shoot each other in the open street. They are a threat to everyone in their vicinity—and if they are allowed to continue, sooner or later they will become a threat to our democratic society. They threaten Sweden (Andersson *Almedalen*).

Here, the spectre of safety justifies harsher punishments and crime control and creates narratives in which sensationalist crimes are no longer considered just anomalies but permanent and insidious features of contemporary Swedish society. To juxtapose gang criminality with traditional Swedish values and with Sweden as it once was, is to hark back to the notions of the Swedish People's Home. Derrida points out that when we use terms like 'democrat', 'terrorist', 'liberator', 'rogue', or 'gang criminals' we must remember, "the more confused the concept the more it lends itself to an opportunistic appropriation" (Derrida "Autoimmunity" 103).

Individuals engaged in gang activities are also constructed as something new, as alien criminal groups mobilising against the good society. This is made explicit in Åkesson's (SD) speech at Almedalen, in which he emotively expresses Sweden's torment:

> There is an ongoing violent, bloody war between different criminal gangs on the streets. We can see riots in the streets, parts of the city ruled by clans, self-proclaimed rulers in different city blocks. Sweden is also tormented by crimes that aren't related to shootings, bombings and pure executions. Burglaries and thefts, traveling

> foreign thieving crews…Robberies and assaults that aim to humiliate—Swedish-hostile, racist deeds—are becoming more common.

Within this discourse, gangs have not emerged as a response to poor or adverse social economic conditions but as the product of a pathological "gang culture" with origins from the immigrant community (see Hallsworth). As an irredeemable, monstrous figure, the gang member is imagined as the subject who will and *must* reoffend. It could be argued that the threat posed by anyone deemed dangerous or 'high-risk' represents a type of absent presence, something that has not yet occurred but is anticipated as highly probable (see Werth "More than Monsters"). However, the dangerous gang member is more than a high-risk subject; they are imagined as the subject *certain* to reoffend. This inflects their risk with a different quality. It is transmuted from something possible or probable to something inevitable, to something that has always happened and always will. Our analysis shows how the political agendas foreclose the future of democratic practices and transformation of Swedish and European politics from the perspective of all, including those who are misrepresented as the less than human, the less than citizen. By proleptically criminalising these bodies, these political discourses immunise democracy from what is fundamental to democratic practices, its openness to the changes and transformations of its demos and to the collectivities and individuals who inhabit it. Here democracy has lost its structure of a promise, lost its open-ended future, democracy is *not* yet to come (see Derrida "Autoimmunity"). It is precisely this belief that the gang member will reoffend—operating as an affective certainty—that turns them into a spectralised figure of the *not yet*; dislocated from time and context, their body is without any inscribed rights (Derrida *Specters*). With gang members reduced to perpetual criminals, locked within the paradoxical nature of the spectre and spectralised bodies as "always both *revenant* (invoking what was) and *arrivant* (announcing what will come)" (Del Pilar Blanco & Peeren 13), moreover, these spectralised offenders play an important role in the need to defend Sweden's borders, where state violence is thus viewed as a moral and justified response against degeneration.

The spectralisation of criminal gang members enhances the idea of them as unfamiliar and uncivilised, immigrants who can be locked up or shut out in order to protect and restore Sweden and its 'uniqueness'. As such, it conflates the issue of criminality with immigration, relegating the problem of gang criminality to unfamiliar, immigrant men who need to be persecuted or

exorcised (Derrida *Specters*) in order to restore the nation's safety. These ideas of safety and restoration also relate back to the notion of the deterioration of the Swedish People's Home and its associated loss of ideals. There is consequently an interplay between the spectre of safety and the spectralisation of gang criminality, where the Swedish People's Home constitutes a spectralising power, transforming spectres of the *no longer* as well as spectralised bodies of the *not yet*.

Engaging with ghosts: The Swedish People's Home deconstructed

Using a hauntological framework, this paper has aimed to trace the *no longer* and *not yet* in the rise of punitive populism in the Swedish electoral campaign of 2022. By drawing on Derrida's ideas of the spectre and of the spectralised, we have delineated the spectropolitics of the Swedish People's Home. This not only conjures the spectre of safety, calling for punitive populism by invoking the loss of the *no longer* but also spectralises individuals engaged in 'gang criminality,' fabricating them as perpetual criminals, haunted by an inevitable *not yet*. Related to Derrida's exploration of spectrality, spectropolitics may be understood as the use of spectralising power to create an invisible visibility and absent presences in order to expel some subjects from the community and hence place them outside the compass of compassion (Derrida *Specters*). The rise of punitive populism evident in the election campaigns of the three largest political parties in Sweden—the Social Democrats from the left and the Moderate Party and Sweden Democrats from the right—consequently emanates from the spectralising power of the Swedish People's Home and its professed loss.

Tied to the cultural ideas of the Swedish People's Home, the Spectre of Safety appears as a ghost in the Swedish election campaigns, haunting the parties' narratives with mourned ideas of a lost past. Even the right-wing leaders are nostalgic about this ghostly figure of welfare past. As Fredric Jameson argues, the appearance of ghost figures in narratives necessitates "a thoroughgoing reinvention" of our understanding of the past (Jameson 43). As such, the nostalgic narratives of the Swedish People's Home in the past have not only reinvented a Swedish People's Home that is no longer; they have also conjured an image of the People's Home that effectively never was. While the aim of implementing the Swedish People's Home was built on the idea of increasing safety and welfare, this safety and welfare were, from the very beginning, built on exclusionary practices where certain people were deemed

irrelevant or unworthy of being included in the Swedish People's Home (Runcis; Broberg & Tydén; Catomeris; Hübinette & Lundström). The Spectre of Safety invoked by the narratives in the election campaigns, calling for increased punitive responses in order to be resurrected, is thus unearthed from within the remains and ruins of nostalgic narratives that have fabricated the Swedish People's Home, which reinvents our understanding of the past in order to demand changes for our future.

These reinventing narratives of the Swedish People's Home, furthermore, resonate in the spectralisation of so-called gang members. The spectralisation of members of gang criminality shows how the meaning of the term gang appears to be found not only in an exegesis of what it is supposed to contain but also in the affective causes it evokes. While gangs are involved in violence, the violence currently being attributed to gangs also involves many people who are not gang-related (see Brå). Still, the problem of violence in Sweden is equated with the problem of gang criminality and the spectralised individuals who are considered members of such gangs. Criminal gangs, we are asked to believe, is a force that arrives from outside the good society it then invades. 'Criminal gang' in this sense constitutes a term that is already loaded with meaning and emotion; it is a highly suggestive and racially loaded term. It distracts attention away from looking at the deeper and structural causes of crime and instead focuses on the idea of an outside threat; of immigrant others who do not belong, neither in Sweden nor in the Swedish People's Home.

As Vanessa Barker has previously argued, it would be a mistake to only read the development of punitive populism as a result of a new turn. The Swedish penal order has a long and Janus-faced history where both mild and repressive elements coexist. The organising principle of the Swedish People's Home, its people, and its negative impact on penal order, are not the result of shifting political winds (although such winds reinforce the phenomenon) or an import from the neo-liberal West, but it is part of the deep structure of the Swedish society itself (see Barker *Nordic Nationalism and Penal Order*). The rise of welfare nationalism and its subsequent criminalisation and penalisation of others, arise from within and are invigorated by the nostalgia and romantic longing for a safe and ethno-cultural belonging. This is precisely why the spectropolitics of the Swedish People's Home can resonate through all the political narratives of the three major parties of the election campaign; the punitive turn so dominant in the election campaign was not imposed by external political forces but was instead *always and already immanent within*.

We should learn, Derrida writes:

> not how to make conversation with the ghost but how to talk with
> them, how to let them speak or how to give them back speech, even
> if it is in oneself, in the other, in the other in oneself: they are always
> there, specters, even if they do not exist, even if they are no longer,
> even if they are not yet (Derrida, *Spectres* 176).

This imploration to talk *with* the spectres— "to let them speak and to give them back their speech" (176)—not only includes giving back speech to the spectralised members of gang criminality, but also involves theoretically interrogating the spectres haunting the narratives of politics, including the spectre of safety invoked by the Swedish People's Home.

As others have previously stated, the term gang is not a neutral way of designating a social problem; rather, it simultaneously signifies and explains the problem (see, for instance, Hallsworth & Young; Katz & Jackson-Jacobs). Insofar as it provides a single explanatory frame, nothing else is seen or allowed. By only looking for the gang, the wider complexities of life are overlooked, as well as the various complexities of the narcotics trade and weapons industry.

Drawing on Derrida, we identify a constellation of symptoms that signify a societal autoimmune response, where the exercise of power paradoxically undermines itself. This response manifests through the figures of the *revenant*—the spectral presence of Sweden's exceptionalist and violent past—and the *arrivant*, the foreseen arrival of future threats. Migrants and ethnic minorities are thereby haunted not only by the legacy of this exceptionalism (the *revenant*) but also by a looming future (the *arrivant*) that envisions a similarly violent exclusion. This dynamic conjures a trauma that projects a bleak, self-perpetuating future, unless it is actively disrupted in the present (Derrida *Rogues*). An ambiguous, nearly spectral enemy permeates the election material—an enemy neither confined to a specific state nor easily mapped or embodied—accompanied by apocalyptic descriptions of geopolitical tensions tinged with religious symbolism. In line with Derrida, we argue that this autoimmune logic propels a self-fulfilling prophecy, activating a counterproductive cycle where anticipated threats become inevitable by virtue of the fear they provoke.

As we have demonstrated, the spectropolitics of the Swedish People's Home, evident since its inception, is still at work. The hauntological presence of individuals who are excessive to the current paradigm of a desirable society, is strategically employed with the purpose of inciting fear. The use of Derrida

and the hauntological perspective in the analysis helped us reveal the election as the fulcrum by which populism tilts politics. Without the presence of this spectral power, the often radical or unprecedented response of the law would be difficult to legitimise, if not impossible. The politics is appealing to a falsely shared past and stoking anxieties about the future, in Sweden, as in so many places in Europe, and the use of Derrida enable us to see through this dynamic in new ways. The populist nostalgia of the Swedish People's Home shows that the welfare state was always both inclusive and exclusive, based on exploitation as a means of providing security only to those who belonged. The shadowy downsides of the dream of welfare in Sweden is haunting; its hidden violence emerges in the politics of punitive populism.

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