Do you want to acquire power through the image? Then you will perish by the return of the image

(Jean Baudrillard, 2005).

Five years ago now, in the edited collection *Cultural Criminology Unleashed* (Ferrell et al., 2004), we commented that the true meaning of crime and crime control was to be found not in the essential (and essentially false) factuality of crime rates, but in the contested processes of symbolic display, cultural interpretation, and representational negotiation. Images of crime, we claimed, were becoming ‘as “real” as crime and criminal justice itself’, with mediated anticrime campaigns, visually constructed crime waves, and media fabrications of countercultural imagery all circulating in ‘an endless spiral of meaning, a Möbius strip of culture and everyday life’ (ibid: 3–4). At that time, our intention was to be controversial; the goal being to play with the parameters of the discipline and challenge the staid conventions of orthodox criminology. However, surveying the world five years on, such proclamations appear less irreverent flights of futurological fancy and more commonsense observation. While the everyday experience of life in contemporary Western society may or may not be suffused with crime, it is most certainly suffused with images and increasingly images of crime. However, it is not just a case of image proliferation – contemporary society’s keen sense of the visual demands that images also be both mutable and malleable. Here the ‘logic of speed’ (Virilio, 1986, 1991) meets liquidity of form, as images bleed from one medium to the next. Uploaded and downloaded, copied and cross-posted, Flickr-ed, Facebook-ed and PhotoShop-ped, the image today is as much about porosity and transmutation as it is about fixity and representation. This, of course, poses a question: what does the term ‘image’ actually mean under contemporary conditions?

The word ‘image’ is utilized and etymologically defined in a number of ways. However, from a pictorial perspective, image traditionally refers to a representation of the external form of an object. This remains the case, of course, but for the purposes of this collection, we have deliberately sought to expand and enhance
the term. Just as cell phone photos migrate from street to screen and ‘user-generated-content’ websites set video clips loose from their origins, traditional conceptual understandings of the term image are also set in motion. One such example is the increasing interchangeability of the terms ‘image’ and ‘visual’. If the former relates to representation, then the latter (traditionally at least) relates to ‘seeing’. However, consider our mass mediated society, what Appadurai (1996: 35) calls the late modern ‘Mediascape’ (that bundle of media that manufactures information and disseminates images via an ever expanding array of digital technologies). Here, much of what we ‘see’ is actually mediated by the image. On the internet, for example, the photograph and the icon function as navigational devices, allowing us to ‘see’ virtual worlds and traverse the endless pathways of cyberspace. Likewise, while TV, film, and video all incorporate sound and broadcast technology, they are by definition primarily photographic experiences. Hence the increasing use of terms such as ‘visual culture’ or ‘imaged form’ as ways of explaining and understanding a world in which the collective conscious is now shaped and manipulated by the digital image-making machinery of the Mediascape.

This blurring of representation and seeing, of image and visual, is never more apparent than when we consider how crime is imaged in contemporary society. While mug shots, surveillance photographs, and newspaper pictures of notorious criminals have long featured as part of the ‘spectacle’ of crime and punishment in modern society (see Carney, this volume). Today, as criminals videotape their crimes and post them on YouTube, as security agents scrutinize the image-making of criminals on millions of surveillance monitors around the world, as insurrectionist groups upload video compilations (filmed from several angles) of ‘successful’ suicide bomb attacks and roadside IED (Improvized Explosive Device) detonations, as images of brutality and victimization pop up on office computer screens and children’s mobile phones, as ‘reality TV’ shows take the viewer ever deeper inside the world of the beat cop and the prison setting, there can be no other option but the development of a thoroughgoing visual criminology.

For some, such a ‘visual criminology’ is already with us. After all, phrases like ‘images of’ and ‘media constructions of’ are now common and commonly accepted prefixes to conventional criminological categories such as policing and prison studies. However, as I have stated elsewhere, ‘[t]his disciplinary drift into the realm of the image hardly constitutes an adequate visual criminology… Simply importing images into a discipline defined by words and numbers is in fact likely to retard the development of a visual criminology, since it will leave in place the ugly notion that written or numeric analysis can somehow penetrate

1 I use the term ‘visual culture’ here in its general sense and not as it relates to the distinct subfield of social and cultural study that draws together cultural studies, art history, philosophy, and critical theory (see e.g. Mirzoeff, 1999; Dikovitskaya, 2006 for introductions to the academic discipline of visual culture).
the obfuscation, conquer the opaqueness, of the image’ (Ferrell, Hayward and Young, 2008: 184–6). Instead of simply studying ‘images’ we need a new methodological orientation towards the visual that is capable of encompassing meaning, affect, situation, symbolic power and efficiency, and spectacle in the same ‘frame’. This new approach must seek to fuse precise visual attentiveness with politically charged analysis, to be as attuned to representation and style as it is to the ways visual culture impacts on individual and collective behaviour. As David Freedburg (1989, xxii) makes clear in his book *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (itself a work that urges art historians to take their analyses beyond traditional understandings of the ‘image’): ‘We must consider not only beholders’ symptoms and behaviours, but also the effectiveness, efficacy, and vitality of images themselves; not only what beholders do, but also what images appear to do; not only what people do as a result of their relationship with imaged form, but also what they expect imaged form to achieve, and why they have such expectations at all’.

In keeping with such a philosophy, this book aims to help cultural criminologists go beyond simple analyses of the static image/picture and develop the theoretical and methodological tools needed to understand the dynamic force and power of visual culture. Such a task is now urgent. Contemporary visual representations of crime, transgression, and punishment take us far beyond the realm of the criminal justice system or law and order politics; even beyond established understandings of the media’s role as ‘a storehouse of illicit excitement’, a ready resource for the voyeuristic consumption of violence and tragedy. Today, our world might best be described as a highly mediated ‘crime fest’, where the visual representation of crime and punishment plays out in reality TV theatres of the absurd and mediated spectacles of punitiveness. To paraphrase a famous quote by Gianni Vattimo and Wolfgang Welsch, over the last few years, the (visual) media has changed from simply conveying information or telling entertaining stories about crime, to actually shaping and producing its reality (Vattimo and Welsch, 1998: 7).

This is exactly the point at which cultural criminology enters the frame. Over the last decade or so, cultural criminology has emerged as a distinct theoretical, methodological, and interventionist approach that situates crime, criminality, and control squarely in the context of cultural dynamics (see e.g. Ferrell and Sanders, 1995; Presdee, 2000; Ferrell, Hayward and Young, 2008). From this view, crime and the agencies and institutions of crime control operate as cultural enterprises— that is, as richly symbolic endeavours created out of ongoing human interaction and power relations. As such, they must be read in terms of the contested meanings they carry; they must be interrogated as key social sites in which rules are created and broken, in which moral entrepreneurship, political innovation, and experiential resistance intersect. In undertaking this interrogation, cultural criminology often focuses theoretically on situated meaning and constructed social identity, and methodologically on forms of ethnography predicated on the Weberian tradition of ‘verstehende sociologie’ (see *Ferrell, 1997*). However, while...
early cultural criminological research emanating from the United States focused predominantly on rich, indexical cultural accounts of marginal deviant groups (e.g. Ferrell, 1993/1996; Hamm, 1995: see Ferrell and Hamm, 1998), more recently, it has expanded its focus to include space, place and cultural geography; the ongoing transformations and fluctuations associated with hypercapitalism; the vicissitudes of power, resistance and state control; concepts of risk and embodied practice, and a whole host of other areas. The strength of the ‘cultural approach’, then, is the way it seeks to tackle the subject of crime and criminalization from a variety of new perspectives and academic disciplines. In effect, as I have stated elsewhere, its ‘remit is to keep “turning the kaleidoscope” on the way we think about crime, and importantly, the legal and societal responses to rule-breaking’ (Hayward and Young, 2007: 103). In all of this, cultural criminology attempts to reorient criminology to contemporary social and cultural changes, and so to imagine a ‘post’ or ‘late modern’ theory of crime and control. In this regard, cultural criminology conceptualizes many transgressive behaviours as attempts to resolve internal conflicts that are themselves spawned by the contradictions and peculiarities of contemporary life; put in different terms, ‘cultural criminology seeks to fuse a phenomenology of contemporary transgression with a socio-cultural analysis of late modern culture’ (Hayward, 2004: 9).

Concepts such as situated meaning, symbolic richness, or cultural flow are, of course, meaningless unless they incorporate a thoroughgoing consideration and appreciation of the visual. Thankfully, cultural criminologists have had a long-standing interest in both symbolic interaction and the way meaning and power are negotiated and displayed through the efflorescences of mass-produced imagery. Similarly, from a methodological perspective, cultural criminology embraces visual analysis, with readings and counter readings of images and imaginative media/textual case studies and deconstructions featuring from the outset (see Ferrell, 1999: 406–8 and the international journal Crime, Media, Culture). How could it really be any other way? In our contemporary world of media festival and digital spectacle, the ‘story’ of crime and crime control is now promulgated as much through the image as through the word. Hence, cultural criminologists use the visual evidence of crime as a critical and pedagogic vehicle to illuminate the power of images in shaping popular understandings and social constructions of crime, deviance, and punishment.

From cell phone photographs and video footage shot in the combat zones of Iraq and Afghanistan and then posted online, to the grainy CCTV footage that drives the slurry of primetime ‘cops and robbers’ compilation shows (Fishman and Cavender, 1998; Rappaport, 2007), from unreal ‘reality TV’ moments that shape moral values and social norms, to stylized representations of crime and power in comic books (Nyberg, 1998; Williams, 1998) and even criminology textbook covers (Ferrell, Hayward and Young, 2008: 101–2), ours is a world in which ‘the street scripts the screen and the screen scripts the street; [where] there is no clearly linear sequence, but rather a shifting interplay between the real and the virtual, the factual and the fictional. Late modern society is saturated with
collective meaning and suffused with symbolic uncertainty as media messages and cultural traces swirl, circulate and vacillate’ (ibid: 123).

Needless to say, such concerns are seen by some as a frippery, a marginal concern well beyond the scope and remit of mainstream (state-sanctioned) criminology. Nevertheless, as cultural criminologists have said many times before, dismissing this focus on visual imagery as a decorative or ‘aesthetic’ criminology is to mistake method for meaning. In a world where power is increasingly exercised through mediated representation and symbolic production, battles over image, style, and cultural representation emerge as essential moments in the contested negotiation of late modern reality.

However, if cultural criminology is keen to break free of the constraints of orthodox criminology, it is equally keen to escape the limitations associated with the existing scholarship on ‘crime and the media’. To my mind, this relatively formulaic body of work (be it the ‘objective’ quantitative study of media forms associated with ‘content analysis’; the decades old ‘media effects’ literature that attempts to unearth tangible causal linkages between media representations and subsequent audience behaviour; or the tradition of ‘cultivation analysis’ which seeks to explain how an excessive fear of crime is produced by a surfeit of ‘anxiety-inducing’ violent crime stories) is in desperate need of creative reinterpretation and reinvention. The goal must be to move beyond this static received body of knowledge and strive instead to understand and identify the various ways in which mediated processes of visual production and cultural exchange now ‘constitute’ the experience of crime, self, and society under conditions of late modernity. This is now an essential task for criminology. For while, traditionally, criminology has typically denied the visual the sustained attention it deserves, elsewhere in the ever mutating world of the ‘Mediascape’ others working both within and against the criminal justice sphere are only too aware of ‘the power of the image’ and how it can be used both as a tool of control and resistance.

Consider, if you will, the extent to which contemporary Western police forces (along with the ever-expanding battalions of security and parapolicing agencies) now utilize camera technology and image monitoring in their everyday practice. Whether it’s identifying ‘known offenders’ via ‘algorithmic surveillance’ systems; using dashboard-mounted cameras in police squad cars; the use of video recording in custody suites and during police interrogation; the photographing and videotaping of crowds and individuals at political demonstrations and protest marches; acting as consultants on the installation and operation of public

2 Of course, criminology is not the only social science guilty of this charge. With few exceptions, sociology has also long ignored the visual as a primary source of data, prioritizing instead the two pillars of social scientific research, text and statistic. Thankfully, recent years have seen the flourishing of a fully fledged ‘visual sociology’ (see Harper, 1998; Papedemas, 2002; Banks, 2005; Stanczak, 2007; and especially the journal Visual Studies). One noteworthy exception within criminology is the expansive three volume set Images of Crime (2001, 2004, 2009), edited by Telemach Serassis, Harald Kania, and Hans-Jörg Albrecht.
privately funded urban CCTV systems; the deployment of mobile and static car license-plate recognition cameras; the use of TV shows like *C.O.P.S* and *L.A.P.D: Life on the Street* by certain police forces as both recruiting tools and informational devices to keep up with developments in other police departments; and now even the deployment of miniaturized uniform and helmet-mounted personal video cameras by beat officers, it’s clear that police work is now very much visual work. Indeed, one might even venture that we are fast approaching the point where prospective police officers might be better off enrolling on a media studies course than a criminal justice degree!

But the power of the image – be it a crime scene photograph, a slice of low-res CCTV footage from a surveillance film, or a car chase shot from a police helicopter cam – is not something that the State and its agents can ever fully own or control. Far from it – the force of the image, the power, and spectacle of the visual is simply too multidimensional. Images permeate the flow of cultural meaning in any number of ways, and just as they can be used to serve the State, they can also be used to critique and undermine it. One of the tasks of cultural criminology, then, is to insinuate itself into this flow. We must begin to use images and visual culture for our own ends, to make hard turns toward uncertainty and surprise amidst the saturating spiral of mass culture. For example, just as one interest group seeks to control or possess an image for its own purposes, another group can steal it right back and subject it a cultural hijacking and a radical reversal of meaning.

Anyone who has attended a protest march, a political demonstration, or even a football match in the UK over the last few years will no doubt be familiar with the sight of police officers photographing and filming the scene for surveillance and crowd control purposes. Now while, for some, such practices are just further evidence of an all-consuming Big Brother state, for others, it’s the trigger for organization and resistance; a way of practically invoking Jean Baudrillard’s (2005) portentous statement that ‘… those who live by the spectacle will die by the spectacle’ (see also Retort, 2004).

Heading out for Sushi on Second Avenue during the summer of 2004, New Yorker Alexander Dunlop inadvertently stumbled upon a demonstration against

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3 And then, of course, there’s the troubling (and largely unremarked upon) relationship that exists between police forces and TV executives involved in the production of ‘reality’ policing shows – a strand of programming that has become so popular it now constitutes its own genre: the so-called ‘criminal vérité’ format (one example, the ‘real life’ police show, *C.O.P.S.*, has spawned over 600 episodes, and grossed in excess of $200 million in the process). While many of these shows such as *World’s Wildest Police Videos* and *Police, Camera, Action*, are little more than tawdry compilations of sensationalist car chases or traffic stops gone bad, there’s also the phenomenon of the police ‘ride along’ show, where a TV crew follows and films officers involved in every aspect of police work, from traffic cop, to dog handler, to helicopter squad. What’s interesting about these shows is the way they are used by the police forces themselves both as a visual recruiting sergeant and as a form of ‘image management’ – 30 minute media-friendly police promo videos.
the Republican Party’s National Convention. Realising his mistake, Dunlop tried to extricate himself from the area but found his path blocked by riot police setting up a perimeter around the area; a process that, in a bizarre physical manifestation of Stan Cohen’s (1985) famous criminological dictum ‘widening the net and thinning the mesh’, involved the deployment of an eight-foot-high plastic mesh fence and the subsequent arrest of anyone found on the ‘wrong side’ of the temporary barricade (Clancy, 2007). Within minutes, Dunlop was arrested, handcuffed, manhandled onto a bus and transferred to a temporary holding facility at Pier 57. Held overnight, he was eventually charged with disorderly conduct, resisting arrest, parading without a permit, and obstructing government administration. When Dunlop’s attorney, Michael Conroy, challenged the arrest, he was provided with an official police video tape of the demonstration showing his client’s arrest and subsequent processing. However, as an evidential record, the tape was seriously flawed. It contained a number of jump cuts that omitted Dunlop asking for police advice about how to exit the demonstration and also the key moment when he ultimately, very calmly, resigned himself to the spurious arrest. In short, the tape had been selectively edited. Enter Eileen Clancy, one of the leading figures of I-Witness video, an activist group who specialize in videotaping events that have the potential to spark civil liberties infringements. Expecting trouble, I-Witness video had been organising workshops and training up teams of videographers to shoot footage that could be used as part of a legal defence against mass arrests. This resulted in a ‘treasure trove’ of hundreds of tapes, including one that contained the vital missing moments in the Dunlop arrest. Conroy subsequently used the footage to successfully defend his client, but it did not stop there. As a result of the coordinated efforts of I-Witness video, the National Lawyers Guild and others, the vast majority of the cases brought against those arrested at the convention protest were subsequently dismissed.

A year or so later, a separate but not totally unrelated incident occurred that illustrates how the power of the image is being further democratized as a result of the panoptic gaze of digital citizenry. It is 28 July 2008 and Times Square is deluged by hundreds of bicyclists as the activist group Critical Mass holds one of its monthly rides. During the ride, committed urban cyclist Christopher Long, 29, is involved in a collision with Rookie NYPD (New York City Police Department) officer Patrick Pogan. Tension has been running high between the NYPD and Critical Mass since 2004, when 250 riders were arrested for parading without a permit during a protest rally against the aforementioned Republican National Convention. Perhaps no surprise, then, that Long was arrested on charges of ‘Attempted Assault in the Third Degree’, ‘Resisting Arrest’ and Disorderly Conduct’. However, within days of the incident, a video of the collision (shot by a tourist) surfaced. It revealed that, far from being Long’s fault, the ‘collision’ had been caused deliberately by Officer Pogan who violently body slammed Long off his bike and onto the pavement (Eligon and Moynihan, 2008). Within days, the story was taken up and publicized by video activists such as the Glass Bead Collective, the TIMES UP Video Collective, and I-Witness Video, all
groups who know more than a thing or two about using the images in defence of civil liberties. This small collision became big news (at the time of writing over 1.6 million people had viewed the YouTube footage of the incident) – and ultimately big trouble for Officer Pogan. In an incredible volte-face by the NYPD, Pogan was first suspended and later indicted by a Manhattan grand jury for falsifying a police report and assault. In the words of I-Witness’s Eileen Clancy, ‘This indictment is a signal event for video activists. Despite the abundance of video showing that police officers have fabricated charges against people arrested at demonstrations, in New York City at least, we have never before achieved an indictment of a police officer for lying in a sworn statement’ (Clancy, 2008).

Like these video bloggers and activists, cultural criminologists must also work to ‘become the media’ and use the power of the image as a tool for understanding and monitoring issues surrounding crime and criminal justice (see Hoffman and Brown, this volume). That said, the focus of this book is not on video activism per se (see Gregory et al., 2001 and Harding, 2001 for useful introductions to this

4 At this point, one is compelled to mention the work of Hughes Légis-Bataille, the photographer who shot our cover image. A specialist in protest and riot photography, Hughes’ work consistently transcends the division between art and politics.
Opening the lens

field; and relatedly David, 2007). Instead, as stated earlier, the goal of this collection is to make a case for the importance of the image within criminology more generally. It is my belief that, given the ascendant position of the image/visual in contemporary culture, it is increasingly important that all criminologists are familiar with the various ways in which crime and ‘the story of crime’ is imaged, constructed, and ‘framed’ within modern society. This collection therefore offers criminologists, be they academics or students, policy makers or theoreticians, a more general overview of this relational dynamic, as theorized through the critical paradigm known as ‘cultural criminology’.

However, it is not enough simply to theorize or interrogate the visual. Whilst this collection will certainly help the reader unearth the hidden social and ideological concerns that frequently underpin images of crime, violence, and transgression, it has another aim: to point the way forward for those keen to embark on their own cultural criminological visual analyses. Given that many academic criminologists and the vast majority of criminology students have little if any experience of media studies, let alone visual cultural analysis, this book will outline and articulate some of the methodological strengths and conundrums associated with research into the ‘looping’ and ‘spiralling’ processes of the crime-media nexus (see Manning, 1998; Ferrell, Hayward and Young, 2008: 129–37). To this end, each chapter has a short ‘Methodological Reflections’ section offering some thoughts and advice for those wishing to conduct their own visually focused criminology project.

Therefore, to the various chapters that comprise this collection. However, before introducing the individual essays, a brief word about what you will not find in this book. As with any text, there is only so much that can be addressed in any meaningful detail and thus inevitably certain related areas of interest are not covered. You will not, for example, find any sustained attention paid to subjects such as the ‘psychological’ and ‘behavioural’ responses surrounding the relationship between image and beholder, or film-theoretical issues such as cinematographic technique, the psychoanalytic interpretation of semiotics, 6 interpellation, or ‘narrative desire’ etc. The mandate of this book likewise does not extend to include aesthetics, art history, or the changing relationships between images and people over history. Neither does it attempt to resolve the theoretical imbroglio surrounding the ‘media effects’ debate, or the ongoing dispute within cultural studies about the distinction between so called ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture(s). Similarly, we make no claims to summarize the voluminous body of research produced by the many disparate fields that constitute visual media studies.

5 See also Alfonso et al. (2004) and Pink (2006) for introductions to the field of video ethnography, a social research method that aims to ‘capture the detail and nuance of social interactions in context more intensely than audio or written description’ (Rhodes and Fitzgerald, 2006: 351).
6 For a thoughtful primer on how to understand and employ semiotics in (visual) criminological research, see Mariana Valverde’s Law and Order: Images, Meanings and Myths (2006, Chs 2 and 3).
Nor do we attempt to condense the criminology-specific empirical research on the media representation of crime (see Ericson, 1995; Kidd-Hewitt and Osborne, 1995; Reiner, 2002; Carter and Weaver, 2003; Jewkes, 2004; Boyle, 2005; Trend, 2007; and Carrabine, 2008 for eloquent and comprehensive summaries). Instead, we have stuck to our stated aim of understanding the theoretical and methodological nuances involved in the relationship between cultural criminology and the image/the visual. To this end, we have gathered together an impressive roster of academics well known in Australia, Continental Europe, North America, and the United Kingdom for their insightful works on cultural criminology. However, *Framing Crime: Cultural Criminology and the Image* is not just another collection of ‘sexy’ essays wherein each author is afforded free range to indulge their own gaze. Rather, we have sought a degree of consistency; the goal being the creation of a cohesive collection of topics that, when taken together, break new ground for cultural criminology without ever becoming esoteric or abstract. Yet a word of caution: these twelve essays are not meant to be ‘the’ definitive statement on cultural criminology and the visual – far from it. Instead, they should be seen as more suggestive than diagrammatic; a series of metaphors rather than an accumulation of static models. Otherwise, in the very attempt to engage with the fluidity of contemporary culture, we risk reifying our own understandings, risk forgetting that these understandings are at best useful ephemera in the emergent construction of collective meaning.

The collection opens with two chapters on the photograph/photography. Constructing a picture of the photographic ‘spectacle’ and its practices in the arena of crime and punishment, Phil Carney’s opening essay takes us on a historical journey from the invention of photography in 1839, through to our contemporary mediated world of late-modern digital entertainments. In a rich account of how colonial anthropologists, criminal positivists, and others sought to use the photograph as an aid to the scientific science of identification, the rise of newspaper photography, and the emergence of paparazzi, Carney asserts that what is omnipresent in this history is the way the photograph has functioned as a ‘social practice of production’. In this case, the production of a modern *spectacle* that turns around theatres of crime and punishment constituted from the performative force of the photograph and its associated festive dynamics of desire and power. Staying with the modern image par excellence – the photograph – but changing the focal lens, Jeff Ferrell and Cécile Van de Voorde’s chapter explores the photodocumentary tradition. Reviewing the work of celebrated photographers such as W. Eugene Smith, Robert Capa, and Henri Cartier-Bresson, the chapter shows how in the hands of a skilled practitioner, the photograph becomes an archetype that captures and condenses visual knowledge. However, this is no didactic history. In a comprehensive methods section, Ferrell and Van de Voorde offer advice on how cultural criminologists might undertake their own photodocumentaries; to click the camera shutter on their own ‘decisive moment’, whether that moment is found at the soup kitchen, the political demonstration, the street corner, or on the steps of the criminal courts.
Continuing the analysis of how photographs are used to frame social and personal life in specific ways and from particular angles, Phil Jones and Claire Wardle’s chapter highlights how photographic representations of criminals (when juxtaposed with text, headlines, and accompanying captions) are manipulated by tabloid newspapers to shape popular opinion about crime, justice, and wrong doing. Focusing on the pictorial press coverage of three centre-right British newspapers of the high profile Soham Murder Trial, Jones and Wardle unearth disturbing evidence of how newspaper-formatting techniques encourage readers to draw entirely misleading conclusions about the case and its prosecution. Given the influence of the tabloid press, it is perhaps strange that media scholars have tended to overlook the powerful role of page layout and image montages in the news making spectacle. This chapter provides a much-needed corrective.

A second batch of three chapters, in the words of Majid Yar, takes cultural criminology to the movies. Yar sets the scene by arguing that a thoroughgoing understanding of the cinematic construction of crime (in all its manifold dimensions) must play a central role in the project of cultural criminology. His essay starts by reviewing the established social science approaches to film study (content analysis, the Marxist tradition of film analysis, and, finally, an overview of the postmodern approach to reading film), before suggesting that the best way forward for cultural criminology is to transcend these models and develop instead a new ‘synthetic critical framework for crime film analysis’. In a sweeping critique of Hollywood crime movies that encompasses such diverse offerings as Bad Lieutenant and Catch Me If You Can, Yar maps out a distinctive, alternative approach to reading crime film that captures the richness and diversity of film texts, whilst simultaneously discerning the ways in which they play a role in the wider politics of law, order, and punishment. Staying with Hollywood film, but changing tack, Alison Young’s chapter turns more around the relationship between the spectator and the image. Drawing on the tradition of ‘criminological aesthetics’ (see Young, 2004), Professor Young aims to ‘discover how law, violence and justice appear and re-appear in the image on screen, in order to open up and give access to the affective dimension of crime and its structures of identification.’ For Young, the emotions that haunt the public imagination are interlaced with media dynamics – something she calls the affective processes associated with crime representation. Her chapter therefore urges, or perhaps more accurately, challenges cultural criminologists to follow her lead and make the affective dimension the starting-point for future interrogations of the cinematic imagination of justice and injustice. In the final chapter on film, Alexandra Campbell uses the Hollywood movie The Siege as a case study to illustrate how political and nationalistic ideologies circulate in the ‘cultural script’. For Campbell, the meanings contrived through films such as Edward Zwick’s 1998 ‘terrorist cell thriller’, The Siege, do not remain confined to the world of fiction. Instead, they provide a lens or framework for interpreting events and identities, insidiously compelling us to understand the world in particularized ways.
Campbell asserts that *The Siege* is a classic expression of an age old ‘orientalist’ Hollywood gaze that stereotypes Muslims as a ‘dangerous Other’ or ‘enemy’. Drawing on semiotic and textual analysis to deconstruct the film, Campbell’s thoughtful chapter illustrates how such images and narratives of the ‘Muslim-Other’ ultimately serve to reaffirm misguided understandings of terrorism and counter terrorist measures within the public imagination.

Moving from Hollywood film to images of crime and law in artwork, Chris Cunneen’s chapter argues that cultural criminology opens a new space for understanding crime where the image is produced by those who are victims of crime and, at the same time, without access to other channels of communication within mainstream social and political institutions. Using a fascinating series of Australian Aboriginal artworks as his research data, Cunneen shows how one can use these images to both critique the unthinking imposition of colonial law on the Aboriginal way of life, and, importantly, as a powerful medium for expressing the oft neglected nuances and subtleties of Aboriginal law and culture. Stephen Muzzati also embarks on a nuanced reading of cultural artefacts, only this time his chosen subject matter takes an all the more ubiquitous and corrosive form. While advertisements envelop our every turn, occupying the pages of newspapers and magazines, saturating our television programming and web surfing, and increasingly transforming public spaces into corporate billboards, they have been subject to surprisingly little criminological analysis. Some, of course, will assert that there is good reason for this: what, after all, have commercials got to do with criminology? Cultural criminologists take issue with such a position, and Muzzati’s engaging essay contributes to a growing tranche of cultural criminological research that explores and critiques the increasing use of transgressive visual imagery in contemporary advertising (see e.g. Presdee, 2000; Hayward, 2004). Focusing specifically on automobile commercials, Muzzati shows how, in a desperate bid to boost the flagging sales of increasingly redundant Sports Utility Vehicles and fuel-inefficient luxury cars, late-modern advertisers now regularly base their advertising and marketing campaigns on romanticized tropes of transgression and crime, allied with visual motifs of conspicuous disobedience.

Bruce Hoffman and Michelle Brown’s chapter turns our attention away from figurative and imagined representations of crime and resistance and directs us back to an earlier theme of photo (or more accurately visual) documentary. Employing the ‘new technologies of digital filmmaking’ Hoffman and Brown show us that, as a consequence of the ‘digital revolution’, it is now possible – indeed wholly advisable – for cultural criminologists to think about producing their own short or feature length ‘newsmaking’ documentaries. Drawing on their own experiences of videoing the media circus that engulfed the execution of Oklahoma Bomber Timothy McVeigh in 2001, Professors Brown and Hoffman offer reflections and advice about how documentary filmmaking can function to challenge and destabilize the dominant frames of meaning that underpin the mainstream broadcast media.
No collection concerned with how crime is imaged would be complete without a chapter on the representation of transgression and deviance on the internet – surely now society’s most fecund seedbed for the spread of violent imagery. Damian Zaitch and Tom de Leeuw analyse the construction, performance, and recreation of identity by football hooligan groups (specifically Dutch; ‘Casuals;’ or ‘hard-core’ football supporters and Argentinean Barras Bravas) on the internet. Closely dissecting photos, photomontages, video posts, and other forms of ‘bricolaged online iconography’, Dutch criminologists Zaitch and de Leeuw take us inside the sub rosa world of subcultural football violence; highlighting a number of critical issues about the cultural performance of football supporters rarely addressed either by mainstream ‘hooligan’ research, or by internet violence studies.

Bringing the collection to a close, the criminologist and legal scholar, Wayne Morrison, continues his campaign to develop a more global criminology capable of encompassing topics traditionally excluded from the canon, such as the crimes of war and genocide. Here, he focuses on four harrowing images of human suffering that span the Spanish conquest of the Americas in the fifteenth century, nineteenth-century colonial exploitation of central Africa, and the low point of twentieth-century genocidal history, the Nazi Holocaust. Morrison’s goal is twofold: to illustrate the complex processes by which such ‘atrocity images’ are produced, collected and edited; and to offer a series of challenging reflections about the role of the visual within criminology. Traversing both historical epoch and the disciplinary divisions that exist between criminology and juridical-legal analysis, Morrison’s essay adroitly illuminates the power of the image, but it also raises unsettling philosophical questions about the nature of the relationship between the spectator and the image of atrocity.

It is established academic convention for opening chapters of edited collections to introduce and summarize the essays that follow. However, it is less common to reflect on how the reader might ‘see’ the volume as a conceptual whole. When taking in a landscape, billboard, or photograph, one approaches the image from different angles, focuses on different aspects, sees within it different things. It is hoped that the same is true of the eclectic mix of critical articles, case studies, and visual deconstructions that have been gathered together here. As mentioned in the foregoing section, cultural criminology’s goal is to keep ‘turning the kaleidoscope’ on the way we think about crime, and this is never truer than when we try to make sense of the ever mutating world of the late modern Mediascape. If we are to broaden and enliven criminological teaching and research in the area of visual culture, we cannot afford to regress to simplistic, monolithic methods. It is no longer sufficient just to count or codify images, or even to strive to unearth spurious causal linkages between media representations and subsequent human behaviour. Instead, we must approach our subject matter as a person studies an album of photographs or as a visitor approaches a painting in a gallery – from various angles and from diverse perspectives. If images are creatively constructed,
then we must study not just the image itself, but also the process of construction and the subsequent processes of production, framing, and interpretation. In other words, cultural criminology’s relationship with the image/the visual must be a creative one that recognizes images as carefully crafted moments (see relatedly, Nisbet, 1976).

Perhaps, then, it is fitting that this introduction concludes on an artistic note. The Canadian art photographer and academic Jeff Wall is frequently described by critics as ‘a storyteller’. He describes himself as ‘a painter of modern life’. Since 1977 he has used backlit transparencies and large-format black-and-white photographs mounted in light boxes to create a series of extraordinarily intense, almost cinematographic images that challenge social reality, explore the phenomenology of experience, and champion the lives of oppressed groups in American society.7 In a short essay celebrating the visual force of Wall’s work, the art historian Jean-Christophe Ammann makes the following important observation: documentaries, he asserts, have shown us the difference between a picture and a document: a picture is always likewise a document, but a document is certainly not always a picture. ‘Jeff Wall operates with both types, transforming pictures into documents and documents into pictures. He achieves this dialectic tour de force – which links history, narration, art history, and everyday life to the present – with a masterful feel for the picture’ (Ammann, 2001: 11). If cultural criminology is to move forward in the study and interpretation of images of crime and transgression, and if it is to develop new theoretical expressions of discovery and documentation, it too must strive to achieve ‘a masterful feel for the picture’ – a mastery that is at once both creative and critical.

In another time, Erving Goffman (1974) famously wrote that ‘frames’ both organize the past and help shape and determine how new experiences are felt and interpreted. The hope for Framing Crime is that it will also help shape and interpret cultural criminology’s future experiences, as it strives to make sense of a world in which the image is truly ascendant.

7 Wall also knows something about the immediacy of crime, having had a gun pulled on him by a disgruntled student during a brief stint as a professor of photography at the Düsseldorf Academy in 1996.

References


