towards a cultural criminology of the everyday

FOUR

everyday crimes small and large

As we noted in the introduction to this book, cultural criminologists often focus their analytic gaze on those little situations, circumstances, and crimes that make up everyday life. Cultural criminology looks for evidence of globalization not only in the wide sweep of transcontinental capitalism, but amidst the most local of situations and common of transgressions. It finds the machinery of mass culture in even the most private of moments, discovers the residues of mediated meaning in even the smallest snippets of conversation. From our view, the essential subject matter of criminology – the manufacture of meaning around issues of crime, transgression, and control – remains an ongoing enterprise, an often unnoticed process that seeps into commonplace perceptions and saturates day-to-day interactions.

To understand the ways in which issues of crime, transgression, and control come to be animated with emotion, then, we certainly must pay attention to televised crime dramas and political campaigns – but we also must pay attention to the people around us, and to their constructions of experience and understanding. Most of all, in a world where information and entertainment swirl through everyday life, emanating from countless video screens and cell phones and digitized billboards, we can – we must – find mediated politics in personal experience. Watching people on the street, we can catch little shadows of last night's television crime drama, and all those that came before it; listening in on conversations in a pub, we can hear echoes of a politician's press

conference at one table, distortions of the daily news at another. Encountering on the street or in the pub some commonplace crime, we can come to appreciate the extraordinary importance of crime itself.

As we also suggested in our introduction, cultural criminology's critics are aware of this focus on the everyday as well, but they see in it something more insidious. For them, the focus on everyday people and everyday crimes suggests that cultural criminologists are unwilling to take on larger, more important issues of crime and its political consequences. Martin O'Brien (2005: 610), for example, concludes his critique of cultural criminology by juxtaposing cultural criminologists' research into crimes like 'graffiti writing or riding a motorcycle recklessly' with the mercenary crimes of Mark Thatcher. The mollycoddled son of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Mark Thatcher has indeed been accused of crimes ranging from racketeering and tax evasion to negligence, arms dealing, and an attempted coup d'etat – crimes that critics like O'Brien assume to be objectively and self-evidently of greater significance than more mundane forms of criminality.

Yet while we're certainly happy to judge the behaviour of a spoiled underling like Mark Thatcher to be morally odious, we're nonetheless left with a serious criminological question: By what terms can we judge his crimes to be more important, or more worthy of our analysis, than the crimes of the lesser known? Put differently, is it the exceptionality of a crime that should draw our analytic attention, or the banality? Is a father's abuse of his daughter more or less troubling, more or less revealing of power and its dynamics, than US soldiers' now well-publicized abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison? Anonymous Latino kids in America sent to jail or deported on trumped-up 'gang member' charges, African-American kids swept off the street by civil gang injunctions, British kids silenced or segregated by ASBOs, American marijuana users sent to prison under the 'War on Drugs' – are these often unnoticed, everyday occurrences more or less important to understanding and confronting injustice than the crimes of Mark Thatcher?

For cultural criminologists, *these aren't questions that can be answered definitively – they can only be interrogated culturally. The difference between one crime and another is negotiated, not innate – in the final analysis more a matter of contested meaning than inherent magnitude.*

In fact this negotiation of meaning, this fluid dynamic between the everyday and the exceptional, can be traced along any number of trajectories. As we and other criminologists have long documented, the criminalization process – the process by which new legal regulations are created and new enforcement strategies designed – can transform the most mundane of existing activities into major crimes, themselves made into the exotica of moral panic. Trash picking, idling about in public, searching for a place to sleep, dancing with friends, getting drunk or high – all of these have, at various times in recent British, European, and American history, been either matters of little consequence or

manifestations of serious criminality. And if this criminalization process at times infuses otherwise little events with large significance, it regularly invokes larger patterns of political and cultural power as well, emerging as it does from media campaigns, staged political pronouncements, and the exercise of economic and ethnic inequality. In such cases, to study everyday transgression, or more specifically to study the *emergent and often amplified meaning* of everyday transgression, is to study the political economy of power.

If we return to the crimes of Mark Thatcher, we can catch a different sort of trajectory, and yet one that suggests a further dynamic linking mundane events and larger matters of meaning. Certainly a direct, cultural criminological analysis of Mark Thatcher's crimes, or for that matter those of George W Bush, would be useful and important. Such an analysis might explore the ways in which neo-conservative values of individual responsibility and personal acquisition in fact set the stage for personal misbehaviour among those who most publicly espouse them. It might examine the ways in which the political privilege of the parent begets the cultural privileging of the offspring, opening doors to inside deals and ensuring endless irresponsibility. It might even focus on the linguistic sleight of hand offered up by expensive lawyers and top-flight public relations consultants such that the misdeeds of the powerful can time and again be obfuscated, reinvented, ignored – and so *not* constructed as crime.

strategic and moral choices

To conduct this sort of analysis well, though – to actually get inside the gilded shadows that make up the world of Mark Thatcher, as opposed to relying on newspaper accounts and popular mythology – would require the sorts of money and connections that few of us have. It would perhaps require travelling in social circles that some of us find uncomfortable, if not repugnant. Most importantly, it would risk valorizing the very phenomenon we wish to analyze and critique – risk reproducing in our own research and writing, that is, the mediated gaze already fixed on the Mark Thatchers and George W Bushs of the world – as we focus too much of our attention on those all too well positioned to capture it. Again, and despite these pitfalls, such a study could make an invaluable contribution to our understanding of political and corporate crime and its consequences – but there is, we think, another way to conduct the study.

That way is to track down Mark Thatcher in the streets and alleys of everyday life, to document his crimes and their consequences in moments more readily available to us. When, for example, wealthy entrepeneurs like Mark Thatcher engage in racketeering and tax evasion, we can effectively explore the consequences of such crimes in the growing gap between the rich and poor of our communities, in decimated local economies and shuttered factories, in underfunded local schools and inadequate healthcare – and so in street-level drug

markets and untreated drug overdoses, in everyday school vandalism and violence, and in the Mertonian strain towards theft or despair encountered by unemployed or under-employed folks all around us. When a global hustler like Mark Thatcher dabbles in the arms trade and in political upheaval, we and our colleagues in other countries can catch up to him at every orphanage, can see the consequences of his actions in a severed limb or a lost life. Like the great documentary photographer W Eugene Smith, who famously captured the horrific effects of systematic corporate mercury poisoning in the close-up deformities of one little girl, we can communicate the crimes of the powerful by way of their everyday consequences.

In this sense cultural criminology's focus on the everyday constitutes something of a strategic choice. For some cultural criminologists, the ethnography of everyday life has offered a do-it-yourself research method kept happily independent of university grant programmes, governmental funding agencies, and other outside influences likely to limit the critical scope of scholarly work. Hanging out on street corners, conducting interviews behind commercial buildings, calling up public officials or surfing company websites, researchers need ask neither for permission nor for money – and so they can follow their findings wherever they may go, unencumbered by funding concerns or official sanction. Certainly, critical scholarship can flow from any number of research strategies – but it flows with particular ease from methods that cast the researcher as an independent outsider. And if this sort of research keeps cultural criminologists outside the orbit of bureaucratic control, it also has the benefit of keeping them inside communities. Research on crime and transgression within everyday life tends to integrate the researcher into the local community, putting the researcher in touch with the lives of ordinary people, and yet offering often extraordinary insights into the dynamics of those lives and communities.

In this process of human engagement cultural criminology's focus on everyday life moves beyond strategic choice and towards moral and theoretical foundation. Attempting to understand the meaning of crime and the dynamics through which this meaning is manufactured, cultural criminology draws on a constellation of theoretical orientations attuned to everyday experience. Among these are symbolic interactionism, with its emphasis on the daily transactions by which individuals create, sustain, and contest shared meaning; phenomenology, with its attentiveness to the intricate and distinctive features of everyday experience; and ethnomethodology, fine-tuned to the reflexively 'elegant knowledge' (Mehan and Wood, 1975: 117) that animates commonplace situations and events. Certainly, these rich theoretical models merit more than these few lines (Lindgren, 2005), but for present purposes we can derive from them a shared insight: *the social world cannot be understood apart from the agency of those who occupy it*. While of course working within profound limitations of political and economic exclusion, everyday people are nonetheless neither 'judgmental dopes' (Garfinkel, 1967: 67) nor calculating machines; they are agents of social reality, active interpreters of their own lives. Watching television crime

news, fearing for our own safety, deciding whether to fix that broken backdoor lock, we make do as best we can – and as we do, we continue to make sense of the world around us, and so to contribute to its collective construction.

Cultural criminology's focus on everyday life becomes in this way also a form of moral politics that we might call *critical humanism*. By 'humanism', we mean simply a scholarly and moral commitment to inquire into people's lived experiences, both collective and individual (see Wilkinson, 2005). By 'critical' we mean two things. First, critical humanism signifies a willingness to critique that which we study, to unpack even the most dearly held and elegantly argued of assumptions. Put differently, a commitment to engage with people on their own terms does not mean that those terms need be uncritically accepted; appreciating the human construction of meaning, we may still judge that meaning to be inadequate, not in terms of some moral absolutism, but out of concern for what harm that constructed meaning may cause others. Second, and relatedly, critical humanism denotes an inquiry into human experience within a larger project of critique and analysis. As already suggested in the case of Mark Thatcher, we intend for cultural criminology not only to give voice to everyday accounts seldom heard, but to gather those voices into a chorus of condemnation for broad structures of violence, inequality, and exploitation. Again, the hope is to overcome the dualism of agency and structure, to link the ordinary and the exceptional, and to discard the false dichotomy between crimes large and small.

Through this work we hope also to affirm the possibilities for progressive social change within the practice of everyday life. Those eager to distinguish large crimes from small are often eager as well to distinguish large-scale political engagement from the less consequential politics of daily life. For them, Mark Thatcher matters more than other criminals precisely because he and his mum matter more politically. And indeed they do – but sometimes they don't. Sometimes progressive social change does indeed emerge from the ballot box or the mass movement, from utilizing millions of voters or millions of marchers to confront structures of social injustice. But sometimes progressive social change percolates in the little moments of everyday experience, as one small act of resistance to the daily routine, to the micro-circuits of social control, sets the stage for the next. Our tendency, then, is to believe that the future remains unwritten, to remember that revolutions often explode when least expected, and so to celebrate progressive moments where we find them. If the everyday remains a primary site for the enforcement of injustice, it remains a place of hope and resistance, too.

a day in the life

What follows is true fiction – a compilation of everyday situations and events extant in the contemporary world, here fictionalized into a single, integrated narrative. It's also a test, of you and of us. If we've managed so far to communicate some sense of the everyday and its importance, some sense of how

transgression and control animate everyday life, the following account should glow with meaning as you make your way through it. In it you should discover many little windows into the unnoticed politics of day-to-day crime and control, and more than a few clues as to what shape a cultural criminology of everyday life might take. But in case we've failed so far, or in case you're about to, we'll even provide a guide. Each time you see an italicized phrase in the following narrative, you can be sure that there's more to be said about the situation it describes – and before we do say more later, you might consider for yourself what importance some inconsequential moment, some simple situation of everyday constraint or transgression, might have for a cultural criminology of our lives.

'Ah, man', he says to himself. 'I gotta get those damned curtains fixed.'

The alarm's not set to go off for another twenty minutes, and the daylight streaming in the window where the curtains hang loose has awakened him. Waking up, it still seems more like a dream for a moment, what with the morning light coming in between the decorative *black iron burglar bars*, filling the room with long shadows like some late modern *film noir*.

Hell, he figures, I'm awake. I may as well get up. Switching off the security system, he opens the front door and heads out to pick up the morning newspaper, only to find that the *Guardian Home Security System sign* planted in his front yard has been knocked over. He stoops over to get the paper, stoops again to right the sign, and heads back inside.

Since the divorce he doesn't bother much with breakfast, so after a quick bath and a cup of coffee, he gets into his business suit and heads off for a brisk walk to catch the train into the city. Arriving at the platform, realizing he left his newspaper at home, *he uses his credit card to buy another paper* and a second cup of coffee and heads to the platform. Head buried in the morning paper, reading the crime news, waiting for the train, it's just a morning like any other. He doesn't notice the *CCTV cameras* mounted on either end of the platform, or the two middle-aged fellows *trainspotting* on the platform across the way.

When he gets tired of standing and retreats to one of the few benches on the platform, though, he does notice something. *Didn't these damn benches used to be more comfortable?* Crossing and uncrossing his legs, moving from side to side, he can barely keep from sliding off as he reads the paper and waits for the train.

Once on the train it takes a minute or two to find a seat; the coach section is crowded with other morning commuters. Finding a seat, settling in, looking up, he notices across the aisle a young woman, half his age, maybe mid-twenties. When she catches his glance he looks away, but he can't help but look back. *She's dressed in a Middle Eastern-style head scarf, sleeveless Che Guevara T-shirt, long shiny necklace, short black skirt, torn fishnet stockings, and knee-high hiking boots; her arms are covered in Maori tribal tattoos. He finds her as much curious as he does attractive; now looking back at her a third time, he even finds himself a bit uneasy*. And when she catches his glance once again, frowns and shifts in her seat, he's uneasier still.

Turning to look out the train window he's able to avoid further embarrassment, but not further discomfort. The train's getting nearer the city, and the sprawl of graffiti writing on the low walls bordering the tracks is increasing. He's noticed this before, he remembers, but he still doesn't understand it: *all this wildly unreadable graffiti along the tracks, sometimes even on the bridges and control towers above the tracks*. Maybe it's the graffiti, or the girl in the odd outfit, or the crime news in the newspaper, but he's feeling unsettled, unsure of himself, even a little angry.

Turning back from the window, he's careful not to look over at the young woman, but no need; she got off the train while he was looking out the window, at the previous stop, the one just a quarter mile before his.

In fact, by now she's already made her way through the train station and out into the street. As she walks towards her job she's a bit annoyed herself, thinking about the jerk on the train, the one who kept staring at her, but she smiles when she thinks about the cylinder necklace swinging from her neck as she walks. It's her favourite, the one her boyfriend gave her for dealing with guys like the one on the train: the *Pepperface Palm Defender pepper spray necklace*. Really, she'd have been happy with the plain silver one, or even the 18-carat gold version, but it was her birthday and he wanted to impress her, so he got her the top of the line: the one encrusted with Swarovski crystals. And besides, it looks cool with the Che shirt.

Since she started working at the *Starbucks* last year, she's walked this route hundreds of times, and to fight off the boredom and the dread of getting to work, she's made a game of seeing how many different graffiti tags she can spot. She's seen some of them so many times, on so many walls and alleyways, she feels like she knows the writers who leave them. *Scanning one alley for tags as she cuts through it, she notices two broken second-floor windows and laughs to herself – side by side like that, with the big jagged holes in each one, they look like two big bloodshot eyes staring back at her*. And come to think of it, *after last night's binge drinking session down at the pub*, her eyes are probably a little bloodshot, too; once she gets to work, she tells herself, she'll grab a coffee while the manager isn't looking.

She checks her watch, afraid she'll be late for work again, and picks up her pace. Problem is, she used to have *a couple of shortcuts* – through the park by the school, and then through the little passageway between the grocery store and the mobile phone shop – *but now the park gate stays locked most days, and somebody has planted a prickly hedge between the two shops*.

By the time she gets to work – ten minutes late – the guy from the train has already been at his desk for twenty minutes, having grabbed a cab out front of his train station. He's hard at the first task of the day, the first task of every work day: clearing emails from his inbox. *Pornographic come-ons, African money transfers, spurious bank requests for credit card information* – the company's spam filter isn't working very well. But what the hell he thinks, while checking out a couple of the porn websites and deleting emails, *the company monitors employee keystrokes as a way of checking up on productivity,* so for all they know I'm working. What he doesn't know is that *the company also monitors and tracks web usage*, and as the corporate data log shows, this isn't his first visit to a porn site on company time.

Not that he really cares. Since the company began downsizing operations and exporting positions overseas, he's figured it's only a matter of time until his position goes away as well. It's bad enough to sit in front of a computer all day, *bored out of your mind*, without having to worry about whether you'll be back to do it tomorrow. Deep in debt as well, he's starting to feel a little lost. No wife, one of these days no job, nothing but bills to pay – makes a man miss the good times, *like that last holiday they had before the divorce, when the two of them flew to Spain, and the tour guides kidnapped them and marched them into the mountains of Andalusia*.

Daydreaming about Andalusia and deleting unsolicited emails kills off the first hour of work, filling out the online forms for the company's upcoming internal audit kills another, and now it's time for a mid-morning coffee break. Before the downsizing started, there was always a pot of coffee down in the break room; you put a few coins in the donation jar and got yourself a cup of coffee, maybe had a chat with a colleague.

These days he goes to the Starbucks across the street from the office, but just for a change, he decides to walk to the Starbucks a block over. Bad decision, since the young woman in the Che T-shirt works behind the counter there – except that she too has clocked out for a quick mid-morning break. No Starbucks coffee for her – she needs something stronger. She's looking for Cocaine.

'Hey', she says to the clerk in the little convenience store in the next block, walking back towards the check-out counter from the cold case. '*Where's the Cocaine*?'

'We're out', he tells her, his accent betraying his Iraqi heritage. 'Since they had it on *The Daily Show* we can't keep it in stock. Should have some tomorrow. Sorry.'

'OK, well, thanks', and she's headed back to work – may as well just sneak another cup of company coffee.

His trip to the Starbucks hasn't gone any better. Sure, he got his usual – double decaf latte – and it was as good as the one he gets at the other Starbucks. Identical, in fact. But then he went over to the little park across the street to sit and enjoy it, and … *Damn it, another ball-buster of a bench. Is there no decent place to sit left in this city?*

Then, shifting uncomfortably on the bench and slurping his latte, all hell breaks loose. *This guy in a car tosses some fast food out into the street. A female bike courier grabs the food and tosses it back in, yelling 'don't litter in my neighbourhood'. He jumps out, throws two coffees at her, and now he's stomping on her bike and they start scuffling. Some guys come off the sidewalk and pull him off of her. Meanwhile another dude with a camera just keeps shooting – but when he tries to photograph the car's licence plate, the guy from the car opens the trunk, grabs a baseball bat, and charges him*.

Christ, he thinks to himself, the whole damn world is falling apart. It's like that film with Michael Douglas, you know, that American actor who was in *that other film where the woman tries to kill him. But in this one he's lost his job and people are messing with him and trying to rob him and … what's the name of that film?*

Back at the office he Googles for awhile, trying to track down the film title – more internet misuse for the company log. Giving up, he begrudgingly gets back to the audit forms, which drag him through the afternoon in a sort of slow death march towards quitting time.

At the Starbucks, a steady stream of latte and espresso orders has dragged her through the afternoon as well, but with at least a bit of excitement. Around three o'clock she got suspicious of these two girls lingering near the counter; one of them had an open book bag, and it looked to her like they were trying to shoplift the newest Starbucks music CD. *So she and the assistant manager went out from behind the counter, smiling and asking the girls if they could help them with anything, and then kept chatting with them until they left the store.* And as the girls left, she noticed something else: *a little black orb attached to the book bag*.

Work day over, she's walking back to the train station when she notices that *the FCUK (French Connection UK) clothing store has changed its display window since she walked past this morning. It now features skinny female mannequins, dressed in the latest FCUK designs, shoving and throwing punches at each other*.

Backing away from the window to get a better look at the tableau of stylized sex and violence, she bumps into someone behind her and turns around.

Son of a bitch, it's that jerk from the train this morning! The FCUK window fresh in her mind, scared and mad that maybe he's been stalking her all day, a bit embarrassed for bumping into him, she reaches for her Pepperface pepper spray necklace, fumbles with it for a moment, gets her finger on to the spray button – but by this time he's backpedaling, arms out, palms up, saying, 'sorry, sorry' – and in a flash he's disappeared into the crowd on the sidewalk.

Disappeared into the crowd indeed – he couldn't be more mortified. To be honest, yeah, he'd been fantasizing a little while looking at those sexy mannequins in the FCUK window, and then all of sudden that girl from the train – a real girl, the real girl he had checked out on the train this morning – was right in his face. Very weird moment, very scary, very embarrassing – and it wasn't the first odd moment on the walk back to the train station from work. *There was also that bus stop shelter with the big speech bubbles pasted over the advertisements – or were those part of the ads?*

Calming down, getting to the train station, checking his electronic organizer, he's reminded that Friday is his ex-wife's birthday; their daughter lives with her, so he still likes to stay in touch. Early for the train, he dips into the Hallmark card shop in the arcade next door. Browsing the cards, he can't find one he likes, but then he spots a card that, well, just seems perfect for her, for their fucked up relationship, and for the day he's had. 'So, anyway, I'm standing in line to buy a freakin' birthday card', the cover of the card begins, 'and the line is like seventeen billion people long….'

After a few more verses of this, the cover concludes with 'and I just really hope you like this card'.

Plate 4.1 FCUK shop window, Canterbury, England
Credit: Photographs Jeff Ferrell and Keith Hayward (2006)

And then when you open the card, inside it says, *'Cause I stole it. Happy Birthday'*.

That gets him laughing a little, and on the train ride home he relaxes and realizes he's hungry, so he buys a prawn sandwich and a Coke – but, he thinks to himself, I'd better not let that vegan punk daughter of mine know about the sandwich. *According to her, even a damn prawn sandwich is a crime*.

So when he gets off the train at his local station, he's careful to toss the uneaten half of the sandwich and the Coke can into the station trash receptacle – and *not five minutes later one of the many dishevelled folks who hang around the station is just as careful to extricate from the trash the half sandwich, the Coke can – and a brand new designer scarf*.

On the walk home he's still thinking about his daughter – worrying about her, that is. *It's bad enough she got that ASBO slapped on her last year for yelling animal-rights slogans at the McDonald's assistant manager*; now she's in trouble at school as well. Last month, *the school counsellor advised him and his ex-wife that his daughter*

seems driven to take risks, to push her own limits, to test herself and her teachers. The counsellor even told them that the school psychologist had diagnosed his daughter as suffering from *ODD, Oppositional Defiant Disorder*, a pathological disregard for school and parental authority. Wait a minute, he thinks to himself, maybe that explains the girl on the train, the one who confronted him in front of the FCUK window – maybe she has ODD, too. But back to his daughter: after he heard all this from the school counsellor, he got so concerned that he bought his daughter a new cell phone, one with a GPS device so he could track her movements. But that only ended up worrying him more – one time he tracked her down across town at some sort of illegal street race. One of these days, he worries to himself, I'm going to find her with *that bunch of damn 'chavs' that hangs out down at the end of the road*.

Home now, he heats some leftovers and plops down in his big easy chair, surfing TV channels while he eats. *It's the same old stuff – CSI: Crime Scene Investigation, Law and Order: Criminal Intent, Cold Case, Without a Trace* – but it keeps him occupied for a couple of hours, anyway.

He's still thinking about his daughter, though, worried about her ODD, so before bed he gets on the Web. That first site that comes up, ADD ADHD Advances (http://addadhdadvances.com/) is run by Anthony Kane, MD, who notes that he is an author and lecturer on such disorders, and 'the parent of several children with ADD ADHD and Oppositional Defiant Disorder'. The website looks promising. It asks 'Is Your Child's Bickering, Tantrums, and Defiant Behaviour Embarrassing You, Destroying Your Home, and Making You Feel Like a Failure as a Parent?' and 'Who Else Wants to *End* Their Child's Fighting, Arguing, and Talking Back Once and for All?', and offers an answer: Dr Kane's treatment programme, 'based upon universal principles of human nature. It doesn't matter what country you live in.' Better yet, while he's scrolling through the site, a pop-up ad appears: 'Congratulations. You Are Invited To Enroll In A Free Course, How To Control Your Defiant Child.'

He's reassured; maybe there's hope for his daughter after all. So after taking two of those sleeping pills they advertise on TV, reactivating the home alarm system, setting his bedside alarm, and falling into bed, he's able to drift off to sleep easily enough. But then the nightmare comes. It's not that half-awake *film noir* moment he had this morning; its worse, a surreal mashup of a day in the life. It's some kind of funeral, with everyone sitting around the coffin on tiny, hard benches. Fast-food wrappers and coffee cups cover the ground, cover the feet of the mourners, crawl up their legs. And there's his daughter, away from everyone else, dressed in a head scarf and a long shiny necklace, kneeling before some sort of coffee cup memorial. But wait a minute, now he's the memorial, he's covered in coffee cups, and he's in the coffin, his head split clean in two by the blow from a baseball bat. And the girl from the train, she's dead too, lying next to him in the coffin.

Except she's not dead. She made it home just like he did, and now she's asleep next to her boyfriend. They went to bed early. Just out after doing six months on a marijuana possession charge, he has to make an 8 am appointment with his parole

supervisor, and she has her 9 am cultural criminology class at the university. She's majoring in criminology, and helping to pay tuition with the Starbuck's job – though she's still managing to run up one hell of a student loan debt.

In fact, she's dreaming too, her dream mixing her boyfriend and her major. *In the dream she's reaching for him, trying to pull him through some sort of wall, but she can't keep her grip and he fades away, receding into the innards of the American penal gulag, disappearing into the crowd of two million other prisoners for whom a day in the life is something very different indeed.*

interrogating the everyday

Just another day in the life of two people making their way between home and work; a little unpleasantness here and there, some petty criminality – but nothing of any importance, no real violence, no crimes of politics or passion, no big police crime sweep through a dangerous neighbourhood. So to tell such a story, and to pay attention to it, is to stay safely away from the big issues of crime and social control, tucked securely inside the cultural minutia of the mundane.

Or is it? A cultural criminology of the story – that is, an interrogation of the story in search of meaning – reveals something more. Carefully considered, this story – constructed, it will be recalled, only from existing everyday events – in fact reveals global shifts and historical trends monumental in their meaning. If we look carefully, we can see the ways in which transgression increasingly comes to be commodified and contained within late capitalist economies. We can see something of social control, and the way in which contemporary mechanisms of social control are morphed, masked, coded, and reinvented. We can notice that these forms of social control, already troublesome in their insidiousness, are in turn cut and mixed with emerging patterns of legal containment and surveillance – and then, for good measure, marketed to the public under the guise of public safety, even freedom of choice. If we look carefully enough we may even see the future – and decide, as have others, to confront it.

Black iron burglar bars

Guardian Home Security System sign

From the view of cultural criminology, burglar bars and home security systems provide more than a hardened home target; they offer evidence of the pervasive, politically useful late modern fear of victimization by outsiders and invaders. They also provide everyday evidence of the billion-dollar home security industries that promote, and profit, from precisely this fear (Hayward, 2004: 128–137).

Home security signs, burglar bars, high fences, and other domestic fortifications also become signs in another sense, constructing the home as a text to be 'read' by neighbours, passers-by, and potential intruders. The 'angry lawns' and armed homesteads that Mike Davis (1990) documents betray the modernist mythology of domesticity, of the home as a pleasant refuge from the dislocated stress of everyday life.

And yet even fear and fortification are not without their aesthetics. In the USA, home security businesses seldom advertise 'burglar bars'; instead, they advertise and sell *decorative* burglar bars that can, as one real estate website notes, 'enhance, or at least not detract from, the appearance of the home' (www.real-estate-agents.com).

Film noir

The deeply unsettled years following World War II saw the emergence of new cinematic forms that presented the promise of a 'good society' ambiguously at best. In Europe and Great Britain cinematic neo-realism emerged as a stark counterpoint to romantic film traditions. In the United States, *film noir* ('black film') offered its own sort of realism: a disturbingly blurred vision of crime and justice. While uncertain morality and unclear identity pervaded the films' plots, the shadowy spaces and dark corners of *film noir*'s cinematography also suggested something far more sinister than the old-fashioned search for truth and justice. In more than one scene, stark outside light cuts through Venetian blinds to cast long, sharp shadows around the film's protagonists – shadows symbolizing *film noir*'s sense of existential entrapment and social claustrophobia. This aesthetic stylization of crime, and this particular *sensibility* about crime, continues as a reference point for filmmakers, artists, and writers.

He uses his credit card to buy another paper

Under the coordinated corporate conditions of late modernity, the simplest of credit card purchases adds information to a massive, integrated web of databases harbouring information on consumer preferences, population movement, and personal habits. Significantly, such databases not only enable corporate surveillance of individuals, but accumulate information tapped by legal authorities as part of the 'war on terror' or other social control campaigns. As Katja Franko-Aas (2006) has shown, even the human body becomes a source of information and surveillance under such conditions, what with DNA databases, biometric passports, and mandatory drug testing.

Nathan Garvis, vice president of government affairs at Target, one of America's largest retailers, recently offered an unusually candid account of the logic underlying this surveillance process. Assigned by Target to explore possibilities for helping the criminal justice system become more efficient, Garvis came to realize that tracking criminals 'was really an inventory-management problem'. So, tapping into Target's already widespread affiliations with law

enforcement, the company donated 'tracking technology and database translation', and began to take 'a lead role in teaching government agencies how to fight crime by applying state-of-the-art technology used in its 1,400 stores'. Today, the company also 'donates' its employees to law enforcement agencies, provides money to prosecutor's offices, coordinates police undercover operations, and does extensive pro bono work for local, state, federal, and international law enforcement agencies. Much of this work occurs at the company's own state-of-the-art forensics lab – 'one of the nation's top forensics labs', according to FBI Special Agent Paul McCabe. Target likewise runs a 'Safe City' programme that 'uses video and computer equipment to help police patrol neighbourhoods by remote control, coordinated with security workers at participating businesses' (Bridges, 2006: A1).

Seamlessly interweaving inventory control with social control, Target translates both the ideology and technology of corporate consumerism into the practice of late-modern policing. And just as distinctions between product and person are lost, so are the rights of the accused and the presumption of innocence, with Target apparently feeling no compulsion to make similar donations to defence attorneys, public defenders, or databases tracking the wrongly convicted. 'Fascism' isn't a word we use lightly – but certainly this is late-modern fascism, consumer fascism, an incestuous integration of corporate control and political authority in the interest of tracking individuals and constructing cities safe for consumption.

Soon, perhaps Target's databases will even be able to make the consumers run on time.

CCTV cameras

The United Kingdom is the undisputed leader in urban closed-circuit television provision, or CCTV (see Wakefield, 2003), with more surveillance cameras in the UK than in the rest of Europe combined. As a result, many people in the UK accept the intrusion of panoptic camera technology into everyday life. With CCTV seeping into virtually every aspect of day-to-day life, though, a cultural transformation is taking place; surveillance is becoming not just commonplace and acceptable, but cool, fashionable, even aspirational. CCTV is now used by everyone from artists (see, for example, the surveillance-inspired works of Julia Scher and Marko Peljhan) to advertisers (a recent jeans promotion asked, 'You are on a video camera ten times a day. Are you dressed for it?'), restaurant and bar designers, and prime-time TV shows like *Big Brother* or *Real World*.

Here we see an emerging relationship between society and surveillance, a relationship that transcends the 'feel good' sensations of safety and reassurance associated with established security products, while consigning civil liberty anxieties to the obsolescent register of early modernity. This is a world where *Big Brother* is only ironic and *Real World* just unreal, a world where non-stop surveillance becomes a source of pleasure, profit, and entertainment (Hayward, 2004).

Yet while cameras may add a sense of voyeuristic or performative satisfaction to the 'lifestyle' social environment, they alone cannot build closely-knit communities or vibrant, pluralistic public spaces. On this point it is interesting to reflect on the differing approaches to CCTV in the UK and continental Europe. In the UK, CCTV is typically the first step in attempting to 'galvanize' run-down communities, an approach that illustrates the extent to which regulation has been resituated as 'community', or more accurately a form of sanitized inclusion. Meanwhile in countries like Italy and Spain, where community and family ties remain strong in regional towns, the demand for surveillance is almost non-existent.

Trainspotting

In Great Britain, and to a somewhat lesser extent in the United States, 'trainspotting' – hanging around train stations, recording and compiling the specifics of various locomotives as they move about the country – has long been a hobby associated with a certain middle-brow, mundane lifestyle. With the release of the 1996 British film *Trainspotting* (Dir. Danny Boyle) – a film exploring the lives of Edinburgh heroin addicts – the term took on another layer of meaning, and perhaps a certain ironic caché.

Now, amidst the 'war on terror', new layers of political and criminal meaning have been added. In the UK, trainspotters have been identified as a security risk, and in some cases removed from train platforms. In contrast, United States officials have attempted to enlist trainspotters in the war on terror, utilizing their penchant for watchfulness as yet another form of everyday surveillance.

Didn't these damn benches used to be more comfortable?

Yes, they did. As part of the CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) strategy in the United States, and similar strategies of spatial crime-control in the UK and elsewhere, public spaces are regularly remade as less comfortable and less welcoming to those who might linger, or loiter, or fail to consume, or commit a public offence. These strategies include rebuilding public seating in ways that disincline long-term sitting and prevent reclining. In this way ideologies of control, surveillance, and exclusion come to be built, quite literally, into the everyday environment.

She's dressed in a Middle Eastern-style head scarf, sleeveless Che Guevara T-shirt, long shiny necklace, short black skirt, torn fishnet stockings, and knee-high hiking boots; her arms are covered in Maori tribal tattoos. He finds her as much curious as he does attractive; now looking back at her a third time, he even finds himself a bit uneasy

The liquidity of late modernity, the global flow of production and consumption, can be glimpsed in the bricolage of styles that constitute everyday 'fashion', and especially 'street fashion' as invented and displayed in large metropolitan areas.

Under such conditions, meaning comes loose from its original moorings; specific styles and images re-emerge as free-floating references to be re-sewn into individual and group style. Che Guevara, the 1950s Latin American revolutionary, has long since been reborn as cultural icon and fashion accessory; along London's trendy Kensington High Street in the 1980s, the *Che* clothing shop sold the latest in mass-marketed apparel, and today *The Che Store* (www.thechestore.com) markets T-shirts and berets 'for all your revolutionary needs'.

This late modern mélange of meaning is not without its consequences. In what remains the definitive analysis of such stylized displays, Dick Hebdige (1979: 90) cautions us not to 'underestimate the signifying power of the spectacular subculture … as an actual mechanism of semantic disorder: a kind of temporary blockage in the system of representation'. So while her outfit evacuates the political meaning of Latin American revolutionaries or Maori tattoos, it nonetheless retains the power to cause uneasiness, even upheaval, for those who witness it – or attempt to police it.

Still, those Maori tattoos do constitute, on closer inspection, a particularly spectacular fraud. They're actually not tattoos at all, but rather part of custom clothing marketed by Canadian fashion designer Susan Setz. 'Blending funky fashion with traditional and modern art', she has invented a line of sheer mesh tattooed shirts and sleeves whose invisibility fools the observer into thinking that their wearer is indeed tattooed.

Criminologist Wayne Morrison (2004b: 76) would be particularly amused by these ersatz Maori tattoos, dislocated from the Maori and even from the skin itself. As he has shown, Cesare Lombroso, founding father of criminological positivism, had already stolen away their meaning 125 years before, reducing them to 'the true writing of the savage' and equating them – erroneously – with common criminality.

All this wildly unreadable graffiti along the tracks, sometimes even on the bridges and control towers above the tracks

Graffiti is surely one of the most pervasive and visible crimes of late modernity, decorating and defacing walls, buildings and bridges throughout the USA, South America, Great Britain, Europe, the Middle East, and elsewhere. Its forms are as varied as the subcultures of those who write it. Looking out a train window in New York City, or London, or Amsterdam, a passenger might well see the angry graffiti of neo-Nazis, the political graffiti of anti-gentrification activists or the anti-globalization movement, love-struck marks of personal affection, symbolic threats issued from one gang to another – even the 'reverse graffiti' of those who write on city surfaces by selectively wiping accumulated soot from them. Entangled on walls and buildings, these various forms of graffiti make for yet another mélange of uncertain meaning, encoding urban space with the pluralism of late modern life. But amidst this swarm of signification, a few things are likely, though not certain:

If our train passenger found the graffiti particularly unreadable, it was probably hip hop graffiti ('graff'), a highly stylized form of public painting through which graffiti 'writers' compete and communicate.

If the graffiti was written on a bridge or tower high above the tracks, it was likely a residue of 'tagging the heavens', a hip hop graffiti practice of writing graffiti in high and highly inaccessible spots so as to gain visibility and status.

If our passenger did get a bit angry or uneasy upon seeing graffiti, that was likely mostly the result of mediated anti-graffiti campaigns that work to define the *meaning* of graffiti by intentionally confounding gang graffiti with other graffiti forms, and by associating graffiti with violent assault and rape (Ferrell, 1996).

And if our passenger thinks, as some do (Halsey and Young, 2006: 293), that graffiti writers 'are not edgeworkers' and ready lawbreakers – and moreover, that this argument *against* cultural criminology can be made by actually *incorporating* many of its key findings (Ferrell, 1995, 1996, 2001/2) without acknowledgement – we'll simply say that, among graffiti writers, stealing someone's style is called *biting*.

And we'll add a closing comment from Earsnot, 'a big, black homosexual' as his friends describe him, out and proud, and a founding member of top New York City hip hop graffiti crew IRAK – a crew name that plays on the graffiti slang for stealing ('racking'), and of course on a certain Middle East situation. 'One of the things I always say', says Earsnot, 'is that a really good graffiti writer will make a good shoplifter – someone who's used to breaking the law fifteen or twenty times a day' (in Levy, 2007: 4).

Then again, as we'll see in the next chapter, all that track-side graffiti could just as well be corporate advertisement.

Dazed and confused

We might hope that the authors of criminological textbooks devoted to the scholarly analysis of juvenile delinquency would clarify distinctions lost in the media-induced confusion over the types and consequences of youthful graffiti. Put differently, we might hope that students of criminology would come to know more about urban graffiti than the average train rider or newspaper reader. In most cases, that hope would be unfounded. In fact, far from addressing such issues, many juvenile delinquency textbooks perpetuate the confusion – and display their confusion on their covers for all to see.

One 1990s textbook presents on its cover what appears to be an image of early hip hop graffiti, circa 1980 or so – but it's difficult to know since hip hop graffiti doesn't appear in the table of contents, text, or index (Jensen and Rojek, 1992). Bynum and Thompson's mid-1990s (1996: 288–90, 473) *Juvenile Delinquency: A Sociological Approach* likewise offers the student a cover apparently composed of computer-generated graffiti-style markings; inside is a short section dealing only with gang graffiti, and a

glossary entry that defines 'graffiti' exclusively as 'the distinctive language/symbolism of street gangs…'. By the seventh edition a decade later (Bynum and Thompson, 2007), a new, more stylish cover reproduces a section of a hip hop graffiti mural, the book's front page shows another sophisticated mural, chapter introductions and summaries repeat these hip hop images – and the errors of the text and glossary remain unchanged. The fifth edition of Bartollas's (2000) *Juvenile Delinquency* features as its cover an aesthetically stunning wall of multi-coloured hip hop graffiti murals and tags – and no mention whatsoever of hip hop graffiti in the table of contents, text, glossary, or index. The more recent seventh edition (Bartollas, 2006: 112, 134) has replaced this cover with a drawing of young man holding a spray can and painting a wall of non-specific graffiti. Inside, the book includes a photo of a young man painting hip hop graffiti, as an illustration of 'destruction of property' and Cohen's 'reaction formation', another uncaptioned photo of a young Latina holding a gun in front of a wall covered in assorted tags and markings – and still, no mention of hip hop graffiti in the table of contents, text, glossary, or index.

Other recent textbooks replicate this discordance between cover and content. An image of non-specific graffiti adorns the cover of Regoli and Hewitt's (2006) *Delinquency in Society*, and is repeated as a background image inside the book, yet the book neither explores nor indexes youthful graffiti. The covers of both Struckhoff's (2006) *Annual Editions: Juvenile Delinquency and Justice* and Burfeind and Bartusch's (2006) *Juvenile Delinquency* present a young man with a spray can in front of hip hop-style graffiti, but neither manages to integrate an analysis of hip hop graffiti into the book itself. Schmalleger and Bartollas's (2008) *Juvenile Delinquency* comes with a cover featuring a darkly atmospheric photograph of hip hop graffiti murals painted on trains. From the look of the trains and the graffiti, it might be New York City or Philadelphia in 1980, maybe London five years later, but we'll never know – the book omits graffiti from its table of contents, text, and index. Most dramatically, Whitehead and Lab's (2006: 125) *Juvenile Justice* wraps a spectacular example of a hip hop graffiti mural around both its front and back cover, literally encasing the book in an explosion of hip hop style and colour, and then fails spectacularly to engage with its own image. Out of its 472 pages of text, the book dedicates five lines to graffiti, under the heading 'Gang Behavior and Types of Gangs'.

We well understand that textbook cover decisions are made as much by publishers as by authors; as Burns and Katovich (2006: 111) noted in their study of melodramatic images in introductory criminal justice texts, 'the highly competitive textbook market … influences textbook design'. Yet these graffiti covers, when affixed to books that consistently fail to address the complexity of graffiti forms – that in many cases fail to address youthful graffiti at all – constitute a form of intellectual fraud. It's not only that the books fail to deliver what their covers promise; in many cases, by juxtaposing hip hop graffiti images with discussions of gang graffiti, they reinforce the very misperceptions we might hope they would dispel. Ironically, while the repeated use of such covers tacitly acknowledges the aesthetic power of hip hop graffiti to startle and engage, the texts turn away from this engagement, ignoring the most publicly visible and aesthetically meaningful form of juvenile delinquency. Having mischaracterized graffiti in both image and analysis, Bynum and Thompson (1996: 228; 2007: 347) note that 'an understanding of graffiti is very important to law enforcement officers…'.

It's very important to students, too.

Pepperface Palm Defender pepper spray necklace

'We've heard all the stats about rape and other violent attacks', writes Alyson Ward (2006: 3G) in a recent newspaper article breathlessly endorsing the new Pepperface Palm Defender, 'But how many of us are really carrying around a clunky canister of pepper spray?'

The solution is the Palm Defender. Its manufacturer, Ward explains, 'is turning personal safety into fashion … In fact, it hopes we'll start to think of it the way we think of our cell phones or MP3 players – as a useful *and* pretty necessity we carry everywhere.' Best of all, 'one shot will incapacitate an attacker for at least half an hour. Which gives you a chance to run, girl'.

Of course, if Ward had *really* read the stats, she'd remind her readers that the most important place to wear the Palm Defender would be around the house, since women remain far more likely to be victimized by acquaintances or intimate partners than by strangers. But no matter – the real issue here is the aesthetic consumption of crime prevention. No unsightly bulges from clunky cans of pepper spray or large concealed weapons – the stylishly hardened target prefers the Palm Defender, or maybe one of the smaller, sleeker handguns that American weapons manufacturers now market to women, the 'smaller, lighter, jazzed up guns for girls' that sport fine detailing and 24-carat gold gilding (Ulrich, 2006).

Coming soon to a shop near you: the new line of ultra-slender stilettos for the stylish woman – and we don't mean high heels.

You go, girl.

Starbucks

A cultural criminology of Starbucks would require a book of its own; here we'll offer just a sketch.

As a key player in the homogenization and globalization of American consumer culture, Starbucks undermines local economies and undercuts the vitality of locally-owned coffee shops; as such, it abets the larger globalizing process by which local economic autonomy is eroded, and through which distinctive neighbourhood cultures are replaced by marketed ideologies of convenience and predictability. Moreover, as Steve Hall and Simon Winlow (2005; see also Winlow and Hall, 2006) have shown, this process of corporate encroachment weakens traditional urban communities, leaving them more vulnerable to unemployment, absentee ownership, and predation among those disaffiliated from long-standing social bonds. Not surprisingly, then, anti-globalization and human rights activists target Starbucks outlets for protest, and in some cases symbolic vandalism. In addition, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) – a militant union known a century ago for organizing low-wage and itinerant workers – has now begun organizing a new generation of young, low-wage, transient Starbucks' workers. While the IWW has employed tactics of direct, disruptive action inside Starbucks

outlets, and has successfully filed complaints with the US National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) over unfair labour practices, it has also confronted Starbucks on the turf of corporate image-making. 'We're going to escalate our outreach to workers', says 27 year-old IWW organizer Daniel Gross, 'and pierce the socially responsible image that the company has so skillfully promulgated around the world' (in Maher and Adamy, 2006: B6).

Weakened local communities, protests and vandalism, NLRB cases and unfair labour practices add up to a question or two. Is Starbucks criminogenic? And when you buy that overpriced latte at your 'local' Starbucks, are you also buying into a pattern of corporate globalization that victimizes communities and, as the IWW might say, undermines your 'fellow workers'?

Scanning one alley for tags as she cuts through it, she notices two broken second-floor windows and laughs to herself – side by side like that, with the big jagged holes in each one, they look like two big bloodshot eyes staring back at her

Actually, she shouldn't be laughing – at least not according to one popular criminological model.

Perhaps the most politically prominent approach to crime over the last few decades has been Wilson and Kelling's (2003 [1982]: 402–4) 'broken windows' model of crime causation. Utilized as the scholarly reference point for a range of reactionary, punitive public policing strategies since its emergence in the 1980s, 'broken windows' is often seen as a straight-ahead, no-nonsense approach to crime control. In reality, it is a deeply *aesthetic* analysis of crime's etiology – and a deeply flawed analysis as well. According to this model, broken windows and similar public displays of neglect and petty criminality function as symbolic invitations to further criminality, in that they 'signal that no one cares', or perhaps 'seem to signal that "no one cares"'. Likewise, 'such otherwise harmless displays as subway graffiti' communicate to subway riders 'the "inescapable knowledge that the environment … is uncontrolled and uncontrollable …"'. In such cases, Wilson and Kelling argue, 'residents will think that crime … is on the rise', potential criminals will perceive these signs of inattention as encouragements to accelerated misbehaviour, and a downward spiral of disorder will be set in motion. Claiming in this way to engage issues of image, public display and perception, 'broken windows' stands or falls on its aesthetic analysis of crime.

It falls.

A useful justification for the conservative clampdown on everyday 'quality of life' crimes like graffiti writing and panhandling, a pseudo-theoretical pretext for aggressively policing marginalized urban populations the model is decidedly less useful as an aesthetic of crime. Imagining the contours of symbolism and perception rather than investigating them, the model constructs a series of abstract, one-dimensional meanings that it arbitrarily assigns to dislocated images and idealized audiences. In fact, as any city-dweller knows, the symbolic

texture of the urban landscape is far more ambiguous and complex. To the extent that 'broken windows' function as symbols, for example, they may symbolize any manner of activities to any number of audiences, depending on situation and context: community resistance to absentee ownership, a long-standing personal grudge, the failure of local code enforcement, or the illicit accommodation of the homeless. Likewise, depending on particularities of content and context, gang graffiti may symbolize a neighbourhood's intergenerational history, suggest changing patterns of ethnic occupation or conflict, or even enforce a degree of community self-policing. A proliferation of hip hop graffiti in place of gang graffiti (a distinction ignored by Wilson and Kelling) may likewise suggest a *decline* in criminal violence – that is, it may lead some neighbourhood residents to understand that gang crime is on the decline – and in fact may harbinger a less violent social order now negotiated through the very symbols that Wilson and Kelling so tellingly misrepresent (Sanchez-Tranquilino, 1995; Ferrell, 1996; Phillips, 1999; D. Miller, 2001; Snyder, 2007).

So a man on a train may find a display of graffiti perplexing, a woman on the way to work may find alleyway graffiti intriguing or broken windows amusing, and others will engage still different perceptions of the urban environment. As cultural criminologists, our job is to investigate this environment and these perceptions, to explore these various meanings – not, as with Wilson and Kelling, to impose our own constipated perceptions in the service of the state.

After last night's binge drinking session at the pub

In recent years 'binge drinking' has emerged as a powerful force in the modelling of a transgressive British stereotype (Hayward and Hobbs, 2007). While press and politicians have been quick to taint drunken kids as 'binge drinkers', less has been made of the wider economic imperative behind so-called 'beer towns' and the 'Nighttime Economy' more generally (Hobbs et al., 2005). Recent governmental policies have facilitated the expansion of local nighttime economies based almost exclusively on the commodification of hedonism and alcohol-related excess. In a bid to 'regenerate' flagging post-industrial cities, the government has encouraged the drinks industry to restructure city centres by compressing alcohol outlets, increasing licensing capacity, and re-zoning areas into 24/7 operations. At the same time, the drinks industry has dramatically changed the way it markets alcohol, switching its focus to younger drinkers and drawing on motifs from the 'dance' and 'rave' scenes in a bid to tap into new psychoactive consumption styles. As Measham and Brain (2005: 266–76) point out, this new willingness to experiment with altered states of intoxication represents a new and distinct 'postmodern alcohol order', characterized by a penchant for increased sessional consumption and a desire for liminal experimentation.

While governmental ministers dreamt of a sophisticated nocturnal café society, they unintentionally created monocultural urban spaces comprised of homogeneous theme bars, branded pubs, and fast-food outlets. Within these environments

aggressive hedonism and disorder were rife, with violent 'hot spots' found among concentrations of late-night bars. Rather than blame their own policies, though, the government blamed the 'binge drinker'; after all, pointing the finger at the consumer was easier than examining the government's morally dubious relationship with the UK drinks industry, or endangering the immense tax revenues that that industry generates. So, desperate to keep the drinks industry satisfied and the revenues flowing in, the government has transformed hundreds of town centres into dystopian drunk-fests: brutal, instrumental urban sites of alcohol-driven excess and violence (Winlow and Hall, 2006).

Not to worry, though: with town centres awash in drunkenness and violence, local governments are responding by rolling out CCTV cameras at unprecedented rates – so at least the next time someone projectile vomits on your parked car, or shoves a fist in your face, it will be seen on videotape by a poorly paid rent-a-cop in a control bunker five miles away! This slice of late-modern culture represents 'the perfect image of the ruling economic order, ends are nothing and development is all – although the only thing into which the spectacle plans to develop is itself' (Debord, cited in Hayward and Hobbs, 2007: 443).

A couple of shortcuts … but now the park gate stays locked most days, and somebody has planted a prickly hedge between the two shops

In the late capitalist city, public spaces – parks, city squares, play areas – are increasingly privatized in the interest of economic development and social control; as Randall Amster (2004) has shown, even city sidewalks are made private, and so made unavailable for public activity. Similarly, that new prickly hedge wasn't the gardener's idea; it was most likely suggested by the environmental design security consultant or the neighbourhood police officer. Among today's environmental strategies for regulating human movement in urban areas is 'barrier planting' (Ferrell, 2001/2: 5–6) – the planting of shrubs and bushes with the potential to impale those who might seek out shortcuts. As it turns out, the politics of the everyday are present even in the flora.

Pornographic come-ons, African money transfers, spurious bank requests for credit card information

The sociologist Gary Marx (1995) has noted that 'new telecommunications technologies require new manners'. With each new advance in the technology of mediated communication, a new *culture* of communication must emerge as well, a new set of interactional codes and symbolic manners appropriate to the technology. The structural grammar of the written letter gives way to the casual speed of email; the expectation of response generated by the phone message differs from that of an email message; the symbolic codes of the instant message compress and abbreviate in relation to the compressed size and speed of the technology itself.

New technologies require new crimes as well, and new crime cultures. A mailed letter offering easy cash offers one kind of enticement, an email message promising an African money transfer another. With the email and its attachment, the recipient's information can be phished more deeply and more quickly – if only the sender can utilize appropriate symbols and markers so as to convince the recipient of honest intentions, or emergency need. Of course the intended victims of such crimes themselves learn new manners, new safeguards against identity theft or consumer fraud, from their own experience and from each other.

We might even say that every technology gets the crime it deserves.

The company monitors employee keystrokes as a way of checking up on productivity … the company also monitors and tracks web usage

New technologies spawn new forms of control, too – forms of surveillance today built into advancing communication technologies as surely as spatial controls are built into the reconstructed social environment. Among these are hard-drive searches, keystroke monitors, 'spyware', and screen-view software, enabling remote viewing of a computer screen in real time. 'However, as with all forms of surveillance', Richard Jones (2000, 2005) notes, 'the more knowledgeable the person (potentially) under surveillance is about the surveillance practices likely to be used against them, the more strategies they can employ to try to evade surveillance.'

Bored out of your mind

As we've documented elsewhere (Ferrell, 2004a), boredom seems one of the definitive experiences of late modernity; kids complain of it, workers hunker down and endure it, and activists of all sorts cite it as the condition against which they agitate and organize. Built into the assembly line and office cubicle as surely as the fast-food outlet and the school curriculum, boredom pervades the everyday operations of a rationalized social order. Even those avenues that promise an escape from the tedium of the everyday – televised entertainments, new music releases, theme parks and adventure tours – themselves quickly become routine, ultimately little more than predictable packages of commodified experience.

In this sense boredom calibrates, second by awful second, the experience of drudgery in the late modern world. As a cultural artifact, it likewise measures the gap between the late modern promise of fulfilling work and the reality of a deskilled service economy, the gap between the breathless marketing of individual excitement and the delivery of fast-fried McEmotions. From a Mertonian view, boredom emerges from strain, from human expectation and experience straining against the false promises of late modernity. And as Merton (1938) would predict, this strain – this desire for desire, to paraphrase Tolstoy – can lead to all manner of illicit adaptations.

Like that last holiday they had before the divorce, when they flew to Spain, and the tour guides kidnapped them and marched them into the mountains of Andalusia

Playing on the romanticized mythology of the nineteenth-century Spanish *bandolero* (bandit), Bandeloro Tours offer full-day or half-day kidnappings, in which tourists pay to be kidnapped, taken into the Andalusia mountains, and there 'regaled with legends about great *bandeleros*' (Abend, 2006: V2) before being returned. The cost is 100 euros for a full-day kidnapping, 50 euros for a half-day.

Likewise, Mexico's Hnahnu Indians offer a *caminata nocturna* – a nighttime hike – for tourists wishing to replicate the experience of illegally crossing the Rio Grande river into the United States (Healy, 2007). Complete with pursuit by *faux* Border Patrol agents and a substitute river, a *caminata* is a bargain in comparison to a *bandelero* kidnapping, at just 200 pesos ($11 US).

Where's the Cocaine?

A new entrant in the growing, youth-oriented 'energy drink' market, Cocaine comes in red cans with the drink's name written in what appear to be lines of white powder. Name and can alike in this way reference both the drug cocaine and the drink Coca-Cola, or Coke. But whereas Coca-Cola/Coke did in its early years contain significant amounts of cocaine, Cocaine the energy drink doesn't. Instead it contains 280 milligrams of caffeine, more than enough to contribute to the growing phenomenon that doctors label youthful 'caffeine abuse'.

According to the company's website (www.drinkcocaine.com), 'the question you have to ask yourself is: "Can I handle the rush?"'. We have some other questions. Is the product's provocative name mostly a matter of marketing commodified transgression to kids? (Yes.) Has the subsequent controversy, in which 7-Eleven has pulled the product from its shelves, further helped promote the drink and cement its outlaw image? (Yes.) And how is it that Coke, a drink that in fact did once contain cocaine, is now the sanitized soft drink of choice for mid-America, and Cocaine, a drink that never has contained cocaine, is now the edgiest of drinks for the young and the restless?

Damn it, another ball-buster of a bench. Is there no decent place to sit left in this city?

Probably not, unless you're willing to pay for it. The privatization of public space and the hardening of the urban environment serve not only to control the movement of urban populations, but to herd them into commercial consequences should they desire even the most basic of human amenities: a drink of water, a place to sit, a toilet.

This guy in a car tosses some fast food out into the street. A female bike courier grabs the food and tosses it back in, yelling 'don't litter in my neighbourhood'. He jumps out, throws two coffees at her, and now he's stomping on her

bike and they start scuffling. Some guys come off the sidewalk and pull him off of her. Meanwhile another dude with a camera just keeps shooting – but when he tries to photograph the car's licence plate, the guy from the car opens the trunk, grabs a baseball bat, and charges him

This incidence of urban conflict exploded in Toronto's crowded Kensington Market area in January 2006. Happening on the scene, photographer Adam Krawesky began shooting photos of it – but that was only the first turn in a spiral of crime and culture. When he posted the photos to the CityNoise website (Krawesky, 2006; www.citynoise.org), thousands of responses began to pour in, and in no time the photos and the story had been picked up by countless other websites and blogs. Meanwhile a daily newspaper, the *Toronto Star*, published three of the photos without Krawesky's permission as part of a feature article on the street conflict, the photos, and the web responses to both (Powell, 2006). By this time Krawesky was getting calls from national and international media, working with another daily newspaper, and, as he told us, learning about the power of mediated images to mislead and mythologize (Krawesky, 2007). After all, he emphasized, he hadn't even been able to photograph the entire incident – and yet people around the world were now sure they understood it, sure of their opinions about it, sure they could make sense of it by referencing street justice, or gender conflict, or similar scenes in the Hollywood film C*rash* (Dir. Paul Haggis, 2004).

Plate 4.2 An image of urban conflict
Credit: Adam Krawesky (2006), by permission

But in this one he's lost his job and people are messing with him and … what's the name of that film?

The name of that film is *Falling Down* (1993), directed by Joel Schumacher, and starring Michael Douglas and Robert Duvall. ***That other film where the woman tries to kill him*** is *Fatal Attraction* (1987), directed by Adrian Lyne, a film widely criticized for its demonization of women and back-handed valorization of traditional marriage. If nothing else, films such as these capture something of the late modern vertigo that plagues the once-secure middle classes; perhaps they exacerbate that vertigo as well.

So she and the assistant manager went out from behind the counter, smiling and asking the girls if they could help them with anything, and chatted with them until they left the store

Jeff Ferrell recently scrounged a *Gap Loss Prevention Manual* from a trash bin behind a Gap clothing store. The manual emphasizes to employees that 'customer service' is the best guard against shoplifting and other theft-related 'shortage', since 'great service keeps our customers coming back and shoplifters from coming in'. The manual offers specific suggestions for customer service as crime prevention – 'extend a warm hello to customers and offer your assistance' – and even suggests scripts: 'Hello, are you shopping for yourself or for a gift?' 'How do you like our new fall colours?'

Should this preventive strategy fail, employees are advised to use 'recovery statements' to reclaim shoplifted merchandise. 'Role-play different scenarios with your managers', they're told. 'Practice using APPROPRIATE, NON-ACCUSATORY, SERVICE-ORIENTED Recovery Statements'. Specific statements are again suggested, including 'That dress is really cute. I bought one for my niece the other day.'

This management of verbal interaction is matched by the management of emotion (Hochschild, 2003). 'Remember to remain positive!' when making recovery statements, the manual urges; even when responding to a store alarm, 'do not accuse the customer or allow the conversation to become confrontational'. Under guidelines for the hectic holiday sales season, employees are urged to call the Loss Prevention Hotline if they suspect internal problems at the store (all calls confidential, reward of up to $500), but in the next line encouraged to 'Have fun!!! The holidays are a perfect time to "choose your attitude!!"'. Further emotional support is provided by Loss Prevention Contests, with employees rewarded with gift certificates or movie passes for knowing loss prevention procedures.

If those two girls in the story are up to nothing more than shoplifting a Starbucks CD, these sorts of soft control, customer-service-as-crime-prevention techniques may succeed. But what if the girls are part of the Yomango underground? Yomango emerged in 2002 in Spain, the name being Spanish slang for 'I steal' and a play on 'Mango', a Spanish chain store. Now a growing phenomenon, Yomango embraces the notion that shoplifting – 'liberating products from multi-national companies or big chain stores' – can function as 'a form of civil

disobedience and a survival technique' (www.yomango.net; Adbusters, 2005; see Edemariam, 2005).

Plate 4.3 San Precario, transgendered patron saint of the precarious and a '*detournement* of popular tradition' (Tari and Vanni, 2005)
Credit: chainworkers.org after an image by Chris Woods

More broadly, illegal everyday practices like Yomango, squatting, and fare-dodging train travel are practised as part of a new 'precarity' youth movement that confronts the precarious conditions of late modernity. Practitioners argue that the fluid, globalized dynamics of late capitalism – 'flex scheduling', part-time service employment, outsourced work, temporary jobs *sans* benefits or long-term assurances – leave more and more people, especially young people, with nothing but emotional and economic uncertainty. Yet this very uncertainty – this very precariousness – creates a new sort of commonality, maybe an amorphous social class, where 'immigrants, mall workers, freelancers, waiters,

squatters … an immigrant worker and a downwardly-mobile twenty-something' (Kruglanski, 2006) together drift through the anomie of late modernity. So precarity itself replaces the job site as a place to organize the disorganized, to find some slippery common ground – and those navigating this slippery ground even invent San Precario (Saint Precarious), the playful patron saint of late-modern uncertainty.

After all, if for an earlier generation 'a job was an instrument for integration and social normalization', today jobs are only temporary 'instruments we use to obtain the cash we need in order to live and socialize with the least humiliation possible' (Kruglanski, 2006). And yet the minimum-wage cash from a part-time job is never enough, and the humiliation only increases – recall those young Gap workers, forced to mimic the manual. 'Smiling is working – where does my real smile begin?', Kruglanski (2006) asks. 'Whether your friendliness is tainted by the shade of networking, or shaded by "Hello, how are we today? My name is Rob and I'll be your server"'. And so, with the social contract effectively voided by the fluid predations of late capitalism, the smiling clerks and servers turn on the very situations that entrap them.

But wait a minute; how can these young shoplifters beat the mall security system, avoid the surveillance cameras, elude the loss prevention strategies of The Gap and Starbucks? Oh, that's right – *they've read the manual*; it's their orchestrated smiles and scripted greetings that constitute the front line of loss prevention in the first place.

A little black orb attached to the book bag

The black orb is ExisTech's new high-fashion surveillance accessory: a sophisticated camera, not unlike the spherical ones you see scanning suspects in department stores, but here utilized by advocates of a process known as 'Sousveillance'. From the French 'sous' (below) and 'veiller' (to watch), sousveillance challenges the ubiquitous surveillance practices of late modernity. It draws on the 'detournement' practice of 'reflectionism' – that is, 'appropriating tools of social controllers and resituating these tools in a disorienting manner' (Mann et al., 2003). Sousveillance not only allows the watched to do some watching of their own – as Mann and his colleagues found out in a series of Research Performances – it also greatly unsettles surveillance agents and security guards.

In one case, sousveillance practitioners donned 'invisibility suits' – wearable computer systems linked to flat-panel monitors worn as backpacks – that project images from a small head mounted video camera. The wearer's back becomes a 'window' and gives the impression of actually seeing right through the wearer. While this type of public display brings sousveillance practitioners into conflict with security staff, 'the wearer argues that the motivation for wearing the camera is to provide protection from being seen by surveillance cameras. Thus the surveillance agent's objection to the

sousveillance camera becomes an objection to his own surveillance camera' (Mann et al., 2003: 355).

The FCUK (French Connection UK) clothing store has changed its display window since she walked past this morning. It now features skinny female mannequins, dressed in the latest FCUK designs, shoving and throwing punches at each other

Unsurprisingly, a retail clothing chain whose name plays on the naughty titillations of sexual slang also displays its apparel amidst a stylized tableau of female violence and victimization. Here transgression is commodofied twice over, first 'branded' into the very identity of the retailer, then reconfirmed in the violent poses frozen in the shop window.

Meanwhile, along New York City's exclusive Madison Avenue, a dealer in fine European antiques files a $1,000,000 suit against three homeless men whose transgression consists of sitting on the sidewalk in front of his display window. According to the suit, the dealer 'spends large sums each year in carefully preparing the displays appearing in the storefront window showcases', and by their homelessness, the three men distract customers from proper appreciation (Burke et al., 2007).

Following the lead of FCUK, he might consider instead allowing the three to set up residence just *inside* the storefront window, maybe throwing a punch or holding up one of the antiques now and then.

Son of a bitch, it's that jerk from the train this morning! The FCUK window in her mind, scared and mad that maybe he's been stalking her all day, a bit embarrassed for bumping into him, she reaches for her Pepperface pepper spray necklace, fumbles with it for a moment, and gets her finger on to the spray button – but by this time he's backing away, arms out and palms up, saying, 'sorry, sorry' – and in a flash he's disappeared into the crowd on the sidewalk.

This sort of accidental, ambiguous swirl of emotion marks many everyday episodes of transgression, whether accomplished or only momentarily considered. Intentions are read and misread, emotions more or less managed, flickers of aggression amplified or redirected, and all of this amidst the seductive urban semiotics of corporate signage, crowded sidewalks, and symbolic identities.

As we discussed in Chapter 3, the rational choice perspective, on the other hand, would have us believe that such moments unfold along a linear sequence of rational decision-making. According to Cornish and Clarke (2006: 19–21), the accidental collision, her act of reaching for her pepper spray, even his retreat away from her, each involved 'a sequence of choices made at each stage of the criminal act – for example, preparation, target selection, commission of the act, escape, and aftermath'. So desperate are such theorists to maintain the

mythology of individual rationality that they find such choices – even when 'made quickly [and] revised hastily', even when made 'in a fog of alcohol and drugs' – to remain 'rational, albeit imperfect'.

In a late modern world suffused with the celebration of irrationality and spontaneity, this claim is serious business – and a serious mistake. In fact, if most contemporary crime, and fear of crime, can't actually be reduced to rational calculation, then rational choice theory begins to appear less an explanatory theory of crime and more what it is: a sycophantic adjunct to the apparatus of criminal justice, orchestrated in the interest of punitive 'policy-making' and narrowly-conceived crime prevention. In this sense, those moments of transgression that punctuate everyday life – and more precisely, the *meaning* of those moments – carry political stakes that couldn't be higher.

There was also that bus stop shelter with the big speech bubbles pasted over the advertisements – or were those part of the ads?

The Bubble Project (www.thebubbleproject.com) is a form of guerrilla media whereby ex-advertising agency worker Ji Lee (2006) and others paste empty, cartoon-style 'speech bubble' stickers over advertisements at bus stops and other public places. The empty speech bubbles invite passers-by to fill them in with dialogue or critique, and once filled in the bubbles are photographed and archived. As its manifesto argues, 'the bubble project is the counterattack' and 'the bubbles are the ammunition' in a battle to take back public spaces – bus stops, train stations, subways, public squares – that have been 'seized by corporations to propagate their messages solely in the interest of profit'.

In this way The Bubble Project operates as a form of *invitational vandalism* – an act of illegal defacement that invites further defacement. A process of illicitly interactive street communication, The Bubble Project recalls the newspapers pasted to walls during the political upheavals of Paris 1968 – newspapers that eventually became 'difficult to read … so covered over are they with critical comments' (Star, 2001: 66) – or more recently the work of the graffiti artist Banksy (2005: 50–5), whose illicit 'This Wall is a Designated Graffiti Area' stencils successfully invite further graffiti. The Bubble Project also recalls, once again, the concept of *detournement*, the 'theft of meaning', whereby activists subvert everyday messages by undermining their meaning. 'Once placed on ads', The Bubble Project argues, 'these stickers transform the corporate monologue into an open dialogue'.

'Cause I stole it. Happy Birthday'

One afternoon Jeff Ferrell was dumpster diving behind a drug store/chemist's when he found this and hundreds of other discarded retail greeting cards. The front of the 'Cause I Stole It' card was eye-catching; instead of the usual flowers or poetry, it featured this long rant, printed in a cut-and-paste 'ransom

note' style and adorned with oversized fingerprints like those left at a crime scene.

Wow – this suggested a whole new area of cultural criminology. We all know that crime gets packaged and sold back to us as entertainment, what with cop movies, reality television shows, video games, and gangsta rap. But here was crime packaged as a birthday greeting! And of course we've all heard the debates over whether cartoons, popular songs, movies, and television shows are criminogenic – whether they promote criminality or cause 'copy-cat' crimes among those who consume them (Hamm and Ferrell, 1994). So was this a criminogenic birthday card? In some oddly reflexive way, was it promoting its own theft, like Abbie Hoffman's (1971) classic *Steal This Book*? How weird would it be if somebody saw this card in some store, read it, and decided to steal it – just so they could tell the intended recipient, 'Dude, I *really did* steal it! No kiddin'!'

According to her, even a damn prawn sandwich is a crime

And maybe it is.

As Martin O'Brien (2006: 6) has shown, the prawns (shrimp) in that sandwich are the result of a global system of large-scale prawn production and distribution that produces at the same time 'murder, abuse, exploitation, theft and environmental destruction'. Global consumer culture not only distances the consumer from the process by which an item of consumption is produced; it distances the consumer from the criminal abuses inherent in that process as well. From Mardi Gras beads (*MardiGras: Made in China*, Dir. David Redmon, 2005) to Christmas figurines (Ferrell, 2006a: 165–6), cultural criminologists attempt to traverse that distance by linking everyday consumer objects to the conditions of their globalized production. As with Dick Hebdige's (1988: 77–115) brilliant deconstruction of the Italian motor scooter, we look for the currents of meaning embedded in the materials of everyday life.

Not five minutes later one of the many dishevelled folks who hang around the station is just as careful to extricate from the trash the half sandwich, the Coke can – and a brand new designer scarf

The vast economic inequality that haunts late modernity is confirmed each time an impoverished scrounger reaches into a trash bin, digging for survival amidst the discards; the highs and lows of late capitalism both occupy that moment.

On the high end, the hyper-consumerism that drives late capitalist economies produces astounding amounts of waste among those privileged enough to afford the next designer suit or computer. A century ago, the great sociologist and economist Thorstein Veblen (1953 [1899]) began to notice patterns of

'conspicuous consumption' – consumption predicated not on the satisfaction of physical need but the attainment of status. A century later, as advertising saturates daily life with the mythology of the perpetually 'new and improved' product, this sort of consumption is pervasive, with consumers endlessly purchasing goods for the sake of lifestyle and status. But of course these consumer goods accumulate, lose their conspicuous luster, and so are discarded to make room for the next wave of consumption. Trash bins overflow with discarded goods, many of them unused and unworn, but now unworthy (Ferrell, 2006a).

On the low end, as we saw in the previous chapter, the same economic system that spawns widespread consumption and waste also spawns widespread poverty and homelessness. The economic circumstances of those 'precarious' part-time retail clerks and flex workers seen earlier are precarious indeed; with low wages and no guarantees of ongoing employment, they remain always on the brink of joblessness, in or near poverty, in many cases one paycheck away from homelessness. For more and more women, single parenthood or the demise of a bad marriage leaves them likewise vulnerable to loss of income or housing – and so we see homeless shelters filling with women and their children. Add to this the steady destruction of low-cost housing in the interest of 'urban development', the corporate 'downsizing' and 'outsourcing' that define the late modern global economy, and it is little wonder that more and more homeless and unemployed people – and 'under-employed' minimum wage workers – find themselves sorting through the waste of others' consumption.

Against all odds, such folks salvage not only cans and clothes but a modicum of dignity, sharing scrounging techniques and inventing moments of do-it-yourself resourcefulness. Others mix trash with do-it-yourself autonomous political activism. The group Food Not Bombs scrounges discarded food, cooks it, and serves it free of charge to the homeless. Projecting the do-no-harm ethic of a vegan diet into the realm of consumption, 'freegans' reject retail shopping for the dumpster diving of food and clothing 'so as to give no economic power to the capitalist consumer machine' (http://freegan.info/; see Clark, 2004; Greenwell, 2006). Around the United States, college students also engage in activist dumpster diving. Wesleyan University students hold dumpster-diving workshops, scrounge the trash of Ivy League schools, and are even making a film, *Operation Ivy: Dumpster Diving at Elite Colleges*, to serve 'as a propaganda vehicle to develop colleges' recycling programs' (Kimes, 2006: 13).

So that dishevelled scrounger digging in the train station trash bin might well be hungry and homeless, but might also be a minimum wage worker, a political activist, a found-object artist, or a committed college student. That scrounger is almost certainly a criminal as well – that is, almost certainly violating one of the many contemporary legal statutes that prohibit urban trash scrounging. In many cities Food Not Bombs activists are likewise denied

permits to feed the homeless, then ticketed or arrested for feeding the homeless without a permit; Las Vegas and other American cities now go further, banning any provision of food to the homeless in downtown parks. As urban economies come to rely increasingly on the high end of late capitalism – on upscale retail consumption within sanitized environments – urban authorities readily criminalize those who, by living from the excesses of that consumption, might somehow interrupt it (Ferrell, 2001/2).

And this dynamic of consumption and waste isn't confined to the relative affluence of the United States, Britain, and Western Europe. In India many of the destitute live from urban trash dumps, in some cases even growing vegetables in the composting waste. In the Gaza Strip, Palestinians scrounge scrap metal from abandoned Israeli settlements. Mexican peasants weave purses and belts from candy wrappers and cookie packages; Brazil's poor collect and sell trash in the tradition of the *garrafeiro*, or 'bottle collector'. As shown in the Academy Award-nominated documentary *Recycled Life* (Dir. Leslie Iwerks, 2006), generations of impoverished Guatemalans have mined Guatemala City's landfill, the largest in Central America. The *cartoneros* ('cardboard people') who scavenge for cardboard and scrap paper in Buenos Aires, Argentina, even ride their own stripped-down 'Ghost Train' to and from their nocturnal work in the city-centre. Meanwhile, in Guiyu, China, 60,000 people work amidst toxic metal and acid runoff as they disassemble old computers – a task, and risk, they share with thousands of inmates in US federal prisons, who earn as little as 23 cents an hour for disassembling electronic equipment (see Bloch, 1997; O'Brien, 2008).

It's bad enough she got that ASBO slapped on her last year for yelling animal-rights slogans at the McDonald's assistant manager

ASBO stands for Anti Social Behaviour Order, a peculiarly British phenomenon that emerged in 2003 in an attempt to 'clamp down' on the anti-social activities associated with so-called 'yob culture'. Unhappy with the existing legal definition of *anti-social*, as set down in the Crime and Disorder Act of 1998, the Labour government began to proscribe hundreds of activities as 'anti-social', including the throwing of fireworks, begging, shouting and swearing, discarding condoms and letting down car tyres (see Presdee, 2005: 192–8). Despite the fact that ASBO activities are generally already covered by existing laws, the government's policy continues unabated, with everything from operating a crack house to illegal parking now part of the ASBO compass. Add to this the fact that since coming to power in 1997 the Labour government has created more than 3,000 new criminal offences – one for almost every day it has been in power – and it would seem that Stan Cohen's (1979: 346) prophesy for the future of social control (i.e. 'thinning the mesh and widening the net') has proved an accurate one.

The school counsellor advised him and his ex-wife that his daughter seems driven to take risks, to push her own limits, to test herself and her teachers

As you've seen in previous chapters, cultural criminological theories suggest some explanations for the daughter's behaviour, and the counsellor's perception of it. Like her father, she may be responding to boredom – to the boredom that the school enforces through dress codes, attendance requirements, and curricula generally drained of critical thought. Like Cohen's (1955) delinquent boys, she and her friends may be delinquent girls, inverting and resisting the standards by which they are judged. Or, as we saw in the previous chapter, she may be one of the many girls and women now engaged in edgework, and so looking for the sharpened sense of self that the rationalized school denies (see Garot, 2007b).

ODD, Oppositional Defiant Disorder

The meaning of crime and transgression can be made in many ways – even medically. From the earliest days of the American juvenile justice system, constructions of 'juvenile delinquency' mixed legal constraint with models of medical treatment and moral rehabilitation. Today, we see the ongoing medicalization of childhood activities, with most any inattentiveness or opposition to adult authority defined as a psycho-medical condition: attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder. Such definitions of course encode adult authority over children with the legitimacy of medical science – and manage to sell a few billion dollars in behaviour-modifying drugs along the way. As labelling theorists were well aware, meanings such as these can even be made retrospectively, such that a girl on a train can be seen to have ODD not when first encountered, but when later remembered (Rossol, 2001).

That bunch of damn 'chavs' that hangs out down at the end of the road

Another British phenomenon is the 'chav', a pejorative label given to white youth who engage in minor forms of unruly behaviour in and around town centres and fast-food outlets. 'Chavs' are allegedly identifiable by their love of designer sports apparel and ostentatious jewellery, a penchant for alcohol and promiscuity, and their sneering attitude towards the police and other authorities. Almost unheard of before 2002, the term 'chav' has emerged as a ubiquitous British epithet for everyone from unwed teenage mothers to high-profile celebrities such as Posh and Becks.

As we've argued elsewhere, the mediated emergence of 'chavs' must be understood within broader socio-economic processes of marginalization (Hayward and Yar, 2006). Given that late modern identity is now forged primarily through consumerism, the popular media increasingly construct marginality and social deficit not in terms of flawed relations to *production*, but by purportedly pathological class relations to the sphere of consumption. Indeed, we found that the rise of the term 'chav' and the decline of 'underclass' discourse in the UK were not unconnected; instead of vilifying an underclass that fails to 'work hard' and adhere to established relations of economic production, we

now vilify the chav because of 'inappropriate' consumer choices. The chav is guilty of excessive consumption in areas stigmatized as aesthetically bankrupt; the chav's problem is consumption deemed vulgar by superordinate consumer classes. The chav phenomenon nicely exemplifies the dynamics of late modernity, with its convergence of consumption, identity, marginality, and social control; in the 'chav' we see that consumption practices have become the locus around which exclusion is configured and the excluded identified and managed.

It's the same old stuff – CSI: Crime Scene Investigation, Law and Order: Criminal Intent, Cold Case, Without a Trace

So large is the market for death that it transcends death itself. 'We're really seeing the day of the zombie', says book publisher Don D'Auria. 'As a monster, it's speaking to people' (St John, 2006: 1). We'd guess that it's saying something about apocalyptic anxiety, and an overblown sense that danger lurks always amidst the everyday. But in any case, as zombie films, novels, and video games proliferate, so do the opportunities to read of humankind stalked by a terror that doubles death back on itself, to watch as the undead eat out the brains of the soon-to-be-dead. No longer do we go gentle into that good night; now we hype the journey, and return to carry others along with us.

The roaring popularity of *CSI* (Crime Scene Investigation) television programmes pushes this death culture deeper still into everyday life. Here, the long process of criminal justice is lost in the pseudo-scientific moment, and the drama of death is in the details – torn and severed flesh, flecks of blood, entry and exit wounds, all to be analyzed in slow-motion close-up (Cavender and Deutsch, 2007). Contemporary cultural artifacts confirm the extent of this American tele-death festival: seven of the top-ten TV shows in August 2005 are *CSI*, *Law and Order*, *Cold Case* and their spin-offs; again in 2007, these make up seven of the ten most-watched TV shows, with a combined audience of some 70 million, and emerge as 'the most lucrative thing on television' (Trend, 2007: 98). If mediated violence is pornographic in its objectification of pain and victimization, these shows are hard-core pornographic snuff films: close-up shots of bullet-on-flesh action or body parts gnawed by rodents, all designed to titillate even the most satiated consumer of televised death. Indeed, it seems we're addicted to the culture of death, dancing every day with violence and morbidity, and inventing as many zombies, serial killers, terrorists, and multi-fatality car wrecks as necessary to keep us, well … happy.

Can it be any surprise, then, that a society hooked on the happy indulgences of televised forensic pornography – a society that finds in televised gore and violation a sad sort of existential succour – wishes only the most painful and punitive consequences for those who traffic in *actual* criminality? This

love/hate relationship is less a contradiction than it seems – more two sides of the same titillation. The criminal must be constructed and punished as 'the other' to successfully serve the viewer's voyeuristic escape from the everyday; the escapist love of the televised criminal and the punitive hatred of the actual criminal are both acts of distancing, of exclusion, and so both necessary safeguards for the consumer of crime news and entertainment. A sadomasochistic marriage of fear and fascination is consummated, and with it a thin line indeed between love and hate.

And by the way: What might we think of a society where seven of its ten most popular television shows portrayed and endorsed the tenets of fundamentalist religion? Would we be concerned about a media-abetted theocracy? If seven of our most popular shows featured hardcore *sexual* pornography, might even the most liberal among us worry that citizens were just a bit preoccupied with sexual gratification, to the exclusion of other matters? So, with seven programmes oriented towards the most graphic of death depictions, with the culture of the zombie ascending like a corpse from the grave, what now? A thanatocracy, a commercialized zombie culture consumed by its own death wish (Jarvis, 2007)?

In the dream she's reaching for him, trying to pull him through some sort of wall, but she can't keep her grip and he fades away, receding into the innards of the American penal gulag, disappearing into the crowd of two million other prisoners for whom a day in the life is something very different indeed

More and more occupants of the late modern world find themselves extricated from the usual rhythms of the everyday, in some cases by the criminal violence they have given or received, in others by the inequitable machinery of contemporary criminal justice as embodied in mandatory and differential sentencing, racial profiling, impoverished public defender programmes, and 'wars' on drugs, gangs, and terror. As we showed in Chapter 3, this incarceration machine now imprisons more than two million Americans, with millions more under the ongoing state surveillance of probation and parole.

And yet this carceral madness has spawned its own critique, has birthed a scholarly Frankenstein more than ready to turn on its creator, and in so doing to reveal the real monster. Emerging from the experiences of those who have transformed their own incarceration into informed critique, *convict criminology* mixes inside exposé, qualitative research, and critical theory to produce a damning critique of mass incarceration. Left with little choice but to 'spend considerable amounts of time observing the culture of today's prison and their impact on staff and convicts' (Austin et al., 2001: 20), these convict criminologists likewise marshal ethnographic immersion and theoretical sophistication to construct a critical, cultural critique of 'managerial' prison research that

offers 'little empathy for prisoners' and 'disregards the harm perpetrated by criminal justice processing of individuals arrested, charged, and convicted of crimes' (Richards and Ross, 2001: 177).

A collective act of intellectual courage, convict criminology might be considered the cultural criminology of the everyday life that no one cares to notice.

a selection of films and documentaries illustrative of some of the themes and ideas in this chapter

TRAFFIC, 2001, Dir. Steven Soderbergh
Traffic is a gripping, multi-layered film that explores the intricate interconnections of the illegal drug trade in contemporary America. Broad in scope, the film's storyline cross-cuts various aspects of the drug trade, from the internal dynamics of drug cartels to the problems faced by Drug Enforcement Agency officers, from the political hypocrisy surrounding the 'war on drugs' to the drug habits of the middle classes. See also the 1990 British Channel 4 series *Traffik* (on which the Hollywood film *Traffic* was based).

FALLING DOWN, 1993, Dir. Joel Schumacher
At one level, a formulaic Hollywood shoot-em-up; at another level, a more problematic story of metropolitan meltdown, as Michael Douglas's character 'D-Fens' psychologically unravels during a cross-LA odyssey. Importantly, *Falling Down* should not be read only as a metaphor for late modernity or, for that matter, ontological insecurity. Rather, it is a parable of alienation and maladaption; a tale of a man out of time. D-Fens is a disillusioned and unstable man who can no longer function or make sense of a more complex, pluralized social order – as a result adopting disturbing measures to achieve his warped version of the American Dream.

MARDI GRAS: MADE IN CHINA, 2005, Dir. David Redmon
Vividly illustrating the inequities and ironies of global capitalism, David Redmon's documentary exposes the link between the consumer excesses of the New Orleans Mardi Gras and the harsh realities of Chinese female factory workers. The film 'reveals the glaring truth about the real benefactors of the Chinese workers' hard labor and exposes the extreme contrast between women's lives and liberty in both cultures' (Meredith Lavitt, *Sundance Film Festival*).

RECYCLED LIFE, 2006, Dir. Leslie Iwerks
Recycled Life is a sobering and ultimately touching short documentary about the generations of families who call Guatemala City's garbage dump home. Abandoned by their government, thousands of Guatemalans are today forced into a daily survival struggle as they eek out a living by recycling consumptive waste. Leslie Iwerks film exposes this hidden world and sympathetically documents what it's like to live in the foothills of Central America's largest and most toxic landfill mountain.

Brick, 2006, Dir. Rian Johnson
Late modern *film noir* for the Y Generation, *Brick* is the story of dysfunctional teenagers in an anonymous Californian high school. All the classic components of *film noir* are in evidence here – *femmes fatales*, fast-paced expositional dialogue, and double-crossing – only this time they're re-energized by their location among high school drug-dealing subcultures. Of interest here is the way young people are adultized, while the actual adult world is marginalized to the point of insignificance.