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It's the Image that Matters: Style, Substance and Critical Scholarship

Much has happened at *Crime, Media, Culture* since our last editorial at the beginning of Volume 2. As we launch Volume 3, we can report that *Crime, Media, Culture* has recently been awarded a major international publishing prize and has continued, we hope, to promote the best in critical scholarship at the intersections of crime, media and culture.

As is to be expected after two years, our Associate and International Editorial Boards have undergone some restructuring. While the changes to the latter are too numerous to list in detail here, we would like to extend our sincerest thanks to all the Editorial Board members who have worked with us over the past two volumes, and to offer a warm welcome to those new members who have come on board. It is also a pleasure to welcome Katja Franko Aas, Mark Hamm, Maggy Lee, Meda Chesney-Lind and Russell Smith as Associate Editors, and to confirm that Alexandra Campbell and Majid Yar have joined us as Review Editors. In addition, we have created a new editorial position – Visual Arts Editor – which will be filled by Cécile Van de Voorde. Reflecting our scholarly interest in the visual, we believe this new role will further cement *CMC*'s distinctive and innovative approach to visual issues. In this context it is the visual, and its significance for explorations of crime, media and culture, that we wish to address briefly in this editorial.

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Today, the visual constitutes perhaps the central medium through which the meanings and emotions of crime are captured and conveyed to audiences. Indeed, we would suggest that it is the visual that increasingly shapes our engagement with, and understanding of, key issues of crime, control and social order. The proliferation of news

and entertainment media has generated growing competition for audience attention, a sort of inflationary spiral of shock and enticement. Producing a visually arresting product which can 'feed the mind and move the heart', as Rupert Murdoch (2006) recently put it, has become one of the major challenges for media practitioners seeking to maintain their commercial buoyancy. In this context of rapidly developing production technologies across a 24/7 mediascape, and multiplying screens and surfaces, the visual becomes paramount. However, while there is no escaping the 'politics of representation' (Hall, 1993), a scholarly engagement with it demands more than merely accounting for the visual; it requires theorizing the complex construction and dissemination of visual media as regards crime, crime control, and social justice.

Undoubtedly, the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) on one side of the Atlantic, and an accelerating, article-driven tenure process on the other, place pressures on academics to produce and publish articles quickly. These pressures in turn often discourage the sort of in-depth, qualitative analyses that *CMC* enthusiastically promotes. While searchable online databases provide a useful resource for locating news stories, for example, they also strip those stories of much of their textual and visual meaning. Reduced to words on a computer monitor, printed 'news' becomes decontextualised, shorn of structure and style, disconnected from defining images and surrounding stories—and so ultimately is left with little similarity to the increasingly spectacular, brilliantly colourful products that media audiences consume on a daily basis. If nothing else, then, we hope that *CMC*, with its attention to visual analysis and its inclusion of visual content, can continue to offer a dedicated publishing home for those scholars who resist institutional pressures and technological temptations in order to engage in deep, holistic analyses of the crime, media, culture nexus. Clearly, sound and spectacle, image and representation matter in the contemporary construction of crime and control—and so we hope that *CMC*, by form and content, matters as well.

In that regard we are delighted to report that *CMC* appears to have created something of a stir in the academic world. Recently, the journal won the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers' Charlesworth Award for Best New Journal.

In their decision, the judges noted in particular the visual style of the journal, along with the strength of its content. And indeed, in Volumes 1 and 2 we featured political commentary from graphic artists, pencil sketches by life-prisoners, photographic essays and freestanding images, in addition to full articles, research notes, polemics and reviews.

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In this first issue of Volume 3, we continue in a similar vein, with Alison Young's visual and aural analysis of two 9/11 'texts', Michelle Brown's analysis of the U.S. 'war on drugs' as represented in Hollywood film, and Gray Cavender and Sarah Deutsch's investigation of the *CSI* (Crime Scene Investigation) US television series. We would also draw attention to the *Research Notes* section, which appears to have become a firm favourite among readers over the past two years. Our *Research Notes* section provides both well established and younger scholars the opportunity to engage in discussion and debate about formative, ongoing or completed research, and to invite comment from those with similar interests. It is perhaps worth recalling that some of the most creative and influential contributions to theory and methodology in the social sciences began life as doctoral theses. Ralf Dahrendorf's (1959) *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*, Daniel Bell's (1965) *The End of Ideology*, Stanley Cohen's (1972) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, Ken Plummer's (1975) *Sexual Stigma*, Carol Smart's (1976) *Women, Crime and Criminology*, Dick Hebdige's (1979) *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, and Paul Gilroy's (1987) *Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, to name but a few, remain definitive contributions to critical scholarship that began life as the early work of young scholars. In addition to submitting full articles, then, we would especially invite our younger and early-career colleagues to consider what is distinctive and original about their research, and to submit this work and these considerations as *Research Notes* for possible publication in the pages of Crime, *Media, Culture*.

The call for an original and distinctive discourse on crime, media, and culture is further exemplified in the current issue by Christopher Williams' creative consideration of existential, ontological, and humanist perspectives as part of an expanded cultural criminology of human transgression. This discourse continues in the *Polemics* section. There, Steve Hall and Simon Winlow put forward their case that cultural criminology can benefit from a deeper level of critical theorising, and from greater attention to the mutating consequences of contemporary capitalism within everyday social life. In counterpoint, Jeff Ferrell, one of *CMC*'s Editors, argues that cultural criminology has not so much turned away from critical materialist analysis as it has oriented itself toward a fuller and more nuanced accounting of inequality, crime, and resistance. This amicable debate will no doubt continue, and we encourage our readers to join it.

Finally, we repeat the invitation to our readership to send us freestanding images, photographic essays, theoretical and methodological inquiries into visual issues, reviews of relevant art exhibitions, photographic collections, television programmes, and films, and ideas for further development in this area. Already, we notice that visual imagery – which among criminological journals until recently remained primarily the province of *CMC* – has now been adopted across a number of other publications. Imitation is indeed the sincerest form of flattery and this is a development we welcome wholeheartedly. But be assured: we intend to continue our visual innovations, to encourage and develop new forms of critical scholarship, and to keep pushing the visual and critical boundaries of academic publishing, wherever they may fall—and we invite your participation in doing so.

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