JUST IMAGES

Aesthetics, Ethics and Visual Criminology

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The last few years have seen a remarkable visual turn in criminology and this article explores some of the implications of this renewed interest in the power of images. It begins by setting out influential sociological understandings of aesthetics, before turning to the distinctive ethical questions posed by visual representations of harm, suffering and violence that feature so prominently in these multi-mediated times. These arguments are then developed in relation to the documentary photography tradition, as it explicitly confronts the relationships between aesthetics, ethics and justice, in ways that a visually attuned criminology has much to learn from, not least since contemporary practitioners have become increasingly aware that they have certain social responsibilities towards the subjects they photograph, while remaining committed to anthropological exploration, moral commitment and political reform.

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Introduction

Over the last decade or so, criminologists have become increasingly concerned with the visual—as images of crime, harm and punishment proliferate across new and old media, there is a growing recognition that criminology needs to rethink its relations with the ascendant power of spectacle. Although this is a project that is long overdue, it is no easy task. Difficulties arise because the discipline is so dominated by 'words and numbers' that just simply introducing images into scholarship is 'likely to *retard* the development of a visual criminology, since it will leave in place the ugly notion that written or numeric analysis can somehow penetrate the obfuscation, conquer the opaqueness, of the image' (Ferrell *et al.* 2008: 186, emphasis in original). In other words, criminology has no choice but to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the visual and confront the ways in which contemporary societies are saturated with images of crime. The radical claim, made by cultural criminologists, is that a 'decisive moment' has now been reached— where it is no longer possible to divorce crime and control from how they are visually represented and urge an end to the distinction made between 'real' crime and the 'un-real' image (Ferrell and Van de Voorde 2010: 36). Much of the criminological work that will be discussed in this paper has begun to address this reorientation of thinking and, here, I will also be developing my own work that explores the relationships between aesthetics, ethics and justice (Carrabine 2008; 2011*a*).

  It has become a well-worn observation that it is impossible to get through a day without encountering a photograph. But amidst this relentless flow of images are those that have a distinctive, intimate energy. This point was made most poignantly by Roland Barthes

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(1981: 70) after of the death of his mother—where his subsequent grief demanded not 'just an image', but 'a just image of her', one that 'would be both justice and accuracy'—and my title 'just images' plays on this duality of meaning. In her classic account of photography, Susan Sontag (1977: 20) described how images of atrocity both 'transfix' yet at the same time 'anesthetize'. In this regard, photography can just as easily 'deaden conscience as arouse it' and she argued that the flood of images on television has descended into a nightly banality, which has sapped our capacity to react. The torrent of mediated misery diminishes the power of images to move us through making the horrific appear more familiar. But she has since recognized that the 'argument that modern life consists of a diet of horrors by which we are corrupted and to which we gradually become habituated is a founding idea of the critique of modernity—the critique being as old as modernity itself' (Sontag 2004*a*: 95). In her last work, she challenged the view that images of atrocity have little effect and instead advocated a more nuanced understanding of the uses and meanings of images—points that I will develop in relation to relation to recent work on 'criminological aesthetics'.

This article seeks to intervene in the visual turn in criminology and explores some of the implications of this renewed interest in the power of images. The first part sets out two influential sociological understandings of aesthetics, which offer important reminders that cultural texts are not produced in isolation and a great deal of social work goes into their creation, reception and reputation. The second part turns to the distinctive ethical questions posed by visual representations of harm, suffering and violence that feature so prominently in these multi-mediated times and is especially concerned with the moral consequences of looking. In the third and substantive part, these arguments are developed in relation to the documentary photography tradition, as it explicitly confronts the relationships between aesthetics, ethics and justice, in ways that a visually attuned criminology has much to learn from. The fourth part then outlines how the documentary photography project itself came under sustained critique and then describes the shift away from the traditional, objectifying practices towards more subjective explorations of identity and difference. The final part considers the impact of digital photography—a technological development that fosters new relationships between object, image and viewer that some critics insist is fundamentally different from the analogue era.

Aesthetics, Art and Sociology

In criminology, the question of how images 'move us' and what a 'just response' to them might be has begun to receive attention (Valier and Lippens 2004: 320), while, in the 'new sociology of art' (de la Fuente 2007), fresh questions about the aesthetics properties of art and the social construction of artworks have begun to be asked. Howard Becker's (1982/2008: xxv) *Art Worlds* is a key text advocating an approach to art that 'is social organizational, not aesthetic' and challenged influential understandings of art as the product of a unique, isolated genius. Instead of reifying individual artists and their particular works, his approach emphasizes their social character. Art worlds involve extensive networks of cooperation, convention, opportunity and stratification among large groups of people participating in the creation of the work and the making of reputation. The idea that art is a form of collective action is taken in a different direction in Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of artistic production where more structural concepts (like 'fields', 'positions' and 'habitus') are introduced to grasp:

. . . the whole set of relationships . . . *between the artist and other artists*, and beyond them, the whole set of agents engaged in the production of the work, or, at least, of the *social value* of the work (critics, gallery directors, patrons, etc.). (Bourdieu 1993: 140, emphasis in original)

Ultimately, the origins of artistic worth do not reside in the artworks themselves, but in the social institutions in which they are produced and consumed.

In Becker, the idea of 'world' is meant to imply a lot of people doing something together and is often taken to prioritize cooperation whereas, in Bourdieu, the metaphor of 'field' suggests an arrangement of forces provoking intense rivalries, conflicts and struggles for dominance. The two approaches are quite distinct: one is drawn from the interactionist tradition and emphasizes lived process, while the other is more concerned with structural disposition and symbolic systems. It would be a mistake to simply combine the two, in an effort to produce more convincing sociological explanation, because the differences between them are too great—but they provide crucial insights into how a visual criminology might develop.

It is significant that Bourdieu emphatically rejects 'internal' readings of artworks, which maintain that the meaning and value of art transcend the historical conditions of their initial creation and reception. Yet, he also dismisses conventional modes of sociological analysis, defined as 'external' readings, that often reduces the origins of an artwork to the social milieu in which the artist operates (such as the rise of a mercantile class and art patronage in Renaissance Florence). Rather, every artist and their work take up a position in the field, and the range of possible positions will depend on the history of the field, the development of generic styles, professional contacts and so on. His overall argument is that no aesthetic judgment or any cultural form is ever 'innocent' and will always involve certain kinds of social power. In order to create value and recognition, hierarchies of difference are essential and, as he demonstrated in *Distinction*, these antagonistic judgments of taste function as markers of 'class'.

Becker (1982/2008), in contrast, remains relativistic and contends that aesthetic theories are inevitably moralistic in tone, distinguishing between 'things which do not *deserve* to be called art from works which have *earned* that honorific title' (Becker 1982/2008: 136, emphasis in original). The emphasis on deserve and earn underlines both the moral and social work involved in deciding between what is art and what is not. Ultimately, what is defined as 'great art' is that which 'has a good reputation for a long time' and that these enduring reputations are 'a product of consensus and that consensus arises through an historical process' (Becker 1982/2008: 366). These sociological arguments are important to keep in mind as we now turn to recent work on 'criminological aesthetics', which advocates an analysis of 'the images themselves and the relation between the spectator and image' (Young 2010*a*: 83). Alison Young's position is also relativistic and recognizes that aesthetic judgments have normative implications. Her contention that 'there can be no *one* definition (or judgment) of beauty, and nor should there be' (Young 2005: 15, emphasis in original) stresses the contested nature of the visual and the struggles over meaning images engender.

Criminology, Ethics and Representation

It is a defining feature of Alison Young's (2005; 2007; 2010*a*; 2010*b*) approach that she examines images of crime and justice as constituting, as well as representing, the social world through the powers of affect. From her studies of contemporary artworks that

have been described as 'disgusting' (Young 2005) through to her analysis of cinematic violence (Young 2010*b*)—where rape and revenge, torture and disaster, murder and mayhem routinely figure on screen—she consistently pursues the question of how it feels to be addressed by such images and considers the consequences that flow from these encounters. Her work is especially concerned with the profound emotional experiences involved in looking and she develops an ethics of visual interpretation that builds upon the affective dimensions of spectatorship. In the cinematic image, 'we find the body of the spectator registering sensations relating to what she/he is seeing without undergoing or having undergone what is depicted and seeing sensation becomes *sense* (meaning)' (Young 2010*a*: 9, emphasis in original). On this reckoning, affect refers to how the body connects both with itself and the wider world, and that connection can range from the ambivalent to the deeply moving. The cinematic and the affective meet most resolutely in scenes of violence, where viewers are confronted with images of suffering. It is here that the question of the spectator's complicity in the scene is posed with often considerable intensity. Here, the 'fears, horrors and desires that flow from our engagement with the image on screen' (Young 2010*a*: 18) are given their full due.

In developing questions surrounding the ethics of representation, the core issue remains the nature of 'our mediated relationship to the other person' (Silverstone 2007: 6) and, in previous work, I have addressed how spectacles of suffering can transform the way we live with, and understand, one another (Carrabine 2011*a*). The central issue at the heart of any examination into the ethics of representation is a concern with our relationships to each other, and that these relationships must be premised on an understanding of difference. Such a position is most readily associated with Emmanuel Lévinas's (1969) philosophical thinking that insists on seeing both self and other as independent, but also existing in relation to one another through respect and responsibility, rather than through relationships of mutuality and dialogue.

Lévinas's (1969) ethics of unconditional responsibility towards the other has been particularly influential on postmodern moral reasoning and has prompted important work devoted to a radical justice of alterity (Carrabine 2006). Liberal ethics are based on recognizing the essential similarity between the self and others, and it is precisely this understanding of shared inter-subjectivity and reciprocity that postmodern thinkers take issue with by emphasizing the singular, particular and local. The appeal of Lévinas lies in his insistence that there can be no shared agreement, as there is always something about the other that escapes comprehension, and it is this ethical opening to alterity that must be acknowledged. In Lévinas, there is a radical reversal of modern liberal ethics by giving priority to the negative other 'which was once unquestionably assigned to the self' (Bauman 1993: 85). This goes beyond simple tolerance, and Bauman's postmodern ethics invites the embrace of difference, as it is impossible for one to truly ever know the other and thereby makes this idea central to social life. Human solidarity and moral responsibility are dependent on proximity, a certain mystery and a distinctive face.

Both thinkers were well aware that the kind of face-to-face responsibility envisaged here is somewhat diminished in complex social systems, which are characterized by the blasé indifference identified by Georg Simmel in the modern metropolis. Indeed, Bauman briefly discusses the idea of the 'telecity' in relation to Simmel's understanding of the stranger in the city and to forms of modern media communication, especially television. He notes how the strangers 'the televiewer confronts are "telemediated"', where there is 'comfortingly, a glass screen to which their lives are confined' and

a technological 'reduction of their existential mode to pure *surface*' in which they 'appear solely as objects of enjoyment, no strings attached' (Bauman 1993: 177–8, emphasis in original). In short, the strangers in the telecity become aestheticized and no longer present a moral problem, as they lack any compelling solidity.

The implications of Bauman's position have been pursued across a series of publications by Keith Tester (1997; 2001; 2010), which explores the moral implications of mediated representations of suffering by examining how images and stories move audiences. Like Sontag, he is concerned with how the media domesticate and decontextualize horrific pictures for Western audiences—producing banal indifference, rather than moral outrage. But, while apathy, boredom and voyeuristic pleasure might characterize much mediated viewing, there are occasions on which 'something happens which stirs us out of our stupor and inspires us to take part in events like telethons' (Tester 2001: 133), which are premised around audience interactivity and endeavour to construct a sense of purposeful engagement through recurring cycles of demand, sacrifice and reward. Mediated charity events like Live Aid, Live 8 and television telethons generally are typically structured in the following way:

First, images of suffering are shown; second, the appeal is made (the audience is called upon to make a small sacrifice); third, the audience is rewarded by a music act or performer who provided amusement, and the cycle begins all over again. (Tester 2010: 52)

Yet, through the gift of money, the screen remains intact and Tester (2001: 130) deliberately invokes Bauman's notion of the telecity to suggest that this kind of mediated interaction 'keeps the donor and the recipient, the audience and the suffering and the miserable, quite apart from one another and consigned to separate bounded spheres' so that 'the money is a free gift that is intended to discharge responsibilities without, however, creating a connection of any sort at all'. Clearly, he is questioning the meaning of donation and the moral ties that might be obtained between the audience and distant strangers by emphasizing how the position of the spectator as consumer is reinforced in these events.

In criminology, Claire Valier and Ronnie Lippens (2004) have also built on Lévinasian arguments to explore why it is that certain images are moving and what might be an ethically just response to them. As they recognize, the journey from ethics to justice involves neither assuming the 'position of imagined victim; nor does one sanctify the victim as martyr' (Valier and Lippens 2004: 324), but that an ethical responsiveness might be constituted through the 'deafening trauma' of the other, through a 'trauma of the senses, pre-symbolic and non-symbolizable' (Valier and Lippens 2004: 331) is their suggestive conclusion. It is significant that these authors have turned to trauma as the prism through which to grasp the possibility of ethical responsibility in these thoroughly mediatized times. If there is one field in which the ethics of witnessing has become central, it is in the growing scholarship surrounding 'trauma studies', which considers the artistic representation of dreadful events—like the Jewish Holocaust or the AIDS epidemic—where the question of how to bear witness takes prominence.

The crucial point is that human misery should not be reduced to a set of aesthetic concerns, but is fundamentally bound up with the politics of testimony and memory. Oliver (2001: 16) draws attention to the dual meaning of witnessing; it has 'both the juridical connotations of seeing with one's own eyes and the religious connotations of testifying to that which cannot be seen, in other words, bearing witness'. Some feel

that this distinction between the legal and religious is too hastily drawn and instead prefer a more productive ambiguity that recognizes that eyewitnesses to a traumatic event are often overwhelmed by it. Here, the 'division between witnessing (first hand seeing) and bearing witness (seeing what is beyond seeing) as being far more fluid' (Blocker 2009: 89) but still remaining faithful to the distinction between what we can see and what we cannot.

Becker, Bourdieu and Photography

In what follows, I draw together the arguments developed so far and discuss them in relation to documentary photography—partly because the case illustrates many of the issues I have been describing, but also because the tradition offers crucial insights from which to build a visual criminology (see Ferrell and Van de Voorde 2010, on the latter point). Documentary photography poses important questions on the relationships between aesthetics, ethics and justice, not least since contemporary practitioners have become increasingly aware that they have certain social responsibilities towards the subjects they photograph. Indeed, much of the work has been driven by a combination of anthropological exploration, moral commitment and political reform that involves a 'subtle dialectic of attentiveness and critical analysis', which is regarded as 'essential to the continued development of cultural criminology and its visual orientation' (Ferrell and Van de Voorde 2010: 44). I would also add the need to build on the insights of Becker and Bourdieu, who have each offered important analyses of photography that further an understanding of the medium.

In Bourdieu's early collaborative work on *Photography: A Middlebrow Art* (1965/1990), he demonstrated how a cultural practice like photography, which, in principle, was open to almost everyone and had not yet acquired an elaborate set of aesthetic judgment criteria, could still sustain social hierarchies and class divisions. The study revealed that working-class respondents were far more likely than their middle- and upper-class counterparts to value photographs that either performed a clear social function (such as recording weddings, christenings or honeymoons) or are considered 'beautiful' in the most conventional ways (sunset, landscapes or famous monuments). These arguments are later developed in *Distinction*, in which he analyses responses to a series of photographs. When confronted with an unidentified documentary photograph of an old peasant woman's hands, the responses prompted an empathic 'ethical complicity', but 'never a specifically aesthetic judgement' ('I really feel sorry seeing that old woman's hands') from manual workers. With the lower middle classes, 'exaltation of ethical virtues comes to the forefront', occasionally 'tinged with populist sentimentality' ('Poor old thing! Her hands must really hurt her. It really gives a sense of pain'). Sometimes, there was a concern for aesthetic properties and comparisons drawn to painting ('The sort of hands you seen in early Van Goghs'). Higher up the social hierarchy, the 'remarks become increasingly abstract with (other people's) hands, labour and old age functioning as allegories or symbols' for 'general reflections on general problems' ('It's the very symbol of toil .... It's terrible that work and poverty are so deforming') (Bourdieu 1984: 44–5). It is on this basis that Bourdieu can claim that taste is far from being an inimitable personal faculty, but is instead an essentially social phenomenon that structures perceptions of the world, where 'culture' now performs the same legitimizing role that birth and bloodline had for the nobility under feudalism.

Although there remain problems with how much emphasis Bourdieu lays on the systematic over-determination of people's lifestyle dispositions by social, economic and political factors, his work provides an important counter to pure, 'internal' readings of images. Becker's approach is far less influenced by the grand traditions of European social theory, but is still dedicated to unmasking the ideological assumptions that predominate in writing about the arts. His now classic essay on how visual sociology, documentary photography and photojournalism derive their meaning emphasizes that, just as 'paintings get their meaning in a world of painters, collectors, critics, and curators, so photographs get their meaning from the way the people involved in them understand them, use them, and thereby attribute meaning to them' (Becker 1995: 5). In contrast to much contemporary photography made for the art gallery, the three photographic genres tend to give some degree of social context to the images they present. As he recognizes, definitions of photographic art are exceptionally fluid, and the art world has often incorporated journalistic and documentary photography into the canon. Weegee (discussed below) is one of the more extreme examples, but many current practitioners actively seek gallery settings for their work, largely in response to changing market conditions. Nonetheless, the examples he discusses 'provide material for the continuing examination of ways of telling about society, whether through words, numbers, or pictures' (Becker 1995: 13). The importance of Becker and Bourdieu's sociological analysis is that it constantly reminds us that visual interpretation should never be an end in and of itself, but must always have the goal of social and political explanation firmly in sight.

In an effort to develop these arguments, I now turn to a more detailed discussion of the origins of documentary photography in the nineteenth century and the expansion of colonial power, then describe the so-called 'golden age' of documentary in the 1930s, when socially concerned photography reached a peak. But it is also important to note that, alongside this morally charged movement, there remained a mass market for sensationalized images of working-class life and the urban condition. This kind of 'candid' photography both gives rise to new developments in tabloid culture and provides a bridge from the conventional topics of documentary photography to the fresh directions taken in the post-war period, which becomes more preoccupied with new kinds of cultural landscape and subject matter. By the 1970s, the very practice of documentary photography comes under sustained critique from the Left, as questions surrounding the politics of representation come increasingly to the fore. And I will pause here and spend time detailing the substance of these critiques and then show how the documentary form responded by shifting away from the traditional, objectifying practices towards more subjective explorations of identity and difference. I finish with some thoughts on how the advent of digital photography has further transformed the documentary project itself and the act of bearing witness through the Abu Ghraib scandal in 2004, where shocking photographs of Iraqi prisoners being tortured and abused circulated around the world and, in doing so, pose important questions for visual criminology.

The Origins of Documentary Photography

From its earliest days, the status of photography as a medium drew from its ability both to authentically record the truth and to present a radically new way of seeing the world. Photography promised a visual record of the way things really are—an encyclopaedic inventory to be 'put at the service of science, commerce, physiognomy, empire, and

art' (Solomon-Godeau 1991: 171). Photojournalism originated in war reporting, and provided a sobering counterpoint to the official battlefield art produced by 'war artists', which tended to glamorize combat. War photography revealed to many the horrors of conflict and has since become integral to news reporting. The American Civil War (1861–65) was the first to be photographed extensively, and the harrowing images Matthew Brady and his colleagues took from the battlefield have been credited with laying the foundation stones of photojournalism. At the same time, these now celebrated images were not the most popular produced in the war—photographic studios were inundated with the demand for portraits of those who were setting off to battle, while photographs of commanders were sold to raise funds in support of the war effort (Carlebach 1992). Nonetheless, all the characteristic photographic practices now associated with the documentary form are well established by the 1860s: aside from Brady's war photography, historical sites, sacred places and exotic natives each became subjects of the lens as colonial empires expanded.

Of course, Cesare Lombroso's criminal anthropology will be the most well known example, to criminologists at least, of how photography was used to classify bodies into distinguishable types in this era. Alan Sekula (1989) and John Tagg (1988) have each argued that the photographs taken for police and prison records should be understood in relation to the boom in portraiture, whereby people were encouraged to measure the respectable citizen against the criminal body and visualize social difference. It was not until the 1880s that a French bureaucrat, Alphonse Bertillon, developed 'anthropometric' techniques to systematically record and identify offenders. His filing-card system helped transform what had been an uneven and inconsistent practice into a disciplinary technology that rapidly expanded and remains pivotal to contemporary biometric databases devised to identify and classify increasingly mobile populations. At around the same time, Francis Galton was pioneering photographic techniques to distinguish racial 'types' in an effort to promote his 'science' of eugenics. These developments were closely connected and it is no accident that the 'criminal classes' were classified as a race apart, of lesser stock and morally inferior. In each, the emergence of the photograph as evidence indicates how the documentary gaze is bound up with techniques of control, observation and order.

Much recent work has been devoted to examining the ways in which the camera helped shape imperial power and domination. Photography presented to metropolitan consumers images of distant people that firmly placed them as barbaric, bizarre, primitive or picturesque—permitting Victorian notions of progress and superiority to flourish. These ideas have been put in the following way:

Despite claims for its accuracy and trustworthiness, however, photography did not so much record the real as signify and construct it. Through various rhetorical and pictorial devices, from ideas of the picturesque to schemes of scientific classification, and different visual themes, from landscapes to 'racial types', photographers represented the imaginative geographies of Empire. Indeed, as a practice of representation, photography did more than merely familiarise Victorians with foreign views: it enabled them symbolically to travel through and even possess those spaces. (Ryan 1997: 214)

At the same time, documentary photography was not only concerned with this kind of anthropological exploration, but it was also used to promote social reform and sought to change social conditions.

Some of the earliest practitioners travelled into 'the abyss' to document those dark, dangerous and ungovernable places in which the urban poor lived. Thomas Annan

exposed slum housing conditions in Glasgow in a series of photographs published between 1868 and 1877, while Jacob Riis reported on the crime and crushing poverty experienced in the East Side tenements of New York from the 1880s. Riis had begun his career as a police reporter, then as a crusading 'muckraking' journalist working the most impoverished parts of the city, and innovatively used the recently invented magnesium flash to capture the despair experienced by his subjects. Figure 1, from Riis, is one of his most well known and is entitled *Bandits' Roost* at $59\frac{1}{2}$ Mulberry Street, nicknamed 'Death's Thoroughfare', which was regarded as the most dangerous street in New York. Although some of the pioneers of the documentary tradition were driven by a reformist vision and were dedicated to changing these harsh social conditions, they 'often rendered those they recorded into passive sufferers of poverty, rather than active agents in their own lives' (Price 2009: 78) and this is one of the key tensions that lie at the heart of the documentary project. But, rather than presenting his subjects as pure victims of poverty, Riis's image is clearly speaking to the 'threat posed by large numbers of poor, unassimilated recent immigrants' and thus invokes the 'specter of social unrest'

FIG. 1   Jacob A. Riis, *Bandits' Roost, New York*, bromide print, 1888 (Museum of the City of New York)

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that lay at the heart of middle-class anxieties (Soloman-Godeau 1991: 175). It is by no means a neutral representation, but plays upon the danger of, and the desire to know, the outcast.

The Golden Age

Other tensions were to emerge during the 'golden age' of photojournalism (1930s to 1950s) when 'reportage' became a staple of newspaper and magazine coverage. Indeed, the rapid expansion of the market during this period, when magazines like *Look* and *Life* in the United States, *Illustrated* and *Picture Post* in Britain and *Vu* in France gave outlets for influential photographers, like W. Eugene Smith, Robert Capa and Henri Cartier-Bresson, to have their work commissioned and published. The 1930s also saw large-scale documentary projects like the Farm Security Administration's (FSA) Information Division, which eventually produced over 80,000 images of the human suffering endured in the Great Depression in the United States. The photographers include Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Russell Lee, Arthur Rothstein and Ben Shahn, among many others, who strove for advocacy and reform in an effort to engender support for New Deal relief policies. As commentators subsequently noted, 'it was images of the "worthy" as opposed to the "unworthy" poor that were promoted' (Solomon-Godeau 1991: 179). The dominant tone is that the victims of the Depression are ordinary people, who have fallen on hard times, where poverty and misfortune are personalized and individualized, rather than the structural product of a breakdown in economic, political and social relations.

Many of the photographs concentrate on the terrible impact of the economic crisis on individuals and families, where the most well-known image is perhaps Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother,* sitting in weary contemplation with her two ragged children pressed in close on either side of her. Others include Figure 2, Arthur Rothstein's striking *Cattle Skull, Badlands* of a decaying skull casting a long shadow over the parched earth of a once fertile landscape. Within months, the photograph became controversial. Rothstein was accused of moving the skull and carefully placing it, so as to dramatize the sun beating down on it. Republicans dubbed the skull a prop and labelled the picture New Deal propaganda—exaggerating the extent of the environmental damage in order to pass contentious legislation through Congress. Rothstein has always denied the charge and has since explained how he found himself:

. . . in South Dakota on cracked earth where there was a skull, and I made a lot of photographic exercises using the skull—the texture of the skull, the texture of the earth, the cracks in the soil, the lighting, how the lighting changed from the east to the west as the sun went down. I spent a good part of the day taking pictures of it, near a piece of cactus, on grass—you know—and experimenting with it. (Rothstein 1964: 3)

The photograph was subsequently picked up by a picture editor as an example of fakery and has become embroiled in scandal ever since—where the very 'truthfulness' of documentary photography is under dispute.

Much later, the working practices of the FSA photographers were criticized for how the scenes were manipulated:

FIG. 2   Arthur Rothstein, *Cattle Skull, Badlands*, gelatine silver print, 1936 (George Eastman House, Rochester, New York)

When subjects smiled into the camera, they were stage-managed into more somber poses; sharecroppers who wore their best clothes to be photographed were told to change into ragged everyday wear, persuaded not to wash begrimed hands and faces for the camera. (Solomon-Godeau 1991: 179)

In striving to capture the honesty of a situation and build compassion for the beleaguered, the FSA photographers were imposing their own aesthetic understanding of how poverty and despair should look. This is a fundamental tension running through the documentary project and will be an issue explored in more detail shortly.

Similar contradictions appear in the *Mass Observation* study of British life founded by the anthropologist Tom Harrison, poet Charles Madge and filmmaker Humphrey Jennings in 1937 in an effort to create an 'anthropology of ourselves'. Here, the objective was to candidly document the everyday life of the British, at work and play in a variety of public places: on buses, in pubs, at church, at the seaside and many other collective situations. The movement was heavily influenced by John Grierson, who had first coined the term 'documentary' in 1926 to describe a distinctive kind of film that had a clear pedagogic function, enabling the public to take an active role in the running of a democratic society by creating an informed citizenry. It is this liberal, reformist vision that

helped define the genre, but it is also one that ultimately explains why the traditional documentary project is drawn to the emblematic and poignant over the antagonistic and disruptive. As Martha Rossler (1981: 72) wrote in her key essay analysing the assumptions informing the tradition, it 'has been much more comfortable in the company of moralism than wedded to a rhetoric or program of revolutionary politics'. Yet, it is also important to recognize that, alongside this socially concerned photography, there remained a mass market for sensationalized images of working-class life and the urban condition.

One of the most infamous photographers of the era was Arthur Fellig, more well known by his nickname, Weegee, who, in graphic black-and-white photography, captured the gruesome detail of gang executions (Figure 3), car crashes and tenement fires (Figure 4) that he then sold to the New York City tabloid editors. Such brutal pictures became the staple images of the mass circulation press and effectively changed journalistic practices overnight (Lee and Meyer 2008). Indeed, his pseudonym is derived from the Ouija board and his unerring ability to arrive at crime scenes sometimes even before the police (from 1937, he was the only civilian permitted to have a short-wave police radio in his car). His bestselling book, *Naked City* (1945/2002), was the first collection of his tabloid photography and was published in the same year as the Museum of Modern Art held an exhibition of his work.[1] One collection describes his contribution in the following terms:

He found washed-up lounge singers and teenage murder suspects in paddy wagons and photographed them at their most vulnerable—or, as he put it, their most human .... He was the supreme chronicler of the city at night . . .. Today Weegee is credited with ushering in the age of tabloid culture, while at the same time being revered for elevating the sordid side of human life to that of high art. (www.amber-online.com/exhibitions/weegee-collection/detail)

A somewhat different view is that his 'photographs are morally dubious, not just because of there evident prurience' but because 'he sold for money images that exposed and exploited the involuntary, naked emotions of people he photographed without their permission, often by deliberately spying' (Coplans 1997: 12). Despite their provocative character, his images provide a bridge from the conventional topics of documentary photography to the new directions taken in the post-war period, which was less concerned with offering up monumental images of America and more preoccupied with new kinds of cultural landscape and subject matter.

Among the key representatives of this shift are William Klein, Robert Frank, Lee Friedlander and Diane Arbus. William Klein achieved acclaim for a series of New York street photographs, which recalled Weegee, but without the sensationalism, and a little more humour, and used his 'anti-technique' to produce fragmented scenes, odd juxtapositions and grainy images that would become a dominant vision of how the random disorder of

[1]There is an important sense in which Weegee's *Naked City* anticipates many themes later explored by Andy Warhol—and I am grateful to Paul Sweetman for pointing this out to me. I examine the relationships between Weegee and Warhol in more detail elsewhere (Carrabine 2011*b*), but it is worth emphasizing that both share a set of thematic concerns clustered around celebrity, criminality, fame, trauma and voyeurism. Phil Carney (2010: 27) has also described how artists have played with the relationship between 'celebrity and desire in the criminal identification photograph', from Warhol's 'Most Wanted Men' series of silk screens in 1964, through Marcus Harvey's enormous painting of Myra Hindley's infamous mug shot initially shown at the *Sensations* exhibition in 1997 to the more recent work of Neil Hepburn and Russell Young that superimposes the faces of model Kate Moss and musician Pete Doherty on the mug shots of the child killers Myra Hindley and Ian Brady to comment on contemporary tabloid culture.
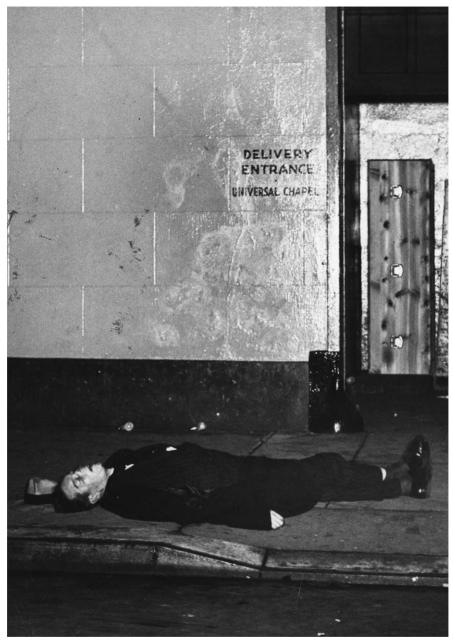
F<small>IG</small>. 3   Weegee (Arthur Fellig), *Dead Man In Front of Funeral Parlor,* 1941 (Weegee/International Center of Photography/Getty Image)

urban life could be represented. In Robert Frank, there is a bleaker sense of the neurotic, restlessness of the 1950s and, through his outsider's eye, he redefined the US icons of the era—observing that cars, diners, jukeboxes, lonely fields and long empty roads were now the symbols of contemporary life—and his loose, casual, rough style of composition proved

FIG. 4   Weegee (Arthur Fellig), *Simply Add Boiling Water*, 1943 (Weegee/International Center of Photography/Getty Image)

to be controversial and influential. Such themes and styles are developed in the 1960s and 1970s by the 'new' documentarists like Lee Friedlander, whose work explored the potential for photographs to convey differing levels of ambiguity, intricacy and shadow.

This new 'subjective' style of documentary making is taken to unsettling, sinister extremes in Diane Arbus's photographic portraits of 'freaks and pariahs', which draw

their power from the 'contrast between their lacerating subject matter and their calm, matter-of-fact attentiveness' (Sontag 1977: 35). It is worth pausing for a moment on Arbus and the emotions her work provokes. Amongst her most well known photographs is 'A Jewish Giant at Home with his Parents in the Bronx, NYC' (1970)[2], which prompted the most angry essay in Sontag's book, where she insists that 'the parents look like midgets, as wrong sized as the enormous son hunched over them' (Sontag 1977: 35) and transform anyone she photographed into a 'freak'. And yet her photographs provoked almost the exact opposite reaction in Stan Cohen (2001: 297), where he describes the deep impression the images left on him and how her subjects produce competing demands 'to acknowledge their utterly disturbing difference and also their common humanity with us'. The gulf between Cohen and Sontag is one that I explore below, for it is a good instance of how two people inhabiting the 'same moral world' can 'see the same images in radically different ways' (Cohen 2001: 299). Nevertheless, what united these very different photographers was the way in which their work drew upon the estranging, surrealist practice of juxtaposing the eerie and the strange with the everyday and the familiar, which, in turn, reopened important questions about photography's complex relationship with reality. It is to such matters that I now turn.

The Critique of Documentary

By the 1970s, the very practice of documentary photography came under sustained critique from the Left, as questions surrounding the politics of representation came increasingly to the fore. Crucial in this regard was the rediscovery of Walter Benjamin's address in 1934 to the Institute for the Study of Fascism in Paris, which was later published as 'The Author as Producer' and introduced many of the themes that still shape debate. Chief among them are how 'art' practices relate to the broader social world; the use of images in the 'mass media'; the aesthetics of 'photographic reportage'; the relationship between pictures and captions; and the place of the intellectual in political struggle. In an often cited passage, he complained that the camera:

. . . is now incapable of photographing a tenement or a rubbish-heap without transfiguring it. Not to mention a river dam or an electric cable factory: in front of these, photography can only say 'How beautiful' .... It has succeeded in turning abject poverty itself, by handling it in a modish, technically perfect way, into an object of enjoyment. (Benjamin 1934/1982: 24)

The New Objectivity movement in art and literature that is his specific target is condemned for the way it 'transforms political struggle so that it ceases to be a compelling motive for decision and becomes an object of comfortable contemplation' (Benjamin 1934/1982: 25–6). It is not only this troubling way that photography beautifies misery that later critics develop, but the ideological consequences are such that documentary

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[2]Unfortunately we were unable to secure permission to reproduce the photograph from the Arbus estate, which as a 'matter of general policy...does not grant reproduction rights for matters unrelated specifically to fine art photography'. Arbus committed suicide in 1971 and since her death the estate have sought to control how her work should be interpreted, presenting certain difficulties for situating the images in a social science context. It is perhaps no coincidence that Howard Becker (1995) was also unable to reproduce any images from Robert Frank's *The Americans* in his discussion of visual sociology, and as will be seen in the next footnote other problems arose in relation to reproducing Sebastião Salgado's work. Of course, many of these images are readily available on the Internet and can be consulted as you read this article.

reportage serves to mask social reality—turning suffering into entertaining spectacle and effectively neutralizing the political force of the image.

For Benjamin, the camera routinely and inevitably aestheticizes all that it pictures. Even a photographer like Eugène Atget, whom he especially admired, is essentially concerned with the 'aesthetics of defamiliarisation' (Watney 1982: 167). In the early twentieth century, Atget set out to record a decaying Paris that was disappearing in the face of modern urban rejuvenation projects, so that his photographs capture the old and the new in ways that anticipate surrealism—Man Ray, Picasso and Matisse bought his work in the 1920s, while Berenice Abbott later popularized his approach in the United States. Benjamin proclaimed that:

... the incomparable significance of Atget who, around 1900, took photographs of deserted Paris streets. It has quite justly been said of him that he photographed them like scenes of a crime. The scene of a crime too, is deserted; it is photographed for the purpose of establishing evidence. With Atget, photographs become standard evidence for historical occurences and acquire a hidden political significance. (Benjamin 1936/1973: 219–20)

Benjamin was acutely aware of the limits of surreal estranging practices and ultimately saw them as rooted in 'pernicious Romantic prejudices'—a charge that Watney (1982: 171) much later levies against Abbot's famous photographs of New York that 'show us the city completely constructed within the cannons of surrealist taste, drained of Surrealism's values'. The irony is that those very estranging techniques that had been developed to expose the alienating conditions of modern life have themselves become little more than an aesthetic style.

Leading critics like Sontag (1977), Berger (1980) and Solomon-Godeau (1991), who have been influenced by Benjamin's thinking, have each accused the documentary photograph of favouring a detached sentimentalism that mystifies political and historical reality. The complaint is that much photojournalism and social documentary exploit the other and reinforce the differences between the superior and inferior. The charge is that to aestheticize tragedy will ultimately deaden the feelings of those who witness suffering, and this point has been made in the following way:

Protected middle-class inhabitants of the more affluent corners of the world—those regions where most photographs are taken and consumed—learn about the world's horrors mainly through the camera: photographs can and do distress. But the aestheticizing tendency of photography is such that the medium which conveys distress ends by neutralizing it. Cameras miniaturize experience, transform history into spectacle. (Sontag 1977: 109–10)

These arguments continue to inform contemporary debates and problematize the documentary project, not least since it remains accused of transforming the victims of disaster into attractive art objects.

One well known example is William Eugene Smith's photos of corporate crime victims in the early 1970s, including his *Tomoko Uemura in Her Bath*, which evokes Rennaisance studies of Christian suffering, where a *pietá*-like mother cradles her terribly deformed daughter to record the horrific effects of mercury poisoning. Once published, it became world famous and helped raise the profile of corporate criminality, but the image was withdrawn from circulation in 1997, 20 years after Tomoko's death, at the wishes of her family. In Smith's work, the tension 'between the demand for careful attentiveness to the photographic subject and the agenda of broader critical analysis' (Ferrell and Van de

FIG. 5   Sebastião Salgado, *Mother and Child. Ethiopia famine,* gelatine silver print 1984.© Sebastião
Salgado/nbpictures

Voorde 2010: 42) is revealed and raises important questions on the ethics of representation, which the documentary tradition continues to explore in controversial and difficult ways.

The disputes surrounding the aestheticization of suffering, which features in much of the contemporary commentary on social documentary photography, is exemplified in the work of Sebastião Salgado (Figures 5)[3]. For example, Stan Cohen finds:

. . . his work a wholly aesthetic response to suffering. The photos are beautifications of tragedy, with gratuitous hints of religious symbolism—the Madonna-like woman holding the Christ-like child. These images leave me altogether unmoved: some I find offensive, others just embarrassing. (Cohen 2001: 299)

The tenor of this critique echoes longstanding objections that to aestheticize tragedy is a sure-fire way to deaden the ethical conscience of those who witness it. Yet, it also returns us, as Cohen (2001: 299) recognizes, to the same kind of objections as Sontag raised against Arbus, in that, for every photo that 'impressed' him 'with its integrity, humanity and compassion, she saw as lacking all these qualities'. Both Salgado and Arbus's work is troubling for many viewers precisely because the images upset and transgress the conventional boundaries of portraiture and documentary. Their compositions make us question not only the gaze of the camera, but also our own motives for looking at such images and why they hold us in their grip, even when it might be better to look away. And it is these conflicts, between humanism and voyeurism, compassion and spectacle, that both photographers explore artistically.

Other commentators find in Salgado's images a way of registering difference that recognizes that there is a cultural politics of representation. It is this 'disturbing quality' of his work that causes 'those who see them to ask themselves: *Are we allowed to view what is being exposed?*' (Levi Strauss 2003: 7, emphasis in original). The aestheticization of suffering that is so apparent in Salgado's work results from the way the images visually eliminate much of the human pain, whilst privileging the tableau vivant aspects—inviting the spectator to contemplate the horror of suffering through a sublimating gaze. It is here that the tension between photography and reality is most pronounced. Salgado's images are densely constructed, carefully crafted compositions that provoke emotionally charged responses among viewers and evidently divide the critics precisely over the very politics of representation: issues explored in subsequent developments in the documentary tradition.

Documentary, Identity and Difference

Since the 1970s, the documentary form has come under increasing critique and these interventions herald a shift away from the traditional, objectifying practices towards more subjective explorations of identity and difference. While working-class life had

[3]If you have accessed this article through an online source you will be presented with a blanked out box, replacing Salgado's photograph, as his representative would only grant permission to reproduce the image in print. Here rights issues surfaced over this article being stored in an online journal archive without a time limit, as the agent explained 'We never give rights to anyone in perpetuity. Who knows what will happen to your web-site or your publisher in the coming decades; how their policy or business practice or the medium might change?' Again, it is perhaps no coincidence that the biggest difficulties faced in obtaining copyright permission in this article were for those images that tend to inhabit fine art worlds.

... it's as if the Black experience is only lived within an urban environment. I thought I liked the Lake District where I wandered lonely
as a Black face in a sea of white. A visit to the countryside is always accompanied by a feeling of unease, dread...

FIG. 6   *Ingrid Pollard, Pastoral Interlude,* hand tinted silver gelatine print 1987. © Ingrid
Pollard/Autograph ABP.

been extensively surveyed through documentary, critical practitioners began to enlarge
the field of vision by interrogating race, gender and sexuality so as to either rework the
older tradition—by making the invisible visible—or question the realist assumptions
informing documentary image making. A good example is Ingrid Pollard's work, espe-
cially her 1987 *Pastoral Interludes* exhibition, which takes the English countryside as one
of her main subjects and powerfully documents her discomfort within it (Figure 6).
Here, larger questions about landscape, nationalism and identity are approached from
her own intimate, personal feelings, which are, in turn, complex and contested.

Not only have changing themes and new subjects come increasingly to the fore, but
the use of colour itself has been significant in revealing a broader range of social and
political issues than was permissible in monochrome.

Once colour was restricted to the advertising industry and the realms of commodity
culture, where the glamourizing of mundane activities, lifestyles and products is central
to the marketplace, it was considered an inappropriate medium for the serious and so-
cially committed documentary photographer. These contradictions have since been
challenged and exposed by work that sought to undermine the distinctions between
high art and popular culture, broadening and revitalizing documentary practice in
the process. Such an approach is epitomized in Martin Parr's (1995/2007) exhibition
and book, *Small World,* which revisits the classic sites of Victorian travel photography—
Eygpt, Rome, Athens, Switzerland and the Far East—yet, now, the attractions, whether it
be the Acropolis in Athens, cathedrals in Paris or the pyramids of Egypt, are each sur-
rounded by the flow of mass tourism that is normally carefully edited out of the holiday
brochures and our own snapshots of these sights.

Such work plays with the generic codes governing 'professional' and 'amateur' pho-
tography, which I explore in more detail in the following section, but also returns us to

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FIG. 7   Jonathan Olley, *Golf Five Zero Watchtower. Crossmaglen, South Armagh, Northern Ireland, UK*, gelatine silver bromide print, 1999. © jonathanolley.com

some important questions about the field of documentary practice and I want to conclude this discussion with two contemporary photographers who continue to explore the politics of everyday life. Jonathan Olley's (2007) *Castles of Ulster* is regarded as one of the most significant documentary projects produced in the United Kingdom for decades and powerfully captures the sinister architecture of control developed during 'the troubles' in Northern Ireland. The photographs of fortified police stations, looming watchtowers and army barracks were taken between 1987 and 2000 and, since the beginning of the peace process, many of the ominous structures have been dismantled. As a work of visual memory and historical testimony, the series conveys the ungainly menace of these fortifications on the fabric of the landscape (Figure 7). In the publicity for the book, the poet Tom Paulin has described how the 'structures are like Martian spacecraft', where:

... one breaks the terraced main street of what looks like a country town and shows that the irenic structures of ordinary architecture must give way to these armed gods, meshed objects that represent the failure of politics and civic values. (Paulin

   Although the work might be said to document the peripheral effects of warfare on social life, it does prompt fresh questions on the nature of violent conflict and invites us to contemplate what it is to live under such estranging conditions. By depicting the alien, otherworldly atmosphere of such places, the series provokes a sense of unease that more

F<small>IG</small>. 8   Edmund Clark, *Single Medical Cell*, 2007. © Edmund Clark/Dewi Lewis Publishing

direct representations of struggle might fail to—and, in doing so, the images offer an ethical opening to alterity through profoundly changing the way we see the world.

In Edmund Clark's (2007) work, there is a less epic, but no less moving, preoccupation with the implications of carceral control, explored in his *Still Life: Killing Time* sequence of images, which offer a bleak meditation on the ageing prison population in the United Kingdom.[4] Figures 8 and 9 capture some of the absurdity and sadness in the everyday routines of elderly prisoners. The pictures are carefully composed pictures that deliberately deploy the still life symbolism of seventeenth-century Dutch painting, in a genre known as the 'vanitas', which were devoted to reminding the viewer of the inevitably of their own demise—as earthly pleasures are mere vanity. This is a strategy that enables Clark to convey the slow decay of extended incarceration, bringing out the monotonous detail of such confinement, yet retaining a compelling sense of the tragic in their quiet consideration of the objects and spaces inhabited by the long-term lifer.

What all these photographers and their work share is the tendency to favour the allusive and considered over the immediate and direct. One of the crucial consequences of this tendency is that the photographs are now exhibited in gallery settings and reproduced in books to the extent that contemporary photographers now have to adopt the position of artist in their efforts to practise. As Becker and Bourdieu have pointed out,

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[4]I am indebted to Natalie Mann for introducing me to Clark's work in her research on ageing in prison. In his more recent work, Clark (2010) has explored the everyday living space in the Guantanamo Bay detention centre in images that evoke the disorientating techniques of incarceration deployed at the camp.

FIG. 9   Edmund Clark, *Inmate's Bedspace*, 2007. © Edmund Clark/Dewi Lewis Publishing

a great deal of collective activity is involved in this field of cultural production, which further acts to differentiate professionals from amateurs in the creation of images and the making of their distinctive reputation. Yet, the situating of photography in the net-work of contemporary art institutions is not without problems, not least as it perpetuates certain kinds of elitism and further removes documentary from the dynamics of news reporting to the white walls of galleries.

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Digital Photography and Abu Ghraib

Of course, the advent of digital photography has further transformed the documentary project itself and the act of bearing witness to the suffering taking place. These issues were brought into harsh light in the wake of the Abu Ghraib scandal in 2004, where shocking photographs of Iraqi prisoners being tortured and abused circulated around the world and offered incontrovertible evidence of US military personnel enjoying the vicious humiliation of captives. It is important to recall that these were personal photographs taken with digital cameras, and recalled trophy snapshots performed for the camera in earlier conflicts:

During World Wars I and II, British and US combatants frequently posed for photographs alongside their humiliated or slain enemy. The proliferation of cheap, mass-produced cameras by the time of the Vietnam War simply encouraged the propensity to capture such images of carnage. (Bourke 2005: 39)

A crucial difference between then and now is that the very ubiquity of digital cameras and the ease with which images can be circulated have meant that 'now the soldiers themselves are all photographers—recording their war, their fun, their observations of what they find picturesque, their atrocities—and swapping images among themselves and e-mailing them around the globe' (Sontag 2004*b*: 3). Aside from their role as trophies and instruments of humiliation, it has been claimed that the photographing of sexual abuse at Abu Ghraib resulted from a strategic decision to blackmail prisoners into spying for the United States (Apel 2005: 90). And yet, these torture images sit alongside the soldiers' snapshots of landmarks, antiquities and pictures of themselves with smiling Iraqi children—so that the atrocity images feature as if they were just another sight to be captured along the foreign adventure.

The very fact that these photographs did not work within the visual codes that govern documentary practice and photojournalism gave the images 'a rawness and immediacy that contributed to their appalling power' (Price 2009: 91). In some respects, images like this, taken by amateur photographers, can be regarded as indicative of the 'new visibility' (Thompson 2005) that mediated interaction encourages. The rapid expansion of global news broadcasting 24 hours a day, the rise of the internet and the spread of new media technologies (mobile phone cameras and many other cheap digital devices capable of capturing images) have made it much 'more difficult for political actors to throw a veil of secrecy around their activities' and, tellingly, 'much harder to control the images and information that appear in the public domain' (Thompson 2005: 49). In certain respects, these amateur photographers are carrying on the old tradition of 'bearing witness' to terrible events, but are doing so 'outside the structures of professional photography' (Price 2009: 91) and this has important ramifications for journalistic practice—as the ongoing disputes surrounding 'citizen journalism' demonstrate (e.g. the way media professionals have responded to the growth of blogging, Flickr and social networking sites is instructive here).

Grasping this point is an important step towards understanding how the sexual torture scenes so apparent in the Abu Ghraib photographs did not provoke so much shock as recognition amongst many commentators. Internet pornography, reality television, performance art and campus humiliation rituals are amongst the sources said to have inspired the brutality and at the same time domesticating it well within the terms of US popular entertainment. Indeed, there is much evidence to suggest that these violations

of humanity scarcely trouble consciences—a view borne out by the banal response to the cruelty in so many sections of American public opinion. The digital images were only meant to circulate as souvenirs amongst a like-minded group of family, friends and other military personnel (like earlier 'genocidal tourism' and lynching photography). In doing so, the pictures powerfully 'established the right of the soldiers to "look" at the nude and brutalized bodies of their victims, even to pose with corpses, while effacing the look of the prisoners through hooding and other forms of degradation' (Apel 2005: 93). It is through these dehumanizing processes that the guards appear proud and happy with what they have done—for they are not doing these things to fellow human beings, but to those who are no longer quite human.

Conclusion

I have revisited the documentary photography tradition in an effort to learn lessons that might inform visual criminology—a field still in its infancy in comparison to this long history. It is important to emphasize that 'this work is most certainly *not the answer* to contemporary issues and images of crime, control and culture', but rather it provokes a 'set of dialectical *questions*, a series of *creative tensions*' that should inform 'criminology's engagement with the image' (Ferrell and Van de Voorde 2010: 40, emphasis in original). The cultural turn in criminology has meant a greater attentiveness to issues of representation and the issues posed are not just restricted to images that evidence criminal acts, but also figure in any act of representation that transforms traumatic experience into visual art. By describing the quite different and difficult subjectivities (between photographer, criminal, victim, spectator, torturer and artist) that any work of representation involves, the most persistent ethical question encountered is: 'What right have *I* to represent *you*' (Levi Strauss 2003: 8, emphasis in original.)? In doing so, the relationship between photographer, suffering subject and the very act of looking are put at the centre of debate.

One conclusion to be drawn from this article is that there is not a 'self-evidently just response' (Valier and Lippens 2004: 332) to images of suffering and that the Levinasian insistence on the unconditional ethical responsibility towards the other poses important questions for a radical justice of alterity. Although the 'politics of humility' that informs this ethical demand is not without problems (see Carrabine 2006: 197–8), it does seek to protect the fragile vulnerability of human relations through a more inclusive cosmopolitan vision than the hegemonic liberal one aggressively waged in the 'war against terror'. By situating the Abu Ghraib photographs in a broader discussion of documentary photography, I do not mean to suggest that they belong to this tradition—though they are powerful visual documents nonetheless.

Instead, the contrast is posed to open up questions surrounding the ethics of representation and, while there is much to be gained in reading photographs against the grain of generic sensibility (as Becker (1995) nicely does), the criminological point I want to make is that any critical intervention into the visual must be alert to hierarchies of difference (in both the sociological, as Bourdieu's thinking demonstrates, and the philosophical, as Levinasian moral reasoning invites). As I have argued elsewhere (Carrabine 2011*a*), it was no accident that so many critics sought to locate the origins of the Abu Ghraib cruelty in lowly US popular culture, while ignoring the much longer history of violent representation that figures in the European classical art tradition, which has frequently justified Imperial ambition, colonial conquest, racial superiority and

eroticized bodies in pain through visual forms of representation. Documentary photography has similarly enabled Imperial notions of progress and dominance to flourish, though many practitioners have been driven by a reformist vision and a moral commitment to the subject matter, which distinguishes their work from the atrocity tourism captured in the Abu Ghraib snapshots. My aim in this article has been to raise some of the ethical problems that arise when the visual takes centre stage in analysis and to suggest some ways in which we might respond to them in a more just fashion. It remains the task for future work to push this project further, but the arguments presented here are an essential precursor to a critically engaged visual criminology.

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