‘Scripting the Street’:

Exploring Geographies of Crime in Popular Films

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Abstract

This study contends that the spaces where crime occurs in films are not neutral; they are layered with maps of meaning that we construct somewhere between the imagined and the lived. Given that popular cultural representations both shape and reflect our understandings of crime and space, a study examining where crime occurs in films was warranted but previously unrealized in the criminological literature. This study addresses this gap in the literature by considering how geographies of crime are characterized in a sample of ten recent popular crime films. Applying a qualitative content analysis approach, this study foregrounds the onscreen spaces where crimes occur in an attempt to expose and denaturalize the meanings around crime that are embedded in these backgrounds. Particular regard is given here to the twinning of crime and urbanity, the aesthetics of insecurity, and the gendering of geographies of crime.

This study reveals the continued depiction of the city as both locus and location for crime. However, this research also shows how these films play against geographic type, subverting the imagery of "safe havens" – such as broad daylight, overt security measures, and idealized domesticity– to disorient the viewer and signal the sprawl of insecurity into everyday life. While this sprawling insecurity allows for the emergence of the man-of-action hero, women in these films are generally reduced to the background, serving as embodiments of the threatened domestic and as sexual scenery. Building off this backgrounding of women, this study forwards the concept of the body as a distinct geography of crime. These findings point to the value of investigating the "reel" geographies of crime and suggest that further research in this area is needed.

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Introduction

It is night time in Los Angeles, and a yellow cab is parked the alleyway between two highrises, just off a crowded street. The cab's horn is blaring, its rear lights are flashing in the dim, and a man can be heard yelling for help. The cabdriver is bound to the wheel of his cab, desperate to make an escape from his captor while he has the chance. The driver watches in his rear view mirror as the milling crowd on the street passes right on by, either failing to notice or ignoring his cries for help. Eventually, several men do follow the commotion down the alley, and the relieved cabdriver thinks he has been saved. Then one of the men puts a gun in his face (***Collateral*** (2004), mark 34:00).

A man stands in front of his house, shotgun trained on the Philadelphia mobsters who have taken his son. He has turned away from their threats and accusations about his hidden identity, his former life in Philadelphia, for days. Now they are on his front lawn, remnants of his violent urban past infringing on his idyllic small-town present, and he is forced to stand his ground. In the house behind him, the man's wife is visible in an upstairs window. White clapboard siding and hanging star ornaments frame her terrified face, a portrait of fear seemingly at odds with the domestic setting. Pressed against the glass, she can only watch (***A History of Violence*** (2005), mark 52:13*).*

In the dingy interior of a West Texas police outpost, an officer sits at his desk, talking on a telephone. Sitting on a bench in the background is a handcuffed man, slightly out of focus and dressed all in black. The police officer assures his superior on the other end of the line that he has everything under control. In the dimly lit space behind him, the dark figure slips his cuffs under his feet, walks silently up behind the officer, and strangles the man with his own restraints (***No Country for Old Men*** (2007), mark 3:05).

This thesis is an exploratory study of the geographies of crime in popular films. In it, I hope to foreground the onscreen spaces in which crimes occur in order to expose and denaturalize the meanings around crime that are embedded in these backgrounds. Take, for example, the three excerpts above, each of which describes a scene from a popular crime film made in the past 10 years. Together, they illustrate that, in film, the spaces where crime is depicted as occurring are not neutral. The dark alley, the home, the police station: each space draws on social narratives around power, deviance, and security, and is imbued with a set of cultural meanings that shape our expectations of what is "in" or "out of place" in that context.

The meanings of crime and space are thus exposed and composed in relation to one another within a matrix of the political and social relationships that are "taken-for-granted" and seen as "natural" by the viewer.

My attempt to denaturalize the geographies of crime in popular films has been driven primarily by the insights of cultural criminology. In an effort to make sense of a media-saturated world wherein "the street scripts the screen and the screen scripts the street" (Hayward & Young, 2004: 259), cultural criminology has incorporated key concepts from cultural studies, particularly the latter discipline's focus on context, symbolism and style (Ferrell, 1999: 396), and extended them to the analysis of popular culture constructions of crime (Ferrell, 1999; Hayward, 2010; Hayward & Young, 2004). This focus on popular culture acknowledges that media representations both reflect our perceptions and shape our expectations surrounding the nature of crime, criminals, and the functioning of the criminal justice system (Ferrell & Sanders, 1995; Ferrell, 1999; Hayward, 2004a, Hayward & Young, 2004; Presdee, 2000). Accordingly, my focus on popular films fits within this approach. Moreover, cultural criminologist Keith Hayward (2004a; 2004b) has advocated for a greater consideration of the meaning, construction, experience, and constitutive power of space, to push against the disciplinary tendency to reduce this meaning to the abstract mapping of crime statistics.[1] My project responds to this call and extends this consideration of space to the realm of popular film. In doing so, I draw on the insight of previous cultural criminological scholarship which has reached across disciplinary lines to incorporate the conceptual approach of cultural geography. In particular, my study seeks

[1] It is worth noting that cultural criminologists are not the only voices within the discipline to have embraced the spatial turn. Munn's 2009 doctoral thesis "'Falling out of the rabbit hole': Former long term prisoners' negotiation of release, re-entry and resettlement" makes an active effort to centre geography within criminology (168) by considering the various ways in which geography and "sense of place" impact the post-carceral lives of ex-inmates.

to mobilize geographical insights into the importance of considering how representations of space contribute to the "maps of meaning" we layer over the world around us (Aitken, 1991; Burgess & Gold, 1985; Cosgrove, 1984). Cultural geography acknowledges that spaces are imbued with political, cultural, and social meanings (Cresswell, 1996; Jackson, 1989) and considers that these meanings – much like the meanings we assign to crime - are constructed somewhere between the mediated and the lived, between the "real" and the "reel" (Cresswell, 1996; Lagerkvist, 2008).[2] Effectively, while cultural criminology has brought to light the relevance of both film and space to the study of crime, cultural geography points to the importance of bridging this gap to consider how the spaces where crime occurs are constructed in popular films.

Given the combined insights of cultural criminology and cultural geography outlined above, the study of filmic geographies of crime emerges as an important area of research. However, criminology has largely neglected this subject up until now. I have attempted to address this gap in the literature by examining – through a qualitative content analysis of ten recent popular crime films - how the spaces where crime occurs are characterized onscreen. The purpose of this study is exploratory, meaning it was designed to provide new insights and open the door for future research (Palys, 2003: 76). As such my primary research question is:

How are the spaces where crime occurs characterized in popular films?

[2] I use the term "reel" to designate onscreen spaces throughout this thesis in the same way that AlSayyad (2006) does: to distinguishing onscreen space from the "real" without drawing a strict (and, from a cultural criminological perspective, erroneous) divide between fictional and factual spaces.

Since, as I will demonstrate in Chapter One, the existing literature on media representations of crime suggests the twinning of crime and urbanity, the signalling of pervasive insecurity in the environment, and the gendering of geographies of crime, this project also explores the following secondary research questions:

1. Is there an observable association made between crime and urbanity in these films? If so, how are urban spaces characterized? How are non-urban (rural and suburban) spaces characterized?
2. What marks spaces in these films as secure or insecure? In other words, what aspects of the environment come to signify insecurity onscreen?
3. How are geographies of crime in these films gendered?

The body of this thesis is divided into three chapters. In Chapter One, I situate my research within the theoretical and topical literature that guided my research, dividing this discussion of the literature into two parts. In Part One, I summarize the literature coming out of cultural criminology and cultural geography. Drawing from these two perspectives, I then lay out some key concepts surrounding mediation, the construction of space and the importance of film. In Part Two, I review a variety of literature related to the media construction of crime and the spaces where crime occurs, in order to lay a more direct foundation for my analysis.

In Chapter Two, I detail and justify the methodology I employed in this research. Here I explain the constructivist epistemological framework of this study before moving on to describe my sampling strategy, coding and analysis procedures. In addition, I note the importance of contextualization of data and findings, given my qualitative approach, and the various procedures I have implemented to minimize the potential loss of meaning when analysing and presenting

visual data in a textual form. I also lay out select internal evaluative criteria for this study, and acknowledge some of the limitations of my research.

In Chapter Three, I present and discuss the findings of my study. This chapter is divided into three parts, roughly corresponding to each of the three secondary research questions laid out above. My analysis throughout this chapter is advanced and strengthened by the incorporation of relevant screen captures. Part One of my analysis deals with the twinning of crime and urbanity in the sample, connecting it to broader concerns about the uncertainty of modern life. In Part Two, I consider how insecurity is signalled in onscreen geographies through a lexis of disorder, but also discuss how these films play against geographic type to throw the audience off guard, giving the impression of widespread insecurity. In Part Three, I discuss the gendering of geographies of crime in these films, and, in the context of the threatened domestic, suggest that these films reinforce normative gender roles by building them into the background. Finally, I build off my discussion of bodies as crime scenery in these films to forward the concept of the body as a distinct geography of crime.

In concluding this thesis, I reflect on my findings and suggest that they alternately support, challenge, and extend the existing literature. Given its location at the crux of emerging perspectives in cultural criminology, cultural geography, and beyond, I propose that the study of filmic geographies of crime represents a space of great academic possibility. Finally, I position this study as a starting point for future research, and suggest that my findings, above all, point to the need for further exploration of the "reel" geographies of crime.

Chapter One: Review of Theoretical and Topical Literature

In this chapter, I review the relevant theoretical and topical literature that has oriented and informed my study of geographies of crime in popular films. In Part One, *Maps of Meaning*, I lay out the theoretical and conceptual groundwork that underpins this study. After locating the orientation of this study in cultural criminology, I suggest that this field is ideally positioned for the incorporation of insights from cultural geography. I then sketch out some points of intersection between these two disciplines, turning eventually to concepts of mediation, the construction of space, and the importance of film. I conclude Part One by demonstrating how both cultural criminology and cultural geography position a study of the geographies of crime in films as an important contribution to the existing literature. In Part Two, "Points of Departure," I draw from an interdisciplinary array of literature to set out the existing knowledge surrounding this under-explored field and lay the groundwork for my study. I identify three main themes in the literature regarding how geographies of crime are constructed in the media. The first is the accustomed depiction, in both news media and popular culture, of the disordered city street as the locus and location for crime. The second is the signalling of terror and insecurity in the environment, including through representations of overt security measures and media depictions which premediate risk. The third is the gendering of geographies of crime, which highlights how gender-exclusive spaces are produced and reproduced through depictions of insecurity. It is based on these three themes that I developed the secondary research questions outlined in my introduction to this thesis. I conclude this chapter by laying out the additional interdisciplinary literature which I mobilized in conversation with my data to extend the existing criminological discussion about representations of crime, urbanity, insecurity, and gender through the lens of filmic geographies.

Part One – Maps of Meaning: Theorizing the Construction of Crime and Space

Berger and Luckmann introduce their 1966 treatise *On the Social Construction of Reality* through the commonsense viewpoint of the "man on the street." They suggest that this man on the street takes the reality of his everyday life for granted; the world of the everyday is, to him, "simply *there*, as self-evident and compelling facticity" (1966: 23). Berger and Luckmann go on to denaturalize this unproblematic view of everyday life in order to make the point that all realities are socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Taking the concept of the "man on the street" somewhat more literally than did Berger and Luckmann, I set out in this study to further denaturalize the concept of "the street." In other words, I have attempted to problematize the commonsense meanings that we assign to certain spaces, namely their association with crime, and expose how these meanings are constructed through the medium of popular film. In doing so, I have primarily been guided by the insights of cultural criminology, a theoretical and methodological orientation attuned to the importance of popular culture and the symbolic contestation of issues of crime and crime control (Ferrell, 1999). However, in accordance with the interdisciplinarity stressed by cultural criminologists, and with the aim of further contextualizing and enriching my study of the geographies of crime in popular films, I have also incorporated insights from the related domain of cultural geography. In the following section, I lay out the key theoretical considerations in both cultural criminology and cultural geography that have oriented this study. From there, I turn my attention to several key conceptualisations about mediation, the construction of space, and the importance of film which emerge from these perspectives. I argue that these perspectives jointly position a study of the geographies of crime in films as a logical and important extension of the existing literature. In Part 2, I then discuss the topical literature in greater depth.

Cultural Criminology

Cultural criminology is an emergent orientation within criminology that departs from the following understanding: "The meaning of crime and crime control resides not in the essential (and essentially false) factuality of crime rates or arrest records; it emerges instead from a contested process of symbolic display, cultural interpretation, and representational negotiation" (Ferrell et. al, 2004: 4). Cultural criminology represents an attempt to grapple with the ascendancy of the image in modern life (Hayward, 2010: 14) and to "expand and enliven" the discipline of criminology (Ferrell & Sanders, 1995) by incorporating the insights of cultural studies, particularly the latter discipline's focus on contextualization, symbolism, and style (Ferrell, 1999: 396). Rather than facts and figures, cultural criminology takes the traces and debris of everyday life – our cultural artefacts – as its data (Presdee, 2000: 15).

As such, cultural criminology gives considerable weight to popular cultural constructions of crime (Ferrell, 1999; Hayward, 2010; Hayward & Young, 2004), identifying the mass media as an arena for the symbolic display, negotiation, and contestation of meaning surrounding crime and deviance (Hayward, 2010: 4). Furthermore, cultural criminology embraces a dynamic view of the processes of cultural production (Presdee, 2004: 276), positioning the media's influence on everyday life as part of a cycle of presentation and representation, rather than a top-down, linear imposition (Ferrell & Sanders, 1995: 14).[3] Wading into this spiralling crime-media-culture nexus, cultural criminologists must "attempt to make sense of a world in which the street scripts the screen and the screen scripts the street" (Hayward & Young, 2004: 259). In addition to incorporating insights from cultural studies, Ferrell (1999) notes that cultural criminology has

[3] The crime-media-culture nexus is elaborated on in the section on mediation below; for now, it is important to note that cultural criminology gives great weight to media constructions of crime and attempts to consider them in a complex way.

been guided in its formation by sociological perspectives – particularly symbolic interactionism and social constructionism – as well as postmodern and critical traditions. The sociological perspectives of social constructionism and symbolic interactionism have also been aligned with more traditional forms of criminology, but, as noted above, cultural criminology focuses on the mediated aspects of social construction and forefronts the 'symbolic' in symbolic interaction through its attention to the image (Ferrell, 1999: 398). Ferrell suggests that approaching these concerns with a postmodern sensibility allows the cultural criminologist to escape some of the dualisms that have plagued earlier constructionist viewpoints, such as the stark division between crime and media coverage, or the forced dichotomy between considerations of style and substance (1999: 397-398). Furthermore, incorporating critical perspectives from sociology, criminology, and cultural studies allows cultural criminologists to consider the politics of crime and the implications of the meaning-making processes which they seek to expose (Ferrell, 1999: 398). Cultural criminology thus encompasses a wide array of perspectives and areas of research woven together by their shared "sensitivities to image, meaning, and representation in the study of crime" (Ferrell, 1999: 396). While this multifaceted approach has led some to critique the "lawlessness" of cultural criminology, proponents of cultural criminology view this interdisciplinarity and heterodoxy as beneficial, even fundamental, to their endeavour (Hayward & Young, 2004: 269). "The strength of the cultural approach," as Hayward puts it, "is the way it seeks to tackle the subject of crime from a variety of new perspectives and academic disciplines" (2010: 4).

Cultural criminology does not simply encourage the transgression of conventional disciplinary boundaries; in some respects, it demands them. Ferrell & Sanders (1995) suggest that "The development of the sort of cultural criminology imagined here – a criminology that

accounts for subcultural styles, media dynamics, aesthetic orientations, social and cultural inequalities, and more – will necessitate journeys beyond the conventional boundaries of contemporary criminology" (1995: 16). In this light, and given this study's express focus on the cinematic spaces where crime is depicted, I incorporate insights from the similarly-aligned discipline of cultural geography within this broader cultural criminological framework.[4]

Cultural Geography

Cultural criminology's movement towards acknowledging the importance of cultural artefacts and the value of interdisciplinary analysis is paralleled in cultural geography.[5] Cultural geography is, as Foote notes, a "subdiscipline of synthesis" (1994: 399), in that it draws from a range of social science disciplines in its interpretation of spaces and places (Anderson, 2010; Foote, 1994). Of particular importance for this study, cultural geographers take landscapes as symbolic (Cosgrove, 1984; Meinig, 1979), an understanding which allows the researcher to interpret geography as text in much the same way that Geertz (1973) invites anthropologists to study culture as text (Cosgrove & Jackson, 1987: 96). Furthermore, cultural geographers propose that this act of interpretation is not exclusive to the academic; it is a part of everyday life. Cultural geography suggests that culture constructs space by shaping our collective "maps of meaning," through which spaces are interpreted (Jackson, 1989). Spaces are social locations, filled with the material traces of culture and the practices of everyday life (Anderson, 2010), but

[4] I am not alone in this particular interdisciplinary foray; in recent years, cultural criminology has increasingly begun to incorporate concerns about space, including the insights of cultural geography (Hayward, 2010: 4). For an interesting cultural criminological perspective on the construction of space and the experiential quality of crime in the city, see Hayward's 2004 book *City Limits: Crime, Consumer Culture and the Urban Experience.*

[5] This study draws primarily on the insights of "new" cultural geography, developed beginning in the mid 1980s by geographers who sought to distance themselves from the focus on the material and on pastoral landscapes (to the exclusion of the urban) that limited earlier work in the field (see Jackson, 1989). This cultural geography, also referred to as "representational" cultural geography, moved towards a deeper understanding of the construction and symbolic life of spaces (Anderson, 2010: 27-28).

they are also imagined locations, subject to constant interpretation and reinterpretation (Soja, 1996: 61). As such, places are "combinations of the material and the mental, and cannot be reduced to either" (Cresswell, 1996: 13); the object cannot be separated from the lens used to view it. This focus on the symbolic construction of meaning brings processes of representation to the forefront in cultural geography (Anderson, 2010: 27). Cosgrove notes the importance of representations to the cultural geographic enterprise in the following passage:

> Geographical representations – in the form of maps, texts and pictorial images of various kinds – and the look of landscapes themselves are not merely traces or sources, of greater or lesser value for disinterested investigation by geographical science. They are active, constitutive elements in shaping social and spatial practices and the environments we occupy (2008: 15).

In other words, cultural geographers position representations of space as culturally productive, rather than as neutral reproductions of the "real" (Anderson, 2010; Cosgrove, 2008; Cresswell, 1996; Jackson, 1989).

Like cultural criminology, cultural geography has also incorporated critical concepts into its search for meaning, increasingly conceptualizing space as a domain for the contestation of social, economic, and political mores and conflicts (Cresswell, 1996; Jackson, 1989). Particularly influential in developing this vein of thought has been Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (Soja, 1996; Cresswell, 1996: 27). Lefebvre suggests that while the social sciences have primarily taken up the study of relationships, the underpinning of all social relationships is spatial (1991: 401). Lefebvre proposes that class conflict is inscribed on space, and conceptualizes social space as both a product and means of production, rather than simply as

a passive venue for social relations (1991: 11). This represents a marked shift from the conceptualization of space as a void, or as a neutral environment. As Lefebvre writes, "To speak of 'producing space' sounds bizarre, so great is the sway still held by the idea that empty space is prior to whatever ends up filling it" (1991: 15).[6] Building off the reassertion of space in social theory, cultural geography has been influential in forwarding the understanding of space as political, social, cultural, and anything but neutral (Jackson, 1989; Cresswell, 1996).

On Mediation: Viewing Crime through the "Hall of Mirrors"

Although criminology has increasingly acknowledged the importance of the media in constructing crime narratives, criminologists have frequently neglected fictional representations of crime, choosing instead to focus on how journalism and reporting have bent "the facts" in their representations of the criminal event (Yar, 2010: 69). This approach maintains an artificial divide between the factual event and the fictional construction (Ferrell, 1999: 398), rather than situating both events and media representations of those events within a broader crime-media-culture nexus (Ferrell, Hayward, & Young, 2008). Ferrell and Sanders suggest that we need to move past our understanding of crime as something that becomes mediated after the fact, and begin to consider it as enmeshed within a spiralling process of presentation and representation (1995:14). In other words, we need to approach crime as part of a media-saturated world in which life imitates art imitating life, and so on down the line.

[6] Lefebvre also suggests that fragmenting the study of space into specialties – the home to the architect, the city to the urbanist and so on – serves to mask and further the interests of neocapitalism (1991: 11).
While this study does not depart from Lefebvre's expressly Marxist viewpoint, nor does it seek the unitary theory of space that he attempts to develop, I have attempted to heed Lefebvre's call to consider space on multiple levels and in a way that crosses artificial disciplinary divides.

Conceptualizing the crime-media-culture nexus as a spiral of presentation and representation (Ferrell, Hayward, & Young, 2008) necessarily moves the cultural criminologist away from a top-down view of media effects and the dualism between crime event and media coverage (Ferrell, 1999: 398). Much current literature on media effects suggests that they cannot be understood as the direct transmission of meaning from the mass media to the audience (Boda & Szabo, 2011; Doyle, 2006; Lewis, 1982; Muzzio & Halper, 2002; Rafter, 2006). Instead, we must take into account that audiences perceive information through a layered system of social and individual filters (Boda & Szabo, 2011). As such, the audience for a film actively participates in the creation of its meaning through the process of interpretation (Hall, 1997: 32-33). Researchers are therefore cautioned against assuming a passive, homogenous audience into which either fear of crime (Doyle, 2006; Pain, 1991) or the impulse to commit crime (Gunter, 2008; Young, 2009) is injected wholesale. As Carney notes, "to perceive an active audience is not, however, to forget power" (2010: 29), and troubling the linear imposition of meaning does bar the researcher from considering how media shapes and reflects dominant conceptualizations of crime. Ferrell and Sanders envision culture as "an infinite hall of mediated mirrors" (1995: 14) through which aspects of social reality are reflected back onto media constructions, just as those constructions help shape social reality (Ferrell & Sanders, 1995; Hayward, 2010; Lewis, 1982; Muzzio & Halper, 2002; Rafter, 2010). This focus on interplay and reflection ideally positions cultural criminology as a criminological lens through which to interpret the construction of space.

"Thirdspace": Positioning the Construction of Space between the Real and Imagined

Perhaps cultural geography's best answer to cultural criminology's "hall of mirrors," the concept of "thirdspace" positions the construction of meaning in space somewhere between the

imagined and the real, between mediation and experience (Lagerkvist, 2008; Soja, 1996). As such, the mediated spaces of everyday life take on a real-imagined quality (Lagerkvist, 2008). Correspondingly, media representations commonly reflect the norms and practices of the street, harkening back to the 'real' even as they actively construct these meanings and norms (Burgess & Gold, 1985: 10; Cresswell, 1996). In this section, I review the literature which positions the construction of space as an interplay between lived experience and mediatised conceptualization.

One of the primary ways in which spaces are constructed, as suggested by the literature, is through the everyday lived experience of them (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Jaguaribe, 2005; Lagerkvist, 2008; Low, 2006). What constitutes socially acceptable practice within a given space is reinforced through performance, interpretation, and repetition and these practices come to structure the meaning of that space (Cresswell, 1996: 13; Low, 2006). Additionally, certain genders (Low, 2006), cultural identities (Springer, 2011) and classes (Penglase, 2007) become identified as either included or excluded from space through the experience of their attendant social milieu. However, these "insider" and "outsider" practices and identities are not natural to the space; rather, they are a result of the politically-charged construction and reconstruction of these spaces (Cresswell, 1996: 16), in which media plays a key role (Jaguaribe, 2005; Kennedy & Lukinbeal, 1997; Penglase, 2007).

Taking the audience as an active participant in interpretation, numerous authors position meaning in space as constructed through the interplay of lived experience and mediatised conceptualization (Kennedy & Lukinbeal, 1997; Lagerkvist, 2008; Muzzio & Halper, 2002). Rather than simply understanding "reel" spaces as reproductions of "real" spaces, the academic should consider them as imaginative geographies which allow viewers to situate themselves within hypothetical spaces and to theorize about their position in society using this generative

function (AlSayyad, 2006). Furthermore, Kennedy and Lukinbeal remind us that film also serves as a lens for interpreting even the "real" spaces of our everyday lives (1997: 33). If the mediated meanings of a space are adopted through practice, these meanings are reinforced through the media once more as it recounts what is now the "reality" of that space (Muzzio & Halper, 2002). Media constructions can lay a veil of either "re-enchantment" or "disenchantment" over particular geographies (Jaguaribe, 2005). Because the media both constructs expectations about spaces and reiterates social norms (Burgess & Gold, 1985: 10; Cresswell, 1996), these representations can further practices of spatial exclusion and shape the way people participate in social space (Degen & Wainright, 2010: 158; Penglase, 2007; Lagerkvist, 2008).

'Reel' Culture: On the Ascendancy of the Image and the Importance of Film

Before moving on to the literature dealing specifically with depictions of crime and the spaces where it occurs, I think it pertinent to explain why filmic geographies of crime, in particular, represent an important area for research. To do so, I first explain how both cultural criminology and cultural geography understand the image as ascendant in modern culture, before moving on to the arguments they present for the somewhat-neglected study of both crime and space on film.

Cultural criminology takes the study of images as central to its study of crime; this reflects an understanding that the visual and the symbolic are exceptionally powerful means of conveying messages, including messages about crime, crime control, deviance, and identity (Ferrell, 1999). The photograph, for example, appears to capture something natural – a moment in time - while also drawing on symbolic systems to convey deeper meaning (Wardle, 2007:

265). This visual focus in cultural criminology also reflects (and attempts to grapple with) the ascendancy of the image in modern culture. As Hayward notes, "While the everyday experience of life in contemporary Western society may or may not be suffused with crime, it is most certainly suffused with images and increasingly images of crime" (2010: 1). Greer, Jewkes and Ferrell likewise suggest that the visual is now one of the primary means through which we make sense of issues of crime and crime control (2007: 5).

Cultural criminology positions film as a central part of this increasingly visual culture, one which represents a simultaneously important and under-explored area of criminological research (Tzanelli, Yar & O'Brien, 2005; Yar, 2010; Young, 2010). Rafter also suggests that crime films are an important area of study for the criminologist, as they at once reflect and shape popular notions about crime (2010). She contends that crime films form a "popular criminology," in that they serve as both an arena for public discussions about crime and a frame for illuminating the points of strain in society (Rafter, 2010: 3). Films and other crime fictions can be particularly potent sources of popular criminology, given that they often present cases with the type of internally coherent logic and simplified explanations that traditional criminological research may be unable to provide (Kelly, 1991). On the other hand, films may also provide a space for alternative narratives about crime which challenge these simplistic conceptualizations (Tzanelli, Yar, & O'Brien, 2005: 114).

While the cultural turn has brought the study of images to the forefront of criminology, the visual, embodied in the concept of landscape, has always been an important part of geography (Hopkins, 1994: 48). Nevertheless, the ascendancy of the image is of similar consequence to the construction of space. In making a case for the geographic study of film, Aitken notes, "The medium of the motion picture is an integral part of modem western culture.

At the societal level it provides a reflection of cultural norms, social structures and ideologies. At the individual level it is an important element in shaping experiences and in moulding relationships between people and places" (1991: 105). Burgess and Gold also position film as an important source for the maps of meaning we construct around particular places (1985: 10). In spite of these calls, popular media and film have long been sidelined in geographical analysis in favour of literature and fine art, constructions which more closely align with the traditional enterprise of geography (Burgess & Gold, 1985: 12; Cosgrove, 1984: 9). However, the influence of cultural geography has, in recent years, fueled a greater appreciation for films as a source of geographic knowledge (Cresswell & Dixon, 2002). Garrett (2010) argues that geographers should embrace and interrogate the depth of experience offered by film as a multisensory medium: through the combination of audio and visuals, film has the potential to (re)create a more complete imagination of place than other mediums might. Given that cultural criminology has increasingly made the case for studying crime (and criminology itself) through film, and cultural geography has likewise embraced the important role of cinematic geographies in constructing the meanings of spaces, a study of the geographies of crime in films seems a logical next step. Furthermore, the ascendancy of the visual and the increasing spatial turn within cultural criminology (Hayward, 2010: 1-4) both position this study as an important next step to take. In reaching across disciplinary boundaries to theorize and contextualize this study, I am attempting to fulfill cultural criminology's mandate to "expand and enliven" the discipline of criminology (Ferrell & Sanders, 1995).

Part Two – Points of Departure: Contextualizing Geographies of Crime in the Media

In Part One of this chapter, I provided an overview of the theoretical considerations that have shaped my research, as well as some guiding notes on conceptualising mediation, the

construction of space, and the importance of film, given this context. I now narrow the scope of this review to literature specifically concerning the media's construction of crime and the spaces where it occurs. In assembling the literature below, I have followed Schofield's assertion that cultural criminologists should "look towards interweaving ideas and understandings from all relevant tangential literature," or, in other words, that "what is relevant should be subject-led," (2004: 129). As such, I pulled from a variety of disciplines adjacent to cultural criminology – including cultural geography and studies of communication, film, tourism, and gender - to thoroughly contextualize this project and enable myself to answer my research questions in a meaningful way. Below, I consider observed patterns in the media construction of both crime and the spaces where crime occurs, before elaborating on post-9/11 depictions of security and the concept of gendered space as it relates to geographies of crime. I conclude this section by introducing the additional literature I have mobilized to theorize beyond the boundaries of conventional criminology.

Media Constructions of Crime

Before considering how geographies of crime are characterized in news media and popular crime fictions the media, I first provide some context by considering how crime itself is constructed in these media. Problematic though criminology's focus on the journalistic misrepresentation of "facts" may be (Ferrell, 1999), the wealth of literature surrounding the construction of crime news provides a good jumping-off point for a discussion about the construction of crime in crime fictions, and particularly in films. Consequently, I begin this section with a discussion of the news media as a "problem-generating machine" (Altheide, 1997), before reviewing the literature on what characterizes newsworthy crime. This literature suggests that the news media favour (and actively construct) sensational crime stories with

simplistic moral narratives. I then turn to the literature on crime fictions, including crime films, which suggests that overtly fictional representations of crime do reflect this sensationalism and moral simplicity, but may also provide a venue for alternative narratives about crime.

In constructing the news of the day, journalists organize the stories they tell according to a ranked order of "newsworthiness," which is determined by the potential of the story to entertain audiences and improve ratings (Altheide, 1978). Stories are also chosen and selectively told in accordance with the levels of salience and resonance they are expected to have with audiences, a combination of factors that tends to eliminate contradictory elements from narratives (Ettema, 2005; Gabriel, 1991). However, the constructionist nature of journalism is often obscured by the profession's performance of objectivity and privileged truth claims (Boudana, 2011; Broersma, 2010). Since "facts" are selected and presented with the aim of producing a visceral reaction, mass media can be viewed as a "problem-generating machine" (Altheide, 1997).

Crime stories, likewise, are organized and presented according to their newsworthiness (Altheide, 1997). Various authors connect the newsworthiness of crime stories to a combination of sensationalism and easily-digestible, morally simplistic storytelling (Altheide, 1997; Cheliotis, 2010; Duwe, 2000; Katz, 1987). Like other forms of entertainment, crime stories are ranked according to their marketability. Katz identifies crimes that are exceptionally competent or exceptionally violent, crimes against the community, morally-charged political crimes, and white-collar crime as being particularly newsworthy (1987). Serial killing is another type of crime that is especially marketable in a modern context (Jarvis, 2007), though perhaps only when it blends well with existing narratives (Wilson et. al., 2010). Feeding into this pattern of visceral reporting and moral simplification, crimes where the victim is a child are often sensationalized

and become symbolic touchstones for traditional views of "angelic" victims and "evil" perpetrators (Conrad, 1999; Machado & Santos, 2009; Wardle, 2007). Conversely, crimes wherein the perpetrator is a youth also tend to achieve wide coverage, with the focus often being shifted onto the apparent aspects of their environment or upbringing that "made" them criminal, including the supposed criminogenic effect of violent media (Frymer, 2009; Kolenic, 2009). While these media-made-them-do-it narratives have been problematized in the academic literature (Gunter, 2008; Young, 2009), spectacles of "youth gone wrong" are interesting to note for their commonality with angelic depictions of child victims. Both portraits draw on the symbol of childhood or youth as something pure that has been tainted by the apparent prevalence of crime – or images of crime – within society (Conrad, 1999; Frymer, 2009).

It is interesting to note that these simplified narratives, emotional appeals, and morally-weighted symbols are more characteristic of what we would consider fictional rather than factual storytelling. For example, the simplistic moral narratives that often characterize crime reporting are also reflected in the thematic structure of comic books, which commonly construct a dichotomous relationship between good and evil and lean towards palatable resolutions (Philips & Strobl, 2006). While the truth claims of journalism certainly merit criminological attention, given the symbolic continuity and stylistic overlap between crime "facts" and "fictions" (Connolly & Haydar, 2008; Yar, 2010) – and given the case for the importance of crime film made elsewhere (Rafter, 2010; Tzanelli, Yar, & O'Brien, 2005; Yar, 2010; Young, 2010) – the process of journalistic meaning-making should be contextualized within the broader media construction of crime, including crime films. To only consider how news media twist the "facts" of crime is, as Ferrell notes, to consider only half of the picture (1999: 398).

One of the most extensive studies of crime films in the existing literature is that of Allen, Livingstone and Reiner (1998), who studied changing images of crimes, offenders, and victims in British cinema over five decades. They found an increased prevalence of crime in these films, the amplified brutality of violent acts, and heightened depictions of victims' suffering (Allen, Livingstone & Reiner, 1998), findings that are consistent with the sensational construction of crime elsewhere in the media. Running alongside these typical offerings, however, Rafter (2010) identifies an alternative or critical strain of crime films, which she calls "films of moral ambiguity." Rafter suggests that these films, which have no clear "good guy" and often lack resolution (2010: 213), move away from the escapism and black-and-white storytelling of more traditional crime films (232). Furthermore, other authors have found that crime films may simultaneously entertain both conservative and critical interpretations of crime (Tzanelli, Yar, & O'Brien, 2005: 114). This suggests the potential of film as a venue for both dominant and alternative understandings of crime, and points to the importance of allowing for multiple interpretations and contradictory meanings within any given film (Young, 2010).

Media Constructions of Crime in Space

While criminology is lacking an in-depth study of the geographies of crime in film, there is sufficient tangential literature – whether in studies of crime news coverage, buried within larger film studies, or built into the examination of film noir - to sketch out a working portrait of what such a study might uncover. In the following section, I lay out the existing literature surrounding the media's depiction of the spaces where crime occurs. This literature suggests that, as in the overall pattern of construction noted above, media depictions often forward a simplified portrait of where crime happens. Urban spaces are generally depicted as both the location and the locus for criminal activity (Jargowsky & Park, 2009; Jarman, 1996; Pain, 1991;

Rentschler, 2011), while suburban and rural communities are often constructed as relatively immune to crime (Jarman, 1996; Wallace, 2008). In addition, media depictions of crime tend to focus on incidents that occur at the street level and in public rather than private spaces (Cheliotis, 2010; Duwe, 2000; Pain, 1991). Certain media depictions further shift the problem of crime onto supposedly criminogenic spaces, pointing to something about these environments that inevitably produces both crime and dangerous others (Springer 2011).

Much of the literature tying crime and insecurity to space concerns the depiction of the city centre as a zone of apparent danger, poverty, alienation and exclusion (Diken & Laustsen, 2002; England & Simon, 2010; Jargowsky & Park, 2009; Rentschler, 2011). Urban areas are often constructed as both the primary locus and location for crime (Jargowsky & Park, 2009; Jarman,1996; Pain, 1991; Rentschler, 2011). Crime is also specifically twinned with urbanity in the cinematic imagination. The urban space has long been a source of fascination for cinema, likely due to its parallel emergence with the art form itself (AlSayyad, 2006). Film depictions of the urban frequently position the city as a divided and isolating space, rife with uncertainty and the potential for crime (Pike, 1998; Rao, 2011). This depiction of the urban as alienating is mirrored in both the fragmented settings of these films and the disconnected characters who inhabit them (Shapiro, 2009; Fischer 2010).

Noir films, in particular, play up this concept of the city as an uncertain and divisive space (Palmer, 2007; Rowe, 2008), creating a disorienting and nightmarish version of the urban known as the "Dark City" (Palmer, 2007: 66; Prakash, 2010). Film noir frequently sets its action in liminal spaces, revelling in the grey areas around thresholds and borderlines for their dual purpose in conveying uncertainty while also being ripe for transgression (Palmer, 2007). These transitional spaces are not always confined to the urban; Smith (2011) notes how desolate rural

spaces can also embody insecurity in film noir. Nevertheless, the shadowy back-alley imagery of noir is thoroughly tied up with the city (Dickos, 2002; Palmer, 2007). Atmospheric lighting and off-kilter camera techniques help magnify the isolation and uncertainty of these spaces (Mattias, 2006; Palmer, 2007; Pike, 1998). These films also frequently strip the audience of the traditional reference point of "good guy" and "bad guy" (Palmer, 2007: 69). Falling in line with the broader depiction of the urban as alienating, characters in film noir are conflicted and disconnected, mirroring the uncertainty and divisiveness of the space around them (Rowe, 2008).

In contrast to the image of urban space as divided and insecure, suburban and pastoral settings have frequently been constructed within media as the clean, safe alternative to the city (AlSayyad, 2006). Situated within a cultural hall of mirrors, portraits of the idyllic, homogenous suburb may both reflect middle-class "white flight" and contribute to perpetuating this trend (Jargowsky & Park, 2009; Muzzio and Halper, 2002). Wallace (2008) argues that the news media forwards the safe, crime-free construction of suburbia in order to maintain the status of these areas as ideal zones for consumption. The chaotic, divided, and transgressive portrait of the city in modern cinema, on the other hand, may be constructed for the voyeuristic pleasure of the exurbanite languishing in apparent security outside city limits (AlSayyad, 2006). Jarman (1996) suggests that, even in cases where crime is depicted in idyllic suburban or rural areas, it is constructed in such a way as to make clear that it is being "imported" from urban areas. Furthermore, persons who perceive their immediate geography as inherently peaceful or safe may be more inclined to relocate the blame for crime to "outsiders" or "others" (Banks, 2005).

It is also well-acknowledged in the literature that the news media tend to focus on incidents of crime that occur at street level and in public spaces (Cheliotis, 2010; Duwe, 2000; Pain, 1991). Cheliotis connects this focus on street crime to journalism's need for narratives that

convey a sense of immediacy and simplicity (2010). The focus on street-level crime minimizes alternative discourses surrounding the nature of offenders, the causes of crime, and the distribution of justice by, for example, demonizing marginalized and easily-controlled individuals while largely overlooking the harm done by often-untouchable corporations (Cheliotis, 2010: 174). Furthermore, Duwe suggests that crimes in public spaces have a sensational or visceral quality to them that makes them more attractive for news media coverage (2000). Just as the twinning of crime and urbanity positions the suburban as a space of refuge, the focus on crime in public spaces furthers an idealized notion of the private as a crime-free zone (Pain, 1991: 423). These two spatial dichotomies – between the threatening urban and the idyllic suburban-pastoral and between the dangerous public space and the private refuge – mimic the wider simplification of crime narratives into easily-digested opposing categories: good versus evil, safe versus dangerous, us versus them.

Several authors also explore how certain media depictions shift the problem of crime away from the event and onto the space in which the crime occurs. Rentschler (2011), for example, demonstrates how media coverage of the Kitty Genovese murder shifted focus from the crime itself onto a "problem of witnessing" in the urban environment, reinforcing the portrait of the city as a socially isolating space. Jarman (1996) takes the issue on a broader scale, exploring how images of rundown urbanity and the working-class ghetto in Northern Ireland are used to signify a geography that has been infected with violence, one that inevitably produces violent people. This latter portrait points to two separate but equally important issues raised by the literature connecting crime and space. First, it exemplifies how crime becomes attached not only to specific spaces but also to certain people within those places, a not-so-coincidental side effect of drawing the boundaries of zones of insecurity around entire populations (Sibley, 1995;

Springer, 2011). Springer suggests that this spatial othering of marginalized groups furthers an emergent neoliberal agenda which not only distracts from the systemic problems contributing to crime, as Cheliotis notes (2010: 174), but also creates divisions within the social sphere, setting the stage in turn for tension and violence (Springer, 2011: 90-91). Secondly, it shows how urban decay and signs of disorder in the environment are used to signal the apparent criminogenic nature of the space, reflecting the wider association between insecurity and "visible incivilities" in the public consciousness (Khom, 2009; Nasar & Jones, 1997; Pain, 2000; Toet & Van Schaik, 2012). These concepts of divided space and the signalling of insecurity are also reflected in the discussion of post-9/11 representations of security below, albeit in a somewhat different form.

Visible (In)Security and the Premediation of Risk

In the preceding section, I examined the well-observed practice in the media of associating crime with the alienating city and the disordered street. In this section, I provide an overview of the literature connecting post-9/11 representations of security to both "real" and "reel" spaces. While this literature explicitly deals with terrorism, themes emerging from this discussion of post-9/11 security - such as the everyday signalling of insecurity through visible security, the increased division of social space, and the premediation of risk – are also applicable to a broader study of crime and its geographies.

Some of the literature connecting insecurity to space examines the proliferation of overt security measures within "real" space, especially in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks (Diken & Laustsen, 2002; Shapiro, 2009). Particularly rampant in cities, overt security and surveillance measures are ostensibly meant to dissuade and control "dangerous" populations, but can also be viewed as a means of governing the population at large by signalling the idea of terror (Diken &

Laustsen, 2002: 300-302). Security measures at the urban level are adapted from national strategies and have a similarly divisive effect, partitioning society along cultural and socioeconomic lines to micro-manage interactions within the city (Shapiro, 2009). This socioeconomic partitioning is exemplified by the gated community (Diken & Laustsen, 2002: 304; Shapiro, 2009). Given that narrative which construct the city as a locus for crime often stress its alienating and fragmented qualities, this trend towards further dividing the urban in the name of security seems highly contradictory. This contradiction exposes what Diken & Laustsen suggest is the "underlying fantasy behind contemporary urban life," that being the concept of the city as "an unpredictable and dangerous site of survival, an 'urban jungle,'" rather than a space intentionally partitioned, closely surveilled, and actively controlled (2002: 291).[7]

Thriving within the dialogue about security measures and terror in post-9/11 media is a small but intriguing vein of literature about *imagining* insecurity in this modern context. Premediation is a concept, originally proposed by Grusin (2004) which suggests that both the news media and popular culture engage in plotting and visualizing a variety of possible futures (De Goede, 2008). Scholars have applied this concept to the forward-looking security gaze of media in the wake of the apparent "failure of imagination" that was 9/11 (De Goede, 2008; Grusin, 2004). As the ability to predict future risks becomes a cultural commodity (Grusin, 2004: 21), the media postulation to this end becomes a sort of "disaster rehearsal" (De Goede, 2008: 156). Premediation is relevant to this study because it suggests a movement towards expecting insecurity in unexpected places, and towards imagining vulnerability even in the face of apparent security. Coinciding with increased security measures in both the real and the reel,

[7] It is important to note that many cultural criminologists have proposed an additional layer to this analysis in the form of an urban underlife. They propose that urban life exists in a duality, composed of the surface-level of the city, divided and controlled, which masks an underbelly of potential and creativity through which the possibility for transgression and resistance emerges (Hayward & Young, 2004: 265).

premediation points to the next weakness waiting to be exploited, the next defense in need of shoring up; it structures our relationship with the world around risk (De Goede, 2008; Grusin, 2004). Popular metaphors about personal security in space – such as the unforeseen threats mimicked in the demonic geography of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* – may serve to reinforce narratives of responsibilization in a risk society (Buus, 2009). However, intentionally forward-looking crime stories - such as those created through science fiction films - may also serve to problematize this risk-oriented mentality and question the reasonable limits of security (Campbell, 2010).

A number of authors suggest that imaginings of security and insecurity in popular culture – and particularly in cinema – have shifted visibly in the wake of the 9/11 terror attacks (Buus, 2009; De Goede, 2008; Dodds, 2008; Grusin, 2004). However, Dodds points out that drawing a strict line between pre- and post-9/11 cinema in order to reveal an emergence of security in film is disingenuous (2008: 228), as many films produced in the "post" era screen terror according to a formula (of spectacular violence that threatens American values and legitimates a violent response) established prior to 9/11 (234-235). Portraits of hyper vigilance and security in space are also highly characteristic of Cold War era films (Kuberski, 2007). Dodds notes, however, that representations of terrorism in the post-9/11 era both reflect and take advantage of the heightened sensitivity to acts of terror in the public consciousness, as well as the symbolism of particular geographies – such as well-known city skylines and landmarks – as representatives of threatened American ideals (2008: 235). Post-9/11 war films also position their settings as disordered, malignant and insecure, using the environment as a stand-in for perceptions of global insecurity (Shapiro, 2007). While films generally make a point of assigning a place to terrorists – using their ethnicity, nationality, or ideology to explicitly identify them as outsiders (Dodds,

2008) – terrorism as an event is less geographically bounded. The War on Terror is presented as a battle without a distinct frontier, and this sense of boundlessness or indistinction, when combined with the pervasive signalling of terror, helps construct the everyday as a zone of pervasive, global insecurity (Diken & Laustsen, 2002: 302; England & Simon, 2010). At the same time as it divides, therefore, the spectre of terror unites the apparently fragmented modern world into one fearful space.

Gendered Spaces of Fear and Exclusion

Throughout this literature review, I have touched on the concept of zones of exclusion, noting that certain identities are constructed as "in place" or "out of place" within a given space (Cresswell, 1996). The literature on fear of crime positioned the concept of gendered space as particularly relevant in this respect. In this section, I summarize the literature regarding the gendered construction of space, particularly as it relates to the broader construction of geographies of crime. This literature highlights how gender-exclusive spaces are produced and reproduced through depictions of insecurity. Before I begin, it is important to note that the literature on gendered space departs from an understanding of gender as a social construct (Jackson, 1989: 129; Low, 2006; Massey, 1994; Wattis, Green & Radford, 2011).

Much of the relevant literature suggests that the construction of space, whether in reality or on film, is gendered (England & Simon, 2010; Fischer, 2010; Low, 2006; Massey, 1994; Miller, 2007; Pain, 1991). This perspective acknowledges that any gendered quality to a space is not natural, and is therefore part of the symbolic development of that space (Cresswell, 1996; Miller, 2007). Low suggests that spaces become gendered when culturally-shaped perceptions interact with the experience of institutionalized spatial orderings and routine practices in space

(2006: 129), suggesting a process of reflection and reinforcement between gendered maps of meaning and lived experience that is consistent with the broader construction of space. Various authors situate the gendering of space in the context of the public-private divide, with the public historically constructed as a space for men and the private, as a space for women (Cresswell, 1996; Massey, 1994; Miller, 2007; Pain, 1991).

We can turn to media depictions in order to visualize this gendering of public and private domains, particularly in the context of the urban. Some authors propose that the exclusion of women from public space can be read in the very architecture of the city (Degen & Wainright, 2010; Fischer, 2010). Fischer notes how the architecture of both real and reel cityscapes is gendered, with soaring skyscrapers representing a masculine geography that aesthetically excludes femininity (2010: 124).[8] At the same time, Fischer suggests that early film depictions of urbanity frequently employ the metaphor of "city as woman," depicting the urban as an exotic geography that embraces the man and invites his exploration (2010: 123-124). Both of these findings are echoed by Degen & Wainwright, who suggest that modern tourism practices still cater aesthetically to the gaze of the male flaneur, the urban explorer who is tempted by the mysterious charms of the city (2010: 166-169). Even while symbolically constructing the city as female, media depictions may simultaneously position women themselves as out of place in urban public spaces. Avila examines the public presence of the femme fatale in film noir, noting how this archetypal character, the embodiment of promiscuity and sexual disorder, is depicted as a perpetual transgressor within urban spaces, one made dangerous for having strayed from her domestic domain, (2004: 8-10). In portraying the woman as "out of place" in the public, these depictions construct the de facto place of women as the home, both reflecting and reinforcing a

[8] Lefebvre similarly notes this "phallic verticality" in *The Production of Space* (1991: 36).

very traditional gender narrative (Massey, 1994; Cresswell, 1996: 105). Pain argues that, in spite of the increased movement of women into the workforce and the public domain, their symbolic twinning with the concept of domesticity and the home space has lingered (1991: 423-424). This is reflected in Tzanelli, Yar, and O'Brien's analysis of the 2002 film *Catch Me if You Can,* in which the authors found female characters to be the embodiments of male characters' nostalgia for an idealized domesticity (2005: 112).[9]

In considering how geographies of crime are gendered, it is important to also note how these spaces are gendered male. As Massey (1994) notes, examining only how geographies are gendered for (or against) women constructs the relationship of men to space as somehow natural.[10] Men similarly construct a gendered "map of meaning" around space in relation to normative social roles (Massey, 1994; Miller: 2007), and both real and reel geographies serve as arenas for contesting masculinity. From a more traditionally criminological perspective, the prison has proved a fruitful subject of inquiry for considering how masculinity is displayed and contested in a given space (Newton, 1994; Jewkes, 2002; Janssen, 2005; De Viggiani, 2012). Jewkes (2002) particularly links this contestation of masculinity in the prison to the use of media, although she focuses on how practices of inmate media consumption impact prison masculinities (in terms of the self-presentation of 'manliness' and autonomy), rather than the onscreen depiction of masculinities. Some recent work coming out of geography has proved insightful in exposing the gendering of space on film. Holmes, Zonn, and Cravey's (2004) study of masculinities in *The Last Picture Show* notes how that film associates the "loss" of masculinity with the decline of the Old West. From a different perspective, Aitken notes how films

[9] The authors also discuss a second identity for women in this film – as untrustworthy femme fatales whose sexuality can deceive even the most practiced con man (Tzanelli, Yar, & O'Brien, 2005: 112-114).
[10] See also Longhurst (2000) on the need to engage with constructs of both masculinity and femininity in order to destabilize masculinism.

deliberately use landscape and scenery to embody the repressed emotions of male characters (2006: 493). Beyond film, other authors have suggested the importance of gendered space in relation to fear of crime for both men and women. Trickett, for example, notes how young men manifest fear and manage public insecurity by attempting to define both masculinity and their environment, actively displaying ownership over particular spaces (2011: 298). However, many of the authors who connect gendered constructions of space to crime and insecurity do so by focusing on women, and particularly on how fear of crime excludes women from public space.

While acknowledging that all women do not necessarily experience fear of crime equally, the literature suggests that women as a whole experience fear of crime differently from men (Pain, 1991), and that this differential experience is intrinsically linked to the construction of gendered place in a risk society (Koskela & Pain, 2000). Numerous sources identify perceptions of risk and fear of crime as factors that particularly exclude women from certain spaces (England & Simon, 2010; Koskela & Pain, 2000; Miller, 2007; Pain, 2009; Pain 1991). Women are told from an early age – by the media, by family and friends, by public awareness campaigns and the police - that they must take measures to protect themselves against the (naturalized) threat of violence in public spaces, often to the point of limiting their public involvement (Pain, 1991: 423). In constructing a map of meaning around public space, women, in particular, may structure their daily lives around avoiding areas of perceived danger (England & Simon, 2010), or what Young calls “no-go zones” (1999: 17). These danger zones are constructed across time, as well as space, with nightfall transforming certain areas into zones of exclusion for women (England & Simon, 2010: 203; Young, 1999: 17).

However, Pain notes that women are subject to varied levels of insecurity in private as well as public spaces, and that this type of insecurity is often overlooked when considering

women's fear of crime (Pain, 1991: 423). As Fenster points out, when the home is a site of oppression, the city may emerge as a space of comparative liberation (2005: 222). This speaks to the problem of taking an essentialist view of women – or men, for that matter – when discussing fear of crime and gendered space (Kern, 2005). Experiences of gender and fear of crime are shaped by intersecting identities, such as class, race, and social location (Kern, 2005; Wattis, Green, & Radford, 2011), and the zones of exclusion laid out in media depictions may shape, overlap, or diverge from these lived experiences in a variety of ways. Nonetheless, this literature does speak to the importance of considering how depictions of the spaces where crime occurs are gendered. Despite this context, little attention has been paid to the construction of gendered space in crime films, positioning this as an additional gap in the literature which I have sought to address in this project.

Reorienting the Map: Theorizing Across Disciplinary Boundaries

The criminological literature lays the ground work for understanding depictions of crime in fictional spaces as social constructions worthy of study. The following section puts that focus into conversation with literature from fields outside of criminology, including film and communication studies, anthropology, urban studies, and geography, to provide a more thorough map of current understanding of issues at the intersection of space, fiction and criminality.

Research from the domain of film studies provides insight into the onscreen othering of certain neighbourhoods. Researchers who have studied gangster film tradition have noted the tendency to set aside particular neighbourhoods of ethnic "others" - notably Italian-, Irish-, and African-American communities - as the loci for crime (Shannon, 2005; Pramaggiore, 2007). Additionally, both Pimpare (2010) and Baum (2010) have observed that the depiction of welfare

households and the Harlem ghetto life in film is problematic, and indicative of a trend towards painting particular neighbourhoods as "other." This type of analysis intersects with criminological analyses of "othering."

Sorrento's (2012) "wasteland" and Augé's (1995) "non-place" are spatial concepts that also help to inform an understanding of filmic depictions of crime. Sorrento's "wasteland" positions the alienating urban and isolated rural as two sides of the same coin, both of which can function as a haven for crime (2012: 40), allowing for an alternate interpretation of this sprawl beyond Dickos'(2002) unidirectional suggestion that rural settings for crime must have something urban about them. Smith (2011) uses anthropologist Marc Augé's concept of "non-places" – modern spaces of transience where "people are always, and never, at home" (1995: 109) - to examine liminal spaces in the crime-centred genre of film noir. Additionally, "non-places" can be interpreted as both onscreen sources and modern geographic embodiments of what cultural criminologist Keith Hayward calls "ontological insecurity": a sense of dis-ease that arises from uncertainty, including the inability to identify one's place in the world (2004: 153; see also Young, 1999).

The aesthetic characteristics of geographies of crime can be illuminated by considering how settings may be used to either enhance the "realism" of a scene or to throw the viewer off guard. Schmid notes the "aggressive realism" of urban spaces in detective fiction (2012:15), or the idea that settings for crime are considered "realistic" only when they are gritty and disordered. Meanwhile, geographer Larry Ford (1994) suggests that strong lighting has increasingly taken the place of the shadow in film noir, diverging from the well-worn dark alley trope in order to provide the sense of disorientation on which film noir trades. Rather than

adding an air of realism, setting a scene in broad daylight is thus designed to make crime seem jarringly out-of-place (Ford, 1994).

Literature concerning the tourist and cinematic gaze also provides valuable insight for an exploration of geographies of crime, particularly for examining panoramic or tracking shots that linger on the landscape or elements thereof. Sadler and Haskins (2005) and Roberts' (2010) suggest that panoramic shots create an all-encompassing, "postcard image" of the city, a process of geographic flattening which mirrors the oversimplification of crime stories in both the news and popular media. Mulvey's (1975) observation of the heteronormative male character of the cinematic gaze also has implications for considering how geographies of crime are gendered onscreen.

In addition, intersecting literature from film studies, urban studies, and criminology offers context for the onscreen construction of the home as a gendered geography of crime. According to Holt and Thompson's analysis of the "man-of-action" archetype in films, the defense of the home allows male protagonists to reassert their masculinity by simultaneously fulfilling the culturally-prized, normative male roles of breadwinner and rebel (2004: 428). This cinematic archetype can be understood within the broader shift towards the privatization of home security observed in urban studies (Atkinson & Blandy, 2007; Dupuis & Thorn, 2008) and, from there, related to the diffusion of responsibility for crime control through "strategies of responsibilization" (Garland, 1996). Welsh, Fleming and Dowler (2011) also position the middle-class home as a site of ideal victimization - a space of presumed inviolability which reframes inhabitants as sympathetic characters - thus lending a spatial component to the criminological concept of the ideal victim.

Intertwined with notions of the ideal victim, an interesting subsection of literature has emerged in recent years examining the "rise of the corpse" (Foltyn, 2008) and "autoptic vision" (Tait, 2006) in popular cultural depictions of crime, particularly the use of "evidential bodies" in television procedurals like CSI (Gever, 2005; Tait, 2006; Pierson, 2010). Tait (2006) suggests that the attention paid to the pale-skinned, slender, young female corpse in these representations reflects the role of these bodies as emblems of both the aesthetic ideal and the ideal victim. Additionally, Pierson (2010) draws from Kristeva (1982) to theorize how the visual impact of the corpse in CSI relies on abjection; in other words, it feeds off audience fears (and fascinations) about mortality and the fragility of the human body. The concept of affect, which cultural criminologist Allison Young understands as the connection forged between bodies across space (2010: 85) - in this case between the body of the victim and the body of the viewer – provides a useful link for thinking spatially about the role of bodies in crime films.

In many cases, literature from these disciplines covers familiar ground for criminology; concepts of othering, ontological insecurity, responsibilization, and the ideal victim are standbys of the discipline. However, thinking through "reel" geographies provides the opportunity to approach these criminological concepts, as well as the broader construction of urbanity, insecurity, and gender in crime films, from a different perspective. Drawing from interdisciplinary literature is a key component of this reorientation, one critical for thinking between the spatial and the criminological and for addressing the particularity of films as popular cultural artefacts. As such, my mobilization of this additional literature answers cultural criminology's call to interrogate the complexities of popular representations of crime and think beyond disciplinary boundaries, with the ultimate aim of "expanding and enlivening" the discipline of criminology (Ferrell & Sanders, 1995).

Chapter Two: Methodology

In this chapter, I detail and justify the methodology I employed in this research within the context of the theoretical departure points that I laid out in Chapter One. I begin by setting out this study's epistemological framework, and then describe my sampling strategy, coding, and analysis procedures. I then move on to a discussion of this study's evaluative criteria, in which I address the importance of contextualizing data within a qualitative study, as well as the particular measures I have taken to avoid loss of meaning when converting primarily visual data into a textual medium. I conclude this chapter by considering some potential limitations of this research.

Epistemological Framework

In order to fully explore my research questions, I adopted a constructivist epistemology. The constructivist epistemology assumes that knowledge, along with all social realities, is constructed by social actors (Guba & Lincoln, 2003: 271). The primary implication of this assumption is that a researcher cannot discover an "objective truth" (Neuman, Wiegand & Winterdyk, 2004: 73). However, researchers who adopt a constructivist paradigm can aim to expose and explain the construction of the social world, and this is the primary objective of the study at hand. McCotter, drawing on Lather, also notes that the aim of constructivist research can largely be characterized as the search for understanding (McCotter, 2001: 4-5), an assertion echoed by Guba and Lincoln (2003: 257).

Adopting a constructivist paradigm has a number of implications for my research. Given the constructivist paradigm's assumption that "objective truth" is unknowable, the value of this research is measured by its capacity to provide a contextualized and holistic interpretation of the

data. To that end, I adopted a qualitative method of content analysis focused on detailed description and nuanced interpretation, which I describe below. This type of interpretive approach is consistent with the constructivist epistemological framework (Guba & Lincoln, 2003: 256).

I have also endeavoured to incorporate critical concepts within this primarily constructivist epistemological framework. While this might seem contradictory, both the critical and constructivist paradigms view the social world as constructed to some extent (Guba & Lincoln, 2003: 256) and, therefore, offer some flexibility in joint application (Guba & Lincoln, 2003: 267). Although proponents of the critical paradigm tend to criticise the relativity of constructivist paradigms, there is some natural conceptual overlap, namely in their shared view of "social reality as changing and subject to socially created meaning" Neuman, Wiegand & Winterdyk, 2004: 79). However, the critical perspective tends to be more action-oriented and emancipatory, presenting these constructions as potentially oppressive and change as desirable (McCotter, 2001: 5). This study problematizes representations of insecurity, urbanity, and the gendered construction of space. In attempting to expose how geographies of crime are constructed in films, I am following in the footsteps of cultural geographers and social theorists who have troubled the natural and neutral image of spaces by bringing the political, economic, and social implications of their construction to light (Cosgrove & Jackson, 1987; Cresswell, 1996; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1992).

Sampling Strategy

In order to explore my research questions, I chose a purposive sample of popular films with a perceived wealth of data and potential for providing the greatest possible insight into the

topic at hand (Berg, 1998: 229; Esterberg, 2002: 93). While purposive samples are not widely generalizable (Berg, 1998: 229), given the relatively small size of this study and its qualitative and exploratory nature, I determined that the increase in potentially meaningful data offered by a purposive sample outweighed its limitations in this case.

Films for this sample were selected from the years 2002 to 2011, inclusively. Setting boundaries on the time period for study not only helped narrow down the available data, it ensured that the films under examination provided somewhat recent portraits of crime and the spaces where crime occurs. Given Rafter's assertion that cinema is an arena for popular discussion about crime (Rafter, 2010), selecting current films for analysis was considered key for accessing correspondingly modern conceptualizations of crime. Using a ten year timeframe for sampling allowed for greater flexibility in choosing data-rich and well-received films than would have a shorter timeframe. My decision to sample current films also reflected the suggestion in the literature that contemporary portrayals may have a greater impact on audiences, as they interact more readily with lived experiences to form part of the ongoing redefinition of space (Kennedy & Lukinbeal, 1997; Lagerkvist, 2008; Muzzio & Halper, 2002). To a similar end, I also excluded films set before the year 1980 or after the apparent present day, with the intent of eliminating period pieces and films set so far into the past or future that their geographies would be less relatable to the lived experience.[11] I settled on the year 1980 as an acceptable cut-off point after examining the range of films in question, because it kept the film settings somewhat

[11] This is not to suggest that cinematic visions of the past or future do not impact conceptualizations of space and crime in the present. (On the contrary, authors such as Campbell (2010) note how science fiction films can problematize the risk society and question the reasonable limits of security and surveillance). However, I argue that this admittedly imperfect time criteria provides a better approximation of our imaginings about where crime happens in our present "reality" than visions of Victorian London or the futuristic megapolis might.

recent while still allowing for inclusion of the most well-received crime films within the sample period.[12]

Given the focus on post-9/11 security and premediation in the existing literature linking crime and space, it should be noted that the ten-year time frame used for sampling films (2002-2011) represents a post-9/11 sample. However, the same caveat for this consideration applies as was mentioned in the literature review: it would be misguided to consider this sample as a distinct split from pre-2001 representations of geographies of crime and insecurity (Dodds, 2008). This is particularly important to keep in mind when one considers that a number of the sample films draw from source material produced pre-9/11.[13] Nevertheless, as cultural artefacts these films emerged and circulated within a post-9/11 climate of representation and interpretation, and thus reflect some of the ways we are conceptualizing crime and the spaces where it occurs in a post-9/11 world.

Since the objective of this study was to examine how filmic geographies of crime are characterized, it was important to put as few constraints as possible on the settings of the sample films. However, in order to aid in interpreting the characterization of space as part of an ongoing exchange between the audience, the medium, and the filmmaker, this study looked only at films that were both produced and set in the United States of America. This exclusion criterion was designed to minimize the presence of exoticism in the sample; in other words, I wanted to avoid films that depicted geographies of crime "over there" rather than "here."[14] Films with settings

[12] The films *Mystic River* and *The Departed* contain undated flashbacks that may take place before the 1980 cut-off. However, given that both films have primarily contemporary settings and that these flashbacks form part of the overall narratives they weave, neither the films themselves nor data in the flashbacks were excluded.
[13] *Precious* (2009) is based on a 1996 novel; *A History of Violence (*2005*)* is an adaptation of a 1997 graphic novel, and *Mystic River* (2003) is based on a novel released in early 2001.
[14] When considered alongside the other exclusion criteria, the only film this restriction functionally excluded was *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011), an American interpretation of a Swedish novel / film depicting crime

that did not maintain at least the pretense of realism were also excluded,[15] again in an attempt to choose films that might be easily relatable to the lived experience. With these two exceptions, the geographic setting of any given film had no impact on its inclusion or exclusion from the sample.

In an effort to sample prominent films with a certain amount of cultural traction, and therefore a potentially greater claim on the "reel-to-real" looping construction of crime and space suggested in the literature, I chose to look at popular movies. Rather than assess popularity based solely on box office returns, I considered a metascore of critic and audience ratings (obtained using the ratings amalgamation website Moviegram) alongside U.S. box office grosses to determine which films in the prospective sample could reasonably be considered both "widely seen" and "well-received." In the final sample selected, all films have a critic-audience metascore of at least 78 (out of a possible 100) and a U.S. box office gross of at least $31.5 million. As with the time criteria, neither of these benchmarks for popularity was established prior to sampling. Rather, each score was weighed against the other – alongside the amount of crime in a film – to help determine what was, in my estimation, the best possible sample of films.

Given the small size of this study, it was important to select films for analysis that were data-rich. In other words, films in the sample had to have a heavy focus on incidents of crime and the geographies that contain them. I used the violence/gore score on parental rating website Kids-In-Mind to select films with prevalent depictions of crime. All films in the final sample

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happening in Sweden. I considered this distance between the film's country of origin and its depicted setting to be potentially problematic.

[15] "Realism" is obviously a term that is applied somewhat loosely here; all the settings under consideration are fictionalized to varying degrees. While *A History of Violence's* Millbrook, Indiana and *Mystic River's* Buckingham Flats neighbourhood of Boston are both fictional geographies, they are obviously intended to be read as "real." The Gotham City of Christopher Nolan's popular Batman franchise, on the other hand, is steeped in the mythological and, leaving aside the suspension of disbelief, does not necessarily demand the same.

had violence/gore scores between 6 and 9 (out of a possible 10), inclusively.[16] It could be argued that this selection method gives preference to films with violent crime. However, the types of crime in the sample are highly comparable to those in the sample that would be generated by a crime genre search on the Internet Movie Database (IMDB), the method used by Rafter (2010). Additionally, using the violence/gore score allowed for the inclusion of two popular films to which crime is central – *Gran Torino* and *Precious* – that do not fall within the unclear boundaries of IMDB's crime genre. While using the violence/gore score is not a perfect method of selecting films with a focus on crime, I determined that it was the most suitable one available for procuring a data-rich sample.

While the purposive sampling strategy detailed above frequently relied on my subjective judgement, and was fundamentally an elaborate means of narrowing down the vast array of potential data into a manageable subset, I employed it in an effort to select the most appropriate and useful films for analysis. My intent was to produce a sample of widely-seen, well-received, contemporary crime films, and through them, access to current popular imaginings of geographies of crime.

Research Design: Content Analysis

Given the large amount of data provided by a sample of ten films, as well as the interdisciplinary and exploratory nature of this project, I determined that content analysis was the most appropriate method for tackling the research questions. More specifically, this study is a qualitative content analysis, meaning that the coding and analysis procedures implemented

[16] Films with a violence/gore score of 10 were excluded from the sample as these films contained what I determined to be an unmanageable amount of data.

focused on detailed description, nuanced interpretation and contextualization rather than enumeration.

Content analysis is broadly defined as "a technique for gathering and analyzing the content of text" (Neuman, Wiegand & Winterdyk, 2004: 314). "Text" is taken here to include any visual medium – including film – that can be converted into text for the purposes of content analysis (Berg, 1998: 224). Considering cultural artefacts, including representations of geographies, as texts is an established practice in both cultural criminology and cultural geography, and relies on the interpretive practices developed by Clifford Geertz (Cosgrove & Jackson, 1987: 96; Hayward & Young, 2004: 270; see also Geertz, 1973). Content analysis makes use of categories to synthesize larger quantities of data by assuming that like words, phrases and images can be taken to have a similar meaning (Elo & Kyngas, 2007: 108). The content analysis process requires that the researcher immerse him or herself in the data to the point of complete familiarity in order to allow themes and concepts to emerge (Elo & Kyngas, 2007: 109).

A content analysis approach benefits this type of research for a number of reasons. First, content analysis is an apt method for dealing with relatively large amounts of data (Neuman, Wiegand & Winterdyk, 2004: 315), which allowed me to draw comparisons and contrasts across a larger sample than a different method might have accommodated. Content analysis is also noted for its workability in examining media representations across various disciplines (Bell, 2001: 13; Neuman, Wiegand & Winterdyk, 2004: 315), which facilitated my incorporation of concepts and literature from across a wide variety of disciplines - particularly geography and film studies - in my attempt to rise to cultural criminology's challenge of thinking outside the bounds of traditional criminology (Ferrell & Sanders, 1995). Additionally, a careful content

analysis can reveal messages below the superficial veneer of a text and provides a useful tool for describing and conceptualising social objects in terms of their overarching (and underlying) themes and biases (Neuman, Wiegand & Winterdyk, 2004: 316). These qualities ideally position content analysis as a method through which to begin exploring and mapping out onscreen geographies of crime.

Research that departs from interpretive or critical perspectives generally aligns better with a qualitative rather than quantitative form of content analysis (Berg, 1998: 314). The content analysis that I conducted in this study focused on examining textual data without converting it to numerical data (Carter & Little, 2007: 1316). I was guided down a qualitative path for analysis by the precepts of both cultural criminology and cultural geography. Ferrell maintains that cultural criminology's search for the symbolically-contested meanings, contexts, and subtexts of crime is best served by qualitative rather than quantitative methodologies (1999: 402). Anderson also suggests that qualitative methods are more appropriate for studies seeking to uncover the meaning of culturally-produced geographies (2010: 168). This sentiment is echoed by Herbert, who notes, "Absent the rich detail that qualitative research affords, we are unable to appreciate fully the formative role of place" (2010: 69). My decision to proceed qualitatively was also based on the assumption that much of the meaning of visual content could be lost were it to be converted to numerical data (Berg, 1998: 224; Ferrell, Hayward & Young, 2008: 184-86). In addition, the qualitative approach attempts to avoid the oversimplification that can plague quantitative content analysis in its search for reliability (Kracauer, 1952: 632). This approach allowed me to consider the construction of meaning around geographies of crime in terms of the symbolic *weight* they were given in the films, rather than just their prevalence.

Key Definitions

Crime

Crime, for the purposes of this study, is defined as behaviour that is readily identifiable as an offence against the person and/or property and is given sufficient importance in a film's action to render its setting significant.[17] These films often made a point – whether through visuals, action, or dialogue – of emphasizing the illicit nature of these acts, so they were easily observable, particularly in a careful reading.

Space and Place

When considering filmic geographies, the concept of space must be defined precisely. Taken literally, the space created by a film is nothing more than the frame used to hold the image (Aitken & Zonn, 1994: 15). In this study, however, "space" denotes an onscreen setting, landscape, or environment, a representation of geography that "demand[s] to be read as real" within the film (Aitken & Zonn, 1994: 16). While there is no real consensus within the geographic literature as to what constitutes "space" as opposed to "place," I generally privilege the term "space" in this study for its more expansive connotation[18] as well as its closer alignment with the critical tradition, in which space is understood as a socially constructed and politically charged cultural, social, and/or physical location (Hubbard, 2000: 41). I selectively use the term "place" in my analysis as Cresswell (1996) does: to denote belonging and to consider how certain activities, people, and objects are constructed as "in place" or "out of place." However,

[17] While my analysis covers the settings of crimes from petty theft to murder, this definition was intended to exclude offenses like littering – acts that might be recognizably illegal but that are generally not given enough attention or weight onscreen for their settings to be particularly revelatory.

[18] While geographers and academics in other disciplines seem to play fast and loose with both space and place (Hubbard, 2000), "space" is commonly used as a metacategory or blanket term (within which place can fall), while "place" often has the distinct connotation of being a concrete location or being "lived in" (Staeheli, 2003).

beyond the definitions of space and place sketched out above, I deliberately left the boundaries of what constitutes a "geography" within these films rather fluid. This allowed me to survey geographies of crime on multiple levels – from the grand context of the urban-suburban-rural scale to the considerably smaller context of the human body – and to open the path of inquiry broadly, in a manner befitting an exploratory study.

Forms of Data

Data in this sample took three different forms: geographies surrounding immediate incidents of crime, "scene of the crime" geographies – which are divorced from the actual act but still depicted as having been the site of criminal activity - and descriptions of sites where criminal activity has taken place. The first two forms were primarily visual and their depictions were recorded using detailed description, while the third was primarily verbal and was transcribed. While analysis primarily focused on these three types of data, the broader context of each film was used to guide interpretation in order to avoid artificially divorcing the data points from the broader narrative in which they were originally situated. Due to the nature of film as a medium in motion, it was important to consider the meanings and symbols of the crime-specific content as part of a continuous flow of symbolic messages (Feilitzen et. al., 1989: 12). However, only content that fell within the three data types outlined above – in other words, data that specifically helped construct geographies of crime – was coded.

Coding and Analysis

I coded for both manifest and latent content in my analysis. Manifest coding examines the surface content of a text, while latent coding looks for submerged or implicit meanings within the text (Neuman, Wiegand & Winterdyk, 2004: 317). I acknowledge that analyzing

latent content in this case – as with a purely textual analysis – required significant interpretation (Elo & Kyngas, 2007: 109), but this practice was invaluable for identifying meanings that might have been glazed over in a more superficial analysis (Neuman, Wiegand & Winterdyk, 2004: 317). Given the visual nature of the data at hand, I incorporated principles of semiotics in my research to aid in identifying visual subtext. Supplementing the analysis with semiotics was my attempt to acknowledge and address the limitations of content analysis for identifying the significance of visual images (Bell, 2001: 13). This study incorporated the semiotic concept of "lexis," or a vocabulary of visual symbols, and the understanding that certain symbols can be taken to convey a specific cultural meaning (van Leeuwen, 2001: 92). The syntax of the images - the way they were presented on screen - was also considered to be potentially meaningful (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001: 134 – 135).[19] This framework for analysis considers the image as both representational and culturally productive, a gap previously bridged by scholars such as Frosh (2001: 626). Augmenting the content analysis framework with these semiotic principles helped facilitate the identification of latent meanings in the data.

Before coding began, I conducted multiple viewings of each of the ten films. The first viewing of each film allowed me to map out the context of the film as a whole. In the second, much more thorough reading, I converted data points within the film from audiovisual data into textual data. The immediate surroundings of crime incidents and crime scenes were described in detail and all relevant dialogue and on-screen text was transcribed. This step collected the data into a form that was more useful for coding and allowed cross-comparison of scenes, symbols and themes in a way that was not as feasible in its original format.

[19] Considerations of lexis and syntax were not specifically coded for, but rather used as guiding concepts for data gathering and analysis.

I began my analysis with open coding, a stage in which the data was examined minutely to establish tentative categories (Berg, 1998: 240), designed to "open inquiry widely" (Berg, 1998: 240). Due to the gap in literature dealing specifically with geographies of crime in film and the exploratory nature of this study, I deemed it inappropriate to begin coding with a pre-established set of codes. My method of analysis had to be flexible enough to incorporate emergent knowledge, so I took a primarily inductive analytic approach, meaning that I attempted to develop new concepts from the specific data set for the purpose of broader study (Elo & Kyngas, 2007: 109). However, my initial literature review shaped a number of the concepts under consideration - such as gendered space, the construction of insecurity and portraits of urbanity – and I used the literature to flesh out and define categories once they were established, so the approach of this study cannot be conceptualized as purely inductive. This strategy of straddling inductive and deductive methods was intended to maintain a "high-quality conversation" between theory and data (Herbert, 2010: 173). Once I had established a working coding list of themes through multiple readings of data, I applied these codes rigorously, first to the textual form of the data and then again to the original film format for substantiation and modification.

Each relevant scene or data point was first coded in terms of its general characteristics: the lighting, the apparent time of day, its geographic situation along the urban-suburban-rural scale, the type of crime being committed or referenced, and the gender of any perpetrators or victims. For the purposes of analysis, I defined gender in the binary, male-female sense, and it therefore constituted a discreet category (Schutz, 1958: 507). However, the characteristics of lighting, time of day, and the urban/suburban/rural nature of spaces were all treated as continuous categories, and I used detailed description to nuance their classification during

coding. I then identified the specific characteristics of the given space. As with general characteristics, I provided explanatory description wherever necessary when classifying data points using the categories and subcategories laid out in Table 1.

Table 1: Specific characteristics – Categories and subcategories for analysis

CATEGORY	SUBCATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Signs of Disorder		"Visible incivilities." Elements of the environment that indicate decay, lack of care, previous or ongoing criminal activity. (Ex. broken glass , cracked pavement, rust, peeling paint, graffiti, sirens, blood, bullet casings).
Spaces of Isolation	*Physical Isolation*	Spaces lacking in other people (beyond those directly involved in the incident).
	Social Isolation	Spaces with little social connection, where others in proximity are either oblivious to the crime or unwilling to interfere. In these scenarios, the victim and/or perpetrator may be depicted as "alone in a crowd."
"Non-Places"		Spaces of transition to which an individual has access but is not intended to belong. (Ex. highways, hotels/motels, airports, subways, shopping malls). This conceptualization of "non-place" is derived from the works of anthropologist Marc Augé (1995).[20]
Familiar Places		Spaces to which the perpetrator and/or victim is clearly accustomed or of which he/she has a demonstrated knowledge.
Evident Security	→	Obvious precautions against crime or disorder. (Ex. fences, barbed wire, alarm systems, locked doors,

[20] I chose to categorize these spaces as "non-places" rather than as "spaces of transition" for the analytic utility of Augé's conceptualization. Non-places, as understood by Augé (1995), are spaces of indeterminate roles and permeable boundaries that embody the uncertainty of modern life. As such, the concept of "non-place" provided a more direct and clearly-defined springboard for connecting depictions of these spaces to insecurity.

Measures		police officers / security guards).
	Existing Security Measures	Measures that are in place before or as the crime occurs.
	Emergent Security Measures	Measures that come to be in place during or after the commission of the crime.
Contrasting Imagery	→	Elements of the environment that appear to be juxtaposed for effect with the criminal activity.
	Innocence	Symbols of purity, particularly children / childhood toys.
	Tranquility / Nostalgia	Environments depicted as peaceful or "sleepy," old-fashioned, or unaccustomed to crime / violence
	Domesticity	Spaces bearing the trappings of an idyllic, well-cared-for "home."
Spaces Defined by Crime	→	Spaces which are explicitly associated with crime/criminals even when the criminal act is not on-screen/ongoing.
	Crime Scenes (location)	Spaces where the crime occurs, in which everything comes under the jurisdiction of the law. Spaces through which crime can be "read."
	Criminogenic Areas (locus)	Spaces which are depicted as inevitably breeding crime/criminals ("bad neighbourhoods").
The Body as a Geography of Crime		Where the body / corpse of a victim provides either a "map" to the crime that occurred or is reduced to scenery indicating that a crime has occurred.[21]

I organized the various classifications of each scene and data point using a detailed data sheet (see Appendix A). This data sheet ensured that each category and subcategory was considered in turn for its applicability to every data point, and invited explanations. Organizing

[21] This category was further divided in the interpretive stage into "the body in a crime scene" (the body as crime scenery) and "the body as a crime scene" (the body as a geography of crime).

the data in this way allowed for subsets of data – all of the data points with a suburban setting or a female victim, for example - to be easily extracted and analysed in depth.

Evaluative Criteria and Presentation of Data

Qualitative methodologies are not typically evaluated by the same criteria as quantitative methodologies, and standards of reliability and validity cannot be applied in the same manner to studies that do not depart from a positivistic standpoint (Guba & Lincoln, 2007: 17). It is generally acknowledged, however, that qualitative studies must demonstrate their credibility in the academic field (Creswell & Miller, 2000: 124) by justifying the interpretations they present (Schwandt, 2007: 12). As such, this study has been held to some internal evaluative criteria which, in accordance with the constructivist paradigm that orients this study, embrace the interpretive aspect of research, rather than the more positivistic "reliability and validity" (Creswell & Miller, 2000: 126). Of particular importance here is the concept of trustworthiness. As a form of evaluative criteria, trustworthiness concerns the methods undertaken in a study and the extent to which the research process may be considered correct (Manning, 1997: 94). This form of evaluation encourages researchers to present findings as holistically as possible (Guba & Lincoln, 2007: 17).

In service of this holistic approach, I have made a concerted effort to contextualize the findings of this study as they are presented. Clearly situating the research within the existing literature provides an important base for informed and credible interpretation (Neuman, Wiegand & Winterdyk, 2004: 93). In conjunction with the literature review that preceded analysis, a second, targeted literature review accompanied data collection and added considerable depth to analysis. In addition, I have explained and operationalized the terms and concepts used in this

study in conjunction with the literature, and these operational definitions should facilitate the evaluation of this study's thoroughness and internal logic (Berg, 1998: 25). Nuanced description has been employed as a credible means of enhancing this study's trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 2007: 19), with the intent of providing as intricate a portrait of the data as possible. Complete immersion in the data, achieved through multiple and detailed readings of the data set, contributed to a more thorough and coherent understanding of the data and should lend credibility to this study (Maxwell, 1990: 8-9). The contextualization of findings is particularly relevant to the study of films, since images in films represent part of a continuum of storytelling and this frame of reference affects their interpretation (Feilitzen, et. al., 1989: 12). To avoid losing track of this continuum of meaning and help orient the reader, I have provided links for each film's trailer at the beginning of Chapter 3, as well as an overview of each film's plot and major themes in Table 2. I have also taken care in my discussion of findings to link the description of particular scenes to the broader narratives of the films in order to maintain this context.

Given the largely visual nature of its data, this study had to address the additional challenge posed to its trustworthiness by the conversion of that visual data into the primarily textual format of a thesis. I have presented relevant screen captures as part of the findings in an effort to maintain some of the data in its pure form. However, this does not entail a claim to objectivity, as I selected the images to be included or excluded and the order in which they appear, all of which affect the meanings assigned to them. Rather, by using screen captures to help expose the meanings constructed around particular spaces, I have attempted in part to answer Hayward's call for cultural criminologists to begin using the power of the image in presenting our research, rather than simply taking the image as its object (Hayward, 2010: 6).

Nevertheless, including images helps approximate the original form of the data much more effectively than a purely textual presentation would.

Limitations of the Study

The preceding section has spelled out many of the limitations and challenges facing the current study. As a qualitative content analysis built around a purposive sample, the findings presented below are not broadly generalizable, and cannot be claimed to hold for all situations. This study inevitably does some injustice to its continuous visual data by converting it into a textual medium, although I have used nuanced description and visual augmentation to minimize the loss. Furthermore, this study is interpretive in nature, and can make no claims to being *the* definitive reading of geographies of crime in popular films. However, I would offer that the limitations of this methodology are outweighed by the potential for an interpretive, qualitative, purposive study of geographies of crime in film to illuminate pathways for future research and shed light on an otherwise neglected field.

Chapter Three: Findings and Analysis

I will now turn to my analysis of the sample films. As outlined in my methodology, I took a qualitative content analysis approach in this study, one somewhat augmented to account for the primarily visual nature of the data, and stressing a conversation between the data and its categories to account for the exploratory nature of this study. Using the purposive sampling frame detailed in Chapter Two, I selected the following ten films for analysis: *Insomnia* (2002), *Mystic River* (2003), *Collateral* (2004), *The Departed* (2005), *A History of Violence* (2006), *No Country for Old Men* (2007), *Gran Torino* (2008), *Precious: Based on the Novel 'Push' by Sapphire* (2009)[22], *The Town* (2010), and *Drive* (2011). In an effort to orient the reader and contextualize this study's findings within the original format of the data and broader stories woven by the sample films, I have attached URLs for each film's theatrical trailer [23] and provided an overview of each film's plot and relevant themes in Table 2 (see below). I have also

[22] Referred to simply as "*Precious*" from this point forward.

[23] ***Insomnia* (2002):** http://www.imdb.com/rg/s/4/title/tt0278504/#lb-vi498008345

***Mystic River* (2003):** http://www.imdb.com/rg/s/4/title/tt0327056/#lb-vi1956118809

***Collateral* (2004):** http://www.imdb.com/rg/s/4/title/tt0369339/#lb-vi448725273

***A History of Violence* (2005):** http://www.imdb.com/rg/s/4/title/tt0399146/#lb-vi1723072793

***The Departed* (2006):** http://www.imdb.com/rg/s/4/title/tt0407887/#lb-vi770769177

***No Country for Old Men* (2007):** http://www.imdb.com/rg/s/4/title/tt0477348/#lb-vi145883417

***Gran Torino* (2008):** http://www.imdb.com/rg/s/4/title/tt1205489/#lb-vi517604121

***Precious* (2009):** http://www.imdb.com/rg/s/4/title/tt0929632/#lb-vi1522402585

***The Town* (2010):** http://www.imdb.com/rg/s/4/title/tt0840361/#lb-vi897975833

***Drive* (2011):** http://www.imdb.com/rg/s/4/title/tt0780504/#lb-vi2772212761

employed screen captures throughout the analysis to illustrate the scenes and concepts under consideration. My analysis is divided into three parts, with each part roughly corresponding to one of the three secondary points of inquiry identified in Chapter One. In Table 3 (see below) I have provided a conceptual map noting the key areas of discussion in each part of analysis and roughly illustrating the relationship between the various sections.

In Part One of analysis, I describe how the sample films locate crime in urban, suburban, and rural contexts, and examine how each of these spaces is characterized as a geography of crime. I first consider the apparent twinning of crime and urbanity in the sample, and identify portraits of isolation and the othering of "criminogenic" neighbourhoods as the two primary trends in these films' constructions of the urban. I then reflect on the relative absence of the suburban context from the sample, before moving on to my discussion of rural geographies of crime. Therein, I describe how depictions of the rural as a setting for crime range from the disrupted idyll to the desolate wasteland, and suggest that the construction of both urban and rural geographies of crime in these films reflect concerns about the uncertainty of modern life. I conclude Part One by introducing the concept of crime's inevitability in these films, something mimicked in the smaller-scale construction of geographies of crime that I discuss in parts two and three.

In Part Two of analysis, I examine how the sample films mark particular spaces as secure or insecure. Using a general discussion of crime scenes as an introduction to the idea of 'reading' onscreen spaces, I consider how the aesthetics of particular spaces invite the viewer to read insecurity into these geographies, particularly through signs of disorder. I then discuss how some films play against the expected imagery of crime, particularly through their use of light as threatening and the depiction of security measures as representations of insecurity. Finally, I

connect this subversion of security to the sprawl of crime into familiar places, and suggest that depicting vulnerability in the home space enhances the impression that there are no safe havens from crime.

In Part Three of analysis, I consider how geographies of crime are gendered in these films. I begin by exploring how the relationship of men to spaces in the sample is largely characterized by territoriality. I then connect this territoriality to both the perceived vulnerability of the home space and the insecurity of security measures discussed in Part Two, suggesting that these films responsibilize the "man of action" for the defense of the home and the provision of security. Correspondingly, I discuss how this construction of masculine territoriality reduces women to the background in these films, to serving as personifications of the vulnerable domestic and even as sexual scenery. To conclude Part Three, I note how my examination of the backgrounding of women in these films exposes the use of the body – and particularly the female body – as a geography of crime all its own.

Table 2: Plot and thematic overview of the sample films

FILM	YEAR	DESCRIPTION
Insomnia	2002	Two L.A. homicide detectives are sent to investigate the murder of a teenage girl, Kay Connell, in remote Nightmute, Alaska. After Detective Dormer accidentally shoots his partner in the pursuit of Kay's killer, he finds himself engaged in an elaborate game of cat and mouse with the suspect – reclusive crime writer Walter Finch - manipulating evidence to cover his own tracks while also trying to pin both deaths on Finch. Dormer becomes increasingly disoriented, as does the viewer, by lack of sleep and the ever-present Alaskan sun. *Insomnia* proceeds in a uniquely neo-noir style and returns often to the theme of losing one's way (both physically and morally)
Mystic River	2003	As a child playing with his friends Jimmy and Sean in the streets of a (fictional) working class neighbourhood of Boston called Buckingham

		Flats, Dave is abducted by two men, taken to a remote location, and sexually abused. The film returns to Buckingham Flats in the present day, where Jimmy's daughter Katie is found murdered. Sean, now a state detective, is brought in to investigate, while Jimmy and his criminal associates start an investigation of their own, and Dave emerges as their prime suspect. The film stresses the isolation of Buckingham Flats and the continuity of crime, the effects of which ripple through the neighbourhood and the lives of the three boys across decades and generations.
Collateral	2004	A hired hit man named Vincent, in Los Angeles to kill the witnesses and prosecutor of a high-profile case, offers his unwitting cab driver Max $600 to drive him around for the evening. After Max witnesses one of the murders, Vincent takes him hostage and threatens his family to force him to follow through on their arrangement. Throughout the film, Max struggles to regain control and save the pretty district attorney he had met earlier that night. The film deals heavily with the idea of Los Angeles as a disconnected metropolis and continually reinforces its theme of social isolation and disengagement.
The Departed	2005	Costigan, a would-be cop with South Boston roots, struggles to distance himself from his family and the neighbourhood's reputation for breeding criminals by infiltrating the crew of a high-profile gangster named Costello. Meanwhile, Sullivan, a cop who also has ties to Southie, is Costello's mole within the police force, with each side struggling to find out who the informant on the other side is. The film centres on identity and plays off the similarities between cops and criminals, following in the vein of its opening remarks: "with a gun to your head, what's the difference?"
A History of Violence	2006	Two criminals on a rampage attempt to hold up a small town diner, and Tom, the owner of the diner, becomes a local hero when he singlehandedly fights them off. The subsequent media attention brings his seedy past to bear on his picture-perfect present, however, allowing some criminal associates from his former life to track him down. When the situation culminates in a shootout on his front lawn that threatens his idyllic family life, Tom must return to Philadelphia to confront his past and attempt to regain his spot in the model portrait he has painted for himself.
No Country for	2007	When Llewellyn walks into the scene of a drug deal and walks away from the bloodbath with two million dollars, he brings a sociopathic,

Old Men		cattle-gun wielding killer for hire named Anton Chigurgh down on his tail. As their chase leaves a trail of destruction in their wake, local Sherriff Bell finds himself struggling to keep up. The film questions security and the ability of law enforcement to deal with the irrational and seemingly inevitable tidal wave of crime.
Gran Torino	2008	After Walt's wife dies, he is left alone in their family home to grumble about his Hmong immigrant neighbours and his children's foreign-made cars. When his young Hmong neighbour Tao attempts (and fails) to steal his classic Gran Torino to curry favour with the local gang, Walt begrudgingly agrees to let him make amends. Walt sets Tao to the task of cleaning up the neighbourhood properties as penance, interspersed with advice on getting a job and how to "be a man." However, the Hmong gang members will not back down so easily, shooting up Tao's home and raping his sister, forcing Walt to take matters into his own hands. The film centres on clashing cultures, ownership, and masculinity.
Precious: From the Novel Push by Sapphire	2009	Precious is sexually abused and impregnated by her now-absent father, and verbally and physically assaulted by her mother, Mary. Belittled and terrified, Precious walks on eggshells around Mary, who alternates between living in front of the television and flying into rages at her daughter, blaming her for "stealing" her man and not bringing in a second welfare check. Precious seeks escape from the violence of life in the apartment through fantasies of a glamorous life and eventually, under the guidance of a new teacher, through reading and writing. Her escape from her home coincides with liberation from this abuse and from the "bad dream" of her life, albeit within constraints.
The Town	2010	*The Town* follows a crew of armoured car thieves and bank robbers from what the film tells us is the historically criminogenic Charlestown neighbourhood of Boston, who come under FBI scrutiny following a major bank heist. Point man Doug follows and eventually begins a relationship with Claire, a hostage from the crew's most recent heist. Swearing off his life of crime and planning to run away with Claire, Doug gets roped back in to one last big heist after a local thug named the Florist threatens his pretty new girlfriend. The crew plans to rob Wrigley Field even as the FBI is closing in. *The Town* sets Charlestown distinctly apart from the rest of Boston, and constructs it as at once a home and a prison, as a place that keeps drawing Doug back into a life of crime.

Drive	2011	Drive follows a Los Angeles stunt driver / mechanic who moonlights as a getaway car driver for hire. The man known only as The Driver gets involved with his neighbour, Irene, and her son, Benicio. He agrees to help Irene's recently-paroled husband pull off a seemingly innocuous pawn shop robbery in order to pay off some old debts and put the family out of danger. However, the robbery turns out to be mob related and Irene's husband is murdered, leaving the Driver to escape with the cash and a hit out on his head. The film injects the plot with the stylized theatricality of its Hollywood setting and revels in strong contrasts between dark and light, control and chaos, childlike innocence and brutal violence.

Table 3: Thinking between levels - A conceptual map of analysis by section

PART ONE: **Urban, Suburban, and Rural Settings for Crime**	PART TWO: **The Aesthetics of Insecurity**	PART THREE: **Gendered Geographies of Crime**
>**TWINNING OF CRIME AND URBANITY** -association between crime and urban contexts, situating the city as the primary locus and location for crime >**CRIMINOGENIC NEIGHBOURHOODS** -environmental determinism – spaces that *inevitably* breed crime ⇩ OTHERING >**ISOLATION** -physical / social isolation as a source of insecurity -alienating urban + desolate rural ("something urban about them" vs. the "Wasteland") >**NON-PLACES** -modern spaces of transition where one is "always, and never, at home" (Augé, 1995) -linking insecurity to the uncertainty of modernity **> SPRAWL ING INSECURITY** -crime's transgression into apparent safe havens	>**READING CRIME THROUGH DISORDER** -interpreting crime scenes by tracing disorder through the environment ⇩ LEXIS OF DISORDER -anticipating crime in a space based on the presence of visible incivilities -"gritty realism" of settings >**CONTRASTING IMAGERY** -juxtaposition of crime with imagery of nostalgia, innocence, domesticity, light ⇩ THE INSECURITY OF SECURITY -insufficient security measures and the inefficacy of police -the evident need for "forting up" (privatization of security)	> **MASCULINITY AND TERRITORIALITY** -the "man of action" archetype -defense of the home as an opportunity for reasserting normative gender roles + (insecurity of security) ⇩ Responsibilization >**BACKGROUNDING OF WOMEN** -women as passive embodiments of threatened domestic / sexual territory -women as crime scenery and the carnographic spectacle ⇩ >**THE BODY IN / AS GEOGRAPHY** -the corpse as a symbol of disorder in an environment THE BODY AS A CRIME SCENE -the body as an affective / universal geography of crime

Part One: Locating Geographies of Crime

In order to assess whether the association between crime and urbanity that was well-observed in the literature (England & Simon, 2010; Jarman, 1996; Jargowsky & Park, 2009; Pain, 1991; Rentschler, 2011) held true for this study, I began my analysis by identifying the primary and secondary settings of each film in the sample, and then categorized those spaces as urban, suburban, or rural. All but two of the films portrayed crime as occurring in one specific area, seven of them urban and one rural, as shown in Table 4. *A History of Violence* and *No Country for Old Men* portrayed crime as occurring in both rural and urban locations, with *No Country* also setting one incident in suburbia. While this overview speaks to the twinning of crime and urbanity, a much more layered portrait emerges when we consider how each of these settings –urban, suburban, and rural - is characterized in turn.

Table 4: Primary and secondary locations for crime in the sample films

FILM	PRIMARY LOCATION	SECONDARY LOCATION	CONTEXT
Mystic River (2003) **The Departed** (2005) **The Town** (2010)	BOSTON	**X**	**URBAN**
Collateral (2004) **Drive** (2011)	LOS ANGELES	**X**	
Gran Torino (2008)	DETROIT	**X**	

Precious (2009)	NEW YORK	**X**	
Insomnia (2002)	NIGHTMUTE, ALASKA	**X**	**RURAL**
A History of Violence (2006)	MILLBROOK, INDIANA **(rural)**	PHILADELPHIA **(urban)**	**MIXED**
No Country For Old Men (2007)	WEST TEXAS **(rural)**	EL PASO **(urban)** + unspecified **urban and suburban** settings	

I begin this portion of my analysis by discussing how the twinning of crime and urbanity is embedded in the construction of the city in these films[24], from its skyline to its streetscape to its alleyways, and examining the connection that these films forge between crime and urban alienation. I also discuss the tendency towards using geography to "other" criminogenic communities within the city, thereby setting the offender at arm's length. After touching on the near-absence of the suburban context from the sample, I demonstrate how the same characteristics that define geographies of crime in the urban – isolation and othering – are also characteristic of the way that crime is depicted in the rural, albeit in a slightly different form. Subsequently, I suggest that these similarities are tied to an overarching concern about the conditions of modernity, as evidenced by the use of nostalgic imagery and the prevalence of the

[24] This section describes the broader trends in how crime is associated (and disassociated) with urban, suburban, and rural locales. A more detailed examination of the aesthetics of these spaces follows in Part 2.

non-place[25] as a setting for crime in the sample films. Finally, I discuss how the sprawl of crime into rural and even suburban geographies – epitomized by the myriad settings found in *No Country for Old Men* – paints a picture of crime as widespread and inevitable.

Bad Neighbours: Locating Crime in the Isolating Urban

Cities are by far the most prevalent settings for crime in the sample, a finding that corresponds with extensive literature noting the depiction of crime as an urban phenomenon, both in crime films and crime media more generally (England & Simon, 2010; Jarman, 1996; Jargowsky & Park, 2009; Pain, 1991; Rentschler, 2011). Seven of the ten films in the sample take place exclusively in the city, and an additional two claim it as a secondary location. Even so, depictions of urbanity are not identical across these films. Crime's connection to Los Angeles is established based on a portrait of the city as a sprawling, disconnected metropolis, while the crime in Boston, New York, and Detroit is woven into the social fabric of particular neighbourhoods within those cities. What these films share, however, is the way they continuously connect crime to the imagery and the character of the city.

Although I anticipated the twinning of crime and urbanity in these films, I did not expect the extent to which this association would be built into the city skyline. One of the opening scenes in *Drive* pans over a view of Los Angeles by night, taking in the city's light-speckled darkness as the wail of sirens drifts over the soundtrack. In *The Town*, incidents of crime – particularly the bank and armoured car robberies - are commonly preceded by shots of the city that eventually narrow in on the location where the crime is about to take place. Similarly, the 911 call reporting Katie Markum's abandoned car in *Mystic River* is played over the wider geography of Boston until the exact location of the crime scene is revealed. *Collateral*, on the

[25] Spaces of transition to which everyone has access but nobody belongs (Augé, 1995).

other hand, silhouettes Vincent's attempt to kill Annie against the backdrop of a sprawling Los Angeles (see Figure 1). Time and again, crime is firmly embedded within the city skyline. If, as other authors have suggested, panoramic treatments of the city afford the viewer a tourist gaze (Roberts, 2010; Sadler & Haskins, 2005), then the "postcard image" of the city that we are left with is a landscape of crime and insecurity.

Figure 1: The city as a backdrop for crime in *Collateral* (2004).

Both *Drive* and *Collateral* use a similar visual tactic to construct Los Angeles as a fragmented space by tracing their action through the city's labyrinthine network of roads and freeways. The action in both L.A. films follows crime-plagued drivers as they navigate between spaces within the city, reinforcing the transitional and unsettled portrait of urban life built throughout. While the space itself is portrayed as disconnected, tracing crime throughout the streetscape effectively unifies the fragmented city into one fearful space (Rao, 2011). *Collateral*, in particular, pointedly associates crime with the character of Los Angeles as a whole, not just its skyline. Early on, Vincent tells his cab driver – and future hostage – Max that he dislikes the

city because it's "'too sprawled out, too disconnected.'"[26] The movie continually reinforces the idea that people in Los Angeles will neither help nor even notice those who are being victimized. When a desperate Max, handcuffed to the wheel of his own cab, blasts his horn and screams for help from nearby pedestrians, people on the street just keep walking on by. The four men who eventually follow his cries down the alley are only interested in robbing him (see Figure 2). *Collateral* teems with scenes that portray crime within a sea of nondescript bodies and faces, on city streets, in subways, and in crowded clubs, repeatedly asking its audience, "'do you think anybody'll notice?'"[27] This effectively frames urban insecurity as, to borrow a phrase from Rentschler (2011), a "problem of witnessing," and contributes to a portrait of social isolation in the city that extends well beyond the boundaries of Los Angeles. Depictions of urban alienation have historically loomed large in cinematic constructions of the city (Clapp, 2005; Shapiro, 2009; Fischer, 2010) and are a common feature of media that constructs the city as a dangerous space (England & Simon, 2010; Rentschler, 2011). My analysis links these two observations together and reinforces them, situating depictions of urban alienation as key to the twinning of crime and the city.

Figure 2: Urban disconnection breeds crime in *Collateral* (2004).

[26] *Collateral* (2004)
[27] *Collateral* (2004)

While *Collateral* overtly links social isolation to insecurity, I found the "city as an alienating space" to be a subtext to urban crime throughout the sample, particularly in the construction of physically isolated spaces for crime. Physically isolated spaces are carved out of the city at large, in parking garages, on rooftops, and in alleyways. The empty rooftop and interior of an unfinished building in *The Departed* (see Figure 3) is an ideal setting for Costigan's undercover meeting with his police contact, but that same private setting lends itself to two separate murder scenes later in the film. Cars also appear in these films as small urban islands, providing escape for criminals but also transforming into cages that trap victims with perpetrators. The hijacked cab in *Collateral* serves as a prime example of this, but *Mystic River* also highlights Dave's tragic solitude when he is twice confined in cars with men who want to hurt him, first as a child and again near the end of his life. *Precious* is also notable for depicting the home as an isolated space; Mary shuts off the apartment from the rest of the world in order to keep her abuse of Precious hidden. Given that the concept of urbanity is predicated on large numbers of people living in close proximity, the construction of physical isolation in city spaces appears to be partially artificial. The perceived insecurity of these spaces is bolstered by the underlying idea that the city is a socially isolating environment, and that urban dwellers are less likely to come to the aid of someone in need (Rentschler, 2011).

Figure 3: Constructing physical isolation in *The Departed* (2005).

Bad Neighbourhoods: Keeping the "Other" at a Distance

Whereas *Drive* and *Collateral* connect crime to Los Angeles as a whole, the other city-centered films in the sample situate the problem of crime within particular urban neighbourhoods. All three of the Boston films link crime to predominantly Irish, working-class districts of the city. *The Town* constructs Charlestown as a breeding ground for bank robbers; *The Departed* revolves around organized crime in South Boston, or "Southie," while *Mystic River* centres on a fictional neighbourhood called the "Buckingham Flats," also patterned after South Boston (Rowe, 2008: 85). *Gran Torino* centres on a Highland Park neighbourhood in Detroit with a high population of recent immigrants. *Precious*, meanwhile, is set in New York City's Harlem district.[28] The respective plots of these films both further and hinge upon a construction of their chosen neighbourhoods as criminogenic, commonly setting these areas apart from the rest of the city and marking their inhabitants as "others." This speaks to Springer's

[28] However, as I will discuss, the broader context of the neighbourhood in *Precious* is largely obscured.

assertion that crime becomes attached, not only to particular places, but also to particular people within those places (2011: 90).

The Town opens its story with the following text, set against a black screen: "One blue-collar Boston neighbourhood has produced more bank robbers and armoured car thieves than anywhere in the world," followed by a single word, "Charlestown."[29] This introduction is notable, not only for its suggestion that the neighbourhood in question actually *produces* criminals, but also for making what appears to be a "factual" or quantifiable claim that ties the fictional narrative at hand directly to the "real" or the lived world. Furthermore, the film weaves a highly deterministic portrait around its environment, constructing Charlestown as a neighbourhood within which crime is passed "from father to son."[30] *The Town* shows how Charlestown repeatedly draws Doug, son of a convicted felon, back into a life of crime through circumstance, through his loyalty to Jem, or because a neighbourhood thug threatens his girlfriend. The film reflects the general approach towards environmental explanations of crime in the movies that Rafter notes (2010: 66), painting with broad strokes to suggest the ill effects of a "bad neighbourhood" without delving too deeply.

The other Boston-based films in the sample construct a similarly deterministic picture around their working class, Irish-American neighbourhoods. *The Departed*'s Frank Costello notes, for example, the reputation of South Boston's Irish population for becoming "cops or criminals."[31] While the film toys with the idea of identity by suggesting that the line between cop and criminal is far from clear, it does so primarily by showing crime and corruption flourishing within the police force. Even as Costigan tries to shed his Southie roots by

[29] *The Town* (2010)
[30] *The Town* (2010)
[31] *The Departed* (2005)

paradoxically using those same ties to go undercover, Sullivan brings the criminal taint of the neighbourhood into the belly of the police force. Each man's connection to Southie marks him as a likely criminal, although one tries to shake that identity while the other embraces it. *Mystic River*'s boys from Buckingham Flats, meanwhile, grow up to fill the same roles set out by *The Departed* – they become cops or criminals. Crime shapes their lives as children and follows them throughout the film, taking on an inescapable quality that is embodied by the neighbourhood itself. When Dave revisits the street from which he was abducted as a child, he winds up in the backseat of another car, being taken, once more, far from safety. Despite his best efforts, Jimmy also finds himself back behind the Black Emerald bar, "killing people and dumping them in the Mystic."[32]

In addition to dealing out parallel fates, the neighbourhoods in *The Departed*, *Mystic River* and *The Town* are constructed using similar visual cues. *The Departed* and *Mystic River* both use South Boston's iconic triple-decker apartment complexes as a reference point for the viewer. The imagery of these buildings is culturally loaded, a fact made particularly evident in *The Departed* when a police sergeant notes that Costigan's family are "dug into the Southie projects like ticks, three-decker men at best"[33] (see Figure 4). Three-deckers are therefore used as an easy visual cue for a working class Boston neighbourhood, allowing any audience familiar with the architecture to locate both the setting of the film and the socio-economic status of its characters. *Mystic River* also borrows from Charlestown by separating Buckingham Flats from the rest of Boston by a river. Buckingham Flats, therefore, emerges as a fictional amalgam of the "real-life" settings of South Boston and Charlestown, and the visual archetype of the kind of poor, Irish-American neighbourhood that each film suggests would unavoidably breed crime.

[32] *Mystic River* (2003)
[33] *Mystic River* (2003)

Figure 4: Three-decker men in *Mystic River* (2003, left) and *The Departed* (2005, right).

The practice of associating crime with particular neighbourhoods is not exclusive to the Boston-based films. *Gran Torino* deals with a Highland Park community in Detroit that has experienced a recent influx of Hmong immigrants. Unlike many of the other urban films, *Gran Torino* makes no real effort to locate this particular neighbourhood within the context of the city as a whole. There are no lingering pan-shots of Detroit; the focus of the film is very local. Additionally, rather than constructing crime as an historic part of the neighbourhood, *Gran Torino* implicates a shift in demographics – from a whiter, more middle-class community, of which Clint Eastwood's Walt is the proverbial last man standing, to a flourishing but impoverished Hmong population – in the development of a crime problem. Sue, a Hmong girl who befriends Walt, identifies the issue as a clash of cultures, noting, "Hmong girls over here fit in better. The girls go to college, the boys go to jail."[34] While this explanation is sympathetic, the film also associates crime with a general sense of disorder accompanying the Hmong. As penance for trying to steal the Gran Torino, Walt directs Tao in literally cleaning up and repairing the neighbourhood, part of a repeated association between the maintenance of order

[34] *Gran Torino* (2008)

and the maintenance of property.[35] The message seems to be that the lack of care for property shown by this "outsider" culture is criminogenic, and that, in order for the Hmong to be law-abiding and for their neighbourhood to be safe, they must actively conform to Walt's All-American property standards.

Precious is unique amongst the sample films in that many of its more serious incidents of crime occur not just within a particular neighbourhood, but within one apartment. The film's story takes place in 1980s Harlem, but only a few relatively minor incidents are set within the broader context of the neighbourhood, the risk "out there" paling in comparison to Precious' abusive home life. There is, however, inherent danger to obscuring the broader geographic context of this film. Since, as Pimpare notes, the lives of Harlem women and welfare recipients are a rare subject for cinema, confining the viewer's gaze to this singular scenario runs the risk of painting entire swathes of the population with the same brush (2010:453-454). Precious' abusive home environment threatens to become a signifier for the ghetto household and representative of an entire black urban underclass, "the problems of which are supposedly self-inflicted, due to defective behavioral and cultural patterns and not due to the legacy of racism" (Baum, 2010: 634). Harlem does not disappear in *Precious*, nor is its perceived identity as a locus for crime minimized by the film. Rather, the ghetto and much of its seemingly inherent violence are simply condensed into one apartment, and so the criminogenic portrait that the film paints of its chosen community is arguably no less severe.

My analysis also reveals how each of these criminogenic neighbourhoods is established as separate from or "other" to the general population. Othering is a tool frequently employed in media constructions of crime, one that allows the audience to distinguish the law-abiding "us"

[35] See also the section on "Signs of Disorder."

from the deviant "them" (Banks, 2005; Greer & Jewkes, 2005). The films in question establish this distance through cultural and socioeconomic factors. *Gran Torino*, for example, conveys the "otherness" of the Hmong through Walt's eyes when he points out how very unlike him they are, remarking on the strangeness of their customs and finding fault in their lack of care for property. In addition, while the poverty of the main characters is most severe in *Precious*, all of these films depict neighbourhoods of lower socio-economic status. When combined with illustrations of cultural and, as discussed below, geographic distance, their economic disadvantage establishes these neighbourhoods as "other" to what is evidently an off-screen, middle-class ideal.

While gangster films do traditionally associate crime with particular groups of "others," most notably working-class or poor Italian-, Irish-, and African-American neighbourhoods (Shannon, 2005; Pramaggiore, 2007), the extent to which the Boston films use geography to segregate their neighbourhoods from the city as a whole was surprising. *Mystic River*, *The Departed* and *The Town* all take care to set their chosen neighbourhoods apart from Boston proper using bridges and rivers, visually emphasizing the distance between these troubled areas and the rest of the city (see Figure 5). While this geographic segregation is partially a reflection of Boston's street-level geography, it would be misguided to consider the visual emphasis placed on distance in these films as somehow natural, particularly when we consider that Buckingham Flats is a fictional neighbourhood. Rather, this unique use of geography allows the audience to locate the source of crime in the city and in the film. In contrast to the depictions that trace crime through the city as a whole, these films provide a neat dividing line, allowing even the urban audience to visually distinguish "us" from "them." While not all the films make this distinction so visible, using criminogenic neighbourhoods functionally allows them to locate crime in the "other" while still maintaining its connection to the urban.

Figure 5: Putting criminogenic neighbourhoods at a distance - constructing geographic segregation in *The Town* (2010 - top) and *Mystic River* (2003 - bottom).

In examining how urban geographies of crime are characterized, I have thus far identified two distinct themes or trends. The first is the depiction of urban life as fundamentally isolating, and therefore inherently insecure. The second is the practice of associating crime with particular criminogenic neighbourhoods that are set, whether visually or otherwise, at arm's length from the rest of the city. After briefly discussing crime's detour into suburbia in *No Country for Old Men*, I suggest that these same two themes – isolation and othering – also characterize rural geographies of crime.

Crime as Contrast in Suburbia

My examination of suburbia will be relatively brief, as the sample contains only one real example of a suburban geography of crime. *No Country for Old Men* plays with the idyllic imagery of the American suburb – closely-spaced houses, sunlight filtering through lush trees, children riding their bikes – as a contrast to the darkness and quiet destruction that accompanies serial murderer Anton Chigurh (see Figure 6). When Anton emerges from the picturesque house where Llewellyn's wife, Carla Jean, had been hiding out and checks his shoes for blood on the front porch, he is accompanied by a soundtrack of lawn sprinklers and chirping birds. Smith notes that the practice of setting morose action within seemingly contrasting geographies like the suburbs has a long history in film noir and is intended to induce a sense of vertigo in the viewer (2011).[36] That this setting is conceptualized as serene enough to serve as a contrast is actually in line with other popular media representations, where the suburbs are depicted as peaceful and relatively immune to crime (Jarman, 1996; Wallace, 2008). *The Town* also deals with the suburban in passing, positioning suburbia – here just a concept that never materializes on screen – as an ideal space to which a man might escape from the cycle of poverty and crime in Charlestown. Doug tells Claire that his father "finally made it out to the suburbs,"[37] rather than reveal that he is in prison, thus identifying suburban life as both a refuge from crime and a goal to which one can aspire. Neither film claims suburbia as its primary geographic context, and, otherwise, the suburbs are conspicuously absent from the films under consideration. While the depiction of suburbia as a crime scene in *No Country* is not particularly groundbreaking, its

[36] This practice of using contrasting imagery to subvert the viewer's expectation of security is discussed in much greater detail in Part 2 of analysis.
[37] *The Town* (2010)

inclusion alongside a variety of urban and rural locations helps further that film's portrait of crime as sprawling and widespread.

Figure 6: Anton emerges from the house where he has just, presumably, murdered Carla Jean (*No Country for Old Men*).

Small Town Idylls and Rural Wastelands: Locating Crime in the Rural

Three of the sample films depict crime occurring in rural locations: *A History of Violence* takes place in the fictional small town of Millbrook, Indiana; *Insomnia* is set in the remote town of Nightmute, Alaska; and *No Country for Old Men* traces crime through a variety of small towns and desert scenes in West Texas, near the United States-Mexico border. My analysis of these three films reveals a tension between portraits of the rural as a relatively crime-free idyll,

which position crime as having been brought into the space by urban outsiders, and depictions of the rural as a wasteland - a space of pervasive isolation in which crime can flourish.

By constructing its setting as a small town idyll disrupted by urban outsiders, *A History of Violence* says as much about the association between crime and urbanity as it does about the rural. Higson notes how rural spaces are often represented as spaces of escape that are somehow still tainted by the city (2006: 245). In *A History of Violence,* the taint of the city comes explicitly in the form of crime. Millbrook is the most overtly idyllic primary setting in the sample, its small-town wholesomeness encapsulated by Tom's diner. Walking down the street on his way to work in the morning, Tom is greeted by everyone he meets (see Figure 1). One patron promises to see Tom at church; another, to play pool with the waitress. We are left with the impression of an orderly, picturesque town where everyone knows each other, a town defined by its "togetherness." As the town sheriff tells some unwelcome visitors from Philadelphia, "This is a nice town. We have nice people here. We take care of our nice people." [38] This portrait serves to amplify the sense of crime as out of place by juxtaposing Millbrook with the off-screen spectre of the socially isolated, crime-riddled city.

Figure 7: Millbrook - a town where everybody knows your name (*A History of Violence*, 2006).

[38] *A History of Violence* (2005)

This is not to say that Millbrook is painted as completely crime-free. One scene, for example, shows Tom's son smoking marijuana and his high school rival swigging alcohol behind the wheel of an SUV, but these scenes play as youthful indiscretion when contrasted with the brutal attack on the diner that follows soon after. Any serious crime that erupts in Millbrook is brought into the town by urban outsiders, whether in the form of two fugitives robbing and killing their way through "podunk towns," or through Tom's criminal associates from Philadelphia. This observation corresponds neatly with Jarman's finding that crime in idyllic rural and suburban spaces is generally constructed as having been imported from the urban (1996). Furthermore, these criminals are easily identifiable to the close-knit townspeople as outsiders, to the point where a pair of high school jocks can identify the fugitives as dangerous "others" based on a momentary encounter (see Figure 8). As Phillips and Strobl note, the use of the tranquil community as a setting for crime simplifies the narrative in that it makes the 'bad guys' easy to spot (2006: 308). *A History of Violence* uses the dangerous spectre of the city to essentially the same effect that the urban films use criminogenic neighbourhoods – to clearly distinguish the criminal as an outsider.

Figure 8: An encounter with dangerous outsiders (*A History of Violence*, 2006).

A History of Violence subsequently throws a wrench in this simplified portrait, however, by revealing the film's most unlikely outsider: Tom. The film shows us how, in spite of

Millbrook's small-town togetherness, Tom was long able to keep his illicit past hidden and slip into the role of insider. While this crack in the town's unified front exposes an unexpected element of uncertainty in the idyllic rural space, I would argue that *A History of Violence* largely maintains its association between criminal otherness and the urban. Tom's "history of violence" is explicitly connected to Philadelphia, and Tom must return to the city to deal with his criminal past and his previously-concealed outsider identity. Violent crime is still, therefore, constructed as having been imported into Millbrook, and the portrait of the rural as a space of escape emerges from the film's final, Philadelphia-based bloodbath largely unscathed.

I also observed the depiction of the rural as refuge in *Insomnia*, although not in the same idealized form. Nightmute police officer Ellie Burr notes that "Two kinds of people live in Alaska - the ones who are born here and the ones who come here to escape something else."[39] While it does not match Millbrook's picture-perfect veneer, Nightmute does share some of the former town's idyllic qualities, namely that serious crime is evidently uncommon there. When 17-year-old Kay Connell is murdered, homicide detectives have to be flown in from Los Angeles because the local law enforcement is ill-equipped to deal with a murder investigation. The detectives from Los Angeles, on the contrary, are shown as seasoned veterans to this type of investigation, to the point of having been corrupted by it. Detective Dormer is shadowed by an internal affairs investigation and actually commits much of the film's onscreen crime, tampering with evidence, breaking into residences and attempting to frame another man for his partner's murder. Dormer's corruption is contrasted with Detective Burr's straight-laced morality and relative naiveté, reinforcing the idea that crime in Nightmute – and, more generally, the rural - is rare enough that Burr has not yet been tainted by it.

[39] *Insomnia* (2002)

Although *Insomnia* juxtaposes rural purity with urban corruption using its characters, I found that its rural location, like many of the urban spaces in the sample, was defined as a geography of crime through the film's emphasis on isolation and noir imagery. Unlike Millbrook, Nightmute is not constructed as a particularly tight-knit town, and Detective Burr admits that the town's isolated location is also a lure for people who want be left alone.[40] This mirrors the social isolation that I found in depictions of the city, here reframed as people "minding their own business." *Insomnia* also frequently sets crime in physically isolated spaces, using the remoteness of its Alaskan setting to great effect. The film takes its audience on a tour of solitary crime scenes, through the dilapidated shack where Kay was murdered, the garbage dump where her body was found, the rusting way station where Dormer faces off with Walter Finch, and the isolated cabin where Finch holds an unsuspecting Detective Burr. Thus, *Insomnia* shows us how the remote wilderness can serve as a criminal's playground, rather than just an unsullied refuge from crime.

The prevalence of isolated spaces in *Insomnia* is likely due in part to its neo-noir style, since using isolation to convey insecurity is a hallmark of film noir (Smith, 2011). Since the film noir genre is thoroughly tied up with the imagery of cities (Dickos, 2002; Palmer, 2007), incorporating film noir tropes to convey insecurity in rural spaces, as Christopher Nolan does in *Insomnia*, also conjures up images of the urban. When Detective Dormer follows a suspect through an abandoned mine shaft and out into the fog, silhouetted against the light, the imagery hearkens back to the wet pavement and shadowed alleys of the Dark City. This likeness is easiest to see when compared to a similar back alley scene in *The Departed* (see Figure 9). In

[40] *Insomnia* (2002)

endeavouring to characterize its rural setting as an insecure space, *Insomnia* appears to refer back to the city as the paragon of insecurity.

Figure 9 : Transplanting imagery from the Dark City - film noir tropes in *Insomnia* (2002, left) and *The Departed* (2005, right).

One way to explain the similarities I observed between *Insomnia*'s depiction of crime in the rural and the depiction of urban crime elsewhere in the sample is to follow Dickos' suggestion that, when noir moves into spaces outside the city limits, those spaces must have something urban about them (2002). From this perspective, isolation and dark imagery are imported from the city alongside crime, their presence doing little to undermine the broader portrait of the rural as refuge. However, we might also consider that these parallel depictions expose an underlying similarity between the conditions of life and crime in both rural and urban spaces. Sorrento suggests that desolate rural spaces and overcrowded urban ones represent two sides of the same coin in crime films: both are isolated spaces – one physically, one socially[41] - and versions of what he calls the "wasteland" (2012: 40). The depiction of the rural as a setting for crime in *No Country for Old Men* falls closer in line with this category.

[41] Although, based on my sample, the distinction between the manifestations of social and physical isolation is often less clear than Sorrento suggests.

No Country for Old Men challenges the image of crime as foreign to the rural by mirroring the irrational, inevitable nature it ascribes to crime in the wildness of its setting. While crime in *No Country* is often set in the rural, the film uses this setting differently than both *A History of Violence* and *Insomnia*. Gone entirely is the idyllic pastoral of Millbrook, and the film's West Texas location has all of Nightmute's isolation but little of its small-town naiveté. . The wasteland character of the rural in *No Country for Old Men* is epitomized in one secluded stretch of desert, the site of a drug related showdown (see Figure 10), which serves as the backdrop for crime in the film on three separate occasions. If we consider that choosing to repeat a crime scene within a film indicates something criminogenic about its location,[42] *No Country* seems to point to this desolate space as an almost inevitable setting for crime, positioning its version of the rural as far from idyllic.

Figure 10: The wasteland as a danger zone - physical isolation in *No Country for Old Men* (2007).

Beyond its preference for revelling in isolation, I observed throughout *No Country* a mirroring between the film's depiction of crime as ungovernable and the untamed scenery that

[42] For more on this concept, see the discussion of crime scenes in Part 2.

this portrait is layered over. The sun-baked deserts and wide-open plains of *No Country*'s opening montage are held back only by thin property fences, rickety dividers that are dwarfed by the wildness they seek to contain. This scenery (see Figure 11) is overlaid by Sherriff Bell's narration:

> Some of the old time sheriffs never even wore a gun. A lotta folks find that hard to believe. Jim Scarborough'd never carried one; that's the younger Jim. Gaston Boykins wouldn't wear one up in Comanche County…. The crime you see now, it's hard to even take its measure. It's not that I'm afraid of it. I always knew you had to be willing to die to even do this job. But, I don't want to push my chips forward and go out and meet something I don't understand. A man would have to put his soul at hazard. He'd have to say, 'O.K., I'll be part of this world.'[43]

Figure 11: Attempting to hold back the wildness of the world in No Country for Old Men (2007).

[43] *No Country for Old Men* (2007)

This opening monologue combines fears of the present with nostalgia for a time when the type of criminal facing Bell – a serial killer like Anton Chigurh, gangs dealing drugs in the desert, the unrepentant man he sends to the electric chair, the sadistic Californian couple he describes to his deputy – was largely absent from the land. Bell suggests that this type of crime is something new and unfamiliar, but not specifically new to the rural. In other words, the problem of crime is constructed as one of modernity, not necessarily one of urbanity. This concept is reinforced by the trend towards contrasting crime with nostalgic imagery in both the rural and the urban films.

Nostalgia at Odds with Crime and Modernity

While a more thorough examination of the aesthetics of geographies of crime follows in Part Two of my analysis, I have included the discussion of nostalgic imagery below in order to illustrate how a concern about modernity connects rural and urban settings for crime in my sample. Nostalgic imagery and references are standbys for crime films and popular constructions of crime, alluding to a mythologized past in order to paint crime as a feature of modernity and the modern world as somehow fallen from the ideal (Fingeroth, 2004; Philips and Strobl, 2006; Sorrento, 2012). I found the most prominent use of nostalgic imagery as a contrast to crime in *A History of Violence* - a primarily rural-based film - and *Gran Torino*, which is set in Detroit.

Given its depiction of Millbrook as a town where "everybody knows your name," there is a sense in *A History of Violence* of the rural community as the standard bearer of a bygone era of social cohesion. The film seems to wink at this portrayal through Tom's romanticization of the town. Enchanted by the idea of a tranquil refuge left over from a simpler time, Tom suggests to his wife that they go to a drive-in; she reminds him that Millbrook has not had a drive-in since the 1970s. However, there is plenty about the town that does seem ripped from a bygone era.

Tom's diner, in particular, seems to conjure up the 1950s, right down to the teenage couple sharing a sundae (see Figure 12). By disrupting the old-fashioned, saccharine quality of the diner, crime's arrival in Millbrook appears to be an invasion not only by urbanity but also by modernity. Walt similarly surrounds himself with the vestiges of the "good old days" in *Gran Torino*, sipping beer on his front porch with his dog, his classic American-made car in the driveway and an American flag flying overhead (see Figure 12). Along with a shotgun, this nostalgic front is Walt's first defence against a neighbourhood that is turning to crime and to a culture he does not understand. Both Tom and Walt cling to the trappings of an idealized past, associating security with keeping modernity at bay.[44] When crime brings modernity crashing in, both men similarly set out to return their communities to the previous idealized state. This corresponds with Phillips and Strobl's observations on nostalgia and the comic book hero that "Only through the cleansing of criminality by the protagonist can the desired status quo return" (2006: 308). Nostalgia is used in both films to paint crime as a facet of the fragmented present as opposed to a socially cohesive and, in the case of *Gran Torino*, more racially homogenous America.

[44] While *Gran Torino* shifts away from this idea as the film progresses, it does so only by making its white man the reformer and ultimate saviour of the Hmong, an element that smacks of colonialism. Nostalgia, as Watson and Wells note, habitually whitewashes the past and obscures the experiences of entire segments of the population for which the referenced time period may have been far from a golden age (2005: 20).

Figure 12: Portraits of nostalgia as a contrast for crime - Tom's diner in *A History of Violence* (2006, left) and Walt's All-American front porch (*Gran Torino,* 2008, right).

Ironically, there is nothing particularly new about this onscreen association between crime and the conditions of modern life; it has a long history in the crime narratives of film noir and other popular constructions of crime (AlSayyad, 2006; Philips & Strobl, 2006). Film noir typically uses two types of space to link together alienation, crime, and the conditions of modernity: spaces of isolation (Smith, 2011: 21) and liminal spaces, which are spaces of transition and ambiguity (Palmer, 2007). This brings me to one of the most far-reaching and thoroughly modern spaces for crime that I found in the sample: the non-place.

Non-places and the Uncertainty of Modern Life

While the literature surrounding film noir identified the importance of transitional spaces in crime films, after observing how these spaces were characterized within my data, I chose to analyze them under the more meaningful category of "non-places." Anthropologist Marc Augé (1995) uses the French term "non-lieux," or non-places, to describe modern spaces of transition that are open to everyone but to which no one has a specific attachment. As Augé puts it, these are spaces where "people are always, and never, at home" (1995: 109). Smith similarly connects the concept of non-place with the transitional spaces of film noir (2011), and given that Augé

provides numerous examples of the non-place - from airport lounges to supermarkets to highways (1995: 96) - the concept of non-place offers a more concrete way of categorizing and thinking about transitional spaces.

Non-places such as metros, motels, rest stops and highways litter the sample, and, though these spaces are intended for "passing through," they become focal points for incidents of crime in many of the films. In general, I found that films present these transitional spaces as havens for displaced criminals and zones of insecurity for everyone else. The use of the motel as murder scene in *A History of Violence*, *No Country for Old Men*, and *Drive*, for example, emphasizes how the fluid boundaries of the non-place put the individual at risk for encountering dangerous others. The motel at the beginning of *A History of Violence* harbours a pair of fugitive killers who intend to leave no witnesses, and while characters in *No Country* and *Drive* seek out the anonymity of motels to protect them from danger, these non-places do not keep them safe for long. As previously discussed, *Collateral* and *Drive* both set crime along the freeways snaking through Los Angeles, which creates a picture of that city as one big, disconnected, transitional space. *Collateral* then builds on this air of transience by setting its climactic final chase scene in the L.A. metro. The roadside is also a favoured setting for serial killer Anton in *No Country for Old Men*, where he can pick off unsuspecting drivers whenever it is convenient.

Figure 13: Demonstrating the danger of non-places in (clockwise from top left) *A History of Violence* (2006), *No Country for Old Men* (2008), *Collateral* (2004), and *Drive* (2011).

Non-places are so prevalent in the sample that their association with crime became routine over multiple viewings; I found myself, as a viewer and a researcher, anticipating the arrival of crime in these spaces. The depth of this association is important to consider because crime scenes represent spaces of vulnerability in the rural films as well as the urban films, manifesting a form of insecurity that is common to both. The liminality of non-places, where roles are largely undefined and ownership is ambiguous, makes them ideal settings through which to explore and exploit fears of uncertainty in modern life, or what Hayward calls "ontological insecurity" (2004: 153; see also Young, 1999). The subject cannot identify his or her place in these fluid spaces, and, as such, non-places become imbued with a level of uncertainty. Crime is shown to thrive in these spaces by virtue of the fact that they are largely unbounded; anyone can pass through a non-place, and that permeability and lack of control leaves characters vulnerable to encounters with dangerous others (Smith, 2011: 13). Ultimately,

the prevalence of these geographies in the sample constructs a portrait of modern life – in both rural and urban spaces - as fragmented, disorienting, and isolating, and, as a consequence, remarkably insecure.

Tearing Down the Safe Haven: Uncertainty and the Sprawl of Crime

The initial literature review for this study suggested that the city would be shown as both the primary location and the locus for crime (England & Simon, 2010; Jarman,1996; Jargowsky & Park, 2009; Pain, 1991; Rentschler, 2011) and that crime in rural and suburban areas would largely depicted as imported from the urban (Jarman, 1996; Philips and Strobl, 2006; Wallace, 2008). While I did find both of these trends reflected in my data, my analysis also reveals a broader depiction of insecurity that challenges the stark division between the "Dark City" and the "rural idyll." Even the film with most overtly idyllic setting, *A History of Violence*, exposes doubt about the distinction between insiders and outsiders. The concern, voiced through nostalgic imagery and the prevalence of non-places is the sample, appears to be over the uncertainty of modern life.

Even still, *No Country* eventually overturns Bell's original declaration of newness through the voice of his father, the elder Bell noting, "What you got ain't nothin' new. This country's hard on people. You can't stop what's coming, it ain't all waiting on you."[45] Here crime is depicted as both engrained in the land and fundamentally inevitable, as fated and yet still unpredictable, balanced on the flip of Anton Chigurh's coin. Chigurh himself is, as Sorrento puts it, 'unplaceable' (2012: 168), at once an "other" to the land and its embodiment. Unlike films that segregate the other, there is no sense in the film of where Anton belongs, and, therefore, where he does not belong. As a consequence, the film lacks any space of refuge. *No*

[45] *No Country for Old Men* (2007)

Country traces crime across a variety of landscapes – from the rural, to the suburban, to the urban – seemingly to make the point of just how inescapable it is. While the sprawl of crime into apparent safe havens is most evident in *No Country*, it is reflected on a smaller scale throughout the sample films and forms a central theme to Parts Two and Three of analysis.

Part Two: The Aesthetics of (In)Security

In Part One, my analysis revealed the anticipated twinning of crime and the city in the sample films, but also the sprawl of crime into unexpected geographies. By considering what marks particular onscreen spaces as secure or insecure, I observed the mirroring of these two concepts – the link to urbanity and the violation of safe havens – in the spatial aesthetics of the sample films. Using crime scenes as a jumping off point for the concept of "reading" crime in a geography, I show how these films employ a popular lexis of disorder that allows the viewer to both anticipate and accept crime in its seemingly natural (urban) environment. However, my analysis also reveals the intriguing prevalence of imagery that contradicts the dark, disorderly, street-level portrait that the initial literature review had laid out. This section further demonstrates how crimes in these films are not simply banished to the shadowy urban back alley, but have crept into broad daylight, into the familiar and the domestic, and flourish against a background of apparent – and apparently ineffective - law and order.

Setting the Scene: Using the Environment to Tell Crime Stories

By way of introduction to this portion of the analysis, and to the concept of "reading" geographies of crime, it only makes sense to begin at the scene of crime. Crime scenes, for the purpose of this study, are the specific locations for crime that films construct as having been marked or redefined by that event. Whether surveyed by agents of the law or revisited by parties

to the offence, crime leaves a legible stain on these locations for characters to interpret, albeit one that is read differently depending on the interpreter. In either case, considering how crime scenes are interpreted in these films is useful for understanding how both signs of disorder and, more broadly, geography are used to construct crime narratives.

Regardless of whether these spaces contain ongoing incidents of crime, they appear to be permanently marked by crime. Some films take that concept far more literally than others. When we revisit the street where Dave was abducted in *Mystic River*, for example, Dave's half-carved name in the cement serves as an enduring reminder of the crime that cut its writing short (see Figure 14). In other scenarios, the stain of crime is only visible to those who were party to the offence. In *The Town*, Jem can pinpoint the spot by the cemetery where Brendan Leahey died, and can read the geography in terms of the meaning it has for him: a symbol of his loyalty to Doug. For both Dave and Jem – one as victim, one as perpetrator – the scene of the past crime serves as an emotional touchstone in the present. Furthermore, the setting is used to give crime and its effects, along with all of the emotions and memories characters attach to them, a physical presence on screen. Each of these spaces is given a primary identity as a crime scene long after the crime itself has gone.

While victims and perpetrators occasionally revisit crime scenes, visits from agents of the law are more common in the sample. Law enforcement officials also read these geographies of crime, but the meanings they assign to them generally differ from those assigned by parties to the offence. Specifically, while crime scenes are generally shown as emotional touchstones for victims and perpetrators, agents of the law treat them as resources from which they can extract the "facts of the case." In some films, a police officer's interpretation of a crime scene serves as

the audience's first window into the crime. *Mystic River*, for example, introduces us to the site of Katie Markum's murder through Detective Sean Devine and his partner, who jointly construct a map of violence using remains at the scene. Agents follow trails of blood and signs of disturbance through these geographies in order to carve a picture of the crime out of the scenery. Unlike the centrality of scientific techniques for "truth telling" observed elsewhere (Gever, 2010), these detectives extract the story of the crime from the environment using routine observation, beckoning the audience to play detective right alongside them.[46]

Figure 14: Dave's unfinished name in the sidewalk as a permanent mark on the landscape – a reminder of crime and a childhood lost (*Mystic River*, 2003).

In the police interpretation of the crime scene, I noted how the sense of order being imposed – of sense being made out of chaos – is reflected in changes to the environment. Through tape, barriers, and police presence, the crime scene is redefined and visibly marked off as the exclusive domain of law, and as *ostensibly* much more secure than it was before. However, this is inescapably order imposed after the fact, and the role of the police as a reactive

[46] As I will discuss below, some films seem to trade on the idea that audiences can identify signs of disorder and crime in the environment.

force reduced to creating imperfect interpretations is particularly evident in films that provide alternative accounts of the crime. For example, *The Town* demonstrates how inaccurate the police interpretation of Brendan Leahey's crime scene was by comparing it to Jem's personal account. In *No Country for Old Men*, the audience watches as Sherriff Bell tries to piece together evidence from crime scenes when we have already seen the crime. This narrative form leaves him a step behind both the criminal and the audience, a fact epitomized when he arrives at Llewellyn's trailer to find a still-sweating bottle of milk that Anton had left behind. *No Country* revisits its crime scenes through the sheriff's eyes to reinforce the idea that Bell is struggling against the tide of something he seems powerless to stop or even understand. The criminal is the master of these spaces, the cop is playing catch-up, and the fallibility of the police is on full display. *Insomnia* takes this a step further, having Dormer walk his colleagues through a false reading of the crime scene in order to deflect guilt away from himself. These competing interpretations expose - some more subtly than others - a chink in the armour, a flaw in the veneer of "order" layered over these crime scenes, and a lingering doubt as to whether police are quite up to the task. My analysis reveals that this practice of exposing insecurity by subverting the aesthetics and accustomed spaces of law, order, and security is rippled throughout the data, and this concept is central to much of the discussion below.

Before I elaborate on the notions of reading disorder onscreen and the juxtaposition of insecurity with visible security, however, it is important to note the use and implications of "repeat offender" crime scenes in these films. Recurring crime scenes – that is, crime scenes where more than one incident is set over the course of the film - are actually quite common in the sample. The body-strewn desert scene that serves as a catalyst for the action in *No Country for Old Men* is the setting for three separate incidents, though each incident seems to spiral out of

that first drug deal. The salt marshes in *The Departed* are a favoured body dump for Costello's gang, and Costigan faces down Sullivan for the final time in the same deserted building where his handler was killed. This repetition effectively gives these spaces an association with crime that borders on the inevitable. *Mystic River*, a film that deals heavily with fate and the continuity of crime, is particularly explicit in this respect. Jimmy killed Ray Harris on the banks of the Mystic, a fact he reveals to Dave just before killing him in the same spot, telling him, "I thought I was finished with all this…. killing people and dumping them in the river."[47] Recurring crime scenes thus echo the construction of crime as inevitable observed in the broader analysis. Furthermore, the claustrophobic nature of what is possibly this sample's most potent repeat crime scene – the apartment where Precious is continually subject to abuse at the hands of both her mother and father – reflects an unexpected and symbolically charged sprawl into the domestic in these films, the discussion of which concludes this section.

The Writing on the Wall: Reading Crime (and the Urban) Through Disorder

In order to consider the visual data in this study in a meaningful way, I incorporated the semiotic concept of a "lexis," or a vocabulary of visual symbols (van Leeuwen, 2001: 92), into analysis. While the idea that particular images can be ascribed a popular cultural meaning guided analysis throughout this study – for example, in the discussion of nostalgic imagery in Part One or symbols of innocence in the sections below – this concept is particularly central when considering how signs of disorder are used to construct geographies of crime. Although the aesthetics of crime scenes and settings vary across films and are necessarily shaped by their broader context, the association between signs of disorder and crime in the sample is both prominent and notable in that it relies on the repetition of a very particular set of images. While I

[47] *Mystic River* (2003)

anticipated the prevalence of signs of disorder in the sample based on my initial literature review, my analysis revealed several key points for elaboration, namely that this "lexis of disorder" is connected to a running concern about property, makes reference to the urban in an attempt at realism, and allows the audience to anticipate crime onscreen.

Primarily a bastion of urban representations, disorder is represented in this sample by rusting chain-link fences, patched-up cars, cracked pavement, overgrown lawns, and evidence of general disrepair. Various authors have identified such visible signs of disorder as signals for fear of crime in the public consciousness (Khom, 2009; Pain, 2000; Toet & van Shaik, 2012).[48] Upon observation, what many of these images seem to share is a concern over ownership and property. I found that disorder is often conveyed through a lack of what might be considered "proper" belongings in a space. The crack house that police raid in *The Departed,* for example, lacks real drapes and almost all other furnishings, including a bed frame. Consistent links are made throughout the data between the concept of order and that of possession or property. *Gran Torino* provides perhaps the best example of this when Walt gets Tao to fix up the Hmong properties in the neighbourhood as his penance for trying to steal the film's titular car. Since Walt's fastidious care of his home and car is frequently shown at odds with the overrun lawns and rundown homes of his Hmong neighbours, this act of apparent (if reluctant) benevolence, combined with his efforts to drive out the Hmong gang members, can be interpreted as his attempt to restore order to the neighbourhood. Restoring order, in this case, appears to mean restoring the more "American" norm of consumerism and reinforcing to the Hmong their duty to possess and maintain property.

[48] If any element of analysis most strongly supports Rafter's assertion that crime films form a popular criminology to which elements of academic discourse filter down (2006:61), it is this one: Wilson and Kelling's broken windows thesis (1982) seems thoroughly embedded in the aesthetics of crime in these films.

In coding for signs of disorder, I observed how graffiti is used as an easy and potent touchstone for conveying disorder in the city, one that is commonly built into the backdrop of urban crime (see Figure 15). Hasty-looking tags are scrawled on fences, the outside of buildings, and even interior walls. They colour shady alleyways and serve as a background for groups of loitering young men, yet another "visible incivility" (Pain, 2000; Toet & van Shaik, 2012). More explicitly than most other symbols of disorder, graffiti in these films seems to point to both the violation of property and to crime, and stands as the visible remains of something illicit in the environment. This follows a pattern in popular and legal discourse of connecting graffiti to disorder and social harm rather than to resistance, expression, or contested meaning (Ferrell, 1995; Halsey & Young, 2006). Given that I found graffiti almost exclusively in the sample's city-centered films, it appears to be a reference not just to crime and disorder, but also to the urban. Functioning as such a heavily-loaded symbol, the presence of graffiti allows the viewer to "read" disorder in the space and to locate it in the urban, all at a moment's glance.

As these symbols are deployed throughout and across various urban settings in the sample, a visual typology of the city emerges, constructing it as a space that is uniformly dirty, disordered, and dangerous. This characterization is part of what Schmid calls the "aggressive realism" of urban spaces in crime fiction (2012: 15), which is driven by an understanding that a gritty portrait of life in the city is the most believable setting for crime in the eyes of the audience. In this case, "realism" is an aesthetic quality that need not have any connection to the "real." Rather, this typology of disorder becomes reflected and reinforced in what Ferrell, Hayward and Young refer to as the media's "vast hall of mirrors" (2008; see also Ferrell, 1999). This intertextual mirroring constructs the link between onscreen crime and symbols of disorder - and, by extension, the urban – as natural and even expected. Watching film after film, I learned

to anticipate incidents of crime based purely on the presence of these markers for disorder in a space, and that anticipation suggests an alternate utility for filmmakers in reproducing this particular construction. When the aesthetics of a space mark it as a de-facto danger zone, it builds both suspense and a sense of insecurity into the environment, allowing symbols of disorder to double as signals for fear and excitement.

Figure 15: Using graffiti to set the scene of a crime in *Gran Torino* (2008, top left), *Precious* (2009, top right), and *The Departed* (2005, bottom).

As I have demonstrated, symbols of disorder play off the anticipated "gritty realism" of the city – albeit a realism that refers more to the "reel" than the "real" – to mark a space as

insecure and allow the audience to read crime into it. However, not all geographies of crime in the sample play so neatly to type, and some films rely on subverting the expectation of security in particular spaces to throw the viewer off guard.

The "New Noir": Bringing Crime into the Light

Given the suggestion in the literature that the perceived insecurity of spaces varies depending on the time of day, particularly for women (England & Simon, 2010), and acknowledging the traditional role of contrast and shadow in the film noir genre (Smith, 2012; Palmer, 2007; Pike, 1998), I chose to code for both apparent time of day and the use of light and darkness in the sample films. While the noir image of the "Dark City" was essentially the anticipated setting for crime heading into analysis, and certainly rears its head in many of the urban settings,[49] my analysis also points to a more novel use of light in some films, one that had previously been speculated by geographer Larry Ford. Ford (1994) suggests that harsh light or daylight is increasingly being substituted in crime films for the shadows previously favoured by film noir, to the extent that light in these films appears as threatening. While many incidents in the sample still relegate crime to the night and to dark alleyways, several films depict places bathed in broad daylight to be even less secure.

Insomnia is probably the most notable film of the ten for its use of light. Set in an Alaskan summer with essentially 24-hour daylight, *Insomnia* strips the viewer of any reference point for the passage of time, adding considerably to the film's general air of disease and disorientation. The constant daylight and pursuant lack of sleep increasingly leaves Detective Dormer wandering in a fog, and he tries vainly to block the light out of his hotel room. Light's

[49] As discussed in Part One, the importation of noir imagery into less-expected geographies means that the Dark City is also visible in non-urban spaces.

threatening role in this film reflects Dormer's efforts to catch a killer while keeping his own spiralling lies hidden, but it also serves the neo-noir purpose of inducing vertigo in the viewer. The shady dealings of both cop and killer seem even more disturbing in the light. *Drive*, meanwhile, establishes the domain of its nameless main character as firmly in shadows, and, consequently, fills many of its crime scenes with California sunshine. Driving a getaway car through the streets of Los Angeles at night, the protagonist seems securely in his element; only when forced out into the daylight is he put off balance. Wherever men come to kill him – whether outside a pawn shop, in a motel room, or in a parking lot – they are routinely accompanied by the light (see Figure 16). *The Town* also drags crime into the broad daylight, albeit by virtue of necessity, since the crew's bank and armoured car robberies require a daytime setting. Brightly-lit locations up the stakes and drama of each heist, but they also make crime and criminals in *The Town* seem especially brazen. Considered from the perspective of security, the takeaway message of crime's migration into the sunlight seems to be this: one should not *only* be afraid of the dark.

Figure 16: The new noir - *Drive*'s (2011) final showdown between Bernie and the driver uses bright light to convey a threat.

Contrasting imagery has long been used in crime films to induce a feeling of vertigo or disorientation in the viewer (Smith, 2011: 62). The depiction of daylight as threatening is particularly relevant to this study, however, because it deepens the sense of insecurity in these films by locating crime in an aesthetic context generally associated with security. This finding is echoed and amplified when we consider the role of security measures in constructing geographies of crime.

The Insecurity of Security

Diken and Laustsen (2002) note that visible security measures in "real" spaces signal terror even as they purport to keep us safe, and I noted a similar use of these measures in "reel" spaces. As this study focuses specifically on the spaces where crime occurs in films, security measures present in these onscreen spaces appear inadequate and further a portrait of insecurity, rather than security. Based on Grusin's (2004) and De Goede's (2008) suggestion that depictions of faltering security measures are a form of "disaster rehearsal," I examined how security measures in these films were used to characterize geographies of crime with an eye towards how their depiction imagines society's weaknesses. I coded for both existing and emergent security measures in the sample films, and found that both forms contribute to the construction of insecurity in geographies of crime. Whether they are private safety precautions or the trappings of police, law, and order, setting crime against a backdrop of overt security measures appears to question the efficacy of these defences even as it argues for their necessity.

I observed a particularly overt juxtaposition of crime with visible security in the treatment of existing security measures, or measures that are part of the environment before the crime. For example, the heist at the beginning of *Drive* takes place at a facility rimmed by

daunting wrought iron and barbed wire fencing (see Figure 17) and equipped with a working alarm system. Despite the imposing locale and visible precautions, the heist is successful. Similarly, Doug's crew targets banks and armoured cars in *The Town* that are variously equipped with alarms, guards, security tapes, and time-locked safes, all of which the robbers are able to circumvent. Intriguingly, offenders in these films use surveillance – a practice more readily associated with security – to predict and master these locations. However, this vulnerability in existing security measures is by no means limited to the heist trope; *No Country for Old Men*'s Anton blows out door locks with his cattle gun, while other characters in *Insomnia*, *Drive,* and *The Town* either casually slip locks or break down doors to cars, homes, and motel rooms. The archetypal image of the rattling door knob appears as well, making both the protagonist and the audience acutely aware that nothing more stands between "us" and "them" than a flimsy lock.

In general, I found that the films in consideration portray emergent security measures - representations of security that come to be in the environment - as less vulnerable than existing measures. The arrival of police on a scene often appears to successfully disrupt the commission of a crime. Note, for example, what Doug says before The Town's opening bank heist: "We're fucked if we see a helicopter; we're fucked if we see SWAT."[50] The biggest apparent difference is that emergent security measures are dynamic rather than static elements of the space, and so they are harder for would-be perpetrators to anticipate and circumvent. To some extent, however, this emergent quality also demonstrates the fundamentally reactive role of police; their arrival is in response to a threat which they are either unable to anticipate or to prevent. In other words, while emergent security measures create problems for criminals in these films, that same

[50] *The Town* (2009)

emergent quality reinforces the essential insecurity of space where the most effective security measure is only reactive, rather than preventative.

Figure 17 - Illusions of security. Top left: Anton attacks a police officer from behind in No Country for Old Men. Bottom left: Thieves break through heavy security in Drive. Right panel: An outnumbered policeman looks the other way in The Town.

Even beyond this reactive characterization, emergent security measures are depicted as far from invulnerable in these films. Perpetrators frequently evade police after a sufficient amount of drama has ensued, with both *Drive* and *The Town* giving considerable screen time to police chases where their antihero criminals emerge victorious. Along with demonstrated knowledge of the space gained through surveillance, these chases seem to reiterate that it is the criminal, rather than the policeman, who is master of his environment.[51] Other films show offenders exploiting the symbolic authority of the police, as when Doug and Jem don police

[51] This is particularly true of familiar places to the offender, a trend in these films that will be dealt with in greater detail later on.

uniforms to break into Fenway Park for *The Town*'s last big heist before using the same uniforms to slip away again. Even more striking is the scene from *No Country for Old Men* in which Anton uses a stolen police cruiser to pull over another driver on a deserted highway. Assuming that Anton is a police officer and trusting in his authority, the man does as he is told, standing still by the roadside while Anton presses the cattle gun to his head and kills him. In each of these scenarios, the façade of security in the space actually serves to bolster a portrait of broader insecurity.

What binds together the treatment of existing and emergent security measures in these films is the illusion of control being shattered by crime, a theme epitomized in one of *No Country for Old Men*'s opening scenes. Set in a desert police outpost, the camera is focused on the lone officer in the foreground as he assures his superiors over the phone that he has "everything under control."[52] The audience watches as Anton slips his cuffs beneath his feet, walks calmly up behind the station desk, and strangles the officer with his own restraints (see Figure 17). *No Country* also shows Anton violating the presumed sacrosanctity of crime scenes. As I discussed previously, crime scenes in these films are redefined as spaces under the explicit domain of the law, with barricades and crime scene tape marking them as *ostensibly* more secure than they were before. In spite of this, *No Country*'s unpredictable villain waltzes back into multiple crime scenes throughout the film. This intrusion exposes vulnerability in a space that police have claimed for their own, and the lack of control that it reveals leads a colleague of Bell's to wonder, "How do you defend against it?" [53] Dealing with a force that is simultaneously inevitable and unpredictable, the police can provide little more than the appearance of control, a veneer of security that these films take care to strip away.

[52] *No Country for Old Men* (2007)
[53] *No Country for Old Men* (2007)

Where they form part of a geography of crime, visible security measures embody an intriguing dual dynamic: they seem to justify their own existence while also proving their own inefficacy. In other words, these measures remind us that crime exists and that security is necessary while also implying that more security is needed, and that crime exceeds the capacity of the police to control. This portrait is reminiscent of Garland's "strategies of responsibilization" in that it shifts responsibility for crime control away from the state by suggesting that the problem of crime is simply too widespread to be managed by any one entity (1996: 451-453). It also speaks to Philips and Strobl's assertion that portraying police as ineffective or outmatched in crime stories makes space for the hero (2006: 318). I will connect and expand on these two concepts in my discussion of masculinity and defensive home ownership in Part Three. For now, it is important to note how these films transform security measures from symbols of safety into representations of insecurity, playing against expectation in a way that is echoed by crime's sprawl into the familiar.

Familiar Places and the Insecurity of the Everyday

Given that media representations of crime tend to settle on the street level and in public spaces (Duwe, 2000; Cheliotis, 2010), the prevalence of the home and other familiar places that I observed in this study was unexpected. Of course, the "mean streets" are still hotspots for crime in these films,[54] but familiar and intimate spaces also loom surprisingly large, albeit in two distinct ways. For perpetrators, familiar spaces are generally a source of power and refuge. For victims, on the other hand, crime's entry into the familiar represents intense vulnerability. Both versions trade on the idea of the familiar, particularly the home, as a safe haven, but the latter

[54] See Part 1, and the discussion of disorder above.

scenario uses the imagery of idealized domesticity and innocence to amplify the horror of crime by showing it as "out of place."

While police in these films struggle to impose and maintain control over the environment, the offender is generally the master of his or her domain. Spaces owned or controlled by perpetrators often take on the quality of a "safe haven" for them, places where they can commit crime with relative impunity. In *Mystic River*, Jimmy enters the Black Emerald Bar where the Savage brothers have Dave cornered and instantly dominates the space. He tells the other men he likes the bar because "nobody bothers you here."[55] *The Departed*'s Jack Costello can threaten people in his home or bar with nonchalance, since he controls both the access to and the hired muscle in these spaces. Mary exerts a similar control over her apartment in *Precious*, refusing to let Precious' school principal into the apartment and subjecting her daughter to further abuse for the transgression. The nameless main character in *Drive* appears at ease behind the wheel, secure in his extensive knowledge of LA's streetscape even as he is trailed by police cars and helicopters. Although the familiar is a "safe haven" of sorts in these representations, it is certainly not a refuge from crime.

When characters are *victimized* in familiar spaces, however, these spaces shed any pretense of security. Although victimization already implies insecurity, setting it in a place familiar to the victim suggests a particular defencelessness about his or her everyday life. The beginning of *Collateral* shows Max cleaning out his cab and making it into a space of order and serenity, even slipping a photo of an island paradise behind the visor. When Vincent forcibly takes over the cab, he strips Max of control in his safe space and leaves him feeling powerless,

[55] This is yet another example of implied social isolation in an urban setting (see Part One).

and Max spends the rest of the film struggling to regain that control.[56] Similarly, when Vincent breaks into Annie's office building late at night, he reduces a powerful Justice Department prosecutor to crawling around on her knees in her own workplace.[57] When, near the end of *No Country for Old Men*, Carla Jean returns to her mother's house to find Anton waiting in her bedroom, she appears more resigned than surprised, as though she had known all along that no childhood home could save her from him.[58] She does not run because she has nowhere left to run; crime's entry into her familiar world serves to reinforce its inevitability. For Precious, meanwhile, her familiar world is already a space of victimization.[59]

The film *Precious* is unique in my sample in that it combines these two spatial relationships – familiarity to the offender and familiarity to the victim – into one claustrophobic setting for crime. Home, for Precious, is anything but a safe haven. Her mother assaults her when she is washing dishes, kicks her head while she is giving birth on the kitchen floor, slams her into the apartment walls; her father rapes her in her own bed. The apartment is constructed as a highly claustrophobic space, both through the film's plot and via its aesthetics. With heavy drapes often shutting out the daylight, the space is dimly lit and cast in shades of orange and red, and takes on an insular, womblike quality that emphasizes how Precious is trapped in her mother's world. Though Mary has the blinds thrown open for a visiting welfare agent, the momentary light only furthers a pretense of normalcy and familial love intended to keep her abuse of Precious hidden. A moment of peaceful tenderness later in the film, in which Mary cuddles Precious' newborn baby while the apartment is bathed in sunlight, quickly turns violent,

[56] He does so eventually, but only by destroying the cab and smashing his comfort zone to bits.
[57] *Collateral* (2004)
[58] *No Country* explores the idea of crime as fated or inevitable throughout, balancing the lives of Anton's victims on the flip of a coin.
[59] *Precious* (2009)

and otherwise innocuous household items suddenly become weapons. Flashes of the domestic ideal in *Precious* - much like her fantasies of a glamorous life - serve to amplify the tension in the apartment, acting as a brief and ultimately false respite from the grim reality of Precious' home life. For Precious, the home is not a sanctuary, but a space of violence and danger, a place from which she must escape.

While *Precious* draws on flashes of domesticity to emphasize the far-from-idyllic quality of life in the apartment, other films in the sample rely on the concept of the home as a safe haven in order to portray crime as "out of place." Images of idealized domesticity make crime feel particularly foreign to the environment, likely because of a longstanding association in cinema – and the media at large - between crime and images of the street (Smith, 2011: 3; see also Cheliotis, 2010; Duwe, 2000; Pain, 1991). When automatic gunfire disrupts a night of Walt watching television with his dog,[60] or when Carla Jean finds a serial killer amongst the chintz and lace of her childhood home, [61] the intrusive quality of crime is magnified. The middle-class domestic environment easily positions occupants of these spaces as ideal victims with whom the audience can sympathize (Welsh, Fleming & Dowler, 2011), and, as I will discuss in Part Three, invasions of the domestic are often used to justify the drastic actions of these films' heroes and antiheroes. While not all the films in the sample present domesticity as a contrast to crime, those that do are trading on a utopian concept of crime as fundamentally foreign to the home (Pain, 1991). Interestingly enough, by positioning the home as a sanctuary threatened by crime, these films effectively strip the domestic of the very sense of security that they are trading on.

[60] *Gran Torino* (2008)
[61] *No Country for Old Men* (2007)

The inviolability or "sacredness" of the home space in these depictions both reflects and is reflected in the way that these films employ images of innocence. As anticipated, films in my sample commonly use images of innocence - particularly children and symbols of childhood - to exacerbate the horror of the crime for the audience. This follows the well-observed pattern in other media of using children to exemplify the ideal victim struck down by the evil perpetrator (Conrad, 1999; Machado & Santos, 2009; Wardle, 2007). Stuffed animals on the bed where Precious is raped by her father, for example, are emotionally-charged reminders of lost innocence and the gravity of the crime.[62] In *The Town*, a boy on the street stands aghast as Doug's crew drives by him, decked out as nuns and carrying machine guns (see Figure 18). Just as one of the fugitives is about to shoot a little girl in the opening scenes of *A History of Violence*, the shot cuts to another little girl at home in bed, screaming about monsters (see Figure 18). Even where children are absent from the screen, the trappings of childhood take their place as standard-bearers of innocence. In *The Departed*, for example, an ill-fated father throws one of his child's toys in desperation at the gangsters who come to kill him (see Figure 18). This juxtaposition of morally-weighted symbols -"evil" versus "innocent"- is extensive in the data, and reflects an ongoing tendency in the media towards the moral simplification of crime scenarios for public consumption (Altheide, 1997; Cheliotis, 2010; Duwe, 2000; Katz, 1987).

[62] *Precious* (2009)

Figure 18 - Children and childhood things as contrasting markers of innocence: *A History of Violence* (2006, top panel), *The Departed* (2005, bottom left), and *The Town* (2010, bottom right panel).

It is useful to consider how these films portray the home as a threatened sanctuary in light of the moral simplification that both I and many others have noted. Many of the films in the sample feature protagonists on the wrong side of the law, what Rafter calls "bad-good-guys" or "criminal heroes" (2006: 199). The home functions as a useful geography of crime, therefore, in that it allows these films to navigate around the moral grey area of the antihero. The potential violation of the home and the family is meant to inspire sympathy for the protagonist (Welsh, Fleming & Dowler, 2011), to mark out a line that should not be crossed, and provide a means of distinguishing criminals from villains. As I discuss shortly, the defense of the home is also central to the characterization of masculinity and the gendering of space in these films. Although it inspires a type of defensive "forting up" (see Part 3), crime's sprawl into the familiar speaks to

the recurring theme of the inevitability of crime in these films by demonstrating the lack of any real safe haven.

Part Three: Gendered Space and the Body in Crime Films

I chose to include considerations of gender in this study based on two key points raised by the existing literature: first, that the construction of space – whether in reality or on film - is gendered (England & Simon, 2010; Fischer, 2010; Low, 2006; Miller, 2007; Pain, 1991), and, second, that concerns about crime construct particular spaces as "no-go zones" or "zones of exclusion" for women (England & Simon, 2010; Pain, 2009; Koskela & Pain, 2000; Miller, 2007; Young, 1999). Taken together, these veins of literature positioned gender as an important point of inquiry into geographies of crime in film, and, indeed, some of this study's most intriguing findings emerged from this consideration. While the relationship between men and space in these films tends to be defined by territoriality – a connection that is manifested in the man-of-action hero archetype - women in these films largely function as domestic and sexual scenery, fading into the background. Considering how the female body is used as scenery in these films also opened up a thoroughly unexpected area for inquiry: the concept of the body as a geography of crime.

While I coded for gender in this study according to a binary male-female definition, it would be impossible to so neatly divide the gendered meanings of spaces in these films. This is not to say that gendered interactions with space failed to differ between men and women; on the contrary, the difference is marked. Rather, the issue lies with how closely the female identity is tied to the male identity in space. Although much of the literature consulted prior to analysis concerned the perceived insecurity of spaces for women, considering only how spaces are

gendered as female constructs men's relationship with space as somehow natural (Carter, 2003: 370; Massey, 1992: 189). Since, as I demonstrate below, the female gendering of space in the sample is largely pursuant to the male version, I begin by considering the place of men. However, the reader will note that my discussion of women as domestic and sexual territory necessarily bleeds into the discussion of male territoriality, and vice versa.

Men of Action: Territoriality, Masculinity, and Responsibilization

The relationship between men and their environment in these films is best summed up as one of territoriality. On a broader level, this relationship takes the form of turf wars between hyper-masculine groups. Gang disputes over boundary lines add conflict to *The Departed* and *Gran Torino,* while policemen scrap over the jurisdiction of crime scenes in *Mystic River* and *Collateral*. Territoriality is most evident in the sample, however, when a man's home is threatened. This kind of threat provides male characters with the opportunity to become what Holt & Thompson call "men-of-action," to reassert their masculinity by simultaneously fulfilling the culturally-prized, normative male roles of both breadwinner and rebel (2004: 428). In order to illustrate how territoriality links gender to geographies of crime, I begin by exploring how threats to property serve as a catalyst for action and then extend this discussion to consider how women come to embody the home and its vulnerability throughout the sample. Drawing from issues first raised in my discussion of visible security measures in Part Two, I then situate the man-of-action hero archetype in relation to the broader shift towards responsibilization and the privatization of security.

Threats to a man's home and, by extension, his family, provide both dramatic tension and a territorial motivation to act for many of the male characters in these films. The phrase "a

man's home" is used here deliberately, as the defense of the home became a primary means through which protagonists assert masculinity in the sample. Threats to the home can be posed primarily to the man's physical property, as is the case in *Gran Torino*. Walt wards Tao off from stealing his car and faces down the Hmong gangsters on his doorstep with a loaded shotgun, demanding, somewhat iconically, that they get off his lawn (see Figure 19). As *Gran Torino* progresses, it ties both order and masculinity explicitly to the care of property, with Walt endeavouring to "man [Tao] up a little bit"[63] as he sets him to work cleaning up the neighbourhood. Even *Gran Torino,* however, relies on the victimization of a woman – in this case, Tao's sister Sue – to spur on the final confrontation between Walt and the Hmong gang members.

While antagonists do threaten the physical space of a man's home in these films, more often – and to greater effect – they also threaten the people who embody this space: the man's family, and particularly his wife or girlfriend. Tom finally acknowledges his violent past and returns to Philadelphia only after a confrontation with the mobsters spills onto his front lawn and endangers his wife and children (see Figure 17).[64] The Florist uses veiled threats against Doug's "pretty new girlfriend" to force him into the final heist in *The Town*, even dropping off a condolence wreath at Claire's apartment to send the latter man a message. Costello threatens to have Madolyn raped in order to keep Detective Sullivan in line.[65] Even after escaping the cab, Max returns to confront Vincent in order to save Annie,[66] while the protagonist in *Drive* fatefully agrees to hand over the heist money in exchange for Irene's safety. Time and again, the antagonists in these films come after men by threatening their women, effectively redefining

[63] *Gran Torino* (2008)
[64] *A History of Violence (*2006)
[65] *The Departed* (2005)
[66] *Collateral* (2004)

women as property that men need to defend. The vulnerability of the home is therefore coded female, and this perceived weakness forces the man to reassert his dominance over that space through a violent display of hegemonic masculinity.

Figure 19: Men marking territory - Walt threatens gang members on his property in Gran Torino (2008, left), while Tom must safeguard his wife and home in A History of Violence (2006, right).

As I touched on in the discussion of domesticity in Part 2, when crime threatens a protagonist's home and family, any retribution on his part is reframed as sympathetic (Welsh, Fleming & Dowler, 2011), and any extreme measures he takes are justified under the veil of protecting his own. Beyond a play for audience sympathy, however, the defense of the home allows male characters to act out a particularly glorified form of masculinity through what Holt and Thompson call the "man-of-action" archetype (2004: 428). As when the Driver agrees to a rigged pawn shop robbery in order to keep Benicio and Irene safe,[67] as when Walt goes solo to confront the Hmong gangsters who raped Sue,[68] as when Tom returns to Philadelphia to ensure the safety of his family,[69] the man of action takes matters of security into his own hands. In

[67] *Drive* (2011)
[68] *Gran Torino* (2008)
[69] *A History of Violence (*2006)

assuming the duty to protect his loved ones, the man of action fulfills the role of breadwinner, but his disregard for the law in the process also marks him out as a rebel. Both of these roles - the breadwinner and the rebel - are socially-prized incarnations of traditional masculinity (Holt & Thompson, 2004: 428), and active defense of the home enables characters to encompass both aspects in one fell swoop.

The man of action's characteristic unwillingness to turn to police or the law for protection takes on another dimension if we consider how security measures and the police are painted as ineffective throughout these films. As I discussed in Part 2, the aesthetics of security – barbed wire, fences, police presence – are continuously contrasted with crime and almost inevitably fail to contain it. When viewed alongside the vulnerability of the home, the inability of police – and, more generally, the law – to control crime seems to reinforce the need for defensive home ownership and the privatization of security (Atkinson & Blandy, 2007: 455), or what Dupuis and Thorns (2008) call "forting up." This construction of widespread crime and insecurity thus responsibilizes the individual – in this case, the man – for the protection of property and family, and for restoring the home to the status of a safe haven. Considering gender in geographies of crime allows us to see how the diffusion of responsibility for crime control and security becomes reframed as an issue of masculinity, wherein "real men" take care of their own.

Sexing up the Scenery: Examining the Backgrounding of Women

In contradistinction to the man-of-action and his hypermasculine defense of territory, I found that women in these films were generally reduced to passive personifications of domesticity, vulnerability, and sexuality. Furthermore, the vulnerability of women in these films is not confined to dark and isolated "no-go zones" within the city; insecurity follows women

through sunlit streets, into their workplaces, into their homes, and into their beds. I will discuss the contrast between my findings and the existing literature below, and suggest that the cultural weight of these zones of exclusion for women may be reflected even in their absence. I will also discuss how geographies of crime are sexualized when they involve women, and use the concept of the female body as erotic crime scenery to further illustrate the backgrounding of women in these films.

While the literature suggested that women would be shown as most vulnerable at night and in dark public spaces (England & Simon, 2010; Koskela & Pain, 2000), women rarely even venture into these spaces in the sample. Two women are victimized in their workplaces after dark,[70] and one woman describes being harassed in the ghetto at night (and frightened out of returning).[71] The street does emerge as space of insecurity for women, as groups of loitering young men in both *Precious* and *Gran Torino* sexually harass young women, but both incidents occur in broad daylight. Women are depicted as vulnerable day and night, in their workplaces, and, as we have seen, in the home, as well as on the street. In short, the map of insecurity laid out for women is not as spatially bounded in the sample as the literature suggested it would be. However, one should not discount the cultural potency of the dark city street as a no-go zone for women; it is possible that the relative absence of women from these onscreen spaces suggests that their mere presence may have been considered either unrealistic or unsympathetic.

[70] *Collateral* (2003) and *A History of Violence* (2006)
[71] *The Town* (2010)

Figure 60: Top - Edie as a symbol of the vulnerable domestic in *A History of Violence* (2006), Bottom - Madolyn as sexual territory in *The Departed* (2005).

While the widespread insecurity of space for women mimics the overall depiction of crime in these films, this insecurity is amplified by the fact that women in this sample are by-and-large reduced to passive victims.[72] My analysis reveals how women in these films come to symbolize the vulnerable domestic, reconstructing violence against them as the violation of a man's home life. Take, for example, the way that Edie Stall becomes the representative of the threatened home in *A History of Violence* (see Figure 20), or how Madolyn is visibly reduced to

[72] *Precious* provides something of a counterpoint to the portrait of women as passive victims or crime scenery; after all, much of the onscreen crime in this film is committed by either Mary or Precious, and both characters are firmly in the foreground of the narrative. However, one would be hard-pressed to view either woman's situation as especially empowered in that film, at least until Precious manages to escape from her violent home life.

the background while Costello threatens to punish Sullivan by having her raped[73] (see Figure 20). While other authors have noted this melding of the woman and the domestic in crime films (Tzanelli, Yar, & O'Brien, 2005: 112), and in the broader construction of sex roles in the media (Carter, 2003), approaching the issue from a spatial point of view emphasizes the extent to which these gender normative portraits reduce women to property or territory. Since the most potent threats against men in these films revolve around the assault and rape of women,[74] the violation of the female body is also in some ways reconstituted as a violation of male sexual territory.

I also observed a distinct trend in these films towards sexualizing the scenarios in which women are victimized, echoing the filmic association between sex and violence observed elsewhere in the literature (Pinedo, 1997; Tait, 2006: 20). *The Departed*, for example, flashes back to an eroticized depiction of French strangling his wife in a silk-draped bedroom, while Ryan Gosling's character in *Drive* pins a woman by her neck to a motel bed and straddles her, threatening to beat her if she fails to give him the information he wants (see Figure 20). Beds and bedrooms are recurring spaces of vulnerability for women, although, as in the scene where Carla Jean finds Anton in her bedroom, these spaces occasionally seem meant to embody intimate danger, rather than sexuality. In other cases, women *are* what is sexual about the location. *Drive* actually uses women as a backdrop for crime in one scene, an erotic tableau in which topless dancers pose statue-still and watch the Driver threaten to hammer a bullet into their boss' brain. The camera also lingers along Katy Markum's dead body in *Mystic River*, her corpse a tragic but still-beautiful part of the crime scene. Of course, the frequent convergence of sex and violence has been well-observed in both crime and horror fiction, a form of entertainment dubbed the "carnographic spectacle" (Pinedo, 1997; Tait, 2006: 20). When

[73] The Departed (2005).
[74] See the corresponding discussion of masculinity for further examples.

considered through a spatial lense, however, and alongside women's depiction as symbols of the home and damsels in distress, this treatment reinforces a portrait of women as passive elements and even erotic scenery in what is ultimately a man's environment.

Figure 21: The bedroom as a space of violence and domination over women in *The Departed* (2005, top) and *Drive* (2010, bottom).

If geographies of crime provide a stage for men of action to emerge, they tend to render women as little more than part of the backdrop. Women in these spaces are frequently reduced to passive, sexualized scenery, and to representatives of domesticity and insecurity against which

male protagonists can reaffirm their power and masculinity. The overall depiction of women in these films as part of the sexual or domestic territory of men – and, simultaneously, of men as primal and territorial beings in relation to space – seems to normalize archaic gender roles by building them into the background.

The Body as Geography

Having addressed some of the gendered qualities of spaces where crime occurs, I now narrow my discussion once more to consider the body and its role as a geography of crime in film. I came to conceptualize the body as a geography of crime over the course of data analysis by noting how crime was traced over women's bodies, allowing them to be read in a similar manner to crime scenes. Correspondingly, the analysis below is divided between discussions of the body *in* a crime scene and the body *as* a crime scene. Situating this concept within existing literature on autoptic vision and the rise of the corpse in crime fiction, I propose that the body serves as both a gendered geography of crime and a universally-relatable crime scene.

The body in *a crime scene*

Corpses are among the strongest signals for disorder the sample films; dead bodies usually signify that a crime has occurred in a space and factor into the legibility of the crime scene for both police officers and the audience. A dead body instantly signals to the viewer that something is out of place, and the camera may either pan past the body as part of a wider crime scene or examine it in detail, flashing to bits of gore and fragmenting the body into legal evidence (Pierson, 2010). When they do not belong to main characters, these bodies seem less like people and more like symbolic markers of violence on the geography. Victims' dead bodies

are continuously shown facedown or sheathed in body bags, thereby obscuring, depersonalizing, and converting them into storytelling objects (see Figure 19). They become, effectively, part of the scenery. Some movies in the sample also use photographs of bodies in situ as a means of summing up the past offences of perpetrators. Police in *The Departed* and *The Town* use slide shows of often anonymous bodies as they were found to demonstrate the violent pasts of Costello's gang and the Townie crews, respectively. Using photographs of corpses as signifiers for crime adds another level of abstraction that separates these bodies from the world of the living. Corpses in this context become what Pierson (2010) calls "evidential bodies," little more than objects of legal and forensic knowledge.

Figure 22: Depersonalizing the body through crime scene photographs in *The Town* (2010).

Though I previously discussed backgrounding and passivity in onscreen space with regards to depictions of women, both male and female bodies are relegated to the status of crime scenery in these films. However, Katie Markum's body receives a somewhat different treatment in *Mystic River*. When the policemen eventually find Katie in the park, the camera traces the length of her body, stark white against the black earth, before settling and lingering on her face (see Figure 23). While this camera trick holds the moment when the viewer can identify the body as Katie at bay, the audience is given time to appreciate the tragedy of a beautiful young white woman falling victim to crime. Katie represents both an aesthetic and a constructed moral

ideal – the ideal victim (Tait, 2006: 56) – and the camera traces violence over her body with a lingering gaze. Although Katie's body is situated within a wider geography of crime, the treatment of her corpse as almost a landscape unto itself is similar to representations of the body *as* a crime scene.

Figure 22- Tracing crime over the bodies of women in *Mystic River* (2005, top panel) and *Gran Torino* (2008, bottom panel).

The body as *a crime scene*

The relevance of the aesthetic corpse for my study becomes more evident when these bodies are examined outside of - and, functionally, instead of - the crime scene in a film. While bodies set within broader crime scenes are reduced to tragic scenery, bodies removed from this context but still bearing the marks of crime become their own geographies of violence. The camera traces crime over the bodies of these women, almost like a tour that takes in limbs and contours and bruises and blood. In much the same way that signs of disorder make crime scenes legible for police officers and audiences (see Part Two), the battered body of the victim serves as

a map to the crime that has been inflicted upon it. *Insomnia* provides its viewer with a key to the map that is Kay Connell's corpse, attaching flashbacks of her murder – filmed so as to obscure anything but her terrified face – to the various marks and bruises the camera traces on her body. *Gran Torino*, however, provides no such interpretation, leaving only Sue's disfigured face and the blood running between her legs for us to surmise how she has been beaten and raped by the Hmong gang members (see Figure 20).

It is worth noting that both victims specifically portrayed in this manner are women; it is also worth noting that both are young women who fit a thin, fair-skinned model of beauty. Precious is subject to repeated abuse, both seen and unseen, but the camera does not follow that violence over her heavy body. Tait notes in her analysis of autoptic vision in CSI that "panning and tracking shots which evaluate the body are largely reserved for slender, young female corpses," (2006: 52) and that the "whitening" of the corpse provides both an ideal victim and an ideal canvas for gore (56). This concept of the aesthetic corpse is echoed by Foltyn (2008), who again notes the merging of sex and death in this type of imagery. In the sample at hand, the camera may snap to bloodied parts of a man's corpse, but it never really traces the length of any man. The gaze inflicted on the male corpse in these films is dehumanizing, but it does not appear particularly sexual or aesthetic. This hints that only certain bodies are deemed worthy of this attentive gaze, and lends some weight to Mulvey's suggestion that the cinematic gaze is traditionally a heteronormative male one (1975).[75] Beyond that, it positions the body as a gendered geography of crime.

[75] While the male heteronormative gaze seems prevalent in the current sample, it is worth noting that analyses of other data sets have exposed eroticization of the male form and raised criticisms about Mulvey's position (Pierson, 2010).

In considering these bodies as geographies of crime, I noted many parallels to conventional crime scenes. Order – here represented by beauty – is disrupted, marred or tainted by crime. Just as the conventional crime scene becomes a source of legal or forensic knowledge, so, too, does the body. However, the body as a geography also expands on the utility of the crime scene. Tracing crime along the body fulfills the expositional role of the crime scene, but does so in a way that draws on deeply engrained fears about death. Furthermore, building off Pierson's understanding of abjection, which essentially proposes that the corpse is used onscreen to feed off of audience fears (and fascinations) about mortality and the fragility of the human body (2010: 193, drawing from Kristeva, 1982), I propose that these bodies serve as affective geographies of crime. By "affective," I mean that this practice establishes a connection between the body of the victim and the body of the viewer (see Young, 2010: 85). While conventional crime scenes in these films appear to have emotional resonance largely for the fictional victim and perpetrator, the body as a geography of crime relies on the shared experience of human fragility to create a universally relatable crime scene. Treating the corpse as a crime scene allows for a reading that is also personal to the viewer, in so much as the human body is one geography of crime from which there is definitively no escape.

Concluding Thoughts

In the analysis above, I have traced crime's sprawl within and across a wide array of geographies in the sample films. Still prominent is the media's historic association between crime and the city, but these films also transgress the boundaries of that association and depict crime creeping into unexpected areas. Beyond the anticipated disorderly streets and dark alleyways, I found crime built into the sweeping landscape of the rural, set against the seeming

contrast of broad daylight and visible security, and positioned either at the threshold or deep within the boundaries of home. I have connected the spatial sprawl of crime in my sample to concerns about the uncertainty of modern life and to the construction of crime as inevitable, a portrayal that likely both contributes to and is furthered by the lack of safe havens in these films. I have also noted the gendering of geographies of crime in the sample, and the extent to which they construct men as actively territorial while relegating women to the background. Furthermore, in examining this process of backgrounding, I observed how these films use the body, and particularly the female body, as a geography of crime all its own.

It is perhaps a stretch to say that crime is, like *No Country*'s Anton Chigurh, completely 'placeless' in these films – in many cases the association between crime and urbanity is still on full display – but it is an avid traveller. Portraying the modern world as a layered collection of geographies in which crime appears certain and security very much uncertain, from the alienating urban to the rural wasteland, the city street to the suburban bedroom, and down to the fragile human body, these films construct a sprawling map of insecurity. Taken from this perspective, crime in these films seems less a question of "where?" than a question of "when?"

Conclusion

I began this thesis with the assertion that the spaces where crime occurs in films are not neutral; they are layered with maps of meaning that we construct somewhere between the imagined and the lived. Given that, in a world of spiralling mediation where "the street scripts the screen and the street scripts the street" (Hayward & Young, 2004: 259), popular cultural representations both shape and reflect our understandings of crime and space, a study examining where crime occurs in films was warranted but previously unrealized in the criminological literature. In this study, I have addressed this gap in the literature and sketched out part of the map of meaning we construct around crime and space by examining how geographies of crime are characterized in a sample of popular films. Below, I summarize my findings and contextualize this study in terms of its implications for future research.

In keeping with the literature's portrait of the Dark City and its dangerous streets, I observed the twinning of crime and urbanity in the films in my sample. My findings regarding this association between crime and the city can be organized around two central themes: isolation; and the dangerous other. Some of the sample films connect crime to the apparently alienating city, while some instead geographically "other" the criminal, locating the source of crime in criminogenic neighbourhoods which they set aside from the city at large. Rural films in this sample alternate between depicting crime as imported by urban outsiders - effectively rolling concerns about the dangerous city and the "other" into one - and portraying both urban and rural spaces as variations on the wasteland. Notably, the sample films associate crime with social fragmentation and isolation on the one hand and actively set the criminal apart on the other.

Moving down in scale to the scene of the crime, I have described how these films invite audiences to read insecurity into particular spaces, drawing a parallel to the detective who traces signs of disorder across a crime scene. At the same time, I have suggested that these films commonly play against geographic type, subverting the imagery of "safe havens" – such as broad daylight, overt security measures, and idealized domesticity– to disorient the viewer and signal the sprawl of insecurity into everyday life. Crime's sprawl into the familiar and domestic in these films was especially unexpected, and this finding, in particular, stresses the value of taking a qualitative approach to the study of filmic geographies of crime. The home is by no means the most prevalent setting for crime in this sample, but threats to idealized domesticity and incidents within the home are heavily weighted, often serving as a catalyst for action in these films. Combined with the demonstrated ineffectuality of security measures in these films, the sprawl of crime into the domestic appears to play into the broader responsibilization of individuals for their own security.

Tied into the defense of the home and the vulnerability of the domestic is my consideration of gendered space in the sample. Women in these films appeared largely as passive embodiments of the threatened domestic, in contradistinction to which male characters emerged as territorial "men of action." Considering how geographies of crime are gendered in these films allowed me to expose these spatially-grounded depictions of the active, territorial male and the passive, vulnerable (and often sexualized) female. My findings therefore suggest that crime films may normalize traditional gender roles and constructions of gendered insecurity by building them into the background. Furthermore, I have built on this observed backgrounding of women to conceptualize the body – and particularly the female body - as a distinct geography of crime, an affective and universally-relatable crime scene.

The general portrait of the spaces where crime occurs that emerged through this research is one of sprawling insecurity. Crime in the sample films at once lingered in expected geographies – in shadowed back alleys and disordered city streets – and crept into unexpected places, tearing down safe havens as it went. This widespread insecurity appears to reflect concerns about the uncertainty of modern life, namely the permeable spaces and identities of modernity. The extent to which my findings both reinforce and challenge the existing literature points to the importance of considering geographies of crime in films, not instead of but certainly alongside the portraits in news reports and other media, and the experiences of everyday life.

In the context of current and future research, this study can be understood as both a meeting place and a point of departure. One of the primary strengths of the cultural criminological orientation which has guided my research is its willingness to stretch disciplinary boundaries and incorporate perspectives from outside the purview of traditional criminology. By approaching the construction of crime on film from the novel angle of space, and incorporating insights from a variety of other disciplines in order to do so, I have attempted to answer cultural criminology's call to "expand and enliven" the discipline of criminology (Ferrell & Sanders, 1995). Furthermore, the study of "reel" geographies of crime is an ideal meeting place through which to continue this desired expansion. Cultural criminologist have begun to explore the criminological value of film - and, increasingly, of space – while cultural geography has also turned to the spatial analysis of film in recent years. This positions the study of filmic geographies of crime at the crux of an emerging array of interdisciplinary knowledge. As cultural criminology and its counterpoints in the cultural turn increasingly look to film and constructions of space to conceptualise our world, new research in this field can both draw from

and contribute to this growing dialogue. The study of the geographies of crime in films is therefore a space of great academic potential.

As an exploratory study, my examination of the geographies of crime in films is fundamentally a starting point. Given the small sample of ten films and the broad path of inquiry that I have taken, this study is far from exhaustive. However, it has opened a new line of criminological inquiry and provided findings that alternately support, question, and extend the existing literature. Future research may choose to expand the scope of study by looking at a wider variety of films, to delve more deeply into the geography of individual films, or to examine how particular cultural meanings concerning crime are developed in film geographies. Whether future researchers chooses to develop the themes I have outlined above or chart new territory, I would argue that the most important concern for further research on this topic is that it occurs; there is still much to be explored.

If, for a moment, we envision the role of a researcher as a cartographer, I have here sketched out an interpretive map to help orient future researchers as to how geographies of crime are constructed in popular films. It will be the task of those future researchers to add further detail, to expand or rework the boundaries of this map, or to discard it wholesale and draw another. Above all else, the findings of this study point to the exploration of the "reel" geographies of crime as an endeavour worth undertaking.

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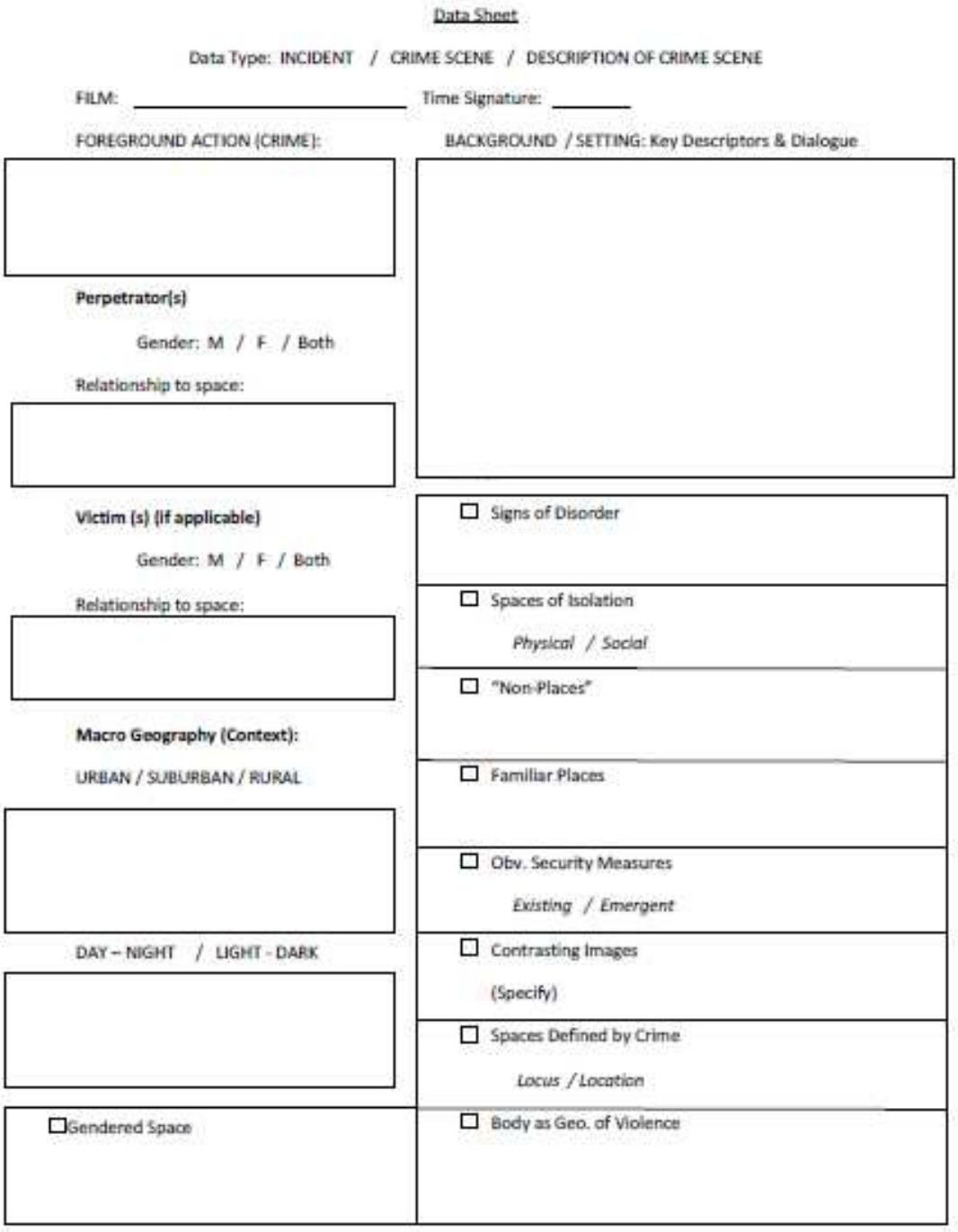
Appendix A: Coding Sheet



Data Sheet

Data Type: INCIDENT / CRIME SCENE / DESCRIPTION OF CRIME SCENE

FILM: _____ Time Signature: _____

FOREGROUND ACTION (CRIME):

BACKGROUND / SETTING: Key Descriptors & Dialogue

Perpetrator(s)

Gender: M / F / Both

Relationship to space:

Victim (s) (if applicable)

Gender: M / F / Both

Relationship to space:

Macro Geography (Context):

URBAN / SUBURBAN / RURAL

DAY – NIGHT / LIGHT - DARK

☐ Gendered Space

☐ Signs of Disorder

☐ Spaces of Isolation

Physical / Social

☐ "Non-Places"

☐ Familiar Places

☐ Obv. Security Measures

Existing / Emergent

☐ Contrasting Images

(Specify)

☐ Spaces Defined by Crime

Locus / Location

☐ Body as Geo. of Violence