

and are found in homes, towns and gardens, looking after men, yearning for men, being wounded by men. The Western director Budd Boetticher put it neatly (though without any obvious irony) when he suggested that a woman's job ... is to react. 'In herself she has no significance whatsoever'. (Parker, 2009a)

Bob Connell - who popularized the term 'hegemonic masculinity' - concurs, arguing that while there is 'a bewildering variety of traits considered characteristic of women' (1987: 183), there is no superordinate version of femininity which is deemed more structurally powerful than others. All versions of femininity are subordinate to the patriarchal power of men.

Although hard to pin down as a 'genre' there is a particular type of crime film which has emerged since the mid-1990s (but whose lineage can be traced right back to films like the 1947 classic *Brighton Rock*), which combines masculinity, violence, class, race and nostalgia in a form that is immediately recognizable and unmistakably British. Tending to lack the gloss, the special effects and (not unrelatedly) the big budget of their Hollywood counterparts, the 'crimes' in these crime films include heroin use (*Trainspotting*), football hooliganism (*The Firm*; *The Football Factory*), gangster violence (*Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*; *Sexy Beast*) and crimes too complex to describe in a few words (*Shallow Grave*). What they have in common is a dark humour, a grittiness, and a presupposition that the audience will have - or at least recognize - shared popular cultural experiences. Although the violence may be casual and brutal ('more potent than sex and drugs put together', as the four male leads in *The Football Factory* put it) it is usually set against a backdrop and soundtrack designed to elicit pangs of nostalgia in the audience. To take an example, *This is England* (2006), is set in Margaret Thatcher's Britain of 1983, and is largely based on the director Shane Meadows' own experiences as a youngster. Facing the prospect of a long and lonely summer break from school, 12-year-old Shaun (Thomas Turgoose) runs into a group of amiable skinheads, one of whom - Woody - takes Shaun under his wing and introduces him to the wonders of Ben Sherman shirts, Doc Martin boots, Ska music, male friendship and girls. With skinhead uniform and newly shaved head, Shaun enjoys the feeling of belonging that the group provides; that is, until Combo comes out of prison and returns to the gang. Older than the others, Combo is a racist, militant psychotic who divides the group and draws the young Shaun into a murky world of nationalism and racist violence which eventually leads to the savage beating of Milky, the only black skinhead in the gang. The film is set against a backdrop of the Falklands War in which Shaun's soldier father was killed, and reflects a time of mass unemployment and casual racism that is becoming politicized and organized. The pain of losing the father he idolized and the exhilaration of being part of a gang and feeling accepted by older and more knowing peers is sensitively handled by the director and cast. *This is England* manages, at one and the same time, to be gritty and romantic.

In most of the British films mentioned, location is important in conveying the inner emotions and motivations of the characters. For Shaun in *This is England*, the grimness of growing up in a coastal town in the north of England is captured in the brutal architecture of the estate on which he lives and the bleakness of the North Sea where, in disillusionment, he throws the Union Flag at the end of the film. Both *Trainspotting* and *Shallow Grave* are set in Edinburgh but largely filmed in Glasgow, where the rather austere Georgian architecture lends both films a mordant quality perfectly suited to the graphic scenes that unfold. Hollywood has also produced numerous films where the location is an important signifier of the dark motives of the characters. The 1990s saw the emergence of postmodern fables offering a nightmare vision of middle America. Epitomised by David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (1986), these portrayals 'mingled cloyingly saccharine glimpses' of small-town America with 'horrific revelations about its psychosexual underside' (Leitch, 2002: 48). In some films the location becomes almost a character in itself; for example the director of *Trainspotting* and *Shallow Grave* was Danny Boyle, who went on to make *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) where the city of Mumbai is used to dazzling, if controversial effect (some politicians and film-makers in India condemned it as 'poverty pornography').

The most famous city on film, however, must surely be New York which feels well known even to those who have never visited through its depiction in the movies (and TV programmes and song lyrics). Once known as a city with a particularly bad record of violent crime, New York has been used as a backdrop for countless crime films and its streets and subways, courtrooms and police department (NYPD) are familiar to audiences around the world. While Los Angeles and Chicago are also iconic settings (particularly for private eye/film noir and mob films respectively) no other city comes close to NYC for its number of instantly recognizable locations and landmarks. Films that used the twin towers of the World Trade Center as a location now have a particular poignancy – none more so than *Man On Wire* (2008) the Oscar-winning documentary about Frenchman Philippe Petit's daring tightrope walk (described variously as a 'real-life heist' and 'the artistic crime of the century') between the twin towers in August 1974. Since the very first gangster 'talkie' was produced in 1928, *The Lights of New York*, to contemporary films such as *The Taking of Pelham 123* (2009) which is discussed below, New York has lent vividness, thrill and menace to the movies.

The 'prison film'

The inclusion of the 'prison film' in a book entitled 'Media & Crime' might seem controversial. Crime and punishment are, after all, quite different entities. My

reasons for discussing prison films are twofold. First, the prison does not feature much elsewhere in this volume; and second, prison films arguably must be included because of their sheer popularity, both among the cinema-going public and with academic scholars (see, for example, Nellis and Hale, 1982; Rafter, 2000; Jarvis, 2004; Wilson and O'Sullivan, 2004; Mason, 2006). As Nellis (1982: 6) observes, 'no other type of crime film – the gangster movie, the police procedural movie and the characteristically English murder-mystery – has claimed such impressive credentials in its bid for genre status'. The author of several publications on the prison film genre, Paul Mason (2008), concurs, commenting that most people could probably name several films about prison and he speculates that most lists would feature *The Birdman of Alcatraz* (1962), *Cool Hand Luke* (1967), *Papillon* (1973), *Midnight Express* (1978), *Brubaker* (1980), *McVicar* (1980), *Scum* (1983), *The Green Mile* (1999) and, indisputably *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) which, nearly two decades after its original release, still tops many viewers' polls of their favourite films of all time. Among academic treatments of the genre, *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (1932) and *The Big House* (1931) are commonly discussed and, although unlikely to have been seen by the majority of this book's readers, many of the themes they deal with – the banality and repetitiveness of the prison regime, the limited movement afforded prisoners, the brutality of the chain gang, and so on – are familiar to modern audiences.

However, many 'prison films' are not really about prison at all but could actually be set in any number of other environments. Like the mob or gangster movie, the prison lends itself to being used allegorically; and like those genres, a staggering number of American prison films were made in the 1930s – the decade of the economic depression – in part because the prison offered filmmakers a metaphor for the disempowerment, injustice and isolation felt by the masses (Mason, 2008; and see Chapter 1 of this volume for a discussion of 'mass society'). Incarceration has also commonly been used as a backdrop for tales about individual perseverance and the indomitable human spirit, whereby the viewer is encouraged to empathize with the convicted offender and share in the highs and lows of their journey of self discovery. The central protagonist may have been wrongfully convicted, as Andy Dufresne (played by Tim Robbins) was in *The Shawshank Redemption*, but even when this is not the case, prisoners are often portrayed as old-style romantic heroes struggling to beat (or at least survive) the system.

One of the reasons for the popularity of the prison film is that the prison is a highly ordered, repetitive and restrictive institution and it therefore can give a film an immediate structure and rhythm. Mason (2003) characterizes the cinematic prison as a dehumanizing 'machine' with an impenetrable set of rules and regulations which grind on relentlessly, and he notes that the convention of prison films to continually repeat shots of inmates doing the same tasks – whether it is walking the landings, tramping around the exercise yard,

queuing for and eating the unappetizing food presented to them in the food hall, or breaking rocks – is a powerful visual reminder to the audience of the mundane and monotonous routine inside prison. For Mason, the representation of the prison as a machine is fundamental to the prison film for it is from this metaphor that other themes flow: 'escape from the machine, riot against the machine, the role of the machine in processing and rehabilitating inmates, and entering the machine from the free world as a new inmate' (2003b: 291).

Like 'crime films' more generally, there are a very limited number of plots to be found in prison films – Nellis (1982) suggests no more than a dozen – and for the audience there is a certain gratification to be had from this awareness and recognition of character traits and plot devices. Images of rock breaking chain gangs, depictions of admissions into prison, pyjama-style prison uniforms consisting of broad black-and-white stripes or black arrows on a light background, and scenes of solitary confinement are part and parcel of most people's understanding of imprisonment and have become iconic symbols associated with loss of liberty. Jewkes (2013) goes further, arguing that the prison must be understood through a Dante-esque lens of darkness and lightness and Heaven and Hell, and that these metaphors – which underpin numerous cinematic portrayals – serve to justify and authorize the prison as infernal hell-hole. Of course, prison films also lend themselves to the commercially winning themes of sex and violence, with violent assaults, riots and rapes far more common in cinematic jails than they are in most real-life prisons. It also goes without saying that prison films are by and large about men.¹

The prison film and the power to reform?

That the prison is frequently depicted as a brutal institution which punishes, degrades and humiliates might be said to present opportunities for those concerned with prison reform to initiate public debates about the futility and inhumanity of incarceration. However, Mason (2008) argues that a closer reading of most prison films reveals not only a reluctance to challenge the existing penal system, but also a voyeuristic obsession with interpersonal violence. Even when the audience is encouraged to empathize with the prisoner protagonist, this is achieved by representing the rest of the prison population as dehumanized monsters and animals: 'while the prison hero/ine is afforded character, emotional development and agency, the rest of the jail is mere cardboard cut-out and cliché. Consequently, prison is constructed as necessary to keep such psychotic deviants caged and incapacitated and the public safe' (Mason, 2008).

An example that illustrates this point well is the 1997 film *Con Air*, which is about prisoners, if not set in a prison, and stars Nicholas Cage as the 'prisoner-good-guy', formerly a highly decorated United States Army Ranger

who accidentally killed a thug who was attacking his pregnant wife. After seven years in a Federal Penitentiary, our hero implausibly finds himself on a plane transporting some of America's most violent criminals to a maximum security prison. Predictably enough the cons take over the aircraft, killing the prison guards and diverting the plane to Las Vegas. Led by Cyrus 'The Virus' Grissom (played by John Malkovich), who charmingly claims to have 'killed more people than cancer', this motley bunch of serial killers, drug smugglers, kidnappers and rapists do nothing to challenge stereotypes of the prison population as inhuman 'others'. Indeed, in persisting in portraying 'the vilest aspects of prison life' (Cheatwood, 1998: 210), the movie industry might be said to be endorsing the view that penal reform is undesirable and unachievable.

It is arguable, then, that cardboard cut-out and clichéd portrayals of prisoners as brutal, violent and ultimately stupid thugs has a role in making prison population growth acceptable to – or at least unquestioned by – the public; in fact Thomas Mathiesen (2001) argues just this. For Mathiesen, the problem is not simply that the public turn a blind eye to dramatically rising global prison populations, but that the picture they *do* receive of imprisonment is grossly misrepresented. Some commentators have suggested that, given most of us will never even see a prison at first hand (it is probably the least visible part of the penal system), the prison film stands in for the real thing (Fiddler, 2007) and, in celebrating prison violence and encouraging voyeuristic participation among the audience, the prison film even has echoes of the spectacle of public executions described by Foucault (1977) in the *ancien regime*, with the film-viewing audience replacing the crowd at the gallows (Sparks, 1992; Mason, 2003; Jarvis, 2004). Furthermore, films which are set in the future – *Fortress* (1992), *Face/Off* (1997) and *Minority Report* (2002), among others – may be an accurate barometer with which to gauge the direction in which punishment is going. The prison of the (near) future is automated, dehumanized and secret, and it is run by sadistic and corrupt wardens working for faceless global corporations. Welcome to the dystopian world of 'Technocorrections' (Nellis, 2006: 226).

Of course, some might say 'why *should* cinema have a reforming agenda?' There are many reasons why audiences are drawn to particular films, not least because of the quality or celebrity status of the actors appearing in them, and the notion of being educated at the cinema may not have mass appeal. In the end, films are primarily about entertainment and even when film producers do try to make a case for prison reform their efforts may be open to misinterpretation (Nellis, 1982). Further, any inherent messages that movies may carry about the inappropriateness of certain aspects of punishment in a civilized society must compete with other media portrayals which Mason characterizes as: 'bottom-up pressure from an angry public, driven onwards by screaming red-top headlines, demands [for] more displays of repressive punishment:

longer prison sentences, boot camps, ASBOS...' (2006: 1). This is why, despite the considerable quantity of prison films made over the last 100 years, few (if any) have done anything to challenge the institution of the prison. Indeed, as film-making has become more sophisticated, able to show ever more graphic scenes designed to shock and titillate, so society has accepted - demanded, even - crueller, more retributive and more humiliating forms of punishment (Jewkes, 2013). For many observers it is of little surprise, then, that for most of the last century, the production and popularity of prison cinema has grown in line with actual incarceration rates. It is also why - despite the harrowing portrayals of capital punishment in movies as diverse as *Let Him Have It* (1991) which is based on the case of Derek Bentley, a British teenager who was hanged in 1953 for allegedly urging his 16-year-old friend to shoot a police officer in the course of a burglary (and posthumously pardoned in the 1990s), and *Dead Man Walking* (1995), a relatively unsentimental Hollywood movie about a convicted murderer on Death Row - mediated and sensationalized real-life offences are frequently greeted by politicians, commentators and newspaper readers in the UK with calls for the return of the death penalty and in the US with demands for its greater use.

The documentary

Before closing this section on crime films and prison films and going on to discuss the 'remake', it is worth considering a genre that has a more explicit agenda in bringing to public attention the social contexts of crime and the realities of the experience of imprisonment - the *documentary*. Usually made for television rather than cinema release, there has been a long tradition of post-war television documentaries, especially in the UK and Australia, which aim to narrate social history from below. One of the most influential was the classic documentary series that started with *Seven Up!* about a group of seven-year-old children, first broadcast on commercial television in the UK in 1964. The man behind the series is Michael Apted who also directed such blockbusters as the Bond film, *The World Is Not Enough* (1999) and the spy thriller, *Gorky Park* (1983). Although not originally planned to have a follow-up, one of the production team had the idea of returning to film the children aged 14 and the series is still going strong, revisiting the participants every seven years.² The *Up!* series is essentially a longitudinal study of social class comprised of in-depth, open-ended interviews recorded on film, and might justifiably be regarded as a precursor to reality television (Burawoy, 2009) or, at the very least, the first example of 'Quality Tabloid TV' (Willis, 2009: 351). The subjects numbered 14 in all and they were from different areas of the