

Editorial

On Imaginative Criminology and Its Significance

Jon Frauley

Department of Criminology, University of Ottawa, Social Sciences Building 14th Floor, Ottawa, ON K1N5N6, Canada; E-Mail: jfrauley@uottawa.ca; Tel.: +1-613-562-5800; Fax: +1-613-562-5304

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Abstract: In growing numbers criminologists are discovering the value of imaginative and creative approaches for enquiry. There is now a critical mass of criminological work that engages substantively and theoretically with cultural artefacts such as film, fiction, music, dance, art, photography and cultural institutions. In doing so these works highlight criminology's persistent epistemological and methodological weaknesses. The broad and fragmented "imaginative criminology" movement offers a challenge to an orthodox criminology that is guided by the coercive and constraining bureaucratic categories of criminal justice administration and the criminal law. Imaginative criminology displaces these as the governing categories of criminological thought and practice. Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Louis Althusser, and C. Wright Mills this paper considers the movement's epistemological significance and the challenge posed to criminological orthodoxy.

Keywords: criminological imagination; cultural criminology; theory; methodology; creativity; speculation; critical criminology; doxa; idiographic enquiry

1. Introduction

Growing numbers of criminologists are discovering the value of doing criminology without succumbing to the foreclosure that "crime" can have on imagination and creativity. More and more criminologists have turned their attention to the study of film, fiction, art, photography, dance, and music, as well as other cultural artefacts and institutions. This is unconventional for criminology as it is often conceptualized from within and from outside as the science of crime. The increasing focus on cultural artefacts and institutions extols the value of investigating non-traditional criminological objects for they can help us understand and deepen our knowledge of the material and discursive

contexts, institutional settings, activities, and actors that make up the politics of criminalisation and production of criminological knowledge. Their study also helps us examine, “test”, and refine criminological ideas.

The production of cultural artefacts, as cultural criminologists have shown, is not radically different from the production of the categories of crime or of criminalised activities. Thus examining outcomes that are seemingly unrelated to criminal justice administration or criminal events can expand and deepen our understanding of important aspects of these more traditional concerns of criminologists while also broadening criminology’s focus and purview. This lateral movement in our thinking cannot but help to reveal aspects of conventional concerns that would otherwise be missed, help us gain new insights and an expanded view of the organisation and practice of these dynamics as well as the organisation and practice of criminology.

Today more than ever before the coercive and constraining bureaucratic categories of criminal justice administration and the criminal law that have long guided criminological enquiry—both quantitative and qualitative and positivistic and interpretive enquiries—are being displaced as the governing categories of criminological thought and practice. As Zedner [1] laments, the category “crime” is waning as a master category within criminology, no longer central to governing criminological pursuits. Many have commented on criminology’s waning relevance [2–6]. With the growth of *imaginative criminology* there is not only a move away from bureaucratic categorisations but a revitalisation of criminology, a strengthening of its ability to remain relevant and expansion of what counts as criminological enquiry.

Garland [7] has recently argued that criminology ought not strive to become autonomous from other fields and should remain multidisciplinary. As Shearing [8] long ago argued, one is constantly moving beyond perceived boundaries precisely because criminology’s dynamic and multifaceted subject matter demands this. The object of criminological concern, Shearing argued, has never been crime but rather the political processes of social ordering. Crime, criminalisation and criminal justice administration are elements within this broader process and it is perhaps for this reason that criminology has always been organised within and beyond the academy in diverse ways without having any firm boundaries [9]. Despite this, Zedner [1] has recently argued that crime ought to be the major focal point of criminological enquiry. Crime, she argues, is the best starting point for examining the process of criminalisation, part of that broader process of social ordering. There is no disputing that such a dynamic social, political, and cultural process should be of criminological concern but it is the starting point advocated that is problematic. This would mean taking a bureaucratic and legal-political category as our starting point for scrutinising what is a bureaucratic and legal-political process. This would result in a foreclosing of the criminological imagination. Crime in this scenario is simply to be used in a bureaucratic way to keep criminology from “sprawling beyond any clearly delineated boundary”, a boundary needed, according to Zedner [1] (p. 274), to contain criminology’s “scope and purpose”. Taking crime as the central organizing category and precept for criminological practice is to orient criminology as a bureaucratic enterprise rather than one characterised by speculation, imagination, and creativity. Any such artificial limit would simply call for its own transgression [8,10–12].

As Garland [7] (p. 303) has remarked, “Where other, more fundamental disciplines have formed around a distinctive scientific object, specified and constituted by the science's own theoretical and methodological practices, criminology addresses a pre-given object (crimes and criminals) which it

derives from a non-scientific social practice—namely, the criminalization processes of the criminal justice state.” Garland’s view follows directly Bourdieu’s criticism of sociology where he argues, Social science must break with the preconstructions of common sense, that is, with “reality” as it presents itself ... studies that simply confirm the constructions of common sense and ordinary discourse by transcribing everyday assumptions into scientific definitions have every chance of being approved by the scholarly community and its audiences, especially if they comply strictly with the more superficial rules of scientific discipline, whereas research that breaks with the false obviousness and the apparent neutrality of the constructions of common sense—including scholarly common sense (*sem commun savant*)—is always in danger of appearing to be the result of an act of arbitrary imposition, if not of ideological bias, and of being denounced as deliberately producing the data fit to validate them (which all scientific constructions do) ([13] (p. 777) and also [14]).

Imaginative criminology seeks to expand criminological enquiry not delimit it. It begins by breaking with doxic positions and questioning. Doxa, according to Bourdieu, is unquestioned and treated as if natural: “that which is beyond question and which each agent tacitly accords by the mere fact of acting in accord with social convention...” [15] (p. 164). Crime for a great many criminologists is doxic, as Shearing [8], Braithwaite [3] and others have intimated. “Crime” embodies principles and precepts that have been naturalized within criminology and have become foundational for practice. The problem here is that, according to Bourdieu, that which is doxic enables us to perceive structures of violence and domination as natural and so they remain unquestioned. This for criminology is a blind spot that requires illumination. The realities confronted by criminologists today [2,4–6,16] require them to remain open to a form of multi-disciplinarity and require them to move beyond doxic adherence to bureaucratic categories and precepts.

Taking a broader view of criminalization enables us to see that what we are dealing with are “institutional orders”, to borrow from Mills [17] (p. 134, [18]), which are made up of several different but interconnected sets of organised fields of knowledge and practice, each containing their own epistemological politics and conflicts (see Foucault [19,20] on the latter). Together these make up the structure of our society. To confine our enquiries with bureaucratic precepts is to confine our study to a particular field of practice and epistemological politics, constraining our understanding and ability to explain these within the broader institutional order of Western societies. Such a focus is too narrow to enable robust descriptions and explanations of the structured settings and broader contexts that shape and influence criminalization and the attempts to control and manage criminalized activities or of the broader internal and external forces that shape criminological enquiry (see [4,21,22]).

The imaginative criminology *movement* indicates an expansion of criminological range and focus and issues a challenge to the criminological doxa or common sense to move away from scientism and the bureaucratic domination that the field has endured since its inception and which has plagued social science more generally since the mid-20th century [17,23,24]. As an analytic strategy and as an outcome of efforts to abandon formulaic and recipe-driven approaches to enquiry, imaginative criminology rejects the doxic assumptions that underpin acceptance of conventional criminological enquiry and transgresses the boundaries of conventional practice (see [15,25]).

2. The Practice of Imaginative Criminology

Although imaginative criminology is at the moment a broad banner that connects several different and fragmented pursuits, what is common is the *practical* challenge posed to criminology's epistemological, ontological, and methodological conventions. This is done not through intellectualisation but through the *selection* of unconventional objects and explanatory categories. Epistemological, ontological, and methodological issues are explored in exemplary fashion, favouring practice over scholasticism, the doing of criminology differently rather than simply discussing how criminology might be done differently from conventional or orthodox criminology. Whenever, for instance, graffiti is studied as art rather than as vandalism what is happening is that the legal categorisation of graffiti as vandalism is abandoned in favour of a characterisation that is independent of the bureaucratic categories of the criminal law and criminal justice administration. In this there is a concern with *epistemology*, as it has to do with *how* graffiti is represented and known, and with *ontology*, as it has to do with *what* graffiti is represented and known to be. It is also a *methodological* concern for our understanding of what something is like will in large part direct us to investigate it in a way believed to be amenable to obtaining knowledge of it.

For a long time the criminological imagination has been hamstrung by bureaucratic categories that have delimited how criminology's objectives and objects of study could be understood and expressed, naturalising bureaucratic problems and precepts as the problems, categories and concepts to be taken up in criminological research, teaching, discussion and so forth. Although alternative theories, methodologies, and debates began to emerge in the 1960s for how these problems and categorisations could be alternatively conceptualised and explained, criminal justice administration continued to provide orienting and organising categories and precepts for criminological enquiry even if these were challenged and rethought. For example, Taylor, Walton and Young's [26] classic and pioneering text, *The New Criminology*, sought to develop a "fully social" conception of crime and deviance. Although they sought to install a more adequate concept of crime within criminology and the sociology of deviance, and sought to offer a more adequate way of conceptualising the state and justice administration, crime remained a guiding organising category. This of course does not detract from their monumental achievement; it is only to illustrate the doxic nature of crime for organising even critical criminological enquiry. Doxic categories such as crime operate as an epistemological obstacle to the advancement of knowledge within criminology and to the further development of criminology as a critical social science [25,27].

Imaginative criminology offers a practical challenge to criminological doxa as it offers a way of doing criminology without aspirations of becoming an autonomous science and without rejecting rigour and systematic examination. Imaginative criminology aims to transgress anything resembling a disciplinary boundary and attempts to bring theoretical and methodological pluralism to criminological enquiry. Although imagination and speculation are necessary for the social scientific production of knowledge, their place and role within criminology seems contentious given they are not well represented within conventional criminology. However, as Williams [23] (p. 102 references omitted) points out, the great and foundational works of criminology and sociology were not devoid of imagination and speculation and are still relevant precisely because they evince these qualities:

The great works of criminology, such as those of Emile Durkheim, Edwin Sutherland, and Robert Merton, have great value to us because they are an exemplary display of intuition and speculative logic. These works are still useful today because they have this explanatory power.

A loosening of the grip of legal bureaucratic categories for orienting criminological thought and practice is represented in the work of the imaginative criminology movement. As the abandoning of a legal characterization and understanding of graffiti exemplifies, legal-political categories that have long been naturalised within criminology are being denaturalized and their organizational and analytical use for criminological scholarship rethought. Where at one time scholars would avoid positioning themselves within criminology in favour of sociology, law and society or socio-legal studies, it is now possible to reconceptualise criminology as a field not necessarily tethered to or saturated by doctrinaire legal-political conceptions.

3. Struggle of Imaginative Criminology

Imaginative criminology intensifies the struggle over what constitutes criminological practice, criminological knowledge and what is deemed a legitimate object of enquiry. The selection and use of categories is also a choice of how we will (or will not) make sense of experiences, institutional organization, and the relation between the two. This is also the adopting and advocating of value-commitments through tacit ratification of selection criteria, concepts and research strategies considered valuable and in this way reproduces certain values as dominant or subordinate. In short, criminology like other fields of practice and knowledge is one that revolves around exclusions. The dominant idiom of enquiry and explanation owes to doxic precepts that *hegemonise* the field by imposing criteria of judgment.

It must be acknowledged, following the path-breaking work of Pierre Bourdieu, that doing criminology is a politics. Imaginative criminology should be seen as inherently political, not least because the struggle for imaginative criminology is carried out within a

space of relations of force between the different kinds of capital or, more precisely, between agents who possess a sufficient amount of one of the different kinds of capital to be in a position to dominate the corresponding field, whose struggles intensify whenever the relative value of the different kinds of capital is questioned (for example, the exchange rate between cultural capital and economic capital) [28] (p. 34).

Indeed as Foucault [19,20] and Bourdieu [29,30] have shown, the scientific and professional fields are marked by conflict over the production and control of discursive resources. If criminology has long been dominated by bureaucratic categories and precepts this attests to the success of the field of criminal justice administration in exercising hegemony over criminological research and training. As discursive resources come to be naturalised and operate as a kind of capital for bearers to exercise dominance within what is a field of ongoing struggle, within criminology the bureaucratic and legal-political categories and precepts that populate justice administration have become high-value forms of capital. As imaginative criminology helps to reveal the symbolic domination of bureaucratic categories and concepts for organising criminology it minimizes the degree of power of the criminal

justice apparatus to organise criminological pursuits and helps to reveal that what is accepted as uncontentious has been installed and imposed through ongoing struggle and exclusion.

Following Bourdieu, what imaginative criminology is able to do is reveal practically the “misrecognition” within criminology of what are bureaucratic conceptions and problems rather than those of social science.

The truth of a doxa is only ever fully revealed when negatively constituted by the constitution of a field of opinion, the locus of the confrontation of competing discourses—whose political truth may be overtly declared or may remain hidden, even from the eyes of those engaged in it, under the guise of religious or philosophical oppositions [15] (p. 168).

Convention and the process of recognition play a substantial role in why and how we come to understand what constitutes criminology’s objectives, objects and methods. Today, what constitutes criminology or criminological enquiry is still predominantly recognised through the idiom of criminal law and the criminal justice apparatus, serving to lead many to “misrecognize” criminology as a “crime-ology”, to again borrow from Shearing [8], or as a bureaucratic technique-driven enterprise, to extrapolate from Mills’ [17] critique of the social science of industrialised society more generally (see [23]). This misrecognition is intimately connected to a process that Althusser [31] called *interpellation*.

Interpellation has to do with the reproduction of the forms of physical coercion and ideological domination that are part of the organization and the practices of institutions (or what he called “repressive” and “ideological state apparatuses”). These forms of domination are reproduced through the practices of those engaged in routinized practices within these spheres. Althusser argued there are no “concrete individuals” but only “ideological subjects”. As social beings we cannot escape from the system of ideology or the various substantive ideologies that animate institutional practices, thus we can never be outside the process of interpellation [31] (p. 164). As a consequence we “constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition” [31] (p. 161). Dominant ideologies that make up any given institution (e.g., religion, mass media, education, military) are internalized by social actors through their routinized activities and inform their “consciousness”, transforming them into “ideological subjects”. This consciousness is externalized and reproduced through individual engagement in the rituals and routines appropriate to their institutional role in meeting institutional needs. Through these routinized activities that reproduce the organizational and ideological structure of the field these ideologies are naturalized and reproduced.

Bourdieu theorises something similar, that forms of authority at work within the organizational structure of a field (education or law for instance) are reproduced “bodily” through subjects first internalizing them as what he calls a “feel for the game” (that is, as practical know-how) and then externalizing and reproducing these through their routinized, field-specific practices (such as the practice of law or pedagogical practice within schools).

In fact, “subjects” are active and knowing agents endowed with a *practical sense*, that is, an acquired system of preferences, of principles of vision and division (what is usually called taste), and also a system of durable cognitive structures (which are essentially the product of the internalisation of objective structures) and of schemes of action which orient the perception of the situation and the appropriate response ([28] (p. 25); [32] (p. 37)).

The effects of this interpellative process—acquiring a system of preferences and principles and the outcomes of this—constitute what Bourdieu ([15], elsewhere) calls *habitus* (something like the “consciousness” of Althusser’s “ideological subjects”). *Habitus* he says is an important mechanism of domination, a structure internal to the body that animates the actions of the subject. It is a “structuring structure” [33] (p. 53), a “mechanism of domination [that] operates through the unconscious manipulation of the body” [34] (p. 115). *Habitus* is aligned with a broader structured field and enables us to implement on a practical level (through the capital we acquire) what has been struggled over and won, and whereby other competing knowledge is excluded. It is a mechanism that enables us to perceive structures of power and domination as simply natural features of our world and therefore symbolic violence is perpetuated as we act to reproduce structures of domination. Dominant forms of understanding that have become naturalized as *doxa* inform actors’ routinized and ritualized daily practices and, importantly, give meaning to their existence.

According to Althusser, an individual’s understanding of his or her relationship to their “real conditions of existence”, to their actual lived conditions, is imaginary because it is forged through these ideologically informed practices [31] (p. 153, *passim*). In this sense, actors practice “ideological recognition” as they *misrecognise* their place within social relations and their role in the perpetuation of forms of domination. This misrecognition is for Bourdieu largely due to the *habitus*, which is made up of doxic assumptions. Without wanting to debate how Althusser and Bourdieu are different and where they overlap what is important here is that both Althusser and Bourdieu provide sophisticated ways of explaining how forms of physical coercion and symbolic domination are reproduced and naturalised as simply “the way things are”. By way of example, both Bourdieu and Althusser argue that schooling equips students with “know-how” as befitting an advanced division of labour. Importantly in doing so it indoctrinates students into “rules of respect for the socio-technical division of labour and ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination” [31] (pp. 127, 148) and the “principles of vision and division” that are needed to reproduce naturalized forms of domination [28] (p. 25), [35]. Thus there is a second-order meaning to the routines of schooling that help to naturalise what has been established through varying degrees of both symbolic violence and physical coercion. It is through this social process of interpellation that people come to accept their subordination and recognise as legitimate forms of domination that make up various sites of struggle within fields of organized practice.

For both Bourdieu and Althusser misrecognition enables the excluding of multiple potential authoritative discourses and expert practices as illegitimate and affords tacit consent for one authoritative form of legitimised violence, which has both a symbolic and material dimension and which takes the form of accepted, necessary and naturalised daily routines and the practical-know how that underpins these. Thus forms of domination are reproduced with little or no resistance in the course of daily life. Conflict and exclusion, represented in social divisions and differentially distributed social entitlements, are accepted as if natural. This misrecognition is in part achieved through the installing of discursive categories, again through historically and institutionally situated struggle and conflict—through forms of symbolic/ideological violence—where these are imposed by some dominant group with the capacity to do so and then naturalized over time as simply common sense.

Criminology as a field of practice and scholarship is characterised by interpellative processes and the (re)production of a criminological *habitus* that transmits know-how and values practically. My

position on the significance of increasing numbers of criminologists breaking with doxic assumptions about what criminology is and how it should be carried out is that the authority behind the interpellative process is undergoing change and thus so is the habitus of criminologists and the field's characteristics. Imaginative criminologies can help to alter the interpellative process charged with reproducing the criminological field. Positivism, scientism and legal-political precepts are more and more being recognised (or less and less misrecognized) as imposing constraints on criminological thought and research and as these become less and less authoritative they will be excluded from the reproduction of the criminological habitus (see [36]). The protracted emergence of imaginative criminology, it is argued, indicates a shift in the underlying doxic assumptions that have guided criminology since the early 20th century. This common sense about criminological practice, about the objects of criminological investigation, its purpose and objectives is undergoing revision. The increasing appearance of imaginative criminologies indicates this for if the old doxic assumptions were still beyond reproach we would not be seeing these various and varied imaginative and creative criminological pursuits that do not begin with the bureaucratic categories or problems of criminal justice administration.

4. Revisioning Criminology

In lamenting the demise of the criminological imagination, Williams [23] (p. 91) argues that “useful and insightful theories are products of imagination and speculation” but that such work is rarely valued within criminology. This point is more recently made by Ruggiero [37] (p. vii) in his remarks on the confusion of colleagues over his efforts to bring literature to criminology and criminology to the study of fiction. “Major breakthroughs”, Williams [23] (p. 96) continues, “have resulted from changing perceptions of data, not from the accumulation of evidence which then commands a new form of understanding”. Highlighting and breaking with doxic bureaucratic categories and precepts is an important step for a criminology aiming to produce useful and impactful insights and each article in this special issue does this.

This special issue demonstrates that imaginative criminology is methodologically creative and epistemologically speculative. Each article shows how criminology's purview can be expanded, illustrates how criminology can be carried out without taking the criminal justice system as a source of orienting precepts, contributes to altering the interpellative process that reproduces the criminological field, and demonstrates how one might move between a selective substantive focus and a broader conceptual contemplation to yield conceptual and empirical insights. Karl Guebert, for example, takes education policy and practice as significant for criminology as the former underwrites practices of regulation and governance that align with crime control but which are rarely studied by criminologists. Arguing that this institution can be studied criminologically, he seeks to contribute to a “criminology of education” wherein criminology broadens its scope outward to re-imagine education as a security institution concerned with many of the same things as is the justice system such as the governance and regulation of moral and political transgressions. David Redmon argues for the development of a “documentary criminology” as a mode of analysis and way of producing knowledge of the sensual and sensuous experiences of transgression. This novel approach seeks to expand the criminological imagination by way of creating a methodology for doing cultural criminology. Rather than seek to

represent or capture reality documentary criminology as a form of ethnographic work explores and makes experiential sense of transgressions. It seeks to render empirically the situated, dynamic, and ongoing lived experiences of transgressive and criminalised activities. Caroline Picart's contribution explores the dynamics involved in the various stages of self-radicalisation. This is done by mapping the move from a rhetoric of radical thought and talk to radical action in the case of convicted terrorist Colleen LaRose. This process of personal transformation is explored in part by furthering her development of "gothic criminology" which is attuned to what Picart calls "monster talk" and how this rhetoric combines with others through the medium of the internet to facilitate self-radicalisation. Vincenzo Ruggiero analyses the works of the 19th century French novelist and playwright Honoré de Balzac. This continues his development of a "criminology of literature", wherein classic literature is examined for its logical argument and criminological insights. These insights are revealed and explored by employing criminological concepts and this, in turn, helps us reflect on, clarify and refine our knowledge of criminological problems and issues, namely that of power crime. In Balzac's work multiple insights directly pertinent to better understanding crimes of the powerful can be found as he explores through his characters and fictive environments the dynamics of power, greed, corruption, and the instability of consumerism. The final contribution from Elise Merrill and Sylvie Frigon explores the role and impact of theatre initiatives for female offenders. In their pioneering and innovative work the authors look at how theatre initiatives operate as a tool of personal growth for criminalised women and as a means of producing a criminological understanding of the experiences of criminalised women. The authors advance what we could call a "criminology of theatre", an inventive and groundbreaking orientation that seeks to harness creativity and imaginative practice for criminology.

Each contributor to this special issue illustrates the practice of imaginative criminology, offering highly inventive, creative, and innovative scholarship that yields empirical, theoretical, and methodological insights. The diversity of imaginative criminology is seen as each author advances his and her own unique criminological orientation while contributing on a larger scale to the imaginative criminology movement. Theoretically diverse, each successfully challenges doxic notions of what criminology is and of how criminology ought to be carried out, thus each author contributes to a broadened scope for criminology. Methodologically, each contributor utilises a case-study approach for analysis. This enables depth in the substantive subject matter and also focused and systematic examination of the conceptual dimensions of the case in question. This enables each contributor to add to the general stock of criminological knowledge, as one is necessarily led to consider broader conceptual issues that exist beyond the case itself. What we see then in each example of imaginative criminology is not only a challenge to deeply entrenched criminological conventions but a commonality in how this is done: (1) the case-based approach enables conceptual and substantive insights and underpins creative, speculative, and imaginative enquiry; (2) imaginative criminologies tend toward *idiographic* enquiry. An *idiographic* form of enquiry emphasises depth and what is different and unique about one's case rather than what is similar or regular across a number of cases or sample. That is, *idiographic* work seeks to particularise whereas the latter *nomothetic* approaches attempt to generalise and situate phenomena as part of a larger, patterned whole. Thus each author's insights stem from breaking with (1) the doxic and scientific forms of enquiry that have come to characterise criminology as well as other social sciences and with the (2) conventional and often tacit acceptance of bureaucratic precepts for criminological enquiry.

Each contributor to this special issue embraces imagination and creativity without sacrificing rigour or succumbing to eclecticism. The problems of where imagination and science meet, of what constitutes the proper domain of objects for criminology and justice studies, and of how speculation and observation intersect, are also tackled by contributors as they add to the pioneering work of those advancing a criminology of culture [37–41] and those keen to explore the criminological imagination [10,42–47].

5. Conclusions

Criminology has been marked from its inception by both internal and external struggle over the designation and definition of its objects and objectives. Although for most of its life criminology has been characterized by doxic categories and precepts owing to a bureaucratic practice rather than anything internally directed and much of the production of criminological knowledge has been and continues to be fuelled and in many ways constrained by images of reality that reflect a widespread fear and fascination with crime and its control (see [6,16]), as Shearing long ago argued, the object around which criminology is organised, around which criminological investigation is ordered, is not and has never been crime, despite an “implicit agreement” by criminologists [8] (p. 170).

Holding that crime should be or is the central object of analysis as well as a guiding precept is to adhere to an outdated doxic position that constrains the criminological imagination. Criminology emerged at a time in the 19th century when “crime” was fast becoming a widespread social problem requiring a solution, as it was held to be threatening to the social, political, and moral arrangement of society. “This focus on crime”, Shearing [8] (p. 177) argued, “was, however, simultaneously a focus on order and threats to it”.

Criminology was theoretically and politically relevant as a discipline because it studied this great threat to social order. As interest shifted from crime and its sources to the control of crime, it was still order that was the central topic; a topic that was approached through the study of the phenomenon most central to it—crime. *Criminology, thus, has always been about ordering.* What has changed, and what has created the definitional tension I have noted, has been the way order is conceived and the way it is resisted and supported.

Although crime has been an important organising category for the development of criminology, this is an outcome of a politics that has both symbolic and material dimensions. It is an outcome of the success of the criminal justice apparatus in dominating criminological enquiry and of a particular understanding of what it means to engage in scientific enquiry.

Carrabine [16] has argued that criminology and justice studies are in need of renewal, a “rediscovery” toward regaining “intellectual energy and vitality”. Might the fragmented but formidable body of work I am calling “imaginative criminology” signal such a rediscovery? I think it does. These introductory and orienting remarks situate the special issue’s contribution to this significant and growing movement. I have discussed the context and one way to make sense of this movement to help the reader see the broader significance of the papers collected here beyond their substantive empirical content. Each offering breaks with the conventional doxa that I have outlined above and promotes a form of criminological enquiry that embraces speculative, imaginative and creative thinking on

non-traditional criminological objects, which in turn sheds light on issues of interest to conventional criminology but which also resonate well beyond this camp. After having outlined how we might conceptualise the significance of the imaginative criminology movement I discussed how the contributors to this special issue offer a practice-based challenge to the epistemological and methodological boundaries of conventional criminology. Illustrating theoretical pluralism, each contributor in utilising the case study and in engaging in idiographic enquiry illustrates how non-traditional criminological objects and non-scientistic approaches can help us understand and deepen our knowledge of some of the material and discursive relations, institutional settings, activities and actors that make up the politics of criminalisation and the production of criminological knowledge. In doing so, the contributors offer insights which could not be yielded through nomothetic analysis and contribute to an expanded view of the possibilities for the organisation and practice of criminology.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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