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doxical status of photography within bourgeois culture. The simultaneous threat and promise of the new medium was recognized at a very early date, even before the daguerreotype process had proliferated. For example, following the French government announcement in August 1839 a song circulated in London which

context, photography is not ...
izing. Rather, photography is modernity run riot. But danger resides not only in the numerical proliferation of images. This is also a premature fantasy of the triumph of a mass

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which was then in the process of being constructed. Although no "Police Act" had yet embraced photography, the 1820s and 1830s had engendered a spate of governmental inquiries and legislation designed to professionalize and standardize police and penal procedures in Britain, the most important of which were the Gaols Act of 1823 and the Metropolitan Police Acts of 1829 and 1839. (The prime instigator of these modernization

William Henry Fox Talbot,
Articles of China, plate 3 from
The Pencil of Nature, 1844



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body—and, as a result, a more extensive social body—

We are confronting, then, a double system: a system of representation capable of functioning both *honorifically* and *repressively*. This double operation is most evident in the workings of photographic portraiture. On the one hand, the photographic portrait extends, accelerates, popularizes, and degrades a traditional function. This function, which

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In the mid-nineteenth century, the terms of this linkage between the sphere of culture and that of social regulation were specifically utilitarian.⁹ Many of the early promoters of photography struck up a Benthamite chorus, stressing the medium's promise for a social calculus of pleasure and discipline. Here was a machine for providing small doses of happiness on a mass scale, for contributing to Jeremy Bentham's famous goal: "the greatest happiness of the greatest number."¹⁰ Thus the photographic portrait in particular was welcomed as a socially ameliorative as well as a socially repressive instrument. Jane Welsh

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concern for respectability and order led him to applaud the adoption of photography by the police, arguing that convicted offenders would "not find it easy to resume their criminal careers, while their faces and general aspects are familiar to so many, especially to the keen-sighted detective police."¹² The "so many" is significant here, since it implicitly en-

THE CRIMINAL ARCHIVE

introducing the panoptic principle into everyday life

was is depicted: which bodies are shown? the beautiful, healthy, -- petite bourgeois

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acteristically petit-bourgeois subject.

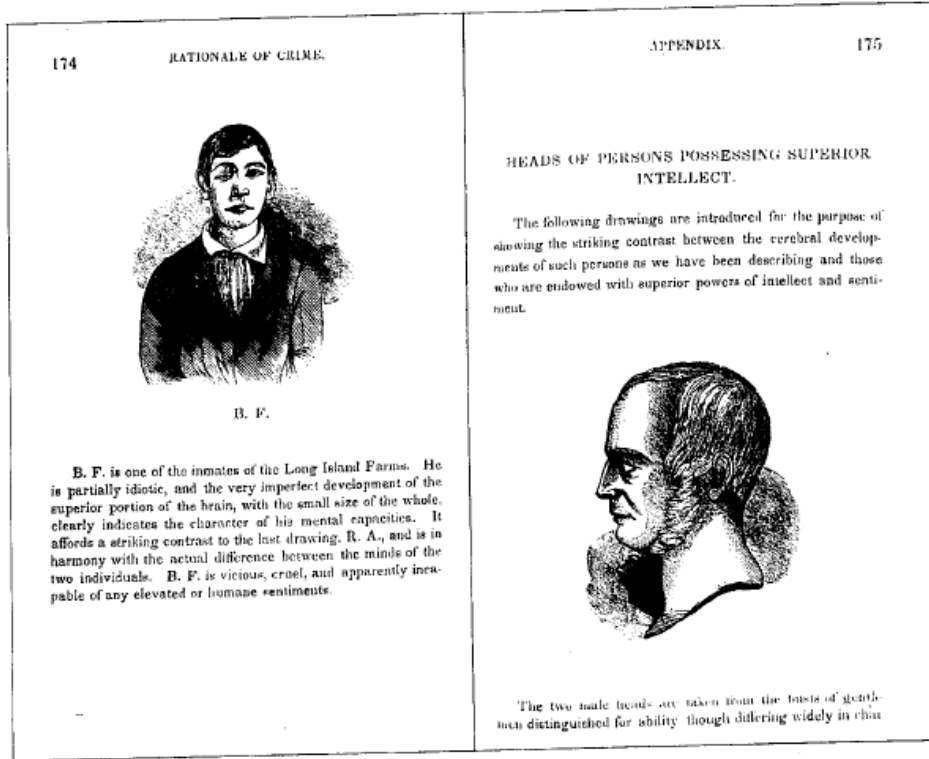
We can speak then of a generalized, inclusive *archive*, a *shadow archive* that encompasses an entire social terrain while positioning individuals within that terrain.¹⁴ This archive contains subordinate, territorialized archives: archives whose semantic interdependence is normally obscured by the "coherence" and "mutual exclusivity" of the social groups registered within each. The general, all-inclusive archive necessarily contains both the traces of the visible bodies of heroes, leaders, moral exemplars, celebrities, and those of the poor, the diseased, the insane, the criminal, the nonwhite, the female, and all other embodiments of the unworthy. The clearest indication of the essential unity of this archive of images of the body lies in the fact that by the mid-nineteenth century a single hermeneutic paradigm had gained widespread prestige. This paradigm had two tightly entwined branches, physiognomy and phrenology. Both shared the belief that the surface of the body, and especially the face and head, bore the outward signs of inner character.

first decade of nineteenth century:

phrenology emerged that argued for a relationship between features of the skull and mental faculties

p 7 case study

From Eliza Farnham,
 "Appendix" to Marmaduke
 Sampson, *Rationale of Crime*,
 1846



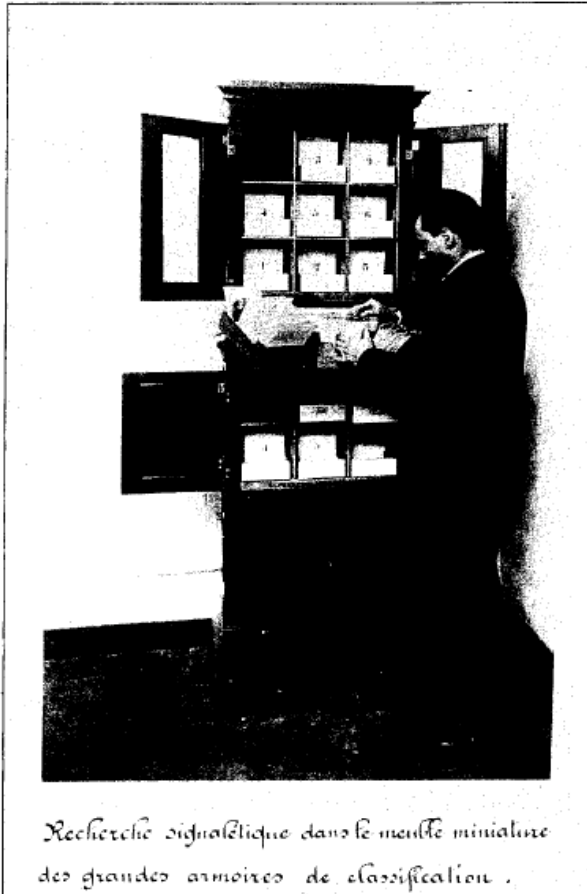
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Farnham's concerns touch on two of the central issues of nineteenth-century penal discourse: the practical drawing of distinctions between incorrigible and pliant criminals, and the disciplined conversion of the reformable into "useful" proletarians (or at least into useful informers). Thus even though she credited several inmates with "well developed" intellects, and despite the fact that her detractors accused her of Fourierism, her reformist vision had a definite ceiling. This limit was defined quite explicitly by the conclusion of her study. There she underscored the baseness shared by all her criminal subjects by illustrating three "heads of persons possessing superior intellect" (two of which, both male, were treated as classical busts). Her readers were asked to note the "striking contrast."²³

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PURSUING THE "CRIMINAL BODY", the attempt for a truth apparatus

A physiognomic code of visual interpretation of the body's signs—specifically the signs of the head—and a technique of mechanized visual representation intersected in the 1840s. This unified system of representation and interpretation promised a vast taxonomic ordering of images of the body. This was an archival promise. Its realization would seem to be grounded primarily in the technical refinement of strictly optical means. This turns out not to be the case.



From Alphonse Bertillon,
Service d'identification,
Exposition universelle de
Chicago, 1893 (Album
collection, National Gallery
of Canada, Ottawa)

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general equivalence between images. This image of the archive as an encyclopedic repository of exchangeable images was articulated most profoundly in the late 1850s by the American physician and essayist Oliver Wendell Holmes when he compared photographs to paper currency.²⁶ The capacity of the archive to reduce all possible sights to a single code of equivalence was grounded in the metrical accuracy of the camera. Here was a

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This archival promise was frustrated, however, both by the messy contingency of the photograph and by the sheer quantity of images. The photographic archives' components are not conventional lexical units, but rather are subject to the circumstantial character of all that is photographable. Thus it is absurd to imagine a dictionary of photographs, unless one is willing to disregard the specificity of individual images in favor of some model of typicality, such as that underlying the iconography of Vesalian anatomy or of most of the plates accompanying the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d'Alembert. Clearly, one way of

The supposed pointer of the XX chromosome to the "criminal type."

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schema. From Quetelet on, biosocial statisticians became increasingly absorbed with *anthropometrical* researches, focusing on both the skeletal proportions of the body and the volume and configuration of the head.³⁶ The inherited idealist fascination with the upright forehead can be detected even in Quetelet's model of an ideal society: he argued that social progress would lead to a diminished number of defective and inferior cases, thus increasing the zone of normality. If we consider what this utopian projection meant in terms of the binomial curve, we have to imagine an increasingly peaked, erect configuration: a classical ideal to a fault.

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In effect, then, Bertillon's police archive functioned as a complex biographical machine that produced presumably simple and unambiguous results. He sought to identify repeat offenders, that is, criminals who were liable to be considered "habitual" or "professional" in their deviant behavior. The concern with recidivism was of profound social importance in the 1880s. Bertillon, however, professed no theory of a criminal type, nor of the psychic continuities or discontinuities that might differentiate "responsible" criminals from "irresponsible" criminals. He was sensitive to the status hierarchy between his *Iden-*

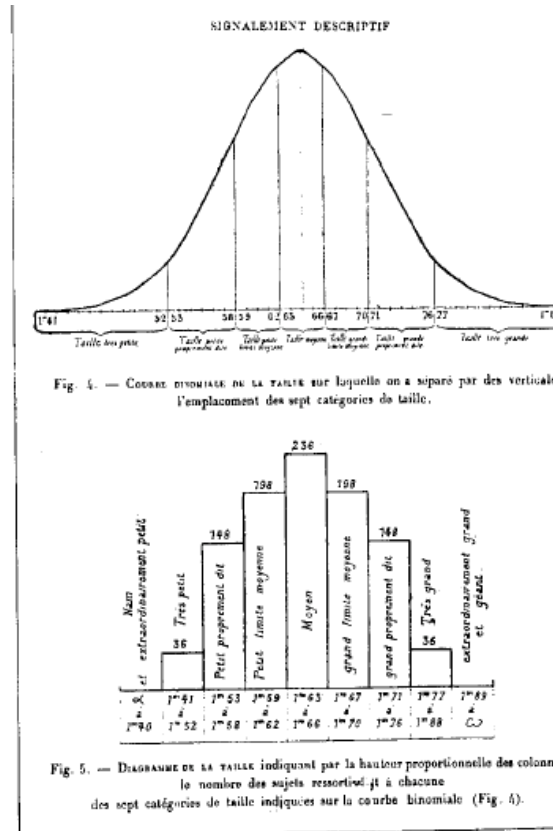


Classification cabinets, Paris Prefecture of Police. From Alphonse Bertillon, *Service d'identification*, Exposition universelle de Chicago, 1893.

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Frontispiece from Alphonse
Bertillon, *Identification*
anthropométrique, 1893



Figures from Alphonse
Bertillon, *Identification*
anthropométrique, 1893

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appearance into words.

For Bertillon, the criminal body expressed nothing. No characterological secrets were hidden beneath the surface of this body. Rather, the surface and the skeleton were indices of a more strictly material sort. The anthropometrical signalment was the register of the morphological constancy of the adult skeleton, thus the key to biographical identity. Likewise, scars and other deformations of the flesh were clues, not to any innate propensity for crime, but to the body's physical history: its trades, occupations, calamities.

For Bertillon, the mastery of the criminal body necessitated a massive campaign of *inscription*, a transformation of the body's signs into a *text*, a text that pared verbal description down to a denotative shorthand, which was then linked to a numerical series. Thus Bertillon arrested the criminal body, determined its identity as a body that had *already* been defined as criminal, by means that subordinated the image—which remained necessary but insufficient—to verbal text and numerical series. This was not merely a self-contained archival project. We can understand another, more global, imperative if we remember that one problem for the late-nineteenth-century police was the telegraphic transmission of information regarding suspects. The police were competing with oppo-

...including the railroad.



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FROM BERTILLON TO THE FINGERPRINT

relative.

The Bertillon system proliferated widely, receiving an enthusiastic reception, especially in the United States, and contributing to the internationalization and standardization of police methods. The anthropometric system faced competition from the fingerprint system, a more radically synecdochic procedure, invented in part by Francis Galton, who had interests in identification as well as typology. With the advent of fingerprinting, it became evident that the body did not have to be "circumscribed" in order to be identified. Rather, the key to identity could be found in the merest trace of the body's tactile presence in the world. Furthermore, fingerprinting was more promising in a Taylorist sense, since it could be properly executed by less-skilled clerks. By the late nineteenth-tens, the Bertillon system had begun to yield to this more efficient and less cumbersome method, although hybrid systems operated for some years.⁵⁴

... for refining the description of individu-

Bertillon card, 1913

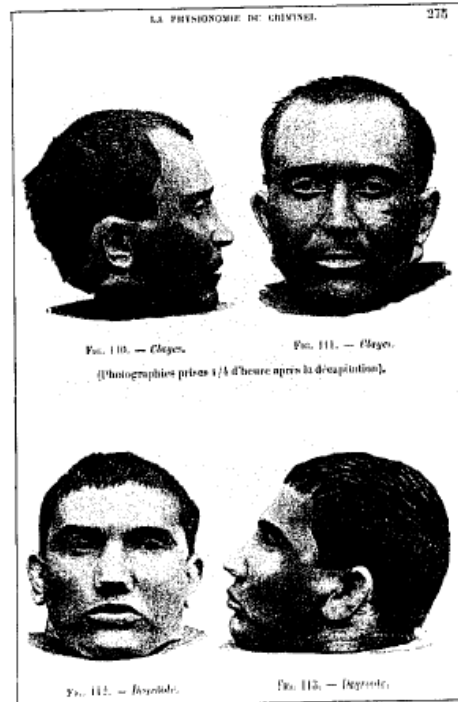
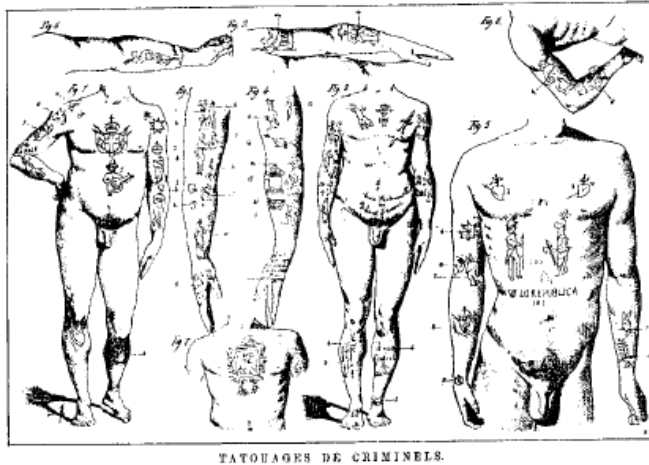
From Thomas Byrnes,
Professional Criminals of
America, 1886

POLICE DEPARTMENT, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|------|------------------------------|------|----------|------|--------|------|--------------|---------|
| Height | 5 10 | Head lgth | 19.0 | L. Post | 23.5 | Class | | Age | 24 |
| Stretch | 57.0 | Head width | 15.5 | L. Max P | 10.5 | Arrest | | Apparent Age | |
| Trunk | 47.0 | Chest width | 13.1 | T. Max P | 8.0 | Mar. | Mar. | Native | Mexican |
| Curve | | H. Ear lgth | 6.9 | L. Cchlt | 4.3 | Feat. | | Occup | Laborer |
| Imp. Height | 5-3 | Remarks relative to Stigmata | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--------|---|---------|----|------------|-------------|
| Inc. | I | Bridge | Re | Hair | Black |
| Stight | M | Itaz | El | Complexion | M. Dark |
| Width | M | Height | P | Teeth | Good |
| Facial | | Frontal | M | Chin | Ball |
| | | | G | Build | F |
| | | | | Beard | Black |
| Height | | | | Examined | 1-17-13. |
| Left | | | | By | Gabrielson. |



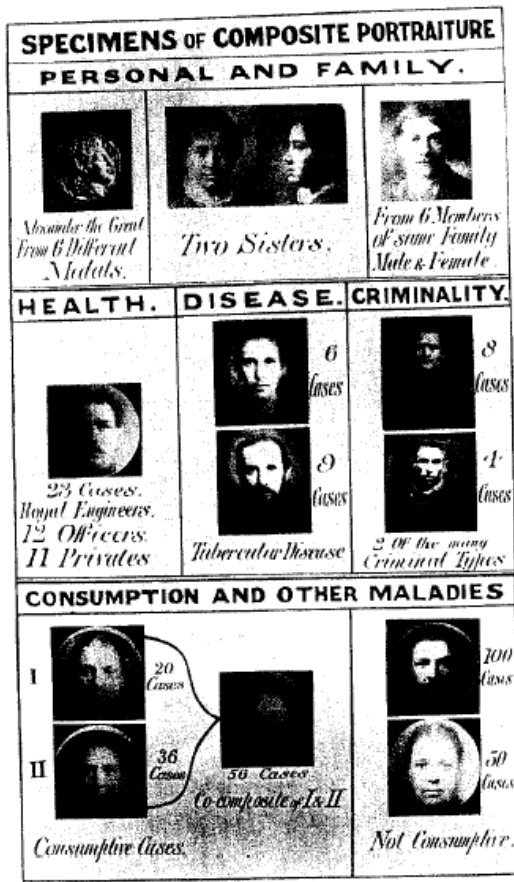


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 logical study of the criminal. A subsequent chapter offered a set of photographs of the severed heads of convicts, “taken one quarter of an hour after decapitation.” Faced with these specimens of degeneracy, this physiognomist of the guillotine remarked: “Degroote and Clages . . . their dull faces and wild eyes reveal that beneath their skulls there is no place for pity.” Works of this sort depended upon an extreme form of statistical inference: basing physiognomic generalizations on very limited samples.⁶⁰

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 Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory
 1899 of Gregor Mendel's work on the genetic ratio underlying inheritance. Politically, Galton sought to construct a program of social betterment through breeding. This program pivoted on a profoundly ideological *biologization* of existing class relations in England. Eugenists justified their program in utilitarian terms: by seeking to reduce the numbers of the “unfit,” they claimed to be reducing the numbers of those predestined to unhappiness. But the eugenics movement Galton founded flourished in a historical context of declining middle-class

What is meant by EUGENICS?



Frontispiece from Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, 1883

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Galton's early, 1869 work *Hereditary Genius* was an attempt to demonstrate the priority, in his words, of "nature" over "nurture" in determining the quality of human intelligence. In a rather tautological fashion, Galton set out to demonstrate that a reputation for intelligence amounted to intelligence and that men with (reputations for) intelligence begat offspring with (reputations for) intelligence. He appropriated Quetelet's binomial distribution, observing that the entrance examination scores of military cadets at Sandhurst fell into a bell-shaped pattern around a central mean. On the basis of this "naturalizing" evidence, he proposed a general quantitative hierarchy of intelligence and applied it to racial groups. This hierarchy was characterized by a distinct classicist longing: "The average ability of the Athenian race is, on the lowest possible estimate, very nearly two grades higher than our own—that is, about as much as our race is above that of the African negro."⁶⁵ Eugenics can be seen as an attempt to push the English social average toward an imaginary, lost Athens and away from an equally imaginary, threatening Africa.

Galton's passion for quantification and numerical ranking coexisted with a qualified faith in physiognomic description. His writings demonstrate a remarkable parallelism and tension between the desire to measure and the desire to look. His composites emerged from the attempt to merge optical and statistical procedures within a single "organic" operation. Galton's *Inquiries into Human Faculty* of 1883 began by suggesting some of the

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The composite apparatus provided Galton with a model of scientific intelligence, a mechanical model of intellectual labor. Furthermore, this intelligence answered to the logic of philosophical realism. Galton argued that his composites refuted nominalist approaches to the human sciences, demonstrating with certainty the reality of distinct racial types. This amounted to an essentialist physical anthropology of race.⁷⁸

It is not surprising, then, that Galton would come to regard his most successful composite as that depicting “the Jewish type.” In a historical context in which there was no clear anthropological consensus on the racial or ethnic character of modern Jews, Galton produced an image that was, according to Karl Pearson, “a landmark in composite photography”: “We all know the Jewish boy, and Galton’s portraiture brings him before us in a way that only a great work of art could equal—scarcely excel, for the artist would only idealise from *one* model.”⁷⁹ This applause, ominous enough as it is, takes on an even more sinister tone in retrospect when one considers the line of influence that led from Anglo-American eugenics to National Socialist *Rassentheorie*.⁸⁰

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Francis Galton, *The Jewish Type*, 1883. Plate 35 from Pearson.

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However, with the general demise of an optical model of empiricism, Galton’s hybridization of the camera and the statistical table approached extinction. Photography continued to serve the sciences, but in a less grandiose and exalted fashion, and consequently with more modest—and frequently more casual—truth claims, especially on the periphery of the social sciences.

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In the interests of a certain internationalism, however, I want to end with a story that takes us outside the contemporary art scene and away from the simultaneously inflated and deflated figure of the postmodernist author. This anecdote might suggest something of the hardships and dilemmas of a photographic practice engaged in from below, a photographic practice on ground patrolled by the police. In 1967 a young Black South African photographer named Ernest Cole published a book in the United States called *House of Bondage*. Cole's book and his story are remarkable. In order to photograph a broad range of South African society, Cole had first to change his racial classification from black to colored, no mean feat in a world of multiple bureaus of identity, staffed by officials who have mastered a subtle bureaucratic taxonomy of even the offhand gestures of the different racial and ethnic groups. He countered this apparatus, probably the last *physiognomic* system of domination in the world, with a descriptive strategy of his own, mapping out the various checkpoints in the multiple channels of apartheid.

Cole photographed during a period of relative political "calm" in South Africa, midway between the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 and the Soweto students' revolt of 1976. At a time when black resistance was fragmented and subterranean in the wake of the banning of the main opposition groups, he discovered a limited, and by his own account problematic, figure of resistance in young black toughs, or *tsotsis*, who lived lives of petty criminality. Cole photographed *tsotsis* mugging a white worker for his pay envelope as well as a scene of a white man slapping a black beggar child. And he regularly photographed the routine passbook arrests of blacks who were caught outside the zones in which they were permitted to travel. As might be expected, Cole's documentation of the everyday flows of power, survival, and criminal resistance got him into trouble with the law. He was questioned repeatedly by police, who assumed he was carrying stolen camera equipment. Finally he was stopped after photographing passbook arrests. Asked to explain himself, he claimed to be making a documentary on juvenile delinquency. Sensing his criminological promise, the police, who then as now operated through a pervasive system of informers, invited him to join the ranks. At that point, Cole decided to leave the

Below: Tough talk and maximums. These are
tough, grumpy, a few have turned to crime rather than work as
skid row's garden boys or messengers - the usual
jobs available to young blacks. Right: A white pocket
being picked. If times are tough, it's tough
for everyone. Black and white hand under the chin is engaging.
This man, dominated by his partner, does
not realize his thick pocket is being rifled. Below, right: He
is allowed to get his run - all next time.



From Ernest Cole, *House of
Bondage*, 1967

country while he still could. *House of Bondage* was assembled from the negatives he smuggled out of South Africa. Since publishing his book in exile, Cole has disappeared from the world of professional photojournalism.¹⁰⁵

The example of Cole's work suggests that we would be wise to avoid an overly monolithic conception of realism. Not all realisms necessarily play into the hands of the police, despite Theodor Adorno's remark, designed to lampoon a Leninist epistemology once and for all, that "knowledge has not, like the state police, a rogues' gallery of its objects."¹⁰⁶ If we are to listen to, and act in solidarity with, the polyphonic testimony of the oppressed and exploited, we should recognize that some of this testimony, like Cole's, will take the ambiguous form of visual documents, documents of the "microphysics" of barbarism. These documents can easily fall into the hands of the police or their intellectual apologists. Our problem, as artists and intellectuals living near but not at the center of a global system of power, will be to help prevent the cancellation of that testimony by more authoritative and official texts.