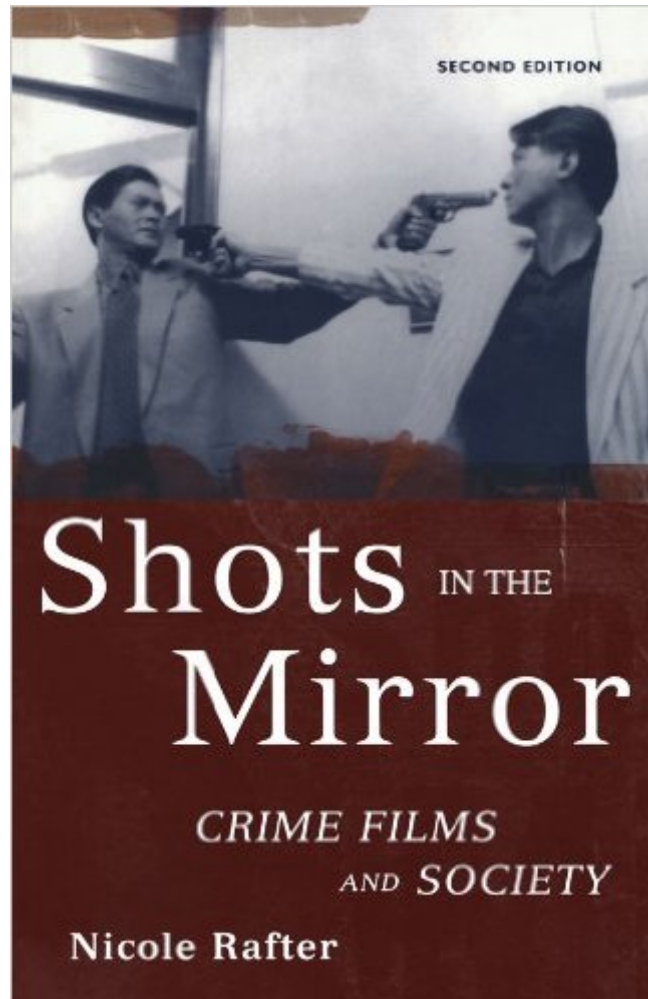


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# Shots In The Mirror: Crime Films And Society



## Synopsis

Movies play a central role in shaping our understanding of crime and the world generally, helping us define what is good and bad, desirable and unworthy, lawful and illicit, strong and weak. Crime films raise controversial issues about the distribution of social power and the meanings of deviance, and they provide a safe space for fantasies of rebellion, punishment, and the restoration of order. In the first comprehensive study of its kind, well-known criminologist Nicole Rafter examines the relationship between society and crime films from the perspectives of criminal justice, film history and technique, and sociology. *Shots in the Mirror* begins with an overview of the history of crime films and the emergence of various genres, surveying important films from the silent era, the early gangster films of the '30s, classic film noir, the work of Hitchcock, and recent innovations by Scorsese, Tarantino, and the Coen brothers. Keeping pace with the evolution of crime films, *Shots in the Mirror* has been updated to respond to recent developments, trends, and shifting circumstances in the genre. This new edition expands the scope and increases the depth and variety of the previous edition by including foreign films in addition to American movies. Rafter also integrates an entirely new body of literature into the study, reflecting the rapid expansion of scholarship on law-related films over the past three years. She has added a chapter on psycho movies, a previously unrecognized subcategory of crime films. Another new chapter, "The Alternative Tradition and Films of Moral Ambiguity," focuses on recent sex crime films. This new final chapter grows organically out of the first edition's distinction between traditional crime films, with their easy solutions to social problems, and those more unusual critical films which belong to the bleaker, morally ambiguous, alternative tradition. Rafter examines more than three hundred films in this study, considering what they have to say, socially and ideologically, about the causes of crime, and adding valuable contributions to the on-going debate on whether media representations of violence cause crime. *Shots in the Mirror* is both a marvelous history of crime films and a trenchant analysis of their complex relationship to larger society.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Nicole Rafter's text offers a rigorous analysis of important social issues facing not only scholars and students of criminality and criminal justice but members of our own communities as well. Film- like other media- provides a viable avenue for academic study and discourse and should be used both as a tool for instruction as well as a subject for critical inspection. Rafter addresses seminal, contemporary "crime and justice" issues by considering the various genres of crime films, namely cop films, courtroom dramas, prisons, and crime itself. She contends that crime films in each of these genres make two general arguments. First, they all criticize society to a certain extent, whether the issue concerns excessive use of force by the police or the violent crime rate. Secondly, these films provide the audience with resolution by displaying the triumph of "justice" over corruption and brutality. As Rafter explains, crime films offer us an uncomfortable sense of gratification. One of the many strengths of this text concerns its accessibility to both members of the academy and the general public. Rafter's text steps outside the boundaries of criminology and criminal justice and embraces a variety of disciplines and perspectives. As she maintains throughout her book, crime films reflect our ideas about social, economic, and political issues, and they shape the way in which we think about them. By examining the interrelationships between film history and technique, social history, criminal justice and criminological theory from multiple interdisciplinary perspectives, Rafter offers a fresh and (enjoyably) enlightening approach to the study and understanding of crime, criminality, and criminal justice within the context of film.

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