The resurrection of former prisons as museums has caught the attention of tourists along with scholars interested in studying that particular pastime (Ross, 2012; Strange and Kempa, 2003; Welch, 2012a, 2013; Welch and Macuare, 2011; Wilson, 2008a). Unsurprisingly, due to their grim subject matter, prison museums tend to invert the “Disney” experience, becoming the antithesis of “the happiest place on earth” (Williams, 2007: 99). With that realization, it is fitting to situate penal tourism within a larger phenomenon known as dark tourism, in which people gravitate to sites associated with war, genocide, and other tragic events for purposes of remembrance, education, or even entertainment (Lennon and Foley, 2010; Rojek, 1993; Stone and Sharpley, 2008). In the realm of punishment, dark tourism has been examined from the standpoint of penal spectatorship involving bystanders who gaze at the spectacle of pain and suffering. Michelle Brown, in her insightful book The Culture of Punishment: Prison, Society, and Spectacle, explains that museum goers are subjected to various techniques of positioning intended to establish certain perspectives and perceptions (see Welch, 2010a). For instance, by keeping penal spectators at a safe social distance from the realities of torture and other forms of brutality, interest in dark tourism is carefully regulated (Walby and Piche, 2011; see Piche and Walby, 2010; Huey, 2011).

Consider a visit to the Clink prison museum in London, a cramped, dingy, and dimly lit cellar that from 1144 until 1780 served as a dungeon for debtors as well as religious and political dissenters (see figure 1). The brochure advertising the Clink promotes the museum as offering “gruesome stories of prisoners” and a “hands-on torture chamber,” thereby inviting visitors to become participants. Toward that end, a series of subterranean galleries are
devoted to the virtual infliction of pain whereby penal spectators have safe contact with the various tools of the torture trade, including the stocks, pillories, cat-o’-nine-tails, and the rack. Storyboards inform tourists about the rationale of certain devices. A sign explaining “The Manacles” reads: “One of the simplest forms of ‘enhanced interrogation’ was to leave a person alone, hanging in manacles for hours and hours, or days; lack of food and water, accompanied by the increasing strain on the arms, and the total solitude might well be enough to induce compliance.” Curators are quick to point out that the manacles were used to evade the rule of law: “Since this treatment left no grievous marks, it was not legally classed as torture and could therefore be employed without a royal warrant; the only great risk was that the victim might go mad before confessing” (see Welch, 2009a, 2009b, 2011a).

The Clink’s “hands-on torture chamber” also contains a key interactive component that invites tourists to “take the role of the other.” For example, visitors can literally put themselves in the shoes of prisoners by trying on “The Boot.” A placard located above a replica of “The Spanish Boot (or the Scottish Boot)” explains:
The Boot was an awful device used to crush the foot, the victim’s foot would be placed in the boot, wood would then be packed in around the foot. The boot would be filled with either oil or water resulting in the swelling of the wood and crushing of the foot. The Boot would then have a fire built underneath it bringing the contents to a boil resulting in the victim’s foot falling off.

**Things to do:**
1) Try putting the boot on your foot.
(We do advise the removal of your shoes)

That technique of interactive pedagogy is used frequently in the Clink’s “hands-on torture chamber.” Consider “The Collar” that “would be placed around the individuals neck, the collar is lead lined and contains a number of spikes.” While inflicting excruciating pain, the spiked contraption would infect the victim with lead poisoning, resulting in death. Visitors are encouraged to think about such suffering:

**Things to do:**
1) Feel the weight of the collar and imagine what it would have been like locked tight around your neck.
2) Imagine how the victim would be able to swallow with such a tight item around their neck.

At the Clink, there is no shortage of “hands-on” experiences with torture instruments, which thereby reinforces a visceral effect. Similar “things to do” are extended to the ball and chain, thumbscrews, the chastity belt, and the chopping block (“put your head on the block and have your photo taken”). Fittingly, the tour concludes with the “Torture Chair,” described as a device to gain confessions from prisoners. Once the body was fully strapped, the back of the chair would be raised and tilted forward, forcing the victim to “sit on the edge of their seat.” From that position, the torturer could easily apply a number of tools, including the tongue pullers. The poster suggests “things to do”:

1) Think what they might do to you once you’re strapped in the chair?
2) Guess what tools they might use on you?

While seated in the torture chair, penal spectators complete their visit with a mildly amusing moment: that is, having a personal picture taken with the museum’s camera. The instructions read: “After your photo has been taken a receipt will print from the box on the wall to your left . . . Simply log on to
your photo via the website where you will be able to download a copy to your computer to keep. You will also have the opportunity to order a variety of special gifts.” Therefore, a trip to the Clink does not remain in the past; through state-of-the-art technology—not to mention merchandising—tourists can keep a living memory that forever connects them with the situated-ness of the former prison: “I was there.”

Though themes of cruelty are prevalent in penal tourism, not all prison museums risk becoming a “morbid theme park” (see Williams, 2007: 102). Certainly, there is always much more to the visit. In their critique, Lennon and Foley (2010) propose that dark tourism poses questions and doubts about modernity and its consequences. Likewise, the case studies contained in this book decipher the complex narratives told through prison museums, including claims to progress, rationality, technology, and science. Moreover, critical analysis reflects on the manner by which prison museums—as storytelling institutions in Buenos Aires, Cape Town, Hong Kong, Johannesburg, London, Melbourne, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seoul, and Sydney—issue a historical tale about their host city with respect to punishment and social control. Of course, the persuasiveness of those stories depends largely on techniques of positioning and distancing as well as on the overall force of the museum effect. Setting the tone for our exploration, we turn to a brief overview of museum studies, particularly as that scholarly field informs penal tourism within a wider cultural sociology of punishment.

THE DYNAMICS OF PRISON MUSEUMS

A museum, according to Paul Williams, is “an institution devoted to the acquisition, conservation, study, exhibition, and educational interpretation of objects with scientific, historical, or artistic value” (2007: 8). Rather than remaining static repositories, museums are appreciated for being dynamic, a quality that has attracted an interdisciplinary field of scholars devoted to museum studies (Bennett, 1995; Crimp, 1993; Prior, 2002). Among the many areas of interest belonging to museum studies is the overarching impact that museums have on their visitors, culture, and society. That museum effect is produced by a complex interplay between objects, images, and space (Casey, 2003; Malraux, 1967). Such interaction entails a good deal of positioning whereby visitors are situated within the museum for the purpose of receiving a certain pedagogical lesson on the institution’s collection. Unlike when stu-
dents are seated in a lecture hall, museums relay their messages through locomotion. Recognizing that visitors’ experiences are realized through their physical movement, museums (as well as fairs and exhibitions) aspire to “regulate the performative aspects of their visitors’ conduct. Overcoming mind/body dualities in treating their visitors as, essentially, ‘minds on legs,’ each, in its different way, is a place for ‘organized walking’ in which an intended message is communicated in the form of a (more or less) directed itinerary” (Bennett, 1995: 6).

A museum’s use of “organized walking” circulates visitors around specific objects and images contained within a larger cultural space. Let us briefly touch on these features of the museum so as to understand better penal tourism and the museum effect. Museums facilitate their narratives by putting on display objects intended to catch the attention of visitors. Williams writes: “The force of ‘the museum effect’ . . . is the enlargement of consequence that comes from being reported, rescued, cleaned, numbered, researched, arranged, lit, and written about . . . [It] enables objects from the past to be valued in entirely new ways” (2007: 28). As objects become part of the collection,* they undergo a cultural transformation, passing from use-value (in their initial incarnation) to signifying-value (in their current incarnation). Curators tend to select objects based on one of three criteria. First, the object boasts signifying-value by being rare or revelatory. At the Argentine prison museum in Buenos Aires, for instance, tourists have the opportunity to gaze at prisoner-made drug paraphernalia (i.e., a bong) that represents not only a deviant social world but also a means of psycho-physiological escape from the pains of imprisonment. Second, an object may be selected for being typical and representative of a category. The lashing triangle exhibited at the Sydney Barracks is virtually indistinguishable from the ones in the museums in London, Melbourne, Hong Kong, and Johannesburg. Finally, a curator might choose an object due to its remnant-themed iconography: that is, for having belonged to a remarkable person or group. Penal spectators at the Melbourne Gaol can deepen their appreciation of Ned Kelly’s legend by beholding his famous sash as well as his pistol that was nicked by a constable’s bullet during the notorious shoot-out.

Regardless of the criteria for selection, objects on display can be interpreted as *semiophores*—items prized for their capacity to produce meaning

---

* Pomian (1990: 9) defines a collection as “a set of natural or artificial objects, kept temporarily or permanently out of economic circuit, afforded special protection in enclosed places adapted specifically for that purpose and put on display.”
rather than for their usefulness (Pomian, 1990). With respect to dark tourism, some objects have a sinister appeal and are “insidiously arresting, particularly because we assume that they were actually used in terrible acts” (Williams, 2007: 31). Consider, for example, the Clink’s display of the “Scavenger’s Daughter”—an iron contraption that compressed the victim into a distorted posture so painful that it caused bleeding from the nose and ears. The device is accompanied by a storyboard with a disturbing illustration of person caught in its grip. Indeed, that picture speaks to another dimension of the museum effect, namely, the power of images.

Whereas images belong to the larger category of objects, at times they are regarded as interpretive illustrations that allow visitors to connect with the past (see Alpers, 1991; Carrabine, 2012; Lawrence, 2012). Photographs, as modern images, are especially significant in museums due to their power to captivate as well as their authority to verify history: “Hence, the museum is crucial not only in its ability to provide photographs with the expert technical verification that establishes their truth-value, but also with the cultural verification, wherein the institution’s decision to collect and display the image establishes its cultural worth” (Williams, 2007: 53). At the prison museum in Buenos Aires, a photograph of Severino Di Giovanni entices curiosity. The infamous (debonair) anarchist is introduced to visitors in three photographs: a headshot, a group shot, and one with him standing next to the chair where moments later he was executed by a firing squad in 1931.

Museum studies have been faulted for neglecting the importance of space and spacial effect, in part because the field has descended from art history, which concentrates more on the meaning of artifacts than on the larger institutional significance (Bennett, 1995; Prior, 2002). Museums housed in former prisons, however, tend to avoid that drawback because of their unique architecture, enhancing a sense of both internal and external space. The Melbourne Gaol, modeled after Eastern State Penitentiary (Philadelphia) and Pentonville (London), stands conspicuously in the city’s central district. Order is expressed through its sheer size, scale, and symmetrical design. Upon entering the institution, visitors find themselves positioned in a long corridor with rows of cells stacked on three levels. Without hesitation, visitors look directly up to the lantern ceiling that filters shafts of light into an otherwise gloomy interior.

One scholar keenly observes: “Architecture matters because it lasts, of course. It matters because it is big, and it shapes the landscape of our everyday lives. But beyond that, it also matters because, more than any other cultural
form, it is a means of setting the historical record straight” (Sudjic, 2006: 23). Setting the record straight is an important dimension of penal tourism because visitors are positioned in ways that convince them of the overall authenticity of the institution. Usually, that is not a difficult task since by being housed in a former penal institution, prison museums are rightfully judged to be authentic. Moreover, because some prison museums were sites of execution (of famous people), they are often regarded as hallowed ground. Accordingly, the historical accuracy is rarely disputed: “this building was used for this purpose; these people were killed here” (Williams, 2007: 80). Touring the Melbourne Gaol, visitors are presented with the tale of Ned Kelly: in that context, the story seems rather hagiographic. The Gaol’s advertising logo appearing on the brochure and the sign at the footpath features a drawing of Kelly’s iconic helmet worn to shield him from police bullets during the famous standoff. After his capture, Kelly was transported to the Melbourne Gaol, where he was hanged on November 11, 1880 (see Welch, 2011c, 2012b).

In sum, the museum effect relies on the mutually reinforcing relationship between objects, images, and space—all of which are linked to a particular site. To be sure, a defining characteristic of prison museums is their sited-ness. Such venues become a major draw for tourists because the prison and its pedagogy are viewed as authentic.

GOVERNING THROUGH MUSEUMS

In his decidedly Foucaultian approach in The Birth of the Museum, Tony Bennett locates parallels between the genealogy of the museum and that of the prison. Early on, both institutions were typically located at the center of the city, where they stood as embodiments of power to “show and tell.” By doing so, they aspired to incorporate people in the processes of the state (see Simon, 2007): “If the museum and the penitentiary thus represented the Janus face of power, there was none the less—at least symbolically—an economy of effort between them” (Bennett, 1995: 87). Bennett mentions the prominent English social reformer James Silk Buckingham, who in 1849 issued a report ambitiously titled National Evils and Practical Remedies, with

* As we shall discuss in chapter 9 on memorialization, fieldwork for a portion of this project took place at the Melbourne Gaol on November 12, 2010, a day after the 130th anniversary of Kelly’s execution. A floral display commemorating Kelly was set at the gallows, the very site of his death.
the Plan for a Model Town. His project was aimed at extolling the virtues of civilized man to establish a “higher state of existence” for Victorian society (224). The model town would be clean and neatly organized around such architectural beauty as statues, colonnades, and fountains. Ideally, churches, libraries, and art galleries would eclipse rowdy pubs, brothels, and the vices they incite. As Bennett points out, that Victorian program demonstrates an interest in conceptualizing the tasks of government. With the head of a family as its paradigm, government would assume gentle responsibility over its citizenry so as to give it a proper upbringing through carefully designed cities that would not only enhance surveillance but deliver incentives to partake in quiet sophistication embodied in parks, public lectures, and museums (see Foucault, 1978): “If, in this way, culture is brought within the province of government, its conception is on par with other regions of government. The reform of the self—of the inner life—is just as much dependent on the provision of appropriate technologies for this purpose as is the achievement of desired ends in any other area of social administration” (Bennett, 1995: 18).

What museum scholars, like Bennett, are placing at the forefront of their analysis is the refinement of cultural power (see Casey, 2003; Crimp, 1993). By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the public museum was taking on its modern form and becoming regarded as a useful means for governing the subordinate classes, which, in the view of the elites, were in need of cultural improvement with respect to their habits, morals, and manners. Still, the sweep of cultural power would facilitate the civilizing of the population as a whole (Buckingham, 1849). Using Foucaultian logic, Bennett contends that by regulating social behavior, cultural power endows individuals with new capacities for self-monitoring and moral restraint. In the 1880s, Sir Henry Cole promoted the use of the museums (as well as parks and chapels): “If you wish to vanquish Drunkenness and the Devil, make God’s day of rest elevating and refining to the working man” (1884: 368; Goode, 1895).

Though festivals and theatrical performances subject their audiences to the display of power, the downside is that those events are merely temporal. Hence, whatever cultural meaning is achieved is intermittent and tends to fade with the passing of time. So as to produce a better economy of cultural power, the enlistment of institutions allows government to use such sites as museums to deliver an ongoing influence. That progressively modifying form of cultural power is believed to have a more sustained effect on visitors’ thoughts, emotions, and conduct, hence making them “cultured.” The birth of the museum was very much a technological project (Bennett, 1995). True,
the symbolic display of power remains important; still, the museum relies on a set of exercises through which visitors are transformed into the active bearers of the self-improvement that culture was held to embody. Toward that aim, the cultural technology of museums had to be carefully arranged. In contrast to private collections of objects, art, and artifacts, the museum was designed to be a public space so that the emulation of civilized forms of behavior might be recognized and acquired, becoming diffused through the entire social body.

Museums were not simply intended to evoke surprise. As a space for representation, the collection was displayed in ways that promoted knowledge, understanding, and enlightenment. Rather than remaining stuck in the past, museums were organized in ways that became a “nursery of living thought” (Goode, 1895; Key, 1973: 86). Overall, the museum utilized the principles of observation and regulation so that the visitor’s body was taken hold of and molded according to the new norms of social conduct (Bennett, 1995; see Crimp, 1993; Elias, 2005). As we shall discover in this book, cultural power plays a crucial role in prison museums. It is through the transmission of meaning that such sites educate, enlighten, and, in some instances, even civilize visitors.*

Cultural Sociology of Punishment

David Garland (2009) is correct in noting that over the past twenty-five years the cultural turn in criminology has become more mainline. While many scholars look to an emerging field of cultural studies for insights into crime and punishment (Ferrell, Hayward, Morrison, and Presdee, 2004; Hayward, 2012; Hayward and Young, 2004), others prefer to return to some of the “great masters” in sociology, most notably, Emile Durkheim. This recent resurgence of the cultural sociology of punishment, however, has sparked some debate on the theoretical merits of Durkheim, especially in opposition to Michel Foucault (Smith, 2008; see Garland, 2009). While not giving into the putative polarity between those luminaries of social thought, the purpose of this analysis is to synthesize the insights of power-based theories (Foucault)

* Between 2008 and 2012, fieldwork involved at least one site visit to each museum (and sometimes several). The entire building and its collection were photographed (compiling a data base of approximately four hundred photos per museum). Supplemental materials such as scholarly publications, brochures, and gift shop books were also consulted.
with semiotics (Durkheim). For example, at the Argentine Penitentiary Museum, we detect the construction of a narrative about the birth of a modern Argentine prison that reaches beyond a reliance on pure disciplinary technologies geared toward transforming convicts into productive workers. At a deeper cultural level, there are important socioreligious influences at play. That museum goes to great lengths to display religious architecture and artifacts in ways that reveal unique relations between the State and the local Catholic Church as they pursue their own vision of prisoner reform. To be in discussed greater detail, religion and governance—as tandem forces—spill over into matters of power, modernization, social control, and gender (see Welch and Macuare, 2011).

In his influential work *Punishment and Culture*, Philip Smith contributes enormously to the cultural sociology of punishment by bringing into the forefront Durkheim’s (2008 [1915], 2012 [1933]) socioreligious concepts, namely, pollution, the sacred, the mythical, and the cult of the individual. Each of those cultural themes resonates in many forms of penal phenomena. For instance, the view that crime (the criminal) is something “dirty” and needs to be cleaned and purified stems from notions of pollution (see Douglas, 1966). The sacred refers not only to higher powers embodied within institutional religion but also to a wider sense of the supernatural that inspires awe. Legends and stories rely on the mythological to spin enduring narratives about key historical figures, events, and social movements. Finally, Durkheim’s insights into what he called the cult of the individual allow us to recognize an evolving sense of personal dignity that promotes mutual respect in a civilized world, even in the face of criminal prosecution, adjudication, and punishment.

In an effort to advance a cultural sociology of punishment, this work borrows Geertz’s (2000 [1973]) method of thick description, whereby researchers deposit their observations into an in-depth network of framing intentions and cultural meanings (see Smith, 2008). Developing a thick description is indeed central to case studies by which a detailed interpretation draws from an array of objects, symbols, and narration. Consider thick descriptions of

* Smith’s (2008) *Punishment and Culture* stems from a renewed interest in Durkheim shared by other scholars intent on advancing a neo-Durkheimian perspective that breaks from the “functionalist” and “positivist” tradition (see Alexander, 2005; Bellah, 2005; Riley, 2005; Smith and Alexander, 2005). By reworking Durkheim, there is much to gain for sociological, cultural, and criminological theory as they inform a deeper understanding of penal tourism.
socioreligious concepts in prison museums around the world. Again, at the Argentine prison museum, a gallery delivers a curious message about pollution being eradicated by modern purification, hygiene, and cleansing. Visitors are shown a white porcelain basin that at first glance seems to represent secular hand washing. However, the attached placard describes its use for “la clausura” (closing ceremony) by the religious staff as they prepare incarcerated women for release into the community. Similarly, a photograph of a bedroom reserved for conjugal visits captures the influence of Catholicism: a crucifix is conspicuously placed above the bed, suggesting that an omniscient deity oversees all human activities, including carnal knowledge.

Durkheim’s notion of the mythological has tremendous purchase in prison museums. In the story of Ned Kelly as told at the Melbourne Gaol, curators underscore his legacy in Australian cultural history. A storyboard titled “NED THE LEGEND” describes the execution in literary fashion and issues a closing passage titled “Australian Icon”: “The Kelly gang’s ‘flashiness’; courage, daring style and distinctive armour captured popular imagination. Despite his crimes, Ned Kelly and his iconic helmet remain for many Australians a powerful image, representing an emerging national identity celebrating independence, mateship, and ‘a fair go.’”

As evidence of Ned’s enduring mark on traditional and popular culture, the museum displays posters of movies inspired by the Kelly gang, most prominently, “Mick Jagger as Ned Kelly (Not Suitable for Children).” One cannot help make the connection between the (rock star) status of Mick and that of Ned (see figure 2).

Another important socioreligious concept is what Durkheim called the cult of the individual, referring to an evolving sense of personal dignity. Whereas such concepts as pollution, the sacred, and the mythological are pretty much self-evident, Durkheim’s notion of the cult of the individual warrants a bit more elaboration since it merges his theories on punishment and religion. In The Division of Labor, Durkheim maintains that punishing criminal offenders is first and foremost an emotional response aimed at avenging an outrage of morality. Smith (2008) delves deeper into that

* Garland detects in Smith a tendency toward Levi-Straussian thinking, whereby the social and cultural order is understood to be patterned by binary oppositions and timeless universal codes. A chief problem in that way of theorizing is that socioreligious concepts become “so all-embracing as to rob them of precision (e.g., everything that is valued becomes ‘sacred’)” (Garland, 2009: 261). As a remedy, Garland proposes a Geertzian perspective from which cultural meaning is shaped by local usage (see Melossi, 2001).
Durkheimian perspective, pointing out that even in the modern world penal law could never be entirely rational because it is embedded within cultural systems. Those systems, according to Durkheim, are forms of social control that are religious in character. Smith’s close reading of *The Division of Labor* shows that under the condition of modernity there emerged a new kind of
moral awareness, producing not only greater sentiments of tolerance but also a new grounding for the sacred known as the cult of the individual (see Garland, 1990; Lukes and Scull, 1983). The cult of the individual joins a cultural system committed to treating others with dignity and respect because the human person is sacred. From the religious standpoint that man is at once believer and god, Smith taps into Goffman (1967), who observed that social life is a series of ritualized encounters in which “the sacred status of the self is continually affirmed” (Smith 2008: 19). In turn, breaches of respect are commonly met with resentment or even disgust (see Elias, 2005).

Theorizing the evolution of punishment, Durkheim examines how punishments became less harsh and more humane. As a foreshadow to Goffman, Durkheim insists that ideal images of man are comparable to those of the deity. Moreover, in taking the role of the other, Durkheim repeats the Golden Rule: “Do not do unto others that which you would not wish done to you” (1983: 124–25). Durkheim goes on to explain that what tempers the collective anger, which is at the heart of punishment, is the “sympathy which we feel for every man who suffers” (1983: 125–26). Such sympathy—as a reflective emotion—tends to moderate punishment.

At the Hyde Park Barracks museum in Sydney, for instance, we are reminded of the significance of “The End of Transportation.” The narrative promotes an emerging Australian identity that ultimately pushed back against the British. The last ship transporting convicts to Sydney landed in 1840, and nine years later the Hashemy was kept from reaching shore as a protest of five thousand citizens at Circular Quay “made their objections known.” The local resistance to transportation marked a new era for Australia. Embracing the cult of the individual, Australians along with British parliamentarians (that is, the 1837 Molesworth Commission) concluded that the practice was “immoral, uneconomical and counterproductive to deterring crime . . . demeaning and close to slavery.”

In formulating a cultural approach to punishment, Durkheim’s socioreligious concepts are treated as fluid rather than static. In doing so, the project intends to show how they commonly interact and facilitate the maintenance of dominant (official) narratives. Furthermore, by attending to local history and culture, socioreligious themes add to a more layered interpretation of the story being told. As a vehicle for cultural transmission, prison museums often rely on poetic messages via plaques and literary references. A poster in the Argentine prison museum cites a passage from the famous novel *La Vuelta de Martin Fierro*, whereby the penitentiary is depicted as a form of justice as
well as a venue offering prisoners a new baptism. Perhaps no other item in the museum’s collection captures the overlap of Durkheim’s socioreligious concepts as well. Obviously, there is reference to the sacred along with the purification of pollution. And together they reinforce the myth of the progressive State and its commitment to the cult of the individual, whereby the personal dignity of convicts is preserved through a ritual of justice, delivering a higher (transcendent) form of redemption. As we shall address in coming chapters, the official narrative on Argentine justice omits the atrocities of the Dirty War carried out by the State’s military apparatus between 1976 and 1983.

In a Foucaultian framework, a cultural sociology of punishment benefits from recognizing the power-control thesis. Prisons, as Foucault (1977, 1980a) theorized in great detail, are among the key sites where state power is exercised. Sharpening that observation, Foucault demonstrated how the institutional histories of penal regimes are grounded in the complex formulation of expert knowledge. In Europe and the United States, penitentiaries during the early nineteenth century had become laboratories designed to pursue the new sciences of surveillance, control, and discipline. The emerging modern prison, according to several scholars, served as a “museum for the display and diffusion of this knowledge” (Scicluna and Knepper, 2008: 503; see Ignatieff, 1978; Johnston, 1958, 2000, 2010; Rothman, 1971). Revealingly, a brochure explains that the Argentine prison museum is “meant to work as a technical-cultural institution: its purpose would be to keep all materials that could witness past experiences of the penitentiary life” (museum brochure, English version: 4). The term technical-cultural institution should catch the eye of scholars interested in penal tourism since it suggests that visitors are instructed how to view the emergence of prison technologies alongside significant cultural interpretations. In other words, tourists are taught a particular lesson in the cultural sociology of punishment that does not separate the technical from its meaning. Indeed, state officials use the museum to communicate a coherent story about Argentine penology and its role in state making.

The Hyde Park Barracks in Sydney also speaks to a wider imagination on order. At the perimeter of the museum, visitors are presented with a plaque titled “Control.” It reads: “Convict constables and clerks occupied these two guardhouses between 1819 and 1848. This was the only entrance to the compound and they controlled the large numbers of people and goods passing through it.” Though not a prison or jail per se, the barracks was tightly governed through a regime of strict rules and regulations geared toward keeping convicts in line. That disciplinary (Foucaultian) theme prevails throughout
much of the tour. “Life at the Barracks,” as described by a storyboard, reminds us that inmates did not have much privacy, free time, or personal space. Convicts would complain of the corrupt and sadistic practices of the superintendents. Still, the heavy-handed treatment of convicts appears to be held somewhat in balance by a system of fairness and incentives, or what Foucault (1977) conceptualized as a microeconomy of perpetual penal power. The staff served convicts only two meals a day, but extra food was issued in exchange for longer hours on the job. Conversely, rule breaking was penalized by restricting the diet to a ration of bread and water along with a stint in solitary confinement. Within the barracks, moral order was constantly being checked. A poster titled “Surveillance” gives visitors a sense that anxiety over the “crime” of homosexuality pervaded the dormitory, especially at night when lamps were extinguished. Along that theme, the tour features a “peep hole” outside the dormitory room into which the night constables would attempt to police “immoral” sexual contact among convicts (see figure 3). Put another way, such surveillance was intended to maintain a purified space from the contamination of polluting vice, thereby bridging the perspectives of Foucault and Durkheim.
At the Old Melbourne Gaol, we again witness how a particular prison museum tells its own story. Unlike the barracks in Sydney that served as secure accommodations for convicts, the Old Melbourne Gaol was Victoria’s first permanent purpose-built prison. The architecture is imposing, reinforcing its semiotic message about what exactly it is—a penitentiary. By the 1880s, the Gaol deserved its reputation as a modern penal institution, again borrowing significantly from Eastern State Penitentiary (Philadelphia) and Pentonville Prison (London). Echoing Foucault’s thoughts on discipline, an elaborate brochure describes how internal order was maintained: “Life in the gaol was hard—prisoners were kept in solitary confinement, communication was severely restricted, food was barely adequate and punishments for breaches of discipline were harsh” (Poultney, 2003: 1). That instrumentalist narrative on discipline persists throughout much of the tour. In developing the state’s system of imprisonment, Victorians looked to the English model. A storyboard titled “Pentonville, Punishment and Penitence” quotes George Duncan, inspector general of penal institutions in Victoria (1871): “There can be no better test of a reformatory system than its success in developing and fostering habits of industry and self-control.” The architects of the Melbourne Gaol replicated the design of Pentonville based on single cells, which had become a “model for prisons throughout the British Empire in the mid-19th century.” That regimen, the poster concedes, was first developed in the United States. Still, much as with the American and British experiences, the practice of isolating of prisoners (“intended to break their spirit in order to re-form their character”) was later abandoned in Victoria since it became viewed as ineffective, brutal, and degrading—a nod to the cult of the individual. While this analysis of prison museums pursues a cultural sociology of punishment by integrating the insights of Foucault and Durkheim, there is an effort to explore dark tourism by reflecting on a critique of modernity.

DARK TOURISM AND MODERNITY

Themes of modernity, reform, and progress figure prominently in the prison museums studied herein. As a historical starting point, the comparison begins in London, where from 1144 until 1780, the Clink served as a dungeon, or what could be described as a premodern prison. Next in chronological order, the Hyde Park Barracks offers evidence of an emerging modern penal institution; built between 1817 and 1819, the barracks served as secured...
accommodations for convicts arriving after the First Fleet (1788). The penitentiary in its early modern form, however, is witnessed at Eastern State Penitentiary (in Philadelphia), admitting its first inmate in 1829. That version of modern penal architecture was replicated at the Melbourne Gaol, constructed between the 1840s and the 1860s. Attending further to narratives on the birth of modern prisons, the Argentine prison museum delivers a story of continued progress. Though its history is steeped in religious tension—much like that of the Clink—the museum in Buenos Aires shows visitors how a more secular penal sphere eventually eclipsed a theological regime.

Expanding the cultural sociology of punishment into the terrain of history, the chapters ahead rely on thick descriptions of penal modernity and its various components, including economics, governance, architecture, and science. As prisons became increasingly modernized, their means of production followed suit. Dating back to the 1820s, prison reformers adhered to the economic principles of efficiency and profit while advancing notions of humane treatment. In tandem, programs to transform convicts into productive workers as well as law-abiding citizens were realized in prison architecture whose innovative designs enhanced surveillance (see Foucault, 1977; Garland, 1990; Melossi and Pavarini, 1981).

Although early prison reformers viewed the modern prison as an alternative to corporal punishment, penal institutions remained rife with cruelty (Johnston, 1958, 2000, 2010). Curiously, prison administrators were soon attracted to the allure of science for the purposes of inflicting—and managing—calibrated degrees of pain (Welch, 2009a, 2009b, 2011a; see Becker and Wetzel, 2007). A prevalent feature in penal tourism is the display of devices for maltreatment, torture, and execution, many of which appear to be adapted to humane reform through science. For example, the museum at the Melbourne Gaol goes to great lengths to document the role of science—physics, anatomy, and medicine—in pursuit of the perfect drop from the gallows. In its exhibition, a poster quotes Charles Duff’s book *A Handbook on Hanging* (1828): “To achieve such a hanging, the rope had to be the right length. Mr Berry, an English hangman in the 1880s, worked out a table calculating the length of the rope required according to the weight of the person to be hanged. If the rope was too long it could wrench the head off, too short and it caused prolonged strangulation.” A hospital senior warder wrote in 1918 regarding the hanging of Arthur Oldring: “Death was absolutely instantaneous. The best execution ever witnessed.” The book *The Particulars of Execution*, replete with sketches (and later photographs) of fractured vertebrae, demonstrates the role
of science in modernizing hangings. Moreover, such expert knowledge had a legal component since under the Act to Regulate the Execution of Criminals (1855) death was to be “instantaneous.”

Without losing sight of the cultural sociology of punishment, a comparative study of prison museums lends itself to a wider critique of modernity and tourism, especially dark tourism. Scholars remind us that tourism as an educative (and recreational) enterprise is closely aligned with the principles of modernity (Burkhart and Medlik, 1981; Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, and Wanhill, 1993). Developing their social critique of dark tourism and the attraction of death and disaster, Lennon and Foley (2010) propose that dark tourism posits questions and doubts about modernity and its consequences. They write, “Our argument is that ‘dark tourism’ is an intimation of post-modernity. We do not seek to enter any philosophical debates over the use of this term but, rather, aim to recognize the significant aspects of ‘post-modernity’ which are broadly taken to represent its main features. If these features amount to late capitalism, or late modernity, then so be it” (11).

Lennon and Foley sketch out their perspective on modernity and dark tourism according to three elements. In the first, dark tourism thrives on global communication technologies that possess the capacity to initiate interest. Nearly all the prison museums studied here have websites that draw attention to their site as an important tourist destination, whether one is traveling to Buenos Aires, Hong Kong, or London. Moreover, global communication technology—the Internet—crosses over into the realm of movies that can be streamed online (e.g., on Netflix or YouTube), giving greater exposure to such favorites as Escape from Alcatraz, featuring Clint Eastwood. Those virtual experiences have a phenomenological effect since they allow for the exploration of global territory in ways that collapse space and time (see Ross, 1983).

The second aspect of dark tourism, according to Lennon and Foley, involves the display of selected objects, images, and spaces. Altogether they prompt anxiety and doubt the project of modernity. Holocaust museums, for instance, generate serious reflection over the “rational planning” and technological innovation used to carry out a highly modernized “Final Solution,” which produced death on an industrial scale (Dekel, 2013; Williams, 2007). For penal tourism, a similar critique is leveled at the use of prisons to maintain state-sponsored racism. A visit to Constitution Hill (Johannesburg) and Robben Island (Cape Town) promises to deepen a critical understanding of apartheid and its unjust—though seemingly “logical”—separation of black and colored people from their white European counterparts.
Similarly, at Eastern State Prison, penal tourists are given an opportunity to contemplate the enormity of mass incarceration. A poster titled “Prisons Today” explains:

Pennsylvania’s population has grown by just 7% since Eastern State closed in 1970. The number of people in prison, however, has grown by 800%. The expense has also increased. In today’s dollars, the prison system in 1970 cost $185 million. Today it costs Pennsylvanians $1 billion, 900 million each year. Most state prison systems grew more. Nationwide, the prison population has grown by 1,000% since 1970.

The poster relies on large bar graphs to illustrate the skyrocketing increase in prisoners and costs as well as the international ranking of the United States vis-à-vis other nations (see Bruggeman, 2012). A caption reads: “The United States imprisons more of its population than any other nation. The American system is also the most expensive ever built. It costs Americans $74 billion every year.” Reaching beyond numerical data, the placard includes a photograph of a contemporary prison dormitory jammed with bunked beds and scores of prisoners dressed only in boxer shorts. The image leaves onlookers with a sense that prisons today are simply (expensive) warehouses for inmates, thereby defying any claim to penal progress and rationality (see Foucault, 1980b, 2009; Welch, 2010b, 2011b).

Finally, dark tourism is accompanied by elements of commodification and commerce. At its very essence, an on-site visit is understood to be a product. Such consumption is most evident at the end of the prison tour as visitors exit through the museum’s gift shop. While many of those stores are geared toward promoting further education via scholarly books and memoirs of celebrity prisoners, some add a sense of local kitsch. At the Melbourne Gaol, tourists are given an opportunity to purchase an array of Ned Kelly books, comic books, posters, stuffed dolls, key rings, caps, beer glasses, replica armor, helmets (priced at $150), and baby bibs (that read “The Kelly Gang” alongside cartooned figures of Ned and others) (see Pretes, 2002; Wright, 2000).

**MODES OF ESCAPE**

Of course, as the title of this book suggests, penal tourism involves elements of escape—a phenomenon that sociologists have pondered with deep
reflection. Leisure allows people the freedom to flee the daily grind of work and responsibility, so it seems ironic that some vacationers would choose to visit a former prison. Perhaps they have an interest in prison history, a cultural fascination with punishment, or maybe a craving for an entirely different experience. The range of motives reminds us that there are several reasons why visitors attend prison museums; consequently, they each bring to the exhibit varied expectations and points of view. Cohen and Taylor’s *Escape Attempts* and Rojek’s *Ways of Escape* offer insights into the sociology of leisure by differentiating between the traveler and the tourist as well as the posttourist. Channeling Levi-Strauss (1955), Rojek maintains that high culture is attributed to the traveler while low culture dogs the tourist: “The traveler is associated with refined values of discernment, respect, and taste. Travel is seen as pursuing the ageless aristocratic principle of broadening the mind” (1993: 175). By contrast, cultural critics are often unkind to tourists, deriding them as unimaginative, unadventurous, and insipid. As they graze, tourists are all too willing to consume whatever the tourist industry feeds them (Carroll, 1980). Not only are those distinctions elitist but they are also superficial since there is considerable overlap between traveling and sightseeing. Moreover, tourists frequently bypass the tourism agenda and script, thereby becoming the posttourist. Cohen and Taylor remind us that in the course of tourism, vacationers have the capacity to be cynical about what tour operators throw at them. Especially when searching for authenticity, tourists are “capable of ironically commenting on their disappointment in not finding it: they see through the staged authenticity of the tourist setting and laugh about it” (1976: 118).

In *The Tourist Gaze*, Urry recognizes the unique consciousness of the posttourist who is well aware of how commodification shapes the tourist experience. Still, rather than rejecting the contrived nature of many forms of leisure, the posttourist goes for the ride and treats the experience playfully: “The post-tourist knows that they are a tourist and that tourism is a game, or rather a whole series of games with multiple texts and no single authentic experience” (Urry, 2002: 100). Moreover, Urry notes that the posttourist willingly interacts with the different facets and representations of the tourist site. The crass commercialism of gift shops and themed food courts does not bother the posttourist; rather, those venues are simply accepted as part of the tourist experience. By contrast, the traveler and tourist maintain different expectations. The traveler is motivated by the pursuit of truth, knowledge, and one’s relationship with the world. Conversely, the tourist commonly
visits destinations in an effort to have a record of one’s journey, which is ritually captured in photographs and home movies. What travelers and tourists have in common is that they both want a highly focused experience; toward that end, they react negatively to the nuisance of others who threaten solitude or merely interfere with snapshots and other features of the consumption experience (Rojek, 1993).

Travelers, tourists, and posttourists all share a sense of curiosity and the desire to escape their daily routine—even if that means visiting a prison museum. Most—not all—prison museums described in this volume tend to offer something for everyone, including travelers, tourists, and posttourists. In fact, curators are quick to understand that those social categories are overly simplistic since, at any given moment, we are all three. While at the Clink, for example, visitors can read the scholarly narrative on political and religious imprisonment and then take a photograph of their kid posing on the chopping block—all the while being aware of their experience. In the chapters to follow, critical attention is turned to prison exhibits, their content, and their story lines so as to reflect on the cultural pull of punishment as a means of escape. Still, what makes the prison museum experience possible is the full realization that the visit is temporary. Not many vacationers would enter such a site with the risk of being kept, mistreated, or tortured. No matter how authentic those museums appear, they are not real prisons—and everyone knows that.

THE TASK AT HAND

Penal tourism offers scholars unique opportunities to refine cultural concepts and interpretations of punishment in modern society.* Commenting on the project of cultural analysis in penology, Garland (2006) cautions that the cultural turn could add conceptual confusion into the field since the notion of “culture” is notoriously multivalent. Set forth by Sewell (1999, 2005), the term culture has two existing usages: first, culture as an analytical aspect of social relations (“the cultural”), and second, culture as a collective entity (“a culture”). Garland suggests that we blend cultural work into an explanatory platform, insisting that “we should isolate and analyze the ‘cul-

* The term penal tourism is preferred over prison tourism because it seems to capture a wider fascination with the cultural history of punishment.
tural elements of punishment only as a preliminary to more integrated analyses that fold cultural elements into multi-dimensional accounts of causes and consequences of penal practices” (2006: 436; see Smith, 2003a). With those proposals in full view, studies of penal tourism can contribute to a cultural sociology of punishment not only with historically driven research but also through comparative work, thereby enhancing cross-cultural interpretations (see Melossi, 2001; Melossi, Sozzo, and Sparks, 2011; Welch, 2012a, 2012b, 2013).

This book marks the culmination of years of international travel. With a critical eye on the cultural pull of punishment, the project explores ten prison museums scattered across Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America. In alphabetical order, they are Alcatraz, the Argentine Penitentiary Museum (Buenos Aires), the Clink (London), Constitution Hill (Johannesburg), Eastern State Penitentiary (Philadelphia), the Hong Kong Correctional Services Museum,* Hyde Park Barracks (Sydney), the Melbourne Gaol, Robben Island (Cape Town), and the Seodaemun Prison History Hall (Seoul).

As remarks thus far suggest, the investigation is informed by a cultural sociology of punishment (Garland, 2006; Smith, 2008). In particular, the theoretical focus synthesizes insights of power-based theories (Foucault) with semiotics (Durkheim), thereby allowing us to appreciate the common ground shared by instrumentalist and communicative interpretations of prison museums (Welch and Macuare, 2011). When we venture into a wider critique, attention is directed at key dimensions of penal modernity and its benchmarks of progress, including economics, governance, architecture, and science. Observations are situated within the scholarly literature on museum studies, penal spectatorship, and dark tourism. In brief, that is the task at hand. Let us summarize some of the main areas and topics covered in the book.

The next chapter, “The Museum Effect,” takes an in-depth look at how prison museums exercise their cultural power. Foucaultian notions of normalizing, gazing, and performing help us decipher the mission and techniques of penal exhibitions. Along the way, we realize that much of the cul-

* Technically, the Hong Kong Correctional Services Museum is not a former prison, although it is located within eyesight of the Stanley Prison. The building is situated next to the correctional training center and visitors are likely to witness staff marching and engaging in other outdoor exercises. The museum features transplanted prison cells and wall-length photographs of the interior of the Stanley Prison to give the impression that one is actually inside the prison.
tural authority that prison museums possess derives from socioreligious symbols, messages, and aura. We give thought to other phenomenological aspects of the museum experience, and special consideration is directed at the significance of objects, images, and space. Together they constitute the museum effect: the overall impact that those institutions have on tourists, society, and culture.

Similarly, chapter 3, “Dream of Order,” begins with Foucault’s reflections on heterotopias, which are physical representations of utopias. Museums are one such heterotopia insofar as they are dedicated to the accumulation of time and the collection of items. Whereas the “dream of order” speaks to a utopian agenda in pursuit of perfection, it is the penitentiary that serves as its tangible model. Penal ambitions, to be sure, manifest at the grand level as well as at the more mundane or institutional level. Still, due to resistance on the part of prisoners and their advocates, there is an alternative order driven by defiance. Prisons in South Africa and South Korea, for example, were used for purposes of political and social control, only to be countered by antiapartheid and prodemocracy movements.

Expressions of complete order typically make their way into the planning of penitentiaries. Chapter 4, “Architecture Parlante” (or “speaking architecture”), explores the communicative capacity of prison design. As a prototype, Eastern State Penitentiary blends neo-Gothic facades and Quaker philosophies of redemption into a quasi-panoptic radial design. More than three hundred prisons around the world have replicated that “cathedral of punishment.” Such form, of course, had function. Critical discussion considers the ways in which Durkheimian semiotics interacts with Foucaultian utility. As we shall see, such semio-technology surfaces in different penal sites, including the island, the dungeon, the monastery, and eventually the model penitentiary. Matters of religion and governance, of course, influence not only the construction of prisons but also their maintenance (chapter 5). Entering former prisons, visitors are quick to appreciate the actual sited-ness while learning about the strict protocol of spiritual transformation. The historical relations between the Church and State with respect to the governance of prisons have been marked by tension and accommodation. So as to sort out some of those developments, special attention is directed at Argentine penology as it straddled the fine line between religion and politics. The chapter also delves further into the sacred by probing its darker affinities—or left sacred. Prison museums have enormous cultural pull due to themes of evil, murder, and execution. Visitors are intrigued by those manifestations of the
left sacred; moreover, they might also wonder about a mystical afterlife. Many tours hint that the prison is haunted by ghosts.

Work and economics are common threads weaving through each of the prison museums studied herein. Accordingly, chapter 6 contemplates how prisons have been used to punish the poor (e.g., the Clink). From there, a more benevolent use of economics begins to take shape, most recognizably under the Pennsylvania System. While that regime focused on the individual inmate, other penal paradigms aspired to use convict labor for purposes of building the state, as in the case of Argentina and Australia. Curators also use occupational themes to give tourists a sense of what it is like to work inside a penitentiary, particularly given its reputation as a forbidden space. Displays of prisoner-made weapons (i.e., shanks) often are accompanied by stark photographs of assaults and riots, delivering potent testimonies on action, danger, and death.

Foucault reminds us that the early penitentiary was not only an institution for confinement but also an exhibition space used to display and diffuse an emerging penal knowledge. Today, prison museums maintain that narrative by explaining histories of scientific expertise, such as criminal anthropology and positivism (e.g., phrenology). Visitors are also given uneasy lessons on science as it was employed to refine the physics of hanging as well as various torture devices that deliver calibrated degrees of pain and suffering (e.g., waterboarding). With those concerns in mind, the chapter explores the paradoxes of science and rationality, as well as their claims of enlightened penal progress. The critique then discusses the reliance on prisons to advance colonial projects (chapter 8).

Conversely, it also chronicles in detail celebrated forms of political, ethnic, and racial resistance: the campaign to liberate Hong Kong from the British, Korea’s fight against Japanese imperialism, the American Indian experience at Alcatraz, and the struggle for racial equality in South Africa.

Memorialization is a major trend in museums, and prison museums are no exception. Chapter 9 examines cultural power as it activates solemn remembrance. Toward that end, many former prisons have been reinvented as heritage sites that honor famous political prisoners committed to noble causes. Analysis is organized around key styles of dramatization: hybridity, authenticity, minimalism, and absence. Correspondingly, sacred and mythological semiotics (Durkheim) facilitates the (Foucaultian) view that prison museums have the capacity to improve those who visit their galleries, thereby promoting introspection and civility.
The final chapter issues more testimony to the power of culture as it manifests in penal tourism. For instance, stories about prisoners who were convicted of murdering defenseless victims—namely, children—are especially disturbing since those crimes brazenly violate the sacred. In a shift of emotional tone, discussion turns to techniques used by prison museums that give visitors a sense of “hands-on” power. Eastern State Penitentiary, in particular, invites tourists to engage in panopticism by allowing them to maneuver a camera perched on the guard tower. As the book concludes, we exit through the gift shop, where cultural consumption allows us to bring home souvenirs that reinforce our memories of the escape to prison.