View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk

brought to you by CORE

provided by LJMU Research Online

LJMU Research Online

Sim, J

Aching desolation: Liverpool prison and the regressive limits of penal reform in England and Wales

http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/id/eprint/10716/

Article

Citation (please note it is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from this work)

Sim, J (2019) Aching desolation: Liverpool prison and the regressive limits of penal reform in England and Wales. Critical and Radical Social Work, 7 (1). pp. 41-58. ISSN 2049-8608

LJMU has developed **LJMU Research Online** for users to access the research output of the University more effectively. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LJMU Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain.

The version presented here may differ from the published version or from the version of the record. Please see the repository URL above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription.

For more information please contact researchonline@ljmu.ac.uk

http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/

Critical and Radical Social Work • vol X • no X • X–X • © Policy Press 2019
Print ISSN 2049 8608 • Online ISSN 2049 8675 • https://doi.org/10.1332/204986019X15491042559709
Acccepted for publication 18 December 2018 • First published online

article

Aching desolation: Liverpool prison and the regressive limits of penal reform in England and Wales

Joe Sim, j.sim@ljmu.ac.uk
Liverpool John Moores University, UK

This article explores the current penal crisis through a case study of Liverpool prison, and the appalling nature of the prison's regime, as documented in January 2018 by HM Inspectorate of Prisons. The dehumanising nature of the regime was not unique as a number of other prisons inspected during 2018 were also shown to be seriously detrimental to the health and safety of prisoners. The article also explores the problematic nature of the state's response to the crisis and the limitations of that response. This raises a number of theoretical and political questions about the abject failure over two centuries of liberal reform. In turn, this failure raises questions about the future, beginning with recognising that the prison should be understood as an institution of the neoliberal state, which is oriented towards criminalising and controlling those on the economic and political margins of a deeply divided, fractured social order.

key words Liverpool prison • crisis • reform • resistance • abolitionism

To cite this article: Sim, J. (2019) Aching desolation: Liverpool prison and the regressive limits of penal reform in England and Wales, *Critical and Radical Social Work*, DOI: 10.1332/204986019X15491042559709

Introduction

This article focuses on three issues.[1] First, it critically analyses the searing report on HM Prison Liverpool, which was inspected by the Prison Inspectorate in September 2017. The report was published in January 2018 (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a). The data generated from this, and other reports produced by the Inspectorate, provide the basis for the development of this article's critical argument. Second, it considers the state's response to the report and explores how a regressive network of political and cultural power, operating in moral entrepreneurial terms through the mass media, framed the popular understanding of the Liverpool report, and the crisis in prisons more generally. Finally, the article considers what should be done. It contends that the response to the current penal crisis lies not in the politics of liberal reform, but in developing an abolitionist analysis and strategy to fundamentally transform prisons. In developing this argument, the article builds on the radical critiques of the prison system in England and Wales from academics (Sim, 2009; Scott, 2018)

and activist groups and charities such as Women in Prison and INQUEST. Taken together, these interventions have not only highlighted the state's abject failure to protect prisoners, but have also illustrated the failure of the traditional prison reform lobby, and their academic supporters, to move beyond the snake oil discourse of crisis–reform–crisis–reform that has dominated their praxis for the last two centuries but that has done little, if anything, to develop a system of detention, for the few individuals who need to be confined, that is just, humane and accountable.

HM Prison Liverpool: harming the confined

Until August 2018, when it was superseded by HM Prison Birmingham, the report on Liverpool was the worst that the Inspectorate had published since it was formed in 1981. Its scathing conclusions about the dire state of the prison generated an unprecedented response from the state. Prison managers and ministers were summoned to appear before the House of Commons Justice Committee to discuss the Inspectorate's findings (Sim, 2018a).

The prison failed the four tests that inspectors used to judge the health of individual prisons: safety, respect, purposeful activity and rehabilitation and release planning. In stark detail, the report meticulously highlighted the institution's 'abject failure … to offer a safe, decent and purposeful environment' to prisoners (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 5). It illustrated the brutal impact of the regime's systemic, corrosive failings on the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of the prisoners. The 'squalid' living conditions that many prisoners 'endured' were central to the Inspectorate's concerns:

> Some [cells] had emergency call bells that were not working but were nevertheless still occupied, presenting an obvious danger to prisoners. There were hundreds of unrepaired broken windows, with jagged glass left in the frames. Many lavatories were filthy, blocked or leaking. There were infestations of cockroaches in some areas, broken furniture, graffiti, damp and dirt.… The prison was generally untidy and in many places there were piles of rubbish that had clearly been there for a long time, and in which inspectors reported seeing rats on a regular basis. (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 5)

One prisoner with complex mental health issues was:

> held in a cell that had no furniture other than a bed. The windows of both the cell and the toilet recess were broken, the light fitting in his toilet was broken with wires exposed, the lavatory was filthy and appeared to be blocked, his sink was leaking and the cell was dark and damp. Extraordinarily, this man had apparently been held in this condition for some weeks. The inspectors had brought this prisoner's circumstances to the attention of the prison, and it should not have needed my personal intervention for this man to be moved from such appalling conditions. (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 5)

The private company Amey had been contracted to maintain the prison.[2] However, 2,000 jobs were outstanding at the time of the inspection, contributing further to

the demoralising nature and impact of the regime (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 15). Prisoners endured these gruelling conditions for the majority of their sentences as there was little or no purposeful activity. Of those surveyed, 43% told the Inspectorate that they spent less than two hours out of their cells on weekdays, there were no association periods and exercise lasted for 30 minutes (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 43).

Failing health and safety

Between May 2015 and September 2017, the date of the Inspectorate's visit, four prisoners took their own lives. There were another two suspected self-inflicted deaths after this inspection. Liverpool had an ignominious history of such deaths, a point this article returns to later. Incidents of self-harm were increasing. Between March and September 2017, there were 184 such incidents. While the report recognised that individual initiatives were in place to manage risks, 'the overall strategic response to reducing self-harm was underdeveloped' (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 26–7). Over the previous six months, Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork (ACCT) forms had been opened on 546 occasions.[3] The governance of these prisoners, officially regarded as vulnerable, was problematic, particularly at night:

> an officer on one unit was responsible for making observational entries, on average, once every five minutes during his 11-hour shift.... We were shocked to find that another officer was unaware that he carried a cell key for use during an emergency. The quality of ACCT documents was inadequate: triggers were incorrectly recorded, care maps were incomplete and reviews were late. (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 27)

Humane treatment and decent conditions are central to preventing self-inflicted deaths in the early stages of confinement. Despite this knowledge, conditions in the reception area were poor: 'only 16% of prisoners said that their first night cell was clean. The cells that we inspected were austere and shabby but efforts had been made to remove graffiti' (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 21). In terms of medical care:

> [c]linical rooms varied in cleanliness. Some wing and reception clinical rooms were in a poor state of decoration. They were not cleaned regularly and did not meet required infection control standards.... No information could be provided by the relevant contractor regarding the Legionella risk from a disused bath.... Not all equipment had been tested and maintained. (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 36)

Finally, 'the serious lack of capacity ... and failure to allocate sufficient custody staff to the inpatient unit led to unacceptable outcomes for many of the most vulnerable prisoners' (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 15).

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48

Failing families and failing prison programmes

Despite family contact being regarded by the state as fundamental to the process of rehabilitation, the report noted that '[t]he support given to men to maintain contact with the outside world had deteriorated since the last inspection and opportunities were missed in several areas' (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 49). Prisoners experienced 'significant delays in adding telephone numbers to their pin phone account' while an astonishing 66% of those surveyed had problems receiving or sending mail (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 49). Additionally, 'too many prisoners were placed on closed visits for reasons unrelated to visits' (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 49). Programmes designed, in theory, to rehabilitate prisoners were absent: there was no offender management policy; there was no coordination between the different groups involved in rehabilitation; assessments were poor; and only 23% of prisoners surveyed indicated that they had a custody plan (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 50–1).

Force and unofficial punishments

In the previous six months, force had been used on 288 occasions (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 12). However, the prison failed to document its use in any detail. Crucially, 'incomplete' paperwork:

> *did not provide assurance of proportionate and necessary use*.… Some completed records also indicated that excessive force had been used by staff but managers were not aware of this. Monthly use of force meetings were not held routinely and not all use of force incidents were reviewed. (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 12–13, emphasis added)

Unexplained injuries 'were recorded but not investigated' (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 25). Prisoners who refused to leave the segregation unit were subjected to sanctions that '*lacked decency* such as withholding showers and telephone calls' (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 25, emphasis added). The report noted that these sanctions were 'applied by staff outside of any formal policy' and therefore '*constituted unofficial punishment*' (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 25, emphasis added).

Differential suffering

Compared with their white counterparts, black and minority ethnic prisoners 'spoke more negatively in our groups and individually about their treatment from other prisoners and staff' (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 33). The monitoring of different systems in the prison – adjudication, incentives and earned privileges and complaints – showed 'a disproportionate number of prisoners in the areas of age, ethnicity and religion' (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 33). The reasons for this had not been investigated. There was 'little evidence of staff using professional interpreting and translation' for foreign national prisoners (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 34). Consequently, they were isolated on the prison's wings. In a prison where 450 prisoners had self-identified as being disabled, the institution

1 was 'unable to meet the needs' of many of them while there had been a significant
2 deterioration in mental health provision (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 39).

A failure of accountability

Structures of governance and accountability were effectively non-existent. Prisoners' complaints were not addressed or taken seriously. Only 10% of those surveyed, who had made a complaint, said that it had been dealt with within seven days. Additionally, only 20% felt that complaints were dealt with fairly. The inspectors found 'a number of responses to complaints in a wing office *which had been there for as long as three months without being returned to prisoners*…. Quality assurance of complaints was not robust' (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 31, emphasis added). Legally, prisoners were isolated and bereft. There was 'no legal advice service', no "'access to justice'" laptops, no information displayed about bodies such as the Legal Ombudsman and legal visits were late in starting. Additionally, there was no system for tracking applications. Only 22% of prisoners said that their applications were dealt with within seven days and no action was taken at meetings (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 31–2).

Prisoners were not only failed individually in terms of the lack of accountability in dealing with their complaints. At an institutional level, recommendations from previous inspections, designed to improve the regime, had effectively been ignored, a situation not unique to Liverpool. Of the 89 recommendations made in 2015, only 23 had been achieved, 14 had been partially achieved and 53 had not been achieved (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 11).[4] In the key area of safety, only three out of 15 recommendations had been achieved, two had been partially achieved and 10 had not been achieved (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a: 12).

Internally, while there were some examples of good practice, in reality, at every level, Liverpool was a failing prison. This was compounded by local, regional and national prison managers who ignored the devastating impact of the regime on prisoners' lives. This failure in governance did not prevent senior prison managers from receiving large salaries and bonuses. In 2016/17, the Chief Executive of the Prison Service earned between £145,000 and £150,000. An additional £25,000 was paid into his pension scheme while he, and four other senior managers, shared between £50,000 and £75,000 in bonuses (Sim, 2018a). How did the state respond to the Inspectorate's devastating indictment of the prison?

The state's response: 'philosophis[ing] disgrace'[5]

Following the report's publication, the House of Commons Justice Select Committee met for three hours. This was unprecedented. It was the first time that the Committee had considered a report on an individual prison 'because, frankly, we were so horrified at what we saw' (House of Commons, 2018).

The Committee heard from six witnesses, including Rory Stewart, the newly appointed Minister of State. He was the fifth prisons minister since 2010. Over the same period, there had been seven Ministers of Justice. Members were told that a number of the worst cells had been removed and that purposeful activity had increased. Importantly, they acknowledged that '*staffing was not an issue, because the staff were up to a high level*' (House of Commons, 2018: emphasis added). Therefore, staffing levels did not explain the degrading state of the prison and the complacent,

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48

dismissive attitudes displayed by prison staff towards prisoners. This directly challenged the relentless line pursued by the Prison Officers Association (POA) concerning the negative impact of budget cuts on staff, a point the article returns to later. The Committee also highlighted the non-implementation of official recommendations. Between 2013/14 and 2017/18, the number achieved declined from the already low figure of 46% to 37% (House of Commons, 2018).[6]

Despite its unprecedented intervention, the Committee's response was limited. Key issues identified by the Inspectorate, such as the official and unofficial infliction of punishment, were ignored. Its deliberations were overwhelmingly concerned with the conditions and the management of the prison. While pushing these issues into political and popular consciousness was important, the Committee ignored the power exercised at every level of the prison, principally through the fierce and unforgiving occupational culture of the staff and the powerlessness, fear and terror that this induced in the prisoners. This culture, and its lack of accountability, continued to be the elephant in the penal corner. Despite being an exceptionally visible, desperately imposing presence, there was a proverbial wall of silence around it, a refusal to recognise, and face up to, its deleterious impact on an often-fragile and frightened population.

In February 2018, in a letter to the Committee, Rory Stewart followed a similar trajectory in closing down the debate about the abject state of the prison, the lack of accountability and the insidious role of prison staff in dehumanising prisoners. So, while he discussed improving standards and 'boosting … education and employment prospects', his 'immediate focus' was to look 'very closely at what can be done to drive down the use of illicit substances behind bars' (Ministry of Justice, 2018a: 1–2). Not for the first time, the spectre of the drug-addled prisoner was central to the state's narrative and structured the political and popular debate about the crisis in the prison and what should be done about it.

Distraction, disavowal and denial

The Committee's limited response to the Liverpool report was reflected in the official response to the wider prison crisis that had erupted in November 2017. The combined political and cultural weight of politicians, the POA, the prison reform lobby and the majority of media commentators reduced the complexities of the crisis to often-superficial sound bites. Five interrelated themes were involved in operationalising this ideological process of distraction, denial and disavowal.

First, this process was based on an ahistorical reading of penal policy. The crisis in 2017 was the latest in a line of often-profound ruptures that had gripped the institution since its emergence in the late 18th century. These crises had generated a self-referential, self-defeating cycle of crisis–reform–crisis–reform based on a liberal discourse which endlessly claimed that the prison could redeem itself through finding the golden fleece of reform, which, in turn, would provide the key to rehabilitating prisoners (Fitzgerald and Sim, 1982). For Foucault:

> word for word, from one century to the other, the same fundamental propositions are repeated.… So successful has the prison been that, after a century and half of 'failures', the prison still exists, producing the same

results *and there is the greatest reluctance to dispense with it.* (Cited in Sim, 2009: 7, emphasis added)

Second, the POA, in particular, was vociferous in framing the crisis in the context of staffing cuts. Restoring the prison budget to its pre-cuts level would, the POA argued, alleviate the crisis and re-establish the penal and, in their view, benevolent status quo. However, this position conveniently and consciously ignored a key point: the pre-cuts prison was also a site of terror and trauma for prisoners, and was a space and place of death. Between 1990 and 2010, *before* the cuts began, there were nearly 2,500 deaths in prison, 1,404 of them self-inflicted (data computed from inquest.org.uk, cited in Sim, 2017).

In the pre-cuts era, self-inflicted deaths had also been a feature of the Liverpool regime. Between 1990 and 1996, 20 prisoners killed themselves. Furthermore, while prison managers claimed that staff had 'introduced a number of measures in a bid to reduce suicides' (Campbell, 1997: 5), in January 2011, the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) highlighted another death, the 16th in the prison since April 2004. The PPO concluded that staff could not have 'reasonably foreseen or prevented [the prisoner] from taking the apparent action that he did' (Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, 2011: 14–15). However, there was an issue about observing and recording any changes in the behaviour of prisoners in their care. The Ombudsman made 'no formal recommendation' but asked 'the Governor to satisfy himself that all staff who have contact with prisoners have received ACCT training to foundation level' (Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, 2011: 14–15). Between January 2012 and December 2017, 31 prisoners died in the prison; 14 of these deaths were self-inflicted, while two were awaiting classification (INQUEST, 2018a). In October 2018, there were a further three deaths in the space of four weeks (*Liverpool Echo*, 2018). The trauma experienced by prisoners was encapsulated by Tony Paine, who killed himself in February 2018. In a poignant letter to his mother and 'desperate beyond emotion',[7] he described how he had been 'nearly stabbed twice in a week. Am in a bad way. I've cut my arms. They won't move me unless I grass. Help me please' (cited in Thomas, 2018: 4). Establishing a binary divide between the pre- and post-cuts prison ignored this longer history of death and confused cause and effect. The cuts intensified already deadly regimes established over two centuries; they did not cause self-inflicted deaths as the dominant narrative contended (Sim, 2017).

Third, according to the POA, the dangers that its members faced had increased as a result of the cuts. The POA was remorseless in pushing this argument. In November 2016, it led a series of protests claiming that it had 'consistently raised the volatile and dangerous state of prisons, as chronic staff shortages and impoverished regimes have resulted in staff no longer being safe, a lack of discipline and prisoners taking control of areas' (EurWORK, 2017).

In articulating their concerns, prison officers, as state servants, constructed and established the narrow, political, popular and moral parameters within which their safety was understood. The dangers faced by other occupational groups were effectively ignored. The Shirebrook warehouse, run by Sports Direct, provides a compelling example of this issue. Between January 2013 and April 2016, there were 110 incidents involving workers that required medical intervention. Of these incidents, 50 were classified as 'life-threatening' while 12 were classified as 'major' injuries. Staff were 'three times more likely to be injured at Shirebrook than in agriculture –

statistically the most dangerous industry in the UK' (Armstrong, 2017: 91). Five of the cases involved pregnant women. One woman 'had gone to work despite being heavily pregnant – afraid of losing her job. After giving birth, she tried to go back to work. Ambulance staff told the police, who then arrested her for wilful neglect' (Armstrong, 2017: 92). National Health Service (NHS) personnel are another case in point. In England, in 2016/17, there were over 56,000 physical assaults on staff, a rise of nearly 10% on the previous year. Paramedics, nurses and mental health staff were the most likely to be assaulted (Campbell, 2018). In contrast:

> Since 1850 only eight members of staff (and not all of these prison officers) have been killed in prisons in England and Wales. The last prison officer to be murdered at work was Derek Lambert, who was killed at Portland borstal by a prisoner in 1965. It was the first murder of a prison officer for some 30 years in England and Wales and proved to be an isolated incident. Not only is serious physical violence against officer[s] by prisoners rare, but there are also many examples of prisoners going to their aid in dangerous situations, such as during prison disturbances. (Scott, 2016)

The discourse of danger is also built on the idea that prison officers are being assaulted on a daily basis. However, the number of days lost as a result of assaults by prisoners on staff is minimal when compared with the other health and safety issues they face. This has a long history. The health of staff is more often compromised by stress, bullying, sickness, anxiety, depression and musculoskeletal problems than by assaults. In 1999, the National Audit Office (NAO) pointed out that sickness arising from accidents and assaults 'represented a small proportion' of absences from work among prison officers; in the latter case, it was 2% of all absences. The number of days lost as a result of depression, anxiety, stress and nervous debility rose by 53% from 116,744 days lost in 1999/2000 to 178,625 days lost in 2002/03. In contrast, the number of days lost as a result of accidents rose from 824 to 1,201 and the number of days lost as a result of assaults increased from 397 to 693 (cited in Scott and Sim, 2018).

Fourth, the narrow discussion of the dangers that staff faced involved a process of 'state talk':

> States, if the pun be forgiven, *state*; the arcane rituals … define, in great detail, acceptable forms and images of social activity and individual and collective identity; they regulate, in empirically specifiable ways, much – very much … of social life. Indeed, in this sense, 'the State' never stops talking … moral regulation is coextensive with state formation, and state forms are always animated and legitimated by a particular moral ethos. (Corrigan and Sayer, 1985: 3–4, emphasis in original)

Thinking about the safety of prison (and police) officers in moral terms has profound political and ideological implications. The murder of a state servant is hugely symbolic. It signifies a 'torn and desecrated' social order that can only be fixed through the righteousness of a retributive, authoritarian response. 'State talk' is crucial to this deeply ideological process (Sim, 2004: 126). Embodying prison officers as perennial *and* potential victims over-exaggerates and overdramatises the nature and extent of the violence they face. It socially and symbolically constructs them as consecrated,

benevolent guardians of a social order that is perpetually confronted by a callous tide of lawlessness, chaos and disorder. This deeply regressive process distracts attention away from the systemic, routinised violence perpetrated by the state inside and outside of prisons, and the corrosive harms that this violence generates (Sim, 2004: 125–9).

The media was pivotal in the often-uncritical dissemination of the POA's 'state talk'. In a sample of 100 articles published in 2016, prison officers were directly and sympathetically quoted in 49 of them: '[v]irtually all accounts which drew upon the words of prison officers/POA, were sympathetic to their plight and often made direct connections to the decline in officer staffing levels and problems confronting prisons today' (Scott, 2018: 142–4).

'State talk' dominated *Channel 4 News* on the evening that the Liverpool report was published. While the broadcast highlighted the harrowing experiences of the families of dead prisoners, the POA's representative dragged the discussion, without challenge, onto the terrain of the cuts. The issues highlighted by the Inspectorate were ignored: the use of unofficial punishments within the authoritarian staff culture; the officially sanctioned use of force and violence; the lack of democratic accountability; the systemic dismissal of prisoners and their experiences; and the pre-cuts prison as a place of terror, trauma, punishment and pain. Instead, the dominant narrative – that the cuts were responsible for the deterioration in the regime – structured the debate. It was a narrative articulated in other media outlets as diverse as *The Guardian* and *The Morning Star* (Sim, 2018a).

The silence induced by the reverse process – what could be termed as state non-talk – is also important in marginalising the social harms generated by prisons. Deborah Coles and Helen Shaw have pointed out that many of the 45 inquests they investigated, which had taken place after long delays, had 'been unreported, not even deemed worthy of a couple of lines in the local media', despite revealing 'shocking failures in the treatment of vulnerable detainees' (Coles and Shaw, 2015: 10). The narrowing of the debate about prison safety both politically and popularly, and the endless focus on the dangers faced by state servants, can also be contrasted with the lack of consideration given to the levels of self-harm in women's prisons and the failure of the state to provide a duty of care and place of safety for female prisoners. In the year to June 2018, there were 498 incidents of self-harm per 1,000 prisoners in male prisons, a rise of 20% from the previous year. In women's prisons, the rate was 2,366 incidents per 1,000 women, a rise of 24%. More generally, the level of self-harm had reached a record high of 49,565 incidents, representing a yearly increase of 20% (Ministry of Justice, 2018b: 3–4).

Finally, the narrow focus on budget cuts denied the role of staff, at all levels, in reproducing the grim environment prevailing in many institutions. David Scott has identified a number of intertwined discourses, deeply embedded in the formal and informal occupational culture of prison staff, that operate to deny prisoners a full sense of what it means to be human: 'denial of responsibility'; 'denial of injury'; 'denial of victim'; 'condemnation of the condemners'; and 'appeal to higher loyalties'. Taken together, they create 'ghosts in the penal machine' (Scott, 2008: 176–82). They ensure that prisoners only partially *exist* and do not fully *live* as human beings in the physically demoralising and psychologically withering regimes in Liverpool and other institutions.

Systemic dehumanisation

While Liverpool was a prison in 'profound anomic disarray' (Streeck, cited in Sim, 2018b: 180), it was not unique. The Chief Inspector's report on Nottingham revealed similar issues. The prison's regime was so problematic that he issued his first ever Urgent Notification Notice, meaning that the Secretary of State had to take personal and public responsibility for improving the regime. He argued that the regime was 'dangerous' for prisoners. His conclusion was profound: '*[m]y fear, which may prove to be unfounded, is that some could face it no longer and took their own lives*' (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2018b: 7, emphasis added). Safety had been assessed as 'poor' on three consecutive occasions. The level of self-harm and self-inflicted death was 'both tragic and appalling'; eight prisoners had killed themselves since the previous inspection in 2016. Again, official recommendations from the Inspectorate and the PPO had been ignored. Only two out of 13 recommendations concerning prison safety had been 'fully achieved'. Overall, only 12 out of 48 recommendations had been achieved (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2018b: 13).[8]

Exeter prison was also indicted for its degrading treatment of prisoners. Crucially, like Liverpool, Exeter was *not* understaffed. The Urgent Notification Notice process was again invoked. In a letter to the Secretary of State for Justice, the Chief Inspector pointed out that:

> [in] the context of a prison with significant levels of vulnerability among prisoners, and where suicide and self-harm are at such high levels, it was shocking to see the way in which cell call bells were routinely ignored by staff. Given that the prison is now much better staffed, this was inexcusable. Inspectors saw bells going unanswered even when staff were doing nothing else. Even on the first night and induction landings, where prisoners are likely to be at their most vulnerable, bells were left unanswered for long periods. The prison's own recording system showed that it was commonplace for bells not to be answered within a reasonable time. The system was either not being reviewed by managers, or what it revealed was being ignored. (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2018c: 3)

The inspectors described the harrowing treatment of one vulnerable prisoner who was:

> assessed as being at heightened risk of suicide and self-harm, who should have been located on the dedicated first night unit, [but who] was instead placed on C1 wing, a subterranean unit that was in effect being used as a segregation unit but without any of the usual safeguards. This prisoner spent three days on this unit before moving to the first night unit where inspectors saw him in a squalid cell without bedding, a television or glass in his window. None of this had been reported by staff who were required to check on him regularly as part of his care plan. (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2018c: 3)

Safety was given the lowest possible grade of 'poor'. There had been six self-inflicted deaths since the previous inspection, five in 2017 alone. Rates of self-harm were higher than comparable prisons and had also risen by 40% since the previous inspection.

The Inspectorate 'saw many examples of a lack of care for vulnerable prisoners which, given the recent tragic events in the prison, were symptomatic of a lack of empathy and understanding of the factors that contribute to suicide and self-harm' (Sim, 2018c). This lack of sympathy, alongside 'unacceptably poor' living conditions, made the regime toxic. As with Liverpool and Nottingham, official recommendations had been effectively ignored: of the 14 concerning safety, only three had been fully achieved (Sim, 2018c).

The three prisons were rated as 1 in the *Annual prison performance ratings for 2017/18*, indicating that there was 'serious concern' over their 'overall performance'. A total of 15 institutions – 13% of the prison estate – fell into this category. This was the highest proportion since 2011/12. Altogether, 54 prisons (46%) were judged to be of concern or serious concern (Ministry of Justice, 2018c: 5, 1).

Another nadir was reached in August 2018 when the report on Birmingham prison was published. It replaced Liverpool as the worst prison inspected by the Inspectorate since its formation in 1981. Conditions were desperate:

> Communal areas in most wings were filthy. Rubbish had accumulated and had not been removed. There were widespread problems with insects, including cockroaches, as well as rats and other vermin. We saw evidence of bodily fluids left unattended, including blood and vomit. I saw a shower area where there was bloodstained clothing and a pool of blood that apparently had been there for two days next to numerous rat droppings. Many cells were cramped, poorly equipped and had damaged flooring or plasterwork. Most toilets were poorly screened, many were leaking and we saw cells with exposed electrics. (Cited in Sim, 2018d)

Again, the POA dominated the media debate to the point where on the evening that the report was published, *Channel 4 News*, a supposedly liberal broadcaster, conducted an interview with a serving prison officer. Replying to the presenter's pointedly leading question – 'Do you feel safe, do your colleagues feel safe?' – he claimed that '*ex-military personnel working in British prisons said they felt safer in Afghanistan and Iraq*' (cited in Sim, 2018d: emphasis added).

The scathing reports on Liverpool, Nottingham, Exeter and Birmingham were important in making visible the invisible, systemic processes of degradation and dehumanisation that prisoners suffered in these institutions. They highlighted the state's failure both to provide a duty of care to prisoners and to ensure that there was some form of democratic accountability to protect them given that official recommendations were consistently and conspicuously ignored. Like rag dolls, prisoners were cast aside by an authoritarian, indifferent prison officer culture. This culture was sustained by a systemic sense of immunity and impunity that left staff free to continue to reproduce brutal, withering daily regimes, a situation that has been implicitly and explicitly condoned, or simply ignored, for decades by politicians, the mass media and liberal academics.

The systemic failings in each prison, and the nature of the official response, crystallised the failure of the state to move beyond the self-referential cycle of crisis–reform–crisis–reform that, as noted earlier, has dominated penal policy for the last two centuries. The reports also illustrated that punishment and pain remained intrinsic to the everyday lives of the prisoners. They were constructed, as they have

always been, as less eligible subjects existing, not living, in a neoliberal institution where the cuts to the prison budget had intensified their status as individuals who were not worthy of being seen as full human beings as a result of their ascribed status as prisoners (Sim, 2017). They existed in a spectral 'wasteland of nobodies' (Amagoalik, cited in Stevenson, 2014: 121). Given this, how can the current situation be radically transformed to ensure that prisoners are protected and fundamental change is promoted? The theoretical, political and strategic issues raised by abolitionism go some way to answering this question.

For abolitionism

Building on Thomas Mathiesen's foundational text published in 1974 (Mathiesen, 1974), British abolitionists have long highlighted the capacity of prisons like Liverpool for delivering punishment, pain and trauma to the confined while critiquing the failure of the state's reformist policies to deal with the crisis in individual prisons and the more general prison crisis (Sim, 1994, Sim, forthcoming; Scott, 2018). They have pointed to a range of policies and practices that transgress reformism and that, if implemented, would radically transform the current system, including: stopping the prison building programme; closing down prisons; dismantling the authoritarian, prison officer culture; and demanding that staff at all levels of the state are democratically accountable (Sim, 2009). Michelle Brown and Judah Schept have developed the abolitionist critique of the prison further by calling for an 'abolitionist praxis', which would include thinking about the meaning of safety – and, by definition, protection – in the 21st century:

> Safety … is not simply about those who have harmed or been harmed, but a movement beyond disciplinary neoliberal frames of responsibilisation and internalisation to community and state accountability, a kind of insurrectionary safety … operating within an abolitionist habitus.… How can we organise our communities to be safe? What should we do when various kinds of harm, with different kinds of needs, occur? What are the collective ways and forums in which we can pursue this work? (Cited in Sim, 2018b: 181–3)

The issues raised by abolitionists resonate with the desperate situation in Liverpool. Placing safety and protection at the centre of the regime, and ensuring the democratic accountability of prison staff, are two issues raised by INQUEST, which has utilised an abolitionist perspective to frame many of its policy and practical interventions into the debates about deaths in custody. Over and above demanding a halt to the prison building programme and diverting those involved with the criminal justice system away from prison to well-funded and well-staffed community alternatives, the charity has also called for the creation of 'a national oversight mechanism to monitor deaths in custody and the implementation of official recommendations arising for post death investigations' (INQUEST, 2018b: 9). This would be tied in with ensuring:

> accountability for institutional failings that lead to deaths in prison. For example, full consideration should be given to prosecutions under the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act, where ongoing

> failures are identified and the prison service has been forewarned (as with Liverpool and Nottingham prisons). (INQUEST, 2018b: 9)

Forensically detailing and recording the 'buried and the disqualified' knowledge and experiences of prisoners and their families has been central to the work of INQUEST and other abolitionist activists groups. It can be seen as representing an 'insurrection of subjugated knowledges', thereby directly challenging the state's definition of penal reality and acceptable penal policies (Foucault, 2003: 8, 7). In that sense, abolitionists have relentlessly searched for, found and exploited the 'the cracks, silent tremors and dysfunctions in institutions' (Foucault, 2002: 458). Their goal has been to speak truth to the state while attempting to force the state to speak truth to the wider society. In the context of the 'unprecedented levels of secrecy, obfuscation, dissembling and downright lying that now characterise public life' (Panitch and Leys, 2005: vii), this remains a difficult, though not impossible, task.

As with any hegemonic intervention, this process is incomplete and is made more difficult in the current neoliberal conjuncture by the limpet-like relationship between liberal reform groups and the state's prison agenda. That limpet-like relationship extends to liberal academics, whose research, often based on snake-oil criminological theories and methods, and debatable funding streams, allows them to work, often obsequiously, with the state, asking for reform rather than demanding radical change (Mathiesen, 1980). There are significant ethical and political issues generated by the existence of this prison–academic industry in the 21st century. Liberal academics *know* what is happening daily in decrepit institutions like Liverpool yet they persist in seeking out grants, from whatever source, in order to search for, and discover, the golden fleece of penal reform, a quest that is as meaningless as it is unachievable.

The endless search for the ultimate reform is based on a 'bastardised conception of political reality' (Unger, cited in Williams, 2013). This means that a proposal or policy for change is considered realistic 'to the extent that it approaches what already exists' (Unger, cited in Williams, 2013). Penal policy provides a particularly clear and grim example of Unger's thesis. 'What already exists' remains both the starting and finishing point for the debate around prisons. Policies and practices that step outside of 'acceptable', common-sense and political penal realism, as well as individuals and organisations who refuse to accept 'what already exists', are contemptuously regarded as unrealistic or are constructed as pro-crime and anti-victim, an ironic and offensive label given the levels of domestic and sexual violence against women that state institutions, and successive governments, have consistently ignored, and indeed legitimated, through their inept and lamentable responses to this violence (Sim, 2009).

Unger's point helps in understanding the official response to the report on Liverpool. Closing down the debate through focusing on the highly visible folk-devil, such as the drug-taking prisoner (while ignoring the often-dubious use of officially prescribed drugs in prison), kept it within the 'realistic' discourses that have been established and remain deeply embedded within the state and those responsible for running and managing prisons. It simply reinforced 'what already exists'.

Conclusion

Liverpool was a parasitical institution that was *not* out of control. It was *in* control, heightening the fears and anxieties of prisoners to often unbearable levels while

brutally extinguishing any hope that they could change for the better. Their aching desolation, and physical and psychological dismemberment, was ignored at every level of the state. Prisoners were barely existing in a mortifying regime where 'casual cruelty flourishe[d]' (Medlicott, 2001: 256).

Prison managers were invisible. They failed dismally to control the regime's purgatorial presence and protect the prisoners towards whom they owed a duty of care. There was no circle of safety for them. Prisoners were bereft and left to fester in a reeking, penal dustbin. There was an institutionalised taboo on empathy, pity and mercy. Ironically, prisons are supposed to generate a sense of responsibility in those they confine. Yet, prisoners in Liverpool (and the other institutions discussed earlier) were detained in a 'site of state confinement' (Carlton and Sim, 2018) that epitomised irresponsibility, complacency and indifference, underpinned by a punitive, hyper-masculine, occupational culture. Trapped in these melancholic places, their sense of terror was reinforced by the senseless, crushing, futile irrationality of the prison rules.

Given this toxic environment, it was not surprising that many prisoners in Liverpool and other institutions – their purgatorial reality dismissed, discredited and disavowed – chose to respond through using drugs and violence, engaging in self-harm, and killing themselves. From the outside, these responses appear to be pathological and meaningless. However, it is difficult to imagine *any* human being, whatever their background, existing in such primal, piercing circumstances and not reacting negatively. Institutionalised indifference, underpinned by the threat and use of state violence, can break even those who have an iron will for self-preservation. The report on Liverpool opened a space to contest the discourse of individual pathology. It exposed the prison for what it was: a trauma-inducing site that further splintered the lives and psyches of dispossessed individuals whose lives and psyches were already splintered by the social and economic circumstances in which many of them lived outside of the institution.

It also highlighted the contradictions within the state, in that state servants do not speak with one voice. Peter Clarke, the Chief Inspector of Prisons, was a former Deputy Commissioner in the Metropolitan Police and Head of Counter Terrorism Command. He did not conform to the caricature of being 'pro-crime, anti-victim' that, as noted earlier, has been, and remains, the dire political response to individuals and groups who criticise the state's often-catastrophic policy failures in prisons and the criminal justice system. This discourse was particularly prominent under New Labour's 'authoritarian reign of piety and iron' (Lowell, cited in Panitch and Leys, 2005: viii). It generated an unyielding, punitive focus on the alleged atavism of the poor in order to change their feral subjectivities while, simultaneously, pursuing 'light touch' regulation for the allegedly well-adjusted, responsible individuals working in the financial 'services' industry, multinational corporations and criminal justice institutions, including prisons (Sim, 2000, 2009).

So, while the Prison Inspectorate should be commended for providing compelling evidence about the soul-crushing melancholia engendered by the regime in Liverpool, and other prisons, the report's limitations should also be recognised. Restoring the penal status quo through state-sanctioned reform will only legitimate the prison's voracious capacity for punishing neoliberalism's racialised dispossessed: in male prisons, a hyper-masculinised, combustible combination of 'social dynamite' and 'social junk' (Spitzer, 1975); in female prisons, overwhelmingly poor, psychologically and physically abused women with mental health issues (INQUEST, 2018c). It also

ignores the institution's (and the wider criminal [in]justice system's) ideological and material role in defending the amoral, brutal structures of power and domination operating in a grossly unequal society (Sim, 2009).

At the same time, the social order of the prison, and the wider society, remains brittle, susceptible to individual and collective acts of insurrection, contestation and disorder. Nearly 50 years ago, George Jackson (1972: 95) captured that sense of fragility when he wrote that 'the ultimate expression of law is not order – it's prison. We have hundreds upon hundreds of prisons, and thousands upon thousands of laws, yet there is no social order, no social peace'. Jackson's poignant insight remains directly relevant to today, arguably even more so in the current neoliberal conjuncture. Politicians, reform groups, liberal academics and media commentators might want to think about the significance of his words if prisoners are to be protected, if state servants are to be held accountable and if the scourge of the modern prison is to be abolished and its stain removed forever from the social landscape.

Funding

The research for this article received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sector.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the two anonymous reviewers, whose comments considerably strengthened the article's arguments, and to Kym Atkinson, Deborah Coles, Will Jackson, Will McGowan, Rebecca Roberts, David Scott, Steve Tombs and Katie Tucker for discussing different aspects of this article with me. Thanks also to Una Barr, Lindsey Metcalf and Adam Westall for organising the 'Shut Up and Write' sessions at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU), where some of this article was written, and to the staff in Ebeltoft Library in Denmark for providing such an excellent environment for writing other parts of this article.

Notes

[1] This article builds on a number of blogs I wrote that were published in 2018 by the Centre for the Study of Crime, Criminalisation and Social Exclusion, Liverpool John Moores University (See https://ccseljmu.wordpress.com/2018/01/30/liverpool-a-broken-prison-in-a-broken-system/).

[2] This was one of 61 contracts that the company had signed with the state. Along with Carillion, another private 'facilities management' company, in 2015, Amey, had won contracts worth £200 million to provide different services to prisons (Corporate Watch, 2018).

[3] ACCT forms should be opened on prisoners who are thought to be at risk of self-harm or self-inflicted death.

[4] These data reflected the longer, deeply embedded history of ignoring official recommendations at the prison. Between 2012 and 2014, the Inspectorate made 288 recommendations. Only 34% were achieved, leaving 66% partially achieved or not achieved (Sim, 2018a).

[5] This is taken from Bob Dylan's song *The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll*.

[6] It is also worth noting that in his response to the Justice Select Committee report on Liverpool, the Chief Inspector pointed out that the failure to act on official recommendations was 'sadly no more than a continuation of a trend I reported on in my last Annual Report, when for the first time we found that the number of our recommendations that had been implemented fell behind those that were not. It was all the more troubling that the Committee heard that senior HMPPS [Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service] leadership had relied on reassurances from HMP [Her Majesty's Prison] Liverpool that previous HMIP recommendations, from our May 2015 inspection, were being successfully implemented. Michael Spurr, CEO [Chief Executive Officer] of HMPPS, told the Committee: "In May, before the inspection, the prison was reporting that 66% of the recommendations were green, on-track and being delivered." As Mr Spurr commented: "That was not right." Mr Clarke added: "When we inspected HMP Liverpool in September 2017, we found that a mere 25% had actually been achieved"' (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2018a).

[7] This is a phrase used by Lou Reed (cited in Beaumont-Thomas, 2018).

[8] Thanks to Lucy McKay of INQUEST for alerting me to some of the Prison Inspectorate's press releases on this prison.

References

Armstrong, S, 2017, *The new poverty*, London: Verso

Beaumont-Thomas, B, 2018, 'We are the people who are desperate beyond emotion': Lou Reed's lost poetry to be published, www.theguardian.com/music/2018/mar/02/lou-reed-lost-poetry-to-be-published

Campbell, A. 1997, Walton tops prison suicides, *Liverpool Echo*, 8 January, p 5

Campbell, D, 2018, Understaffing and delays blamed for rising attacks on NHS staff, *The Guardian*, 17 April, p 9

Carlton, B, Sim, J, 2018, Deaths in sites of state confinement: a continuum of violence and terror, in S Read, S Sotirios and A Wright (eds) *Loss, bereavement and the criminal justice system: Issues, possibilities and compassionate potential*, London: Routledge, pp 54–63

Coles, D, Shaw, H, 2015, Deaths in detention, *Criminal Justice Matters*, 102, December, pp 9–10

Corporate Watch, 2018, Government allowed Carillion staff to work in prisons without mandatory suicide prevention, https://corporatewatch.org/government-allowed-carillion-staff-to-work-in-prisons-without-mandatory-suicide-prevention-training-outsourcing-amey/

Corrigan, P, Sayer, D, 1985, *The great arch: English state formation as cultural revolution*, Oxford: Blackwell

EurWORK, 2017, UK: prisons officers protest over staff shortages and safety concerns, www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/articles/uk-prisons-officers-protest-over-staff-shortages-and-safety-concerns

Fitzgerald, M, Sim, J, 1982, *British prisons* (2nd edn), Oxford: Blackwell

Foucault, M, 2002, So is it important to think?, in J Faubion (ed) *Michel Foucault essential works of Foucault 1954–1984*, London: Penguin, pp 454–8

Foucault, M, 2003, *Society must be defended*, London: Penguin

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018a, *Report on an unannounced inspection of HMP Liverpool by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 4–15 September 2017*, London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons

HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2018a, Response by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons to Justice Select Committee report on HMP Liverpool, www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/media/press-releases/2018/02/response-by-hm-chief-inspector-of-prisons-to-justice-select-committee-report-on-hmp-liverpool/

HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2018b, *Report on an unannounced inspection of HMP and YOI Nottingham 11–12 December 2017 and 8–11 January 2018*, London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons

HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2018c, Urgent notification: HM Prison Exeter, www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2018/05/Exeter-UN-letter-and-debrief-for-publication.pdf

House of Commons, 2018, *Justice Committee oral evidence: HM Inspectorate of Prisons report on HMP Liverpool HC 751*, London: House of Commons, https://ccseljmu.wordpress.com/2018/01/30/liverpool-a-broken-prison-in-a-broken-system/ Accessed 14th February 2019

INQUEST, 2018a, *Press release: Inspectors find further evidence of abject failures at HMP Liverpool, one of the worst prisons for self-inflicted deaths*, London: INQUEST

INQUEST, 2018b, *INQUEST submission to the Health and Social Care Committee inquiry into healthcare in prisons May 2018*, London; INQUEST

INQUEST, 2018c, *Still dying on the inside: Examining deaths in women's prisons*, London: INQUEST

Jackson, G, 1972, *Blood in my eye*, Harmondsworth: Penguin

Liverpool Echo, 2018, 25 October, https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/new-prisoner-dies-48-hours-15321869, accessed 14 February 2019

Mathiesen, T, 1974, *The politics of abolition*, London: Martin Robertson

Mathiesen, T, 1980, *Law, society and political action*, London: Academic Press

Medlicott, D, 2001, *Surviving the prison place*, Aldershot: Ashgate

Ministry of Justice, 2018a, Follow-up evidence on HMP Liverpool, www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/Justice/correspondence/Minister-of-state-HMP-Liverpool.pdf

Ministry of Justice, 2018b, *Safety in custody statistics, England and Wales: Deaths in prison custody to September2018 assaults and self-harm to June 2018*, London: Ministry of Justice

Ministry of Justice, 2018c, *Annual prison performance ratings 2017/18*, London: Ministry of Justice

Panitch, L, Leys, C, 2005, Preface, in L Panitch and C Leys (eds) *The socialist register 2006*, London: The Merlin Press, pp vii–x

Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, 2011, *Investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of a man at HMP Liverpool in February 2010*, London: Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

Scott, D, 2008, Creating ghosts in the penal machine: prison officer occupational morality and the techniques of denial, in J Bennett, B Crewe and A Wahidin (eds) *Understanding prison staff*, Cullompton: Willan, pp 168–86

Scott, D, 2016, Bloodbaths and prison staff: considering the actual state of our prisons, https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/new-prisoner-dies-48-hours-15321869, Accessed 14th February 2019

Scott, D, 2018, *Against imprisonment: An anthology of abolitionist essays*, Hook: Waterside Press

Scott, D, Sim, J, 2018, Prisons: dangerous for whom?, https://ccseljmu.wordpress.com/2018/09/20/prisons-dangerous-for-whom/
Sim, J, 1994, The abolitionist approach: a British perspective, in A Duff, S Marshall, RE Dobash and RP Dobash (eds) *Penal theory and practice: Tradition and innovation in criminal justice*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp 263–84
Sim, J, 2000, 'One thousand days of degradation': New Labour and old compromises at the turn of the century, *Social Justice*, 27, 2, 168–92
Sim, J, 2004, The victimised state and the mystification of social harm, in P Hillyard, C Pantazis, S Tombs and D Gordon (eds) *Beyond criminology: Taking harm seriously*, London: Pluto, pp 113–32
Sim, J, 2009, *Punishment and prisons: Power and the carceral state*, London: Sage
Sim, J, 2017, Austerity, violence and prisons, in V Cooper and D Whyte (eds) *The violence of austerity*, London: Pluto, pp 195–202
Sim, J, 2018a, Liverpool: a broken prison in a broken system, https://ccseljmu.wordpress.com/2018/01/30/liverpool-a-broken-prison-in-a-broken-system/
Sim, J, 2018b, We are all (neo) liberals now: reform and the prison crisis in England and Wales, *Justice, Power and Resistance*, 2, 1, 165–88
Sim, J, 2018c, Nottingham and Exeter prisons: death, danger and dehumanisation, https://ccseljmu.wordpress.com/2018/06/25/nottingham-and-exeter-prisons-death-danger-and-dehumanisation/
Sim, J, 2018d, Beyond redemption: the barbarism of Birmingham prison, https://ccseljmu.wordpress.com/2018/09/18/beyond-redemption-the-barbarism-of-birmingham-prison/
Sim, J, forthcoming, 'Malignant reality': mental ill-health and self-inflicted deaths in England and Wales, in K Kendall and A Mills (eds) *Mental health in prisons: Critical perspectives on treatment and confinement*, London: PalgraveMacmillan
Spitzer, S, 1975, Towards a Marxian theory of deviance, *Social Problems*, 22, 5, 638–51
Stevenson, L, 2014, *Life beside itself*, Oakland, CA: University of California Press
Thomas, J, 2018, They should have kept my boy safe, *Liverpool Echo*, 23 February, p 4
Williams, Z, 2013, Why does Wonga even exist? It's a question no one on the Left asks, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/17/why-wonga-exist-no-one-on-left-asks