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'Inside White – racism, social relations and ethnicity in English prison'

ABSTRACT: Using personal experience and research in English men's prisons this chapter explores the ways in which some white ethnicities are shaped by resentments that emerge in the face of the powerful strategies of the prison regime to eradicate unfair differential treatment of black and minority ethnic prisoners. These entangled relations can be disorienting for some white men in multicultural prisons where conventional, and more or less familiar, hierarchies of race are constrained, disrupted and disturbed. The prison setting, with its highly managed spaces and sensibilities, provides a lens through which to analyse tensions in the ways in which ethnicity is formally recognised and directly experienced.

“What are the terms for groups of people from different cultural, religious, linguistic, historical backgrounds, who have applied to occupy the same social space, whether that is a city or a nation or a region, to live with one another without either one group [the less powerful group] having to become the imitative version of the dominant one – i.e. an assimilationism – or, on the other hand, the two groups hating one another, or projecting images of degradation? In other words how can people live with difference?”

Stuart Hall, 'Rethinking the cultural question' – a video conversation with Nira Yuval-Davis, presented at the 'Racisms, Sexisms and Contemporary Politics of Belonging Conference, London August 2004.

Prison: Signs of trouble, symbols of order

Prisons are strange and difficult social spaces. At once familiar, because they are part of an everyday vocabulary of punishment, and remote because what goes on inside a prison is rarely the stuff of lived experience for the majority of the population. Prisons are the stuff of legend and nightmares, myths and movies. They symbolise the state's authority, order and the rule of law. They are its ultimate sanction demonstrating, short of the death penalty, the state's power over a person's life. A prison sentence, particularly a long one, is referred to as a 'civil death' with good reason. Prisons can

be tombs as well as cages. As such, the fascinations they provoke in social scientists can be simultaneously profound, morbid and instrumental. For some people however, prisons are more routine; a fate lurking not so far around the corner. This is particularly the case if you are a young man and not of the majority population in terms of ethnicity.

From the time of Gresham Sykes's (1958) seminal study, *The Society of Captives*, the institution of prison has been recognised as a political device of the state's creation, a decisive instrument in the arbitration of social power, and the archetype of its 'exclusionary enclosure' (Wacquant 2007). As Sykes (1958:8) reminds us "we must keep this simple truth in mind if we are to understand the prison". According to Loic Wacquant (2009a 2009b) the racial configurations of western penal systems are now so stark they represent a significantly novel development in neo-liberal statecraft. He suggests the 'blackening' of the carceral population in the US at a time of declining crime rates should be recognised as a mechanism for managing the marginalised populations of an expanding neo-liberal order. The state, he argues, is engaged in the social and moral excommunication of its racialised and ultimately expendable 'others'. Although Wacquant's complex theoretical propositions have been met with a combination of guarded welcome and some scepticism in the UK (Newburn 2010; Squires and Lea 2012) the data on levels of incarceration according to ethnicity on both sides of the Anglophone Atlantic are stark. For the USA in 2008, of the 1.54m imprisoned for over a year in federal and state prisons, 34% were white, 38% were black and 20% were Hispanic (Sabol et al. 2009). The composition of the general population of the USA in 2004 was 80% white, 13% black, 4% Asian with the remainder made up of other minority ethnic groups (US Census Bureau 2005, cited in Sabol 2009). With an incarceration rate of 760 per 100,000 in the USA the sheer numbers of the Black minority ethnic group in the US prison population is as staggering as it is exceptional (Pratt 2011). Going to prison has become a commonplace, 'a modal event' as Megan Comfort (2008) puts it. For some young African American men, going to prison after high-school is as likely as going to college, more likely if they happen to occupy public housing.

The astonishing scale of the US penal nightmare tends to overshadow the fact that racial disproportionality in prison populations is *even more* marked in England and Wales (and Australia) than in the US, and has been skewed that way for some time (Phillips 2013, Tonry 1994). Based on 1990 data the black:white ratio was 7.1:1 in England and Wales compared with 6.44:1 in the US and this pattern continues (see Phillips 2013). The most recent available comparison from 2000 shows a black:white (male and female) incarceration ratio of 8.5:1 in England and Wales compared to 7.7:1 for men and 6:1 for women in the US (Home Office 2000; Becker and Harrison 2001).

If you are black and male prison is likely to feature in your life as something other than a remote symbol. If not a haunting presence touching friends and family, it will be a direct and forceful reality. Similarly, if you are male, white and working class your experience of prison is less likely to be one of fascination or theoretical speculation than fateful or fatalistic dread. It is now, as it ever was, that prisons are filled with men from the social and economic margins of society. The extraordinary growth of penal populations in Anglophone democracies, but particularly the USA, confounds penal theorists' explanations (Garland 2001; Simon 2007). It is almost as if the ultimate force of imperialism that once extended the reach of the State beyond its boundaries, is now, in post-colonial societies, turned inward. Where the armies of the State projected its influence beyond its borders, prisons are now raised to secure the State from internal threat and pacify the unruly enemies within (Christie 2004). For many young men the priorities of the neo-liberal security state are the ones they are most likely to encounter. Increasingly, they find themselves engaged not by a State recognised for its provision of housing, hospitals and schools, but by a hostile force they need to avoid or confront as it pursues them through the economic margins. This hostile state is to many young men what 'interfering' tax authorities are to their super-rich equivalents at the other end of the social hierarchy, only a lot more extensive, militarised and difficult to dodge (Earle 2011a).

Prison: perspectives on everyday life?

In this chapter I discuss some aspects of a two year research project into men's social relations in two prisons in SE England between 2006 and 2008. The research explores the salience of ethnicity and gender to the lived realities of being in prison. The dynamics of ethnicity in men's prisons, prior to this study, were largely absent from the prison research literature. Some of the impetus behind the study derives from the disproportionality referred to above, the persistence of this disproportionality and the need for deeper, clearer and more local understandings of the ways in which 'race' and ethnicity are implicated in the contemporary carceral process (see Phillips 2013).

The research adopted qualitative research methods involving extended visits to two prisons in S.E. England where I, along with Coretta Phillips, the Principal Investigator, spent as much time as we could talking with prisoners and hanging around the wings, workshops and restricted social spaces of the prisons. Over the course of eight months in each prison, a total of 110 semi-structured interviews were conducted with men in the prisons, and fieldnotes recorded our observations, interactions and feelings during the research period.

This extract from my field journal indicates how some of the preoccupations alluded to above, and that I develop further here, began to emerge:

"I sometimes think, abstractly as I'm conducting fieldwork, travelling to the prison, or away from it, that the prison order is the order of a police state, i.e. a society of almost total control where there is only the (aberrant, dangerous, lonely) Individual (man) and The State (men). I don't know what to do with this dystopian image that haunts me. Is it the spectre that haunts the Western, the Late Modern, social imagination? (following De Certeau – "Believing is running out, being exhausted, leaving only seeing, seeing like a state" find ref????)".

[Fieldnote, 4/11/2007]

It is tempting to see 'the prison' as a microcosm of a whole society. Such thinking is at least partly shaped by being consumed by the fieldwork process, the compelling strangeness of prison life and the power prisons hold over the sociological imagination. De Certeau (1984), for example, finds an analogy for the constraints of modern life in the similarities between a train and a prison: you can't get out, except at your allotted time, and because 'inside' real life is suspended, life is simple, reduced to a functionality that is accepted on the basis of the separation and compartmentalisation necessary for the journey.

If you imagine being locked in a train compartment for about three months with the same people and that the train never moves, but all around you the world whirls and moves on, you have something of the disorienting stasis I experienced as a prisoner in my twenties. That's the sentence I got through and the impression it left with me.

Prison is a place so removed from the real world that temporality (experienced time) is distorted in such a way that a sense of 'the future', which should be an open horizon, becomes all-but-inoperative while you are in prison. There is no future within a prison sentence, nothing between going in and coming out but the pre-established routines, the prison timetable, to drift through. As gang leader, Avon Barksdale, remarks in the television series *The Wire* (Season 3, Episode 7) 'you only do two days inside, the day you go in and the day you come out'. A prison sentence blocks what Merleau-Ponty (1968) has called the originary power of "I can", the innate power to realize the formation of human possibilities. The recognised 'pains of imprisonment' close off conventional existential horizons but through their closure, they are, ironically and painfully, made more apparent. The possibility of possibilities is made real by their withdrawal (Nakagawa 1993). I think many prisoners contend, at various levels, with such ontological dilemmas of who they are, and how they want to be; they work on themselves and their possibilities even as the prison does the same. You are often your own best company in prison. I don't know if after 3 years in prison I'd feel the same about it, let alone if I did more, but now some 30 years later, De Certeau's train image

resonates powerfully with my experience as a prisoner and conveys the peculiar, cramped, immobilisations and separations from more regular living conditions that prison imposes.

For other social theorists the prison provokes more portentous analogies. For Jerome Miller (2000, cited in Shalev 2011:28) “prisons and jails are an early warning system for society. They constitute the canary in the coalmine, providing an omen of mortal danger that often lies beyond our capacity to perceive”. For Zygmunt Bauman (1993: 122) prisons are fertile ground for sociological research because “...penal practice may serve as a laboratory where the tendencies attenuated and adulterated elsewhere can be observed in their pure form; after all control and order are the outspoken objectives of the prison system”. These ominous perspectives suggest prisons offer premonitions of social processes otherwise obscured or impending, as if prison relations can be scaled up to model those of wider society, or that they are stripped down forms of those operating in society at large, revealed from their social camouflage.

Within the more prosaic ambitions of penal research itself, two theoretical frames have guided most qualitative studies of prisoner’s social relations. The first, derived from Sykes (1958) study, is known as the ‘indigenous model’. It suggests men’s identities are subsumed by a master prisoner status imposed by the grim routines and regimentation of prison life. These formally strip the individual of their erstwhile identity and impose what Foucault (1975) liked to think was a ‘recoding of their existence’. The second, ‘importation model’, derived from Jacobs’ (1979) study, suggests prison identities are less discrete and draw more from external, racialised identities. These largely pre-existing identities from outside the prison structure its social hierarchies, its informal economy and most religious activity. As is perhaps obvious, both these influential models derive from dated US research.

In the UK, empirical studies of race and ethnicity in prison have been scarce and limited, the exception being Genders and Player’s (1989) study, drawing from fieldwork in the early 1980s. This described primarily same-race solidarities within three English prisons, with a racially stratified social

hierarchy in one institution, headed by white professional 'gangsters', with black and 'terrorist prisoners' in the middle echelons and sex offenders at the bottom of the hierarchy. Bosworth's (1999) analysis of women's prisons has explored how intersecting identities of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and nationality provide a mechanism for resisting institutional power and control, whilst Wilson (2003) found strong black prisoner solidarity in response to racism in a YOI. Crewe's (2010) and Drake's (2012) rich and detailed studies concentrate on reconfigurations of power, security and legitimacy in prison. In most recent contemporary prison research a hybrid model is acknowledged that synthesises elements of both the 'importation' and 'indigenous' models. .

Modern, multicultural prison

At the time of this study in 2006 27% of male prisoners in England and Wales were of minority ethnic origin and 15% were foreign nationals (Ministry of Justice 2009). The two prisons were chosen to reflect this. HMP Maidstone and HMYOI Rochester in Kent were selected for having an ethnically mixed population of prisoners from both urban and semi-rural settings. Each of the prisons hold approximately 400 men convicted in the Greater London area courts, where Black and minority ethnic men are over-represented in the criminal justice system, and from courts, or other prisons, in the neighbouring counties of Kent, Essex and Sussex where white ethnicities predominate. The minority ethnic population of Inner London registers somewhat above 34%, while the corresponding figure for Kent and Essex, to the north, is approximately 3%).

The research, briefly summarised here (see Phillips 2013 for a full account), reveals a complex and contradictory picture of social relations among prisoners in which ethnic differences were frequently seen as quite an ordinary and unremarkable aspect of their lives, both inside and outside the prison. Black and minority ethnic men tended to have stronger senses of ethnic identity, sometimes expressed in styles of hair care, idioms of speech, modes of greeting, social interaction and ways of wearing prison-issue clothes. Trousers, for example, worn beltless and low over the backside represented an ironic transatlantic echo of young men's street fashions that draw from the

iconography of US prison dress codes (the enforced removal of trouser belts resulted in such low slung, apparently ill-fitting habits of dress). Some white prisoners also felt comfortable with such stylings, but for others they seemed challengingly defiant of convention and were resented. However, many white and ethnic minority prisoners told us they preferred to ignore ethnic differences and focus on a sense of 'common humanity' in which differences of skin colour and culture was dismissed in favour of a kind of dissolute egalitarian humanism. Following Gilroy (2004) we have dubbed these relations as expressions of a tentative con-viviality (Earle 2011b, Earle and Phillips 2009), elements of which transcend conventional habits of racialization.

Both researchers observed how many social groupings and forms of association gathered around ethnicity, but this did not appear to be rigid, overtly antagonistic or actively exclusionary. By way of contrast, expressions of explicit racism or racialised antagonism were vehemently condemned by prisoners, many of whom were prepared to confront it with force. Overt racism was not tolerated among the men in the limited open social spaces of the prison but we found signs that though suppressed, it had not disappeared. It had retreated 'behind closed doors'. Personal expressions of racism had been privatised rather than being rendered entirely obsolete as a social currency or an ontological resource. For some white prisoners feelings of hostility toward black and minority ethnic prisoners continued to be expressed in private, away from 'mixed company'. These expressions drew on the conventional racial fetish of innate white superiority, national mono-culture and essential differences (Hage 1998).

Some white prisoners expressed frustration at the impact of race equality and diversity policies which they felt unfairly offered some prisoners a form of leverage against the prison regime that they could not operate. As the case study discussed below indicates, this 'race card resentment' had considerable momentum and currency among white men who appeared unaware, or dismissive, of widespread and empirically sustained complaints of unfavourable differential treatment of black and minority ethnic men by prison officers in particular and the criminal justice system in general.

For many of the younger men interviewed in the HMYOI Rochester whether you were black or white was of less significance than where you were from. Area-based identification or a sense of locality seemed at times to displace senses of identity based on conventional ideas of race or ethnicity. This sense of 'postcode pride' (Earle 2011a) seemed less significant to the older men in the adult prison, but was a material practice that fashioned a localised kind of territorial, working class masculinity similar to that identified by Robins and Cohen (1978).

Though they are more comprehensively explored by Phillips (2013) these summary findings indicate a variety of significant features of men's prison experiences that can contribute helpfully to understanding neglected aspects of ethnicity and social relations in English prison life. In the next sections I concentrate on how some aspects of prison conditions and contexts can sharpen the anxieties that occupy contemporary white English identities (Ware 2009).

What White is that?

It is quite common for white people to want not to acknowledge racialised differences. As Ruth Frankenberg (1994) has pointed out to be 'colour-blind' constitutes an organized effort not to acknowledge such differences. It has become the 'polite' way of doing racialised difference by appearing not to. Although this stance has complex and sometimes honourable antecedents (see Gilroy 2000) it is, inevitably, an insufficient account of race, not least because it sustains the confusion that to be 'caught in the act of seeing race [is] to be caught being prejudiced' (Frankenberg 1994:145). As the brief account of prisoner social relations above indicates, the colour-blind disavowal of racialised difference by white prisoners proved functional at a number of different levels, but also floundered in the contested and fractured domain of the late modern, multicultural prison described by Phillips (2008, 2013). Phillips argues that conventional hegemonies of race in Britain, in prison or otherwise, are so thoroughly disrupted by the volatile dynamics of globalisation that it is frequently difficult to recognise or identify the proliferating replacements and multicultural

re-combinations emerging in people's practice and social relations. As Hall notes above, the terms of reference are unclear, the language and social spaces contested.

The fieldwork itself, conducted by a white man (myself) and a mixed race woman (Coretta Phillips), was not free of such 'blind-spots'. Being white and male, my 'ways of seeing' social relations, and doing the research frequently contrasted with those of Coretta, and it was sometimes only by 'comparing notes' and seeking to acknowledge differences of ethnicity, gender and class that we could appreciate how they shaped the data we were collecting (see Phillips and Earle 2010). The following fieldnote of our joint observation of men returning across the prison compound to their cells blocks from the prison workshops is a case in point:

Today it seems like one big group, maybe 100 prisoners, all together moving loosely. It's more tightly packed than the one I saw previously, and there is less calling. Coretta nudges me and says, 'See, how it is grouped according to race' or something like that and I feel myself snap to a different kind of attention; where I had been noticing a tighter knit whole group, she had seen ethnic grouping, and I wonder what is wrong with my way of looking that what leapt to her attention, leapt over my head. I look again, and in the crowd, which is loosening as people peel off to Medway [prison wing block] while others proceed to Weald [prison wing block], it is obvious that black guys are bunched together and white and white-ish guys are also in groups, 3-4, or 4-5, with little overlaps here and there. (Fieldnote: 4 July 2007).

In subsequent theorising of ethnicity and social relations in the prison my identification with evidence for post-colonial conviviality in the prisons is, I am sure, at least partially mediated by those aspects of my whiteness that correspond with Frankenberg's formulations (Earle and Phillips 2009). The pursuit of equanimity and conflict-avoidance are frequent leitmotifs of white 'colour-blind' perspectives on race. Although these pursuits acquire added resonance in prison's brittle contexts, an unintended consequence is to implicitly privilege racialised conflicts and disturbance. These

become the pre-eminent 'signal crimes' (Innes and Fielding 2002) of racism, such that they can be taken as the benchmark that defines the issue at the expense of recognising more pervasive, banal and ambient racism that frequently only occupies the margins of the white field of vision. As such racism remains deeply implicated in the dynamics of prison life but, as elsewhere, it survives in countless 'hidden injuries' (Sennett and Cobb 1993; Gadd 2010) inflicted by the lattice work of an ethnically undifferentiated social power, whiteness, that has often escaped scrutiny (Garner 2006). Just as many men commonly find it hard to recognise gender privilege and the patriarchal dividend that accrues to them through hegemonic masculinity because it is the norm for them to occupy its social spaces (Connell 2006), so whiteness appears as intelligible to white folk as wetness does to a fish. This is not to say that whiteness is natural, only that, like masculinity, one of its most potent social privileges is to render them as such, natural and thus invisible to the bearer.

According to Hage (1998, 2003) such blinkered perspectives are particularly characteristic of a white bourgeoisie whose relationships with the conventional structures of political power are being redrawn. Historically neglectful of race and racism these relationships are now complicated by the waning pre-occupations of nation states toward their publics and the declining welfare priorities of modern statecraft. One consequence of this redrafting is the concomitant decline of the post-war welfare settlement between the British state and its publics, such that it is now more likely to eschew the material implications of redistributive demands for racial and sexual equality.

Prisons and Publics, Ghosts and Phantoms: The state of the prison(er)

Hage (2003) recalls 'the Lippmann Question' in which the celebrated American journalist, Walter Lippmann, disillusioned by media manipulation of public opinion in World War 1 and alarmed by the rise of fascism in Italy, declared the idea of 'the public' to be a phantom (Lippmann 1925). Preceding Margaret Thatcher's notorious dismissal of 'society' by about 60 years, Lippmann regarded the idea of a civil public sphere as a dangerous illusion, a theoretical fiction conjured into place by sociological busy-bodies intent on justifying state interference in people's lives. Hage's analysis

works with the conjoined dynamics of race and nation, racism and nationalism, to speculate on the predicament of post-war welfare states as they encounter the full force of neo-liberalism's globalising, fragmenting and disorienting momentum. The welfare state, he argues, once stood for a conception of public and social life, the organisation and trajectory of its hopes that surfaced after the defeat of fascism in Europe and the exposure of its genocidal ambition:

“When the society of the past saw the possibility of social death, the welfare state intervened to breathe in hope, for there was a perception that all society was at stake wherever and whenever this possibility arose. Today, not only does the state not breathe in hope, it is becoming an active producer of social death, with the bodies rotting in the spaces of chronic underemployment, poverty and neglect. We seem to be reverting to the neo-feudal times analysed by Norbert Elias, where the boundaries of civilisation, dignity and hope no longer coincide with the boundaries of the nation, but with boundaries of upper-class society, the societal spaces inhabited by an internationally delineated cosmopolitan class.”

Hage (2003:18) does not refer to prisons, perhaps because his work precedes Wacquant's (2007, 2009a, 2009b) evolving analysis of the emergence of a penal security state, but his examination of the ways in which white ethnicities, nationalism and racism have been implicated in state projects or statecraft (in Wacquant's terminology) in Australia has much to offer an understanding of contemporary English prisons. Like Wacquant he finds the changes that are emerging around nation-states to be epochal in scale, creating new hybrids of pre-modern feudal orders and modern cosmopolitan ones. In this schema, the twenty first century increasingly resembles 'an amalgam of the sixteenth and the nineteenth' (Retort 2004:12). The 'social death' Hage sees as the state's novel and increasing output in these new times is heavily rehearsed in the prison's civil death. It is a fate reserved for those unruly elements that cannot be otherwise contained to the expanding social margins of the privileged, cosmopolitan core.

Hage's psycho-social theorising draws creatively from both Klein and Winnicott to explore how the nation-state provides for personal attachments, senses of belonging and care out of which publics grow. In this schema the nation offers citizens ontological as much as material security but, asks Hage, 'what happens when the nation starts hurting you?'; what happens when its apparatus becomes security-minded rather than care-minded? Hage suggests that as the state's ambitions to provide shrink and its orientations toward the future become narrower it triggers, particularly in white middle class people, avoidant, 'worrying' and blaming strategies that result in defensive, paranoid character formulations, not dissimilar to those originally analysed by Frankfurt School Freudo-Marxist theorists such as Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse and Wilhelm Reich (see also Gadd 2010). Although it is probably too speculative to call prison the character armour of the emerging neo-liberal state, the characters in prison, and their relationship to the state, their formulations of ethnicity and race, can be revealing of such a process because being a prisoner generates a paradoxical condition of almost total dependency on the state. In prison, like nowhere else in society, the state is your keeper and you are its property (Ruggiero 2010).

Even as the British Government affirms the 'civil death' status of its prisoners through its exceptional resistance to the European Court of Human Rights' ruling regarding the denial of prisoner's voting rights, it also pursues an assertive, innovative and largely progressive approach to diversity in prison and prisoner management. Before going on to analyse this further I present a case study from HMP Maidstone in an attempt to flesh out the issues being raised as they were encountered in the prison.

A Case in Point: 'Barry', racism and care in the (nanny) state.

Barry (not his real name) is an articulate, middle aged, university educated white man. As a prisoner at HMP Maidstone he became something of a wing advocate, organizing for better facilities and volunteering to provide prisoner-led activities. He deeply resents his incarceration for 'white-collar crimes' and holds the prison in the same kind of contempt which he reserves for the State. In the course of a long and thoughtful interview his ideas about ethnicity, race, racism and diversity

seemed to encapsulate many of the paradoxical, contradictory accounts and experiences we encountered in the prison from white prisoners.

In the following composition extracts from Barry's interview are woven together to present a single continuous narrative that offers insights into aspects of the kind of white ethnicities Hage insists require urgent analysis. While this composition is an analytical artefact the words are almost entirely his own and have been put together from the interview transcript by removing my questions and connective interjections. Although this case study composition is an unconventional rendition of respondent perspectives it provides a way of linking sometimes disjointed discussions of ethnicity threaded through an extensive interview (Gomm et al 2000; Gadd and Jefferson 2007; Gadd 2010). It is deliberately condensed and constructed to convey those aspects of a longer discussion and presented in this way to convey something of the person's narrative account of themselves that would be lost in fragmentary interview extracts (see Crewe and Bennett (2012) where this case study and approach was first deployed). Barry's perspectives on race and ethnicity are then discussed and contextualised as aspects of whiteness more fully in the remainder of the chapter.

Barry: *"Well you have ethnicity jammed down your throat all the time don't you. I'm a Samaritan for the prison, a Listener, so I do have to speak to a lot of people and or rather, have them speak to me. They're sometimes quite distressed. There was one about six months ago when I got referred to somebody who was trying to kill himself. And he said he didn't want to talk to me cos 'you're a white racist motherfucker'. And he would not speak to me. So the other racists in here do throw one's Caucasian background down your throat all the time. They play the race card even more in here.*

You find that people stick together in here for language reasons quite a lot. If there's three Dutch people on the wing, you'll find they play cards all the time. The West Indians stick together cos that's the way they are. I'm not being racist there, but they are, and they're the cause of an awful lot of trouble in here. They're the most racist bunch of bastards in the world. The Asians stick together.

It brings back the old question which is whether the racial and cultural barriers and difference should be celebrated or broken down. I don't think you could ever break them down. And if you celebrate them too strongly then it becomes racism. They have to be accepted and appreciated for what they are. Diversity is always a great thing. It's enriching for everybody who's in the melting pot. But it has to be tempered with reason. On one wing there was a period where the Muslims complained so much about people cooking bacon that it was banned completely from the self-cook. And they tried to make that stick on another wing, and in this one. I wouldn't have it, neither would any of the others. Fuck off, if you don't like it mate. I'm sorry, we can always fall back to the old baseline that this is a Christian country and if you want to be here, come and fit in. If I go and live in Dubai, I fit in with the Arabs, I observe Ramadan. I don't walk down the street with a beef burger. And you observe the traditions of the country that you're in, you don't try and impose your own traditions on them. I know that sounds a bit hard-line.

With the bacon ban, it didn't last long at all, but that's what they can do, they play the race card, they say 'he's being racist, he's cooking bacon where I want to'. Fuck off. They try it on all the time, they try and play the race/religion/Muslim card all the time. It has made them so unpopular. I mean I've heard people on the wing saying openly that they do not want Muslims on this wing. And that's not healthy.

On the other wing I couldn't get down to self-cook because the West Indians are the only ones allowed to cook. Nobody else is allowed to. It's the fact that the West Indians are the ones who take over. Again, I'm sounding racist. I'm not at all, it's just an observation. If you're not West Indian you can't cook on that wing, full-stop, that's it, end of the line. You try, you have a fight. If you're not West Indian you have to queue for your dinner as well on the servery. If you're West Indian you don't need to queue, you just go straight to the front, and the officers turn a blind eye because they can't argue with them because they're West Indian. That causes resentment. But the West Indians are a minority obviously, but they're one of the bigger minorities, they are very strong, they're not afraid to

have a fight because they pull the race card straightaway. If you hit a black guy, you'll get shipped off the wing because you've assaulted him in a racist manner. That's the way it always goes. It's reverse racism.

It's the same as it is outside the prison. There'll always be ethnic intermingling and ethnic separation as well. I had a flat once in Stoke Newington, big Turkish area [in north London]. Everybody was Turkish round there. I was one of the few English people in the street. And they just stick together, it's a ghetto. You go up to Stamford Hill [north London] and it's a Jewish area. It's a funny thing in here and it's a funny thing in society in general. Pure diversity and lack of racism involves not noticing the other person's diversity, the other person's race. It's irrelevant, it's irrelevant that you're black and I'm white, that you're from somewhere else to me. And yet the first thing they do when you come in here is 'what's your ethnic code'. That's disgusting. How dare they! It's none of their business what my ethnic code is. I put myself down as a black Afro-Caribbean Chinese cross usually, just to piss them off. It is none of their business. It's disgusting that they even ask. And I always tell them it's none of your business, 'make a guess' I say.

The prison service is not working, particularly because of the social worker input as I call it. The fact that they're forced to record one's ethnic code and all the rest. Even mentioning that somebody is Chinese or Norwegian should be a sackable offence. Nanny state again. 'We seem to have somebody from Laos on the Wing', so they'll have to reprint every sign in the jail with Laos as an option. Fuck off! This is England. These people they're all one great big bunch of ethnic foreigners or English ethnic different background, but nevertheless they're in England. Keep the signs in English, supply some translators and pretend not to notice that they're from a different country. That's the only way to do it. And anything beyond that is racism in itself. It's only a problem in England. What is it with the English? And the more these PC [political correctness] idiots try, and do, to solve the problems, the worse they make them."

Unhappy bedfellows: penal and political corrections.

In prison being the same as each other, wearing a prison uniform and being assigned a number have, traditionally, been seen as providing a simple 'us prisoners' v 'them officers' set of relations and identities. Although it is a largely mythical image, albeit with more than a grain or two of truth to it, there was much more going on in the two prisons of this research. Modern British prisons no longer address prisoners by their number or insist on prison uniform but they remain a paradoxical exercise in the degradation of what it is to be human (punishment) and in the imagination of what it is to be human (rehabilitation). Just as 'race' is premised on a similar kind of perverse, conflicted humanism (Young 1992), so too is the prison. It involves a similar kind of 'Enlightened' conjunctural practice where philanthropy meets misanthropy, often with the most terrible consequences.

Unsurprisingly, most people sent to prison resist being cast as 'all the same', 'all trash', and this can make personal projects in identity management more urgent and explicit. Prisons are places with obvious designs on men and in them, men design their own responses. Difference and distinction are needed by prisoners to discount the historical effort to reduce their humanity and rehabilitate them into more manageable units of society. Dehumanisation is an intensely deconstructive business, resisting it, a very personal affair.

Both HMP Maidstone and HMYOI Rochester had active, widely promoted and energetically developed diversity policies (Phillips 2013). There were obvious provisions for the substantial minority of Muslim prisoners, multi-faith facilities, and corresponding, if limited, dietary options. Religious and cultural festivals, such as Christmas, Passover, Ramadan and Eid, were accommodated in prison schedules and calendar activities. The prison administration's diversity panels and committees met regularly and reviewed complex, computer-assisted monitoring data that mapped the allocation of significant decisions and actions against prisoner's recorded ethnicity. The software operated a 'traffic-light' warning system indicating the presence of ethnic disparity and the urgency of addressing them as they emerged. These high-profile procedures were a prominent feature of prison administration, as Barry's account indicates. In these complex and necessarily pervasive

procedures, white English prisoners, such as Barry, appear to recognise a provision, even a sense of care, for people 'not like them'; ethnic people. At the same time they both resist and resent their own apparently inconsequential 'ethnification', not least because it is encountered as a fait accompli, presented to them by default (their fault!), rather than shaped by them. They are presented with a white ethnic identity that, if it cannot distinguish itself by an external nationality, such as Irish, or Polish, becomes intensely troubled and troubling (Ware 2009).

Barry resorts to an assimilative, colour-blind English national identity, but it is a besieged, defensive and plaintive position, an identity far removed from the empowered positions he sees in other prisoners' identities. It holds none of the attractions, and little correspondence with, the identities that emerged from the popular movements of minority ethnic people in many Western countries from the late 1960s. These 'traditionalist' identities provided a sense of security, even salvation, in times of turbulence and crisis. The character of these 'old ethnicities' was "fixed and ascribed" and provided a medium for engagement in larger imagined collectivities, such as the nation state. In some cases they offered "a set of standards, values, rules for living" (Friedman 1994:243). They are associated with a kind of essentialism and traditionalism expressed in the desire for roots, "the rise of the fourth world, the return to religion and stable values" (ibid:243). As Brah (1992:144) quizzically notes, essentialism is 'not easy to deal with' and the problems of such 'strategic essentialism' have left lasting legacies in the recognition and management of new diversities.

Among white people the beleaguered, resentful response to the new management of diversity ('everyone else gets all the advantages, we're abandoned'), is so pervasive as to be becoming constitutive of a new whiteness in contemporary Britain (Garner, 2012, personal comm.). It implicitly signals the displaced racial status quo in which minorities that were once discounted and discriminated against with impunity, and English imperial aspirations imposed across the globe, no longer holds. The apparently 'tolerant' 'live and let live', 'when in Rome...' account proffered by Barry depends on, and can only be sustained by, a wilful historical amnesia. Barry says "*If I go and*

live in Dubai, I fit in with the Arabs, I observe Ramadan. I don't walk down the street with a beef burger. And you observe the traditions of the country that you're in, you don't try and impose your own traditions on them. I know that sounds a bit hard-line." Unfortunately, for most of the 18th, 19th and half of the 20th century 'ramming it down people's throats', imposing English traditions, law, language, customs and habits was pretty much business as usual from Ireland to Africa, Australia and south east Asia. Barry's evocation of the equable, white Englishman abroad respecting local custom and culture represses this history and substitutes a more palatable inversion of contemporary cosmopolitanism (see Wemyss 2008; Tyler 2012). Barry's account also discretely implies an equivalence to the way he behaves as a visitor in a foreign country with the behaviour of a British citizen in their own country because, in his eyes, they would not be, could not be, a Muslim: 'Fuck off' or 'fit in' as he puts it to those he regards as badly behaved guests rather than fellow citizens. These unstable tensions energise the confused antagonism he has toward those he feels are failing to abide by his enlightened standards of international, inter-ethnic understanding. To the extent that this also represents Barry's middle class whiteness, his resentment is racialised (Aughey 2012; Fenton 2012).

History and prison: No escape, no short cuts

Stuart Hall's (1992:254) acute evaluation that the political consequences of what he called 'the end of the innocent notion of the essential black subject' had not been 'fully reckoned with' is as true now as it was when he made it. And so it continues. Gilroy's (2006) account traces how these seductive 'certainties' of 'race thinking' allow white Britons to keep their bearings in a world they experience as increasingly confusing. Barry's account offers a compelling mixture of indignant exasperation and reluctant engagement as he is drawn into that same 'old question' that Hall diagnosed as so elusive but so central to the social and cultural life of modern societies. In the enclosed proximities and shrunken social possibilities of the prison ducking the question is rarely an option.

Barry's account reflects the melancholic (Gilroy) and paranoid (Hage) tendencies that surface as he grapples with difference and searches for hope in the flattened, abbreviated hierarchies of the society of captives. Here he, and other prisoners in HMP Maidstone and HMYOI Rochester, encounter some of the 'feral beauty' (Gilroy 2004:157) of unruly post-colonial hybridity, the paradoxical and disorienting glamorisation of racial difference and the banal, 'ragged-edge vitality' (Irwin 1980) of an undeniably multicultural prison. Barry's whiteness is as hidden from him as the injuries of racism endured by non-white prisoners; all those subtle and not so subtle difficulties, experiential anomalies and obstacles thrown up against the life course that are obscured by the material and ontological privileges of whiteness (Sennett and Cobbett 1993, Gadd 2010). Alongside this uneven multicultural experience of diversity (con-viviality) white prisoners also encounter multiculturalism as a prescription for the management of such diversity. Boxed into the confined spaces of wings, courtyards and workshops prisoners are manifestly 'all in it together' in all the ways that the rest of us in David Cameron's Big Society manifestly are not. Here the state has them locked in and locked out of society and presents them with its own paradoxical vision of diversity, of 'how people can live with difference', and how it can react to the systemic discrimination and prejudice of racism that propelled so many of them there in the first place. For prisoners it is as challenging, enigmatic and ironic as that.

As both Phillips (2013) and Hage (1998, 2003) argue, contemporary formulations of racism in policies and personal practice commonly present the issue in zero sum binary terms – you are (a) racist or you are not, you are a victim or a perpetrator. The implied morality of this liberal anti-racism, sometimes manifest in prison diversity programmes, threatens white prisoners, not just for portraying them as potentially evil perpetrators (convicted again!), but also casting non-white prisoners as victims and virtuous (un-like them). The reductive moralism of this discourse implicitly projects virtue onto the victims and sets up a bogus hierarchical difference that is deeply resented (Ware 2008). Hence, perhaps, the vehemence of Barry's protestations and inversions that 'black people are the most racist people in here' while he is the victim of 'reverse racism'.

Looking for answers to the questions posed by Stuart Hall at the start of this chapter on how we can live with difference inevitably involves working beyond the boundaries of conventional Anglophone criminology. Expecting to find them in prison is perhaps naïve but, following Bauman (1993), in the multicultural prisons of this research the ‘tendencies’ of both a penal humanism and a more planetary humanism (Gilroy 2000) could be found, alongside and within the reconfigured racisms.

Henry Giroux (2008) insists that the meanings and definitions of racism alter for each generation, and that the challenge for scholars is to develop a new language for understanding how race redefines social relations between people. Stuart Hall’s remarks suggest this process and his work around new ethnicities (Hall, 1993) remains the most viable starting point. Hage (1998, 2003), Gilroy (2004; 2006) and Gadd (2010, & Jefferson 2007) all provide evidence, empirical and theoretical, that psychosocial, intersectional analyses are providing resources for this language. Whiteness, as Garner (2006; 2007) notes, is now part of the vocabulary and helps us to identify and trace its variable trajectories. Among these are the elusive ‘ghostly forms’ that enable people, such as Barry, to ‘see themselves as unfairly dealt with simply because they are white’ (ibid 2006:178).

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