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## Glimpses across 50 years of prison life from members of British Convict Criminology

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# Glimpses across 50 years of prison life from members of British Convict Criminology

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**When the editor of the Prison Service Journal approached us with his proposal to include the views of ex-prisoners in this Special Issue on the last 50 years, we were keen to oblige. Our first ambition was to secure five short first hand accounts, one from each decade, that is the 70s, the 80s the 90s and so on. Quite quickly it became apparent that this would not be possible. Anyone serving a sentence in the 1970s, most probably in their mid-20s, would now be in their late 70s and we just couldn't track anyone down. As the oldest among the authors, I offer my own recollections of a short sentence served at the beginning of the 1980s when in my early 20s. Bill Davies, somewhat younger but less handsome, offers his of the time he served in the 1990s. We both served short (3 month) sentences but both of us feared, and could easily have received, much harsher punishment.**

One of the dilemmas of pursuing convict criminology is how to qualify the implication that these brief and personal experiences can be aggregated into some distinctive criminological contribution. How do we avoid appearing to valorise our experience as if they were something paradigmatic or typical? How can the implied authenticity of our experience be made to count for something without reverting to a sense of timeless, unchanging penalty? The answers are elusive but tend to involve elements of 'strategic exoticism' and 'strategic essentialism' in which we discuss our experiences in prison as if they were beyond the usual reach of criminologists by virtue of the fact of being direct 'from-the-convict' experience. To an extent they are, but they are much less than a comprehensive or fully authentic account, even if we wanted them to be. They are particular and personal and it is by sharing some of the particulars in the vignettes that follow that we seek to

offer methodological shape to the potentials of convict criminology.

Notwithstanding the brevity of the prison experiences referred to above, thinking about the last fifty years of prison is likely to have very different connotations, depending on whether you are an academic or were once (or twice or more) a prisoner. As one of the BCC group, Dr Dave Honeywell ruefully remarks, it can seem like the you never become free of the prison: 'What I'm teaching is what I'm part of...It's there with me 24/7. Sometimes I think 'is this dominating myself, am I sort of imprisoning myself here to be always this ex-convict talking about the same thing over and over again'.<sup>i</sup> Dr Honeywell has felt the insidious pull of institutionalisation from two of society's factories of character — the university and the prison — and lives with the unsettling liminality it imposes on his identity: '... the only way I would be able to transform my life through being accepted and fully integrated would be through the university culture... the academy has become the institution in which I am now defined'.<sup>ii</sup>

There is also a side-story to the limited range of this assemblage of voices for the 250th issue of the journal. It is one that reflects some of the successes, and difficulties, of the British Convict Criminology group. Established in 2011, both of us as active members of the group are pleased that it offers a conduit into an academic journal on prisons and that this review of the last 50 years will include perspectives from formerly incarcerated people. Criminologists associated with British Convict Criminology have been regular contributors to the journal over the last few years.<sup>iii</sup> There are several other potential contributors within Convict Criminology and the wider community of formerly incarcerated British criminologists who might have been able to offer their own accounts of imprisonment in this period, but one of the downsides of

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- i. Earle, R. (2018) 'Convict Criminology in Britain: Development and Dilemmas', *British Journal of Criminology* 58(6) 1499-516
  - ii. Honeywell, D (2020) 'Ex-prisoners and the transformative power of higher education, in Earle, R. and Mehigan, J. (eds) *Degrees of Freedom, Prison Education at The Open University*, Bristol, Policy Press
  - iii. Aresti, A. and Darke, S. (2015) 'Open prisons: An ex-prisoner perspective' *Prison Service Journal*. 217, pp. 14-16.; Aresti, A., Darke, S. and Manlow, D. (2016) 'Bridging the gap: giving public voice to prisoners and former prisoners through research activism.' *Prison Service Journal*. 224, pp. 3-13.; Davies, W. and Nichols, H. (2016) (Eds) 'PRisoN: Unlocking prison Research', Special Edition. *Prison Service Journal* 223; Honeywell, D. (2016) 'Returning to HMP Durham 30 years on: An ex-prisoner's perspective', *Prison Service Journal*. 224 pp 14-20

the growth in university criminology is that academics joining the discipline, with or without prior experience of imprisonment, find themselves having to take on increasingly punishing work routines that preclude and prevent their relatively impromptu contribution to collections like this. University teaching loads, marking and student support, research income targets and demands for 'impactful outputs' are ever-increasing and accelerating. We sometimes find ourselves referring with wincing irony to treadmills. Bentham's vision of prison as a machine for 'grinding rogues honest' has travelled far indeed. Universities, for all their elitist ambitions and function, were intended to be places to think and places where time and thoughts could move at a pace determined by the thinker. That's a rare or unknown pleasure now.

The two vignettes below seek to capture and present something of life inside a prison in two of the five decades covered in this retrospective. The vignettes demonstrate how some of the conventional landmarks of penal policy, law-making (and breaking) and criminological inquiry are lodged in the personal lives of convict criminologists. They are followed by some critical reflections prompted by our onward journeys through criminology.

**Scene 1: Bill Davies, HMP  
Cardiff, November —  
December 1997**

*(subsequently University of Essex, 2003-2007, BA (Hons) Criminology and Sociology; University of Cambridge, M.Phil. Criminological Research, 2007-2008; University of Hull, PhD Criminology, 2009-2014.)*

*November 1997 will probably not be memorable to anyone old enough to remember it. So that the reader can locate it in their cultural memory I offer the following; the movie Titanic got released; The British nanny, Louise Woodward, jailed in America for murdering a child in her care, had her sentence reduced to manslaughter; Brazil refused to extradite the (now late) Great Train Robber Ronnie Biggs; The Queen celebrated her 50th wedding anniversary and Barbie Girl by Aqua was number 1 in the charts. It was also the month that I was sent to prison; 10.30am on the 10th of November to be precise, with two sentences of 3 months imprisonment, to be served concurrently. My barrister came to see me in the cells under the court and told me that I was very lucky, and seeing as I could have been*

*sentenced to upwards of 18 months, I felt very lucky.*

*As it turns out, I was rather unlucky. Had I been up in court 12 months earlier, I might have received a suspended sentence, but this was 1997 and not 1996. In 1996, when John Major was in power, England and Wales had approximately 50,000 people in prison. In 1997 Tony Blair was in power and was finally putting his 1995 leader's speech on getting tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime to use, leading to approximately 60,000 prisoners, of which I was now one. The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) was still 7 years away, and the first Secretary of State for Justice, Charlie Falconer, was 10 years away from appointment. It would take me another 10 years, an undergraduate degree and master's degree to realise that I was simply a pawn in the politicisation of crime.*

*I had no idea about this when I was sat in the prison van watching the world go by on the short two-mile drive to the prison; the prison that I had walked past any time that I went to Cardiff city centre. Even at a conservative estimate of four times a week heading to work, I must have passed that prison thousands of times, never knowing I would one day*

*live there.*

*It was past 3pm before I got to the prison, and past 5pm before I got through reception and the stores where you picked up your prison issue clothes. There was a lad behind the window asking peoples' sizes and sifting through piles of clothes looking for the cleanest he could find. While he was doing this he would try and guess the offence of the mannequin before him in a fairground-style 'guess your weight' side show; that said, his guess was in the right ballpark.*

*The first week consisted of 23-hour a day lock up with my cell mate, a nice enough chap in his mid-20s, and a recidivist (a word I would have to wait several years to learn the meaning of) factory burglar who liked to spend the colder months at Her Majesty's pleasure. It was a dull week listening to my cell mate give a running commentary on the trains arriving and departing Cardiff Queen Street station that you can hear from the window. If you*

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stood on the pipes and looked through the letterbox of a window at the top of the Victorian cell wall, you could just make out the roof of the trains that were being identified.

There were a number of firsts that week; the first time that I slept in bunk beds with a stranger; the first time I sat on my bed eating lunch while a stranger sat just two feet away defecating on a toilet; the first time I ever read a book in one sitting; the first time I ever felt real boredom. A few years later as I sat in HMP Hull interviewing short term prisoners on their experiences of prison, the topic of 'a lack of meaningful activity' within prisons came up, and in an instant, I was whisked back to that cold Victorian cell, listening to 17:48 Caerphilly train being announced to the waiting commuters that were blissfully unaware of my self-pity.

After a fortnight of bunk-bed sleep-overs I was moved to one of the newly built wings. It was constructed a year earlier, in time for the boom in occupancy that has always reminded me of Kevin Costner's 'build it and they will come' remark in the film *Field of Dreams*. This was a single cell (en-suite, of course), with a curtain-less window that afforded a clear view of the top of the multi-story car park where, on Friday and Saturday nights, local women would go so that they could flash their breasts to the 'zoo animals'. Fast forward eight years to when I first read Gresham Sykes' (1958) *Society of Captives*, and I couldn't help but think of the lack of curtains when I learned of the deprivation of goods and services involved in serving a prison sentence; and the serial flashing of breasts at the top of the car park when I read about the deprivation of heterosexual relationships.

I was offered a job on the garden crew, a job that came with a red band and the opportunity to spend most of the day out of my cell, not to mention the £13.50 weekly wage. In addition to the newfound daily freedom to wander around the inside of the perimeter wall at HMP Cardiff, came daily requests to 'bring in' items that I might find near said walls. For example, a tennis ball, or dead pigeon that had contraband within them; each request was

returned with a polite RSVP declining the offer. Thankfully, those who made the requests were always able to find couriers within the wider red band community, so my refusal didn't have a negative impact on me or my health. Sykes (1958) would have been proud of me for not being a snitch, and for getting on with my own time, even if he wasn't there to tell me at the time.

To prepare me for my release the prison sent me on extensive training courses to address my offending behaviour. These courses of re-education consisted of a single one-hour session with a prison officer, a flip chart, a marker pen, and a cautionary tale

about drug addiction. Drugs had not played any role in my offending, yet this was the only educational programme that was offered to me — because it was there. Had Dame Sally Coates written her 2016 Review into Prison Education some years earlier, then maybe that would have been different. I am now lucky enough in my job at Leeds Beckett university to teach men serving their sentence in a category-A prison and find it the most rewarding thing that I have ever done.

My last week of prison was also a countdown to Christmas. I left prison at 7.30 am on the 24th December 1997, with a small amount of money in my

pocket and the advice of my 'personal officer' ringing in my ear; 'don't worry about work, everyone needs their bins emptied and their windows washed'. The mandatory period of probation that followed my release was less helpful in my gaining employment, with the only advice given relating to which benefits I should apply for. Three probation meetings over the following six weeks, and my sentence was officially served. Unofficially, at times, it still feels as though I have to explain myself and my actions some 20+ years since.

...with a small amount of money in my pocket and the advice of my 'personal officer' ringing in my ear; 'don't worry about work, everyone needs their bins emptied and their windows washed'.

## Scene 2: Rod Earle, HMP Norwich, June-August 1982

(subsequently, Birkbeck College 1993-95, HE Certificate, Sociology of Crime and Deviance; Middlesex University 1995-97 Master's Degree, Criminology; The Open University, 2014. PhD-by-publications)

*In June 1982 when I went for trial, after almost exactly a year remanded on bail, I didn't expect to get sent down. I hadn't packed for a prison sentence so when I was taken from the dock down to the cells below the courtroom, I felt a bit numb. Stunned rather than panicked, I didn't know what to think. My patently inept barrister was little comfort. He had been drafted in on the day of the trial due to the unavailability of my more fully briefed 'brief' being unexpectedly occupied on another trial. His local replacement asked if I'd considered changing my plea so 'we' could go for a stronger mitigation, telling me I risked a sentence of up to 5 years or more if things went badly. They did, but the judge obviously did not agree with him on the potential sentence and, having been found guilty by a jury, he gave me three months, pronouncing that my actions in printing a fanzine that appeared to incite illegal behaviour (arson) suggested I was probably more of a 'knave than a rogue'.*

*I had a packet of cigarettes and a bit of loose change in my suit pockets as I was put in a van and taken from the court to HMP Norwich, a prison I barely knew existed on the edge of the city I'd lived in for the last 5 years. I was the only one in the van. I can't say my mind was reeling as it seemed to have stopped working almost completely. At the prison I remember having to strip and hand my clothes over to an officer who said they'd be returned on my release as he handed me a pile of folded grey garments and indicated the door-less shower cubicle. 'Of course', I thought 'a cold shower, it's a prison isn't it.'. The showers weren't cold, or hot.*

*After emerging from that first ordeal in my shabby grey prison garb, I remember the noises as we entered the main prison wing. There was the metallic clanging of gates and doors, an ambient echoey clatter. Hard surfaces for hard men. I faintly recall the officer explaining how I would be put in a reception cell which would be temporary, just one or two nights, before going to another where I would spend the sentence.*

*HMP Norwich is an old prison, built in 1886-7 and it is classic prison architecture. Clutching my loose pile of prison issue clothing, I recall looking at the prison landings, three levels up and wire-fenced along*

*each side, metal stairs up the middle and thinking how it looked so typically prison-like, even though my mental image of prison interiors was probably based only on the occasional episode of the tv sitcom, Porridge.*

*Shown into my cell I was alone for a while. Just me, the metal bunk and the sparse furniture. And a bucket. With a lid. In the early evening I was joined by another reception prisoner. I dreaded this moment. The space of the cell to be shared. He was a white man considerably older than me, perhaps in his late 40s, chubby, bald and sweating. He and the officer letting him in seemed acquainted. 'How long are you doing' he asked. 'Three months' I said. 'Fuck me, I've done more than that in a panda car' he exclaimed with genuine derision. Having established I wasn't worth talking to much he proceeded to tuck himself into the lower bunk and seemed to spend several parts of the night wanking noisily while I wept silently.*

*In 1982 the prison population in England and Wales was, at about 40,000, twice as large as the official capacity. HMP Norwich was an over-crowded prison. Already nearly a hundred years old, most of the cells designed for a single person were doubling up. Some*

*were tripled. It is just about possible to squeeze another single bed into a cell with a bunk bed, but no one was happy with the arrangement. When I was moved from the reception cell I joined two young-ish white men in such a cell. They were clearly not pleased to see me, complaining to the officer that they had been promised when the guy that preceded me was released, they would be assured a two-person share. They made a point of including me in the discussion with a 'don't get me wrong, mate, this isn't about you'. It was a welcome gesture and they proved to be friendly cell-mates who quickly demonstrated they were reconciled to sharing with me. They were from the north and had robbed their way south down the motorways, fully expecting to wind up somewhere like HMP Norwich. They were cheerfully serving out what they assured me was their last time inside.*

*Not much imagination is needed to understand the indignities of no in-cell sanitation, but considerably more to fathom the intricacies of 'less eligibility'.*

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With three to a cell even the most strenuous efforts to minimise the use of the bucket break down. An unwritten compact, a mutual understanding was that no one would use it unless absolutely necessary. And if they did, it was their job to empty it in the morning. The smell of the latrine area on the wing where buckets were emptied is not easily forgotten. It was only after the prolonged protest and riot at Strangeways prison in 1990, and the subsequent Woolf Report, that this most basic of prison humiliations was reformed. The penultimate day of my sentence I learned just how bad that humiliation could get.

At the usual slopping out in the morning, the smell was so much worse than usual — the acrid stench of urine was overpowered by something worse, something more ‘organic’. The talk was of food poisoning. Several people had been taken ill in the night and there was plentiful evidence of their much-loosened bowels in the buckets. Just as I was thanking my lucky stars I was unafflicted I felt the tell-tale signs of an irresistible lurching in my guts. I pounced on an opening toilet door and pushed my way in to claim my place on a throne. It was my luckiest moment in HMP Norwich as the unstoppable download struck at the one place where I had the best chance of avoiding the ultimate indignity.

There was much about the prison that was bearable. My cell mates helped me to apply for a better job, encouraging me to join them in the bookbinding workshop (see Earle 2020). The husband of one of my best friends in Norwich was serving a long sentence for various offences and sought me out. Gary was a small wiry Scot with a fairly fearsome reputation. He fixed up a cell move so I could join him when his cell-mate was moved on. He knew the ropes and helped me through them. In the short time I was inside I couldn’t help but learn a lot about prison. The food is poor, but just about adequate. The drugs are there, but best avoided, like the debts. Gary was an ex-heroin

addict from Aberdeen, a survivor of Scotland’s first heroin epidemic that coincided with the oil money and rig work. His truths on that subject, shared with me in the inevitable, unavoidable hours, have lasted me a lifetime. Boredom, work, exercise, lock up, radio. Repetition, routines, sleep and the drowsy slowing of life’s rhythms into the dull demands of prison emptied time are strangely insistent memories, even though my sentence can be counted in weeks rather than months, far less years.

In the decade that followed my incarceration, the 1990s, the introduction of in-cell sanitation changed something of the squalor of prison life, but talking to prisoners during my research in prisons in 2006/7<sup>iv</sup>

it wasn’t seen as a very great privilege to be sitting eating your meals next to your own flush toilet. The prison governor of that prison told me his proudest achievement was that despite the pressures of overcrowding he hadn’t had to impose cell-sharing in single cells in his prison. It was evidence of progress and his resistance to the warehousing features of modern imprisonment.

The squalid dereliction of old French prisons was a startling contrast to the relatively clean, modern, machine-like caging-in-groups type of prison he found at Attica.

#### Unending reform, unbearable conditions

There are certain features of a prison sentence that are almost universal and placeless: poor food, drugs, boredom, work, exercise, lock-up. Austerity. Hierarchical authority. Ruth First, imprisoned in South Africa in 1965 for opposing apartheid, reports a prison officer saying, ‘I am the regulations’.<sup>v</sup> A prison officer in HMP Norwich said something very similar to me in 1982 and I expect that comparable sentiments have been heard by prisoners or reported to every prison researcher every year of the last 50 years.

Prisons are always different and yet always the same. Michel Foucault, visiting Attica prison in the USA in 1972 after the bloody suppression of the prisoner’s rising/riots, was astonished at the differences to the French prisons he had recently become interested in. The squalid dereliction of old French prisons was a startling contrast to the relatively clean, modern, machine-like caging-in-groups

iv. Earle, R. (2014). ‘Insider and out: reflections on a prison experience and research experience. *Qualitative Inquiry*’, 20(5) pp. 429–438.; Earle, R. and Phillips, C. (2013). ‘Muslim is the new black’ - new ethnicities and new essentialisms in the prison’. *Race and Justice*, 3(2) pp. 114–129

v. First, R. (1965) *One hundred and seventeen days: an account of confinement and interrogation under S. African ninety-day law*. London Penguin.

type of prison he found at Attica. He attributed the difference to the more overt political dimension of US carcerality, located specifically in the political repression of its racial dynamics.

By way of contrast, in the France of the early 1970s, Foucault identifies the explicit disavowal of prison's broader political dimensions, the limited perception of its politically repressive function. He draws on an anecdote told to him by the formerly incarcerated French writer, Jean Genet, who recalled an episode in which an imprisoned communist agitator had once refused to be cuffed to him as he (Genet) 'was a common thief, a criminal' whereas the agitator wasn't — he was better than that. Genet says that after sensing the contempt with which this communist agitator regarded him, he could never again fully trust anyone with self-professed political affiliations. For Foucault it demonstrated the need to ask questions and involve prisoners more closely in the process of understanding and critically analysing imprisonment — hence the establishment of Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons (GIP).

As hundreds of French political activists and industrial militants were imprisoned following the collapse of the 1968 insurgency in France, Foucault insisted it was important to understand how prison was able to forge and reinforce divisions between what was acceptably political, what was resistant to the prevailing social order and what was merely criminal. What was it that connected the subjectivities of those driving ever more people into prison with the subjectivities the prison sought to develop through its regimes? What is society consenting to when it consents to the manufacture and deployment of these regimes? What tastes, appetites and preferences are satisfied by the production of such large numbers of prisoners? As Bourdieu<sup>vi</sup> (1984:56) was to notice some years later 'tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance of the tastes of others'. The prison somehow gives shape and form to these negative preferences.

In his response to visiting Attica in 1972, Foucault insisted proponents of social change and revolution

needed to be more wary of how radical politics was drawn ineluctably into the 'game of negation and rejection' when it accepted the underpinning 'bourgeois morality' of the prison, rather than scrutinising its wider and ideological 'role in the class struggle'.<sup>vii</sup>

In 2020, some fifty years later, the term 'bourgeois morality' is heard more as if it were a tired political cliché than something real, something shaping how we live. It is, perhaps, more easily recognised as something that used to exist in the past or in Victorian fiction, in the novels of Charles Dickens or Victor Hugo. Thankfully, you don't have to read any old novels to see a bit of bourgeois morality. You can go to the cinema or stream *Parasite*, the Oscar winning film by Bong Joon-ho, into your home screen. In *Parasite*, as in *Les Misérables*, as in *Hard Times*, the class struggle is writ large against the backdrop of the lives of the bourgeoisie and their toxic morality. In *Parasite*, there are crimes aplenty, but the film's energy and narrative brilliance derives from the transgression of the boundaries that separate the rich from the poor, its tensions from the contemptuous disdain of one family for another. Bourgeois morality is located in the visceral indifference that insulates the rich from the poor, normalises their coexistence and exceptionalises actions that disrupt it.

Bourgeois morality makes a fetish of self-discipline, industriousness, punctuality and thrift. It sees the poor as a breed apart, pathologically indolent, inevitably different, even smelling disgusting in one of the film's pivotal moments. The boundaries of indifference are breached and the hate behind them spills out<sup>viii</sup>. In the violent climax of the film, the refusal of the status quo is criminal and cathartic, literally a bloody coup d'état from below that cancels the illusions of 'levelling up' or 'carrying on' that were woven through the social fabric to defer discontent in the UK, at least until the corona crisis offered a new lens on the present, the past and the future. And therein lies an argument about crime, imprisonment and class struggles within racial capitalism<sup>ix</sup> that seems to have got lost in the last 50 years, as prisons have grown and multiplied so dramatically.

Bourgeois morality makes a fetish of self-discipline, industriousness, punctuality and thrift. It sees the poor as a breed apart, pathologically indolent, inevitably different, even smelling disgusting in one of the film's pivotal moments.

vi. Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London. Routledge

vii. Foucault, M. (1972) Michel Foucault on Attica: An Interview, (John K. Simon) *Social Justice*

viii. Ahmed, S. (2004) 'Collective Feelings, or The Impressions Left by Others', *Theory, Culture & Society* 21(2): 25-42

ix. Robinson, C. (2019) *On Racial Capitalism, Black Internationalism and Cultures of Resistance*, London. Pluto Press.

In 1968, two years before the Prison Service Journal was launched, there were 168 people in prison serving a sentence of 10 or more years. In 1974, four years after the launch of the journal, the number of people in prison who had been detained for more than 15 years had risen to 19. In 2019, the number of people serving sentences of 10 years or more exceeded 18,500 and such sentences are regarded as 'normal'<sup>x</sup> and insufficient by some. We urgently need more critical analysis that can weave a story between the politics of crime, the miseries of incarceration, the limits of what is tolerable and the hostile environments that are becoming the speciality of modern statecraft.

After his tour, one of the few times that he actually visited a prison, Foucault imagined what it must be like to be a prison guard in Attica, guiding the visitor around its cages. Bizarrely, he imagines the guards 'giggling inside' as they conduct visitors around the prison, all the while thinking:

*'You have handed over to us robbers and murderers because you thought of them as wild beasts; you asked us to make domesticated sheep of them on the other side of the bars that protect you; but there is no reason why we, the guards, the representatives of 'law and order', we, the instruments of your morality and your prejudices, would not think of them as wild animals, just the same as you. We are identical with you; we are you; and, consequently, in this cage where you have put us with them, we build cages that re-establish between them and us the relationship of exclusion and power that the large prison establishes between them and you. You signalled to us that they are wild beasts; we signal in turn to them. And when they will have learned it well behind their bars, we will send them back to you.'*<sup>xi</sup>

If, some 50 years later, this account were unrecognisable we might have more to celebrate and less to worry about. It would not be necessary to remind ourselves of Foucault's other, less well remembered prescription: 'The only way for prisoners to escape from this system of training is by collective action, political

organisation, rebellion'.<sup>xii</sup> In the summer of 1972, even without recourse to Foucault's insights, there were more than a hundred strikes and rooftop protests in British prisons.<sup>xiii</sup> A decade of penal reform and radical analysis was opened, but then narrowed again toward the end of the 1980s. The 1980s closed with the events at Strangeways prison in Manchester on 1 April 1990. As Joe Sim<sup>xiv</sup> reports on the very first day of the protest one of the prisoners involved in the protest declared 'We are having no more. We are not animals, we are human beings'. Twenty-five days of rebellion, roof top protests and riot resulted in one prisoner being killed and 47 being injured, as well as nearly 150 prison officers. It sparked other riots and disturbances in 20 prisons across England, Scotland and Wales, prompting the Conservative government into announcing a public inquiry, headed by Lord Woolf. Woolf reported what prisoners up and down the country knew: prison conditions had become intolerable, prison life unbearable.<sup>xv</sup>

As prisoners took the roof off HMP Strangeways in 1990, David Garland's *Punishment and Modern Society* was published to much acclaim. In its concluding discussion of the symbolism of imprisonment Garland<sup>xvi</sup>, following Foucault, points to prisoners perspectives on punishment: '...whatever meanings the judge, or the public, or the penitentiary reformers meant to convey by sending offenders to prison, it is the day-to-day actualities of the internal regime which do most to fix the meaning of imprisonment for those inside.' Criminologists have work to do if they want to avoid being implicated in Alvin Gouldner's famous analogy about the zookeepers of deviance who 'like the zookeeper...does not want spectators to throw rocks at the animals behind bars. But neither is he (sic) eager to tear down the bars and let the animals go.'<sup>xvii</sup> To avoid developing 'zoo-eyes' criminologists need to listen carefully for those meanings and not just look into prisoners' souls like secular priests but into the wider struggles, the class struggles that initially propelled Foucault to look inside prisons. Prisoners need partisans as much as they need criminological chaplains. Convict criminology is not necessarily either of these but seeks to make new alliances that might prompt new thinking rather than new prisons.

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x. Prison Reform Trust (2019) Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile, Winter 2019. London PRT  
 xi. Foucault, M. (1972) Michel Foucault on Attica: An Interview, (John K. Simon) *Social Justice*  
 xii. Foucault, M. (1972) Michel Foucault on Attica: An Interview, (John K. Simon) *Social Justice*  
 xiii. For a full account see Mike Fitzgerald's (1977) *Prisoners in Revolt*, Harmondsworth Pelican/Penguin  
 xiv. Sim, J. (2020) 'We are having no more...' Centre for Crime and Justice Studies Blog <https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/resources/we-are-having-no-more-we-are-not-animals-we-are-human-beings> (accessed 17/03/20)  
 xv. Jameson, N and Allison, E. (1995) *Strangeways 1990: A Serious Disturbance*, London. Larkin Publications.  
 xvi. Garland, D. (1990) *Punishment and Modern Society*. Oxford. Clarendon  
 xvii. Gouldner, A. (1968) The Sociologist as Partisan: sociology and the welfare state', *The American Sociologist* 3(2) 103-16