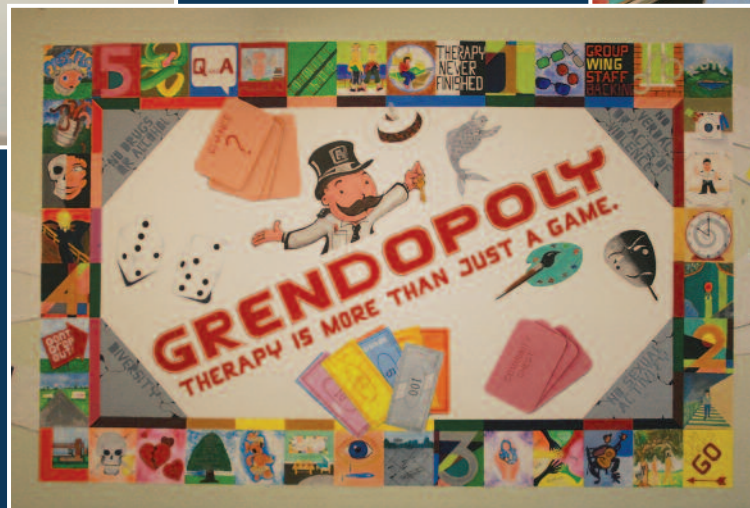
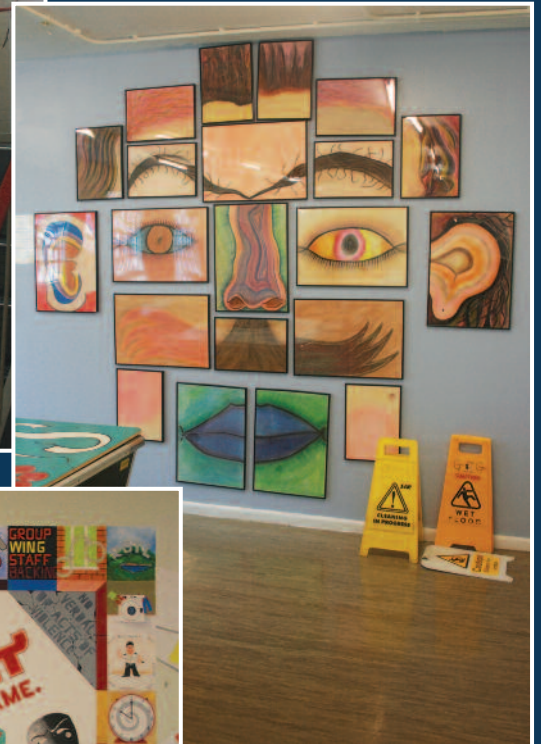


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*Breaking the Cycle*

# 'Welcome to the Machine'<sup>1</sup>: Poverty and Punishment in Austere Times

*Professor Joe Sim is Professor of Criminology, Liverpool John Moores University.*

**We don't necessarily need to know every pathway that leads to misery in every individual. If anguish and madness are caused by material things happening to material bodies: on [the] one side, traumatic abuse and persecutions; and on the other, soul-deadening labour, squalid impoverishment, the boredom of joblessness, the moralising sermons of the privileged — to name but a handful of the officially approved torments — then it seems sensible not to try to talk people out of their unhappiness, but to change the world from which it springs. A concerted effort to take the plight of the poor and the marginalised seriously, to redistribute wealth, and to give them more say over their own future might not solve every one of these ills, but it would be a good place to start.<sup>2</sup>**

Rehabilitation is back on the state's agenda. The publication of *Breaking the Cycle* in 2010, and other policy documents, has allowed ministers to claim that their government is at the forefront in revolutionising the process of rehabilitating prisoners. However, even in its own terms, there are a series of problems with this development which Nicola Padfield,<sup>3</sup> amongst others, has identified. This article, focuses on a number of broader issues and considers the rehabilitation revolution in the context of the social and economic policies pursued by the present government (and their less than illustrious predecessors), which, with their atavistic attacks on the discourses and practices of the welfare state, are negating and destroying the social protection afforded to the poor as a result of the post-war settlement and ravaging both their collective sense of self-worth and their individual sense of personal validation. It addresses three issues. First, it analyses the punishment of the poor through the welfare reforms that are being pursued which are intrinsic to the interlocking and intensifying power of the penal-welfare state. Second, there is the question of programmes for prisoners and the link, or not, to individual rehabilitation. Finally, the article discusses the

development of an alternative set of discourses which would contribute to thinking differently, and critically, about crime, prisons and the welfare state. These alternative discourses can be understood as contributing to the construction of material and ideological 'abolitionist alternatives' (Davis, 2003)<sup>4</sup> to the current penal and welfare arrangements in order to confront, and eventually remove, the soul-crunching policies that are being implemented by state institutions and profit-obsessed, private corporations.

## Punitive Welfare Regimes

In neoliberal Britain, in a landscape marked by the scar of the foodbank which, in 2012-13 fed nearly 350,000 people nationwide, of whom nearly 127,000 were children,<sup>5</sup> the material existence of the poor and dispossessed is under remorseless attack. Indeed, the very act of attempting to survive in capitalist-induced times of austerity — what Moloney has called 'the punishing existence' of the poor — subverts their sense of 'safety, self worth and competency'.<sup>6</sup> In turn, this means that feelings of rejection and patronising disdain are central to their often-wasted lives. As he notes:

*For poor people living in western consumer societies ... the daily grind of earning and getting by, the patronising arrogance and pettiness of the welfare officials upon whom many of them depend, the contrast between public opulence on the one hand and bare survival and private squalor on the other — all reinforce the message of low self-worth. Over time, such feelings become ingrained, densely connected to memories and experiences through multiple neural networks, and, in consequence, always primed to surge forth and overwhelm, making future attempts at escape more unlikely, even if circumstances should change for the better.<sup>7</sup>*

1. The first part of this paper's title is taken from the Pink Floyd song of the same name. The paper was originally presented at a seminar in Grendon Underwood prison in July 2013. I would like to thank the governor, Jamie Bennett, prison staff and the residents for their contribution and hospitality on the day. Thanks also to Roy Coleman, Will Jackson, David Scott and Steve Tombs for discussing different aspects of this paper with me.
2. Moloney, P. (2013) *The Therapy Industry* London: Pluto p. 208.
3. Padfield, N. (2011) 'Wither the rehabilitation revolution?' in *Criminal Justice Matters*, 86, December pp17-19.
4. Davis, A. (2003) *Are Prisons Obsolete?* New York: Seven Stories Press p. 109.
5. <http://www.trussell.org/foodbank-projects>. Accessed 28 January 2014.
6. Moloney (2013) see n 2 pp 201-202.
7. *Ibid* pp 202-203.

This attack is operating across a range of political and cultural institutions. In early 2013, it was reported that members of the Royal Family, had allegedly engaged in chav-themed fancy dress parties at Sandhurst, colleges at Oxford University had organised 'chav bops' while 'the privately educated creators of Little Britain [were entertaining] their devotees with comedic representation of the so-called underclass'.<sup>8</sup> These bourgeois 'japes' should not be surprising given that the caricaturing of the poor — 'bodies without brains'<sup>9</sup> — has reached unprecedented levels in the second decade of the twenty first century. Their cultural denigration is underpinned by political and popular hostility to their lives, habits and characters which, as Zygmunt Bauman, following Gans, has noted, is crystallised around a number of regressive themes and apocalyptic images: a parasitic class, tied to a netherworld of behavioural and psychological diseases. They are 'failed consumers', 'unwanted', 'incompetent', 'hopeless', 'hapless', 'immoral', 'lax', 'intractable', 'unreachable' individuals who have chosen debauchery over respectability.<sup>10</sup> Above all, they are dangerous. They constitute:

*... a black hole that sucks in whatever comes near and spits back nothing except vague but dark premonitions and trouble ... Prisons now deputize for the phased-out and fading welfare institutions, and in all probability will have to go on readjusting to the performance of this new function as welfare provisions continue to be thinned out.*<sup>11</sup>

The voyeuristic surveillance of their behaviour has reached a point where even Jeremy Bentham might have had misgivings. Any potential for deviance, including welfare deviance, is increasingly being ruthlessly suppressed, a coercive strategy legitimated by the cod-psychology articulated by a range of 'judges of normality'<sup>12</sup> employed by both the state and private companies who are remorseless in their intent to psychologically break down welfare claimants and rebuild their 'deviant' personalities so that they

become remoralised drones operating in the service economy.

This surveillance is underpinned by the discourse of mistrust — they are not to be trusted, in fact, they are mendacious. Conversely, the self-surveilling rich can be trusted to act truthfully and responsibly for the greater good of the wider social collective — a grimly ironic perspective given their role in the seismic, economic crisis that continues to engulf the lives of individuals and communities both nationally and internationally. A further indignity in the attempt to induce their respectable conformity is to expose their families to the 'wisdom' of celebrities who share their lives for a limited period of time while offering them sage advice, from their millionaire's perspective, on how to manage their meagre budgets. Reimagining, and coercively rebuilding their family structure, is central to this process. The alleged decline in family values was a

## The alleged decline in family values was a perennial, political concern of New Labour and remains a central obsession of the coalition.

perennial, political concern of New Labour and remains a central obsession of the coalition. It is a discourse underpinned by naked positivism. Thus, in 2006, on returning from a summer break taken in Cliff Richard's Barbados villa, Tony Blair was asked about interventions with problematic children and families. Blair took up the point with an enthusiasm redolent of nineteenth century positivists, arguing that 'a lot of the evidence suggests that you need

to be getting in there while the child is still in nappies frankly. Or pre-birth, even ... I think if you talk, as I do, to teachers sometimes they will tell you, and I know it sounds almost crazy to say this, but at age 3, 4, 5 they are already noticing the symptoms of a child that when they are 14 or 15 is out on the street causing mayhem'.<sup>13</sup>

An additional, 'officially approved torment'<sup>14</sup> is the role of, and the interventions made by, private corporations, such as Atos, contracted to the state to provide a range of 'services' including fit-for-work assessments. In January 2013, in a Parliamentary debate concerning work capability assessments for those on incapacity benefits carried out by Atos, MPs raised a number of issues with the Work and Pensions Minister, Chris Grayling (soon to become the Justice

8. Harris, J. (2013) 'Chav-bashing-a bad joke turning into bilious policy' in The Guardian, 7 January p 28.

9. Wilson, D. and Anderson, M. (2011) 'Understanding Obama's Discourse on Urban Poverty' in Bourke, A., Dafnos, T. and Kip, M. (eds) Lumpencity Ottawa: Red Quill Books pp 43-74 p 50.

10. Bauman, Z. (2007) Consuming Life Cambridge: Polity pp 123-134.

11. Ibid pp126 and 132.

12. Foucault, M. (1979) Discipline and Punish Harmondsworth: Penguin p 304.

13. www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page10023.asp Initially downloaded 2 April 2007.

14. Moloney (2013) see n 2 p 208.

Secretary). Michael Meacher was particularly scathing about the tests and the devastating impact on some of the most vulnerable groups in the society. He noted that the chief medical officer of Atos had joined from an American company, Unum, which had been described as an 'outlaw company' by authorities in America 'because it was regarded as a 'disability denial factory'. He went on to raise a 'fundamental issue' and asked:

*... how can pursuing with such insensitive rigour 1.6 million claimants on incapacity benefit, at a rate of 11,000 assessments every week, be justified when it has led, according to the Government's own figures, to 1,300 persons dying after being put into the work-related activity group, 2,200 people dying before their assessment is complete, and 7,100 people dying after being put into the support group? Is it reasonable to pressurise seriously disabled persons into work so ruthlessly when there are 2.5 million unemployed, and when on average eight persons chase every vacancy, unless they are provided with the active and extensive support they obviously need to get and hold down work, which is certainly not the case currently?<sup>15</sup>*

Thus, the patronising interventions of celebrity culture and reality TV programmes, the inane interventions by politicians and the iron grip of private corporations, with their insidious links to the state, have added further layers of regulation, and, from the perspective of the poor, an intensified sense of dread, to the already damaging, neoliberal policing that they endure on a daily basis. Allied to this corrosive process, is the shameless role of the mass media in constructing and reconstructing commonsense attitudes towards those in poverty. An analysis of 6000 newspaper articles on the subject of social security, published between 1995 and 2011, found that 'the most immediately striking aspect perhaps is just how much of the coverage refers

to benefit fraud. Remember that rates of fraud are between 0.5 per cent – 3 per cent depending on the benefit in question. But 30 per cent of all articles in the dataset refer to fraud. This is much higher for the tabloids ...<sup>16</sup> Similarly, in the year up to April 2013, in speeches made by ministers from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), and in press notices released by the same department, there was an increase in the use of terms such as 'dependency' 'entrenched' and 'addiction' compared with the last year of the Labour government's time in office. Crucially, fraud, which accounted for less than 1 per cent of the overall

benefits bill was mentioned 85 times while 'entrenched' was mentioned 15 times, 'addiction' 41 times and 'dependency' 38 times in speeches by ministers in the department.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, and ironically given the mendaciousness attributed to the poor, the ideological battle to socially construct a particular, eviscerating 'truth' around their behaviour is taking place in the context of a 'generalised pathology of chronic mendacity [which] seems to be a structural condition of global capitalism at the beginning of the twenty first century ... unprecedented levels of secrecy, obfuscation, dissembling and downright lying ... now characterize public life'.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the capacity to have a serious and informed debate about crime, prisons and social welfare, was, and is, increasingly hindered by this 'chronic

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'mendacity' which has become obvious across a range of political and cultural institutions: misleading crime statistics, misleading welfare statistics, misleading 'problem families' statistics as well as the revelations concerning 'Plebgate', Hillsborough and phone hacking, all of which, in one form or another, come back to the question of whose truth and what justice? The fact that those in power, of whatever political persuasion, could preside over a system that saw the hacking of a murdered teenager's phone says something profound about the priorities of the powerful: a forensic focus on the poor while relegating their own lamentable, immoral and often-illegal

15. Hansard 17 January 2013: col 1051.

16. Elizabeth Finn Care and the University of Kent (2012) Benefit Stigma in Britain London: Elizabeth Finn Care.

17. The Guardian, 6 April 2013.

18. Panitch, L. and Leys, C. (2005) 'Preface' in Panitch, L. and Leys, C. (eds) The Socialist Register 2006 London: The Merlin Press pp vii-x p vii.

behaviour to the margins of the perpetual surveillance and regulatory network that has come to dominate the lives of the powerless while leaving the lives of the powerful effectively unscathed, untouched and unrestrained.

### Programming the Poor in Prison

For those who are being pushed to the margins of an increasingly fragile and vanishing net of welfare support, the spectre of the prison awaits them. In the second decade of the twenty first century, the institution continues to 'warehouse [the] social dynamite and social wreckage'<sup>19</sup> generated by neoliberal capitalism. Importantly, this process is not new but has been part of the prison's role since it emerged at the end of the eighteenth century, a point that is often omitted in the academic debates around contemporary 'shifts' in penal policy, debates which underestimate historical continuities and overestimate historical discontinuities in the operationalisation of state power.<sup>20</sup> Penal power is being augmented and reinforced by the programmes that are being introduced and consolidated inside which are legitimated by old and new 'judges of normality' dedicated to normalising the attitudes and behaviour of this social wreckage and dynamite. An example of this process can be seen in Liverpool prison.<sup>21</sup> The prison is integral to a local structure of state power involving the policing of a city which is not only one of the poorest in the country but is also 'the easiest place to die — 35 per cent above the national average'.<sup>22</sup> In December 2011, the institution was operating as a warehouse for short term and remand prisoners. According to the Chief Inspector of Prisons, over 63 per cent of the prison's population, were serving 12 months and under.<sup>23</sup> A range of programmes were in operation in the prison to normalise the deviant. However, even on their own terms, these programmes, based on self-surveilling, responsabilisation strategies, and heralded as the

For those who are being pushed to the margins of an increasingly fragile and vanishing net of welfare support, the spectre of the prison awaits them.

panacea for the elimination of the feckless criminality of the confined, were problematic. For example:

*... resettlement resources were not adequate to meet the needs of the population held. There were significant backlogs of the reviews necessary to address prisoners' offending behaviour and little planning for remand or short term prisoners. Housing services were stretched and some prisoners did not have accommodation confirmed until the day they were released; during the inspection just before Christmas, some prisoners genuinely expressed great anxiety that they would be homeless after release.*<sup>24</sup>

Similar critiques were made of the offending behaviour programmes:

*Implementation of the learning skills strategy had been slow and few skills acquired at work were recognized or led to qualifications. There were very few vocational trading places ... More offending behaviour programmes had been introduced but the range of courses was too limited to meet the prison's aim of becoming a community prison. Gaps had been identified for alcohol-related offending, anger management, domestic violence and victim awareness. Prisoners were unable to be assessed for programmes not run at Liverpool.*<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, despite the 'rehabilitation revolution' articulated by successive governments, the reality of penal power remains as debilitating and disempowering as ever for the short-term, petty recidivist. Furthermore, even if the programmes were accepted as offering some form of rehabilitation to offenders, there is another question which is rarely, if ever, addressed by those who advocate introducing these programmes: what are prisoners being

19. Parenti, C. (1999) *Lockdown America* London: Verso p. 169.

20. Sim, J. (2009) *Punishment and Prisons* London: Sage.

21. For a fuller account of this issue see Cooper, V. and Sim, J. (2013) 'Punishing the Detritus and the Damned: Penal and Semi-penal Institutions in Liverpool and the North West' in Scott, D. (ed) *Why Prison?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press pp 189-210.

22. Armstrong cited in Coleman, R. and Sim, J. (2013) 'Managing the mendicant: regeneration and repression in Liverpool' in *Criminal Justice Matters*, 92, June, pp 30-1 p 30.

23. Cited in Cooper and Sim (2013) see n 21 p 201.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

rehabilitated to? For Pat Carlen, 'rehabilitation programmes in capitalist societies have tended to be reserved for poorer prisoners' and therefore 'have not been designed for corporate criminals'.<sup>26</sup> As she goes on to point out:

*... re-integration, re-settlement or re-entry are often used instead of re-habilitation. Yet all of these terms, with their English prefix 're', imply that the law breakers or ex-prisoners, who are to be 're-habilitated'/'re-integrated'/'re-settled' or 're-stored', previously occupied a social state or status to which it is desirable they should be returned. Not so. The majority of prisoners worldwide have, prior to their imprisonment, usually been so economically and/or socially disadvantaged that they have nothing to which they can be advantageously rehabilitated.*<sup>27</sup>

She concludes by noting that justifying 'what works' as a mechanism of crime control:

*has gradually erased the citizen-subjects of the welfare state from the penal frame, replacing them with the risk-laden, techno-entities of surveillance and security fetishism. Moreover, whatever the official claims regarding 'what works', criminal prisons in most jurisdictions are still primarily for the poor, the mentally-ill, the homeless, ethnic minorities and the stateless — and yet!!! the belief in rehabilitation as a panacea for all penal ills lives on!*<sup>28</sup>

These programmes are also clearly differentiated by gender. Either way, their desired goal is the individualisation and the normalisation of the abnormal poor, a process that leaves the wider structures of power and powerlessness, violence and intimidation, degradation and humiliation, that give meaning to, and set the parameters for, how their lives are lived,

untouched, unaddressed and unaffected. Or as Carlen succinctly points out with respect women's offending, the programmes see their criminality as 'being in the [women's heads], not their social circumstances'.<sup>29</sup>

### Thinking Differently

Stuart Hall has argued that 'history is never closed but maintains an open horizon towards the future'.<sup>30</sup> For Hall, ideas are fluid, contestable and open to different, more utopian outcomes. Hall's insight can be applied to crime and punishment in that it allows for the possibility that 'good sense' discourses around law, order and welfare can be developed, and, indeed implemented, contesting those policies that reinforce commonsense, regressive mentalities in these and other social and political arenas.<sup>31</sup> Bearing his point in mind, there are three areas the paper now highlights that might be considered pertinent to thinking critically, and honestly, about an alternative penal, criminal justice and welfare future.

First, any discussion about crime and deviance should recognise the unadulterated hypocrisy of the powerful, elected and unelected, when they discuss the offending behaviour of the poor.

First, any discussion about crime and deviance should recognise the unadulterated hypocrisy of the powerful, elected and unelected, when they highlight the offending behaviour of the poor. Their rampant criminality and deviance, cutting across a range of social areas, and the profound harms, including death, that this behaviour generates, is still marginalised at least in political debate in favour of the endless probing and testing of the poor — their habits, lifestyles, psychological fragilities and family structures. Failing to recognise this, (an omission that is not unique to politicians and the media but remains central to the often-facile and endless, empirical chatter about crimes of the powerless that continues to bedevil disciplines like Criminology and Psychology) inevitably leads to the perverse and skewed picture of crime and deviance that has underpinned political, popular and academic debates for decades.

Second, what about the resurrection of rehabilitation as a discourse by the coalition

26. Ibid p 202.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Carlen cited in Ibid p 206.

30. Hall, S. (2011) 'The neoliberal revolution' in Soundings, 44, Summer, pp 9-27 p 26.

31. 'Good sense' is taken from Gramsci's use of the term. See n 20 p 129.

government? In practice, it has rarely, if ever, been a central goal of the penal system, historically or contemporaneously.<sup>32</sup> The idea that it is being brought back into the penal system conveniently ignores this fact. Programmes, policies and practices of reform have consistently been confronted by the formal and informal apparatuses of punishment that have had, and continue to have, a detrimental and negative impact on the everyday lives not only of the confined but also of those prison staff who have attempted to break through the punitive and degrading discourses that have legitimated, and given meaning to, the landing culture of prison officers in the UK.<sup>33</sup> Thus, an alternative, and more critical, perspective would mean confronting and deconstructing this culture and, instead, replace it with the philosophy and practices that have been operationalised in a number of institutions over the last fifty years, such as the Barlinnie Special Unit, Parkhurst 'C' Wing and Grendon Therapeutic Community Prison. However, there is an obvious problem. While these institutions are amongst the few attempts that have been made to develop genuine, empowering and holistic rehabilitative models of confinement, they have either been abandoned, after years of official and media subversion and criticism, as in the cases of the Barlinnie Special Unit and Parkhurst 'C' Wing or, in the case of Grendon Therapeutic Community Prison, have remained marginal to the 'real' concerns of penal policy and practice which is punishment.

In a society dominated by the demands for more law and better order, the social construction of these places as 'easy' options has meant that their success in changing individual behaviour, particularly with respect to the masculine subjectivity and 'self-estrangement'<sup>34</sup> that gives meaning to many, though not all forms of officially recorded criminal behaviour, was, and is, continuously undermined by their alleged pandering to the abnormal in the form of the convicted criminal. Ironically, as the evidence suggests, these places, can, in fact, be *harder* environments for the confined to do their time,<sup>35</sup> a fact lost on the contemporary preachers

of punishment whose valorisation of certain well-chosen victims of crime, while ignoring others, particularly in the area of gendered violence, only further underlines their hypocritical attitude towards crime and deviance. Therefore, recognising the contribution made by these institutions, and embedding their philosophy and practice within the *whole* penal system — not just the prison system — would provide a new sense of direction for a system that remains locked in a dispiriting, and endless cycle of crisis-reform-crisis that ultimately does little to change the behaviour of the confined, or in the state's terms, to rehabilitate them.

Finally, given the political and media obsession with the decadent fecklessness and disorderly actions of the poor and the powerless, and their alleged lack of moral responsibility, what might an alternative and critical vision of moral responsibility look like? As Pat Carlen observed over two decades ago, thinking about the radical transformation of the criminal justice system would involve developing more sophisticated models of culpability, responsibility and accountability.<sup>36</sup> Building on the work of Steven Box, she argued for an alternative vision of justice which would begin by recognising the material circumstances in which the vast majority of offenders lived their lives. In making this argument,

Carlen, like Box, eschewed reductive, deterministic views of human behaviour and, instead, envisioned a more expansive, understanding of behaviour built on recognising that social action involves a dialectic between individual agency, human meaning and broader structures of social and economic power. Therefore:

... although people choose to act, sometimes criminally, they do not do so under conditions of their own choosing. *Their choice makes them responsible, but the conditions make the choice comprehensible. These conditions, social and economic, contribute to crime because they constrain, limit or narrow the*

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32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Epstein, M. (1995) *Thoughts Without a Thinker* Cambridge: Basic Books p.159.

35. Stevens, A. (2013) *Offender Rehabilitation and Therapeutic Communities* London: Routledge.

36. Carlen, P. (1988) *Women, Crime and Poverty* Milton Keynes: Open University Press p. 162.

choices available. Many of us, in similar circumstances, might choose the same course of action.<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

Marx made the point that the workhouse in the nineteenth century was a 'place of punishment for misery'.<sup>38</sup> Two hundred years on, the everyday humiliations experienced by those caught in the pliers of welfare austerity, indicate that the punishment and misery he saw in nineteenth century institutions has not only *not* disappeared but has become intensified through a deadly combination of panoptic and synoptic power networks which leaves those at the sharp end of this process as dispossessed and bereft as ever. Given the destructive nature of the social and economic policies pursued by successive governments, the sense of entitlement of the powerful and their often-sneering disdain for those who are not, in the neoliberal sense 'one of us', contemplating the alternative visions outlined above may appear to be hopelessly idealistic. However, *not* to think in these terms, will mean the continuation of a pathological system governed by the hypocritical, exploitative behaviour of the degenerate few which will continue to generate degrading

desolation for the increasingly desperate many. The penal/welfare industrial complex that is being consolidated is now part of that process, despite the constant, but ultimately delusional, references to the chimera of rehabilitation articulated by the majority of state servants and politicians who share a 'correspondence of interests'<sup>39</sup> *not* to confront the wider, acidic structures of power and powerlessness that lacerate the potential for individual growth and annihilate the spirit and space for collective development.

The 'healing' of the 'disordered subjectiv[ities]'<sup>40</sup> of the poor demands thinking about social justice. However, social justice demands empathy and empathy demands self-awareness and self-scrutiny. At this historical moment, this empathy, self-awareness and self-scrutiny are the last things on the collective consciousness of the powerful, and the institutions of the state, which, despite the contradictions and contingencies between them, ultimately legitimate and defend their interests and their parasitical behaviour. The current state-defined debate about rehabilitation is a zombie idea for a zombie institution operating in zombie times.<sup>41</sup> It will contribute little, if anything, to solving the complex social problems facing those existing spectrally in the austere wastelands of twenty-first century Britain.

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37. Box, cited in *Ibid*, emphasis in the original.

38. Marx cited in Palmer, B. (2013) 'Reconsiderations of Class: Precariousness as Proletarianization' in Panitch, L., Albo, G. and Chibber, V. (eds) *The Socialist Register 2014* London: The Merlin Press pp 40-62 p. 55.

39. Hall, S. and Scraton, P. (1981) 'Law, Class and Control' in Fitzgerald, M., McLennan, G. and Pawson, J. (Compilers) *Crime and Society: Readings in History and Theory* London: Routledge pp 460-497 p 474.

40. Mitchell cited in Moloney see n 2 p. 150.

41. See Little, B. (2013) 'Parties, causes and political power' in *Soundings*, 55, Winter, pp 25-38. Little develops the concept of the zombie from the work of Henry Giroux and Andrew Quiggan. The subtitle of Quiggan's book on *Zombie Economics* — 'how dead ideas still walk among us' — seems entirely relevant to current, state-inspired penal philosophies and practices.