

## Budgie smuggling or doing bird?

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**Budgie Smuggling or Doing Bird? Human-Animal Interactions in Carceral Space: Prison(er) Animals as Object and Subject**

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**Abstract**

*Carceral geography, whilst in dialogue with many aspects of theory-building in contemporary human geography, including notions of affect, mobility, and embodiment, has yet to meaningfully engage with animal geographies to consider the nonhuman dimension of carceral experience. Likewise, criminological scholarship of human-animal carceral co-presence has yet to progress far beyond the consideration of animals as mere 'signifiers' of human endeavour and meaning. Further, the study of prison animals has thus far considered only those nonhumans intentionally present in carceral space, such as therapeutic animals, eliding completely those considered 'vermin'. This paper broadens the scope of extant scholarship, considering the parallels between the discourses of the 'rehabilitation' both of prisoners and prison animals during incarceration, and of both the prisoner and the prison animal as object.*

**Key words:** carceral geography; animal geography; prison; vermin; object

## **Introduction**

In November 2012, prisoners at the maximum security prison at Portlaoise in the Irish Republic were confined to their cells whilst the prison was combed for contraband. Eight illicit mobile phones, three SIM cards, a quantity of homemade alcohol, and thirty syringes were recovered by prison officers whilst *gardai* patrolled prison landings. Amongst the smuggled goods recovered in the raid ordered by the Justice Minister Michael McDowell, and part of what he called a 'brazen and deliberate breach of security', was a live budgerigar.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst the Portlaoise budgie allegedly came into carceral captivity through an illicit smuggle by a female prison visitor who apparently concealed the live bird internally within her body, elsewhere prisoners are permitted to keep domesticated birds as part of a system of earned enhanced privileges, and with a view to supporting their rehabilitation. And budgerigars are not alone in being permitted into prisons – animals are also kept on prison farms, and dogs and horses are trained by prisoners through schemes intended to develop responsibility and empathy. Whereas these animals are intentionally brought into prisons for specific purposes and with a view to the 'betterment' of the captive human population (a perception not always shared by a 'punitive' public), prisons are also sites in which infestation with vermin in the form of rats, mice and cockroaches can mar the lives of the incarcerated.

In dialogue with the vibrant field of animal geographies, this paper is an exploratory foray into carceral spaces, a context in which existing scholarship of human-animal co-presence has yet to progress beyond the consideration of animals as markers of human endeavour, be that either as therapeutic animals, or as abject pests to be eradicated. As such, the paper's aims are twofold. It seeks to open a space for a more nuanced consideration of prison animals, firstly by broadening the scope of carceral geography to include nonhumans; and secondly by suggesting that the carceral context is one with considerable potential for animal geographies, particularly in relation to non-mammalian nonhumans (Bear 2011), including those constructed as 'vermin'.

The paper opens with a brief review of the development of animal geographies, and of the extant scholarship of prison animals in criminology, before considering notions of the incarceration of human and nonhuman animals in discussion of the 'prison' and the 'zoo'. It then considers the popular discursive use of the term 'animal' in relation to human captives, and the associated identification of human prisoners as outcast and dehumanised 'abject', after Kristeva (1982). Finally, it explores the interactions between human and nonhuman inhabitants of carceral spaces, drawing attention to the complex and nested identification of human/nonhuman, abject and subject within carceral space.

## **Animal geographies, and animals in criminology**

Early work reflecting on human geography's 'deafening silence about nonhuman animals' (Wolch and Emel 1995: 633) exhorted geographers to go beyond taking animals as merely 'signifiers' of human endeavour and meaning. Initially, a critical task of the newly emergent animal geography was to 'explore the complex nexus of spatial relations between people and animals' (Philo and Wolch 1998: 110), in recognition both of the agency of animals themselves, and of the ways in which that agency is differentially constructed or understood in time and space (Buller 2013: 2). The resulting 'animal turn' in human geography, alongside other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, has resulted in a positioning of the subfield of animal geographies as 'a porous, shifting and eclectic heterogeneity of ideas, practices, methodologies and associations within a more-than-human life/world: an emergent scholarly community in which animals matter individually and collectively, materially and semiotically, metaphorically and politically, rationally and affectively' (Buller 2013: 3). In other words, animal geographers have actively and enthusiastically acknowledged that human interactions with and relations to nonhumans are of critical importance to both to human experiences and understandings of a diverse and decentred lifeworld, and also to nonhumans' experiences and understandings, insofar as they can be appreciated and understood by humans. Drawing attention to the 'otherness' of the nonhuman, in the first of a three-part review of animal geographies, Buller (2013: 5) argued that animal studies has addressed three priorities; first, to recognise the impacts of the purposefulness and agency of animals both on our co-habited worlds and in resistance to them; second to thereby destabilise hitherto accepted dualistic approaches through a more fluid, turbulent and relational human/animal ontological reconfiguration of cultural practice, spatial formations and ultimately decentred subjectivities, and finally to create a more radical politics that might accommodate all of this complexity within it. In moving away from seeing 'the animal' as a conceptual device through which to interrogate the human, through viewing animals as figures in our cultural spaces, he argued that we arrived at a 'more intimate and experienced set of lived and dwelt encounters with actual 'critters'' (Buller 2013: 6).

Animal geographies is now a vibrant subfield of human geography, with a diverse range of work pertaining to a variety of 'critters' being undertaken. As Bear (2011) has pointed out, however, this scholarship has thus far tended to focus on mammalian life forms, and predominantly on the encounters between these creatures and humans, rather than generating a greater understanding of their lives *as* animals beyond these encounters. In this sense, animal geographies still struggles to attend to the 'beastly' nature of animals themselves, retrieving the 'animal' within the nonhuman (Johnston 2008), as suggested by Philo and Wilbert (2000) in their seminal collection *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places*. Animal geographies have likewise tended to take as their focus animals which are in various ways positively constructed and valued by humans, such as pet animals (Fox 2006; Power 2008; Holloway 2007; Sanders 2006), farm animals (Holloway 2001; 2007; Ufkes 1998), prey or hunted animals (Woods 2000; Ryan 2000; Bear and Eden 2011), zoo animals (Mullan and

Marvin 1987; Malamud 2007; Sorensen 2008) and wild animals in need of protection (Whatmore and Thorne 1998; 2000; Hinchcliffe et al. 2005; Bingham 2006). With the notable exception of Ginn's (2013) work on garden slugs, less attention has been focused on animals negatively constructed as pests or vermin, although scholarship beyond animal geographies also points up the tensions between conflictual framings of badgers as both vermin and victim in relation to culling policies introduced to control bovine tuberculosis (Cassidy 2012).<sup>2</sup> By drawing attention to prison animals, and in particular to those nonhumans negatively constructed as vermin, this paper both broadens the scope of animals geographies to consider insect life forms (following Shaw et al. 2010), and offers an opportunity to consider the ways in which the 'animal' and the 'beastly' conflate with notions of vermin and the abject in carceral space, both for humans and nonhumans.

The 'animal turn' in human geography took place in parallel with 'turns' detailed by Buller (2013) in literary studies, anthropology, sociology, history, philosophy and so on. Although criminology has also experienced an 'animal turn', this appears to have taken place almost exclusively in relation to interspecies crime. Taylor (2011) has argued that although historically, animals were seen as beings with agency that could be, and indeed were, prosecuted and executed for crimes such as theft, within contemporary criminological discourse animals are seen either as human property, or in terms of their functionality as constituted by animal welfare laws and regulations. In appealing for a 'brave new world' of non-speciesist critical criminology in which these entrenched assumptions about animals are challenged, Taylor appealed for the kind of overhaul of the ways animals are conceptualised that has taken place in other disciplines, such as animal geographies. However, he concluded that animals still enter the remit of criminology as 'objects' rather than 'subjects', and from a 'firmly anthropocentric and anthropomorphic perspective' (2011: 252).

In the light of this conceptualisation of animals within criminology, the presence of animals in prisons, although not altogether ignored by prison researchers, has to date generated a rather narrow range of published work. The research which has been carried out has tended to consider prison animal programmes purely in terms of their intended effects on human inmates, to give a sense of the scale of activities in this area, and to assess their effectiveness in delivering these aims. However, other, unwanted and undesirable animals that might also be present within the prison are usually mentioned only in passing, and consideration of the subjectivities of the animals themselves, be they considered 'guest', or 'pest', tends to be elided. Whilst this omission is understandable given the perspective and the priorities of criminological research into incarceration, and its contemporary conceptualisation of animals, such a lacuna offers an opportunity for carceral and animal geographies to converge to consider the subjectivities of nonhumans in carceral space. Although one central theme of work within carceral geography has been the nature of carceral spaces and experiences within them (see for example Dirsuweit 1999; van Hoven and Sibley 2008; Baer 2005; Baer and Ravneberg 2008), thus far carceral geographers have focussed exclusively on the human experience of carceral space, depicting carceral

environments as largely devoid of nonhumans. And although carceral geographers have recently begun to engage in other ways with animal geographies, to date this nascent scholarship has tended to focus on parallels between the treatment of captive animals and captive humans, for example in Morin's (forthcoming) work on zoo animals and US supermax confinement, and Merritt and Hurley's (2014) consideration of the parallel rise of mass incarceration and concentrated animal feeding operations in the US. There is scope for further insightful work here, drawing on carceral geography's explicitly relational approach to the prison and prison systems (see for example Martin and Mitchelson 2009; Loyd et al. 2012; Moran et al. 2013).

### **The Animal Prison, and the Human Zoo**

Parallels are frequently drawn between the captivity of humans in prison, and of animals in zoos, with deployment of the terminology of one frequently intended to magnify the negative implication of the other. These parallels merit further exploration, since these discursive uses of the lexicon of zoo animals and incarceration underscore much of the discourse of human imprisonment discussed in this paper, and underpin many of the assumed similarities between these two types of captivity. Witness, for example, a prisoner's testimony in the UK:

Just 'cause we're in prison you don't need to degrade us... just 'cause I'm in prison, I'm not going to act as if I'm... the lowest part of society or whatever. I'm not going to act like where you can come and treat me like an animal... like I'm a monkey and this is the zoo. (Prisoner quoted in Liebling et al. 2011: 31)

Crewe (2011: 455) recalled prison scholarship in the 1980s, which detailed a situation in which 'Staff are [seen by prisoners as] callous zoo-keepers, indifferent to, or enjoying, the indignities suffered by their charges' (McDermott and King 1988: 361). Similarly, the use of the word 'prison' is commonplace in critiques of zoo captivity, such as the much-quoted words of *Born Free* film star Virginia McKenna: 'wild animals belong in the wild, not imprisoned in zoos', used by, amongst others, the international animal rights organisation People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)<sup>3</sup>.

One possible source of the parallels thus drawn between zoo and prison may be the suggestion that Bentham's eighteenth century design of the 'Panopticon' prison, the subject of Foucault's theorisation of disciplinary control, could have been inspired by La Vaux's menagerie for Louis XIV at Versailles (Mullan and Marvin 1987; Szczygielska 2013). The Panopticon, with its central observation tower from which the peripheral cells in a circular building could be viewed, was intended to enable constant surveillance of inmates by an unseen observer, without their direct awareness of being watched. Foucault argued that the Panopticon was 'a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it' (1979: 201), in that inmates internalised the regime; through regulation of space, segregation of individuals, and unseen but constant surveillance of the body, the subject is moulded into its own primary disciplinary force. Foucault described Bentham's design for a model prison as a complete panoply of the disciplinary techniques

which delivered 'docile bodies', and used the term 'panopticism' to label the discourse which emerges from it and broadens into an understanding of the 'disciplinary society'. As Acampora (2005: 78) argued, 'it is not necessary to regard zoo-keepers as prison wardens to find Foucault's analysis of the structure of the institution of the prison to be informative', since the zoo is an artificial space of enforced occupancy and demonstration. Arguably 'docility' is also produced within zoo animals, as they are prevented from living the lives they were supposed to have as wild animals, and as an example of the relationship of 'powerful dominion (captor over and above captive, the carceral shot through the carnal)' (ibid).

There are of course critical differences between the prison and the zoo. Firstly, humans are incarcerated in prisons in response to their individual offending behaviour, with some intention both of a combination of punishment and rehabilitation to take place there, and in most cases an intention that they will be released from captivity after a sentence has been served. For zoo animals, in contrast, their captivity is not intended to be suffered as punishment, or at least, it is not a punishment for their own individual transgressions. As Braverman (2011: 827) has argued, animals in zoos 'are deprived of their individual freedom in order to save the rest of their species and even their entire habitat'. Subject to a 'collective incarceration', they are individually imprisoned 'in the name of their particular animal collective and for actions conducted by another collective: humans' (ibid: 827-828). And connectedly, she argued that whereas human captives are expected, within the Foucauldian model, to be changed by their incarceration, for zoo animals 'the inward focused gaze of the Panopticon is meaningless' since animals 'cannot be the full, realized subjects of disciplining'. And of course, if human prisoners, as has been argued elsewhere (e.g. Moran et al. 2009), 'perform' docility instrumentally as a means of improving the conditions of their incarceration or perhaps earning early release, even if zoo animals were 'full, realized subjects', since they will never be released from captivity, there is no comparable incentive for normative behavioural change.<sup>4</sup>

A further difference is that as Braverman (2011) argued, whereas the prison in a Foucauldian analysis uses vision as a disciplinary tool in that the subject, the human prisoner, internalises the surveilling, disciplining gaze; in a zoo the intention is quite the reverse – that the subject, the zoo animal, becomes normalised to ignore the gaze. In the ultimate 'zoopticon', animals are sufficiently acculturated that they ignore human spectators, and engage in their 'natural' behaviours, or at least, in behaviours that 'spectators might imagine them performing in the wild' (Braverman 2011: 827). The issue of visibility itself is a further difference between the prison and the zoo. Whereas the zoo exists explicitly as an institution to be visited, whose captives are intended for display, the prison is constructed as a closed institution, in which prisoners are concealed from public view.

A thorough tour of the history of the modern zoo is beyond the scope of this paper, but in broad brush, it sees its roots in exotic animal collections in ancient China, Babylon and Greece, where such collections exhibited power and wealth. The later 'zoological garden'

intended animal display to further scientific agendas and to educate the general public, and in the modern zoo, the intention is often to display animals to a paying public in a way which removes as far as possible all traces of human intervention, in a simulacra of wild habitat (Anderson 1995; Braverman 2011). For the origin of the prison, by contrast, Foucault's (1979) familiar contention is that the prison *replaced* the public spectacle of punishment, as the gallows, the stocks, and public humiliation through punishment wrought against the body, was replaced by internalisation of the carceral regime, with prisoners hidden from view within carceral institutions. There is further nuance here, however. For Braverman (2011: 828), the zoo engenders another type of gaze, the 'panoramic', in which rather than influencing those who are gazed *at*, the gaze influences those who do the *gazing*. By enabling its visitors to witness the human domination of nature, she argued, 'the zoo publicly instructs the populace about the *proper* relationship between culture and nature' (ibid, my emphasis). A similar, familiar, argument within contemporary criminology and media studies is that media representations of incarceration open the closed world of the prison to public view; the 'spectacle' of human punishment returns in new guises, albeit in selective and incomplete ways, through documentaries, docu-dramas, movies, novels, and so on (e.g. Turner 2013; Mason 2013). Kearon (2012) argued that accounts of imprisonment, ranging from the fictional to the 'real-life', all necessarily presenting constructions, interpretations and partial readings of their subject matter, nevertheless shape public opinion of imprisonment, which arguably in turn shapes punishment policy, in contexts in which criminal justice policy is politicized to the extent that criminal justice becomes a political tool rather than a balanced assessment of the effectiveness of interventions (Cheliotis 2010).

The mutually damning references to 'prison' and 'zoo' refer perhaps to the worst excesses of each institution – to the caged animal, whether human or nonhuman, pacing behind bars. The realities of each deserve closer attention, and indeed are receiving it, within carceral geographies and animal geographies respectively (e.g. Mullan and Marvin 1987; Anderson 1995; Malamud 2007; Sorensen 2008; Bear 2011; Braverman 2011). This paper cannot resolve the troubling questions of the applicability of the term 'incarceration' to the captivity of nonhumans, or of 'carceral' to different forms of cages for different kinds of nonhuman animals. What it can do, however, in the remainder of the paper, is focus on the presence of (human and) nonhuman animals in human prisons.

### **Prisoners, Animals and Prisoner/Animals**

Animal geographies emerged in response to developments in social theory that challenged Cartesian notions of binary divisions between 'nature' and 'culture', 'human' and 'animal', which raised new theoretical and ethical questions about the relationships between the human and nonhuman worlds (Fox 2006), and which theorised a 'posthuman' world in which absolute boundaries between nature/culture, and human/nonhuman dissolve. In considering the human-nonhuman relations between prisoners and animals, it is important



to note at the outset, that the label of 'animal' is widely applied to prisoners themselves, and that this terminology is redolent with assumptions about who prisoners are assumed to be, itself intimately connected with a supposed punitive sentiment on the part of the 'public'.

Research into the treatment of prisoners is replete with examples both of the moniker of 'animal' being applied to incarcerated humans, both in media coverage and in everyday discourses within prisons, and also of specific incidences of abuses of prisoners which centre on their treatment as 'animals'. Perhaps originating with the 17<sup>th</sup> century term 'jailbird', denoting a person who has been in and out of jail, animal terminology is now widely applied.<sup>5</sup> For example, Eschholz et al (2003: 173) commented on media references to offenders as 'animals or monsters, symbolically severing the shared human connection', and Sharp (2005: xi) has drawn attention to 'prosecutors and legislators who refer to certain offenders as animals or subhuman', as a process of 'othering' offenders, furthering a sense of separation from society and, under the US system of capital punishment, arguably making it 'easier to sentence them to death'. Homant and Osowski (1982: 62) noted that in a 'Scared Straight' programme for juveniles in the US and Canada, prisoners were 'deliberately portrayed as 'animals''. Researching practices in a county jail in the US, Novek (2009: 185) observed that correctional officers referred to prisoners 'as animals' in an apparent 'effort to break down inmates' emotional and physical wellbeing'. In New Zealand, a report on the effects of imprisonment for inmates and their families found that prisoners reported being likened to animals by 'being caged and herded', that they felt that they were 'treated worse than an animal because they are required to eat, sleep and defecate in the same area', and that they were positioned as 'unpredictable, untrustworthy and untamed animals that need to be locked up' (Roguski and Chauvel 2009: 8). These discursive references to inmates as animals extended to access to medical care, where prisoners reported that if they acted 'tamed or domesticated', they were given faster access to medical assistance (ibid). And Vervaeke (2010: 30) has commented on the mistreatment of prisoners in Belgium, where in 2006, prison guards at Mons prison abused two prisoners by forcing them to walk on all fours, put collars around their necks, led them as if on a lead, and commanded them to 'sit' or 'heel' as if they were dogs.

The most notorious incidence of conflation of prisoner and animal is perhaps the treatment of detainees at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. At Abu Ghraib, prison guards used knives to cut away prisoners' jumpsuits from neck to thigh, representing a symbolic slaughter and gutting. Prisoners' clothing was removed and their faces obscured, hiding human characteristics. Guards 'branded' prisoners like cattle, with words and symbols on their legs and buttocks, and forced prisoners to crawl on their hands and knees, wearing collars and leads, and to bark like dogs. One staff sergeant reportedly forced one male detainee to masturbate near the open mouth of another male detainee, remarking 'look what these *animals* do if you leave them alone for two seconds' (Brower 2004: 1362 emphasis in original). Unruly prisoners were reportedly confined to shipping containers used

to house prison dogs, and were left in their cells for days without clothes or bedding 'as if they were dogs' (ibid). Analysing these events, Brower (2004: 1353) drew parallels between the treatment of animals and prisoners as 'a population condemned to an existence bereft of the protections that accompany legal personality'.

Although the Abu Ghraib example is extreme, it is perhaps an overt incidence of a pervasive sense of the figure of the prisoner constructed as something less-than-human, recalling the construction of the 'abject'. Kristeva's theory of the abject originates in an understanding of the infant process of the recognition of the self through the rejection of that which is other. The abject is 'not only an external menace but... it may menace us from the inside' (Kristeva 1982: 135). Extending this theorisation, Oliver (1993: 56) argued that 'every society is founded on the abject – constructing boundaries and jettisoning the antisocial – every society may have its own abject'. As the 'jettisoned antisocial', the prisoner represents an archetypal abject body, on the boundary of human/nonhuman. In his work on the prison in the popular imagination, Smith (2009: 6) discussed the fundamentals of the carceral imagination, in the form of two apparently irreconcilable figures of the prisoner, on the one hand as a 'reflecting, self-governing' correctable soul, and on the other as a 'cadaverous, dehumanised body'. In the shape of the prisoner, then, is manifest both the 'perfect subjectivity of the modern citizen, and at the same time, the abject body outcast from the circle of rights-bearing society' (ibid). Smith (2009: 6) argued that the 'poetics of the penitentiary' constituted a narrative of rebirth, which itself necessitated the prisoner's civil death. This civil death reduced the prisoner 'to the condition of an abject 'other'', bound and contained, an 'offensive body vulnerable to violence and deprivation', a 'monstrous exile, beyond the pale of humanity, without a claim to legal personhood' (ibid: 39).

This popular discursive construction of prisoner as 'animal', and in particular its expression in media discourse, is articulated with notions of the assumed punitiveness of the public, and a perceived desire for 'prisoners to be punished'. This notion of 'public punitiveness' has been discussed and contested in detail within criminology and prison sociology, (see for example Garland 2001; Greer and Jewkes 2005; Young 2003; Hancock 2004; Frost 2010); it is argued that growing public punitiveness reflects the profound anxiety that besets contemporary life in the 'risk society' of late modernity (Beck 1992; Bauman 2000), enabled by a media which heightens levels of crime consciousness, and correspondingly high levels of fear of crime. Recent research into the nature of punitiveness in public opinion has critiqued understandings of the relationship between a punitive public and increasingly punitive criminal justice policies (Frost 2010; Hamilton 2014), and Ramirez (2013: 329) has observed that the limitations of data pertaining to what he called 'punitive sentiment' mean that actually very little is reliably known either about the opinions of given societies, or how these change over time and in relation to criminal justice policies. However, harsher sentencing policy is often attributed in part to demands for 'punishment' from what is assumed to be an increasingly punitive public, whose views therefore indirectly

and directly affect criminal justice policy. The 'new punitiveness' is expressed through lengthening prison sentences, increasing prison sanctions, and more austere and spartan prison conditions, operating to a greater or lesser extent in various contexts (Pratt et al. 2011; Hallsworth and Lea 2011; Lynch 2011; Snacken 2010). This recent 'hardening' of penal sensibilities, which in the UK and elsewhere is coupled with more severe sentencing policies (Criminal Justice Act 2003), the fetishizing of risk and security within and outside the penal estate, and a rising prison population (which, in England and Wales, grew by 30% since 2001, peaking at 86,842 in September 2011), is arguably associated with the perception of the prisoner as less-than-human, in that 'othering' offenders by constructing them as abject or subhuman, enables the popular justification of their subjection to harsh imprisonment practices

With the figure of the human captive thus popularly inflected with notions of the abject, and the prisoner as outcast and dehumanised, the role of nonhumans and human/nonhuman relations in prison takes on a special significance, and opens particular issues for debate and consideration. For example, although arguably considered 'abject', prisoners' safety and dignity *are* (officially, at least), protected through legislation which affords them rights in relation to the conditions of their imprisonment, including consideration of specific human/nonhuman encounters. And even as an 'abject' population 'jettisoned' from civic space, prisoners themselves seek to exclude certain abject nonhumans from *their* own personal spaces, whilst at the same time discursively constructing these nonhumans as subjects with whom they engage in challenging encounters, affording the nonhumans agency and subjectivities both collectively and individually.

In order to explore these notions, the following sections of the paper discuss two typologies of nonhumans in carceral contexts; animals considered 'guests', and others constructed as 'pests' with, of course, some blurring of this distinction. Prefacing both discussions, the first observation to make about animals within prison settings is that none is strictly 'incarcerated' in the same way as the human captives of these institutions. 'Guest' animals, although brought into prisons outwith their own volition, sometimes for some form of training or rehabilitation, are not present to further any sense of punishment. 'Pest' animals, on the other hand, enter prison settings entirely of their own accord, although determining whether this entry is either conscious or informed, i.e. whether the 'pest' animals have any notion of the nature of the spaces they inhabit, is beyond the ability of human observers.

### **Prison animals as 'guest'**

For 'guest' animals, such as dogs and horses, brought in to the prison as subjects in training programmes, there are direct parallels between the human construction of the animals' periods of confinement with those of the prisoners who train them. In most cases, prison animals such as these are brought to prison to undergo some form of correction of their

previous behavioural patterns, be this as puppies to be trained as service dogs, mustangs or retired race horses to be broken or retrained for recreational riding, or rescued or abandoned dogs to be resocialised as domestic pets. The 'rehabilitation' of the animal, its retraining into a form more 'suitable' for reintegration into roles predetermined by human owners or keepers, either in a service capacity or in a domestic home, has much in common with the rehabilitative aims of imprisonment of human inmates, intending to change behaviours to reduce the likelihood of offending after release.

Although the retraining of the nonhumans is a stated aim of such Prison-based Animal Programmes (PAPs), it remains secondary to the intended outcomes for humans both within and outside carceral institutions. PAPs share some similarities with Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT), deployed with other (non-incarcerated) populations such as the elderly and children, where the animal is present purely for the therapeutic benefit of the human involved, and which draw on the observed physical and emotional benefits for humans of interactions with animals. Where PAPs diverge, though, is in their broader community service function. Prisoners care for animals in prison ahead of their adoption out into the community, or train them in preparation for a specific specialised function, such as, for dogs, detecting drugs or explosives, or working with people with disabilities (Furst 2007). These relatively low-cost programmes are also thought to lower rates of reoffending after release, through the same beneficial effects attributed to AAT. For example, in a medium security facility in Oklahoma, US, pairing dogs with depressed inmates was observed to reduce levels of both depression and aggression (Haynes 1991, cited in Turner 2007). Likewise, evaluations of a service dog training programme in Colorado, US, suggested that it delivered enhanced morale for both inmates and staff at the prison. Britton and Button (2005) reported on a CARES (Canine Assistance Rehabilitation Education and Services) programme in Kansas, US, in which male and female inmates trained assistance dogs and dogs later made available for domestic adoption. Both female and male prisoners spoke of the value of the programme, and the ways in which it had helped them gain confidence, and improve their self-esteem:

I'm not as stupid as I was always told I was. I have a lot to offer, to the community and to other women in the program, and to the dogs too.

The dog depends on you and you look out for the dog. You take care of the dog first and then yourself.

If I can bring my dog to her full potential, I can reach mine.

[The programme is] a tremendous life lesson. I'm trusted with something alive. We've lost trust in here and to get it back we'll do this hard work (ibid 106).

There is also a strong sense in which the programme enabled prisoners to demonstrate that they could take responsibility for their previous actions; according to one participant: 'These dogs are being trained for something fabulous – to save lives. This is my way of giving back even though society doesn't think much of convicts' (ibid: 106).

In both cases, the frame of reference of the enquiry viewed the animals themselves as devices through which to enable positive change in the inmates, detailing the challenges in enabling the programme to take place (such as the potential for the programme to act as a catalyst for violence within the prison, when there are disagreements between inmates over the correct way to treat the animals), and benefits in the form of positive changes in inmate behaviour.

The effect on prisoners is posited by Furst (2007: 97) to rest on the 'zoological connection' emergent from social constructivist/symbolic interactionist traditions (Jerolmack 2005), in that the effect of animals on the self-identity of prisoners is understood from a perspective of 'neo-Meadian sociology of mind' (Furst 2007). Essentially, although Mead denied that animals engaged in 'minded' behaviour, human-animal scholars have argued that animals have 'selves' in the Meadian sense, and that they can share symbols with humans (Jerolmack 2005: 652). With such a mutual understanding established between animal and human, each actor can impact the other. While for Mead, the lack of a shared verbal language limited human-animal interactions, Furst (2007) argued that the lack of language may in fact be beneficial for human-animal relations in prison, with these interactions uniquely impacting prisoners who often 'have histories of being punished and rejected with words' (2007: 97). Drawing on Maruna's (2001) criminological scholarship of prisoner desistance, which posits that in order to desist from offending after release from prison, ex-offenders need to 'develop a coherent, prosocial identity for themselves' (Maruna 2001: 7), through the help of some external force, or someone who believes in the ex-offender, Furst (2007) posits that the animal occupies this role of external validation, enabling this human transformation to take place.

In summary, the outcomes of PAPs are considered to be broadly positive and significant for humans, both in terms of enhancing the quality of life of human prisoners and prison staff, for facilitating rehabilitation, and for reducing rates of reoffending, and also for delivering to nonhumans the skills required for their useful deployment by future human owners or companions (Dearon 2005; Fournier et al 2007).

Within this scholarship of prison animal programmes, there is very little consideration of the *differences* between the different animals involved. Dogs are discussed very much as are horses, aquarium fish, or caged birds. However, as animal geographers note, there is immense diversity amongst these creatures, not only in terms of the extent to which they may seek out, or appear to enjoy, human company, but also in the nature of their captivity, and domestication (Anderson 1997), which may in turn affect the ways in which they experience life within a human prison. For example, many consider dogs and humans to have domesticated each other over thousands of years of co-presence and mutual assistance, with dogs particularly attentive to human faces. Some scholars argue that human eyes developed visible 'whites' to assist dogs in following gaze cues (Shipman 2012; Téglás et al. 2012). By contrast, caged birds are often wild-caught, or only a few

generations from the wild, and whereas domesticated dogs thrive in human company, birds are known to suffer from specific conditions in connection with captivity, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, malnutrition, boredom, and so on (Collard 2014). These differences speak to a critical nuancing of the experience of 'guest' animals which could be illuminated by animal and carceral geographers; that of the nature of their confinement within carceral space. Prison dogs may experience prison programming in much the same way as domestic dogs experience being family pets, benefitting from human company and engaging in the kind of kinaesthetic empathy widely observed amongst companion dogs (e.g. Myers 2003). In a rare study of the effects on the dogs themselves, Hennessy et al. (2006) found positive behavioural outcomes for shelter dogs in a prison socialisation program. A budgerigar caged within a prison, however, may be subject to a kind of double or two-fold carcerality. Attention to nonhuman experience here would help prise apart the different forms of captivity to which they are subjected, and illuminate their diverse experience of it.

However, away from the academic research into the scope and effects of PAPs, the construction of the human prisoner as abject permeates many media portrayals of prison animals, reworking notions of prisoners as undeserving and unworthy of the privilege of keeping animals. For example, recent coverage in the UK *Daily Mail* newspaper of the keeping of birds under the Prison Service of England and Wales' Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme, designed to encourage responsible behaviour, is replete with references to prisoners as abject bodies. Under the headline *The lifers allowed to keep budgies: Families' anger after it is revealed notorious inmates are keeping birds in their cells for company*, the newspaper claimed that 'as many as 19 prisoners' at Frankland Category A (high security) prison in Durham 'which contains murderers and rapists' may have birds as pets.<sup>6</sup> Families of murder victims were reported to condemn this privilege as a 'disgrace', with one relation describing the situation as prisoners having

...more rights than we have. They can enjoy TV, go to the gym, and keep pets in their cells, it's absolutely unreal. There are hard-working people who can't afford pets of their own yet we let these life-term prisoners have them.

Although prison authorities did not disclose the identities of the prisoners keeping birds, the newspaper speculated that birds *could* be being kept by some of the more infamous offenders currently held at the prison, including those convicted of the murder of police officers, and by extension, that they also could *previously* have been kept by other, even more notorious former inhabitants of the prison. This kind of media discourse exemplifies the 'less eligibility' principle, based on an understanding that prisoners should 'suffer' in prison not only through the loss of freedom but also by virtue of prison conditions. This principle informs much prison policy in the US and Western Europe, and holds that prison living conditions should be of a worse standard than those available to the poorest free workers. The reported comments of victims' families, pointing up precisely these perceived imbalances between living standards for free populations and the

'privileges' afforded to prisoners, demonstrates exactly the kind of media reinforcement of 'public punitiveness' discussed earlier.

In a rather different example, which opens up different avenues for the construction of prisoners as abject and animalistic, a prison rodeo in Angola Prison (Louisiana State Penitentiary), US, uses the presence of 'wild' animals in the form of bulls, calves and horses, to open the prison as a tourist attraction, enabling a voyeuristic spectacle of punishment (Schrift 2004; 2008; Gould 2011; Silver 2013) for a paying public. The animals themselves, apparently brought into the prison specifically for the rodeo, are not strictly speaking 'prison animals' of the ilk of those discussed elsewhere in this paper. However, they play a key role in what Schrift (2004: 341) has described as the 'voyeuristic opportunity that entertains the public's deepest and darkest fantasies about the animalistic nature of inmates'. Discourses around a performance in which untrained and largely unprotected inmates attempt rodeo skills, in front of an amused and jeering audience, emphasise a brute stupidity and ineptitude, contrasted against the perceived cunning and intellect of the nonhuman animals. Prisoners, wearing recognisable black and white striped shirts revived for the occasion, are mocked as 'brutish and dumb' (Schrift 2008: 33), in a spectacle which offers up their commodified bodies as a form of public entertainment. As a collective act of discipline, the prison rodeo can be read as the endangered offender publicly beaten and subdued as a punishment for their crime (Gould 2011), but with the added layering of abjection that they are subjugated not by another human, but by an animal to which they are constructed as inferior.

'Domesticated' animals such as the rodeo bulls brought into Angola for specific events, where they are prized for their 'wildness', have something in common with the visiting 'wild' animals which experience some form of 'domestication' during their forays into the prison. Situated somewhere between 'guest' and 'pest', these animals are, as Ormerod (2008) has noted, often individual feral cats, pigeons, or wild gulls or rabbits that make their own way into prison facilities and, whilst often the target of pest control, are sometimes 'adopted' by prisoners seeking a nurturing connection. The most famous example is perhaps that of the 'Birdman of Alcatraz', Robert Franklin Stroud, whose story has become clouded by dramatization in film and novels. Whilst incarcerated at Leavenworth federal penitentiary in Kansas, US, in 1920, Stroud apparently found a nest with three injured sparrows in the prison yard, and raised them to adulthood, subsequently breeding canaries for sale and for avian research, and publishing respected works on avian pathology. Although banned from keeping birds at Alcatraz, part of the 'Birdman's' legacy is the powerful metaphor of the caged bird for the incarcerated human. This discursive juxtaposition of free and unfree underpins prisoner/animal interactions in relation to unwanted or pest animals present in spaces of human incarceration.

### **Prison animals as 'pest'**

The notion of the 'pest' prison animal resonates with the geographical notion of the animal as 'out-of-place' or 'improper', a transgressive being that causes conflict with human users, human intentions and human categorisations (Buller 2013: 4). Within animal geographies, scholarship of 'wild' animals in cities has suggested that we must either redefine the city, redefine 'wild', or accept such animals as citizens, with the notion of 'Zoopolis' (Wolch 1998: 120) allowing animal residents of urban spaces to 'come out of the shadows'. At the same time, as Brownlow (2000) has argued, such 'beastly spaces' can themselves become metaphors for human marginality.

This notion of 'improper' or 'out-of-place' animals whose presence causes conflict with human users, could be extended to an understanding of vermin, where such 'pest' animals are considered abject rather than subject. In socially excluded spaces, the theory of abjection has been applied by Sibley (1995: 1998), Wilton (1998) and Dirsuweit (1999) in considering identity creation and the creation and maintenance of the (human) other (Dirsuweit 1999: 82). For example, Sibley (1995) described the process of construction of healthy normality through a negative identification with a diseased other, and in the context of a women's prison, Dirsuweit (1999) described the 'othering' of lesbian prisoners and the delineation of spaces 'untainted' by lesbian inhabitation. In both cases the 'other' is seen as a threat to the maintenance of the boundaries of personal space.

It should first be noted that the presence of vermin in prisons is rarely officially countenanced as appropriate. Unfortunately, infestations do occur, for example as noted in an unannounced inspection of HMP Bristol, UK, by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) in May 2013:

Some prisoners were living in cells with damaged or missing windows. Too many cells were dirty, and had damaged or missing furniture and offensive graffiti. Prisoners had too few opportunities to clean their cells and we found an infestation of cockroaches on residential units (HMIP 2013: 16).

For their part, human prisoners report (a sometimes resigned) repulsion at bodily proximity to such abject nonhumans. In 'Jon's Jail Journal', the first blog by a serving prisoner, which detailed Shaun Attwood's experience in incarceration in the United States, cockroaches featured prominently in descriptions of prison life.

On Sunday morning, I awoke to find two cockroach corpses crushed on my mattress. I must have rolled on top of them in my sleep.<sup>7</sup>

A cockroach had crept into an [asthmatic fellow prisoner's] inhaler during the night. When he woke up, he grabbed his inhaler and blasted the insect down his throat. Feeling the cockroach moving around inside of him, he promptly vomited his stomach contents.<sup>8</sup>

In relation to nonhuman vermin such as cockroaches, prisoners describe encounters with the abject in terms which both afford to the cockroaches a definite sense of agency and ingenuity, constructing for these nonhumans the kind of narration of selfhood that is often deployed in human descriptions of nonhuman companion animals, yet simultaneously



conveying the absolute imperative to exclude these abject nonhumans from human space. For example:

During my two-year stay, I've been "rolled-up" (moved) numerous times. A new cell equals a new garrison of cockroaches to battle, and I have learned to travel armed with enough AmerFresh toothpaste to block cockroach entry points effectively. On Tuesday, our pod was moved to a different floor and I used my entire stock of AmerFresh to seal the cracks in the walls. The cell was quickly and expertly fortified against the enemy. That night, I admired the bug-free environment, relished the room's minty-fresh aroma and slept soundly. Little did I know the jail was about to sabotage my hard work. On Wednesday, I was moved back to my original floor, into one of the most infested pods in the building. Completely unarmed with AmerFresh, I watched helplessly as the cockroaches sized me up from the myriad cracks in the walls. I knew as soon as the lights went off I was doomed. My cellmate, Mark, and I didn't get much sleep. We stayed awake watching the legions of cockroaches conquer the room. Slowly gathering into larger numbers around us, they swarmed the floor. The walls. The ceiling. Our commissary bags. And finally, our bunks.<sup>9</sup>

Prisoners' spatial tactics to seal off human space from the abject bodies of nonhuman cockroach vermin were also observed by HMIP inspectors at HMP Bristol:

Prisoners repeatedly complained of an infestation of cockroaches and we saw many cells in which prisoners had used toothpaste and paper as a makeshift sealant for gaps around sanitary units and airbricks to prevent the ingress of cockroaches (HMIP 2013: 31)

In an example of black prison humour, Neil Harrison-Scott, an inmate at HMP Liverpool, UK, a prison described as overrun with cockroaches during inspections (HMIP 2003), wrote to the UK's *InsideTime* national newspaper for prisoners and detainees to (apparently) joke about supplementing the 'poor and meagre prison diet' with cockroaches.

There are many here and the best way to catch them is by placing empty crisp [potato chip] packets on the floor and turning the lights out. The cockroach will be attracted to the smell of the crisp bag and you will hear them rustling the packet as they go in. You then snatch the bag, sealing the cockroach inside. You can boil them in the kettle or fry them in an empty tuna tin, but my favourite is cockroach kebabs. Simply fashion a skewer from a sliver of wood, and impale two or three, then melt a chocolate bar to use as a dip. Cockroaches have a nutty taste so when you dip them in chocolate they taste like a fruit and nut bar.<sup>10</sup>

These nonhuman/human co-presences can be read as examples of what Ginn et al (2014: 114) have termed 'awkward flourishing'; in which flourishing always 'involves a constitutive violence', with some collectives (human or nonhuman) prospering at the expense of others; in this perspective, they argue that we must see 'nonhumans not always as victims, nor humans... as perpetrators' (ibid: 115). They point to the everyday proximity between humans and those nonhumans that we find objectionable, disgusting, and do not want to be close to or to touch – the abject. For humans, co-presence with abject others in the form of creatures constructed as pests, is almost always unwanted. Cockroaches, mice, and any other form of 'vermin' which may infest ostensibly human prisons are also unwelcome in habited spaces outside. There are parallels, for example, between the foregoing descriptions of interactions between prisoners and cockroaches, and between gardeners and slugs as described by Ginn (2013). In his study, slugs and gardeners shared a 'sticky' history, with gardeners practicing 'detachment', distancing themselves from the act

of killing yet avowing the violence of their actions, acknowledging both the limits of their power against the slug, and slugs' own vulnerability, and, he argued, being transformed by that recognition. Gardeners' tales of slugs 'lurking' in compost heaps, ready to consume prized specimens, recall the nocturnal scurry of the cockroach from nooks and crannies in prison cells.

However, I would contend that this particular condition of nonhuman/human co-presence is distinct from that experienced elsewhere. Considering abject nonhumans in prison, the 'improper' presence of such animals not only threatens prisoners' personal space, but creates intriguing synergies with the social construction of prisoners themselves, as abject bodies. In the UK, infestations are attended to in regular prison inspections carried out by HMIP, an independent, statutory organisation which reports on the treatment and conditions of those detained in prisons, as part of the UK's response to its international obligations under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). HMIP is concerned to ensure that prisoners are held safely, and that they are treated with respect for their human dignity, and it constructs vermin infestations as in contravention of the safe and respectful treatment of prisoners. Similarly, in the United States, a federal judge ruled in 2012 that the infestation of a prison cell with mice and cockroaches may violate the US' constitutional protection against cruel and unusual punishment. Calvin Thomas, a prisoner serving a seven year sentence in Illinois for burglary, brought a case claiming that he was forced to endure unhealthy conditions in his cell at the Vienna Correction Center, in part due to its infestation by pests. A judge ruled that a 'heavy, protracted infestation' could entitle a prisoner to damages, since it was 'pretty obvious' that living in a small cell infested with mice and cockroaches could cause psychological harm.<sup>11</sup> In Trinidad and Tobago, the infestation of prison cells with rats and cockroaches was listed by a member of the United National Congress amongst the human rights abuses alleged to characterise that country's prison system; 'in the evening, [prisoners] must stuff their ears and nostrils, and put bread in a corner to deflect the cockroaches from crawling into their unguarded orifices'.<sup>12</sup>

The very fact that prisoners encounter mice and cockroaches is an indication that the official protections they are afforded through legislation in relation to the conditions of their imprisonment, are less than effective. Although some prisoners may deploy dark humour to make light of this situation, in reality they face a rather different scenario to that of the slug-bothered gardener. Confined to a cell and armed with little more than toothpaste and toilet paper, prisoners are denied the equivalent options of table salt or slug pellets. The gardener's ethical decision to live in harmony with the slug by growing different plants has no obvious corollary for the prisoner whose bed is infested with cockroaches. At the mercy of the prison institution for the conditions of their confinement, the enforced togetherness, the 'awkward flourishing' of prisoners with nonhuman others can be read as yet a further aspect of their own abjection, cast out from society and subjected to the kind of nonhuman/human co-presence that would not be tolerated in other circumstances.

## Discussion

In her work on pet-keeping, Fox (2006: 526) drew attention to companion animals' occupation of a liminal position 'on the boundaries between 'human' and 'animal'', considered by their owners to be '...capable of rational thought and emotion, yet also treated as objects or possessions to be discarded if they do not conform to human expectations and values'. In this context, this exploratory piece has demonstrated that there is considerable overlap between the status of prison animals and indeed prisoner animals. Both occupy a position of subject, in relation to their construction as capable of rational thought and emotion; prisoners are citizens whose human rights must be respected and whose emotional wellbeing should be protected during incarceration; 'guest' prison animals are treated with affection, like the domestic companion animals researched within animal geographies (e.g. Fox 2006), and even cockroaches are respected as formidable adversaries. However each also, and simultaneously, occupies the position of abject bodies to be discarded – prisoners from society at large; prison animals from training programmes if they do not succeed; and prison vermin from physical proximity with human bodies. In the human/nonhuman cohabited world of the prison, a complex and nested set of interactions takes place between captive humans and both captive and free nonhumans, in which disciplined humans train some animals and attempt to discipline the behaviour of others, and in which humans popularly constructed as animals afford quasi-human subjectivities to the animals they treat both as guests and as pests.

For carceral geography, the potential of dialogue with animal geographies is enormous and untapped. What this paper shows is that rather than being a bricks-and-mortar, inert structure to be managed and inhabited by humans, the built form of the prison is densely inhabited by nonhumans, some of whom are caged in kennels or aviaries, whereas others roam freely from their hiding places in cracks and crevices. These latter nonhumans in particular shape the very fabric of the building itself, causing specific areas to be viewed with trepidation ('one of the most infested pods in the building') in ways which are most clearly apparent to those who inhabit the building at night. Considering the habitation of carceral spaces by both nonhuman as well as human animals enables prisons and imprisonment to be viewed in new and insightful ways. Carceral geographers could thus consider the 'inhabitation' of prison buildings (Jacobs and Merriman 2011: 213), in terms of the 'dynamic encounters between buildings, their constituent elements and spaces, inhabitants, visitors, design, ergonomics, workers, planners, cleaners, technicians, materials, performances, events, emotions, affects and more'. Like any other buildings, prisons are sites in which a myriad of users and things come into contact with one another in numerous complex, planned, spontaneous and unexpected ways, and where the encounters are both embodied and multi-sensory (haptic, visual, acoustic, kinaesthetic, thermal and so on), and resonant of the power structures which exist both within and outwith the prison building and which shape its inhabitation. Amongst those myriad 'users and things' are prison animals.

The intention of this paper was to raise issues for debate rather than to resolve them, and in relation to animal geographies, a paper such as this cannot hope to attend properly to the 'animal' within the nonhuman (Johnston 2008). What it can do, however, is draw attention to fluid and relational human/nonhuman co-presence within carceral space, in the context of infestation and abjection. In so doing it can draw the attention of animal geographies to under-researched animals such as insects, and point to the potential for other studies of unwanted, proximate co-presences, involving conflation of the human and nonhuman, such as bodily and parasitic infestation. For carceral geography, it shows that understanding the nature and experience of carceral spaces does not stop at the human. Whether experienced as the therapeutic and rehabilitative effect of human-animal co-presence (whether illicit or otherwise), or as the repugnant infestation of cells by prison vermin, the animal is a real, tangible and influential figure in the cultural spaces of incarceration.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Irish Independent*, 25/11/2012

<sup>2</sup> A notable exception here is Shipstone, S (2007) Becoming Rat: An examination of the politics of vermin, unpublished Masters thesis, University of Durham.

<sup>3</sup> PETA factsheet 'Zoos: Pitiful prisons' <http://www.peta.org/issues/animals-in-entertainment/animals-used-entertainment-factsheets/zoos-pitiful-prisons/> accessed 18/8/2014

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<sup>4</sup> A notable exception here the example in Collard's (2014) work of a specific attempt to 'renature' 'companion commodities' through captivity of retrieved animals smuggled as exotic pets, during which an attempt is made to instil in them a fear of humans, in preparation for a possible return to the 'wild'.

<sup>5</sup> 'Doing bird' (time spent in prison) is thought to originate in British cockney rhyming slang for 'bird-lime', lime, denoting the unlawful practice of catching birds using this sticky substance.

<sup>6</sup> The Daily Mail 27/2/2014

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ionsjailjournal.blogspot.co.uk/2004/06/27th-may-04-on-sunday-morning-i-awoke.html> accessed 19/3/2014

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ionsjailjournal.blogspot.co.uk/2004/03/march-25th-04-sufferer-of-week-i-am.html> accessed 19/3/2014

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ionsjailjournal.blogspot.co.uk/2004/03/18th-march-04-roach-attack-one-of.html> accessed 19/3/2014

<sup>10</sup> Letter to InsideTime, February 2014 [http://www.insidetime.org/mailbag.asp?a=1382&c=cockroach\\_kebabs](http://www.insidetime.org/mailbag.asp?a=1382&c=cockroach_kebabs) accessed 19/3/2014

<sup>11</sup> Thomas vs. Illinois et al, 7th US Circuit Court of Appeals, No. 12-2095, reported in The Chicago Tribune, September 27, 2012

<sup>12</sup> InterPress News Agency, 25/3/2010 <http://www.ipsnews.net/2010/03/trinidad-sharing-a-cell-with-cockroaches-and-rats> accessed 21/3/2014