

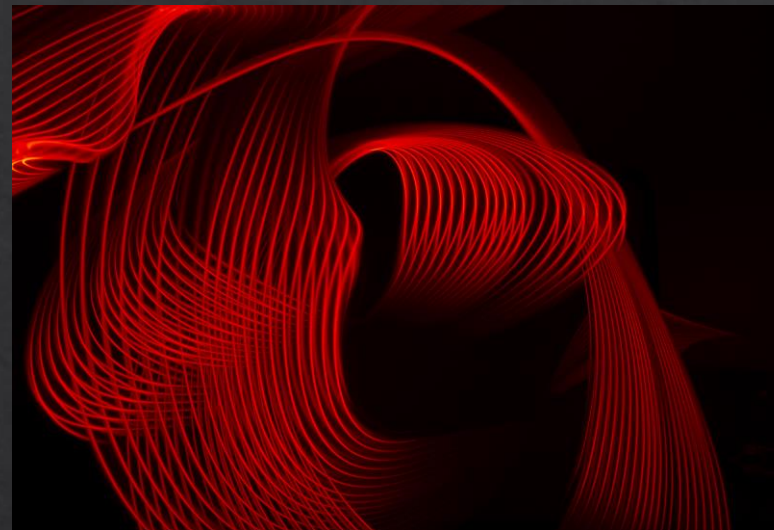


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Punishing Soundscapes

What is a “soundscape”?

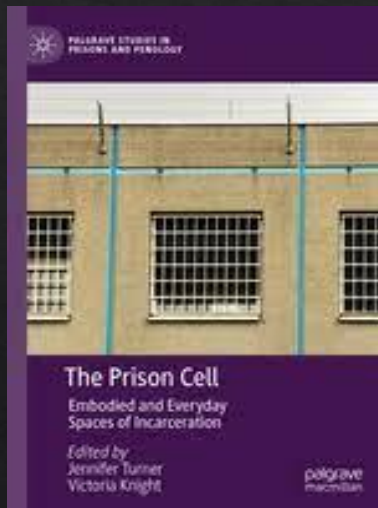
- - ◇ **The aural components of a physical environment**
 - ◇ **Interpretations are coloured by expectation, experience, emotion (British Standards Institute 2014: BS ISO 12913-1:2014)**
 - ◇ **Distinction between what is heard and sound as a facet of social experience**
 - ◇ **Rich in symbolic meaning (e.g. alarms, banging)**



What does prison sound like?



- **“A cattle market”, “Bedlam”, “Chaos”, “A Swimming pool”, “A youth club”, “Madness”**
- **Prison an “acoustic community (Truax 1984)**
- **Surveillance/ “sousveillance” (Fernback 2013)**
- **Of 711 Prison inspection reports (90’s – 2015) Over half refer to sound**
- **A barometer for social climate (“how does it feel?” “It ‘feels’ spikey”**



EMERALD STUDIES IN CULTURE,
CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND THE ARTS

SENSORY PENALTIES

EXPLORING THE SENSES IN
SPACES OF PUNISHMENT
AND SOCIAL CONTROL

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Sound as method(ology)

Demonstrates importance of taking the sensory seriously as theoretical and analytical tool

Draws on doctoral research (Herrity 2019)

- **Spent over 8 months in a local men's prison**
- **Aural ethnography**
- **Sensemaking and attunement**
- **Interview**

Listening to order

Degree to which the prison day is predictable and steady

Wake of “Strangeways” riots (1990) Woolf report 1991, cast long shadow.

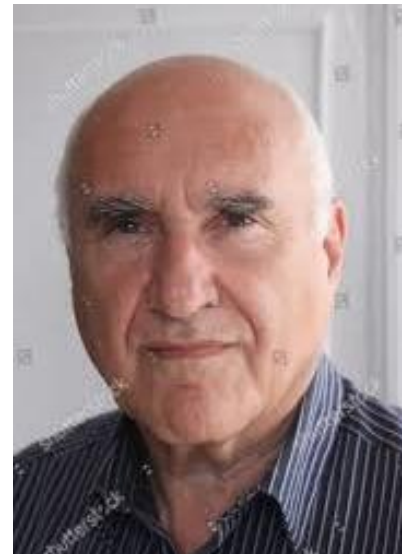
Assumes we can understand order by focusing on conditions for disorder

“The everyday tune that’s normal for here”

- **Order and is focus**
- **Demonstrates not directly opposed states (limits of legitimacy)**
- **Engages with prison “community”**



“Strangeways” Bloomstein (1980)





Social/emotional climate

- ◇ Social life has sensorial aspects
- ◇ Sound as barometer for social emotion (“spikey”, “bubbly” refer to a changeable, volatile social climate)
- ◇ “Trouble” has a feel, and trained staff recognize it:

“I don’t know how I can explain that tension, or how you can feel that, but you could. Sometimes there is no sound. It’s just a nothing. It’s just a void but you sense it, you sense that there’s something amiss. Because it’s different. The noise is different...” (Officer Rose)

Van Gogh, 1890

Sound and harm (effects of imprisonment)

- ◇ **“One day I came in (indicating area of the laundry) and found my friend hanging from the bars there. Me and the officer cut him down, but I see him hanging there every day. The alarm reminds me of that” (Joe, 2015)**
- ◇ **“[I heard] the noise all around me, but I couldn’t respond to it in the same way... something was wrong... an out of body experience” (Officer Allen)**
- ◇ **“That cheap, sterile, cold smell – it reminded me so much of being escorted down the corridor often by men twice my size, just a body, chucked in a cell and kept until another place or person knew what to do with you. I suppose that was the message, the ‘we don’t know what to do with you’ smell – you’re an inconvenience to society, it doesn’t know what to do with you so we’ll contain you for a bit in this building, disinfecting human traces” (Gemma 2021)**
- ◇ **www.Sensorycriminology.com (7,108 visitors, 76 countries)**

And safety...

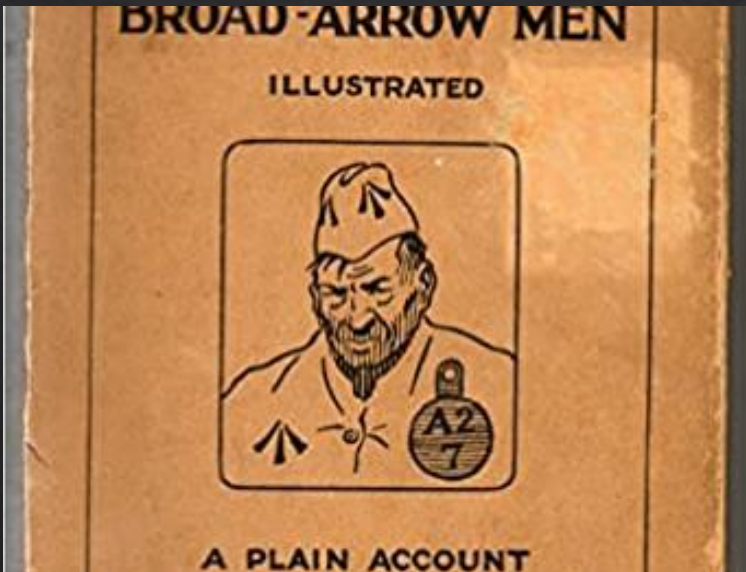
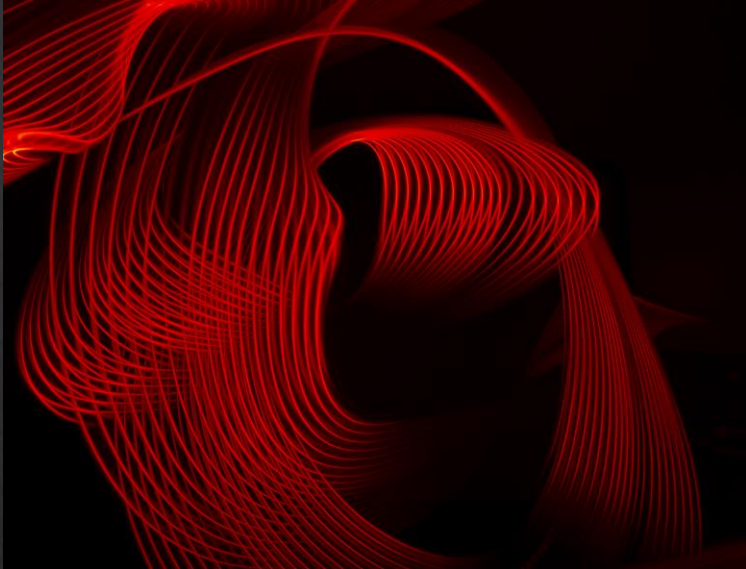
- ◆ **Learning difficulties & disabilities, mental illness, conditions such as PTSD over-represented**
- ◆ **High staff attrition rate (MoJ now release aggregate figures)**
- ◆ **Taken into care as a child 24% (31% for women, 24% for men) (Gen pop: 2%)**
- ◆ **Have symptoms indicative of psychosis 16% (25% for women, 15% for men) (Gen pop: 4%)**
- ◆ **71% of women and 47% of men surveyed by inspectors in prison reported having mental health problems**
- ◆ **Have attempted suicide at some point 46% for women, 21% for men (Gen pop: 6%)**

(PRT 2021)



**Image: AndyAitchison UK
Figures: PRT 2021**

Where next?



- ◆ **Rhythms and routines (the limits of legitimacy)**
- ◆ **Midtown tales: Narratives in a local prison**
- ◆ **“Among the broad arrow men” (project at HMP Leicester)**
- ◆ *** Sound, punishment and emotion**
 - **To account for the particular relationships between social emotion, the composition of order and experiences of punishment amongst different prison populations**
 - **To compose a sonic map of these distinct prison spaces as a means of deepening understanding of differential prison experience and what this means for safety and wellbeing**
 - **To incorporate sound in to mainstream research methods**