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Captive and Captor Representations at Canadian Penal History Museums

Abstract This article examines representations of prisoners and prison staff from 45 penal tourism sites across Canada. Drawing from literature on representations of criminal justice, we demonstrate that the objects, signs, and symbolism in these heritage sites are curated in ways that can create separation between penal spectators and prisoners. Positive representations of prison staff stand in contrast to depictions of prisoners who are often demonized in museum displays through emphasis placed on narratives, relics, and images of danger and violence. Arguing that these depictions generate conditions for the support and justification of punitive practices including incarceration, we conclude by reflecting on what our findings add to social science literature on representations of captives and captors.

Keywords Penal History Museums; Prisoners; Prison Staff; Prisons; Objects; Representations; Canada

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The prison operates within a "secret world" (Surette 2011) about which the general public knows little. Yet the prison and other carceral spaces remain highly visible in the popular imagination and are a seemingly permanent fixture in Anglo-Saxon countries (Brown 2009). Though it is becoming more common for people to have direct experience as a captive, a captor, or as a loved one of either (Walmsley 2013), most of what is publicly known about imprisonment is informed by news and entertainment media (O'Sullivan 2005; Wilson and O'Sullivan 2005; Bennett 2006; Mason 2006a; 2006b), as well as other cultural productions (Carrabine 2011), including penal history museums.

Recent studies highlight how penal tourism sites in Australia (e.g., Wilson 2008a), Canada (e.g., Walby and Piché 2015), South Africa (e.g., Shearing and Kempa 2004), the United Kingdom (e.g., Barton and Brown 2015), the United States (e.g., Bruggeman 2012), and elsewhere in the world (e.g., Ross 2012; Welch 2015) are becoming a popular forum where images and narratives of penality can be consumed, often within the confines of decommissioned carceral spaces. While Brown (2009) argues representations of prisoners in wider popular culture tend to demonize prisoners, creating social distance between the public and the incarcerated, little research has examined how the incarcerated are depicted within penal heritage sites. Moreover, representations of prison staff and of how their role in penality is framed in these historical settings has not been a major focus in penal tourism literature.

We address these gaps by examining representations of captives and captors in both larger and smaller Canadian penal history museums. Drawing on data compiled at 45 of these sites across Canada, we show how the signs and symbols found in most of these museums foster distance between penal spectators (i.e., the tourists) and prisoners. The latter are often demonized through a fixation on violent incidents and stories of danger relating to imprisonment. We have also found that the perspectives of prisoners concerning incarceration and punishment are excluded from most of these representations. In contrast, prison staff are humanized and celebrated through positive

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penal history museum portrayals of their work (also see: Wilson 2008a). While we are not disputing the complicated work carried out by prison administrators and front-line staff (see: Liebling, Price, and Shefer 2011), we draw attention to the clear differences that exist between depictions of captors and captives in penal tourism sites where exceptional incidents are often highlighted. Our analysis below draws on criminal justice literature, which examines how representations comprised of signs, symbols, and objects communicate messages about criminalized harms, law, and (in)justice (e.g., Maneri and Ter Wal 2005; Ulasewicz 2007; Brown 2009; Khachan 2012).

This article begins by reviewing research on representations of prisoners and prison staff found in entertainment and news media, as well as penal tourism literature, which inform our work on depictions of penal actors found in Canadian museums. Following an overview of the fieldwork we conducted at prison tourism sites, we present our findings and demonstrate how most Canadian penal history museums are organized in ways that lend support to the intensification of penality. Specifically, we show that these representations can foster connections between prison staff and penal spectators, and justify punitive ideologies that inform carceral practices. In the discussion, we assess the ways in which such representations of prisoners and prison staff may foster punitive views of prisoners. We conclude by reflecting on the implications of our findings for social science literature on representations of prisoners and prison staff, as well as prisons and penal tourism more broadly.

Representations of Prisoners and Prison Staff

This study focuses on the representations of prisoners and prison staff in penal history museums. As Stuart Hall (1997:15) argued, "[r]epresentation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture." While meaning is produced in part through written language, images and sounds may also be used to further extend or enhance intended meanings. Films or other symbolic productions use representation to project specific images, characters, and plots, all of which are framed and then interpreted in different ways (see: Watney 1989; Lidchi 1997; Eide and Knight 1999). Representations also legitimize some knowledge systems and not others (Howarth 2006). In our case, representations of penality may endorse or promote certain constructions of prisoners, their captors, and carceral spaces. As Mason (2006a:251) notes, media representations of prisons have at times promoted "populist and highly punitive penal policy." Museums do much the same by presenting select narratives and constructing specific frames through which issues and conflicts become interpreted (Barton and Brown 2015; Lin 2015). Representation is also a means by which some subjects are framed as "others" and therefore untrustworthy, or depicted as similar to the self and therefore acceptable (Drake 2011). In museums, representations of prisoners and prison staff may foster stereotypes about one set of penal actors or both.

Over the past three decades, a great deal of research has been conducted on the way in which prisons and prisoners are represented in popular culture. For instance, research has shown that news media outlets play an important role in defining public knowledge of the penal system (Mathiesen 2001; Sela-Shayovitz 2007; Kohm 2009; Marsh 2009). In a study of news media reports, Altheide and Coyle (2006) found that prisoners and individuals in conflict with the law are merged into one homogeneous "othered" group considered to be inferior and thus deserving of punishment. Similarly, Drake (2011:368) writes, the criminalized are constructed as public enemies in media discourses that dwell on graphically violent depictions, which also call for greater state interventions and harsher punitive measures. News readers and viewers are able to detach themselves from their own responsibility in the treatment of the incarcerated when they view material constructing all prisoners as one universal "enemy" group consisting of unpredictable and dangerous people (Drake 2011:380). Televised news coverage on incarceration highlights extraordinary events occurring within penal institutions, while mundane aspects of daily prison life and management are rarely communicated to members of the public (Surette 2011). In an analysis of stories about prisons in national newspapers published in the United Kingdom, Mason (2006a:253-254) found that news media representations rely primarily on discourses of fear and dangerousness to construct a body of rhetoric that positions incarceration as a necessary strategy for public safety. By focusing on the violent extremes of prison life and featuring stories of escape, security breaches, and early release, news media representations often ignore significant facets of life in prison—the daily monotony of rigid routines and schedules to which prisoners are subject, the erosion of prisoners' rights, and unprecedented increases in the prisoner population as a result of increasingly punitive penal policies (Mason 2006a:261-262). Because most citizens rely heavily on the news media for information about prisons, extreme narratives that disproportionately draw on rhetoric of violence and risk dominate the ways in which public knowledge of prisoners and prison life is shaped (Marsh 2009).

Literature on representations of prisoners in entertainment media yields similar findings. In a study of a "reality" television program about women in prison, Cecil (2007) found that the imprisoned are often constructed using archetypical clichés consisting of deviant traits such as violent tendencies and "bad" parenting, which may then affirm existing beliefs held by audiences concerning the need for harsh(er) penal policies and practices (also see: Cecil and Leitner 2009). O'Sullivan's (2001:330) analysis of four prison films indicates that the imagery communicated within fictional portrayals of incarceration accepts imprisonment as a necessary component of the social order. Focusing on violent prisoners, prison films typically provide a skewed representation of the general prisoner population. O'Sullivan (2001:318) argues, "the public have a poor understanding of the characteristics of the offending population and their offences" since the "worst of the worst" appear to be the norm in these films. Eigenberg and Baro (2003) found that prison movies might play a part in presenting the social construct of male rape in prison as a norm, thus creating the expectation that sexual harm is pervasive in prison. Mason's (2006b) research on cinematic depictions of prisoners notes that the

graphic exploitation of violence and sexual assault in prison films is depicted voyeuristically, and fosters even greater dissociation between the public and prisoners.

Penal history museums are likewise venues where representations of prisoners (and prison staff) shape how the public understands criminalization and punishment. As contributors to museums studies and memorialization have argued, such historical sites paradoxically both preserve and distort the past (e.g., Kelley 2011; Bruggeman 2012; Otele 2012; Morin 2013). For example, while attempting to appear as more authentic and legitimate sources of information about the history of imprisonment, many prison museums focus on (in)famous prisoners and incidents. Indeed, in their study on the Robben Island Museum in South Africa, Phaswana-Mafuya and Haydam (2005) found that tourists expected to learn about the prison's most famous prisoner, Nelson Mandela, and be given the opportunity to tour his cell and browse his personal belongings.

While scholars such as Shearing and Kempa (2004) have noted that Mandela is celebrated as a symbol of hope in this forum, more often these sites tend to focus on prisoners who symbolize less savory aspects of the human condition. For instance, Wilson (2004) found that ex-prisoner "Chopper" Read was a focal point of the tour at the Pentridge Prison Museum in Australia, which featured anecdotes and relics relating to the notorious prisoner. Read became known for his brutal reputation, along with his autobiographical book about his life in prison that was later adapted into the movie, *Chopper*, in 2000. Wilson (2004) cautions that focusing on violent depictions about "elite prisoners" overwhelms the voices of the majority of captives. By emphasizing the most violent stories related to imprisonment, penal tourism sites often stigmatize the incarcerated as wicked and dangerous in a totalizing fashion, informing and giving credence to exclusionary ideas. In her research on prison imagery, Brown (2009) contends that tours of decommissioned prisons often direct visitors' attention to riots, escape attempts, murders, and executions. Brown argues that while this process is meant to make the experience appear more authentic and entertaining for visitors, focusing on violence reinforces the "othering" of and misconceptions about the incarcerated.

Fewer publications and much less research have focused on representations of captors (e.g., Wilson and O'Sullivan 2004; Gonthier 2006). In an analysis of newsprint media in the United States, Vickovic, Griffin, and Fradella (2013) found that prison staff are often portrayed as corrupt, morally ambiguous, violent towards prisoners, and engaged in various forms of harassment and discrimination. These portrayals in news media suggest a "contagion effect" in which the morality of prison officers is tainted due to their association with criminalized and incarcerated people encountered in their line of work. To add to this literature, we examine representations of prison staff in addition to depictions of prisoners found within penal tourism sites across Canada.

Research Design and Analysis

We have made detailed observations at 45 Canadian penal history museums where we have also conducted interviews where possible (n-52). These sites range from small county gaols and local lock-ups to larger decommissioned jails, prisons, and penitentiaries (Walby and Piché 2015). The rationale for this design was to compare different dimensions of penal tourism museums in one country, and to include smaller sites that are often overlooked due to their rural location or lack of notoriety outside of the regions where they are located. The data examined here are representative of the majority of cases in our sample. In other words, these data are explanatory (Stake 1995) since they help us point to general tendencies with most cases.

As research team members participated in site tours or observation sessions, their focus was directed towards four types of arrangements—spatial, visual, narrative, and performative. The spatial refers to the manner in which museum space is organized and how visitors are directed through the site. The visual pertains to museum aesthetics. The narrative relates to the content tourists encounter through interactions with guides and texts found throughout a site. The performative emphasizes museum staff and volunteer roles, and how these were executed. Site histories, marketing practices, the visitor experience, and museum staff views of prisoners, prison staff, incarceration, punishment, and the role of museums were also addressed in addition to the four themes noted above in interviews. A field note guide sheet also prompted research team members to document their overall impressions of museums and any significant observations, as well as methodological and theoretical insights. Hundreds of photographs were taken at each research site, with these visuals serving as an aide-memoire and analytical guide during the writing process (Walby and Piché 2016). Additional data were retrieved from website content and other marketing materials where available, which are the focus of another paper (see: Luscombe, Walby, and Piché 2015).

Data analysis was a team-based process. Although analysis of representations based on pre-existing codes can be quite informative (e.g., Sarpavaara 2007), our codes were assembled inductively. To begin the data analysis process, we engaged in an initial round of open-coding of all 45 sets of data to identify various key tendencies emerging from our fieldwork. For the purposes of this paper, data were sorted into two broad categories: (1) representations of prisoners and (2) representations of prison staff or officials. We then compiled our individual findings and engaged in a round of collaborative coding wherein we organized our data into several sub-categories within each larger category. Ultimately, vignettes that were most representative of each sub-category were selected.

Representations of Prisoners and Staff at Canadian Penal Tourism Sites

Our analysis reveals several recurring constructions of prisoners and prison staff in Canadian penal history museums. Prisoners are most often depicted as dangerous and demonized through repetitive stories of violence, escape attempts, or other notable occurrences. The focus on (in)famous or exceptional prisoners and incidents renders the everyday experiences and lived realities of the general prisoner population invisible and unimportant.

Exhibits displaying devices used to subdue prisoners, such as whips and chains, imply extra security measures and devices were, at least at one time, needed to control them. Stories of the ghosts of former prisoners and rumors of hauntings at prison museums further dehumanize those that were incarcerated and/or executed at these sites. Finally, displays emphasizing the barbarity of conditions of confinement "back then" by staging old cells as crudely as possible suggest a significant evolution of the Canadian penal system, whereby prisoners today have it "easy" by comparison, or that pains of imprisonment have since diminished.

In contrast, prison staff and other penal actors are constructed as altruistic human beings that deign to work with such a difficult and undeserving population. Depictions detailing acts of bravery and kindness further elevate prison staff in status. The symbolism of artifacts associated with Canada and the monarchy also conveys captor patriotism and a sense of duty to their country and the Crown. Staff members at many sites are humanized through the clear identification of their full names and titles next to their photos, as well as through stories of their achievements, both within the prison and in the greater community. Smaller, local museum sites further humanize prison staff by displaying pictures and narratives of their homes, especially at locations where jailers and their families lived on-site. This was one key difference between large and small museum representations. We explain and expand on these findings below.

Depictions of Violent and Menacing Prisoners

The depictions presented in Canadian penal history museums focused mostly on spectacular stories of exceptionally dangerous prisoners. At many sites, scripts or discussion points provided by tour guides included exciting stories of the most notorious prisoners held captive at the facility. At the Albert County Museum in Hopewell, New Brunswick, the most prominent portrayal focused on Tom Collins, also known as the "Axe Murderer." According to signs posted in the museum, Collins, the only person to be executed at the Albert County Gaol, was sentenced to hang for murdering a woman by cracking her skull with an axe. Collins' exceptional case overshadows the experience of the majority of prisoners held at the gaol. A less prominent poster at the same museum indicates that most of the people imprisoned there were detained for minor, non-violent incidents, including public intoxication, failure to pay debts or taxes, and hunting during prohibited seasons. Staff and volunteers working at many of the museums examined in our larger study, such as the Old Stone Jail in Beaverton, Ontario, admitted that the sites had served as multi-purpose facilities, incarcerating mostly local "drunks," "lunatics," and "vagrants"—not the violent prisoners that dominated the focus of displays at these sites.

Image 1. Photo by Alex Luscombe of wanted posters adorning a prison cell wall at the Jailhouse Museum in Tweed.

Another example of a depiction that focused on violent prisoners was presented at the Jailhouse Museum in Tweed, Ontario. A newspaper clipping hanging on a wall declares that Gideon Budds, a man suspected of murdering his wife, was held at the small jail for one night before being transferred to a larger prison. Although this one-room jail served mostly as a container for rowdy and intoxicated locals, the story of Budds' overnight stay is singled out and featured over all other possible narratives and occurrences at this site. Posters proclaiming, "WANTED: DEAD OR ALIVE," featuring famous "outlaws" who were not associated with the site in any way, including the American bandits Bonnie and Clyde, were also plastered across the walls of the small jail. This communicates to penal spectators imageries of violent and notorious prisoners rather than the mundane reality of the jailhouse.

Image 2. Photo by Alex Luscombe of a *London Evening Free Press* article on a prison escape at the former Middlesex County Gaol.

Attempted prison escapes were also a focus at many jail sites, including the Middlesex County Administration Building in London, Ontario. The tour incorporated the stories of one prisoner who tried to climb out of his cell using bed sheets tied together and another prisoner who smuggled a hacksaw into the jail. At the Huron Historical Gaol in Goderich, Ontario, stories of prisoner escapes included the methods employed by prison staff to combat these attempts. For instance, one display discussed the gaol walls that were smoothed down with loose stones strategically placed so as to prevent prisoners from scaling them. These stories of near and successful escapes construct prisoners as potential dangers to the surrounding area, emphasizing their cunningness and desperation to flee from the prison. Many sites also reported that the majority of runaway prisoners were later recaptured by the authorities and returned to their "rightful place" behind bars.

Focusing on exceptional depictions constructs prisoners as menaces in need of greater security measures to control them. The emphasis placed on representations of violent individuals does not acknowledge the violence prisoners themselves have experienced at the hands of prison staff, as well as through the everyday pains of confinement (Sykes 1958; also see: Crewe 2011). The vast majority of prisoners remain nameless and faceless, especially at

penal tourism sites with little to no mention of prisoners, such as the Morrin Centre in Quebec City, Quebec. Similar to Drake's (2011:380) findings of dehumanizing portrayals of the criminalized in news media sources, the representation of prisoners by Canadian penal history museums can allow penal spectators to detach themselves from the lived realities of the incarcerated, and further implies that the most "natural" answer is to lock up these "dangerous others" rather than address the myriad social conditions that are often at the root of criminalized conflicts (Brown 2009).

Artifacts of Danger and Cunningness

In addition to depictions that focus on violence, numerous relics and artifacts displayed in the penal tourism sites visited contribute to the prominent representation of prisoners as a continuous threat to society. At the Old Jail Museum in L'Orignal, Ontario, whips, handcuffs, and a pillory are on display for visitors to examine. Posters throughout the jail indicate that forks, knives, uniform ties, and belts were prohibited on-site as a safety precaution to prevent prisoners from using them as weapons. Precautionary security measures are also emphasized at The Old Prison Museum in Trois-Rivières, Quebec, where visitors are invited to participate in a straightjacket demonstration. A tour guide at the site explained that female prisoners often had to be physically restrained after spending prolonged isolated periods in their cells. An explanation of the special meal and recess schedule developed to ensure specific groups of prisoners did not cross paths and come into conflict with one another emphasized the inherent dangerousness of the people incarcerated at the facility. One display in the "Contraband" exhibit at the Federal Penitentiary Museum in Kingston, Ontario, features a stack of cafeteria food trays fused together and hollowed-out by a prisoner in order to facilitate his escape, which was unsuccessful and made the local news. This exhibit also includes lock-picking kits smuggled in or assembled by prisoners. Such displays imply prisoners are unpredictable and untrustworthy, and stress the need for additional security measures and safety precautions to be taken when working with this population.

Image 3. Photo by Justin Piché of a display featuring a prisoner-made weapon at the Federal Penitentiary Museum.

Display cases containing prisoners' contraband weapons are also featured at several museum sites. At the Keillor House Museum in Dorchester, New Brunswick, shanks and other weapons made by prisoners are on display in the "Penitentiary" exhibit. At the Rotary Museum of Police and Corrections in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, various weapons confiscated from prisoners, including a knife made of bone and handmade pistol replicas, are prominently displayed. Wilson (2008b:12) writes that violent stories and images of prisoner-made weapons communicated during penal tours contribute to the construction of prisoners as wicked and cunning, and further legitimize the need for imprisonment. According to Brown (2009), these processes of vilification also expand social distance between penal spectators and prisoners (also see: Wilson 2008b).

Demonized in Death

Even after death, prisoners are constructed as malicious beings through ghost stories told at some Canadian penal history museums. Most of these rumored "hauntings" involve a prisoner being executed for some violent act. For instance, at the Charlotte County Old Gaol in New Brunswick, museum staff allege the site is haunted by the ghost of a former prisoner who was executed for murder and by a man who committed suicide while imprisoned. Similarly, a staff member at the Fort Saskatchewan Penitentiary Museum in Alberta told the story of an incarcerated woman, who claimed to be innocent, that was hung at the site for murder and whose ghost was reportedly seen by visitors amidst the fog captured in a picture. On the website of the King George Inn, located in an old historical jail in Cobourg, Ontario, visitors are invited to make their visit even more "exciting" by hosting events at this "haunted" jail grounds. Stories of haunted prisons and of prisoners returning as demonic beings further dehumanize captives, implying their vengeful spirits linger on after death.

Image 4. Photo by Jonathan Côté of a note posted on a door by Charlotte County Archives staff notifying visitors of the ghostly presence of Thomas Dowd, who was executed at the site in 1879.

Gordon (2008:xix) explains ghost stories are "haunting reminders of lingering trouble." Through ghost stories and promotions of haunted jail sites, prisoners' struggles are often transformed from narratives of pain into exciting anecdotes for the thrilling entertainment of visitors. As previously mentioned, the construction and viewing of prisoners' lives as forms of entertainment create social distance between penal spectators and the subjects of their observation (i.e., prisoners) (Brown 2009). A guide at the Middlesex County Administration Building in

London, Ontario, mentioned to visitors that many executed prisoners were still buried in the courtyard around the site, and described the old cellblock as "creepy" and "spooky," constructing prisoners as an eternal force that continues to threaten society even in death. Such narratives also prolong the spectacle of punishment, and prevent deceased prisoners from enjoying the respectful commemoration and dignity afforded to prison staff.

"Past" Versus "Present" Discourse

The final sub-category identified addresses discourses of "past and present" or "then and now." In the "Suicide cell block" at the Old Lindsay Jail in Peterborough, Ontario, a particular informational display sets out to visitors what it was like for captives "living in an 1863 jail cell," describing cells as "no bigger than a closet" and claiming "prison life was a wake-up call and something [prisoners] did not want to return to." This description conjures images of a time before running water, electricity, and other contemporary comforts visitors take for granted, while suggesting these conditions were nothing short of justice served for "law-breakers" at the time. The Federal Penitentiary Museum in Kingston, Ontario, takes a similar exhibit one step further by recreating a side-by-side comparison of a typical tiny cell from 1835-1906 with a comparatively larger one from 1998-present (see: Walby and Piché 2011). These representations of conditions of confinement for prisoners "then" and their present-day counterparts foster social distance between museum visitors and prisoners by allowing penal spectators to feel relieved at the "progress" made, or possibly to view prisoners today as "having it easy."

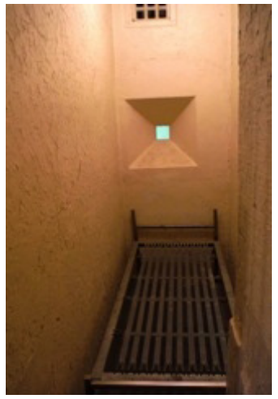

Image 5. Photo by Alex Luscombe of a prison cell at the former Middlesex County Gaol.

Other penal tourism sites depicted more explicit connections between "past and present" through entertainment-driven tour guide scripts. While guiding visitors through a tour of the jail's cellblock, an employee at the Middlesex Country Administration Office that is housed in the former jail in London, Ontario, exclaimed, "We think jails are bad now! Wait until you see this one!," and proceeded to draw the group's attention to "just how crude and rustic [the cells] were." Similarly, on the first page of the "Gaol Tourmate Script" for the Huron Historic Gaol in Goderich, Ontario, guides are instructed to welcome visitors "who wish to gain insight into the society of our past." This framing implies an especially depraved past environment of confinement and suggests that prisoners no longer experience these conditions in the present-day carceral state. In addition, the comments made by a tour guide at the decommissioned Middlesex County Jail in Ontario suggest modern penal institutions are even more comfortable than the public perceives them to be, which can legitimate "tough-on-crime" legislation and increasingly austere prison conditions.

Commemoration of Prison Staff

Compared to prisoners, who tend to be demonized in portrayals at prison museums, prison guards and other officers are commemorated for the sacrifices made in serving and protecting the public, including being injured or killed in the line of duty. For example, at the Keillor House Museum in Dorchester, New Brunswick, details about a guard who was stabbed and killed during a prison riot are displayed next to a photo taken at his funeral. The accompanying newspaper clippings describe the guard, Officer Masterton, as a quiet-mannered man, who was survived by his wife and children. The display evokes strong feelings of pride in Officer Masterton and sympathy for his widowed family.

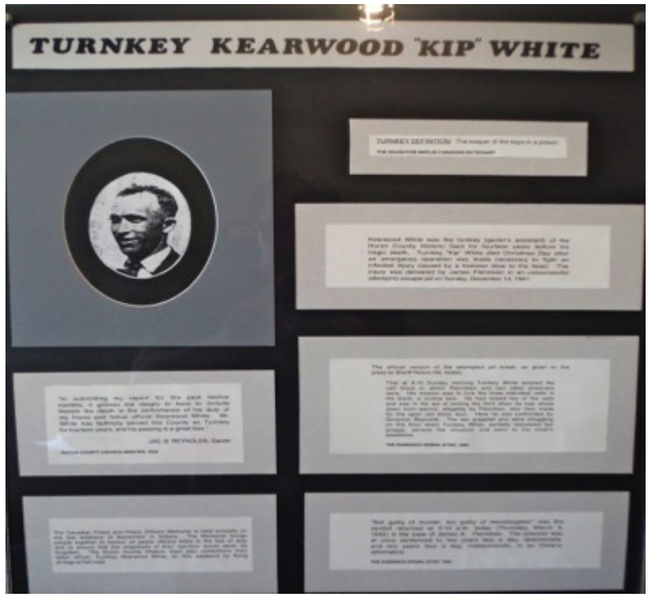

Image 6. Photo by Alex Luscombe of the Kearwood "Kip" White display at the Huron Historical Gaol Museum.

Similarly, at the Huron Historical Gaol Museum in Goderich, Ontario, a display about a turnkey named Kearwood "Kip" White, who was killed by a prisoner during an escape attempt, is placed next to a larger exhibit entitled, "The Canadian Peace and Police Officers Memorial." The display describes the national annual service as "a lasting tribute to the brave men and women killed while performing their duties as police and peace officers," and vows to never forget their sacrifices. In particular, prison officers killed by prisoners are immortalized as heroes within their local communities, as well as at the national level during the Memorial Service held annually in Ottawa, the nation's capital. Accounts of deaths and injuries suffered by prison staff and officers are constructed as especially tragic when compared to accounts of prisoners' deaths, who, although also immortalized, are often relegated to a dangerous, demonic, and ghostly "othered" status. These findings are contrasted against the immortalization of prison staff through formal remembrance services centered on honor and duty. Not addressed in these depictions where the source of violence identified tends to be the individual criminalized assailants are the long observed power imbalances between prisoners and prison staff that foster resentment amongst these actors that can erupt into conflict and the loss of life (Sykes 1958).

Artifacts of Duty and Valor

At many of the penal tourism sites in our sample, the belongings of guards and other prison staff were carefully and respectfully displayed for visitors to examine. For instance, at the Fort Saskatchewan Museum in Alberta, several display cases contained former guards' uniforms and badges issued at the prison. Common design elements present in most prison staff uniforms employ symbolism relating to duty, honor, and nationalism. In addition to

guard uniforms, a collection of badges and buttons is on display at the Federal Penitentiary Museum in Kingston, Ontario, most of which are emblazoned with red and gold maple leafs and the crown of the British monarchy. Featured awards are also displayed, including those for bravery, honor, peacekeeping, and commemoration. The symbols on these insignias demonstrate the level of reverence shown for penal system actors and their line of work for having to deal with prisoners on a daily basis.

Image 7. Photo by Justin Piché of staff badges displayed at the Federal Penitentiary Museum.

Portrayals of prison guards as heroic allow these individuals to be viewed as more admirable and respectable by penal spectators. Rather than discuss serious systemic issues occurring in prisons since their inception, such as staff brutality and corruption (see: Beattie 1977), the Canadian penal tourism sites in our study generally depict prison staff as the epitome of honor and duty, voluntarily taking on the task of protecting society against prisoners. Such an arrangement increases the potential of fostering solidarity between penal spectators and enforcers of the law, while simultaneously expanding the social distance between tourists and the "othered" group of prisoners.

Depictions of Altruism

Within the confines of penal history museums in Canada, prison staff and other state actors are often portrayed as generous and self-sacrificing human beings. An account of altruism displayed by prison staff was found on an interpretive sign at the Old Lindsay Jail in Ontario, which claimed, "the Warden or a staff member would then go to the store and get the prescription for the sick person" after a visit from the prison's resident doctor. This account of a warden's care and level of involvement in the daily lives of the prisoners in his custody contributes to the construction of prison operators as compassionate and attentive to the needs of captives.

Image 8. Photo by Alex Luscombe of a placard describing "The Laundry Room" at the Huron Historical Gaol Museum.

At the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol in Goderich, Ontario, tour guides making use of page two of the "Gaol Tourmate Script" inform visitors that arduous prison labor programs "provided a welcome change from the monotony of [the prisoners'] cellblock." Such language portrays prison officials positively as they sought to implement rehabilitative rather than overtly punitive programs. Another placard at the site explains that, at one time, prisoners were assigned to laundry duty until staff reported the prisoners merely "tore, and only half cleaned the clothes." In this anecdote, the program proved to be ineffective, suggesting prisoners at the facility were unappreciative of the opportunity and simply beyond help despite the best efforts of prison staff. At the same museum, the site's gaoler, Joseph Griffin, is heralded in page five of the "Gaol Tourmate Script" for bringing forth "needed reform in penology" by setting up a woodworking shop and planting a garden with fruit trees. While these efforts may have benefitted prisoners of the gaol, the overall construction of prison staff at the facility as having worked tirelessly to rehabilitate and reward well-behaved prisoners may legitimate punitive sanctions against prisoners who fail to see their treatment by their captors in this light (Sykes 1958). The focus on altruistic actions undertaken by prison staff suggests prisoners are given beneficial amenities that even people on the outside cannot access. This portrayal of the prison as an exceptional space is presented alongside the dominant narratives of rampant dangerousness. Marsh (2009) suggests that this juxtaposition further implies that prisoners are undeserving of compassionate treatment, not only because of their potential dangerousness, but also because of their ungrateful attitudes towards the acts of altruism they benefit from while inside.

Humanization of Prison Staff

As noted above, penal actors are humanized through depictions of their altruistic rehabilitative efforts made towards mostly unappreciative prisoners. Moreover, prison staff are commemorated when they are killed while on duty, and even more so when this death is a result of interactions with the incarcerated. Many prison guards and wardens are also honored at prison sites even when this is not the case. At the Huron Historical Gaol Museum in Goderich, Ontario, an obituary of former turnkey, Edward Campaigne, on display reads, "In his official capacity he manifested a love of discipline, which, coupled with his warm-heartedness and remarkable strength, maintained excellent order in the jail as well as in its general appointments as in the conduct of the prisoners." Many local prison museums also provide information about former prison staff who may have served at the site or in the surrounding community. At the Gaol Museum in Saint Claude, Manitoba, the small lockup site is decorated with achievements of former prison officers, including photographs of one constable's fiftieth wedding anniversary, and a tribute to one constable's successful butcher shop. These displays stand in contrast to the milestones that are emphasized when discussing former prisoners, which focus on their criminal record or other disreputable details about their lives.

Image 9. Photo by Alex Luscombe of a display commemorating the 50th wedding anniversary of former Saint Claude Constable Napoléon Dion and his wife at the Gaol Museum.

Exhibits about the gaoler or warden's adjoining residences were also found at many of the museum sites visited. These sites often included information about how a jail keeper and his family lived, their daily duties and tasks, and displays or replicas of their belongings. For instance, visitors at the Huron Historical Gaol Museum in Goderich, Ontario, are invited to tour the Governor's House. The residence is attached to the gaol and contains rich furnishings from the 20th century, as well as portraits and photos of former wardens and their families. Allowing visitors to "experience" a day in the life of a jail keeper by touring their residence and viewing their personal belongings and photographs enhances the likelihood that solidarity will be fostered with penal spectators by communicating the idea that these men and women are doing admirable work for the community. Whereas staff are depicted as having lives worth living, prisoners are most often reduced to and defined by their most deplored acts, with no consideration of their families or the social and political conditions that may have lead them into conflict with the law.

Our findings suggest that prison staff are portrayed positively in Canadian penal history museums through narratives and artifacts emphasizing notions of honor, duty, and sacrifice, which can be juxtaposed against findings from Vickovic, Griffin, and Fradella (2013) on depictions of correctional staff in print news media across the United States. In their study, the authors found that guards were constructed as doing "dirty work," and through the sensationalization of violent prisoners in news stories, prison staff were represented as being associated with the immorality of prisoners. Our findings suggest the opposite in penal history museums—while the line between the punished and their punishers is blurred in newsprint media, prison staff in Canadian penal history museums are consistently depicted as venerated upholders of the law against the dangerous prisoner population. In Canadian penal history museums, the division between "us" and "them" is defined through narratives of duty and sacrifice contrasted against stories of dangerousness and violence.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our study focused on representations of prisoners and prison staff at Canadian penal history museums, which possess the "symbolic power" (Ulasewicz 2007:152) or "cultural power" (Welch 2015) to shape public views of criminalized harms, law, and (in)justice. As Howarth (2006:79) notes, representations are important to study because "in supporting a particular version of the social order, they protect particular interests over others." Our analysis of objects, signs, and symbolism presented at the 45 sites our research team has studied indicates that prisoners in Canada are most often constructed as "dangerous criminals" requiring tight security measures and constant supervision to prevent the smuggling or fabrication of contraband items, escape attempts, and violent attacks on other prisoners or guards. In advancing dehumanizing portrayals of prisoners, the relationship between viewers and the subjects of punishment is severed in such a way that invites the former to gaze upon the suffering of the latter as an entertaining activity (Brown 2009:97-98).

Our analysis of the representations of captives and their captors in Canadian penal history museums raises important questions about the marketability of dark tourism, which capitalizes on visitors' interest by relying on narratives of violence, death, and morbidity (Stone and Sharpley 2008). According to Brown, McDonagh, and Schultz (2012:198), museum curators and managers must ensure dark tourism sites are "packaged, promoted, priced, and positioned, just like any other product or service" to attract visitors. In another article produced within the larger research project on Canadian penal history museums, Luscombe and colleagues (2015) explore specific marketing strategies employed by prison tourism site curators and promoters, namely, their claims of authenticity, historical specificity, and exclusiveness. These sites promise to exceed visitors' desires and expectations for entertainment, while also seeking to strike a balance between commemorating and commodifying the painful lived realities of prisoners incarcerated at these sites. Such practices raise the concern that stories of violence and death in prison presented at penal history museums may be sensationalized and/or sanitized for wider public consumption to satisfy visitors' desires to be entertained with the shocking and macabre (Huey 2011), to the detriment of those who have experienced such pains in actual carceral settings.

The penal tourism sites examined in this study often claim to portray an "authentic" perspective of imprisonment, though the depictions offered present prisoners in a stereotypical and, at times, belittling manner. Similar to findings in literature on prison discourse in the mainstream media, prisoners continue to be homogenized by portrayals at penal tourism sites and are often constructed as part of a demonized "other" group deserving of punishment. Though some representations may make room for revelation, humanization, and empathy (see: Fiander et al. 2016), our findings indicate that depictions of prisoners at most penal tourism sites across Canada often mimic views disseminated through news and entertainment media, which offer a dichotomous construction of captors and captives. This contrast is especially pronounced in smaller museums where the personal lives of captors are discussed in a positive light, alongside professional accomplishments that tend to be the focus of staff representations at penal history museums. Set against positive portrayals of prison staff members, we argue that the representations of prisoners as hazardous in penal heritage sites, big and small, legitimate discourse on prisons as the natural and necessary response to criminalized acts.

While the prisoners of decommissioned carceral facilities largely remain nameless and faceless (with the exception of celebrity prisoners), the names and photographs of guards, wardens, and other staff were often displayed in a respectful manner, at times accompanied by photographs of themselves and their families. Museum exhibits encourage penal spectators to empathize with the arduous duties of prison staff, as well as admire their acts of bravery and altruism. Our findings suggest that representations at penal tourism sites are political in the sense that these depictions foster views of prisoners that can support *status quo* power relations (also see: Wilson 2008a; Mendel and Steinberg 2011; McAlister 2013). As such, the Canadian penal history museums discussed here are likely to create social distance between prisoners and penal spectators by fostering social solidarity with captors. Although more research is needed on visitor reactions to these penal spectacles, our additional analysis of TripAdvisor user comments concerning visits to these sites demonstrates the ways in which brief encounters with penality tended to foster punitive sentiments towards prisoners. This is best captured by online visitor calls for the return of "treatment…in accordance with the crime committed" and "corporal punishment devices that was [sic] at one time used, back before bleeding hearts stopped the government from punishing people who kill and rape" (Ferguson, Piché, and Walby 2015:367). Mason (2006a:251) likewise demonstrates how media accounts of prisoners endorsed "populist and highly punitive penal policy" in ways that legitimate more controlling penal practices.

Canada was once celebrated for "missing the punitive turn" (Meyer and O'Malley 2005) for reasons related to its stable incarceration rate, abolition of capital punishment, and lack of punitive rhetoric in official discourse. Doob and Webster (2006) argue that while Canada is susceptible to punitive rhetoric and increased reliance on imprisonment when "law and order" approaches garner public support or are endorsed by political will, Canada has not yet adapted punitive public policies to the same extent as many jurisdictions in the United States and other countries. However, much changed when the Conservative Party of Canada held office from 2006 to 2015, touting policies with the stated aim of sending more people to prison, for longer periods of time, and with fewer chances of release (Webster and Doob 2015). Keeping in mind Hutton's (2005) cautions concerning the idea of punitiveness, future research should explore how dark tourism sites such as carceral museums may foster support of punishment agendas and dovetail with the ideological positions of governments. Studies of penal system signs, symbols, and iconography are needed to empirically describe how cultural productions contribute to public support of actual ongoing penal practices. More research about tourists is also required to gauge how these representations become translated into political support for punitive public policies in Canada and elsewhere.

Another area of potential interest moving forward with research on penal tourism would be to examine representations of incarcerated women in comparison with their male counterparts (also see: McAlister 2013). Several of the penal history museums visited, such as the Federal Penitentiary Museum in Kingston, the Lindsay Jail in Peterborough, and the Huron County Gaol in Goderich, either mentioned or dedicated entire exhibits to women in the penal system, both prisoners and prison staff. With this said, it appears that women's confinement, suffering, and/or work behind bars are largely ignored in representations of prisoners and prison staff found in many penal tourism sites across Canada. There has been an overwhelming "collective amnesia" about criminalized and incarcerated women (Hannah-Moffat and Shaw 2000). Though some scholars focus specifically on gender and imprisoned women (see: McAlister 2013), this oversight in the vast majority of research on penal tourism suggests women continue to be viewed as "too few to count" (Adelberg and Currie 1987) in cultural sociologies and criminologies of imprisonment and punishment.

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