Imagining Prison:
Culture, History and Space[1]

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In this article I explore the diverse ways in which stories of prison and punishment have been told in the literary and visual arts. Stories of crime and punishment are central to every society as they address the universal problem of human identity. Every culture generates founding myths to account for society's origins, typically situated in some dreadful primordial event. The imaginary origins of Western civilization are to be found in tales of banishment, confinement, exile, torture and suffering. The theme of exclusion is symbolically rich and spaces of confinement — both real and imagined — have provided stark reminders of human cruelty and reveal just how thin the veneer of civilization can be. This article examines how prison space has been represented in the literary and visual arts so as to grasp the complex cultural landscapes of punishment.

Old Prisons

Before the eighteenth century imprisonment was only one, and by no means the most important, form of punishment. The old prisons were very different places from the new penitentiaries replacing them later in the century. Until then hanging was the principal penalty, with transportation abroad the main alternative, while whipping remained a common punishment for petty offences. The defining features of the old prisons are summarized[2] as follows:

> *At mid-century in England, petty offenders were hanged or transported for any simple larceny of more than twelve pence or for any robbery that put a person in fear. The typical residents of eighteenth-century prisons were debtors and people awaiting trial, often joined by their families … Most prisons were not built purposely for confinement, but all were domestically organized and the few specially constructed ones resembled grand houses in appearance (e.g. York Prison, c. 1705). Prisons were temporary lodgings for all but a few, and*

> *the jailer collected fees for prisoners for room, board, and services like a lord of the manor collecting rents from tenants.*

A number of points are emphasized here. First, over two hundred crimes (ranging from petty theft to murder) were punishable by death, under the 'Bloody Code' of capital statutes, as the political order sought to maintain power through the terror of the gallows. Second, prisons were often makeshift structures and many were no more than a gatehouse, room or cellar and rarely confined prisoners for any great length of time. The largest prisons were in London, where Newgate was the most significant, but others like the Fleet and Marshalsea were reserved almost exclusively for debtors. Third, the prisons were run as private institutions and ran largely for profit: prisoners were required to pay for the cost of their detention. The jailer had almost no staff and so prisoners were chained up in irons to keep control, while those who could afford it could buy relative freedom and even comfort — all at a price.

Whatever the conditions were actually like inside the old prisons, we see them persistently spoken of as places of evil, where profane pleasures, abject misery and infectious diseases all mingled in what seemed like a grotesque distillation of the world outside. In fact, many literary and visual sources drew attention to the failings of the legal system and mocked the rituals of punishment. An excellent example exposing the absurdities of the execution ceremonies is Jonathan Swift's (1726/7) poem 'Clever Tom Clinch Going to be Hanged' that delights in the comic spectacle of the drunken Clinch making his 'stately' procession to the gallows and ultimately pointless defiance as 'he hung like a hero, and never would flinch'. Although Swift was a Tory, he was a radical Anglo-Irish one, ambiguously caught between the colonizer and colonized, his satire mercilessly exposing the gulf separating the noble ideal from grim reality. The most damning example is his *A Modest Proposal* (1729), a pamphlet calmly advocating that the Irish poor should eat their children in order to solve Ireland's economic troubles.

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1. Much of the material in this paper is taken from Carrabine, E (forthcoming) 'Telling Prison Stories: The Spectacle of Punishment and the Criminological Imagination' in Cheliotis, L. (ed.) *The Arts of Imprisonment*, Aldershot: Ashgate, where the argument appears in a more extended form.
2. Bender, J. (1984) J. (1984), 'The Novel and the Rise of the Penitentiary: Narrative and Ideology in Defoe, Gay, Hogarth, and Fielding', *Stanford Literature Review*, Spring, 55-84, p.57.

Early modern authors were drawing on, and occasionally, transcending already existing literary forms. Daniel Defoe is the archetype. Indeed, he was imprisoned many times, mostly for debt but occasionally over his political writings, including a five-month stretch in Newgate following the 1702 publication of his *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, a pamphlet mocking High Church extremism. Although this punishment was severe, more degrading to Defoe were the three visits to the pillory he endured as part of the sentence. By the 1720s he was successfully writing feigned autobiographies, including *Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders*, *Colonel Jack*, and *Roxanna*, which have become well known as amongst the first English novels. *Moll Flanders* takes the form of a gallows confessional and includes a spiritual rebirth in Newgate prison at the depths of Moll's misfortune. In the book the prison is cast as a macabre gateway, yet in Moll's case it does not lead to the gallows, but to a new life in the New World. Her crimes make her rich, and her penitence enables her to enjoy a prosperous life in Virginia. It is this heavily ironic structure that enlivens the text, but behind all the adventures lays the looming presence of Newgate, where Moll was born to a woman sentenced to death for shoplifting and to where she inevitably returns. Like that other great picaresque novel from the eighteenth century, *Tom Jones*[3] who was 'born to be hanged', the shadow of the gallows hangs over the central protagonist and the prison occupies a pivotal place in the narrative. The dramatic crisis is reached when the reckless but good natured hero ends up in the Gatehouse, following a series of amorous encounters and comic adventures, as a result of his half-brother Blifil's treachery (who has Tom framed for robbery and sentenced to death). It is just at the darkest hour, when all seems lost, that Tom's true parentage is revealed and the natural order is restored, enabling him to marry his childhood sweetheart.

Fielding's fiction is much more tightly plotted than Defoe's, and in doing so he exposes the distance between how things really are and how they ought to be. One suggestion is that in the real world Tom would have ended up hanged and the villainous Blifil may well have become prime minister[4]. An irony Fielding had earlier explored in his *Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743), where the notorious thief-taker becomes synonymous with Walpole's leadership of Parliament — satirically drawing the barbed comparison between Wild's criminal organization and Walpole's manipulative control of government. There is a crucial tension between what actually happens in a Fielding novel, suggesting that the world is a bleak place, and the formal structuring of those events, implying pleasant symmetries, poetic justice and harmonic resolution. It is as if his earlier career as a successful comic playwright and later years spent as a harsh London magistrate combine to produce work obsessed with preserving traditional forms of authority, yet fascinated by the disruptive energy of the outcast.

Prisons of Invention

The work that most revels in the many contradictions governing representations of crime, justice and punishment during this era is John Gay's (1728) hugely successful musical drama, *The Beggar's Opera*. Using popular English and Irish folk tunes instead of intricate arias, and set in the criminal underworld rather than royal palaces, the piece gleefully parodies the generic conventions of the then fashionable Italian opera. Although the central characters have become mythical figures they were based on well known criminals from early eighteenth century London. The character Peachum, was modelled on the infamous thief-catcher Jonathan Wild, both of whom impeached (that is they informed on) their criminal associates for the reward offered by the authorities. The dashing highwayman-hero Macheath (later immortalised in Brecht-Weill's *Threepenny Opera* and the popular song 'Mack the Knife') was based on Jack Sheppard, who had achieved celebrity status through the ingenuity with which he was able to escape different prisons, including Newgate. The original idea for the play is often attributed to Jonathan Swift, who suggested to Gay that he might write a 'Newgate pastoral, among the whores and thieves there', but the ploy of associating Newgate society with larger political corruption was already a familiar one. There is no doubt that the play was immediately successful and no one was in any doubt that the Walpole's government was the target of the satire.

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3. Fielding, H. (1749/1975), *Tom Jones* p.118.
4. Eagleton, T. (2005), *The English Novel: An Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell, p.59.

The play also informed the visual art of William Hogarth. One of his earliest oil paintings depicts the climactic scene of *The Beggar's Opera* (1729), where all the main characters are grouped on the stage [Figure 1], which mimics and mocks the compositional dynamics of contemporary paintings of more noble families. The juxtaposition between respectable and criminal, which the play successfully exploits, is developed in two of his famous sequences *The Harlot's Progress* (1730/32) and *The Rake's Progress* (1734/35). The titles are clearly ironic, as the engravings chart the demise of naïve protagonists caught up in corrupt social institutions. The prison depicted in Hogarth's (1729) painting of *The Beggar's Opera* is also important as it borrows from a Baroque tradition of theatrical stage design largely lost to us now (they have long since crumbled away), but had a major influence on the Gothic imagination emerging much later in the eighteenth century. By innovatively producing a *scene per angolo* (a way of looking at things at an angle) it appeared to deepen the stage and gave quite extravagant illusions of perspective. It is this lofty prison setting (combining elements of both palace and dungeon), that Hogarth captures in his painting, though others were to produce far more melodramatic images.

The most fantastic imagining of the prison as a space of labyrinthine nightmares is contained in the *Carceri d'Invenzione* series initially published by

Giambattista Piranesi in 1750. These 'prisons of invention' draw on the operatic set design tradition, but transform the conventions into megalomaniac structures that have had an immeasurable impact on cultural sensibilities. In his own day Piranesi had achieved acclaim for a series of striking images of the decaying architecture of ancient Rome, the scale of which informed the awesome imagery contained in the *Carceri* (see Figure 2). Piranesi's architectural settings bare scant relation to actually existing prison buildings (or even theatrical stage sets), but they do herald a new aesthetic combining both terror and beauty to sublime effect. Many critics have noted how the carceral spaces depicted by Piranesi are fantasy worlds that pervade gothic treatments of imprisonment. Indeed, ancient ruins, dark forests, inaccessible castles, dank dungeons and raging thunderstorms (amongst other elemental forces) were becoming attractive to a new sensibility developing in the eighteenth century.

This fascination with horror would be soon called the Gothic and while it could very easily fall into hammy melodrama (a tone wonderfully sent up in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, written in the 1790s) the creeping unease generated by Franz Kafka's modernist fiction is hugely indebted to the *romans noir*. In his novels *The Trial* (1914) and *The Castle* (1922) and shorter stories like 'Before the Law', 'In the Penal Colony' and 'The Metamorphosis' they each take up the theme of an innocent victim caught up in relentless

Figure 1

Figure 2

machinations well beyond their control. From Josef K's arrest for a nameless crime in *The Trial* (with no hope of acquittal) to Gregor Samsa's grotesque metamorphosis (into a giant insect) the stories explore the question of confinement with immensely unsettling results. In the latter tale the horror derives not so much from the monstrous transformation but in the initially embarrassed and then indifferent way his family react to Gregor's plight — eventually leaving him to die alone in his room — raising profound questions about our own responses to the suffering of others.

Aside from fuelling the Gothic imagination, these diverse forms of penal representation have also informed actual carceral spaces. It has been noted[5] how:

from France came a number of architectural projects attempting to create prisons from the images of incarceration in the arts. Those produced by Boullée, Ledoux, Houssin and Bellet in the 1780s and 1790s are well known: oppressive, massive, and monumental, with balefully lit cachots *surrounded by monolithic masonry. Only the capaciousness of the stage set was lost. They were declarations that architecture was, above all, an art of evocation. The incalculable weight of stone, the encasing exteriors, the immuring courts*

filled with shadow, the melancholy dungeons pierced with a single ray of light, the entire prison was becoming a cultural reminiscence.

This is a crucial point. All these images looked to the past and appeared anachronistic when compared to the burgeoning prison reform movement then gathering force. As yet it did not possess a distinctive architectural vision, but when it did find one it would be one that looked forward.

Nevertheless, from the 1760s onwards many prison exteriors consciously drew on these forbidding elements, while the interior practices remained mostly intact. Bender (1984:58) has described how the old system based on gaoler's fees stubbornly resisted change, while new prison designs 'outwardly assumed a fearful, awesome, sublimely intimidating aspect — imagery envisioned in the graphic arts by Piranesi and in architecture by George Dance's 1768 design for London Newgate.' At the same time the famous prison reformer John Howard denounced the interior design of the New Newgate as 'hopelessly old-fashioned'. The rebuilt Newgate was the last and grandest prison to be constructed before the full impact of late eighteenth century reform was realised. Between the demolition of old Newgate in 1767, which was still essentially a medieval gatehouse, and the completion of the 'Model

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5.　Evans, R. (1982), *The Fabrication of Virtue: English Prison Architecture, 1750-1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.80.

Prison' at Pentonville in 1842 nearly every gaol and house of correction in England had been demolished and rebuilt according to new principles of confinement.

The Penitentiary Ideal

Throughout the eighteenth century the cultural and ideological importance of the law ensured that it remained at the forefront of public debate. These discussions took many forms, yet always provided commentary — ranging from the burgeoning newspapers, satirical journals, political pamphlets through to literary sources like poems, novels and plays. Such sources could deliver quite damning critiques of the government through stories of crime and punishment. This literature is important as it is closely allied to the rise of the liberal public sphere from the early eighteenth century. The 'public sphere' was much more than a purely discursive realm but was grounded in a network of social spaces and institutions that regulated manners and promoted urbane conduct.

Satire was a form of political opposition highlighting the cultural tensions between the civilised and barbaric in metropolitan life, so that accompanying the development of a refined public sphere were numerous attempts at 'social hygiene' seeking to regulate the unruly and the vulgar. It is in this context that John Howard's (1777) *The State of the Prisons* can be understood, a book popularising prison reform by documenting just how bad conditions were in English prisons, especially when compared to European institutions. Howard was offended by the indiscriminate mixing of men and women, the lack of segregation between the tried and untried, the open sale of alcohol, gambling and generally filthy conditions, where diseases like typhus were rife, rules disregarded and prisoners whiled away their time in 'sloth, profaneness and debauchery'. Ultimately, the unruly prison was morally degenerate and the squalid antithesis of Christian benevolence. Influenced by religious piety and Enlightenment reason, Howard and his fellow reformers advocated the benefits of classification, isolation and sanitation to create the impression that prison was the natural form of punishment.

But there was no single victory of the penitentiary idea. Reformers were divided over the kind of work prisoners should do and the role of solitary confinement. It was in this climate that Jeremy Bentham pitched his famous Panopticon prison design in 1787. The novel idea was that inspection would be continuous from a central watchtower, but the caged inmates would not know whether they were being watched in their peripheral cells because of a series of blinds shielding the inner tower. Critics not only worried over the tyranny exemplified in the design, but disliked Bentham's insistence that the panopticon could be ran as a profitable commercial business. This latter objection ultimately led to the rejection of his plans. Nevertheless, significant elements of his design have informed subsequent prisons.

Revisionist historians have demonstrated how the penitentiary offered a vision of social order set to discipline the urban poor, while containing the social disruptions unleashed by rising unemployment and new class divisions in the first half of the nineteenth century. By the middle of the nineteenth century the characteristic features of the modern prison are in place and almost the entire range of Georgian criminal sentences — the pillory, the whipping post, the gallows, and the convict ship — had disappeared from public view by the 1860s. There is no doubt that the new institution was involved in the ideological legitimation of industrial society and the extension of disciplinary techniques through new systems of classification, examination and surveillance.

Realism and Punishment

If satire was the defining form of cultural opposition in the eighteenth century, then it is the language of realism that explored the many contradictions of imprisonment in the nineteenth century. One of the first and greatest exponents of realism was the Spanish artist Francisco Goya. From the 1790s onwards he produced paintings depicting torture, madness and terror that are still profoundly moving. Amongst the earliest are *Interior of a Prison* and *Yard with Lunatics* (both 1793-4), which recall Piranesi's fantasy architectural settings of shadow, misery and chains. Later drawings like his now famous series *The Disasters of War* (1814-1818) document the true horror of combat in dreadful detail. By the middle of the nineteenth century French painters like Gustave Courbet and Édouard Manet strove for 'Le Réalisme', heralding a further move away from conventional wealthy subjects to lowly urban themes capturing not just the alienation but also the vitality of contemporary metropolitan life. Contrasting somewhat with realist conventions are the intense pieces produced by Vincent van Gough, including the famous *Prisoners Round* (1890), depicting prisoners walking in a futile circle in an exercise yard *http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9e/ Vincent_Willem_van_Gogh_037.jpg* Van Gough's painting though is not overly concerned with providing an accurate representation of prison life, but through the evocative colours and exaggerated forms the haunting image has something more telling to say on the experience.

Ultimately realism reached its fullest expression in the nineteenth century novel. Not all novels are realist, but it has become the dominant style in which they are written and the measure against which they are judged.

Charles Dickens was amongst the first of the great novelists of the city and the prison figures in many of his novels. In his early writing he attacked the influential Philadelphia 'separate system' of prison discipline in his *American Notes* (1842/1906). In this account of his travels he was especially concerned about the damaging effects of the system upon prisoners. A remarkable passage describes[6] a hooded prisoner as a 'man buried alive, to be dug out in the slow round of years; and in the meantime dead to everything but torturing anxieties and horrible despair'. This metaphor of living death is one he returns to in *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) where the deadening atmosphere of imprisonment pervades the novel, while in *David Copperfield* (1849/50) he makes a number of criticisms of the separate system that some have claimed led to its demise.

Another theme Dickens pursues is the mystery of human identity — where do we come from, are we really who we think we are, do we author our own destinies and so forth. In his finest prison novel, *Little Dorrit* (1855-57), these themes come together in a work where imprisonment structures practically every aspect of the tale. The playwright George Bernard Shaw once claimed the book was more incendiary than Marx's *Das Kapital* in its devastating critique of greedy capitalism and incompetent officialdom. The vast social landscapes drawn by Dickens dramatize the contradictions of the age by traversing the diverse worlds his characters inhabit. But for all this sweeping panoramic vision a novel like *Little Dorrit* also announces a further paradox, that of an all pervasive prison and an 'omniscient narrator' who is divorced from his 'fictional world' (Carnochan, 1998:394)[7]. This is no problem for an author like Dickens as his realism is always blended with earlier styles of writing, including romance, fable, satire and Gothic, but it is a dilemma for those writers seeking to deliver some realistic psychological complexity to the pain their characters experience.

In response much subsequent writing about prison has looked inward to grasp what it is to be human. The model for this approach is Victor Hugo's (1829) *The Last Days of the Condemned Man*, which vividly describes a prisoner's struggles to come to terms with his fate. Much later Albert Camus's (1942) *The Stranger*, John Cheever's (1977) *Falconer* and John Banville's (1989) *The Book of Evidence* each provide first person narratives where hope and despair are dynamically interweaved in the stories. In *The Stranger*, for example, those waiting execution worry intensely about the proper functioning of the guillotine — as any fault can mean repeating the same botched operation over and over again. While in Kafka's 'Penal Colony' (1919/1954) the condemned are so resigned to their fate in the grisly execution apparatus known as 'The Harrow' that they can be left free to run in the hills, a simple whistle enough to recall them for their execution. Prison systems have also continued to be criticized on a grand scale. Octave Mirbeau's (1898/1995) *Torture Garden* is such an account exposing the hypocrisies of European civilization. Readers soon learn that the narrator is a corrupt, if somewhat incompetent, guide who has left France to study foreign prison systems. On route he meets the extraordinary Clara, the daughter of an opium trader living in China, who convinces him to join her on a journey to a prison in a remote corner of Canton. The second half of the book then goes on to detail the flayings, crucifixions and numerous other forms of misery endured in beautifully laid out gardens in the heart of the prison: where torture mingles with horticulture, as the decomposing dead fertilize the immaculate floral landscape.

The book is an unmistakable influence on Kafka's (1919/1954) 'In the Penal Colony', but here the sinister torture machine has fallen into disrepair. Where once 'The Harrow' would elaborately carve the sentence of whatever commandment the prisoner had broken on his body, until death provided a merciful release. Now the machine simply stabs the victim quickly to death. Like the *Torture Garden* the story is seen through the eyes of a visiting European dignitary. Although it is the

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6. Cited in Johnston, H. (2006) '"Buried Alive": Representations of the Separate System in Victorian England', in Mason, P. (ed.) *Captured by the Media: Prison Discourse in Popular Culture*, Devon: Willan, p.108.
7. Charnochan, W. B. (1998), 'The Literature of Confinement' in Morris and Rothman (eds.) *The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

executing officer who is finally destroyed by the machine, it is the prophecy that the mechanization of torture and it's associated form of justice — where the accused is always found guilty — will eventually return that menacingly concludes the story. It is this iconography of machine that has shaped the representation of imprisonment in twentieth century media culture, to where we now turn.

Inside the Machine

While modern punishment now largely takes place away from the gaze of public attention, the role of the mass media in making penal practices more visible is especially important. Understandings of incarceration cannot be divorced from how they are represented in television, film and print. Yet how to make sense of the relationships in a media-saturated world is by no means easy or unproblematic. One way of analyzing the social character of mediated representation is through the theory of genre. There are now a number of studies of prison films as a genre and several stock features have been identified: escape, riot, camaraderie, violence, injustice and so on. To give one example *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) is one of the most popular films ever made, while actually 'saying nothing new about prison' (Mason, 2003:288). It contains all the stock elements of the prison film: sadistic guards, corrupt wardens, masculine solidarity, predatory rapists, eventual escape and a revenge climax. Yet it is the way that the story is told that has shaped the film's popularity. Film critics[8] have compared it to a modern day Gospel parable, as well as a political allegory on recent US history (the corrupt Warden stands for President Nixon) but ultimately it is seen as testimony to the power of Hollywood cinema to move audiences in ways that 'lesser' films do not. In a nuanced analysis of the film Michael Fiddler[9] has shown how the influence of Piranesi's depictions of carceral space inspired the dramatic representation of Shawshank.

Others have noted how the iconography of the machine permeates screen representations of prison[10]. When heroes break inflexible rules or rebel

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against injustice, this often results in long periods of solitary confinement, as in films like *Cool Hand Luke* (1967) and *Papillon* (1973) and it is the metaphor of the machine that is fundamental. It is the organising principle from which all other narratives flow: 'escape from the machine, riot against the machine, the role of the machine in processing and rehabilitating inmates, and entering the machine from the free world as a new inmate' (Mason, 2006: 204). In doing so prison films draw on generic conventions that were already established in earlier artistic and literary traditions outlined above. One of the most recurring motifs in all this material is seeing the experience of imprisonment through the eyes of the protagonist entering confinement for the first time, enabling audiences to identify with the character in their struggle with the penal machine.

Of course, prison films are only one way in which the viewing public see punishment — there are many more genres on television. The prison setting has appeared in popular situation comedies (*Porridge*), light entertainment drama (*Bad Girls*), 'serious' drama (*Buried*), documentary (*Strangeways*) and reality TV (*Banged Up*), while newspaper reporting provides an essential counterweight to fictional representations in the broadcast media and the literary tradition I have been describing. It is important to recognise though that stories of crime and punishment, when they appear in press reports and documentary programmes, are themselves increasingly told in melodramatic form. This generic blurring does not mean that media audiences are incapable of discriminating between fact and fiction, rather that both are influential in shaping how crime and punishment are understood. Genres do not produce themselves and I now briefly turn to stories told by prisoners, which offer further understandings of prison space.

Prison Writing

Any account of prison writing soon acknowledges that most of the literature is written by privileged prisoners. Not only are they literate, but often they have been imprisoned for political,
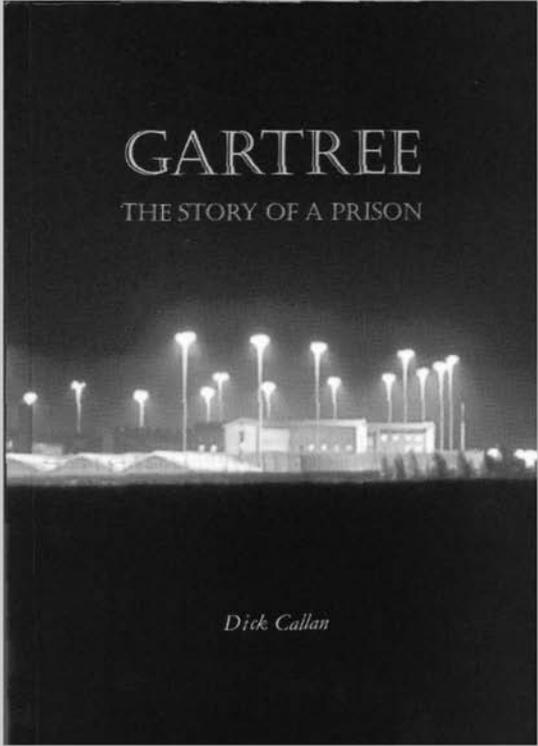
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8. Kermode, M. (2003), *Shawshank Redemption* (London: BFI publishing).
9. Fiddler, M. (2007) 'Projecting the Prison: The Depiction of the Uncanny in *The Shawshank Redemption*', in *Crime, Media, Culture*, 3(2):192-206.
10. Mason, P. (2006), 'Relocating Hollywood's Prison Film Discourse', in Mason, P. (ed.).

religious or other ideological reasons which further distinguishes them from other inmates. Three different kind of writing have been identified. One is produced by imprisoned intellectuals and includes Socrates, Bunyan, Boethius, Dostoyevsky, and Gramsci. Ranging from spiritual salvation to political martyrdom it demonstrates the extraordinary breadth of writing produced under captivity. A second group contains writers who speak from within a prison culture and whose messages have more often than not disappeared: either lost or destroyed by officials. Jean Genet and the Marquis de Sade are two of the most well known writers in this tradition. Aside from these infamous accounts of dissident sexuality this writing covers a diverse range of genres — including autobiography, memoir, fiction, drama, poetry and journalism — from Oscar Wilde in the late 1800s to Razor Smith in the early twenty-first century[11]. A third group stretches back to the beginnings of history and include parts of the 'Old Testament, stories of the shtetl, the songs and stories of the American and Caribbean slaves, the accounts from the Gulag and Van Diemen's Land' which have become part of collective memory through the folk tradition of storytelling[12]. These very different narratives speak to 'real' and 'imaginary' pain in significant ways and are unified in the fundamentally moral question they ask: how are we to live? The importance of the cultural representations I have been discussing is that they can enlarge our powers of imagination, so that we can better understand each other and the kind of world we live in. As Aristotle[13] pointed out in his *Poetics*, written in the fourth century BC, literature shows us 'not something that has happened, but the kind of thing that might happen'. This understanding of possibilities is a vital resource enriching comprehension of the human condition and one that reminds us of just how much of our cultural tradition has been produced under captivity.

11.   Broadhead, J. (2006), *Unlocking the Prison Muse: The Inspiration and Effects of Prisoners' Writing in Britain* Cambridge: Cambridge Academic.
12.   Davies, I. (1990), *Writers in Prison*, Oxford: Blackwell, p.4.
13.   Cited in Nussbaum, M. (1997), *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defence of Reform in Liberal Education*, Harvard University Press.