

# Working Papers on Design

© University of Hertfordshire. To cite this journal article:  
Ash, Juliet (2010) 'The Untruthful Source: Prisoners' writings, official and reform documentation 1900-1930.', *Working Papers on Design*, 4, ed. Grace Lees-Maffei, Retrieved <date> from  
<[http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes\\_research/papers/wpdesign/index.html](http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research/papers/wpdesign/index.html)>

---



## The Untruthful Source: Prisoners' writings, official and reform documentation, 1900-1930.

Juliet Ash

Royal College of Art, London

### Abstract

The paper questions how myths arose regarding the history of prisoners' clothing in Britain in the first half of the twentieth century. Legal written documentation charting the imposition of broad arrow uniforms and its abolition is set against the language in Fabian prison reform writing in the inter war years. Official and reform writing are posed against the inmate's experience of humiliation embodied in the broad arrow clothing and written about in prisoners' diaries, anthologies and books.

Although there is little extant critical writing about prisoners' clothing design in this period, inmates' writing and archival documentation provide us with an inverse of the political encounter played out in global courtrooms. As design historians we are led to question the truth of official documentation when it is contradicted by the words of the wearer that are built upon experiential evidence. The paper argues that the language used in the interpretation of clothing as punishment in these sources articulates the specific class and gender politics of the prison authorities that speak in the Government's name, that of Left wing reformers and imprisoned Irish, Suffragette and Communist sympathisers. This written exposition identifies the political gaps in communication between the authorities, reformers and those affected by the Law and prison policies but whose spoken word is questionable. The written contradictions concerning prison uniform lead us to question the popular mythology that arose around the existence of the broad arrow clothing that was disseminated as a visual truth in cartoons in the British media until the present, despite its abolition in the 1920s.

The paper addresses this historical imbalance through a reading of the written word for evidence in the identification of the co-existence of a number of truths embodied in the design of broad arrow prison uniforms.



## Introduction

Bertolt Brecht wrote in the late 1930s of a Shakespeare manuscript that contained a note in the margin, "Choose whichever reading seems best to you and if this way of putting it is difficult to understand or unsuited to the audience, then use another". Brecht adds, 'we need imagination for our purposes [those of the dramatist actor]; we want not to create illusions but to see that the audience too gets a picture of the matter in hand.' (Brecht 1965 (1939), 55-57) Shakespeare's, and subsequently Brecht's, recognition of the many readings of the written text and the imaginative role of the interpreter/historian, in bringing alive the matter in hand to the audience, provides design historians with a layered methodology. In looking at three types of writing about the design of broad arrow prison clothing we become aware of different truths about the public institution of the prison in the inter-war years in Britain. The broad arrow prison uniform was introduced in British prisons and the colonies in the mid nineteenth century. Large arrow marks were stamped in ink randomly all over prisoners' clothing ostensibly to prevent escape and stigmatise the wearer as a criminal. (Ash, 2009, 20–23, 49-51)

From the writing at this time we begin to unravel the mystery of whether the broad arrow prison clothing as popular visual mythology existed in Britain, how it was made, experienced, produced and the reality of its abolition. We can also ascertain in the writing the 'active and conflicting human histories' (Williams, 1980, 15) behind change and resistance to it. The layering of different writings becomes like a collage of positions of social groups, that vary from the subjective experience of the prisoner to the conformity of petit bourgeois prison authorities and the position of social reformers whose broad agendas for political change included transitional reforms of prison conditions – in this case that of dress.

There is not a chronological progression towards more relaxed forms of prison dress. In Western democracies, eras of reform — for example between the two world wars — led to the eventual abolition of nineteenth century prison uniforms such as the broad arrow clothing. But prison regimes did not relinquish the regulation of the imprisoned body; prisoners were still to be stripped of their identity and self-esteem. Meanwhile the visual mythology of the uniform lingered on until today. Penal reformers addressed prison clothing issues as part of the need to improve prison conditions, in order that on release a person could resume the everyday life expected of 'normal' working citizens who consumed clothes that approximated to notions of decency, if not fashionability. In debates about imprisonment the issue of dress polarises between those who ask why society should worry about what criminals wear, when they have infringed the law, and reformers who focused on the implausibility of expecting people to be rehabilitated when fundamental rights such as a clean change of underwear (Travis, 2006) are denied them. Yet such small reforms in prison culture, important in affecting the self-esteem of prisoners, have often been sidelined in comparison to larger issues, such as the need to relieve overcrowding in prisons or the need for more stringent 'law and order' policies.



Additionally, the history of the raiment of the convicted is shrouded in secrecy. It is as though the exposure of the conditions in which inmates pass their time, which include prison clothing, undermines, and threatens, the prevention of crime. Maybe this is because the history of prison clothing is the history of mechanisms of the embodiment of law and order. At times the design of clothing is deliberate, at times seemingly arbitrary. But the neglect of prison clothing reveals as much about the politics of penalty and retribution as its intentional design and construction.

This article addresses the mystery that conceals the nature of prison clothing in the inter-war years in Britain through examining the difference between the writing of the wearer who 'speaks' *from* the people for whom the clothing is intended and the corporate voice of the written communication of the authorities who speak *for* them. Also considered is the writings of radicals who saw the reform of prison clothing as part of a wider reform of the prison experience as rehabilitation, rather than humiliation or punishment.

## **The existence of the broad arrow**

There are a variety of reasons for the adoption of the broad arrow mark on prison clothing. One is its early appearance as branding on sheep to denote ownership; another is its heraldic significance for families such as the Thrales who were permitted to use it as a symbol of Royal patronage in the sixteenth century; and some have traced its derivation to its placement on the selvedge of cheap cloth in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries. Its significance on the bodies of prison inmates was thus an amalgam of property branding and wastage – at the very least it became an embodiment of punishment and humiliation.

We know that the broad arrow uniform existed as a colonial form of prison clothing to prevent inmates in chain gangs escaping during the transportation of convicts from Britain to Australia in the early 1800s (Maynard 1994, 9-26). From official Home Office photographs we also know it existed in British prisons in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The form and placement of the broad arrow on prison clothing in Britain between the 1880s and 1920, when it was said by historians (Morris 1976, 53) to have been abolished, varied from prison to prison and it was worn by male and female inmates.

In a Home Office photograph, women prisoners in Gloucester prison in 1900 were dressed in loose clothing, tied at the waist by apron strings. The broad arrow was marked in black paint on dresses and aprons. In contrast, the fitted staff clothing was tailored and, in this respect, connected with the outside world of fashion. It is as though modernity had passed the female prisoner by.



Fig. 1 - Male prisoners in broad arrow prison uniforms, Wakefield Prison, 1914. Photograph reproduced with kind permission of NCCL Galleries of Justice, Nottingham, UK.

In Fig. 1, male prisoners at Wakefield prison are shown in the useless activity of sewing mail bags in a workshop in 1914. The shape of the caps and the marks on the clothing approximated to the lowest rungs of the army or navy. The broad arrow mark is underlined by three stripes on the arm. This indicates the 'Third Division' status of the prisoner. Additionally there are broad arrows on the cap. Like the women in Gloucester prison, the men in Wakefield are differentiated from the prison officers who are dressed in peaked caps denoting their higher status, equivalent to that of a military major. This differentiation is reflected, too, in the spatial organisation of the photograph, in which an officer stands on a table at the end of the room higher than the seated prisoners. These photographs, and their depiction of the visual embodiment of order and control over prisoners, were staged for the benefit of the intended viewers – the prison authorities and Home Office personnel. The relatively discrete marking of the broad arrow contrasts with the way prisoners wrote about the humiliation experienced when dressed in the clothing.

## Early twentieth century prisoner writing

In 1905 Oscar Wilde characterised prison clothing in the following words:



But that the dreadful thing about modernity was that it put tragedy into the raiment of comedy, so that the great realities seemed commonplace or grotesque or lacking in style. It is quite true of modernity... Our very dress makes us grotesque. We are the zanies of sorrow. We are clowns whose hearts are broken. We are specially designed to appeal to the sense of humour. (Wilde 1911 (1905), 130)

He was imprisoned for two years between 1895 and 1897 for alleged homosexual offences. Although he was upper middle class he was on the fringes of respectable bourgeois society and a radical aesthete. His writing about the indignity of prison dress and life at the turn of the century in Britain is informed by his class position outside the prison. However, he articulates issues relating to the embodied condition of prison dress that are consistent with prisoners accounts across the classes and genders. He particularly considers the subjective experience of prison dress as stigmatised both inside, and outside, the prison walls. The modern world defined status as worn on the sleeve, in the model of conspicuous consumption theorised at this time by Thorstein Veblen (Veblen 1970 (1899)).

The Suffragette Sylvia Pankhurst was imprisoned for short stretches of time during the years 1906 to 1914. She was a socialist, and later communist, Suffragette. Like Oscar Wilde, Pankhurst was on the fringes of respectable bourgeois society and her writing conveys the conspicuousness of prison dress as humiliation. More specifically she describes in some detail the manner in which the broad arrow was stamped on clothing:

A wardress shouted: "Make haste and get dressed!" as she hung... some clothing over the door – strange-looking garments, all plentifully marked with the "broad arrow", black on light colours, white on dark... daubed with paint and fully four inches long. (Pankhurst 1931, 231).

As a painter, her writing graphically demonstrates the demeaning nature of the broad arrow. The description of the length of the broad arrow marking is perhaps exaggerated, but the writing reveals her self-awareness of the indignity of wearing this stigmatised uniform. There is urgency in the dramatic language. The process of writing with such precision about the design of the marking does not reveal the prisoner as a 'docile body' (Foucault 1991) upon whom the prison inscribes control, characterised by Michel Foucault in his early writing about prisons. Nor is the prisoner's recognition of self in demeaning clothing demonstrated as an act of subversive counter-design. Rather, it is in the language itself that the indignity of the broad arrow is communicated by those who wore the clothing as punishment.

The word 'daubed' sums up one of the little personal gestures that declare the preservation of the identity of the incarcerated even in highly regulated public institutions that are examined in Erving Goffman and Foucault's later writings (Goffman 1968; Martin, Gutman and Hutton 1988). Sylvia Pankhurst's writing also exposes the nature of imprisonment in this period as one of embodied control and continued punishment rather than rehabilitation. In a post-card produced by the Women's Suffrage and Political Union (WSPU) in 1909 [Fig. 2], a woman inmate is dressed in the broad arrow clothing. The garment was made up by the WSPU as a simulation of prison clothing and





then worn by suffragettes who acted as inmates in fund-raising exhibitions in 1909 and 1910 in London and Glasgow. Although the length and conspicuousness of the broad arrows resembles those described by Sylvia Pankhurst in her autobiography, the precise arrangement of the markings suggest an element of decoration. This is in stark contrast to the way they are described as 'daubed' on the cloth, which implies a lack of attention to their placement. Their conspicuousness corresponds with the wearer's feeling. As Oscar Wilde observed, prison clothing shamed the wearer and provided the social exclusion from everyday attire that made inmates risible in the public eye.

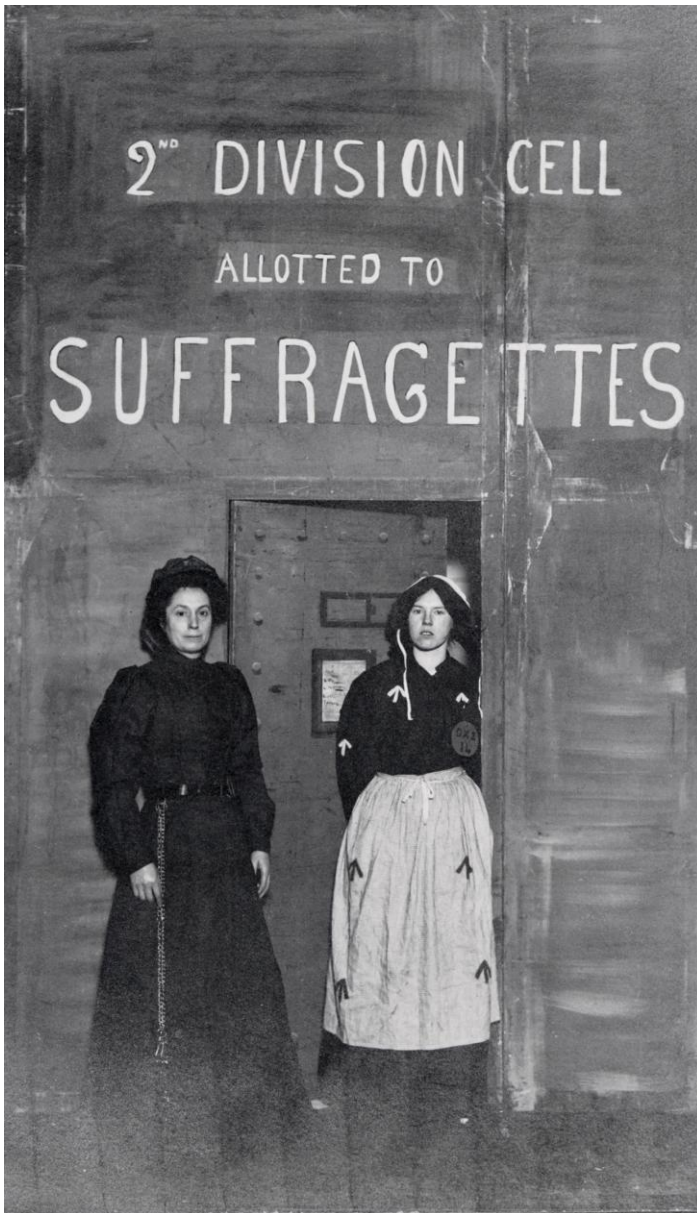


Fig. 2 - Post card of a Suffragette dressed in Holloway prison broad arrow uniform, 1909. Reproduced with the permission of the Museum of London.



## Official prison writing in the early twentieth century

Changes in young offenders' clothing contributed to the drive to abolish the broad arrow marking. A circular from the Comptroller of Prisons to Governors of Borstals in 1916 stated that young offender clothing had 'been modified' and since 1911 was only marked with the "broad arrow" on the inside of outer clothing' (National Archives, PCOM 7/ 546). However, there was an anomaly. Young prisoners who were sentenced to a month or less 'are clothed in the ordinary male prisoners' garments and ... the articles are marked on the outside with the broad arrow at the time of manufacture.' (National Archives PCOM 7/546) It was considered difficult to change this practice since it would mean providing a separate stock of clothing for the young offender who was housed in male prisons and that this would prove 'uneconomical'.

This circular was written during World War One, when prison reform was not a priority, and inconsistencies in penal practices frequently occurred. The circular mentioned that despite reforms in young offenders' institutions during the years leading up to the war there had not been time subsequently to implement them thoroughly. Economic viability was of prime importance for change in prison clothing to occur. This took precedence over broader influences such as considerations of penal reform, inmates' self-esteem or clothing developments outside the prison walls. Unsurprisingly, financial imperatives dominated official writing about the protracted abolition of the broad arrow.

In contrast to prisoners' writings, official documentation at this period demonstrates not only that this mark of humiliation was slow to disappear, but also that there was a lack of urgency in its abolition. As late as 1924 it was admitted in the official documentation that the broad arrow had not been abolished. A Home Office circular, for example, went out in March 1924 stating that the broad arrow should not appear on the inside or outside of prisoners' clothing or bedding. (National Archives PCOM 7/314, 1)

Broad Arrow Marking. In future this mark will not be used on Prisoners Clothing (inner or outer)... and marking ink... will be used for the replacement stamp – "HM Prison." (National Archives, PCOM 7/ 314, 1)

Prison Governors were asked to itemise the way clothing was marked. From the responses submitted by Governors to the Prison Commission it is clear that at a number of prisons the broad arrow still appeared on the inside and outside of clothing. For example at Manchester Prison most clothing was itemised:

The following are stamped: ↑ No: 59 Size No:

Caps – Arrow each side – Paint.

Capes – 6 Arrows inside – Paint

Jackets – 6 Arrows. 2 each side and back – Paint . (National Archives, PCOM 7/314, 3)

As well as revealing the fact that little change had occurred, these texts reveal the petit bourgeois nature of official prison clothing documentation, predicated on a tradition of scientific enumeration (itemisation, categorisation,



costings) as evidence. The writing gives the lie to the demise of the broad arrow in 1920. It expresses conformism in the fixed ideas and limited scope of the words used. Eugene Ionesco, writing in the 1950s, describes this as 'the mechanical language' of the 'petit bourgeois' (Ionesco 1964, 186). There is no personality behind the words and the language reveals 'the mechanical routine of everyday life, man sunk in his social background no longer able to distinguish himself from it' (Ionesco 1964, 186–187). The Prison Commission had ordered that the broad arrow be discontinued, without explanation. The writing speaks for a public institution in an impersonal world in which the words of Manchester prison's Governor are indistinguishable from those of the Government Prison Commission that instigated an investigation. There is no recognition of a disparity in what is occurring; labour, cost, and time remain just that and the Governor of Manchester prison is not tried in a Court for not observing the law, as a prisoner would have been.

## Reform writing

Reform writing takes on the bigger picture of prison dress and where there is itemisation there is also implied criticism of the design, or lack of it, in the language used. In his later work, Havelock Ellis, along with penal reformers in the inter-war years, proposed that prisons should treat prisoners therapeutically rather than punish them and that prison reform should not be disconnected from wider social and political reforms. 'We may neglect the problems of social organisation, but we do so at our peril,' he wrote (Ellis 1914, 373). Penal reform movements reflected early twentieth-century 'nonconformity, (which) presented itself, in one aspect at least, as a *modernising* force, on the side of progress and change' (Samuel 1998, 305).

During the inter-war years the Labour Party came to power in Britain for the first time, led by Ramsay MacDonald. Although there were vacillations between Conservative and Labour Governments during the period, radicals such as Sidney and Beatrice Webb, and the socialist writer Bernard Shaw of the Fabian Society, campaigned for an evolutionary change to socialism through a succession of reforms. As Labour Members of Parliament, radicals such as Sidney Webb in 1924, and Fenner Brockway in 1929, exercised socialist legislative authority for the first time. An Enquiry Committee Report published in 1922, entitled *English Prisons Today*, and a later publication in 1927, *English Prisons Under Local Government*, by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, with a Preface by Bernard Shaw, proposed radical reforms aligned to other welfare policies. Although these reports were sidelined by the 1925 Criminal Justice Act and the immediacy of the 1939-1945 war period, they re-emerged in the 1950s as frameworks for prison reform after World War Two. Fenner Brockway had been imprisoned during World War One as a conscientious objector, and his own experience of prisons, combined with his socialist background, informed the writing of the 1922 Report. This report demonstrates that demeaning punishment practices, such as the broad arrow, were still in use. In a footnote to the Enquiry there is precision in the dates at which evidence was taken:





Much of the evidence on which this and other chapters are based, is necessarily drawn from the actual experience of the writers themselves and of many other witnesses during the war years 1914 to 1919... But the writers have taken some trouble to make the description correspond to the actual facts of the present day (the winter of 1921). (Brockway and Hobhouse 1922, 94)

The report describes the inmate's clothes stamped with the broad arrow and provides critical commentary in the words used compared with the official documentation: 'By the bath side he finds a towel and a *makeshift* [my italics] assortment of prison clothing ... The complete outfit (for a man) consists of a prison uniform stamped with the broad arrow.' (Brockway and Hobhouse 1922, 95) The word 'makeshift' conveys an implied critique of the neglect of design of the clothing. The continuation of the broad arrow is indisputable and is based on the witnessing of prison practices informed by a broader perspective than that of Prison Governors. The writing of inter-war radicals expresses an ideology whereby the reform of prison conditions was considered integral to socio-political change and the individual prisoner's welfare and self-esteem needed to be addressed.

The report continues to consider that the imposition of uniforms in the nineteenth-century prison was as much to 'humiliate the wearer as to facilitate discovery.' (Brockway and Hobhouse 1922, 131) The report relied on evidence from ex-prisoners for its validation. The enquiry considered that after the demise of the 'arrows denoting [a prisoner's] criminality', the general condition of prison clothing as humiliation should be reformed. Demeaning clothing denied the prisoner's individuality and identity, qualities at the heart of the proposals for rehabilitation rather than punishment.

Again and again our ex-prisoner witnesses protest against the degrading effect of the prison uniform. "After I put on the prison clothes", says one, "I had difficulty to retain my self-respect ... all had a degrading effect, making me feel less a man and more an outcast." (Brockway and Hobhouse 1922, 131–132)

The report highlights how the prison uniform embodied State neglect of the self-esteem of a prisoner as being fundamentally important to their social inclusion after release from prison.

The reform ideas expressed in the 1922 report were extended in a new report by Sidney and Beatrice Webb in 1927. The Webbs' report focused on conditions in local prisons that had previously been ignored. The Webbs' argument revolved around the premise that, due to the centralisation of the prison service, there was no accountability in local facilities. As a result, conditions, including prison clothing provision, were worse in local prisons than in the central prison system. Additionally, they identified a core infringement of human rights:

The prison has become "a silent world", shrouded, so far as the public is concerned, in almost complete darkness. This invisibility of the criminal, far from being improved in the inter-war years, had deteriorated and prisons operated an administration where there was "No admittance except on business." (Webb 1927, 235)



The report suggests that it was as a result of the secrecy surrounding prisons that the public was misinformed about the reality of prison conditions, whether in terms of human rights or the humiliation of prison dress. It is implied in the report that the mystification of the public, as to whether the broad arrow uniform existed or not, and whether and when it had been abolished, if it did exist, was due to the phoney silent world of the culture of imprisonment. Equally reform writing indicates that 'the business' of prison administrators was one of routines based on little information even within the prison walls. This provides an insight into the lack of informed knowledge in the language of officialdom that was revealed in the Governors' reports of 1924.

In his Preface to their report, George Bernard Shaw reiterated the Webbs' argument for more transparency in prisons. He explicitly counters earlier characterisations of the 'criminal type' as genetically determined and physically measurable. 'What it means is that the criminal type is an artificial type, manufactured in prison by the prison system.' (Webb 1927, lxii) The Webbs and Shaw did not consider everyday human rights as trivial. They saw prison reform, and changes in the provision of prison clothing, as humane and necessary parts of a socialist vision in a capitalist system that was itself criminal.

The depredations of the criminal are negligibly small compared to the militaristic holocausts and ravaged areas, the civic slums, the hospitals, the cemeteries crowded with the prematurely dead, the labour markets in which men and women are exposed for sale for all purposes, honourable and dishonourable, which are the products of criminal ideas imposed on the entire population. (Webb 1927, lxvii)

These welfarist proposals in Britain, Europe and America were, however, put on hold until after World War Two.

## **Prisoner writing in the 1930s**

A prisoner's words later on in the period express the untruth of the abolition of the broad arrow. Wilfrid McCartney's account of his time in Parkhurst prison in 1928 mentions that he was given with clothing marked with the broad arrow. He was provided with 'dirty looking trousers sprinkled with broad arrows.....and a drab coat with hundreds, as it seemed to me, of broad arrows, all over it.' (McCartney 1936, 66) McCartney was a communist imprisoned in 1927 for ten years for obtaining information 'calculated to be useful to the enemy' (the USSR). He describes clothing with broad arrows in a variety of British prisons well into the 1930s. There is no reason to disbelieve this account, although the number of broad arrows might be exaggerated. The exaggeration, as in Sylvia Pankhurst's writing, demonstrates the effect of wearing the broad arrow. The humiliation resounds in the words in contrast to the itemised numbering of '6 broad arrows' in the prison authority reports. McCartney acknowledges the subjective nature of his account when he writes, 'as it seemed to me'. Yet the words also speak for the many other prisoners – guilty or not guilty of crimes - all dressed in the broad arrow uniform and thus indistinguishable from each other by themselves and the authorities. This universality of the embodiment of punishment is as



arbitrary as its placement on clothing since its imprecision serves to gloss over the differences in crimes allegedly committed - property crime, man-slaughter, petty shop-lifting or ideological crimes.

## **Media representations of the broad arrow after its demise**

Due to the secrecy surrounding prison conditions described by the Webbs, the public mystification as to the existence or not of the broad arrow continues, although the mark of criminal stigmatisation went out of circulation by the 1950s. Despite the lack of public awareness of how inmates were dressed, broad arrow clothing provided an immediately visible iconographic sign of embodied punishment in Britain. In the nineteenth century there had been little public communication on prison conditions, and newspaper and court reports concentrated on the crimes, the perpetrators of crime and sentencing procedures rather than how inmates lived their lives in incarceration. However, in the nineteenth century, *Punch*, as a relatively conservative magazine, had familiarised its British readership with the broad arrow as immediate visual identification of criminality regardless of proof. Thus a readily available visual language connected to the identity of prisoners as criminal entered mass circulation. The criminal increasingly became the popular subject of both fictional and news depictions for public consumption in the early twentieth century.

The lag between the demise of the physical garment and the continuity of its representation was partially due to the increase in the mass production of visual media during the twentieth century. Printed media, film and television increasingly resorted to the use of a shorthand visual embodiment of criminality. And *Punch* continued to rely on its original iconographic formulation: between 1941 and 1986 there were six cartoons depicting the broad arrow. In the *Punch Almanack* for 1941, for example, two army personnel with guns passively observe an escapee in the broad arrow uniform. 'He's not one of ours', says one, meaning an army deserter. Thus the broad arrow garment replaces the man himself. He is just a criminal. In June 1955 a broad arrow garment lies discarded on the ground against a high wall with the notice 'Summer Bay Nudist Camp' and in 1966 an image of a man in the broad arrow looks pleadingly up to the sky and freedom. In March 1967, [Fig. 3] prison officers review a row of men in the broad arrow garment with arrows pointing in different directions towards the 'responsible' criminal.

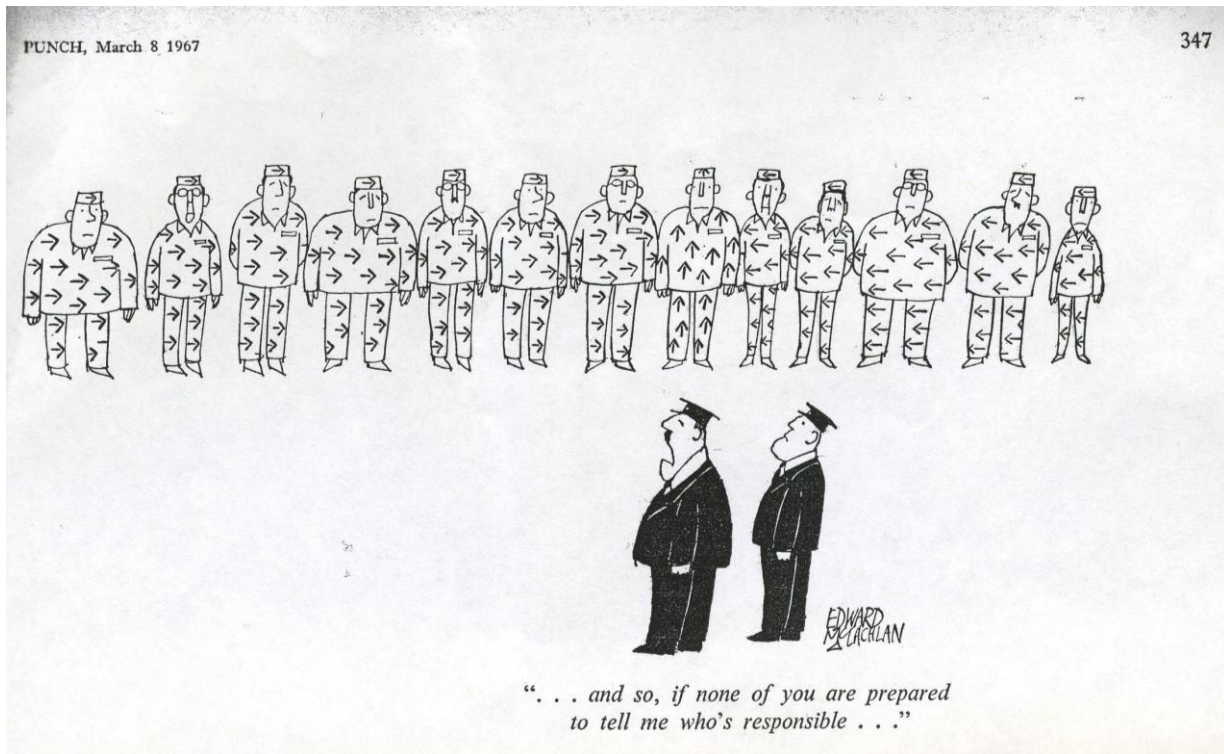


Fig 3 *Punch* magazine cartoon of the broad arrow uniform, 8<sup>th</sup> March 1967. Reproduced with permission of *Punch* Ltd.

In December 1968, a man in the broad arrow skis over the wall of the prison as prison officers comment, 'it's Ferguson from the carpentry shop.' In 1986, prisoners in party hats and the broad arrow circle an electric chair. They are playing musical chairs while prison staff members play the piano and comment, 'we try never to let a birthday pass unnoticed.' In these cartoons, the broad arrow is used by the illustrator to achieve instant recognition, by the viewer, of embodied criminality. Additionally there is the implication that the penal system is justified in its punishment of the criminal. As Oscar Wilde mentioned in the 1900s, bodily humiliation of the prisoner was partly brought about by the risible nature of inmate attire. Thus, the broad arrow continued as representational currency of the public humiliation of the prison inmate long after its abolition on clothing. Visual stigmatisation has repercussions for prisoners' self-esteem in the public imagination, still mystified by the untruth of the words of prison authorities as to the nature of prison clothing as punishment or possible rehabilitation.

## End

It is in the layered writing on the subject of the broad arrow clothing that inter-war attitudes to the nature of imprisonment are revealed. The style of writing about the object, as much as the content, exposes the real and subjectively symbolic nature of the broad arrow uniform and the diverse positions and conflicting ideologies of authors and institutions (Ionesco 1964, 161). The exaggerated description of the garment in the words of inmates is



both experiential and informed by politics. The Suffragettes' hunger strikes in the early 1900s were conducted to draw attention to their campaign for the vote and for political status, rather than being forced by the prison authorities to adopt a criminal identity in the broad arrow clothing. The writing of prison authorities in reports and commissions, while advocating change, is restricted by short-term budgetary imperatives that deny improvements in the everyday needs of those in their charge, that might lead to their rehabilitation and thus a decrease in the numbers incarcerated. Prison reformers' writing acknowledges that apparently small changes in policy to do with the everyday conditions of prison inmates, such as the abolition of visibly humiliating broad arrow uniforms, are driven by broader agendas for long term social and political change. Reform writing combines the experiential words of inmates themselves with insights into Governmental systems. Their writing moves from the specific object – the broad arrow clothing – to raise questions as to the effectiveness of prisons in their apparent intention to prevent rather than create criminality.

## References

- Ash, Juliet. 2009. *Dress Behind Bars: Prison Clothing as Criminality*. London: IB Tauris.
- Brecht, Bertolt. 1965 (1939). *The Messingkauf Dialogues*. London: Methuen.
- Brockway, Fenner, and Stephen Hobbhouse (eds.). 1922. *English Prisons Today: Being the Report of the Prison System Enquiry Committee*. New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc.
- Ellis, Havelock. 1914. *The Criminal*. New York and Melbourne: The Walter Scott Publishing Co. Ltd.
- Foucault, Michel. 1991. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin.
- Goffman, Erving. 1968. *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. London: Penguin.
- Ionesco, Eugene. 1964. *Notes and Counter-Notes*. London: John Calder.
- Martin, Luther, Huck Gutman and Patrick Hutton (eds.). 1988. *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Maynard, Margaret. 1994. *Fashioned From Penury: Dress as Cultural Practise in Colonial Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McCartney, William. 1936. *Walls Have Mouths*. London: Victor Gollancz.
- Morris, Rosamund. 1976. *Prisons*. London: Batsford.
- Pankhurst, Sylvia. 1931. *The Suffragette Movement: An Intimate Account of Persons and Ideals*. London: Longmans.
- Samuel, Raphael. 1998. *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain: Theatres of Memory, Volume Two*. London: Verso.





Travis, Alan. 2006. Cites Ann Owers, HM Inspector of Prisons, *Pentonville Prison Inspection Report* in the *Guardian* September 28: 6.

Veblen, Thorstein. 1970 (1899). *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. London: Unwin Books.

Webb, Beatrice and Sidney Webb. 1927. *English Prisons under Local Government*. London, Special Subscription Edition printed by the Authors for Subscribers.

Wilde, Oscar. 1911 (1905). *De Profundis*. London: Methuen.

Williams, Raymond. 1980. *Problems of Materialism and Culture*. London: Verso.

## Contact

Juliet Ash  
Tutor in History and Theory of Fashion and Textiles  
Royal College of Art  
Kensington Gore,  
London SW7 2EU  
juliet.ash@rca.ac.uk