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Title: The Pedagogy of Porter: The Origins of the Reformatory in the  
Cape Colony, 1882-1910.

by: Linda Chisholm

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THE PEDAGOGY OF PORTER:

The origins of the reformatory  
in the Cape Colony, 1882 - 1910

LINDA CHISHOLM

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### SUMMARY

This article explores the origins and nature of the reformatory in Cape colonial society between 1882 and 1910. Borne in a transitional period, its concern was with the reproduction of a labouring population precipitated by colonial conquest. Unlike the prison and compound, which gained their distinctive character from the way in which they were articulated to an emerging industrial capitalist society, the reformatory was shaped by the imperatives of merchant capital and commercial agriculture. Internal operations were structured by an ideology of rehabilitation through institutionalisation and socialisation and by the particular material conditions of the Western Cape, although the segregationist reverberations of the industrial revolution were also heard 'at a distance'. These issues conditioned, and were refracted through the internal structure and discipline of the reformatory, the relationship between education and work, between the reformatory and the labour market, responses of the inmates and attempts by the authorities to control these by, inter alia, a strategy of racial segregation.

During the past decade a considerable literature has emerged examining the birth of the prison and asylum. Based primarily on the European and American experience, this has investigated the economic, social and intellectual roots of such institutions, their repressive internal dimensions, techniques and ideologies of punishment and their relationship to the wider society(1). To a large extent debate has revolved around the relationship between their hidden 'internal' character and their 'external' public character, while the ways in which the imprisoned have responded to the new controls has constituted an important ancillary theme(2).

From these studies it would appear that, in Europe, the process of criminalisation of newly-formed proletarians and the emergence of new forms of punishment took place over three centuries. The workhouse, prison and similar institutions were the products of new economic and social relationships forged during the process of transition from feudalism to capitalism. These new institutions constituted an attempt to blunt the impact of a radically counterposed popular culture which combined forms of the old peasant way of life with new methods of resistance called into being by changed conditions. They also sought, through habituating inmates to work, to inculcate new values. By the late eighteenth century, their basic forms had been established. In the United States, the institutionalisation of criminals, the insane and the delinquent was similarly confirmed as a method for rehabilitation by the 1870s.

These experiences in the older, northern industrial societies, however, were not readily grafted onto the later developments in the southern hemisphere. The development of two sociologically related institutions, the prison and compound in South Africa, for example, show significant divergences from the pattern sketched above. Here the prison and compound emerged and took on their distinctive form only after the 1870s, but then very rapidly. To a large extent this is attributable to South Africa's relatively late industrialisation, fuelled by the discovery of diamonds in 1867 and gold in 1886. Not only was South Africa a relatively late industrial starter, but its form of industrialisation was very different from that of the metropole. Unlike the United Kingdom, where industrial capitalism was initially largely based on textiles, industrial capitalism in South Africa was founded on primary extractive industries. It relied not so much on a labour force entirely dispossessed from the land and with a large female and juvenile component, but on a labour force partially separated from the land and entirely male and adult. Its industrial revolution was built on workers differentiated by colour, gender and age from that of the European and American pattern. In the burgeoning industrial centres of Kimberley and the Witwatersrand, this predominantly black, migrant proletariat was housed, regimented and

controlled in an institution showing marked similarities to the prison - the compound. The prison itself supplemented the compound as a large majority of the Rand's black male workers passed through it at one point or another during their sojourn there. Attempts by the gold mining industry to restrict the movement of this labour included the introduction of pass laws, of which many were convicted. The population of compounds, and especially prisons, thus consisted not of criminals, but a new labouring population criminalised by new laws and controlled in new institutions(3).

While the pattern of development of the prison and compound in South Africa shows marked divergences from that of their European and American counterparts, the same cannot be said of the reformatory. Concerned more with re-socialisation than control, the reformatory does not readily fit the model of the prison and compound. And although the reformatory became an adjunct to these institutions after the first World War when the growth of secondary industry obliged capital to address itself more systematically to the reproduction of its workforce, its roots lie in an earlier phase of South African history. The first reformatory, Porter Reformatory, was established in 1882; not in the industrial heartland, but in the commercial and agricultural hinterland of the Cape Colony. It emerged in the interstices of the transition from merchant to industrial capitalism, effectively straddling two distinctive phases in South African history. Both in its bridging role and in its concern with the ideological preparation of potential workers, it is usefully illuminated by the European and American experience.

The reformatory in South Africa emerged in a region where colonial conquest and attendant processes of dispossession and proletarianisation had already been underway for several generations. In the Western Cape, in particular, a labouring population had been created by the disruption of colonial conquest by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The reproduction of this working class had become a matter of serious concern to merchant capital and local agricultural interests some time before the advent of industrial capitalism. It is thus no accident that the reformatory emerged where and when it did. This regional specificity also sets it apart from the European and American experience. Although the ideas informing those social groups responsible for its establishment were drawn from the ideology of rehabilitation prevalent in Europe, they were rapidly transformed in the local context to meet the needs of farmers. The particular character of the reformatory, then, was shaped by the needs of commercial agriculture. By the time, then, that the reformatory 'took off' in South Africa, it was fashioned as much by this pattern as by continental criminology and penal practice in South Africa. To establish the precedents of these later developments, it is necessary to examine the specificity of Porter

Reformatory, both as it was moulded by local social realities, and as, to some extent, it began to act as a prism, refracting broader social processes through its internal operations. Historiographically, too, investigation of an institution related to the prison and compound but distinctive in its concern with reproduction of a future workforce, should cast further light on the newly-emerging society and its social institutions.

The historical moment of the emergence of the reformatory in the Cape Colony was the moment of a dramatic 'spatial shift in the core of the regional economy of Southern Africa'(4). This shift from the South Western Cape to the North was prefigured in the boom years of the 1870s by intensified rural production and the discovery of diamonds in Griqualand West in 1867. Investment in sheep farming and an increasing concentration on ostriches led to the growth of colonial trade and strengthening of merchant capital in Cape Town. Kimberley was propelled into pre-eminence in the colonial economy in the latter years of the boom by the diversion of enormous stocks of capital from Cape Town to its diamond diggings. It rapidly became the centre of large-scale industrialised production in the Colony. Here new forms of labour control were developed. The social and spatial separation of black from white workers, and the development of the closed compound system after 1884 for the tighter control of black workers characterised capital's response to heightened labour tensions on the mines.

The pattern of economic development in the Cape, following capital's redirection to the North, was highly uneven. On the one hand, Cape Town's increasing insertion in a wider capitalist revolution was reflected in its population which doubled between 1865 and 1891(5). These numbers were considerably stiffened by the dispossession of Xhosa-speakers in the last frontier wars of 1877-79 and their delivery onto the wage-labour market of the Western Cape. But these increases notwithstanding, its manufacturing capacity remained limited. This tendency was exacerbated after the recession of the early 1880s and the mineral discoveries on the Witwatersrand in 1886, as a consequence of which there was a further efflux of capital to the goldfields and a commitment to conducting the commercial and carrying trade of the North rather than developing its own industry. Investment in existing manufactures, which included confectionaries, breweries, match factories, steam mills and leather factories, remained low(6). Commercial

agriculture continued to be the major, albeit struggling enterprise of the south western and eastern regions. First thrown into insolvency by the recession of the early 1880s, many farmers suffered a further setback in the early 1890s as wool prices fell. To their chagrin diamond, gold and railway employers were also recruiting from their sources of labour. During the early and middle 1890s their demands for the control and adequate distribution of labour became more urgent.

A key by-product of the wider transition to industrial capitalism was the institutionalisation of juvenile offenders in the Cape Colony. Before the establishment of the reformatory there had been no special institutional provision for the confinement of juvenile delinquents in the Colony. Generally, if convicted of pilfering or stock-theft, juveniles were whipped or fined; in rare cases they were incarcerated with adult prisoners(7). In the mid-1850s, colonial officials could confidently declare that 'juvenile delinquency...in this Colony, as a class of crime may be said not to exist'(8). Thirty years later its apparent preponderance had necessitated the construction of a reformatory.<sup>P</sup> By this stage, the structural changes in Cape economy and society, sketched above, had seen the growth of a new class of impoverished whites and proletarianised blacks in the smaller towns of the Eastern Cape where vagrancy, begging and crime had become the shared fate of white and black, juvenile and adult(9). The Western Cape, and in particular Cape Town, saw similar developments. In the first case, the recession of the late 1870s and accelerated conquest of African societies hastened the entry of large numbers of unemployed and recently proletarianised into Cape Town. After 1879 several thousands of 'rebel' Xhosa-speaking men, women and children were brought to the Western Cape as convicts or to be indentured. Once freed they occupied the present-day industrial and residential areas of Woodstock and Salt River from which they were removed to Cape Town's sixth district during the 1890s(10). District Six, one of the areas of most rapid growth during this period, was also the home of domestic servants, unskilled labourers, casual workers at the docks and the unemployed. In addition, District Six was also gradually filled with farm workers leaving the country during the 1880s and 1890s(11).

Amongst these were considerable numbers of children. In the first half of the century, the most important means of controlling juvenile labour

was apprenticeship. A proclamation in 1812 had empowered farmers to apprentice children reared on their farms for ten years, from the age of eight. In 1819 the power of apprenticeship was extended to cover orphans and deserted children. Ordinance 50(1828), in stipulating that children could no longer be apprenticed without parental consent, merely reformed and did not abolish child apprenticeship. In 1841 the first Masters and Servants Act extended the period of indenture until the apprenticed reached the age of twenty one. However, from the middle of the nineteenth century, as growing numbers left the countryside, apprenticeship appears to have exercised less control over the futures of larger numbers of children. In addition, compulsory schooling did not exist for either white or black children in the Cape Colony before 1905. What schooling there was for the popular classes was mainly provided by missionary societies. Evidence submitted to the Labour Commission of 1894 suggests, moreover, that access to mission education was afforded largely to the more settled labouring communities than to those thrust onto the labour market during the 1880s and 1890s(12). It is thus not surprising that by 1910 a large proportion of Porter Reformatory's inmates were drawn from the District Six community.

None of the social developments accompanying the movement of people to the towns were welcomed by the Cape Colony's merchant bourgeoisie. Increasingly self-assured and rich, this governing class set about fashioning new forms of control for the poor(13). William Porter, Attorney-General of the Cape Colony and member of the Legislative Council, was one of these(14). Along with English social reformers and philanthropists, he strongly believed that character was shaped by environmental influences rather than being an innate attribute(15). Placed within the correct disciplinary context, he believed, delinquents could be exposed to different, more positive influences than those which had been responsible for their conviction or which were exercised over them by adult criminals with whom they were incarcerated. Through a reformatory, based on the English model, the state could intervene to restructure social attitudes. As a substitute for what was considered to be poor parental control, it could help in the construction of new moral authorities. Porter's bequest of £20,000 provided the conditions necessary for the concretisation of these goals.



In this context it is significant that Porter Reformatory had as its purpose the inculcation of the discipline of work into a generation that was unlikely to receive much schooling. This purpose, as conceived by a Management Board comprising lawyers, merchants and a representative from the Church, was to break down 'wild and reckless' habits and to build up values considered appropriate for an emergent working class: obedience and willingness to work, honesty and clearness. Its constituency, as revealed by the reformatory's Description Registers for the period between 1894 and 1897, was the urban and rural labouring poor(16). Juveniles were drawn not only from the urban environs of Cape Town and Kimberley, but also from the rural towns and districts of Graaff Reinet, King Williamstown, Queenstown and Victoria West, towns whose population had grown considerably during the 1860s and 1870s. Over the years many of the smaller villages in the Cape also contributed a number of inmates. Apart from a tiny fraction which was school-going, all the boys detained in the reformatory had previously been employed as messengers, attendants, shepherds, domestic servants or labourers(17). No provision was made for female juveniles until 1897 when a dormitory was set aside in the Female House of Correction, a part of the Cape Town gaol, for seven girls between the ages of thirteen and twenty one(18).

Not all the children convicted of crimes were sentenced to a period in the reformatory. It appears that the great majority of male juvenile offenders who committed crimes of violence ended up in gaols. To the reformatory, however, were sent boys who were apprehended for a variety of property and social crimes, such as stock-theft on farms, house-breaking with intent to steal, theft and pilfering. Boys convicted of property crimes were seen as 'reformable', whereas those guilty of murder were assumed to have an innate criminal disposition. Here the criminological categories of Lombroso had some purchase. Girls of a similar age-group were sentenced not only for theft and 'female crimes' such as concealment of childbirth and prostitution, but also for crimes considered 'unnatural' to the female sex - assault, culpable homicide, poisoning and murder(19). In the case of both boys and girls, assumptions about what constituted 'natural' behaviour were operative in determining their incarceration in a gaol or reformatory.

Although the reformatory's constituency was class and sex-specific, no distinctions were initially made between black and white. Thus 'Coloured

Afrikaners' and 'Hottentots', who constituted the majority of the inmates, Afrikaners from the Eastern Cape Transkeian regions, 'Mozambiques' generally employed on the docks in Cape Town, Malays and Europeans, who together comprised the remaining quarter of the reformatory population, found themselves in the institution. This was entirely in keeping with broader penal policy which at this stage did not legally differentiate between white and black prisoners inside gaols.

Methods for the control and discipline of reformatory inmates changed dramatically during the 1890s. At first, under the direction of a Managing Board and Superintendent drawn from the Church, the institution lay open to the fields and the boys, undifferentiated by colour, enjoyed a relatively free existence within its confines. Little control was exercised over them. Warders and supervisors were few in number, and the Superintendent's powers were limited by those of the magistrate to whom all major decisions regarding punishment had to be referred. Time was unstructured. A strict time-table did not exist, although boys did spend a few hours of each day in industrial training and clearing the farm grounds. Few heeded what punitive controls there were. Sentences were no longer than two years on average, and the reformatory was treated with contempt rather than fear. In 1889 the colonial government took over control. This inaugurated a new era: the reformatory was reorganised and different means of character reformation were introduced

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What were the organising principles of the reformatory? What was the structure of relationships, the relationship between education and work and the nature of the inmates' responses?

The symbol of Porter's punitive aspect lay in its structure and siting(20). Originally sited on the farm Valkenberg, the reformatory was moved to the Tokai Estate in 1889 when the farm was taken over for use as a mental hospital. Located some miles outside Cape Town and surrounded by forest, the reformatory was secluded from the common concourse of society. The isolation and enclosure of inmates was secured by thick wire fencing around the grounds, barred dormitory, school and hospital windows, enclosed yards serving as playgrounds and several isolation cells for the

solitary confinement of recalcitrant offenders(21). At first, two dormitories were flanked by the Superintendent and warders' rooms which overlooked the yard. In this confined space the boys spent two hours of each day under conditions of sun and rain. Here they had their meals and spent their leisure time.

Along with the physical structuring and delimitation of space went the invasion of the boys' innermost lives. To the warders belonged the task of surveillance. For this purpose judas windows were fitted into the dormitory doors and in the workshops doors were placed in the partitions dividing them to allow the warder to see the whole length of the building(22). He was the most important person in the day-to-day operation of the reformatory, supervising and coming into direct contact with the boys each hour of the day. Without the warder to enforce the highly ordered daily schedule of the reformatory, the disciplinary regime was incomplete(23). Men 'accustomed to discipline' were preferred as warders(24); the majority were, however, drawn from the pool of lower-class, unemployed and sometimes convicted men who also provided the recruits for other penal institutions(25). Wages and conditions of employment reinforced the warder's position as the lowest agent in the hierarchy of punishment(26). There was no provision for leave, temporary illness or other casualty. An 'out of the way place, with no educational facilities'(27), Tokai was not an ideal place for a warder with a family. It was often less so for a single man who found his personal life closely watched and controlled. In 1890 one warder, for example, who brought a black woman to his room after a week-end, was 'ordered to take her off the place' and reported to the Attorney-General(28).

Their movements closely noted, despised by Superintendent and inmates alike, warders' behaviour was characterised by suspicion and violence - against fellow warders and juveniles alike(29). Warders could betray and insult one another, but their hostility found its greatest outlet in violence against inmates. Arbitrary brutality was a regular feature of reformatory life(30). Warders who developed a sympathy for the boys, such as Warder Oughton who did not report or punish every misdemeanour, could find themselves betrayed by the boys. Oughton himself was dismissed for lax discipline after a 'good conduct boy' had reported his failure to stop boys under his supervision from playing with 'one or

two stolen carrots'(31). In these circumstances, there was no room for sentiment - a warder either played by the rules of domination and subordination of inmates or lost his job; an inmate either outwitted a warder or was beaten by him. Thus all relationships in the institution between staff and inmates were structured by a dynamic of power and powerlessness set in motion by the incarceration of a large number of boys and their supervision by a relatively small core of men whose structural vulnerability predisposed them to acts of violence.

At the pinnacle of the reformatory hierarchy stood the Superintendent. H.M. E. Orpen, appointed in 1895, was drawn from the Cape Civil Service, having at various times been a clerk, assistant resident magistrate and accountant in the Colonial Secretary's Department. From these lowly beginnings he moved to a position where he presided over a strict hierarchy of Head Warder, Warders and Gardener/Supervisors, Schoolmaster and Cook. Through him were mediated all the affairs of the institution. With him lay the power of inflicting punishments such as the forfeiture of rewards and privileges, corporal punishment or solitary confinement on a reduced diet of bread and water. It was also his task to ensure the self-sufficiency of the institution as a farm. As such it was tempting to treat the reformatory as his own personal fiefdom. In the early 1890s, the Superintendent was apprenticing boys for his own domestic use - a practice continued by later Superintendents - and even went so far as to suspend a warder for arriving late for work. Any limits on the power exercised by Superintendents were fiercely opposed. In thus defining the limits of discipline and order in the reformatory, the Supt also created the space for abuses of power and tolerance of such abuses. In 1908 a Commission of Inquiry was appointed to investigate the administration of Tokai Convict Station and Porter Reformatory and to suggest means of economising expenditure. It revealed the extent to which the Superintendent's autocratic position was promoting venality and corruption(32).

Life in the reformatory was rigidly structured and tightly controlled. To the same unyielding routine of work and moralisation were subjected boys of profoundly varying origin, many of whom had had little previous experience of institutional life. Many had for years led lives with little control exercised over them, either by families or the state. Members

of the urban contingent had received their most significant socialisation in what the Superintendent chose to call 'gangs of young thieves'(33). To eradicate such independence and autonomy as there was, they were drilled into docility by a time-table characterised by the discipline of the army:

5.30 Rise. Muster. Wash. Make up beds  
 6.00 Muster for work  
 8.00 Breakfast, Prayers. Play.  
 8.30 Muster. One half the number of boys in the institution to attend school - the other half to work  
 11.30 School dismissed. Working parties brought in  
 12.00 Dinner. Play.  
 1.00 Muster for work and school. The boys who attended school in the forenoon now take up work. Those who worked earlier now attend school.  
 4.00 School dismissed. Scholars to work.  
 5.00 Muster. Wash. Supper. Prayers. Play.  
 6.00 Muster. March to dormitories. Lock-up  
 8.30 Visit by Warden. Remove lights(34)

Quite apart from times when the boys themselves subverted or disrupted the daily routine, it was interrupted only on occasions when the institution demanded the labour of all boys. During the planting and harvesting seasons, when many hands were required, all other activities, including schooling, were abandoned(35). At these times, the institution's capacity to remain self-sufficient took precedence over its disciplinary function; economic imperatives alone broke the social-psychological regimen.

Productive labour was clearly the most important aspect of disciplinary training. Through work boys could be reformed of criminal and undisciplined habits and be 'brought within the ranks of wage-earners and become a valuable asset(sic) to the Colony'(36). Non-productive labour was strongly discouraged by the Colonial Office. It argued that forms of punishment characteristic of the precapitalist epoch and discarded in Britain, 'including all purely mechanical work on cranks and treadmills should, except as prison punishment, be entirely abolished wherever possible'(37). Instead, but also in line with the imperative to be self-supporting, farm work and varieties of craft labour were advised and put into practice. Through dairy-farming, market-gardening and fruit cultivation an agricultural surplus for sale to other penal institutions was produced, while boys were simultaneously trained in largely unskilled manual farm labour.

Industrial training, which involved tailoring, carpentry and blacksmithing was intended to teach boys 'some useful handicraft by which they can earn

their living after their release'(38). It did not succeed in achieving this aim for a number of reasons. No consistent training was provided; only a handful of boys were employed for short periods in each activity. In practice industrial training meant that they made the uniforms for their fellow-inmates and did the necessary repairs to the reformatory buildings and equipment. Their training was directed by warders, themselves untrained and ill-equipped to teach. In tailoring, each boy cut and sewed an entire article, a labour process already superseded in the light clothing industries of Cape Town. Industrial training achieved little more than the transmission of forms of de-skilled work.

Both skills and products manufactured at the reformatory were unmarketable. Very early on, in the late 1880s, as the reformatory regime became established, reformatory production became geared to the needs of other penal institutions. Apart from producing commodities in a way that made them uncompetitive, there is also some evidence to suggest that pressure had been exerted by craft unions, which by the 1890s had become racially exclusive, as the colonial government stressed that by confining production in prisons and reformatories to the supply of government institutions, it had 'ensured that the government does not enter into competition with private enterprise or business'(39). By 1896, all basket-ware for the General Post Office, hospitals, Robben Island leper colony and other government institutions were made at the reformatory.

What schooling there was, was a travesty of what is understood by the notion of education. The hours assigned to school work, for at least one group, were those when boys were least alert, and then only for two to three hours every day. The majority of the boys arrived at the reformatory illiterate. Only a few possessed some rudimentary skills of literacy and numeracy(40). At first, irrespective of age or educational level, all boys were crowded into one room. Here they received religious instruction and elementary skills in the three r's. Religious instruction on weekdays was provided in the precepts of the Church of England, even though the majority of boys with a religious affiliation belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church(41). Only on Sundays were the latter catered to by the Visiting Chaplain, J. Roos, of the DRC. At first the Superintendent and the Warders, the latter barely literate themselves, supervised this instruction, but when the institution was taken over by the colonial government, a schoolmaster was appointed. In order to control the large

number of boys crammed into the schoolroom, he used a monitorial system(42). While this might have been an effective method for controlling large numbers of untutored boys, it did not significantly advance their education.

As in all other similar establishments - prisons, compounds, boarding schools - it was inevitable that the boys would respond by creating a distinctive subculture. It was a subculture brought into being by the integrating effects of institutional life and mediated by the boys' experiences outside the reformatory. Through it they established their own, autonomous spheres of authority in and through which they attempted to reject the authority of the state and sought to assert their right to control their own lives. Through it they demonstrated a degree of cohesion and solidarity which could be contained but not always controlled. The other side of this was a violence amongst one another, an aspect of the subculture which can only be understood in terms of the brutalising effects of institutional life and by reference to the alternatives open to them(43).

Hierarchies based on age and strength amongst the youth replicated the hierarchical structure of authority in the reformatory. Initiation into the 'under-life' of the reformatory could be through homosexual rape, while younger boys were soon drafted into service, sexual and otherwise, for older boys. Masturbation and homosexuality were common(44), while fagging, a common boarding-school phenomenon, also appears to have been in practice, as is indicated by the following warder's report:

On Saturday afternoon last, after play, I fell in the stable party for the purpose of milking, bedding down the animals, etc. The boy Mposwana whose duty it was to feed the pigs, did not do so, but sent a little one to do it, whilst he played marbles....(45)

The time and place that boys were most powerless and vulnerable was at night, in the dormitories, after lock-up. Locked in and largely shorn of all external control, they seem to have used this space for welding hierarchies of authority and planning various forms of opposition, including the most powerful response - attempts at escape.

That many found the culture of discipline and violence unendurable is indicated by the frequency of attempted escapes, the occasional report of mental derangement, self-inflicted injury and even suicide. The rural origins of many of those who attempted to escape emerges from several

reports. A list of five absconders from Porter in 1889 designated their homes as remote rural areas(46). The majority of those convicted of stock theft were from farms and outlying areas. Adjustment to the life of the reformatory would presumably have been doubly difficult for them, as there would have been few associates amongst the inmates. Absconders did often give as their reasons for absconding their treatment at the hands of other boys(47). These were obviously not the only reasons for absconding. Peter Abrahams fled to avoid <sup>the</sup> punishment he was promised when he stole some bread from the warders' mess room(48). Marcus Ram, August Koopman and Booy van Zyl bolted into the Tokai forest after repeated beatings(49). This was the second attempt by Marcus Ram who eluded his captors a month earlier for precisely the same reason - being beaten by a warder(50). The reformatory's indifference to mental disorder spurred an escape of another kind. Malbroek (transl. 'Madpants') escaped from hospital where he had been put into isolation 'to prevent him from doing harm both to himself and others'(51). Malbroek had apparently been begging constantly and worrying warders for food. He could have been placed close to a typhoid ward - an annual disease at Porter - as he had been 'found crying with terror owing to Thomas's appeals for help when in an almost dying condition'. That Malbroek had been on a milk diet for a month and perhaps needed food did not seem to occur to his warders(52), or that the last thing a boy terrified of death needed was isolation. Malbroek escaped through a barred window six feet from the ground, 'dropping his mere bag of bones' through the eight inch aperture despite the 'bitterly cold wind raging outside'(53). He was recaptured shortly thereafter.

Recapture was always met with punishment. A boy could expect fifteen cuts from the Resident Magistrate and a short spell in isolation on a diet of bread and water. Jamie Mogamat, who twice made the attempt and twice failed, was placed in chains 'until such time as he shows a disposition to reform'(54). The route of escape was either north onto the slopes of Table Mountain or south towards the wastelands of Retreat. Either way the dangers lay thick on the ground. Having evaded the warder in charge of him, the absconder would have to move fast and carefully as he wove his way through the trees. Apart from the search party that would be sent after him, he needed to avoid employees of the Forestry Department living on the Tokai Estate, convicts and ex-reformatory boys who would be willing to turn him in for the £5 reward(55).

Absconding was often the individual's response to the terror and misery he might experience. Sometimes, the inmates did act as a group to bring their grievances to the attention of the outside world. During the 1890s



members of the public had the right, which they rarely exercised, to visit and inspect the reformatory. In addition, after 1892, an Official Visitor was appointed - the Rev. B. Marchand of the Dutch Reformed Church. Although his role was essentially 'to apprise the Minister of matters affecting the moral control of the reformatory (and) to act as a buffer...between the Departments and the public'(56), he was also officially outside the inner walls of the reformatory, representing the ideology of reform rather than punishment. As such, the inmates made use of him to publicise some of their complaints.

A year after his appointment, in 1893, while on a visit to Porter, Marchand was approached by a delegation of boys who told him that Head Warder Hartley was 'rough with them in hurrying them over the gravel in the morning - the point of the complaint being of course that having no boots the stones hurt their feet'(57). The upshot was that the Superintendent was directed to equip all white boys with boots and socks although it is unclear - and unlikely - that only white boys were involved.

The boys seemed to understand the limits of official state channels, complaining about the injuries suffered at the hands of the state in the reformatory, but not about those inflicted by themselves on one another. Thus, during the 1909 Inquiry, a few again used the opportunity to register the fact that they were being ill-treated and assaulted by warders. When offered a channel to protest about conditions, they used it against the state and not against themselves.

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In 1891 the first schoolmaster, Herbert Armitage, drawing on his knowledge of Dr. Barnardo's Home for Destitute Boys in Stepney, London, located the origins of unruliness in the reformatory: 'I believe', he observed, 'that all the serious offences that have been committed here have had their rise(sic) in the dormitories'(58). To 'remedy the evil', in order to 'raise the tone among the boys and make them a credit to the institution'(59), Armitage recommended a series of privileges and rewards to supplement punishments. Stripes and badges should reward good conduct: these would

carry extra privileges and power. Forfeiture of these privileges could be used as punishment for bad conduct. The boys could be graded hierarchically, the 'good conduct boys' acting as local authority and 'spy' for the Superintendent in the dormitories at night. Armitage also recommended simpler prayer services than the recital of catechisms, more time and equipment for recreation, larger playgrounds and a prize-giving ceremony. His report was forwarded to the Secretary of the Law Department, John J. Graham, who rejected almost all his suggestions, probably on the grounds of their cost to the state, except for those involving the division of boys through privilege and punishment. Graham gained his formative experiences in the courts of the Eastern Districts and rose to Secretary of the Law Department in 1882, a post he held for more than 20 years. There, he introduced far-reaching changes in the prison-service, such as those concerning the separation of black and white prisoners at all levels. He felt particularly strongly about this, 'whether regarded from the moral or economical point of view' (60). With reference to Porter he argued that in the future management of the reformatory, if there was to be any material change, it should be in the separation of black and white. This, he felt, should be effected not only as regards sleeping arrangements, but also as regards education (61). Accordingly, a ward for white boys was completed at the end of 1892 and at the end of 1894 it was noted that 'still further classification seems to be necessary' (62).

During the 1880s and 1890s, the provision of housing, relief and formal education in Cape Town was increasingly administered on a racially differential basis. In 1891 the Superintendent General of Education, Langham Dale, affirmed a particular direction for black education:

In a few institutions handicrafts have been taught and general industrial habits have been created and cultivated for many years. What the Department wants is to make all the principal Day-schools places of manual instruction, as well as of book instruction. It is not expected that all the boys will become expert tradesmen; but it is something to train them to use the spade and the hoe, the plane and the saw, the mason's trowel and the plumb line (63).

This trend began to be reflected in the workings of Porter Reformatory from the early to mid 1890s. White boys were channelled into industrial training and blacks into manual labour - 'gardening, milking, tending cows, working with horses ... and general farm labour' (64). White boys were also granted extra privileges. From 1893 they could remain in the dining room up to 8.00p.m. (instead of being locked up at 6.00 p.m. as the black boys continued to be) where games such as draughts and

dominoes were permitted. A small library of books was made available to them. Whether any of these were read is highly doubtful, as they were selected by the Superintendent whose notion of what would be appropriate reading was derived from the British context. Amongst the books, for a group of mainly Afrikaans-speaking boys, were Dr. Barnardo's Child's Treasury, Little Folks, Boys' Own Annual, Chatterbox, Child's Companion, The Prince, Sunshine, Children's Own Magazine, and Christian Friend(65).

Segregation of boys in Porter Reformatory began as an attempt to control and weaken the informal culture cutting across colour lines that had begun to appear in the institution. That classification became interpreted as a means of segregating boys along racial lines reflected broader social policy in the Cape Colony during the 1890s. It was no doubt related to the way in which colonial officials reinterpreted imperialist ideas relating to the poor in a colonial context(66). It was possibly also a reflection of the changing ideology of a ruling class increasingly taking its cues from the developing racial division of labour in the mining industry in Kimberley and on the Witwatersrand.

Classification and separation was not only conducted racially. Age and conduct also became an important differentiating mechanism. For the purpose of extending and systematising classification, an exhaustive examination of and report on Porter was undertaken at the beginning of 1895 by the Inspector of Prisons. Structural alterations to the building were recommended and as a consequence two additional dormitories were built to separate the 'incorrigibles' from the newest and youngest arrivals. For reformatory authorities a victory; for at least the younger boys some form of protection. The introduction of a system of privileges and rewards was similarly double-edged. It divided, protected and rewarded boys who conformed to the rules of the reformatory; it gave the smaller, younger boys, who consciously aimed at good conduct marks, some bargaining power over bullies in the dormitories(67). It was a bargaining power, however, that could easily be subverted and undermined. Rewards for good conduct were at the same time a privilege and a potential punishment, at once the carrot and the stick. Whenever a privilege was conceded - such as being able to attend the monthly Magic Lantern slide shows, play

football on Saturday afternoons, have puddings for Sunday lunch, wear a distinctive stripe-less dress on Sundays which would become the boy's property on his release, or go to the beach with the Superintendent once a month - it was done so with the understanding that it could be withdrawn for bad behaviour(69).

By the end of 1896 the Superintendent was singing the praises of classification according to conduct. 'Classification', he exulted, 'strict discipline and supervision, both by day and night, works wonders. Boys of the most pronounced physical types, who were considered as completely incorrigible, have...become...decent characters'(69). By 1909 the dormitories had been classified according to conduct, age and colour. The eight dormitories were divided as follows: 'No. 1, coloured, 9 - 12 years; No. 2, coloured, 15 - 16 years; No. 3, coloured, incorrigible; No. 4, coloured, 12 - 15 years; No. 5, coloured, good conduct boys; No. 6, European, 13 - 16 years; No. 7, European, 9 - 13 years; No. 8, coloured, smaller, good conduct boys'(70).

In order to assess the efficacy of his strategy, all convict stations were circularised to discover whether any of their convicts had served a period in the reformatory. Perhaps it was too early to tell in 1895 and 1896, but both years produced evidence of recidivism. It was later estimated that of all the boys released between 1882 and 1896, there was a 14,4% rate of recidivism(71). These figures, small and imprecise though they might be, nonetheless begin to cast some light on the role of the reformatory in re-producing rather than stemming delinquency.

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A close and changing relationship existed between the reformatory and the labour market of the Western Cape during this period. Boys were apprenticed to local Cape farmers and dignitaries on a regular basis. Although the reformatory does not seem to have been a major

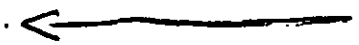
source of labour - numbers in the institution were too limited: between 700 and 800 a year passed through its doors - the steady trickle of apprentices swelled during periods of labour shortage in the Cape. Numbers were at their highest, for example, during the farm labour shortage of the mid-1890s. Again, during the South African War (1889 - 1902), when many adult workers were drawn into military service, numbers in the reformatory expanded and contracted according to the demands made on it (72).

Apprenticeship was a key index of the role the reformatory played in training and disciplining boys for farm labour. The extension of apprenticeship was explicitly linked to employers' demands for indentured labour (73). The practice of apprenticeship in the reformatory built on and modified modes of forcible apprenticeship in existence since the beginning of the century in the Cape Colony. In 1879 legislative provision had been made for the apprenticeship of juvenile offenders during their detention at the reformatory provided that prior parental consent had been obtained. In practice, those boys whose parents could not be traced and whose consent was unobtainable were singled out for indenture. Since in many cases parents lived in remote rural districts or had died or had difficulty in communicating with their children, it was a relatively easy matter for the state to take possession of these youths and apprentice them during their term of sentence at the reformatory. In other cases, if the state judged parents to be of 'dissolute' or degenerate character, generally a synonym for the labouring poor, they lost their claim to their son.

A contract of apprenticeship does appear to have been signed by the 'Master' who was accountable only to the local magistrate of Wynberg. It stipulated the length of the apprenticeship - generally two years - and the Master's responsibilities. These included instructing the apprentice in a calling or trade, providing for his education and religious instruction, clothing, lodging and food. The Master had to pay a certain sum to the Superintendent as wages for the boy, until termination of the contract, when the boy was returned to the reformatory. Clearly this was part of the process of accustoming inmates to wage-labour on farms.

No record was kept of the boys either during or after their apprenticeship. No provision was made for inspection of the conditions under which they laboured(74). The reason for this was given by John Graham in 1891. He admitted that some of the clauses, such as those dealing with education and religious instruction were unenforceable(75). Proper inspection would necessitate that they be enforced, since they were not at the time. This would have conflicted with employers' interests in the labour of the boys. There is thus no evidence of the working conditions of the apprentices. What is uncontested is that reformatory boys did not relish the prospect of being apprenticed for almost half their sentence. Superintendent Johnston reported as early as 1885 that '... the little boys do not respond very cheerily .... They get attached to their comrades in the institution. Most of them have just left farming work and they certainly know that they are better treated(in the reformatory)'(76). If treatment in the reformatory was preferable to treatment on farms, some indication of the arduous work enforced on boys is provided. Of the older boys Johnston also indicated that there was a 'general objection.... If left to themselves, I believe not one boy would go...excepting perhaps in the case of relations where they are claimed'(77). A few boys did use the opportunity to leave the reformatory to join family or friends(78). Damon Jonker, for example, who was due for discharge in 1893, asked to be apprenticed on a farm where his brother had also been apprenticed.

It was not unusual for boys to abscond from their Masters. Anthonie Klerck, apprenticed to liberal Cape Parliamentarian, John X. Merriman, absconded after three years(79). Another apprentice, Stephanus Jonker, fled the farm for the reformatory, stating that he had been severely beaten by his master and his master's son(80). It is not clear whether such boys were returned to the original master, re-apprenticed to another or kept at the reformatory for the remainder of their sentence. That there was no guarantee of being dealt with sympathetically meant, however, that escapees were taking a considerable risk.

There is little information about the lives of boys once they left Porter.  Some found their way back into prison as adults; others, defined as destitute by the state, were drafted into farm labour. A few sought employment in the environs of the reformatory. It is about

these that we have most information. It seems that they chose this option for a variety of reasons: to remain close to friendships forged during the period of incarceration or to use this as a time for negotiating re-entry into the wider world. When boys were discharged, the marks of the outcast were removed and new symbols of incorporation were introduced. They were given 1-5 shillings (depending on their conduct inside), a suit of discharge clothing made at the reformatory and their fare to the railway station nearest to their ultimate destination.

#### CONCLUSION:

By the end of the century, as the Cape increasingly 'became a commercial partner for an industrial hinterland'(81), the Witwatersrand, the focus on juvenile crime also shifted Northwards. In 1900 provision was made in Porter for the detention of juvenile offenders from the Orange River Colony and the Transvaal, but this was clearly merely an interim measure until the Rand had developed its own thrust in penal policy and <sup>its own</sup> network of penal institutions. Here, as ideologists such as de Villiers Roos, Minister of Justice after 1910, began to think through the question of crime control in the context of industrialisation, they turned their eyes towards the United States of America, more and more in the forefront of international penal policy. New explanations and methods were discussed. Positivist criminology and psycho-pathological models of delinquency became dominant. Some of these began to filter through to Porter. After the South African War greater interest was bestowed on the social environment and especially the family background of the offender. Description Registers change from requesting details about the crime, sentence, parents' occupation and capability to maintain the offender to requesting in-depth reports on the 'environment of the offender previous to the conviction', the traceability of the crime 'to any known cause', the character and condition in life of the parents and whether the parents had a criminal record themselves or not(82). Knowledge about the offender begins to assume a new status. Much more intimate information regarding the family and social background of the inmate is required(83). The recommendations of the 1909 Inquiry stressed the need for the re-organisation of Porter 'upon the same basis as similar modern institutions elsewhere and introducing higher reformatory principles'(84). It also made recommendations for the further classification of boys according to crime; control over boys after discharge; power to apprentice boys after expiration of sentence without

obtaining consent of parents or guardians; separate institutions for Europeans, Africans and Coloureds' (85). A new regime was ostensibly on its way.

In conclusion, then, this paper has explored various aspects of the emergence of the reformatory in the Cape Colony. An explanation for its birth was found not in the ideas of colonial administrators or in the rise of industrial capitalism, but in the social consequences of colonial conquest which had given birth to a labouring population, many of whose children were no longer being adequately controlled either on the farms or in the towns. Merchant capital and commercial agriculture, dominant in the Colony, responded by beginning to formulate means for the control and re-socialisation of those juveniles who fell foul of colonial law. In attempting to habituate juveniles to farm labour through institutionalisation they reflected continental beliefs in the corrective power of training and work. Farm work in the curriculum and apprenticeship as part of the sentence, however, were drawn not so much from reformatory practice elsewhere as from the needs of farmers and already-existing methods for the control of juvenile labour. In this sense the internal organisation of the reformatory reflected material conditions in the Cape Colony. Similarly, changes in the control of offenders was related not only to colonial segregationist ideology and practice, but also to the way in which Cape society was beginning to adjust to the social patterns being established in the industrialising North. The segregation of white from black in the reformatory began as a method for deepening control at a time precisely when the labour market was beginning to show this division. As this strategy was sophisticated, so industrial training rather than farm labour became the prerogative and privilege of white offenders. The importance of the subculture created in the institution lies not so much in the challenge that it might have posed to reformatory authorities, or even in that it provides evidence of the way in which 'total institutions' develop an internal life of their own not in keeping with the original aims of its formulators. In a colonial context, its significance lay in the fact that it called into being a cultural response which helped to integrate boys from widely divergent backgrounds into a common experience of subordination.



## FOOTNOTES:

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5. Mabin, Ibid, Appendix
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7. A.F. Hattersley, The Convict Crisis and the Growth of Unity: Resistance to Transportation in South Africa and Australia, 1848-1853(Natal University Press 1965)
8. M. van Wyk, Die Ontwikkeling van die Gevangeniswese in die Kaapkolonie vanaf 1806 tot 1910, Ph.D. UNISA 1964, p. 371
9. Colin Bundy, 'Vagabond Hollanders and Runaway Englishmen: White Poverty in the Cape before Poor Whiteism', Carnegie Conference Paper no 247, University of Cape Town, Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty in South Africa 1984
10. B.H. Kinkead-Weekes, 'A History of Vagrancy in Cape Town', Carnegie Conference Paper no 11, ibid; Christopher Saunders, 'Segregation in Cape Town: The Creation of Ndabeni', Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, Africa Seminar: Collected Papers, vol. 1, (1978)
11. Bickford-Smith, 'Growth of Cape Town', 12
12. Evidence submitted to Labour Commission, Cape Town, 1894
13. Bundy, 'Poor Whiteism', op cit, for elaboration
14. Born at Artikelly, near Newtownlimavady, Co. Derry, on 15.9.1805 into a Nonconformist family, William Porter was appointed Attorney-General of the Cape of Good hope in 1839 and held office until 31.8.1865. In conjunction with this office, he was a member of the Legislative Council and held a seat in both Houses of Parliament. He left the Cape in 1876 and died in Ireland in 1880.
15. See 'On Infant Schools', where Porter elaborates on his ideas about education for the poor, The Porter Speeches: speeches delivered by the Hon. William Porter during the years 1839-45 inclusive (Cape Town 1886); see also Cape Times, 27 June 1891
16. Colonial Office(C.O.), Cape Archives Depot, vol. 6971, Description Register of Juvenile Offenders
17. Ibid
18. van Wyk, Gevangeniswese, 475
19. C.O. vol 6972, Description Registers of Female Prisoners aged between 12 and 20 1889-1900; see also Carol Smart, Women Crime and Criminology: A Critique (RKP 1976)
20. C.O. vol 6414 and vol 6485 ref 134/93; vol 6521 ref 271/95 and ref 189/95; vol. 6504 refs 148/94 and 153/94
21. C.O. vol 6436 refs 138/90 and 194/90; vol. 6504 ref 143/94 and vol. 6533 ref 1396; also see Cape Times, 27 June 1891
22. O'Brien, Punishment, deals very illuminatingly with the role of the warder
23. C.C.P.(Cape Archives) vol. 1/2/1/71, Report of the Committee on Convicts and

Gaols 1888, Evidence of Superintendent Johnston

24. For comparison of background of employees in compounds, see van Onselen, Chibaro, 136-41
25. C.O. vol 6416, Superintendent to High Sheriff, Law Dept, 30.8.1889
26. Ibid, 4.9.1889
27. C.O. vol 6436 ref 71/90
28. Ibid, ref 84/90
29. Ibid, ref 246/90
30. C.O. vol 6521 ref 335/90
31. C.O. vol 6465 refs 18/92 and 4/92
32. O'Brien, Punishment, argues that 'one can speak of the life of the guard in terms of a (deviant) subculture...', 207
33. C.O. vol 6451 ref 384/95 and C.O. vol 6533, no page ref
34. C.O. vol 6451 ref 44/91
35. Ibid, refs 131/91 and 217/91; C.O. vol 6465 ref 280/92
36. C.O. vol 1966, no page ref
37. House of Assembly(H.A.) Annexures vol. 383, Report on the Management and Discipline of Prisons and Convict Stations for the year 1894, 23
38. Ibid
39. Cited in van Wyk, Gevangeniswese, 50-51
40. C.O. vol 6436 ref 30a/90
41. C.O. vol 6465 ref 292/92; C.O. vol 6971, Description Registers of Juvenile Offenders
42. C.O. vol. 6451 ref 172/91; C.O. vol 6521 ref 384/95; C.O. vol 6533, no page ref
43. See Paul Corrigan, Schooling the Smash Street Kids(London 1979) and Don Pinnock, The Brotherhoods: Street Gangs and State Control in Cape Town (David Philip Cape Town 1984)
44. C.O. vol 6521 ref 89/92
45. C.O. vol 6504 ref 279/94
46. C.O. vol 5416, Description List of Absconders from Porter Reformatory, 1889
47. C.O. vol 6521 ref 20/95 and 63/95
48. Ibid, ref 249/95
49. Ibid, ref 85/95
50. Ibid, ref 69/95
51. Ibid, ref 46/95
52. Ibid. Alternatively, it could also be argued, as does Stephen Humphries, op cit, that appropriation of food constituted a form of resistance. In this context, it seems that Malbroek's quest for food had more to do with the exigencies of survival than resistance.

53. C.O. vol 6521, no page ref
54. W.O. vol 6486 ref 494/93
55. C.O. vol 6465 refs 121/92, 121/92, 301/91 and 52/92
56. C.O. vol 1966, no page ref
57. C.O. vol 6483 ref 238/93
58. Ibid
59. C.O. vol 6451 ref 32/91
60. H.A. Annexures, vol. 383 ref 401, Report on the Management and Discipline of Convict Stations and Prisons for the Year 1894, Minute by Secretary to the Law Department, 17.7.1895
61. C.O. vol 6451 ref 32/91
62. H.A. vol. 292, no page ref
63. South African Library, Cape Of Good Hope Publication, Report of the Superintendent General of Education for 1891, 12
64. C.O. vol. 6504 ref 198/94
65. Ibid, ref 330/94
66. Bundy, 'Poor Whiteism'
67. C.O. vol 6504 ref 146/94
68. C.O. vol 6465 refs 98/92, 104/92 and 106/92; C.O. vol 6504 ref 139/94
69. H.A. vol 292, no page ref
70. van Wyk, Gevangeniswese, 552
71. Ibid, 555; Department of Justice Annual Report for 1911; Transvaal Leader, 11 Apr. 1911
72. See W.R. Nasson, Black Society in the Cape Colony and the South African War 1889-1902, A Social History, Ph.D. Cambridge 1983
73. Department of Justice, vol. 56, Annual Report for Porter Reformatory for 1911
74. C.C.P. vol 1/2/2/1/33, Report of Select Committee on Porter Reformatory, 1885
75. C.O. vol 6451, Notes made by Secretary, 29.6.1891
76. C.C.P. vol 1/2/2/1/33, Report of Select Committee, 12
77. Ibid
78. C.O. vol 6485 ref 17093; C.C.P. vol 1/2/2/1/33: Johnston's evidence ran as follows, 'frequently is a lad has a friend he gets him out by having him apprenticed'
79. C.O. vol 6533 ref 105/96
80. C.O. vol 6485 ref 36/93
81. Mabin, Colonial Capitalism, 248
82. C.O. vol 2736, no page ref
83. Ibid
84. C.O. vol 1883