

Ghosts of Prisons Past: A Prehistory of the Toronto South Detention Centre

Magdalena Miłosz

We wait over an hour to get into the new prison, lined up with more than a hundred other curious visitors in a queue reminiscent of a well-frequented amusement park. The aim of our slow approach is a glass-box lobby fronting a hulking, beige-coloured structure; the two together epitomize the devious interplay of transparency and opacity in modern corporate architecture. This grey day in October is the last chance for the public to enter the maximum-security facility before the prisoners are shipped in—unless you later happen to become one of them.

The Toronto South Detention Centre (TSDC), an adult-male “superjail,” was completed in 2013 with considerable private investment through a public-private partnership (P3). It is the largest prison¹ in the province of Ontario and second in Canada only to the Edmonton Remand Centre, which opened the same year. The complexity of the TSDC’s design and construction was managed by Infrastructure Ontario, a crown corporation, through a design-build-finance-maintain (DBFM) model. The choice to develop the new prison in this way has entangled the provincial government with a plethora of private businesses in a global network of capital.

The DBFM aspects of the TSDC were executed by Integrated Team Solutions (ITS), a consortium of private companies headed by a joint venture between investment firm Fengate Capital and construction giant EllisDon Corporation. The building was designed by the local Zeidler Partnership Architects and built by EllisDon, whereas financing was amassed from a variety of sources, including major banks and insurance companies, both locally and abroad. A facilities management contract was established with Brookfield Johnson Controls, which will be responsible for operating the building for the next 30 years. Through the P3 arrangement, the Ontario government will make annual payments to the DBFM consortium throughout the entirety of the contract.

One of the most impressive and unsettling aspects of the

¹ The province of Ontario divides its carceral facilities into three categories. “Jails” or “detention centres” (such as the TSDC) are entry points into the institutional system and house those on provincial or federal remand or those serving shorter sentences of sixty days or less, with the former representing “older, generally smaller institutions originally established by counties or other municipalities;” “correctional centres” are for those serving sentences of sixty days to a maximum of two years less a day; and “treatment centres,” staffed by medical professionals, are for prisoners with clearly identified problems such as substance abuse. Canadian federal facilities, on the other hand, are for prisoners serving sentences of two years or more and are predominantly referred to as “institutions” or, especially historically, “penitentiaries.” A conventional distinction between jails as local or provincial facilities and prisons as federal facilities is thus complicated by contemporary terminology and a recent tendency, represented by the TSDC, for provincial institutions to appear in the form of “superjails” architecturally more akin to large federal prisons than the older, smaller jails. For

these reasons, as well as the correspondence between the words “prisoner” and “prison” and the normalization proposed by terms like “detention centre” (which I am actively trying to resist in this text), I use the terms “jail” and “prison” interchangeably in this article. See Ontario Ministry of Community Safety & Correctional Services, “Facilities,” April 3, 2007, www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/corr_serv/adult_off/facilities/facilities.html, as well as Correctional Service Canada, “National Facility Directory,” March 31, 2014, www.csc-scc.gc.ca/institutions/001002-0001-eng.shtml.

² Tindall Corporation, “Corrections,” www.tindallcorp.com/corrections.

Incarceration

Scapegoat 7

TSDC is its prefabricated construction, which was a major selling point in the ITS consortium’s pitch to Infrastructure Ontario. The architects worked with the South Carolina-based Tindall Corporation, a concrete-products manufacturer, to design the jail cells. The company’s website boasts that “Tindall-engineered cells have housed more than 62,000 inmates and detainees.”² Constructed in Atlanta, Georgia, the concrete cells were transported 1,600 kilometres by rail and assembled into this sprawling structure in a industrial area of west Toronto.

As we approach the front of the line, worries about not getting in are dispelled for some, while others are sent away by the correctional officers managing the crowd. Those who remain get a visit from the local OPP canine unit team, an officer and a German Shepherd named Vinnie. The pair provide a diversion until we enter the building. In the light and airy lobby, all cell phones, cameras, and other electronics are relinquished for safekeeping, to be returned after the tour. We are then herded into the public waiting area for debriefing [Figure 6, p 70].

The TSDC is designed to hold 1,650 prisoners, in addition to the 320 serving primarily weekend sentences at the Toronto Intermittent Centre (TIC) next door. [Figure 7, p 71] Intermittent sentences are sometimes given to those with sentences of ninety days or less who have significant responsibilities that a judge deems should be continued during the sentence. Although the TIC and the TSDC are separate institutions, they are physically connected through the shared services of the kitchen, laundry, and maintenance area, as well as staff areas. The TIC’s transparent lobby with large, exterior canopy and tall, slender columns is a miniature version of the main TSDC entrance.

The bright, fully glazed foyer where we wait is brimming with visitors and administrators, as well as correctional officers recruiting those interested in working at the provincial prison. The busy hum and walls of glass belie the rigid, opaque quality of the structure beyond. Like a mask not quite adequate to conceal the identity of its wearer, the transparent blip of the public area facing the street is an unconvincing disguise tacked onto the bleak mass of the prison. Its “unbearable lightness” stems from the oxymoronic contrast between the public “openness” suggested by the large glass walls and the closed, coercive privacy of the inmates’ sphere

beyond.⁻³ In a material sense, this contrast is emphasized by the use of bricks manufactured at the Ontario Brick and Tile Company, one of the TSDC's carceral predecessors on this site. The bricks make up an interior wall opposite the glass frontage—an assemblage of inmate labour from times gone by, brought into the present to become part of the newest iteration of jail reform.

The implied public transparency of the institution is further undermined by the “video visitation” area just past the lobby. Here, the public will “visit” prisoners via video conferencing, using the many monitors and handsets arranged in long rows. Inmates will use similar units in their “living area” to interact with family, friends, or lawyers in Skype-like fashion, rather than in person (even if only through glass). Only prisoners, staff, select professionals, and volunteers will be allowed beyond the video visitation space upon the commissioning of the institution.

The distinction between a provincial prison such as the TSDC, used for remand prisoners or those with sentences of less than two years (see note 1), and a federal prison, for those serving sentences of two years or more, dates back to legislation enacted in 1842. Similarly, the TSDC is underpinned by a 127-year history of institutions previously occupying this site [Figure 8, p 71], all linked by a synergy between capitalism, incarceration, and colonialism whose ideological echoes still reverberate today.

Although it is no secret that the TSDC site has a long carceral history, these historical underpinnings tend to be minimized in the face of each new institution. Prior to the TSDC, another prison stood here, and other institutions preceded that one. Every successive phase in the life of this place possesses an iterative quality, different from and yet somehow similar to what came before it. An investigation of the TSDC's prehistory, before a single prefabricated cell was installed, clears away the aura of novelty to reveal the deep material and ideological roots of the institution. This more inclusive view of the TSDC, taking into account its many antecedents, suggests that, in its core purpose of imprisoning people, it is not new at all. These histories collectively act as a counterpoint to the novelty stressed in official depictions of the new prison.

3
Jeffrey Monaghan and Kevin Walby use Milan Kundera's concept of “unbearable lightness” to describe the architecture of the new CSEC building in Ottawa. Jeffrey Monaghan and Kevin Walby, “New Camelot: The Unbearable Lightness of Canada's Twenty-First-Century Security Architecture,” Scapegoat: Architecture / Landscape / Political Economy 5 (Summer/Autumn 2013): 218.

“The Development of a True Man”: Victoria Industrial School for Boys, 1887–1935

The site of the TSDC was first operative in 1887 as the Victoria Industrial School for Boys (VIS). In the decade before this original institution was built, the site, not far from the shores of Lake Ontario, was a parcel of government land surrounded by farms [Figure 9, p 71]. The fledgling town of Mimico was just to the east, and nearby lots to the west belonged to Daniel F. Horner, likely the namesake of the site’s Horner Avenue address. In the middle was the Victoria “school,” an institution along the same genealogical lines as the various others that were to follow it.

The location’s storied past is an invisible dimension of the new TSDC, mostly forgotten in order to permit the perpetuation of a more publicly acceptable practice of “‘corrective’ detention,” developed in the nineteenth century.^{–4} Proponents of reform projects in this era believed that separation from society in tandem with labour or other enforced activities could rehabilitate everyone from wayward boys to adult criminals, mental health patients to sexually independent women, as well as Indigenous children, to be “cured” of their culture through assimilation at Indian residential schools. In all cases, administrators sought a transformation of the inmate, believing that the environment of the institution and its routines were the ideal means to this end. The Canadian-American sociologist Erving Goffman termed such places “total institutions,” which he defined as:

[Places] of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life. Prisons serve as a clear example, providing we appreciate that what is prison-like about prisons is found in institutions whose members have broken no laws.^{–5}

Goffman’s concept applies to various institutions, including voluntary, open ones such as boarding schools, religious cloisters, and army barracks (barring conscription), as well as closed, coercive ones such as industrial schools, work camps, and prisons. Beginning

with the VIS, it is exclusively with the second type that the histories of the TSDC site are concerned.

Industrial schools were developed in the context of efforts to expand state-run education in the second half of the nineteenth century, but they emerged as something between regular schools on the one hand and prisons on the other. According to the British architect E.R. Robson, industrial schools existed “on the border land between vice and virtue,” often employing methods of penalty associated more closely with prisons than with schools.⁻⁶ For instance, many inmates of the VIS were “sentenced” for various criminal offenses.⁻⁷ In 1901, a ten-year-old boy was sentenced to a six-year term at the school for stealing. In 1903, four Aboriginal youths from the Mohawk Institute, an Indian residential school in Brantford, were sent there after confessing to burning down the Institute’s main building, barns, and playhouse. They received sentences of three to five years at the VIS. The irony of transferring these boys from one coercive total institution to another was clearly lost on bureaucrats.

The inmates of the VIS were brought into the institution for other reasons as well, including truancy, or even for “corrective” purposes by parental request.⁻⁸ The school stressed discipline and moral reform, which were to aid its ultimate goal of “reclaiming” working-class boys from the fringes of society and guiding them towards roles as upstanding, productive adults in the industrial economy. A news article from 1891 sketches a generalized portrait of an inmate at the school:

But after he has grown to think that besides tobacco and profanity there is another manly attribute that he must affect, the shifting of his own tasks on to the shoulders of his neighbors, his bright activity is changed to a languid cunning. With this comes laziness and general stagnation and the descent is easy to crafty evasion and theft. To rescue the boys who have thus fallen and to restore them to that condition of bright, active boyhood that portends the development of a true man is the work of the

6
Edward Robert Robson, School Architecture (New York: Humanities Press, 1972), 351.

7
Bryan Hogeveen provides a breakdown of the various rationales for committing children to the school from 1898 to 1927 in “Accounting for Violence at the Victoria Industrial School,” Histoire Sociale/Social History 42, no. 83 (May 2009): 152. In 1924, 82 percent of inmates had been committed for a crime.

8
Craig Heron, “Boys Will Be Boys: Working-Class Masculinities in the Age of Mass Production,” International Labor and Working-Class History 69 (Spring 2006), 15.

managers of the Victoria Industrial School at Mimico.⁻⁹

The children lived in one of six cottages, each with an adult female and male supervisor in imitation of a nuclear family. Because the boys were cut off from the wider society, the school encompassed not just residential and educational functions, but all the necessities of a "formally administered" daily life. The other buildings on the site were the gymnasium, kitchen and dining cottage, superintendent's residence, combined workshop and laundry, as well as various farm buildings [Figure 10, p 71]. Labour was considered to have curative properties; therefore, the school's inmates spent half their day at work.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the institution became more commonly known as the Mimico Industrial School. It held between 200 and 300 inmates, and activities derived from military practices, such as drilling and marching, were a significant part of daily life [Figure 11, p 72]. These occupations, as well as undertones of brutality within the institution, emphasized acceptable notions of working-class masculinity.

As was the case at many institutions of its kind, a period of more-or-less successful operation and optimism on the part of administrators gave way to "difficulties" that prompted public and official scrutiny. The problems at the VIS included run-down facilities and "considerable numbers of badly nourished and enfeebled children."⁻¹⁰ The school had also become a dumping ground for children with needs and issues that could not be addressed at the institution, such as those with developmental delays. The Royal Commission to Investigate the Victoria Industrial School recommended splitting up the population among two proposed new schools and an existing institution, suggesting that the land the VIS stood on could be sold at a profit to fund the endeavour. Another reason the Commission gave to abandon the current location was its proximity to rail lines, which facilitated escapes. In the end, the recommendations were never implemented and conditions continued to deteriorate.

Just as Indigenous children retaliated against residential schools, inmates of the VIS made numerous escape attempts in resistance to their incarceration. In 1933, a headline explained twenty recent escapes: "WISH FOR FREEDOM EXPLANATION GIVEN

FOR BOYS' ESCAPE: No Cause for Discontent at Mimico Industrial School.”¹¹ Despite the supposedly wholesome state described by this almost oxymoronic statement, the institution was closed down in 1935 amid accusations of cruelty. The Minister of Public Welfare, David Croll, called the school “the step-brother of Kingston,” referring to the notorious adult penitentiary in that city.¹² The remaining boys at Mimico were sent to the Bowmanville Training School, where “treatment was milder, corporal punishments were few [...] the boys were given greater freedom, and for the first time were permitted to go to their homes at Christmas.”¹³ Tentative plans in 1944 to return the buildings to their former use did not come to fruition.

The site of the Victoria Industrial School is a stone's throw from the new TSDC, a piece of land now known as Ourland Park [Figure 12, p 72]. It was severed from the main provincial government property and sold to the Borough of Etobicoke in 1973. I came here months after having seen the new jail, hoping to gain some further insight into the layered history of the place. On a dreary spring day, the park is empty except for a father kicking around a soccer ball with his son. A tall fence separates the park from Islington Avenue, which now bisects what was once the expansive government property. The park has all the trappings of a well-furnished suburban recreation spot: a community centre, baseball diamond, outdoor pool, playground, and tennis courts. I want to find some trace of the land's former use, perhaps a plaque bluntly stating the site's chronology, but these are completely absent. A low-lying, mid-century public school stands across the way, oblivious to what was once here.

For Confinement and Profit: Ontario Brick and Tile
Company, 1913–1969

In 1913, clay and shale deposits were found on government land near the VIS [Figure 13, p 73]. The provincial government developed a brickyard and, in order to extract the material for its own use, turned it into an out-camp of the Toronto Central Prison, located in what is now Liberty Village. Since its establishment in 1874, the

11
“WISH FOR
FREEDOM
EXPLANATION
GIVEN FOR BOYS'
ESCAPE: No Cause
for Discontent at
Mimico Industrial
School, Is Report,”
The Globe,
September 30,
1933, 11.

12
“DOMINION'S
GREATEST
PROBLEM:
Welfare Minister
Speaks to 'Big
Brothers,’” The
Globe, February 6,
1935, 9.

13
“DEFENDS
MOVING
BOYS OUT TO
BOWMANVILLE:
Says Lads From
Mimico Have
Begun to Fit In
at New Home,”
The Toronto Daily
Star, January 11,
1936, 6.

William John Hanna, The Prison Labor Question: History of the Contract System in the Toronto Central Prison—A Record of Continuous Failures—The Outlook for the future (Toronto: L.K. Cameron, 1907), eco. canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.82701.

Toronto Central Prison had farmed out inmate labour under contract to private companies. Prisoners also produced supplies for provincial hospitals, jails, and asylums. In 1913, this longstanding practice continued when the prison began sending inmates to the brickyard in Mimico; known as the Ontario Brick and Tile Company, the brickyard was located precisely where the TSDC now stands. Like the inmates of the newest prison on the site, the brickyard labourers were serving sentences of up to two years.

Total institutions run by governments were often expected to generate their own income, and financial considerations necessitated the introduction of labour to prison life in the 1790s. However, prison labour was not efficient when compared to outside standards; this is not surprising given that it was often free or underpaid. Still, private companies argued that inmates represented unfair competition, so the prisons eventually restricted their production primarily to items that could be reabsorbed by government institutions rather than sold.^{–14}

David J. Rothman, an American scholar of social medicine, explains that labour in carceral institutions was thereafter post-rationalized as a rehabilitative measure and, once found ineffective at generating profit, widely used instead as punishment.^{–15} Foucault argues that the signification of carceral labour once played an important role as well: “The ideal would be for the convict to appear as a sort of rentable property: a slave at the service of all.”^{–16} In other words, the visibility of prisoners working their way through a jail term was supposed to provide both a deterrent and an image of restitution.

When the Toronto Central Prison closed in 1915, the Ontario Brick and Tile Company became a branch of the Ontario Reformatory in nearby Guelph (now the abandoned Guelph Correctional Centre). The Company continued producing bricks for provincial use, occasionally using them as a source of revenue for the government. In 1920, the province advertised “approximately one million wire cut, well burnt brick” for sale, enough to build some fifty average houses.^{–17}

Just as runaways from the nearby industrial school made headlines, prisoners made frequent escapes from the brickyard.^{–18} The institution became the autonomous Ontario Reformatory-Mimico

David J. Rothman, The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990), 92–3.

Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 109.

“Brick for Sale,” advertisement, The Globe, June 26, 1920, 27.

“Morrisburg Prisoner Escapes at Mimico,” The Globe, March 12, 1932, 13; “Dump Cart is Used By Five Prisoners In Daylight Escape,” The Globe, June 30, 1934, 4.

after the Victoria Industrial School was closed in 1935 and the school property was merged with the brickyard lands. The Reformatory continued to operate the brickyard until 1969, when issues of competition with private enterprise were brought up once more, this time by labour unions. The Ontario Brick and Tile Company was closed that year.

Beyond the video visitation room at the TSDC, we go through the screening area to enter the secure section of the building. All volunteers and professionals visiting the prison will have to pass through this room, where they will be subject to search and screening via metal detectors. Their bags will be examined by x-ray machines. Because the prison is not yet operational, we pass through this area undisturbed and emerge beyond what would normally be the boundary of the highly restricted space inhabited by prisoners. On our way to the inmate intake area, we pause by a wide but short window with heavy, horizontal bars. We peer past them into the enclosed yard with its manicured green lawn, where inmates will never set foot unless they are being evacuated due to an emergency.

At the intake area, a large, weathered man in uniform greets us from behind a counter, stationed there as if ready for prisoners to start streaming in at any moment. A prison guard in his day-to-day life, today he plays host to a crowd of visitors, explaining the ritual of admitting prisoners. New inmates will be brought to the TSDC by vehicle and dropped off in a secure garage prior to intake. Before they are processed, they will be kept in the “dirty” area, so named because its occupants are assumed to be carrying weapons or other contraband until they can be confirmed as “clean.” In relation to this process, the officer dramatically alludes to an experience in which he nearly lost his life.

From a distance, the intake area looks like an office full of grey, half-height cubicles, acoustic ceiling tiles and fluorescent lights above. Doors to single cells line the walls of the large room. The “cubicles” in the centre are actually stalls made of concrete block where each prisoner will be stripped, searched, and given thorough security, medical, and mental health screenings. His personal effects

will be itemized and taken away. He will be given his new clothes: an orange jumpsuit, a t-shirt, blue boxers, blue slippers. He will be assigned to a cell in the vast structure beyond and moved from the “dirty” area to the “clean” side of the intake room until he can be taken there. The decision made here may affect him for only a few days as he awaits bail, or for up to 729—two years less a day, although likely not exceeding sixty days. If his sentence is longer, he will be transferred to a provincial “correctional centre” or, if it is two years or more, a federal institution.

As we are shuffled out of the intake room, we gawk at the shiny surfaces and invasive paraphernalia. The dry toilet used to recover ingested items and the Body Orifice Security Scanner (BOSS), a contraption devised for non-invasive body cavity searches, incite particular interest. The prison seems modern, safe, and humane. It is pristine. But it differs from what came before it only in form, not in substance. Although the physical matter of the institution is new, the practice of incarceration it enables is not new at all.

“An Unnatural Life”: Camp 22, 1941–1944

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland; nine days later, Canada declared war against Germany. The United Kingdom, which had joined the war on September 3, appealed to its former colony for assistance with handling prisoners of war; the presence of thousands of German captives on British soil posed a great risk while the war raged on. The first prisoners bound for Canada left Europe in June 1940. They were eventually interned at camps across the country, many of them in a variety of existing but disused structures. Some were perceived to have quite comfortable conditions, such as the “gilded cage”—¹⁹ of Camp 20, located at a former hotel in Gravenhurst, Ontario. In Mimico, part of the Ontario Reformatory-Mimico grounds became Camp 22, where German prisoners of war were interned for four years.

The camp population was composed of 300 German merchant seamen and 200 civilians who lived in huts and took their meals in an existing building. A British officer stationed at the camp reported that after “camp bosses” who had prohibited inmates from

working were moved to another camp, many prisoners “begged to be allowed to undertake farm work or factory work or some other form of reasonable and regular work” (emphasis original).²⁰ This request demonstrates how work in total institutions may be seen as a prophylactic against boredom and a means of maintaining some meaningful activity. The British officer observed that incarceration was extremely difficult from a psychological point of view [Figure 14, p 73].

His observations apply equally well to the inmates of any carceral institution. Near the end of the war in 1944, Camp 22 was dismantled, and plans were made to return the site to its former use as the VIS. These were not carried out. The Ontario Brick and Tile Company, however, continued to operate long after the war.

We leave the intake area of the TSDC and wait for an elevator to take us to one of the prisoner “living units.” Each of the three towers is seven storeys high: three levels of two-storey living units in addition to the ground floor. Each living unit has two levels of cells overlooking a double-height common area. The corridors of all three towers are colour-coded, but the route to the cells is so circuitous it is impossible to orient oneself in the building. We eventually make our way through a sally port—two doors one immediately after the other—into the living unit. Typically, these “airlock” doors will be shut; prisoners and officers will have to enter through one, shut it behind them, then wait for the second door to open. These sally ports can be found throughout the building, some even breaking up the long, otherwise continuous corridors. All of them are centrally controlled.

The living area is awash with natural light. Its source is unrecognizable until I finally notice the translucent windows in the cells, many of whose doors are open. There are twenty cells, ten on the lower level and ten on the upper, both looking out onto the common area. The shared space has foam chairs spread out in front of a television, as well as metal tables and seats affixed to the floor.

An “exercise yard” in the corner is simply a room separated from the common area by glass, with a wall of translucent glazing and air vents to the outside. All the translucent glazing gives

20
The officer kept a detailed count of the political opinions of the 500 prisoners, which he categorized as follows: 9.1 percent were fanatical Nazis, 48.3 percent convinced and sincere Nazis, 31.9 percent lukewarm Nazis, 5.3 percent non-Nazis, and 5.4 percent anti-Nazis. Political opinions among the prisoners waxed and waned according to the influence of high-ranking internees as well as news from the warfront. “Camp 22, Canada: Report by British Intelligence O,” 1942, HO 215/37, The National Archives, Kew, (UK), original department: I/GEN 2/2/26, discovery. nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/Details?uri=C2454905.

a disconcerting impression of almost, but not quite, being able to see what is going on outside. Several visitors in the tour group question the lack of exterior views. The officer stationed in the living unit explains that prisoners are not allowed to see outside for security reasons. For instance, he says, he wouldn't want one of them catching a glimpse of his license plate as he drove away after work.

The living area will operate on the "direct supervision" principle, an "inmate management system" that, despite the danger intimated in the hypothetical "license plate" scenario, is supposed to foster a more normalized relationship between prisoners and guards.^{–21} Correctional officers will mingle with prisoners in the common area of the living unit rather than watch them from behind glass. It is touted as a more humane way to incarcerate people and flaunted as something new and improved, but the philosophy was first applied in United States in 1974 and has seen decades of use.^{–22} It is linked with reduced levels of violence among inmates and against guards, but it also promotes a severely unequal relationship in which guards have complete power to incentivize certain behaviours and, conversely, to punish others.

Expansion and Contraction: Ontario Reformatory-Mimico, 1917–1972

The Ontario Brick and Tile Company became a full-fledged, independent prison when the Ontario Reformatory-Guelph was turned into a hospital for WWI veterans. In 1917, the last three Guelph prisoners were transported to the new Ontario Reformatory-Mimico (ORM), where in addition to labouring in the brickyard, they would work on the institution's farm. In 1934, the three farm buildings were destroyed by fire, but the animals, comprising forty cows, fifty pigs, and twelve horses, were rescued. The farming operation continued, and the Reformatory even had a world-record-breaking cow named Reta, which produced 34,636 pounds of milk in 1947. Like the farm at the VIS, the "jail farm" at Mimico grew out of the idea that work was rehabilitative and prisoners should contribute to the maintenance of the institution at which they were incarcerated.

At the beginning of WWII, Ontario Premier Mitchell

Hepburn wanted 560 short-term prisoners of the ORM enlisted in the Canadian Forces. He justified this proposal by stating that “they took men from the reformatories during the last war. These men are not criminals, but largely victims of the depression and lack of a constructive policy on the part of the Federal Government.”²³ The premier’s recognition that the men were incarcerated due to systemic circumstances demonstrated an understanding of the ineffectiveness of the prison system. However, his desire to divert the prisoners towards the war effort perpetuated the idea that they owed the government a debt that must be repaid in some way, adhering to the notion that prisoners were “property” to be put to use.

A new dormitory building was constructed at the ORM in 1954 before a program to scale down the expansive brickyard and farm operations was initiated. In the 1960s, the ORM was known as “The Old Men’s Home” in reference to the age of the prisoners and their recurring stints in prison.²⁴ Many of these “old men” were arrested on public intoxication charges, and since shorter sentences were being given by the province for this particular misdemeanour, the men found themselves in and out of prison on a regular basis.

In 1968, a tract of 32 houses next to the ORM was expropriated to form a continuous lot with the farm. This consolidated property, part of which was the site of the old VIS, was later sold to the Borough of Etobicoke for industrial development. In 1969, the Ontario Brick and Tile Company was closed due to complaints of interference with outside labour. The downsizing efforts heralded the end of large-scale industry at the ORM, although prisoners continued to work at smaller enterprises that produced park tables and slippers.

The cells lining one wall of each living unit are small and spare. A bunk bed, two shelves with hooks, a table, two stools, and integral toilet and sink are all the furnishings within. These cells, including fixtures, plumbing, electrical wiring, external cladding, and window were completely prefabricated by Tindall in Atlanta. After arriving in Toronto by rail, the ready-made cells were stacked together to construct the three towers of the prison. The dimensions of each cell have been determined by the Ontario Building Code as

23
“Patients Moved Quickly as Hospital Taken Over,” The Globe and Mail, October 17, 1939, 5.

24
“Inmates Find Mimico Comfortable,” The Globe and Mail, July 21, 1964, 3.

well as American design guidelines, since Canadians are much less experienced with prison design than their southern neighbours. They also had to be designed to fit onto rail vehicles for their journey north. The prefabricated cells scored a point towards the TSDC's LEED Silver certification, brandished by the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services as a selling point for the project. The point was for the use of "local" materials.

Treatment and Punishment: Alex G. Brown Memorial Clinic, 1951–1973

The Alex G. Brown Memorial Clinic, named after a past superintendent of the ORM, opened in 1951. Established in one of the former VIS buildings, the clinic was an alcohol treatment centre for prisoners who were admitted voluntarily a month before their sentences were up. It was one example of how the provincial Department of Reform Institutions (DRI) "showed a remarkable willingness to explore and implement new and innovative services in the province's reformatories [prisons]."–²⁵ The building was renovated by prisoners and had space for up to thirty patients when it opened. It was also host to a job-training program. The "voluntariness" of attendance was, of course, limited to a choice between continuation of a prison sentence or transfer to the government-run clinic.

In 1954, the clinic's services were expanded to include drug-addiction treatment, and the program drew worldwide interest. It was advocated as a viable alternative to incarceration and, in this way, espoused the idea of British social reformers Sidney and Beatrice Webb that "the most practical and the most hopeful of 'prison reforms' is to keep people out of prison altogether."–²⁶ Whether prisoners were transferred to the clinic to complete their sentence or were sent there in lieu of prison, the clinic, like the industrial school before it, never left the continuum of carceral institutions. In both prisons and hospitals, as the architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner notes, "a number of people are confined in one particular place, although they would prefer not to be, and in both cases constant supervision is necessary."–²⁷ This resemblance was all the more clear given the clinic's connection with the prison.

Almost 3,000 inmates were treated in the clinic's first nine years of operation. In 1961, it became the inaugural centre for "rehab" as an alternative to imprisonment. However, the conflation of rehabilitative and punitive programs caused friction between doctors and administrators; those within the senior ranks of the DRI were "openly hostile toward any program that departed from traditional military-style rule and discipline."²⁸ The same year, eight clinic staff members resigned. The DRI's reputation as a supporter of progressive reform disintegrated as treatment centres became tools to control prison discipline rather than places of healing. The Alex G. Brown Memorial Clinic was moved off-site to the Ontario Correctional Institute in 1973. In the late 1970s, prisoners from the ORM took part in a rehab program at a nearby psychiatric hospital. Despite the absence of the clinic, it was evident that a more productive alternative to incarceration that addressed prisoners' real need for treatment was still very much necessary.

The TSDC has a twenty-six bed mental health assessment unit as part of its program, with psychiatrists and other health professionals on staff. The unit is part of a "Forensic Early Intervention Service" delivered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, which aims to divert prisoners with acute mental illness towards assessment and treatment. We don't see this area on the tour, nor do we see the prison's 120 segregation cells. There, prisoners will be isolated for safety reasons but also as punishment, which officers within the direct supervision units will have the power to mete out. The prison program is a strange amalgam of well-intentioned rehabilitative measures and hard-line discipline that continues to perpetuate the histories of its institutional predecessors.

"Inside" Out: Hillsdale Forestry Camp, 1956–1964

The Hillsdale Forestry Camp, although located away from the TSDC site, forms part of its institutional history. The camp was built north of Barrie, Ontario in 1956 and, after three years of running seasonally, was turned into a year-round operation. Just as the

Ontario Brick and Tile Company had once been an out-camp of the old Toronto Central Prison, Hillsdale became an out-camp of the ORM. Prisoners could "win" a month's transfer to Hillsdale for "co-operative conduct."²⁹ Others were sent there for a few months at a time after experiencing negative effects, such as claustrophobia, as a result of being imprisoned.

At Hillsdale, prisoners could swim and play golf in addition to performing manual labour for the province. They worked at maintaining parks in townships near the camp; they also cut wood, cleared land, and pruned provincial and municipal forests. They built the structures of the camp, including the bunkhouses, dining hall, and offices, and were responsible for cooking the food. Like the ORM, the forestry camp was a self-supporting entity, with the prisoners producing many of the institution's necessities.

Hillsdale was described by one journalist as a place for men of "the sort who can no longer live in free society,"³⁰ conveying the perception that these men somehow wanted to be imprisoned. The low rate of escapes due to the camp's isolated location and the fact that camp life seemed preferable to being kept within the walls of the ORM or its brickyard contributed to this perception. Populated by repeat offenders, the "old men" who had already spent several terms in prison, the camp must have appeared to outsiders as a benign entity populated by those for whom life on the "outside" was impossible. However, the fact remained that the camp was structured on the same carceral basis as the prison with which it was connected and, like that prison, made full use of the labour of those who were incarcerated there.

A New Language: Mimico Correctional Centre, 1972–2011

The 1970s marked a period of prison reform within the Ontario Ministry of Corrections, which focused on improving conditions within prisons and manifested in more "normalized" prison formats intended as a fresh take on incarceration. In 1976, the chief facilities design planner of the Ontario Ministry of Corrections, Stephen Lendvay, exemplified this attitude with a new architectural nomenclature for prison spaces: "I don't call them cells anymore. I

call them rooms. Cells are for storing bodies and we're not storing bodies."—³¹ From an abolitionist perspective, language use that normalizes the experience of prison, such as calling prisoners "inmates," incarceration "treatment," or jails and prisons "centres" of all sorts, "denies prisoners the reality of their experience" and prevents the development of a realistic definition of prisons.—³² The fiction evoked by these substitute words presents a soft-focus view of prisons to the public and thereby impedes an honest critical examination of their (lack of) effectiveness.

This perspective also applies to language that defines the physical environment of the prison, as well as the design tactics used to normalize this environment. Calling prison cells "rooms" and prisons "detention centres" or "correctional facilities" obscures the primary purpose of these spaces: incarceration. Similarly, many new prisons in this period of reform were designed to have a "home-like atmosphere." To Lendvay, for example, horizontal window bars had a more residential character than conventional vertical bars.—³³ Although the TSDC has since shed this pretense of domesticity, the horizontal window bars outside its windows demonstrate how rhetorical design features may become embedded within successive built environments.

Consistent with the new language use surrounding prisons, the ORM was renamed the Mimico Correctional Centre (MCC) in 1972. In the 1980s, it became fashionable, once again, for jails to collaborate with private businesses to supply inmate labour for various enterprises. The specific format of these arrangements varied, although prisoners were generally paid for their labour.—³⁴ At the MCC, a workshop produced fireproof mattresses under the management of an outside factory. In the prison greenhouse, inmates at Mimico grew the poinsettias that graced government offices.—³⁵

The MCC was for a time renamed the Mimico Correctional Complex but soon reverted to its former name. Perhaps the term "complex" suggested an unnecessarily large institution, although the jail expanded again in the 1990s. Part of the enlargement was to accommodate a ballooning number of remand inmates in the province. When the two-phase TSDC project was announced in 2008, the population of adults awaiting trial or sentencing was double

31

"Changing the Look of the Old-Time Jail," The Globe and Mail, April 1, 1976, 43.

32

"Prison Abolition & Alternatives," www.prisonjustice.ca/politics/abolition_alternatives.html.

33

"Changing the Look of the Old-Time Jail." (34) "Prisons Profiting in Joint Ventures with Outside World," The Globe and Mail, February 21, 1981, B1.

35

"Inmates Receive Training in Greenhouse," The Globe and Mail, November 25, 1988, A18.

what it had been ten years earlier. The TSDC was also identified by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services as a necessary replacement for the aging Toronto (Don) Jail in the city's east end. The MCC site was chosen for the new facility and in 2008, construction began on the first phase of the project, the Toronto Intermittent Centre (TIC). During construction of the TIC, the MCC continued to operate. Just days after the MCC was finally shut down in December 2011, the TIC became operational; the MCC itself was demolished soon after to make way for the second phase, the TSDC.

Youth "Justice": Toronto Youth Assessment Centre,
1998–2003

The short-lived Toronto Youth Assessment Centre (TYAC) was a facility for 138 sixteen- and seventeen-year-old prisoners pending bail hearings, or those who had been denied bail. It was connected with the Mimico Correctional Centre and located on the site of the current TSDC. The TYAC was notorious for its brutal atmosphere and occurrence of violence among its young prisoners, as well as for its inadequately trained and neglectful staff. The TYAC was closed in 2003 in the wake of the 2002 death of David Meffe, a sixteen-year-old prisoner who hanged himself while awaiting trial for a minor offense.^{—36}

A New Prison Economy: Toronto South Detention Centre,
2014–

The Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services predicted in 2008 that the TSDC would generate \$120 million in construction job salaries. 500 to 550 workers were to be on site during the busiest period of construction. Whereas in the past, the profit extracted through jails was in the form of prisoners' labour, the biggest profit is now derived from the design, construction, and operation of the jail. Prisoners are no longer required to work, nor is there any work for them to do. Instead, the prison focuses on educational and cultural or religious "programming" that will fill some of the idle time of incarceration.

The jail itself is almost entirely the creation of private enterprise. Through the P3 arrangement that made it a reality, the provincial government will be paying rent to the ITS consortium for thirty years. In that time, the accumulated cost of the institution, including interest and inflation, will rise from \$593.9 million to \$1.1 billion.—³⁷

Each living unit within the Toronto South Detention Centre has a program room of its own, and the entire prison shares a central program area with religious and multipurpose rooms. We leave the living units and return to the ground floor to see what they are like.

The multifaith worship room, with fluorescent tubes hanging from the ceiling in a sunburst pattern, has amenities such as bathing facilities for various religious requirements. The prison is projected to hold so many Indigenous inmates that it has a specific program room for their use; it has a circle motif and is adorned with First Nations art. Its special ventilation provisions will allow smudging ceremonies to be performed in the space. An area has also been planned in one of the enclosed courtyards for Indigenous prisoners to construct a sweat lodge on the pristine lawns. The idea is that the lodge will be built and dismantled according to need. The maximum-security status of the building, however, with restrictions on the circulation of prisoners, seems likely to impede its implementation.

Indigenous people are disproportionately overrepresented in Canadian prisons. In 2010–2011, 27 percent of adults in provincial and territorial sentenced custody and 20 percent of those in federal custody across Canada were Indigenous, about seven to nine times the percentage of Indigenous people in the population as a whole (3 percent). In the province of Ontario, the rate was 11.4 percent, compared with 1.8 percent representation in the general population.—³⁸ Recalling the four boys who came to the Victoria Industrial School from the Mohawk Institute in 1903, the continuing systemic oppression experienced by Indigenous people at the hands of governments is brought into glaring focus on the TSDC site.

37
Infrastructure Ontario, "Contract Awarded for Toronto South Detention Centre: Environmentally Friendly Facility to Boost Local Economy during Construction," media release, October 28, 2009, www.infrastructureontario.ca/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=2147485574.

38
Statistics Canada, "Adult Correctional Statistics in Canada, 2010/2011," October 12, 2012, www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2012001/article/11715-eng.htm.

39
Ibid., see notes 14
and 17.

Incarceration

Scapegoat 7

40
At the Central
East Correctional
Centre (CECC)
in Lindsay,
Ontario, 191
prisoners out of
a total capacity of
1,184 were migrant
detainees as of
September 2013.
The migrants were
involved in a
strike to protest
the federal
government's
practice of
indefinite
detention. See
Tings Chak
and Mac Scott,
"Hunger Strikers
Protest Indefinite
Detentions
in Lindsay,
Ontario," Rabble,
December 13,
2013, [rabble.ca/
news/2013/12/
hunger-strikers-
protest-indefinite-
detentions-
lindsay-ontario](http://rabble.ca/news/2013/12/hunger-strikers-protest-indefinite-detentions-lindsay-ontario).

41
Eva Mackey,
The House of
Difference:
Cultural Politics
and National
Identity in
Canada (London:
Routledge, 1999),
62.

42
Justin Piché,
quoted in
"Etobicoke's
Cutting-edge Jail
Opens to Mixed
Reviews," CBC
News, February
13, 2014, [www.
cbc.ca/news/
canada/toronto/
etobicoke-s-
cutting-edge-jail-
opens-to-mixed-
reviews-1.2534549](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/etobicoke-s-cutting-edge-jail-opens-to-mixed-reviews-1.2534549).

Non-status immigrants will also likely be detained at the TSDC, as they are at other provincial jails. Statistics Canada reports that in 2010–2011, inmates in prison for reasons other than sentenced custody or remand, including immigration holds, made up about 1–2 percent of all adults in federal and provincial custody.^{–39} However, the percentage of migrant detainees at one provincial jail reached a much higher 16 percent, and it is still too early to tell what the figures are or will be at the TSDC.^{–40}

The programmatic attempts at cultural inclusion within the TSDC can be understood as being consistent with the "institutionalization of difference," which developed in 1960s Canada as state multiculturalism.^{–41} This institutionalization makes manageable disparate identities within the prison and deranges a critical evaluation of the carceral system as it currently exists and how it has been shaped by its past.

An awareness of the history of this site is essential for realizing that the TSDC is just the latest in a string of carceral structures built on top of one another—its shiny surface is thin. This recognition should make us stop and wonder about the process of repackaging the same old carceral apparatus in new language, new building techniques, increased depersonalization, and new methods of extracting profit. Justin Piché critiques the new prison economy espoused by the TSDC by suggesting that "maybe we should stop thinking that it is the design of old prisons that is antiquated and start looking into whether it is the idea of imprisonment itself that is well past its time."^{–42}

The Toronto South Detention Centre began taking in prisoners in the spring of 2014.

Not long after, I catch sight of the building from a bus going down the Gardiner Expressway. The towers of the jail soar above the low-rise industrial buildings around them. From a distance, the cell windows look tiny in the massive walls.

The TSDC purports to be a piece of civic architecture, to represent the dignity with which society can deal with criminal behaviour. The muted and almost serene exterior of the building belies

an actuality that the very incarceration of individuals is an undignified humiliation. The site's histories waver in and out of consciousness, obscured by the new prison. When they come into focus, it is clear that incarceration is a practice that is indeed well past its time.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Janne Janke and Michelle Hunniford for invaluable editing assistance.



Figure 4: Train station,
Orestiada, Greece, 2011
(Photo: Jenna Loyd, courtesy
Island Detention Project)



Figure 5: Train station graffiti, Orestiada,
Greece, 2011 (Photo: Jenna Loyd,
courtesy Island Detention Project)

↓ Ghosts of Prisons Past . . . pp 47–67 ↓



Figure 6

Figures



Figure 7



Figure 8

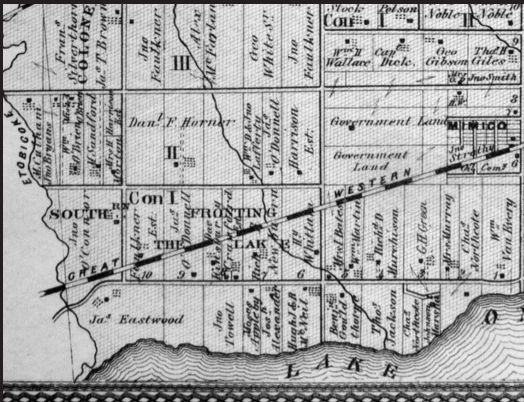


Figure 9

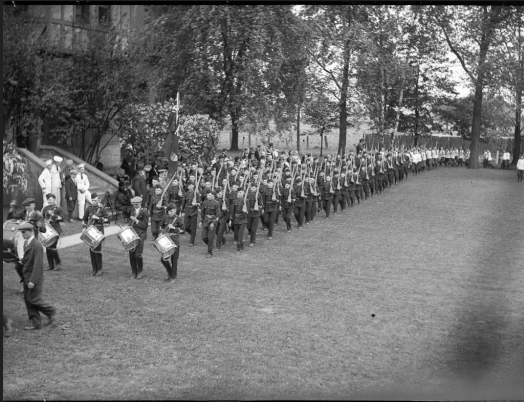


Figure 10



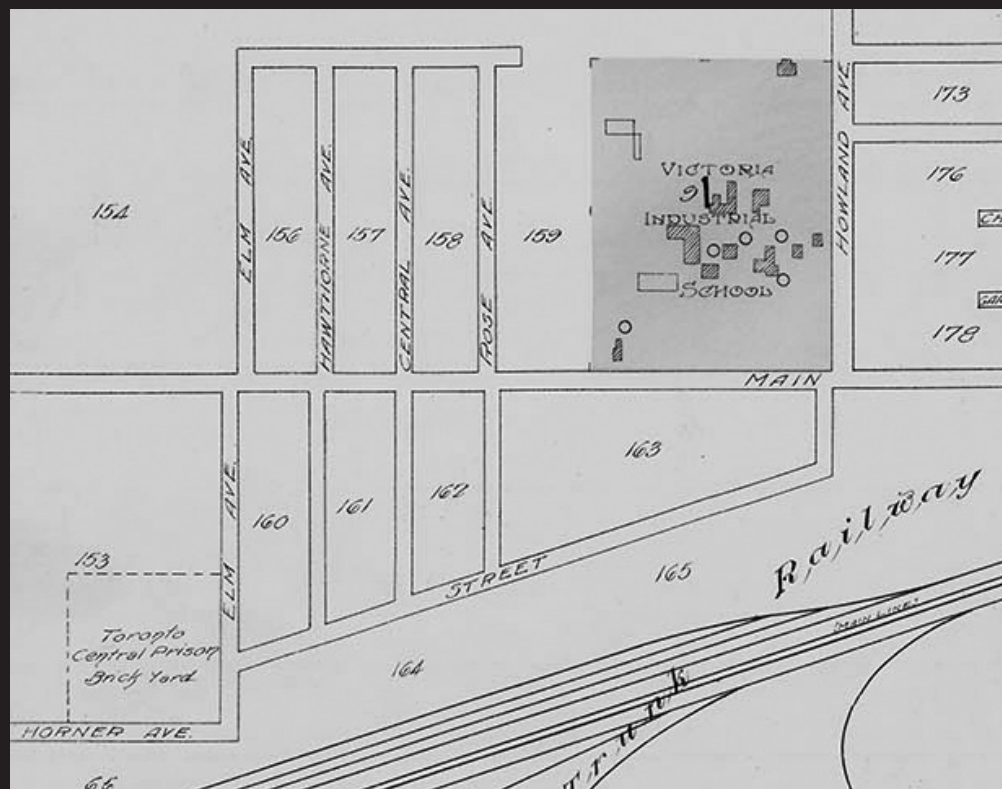


Figure 13

16) This change of heart is not entirely due to military developments. Interment is more than unpleasant; it is an unnatural life, devoid of female companionship and all real privacy and chance to be alone with oneself even for an hour. The prospect of an indefinite continuance of such a life adds materially to the depression.

Figure 14