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Phantom architecture: Jeremy Bentham's haunted and haunting panopticon

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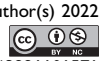
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Abstract

Drawing upon Jacques Derrida's notion of hauntology and the nascent field of ghost criminology, this article explores the spectrality of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon. This frames the never constructed building as an example of 'phantom architecture'. It can be seen as both haunted and haunting. Here, we use Beaumont's 'architectural parallax' to examine this building that is 'out-of-joint'. It is at once of the past, yet profoundly present, as well as prefiguring the future. We turn first to the spectral presence of an abandoned building designed by Samuel Bentham, Jeremy's brother. We see how Samuel's experiences in Krichev in the 1780s left traces in the prison design that the brothers would work upon. This saw them develop an architecture that would hold in its centre a surveillant 'entity' that would haunt those being observed at the building's periphery. Having explored the 'no longer', we turn to the 'not yet' to see how the panopticon has come to inspirit thought and architectural practice. In tracing these varied spectralities, both within and of the panopticon, we can reveal its enduring impact on the criminological imagination.

Keywords

Hauntology, prison architecture, Jeremy Bentham Samuel Bentham, haunting

In December 1786, Jeremy Bentham – the utilitarian philosopher and social reformer – wrote to a friend to describe a design for a building that his brother, Samuel, had been developing. It was, he wrote, a 'very singular new and I think important though simple idea in Architecture' (cited in Steadman, 2012: 2). Bentham had travelled to Russia to visit his brother Samuel in Krichev

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(located in what is now Belarus). Samuel had been tasked by Prince Grigory Potemkin to construct naval vessels and manage workshops. During this time, he developed plans for a distinctive 'Inspection House or Elaboratory'. This was the 'simple idea'. Jeremy Bentham would later describe this rotunda-shaped building as 'a large workshop [with] partitions in the form and position of radii of the circle being employed by separating from each other such as required to be separated' (Bentham, 1843b). In the centre of this rotunda would be the Inspector's Lodge. This would afford the individual occupying this central point the 'power to commence and conclude a survey of the whole establishment in the twinkling of an eye' (Bentham, 1843b).

The Krichev designs were abandoned in 1787 when, with the onset of the war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, Potemkin sold the estate and Samuel was called to fight in naval engagements in Crimea. However, the conceit of a building that was premised upon a centralised point of observation would be iterated upon by the brothers that year. But, rather than a workshop, they applied this plan to a prison. These early versions, in large part, simply placed a roof upon the Krichev workshop. In 1790, the plan for this circular 'iron cage, glazed' was first submitted to the British Parliament (Johnston, 2000: 50). A 1791 polygonal version saw the brothers work with the artist and architect Willey Reveley upon a design that increased the complexity if not the clarity of this 'panoptical' or 'all-seeing' principle. This saw the addition of annular galleries or walkways in the void between centre and periphery. In addition, there was to be a change from solitary confinement to four per cell and the movement of the warden's accommodation, along with administrative offices, to a rectangular para-site to the main 'drum' of the building. This design would have been flooded with light from exterior windows and a large oculus (a circular opening in the roof). Yet, in attempting to rectify the problems of the 1787 design, the 1791 iteration introduced elements – the galleries and areas of raked seating, for example – that meant that there was no longer a 'single point, nor even a single room, from which the governor and his guards [could] simultaneously see all the cells' (Steadman, 2007: 15). This was no longer a panopticon.

By 1793, however, it appeared that the plan had received broad governmental approval. Yet, as Semple (1993: 214) details in an exhaustive account, it was met in the years that followed with the 'inertia of the Treasury, the procrastination of Crown lawyers, and the antagonism of special interests'. Hume (1973, 1974) similarly notes the bureaucratic quagmire that beset the proposal. This is perhaps typified by the years long process spent in acquiring a site for the prison. Semple (1993) also describes Bentham's 'political naiveté' in his response to these and other problems that fell upon the proposals in the mid-1790s. It was as though he was almost 'wilfully determined to misunderstand the parliamentary process' (Semple, 1993: 169). Throughout, Bentham tirelessly promoted the panopticon idea. He proposed numerous variations including a 'paedotrophium' (for infants) and a 'sotimion' described by Semple (1993: 290) as a 'grotesque cross between a Magdalen and an amusement park'. The collapse of Pitt's government in 1801, rejection of the plans by the following Addington government in 1803, and then subsequent reappraisal followed by rejection once again by the Treasury in 1811–1812 could each be seen as points at which hopes for the panopticon's construction were extinguished.

Himmelfarb (1968) describes Bentham's 1831 text, the *History of the War between Jeremy Bentham and George III, by one of its belligerents*, as a memorialising of the project (although it had earlier been captured in his monumental *A Picture of the Treasury* in 1801–1802, as well as *On the Penitentiary for Place* in 1823 that dealt with the 1811–1812 penitentiary committee). Semple (1993: 312) dismisses the *History…* as 'slipshod and inaccurate', but this process of revisitation speaks to the grip that the idea had on Bentham throughout much of his life. Similarly,

Samuel continued to work on variations and he would build a panopticon-like naval school in Okhta in 1806 although that would be destroyed by fire in 1818. The site that was eventually allotted for the panopticon, Millbank on the Northern shores of the Thames,[1] a mile or so from the Houses of Parliament in London, would be given over to Millbank Penitentiary. Penal panopticon-like buildings would later be built in the 19th century in Holland, including Koepelgevangenis ('cupola prison') in Arnhem, and later in Illinois, USA (Stateville Correctional Center[2]) and Cuba ('Isle of Pines').

The panopticon, as envisaged by the Benthams and Reveley – remains unbuilt. Yet, it has a spectral presence. It lingers. It is a phantom that haunts the criminological imagination whilst also containing its own spectres.

In *Victorian Minds*, Himmelfarb (1968: 32–3) stated that 'historians and biographers' had, to that point, ignored the panopticon as a feature of Jeremy Bentham's canon: '[t]hey have resolutely closed their minds to the devils haunting Bentham that they can hardly credit the reality of his obsession, let alone the reality of the devils'. Likewise, Semple (1993: 1) echoes this by arguing that '[s]cholars have accorded it little interest or respect'. By contrast, Smith (2008) describes it as now 'inescapable'. In particular, it is Foucault's (mis)reading of both the panopticon and Bentham's penal thinking that has helped to shape and define the revenant that has returned in analytical accounts (Garland, 1990; Smith, 2008).

The conventional reading is that Jeremy Bentham took Samuel's idea and made it universal (Evans, 1982; Himmelfarb, 1968). As Bentham (1787/1995: 31) stated in his collected Panopticon Letters, it was a design that offered: 'Morals reformed-health preserved-industry invigorated-instruction diffused-public burthens lightened- […] -all by a simple idea in Architecture!' A circular work yard with observation as its central conceit could be applied to prisons, schools or hospitals. This would seem to decontextualise the ideas underpinning the Krichev workshop. However, as will be demonstrated here, it is Samuel's Krichev plans that 'haunt' the panopticon. Here, we will be drawing upon Jacques Derrida's (1994) notion of hauntology, his pun on ontology. Where ontology is concerned with being, hauntology looks to phenomena that hover at the interstice of absence and presence. To be clear, this is not concerned with the spectral as it relates to the supernatural. Rather, it offers a framework to explore phenomena whose effects 'leave a trace without ever [themselves] being present or absent' (Royle, 2003: 50). Our task here is to sift through these traces to examine this building's haunting influence. In addition, within the core of this example of phantom architecture resides a spectral entity. It is this that occupies the 'dark spot' at the centre of the panopticon designs. We will similarly examine its traces. In referring to the panopticon as 'phantom architecture', the aim is to draw attention to its hauntological qualities. As such, we can situate this discussion within the nascent field of ghost criminology. This is a sub-discipline looking to explore 'how certain groups, individuals, cultural artefacts, and spaces have been rendered ghostly' or disrupt our sense of linear time by not being wholly of the past, present or future (Fiddler et al., 2022: 5). This gives us a sense of the instability of the temporal order. Linear, causal time is perhaps not quite as rigid as we might think. In this regard, it is helpful to see how Fisher (2014: 19) distilled hauntology into two strands:

> The first refers to that which is (in actuality is) *no longer*, but which remains effective as a virtuality (the traumatic 'compulsion to repeat', a fatal pattern). The second sense of hauntology refers to that which (in actuality) has *not yet* happened, but which is *already* effective in the virtual (an attractor, an anticipation shaping current behaviour).

In this article, we will examine how the panopticon has been both *no longer* and *not yet*. We will unpack how it has returned, revenant-like, in changed forms, yet ones that suggest 'persistencies, repetitions [and] prefigurations' (Fisher, 2014: 28). We will look at the ways in which the space of the panopticon was configured to hold a spectre at its core and haunt the imaginations of those at its periphery. The innovation of this piece lies in taking this hauntological approach and using it to map the spectrality of a building that has come to inspirit the discipline of criminology. The utility of such an approach is that it defamiliarises a building familiar to us from both undergraduate lectures and Foucauldian analyses. This hauntologically informed framework allows us to see the panopticon anew. We will trace the possible precursors that influenced the Benthams in their designs. This will lead us, in turn, to discuss the competing readings of Jeremy Bentham's penal thinking. It is then that the spectral form of the Krichev panopticon will emerge as we explore its influence. This provides us with a changed perspective on the role of the entity that was to occupy the building's core. Finally, we consider the haunting presence of the panopticon itself and how – using Derrida's (1994) notion of the 'visor effect' – it can be framed as a building that regards us; *we* have become subject to *its* gaze.

Hauntology and architectural parallax

First, let us set out our framework to consider how Fisher's 'no longer' and 'not yet' can be applied to the panopticon. How best to analyse a building that was not simply unbuilt, but is 'out-of-joint'? Hauntology hinges on a sense of temporal dis-ease. It offers a recognition that the present 'wavers'. Within hauntology, the figure of the spectre is a figure of clarification. Where time is considered to be 'dislocated, dislodged…off its hinges' (Derrida, 1994: 20), the spectre allows us to see the present (*and* past *and* future) anew. It suggests a 'structural openness or address directed towards the living by the voices of the past or the not yet formulated possibilities of the future' (Davis, 2005: 378–9). This requires a little unpacking. A death, a passing, presupposes that a return will follow. This need not be referring to an individual's death, but can be a period, an idea, or even a building. Its return, its *haunting*, allows commentary on the past, present, and future. Brown (2001: 149–150) provides a useful analysis here:

> The specter begins by coming back, by repeating itself, by recurring in the present. It is not traceable to an origin nor to a founding event […], yet it operates as a force…We inherit not 'what really happened' to the dead but what lives on from that happening, what is conjured from it, how past generations and events occupy the force fields of the present, […] and inspirit our imaginations and visions for the future.

My aim here is to trace the ways in which the panopticon was both haunt*ed* and haunt*ing*. In doing so, we can chart its influence as a force. It carried within its structure spectral presences. Subsequently, it has then been a spectral presence itself within the criminological imagination. How do we unpack the inheritance to the past and passed off a building that is at once haunted and haunting? For a phantom architecture, we require a way of conceiving the building within a framework of temporal dis-ease. We need to 'see' a building unmoored from time. A useful way to conceptualise this is to use Beaumont's (2018) notion of architectural parallax (by way of Žižek).

Parallax, Beaumont (2018) reminds us, is derived from the Greek verb *parallassein* or 'to alternate'. This refers to the way in which a viewer is afforded differing perspectives on an object when

they change their position in relation to that object. The change in position alters an object's orientation to the viewer, as well as to its background. Žižek (2011: 244) expands on this, suggesting that

> subject and object are inherently 'mediated', so that an 'epistemological' shift in the subject's point of view always reflects an 'ontological' shift in the object itself.

As we shift positions in relation to the building being observed, so there are gaps between those perspectives. This 'opens up a place for a third, virtual building' (Žižek, 2011: 245). We can use the example of a Cubist painting to help visualise this for ourselves: the intersecting planes of a Picasso suggest differing spatial and temporal snapshots captured in a single image. In Beaumont's (2018: 65) evocative phrasing, the Cubist composition suggests 'an elegant, complicated dance in time': 'it is not so much a still life as an unstill one'. The differing perspectives and the parallax gap between them renders the building unfamiliar. Here, the third, virtual, *spectral* building that emerges from the gap of the architectural parallax destabilises the building's identity. It affords an opportunity to 'see' the building 'bear[ing] the imprint of different and mutually exclusive perspectives' (Žižek, 2011: 244–5). So it is with the panopticon. As we shift our point of view, the building becomes destabilised. Alternatives are opened up. It is made 'both itself and not itself' (Beaumont, 2018: 66).

Our task in the coming pages then is to move about the panopticon so as to reveal this third, virtual, spectral building. What we will encounter will be those planes of an 'unstill' Cubist rendering of the panopticon. These will be intersecting, on occasion mutually exclusive, perspectives as the building is at once seen as both itself and not itself. There will be different renderings of the Benthams' idea. And, as we take into account the cultural and architectural influences upon both Samuel and Jeremy, this will push our position in relation to the panopticon around, shifting our perspective and once again opening up the parallax gap and revealing a fresh plane of the analysis. We can begin by examining possible forerunners of the panopticon and what these reveal about readings of the building itself.

The panopticon's precursors

There are several possible precursors to the panopticon to which we can point as being influential upon the Benthams. As we might predict, those that individual theorists highlight have a tendency to reflect their reading of Jeremy Bentham's penal thinking. The path that the Benthams took to get to their design can be mapped in several different ways. Johnston (2000: 48) makes the argument that, simply put, the 'eighteenth century preoccupation with geometric architectural patterns was bound to result in circular and polygonal buildings for many different purposes'. In terms of observation, there are contemporaneous examples of optical centring that we could point to as possible influences. The anatomical theatre or artists' classes could be inverted to provide the centralised observation and surveillance at the core of the Inspection House. Evans (1982) sees similarities with Giullo Camillo's Memory Theatre of the 16th century. Here, an individual would imagine themselves stood in the middle of a raised semi-circle with knowledge arrayed in front of them in seven tiered segments. Occupying that central position would afford 'all that the mind could conceive and all that was hidden in the soul' (Yates, 1966, cited in Evans, 1982: 209). Morriss (2015: 178), in a history of Samuel Bentham's time in Russia in the late 18th century, notes that the location for the construction of the vermicular links (connected boats) that he was working upon may have dictated the panoptical design:

> The interior of a river bend would have contained flat land suitable for building after the winter thaw and for launching vessels when higher water levels returned. The concave shape of that land would have provided a central position that was an ideal situation for the location of a supervisor.

Another example, where 'the privileged eye determined the shape of the world', was Louis Le Vau's menagerie at Versailles (Evans, 1982: 211). Populated with birds and an assortment of animals, it was designed and constructed across the 1660s. Foucault notes how it afforded taxonomic classification and observation from a singular vantage point. In addition to the detached observation of the aviary, Foucault was also drawn to the similarities between the panopticon and the instrumental, functionalist arrangement of buildings at the Royal Saltworks at Arc-et-Senans. It is this analogy that gives us the greatest insight into Foucault's (mis)reading of Jeremy Bentham's penal thinking. He describes the raised administrative centre with first a circle and then a semi-circle of buildings radiating out from it: 'towards which all gazes would be turned' (Foucault, 1977: 173). In this diagrammatic arrangement – with policy, economic and religious functions at the core – Foucault saw 'expressed a certain political utopia' (Foucault, 1977: 174).

This speaks to the 'one-sided history' of *Discipline and Punish* leading to a 'similarly one-sided understanding of punishment and penal institutions' (Garland, 1990: 162).[3] Foucault suggests that 'Benthamism' – a rational, calculating framework to determine conduct – 'is, in fact, a deep description of the actual nature of modern punishment' (Garland, 1990: 162). Yet, as others have pointed out, this is to misread Bentham's attempt to set out an idealised model to work towards and one which ignores the impact of 'legal culture, popular sentiment, and ritualistic tradition' (Garland, 1990: 164; Hutchings, 2001; Smith, 2008). A further alternative and one that reflects Jeremy Bentham's penal thinking a little more closely is encountered by way of his expression '*multum ex scenâ*' (translated as 'much from the scenery'). It is the *theatricality* of the rotunda at the Ranelagh Pleasure Gardens to which Smith (2008), in particular, draws the reader's attention.

As a key location in fashionable Londoners' social calendar, Smith (2008: 107) remarks that it was somewhere that 'Bentham himself would have been intimately familiar' (unlike Le Vau's menagerie).[4] Open between 1742 and 1803, the pleasure gardens were located near to the Thames in Chelsea, West London. The central rotunda was 150ft across and held 52 private boxes facing onto the central stage, fireplace and grand organ. Attendees could promenade around the central stage or sit within private boxes on the periphery. It was a space to see and be seen. This is the central critique that Smith levies at Foucault's reading of the panopticon. Smith (2008: 106) argues that Foucault's emphasis on a surveillant machinery was at odds with Bentham's 'theatrical leanings':

> for the great utilitarian the panopticon was not simply an observatory for the cold eye of one over the many, but rather a theater and spectacle where the multitude could look upon a few for both entertainment and edification.

This further suggests that the detached observation and classification at the menagerie ill-supports Bentham's focus. Rather, this was to be 'a vivid cultural performance to a witnessing civil society' (Smith, 2008: 100). In later iterations, the masked inhabitants of the panopticon were to be opened to those witnessing multitudes.[5] Again, this is more reflective of the importance of the ritualistic dimensions of punishment that Garland points to in Bentham's writing. Where

Smith critiques Foucault for a misplaced diminishing of the theatrical, Hutchings (2001) makes the key observation that Foucault's reading of the theatrical and spectacle does not speak to the changes that performance went through during the period. There was a movement away from the style typified by Shakespeare's Rose theatre: 'rowdy, participatory mass engagement, performed in daylight or under artificial lighting which lit audiences as much as actors' (Hutchings, 2001: 32). Rather, the theatre of the Benthams' period was coming into alignment with the optical centring of the anatomical theatre. A quietened audience would observe a brightly lit stage from a darkened auditorium. As Hutchings identifies, these were part 'of the reformist discourses seeking a more controlled and effective theatre of punishment' (Hutchings, 2001: 32). In this way, there are parallels to be drawn between the panopticon and the stage. To be within a panopticon was to be part of a mechanism of both display and imagination.

Likewise, Welzbacher (2018) notes that in 1792, the year following the printing of the Panopticon Letters, the first 'panorama' opened in London. Oettermann (1980, cited in Welzbacher, 2018: 87) described the panorama as

> a machine, in which the sovereignty of the bourgeois gaze is at once learned and exalted, an instrument for the liberation and the renewed imprisonment of the gaze.

The all-seeing eye within the panopticon was closely aligned with the scopic and epistemic regimes of the period. It facilitated taxonomic practice. The rational gaze could be turned to the heavens to observe the passage of celestial bodies. The panorama could interrogate the urban sprawl. And the mechanism of the panopticon could be turned to that illusive target: the soul. Another option is open to us though. One that is more clearly resonant with both the principle of panopticism and Jeremy Bentham's broader penological thinking. It is one that speaks to theatricality and the power of imagination, as well as a surveillant gaze derived from both. For this, we must orient ourselves anew in relation to the panopticon. Having explored one plane of analysis opened up by the architectural parallax in looking at precursors, let us position ourselves differently. In doing so, we conjure up that figure who has remained silent within many of the analyses detailed thus far: Samuel Bentham.

Haunted: The spectral presence of Samuel Bentham's panopticon

Jeremy Bentham joined his brother in Krichev in 1786 and spent the next two years writing and 'dealing with various aspects of Samuel's affairs' (Schofield, 2017: vi). In the December of 1786, Jeremy wrote to George Wilson: 'I have been obliged to go a-begging to my brother, and borrow an idea of his, which I have dressed up with a little tinsel of my own…' (Bentham, 1843a). Between the Letters written during 1786 and the subsequent Postscripts in 1790 and 1791, we can see that Samuel was closely involved in the development and promotion of the panopticon project. It was to be both a vehicle for the 'application of the panopticon-principle' and a setting for Samuel's inventions to harness the productive labour of prisoners (Hume, 1973: 706). And it was to be from this type of machinery that 'the great profits were to be made' (Semple, 1993: 106). The brothers were to 'share in the credit and the profits' of this venture (Semple, 1993: 215). They were to be joint contractors with both occupying the panopticon's governor's mansion (Semple, 1993). Clearly, Hume (1973, 1974), Semple (1993) and Morriss (2015) note the closeness of the collaboration, as well as the project's origins in Samuel's Krichev designs. A cursory reading of Jeremy Bentham's collected correspondence likewise reveals the importance

of Samuel in this phase of the panopticon proposal. However, as Morriss (2015: 5) observes, in 'the twentieth century [Samuel Bentham] has been relatively ignored owning to the attention focused on his brother'. A closer examination of Samuel's role in these early stages and the influence of the Krichev panopticon – which builds upon the work of Christie (1970), Steadman (2007, 2012) and Werrett (1999) – reveals an intriguing alternative precursor that relates to the broader hauntological themes of this piece.

Samuel's work is fleetingly – and, as Werrett (1999) notes, *incorrectly* – mentioned in Evans's (1982) superlative history of 18th and 19th century English prison architecture in *The Fabrication of Virtue*, as well as Markus's (1993) *Buildings and Power*. In the latter, Markus suggests that it was Jeremy Bentham's idea to place supervision at the centre of the Krichev workshop for the purpose of control. Ignatieff (1978) mistakenly suggests that the Krichev panopticon was constructed. There is neither mention of Samuel in Melossi and Pavarini (1981/2017) nor Garland's (1990) *Punishment and Modern Society*. He goes unremarked in Michel Foucault's (1977: 173/376, n.2) *Discipline and Punish* save for an unnamed aside in an endnote that refers to Samuel being influenced by the École Militaire. Let us, then, re-examine the role that Samuel played in the panopticon's development.

Samuel Bentham, born in 1757, was apprenticed to a Master Shipwright at Woolwich in London when he was 14. He then worked at the Chatham docks before completing a seven-year apprenticeship at the Naval Academy in Portsmouth (Skempton et al., 2002). His inability to secure a position in dockyard management and a desire to make use of his inventive talents led him to Russia, and the hope that Catherine the Great's court would provide a greater opportunity (Morriss, 2015).

In 1780, Samuel Bentham arrived in Russia with the intention of developing his understanding of shipbuilding (Christie, 1970). The following year he toured the Urals and in 1784 he entered the service of Prince Grigory Potemkin and travelled to Krichev in 1786. He was tasked with managing a small industrial complex and organising the construction of vessels to transport shipbuilding materials (Werrett, 1999). He found that the local workers were insufficiently skilled and so drew upon the expertise of supervisors that he brought over from England. However, these supervisors proved ill-disciplined.[6] As we saw earlier, this led to Samuel designing what Jeremy would describe as a 'singular… idea in architecture'. The Inspection House or Elaboratory allowed for the instruction of the local workers and was an answer to the ill-discipline of the supervisors.

Samuel Bentham's work on Potemkin's estate at Krichev must be placed in the context of Catherine the Great's 1787 tour that occurred between January and July of that year. Alongside his management and design work for the naval yard, Samuel Bentham was also collecting literature on husbandry, agriculture and landscaping. Werrett (1999) frames this all as part of Potemkin's desire to present an idealised notion of the Russian estate that was to be, in part, actualised by Samuel Bentham. This was to be Potemkin's 'idealised Russian eden' (Werrett, 1999: 10). This can also be located within the hauntological language of a utopian 'not yet'. The presentation of the estate could be understood as a vast theatrical display of potential. The optical centring of the panoptical naval yard also mirrored the Russian state itself. As with the Royal Saltwork at Arc-et-Senans, Welzbacher (2018) describes the structure of Russian cities that were founded in the 18th century as positioning palaces or Admiralty at the centre, and the city itself fanning out from that central point. We can invert the looking glass to rather envisage Samuel Bentham's plan as 'compress[ing] the spatial structure of the Russian estate into a single building' (Steadman, 2012: 13). However, where the impetus for the plans can be seen as a spectacular imagining of a utopian site for Catherine the Great's tour, it can be argued – drawing upon Werrett's (1999) work – that the key architectural influence upon Samuel's proposals was that of the design of Orthodox Christian churches. Morriss (2015: 14) notes that Samuel was 'sceptical

about religious belief, but he took interest in church ceremony and symbolism'. For him, the '[r]ituals of worship were theatre' (Morriss, 2015: 14). We can trace echoes of this in the panopticon designs.

Werrett (1999), in particular, points to the influence of Starov's designs for the Holy Trinity Cathedral in St Petersburg (constructed during the time that Samuel was in Russia), but we can look to similar structures built to the same plan on a more modest scale in Krichev itself. As Werrett (1999: 17) acknowledges, 'it may seem unlikely for Samuel Bentham to devise a "secularized Church"', but the hauntological qualities of the panopticon help solidify the comparison.

Churches within the Orthodox Christian tradition take a form that was established in the ninth century. They are typically cruciform within a square. The centre is defined by a circular nave with a large dome. The building itself is seen as an extension of the body of Christ and its dome 'symbolizes the earthly heaven in which the heavenly God dwells and moves' (Germanis, nd, cited in Werrett, 1999: 15). There are two key elements of the church that take on particular resonance when examined in relation to the panopticon. Firstly, we can see the central dome within Orthodox Christian churches as analogous to the circularity of Samuel's design. Secondly, the congregation and clergy are separated from one another by an iconostasis, a screen, that defines the boundary between nave and sanctuary. The congregation can neither see nor hear the prayers of the clergy within the sanctuary. Rather, they are left to contemplate the images in the iconostasis or the Church itself. One of those would be the Angry Eye Saviour, an icon with a severe countenance. Likewise, there would be a Christ Pantokrator, an image of a stern-looking Christ, in the design of the dome looking down upon the congregation. Clearly, an asymmetry of vision and a notion of (surveillant) observation are integral here. The laity is denied the sight of the worship of the clergy whilst being subject to the (stern) gaze of the icon. As Werrett (1999: 17) phrases it, 'whilst [the laity] cannot know the source of divine power, that same power is watching and judging over them'. It is this that informs our understanding of the 'entity' that was to haunt the panopticon's centre. To focus on this our position must, then, shift once again in relation to the panopticon. As we move closer to this plane of the analysis, we zoom in to see how the surveillant gaze and asymmetry of vision produced by the church's architecture prefigured the entity that was to occupy the prison's centre.

Haunted: Fictitious and inferential entities

Both Lyon (2014) and Welzbacher (2018) note the design for the Panopticon Letters frontispiece. It depicts the eye of God within a triangle. The triangle itself is positioned within a circle: it is a simple rendering of the panopticon's floorplan with individual cells within the circle's perimeter. Beneath the triangle are some lines (taken out of order) from Psalm 139:

> Thou art about my path, and about my bed; and spiest on all my ways.
>
> If I say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover me; then shall my night be turned to day. Even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

There are similarities between this simplified rendering with its central eye with that of Hieronymus Bosch's 1485 painting of 'Seven Deadly Sins' (Lyon, 2014). The painting itself resembles an eye with its pupil and iris. Within the pupil is an ever-watching, ever-vigilant Christ. In the

iris are depictions of the sins themselves, as well as corresponding punishments. An inscription in Latin reads 'cave, cave, deus videt': 'beware, beware, God is watching'. It is this sense of deferent awe that seems to inform Bentham's reading of these lines taken from Psalm 139. However, a reading of the remainder of the Psalm reveals a slightly different relationship between a surveillant God and the subject of that gaze. Subsequent lines read

> Yea, the darkness is no darkness with thee, but the night is as clear as the day; the darkness and light to thee are both alike.
>
> Look well if there be any way of wickedness in me; and lead me in the way everlasting.

In Lyon's (2014) nuanced reading, this is not a warning for us to beware that God is watching. Rather, it depicts a psalmist who does not respond to the gaze with 'abject fear, but rather gratitude, wonder, reassurance – so much so that the psalmist *invites* further scrutiny …' (Lyon, 2014: 29, original emphasis). This is quite different to the emphasis placed on the (re-ordered) lines of the frontispiece. Where the Psalm sees God as 'guardian and leader, as a companion to wayward souls', the frontispiece depicts a disembodied eye that is separate from that which it sees (Welzbacher 2018: 69). The hand that 'holds' in the Psalm's text can be read here as more constraining than comforting. The darkness of the night of the frontispiece serves to diminish the clarity of light of the Psalm.

It is important to note that these details of the frontispiece because they help us to understand the 'secular omniscience' within the panoptical design. It 'offered an alternative way of achieving social order that…sidestepped the need for the "eye" to be God's' (Lyon, 2014: 26). The panopticon was not simply 'haunted' by its influences. Rather, its specific organisation of space produced a staging for a non-existent presence. The panopticon would hold within its core an entity: an audience of (n)one for a theatrical staging of punishment. The building's spectrality came from the neither/nor presence and absence that would occupy the shadowed Inspector's Lodge. It is this entity, formed by an asymmetry of vision and voice, that produced the secular omniscience. It was a product of both the architectural form of the Russian Orthodox Church co-mingled with, as we will see shortly, Jeremy Bentham's fear of a supernatural surveillant force.

The Eye that would occupy the building's 'dark spot' belongs to a figure that hovers between states. To use the terms that Bentham describes in his 'A Fragment on Ontology', they are at once an 'inferential' and 'fictitious' entity. The former is a figure that is not revealed through exposure to the senses, but a feeling is 'produced by reflection [and] is inferred from a chain of reasoning' (Bentham, 1787/1995: 119). He gives the example of the soul, separated from the body which is understood as a ghost. The fictitious entity is one that 'though by the grammatical form of the discourse employed in speaking of it, existence by ascribed, yet in truth and reality existence is not meant to be ascribed' (Bentham, 1787/1995: 123). So, hovering at the edges of existence, being neither/nor present and absent. Hutchings (2001: 41) states that 'the panopticon authors a fiction of inspection in its architecture: a fiction in plain sight, a multitude of effects coming from a lie enacted by the scenery of punishment'. It is this fiction of inspection that rests on the fictitious *and* inferential entity.

Haunted: The building that looks

So, the rational geometry of the panopticon was to be haunted by a spectre possessing an impartial, humane gaze. In a departure from our focus on the hauntological elements of the spectre, our

understanding of the effect of that gaze must be informed by Jeremy Bentham's thoughts on the supernatural. In his 1843 memoirs, Bentham (1843b) wrote that 'this subject of ghosts has been among the torments of my life'. Reflecting on this, he states that on the subject of ghosts 'though my judgment is wholly free, my imagination is not wholly so' (Bentham, 1843b). The imagination gives the spectral its potency. Whilst

> [i]n no man's judgement can a stronger persuasion of the non-existence of these sources of terror […] have place than in mine; yet no sooner do I lay myself down to sleep in a dark room than, *if no other person is in the room*, and my eyes keep open, these instruments of terror obtrude themselves. (Bentham, nd, cited in Hutchings, 2001: 40, emphasis added)

Knowing that no one else was in the room accentuated these 'terrors'. It was precisely because these rested in the imagination, because they *did not exist*, that they were so affecting. If they were real, they could be managed. They would still instil fear, but it would be of a different, *knowable*, quality. Such spectral frights 'taught [Bentham] the means to *haunt the social imagination*' (emphasis added, Hutchings, 2001: 43). As Božovič (1995: 22) puts it, '[t]he fear of ghosts is perhaps the purest example of how an imaginary non-entity owes its real effects to its ontological status as a fiction'. Extending this to the figure within the Inspector's Lodge, Božovič (1995: 20) argues that without their simultaneous presence and absence, 'the universe of the panopticon would collapse'. The inspector is ever present precisely because of their non-presence. Theirs is a vapourishness of ontology. They hover between states. Yet, its gaze was to be imagined and experienced as real. The imagined Inspector would haunt the prisoner's imagination.

The Inspector's fundamental role was not to be seen. This was to ensure the fiction of inspection. The apparatus of the panopticon always and already facilitated an omniscient gaze on those being observed. To be seen would collapse the theatrical apparatus of the spectacle in upon itself. The enforced invisibility of the Inspector must be juxtaposed with the enforced visibility of the prisoner. In one of the panopticon's iterations, Bentham calculated that the Inspector's isovist, that volume of visible space observable from their central vantage point, did not extend to the back of the cell. Bentham, therefore, suggested that a line be drawn along the floor of the cell to indicate where the prisoner should stand to be visible to the Inspector. Forward of the line, they would be visible. Behind it and the prisoner's 'very invisibility is a mark to note him by' (Bentham, nd; Božovič, 1995: 18): '…[T]he Inspector was in fact all-seeing: his gaze extending *beyond the limits of the visible into the invisible*' (Božovič, 1995: 18, original emphasis). The spectre could see the visible invisible. It *compelled* visibility of those being observed, but was itself always and forever to be shadowed.

Haunted: The building that speaks

Having looked at the power of the Eye, let us turn to a related notion, the importance of the voice. A curiously under-explored element of the surveillance mechanism of the panopticon was the conversation tubes. Steadman describes these as running between the Inspector's Lodge up to the wardens at a higher vantage point with a loud hailer allowing the Inspector to speak to all prisoners. Božovič suggests that these tubes also ran from the lodge to individual cells. Edmund Burke, upon seeing the panopticon plans, remarked '[t]here's the keeper, the spider in the web' (Himmelbarb, 1968: 59).

The appearance of this filigreed latticework of tin tubes radiating out from the Inspector's Lodge would have made this analogy somewhat more explicit.

As Božovič (1995: 12) states, the Inspector 'is able to speak to [the prisoners] without having to expose himself to [their] eyes…the prisoners can hear him, but they cannot see him'.[7] This places emphasis once more upon the asymmetry of vision between Inspector and prisoner, centre and periphery. However, it is this bodiless voice that we should dwell on as it offers both its own haunting presence/absence, as well as further complicating the surveillant Eye at the building's centre. Michel Chion (1982, cited by Dolar, 2006) refers to the 'acousmatic voice' as appearing without visible origin. It cannot be placed. There is something of the uncanny to a voice without a body. It too is haunting. A placeless voice can appear as though from all places. There is not simply an authority to the acousmatic voice, but an omniscience in its spectral effects: 'the hidden voice structurally produces "divine effects"' (Dolar, 2006: 62). As Dolar notes, the God of the Old Testament[8] is often represented as an acousmatic voice, as are other such deities. It is also troubling. We know that it must have a corporeal source. It cannot be an 'effect without a cause' (Dolar, 2006: 66). But to place this in relation to the panopticon, the presence behind the curtain that shrouded the Inspector's vantage point 'seizes us and haunts us' (Chion, 1988, cited in Dolar, 2006: 66). This haunting effect is produced by the ambiguity of that presence hovering between being the fictional and inferential entity of Bentham's description.

Of course, again, if the mystery behind the curtain were to be revealed, the conceit would collapse. A corporeal source – of gaze *and* voice – causes the surveillant system to crumble. It requires the theatricality of the curtain to remain intact. Chion refers to this as 'disacousmatization'. However, where the source is unseen, we can imagine the voice adding to the potency of the gaze. It is at once a fictional and inferential entity. Unlike an inferential entity, the voice can be apprehended by a(n auditory) sense. Yet, when the acousmatic voice is commingled with the omniscient gaze, for those that are being spoken to and watched, it becomes an entity that is *imagined* to do the speaking and watching. It is a soul seemingly stripped of a body. So, we have two phenomena that offer a sense of simultaneous being and absence complementing one another. There is a gaze – projected from a shadowed space – that is looking. And a voice that is placeless and bodiless. The mystery of the voice *adds* to the mystery of the eye.

Haunting: The panopticon and the visor effect

Having looked at the *panopticon-as-haunted*, let us step back and position ourselves differently once again in relation to the building. In adjusting our relationship to the panopticon, the architectural parallax shifts. Here, we can orient ourselves to examine the *panopticon-that-haunts*. As an architectural concept, it is both no longer and not yet. It acts as a force, haunting and inspiriting thinking whilst being a virtuality.

This approach takes imaginative form when we consider one of the later iterations of the panopticon. This would have seen the building constructed from iron and glass. These materials and the layered organisation of cells led Bentham to describe this as a 'glass beehive' (with himself as the 'greedy honey collector') (Smith, 2008). Mirzoeff (2002) makes the observation that it would have had a closer affinity to London's Crystal Palace or the Benjaminian Arcades than the typical prison design of the late 18th century. What we see in the panopticon-that-haunts is a transposition. Its haunting influence is refracted through other modalities, be they other buildings or analyses. This is in keeping with how the spectre returns. As Löffler (2015: 1; emphasis added) phrases it, '[g]hosts…permit the recurrence of phenomena *at another scene…*'. Where we can point to the

traces of pleasure garden rotundas, anatomical theatres and Russian Orthodox Churches in the diagram of the panopticon, so we can look at the ways in which echolalic practices transpose the Benthams' designs into new forms that are present in the present or help shape the future to come.

We can trace examples of these 're-workings'. We can, for example, see the surveillant Eye within its glass beehive haunting what Colomina (2019) refers to as the X-ray building. Some 150 years after the initial proposals for the panopticon, that 'iron cage, glazed', modern architecture in the 1920s placed a focus on bringing iron and glass to a 'machine aesthetic' with an emphasis upon 'functional efficiency' (Colomina, 2019: 9). Colomina (2019: 9) makes the case that tuberculosis, the 'dominant medical obsession' of the early 20th century, drove this development. It drew upon the technology with which it had been twinned: the X-ray. The X-ray 'exposed the secrets of the body, its depths, collapsing the essential divide between surface and depth, and rendering the body a deep surface' (Lippit, 2005: 29/30). The language of the X-ray emphasises transparency and visibility. It is the insistent, penetrating X-ray that holds within itself haunting traces of the panopticon. Here, architecture became a diagnostic tool to open the building and its inhabitant up to analysis. Conventionally understood, modernist living and workspaces did not simply enfold the body in a protective caul, rather they were machineries to shape and mould, to improve the body in terms of efficiency and health. We might be reminded of Bentham's (1995: 31) entreaty that the panopticon afforded 'morals reformed, industry invigorated, instruction diffused…all by a simple idea in Architecture!'. Yet, this is simply something of a simplistic echo. Instead, if we interrogate the transparency of modern architecture a little more closely, we can see the spectral wisps of the panopticon's surveillant Eye. An X-ray building, in Colomina's (2019) framing, reveals the invisible visible: what once had been obscured or hidden from view. As the panopticon's Eye proposed to re-configure the practice of reform and industry within the prison, so modern architecture's exposure of once-private spaces – owing to an 'intrusive logic of medical and police surveillance' – realigned domesticity's relationship to 'shelter and comfort' (Colomina, 2019: 147). The building facilitates exposure. It shapes what occurs as private for an exterior gaze looking in: '[t]he threshold of the private was no longer the outside limit of the building' (Colomina, 2019: 170). Where the new visuality of the X-ray 'generated an impossible perspective' that collapsed interiority and exteriority into a single image, so the X-ray building drew public and private into intimate connection (Lippit, 2005: 53).

Modernist architecture led all to become perpetual patients subject to a disciplining gaze. In the present moment, the logic of the X-ray pervades social life: 'the most inner secrets of our bodies, movements, sexuality, medical histories, domestic life, and finances are now public' (Colomina, 2019: 170). We are in a state of permanent visibility. We find ourselves enmeshed in physical and digital equivalents of the line painted along the cell floor – spaces suggesting privacy, apparent blindspots – but that also reveal the invisible visible.

An alternative to the all-pervasive and all-invasive transparency of 'X-ray architecture' can be found in a consideration of Derrida's notion of the visor effect and its application to buildings. Drawing inspiration from Hamlet's encounter with the ghost of his father, Derrida used this as a means of describing the asymmetrical gaze of self and spectre. Hamlet stands before the ghost, but cannot see its face, its *eyes*, because it is obscured by a visor. He has the sensation of being watched, but without being able to return that look. There is a play here on the meaning of 'before'. Hamlet is stood *before* the spectre. Derrida uses this to emphasise our inability to return a gaze from the past and from those that have passed. Hamlet also inherits from the past: that which has come *before*. And there is an indebtedness to the passed.

This rendition of the spectral evokes the sense of temporal dis-ease where past/passed is encountered as present. Yet, there is an added cadence when applied to the panopticon. The asymmetry of a

spectral look *is* the core relationship between its centre and periphery. This leads us to consider how the visor effect is experienced when applied to a building that looks. To put this slightly differently, the question becomes not simply how we regard buildings, but 'how buildings look at us; that is, how we internalize the gaze of buildings' (Beaumont, 2018: 64). Where we might ordinarily describe the façade of a building, here we would talk of a visor obscuring the building's 'look' as it regards us. How do we internalise that look, as the prisoner within the panopticon would have internalised the gaze of the Inspector? In a Marxist reading, we inherently experience a sense of alienation from buildings. As Marx phrased it in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, a worker's home is a hostile dwelling, an 'alien restraining power which only gives itself up to him in so far as he gives up to it his blood and sweat'. So, building-as-host masks building-as-hostile. In this sense, the visor effect provokes an alienating look from building to observer. We who stand before the building do so within a system of capital that alienates us from both the building and the system of production that shaped it. Given the centrality of labour and capital to Bentham's panopticon (see Evans, 1982; Semple, 1993), it is not so difficult to extend that out to its designs. However, a more nuanced approach can be taken that sees the exterior visor and the spectral figure haunting the building's interior come into alignment. The drum-like building becomes a torus such that the 'exterior' (the visor) is at the same time the 'interior' (the Eye). The visored, hostile and alienating gaze would become joined with that of the Inspector's Eye.

Now, it is us that are *before* the panopticon. *It* regards *us*. We have internalised its gaze. And how it has inspirited the criminological imagination is where we turn to next in our examination of the final plane of the spectral panopticon.

The panopticon as phantom architecture

In *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, Cohen (1972/2015: 48) uses the pleasingly evocative term 'kulturgeist' to describe 'an ephemeral something that helps to define a period'. Throughout this piece, we have used the subtle variations of the ghostly, spectral and revenant to tease out the traces of a building that was never constructed. Indeed, we have referred to this as an examination of phantom architecture. Perhaps we can introduce a final variation that riffs on Cohen's term: baugeist. We can define this as a spirit of a particular building. This is the third, spectral, virtual produced by the architectural parallax that Žižek (2011) and Beaumont (2018) described. This is what we have moved around. We have examined differing planes of this unstill life. This, then, is where we see the broader utility of this approach. By employing a hauntological framework, as well as the conceit of the parallax that allows us to examine the planes of a building experienced as 'out-of-joint', it defamilarises the familiar. It is a means to see how harms might return albeit changed, or it prefigures harms yet to come. In relation to the carceral, it could be applied to the 'dark tourism' of former prison sites or the 'not yet' of zones of future construction. More broadly, it can be twinned with Ferrell's (2022) 'ghost method' as a means to capture both social spaces and their occupants that have been pushed into invisibility or rendered spectral.

Let us return once more to Brown (2001: 149) and situate this panopticon within the hauntological context: '[t]he specter begins by coming back, by repeating itself, by recurring in the present. It is not traceable to an origin nor to a founding event, it does not have an objective or "comprehensive" history, yet it operates as a force'. We have encountered this ourselves with the panopticon. There are competing points of origin: the menagerie, the pleasure garden rotunda, anatomical theatre and Russian Orthodox Church. And, it continues to operate as a 'force'. We have inherited 'not what really happened', but 'what lives on from the happening' (Brown, 2001: 150). Simply put,

Samuel Bentham's spectre (but perhaps, more particularly, the template for the Russian Orthodox Church within the Krichev workshop designs) 'haunts' the panopticon. We can see traces of those original ideas within the roles that the Eye and voice of the panopticon were to play. They belong to a spectre within the design's core. This is an entity that also operates as a trace, hovering between presence and absence; it is invisible yet experienced through inference. Finally, it is with the notion of the visor effect that we begin to see traces of the panopticon persist and felt as a 'force'. It is something of the past that is expressed as insistently present.

We see it persist despite it not having been constructed. Evans (1982) suggests that, following its failure to be built, the panopticon was soon superseded by radial designs (typified by HMP Pentonville or Eastern State Penitentiary). The term panopticon itself was abraded such that it came to be applied to radial or polygonal plans with a central point of observation (Evans, 1982). The radial design resolved what Steadman (2007) refers to as the 'contradictions' of the panopticon. As we saw, the later iterations layered further complexity upon Samuel's Krichev workshop such that its central conceit – complete visibility – was fatally undermined. The 'great waste of space' of the annular well between centre and periphery was similarly remedied by a move to the corridic forms of either radial or telegraph pole designs. How is it then that this 'failed' design should perpetually return from the past as profoundly present? Just as how the fiction of the panopticon would have unravelled at the sight of the Inspector as the source of the acousmatic voice, so the 'concrete object' would have doomed it. It could only ever exist as a 'mythical utopia […] a divine vision tainted by divine madness' (Himmelfarb, 1968). Perhaps, as with Millbank, the built design would have been relegated to a curious footnote in English prison architectural history, an experiment that culminated in a dead end (although primed for its own revenant return). Instead, it is a perpetual 'not yet'.

Semple (1993: 16) notes that in old age Jeremy could not bring himself to look through the collected panopticon papers he had accumulated through his decades-long campaign: 'it is like opening a drawer where devils are locked up – it is breaking into a haunted house'. The panopticon has proved to be an example of phantom architecture. It is a baugeist inspiriting thought. And it continues to haunt the social imagination.

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Notes

1. Various sites around London (including Hanging Wood, Battersea Rise, Lambeth Marsh and Tothill Fields) had been considered (see Semple, 1993).
2. As Semple (1993: 313) puts it, Stateville 'was a travesty of Bentham's plan'. Simply, the central observation tower – and, crucially, the officers within it – could be seen by prisoners at all times. This can be seen in the film *Call Northside 777* (1948, dir. H. Hathaway) that was partially shot on location at the penitentiary.
3. Brunon-Ernst (2012: 17) similarly, frames Foucault's reading as 'fractional and partial', noting that '[t]here is not one Panopticon, but at least four different versions of Bentham's surveillance machine' (Brunon-Ernst, 2012:: 40): the prison-, the pauper-, the constitutional- and the chrestomathic-panopticons. As Brunon-Ernst (2012: 40) states, these designs and ideas were iterated upon as Bentham's 'thoughts on good government develop(ed)' adding nuance that was not captured in Foucault's analysis of panopticism.
4. In the Second Letter to Lord Pelham, Bentham makes an explicit comparison in describing a model of the Panopticon as being 'round like Ranelagh' (Bentham et al., 2022: 233).
5. 'Transparent management' meant that surveillance was to come from outside visitors, as well as being projected from the 'dark spot' at the building's interior: '[t]he final application of the inspection principle was of the whole prison by the whole of the outside world' (Semple, 1993: 142).
6. Christie (1970: 244) makes the point that reports of any disciplinary trouble amongst the supervisors were somewhat overblown. They can, perhaps, be traced to a letter that Jeremy Bentham wrote lamenting his brother's 'want of steadiness [or] firmness with them'.
7. Bentham (1787/1995: 36) provided this evocative description of their operation: '[b]y means of this implement, the slightest whisper of the one might be heard by the other, especially if he had proper notice to apply his ear to the tube'.
8. Dolar (2006: 71) also notes that 'in many languages there is an etymological link between spirit and breath'. In an extraordinary phrase, Dolar describes '[t]he voice is the flesh of the soul' (Dolar, 2006: 71). There are clear resonances here with Foucault's (1977: 30) phrasing that 'the soul is the prison of the body'.

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