

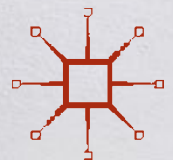
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SUSAN FLYNN AND ANTONIA MACKAY



# **SURVEILLANCE, ARCHITECTURE AND CONTROL**

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DISCOURSES ON SPATIAL CULTURE



# Surveillance, Architecture and Control

Susan Flynn • Antonia Mackay  
Editors

# Surveillance, Architecture and Control

Discourses on Spatial Culture

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## CHAPTER 10

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# Ireland's Magdalene Laundries and the Psychological Architecture of Surveillance

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and Alison Torn*

## INTRODUCTION

Just as the mental asylum was at one time perceived as the panacea for the mentally ill (Brown 1980), so too were the Magdalene Laundries of Ireland seen as the solution to the problems of “loose morality” and deviant behaviour of young women. This chapter will use the site of a former Magdalene Laundry in Waterford as a case study to consider both the psychological architecture of surveillance and how the physical site operated to enforce a sense of containment.

Schutz and Wicki (2011, p. 49) have argued that, “architecture can convey the natural existence of psychiatric structures within our society”;

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thus, both the outer architecture of a facility, as a representation of outside people's fears of those contained within, and the internal architecture (and the changes in these structures) may be representative of the prevalent views of "othering" of patients (in the case of psychiatric facilities) and women (in the case of Magdalene Laundries) and their treatment over time. Post-independence Ireland contained what it perceived as sexual immorality by locking it away across a range of interconnected institutions, including mother and baby homes, industrial and reformatory schools, mental asylums, adoption agencies, and Magdalene Laundries. Smith (2007) describes this system as Ireland's architecture of containment, which functioned to remove troublesome women from society. As a result, the Magdalene women existed in a dichotomous state of constant surveillance behind high walls and locked doors, while being hidden from view from the rest of society, lest they corrupt it.

Taking a psychological lens, this chapter will frame the Magdalene Laundry as a cultural phenomenon, and consider how the behaviour of the incarcerated women and girls is framed and manipulated by the constant surveillance of the Religious Orders within the physical site of the Laundry, whereby it is theorized that even subtle cues of surveillance can impact behaviour (Bourrat et al. 2011). This analysis will be contextualized within the frame of Foucault's (1979, 2006) discussions on the enactment of disciplinary power through architecture and Bentham's principle of Panopticon order.

### IRELAND'S MAGDALENE LAUNDRIES

The Magdalene Asylums were founded in the nineteenth century as a result of societal and political concern regarding the interrelated issues of prostitution and venereal disease. These institutions formed with the ethos of public philanthropy of "rescuing" women who had fallen into prostitution. Magdalene Asylums were common institutions in societies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; by 1900 there were more than 300 asylums in England, at least 20 in Scotland, and at least 40 in Ireland (Finnegan 2004). Institutions also existed in France, Australia, Canada, and North America. However, the Irish Magdalene Laundries are notable for their comparative longevity, remaining in existence until 1996 while similar Laundries in other countries were closing in the early to mid-twentieth century (Smith 2007). As institutions focused on social control,

analysis of the Magdalene Laundries has global resonance to other institutions with similar ethos.

The late nineteenth century saw a decline in prostitution in Ireland, due to improved educational and employment opportunities for women and high levels of emigration from Ireland (Titley 2006). Levels of prostitution saw further deep decline after Ireland gained independence from Britain in 1922, due to the removal of British soldiers. In order to maintain their survival, the Magdalene Asylums needed to reformulate their mission. The institutions began to focus their efforts towards unmarried mothers; referrals from the criminal justice system, social services, and other institutions; as well as girls who were “sexually aware” or “demonstrating marked tendencies towards sexual immorality” to maintain their clientele base (Department of Justice 2013; Raftery and O’Sullivan 1999, pp. 27–28; Titley 2006). The formation of the Independent Irish State in 1922 was heavily influenced by the Catholic Church and doctrine, which targeted these women who did not fit strict puritanical notions of womanhood and motherhood. Ten institutions existed after Ireland’s independence, existing from 1922 to 1996; during their time these institutions accommodated fewer voluntary entrants, and became increasingly punitive, detaining girls and women for longer periods (many for life, who died behind Laundry walls).

The Church and the newly formed Irish Free State cooperated increasingly throughout the 1920s to police and surveil the nation’s moral climate. In particular, the Catholic Church enforced moral control over women’s bodies and sexuality through a social and legal establishment of power, which managed domestic life, education, health, the arts, welfare entitlements, and religious participation (O’Mahony and Delanty 2001). Women were restricted in behaviour and role to enforce the outward image of Ireland as a sexually pure and moral nation (Finnegan 2004). The control of women’s sexuality, in both practice and discourse, became one of the main strategies by which the Catholic Church maintained its power, with severe consequences for those considered to have transgressed (Inglis 1998; Luddy 2007). The institutions bore the title of “Magdalene” in reference to Saint Mary Magdalene, described in contemporaneous Catholic doctrine as a reformed prostitute who was rewarded for her penitence and service to Jesus with love and compassion (although readings of the four gospels of the new testament offer little support to the prostitute narrative [BBC 2011]). Life in the institutions reflected this belief of



penitence and servitude to facilitate forgiveness and redemption. The incarcerated women served penance through systematic prayer, silence, and hard labour laundering and ironing soiled sheets from hospitals, hotels, and other businesses (Department of Justice 2013; O'Donnell 2011; Smith 2007). Some of these women did so for decades without financial compensation, while denied freedom of movement.

This chapter will begin with a consideration of the psychological theories of social control and surveillance, followed by an analysis of how these culturally embedded notions of control and surveillance are manifested in the physical architecture of a former Magdalene Laundry.

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SOCIAL CONTROL

Fundamentally, the ethos of the Catholic Church and its relationship to social control (and, more specifically, its control of women's sexuality) frame cognitive schemas to justify and validate the surveillance of women's bodies. This surveillance of women is culturally embedded in Irish social life through the shaping of rhetoric by the Catholic Church, and is reinforced by the physical buildings associated with the Church. Institutions like the Catholic Church must be understood as part of the historical evolution and broader context of social action and cultural traditions, from which it emerged (Melossi 2001).

Social control refers to the regulation and enforcement of social norms to maintain social order, and can be defined as an organized action intended to change people's behaviour (Innes 2003). In the Magdalene Laundries, girls were often transferred between industrial schools and the laundries without warning or explanation (Raftery and O'Sullivan 1999). The girls were kept in a constant state of emotional and psychological turmoil, often unaware of why they were there, how long they would remain, or whether they would be transferred elsewhere. The girls were under constant control of the Religious Order and deprived of an education, rest, and privacy, and were assigned new names and uniforms (O'Rourke 2011). Social control was achieved using positive and negative sanctions, reinforcing acceptable behaviour, and punishing unacceptable behaviours that violated promoted social norms.

Closely related to notions of social control are actions of "watching" and surveillance. Individuals who violate the social norms are seen as deviants, with women who break the rules often looked at as doubly deviant, breaking not only social norms or societal laws but also the gender norms



of acceptable behaviour. In the case of the Irish Magdalenes, the Irish State and Religious Orders have been complicit in portraying these women as deviants to justify their incarceration (O'Mahoney-Yeager and Culleton 2016). Historically, women's sexuality has been targeted in order to portray an external image of Ireland as a moral and pure nation. Extramarital sex contradicted a national identity which emphasized conformity and Catholic morality.

McCullough and Carter (2013) hypothesize that religion fosters the development and exercise of self-control and self-regulation. They argue that changes in religion, in particular an increased focus on entities that possess preferences about human behaviour and morality, and who monitor, reward, and punish those behaviours, reflects a belief in the efficacy of these entities to control behaviour. Furthermore, according to Raven (1999) to implement power strategies of social control, various devices can be used including the notion of an omnipotent deity with the power to reward or punish; reward and coercive power is enhanced by omnipotence and where omnipresence establishes necessary continual surveillance (real or perceived). Thus, religious cognitions, in particular those featuring moralizing Gods, and a belief in the afterlife, are particularly useful for promoting social control. The idea of being watched and punished by a deity, or its representatives, should promote prosocial behaviour (Bering 2006; Johnson and Bering 2006; Norenzayan and Shariff 2008). The supernatural monitoring hypothesis suggests that thinking about God might make believers think their behaviour is being monitored. Various studies find support for changes in behaviour when participants are primed to think they are being watched by some "other" (Gervais and Norenzayan 2012; Bering et al. 2005; Piazza et al. 2011). The ability to measure these results in a lab setting only indicates how simple it is to achieve the sense of "being watched". Unfortunately, the actual history of the Magdalene Laundries speaks to what can be achieved through the systematic promotion of a watchful God both culturally (in Ireland) and institutionally (in the Laundries), coupled with actual behaviour monitoring by members of the Holy Orders who ran the institutions. This was further exacerbated by the Nuns in the Laundries encouraging the women to report on each other's behaviour, thus creating a system of high-level social control and in-group monitoring, with detrimental effects. This in-group monitoring acted as an informal sanction, ensuring the reinforcement and punishment of behaviour by in-group members.

## SOCIAL CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE

Intuitively, we can know that being watched changes our behaviour, however this intuition is also empirically supported in research. For example, the Hawthorne Effect refers to the modification of behaviour (person or group) in response to knowledge of being observed, similarly the Spotlight Effect (Gilovich and Savitsky 1999) is the tendency for us to think that people notice our actions more than they do and that this impacts our behaviour. Thus, from the perspective of social accountability we have evolved to follow group norms, particularly under group observation—to not do so would lead to discomfort similar to that experienced by those who did not conform in Asch's (1951) infamous conformity experiments. Additionally, it may not simply be the real presence of others that can influence our behaviour, but also the implied or imagined presence of others. This is exemplified in research by Bourrat et al. (2011) who found that humans pay close attention to the reputational consequences of their behaviours and that even very subtle cues that one is being observed can affect, for example, cooperative behaviours. In investigating how even subtle cues of being watched would affect moral judgements, Bourrat et al. predicted that participants exposed to these subtle cues (in this case an image of eyes) would affirm their endorsement of prevailing moral norms by expressing greater disapproval of moral transgressions. Bateson et al. (2013) found similar results in their study where they found that images of eyes induce more prosocial behaviour, independent of local norms. These studies illustrate that even in cases where people are not being watched, but the perception of being watched is primed, it has a measurable impact. Also indicated is the relevance of reputation to engagement in behaviour, with an evolutionary link to cooperative reputation identified in Engelmann et al. (2016). A small number of contemporary studies suggest that even at preschool age children show reputational concern and choose to modify their behaviour when in the presence of a peer observer (Engelmann et al. 2013; Leimgruber et al. 2012; Shaw et al. 2014).

The significance of this in relation to the Magdalene Laundries is particularly relevant—where the institution was built on the premise of reputation management and change in line with the professed Catholic moral of the time. Irish women were historically constructed as the biological and moral representatives of the Irish State; sexual immorality was the most extreme act of deviance and was dealt with by locking it away.

Ireland's architecture of containment (Smith 2007) allowed for women's sexuality (and their sexual abuse) to be hidden from society and written out of Irish history.

The psychological theories explaining the phenomenon of social control and surveillance can aid in understanding how social control was maintained in these institutions. However, to more comprehensively consider surveillance in the Magdalene Laundries, it is essential to consider how the physical architecture of the Laundries also contributed to this experience of being constantly monitored. To illustrate this point, the chapter will consider how architecture plays a role in the psychology of surveillance and social control through the case example of the former Magdalene Laundry in Waterford, Ireland.

### ARCHITECTURE, SURVEILLANCE, AND SOCIAL CONTROL: ST MARY'S GOOD SHEPHERD LAUNDRY, WATERFORD

Historically, the rapid growth of industries and technologies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries meant that society was no longer able to carry perceived deviants (Scull 1993). Consequently, there was increased demand for those deemed extraneous to society to be institutionally accommodated and separated as surplus to the capitalist economy, thus maximizing the labour force and removing the threat to social order (Scull 1993). Asylums turned no one away; anyone whose behaviour was judged intolerable was likely to be incarcerated. So lay definitions of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour gained influence in demarcating the sane from the insane, moral from immoral.

In relation to asylum construction, there were grand political ideals from reformers of constructing architecturally pleasing buildings with a stimulating environment of galleries, music, and artists' rooms. However, with the compulsory erection of asylums throughout England, for example, as a result of the 1845 Lunatics Act, asylums became expensive to build, run, and staff, becoming an unnecessarily costly means of managing deviants ostensibly from the lower classes (Scull 1993). Thus, the emergence of asylums was paralleled by the creation of other institutions such as prisons, workhouses, juvenile reformatories, and Magdalene Laundries, with which there are obvious similarities. As Scull describes them, such institutions turned out to be "museums for the collection of the unwanted" (Scull 1993, p. 370). Not only did they become a depository for deviants, critically these institutions also became a disciplinary space, with a movement

from physical to psychological forms of power and restraint as Foucault (1979) describes, “it is the transition from one art of punishing to another, no less skilful one. It is a technical mutation” (p. 257).

Whilst asylum-type institutions were products of the philanthropic reform movement, all were organized around the order of surveillance and control, and all reinforced the reformatory powers of labour, religion, and routine (Ignatieff 1983). Isolation from the outside world was a key feature of these institutions, premised on avoiding the antecedents of deviance and restoring the spirit. In relation to the Magdalene Laundries, isolation and solitude provided space for spiritual reflection, so that the institution was not solely an administrative apparatus but “a machine for altering minds” (Foucault 1979, p. 125). Such isolation became a disciplinary enclosure, a means of preventing the spread of immorality in society, thus the institution was a societal instrument used for the maintenance of social order. Incarceration and partitioning were therefore motivated by the twin desires for a pure community and a disciplined society (Foucault 1979).

Coercion was used within the reform institutions, and the Magdalene Laundries in particular, to mould the inmates through techniques, such as timetables, compulsory activities, silence, and repetition (Foucault 1979). Within the Waterford Institution, the business of the laundry itself functioned to establish the rhythms and control of activity to serve multiple purposes: to eliminate idleness; to avoid preoccupation (e.g., with immoral, criminal, or mad thoughts); and to transform the individual via occupation towards a fixed norm. The most powerful tool in coercion however was observation and the material manifestation of this was evident in the architecture of the reform institutions of that time.

The Panopticon design that embodied this all-seeing architecture, whilst devised in the eighteenth century, came to fruition in the nineteenth century. Its designer, Bentham, sourced the idea of the Panopticon from a visit to his brother's factory, which had been set up around a centralized unit from where his brother could keep a watchful eye on his workforce. Bentham describes the Panopticon not as a schema or template for institutional architecture, but as a mechanism, which, for Foucault, means a mechanism of disciplinary power (Foucault 2006). The building had corridors of locked and barred rooms circling around a central building or tower, from which inmates could be seen at all times, with minimal staffing (two or three at the most). The tower was a central point of surveillance, which illuminated all that had to be seen, whilst providing a

single gaze. This central observation cell was often constructed in such a way that the observer could not be seen by the inmates. The power of surveillance on the bodies of the inmates was therefore exercised irrespective of the actual presence of the observer. Conversely, the cells of the inmates were constructed to make them permanently visible, therefore the power exercised, whilst ever present, was only ever an optical and psychological effect (Foucault 2006). Crucially, the architecture of asylums enabled power to be distributed, an all-pervasive continuous control, whose premise was internal governance and, as such, was essentially embodied. The inmate of a Panopticon was therefore at the receiving end of asymmetrical surveillance, policing the self for fear of punishment.

There is no question that the literature on the Panopticon is omnipresent in surveillance studies, as the leading scholarly model and metaphor for considering surveillance. Haggerty (2006, p. 27) goes as far as to suggest that, “Foucault continues to reign supreme in surveillance studies and it is perhaps time to cut off the head of the king”. However, much criticism has been written about the desire to move towards post-Foucauldian studies of surveillance (e.g., Caluya 2010; Wood 2007). Wood (2007) suggests that Actor-Network Theory is the only viable option for post-Foucauldian studies of surveillance, which combines both a genuine methodological advance borne through genealogy, which does not allow for moral assumptions to determine resulting analyses. However, these writings and calls to move beyond Foucault’s analysis of the Panopticon focus on examining the links between life and technological surveillance; the current chapter examines the role of surveillance in Ireland’s Magdalene Laundries, which experienced its zenith prior to the 1970s (and, therefore, prior to electronic or virtual surveillance technologies). For this reason, Foucault’s pre-technological considerations of surveillance are much more relevant to the present chapter than post-Foucauldian studies of surveillance.

Further, we must consider that Foucault’s primary theoretical focus in *Discipline and Punish* is to analyse power. Foucault uses Bentham’s Panopticon as “an architectural diagram” as a metaphor from which to consider power in Foucault’s disciplinary society (Caluya 2010, p. 624). Caluya (2010, p. 625) reminds us that the core principle of the Panopticon is not the surveillant gaze, but the “automatisation and disindividualisation of power”, where the analysis of the Panopticon is part of a larger analysis to understand power. Through this lens, scholars have called for following Foucault’s method, by tracing the evolution and genealogy of



punishment, power, and object relations (Caluya 2010; Wood 2007). Foucault (1979, p. 307) completes *Discipline and Punish* with the statement that “I end a book that must serve as a historical background to various studies of the power of normalization and the formation of knowledge in modern society”. In other words, Foucault was writing a genealogy of modern punishment (and not a history of prisons and incarceration), where the Panopticon is presented as an architectural diagram and metaphor, and not as a “summative theory” (Wood 2007, p. 250).

The applicability of the Panopticon to the Magdalene Laundries is apparent on many levels, as a method for understanding how surveillance and power manifested in this specific context. While the Laundry in Waterford was not built architecturally speaking, in line with the concept of the original Panopticon, they nevertheless retain features of the broad concept of Panopticon surveillance (and its supposed merits in containment), as well as the broader diagram of power as described by Foucault. The very design of the site of the Waterford laundry facilitated the control exerted over the women held on site, who are also referred to as inmates in contemporary analysis of the Laundries (e.g., Finnegan 2004; Luddy 2007; Smith 2007).

The College Street Campus of the Waterford Institute of Technology, purchased in 1994, is the former site of a convent of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd of Angers (commonly known as the Good Shepherd Sisters), as well as the St Mary's Good Shepherd Laundry and St Dominick's Industrial School. In 1842 Reverend Timothy Dowley established an institution for homeless girls and women in Waterford. Bishop O'Brien approved Reverend Crotty's request to the Good Shepherd Sisters in France to send sisters to facilitate the running of the institution, and five sisters arrived in 1858 (Department of Justice 2013). Building work on the Convent and other buildings began in 1882 and was occupied in 1884. The Laundry operated on site until its closure in 1982 (Department of Justice 2013).

Figure 10.1 depicts the Convent building. There are no known pictures of the functioning laundry, which would have been located to the left of the Convent (but still physically attached to the Convent building), where the Nuns' “cells” were located. The interior of this building is adorned with patterned tiles and handcrafted woodwork (see Fig. 10.2); the incarcerated girls and women were not permitted in this part of the complex, except to clean. The girls' sleeping areas were located in a separate part of the complex, on the second and third floors of the building, above the



**Fig. 10.1** Good Shepherd Convent, Waterford postcard. (The Poole Photographic Collection, National Library of Ireland)



**Fig. 10.2** Interior of Convent building





**Fig. 10.3** Former Magdalene Laundry building (right) with connecting hallway (centre of image) leading to Convent building

laundry, which was located on the ground floor (see Fig. 10.3). Survivors of the laundries report being monitored constantly in the building, with at least one Nun keeping watch on the shared dormitories to ensure the girls did not speak to each other or leave the room for any reason. While the Convent and Laundry buildings were connected through a hallway (see Fig. 10.3), this hallway was barred to the girls by locked doors at either end.

Similarly, the Panopticon perfected the exercise of disciplinary power, providing a constant pressure whilst simultaneously reducing the number of those who exercise the power and increasing the number on whom it is exercised (Foucault 1979, p. 206). Bentham glorifies the Panopticon for its ability to exercise this form of power: it “gives a herculean strength to those who direct the institute” and constitutes a “new mode of obtaining power, of mind over mind” (Bentham 1843; as cited in Foucault 2006, p. 74). The Nuns had supreme control over the behaviours of the inmates of the Laundries through the physical design of the building; however, it



**Figs. 10.4, 10.5, and 10.6** The main corridor connecting the former Laundry building to the Convent (Fig. 10.4; see also Fig. 10.3). Halfway down the corridor is the “penitent’s” entrance to the Chapel on the right (Fig. 10.5). At the end of the penitent’s entrance are the double doors (Fig. 10.6) leading directly into the left side of the Chapel where the Magdalene girls would have sat for Mass

was the power of mind over mind that was most effective. Being able to control when and where the inmates of the Laundry went and maintaining watchful eyes (real or perceived) on them at all times facilitated high levels of social control.

Within asylum architecture, inmates became a productive source of knowledge on, for example, the causes of immorality, criminality, insanity, its control, and cure and skill. The formation of knowledge and exercise of power form a symbiotic relationship with a mutual reinforcement of the other:

The Panopticon functions as a laboratory of power. Thanks to its mechanisms of observation, it gains in efficiency and in the ability to penetrate into men's behaviour, knowledge follows the advances of power, discovering new objects of knowledge over all the surfaces on which power is exercised. (Foucault 1979, p. 204)

This constant monitoring of the girls by members of the Holy Orders who ran the institutions was facilitated by the Nuns promoting some of the "more penitent" or obedient girls to the status of "Sister". The Sisters were encouraged to report any deviant behaviour to the Nuns, creating what Foucault described as "a laboratory of power".

As part of the Good Shepherd complex in Waterford, a Chapel was built adjacent to the Convent. The Chapel in Waterford depicts a physical representation of Jesus on the cross, the prevailing model of Church architecture until the second half of the twentieth century (Fig. 10.7; Schloeder 1998, p. 30).

Christ's head is at the apse, which is the seat of governance represented by the bishop's cathedra; the choir is his throat, from which the chants of the monks issue forth the praise of God; the transepts are his extended arms; his torso and legs form the nave; since the gathered faithful are his body; the narthex represents his feet, where the faithful enter the church; and at the crossing is the altar, which is the heart of the church.

The gothic Revival style Chapel in Waterford was built ca. 1880 (National Inventory of Architectural Heritage n.d.). Gothic revival design emphasized the continuity between the established church and the pre-Reformation Catholic Church (Curl 1990). The Waterford Chapel is constructed from limestone, with an exposed solid timber roof, creating a sense of proportion and durability. The Catholic Church placed great





**Fig. 10.7** Good Shepherd Chapel, ca. 1901–1908. (Poole Photographic Collection, National Library of Ireland)

emphasis on permanence in design, both externally and internally. The edifices and buildings were designed to represent Christ's presence in this permanent structure, by drawing metaphorical links between the physical firm foundation of the site with the firm foundation of the Catholic faith. In this way, the buildings themselves bear silent witness as a survivor of time and change, transcending time and place as Christ does (Rose 2001). Designers of Catholic architecture were tasked with conveying a sense of "permanence that speaks of reverence due to sacrament", echoing Hebrews 13:8 "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Schloeder 1998, p. 123). Similarly, Foucault describes the primary effect of the Panopticon was "to induce in the inmate a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault 1979, p. 201). The most powerful tool in coercion was observation and the material manifestation of this was evident in the architecture of the reform institutions. The building itself was a carceral mechanism which aimed to transform individuals through a combination of coercion,

reward, and punishment. Foucault (1979, p. 172) describes institutional architecture thus;

architecture ...is no longer built simply to be seen..., or to observe the external space..., but to permit an internal, articulated and detailed control – to render visible those who are inside it; ...an architecture that would operate to transform individuals: to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them.

The exercise of power via surveillance is further manifested in the Waterford Laundry through religious symbolism and iconography embedded throughout the building. Schloeder (1998, p. 145) maintains that Catholic buildings, like the Waterford Chapel, have important value “as a symbol... it should in some way speak of what it is: not a secular building surmounted by a cross, but a sacred building: a place set aside for God and his people... we must look beyond the functional arrangements so even the language and grammar of the building might contribute to our understanding of the things of God”.

In addition to the physical structure of the Chapel, religious imagery was displayed throughout the Waterford complex of buildings (e.g., pictures and statues of Jesus, the Virgin Mary), contributing to the sense of constant surveillance of the girls and women. Iconography or the sacred image of God has been important throughout the history of Christianity. Schloeder (1998) maintains that the most important role of this iconography is to “depict the truths of the Gospel in material media” (p.145), where the import and symbolism of these icons “lies not in the object, but in its subject” (p. 148). The Catholic Church has long valued the symbolism of unity between Christ, the message of the Gospels, and their conveyance of these values through icons.

Religious icons are embedded with meaning, conveying a sense of a permanent and omnipotent surveillance in the physical space of the Laundries. The icons are often depictions of Jesus, Saints, or the Virgin Mary in human form. In this way, “surveillance has particular significance because it can invoke audiences that are not immediately present and hence bring to bear constraints upon action from elsewhere in space and time” (Reicher and Haslam 2002, p. 14). These physical icons and artefacts assume the role of “a physical symbol of God’s or Christ’s presence itself” (Hart 2013, p. 172). These symbols, coupled with regimes of

prayer, labour, and silence, served to fuel the message of an omnipotent God, and the sense that the Magdalene girls and women were under constant surveillance. The girls were surrounded by spiritual images of “eternal verity” where “the best the transient viewer on earth can hope to do is to glimpse a fragment of the eternity that awaits the souls of the redeemed” (Antonava 2010, p. xi); their role of “penitent” and “sinner” was reinforced by their incarcerated status and physical and verbal degradation from the nuns.

## CONCLUSION

Foucault's (1979) Panopticon describes a system of power that resulted in people monitoring and disciplining their own behaviour in response to the sense of being continually surveilled by a central watchtower where prisoners were unable to see the guard through the obscured watchtower. In this sense, the omnipotent gaze of the guard is both visible and invisible. The inmate must therefore assume they could be watched at any moment, and begin to control and discipline their own behaviour (Foucault 1979). The girls and women in the Laundries were similarly monitored by the physical gaze of the Nuns and Sisters, as well as the omnipotent gaze of Catholic icons. As with the early asylums, coercion was used to control both asylum and Magdalene Laundry inmates. Similarly, the most powerful tool in coercion was surveillance, and the material manifestation of this was evident in the architecture and physical environment of the Magdalene Laundries.

Although Magdalene Laundries existed in Ireland for much longer than other countries, they were initially common institutions in societies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, France, and Australia (Finnegan 2004; Smith 2007). The consistencies and similarities in surveillance in these institutions (along with mental asylums and other institutions of social control, such as workhouses and industrial schools) suggest that the theories and examples discussed here can be extrapolated to other contexts internationally. Surveillance permeates the environment of the Laundries in multiple forms: their own in-group; the out-group of Sisters and Nuns; and by the physical icons and structures of the buildings. The physical institution of the Magdalene Laundry creates group inequality by restricting the movement and behaviour of girls and women in and through the building complex.

Foucault's Panopticon is a method for considering social order and social control through surveillance via two methods. The first involves training people through "hierarchical observation exemplified by the military camp" where the Panopticon is a diagram of power enacted through its very visibility (Foucault 1979; Wood 2007). The second method is enacted through the process of normalizing codes of behaviour, which can be found across most institutions (e.g., schools) (Wood 2007). It is only through the combined reality or suggestion of hierarchical observation and generation of social norms that social order and control can be enforced. Foucault (1979) speaks of how time is needed to create a generation of sameness, which allows for a boundary between normal and abnormal and worth and unworthiness to be created. In social psychology, this process of the creation social norms has been empirically described as the customary rules that govern behaviour in groups and societies. Social norms provide a robust method for understanding social influence and conformity.

In the Magdalene Laundries, this dual approach for considering social order and control, as conveyed through Foucault's Panopticon, manifests in both the physical architecture of the buildings (which often echo a prison setting with locked doors, high walls, the removal of the girls' names, and wearing of uniforms, along many other cruelties); and in the generation of social norms, which enforce social order. The Magdalene girls are not permitted to speak, except in prayer, and the norm of penance through systematic prayer, silence, and hard labour governed their daily behaviour.

As such, Foucault's (1979) Panopticon is both a system of visual surveillance and linguistic control; "a system of optic surveillance that is predicated upon – and reinforced by – the documentation and distribution of personal information" (Elmer 2003, p. 234). Foucault's concept of the Panopticon considers both what is visible and what is expressed through this architecture of surveillance. Part of the system of control and power is visible (in the physical structures), while also being expressed through the classification and separation of people. The Magdalene Laundries functioned via a similar mechanism of overt displays of control through the presence of the Nuns and Catholic iconography, and strict regimes of control (through silence and prayer), reinforced through the separation of Magdalene girls and women from other areas of the complex through locked doors by incarceration. Like the Panopticon, the Magdalene Laundry is a permanent structure, where the inmates are



visible to an assumed gaze from those in power (the Nuns and/or God). As such, the “architectural apparatus” of both the Panopticon and Magdalene Laundries “induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault 1979, p. 201).

The Magdalene Laundries were institutions focused on social order and control. Using the former Magdalene Laundry in Waterford as a case study to consider both the psychological architecture of surveillance (as well as how the physical site operated to enforce a sense of containment) has global resonance for institutions focused on social control worldwide, while giving due consideration to the Irish cultural context. Foucault’s (1979) Panopticon has provided an internationally relevant paradigm from which to understand how the behaviour of incarcerated women and girls is framed and manipulated by the constant surveillance and physical gaze of the Nuns and Sisters (as well as the omnipotent gaze of Catholic icons of the Religious Orders), within the physical site of the Laundry.

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