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Spooks

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ABSTRACT
This article considers the double meaning of 'spook' as both ghost and spy. Building on but moving beyond the hauntological or spectral turn in the recent humanities, the article explores this double meaning of 'spook' and what it might tell us about security politics. In so doing, the article moves through a diverse range of topics: from Hamlet to Bentham, from undercover cops to the anxieties of security intellectuals, and from moles to the ghostly powers of police, the article lays bare the haunted nature of contemporary security.

KEYWORDS Spooks; ghosts; spies; moles; undercover cops; security; police; hauntology; Hamlet; Bentham

What is a spook? The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers the noun 'spook' as 'a spectre, apparition, ghost', with a verb form 'to spook' meaning to haunt, frighten or unnerve. As a noun, however, spook has a second meaning: 'an undercover agent; a spy'. Is there a connection between the first spook and the second? Between the spectre or ghost on the one hand and the security agent or spy on the other?

Such questions are even more pressing given the recent 'hauntological' or 'spectral' turn. Since the publication of Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, the social sciences and humanities have witnessed one ghostly discussion after another. To give just a few examples from across the disciplines: Avery Gordon placed the ghost centre-stage in sociology with *Ghostly Matters*; Stephen Frosh did something similar for psychoanalysis in *Hauntings*; Mark Fisher recast cultural analysis in *Ghosts of My Life*; Sue Chaplin situated spectres at the heart of law in *The Gothic and the Rule of the Law*; and Michael Fiddler, Theo Kindynis and Travis Linnemann performed the same task for criminology in *Ghost Criminology*.[1] Journals such as *Ethos* and *Law and*

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[1]Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (1993), trans. Peggy Kamuf (Routledge 1994); Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (University of Minnesota Press 1997); Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on*

Humanities have also run special issues on, respectively, 'Haunting in Psychological Anthropology' (in 2019) and 'Haunted Courts' (in 2022). The field is now so well established that there are edited volumes with multiple contributions, such as *The Spectralities Reader* edited by María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren.[2] The literature on the ghost, spectre and haunting now seems to be making its presence felt everywhere, with one contemporary anxiety or political force after another interpellated in terms of things spectral. Yet within this plethora of work on the ghostly, the connection between the spectre or ghost on the one hand and the undercover agent or spy on the other (between the spook and the spook, so to speak) is never addressed.

The absence is even more remarkable given the constant reference back to one of Derrida's starting points, namely the opening claim of *The Communist Manifesto*, to the effect that 'a spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism'. When they make this claim, Marx and Engels go on to say that the powers of Europe have entered into an alliance to exorcize the spectre, including 'Pope and Tsar, Metternich and Guizot, French Radicals and German police-spies'.[3] Despite Marx and Engels's swift move from the spectral enemy to the police spies opposing it, none of the work in the hauntological turn addresses this point. The police spies ranged against the spectre appear … nowhere. Marx has a noticeable presence in the near-600-page *Spectralities Reader*, for example, but in the dozens of citations to him and the spectre with which the *Manifesto* begins, the police spies never appear. The Pope gets a mention (in Derrida's discussion with Bernard Stiegler), and the Tsar, Metternich and Guizot appear (in the excerpt from Peter Hitchcock's book *Oscillating Wildly*), but the police spies go unnoticed and unseen.

This points to a broader issue: very little has been written about the haunted nature of the world of security. If, as Derrida argues, 'haunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony',[4] then *what about the hegemony of security*? For contemporary security politics is replete with ghosts. Witness, for example, the plethora of work written by security intellectuals about what has been presented to us as perhaps the major security issue of the twenty-first century thus far: the 'war on terror'.[5] 'The insurgents are ghosts', commented one *New York Times Magazine* report in 2008, adding that soldiers report seeing the ghosts, getting close to the ghosts, and, of course,

Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures (Zero Books 2014); Sue Chaplin, *The Gothic and the Rule of the Law* (Palgrave 2007); Michael Fiddler, Theo Kindynis and Travis Linnemann (eds), *Ghost Criminology: The Afterlife of Crime and Punishment* (New York University Press 2022).

[2]María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (eds), *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory* (Bloomsbury 2013).

[3]Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works, Vol. 6* (Lawrence and Wishart 1984), 482.

[4]Derrida (n 1), 37.

[5]We are building here on Mark Neocleous, *Pacification: Social War and the Power of Police* (Verso 2025), 128–32.

destroying the ghosts. 'The best antidote for the menacing ghostliness of the ambushing enemy is killing and knowing you've killed them', one soldier told the reporter. Journalism from the period was replete with comments along the lines that Western soldiers were up 'against a ghostly enemy'.[6] In an earlier period, Soviet security personnel also referred to Afghan rebels as *dukhi*: ghosts. The extent of such discourse is evident from the titles of books produced from within the security industry since 2000: *Ghost Wars* is the title of one history of the CIA; *Chasing Ghosts* is the title of a book on unconventional warfare; *Ghost* is the title of a book on the secret life of CIA spy James Jesus Angleton, a book on the confessions of a counterterrorism expert, and another on the confessions of an FBI undercover agent; *Spooks* is the name of an unofficial history of MI5; *Chasing Ghosts* is the name of a book on the policing of terrorism; *The Ghost Warriors* is the name of a book on Israel's war on terror; *Spooked* is how the CIA manipulation of the media is described in one book; *The Ghosts of Langley* is the title of a book taking us into the heart of the CIA.[7] This list could go on and on. Books published prior to the turn of the century include *Spooks: The Private Use of Secret Agents* (1979) and Sam Greenlee's *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, retelling the experience of the first black man employed by the CIA and turned into a film in 1973.[8] (The title also plays on the other, specifically American racial meaning of 'spook', referring to black people, and also contains a far more political point: 'that an armed revolution by Black people haunts White America, and has for centuries'.)[9] We might also namecheck the B.B.C. TV spy drama *Spooks* that ran from 2002 to 2011. There also exists a large body of literature on the 'ghosts of Vietnam', a war, we might note, in which CIA security operations included attempts to prey on Vietnamese superstitions by telling them that 'the wandering souls of their unburied dead … are guiding our bombs'.[10]

[6]Elizabeth Rubin, 'Battle Company is Out There' *New York Times Magazine* (24 February 2008); Peter Beaumont, 'US Sails Against Ghostly Enemy' *The Observer* (23 November 2001).

[7]Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (Penguin 2004); Fred Burton, *Ghost: Confession of a Counterterrorism Agent* (Random House 2008); John J. Tierney, *Chasing Ghosts: Unconventional Warfare in American History* (Potomac Books 2008); Thomas Hennessey and Claire Thomas, *Spooks: The Unofficial History of MI5* (Amberley Publishing 2010); Samuel M. Katz, *The Ghost Warriors: Inside Israel's Undercover War Against Suicide Terrorism* (Diversion Books 2016); John Mueller and Mark G. Stewart, *Chasing Ghosts: The Policing of Terrorism* (Oxford University Press 2016); Nicholas Schou, *Spooked: How the CIA Manipulates the Media and Hoodwinks Hollywood* (Skyhorse Publishing 2016); John Prados, *The Ghosts of Langley: Into the Heart of the CIA* (Amberley Publishing 2017); Michael R. McGowan and Ralph Pezzullo, *Ghost: My Thirty Years as an FBI Undercover Agent* (St. Martin's Press 2018); Jefferson Morley, *The Ghost: The Secret Life of CIA Spymaster James Jesus Angleton* (St. Martin's Press 2018).

[8]Jim Hougan, *Spooks: The Private Use of Secret Agents* (W.H. Allen 1979); Sam Greenlee, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (Richard Baron Books 1969).

[9]Greenlee cited in Andrew Peart, '"I Won't Have Anything to do With Amoral Dudes"' *UChicago News* (27 February 2023).

[10]Memorandum from Henry Kissinger to the President, 'Psychological Warfare Campaign', 1 June 1972 - https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/LOC-HAK-512-7-21-2.pdf

As is clear from the dominant trope in these titles, the enemy threat is interpellated as a ghostly figure and spectral presence to capture something of its radical and spooky otherness. And yet, at the same time, there is an acknowledgement of the spookiness of the security industry's own organizations and processes, which is why it refers to its own agents and operatives as ghosts and spooks. Such security personnel are often to be found flying 'ghost planes' and driving 'ghost cars'. In British police slang, 'ghosties' is the name for the police team that breaks through doors (adopted from the film *Ghostbusters*), a very spectral term for a very violent material process.

The spooks are spooked as well as spooky, it seems. But what are they spooked about? Taking a circuitous route through various strands of cultural and intellectual history, this article argues that it is important to consider why spooks are spooks and what is spooking them. Something important hangs on the spookiness of their role in seeking something that goes by the name of security. In making this claim, we also argue that to understand the security imaginary we must grasp the fundamentally ghostly nature of the state's police power. But we begin in a world that seems rather far from contemporary security politics and the police power: in the haunted mind of one of the chief liberal theorists of security, Jeremy Bentham.

'This subject of ghosts has been among the torments of my life'

Liberty is a 'branch of security', Bentham claims in *Principles of the Civil Code*. The fact that we seek 'security against injustice' is the very reason that security forms the principal object of civil law. For Bentham, as for liberalism in general, it is security rather than liberty that is the supreme concept of modern society. 'A clear idea of liberty will lead us to regard it as a branch of security'. Perhaps even more significantly, when Bentham comments on the extent to which a commitment to equality 'might require a redistribution of property', he adds that the threat this poses is to security rather than liberty.[11]

For Bentham, the objects of law are subsistence, abundance, equality, and security. 'Of these objects of the law … security is the only one which necessarily embraces the future'. If the future is to be predictable, then it must be made secure. 'To form a clear idea of the whole extent which ought to be given to the principle of security, it is necessary to consider, that [man] … is susceptible of pleasure and pain by anticipation'. As such, 'the idea of his security must be prolonged to him throughout the whole vista that his

[11] Jeremy Bentham, *Principles of the Civil Code*, in *The Works of Jeremy Bentham, Vol. I*, ed. John Bowring (William Tait 1843), 302–11. Hereafter cited as *Works* followed by volume number.

imagination can measure'. Security is designed 'to guarantee to him, as much as possible, his possessions against future losses'.[12] It is this that makes private property and accumulation possible. 'Security is the seed of opulence', and for opulence what people 'want principally of government is … security', and especially 'security in respect of future subsistence'.[13]

Yet, as always with those insisting on the priority of security, it is likewise seen as always under threat. 'Security', Bentham writes, is 'always tottering, always threatened, never at rest, lives in the midst of snares'.[14] This is why he spends so much time on that security architecture for which he has become so well-known: the Panopticon. Following Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, Bentham's Panopticon has been much discussed as the archetypal form of modern surveillance, discipline and punishment, and, following the train of thinking initiated by the subtitle of Foucault's book, *The Birth of the Prison*, the analysis of the Panopticon has centred on the prison. But as well as the prison, the Panopticon was to be used in 'Houses of Industry, Work-Houses, Poor-Houses, Manufactories, Mad-Houses, Lazarettos, Hospitals, and Schools'. The 'contrivance', to use one of Bentham's favourite words, was not simply a way to imprison people, but was to be 'a great and new invented instrument of government'. The Panopticon's 'great excellence consists in the great strength it is capable of giving to any institution it may be thought proper to apply it to'. In that sense, the contrivance was to be applied to 'persons to be governed', to deliver 'the security afforded by … the good behaviour of every individual', and therefore to achieve 'a degree of security, which, perhaps, has been scarce hitherto reached by conception, much less by practice'. It was expected to be able to do these things because, as the subtitle makes clear, at the heart of the Panopticon is inspection and 'inspection [is] the only security against escape'.[15]

All of which reinforces Bentham's status as a thinker committed to a rational and enlightened approach to government, which he believed ought to come through in legislation, and which would in turn provide the best security. But then what are we to make of his claim that the 'subject of ghosts has been among the torments of my life'.[16] Why would such a rational and enlightened thinker be so spooked? Educated and enlightened people are supposed to have given up the idea that the dead can return as spirits, Freud points out in his essay on the 'uncanny', and if there is one thing for sure it is that Bentham considered himself to be educated and enlightened. So why then was he so tormented by ghosts? The answer lies

[12]ibid 302, 308.
[13]Jeremy Bentham, 'Method and Leading Features of an Institute of Political Economy' (1801–4), in *Jeremy Bentham's Economic Writings, Vol. 3*, ed. W. Stark (George Allen and Unwin 1954), 310, 324.
[14]Bentham, *Principles of the Civil Code* (11) 307.
[15]Jeremy Bentham, 'Panopticon; Or, The Inspection House', in *Works, Vol. IV*, 37, 45–6, 66, 168, 239.
[16]Jeremy Bentham, 'Memoirs', in *Works, Vol. X*, 18.

in the whole problematic of security, which we use here to help us segue into the wider world of spooks.

In his *Constitutional Code*, Bentham writes that it is just as important to discuss 'ghosts and other fabulous maleficent beings' as it is to discuss monarchs and other figures of state. His enlightened reasoning pushes him towards the position that such beings do not exist, yet their power means that they must be considered for discussion.

> In no man's judgement can a stronger persuasion of the non-existence of those sources of terror have place than in mine; yet no sooner do I lay myself down to sleep in a dark room … than these instruments of terror obtrude themselves.[17]

The educated thinker knows that such beings do not exist, yet still they scare him. He simply finds it impossible to shake off his childhood fears. His 'fear of ghosts, and of the visitations of spiritual beings, was strong', he writes in his memoirs. So strong that 'even now, when sixty or seventy years have passed over my head since my boyhood received the impression which my grandmother gave it, though my judgment is wholly free, my imagination is not wholly so'. He was also 'always afraid of the devil' ('I was haunted by him') and professed a fear of vampires too.[18]

Bentham believed that the house in Barking where he spent his early years was haunted.

> At Barking, in the almost solitude of which so large a portion of my life was passed, every spot that could be made by any means to answer the purpose was the abode of some spectre or group of spectres.[19]

And in his correspondence he also recalls singing to himself as he walked home through a churchyard at night. 'Was it from high spirits?' No. 'My heart was going pit-a-pat all the while, and I fancied I saw a ghost perched upon every tombstone'.[20] So, in both private and public spheres, Bentham thought he was encountering some ghost or another.

Bentham thinks he knows who to blame for his fear of ghosts. It turns out to be the same people who Marx and Engels identify as the material force that will realize the spectre of communism and thus the very people who become the focus of Bentham's Panopticon: the workers. Bentham's fear of ghosts 'was not unknown to the servants', he admits in the memoirs, adding that they found it 'a permanent source of amusement to ply me with horrible phantoms in all imaginable shapes'. He later adds that the 'fear of ghosts had been implanted in my mind from earliest infancy by the too customary cultivators of that noxious weed, domestic servants'.

[17] Jeremy Bentham, *Constitutional Code* (1827), in *Works, Vol. IX*, 84.
[18] Bentham, 'Memoirs' (16) 11, 18–19, 21, 39.
[19] Bentham, 'Memoirs' (16) 18.
[20] Jeremy Bentham, letter to 'Miss F', in *Works, Vol. X*, 276.

In the *Constitutional Code*, he claims that 'the cause of these illusions were the stories told by servants in my childhood'. 'So dexterous was the invention' of the workers that they even 'managed to transform a real into a fictitious being. His name was *Palethorp*'. To elaborate on the emergence of the scary fictitious being known as Palethorp, Bentham tells the story of being taken by two servants to a public house run by a large and ugly man called Palethorp. The servants and Bentham had some drinks, but when the time came to leave the two servants paid for their share, knowing that the young Bentham had no money. Out of fear of what might happen to him given that he couldn't pay his bill, he rushed out and ran all the way home. The servants quickly learned how to use this fear to haunt him.

> When my company became troublesome, a sure and continually repeated means of exonerating themselves from it, was for the footman to repair to the adjoining subterraneous apartments, invest his shoulders with some strange covering, and, concealing his countenance, stalk in, with a hollow, menacing, and inarticulate tone. Lest that should not be sufficient, the servants had, stuck by the fireplace, the portraiture of a hobgoblin, to which they had given the name of Palethorp.[21]

The fact that the servants used a hobgoblin is not insignificant. Originally the word for a household spirit considered helpful, 'hobgoblin' was by the nineteenth century thought of as something frightening. For Bentham, the hobgoblin is a 'tremendous spectre', a 'monster'. Worse, 'the hobgoblin … is Anarchy'. The hobgoblin is thus often used as an 'instrument of terror' by 'the barbarous or unthinking servant'.[22] 'Hobgoblin', we might recall, was also the word used instead of 'spectre' [*Gespenst*] in the first English translation, approved by Marx and Engels, of the *Communist Manifesto*: 'a frightful hobgoblin stalks throughout Europe'.

So entrenched was Bentham's belief that the workers were the cause of his fears that he continued to hold that view into his senior years.

> Yesterday morning I dismissed three of my servants for naughty attempts to break open the cellar-door; and surely they were induced with what Cicero calls the *robustior improbitas* [robust impiety] in practising their tricks on a spot which, in particular, has long been watched by the angry ghost of my reverend predecessor, Parson Nelson. The culprits acknowledged their belief in the spectre, but denied their guilt.[23]

Bentham is not just spooked, then, but spooked by the workers, who threaten the security of the state. Conjuring one ghost after another, the workers

[21] Bentham, 'Memoirs' (16) 19.
[22] Jeremy Bentham, *The Book of Fallacies: From Unfinished Papers of Jeremy Bentham* (John and H.L. Hunt 1824), 143.
[23] Jeremy Bentham, letter to S. Parr, in *Works, Vol. X*, 417.

represent the possibility of resistance, revolution, anarchy. This is precisely why they must be disciplined and punished.

Bentham believes that his own experience of being terrorized by ghosts and other maleficent beings as soon as he lays down in a dark room is one shared by everyone. The darkness has 'a peculiar tendency to dispose men to conceive, and in a manner to feel, the presence of invisible agent'. Indeed, one of the reasons why Bentham gradually moved away from advocating solitary confinement in prisons is precisely because of the phantoms that the mind can conjure up when humans are left alone in the dark.

> When the external senses are restrained from action, the imagination is more active, and produces a numerous race of ideal beings. In a state of solitude, infantine superstitions, ghosts, and spectres, recur to the imagination. This, of itself, forms a sufficient reason for not prolonging this species of punishment, which may overthrow the powers of the mind, and produce incurable melancholy … madness, despair, or more commonly a stupid apathy.[24]

An enlightened and rational liberal and yet tormented by ghosts and spooked – more than anything by the workers. Bentham's torment is evidence of Adorno and Horkheimer's claim, in a note called 'On the Theory of Ghosts' that they added to their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which states that even 'enlightened' individuals often find it impossible to give up some of the old beliefs about the dead.[25] This is especially remarkable given Bentham's desire to rid people of superstitions about the dead and convince them that it is enlightened and rational to use dead bodies to benefit later generations; hence the donation of his body to science for dissection, followed by its preservation and public display, dressed in his suit, known as the 'Auto-Icon' (still on display at University College London).

Bentham's torment is even more remarkable given that the utilitarian calculation and enlightened reasoning through which security was intended to be achieved required exorcizing all other forms of theological thinking and fanciful imaginings. He once commented that he had sought to cure himself of the fear of ghosts by reasoning as follows:

> Ghosts are clothed, or not clothed; now, I never saw, nor fancied I saw, a ghost without clothes: so if there be ghosts of men, there must be ghosts of clothes too; and to believe this requires a farther stretch of belief, and farther evidence and authority.[26]

Ghosts do not exist, then, and are all the more frightening for it. Yet his eagerness to remove ghosts was due to the more general implications that such beliefs and fears can have on reasoned judgments. 'Now that I know the

[24] Jeremy Bentham, *The Principles of Penal Law*, in *Works, Vol. I*, 426.
[25] Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, 'On the Theory of Ghosts', in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), trans. John Cumming (Verso, London 1979), 215.
[26] Bentham cited in Bowring, 'Specimens of Bentham's Conversation', in *Works, Vol. X*, 587.

distinction between the imagination and the judgment, I can own how these things plagued me, without any impeachment of my intellect'.[27] Hence when a friend offered to tell the adult Bentham a ghost story, he declined the offer. 'No, that shall you not. I have had too much plague with ghost stories. The judgment is sometimes enslaved by the imagination'.[28] For rational judgment, we must clear our minds of its various imaginings, especially the imaginings of fictitious beings such as ghosts. What is required for good judgement, good law and therefore good government, is good reason, with which nothing should interfere.

It is for this reason that Bentham's horror of ghosts coincides with his horror of legal fictions. The jurisprudence which underpins Bentham's political arguments is firmly opposed to the idea of legal fictions, against which he rails throughout all his work, such as in his claim that the common law is but an 'assemblage of fictitious regulations'.[29] 'The season of *Fiction* is now over', he declares in *The Fragment on Government*. That work is a critique of Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765–69), in which such fictions play an important role, with Blackstone believing that such fictions enable the law to adapt. For Bentham, however, legal fictions are falsehoods and swindles that undermine what should be the rationality of legislation. A legal fiction 'may be defined [as] a wilful falsehood, having for its object the stealing legislative power'.[30] Any such fiction 'has never been employed but to a bad purpose' and, worse, 'is capable of being employed to every bad purpose whatsoever'.[31] Such fictions overawe us, he argues, making us imagine the law as, in Blackstone's words, a 'Gothic castle' albeit one 'fitted up for a modern inhabitant'.[32] For Bentham, in contrast, rational jurisprudence must remove from the law such 'theological' flourishes and Gothic touches that seem 'fetched … from the clouds'. 'In theology he [Blackstone] has found a not unfrequent source of ornament to divert us, of authority to overawe us, from sounding into the shallowness of his doctrines'.[33] In this sense, legal fictions are like ghosts. Ogden goes so far as to say that 'ghosts, no less than his horror of Legal Fictions, can be shown to have played their part in determining the intensity and pertinacity of [Bentham's] researches'.[34] Thus, in the 'Historical Preface' of the second edition of his *Fragment on Government*, he explains to the reader that the book was written to

[27]Bentham, 'Memoirs' (n 16) 21.
[28]Bentham, 'Specimens of Bentham's Conversation' (n 25) 563.
[29]Jeremy Bentham, *A Comment on the Commentaries* and *A Fragment on Government*, ed. J. H. Burns and H. L. A. Hart (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977) 120.
[30]Jeremy Bentham, *A Fragment on Government*, in *Works, Vol. I*, 243.
[31]Bentham, *Constitutional Code* (n 17) 76.
[32]William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England, Vol. 3* (1765–69) (University of Chicago Press, 1979) 268.
[33]Bentham, *Fragment on Government* (n 30) 272.
[34]C. K. Ogden, *Bentham's Theory of Fictions* (Kegan Paul 1932) ix–x.

erase the 'phantom' of the idea of the social contract on which so many arguments about government have been based: a belief in the social contract is like a belief in ghosts and both will cloud sensible judgment. For this reason, the Panopticon is the very opposite of the Gothic castle, constituting the 'modern' architectural form of a rational security apparatus to better police the threat to security posed by workers, paupers, criminals and the mad.

The fact that Bentham calls the Panopticon an 'Inspection House' reminds us that it is the architectural form for 'any sort of Establishment, in which persona of any description are to be kept under inspection'. The point about the architecture of inspection, however, is not that individuals are being watched, but that they *think* they are being watched (which is why the Panopticon continues to haunt our imagination, as Michael Fiddler puts it).[35] What matters is not that there *is* an Inspector, but the general *idea* of inspection. 'The apparent omnipresence of the inspector' is, in fact, the actual omnipresence of the belief that one is being perpetually inspected. The idea is that people are '*assured*, that whatever they do is known, even though that should not be the case'.[36] The actual figure of an inspector is replaced by the imagination of perpetual inspection. Somewhat ironically, what emerges is a new fiction, the *fiction of inspection*.[37] Such a fiction is just one example of the many fictions upon which security politics rests and about which we are now all too well aware.

Now, this idea of inspection might appear to be akin to spying, at least in the sense that the occupants think that they are being watched; hence the theme of surveillance which has dominated discussion of Bentham's Panopticon. Yet Bentham is keen to argue that what he has in mind is *monitoring* rather than *spying*. He even warned against 'a system of espionage', a French word that entered the English language in the 1790s, adding that 'to the word espionage a stigma is attached: let us substitute the word *inspection*, which is unconnected with the same prejudices'.[38] In his Panopticon work, he explains why the inspection model of power is superior to the model known as 'Dionysius's ear'. 'The object of that contrivance was, to know what prisoners said without their suspecting any such thing', but 'the object of the inspection principle is directly the reverse'.

[35]Michael Fiddler, 'Phantom Architecture: Jeremy Bentham's Haunted and Haunting Panopticon' (2022) *Incarceration* 1.
[36]Bentham, 'Panopticon' (n 15) 45, 66.
[37]Peter J. Hutchings, *The Criminal Spectre in Law, Literature and Aesthetics: Incriminating Subjects* (Routledge 2001), 41.
[38]Jeremy Bentham, *The Rationale of Reward*, in *Works, Vol. II*, 222. One wonders if his objection to the spy is connected to his fear of ghosts: Bentham tells the story of his mother taking him to visit a local widow. 'The visit was very charming. I was treated with rare sweetmeats, and got possession of a delightful book, a novel in four volumes, called "The Invisible Spy" – the heroine of which had, by the favour of an old magician or wonder-maker, acquired the secret of making herself occasionally invisible' - Bentham, 'Memoirs' (n 16) 23.

> It is to make them not only *suspect*, but be *assured*, that whatever they do is known, even though that should not be the case. Detection is the object of the first: *prevention*, that of the latter. In the former case the ruling person is a spy; in the latter he is a monitor. The object of the first was to pry into the secret recesses of the heart; the latter, confining its attention to *overt* acts, leaves thoughts and fancies to their proper *ordinary*, the court above.[39]

There is no need for spies to covertly gain intelligence of the secrets of those being governed by the Panopticon, because the occupants will be working on the basis that *everything about them is already known*. As a contrivance for *security*, the Panopticon operates as part of the wider machinery of modern power, including new forms of police, administration, rules, regulations, and punishment, all of which was to be internalized by the individual such that they police themselves. It is through internalizing the logic of security that prevention through monitoring becomes more powerful than detection through spying. For Bentham, then, monitoring is not spying.

When Bentham was writing, a 'monitor' was a noun connoting either a senior pupil at a school with responsibility for maintaining order, or a person who advises, warns or admonishes. This meaning of 'monitor' is found in the fifteenth century and was never confused with a 'spy' as a person who keeps watch over others. The modern use of 'monitor' as a verb to describe the regulation of the quality of a thing, such as a sound recording or radio signal, comes in the 1920s. A decade later, in the 1930s, it comes to also mean listening into and reporting on radio broadcasts, especially from foreign countries. And from there, in the 1940s, 'monitor' extended its meaning to include eavesdropping, such as on telephone conversations, and usually in secret. At this point, spying and monitoring come to share rather a lot of common ground. Precisely why this might be important takes us beyond Bentham. Why? Because in the very same decade that monitoring and spying were drawn together, spies started to be thought of as spooks. In other words, as monitoring became a key feature of spying, and spying came to be thought of as a form of monitoring, *spying* came to be imagined as having a *spooky* kind of presence.

'Seeing unseen'

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) tells us that the word 'spook' has its roots in the Dutch *spook* and German *spuk* (also *spuch*), initially coming into American English through German- and Dutch-settled regions (and reminding us of territories haunted by the ghosts of dead slaves and Indians). The first recorded use of the term offered by the *OED* is from 1801, in a sentence 'By mine dunder I fly so swift as any spook', meaning spirit. The citation

[39]Bentham, 'Panopticon' (n 15) 66.

appears in a July edition of a newspaper called *The Massachusetts Spy*, founded in 1770 by Isaiah Thomas and Zechariah Fowle, and which quickly became one of the most important newspapers supporting freedom of the press and the American Revolution. (The use of 'spy' in the newspaper's title was a naming convention not unusual in Britain and its colonies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, highlighting the role of the press in watching, discovering, or revealing.) The idea of a 'spook' as an undercover agent spying on others appears much later, in the early 1940s. This might suggest that the word emerged in the war conditions of 1939–1945. In fact, in its first uses, a 'spook' was a person employed by bosses to spy on employees or to spot or detect any irregularities among the workers; a spook was also known as a 'spotter' and 'detective'. Hence in *The American Thesaurus of Slang,* first published in 1942 and the source for the *OED*'s citations of the first uses of 'spook' as spy, the word 'spook' appears in the entries for 'detective' and 'company man' (as well as having an entry of its own where it is said to mean 'ghost').[40] But by the early 1960s, the spook as an undercover agent shifted from the workplace to the state. The *OED* cites a London-based magazine in April 1961, to the effect that 'the idea of making a living as a spy – "spook" in current Washington slang – is repugnant to most of us'. The writer obviously felt the need to explain that the word was American slang, but the fact that they could refer to it as 'current' suggests it was now part and parcel of the politics of 'national security' in the U.S. 'National security', it should be recalled, is a term and concept that emerged in 1947, but which quickly became a key feature of political discourse.[41]

All of which is to say that between roughly 1942 and 1960, the spook as an undercover agent moves from the world of workplace security to national security. To put it bluntly: the spooks come into their own with the national security state, a form of power that required spooks to operate externally, spying on other states, and internally, spying on the state's own citizens, most notably those operating in support of workers. Moreover, as the national security state developed, so security agents 'learned to live with the term, and occasionally refer to themselves as spooks'.[42] One dictionary of espionage even styles itself as translating 'spookspeak' into English.[43]

[40]Lester V. Berrey and M. Van den Bark, *The American Thesaurus of Slang: A Complete Reference Book of Colloquial Speech, Second Edition* (Thomas Y. Crowell 1953) 406–7, 716. Coincidentally, in the second half of 1945, a new 'Special Duty Squad' was formed within the London Metropolitan Police aimed at formally integrating undercover officers into policing, which quickly became known as the Ghost Squad. It was disbanded in 1949, with undercover officers being more widely distributed among other parts of the police force. The story is told by the Squad's first head, John Gosling, *The Ghost Squad* (W.H. Allen 1959).

[41]Mark Neocleous, *Critique of Security* (Edinburgh University Press 2008), 76–7, 94–5.

[42]David Atlee Phillips, *The Night Watch* (Atheneum, 1977) 61.

[43]Henry S. A. Becket, *The Dictionary of Espionage: Spookspeak into English* (Stein and Day, 1986).

Watching, listening, monitoring, and spying, all in the name of security: the spook perpetually traces, tracks and gathers intelligence, in a search that is, by definition, endless, all the while remaining hidden. The spook sees while remaining unseen.

'Seeing unseen' is a phrase used by the King in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. That play is well-known as a classic ghost story, containing what is certainly the most famous of the many ghosts that appear in Shakespeare's plays. The Ghost appears in the very first Act, where it 'bodes some strange eruption to our state', as Horatio puts it, or as Marcellus comments, 'something is rotten in the state of Denmark'. The Ghost is a portent of disorder and disruption and of dangerous things to come, as well as the fact that, to a Protestant audience, something devilish is at work. The Ghost in *Hamlet* is a revenant, coming from the past, and, in so doing, destabilizing the present and seeking to affect the future by avenging something awful that has been done in the past. The 'time is out of joint'.

> I am thy father's spirit,
>
> Doomed for a certain term to walk the night
>
> And for the day confined to fast in fires
>
> Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
>
> Are burnt and purged away. (1.5)

The Ghost wants to be remembered, a lesson understood by Hamlet, who swears to follow the Ghost's command to 'remember me'. But the Ghost also wants revenge and thus justice. 'If thou didst ever thy dear father love', the Ghost says to Hamlet, 'revenge his foul and most unnatural murder' (1.5).

Like all ghosts, this one knows things, yet considers himself 'forbid / To tell the secrets of my prison house'. Forbidden from revealing the secrets he knows, he also knows that others know that he knows things yet also knows that they do not know what he knows. 'I could a tale unfold', he adds. The Ghost holds some secret intelligence. Secret intelligence is also what Hamlet insists Horatio and Marcellus can never reveal: 'Never make known what you have seen tonight. … Never to speak of this that you have seen' (1.5). It turns out that *Hamlet* is a ghost story doubling up as a spy story.

'Spies are everywhere' in *Hamlet*, observe Simon Critchley and Jamieson Webster. Consider the proliferation of spies in the play. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern spy on Hamlet; Claudius and Polonius spy on the prince; Polonius spies a second time that results in his death; someone is spying on Ophelia, which is how we know about her last moments.

> The point is that everyone is being watched in *Hamlet*, and everyone lives in fear because they know they are being watched. Elsinore is a world of spies, a world of utter political mistrust in a corrupt and murderous regime.[44]

The spying is intensified by living in a 'warlike state' with an external enemy in the form of Fortinbras, Prince of Norway, but also by the sense that 'something is rotten' within the body politic itself in the form of an internal enemy – 'Treason! Treason!' (5.2) – whose identity seems to be a secret. This requires many of the characters to act as 'lawful espials', as the King describes himself and Ophelia's father, in the very speech in which he says that he and Ophelia's father will bestow themselves so that, 'seeing unseen', they can discover what is going on between Hamlet and Ophelia (3.1).

In *The Mousetrap*, the play within the play that Hamlet asks to be performed, there is to be a scene that comes close to re-enacting the murder of his father. Hamlet informs Horatio that one scene in the play contains events that are akin to the circumstances of his father's death. 'Observe my uncle', he tells Horatio. 'If his occulted guilt / Do not itself unkennel in one speech, / It is a damned ghost that we have seen' (3.2). Hamlet adds that he too will keep watch on his uncle: 'I mine eyes will rivet to his face'. The watchers will be watched by as many as possible.

As well as seeing unseen, there is that classic technique used by spooks: listening. Polonius tells Ophelia that she need not reveal what Hamlet has told her about his current state, since 'we heard it all'. Yet, seeking more intelligence, Polonius proposes that, following the play within the play, Hamlet should be left alone with his mother to see if she can 'entreat him / To show his grief', while Polonius will 'be placed, so please you, in the ear / Of all their conference' (3.1). When the King loses his composure after watching the playing out of his crime in *The Mousetrap*, Polonius offers to engage in yet more undercover listening:

> My lord, he's going to his mother's closet.
>
> Behind the arras I'll convey myself
>
> To hear the process. I'll warrant she'll tax him home;
>
> And, as you said (and wisely was it said),
>
> 'Tis meet that some more audience than a mother,
>
> Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear
>
> The speech of vantage. Fare you well, my liege. (3.3)

[44]Simon Critchley and Jamieson Webster, *The Hamlet Doctrine* (Verso 2013) 48–52.

As Peter Szendy points out, listening 'of vantage' means 'to hear more and to hear better'. The *advantage* comes from a position *of vantage*, but 'also means to hear *in advance*, like a spy who positions himself at the outpost or the advance-guard of what is happening in order to *prevent* what is coming'.[45] In *Hamlet*, then, the seeing unseen is paralleled by a hearing unheard.

Along with *The Mousetrap*'s audience being watched, the watchers are themselves being watched, by us, as we observe this world of spies and ghosts, keeping our eyes on Horatio and Hamlet as they keep their eyes on the King, seeking whatever intelligence we can, like lawful espials. We also hear everything, including what is said by the Ghost when he is off stage and underground. If the key to the lawful espials is that they are seeing the unseen and hearing the unheard, then it is equally true of spies like us. It is a world of spies. But a world of spies is a world in which no one can be trusted; such a world we might regard as a human tragedy, in which dead bodies are guaranteed to pile up (as they do both in the world of *Hamlet* and in our world in the name of security).

In short, as much as *Hamlet* is a ghost story, so it is also very much a spy story, which is why it is also a story about *moles*. When, in the fifth scene of the first act, the Ghost disappears from the stage, he goes underground, as is revealed when Hamlet tries to swear Horatio and Marcellus to secrecy. Marcellus insists that they have already sworn. 'Swear', the Ghost cries from a room beneath the stage. 'Come on, you hear this fellow in the cellarage', Hamlet says, insisting that they consent to swear. 'Never to speak of this that you have seen, / Swear by my sword'. 'Swear', the Ghost says again from under the ground, 'swear by his sword'. Hamlet: 'Well said, old mole. Canst work i' th' earth so fast? – / A worthy pioneer!'. The Ghost is a 'pioneer' (meaning 'foot soldier') in the underground, working in secret to hear what is happening and gather intelligence. The Ghost works as a mole.

In the world of spooks, a mole is an undercover agent, a spy working underground seeking to gain a position of trust within an organization, to uncover their secrets and gather intelligence, in order to undermine them, incriminate them, and defeat them, often through acting as *agent provocateur* and provoking them to undertake acts that they were never themselves planning but which then incriminate them. It is often claimed that this idea of the 'mole' was adopted into the world of spying via the novels of John le Carré, specifically *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (1974); or, as it appears in French translation, *La Taupe* [The Mole]. This suggests that the figure of the mole came into the security imaginary from the world of literary fiction. The editors of the *OED* even once wrote to le Carré to ask if he invented

[45]Peter Szendy, *All Ears: The Aesthetics of Espionage* (2007), trans. Roland Végső (Fordham University Press 2017) 13.

this use of the word.[46] Eventually, they found various uses of this meaning of mole running back to the 1920s. Yet if we track the idea further back, we discover that it was already coming into existence when Shakespeare was writing. It is used, for example, by Francis Bacon, a man considered by some to have authored plays under the pen name 'William Shakespeare'. Here is Bacon commenting on the court of Henry VII:

> As for his secret spials which he did employ both at home and abroad, by them to discover what practices and conspiracies were against him; surely his case required it; he had such moles perpetually working and casting to undermine him. Neither can it be reprehended; for if spials be lawful against lawful enemies, much more against conspirators and traitors.[47]

In this, as in so many other ways, Bacon and Shakespeare were on to something.

Notwithstanding such an early example of the idea of the mole, the idea only really comes into its own during the Cold War and the consolidation of the national security state, which is to say that the rise of the 'mole' is coterminous with the rise of the 'spook'. This is no doubt why one handbook on the principles and practices of counterespionage claims that the mole communicates in spookspeak.[48]

Watching and listening, spying and monitoring, working underground to gain intelligence: all merge in that key security process to which Bentham alludes in his account of inspection and monitoring, 'the maintenance of a system of police',[49] or, as he puts it in his arguments for new police legislation, 'an all-pervading system of National Police'.[50] In this sense, the spook captures the essence of the police power.

In a 1721 eulogy for Marc René d'Argenson, the recently deceased Lieutenant-General of the Parisian police and the man regarded as 'the architect of the secret police',[51] the well-known French thinker Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle offered a version of the functions of the police power:

> To perpetually maintain in a city such as Paris an immense consumption, which an infinity of accidents can always cause to dry up; to repress the tyranny of the merchants over the public and yet at the same time stimulate their commerce;

[46] John le Carré, 'Introduction' (1991), to John le Carré *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (1974) (Pocket Books, 2002), xiv.
[47] Francis Bacon, *The History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh* (1622), ed. Jerry Weinberger (Cornell University Press 1996) 207.
[48] H. H. A. Cooper and Lawrence Redlinger, *Catching Spies: Principles and Practices of Counterespionage* (Bantam 1990) 184, 186, 189, 194, 196.
[49] Bentham, *Rationale of Reward* (n 37) 222.
[50] Jeremy Bentham, 'Heads of the Draught of a Bill to be intituled A Bill For the granting to his Majesty certain duties on Licences, for the establishment of a Board of Police Revenue, etc', and 'A Bill for the Establishment of a Board of Police, etc', in *Writings on Political Economy, Volume III: Preventive Police*, ed. M. Quinn (The Bentham Project 2018) 54, 149.
[51] Leon Radzinowicz, *A History of English Criminal Law And its Administration From 1750, Vol.3* (Stevens and Sons 1956) 544.

> to recognize in an infinite crowd all those who can so easily hide their pernicious industry; to either purge society of them, or to tolerate them only as long as they can be useful by doing jobs that others would not undertake or would not perform so well; … finally, to move or stop at will an immense and tumultuous multitude. … These are the general functions of police.

The list is a standard one, like many others found in police science, which essentially draws police into the whole sphere of government (good policy = good police) and treats police as a process rather than a thing.[52] How are all these things to be achieved? By police being 'the always active and almost unknown soul of this great body', by 'penetrating through underground channels into the interior of families', and by 'being present everywhere without being seen'.[53] In the words of Monsieur Lecoq, the lead character in Émile Gaboriau's novel of that title and said to be styled on Eugène-François Vidocq, the French criminal who became a police chief and head of the *Sûreté Nationale*: the police must be a 'mysterious power … whose hand is everywhere; which one neither sees nor hears, and yet which hears and sees everything'.[54]

It is this presence, the ability to see the behaviours and movement of people without being seen, to hear their thoughts and beliefs without being heard, to work underground monitoring their sentiments and feelings without being monitored, that undergirds Walter Benjamin's insight that 'a consideration of the police institution encounters nothing essential at all. Its power is formless, like its nowhere tangible, all-pervasive, ghostly presence in the life of civilized states'. This is as true of the modern democratic state as it is of the absolutist state of the eighteenth century. It alludes to the ways in which police power extends beyond professional police forces, working as a power that is everywhere and anywhere, accompanying the citizen 'as a brutal encumbrance through a life regulated by ordinances, or simply supervising him'. Such a power can intervene whenever or wherever it likes 'for security reasons in countless cases where no clear legal situation exists'. The separation between law-making and law-preserving violence is suspended in the police, which possesses a combination of the two forms of violence, described by Benjamin as a 'spectral mixture' [*gespenstischen Vermischung*].[55] This is also one reason why the police in general feel naturally compelled to operate beyond the law … just like spies.

On the one hand, the combination of law-making and law-preserving violence gives the police a very real material power and visible force in the

[52]Mark Neocleous, *A Critical Theory of Police Power* (Verso 2021).
[53]Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle, 'Eloge de Monsieur d'Argenson' in *OEuvres de Monsieur de Fontenelle, Tome 6* (Chez Brunet 1752) 147–8; our translation.
[54]Émile Gaboriau, *Monsieur Lecoq* (E. Dentu, 1868) 24; our translation.
[55]Walter Benjamin, 'Critique of Violence (1921)',, in *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings, Vol. 1: 1913–1926* (Harvard University Press 1996) 242–3.

truncheon, baton, taser, and other technologies of violence. On the other hand, the police power is so universal and intangible that it appears immaterial and invisible, making its presence somewhat ghostly; it is weird and eerie, as Travis Linnemann and Justin Turner put it.[56] For security reasons, the police power is permitted to see unseen and to hear unheard, to the extent that we feel as though the power is watching us even when it is not; the police haunt everything. 'Charm me, that I may be invisible, to do what I please, unseen of any', says Dr. Faustus in Christopher Marlowe's play of that name, as he engages with necromancy. An apt description of the ghost, it is also an apt description of the police. To be able to do as they please, unseen and unheard, means being undercover and yet everywhere, underground and yet spectral, a mole and a spook, spying on us and monitoring us everywhere, even into our homes.

'Home … with all my ghosts jostling for their turn to haunt me'

In her book *Small Town Girl*, Donna McLean details how her whole life was upended by a spook doubling up as a mole. McLean was a victim of one of the many undercover police spies (estimated to be around 139 and working in a 'Special Demonstration Squad') who infiltrated hundreds of left-wing, anti-fascist, anti-racist and environmental groups in the UK from 1968 onwards, forming many intimate and long-standing relationships with women in those movements. In a chapter called 'Ghosts', McLean describes how recounting her story to the media makes her feel 'as if my unknown assailant has returned. The physical threat feels real. Another ghost from my past, turning up uninvited, to haunt me after all these years'. For McLean, the ghostliness lies in her sense that the man in question 'was not a real person' but 'a fiction'.[57] This might seem an odd claim. After all, the undercover cop was so 'real' that he tricked her into starting a relationship, moved into her home, convinced her that he loved her, proposed marriage, and talked about starting a family together; nothing could be less fictitious than such cruelty and violence. In another way, however, McLean's idea of the cop as a ghost and fiction is entirely appropriate. He was, after all, a spook peddling one lie after another, a reminder that spooks appear in different shapes and forms and often appear to be something other than they seem.

McLean ends up feeling as though she is being perpetually haunted, unable to escape the spook, especially at 'home … with all my ghosts jostling for their turn to haunt me', just like she was unable to escape being

[56]Travis Linnemann and Justin Turner, 'Police: The Weird and Eerie' in Fiddler, Kindynis and Linnemann (eds), *Ghost Criminology*, building on Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (Repeater 2016).
[57]Donna McLean, *Small Town Girl: Love, Lies and the Undercover Police* (Hodder & Stoughton 2022) 74, 101, 106, 116.

perpetually spied upon. 'How do you compensate someone for living with a ghost?', she asks. Which is another way of asking: how do you compensate someone for living with a spy? How do you compensate someone for living with a creature that is a spook in both senses of the word?

The questions remind us that the spy settled into her home, the place more than any other in which we hope for security. Yet home is often where we most experience the unhomely, the uncanny, the spooky; a home can feel like a haunted house, threatening whatever security we think we feel. It was Freud in his analysis of the uncanny who most directly drew attention to this connection. The 'uncanny' is a translation of the German word *unheimlich*, which is also 'unhomely' and thus the opposite of *heimlich*, which is 'homely', but also connotes 'a place free from ghostly influences'. But the opposition is dialectical: 'what is *heimlich* … comes to be *unheimlich*', Freud writes. '*Heimlich* is also used of a place free from ghostly influences', he adds, making it all the more remarkable that *heimlich* nonetheless 'finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*'. And as Freud also points out, citing Schelling, *unheimlich* also names something that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light.[58] In English, a person's 'haunt' can also connote their 'usual abode' or 'place of frequent resort'. McLean's home and the other regular 'haunts' she frequented with friends and comrades are *heimlich* and *unheimlich*. These are spaces the spook infiltrated using skills that we can only describe by using the English word *canny*, which the *OED* tells us has several connected meanings: 'knowing, wise'; 'prudent, cautious'; 'sly, cunning'; but also 'supernaturally wise' and 'endowed with occult or magical power'. The spook *cannily* ghosted into her life and home, ghosted out, disappeared for short periods (beyond this 'fictional' world he had a wife and child in the 'real' one), and then, finally, just disappeared altogether, leaving her haunted as well as violated. To add to this ghostly nature, the spies in question often based their aliases on the details of children who had died many years before, supported with state documentation in the form of fake driving licences and national insurance numbers, and thereby managing to also haunt and violate the lives of the families who had lost those children. Not only weird and eerie, then, the police power is also both canny and uncanny.

In psychoanalysis, ghosts often represent repressed trauma or unresolved emotional experiences – what one was unable to confront or forbidden from confronting. But as the two very different examples of Jeremy Bentham and Donna McLean show, haunting is very much a social phenomenon, a fact attested to by the ghosts in Shakespeare's plays, who always appear with some intent. This draws attention to a point made by writers as diverse as

[58]Sigmund Freud, 'The "Uncanny" (1919)' trans. Alix Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 17* (Vintage 2001) 220, 224, 225, 241.

Keith Thomas in his book on the decline of magic and Avery Gordon in her book on the sociology of haunting, to the effect that ghosts operate as social figures, personifying something about human hopes and fears and acting as some kind of social sanction.[59] This means that from a political perspective, the figure of the ghost carries several intertwined meanings, ranging from the return of the repressed to delayed justice, unfinished mourning, and various forms of resistance. Either way, the ghost plays an active role in the world, seeking to rectify something wrong. In this sense, the ghost is not simply a reminder of *what has been* but is also about *what might have been* and thus plays a determining role in *what might be*. 'Ghost of the future! … I fear you more than any spectre I have seen', cries Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*. Nowhere is this more apparent than the spectre with which Marx and Engels begin the *Manifesto*, which, contra Derrida's focus on the spectre as 'revenant', coming back from beyond the grave to haunt, is in fact doing the very opposite: it is a spectre of the communist future, one that needs to take on a corporeal form in order to fulfil its purpose. If the ghost informs us of something important about our contemporary world – the time is out of joint – it also reminds us of the uncertainty of the future. This is the 'not yet' of contemporary hauntology that picks up on the spectre of the *Communist Manifesto*: the ghost points to a world that we might have instead of this one, the 'not yet' as well as the 'no longer'. If the ghost unsettles us, it does so by reminding us of what might be possible.[60]

Nonetheless, if it is indeed the case that haunting involves a repressed or unresolved violence making itself known, then the pathos of the loss and violence that makes the ghost a ghost reminds us that what most haunts us are lives that have been violently cut short, collective traumas that have been violently buried, often in the name of profit but equally often in the name of security: colonialism, genocide, slavery, disappearances, torture, political repression. These are the kinds of pasts that official history attempts to silence. This is why postcolonial literature is replete with ghosts. In Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*, for example, Juan Preciado travels to Comala and discovers that it is less a town and more a mass grave – a literal ghost town – in which the dead and the living coexist, yet communication continually collapses as voices overlap and dissolve to the point where it becomes impossible to ascertain whether the person speaking is alive or dead. Time has stopped because justice has been eternally deferred and the social life of the town is structured by this spectre. Likewise, the ghost Beloved in Toni Morrison's novel of that name is not simply a murdered child but is the embodiment of slavery's unspeakable violence, the return of what the nation wants to forget, and the novel exposes how societies practice collective amnesia to

[59]Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Penguin 1973) 717; Gordon, *Ghostly Matters* (n 1) 8.
[60]Gordon, *Ghostly Matters* (n 1) 127; Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life* (n 1) 19.

bury guilt and disavow responsibility; yet the ghost returns as the witness to what remains unresolved.

The haunting of the victims of myriad violences is also why 'security sites' such as prisons, asylums, and detention centres are often said to be haunted, along with those sites of death and atrocity such as plantations, factories and workhouses. And just as the dead refuse to stay dead, haunting those who hope they will return and those who fear they will, so too do those 'disappeared' in the name of security become spectral political subjects, neither fully alive nor fully dead, occupying the liminal space where justice has been suspended. Or to put it in Derrida's terms, which are more easily understood through the campaigns of McLeod and other victims of the spooks, haunting raises the question of justice.

But then what kind of social figure, exactly, is at play in the minds of the spooks of security? There is no straight answer to this question. Is it the security spooks themselves, seeing unseen and hearing unheard, moving around in their ghost cars and ghost planes, an intangible all-pervasive spectral power. Or is it the ghosts that haunt the security spooks, the ones that they think about when they situate their police spies against the spectral enemy, the *unheimlich* of homeland security. Or is it both these things? And then another question demands an answer: What kind of 'no longer' or 'not yet' is at stake for the security spook? Are they spooked by the past or the future? Or both? What does the ghost haunt? A space? A family? A nation-state? A political order? Three observations to close our discussion, though these do not constitute answers to those questions.

Coda

First, there has been so much historical violence conducted in the name of security that it is nigh on impossible to calculate the harm done: deaths at the hands of the police power, the war machine and all the other security forces, conducted in the name of state and capital. Security is a death machine, a system for the manufacture of corpses. One senior CIA security operative, John Stockwell, who took part in a project in Angola that led to the deaths of over 20,000 people, estimated the deaths of CIA operations as follows: 'one million killed in the Korean War, two million killed in the Vietnam War, 800,000 killed in Indonesia, one million in Cambodia, 20,000 killed in Angola – the operation I was part of – and 22,000 killed in Nicaragua'. Summing up these security operations 'in broad numbers and figuring out how many people have been killed … we come up with a figure of six million people killed'. This, he adds, 'is a minimum figure'.[61] It is a minimum figure because it omits the millions killed at the 'security sites'

[61] John Stockwell, *The Praetorian Guard: The U.S. Role in the New World Order* (South End Press 1991) 81.

mentioned above. It also omits those killed in the intensification of 'security operations' in the twenty-first century. If every ghost is a revenant with a history, then each of these deaths cannot help but generate fears of their return that 'bodes some strange eruption to our state'. And strange eruptions in the state are precisely what the security spooks claim to prevent.

Perhaps, then, the ghosts that spook the world of security are manifestations of the dead killed in the name of security, those who will not stay dead until their memory – of murder, genocide, trauma – is addressed, along with their demand for justice. This is the security dilemma: haunted by an enemy that is thought to have been destroyed in the name of one security project after another. Yet, can they ever be sure of their success? 'We have killed them. Have we really killed them? Yes. Are we sure? No. Maybe, maybe not. Might they return for revenge? Might they return … *undead*?' If the spooks are spooked, then it is because they are haunted by the victims of their violence, those whom they thought were *no longer*, but who continue to haunt them, whose absence is their presence.

Second, the enemy of bourgeois security was once the spectre of communism, which is why the police spies of Europe were ranged against it. But the security spooks have an unlimited ability to conjure up one spectral enemy after another: communist, of course, but also terrorist, insurgent, guerilla, pirate – all categories often defined as such by the state rather than by the actual people in question. One 'enemy of all mankind' after another (to use a term from early modern security politics), or one 'universal adversary' after another (to use a term from twenty-first century security politics), conjured by the security apparatus that sees in such enemies a power without limit and thus a universal, haunting, spectral presence.[62] This is why the security apparatus conjures so many enemies from the history of demonology and the stable of the horror genre, aiming to scare us with their radical otherness: the Witch, the Zombie, the Devil, the Demon, and, of course, the Spectre, each imagined as a security threat somehow beyond the pale of civilization but also within it, against which war must be declared and the police power mobilized. The conjuring of such enemies is a necessary feature of security politics, if only because they help legitimize the existence of the security state.

Third, the spooks fear the ghost because they fear that the ghost has the powers that they want for themselves: to be everywhere, see everything, hear everything, without being seen or heard. What is therefore needed is a spook to defeat the spooks: a counter-spook to fight the spook, just as they imagine their counterinsurgency as a war against the insurgency, without ever realizing that the spook, like the insurgency, is often created by the counterpower

[62]Mark Neocleous, *The Universal Adversary: Security, Capital, and 'The Enemies of All Mankind'* (Routledge 2017).

itself. As much as the agents of security fear that the dead enemies are not dead, and must therefore be killed over and again, the wars of security cannot take place solely in the material world. Thus, security will itself always take a spectral form. Security must have its own spooky operatives, its ghostbusters. The spook thereby becomes central to the cunning of security.

Where would security be, without its ghosts, without its spooky enemies? Where would security be, without its ghostbusters? The spooks are believers who hunt spooks to prove they exist, fearing that the rest of the population do not sufficiently believe in their existence and hence lack the right level of fear. At the same time, the spooks express their own paranoia about who exactly is controlling things. The spooks are troubled by their inability to control the horrors and terrors that they themselves have done so much to conjure, perhaps troubled by the ghostly return of the enemies that they have killed, or maybe even unable to give up the evil thoughts they have about the dead. Either way, one thing is sure: something must be done, another security war declared. Out, ghost! But the ghost will not leave. It always returns, a spectre of rebellion, insurgency and revolt.

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