

AKC Essay Competition - Coversheet

Student ID number NOT your K number	
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Degree Programme (where applicable)	LLB Law degree
Department (where applicable)	School of Law at King's College London.
AKC Year (1, 2 or 3):	3 rd Year

Essay question number:	1 If there was a tenth lecture for this AKC series, which building would you choose and why?
Essay Title:	Millbank Prison and Long
Deadline:	23:59, Sunday 26 April 2020
Date Submitted:	Sunday, 26 April 2020
Word Count	1598

DECLARATION BY STUDENT

By submitting this essay, I declare the following:

This assignment is entirely my own work. Quotations from secondary literature are indicated by the use of inverted commas around ALL such quotations AND by reference in the text or notes to the author concerned.

ALL primary and secondary literature used in this piece of work is indicated in the bibliography placed at the end, and dependence upon ANY source used is indicated at the appropriate point in the text.

I confirm that no sources have been used other than those stated.

I understand what is meant by plagiarism, including self-plagiarism.

I understand that plagiarism is a serious academic offence that will result in disciplinary action being taken and may result in my withdrawal from the AKC programme.

I understand that essays which do not include references and a bibliography will not be read.

My word count is accurately stated above and I understand that essays which are more than 10% over the word limit may not be considered by the AKC Steering Committee.

If there was a tenth lecture for this AKC series, which building would you choose and why?

The AKC's second series of lectures explored the significance of London through nine buildings. Galleries, abbeys, libraries and universities represent a spectrum of culture, quirkiness, history and art that make London one of the most tourist-trafficked cities in the world.¹ What piece could complete this portrait of England's capital city?

Dostoevsky said the 'degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons.'² As British prisons are in crisis; it seems an appropriate to take a look at the dark underbelly of the British penal system. Thus, if there were a tenth lecture, I would propose the exploration of a London prison. The popularity of prison-museums such as the Tower of London and the Clink is a testament to society's fascination with crime and punishment. These institutions, however, are of a bygone era and it is perhaps this dissociation which makes visiting them entertaining rather than insightful. More important, perhaps, are those prisons that serve as a reminder that the penal system deserves regular re-evaluation and scrutiny.

Millbank: London's First Reformed Prison

Before the Tate Britain, a much more severe building was located on the bank of the Thames: Millbank Prison. The penitentiary system in 19th century England functioned under a deterrence policy which aimed to make prisons so inhospitable people would be deterred from offending – or reoffending.³ Millbank was no different. Hard labor and corporal punishment were the norm.⁴ The moat – described by Dickens as a 'sluggish ditch [which] deposited its mud at the prison walls'⁵ – became a breeding ground for two cholera outbreaks (in 1824 and 1849).⁶ The prison was closed in 1896 and demolished four years later due to the appalling conditions.⁷ In its place, the Tate Britain, the Royal Army Medical College, and Millbank Tower were erected.⁸

¹ Hedrick-Wong, Yuwa, and Desmond Choong. "Big Cities, Big Business: Bangkok, London and Paris Lead The Way In Mastercard's 2018 Global Destination Cities Index". *Mastercardcontentexchange.Com*, 2020, <https://mastercardcontentexchange.com/>

² Dostoevsky, Fyodor Mikhailovich. *The House of The Dead*. Ktoczyta.Pl, 2019.

³ "A Victorian Prison." *The National Archives*, 30 Jan. 2020, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/victorian-prison/.

⁴ Swift, Ian. "Victorian Prison Conditions." *Old Police Cells Museum*, 2013, www.oldpolicecellsmuseum.org.uk/content/learning/educational-programmes-and-tours/prisons-and-transportation/victorian_prison_conditions.

⁵ Petrovski, Nikola. "Millbank Prison: Now Long-Vanished but the Story of Its Horrors Endures." *Abandoned Spaces*, 16 Feb. 2019, www.abandonedspaces.com/public/millbank-prison-now-long-vanished-but-the-story-of-its-horrors-endures.html.

⁶ "Millbank Prison." *19th Century Prison History*, The Open University, 2020, www.prisonhistory.org/prison/millbank-prison/.

⁷ Edwards, Catherine (2010). "The Millbank Penitentiary: excavations at the Tate Gallery (now Tate Britain), City of Westminster". *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*. 61: 157–74.

⁸ Millbank Conservation Area Audit. *City Of Westminster*, 2005. <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/conservation-area-audits>

Although Millbank was plagued by the same issues as most Victorian prisons, it started it off as a unique concept: the panopticon. Jeremy Bentham developed a utopian prison which aimed to create a more efficient and humane prison through its architecture. The panopticon design consisted of a central guard tower surrounded by prison cells. The architecture was such that prisoners would not be able to see the guard, and thus not know whether or not they were being watched at any given moment.

Foucault extrapolated two necessities to Bentham's system of control. First, power should be visible, which is ensured by the tower and the center of the construct. Second, power should be unverifiable; in this case, inmates would never know for certain when they were being watched.⁹ This omnipresent authority was what made the panopticon successful for Bentham. Bentham also viewed his design as a gateway to more humane prisons, in line with the prison reform movement that gained momentum in the late 18th century. He believed that his vision illustrated 'morals reformed, health preserved, industry invigorated, instruction diffused, public burthens lightened, economy seated as it were upon a rock, the gordian knot of the poor-laws not cut but untied – all by a simple idea in architecture.'¹⁰

In 1799, Bentham purchased a plot of land from Lord Salisbury in order to build his penitentiary, but due to what he believed was corruption, the plans never came to fruition.¹¹ William Williams ultimately designed the prison and after going through multiple architects, Millbank was completed in 1819 by Robert Smirke.¹² The final product did not reflect Bentham's utopian prison; for instance, its location fell short of certain sanitation and health standards.¹³ The Millbank location, unlike the one purchased by Bentham, was cramped and marshy.¹⁴ Nevertheless, Bentham's ideas for reform persisted and later influenced Pentonville, a prison developed in 1840 which aimed to take over Millbank's reformatory role.¹⁵ When addressing the House of Commons, Sir Arthur Graham guaranteed that Pentonville would provide better living conditions. Pentonville still serves as a prison today.¹⁶

Broadly, Millbank was a failure, and the panopticon has been abandoned in prison architecture. Where it did succeed was in opening the discussion for prison reform. Major Arthur Griffiths said of Millbank that it was 'suggestive of an order that has passed... a period when the safe custody of criminals could

⁹ Foucault, Michel. "'Panopticism' from '*Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison.*'" *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, vol.2, no.1, 2008, pp.1–12. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25594995.

¹⁰ Bentham, Jeremy *The Panopticon Writings*. Ed. Miran Bozovic (London: Verso, 1995). p.29-95

¹¹ Semple, Janet. *Bentham's Prison*. Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 240-5.

¹² Torde, Berto. "Millbank Penitentiary – The Prison That Once Stood At London's Millbank". *Historific*, 2019, <https://www.historific.co.uk/millbank-prison-london-millbank/>. Accessed Apr 2020.

¹³ Harrison, Marc (2013) Scurvy on sea and land: political economy and natural history, c.1780–c.1850, *Journal for Maritime Research*, 15:1, 7-25, DOI: 10.1080/21533369.2013.783167

¹⁴ Semple, Janet. *Bentham's Prison*. Oxford University Press, 2011, pp.240-5.

¹⁵ Teagarden, Ernest. "A Victorian Prison Experiment." *Journal of Social History*, vol.2, no.4, 1969, pp.357–365. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3786565.

¹⁶ *Ibid*

be compassed, people thought, only by granite blocs and ponderous bolts and bars.’¹⁷ In other words, Millbank affirmed that the penitentiary system shouldn’t simply be out of sight, out of mind.

England’s Prison Problem

Today, Britain’s system is in crisis. In 2020, prisons in England and Wales are at 111% capacity and reoffending continues to increase.¹⁸ Moreover, Victorian prisons cannot keep up with modern standards.¹⁹ Pentonville isn’t the reformed prison promised by Graham; 20 inmates died in the last year (13 by suicide) and most inmates share cells intended for one person. Wandsworth, opened in 1851, faces similar issues. Chief Inspector of Prisons Peter Clarke called it ‘one of the most overcrowded jails in England and Wales filled with many men with drug or mental health problems receiving poor training and education.’²⁰ Clarke highlighted that boredom, understaffing, lack of mental health resources and access to drugs contributed to high violence in the prison.²¹

In 2015, Justice Secretary Michael Gove proposed a plan to demolish Victorian prisons and replace them with modern, cost-effective institutions with a rehabilitation-focused design. Gove emphasized this need for reform: ‘[I]t is only through better rehabilitation that we will reduce reoffending, cut crime and make our streets safer.’²² Just two years later, this reform was abandoned due to a drastic increase in prison population.²³

HMP Berwyn in Wales represented a glimmer of hope as a prison whose design emulated a Norwegian prison dubbed the world’s ‘most humane’. At Halden prison, natural light and materials, interaction between guards and inmates²⁴, and the availability of kitchens and workshops all foster rehabilitation.²⁵ Similarly, Berwyn is located in a rural environment and focuses on rehabilitation. The institution is equipped with workshops and classrooms, aimed at providing inmates with the necessary tools to succeed upon release. However, Berwyn is still only at half capacity; drugs, violence and self-harm are

¹⁷ MacConville, Seán. *A History Of English Prison Administration*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981, p.137.

¹⁸ “Reoffending Rates Are Climbing.” *Russell Webster*, Apr.2019, www.russellwebster.com/reoff419/.

¹⁹ Travis, Alan. “Conditions at Pentonville Prison Deteriorating, Says Chief Inspector.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, June 2015, www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jun/23/conditions-at-pentonville-prison-deteriorating-says-chief-inspector.

²⁰ “HMP Wandsworth – Overcrowded Victorian Jail Needing a New Culture to Improve Safety and Living Conditions.” *HM Chief Inspector of Prisons*, July 2018, www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprison/media/press-releases/2018/07/hmp-wandsworth-overcrowded-victorian-jail-needing-a-new-culture-to-improve-safety-and-living-conditions/.

²¹ *Ibid*

²² “Prison Building Revolution Announced by Chancellor and Justice Secretary.” *GOV.UK*, 5 Nov.2015, www.gov.uk/government/news/prison-building-revolution-announced-by-chancellor-and-justice-secretary.

²³ “Plans to Turn Victorian Jail Sites into Homes Scrapped.” *BBC News*, BBC, Oct.2019, www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-50143031.

²⁴ Haubursin, Christophe, and Gina Barton. “How Norway Designed a More Humane Prison.” *Vox*, 12 Apr.2019, www.vox.com/videos/2019/4/12/18301911/norway-humane-prison.

²⁵ Benko, Jessica. “The Radical Humaneness of Norway’s Halden Prison.” *The New York Times*, Mar.2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/03/29/magazine/the-radical-humaneness-of-norways-halden-prison.html.

common and the prison is inadequately staffed.²⁶ Cost-cutting during construction has caused many issues including broken heating systems and unusable workshops.²⁷

Of course, the UK cannot base a prison reform program entirely on Norway's. Prisons like Halden, where an inmate costs £98,000²⁸, are expensive compared to the average £41,136 per inmate in the UK.²⁹ The UK also has a much larger prison population: per 100,000 of national population, 139³⁰ are prisoners in the UK, whereas in Norway that number is 60.³¹

Conclusion

Now overshadowed by the Tate Britain, Millbank was once a symbol of reform whose importance persists. Although Bentham's panopticon never came to fruition, its influence and the importance of prison architecture endures. As Churchill said, 'First we shape our buildings; then they shape us.'³²

For a tenth lecture, I would suggest Millbank Prison, which invites us to evaluate this country's prison system, a call for reform that is just as pertinent today as it was in Victorian times.

²⁶ O'Murchu, Cynthia, and Sarah O'Connor. "What Went Wrong at Britain's Prison of the Future?" *Financial Times*, Mar. 2019, www.ft.com/content/e8454c86-3f9d-11e9-9bee-efab61506f44.

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ "How Norway Turns Criminals into Good Neighbours." *BBC News*, BBC, July.2019, www.bbc.co.uk/news/stories-48885846.

²⁹ "Costs per Place and Costs per Prisoner by Individual Prison." *Ministry of Justice*, Oct.2019, assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/841948/costs-per-place-costs-per-prisoner-2018-2019.pdf.

³⁰ "Prison Data: United Kingdom, England and Wales." *World Prison Brief*, University of Birbeck London, 2020, www.prisonstudies.org/country/united-kingdom-england-wales.

³¹ "Prison Data: Norway." *World Prison Brief*, University of Birbeck London.2020, www.prisonstudies.org/country/norway.

³² "Churchill and the Commons Chamber." *UK Parliament*, 2020, www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/building/palace/architecture/palacestructure/churchill/.

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