photographs published in a certain way in certain books. Exploring the physicality of images disrupts conventional chronological narrative. Bullen attempts to add the Byzantine motif to our general understanding, and his facts and color illustrations inspire further rumination; he tells a story. Nelson analyzes an intellectual construct, and as is often the case with such an effort, he does not follow a chronological track. Bullen’s pages make you hungry for Nelson’s analyses and interpretations. Nelson is more respectful of Bullen’s field of literary analysis than Bullen is of Nelson’s field of art history.

What about Nelson including Wright’s Church in Wauwatosa, outside Milwaukee? (Bullen ends with Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue’s more expensive and less interesting Nebraska State Capitol in Lincoln, 1919–32.) Generally one tries not to discuss Wright’s work after the Guggenheim Museum (designed in 1943) when he seemed to fall into a vulgar exoticism. With the Milwaukee church, more than anywhere else in Nelson’s book, the masterpiece of Hagia Sophia is set in a popular context—that of contemporary Greek Orthodox churches in America—proving little, I think, because regardless of Wright’s exaggerated geometry, his design is still broad, cohesive, and spatially powerful. In the mid-twentieth century it is not the exact set of ethnic meanings or general church types that matter, but instead purely formal issues of spatial geometrics. The architectural lens through which to view the Milwaukee building is perhaps the work of Bruce Goff, and the real comparison to make is with the work of Hans Scharoun, Gottfried Böhm, and even Walter Netsch. Nelson’s effort to see the Milwaukee church narrowly saves us the trouble of doubting this.2

I have three complaints about Nelson’s truly excellent book. First, after his early chapters on German Romantic Neo-Byzantinism, we never really leave the Anglo-American world. (Here Bullen is more balanced.) Austria, that most Byzantine of modern empires, makes no appearance at all. This deprives us of two puzzling and important aspects of Hagia Sophia’s cultural circulation. First, the intense political and cultural exchange between the German and Austrian empires and the Ottomans manifested in a broad, shared, turn-of-the-century Byzantine-Islamism across southeastern Europe, powerfully present in all the expanding metropolises there, especially in Vienna and Istanbul. Where is the chapter on Gustav Klimt? Furthermore, Nelson makes no mention of that central motif of Germanic avant-garde design, the pendentive-domed and semidomed gathering place, whether in the fantasies of Berlage, Belling, Kohtz, or Kropfholzer, or in such monuments as the Sacré-Coeur on the Koelkelberg, which is such an unavoidable and troubling presence for anyone visiting Brussels.3 Nelson touches on German imperial fantasies in his Romanticism chapter, but where is Hagia Sophia on the eve of the world wars? In the end, this is first and foremost a Central European and Germanic subject.

Second, in balancing the reproduction of Byzantine forms (especially in chapter two) and literary images (especially in chapter six), Nelson has missed an important architectural middle term, namely the idea of Byzantine decorative pattern, freed in the late nineteenth-century French decorative explorations of Vauclerc and Train to inspire the accomplishment of H. H. Richardson, John Welborn Root, Harvey Ellis, and Louis Sullivan. This is an extremely important plane of cultural work—ornament and its place in the larger enterprise of nineteenth-century architecture—that both Nelson and Bullen omit.

Third, to return to my first complaint, the territory upon which Nelson focuses is, in the final analysis, scary. There always seems to be something worrisome about the intrusion of Byzantine imagery into Western democratic culture. Nelson’s relentless evenness of documentation levels such utterly disparate enterprises as German imperialism and American restoration campaigns in Europe, and such resolutely distinct personalities as Lethaby and Curzon, Whittetmore and Wright, while continuing to document a uniqueness about which he does not permit himself to wonder. Why did people get so involved in this strange thing? A little more amazement and outrage is needed to loosen up this narrative—for certain there are ample amounts of amazement and outrage in this extraordinary story.

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Notes
3. Hendrik Petrus Berlage, Afbeeldingen van de Ontwerpen voor het Pantheon der Menschheid (Rotterdam, 1915); Hermann Belling, Architektur Skizzen (Stuttgart, 1904); Otto Kohtz, Gendanken uber Architektur (Berlin, 1908); Alexander Jacobus Kropfholz, Kunst en Leven (Amsterdam and Antwerp, n.d.).

James Garman
Detention Castles of Stone and Steel: Landscape, Labor and the Urban Penitentiary

James Garman’s Detention Castles of Stone and Steel seeks to expand our understanding of the prison as a cultural phenomenon through the detailed study of a single nineteenth-century American penal institution. Towards that end, the author studiously recovers the competing motivations that led both to the birth and relatively rapid demise of Rhode Island’s first state prison. Garman’s chief concern is the uneasy relationship that existed between incarceration as a reformatory project and the larger imperatives of liberal capitalism. The latter weighed heavily on the prison in the form of a mandate to fiscal self-sufficiency that rendered Rhode Island State Prison as much entrepreneurial enterprise as reha-
bilitative institution. Garman charts this tension between reform and capital in the constantly shifting organization of both the institutional landscape and the regimes of rehabilitative labor imposed within the prison’s walls. Drawing on a wide range of historical and archaeological evidence, the author traces a middle way between strict economic determinism and an abstract mechanics of power to present the full complexity of the early American carceral context as it was lived by its inmates.

A walled complex comprised of the warden’s and keepers’ quarters, a cell block, and a workshop, Rhode Island State Prison was an enormously costly undertaking that remained active for a mere forty years. From the moment of its construction in 1838, the project was challenged by graft, indecision, and legislative neglect. Initial compromises in sitting and penal philosophy provoked a cycle of continual renovation to keep pace with both evolving penal goals and the institution’s struggle to become economically self-supporting. After numerous attempts to retrofit the original architecture, the building was determined to be inadequate for the state’s needs and closed in 1879. Eventually demolished, the site of the prison was the object of an archaeological study by Garman prior to its development as a luxury shopping mall. Garman’s on-site investigation and his extensive consultation of the written archive associated with the prison’s conception and day-to-day governance provide the basis of the current text.

_Detention Castles of Stone and Steel_ is a work of historical archaeology, a field that has expanded in recent decades beyond investigation of the material culture of social elites to encompass subaltern populations and their strategies of resistance. As such, the archaeology of an early prison presents the ideal opportunity for testing both theories of incarceration as well as advances in Garman’s own field. Reflecting these concerns, the author treats the architecture of Rhode Island State Prison as the registration in built form of a continual exchange between state power and inmate resistance. Garman emphasizes the multivalent power within the prison, skillfully documenting the effect on prisoner and keeper alike of the evolution of Rhode Island penal policy to serve the dictates of production within an emerging market for consumer goods. The author’s expansion of the carceral context into wider social and economic networks complicates our understanding of roles within prison society. For instance, the warden is presented as occupying a contradictory position: absolute authority within the institution but utter servility when navigating state politics or when trying to market prison-produced goods. In addition, Garman documents the prisoners’ regular subversion of official power through such acts as workplace sabotage or the use of mechanical systems to communicate between cells. The resulting portrait of the early penal institution is of an intricate network of agency and submission affecting all within its walls, though this book emphasizes the lives of the jailed. In this regard, Garman might have done more to fill out the picture of nineteenth-century American prison society by exploring further the contradictions of the jailers’ own social lives and roles in relation to the jailed, for example around issues of labor, class, and gender.

Most important for the architectural historian, _Detention Castles of Stone and Steel_ avoids reducing the history of prison architecture to a catalog of ideal plans (for example, the familiar debate between proponents of the Auburn and Eastern State models). Architectural history has generally codified prison architecture as a series of fixed plans each associated with a particular vision of reform, an approach that offers an illusory sense of ordered experimentation. By contrast, Garman presents the early American institution as a more chaotic grafting of high-minded Enlightenment intention and Jacksonian market pragmatism. Few nineteenth-century American prisons adhered to their initial design or penal philosophy, and the author breaks new ground by studying architectural alteration through time.

Garman rightly treats the historical instability of the built environment of Rhode Island State Prison as evidence of the nascent science of penology’s penetration by larger political and economic forces.

Garman’s most interesting and original claim is that of the central elements of the reformative project—the manipulation of time, behavior, and space—it was the spatialization of prevailing penal goals that led to Rhode Island State Prison’s obsolescence within a mere forty years. He argues that the original organizations of time and behavior within the institution could easily be adapted to accommodate evolving dictates of the market for prison labor—but that the prison’s space could not. Once a particular penal philosophy adopted built form, the resulting architecture either hindered or enhanced the prison’s assimilation to capitalist production.

Garman offers a model for the study of penal architecture that is unique in reflecting the dynamism of the prison as both social and architectural experiment. Such a clear illustration of the tensions between intention and built form possesses important implications for the entire practice of architectural history. Garman’s book suggests that architectural failure has as much to offer the historian as architectural success, and the historian might do well to focus on seemingly mundane occurrences in a building’s life well beyond its initial design.

This latter insight begs the question of an archaeological study’s relevance for the architectural historian. One of archaeology’s primary contributions to the history of built form is its focus on daily life. For instance, Garman’s soil analyses permit a startling reconstitution of the prison yard as a space that was successively compromised by corrective redesign of the original building as well as by the by-products of various manufacturing endeavors undertaken by the prison workshop. The waste heaps and ad hoc drainage systems he describes provide a striking contrast to the assured classical facade and impregnable walls that the prison presented to the public at
large. Such an instance of vivid yet ephemeral, spatial, and visual contradiction constitutes a species of evidence that might easily elude the architectural historian. Garman also conducts a detailed consideration of official reports and daily punishment logs—artifacts he wisely incorporates within his expanded definition of the standard archaeological record—in order to determine the manner in which various spaces within the prison were deployed for resistant activity and subsequent punishment. Such empirical evidence supports the exchange of discipline and subversion that he reads into the institution’s spatial organization and provides a new perspective on penal architecture as a continually unfolding enterprise.

Garman’s project is important for both social and architectural history, and one wishes at times that his larger objectives were less encumbered by the apparent disciplinary limitations of archaeology. The author’s theoretical ambitions usefully complicate both Marxist and Foucauldian perspectives on incarceration. But one wonders whether the archeological study of a single, minor carceral example such as the Rhode Island State Prison can sustain these ambitions on its own. Indeed, Garman’s lengthy recapitulations of the existing literature of incarceration and archaeological method often overwhelm the material evidence he seeks to present. This is unfortunate, for it is precisely the use of the material record that promises to set his consideration apart from other studies. Perhaps one contribution that architectural history can offer archaeology in a return is a broader mechanism of historical inquiry. Standard historical practice would suggest that other examples might substantiate or better serve the larger cultural claims about penology and capitalism that Garman culls from his chosen site. For example, Charlestown State Prison in Massachusetts was a contemporaneous building constantly remodeled (and also eventually demolished) in reflection of penology’s halting development. Limited investigation of other nineteenth-century prisons would, I suspect, support Garman’s observation that a cycle of architectural obsolescence and renovation was characteristic of early American penal architecture. While it may not be the archaeologist’s job to undertake such a wide-ranging study, one wonders whether concentration on a single site might not result in methodological constraints that are worth interrogating within the field.

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Bernard L. Herman
Town House: Architecture and Material Life in the Early American City, 1780–1830

In Town House, Bernard Herman arrives at a new way of understanding what urban life and its architecture in the early American city meant to its makers and participants. Herman argues that to interpret town houses we must understand both their physical and experiential qualities—that is, how they were made, designed, used, and perceived. Herman’s analysis proceeds through linked layers of urban experience, from wealthy, established merchants to working-class artisans, slaves, and transient laborers. No matter how lowly, all these people lived within networks of international trade and influence, and large or small, the town homes were sites where owners, builders, and occupants negotiated between public and private identities, inert space and human action, personal circumstance and community norms.

Relatively small and simple town houses did not house small and simple lives. Repopulating artisan houses and neighborhoods has enabled Herman to reconstruct a complex material world where the interaction of social identities with occupational and economic realities took physical shape. As such, Herman’s book has been recognized as exemplary in the field of vernacular architecture. Town House was the cowinner of the 2006 Abbott Lowell Cummings Prize, awarded by the Vernacular Architecture Forum for the best work in vernacular architecture studies.

Herman’s seven chapters meander from major urban centers to lesser entrepôts in the United States and England. His range of field work and archival investigation is impressive, encompassing in-depth work in Charleston, Philadelphia, Lancaster, Boston, and New Castle, Delaware, as well as Bristol and London in England, and side excursions to several other locales. In most chapters, Herman sets the scene with a brief story—testimony in the Denmark Vesey trial, for example, or an account of creating a spun-sugar dessert for a fancy dinner party—which offers a glimpse into “the ways people employed town houses as symbolic representations of self and community” (2). “Urban Settings,” the first chapter, sets out definitions of “presence of place, situation, comportment, and circumstance,” key concepts in Herman’s reading and analysis of these North Atlantic rim communities (2). Most of the book explores aspects of town-house design and use from various perspectives, from the elite permanent population to the economically and socially dispossessed. Herman’s conclusion turns the complexity of these disparate views into a key aspect of the city.

Throughout this work, Herman reminds us to look beneath surfaces. Merchants’ town houses, for example, varied considerably in exterior appearance, within cities as well as in the trans-Atlantic world. Still, American merchants shared notions of respectability and sociability with their counterparts in other cities and overseas. Polite society required that places be outfitted with certain accoutrements. Tea tables, dining tables, and card tables provided the venues for genteel exchange whether in Bristol, England, or Charleston, South Carolina. The blending of “local practice and cosmopolitan values” explains similar conceptual solutions to social and design problems, such as how to accommodate commercial space within urban dwellings or how to segregate service and

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