Chapter 2

From Victorian Terror to Digital Control: Wells's The Invisible Man and the Gaze of Surveillance Capitalism

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Abstract

This article argues that H.G. Wells's 1897 novel, *The Invisible Man*, functions as a radical literary inversion of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, offering a profound critique of power, visibility, and social control. The protagonist, Griffin, a brilliant but morally corrupt scientist, achieves absolute invisibility, thereby escaping the social contract and becoming the ultimate "unseen watcher." Unlike the Panopticon's inmate, who is controlled by the possibility of a perpetual gaze, Griffin's unaccountable invisibility grants him freedom that accelerates his descent into megalomania and terror. By detailing the structural reversal embodied by Griffin—the visible majority subjected to the invisible few—this study connects Wells's Victorian-era cautionary tale to modern anxieties surrounding digital surveillance. The essay demonstrates how contemporary phenomena, such as the "chilling effect" of mass monitoring algorithmic gaze of Surveillance Capitalism, realize the terrifying potential of Griffin's "Reign of Terror." Ultimately, *The Invisible Man* transcends its genre to serve as a timeless reflection on the politics of gaze, warning that the unchecked power of the invisible few will always threaten the liberty of the visible people.

Introduction

Rapid scientific advancement and profound social change in the late nineteenth century created the ideal setting for H.G. Wells's fiction. His 1897 novel, *The Invisible Man*, transcends its genre as a cautionary tale of scientific hubris, offering a critique of power, visibility, and social control that remains acutely relevant today. The novel's protagonist, Griffin, a

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brilliant but morally bankrupt scientist, achieves the ultimate escape from the social contract by rendering himself invisible. This act of self-erasure from the visible world immediately invites a comparison with the architectural and philosophical model of control established a century earlier: Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon.

Surveillance is vital to keep the population docile. The "new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind" started with Jeremy Bentham's idea of Panopticon in the 18th century (1995). The Panopticon is a type of institutional building and a system of obtaining power over people originally designed in order to observe the people in a building, especially in prisons. Michael Foucault carried the idea of Panopticon one step further in his *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) and used it as a metaphor for modern disciplinary superstructures, which rely on discipline through surveillance to maintain order. Bentham's model was physical and helped the people in control have the upper hand in those kinds of institutions. The Panopticon is one of the most significant architectural designs in the history of social control. Initially proposed as an ideal design for a prison, Bentham envisioned its principles applying broadly to any institution requiring efficient supervision, including schools, hospitals, and factories. Architecturally, the Panopticon was circular in shape with cells for single inmates arranged along the outer wall, each being illuminated by a window. The central lookout tower was situated right at the centre. The core concept of the layout was the mind game: a supervisor in the tower had the ability to see all the cells, however, the prisoners could never find out whether they were really being watched at any moment. The Panopticon's power lay in the inmates' inability to verify if they were being watched. Bentham believed that the constant *possibility* of surveillance would lead the inmates to a state of "conscious visibility." This psychological pressure would compel them to regulate their own behaviour, acting as if they were perpetually under inspection, thus achieving "the power of mind over mind" with minimal physical intervention or staff.

Foucault moves it further and asserts that the panopticon should not be seen as "a dream building." To be more precise, it is a schematic depiction of a power mechanism in its ideal condition. It is crucial to demonstrate the faultless operation of the "architectural and optical system" without any impediments, objections, or opposition. As a matter of fact, it is a political method that should be separated from any particular use (1977, 205). Foucault believes that Bentham's original idea of panopticon has been used by the ruling class to exert their power over their citizens. For him, the aim of the panopticon is to create and sustain "a power relation independent

of the person who exercise it" (201). The physical model of Bentham was based on the concept of discipline. The prisoner would be in the gaze of the watcher and check his/her behavior accordingly. Also, they would feel the watchtower psychologically. The objective of this is to determine the existence or absence of persons, to ascertain their whereabouts and how to discover them, to build effective means of communication, to disrupt the activities of others, and to continuously monitor the behaviour of each individual (143). Using panopticon, the superstructure controls the subjected bodies, who start to normalize and internalize the gaze psychologically. As a result of being observed, the subjected bodies feel more isolated, and this prevents the subjects from organizing. Foucault suggests that "he who is subjected to a field of visibility… makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (202-203). Knowing they might be watched, the individual regulates their own behaviour, thus becoming both the subject of control and the agent of their own discipline.

The Invisible Man presents a radical inversion of this paradigm. Unlike the Panopticon's inmate, who is perpetually visible and thus controlled, Wells's Griffin is the unseen watcher—a man who has completely escaped the radar of social accountability. His invisibility grants him a sense of absolute autonomy to break the moral and social shackles of civilization. This work argues that H.G. Wells's *The Invisible Man* functions as a literary inversion of the Panopticon, using Griffin's unbalanced visibility to prefigure modern anxieties surrounding digital surveillance and unaccountable power. By analysing Griffin's descent into megalomania and terror, this study will first establish the novel's critique of unchecked scientific power. It will then detail the Panoptic model of control to highlight the structural reversal embodied by Griffin. Finally, it will connect the novel's central theme—the danger posed by an invisible entity that can observe and manipulate without consequence—to the contemporary issues of digital surveillance, where corporations, governments, and algorithms operate as unseen watchers over a visible society. The novel, therefore, serves not merely as a work of science fiction, but as a profound reflection on the limits of surveillance and the corrosive nature of absolute, invisible power.

Griffin: The Unseen Watcher

Griffin is a brilliant scientist who, against all odds, manages to make himself invisible through a groundbreaking discovery. This scientific achievement is immediately corrupted by his moral failings, thus turning him into both a scientific wonder and a threat to the society. Griffin is depicted as a human

monster, a figure whose body and behaviour deviate from social norms. Griffin embodies a complex duality where he is simultaneously a victim and a perpetrator of exploitation. He represents the system's creation and now, he angrily confronts the system, and, therefore, his childhood memories of being marginalized, rejected, and isolated which eventually caused him to commit exploitative actions. He stands for chaos, flaw, and irregularity as the representative of a pervert whose looks go beyond the visible realm.

Griffin's moral trajectory is defined by a destructive blend of isolation and megalomania, a process that his invisibility merely accelerates. Even prior to his scientific breakthrough, Griffin was an isolated figure, driven by a singular, all-consuming ambition that placed him outside the conventional social sphere. This pre-existing alienation is both a cause and a consequence of his subsequent actions. His inability to integrate into the community of Iping and his profound scorn for human connection stand in sharp contrast to the expected conduct of a Victorian scientist. As his experience of invisibility deepens, this alienation is exacerbated, severing his final connection to the moral and social world (Glinski, 39). He admits to Dr. Kemp:

> I did not feel then that I was lonely, that I had come out from the world into a desolate place. I appreciated my loss of sympathy, but I put it down to the general inanity of things. Re-entering my room seemed like the recovery of reality. There were the things I knew and loved. There stood the apparatus, the experiments arranged and waiting (81).

After Griffin makes himself invisible, his one ambition quickly becomes a wild and destructive megalomania. He acts in a terrorizing way after obtaining his power of invisibility, and to make himself feel even more superior. His overestimation of himself stems from intellectual arrogance, a trait evident even during his student days, as shown by the Kemp rivalry. For him, invisibility is the turning point that leads to his fall of morals. Having the freedom to do as he pleases without being caught ruins his morality. He "descends into a mental state of paranoid savagery as he carries the weight of his moral degeneration" (Glinski, 37). He considers people as simply tools for achieving his own ends. Griffin's scientific attitude is a pseudoscientific one. He does not follow the standard Victorian scientific rule, "formal procedures should be congruent with the phenomena observed" (Kucich, 123). He recklessly exploits his scientific knowledge for his own personal gain, without giving a thought to the consequences for others.

Griffin's descent is fuelled by his experience of social rejection and isolation. His intellect and heart are polluted by the cold logic of the modern

world which he takes from his own groundbreaking scientific discoveries. Although he is a scientific genius, he turns out to be a fugitive whose works and achievements are regarded as mere abnormalities by a society that refuses to recognize him. In the end, he is a victim of the system he fights against, physically susceptible to being badly handled by an angry crowd and getting defeated even though he is invisible. He benefits from horror mechanisms by employing fear and physical danger, primarily facilitated by his invisibility and psychological instability. The primary mechanism of horror is the unseen, intangible threat that can strike at any moment. The terror is a response to the disruption of the normal way of life and the hierarchical system that the threat to the Griffins represents. The townspeople's initial reaction to his reveal is pure panic:

> It was worse than anything. Mrs. Hall, standing open-mouthed and horror-struck, shrieked at what she saw, and made for the door of the house. Everyone began to move. They were prepared for scars, disfigurements, tangible horrors, but nothing! The bandages and false hair flew across the passage into the bar, making a hobbledehoy jump to avoid them. Everyone tumbled on everyone else down the steps. For the man who stood there shouting some incoherent explanation, was a solid gesticulating figure up to the coat-collar of him, and then--nothingness, no visible thing at all! (35).

The basic terror that the book conveys is the fact that this horror cannot be shown visually. When he shows himself to the villagers, they expect "scars, disfigurements, tangible horrors, but nothing!" This awful "nothingness" causes terror and makes the people run away.

Griffin dangerously challenges the existing order and terrorizes society. Among the crimes he commits with the help of his invisibility are robbery, violation, terrorization, and murder. The town is immediately seized with horror upon the arrival of the invisible man and people start to scream, run, and lock their doors. The invisible Griffin violates the most basic social contract: visibility. He is a walking paradox, an "exposed interior" with an "absent surface." This, in turn, compels society to confront the "horrific inability of interiority to manifest a legible identity" (Bowser, 22). What frightens people is the fact that a person can still be there and be active yet be completely unaccountable and unknowable.

He considers himself a revolutionary, announcing the beginning of the "new epoch—the Epoch of the Invisible Man". One of his ideas is to create a "Reign of Terror" in a selected town by dictating orders and slaughtering

the disobedient to assert his power. Ultimately, his goal is to control the entire world and assert his dominance over those who once scorned him. He seeks to dominate society through fear and violence. His method is a calculated form of psychological warfare:

> Not wanton killing, but a judicious slaying. The point is, they know there is an Invisible Man--as well as we know there is an Invisible Man. And that Invisible Man, Kemp, must now establish a Reign of Terror. Yes; no doubt it's startling. But I mean it. A Reign of Terror. He must take some town like your Burdock and terrify and dominate it. He must issue his orders. He can do that in a thousand ways--scraps of paper thrust under doors would suffice. And all who disobey his orders he must kill and kill all who would defend them (106).

Griffin's desires and goals transitioned from one of a scientist by nature to purely greedy, and finally, to that of a power-hungry one who wants to see the world burn. The initial one is the intellectual and scientific triumph of his discovery. After that, the only thing he can think of is to use the benefits of his new state. Invisibility gives him "impunity" to do "all the wild and wonderful things" (88). The first things he intends to do are selfish and criminal in nature: to use his invisibility in robbery and violations. He manipulates others to carry out his work, including his father: "I robbed the old man—robbed my father. The money was not his, and he shot himself" (80). Griffin's far-fetched, megalomaniac idea is to take over and create a new social order in which he is the invisible, absolute ruler. One of the things he is going to do, among others, is the "Reign of Terror." It comes about as a result of the vicious circle of social rejection and loneliness he experiences, which makes him want to flip the roles and become the oppressor. He wants "to terrify and dominate" a community and at the same time be "the enforcer of the unseen tyranny" that is himself (Nakwah, 253). His last, hopeless idea is to kill Dr. Kemp, his betrayer, as a public hanging to show the beginning of his reign: "The first day there will be one execution for the sake of example—a man named Kemp. Death starts for him to-day… Death, the unseen Death, is coming" (Wells, 114).

The terror that Griffin describes in his 'Reign of Terror' can be considered as the totalitarian regime of fear that is used to control people when the power source is completely mysterious and not subject to any kind of control. Still, the book illustrates this absolute liberty as a kind of self-destructive weapon that drives the character to paranoia, violence, and deep isolation. The invisibility of Griffin, who looks for power through it, finally separates him from humans. He loses the basic things that constitutes human life as

he can neither reveal his secret, nor have real relationships, nor even make use of the simplest things. Besides, this estrangement is intensified by the continuous necessity to avoid being caught, which leads to a pessimistic state of mind, even paranoia. So, the world turns out to be his enemy and his power, instead of making him happy, becomes the cause of his disorder. In the beginning of the book, for instance, he declares, "An invisible man is a man of power," seeing invisibility as a victorious scientific breakthrough that takes him beyond common human limits (44). However, as the story goes, so does his "power" become paranoia and estrangement. Not only is he chased by society but also by his own solitude, and thus he complains he is lonely and miserable. The very same invisibility that is to be the source of his absolute power is the one that disentitles him and separates him from the human community.

In Wells's *The Invisible Man* (1897), invisibility is used as a radical foil to Bentham's Panopticon. While Bentham's structure guarantees order through the possible constant observation, Griffin's invisibility power flips this hierarchy—he is the one who is invisible and therefore free from being seen and from giving account of his actions to the moral sphere. In the terrifying picture of a "Reign of Terror," Griffin dreams of being able to carry out total observation and control of other people without being himself under any kind of control. His invisibility thus makes him the very person who has an immense power without regulation—the individual Panopticon without a moral side. One of the key characteristics of the architecture designed by Jeremy Bentham was the establishment of a hierarchical system of power in which the person in charge monitoring from the central, secret location was invisible, but the inmates who were under observation were made to be visible at all times, thus being forced to regulate themselves. Griffin's invisibility, however, is a complete contrast to this by giving the ability of the invisible observation not to a centrally located, strictly disciplinary institution, but to just one, free individual. Griffin becomes the ultimate unseen watcher, able to watch others without ever being seen, thus acquiring a frightening freedom from moral and legal accountability. The single, uncontested power of observation is basically what his metamorphosis is all about. In the Panopticon, the mere chance of being watched regulates behaviour; in Griffin's world, the certainty of not being watched eliminates it. His invisibility is certainly not just an product of science but a moral abyss which makes him able to go beyond social norms. The very liberty he achieves is not that of emancipation, but he transforms from a genius scientist to a megalomaniacal villain. As the ultimate unseen observer, Griffin attains an absolute dominance of vision over a world which is always visible.

While the Panopticon employs the invisible gaze to impose conformity, morality, and discipline on the masses for low-cost control, Griffin's invisibility enables him to disregard all norms and social rules for private gain. Griffin's invisibility essentially changes the character of the game by granting the power of the unseen watcher to a single person who is highly self-interested, rather than to a bureaucratic or institutional authority. The use of this unrestrained power is most obvious in Griffin's horrifying idea of a "Reign of Terror." Fed up with being driven to desperation and violence by the practical difficulties of his situation, he imagines using his invisibility to take over society. He sets up a concept of a total, invisible dictatorship where terror, rather than law, is the tool of governing.

The story dramatically shows how this invisible power that no one can see but is self-destructive. When Griffin is caught and killed, he becomes visible again. His death makes him visible again—quite literally bringing him back to the human condition only through death. So, Wells is implying that a very total invisibility, or the illusion of watching without any accountability, will wipe out the very core of being human. Where Bentham's Panopticon is a device of control through the look, the absence of the look in Griffin's reversed Panopticon kills. The invisible watcher, who is not restrained by the social sight, turns out to be a demon, thus proving that being seen and moral involvement are necessary for human living together.

From Victorian Invisibility to Digital Surveillance

The history of surveillance could be tracked through three distinct models of the gaze that illustrate different power-subject relationships. The first one was Foucault's Panopticon which was intended to reform and promote self-discipline only by the architectural assurance that the inmate might be watched at any time. The disciplinary power exercised through the Panopticon resulted in the emergence of "docile bodies," i.e., subjects who had internalized the gaze and consequently became their own wardens. This power is essentially productive as it legitimizes behaviour so as to make individuals useful members of society. The second model, Griffin's Reversed Panopticon, on the other hand, is completely different, as it aims at the domination and control of a single individual by the absolute, invisible power. The terror caused by Griffin's inability to be located is thus immediate and, consequently, collective resistance becomes the final reaction of the frightened people. Being a purely repressive power, this system depends on the threat of force to oppress the people and impose an arbitrary will upon them. The third and most complex model of surveillance is one of Digital Surveillance, which can be seen as a combination of the two previous

models. The first of its two purposes is to create a profit for Surveillance Capitalism (Zuboff, 2019) by means of extracting and selling personal data, while the second one is to assure security through state surveillance. So, the control here is of a layered nature whereby the self-discipline of the Panopticon (the chilling effect) is present, as well as the fear of an unseen, unaccountable watcher (Griffin's terror), and voluntary participation which Byung-Chul Han terms as the exploitation of freedom (2015). Therefore, the digital gaze is capable of not only being productive shaping behaviour towards consumption and normalization but also being repressive dissent and enforcing compliance. The integration of productive and repressive forces accomplished via the invisible, algorithmic gaze is what identifies the digital era as the most penetrating and impregnable system of control so far, a system that has effectively realized the potential of the unseen watcher to govern the visible subject.

The most profound parallel between H.G. Wells's invisible man and the modern digital gaze lies in the psychological mechanism of control: the chilling effect of mass surveillance. The chilling effect is described as follows by Manokha: "the concept of 'chilling effect' is now widely used to describe changes in behaviour made by individuals, aware of being under surveillance, to be in conformity with the perceived norms or expectations of the surveyors" (228). This effect, which describes the voluntary self-censorship and behavioural modification induced by the awareness of being monitored, is the modern, systemic realization of the terror Griffin seeks to unleash.

In *The Invisible Man*, Griffin's single hand power to victimize is not the main factor that gives him power, but rather his indeterminate presence. The people of the town are kept in a condition of continuous dread as they know that the invisible man could be anywhere, looking, listening, or getting ready to attack. That incessant threat, which could not be found, forces them to change their way of living, to use lower voice levels when speaking, and to consider that every unexplained noise is a trick of the invisible man. Their fear is not of something visible but rather of the invisible that could be capable of acting. This frightening fiction from the past has a modern-day counterpart in the Snowden revelations in 2013. The disclosures laid bare the extensive and unobserved powers of the NSA and other similar state agencies to collect and analyse digital communication of millions of people. In Snowden's view, "because he [Snowden] made the public more aware of the NSA's operations and the extent of their surveillance, he reinstated a culture of self-surveillance that had been lost in the rise of the digital age" (Sheridan, 8). The surveillance machinery, however, was still concealed—a

kind of decentralized network of algorithms and data trawlers. Nevertheless, the awareness of such an apparatus was given to the public. For Ivan Manokha, this awareness is what turns the digital environment into an even more 'panoptic' one than the original architectural model (2018).

Such a chilling effect that followed is quite comparable with the fear of the people of the town in the digital world and is the new version of it. The studies that came after Snowden revelations depicted that a noticeable increase in the cases of self-censorship was recorded, especially that of journalists, activists, and those individuals who involved in the discussion of sensitive topics. People started to avoid using certain search terms, stop airing their controversial views on the internet, and went for encrypted communication methods not because they did something illegal, but because they knew that they could still be monitored. The main reason why the modern Panopticon is so effective is because people "aware of being under surveillance, may end up exercising power over themselves without any coercion or use of force by other actors" (Manokha, 3). This is the core of the chilling effect which is a perfect analogy with the psychological terror that Griffin tried to establish. His power is not from a visible army but from the threat that was not locatable, yet his invisible presence forces the townspeople to change their behaviour, talk in low voices, and live in constant anxiety. In the both worlds-the fictional one and the digital reality-the watcher who is not seen whether it is a scientist with megalomaniacal tendencies or a large data-collection system achieves his/its goal by making the visible subject their own jailer, thus ensuring compliance through the potential of the gaze rather than through physical power. In both situations, the power of the invisible observer is not the mere act of watching, but rather the self-discipline which it internally evokes. The terror of the unseen—be it a megalomaniacal scientist or a huge, incomprehensible data-collection system—forces the visible subject to follow the rules, to regulate their own thoughts and actions, and to give up the freedom which the digital age was supposed to bring. The Snowden revelations briefly made the invisible watcher visible, but the main lasting effect is the self-imposed silence of the watched, which is a proof of the still powerful unseen gaze.

Another major similarity is the invisible tracking of digital cookies and the unnoticed change of society by Griffin, which provides an example to the central thesis of the Reversed Panopticon. In a similar way, as Griffin secretly enters the town, spying on the public's movements, talks, and secrets, digital cookies are in a similar way invisible in their operation across the internet and are mostly without user consent or at least consent is not explicitly given. Cookies are there to record each click, each search term,

and each buying preference, thus personal data is stored as a commercial product. This invisible tracking has the same fundamental power as Griffin's manipulation: information asymmetry. However, the difference is that Griffin uses the invisibility to gain knowledge and terrorize and dominate society, whereas the data collected via cookies is used to make behavioural predictions and subsequently "nudge" user behaviour toward profitable outcomes. As Byung-Chul Han puts it, this dynamic is a system of invisible control which works by exploiting the subject's freedom: "The digital society of control makes intensive use of freedom. It is only possible thanks to voluntary self-illumination and self-exposure. It exploits freedom" (Han, viii).

Han's idea of "exploiting freedom" is central to grasping the psychological depth of both the Panopticon and Griffin's terror. Essentially, it is a critique of the stereotypical view of power as mere coercion, revealing it as internalization. In the original Panopticon, the system utilizes the prisoner's cognitive freedom — their freedom to think they are being watched — in order to dominate. The prisoner is supposedly free to act as he pleases, but the fact that he could be observed at any time exploits his fear of punishment. The prisoner voluntarily embraces the gaze and thus controls himself, in effect, making himself his own guard, for he is free to choose the less dangerous path. The system takes advantage of their freedom of choice to create a docile body that behaves as expected without the need for constant, visible coercion. Griffin's control over the public is a forcible, but nonetheless, a direct exploitation of the public's freedom. The townspeople could physically do whatever they wanted, but Griffin's invisibility was taking advantage of their fearlessness. By murdering people at will and without being seen, he forces the public to opt for self-censorship and compliance voluntarily. They choose their own free will to give up their freedom in return for security which, at least from their point of view, is guaranteed. Griffin is taking advantage of their basic right to live without fear to establish his imperceptible reign. Nowadays, with the advent of the internet, the exploitation is even more sneaky, as it is aimed at the user's need for self-expression and the desire for the things to be easy. The system takes advantage of the user's need for connection by forcing them to give up their privacy. Those in power are at their best when they manipulate the targets' own rational decisions and freedoms for self-control, thus making subjects not only the most helpless, but also active, willing participants in their own domination.

Shoshana Zuboff refers to this apparatus as "surveillance capitalism," in which people see themselves turned into a data commodity. According to

Shoshana Zuboff in *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (2019), this new system is essentially to be seen as the commoditization of the human experience that is given for free and made subject to behavioural data. In this so-called "economy of visibility," the human being is on one hand the generator and on the other hand the product: practically every click, movement, and interaction is seized and turned into data that help the predictive models. The cell of Bentham's Panopticon is replaced by the algorithm's architecture—a system that monitors but does not reveal itself. Users, similarly, to the inhabitants of Bentham's prison, are always visible but do not know who—or what—is watching them. The power dynamic has been turned to become even more asymmetrical: visibility no longer guarantees accountability but instead it deepens the dependence on the invisible digital gaze. The watcher is now a system, not a human, a decentralized network of surveillance that makes the concept of privacy almost disappear. Thus, the digital era is a realization and even a progression of the Panopticon's logic: a complete observation without a visible observer.

In addition, isolation is the shared destiny of both Griffin and the modern subject under the Reversed Panopticon. Griffin's invisibility, which he considered as the ultimate freedom, turns out to be his most terrible prison. Separated from real human connection, not being able to share his secret or take pleasure in the simple things of life, his power makes him paranoid and thus, he ends up in a desperate, solitary struggle against the world. He is, in fact, the very isolated figure, the tragic outcome of his power. Similarly, the digital gaze, though it seems to connect us, is the cause of a new kind of isolation. The chilling effect leads individuals to self-censorship and self-restraint; thus, they disengage from real, open communication. Byung-Chul Han defends the idea that the human soul needs "realms where it can be at home without the gaze of the Other" and that if there were no shadows, "it would scorch the soul and cause spiritual burnout of a certain kind" (3). The continuous being of watched even if by an algorithm imposes on the subject a condition of perpetual performance and guardedness which in the end leads to psychic isolation - the same lonely, paranoid fate that devoured Griffin.

Conclusion

H.G. Wells's, *The Invisible Man* remains a profound and unsettling work precisely because it offers a radical, literary inversion of the Panoptic model of control. By granting Griffin absolute, unaccountable invisibility, Wells effectively flipped the hierarchy established by Bentham and analysed by Foucault. The novel's central argument is that the true danger to society is

not the perpetually watched inmate, but the unseen watcher—the individual or entity that can observe, manipulate, and terrorize without ever being subject to the moral and legal constraints of visibility. Griffin's descent into megalomania and his terrifying plan for a "Reign of Terror" serve as a cautionary tale about the corrosive nature of power divorced from accountability.

This story from the Victorian era miraculously connects with our times. The Panopticon is no longer a literal building that shows each prisoner to the guard but has changed into a global digital world where everyone can be watched and no one knows when. So, the ordinary person is now a kind of prisoner who is always under the eye and is chased by his/her numerous invisible watchers: algorithms, business enterprises, and state surveillance apparatuses. These modern entities operate with a degree of invisibility and impunity that mirrors Griffin's own, collecting data and exerting control over behaviour without ever being fully seen or held to account. Ultimately, *The Invisible Man* transcends its genre to become a timeless reflection on the politics of sight. Wells's novel forces us to confront the uncomfortable truth that in any system of power, the greatest threat to freedom is the one who can see everything while remaining unseen. The enduring relevance of Griffin's story lies in its warning: that the unchecked power of the invisible few will always threaten the liberty of the visible many.

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