

Interpretations of Heterotopia (revised 2016)

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1. Cautions

Foucault's accounts of heterotopia remain briefly sketched, provisional and at times confusing. Genocchio (1995: 37) notes a clear inconsistency between the presentations of the notion in the preface to *The Order of Things* (Foucault 1970 [1966]) and the later lecture (Foucault, 1998a [1967]). Deaene and De Cautier (2008a: 28), who have produced the fourth English translation of the lecture, consider it incomplete, as it does not fully address the third stage of '*emplacement*' in Foucault's brief comments on the history of space. Soja (1996:162) suggests that Foucault's ideas are not only incomplete; they are also 'inconsistent' and at times 'incoherent'. A specific instance can be found in the way he presents his first 'principle' in his lecture. Foucault first of all suggests that it refers to the way heterotopias are found in all cultures with no universal form and then goes on to suggest two 'major types'

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relating to crises and deviation. However, this typology is not followed through explicitly in his following principles and examples.

More significantly, Genocchio (1995:39) questions whether anything and everything could be described as an example of heterotopia (a point made in a more belligerent style by Harvey, 2000: 185). The illustrations are so wide and diverse that most if not all social sites share some aspects. One way of revealing this weakness is to take an example and consider whether all associated sites are heterotopic in any sense. For instance, the illustration of the Polynesian village, which both ‘abolishes time’ and yet also compresses it into a short vacation, may lead to the consideration of other types of vacation sites. Are cruise liners, themed hotels and safari parks ‘different spaces’? More widely, what about leisure parks, caravan sites or beaches? Are we not led into the realm of the everyday rather than the different? Where do we draw the line? The same enquiry could be taken with his example of the prison. If we include the prison as a ‘different space’, and the other ‘deviation heterotopia’ that Foucault associates with it – boarding schools, psychiatric hospitals, barracks, old people’s homes – where do we stop? If we are inclusive here, does this not create an imbalance in that these institutions, as Foucault reveals in his other work, have more in common with each other than with festivals, cemeteries, brothels and so on? In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977:141-149 [1975]) outlines four different ‘principles’ which characterise the spatial distribution of prisons, schools, factories and naval hospitals in the late eighteenth century without mentioning heterotopia. The fact that Foucault never returned to the concept of heterotopia directly, despite concentrating on the detailed and complex spatial arrangements within a range of institutions, at least raises some doubts as to its potential usefulness (see also Saldanha, 2008)

A major problem with Foucault’s account of these spaces therefore concerns the question of the extent of their ‘difference’ and how such difference can be measured. It must be admitted here that Foucault’s argument is not helped by the use of various absolutist phrases suggesting that heterotopias are ‘utterly’ different from ‘all’ the others (although we have to remember that the text we have is based on transcripts of the lecture). In perhaps the most sustained critique of Foucault’s concept, Saldanha (2008: 2081) forcefully argues that such terminology undermines the whole schema. She claims that Foucault’s notion is fundamentally defective because it is based on structuralist fallacies and reduces spatial difference to a ‘quasi-transcendent totality’. In particular, Foucault sets heterotopias against a

backdrop of a static or whole 'society'. However, Saldanha's overall interpretation encourages just such a reading, as she mistakenly considers that heterotopias are essentially oppositional, on the 'wild edges of society'.

As Ritter (1998: 14) comments, many of the various uses of heterotopia are 'not only contradictory and opposed to each other but also in some cases completely incomparable'. A recent collection of over twenty essays by mainly architects, planners and urbanists, *Heterotopia and the City* (Deaene and De Cautier, 2008a), demonstrates clearly various contradictions both within individual essays and more profoundly between some of the contributions. One clear example centres upon the function of the shopping mall. Many of the writers include this site in their lists of typical heterotopias. The editors of the collection do so explicitly in their introduction (5). However in their substantive essay, the editors put forward an emphasis on 'play' and holiday in all its guises, arguing that heterotopia is above all a liminal space, a break from normality (2008b). Drawing inspiration from the categorisations of space found in the ancient Greek city and specifically Hippodamus' triad of space, they argue that heterotopias are spaces of free time, both 'anti-economical' and 'non-political'. Does this square with the shopping mall? Possibly, but in another essay Muzzio and Muzzio-Rentas (2008: 139) summarising much of the recent urbanists' debate, describe the mall as the 'contemporary icon of American culture, an exemplar of US social and commercial values', a space of 'economic, social, cultural and political activity'. Kern (2008: 106) confirms this reading, suggesting that in the 'heterotopian world of the shopping mall, there is social homogeneity and social order'. Can the site be both socially homogenous and a break from normality? Perhaps, but this seeming contradiction is not addressed. It is more difficult to see how such sites can be both a centre of political activity and non-political, or at the same time commercial and anti-economical.

Many authors in this important collection of essays tend to take one side or the other and leave an overall contradictory or at least confusing sense, although some essays argue for an underlying 'double logic' of heterotopia, both sustaining and undermining normalcy (see Boyer, 2008: 54 and Heynen, 2008: 322). This double logic is I think a possible key to interpreting heterotopia, emphasising the relational aspect of the concept. In a sense heterotopias do not exist, except in relation to other spaces. Heterotopia is perhaps more about a point of view, or a method of using space as a tool of analysis. As I have argued elsewhere (see Johnson, 2013), an article by the social geographer, Matthew Gandy (2012)

illustrates this type of analysis very convincingly. He describes how Abney Park in London, originally a nineteenth century cemetery, serves many functions and has a diverse variety of visitors including dog walkers, ecologists, teenage drinkers, sexual cruisers and mourners. Combining the notion of heterotopia with queer theory, he uses the former as a starting point in a process of contestation, a queering of approaches to space that ‘challenges categorizations and “mappings” in their broadest sense so that we encounter a challenge to “neatness” in relation to human subjectivities and material landscapes alike’ (Gandy, 2102: 14). In a sense, heterotopia is a modest, in some respects, underwhelming, notion that teases us to think about new ways of relating and conceiving spaces and places.

2. Twists and turns

The biography of the concept of heterotopia has a significant place within the overall context of what is often called a ‘spatial turn’ in social theory (Crang and Thrift, 2000) and a related ‘postmodern turn’ within human geography (Minca, 2001). Seminal works within these theoretical developments include Jameson’s focus on space in *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991) and the English translation of Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1991). Spatial theories have been explored in relation to the structure of language, the process of writing, themes of identity and experience, and notions about new forms of global communication. Crang and Thrift have looked at such developments with a sceptical eye:

Space is the everywhere of modern thought. It is the flesh that flatters the bones of theory. It is an all-purpose nostrum to be applied whenever things look sticky (2001:1).

Within the context of this ‘spatial turn’ Foucault’s work generally, and the concept of heterotopia specifically, have been excavated and thoroughly examined from countless angles. Foucault’s open-ended and ambiguous account of heterotopia has probably provoked more discussion and controversy than any other of his minor texts, articles or interviews. Apart from stimulating four distinct English translations, it has received sustained responses from Defert, Foucault’s long-term partner (1997), and also Faubion (2008), the editor of the English translation of Foucault’s *Essential Works*. The brief account of Borges’ discursive heterotopia has become, often rather casually, associated with post-modernist approaches (see McHale, 1992: 250; Lyon, 1994: 99). Connor goes as far as to suggest that heterotopia ‘offers

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a name for the whole centreless universe of the postmodern' (1989: 8). More modestly, Vattimo uses the general term heterotopia to describe the productive features of a postmodern era driven by the mass media and communicative technologies. He encapsulates the emergence of post-modernity as a transformative aesthetic experience based upon plurality of different 'worlds' (1992: 68-9). As explored later in this essay, other theorists, using both the accounts of heterotopia, but tending to concentrate on the lecture to architects, have produced comprehensive arguments tying the notion explicitly to the birth of modernity (Hetherington, 1997) as well as principles within post-modernity (Soja, 1995, 1996).

More widely, the notion has been used to underpin, supplement and invigorate a range of research from the role of imported prints in early colonial Calcutta (Eaton, 2003) to the process of organisational entrepreneurship within management theory (Hjorth, 2005). The notion of Foucault's 'different spaces' can be found scattered across literary studies (see Bryant-Bertail, 2000 and Meerzon, 2007), science fiction studies (see Somay, 1984 and Gordon, 2003) and curriculum and childhood studies (see Sumaura and Davis, 1999 and McNamee, 2000). A dazzling variety of spaces has been explored as illustrations of heterotopia (see my [bibliographies](#) for full listing):

Arab-Islamic architecture (Tonna, 1990)

An environmental installation (Genocchio, 1995)

The Museum of Pacific Island Culture (Kahn, 1995)

The Citadel-LA – the civic centre of Los Angeles (Soja, 1995)

The Palais Royal, masonic lodges and early factories (Hetherington, 1997)

Vancouver's New Public Library (Loretta, 1997)

A performance prototype (Birringer, 1998)

Local Exchange Trading Schemes (North, 1999)

Women's colleges at the turn of the nineteenth century (Tamboukou, 2000)

Sites in Fascist Italy (Burdett, 2000)

Landscapes (Guarrasi, 2001)

Gated communities in South African security parks (Hook and Vrdoljak, 2002)

Buddhist Site of Swayambhu in Kathmandu Valley (Owens, 2002)

Underground bandrooms in Hong Kong (Kit-Wai Ma, 2002)

The Nineteenth century ship narrative (Casarino, 2002)

Pornographic sites on the internet (Jacobs, 2004)

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The cybercafé (Liff, 2003)

Chinatown in Washington DC (Lou, 2007)

The shopping mall (Kern, 2008; Muzzio and Muzzio-Rentas, 2008)

Masculinity practices along the Tel Aviv shoreline (Allweil and Kallus, 2008)

Burial sites in Kinshasa, Congo (De Boeck, 2008)

The vampire (Davies, 2008)

Patterns of disclosure among heterosexuals living with HIV (Persson and Richards, 2008)

The group dynamics of a Climate Camp (Saunders and Price, 2009)

The public nude beach (Andriotis 2010)

Off-shore pirate radio station (Soffer 2010)

Derek Jarman's garden (Steyaert 2010)

Hospitals (Coleman and Street 2012)

Abney Park Cemetery in London (Gandy 2012)

The Persian Garden (Kive 2012)

The Lunar Cemetery (Damjanov 2013)

Facebook (Rymarczuk and Derksen 2014)

Ultra-Orthodox Spaces in Israel (Shoshana, 2014)

Floating Asylum (Morgan, 2014)

Night lives and youth transition (Gallan, 2015)

Abandoned Northern Ireland Prison (Kindvinis and Garrett (2015)

Numerical Modelling (Laborde (2015)

3. Architecture and Art

Foucault's concept has particularly provoked responses in architectural theory. In an article first published in 1980, later translated as 'Heterotopias and the history of spaces', Teysot (1998) offered the very first discussion of heterotopia, referring both to the account in the preface to *The Order of Things* and the original lecture to architects (through various excerpts that had appeared in an Italian journal in 1968). In an ingenious attempt to marry the two versions, he uses the term to explain the significance of institutions organised around health measures in the eighteenth century as described by the historian Perrot. Following Perrot, Teysot formulates the various hospitals and facilities within a grid with eight classifications of patients that seem as bizarre to us today as Borges' encyclopaedia, for example, one group referring to 'foundlings above the age of nine, the indigent, bastards and so forth'. For

Teyssot such a description of these strangely ordered institutions counters any simple linear or evolutionary history of hospitals; it introduces ‘discontinuity’, which he argues is a key notion in *The Order of Things*: the ‘disjunctions... between one particular ordering and the next’ (Teyssot, 1998: 300).

In contrast, Porphyrios (1982) uses the concept in a thorough revaluation of Alvar Aalto’s architecture. He argues that heterotopia helps to identify a fundamental category of Aalto’s design method that opposes trends within what Porphyrios calls ‘homotopic’ modernism (110). Discontinuity, gaps and fragments are embraced rather than the smooth continuities of modernism. A ‘heterotopic sensibility’ introduces difference rather than drawing elements together and juxtaposes dissimilar things in order to produce ‘cohesion through adjacency’. Heterotopic organisation is able to fragment and relate simultaneously, an accretional process:

where the fringes intermingle, where the extremities of the one denote the beginning of the other, there in the hinge between two things an unstable unity appears’(3)

Tafuri (1987: 40) also uses the term to try to capture a certain architectural sensibility, but this time provocatively highlighting the designs of Giambattista Piranesi as a forerunner of the avant-garde. Piranesi’s spatial distortions are likened to the way heterotopia undermines language and the customary means of holding words and things together. According to Tafuri, the very foundations of architectural language are embraced by Piranesi as precarious, demanding a commitment to constant variation of form (42). Summarising the various architectural interpretations of heterotopia, Urbach (1998) argues that the notion has been used narrowly to identify and commend particular architectural works and projects. He considers that the term has become a ‘name tag’ for the architecture of a given period and loses its crucial ‘contingent, relational character’. Unfortunately, Urbach’s alternative, undeveloped interpretation is, as I will go on to argue, a simplistic, binary notion that heterotopia fundamentally ‘dissolves, destabilises and interrupts power’ (351-52).

Rotenberg (1995) focuses on the ‘extraordinary places’ of garden architecture and explores some of their historical development of formal gardens through the framework of Foucault’s six principles of heterotopia. He uses the principles in order both to distinguish ‘ordinary’ and ‘extraordinary’ places and to provide some consistent bench marks over time. Overall, through tracing how powerful groups have used municipal resources to shape public space,

he highlights ‘the persistence of an unresolvable opposition between the symbols of order and the symbols of liberty’ (9). He argues that from the second half of the eighteenth century this opposition has shaped the thinking of each new landscape regime. He produces many compelling accounts of how the philosophy and design of gardens incorporate, display, and legitimate dominant political forces. Unfortunately, although he makes some convincing points about these different spaces of contradiction, spatio-temporal ambivalence and fantasy, his central dichotomy seems to be too simple and tends to jar with his use of heterotopia. Garden philosophy and practice are reduced to a battle between those who promote tidy geometrical designs (e.g. Absolute monarchists within the ‘French’ style) and those who promote the uninhibited growth of nature (e.g. libertarian Republicans within the ‘English’ style). This leads to self-evident, overblown generalisations, such as ‘through this imposition of control, the aristocratic proclaimed his limitless power’ (54) and ‘the baroque landscape in Vienna dwarfed the individuals, reducing their wills and desires’ (62), or provocative but unsubstantiated comments such as the English landscape is a ‘delusion of freedom which hides the gravest inequities of the industrial transformation of capitalism’ (85).

Although Rotenberg explains how these dichotomies were played out in contradictory ways, for example, how the gardens of liberty were ‘elaborate stage sets’ and as deliberate as the baroque gardens they annulled’ (86), his argument hinges on the crude distinction between ‘places of control and places of power’. The former are public spaces where those ‘who control the agenda for metropolitan planning use landscape to enshrine their model of the relationship of the person to the state’, and the latter are ‘domestic gardens in which individuals use landscape to display their model of the relationship of the person to nature’ (17). Here the simple antithesis misses the rich couplings that can take place between the two modes of power and how people can be governed *through* these couplings. Put another way, the use of Foucault’s notion of heterotopia is set within a non-Foucauldian, top-down notion of power.

It is also worth noting that heterotopia has been linked to various works of art. Foucault’s long-term partner, Daniel Defert (1997) concludes his historical review of the concept of heterotopia by evoking the work of Felix Gonzalez-Torres, who produced an ‘experimental heterotopian environment’, showing an unmade, body imprinted bed on Manhattan billboards. Similarly, Genocchio’s (1995) seminal essay on heterotopia clinches his analysis by reference to an environmental installation by Australian artist Denis del Favero. Other

contemporary art has been interpreted as heterotopian, perhaps most notably Birringer's (1998) reflections on Makrolab, a communications, research and living space started by Marko Peljhan and first realised during Documenta X in Kassel in 1997. Makrolab was equipped to accommodate artists, scientists, 'tactical media workers' for joint 'progressive' work primarily in the fields of telecommunications, weather systems and migrations. Makrolab became a mobile space station, an incongruous site in which, echoing Foucault, 'all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted'. The subversive lab 'orbits around the spectrum of public and private data networks and telematic nervous systems, fishing and analysing signals, mapping voices, intercepting transmissions'. In turn, a few artists have incorporated Foucault's notion of heterotopia within an exploration of Foucault's wider work, as a sort of tool box of ideas and inspiration, exploring the possibility of *making* heterotopia, an interpretation through practice. Examples here include installations by Dan Graham and work by the Norwegian artist and filmmaker Knut Åsdam (1995), who has explicitly explored heterotopia as one key strand in his work.

4 Critical Reviews

4.1 Hetherington's question of modernity and 'neutral' space

Kevin Hetherington's *The Badlands of Modernity* (1997) has been perhaps the most influential study of heterotopia. Overall, Hetherington provides a convincing relational perspective which avoids seeing heterotopia as fundamentally oppositional or marginal. He anchors his interpretation within the evolution of specific social spaces during the formative years of modernity, exploring three specific examples: the *Palais Royal* in Paris, Masonic Lodges and early factories of the industrial revolution. Hetherington refers to little detail of Foucault's descriptions of heterotopia and uses the term rather loosely and generally. For instance, he assumes that heterotopia has been implied through a range of notions such as 'paradoxical space' (Rose, 1993: 150-155) and 'marginal space' (Lefebvre, 1991 and Shields, 1991), even though the term has not been used by these specific theorists. He defines heterotopia as different places which provide either an unsettling or an alternative representation of spatial and social relations (Hetherington, 1997: 8). The sites are incongruous in some way and display 'different modes of ordering'. Hetherington is

particularly keen to distance heterotopia from notions of transgression and resistance, but unfortunately switches backwards and forwards between describing the sites as either ‘alternate’ (one thing and then another) or ‘alternative’ (one instead of another) in their ordering process. The distinction between the words is lost and the definition of heterotopia becomes confusing. By defining heterotopia very broadly, Hetherington also suggests that they are an important feature of Foucault’s overall work. He makes some sweeping, unsubstantiated claims:

... it is Foucault who has most clearly developed the concept of heterotopia and suggested its importance to understanding the spatiality of the social ordering of modernity (1977, 1984, 1986a, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c)... (40)

In the above quotation, I have included Hetherington’s six references to Foucault’s work. However, scant evidence is presented to suggest that Foucault developed the concept of heterotopia through these books. When the spatial aspect of Foucault’s other major works are discussed by Hetherington, the prison, asylum and hospital are lumped together and defined within a ‘metaphor of the panopticon’ without any indication of the subtle breadth and variety of Foucault’s approaches to these spaces (111).

Overall, Hetherington describes heterotopia as laboratories for experimenting with new ways of ordering society. His first example of a heterotopic site is the *Palais Royal* at the time of the French Revolution. The *Palais Royal* at this period is depicted as a diverse social space for the enlightened bourgeoisie, incorporating gardens, theatres, cafes and a range of new commercial activities. However, as Hetherington outlines, it was also the haunt for ordinary folk to find pleasure in festivities and spectacles as well as a centre for gambling, prostitution and political agitation. One of Hetherington’s most powerful arguments is that the *Palais Royal* combined transgressive elements with subtle forms of control. In this he wants partly to critique those who, influenced by such writers as Bakhtin, have ‘valorized’ the margins in terms of sites of resistance and otherness (see Shields, 1991). Hetherington, heavily influenced by Stallybrass and White’s, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (1996: 18-34) wants to argue that these sites produced another ‘mode of ordering’ rather than a radical break. Bakhtin and those influenced by his thought have tended nostalgically to overplay the freedoms allowed by the authorities and ignored the diverse manner in which the events were moderated and controlled (Hetherington 1997: 30).

At first glance, Hetherington's description of the *Palais Royal* is suggestive and seems to chime with aspects of Foucault's examples of heterotopia, but he wishes to take things much further by making two big claims. Firstly, he argues that the *Palais Royal* can be seen as a 'metaphor for modernity'. Secondly, he asserts that heterotopia, and by implication, modernity itself, are characterised by combining, in new ways, aspects of social control and expressions of freedom (6). Hetherington wants to replace the simple divide between social order/margins with a notion involving process, mobility and ambiguity:

Ordering and disordering go together, as do centres and margins, in ways that are tangled, uncertain and topologically complex. (7)

One major difficulty here is that Hetherington does not corroborate his conception of modernity and social ordering. He outlines two broad and conflicting 'traditions' and then mixes them up to provide his new conception. On the one hand, referring generally to Bauman, he depicts notions of modernity as linked to the ideas of the enlightenment that stress progress, order and control. On the other, referring broadly to Berman, he outlines a version of modernity that emphasises change, flux and transience (10). He wishes to replace these traditions with one that contains uncertainty and ambiguity, and which can be seen in the ordering processes that emerged at the time of modernity's formation. Jameson (2002), in discussing the recent upsurge of academic interest in modernity, argues that to apply the term always involves a disproportionate excitement. Such an intensity of feeling emerges through discovering a new angle or twist to the tale of modernity, reorganising what has gone before and setting out a novel schema or a breaking of traditional paradigms. The rewriting process takes priority over the historical insights that are offered. Modernity for Jameson is therefore a narrative category rather than a concept:

What I want to underscore... is the way in which to affirm the 'modernity' of this or that historical phenomenon is always to generate a kind of electrical charge.... to awaken a feeling of intensity and energy that is greatly in excess of the attention we generally bring to interesting events or monuments of the past. (Jameson, 2002:35)

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Osborne (1998: 19) argues that problems of dichotomisation undermine sociological theories of modernity; they 'over-dramatise' and condense features of social change to one or two basic elements. To try to rewrite the story of modernity again surely requires utmost circumspection? To reduce modernity to a 'middle way' between order and freedom seems too simple. Hetherington wishes to collapse a binary, but actually retains it through overworking each side too heavily.

Hetherington also argues for a strong link between modernity, heterotopia and utopia. He argues that the most significant aspect of utopianism is its 'translation into spatial practice' (11) within the development of modernity. He finds inspiration for this idea through a reading of Louis Marin's *Utopics: The Semiological Play of Textual Spaces* (1984). However, Hetherington's use of Marin is forced and unconvincing. Marin's complex semiological study is reduced to a loose presentation of the concept of the 'neutral' and its equation with heterotopia:

The space of the neutral, therefore, is the space of an alternate ordering; it is the space I have called, after Foucault, heterotopia. (Hetherington, 1997: 67)

It is possible that the two concepts could be used together productively, but this would require a careful and sustained 'reading' of a specific site, applying at least some of Marin's semantic tools which he has appropriated from Derrida. Such a study would have to conceptualise how the neutral can be both 'an impossible space, a realm of *différence* as Derrida would have it', or an empty space, and the encountered 'realm of social ordering' (Marin, 1984: 67). At most the analysis would require recognition that these two notions of 'heterotopia' and the 'neutral' stem from very different intellectual pathways, highlighted by the colourful and acrimonious exchanges between Foucault and Derrida (see Boyne, 1990). A concept of the 'neutral' can be found in Foucault's (1998b: 149) essay on Blanchot but this is very different from its use within deconstructivists' accounts. In general, Hetherington opens up a potentially fascinating linkage between Foucault and Marin's concepts but does not help his case through the bold assertion that they are 'almost identical' (1997: 69).

Hetherington wishes to pin down heterotopia to a particular role at a certain stage of history. Such an assertion goes against Foucault's argument that these sites can be found in all cultures and that their function changes throughout history, but Hetherington does expose

some interesting questions regarding how heterotopia might work relationally and also how these sites might have a particular importance within the emergence of modernity.

Hetherington's conclusions are suggestive and worth exploring further. Most importantly, he outlines how these spaces have no intrinsic features; their distinction arises solely through their relation to other sites and they have 'multiple and shifting meanings'.

4.2 A brief word on Shane's Recombinant Urbanism

Hetherington's anchoring of heterotopia to modernity is worth contrasting with Shane's (2005) notion of 'recombinant urbanism'. Shane's book puts forward the notion of a city-element triad. The main argument is that all major cities are built around specific districts, units, or 'enclaves' which act as focussing, or centring devices. A key example is the city square which has taken diverse forms throughout history and in different cultures but is always the pivotal space, separated out from its surroundings by a perimeter, often by walls, barriers, gates and has the function of slowing down and concentrating activity (energy). 'Armatures', the second element, are urban assemblages, spaces of connection and flow, essentially linear and producing a sequential experience. They link different areas of the city. In contrast 'heterotopias' are exceptions to the dominant city model and mix the stasis of enclaves with the flow of armatures. They are heterogeneous spaces that 'handle or sort disparate flows', a specialised, hybrid form of enclave, with multiple 'sub-centres and subcompartments' that are differentiated from their surroundings, for example, a monumental church, hospital, prison, fair, theme park, shopping mall, public squares used for specific spectacles, exhibitions 'or any public institution standing out from the surrounding urban fabric' (75).

As Defert (1997) suggests, there is a distinct functionalist-structuralist aspect to Foucault's presentation of heterotopia. Shane endorses and builds on this functionalist dimension. Heterotopias 'help maintain the city's stability as a self-organising system' (231). They work to handle exceptions, for example, containing specialised exclusions as in prisons, or they can help balance binary forces, for example, consumption and production, or they can act as facilitators, for example, addressing the need for speed through virtual spaces. A key function is to contain people and activities that have been classified as 'taboo' (232) or the 'rejected elements necessary to construct an urban system' (244). They are spaces that can act as safety

valves, gathering exceptions, making them harmless, avoiding disintegration and instability, handling flows and managing change.

As Shane states in his introduction, ‘urban theorists have identified various normative city models (almost always in threes)’. He follows this tradition rigorously. For example, each of the three elements, or organising devices, relate to one of Kevin Lynch’s three normative city models: enclaves = city of faith; armatures = city as machine; heterotopias = ecological city. Heterotopias themselves are divided into three types. He reduces Foucault’s six principles into (1) ‘crisis’ (2) ‘deviance’ (two sides of Foucault’s first principle) and (3) ‘illusion’ (one side of his sixth principle). Shane attempts to tidy up the confusion of Foucault’s accounts of heterotopia, defining features which fit into previous tripartite schemes. With ‘deviance’ this is quite straight forward as he relies on Foucault’s later writing on prisons and disciplinary forms of observation, classification and normalisation. Elsewhere he relies on vague and unsubstantiated references to Foucault, for example ‘in the 1970s Foucault identified particular places in the city where processes of change and hybridisation are facilitated, dubbing them heterotopias’ (9) – a notion seemingly borrowed from Hetherington. Another example, amongst many, is the suggestion that in Foucault’s discussion of colonies and port cities, he ‘was clear that he was dealing with heterotopias of “deviance”, not “crisis” (250). I am not sure of the source of this assertion.

This very brief review does not at all do justice to the breadth and inclusiveness of Shane’s conceptual modelling in architecture, urban design, and city theory, however, I do find the treatment of heterotopia very rigid and forced. I endorse Lieven De Cauter’s and Michiel Dehaene’s (2008) argument that the principles and distinctions that Foucault indicate offer no ‘fixed’ taxonomy. At most we are left with different axes and related qualifications such as: imaginary (real/unreal), temporal (permanent/transient) and anthropological (normal/abnormal). There are functionalist elements in Foucault’s descriptions but Shane’s functionalism relies on a very unFoucauldian notion of power, referring for instance to ‘dominant urban actors’ that employ heterotopias ‘to keep their favoured order as “pure” and consistent as possible’ (Shane, 2005: 232).

4.3 Soja's 'thirdspace'

In contrast to Hetherington, Edward Soja links the notion of heterotopia with post-modernity rather than modernity. In a range of studies, Soja uses Foucault's work generally, and the notion of heterotopia specifically, to open up and explore new approaches to the study of human geography (see 1989, 1995, 1996). Soja wishes to overturn what he describes as a 'persistent residual historicism' that distorts and blinkers much modern critical social theory (1989:16). He makes a case for spatialising social theory and argues that Foucault was ahead of the game in this project. Soja often justifies these innovative approaches by explicitly aligning Foucault and post-modernity. For example, this bold statement about Foucault is found towards the beginning of *Postmodern Geographies*:

He would no doubt have resisted being called a postmodern geographer, but he was one, *malgre lui*, from *Madness and Civilisation* to his last works on *The History of Sexuality* (1989:16)

Without going into an insular, if not sterile, debate about what is or is not post-modern, it is worth noting Soja's sweeping use of the term. What is missing in his work is any acknowledgement that the term 'postmodern' is, to use Jameson's words, 'not merely contested, it is also internally conflicted and contradictory'. Jameson argues that for better or worse 'we cannot not use it', but unlike Soja, he is extremely cautious:

Postmodernism is not something we can settle once and for all and then use with a clear conscience. The concept, if there is one, has to come at the end, and not at the beginning of our discussions about it. (1991:xxii)

Soja makes massive assumptions about, and all-encompassing appropriations of, both the notion of post-modernity and the work of Foucault. It is within this questionable context that he uses Foucault's notion of heterotopia to underpin his arguments. Soja applies Foucault's ideas about 'different spaces' in order to describe specific sites, for example, he analyses the Citadel-LA, the 'urban fortresses found in the centre of Los Angeles and an exhibition held there in 1989 to celebrate the bicentennial of the French Revolution (1989 and 1996: 186). However, Soja's main application springs from Foucault's term 'heterotopology' to describe a method of 'reading' particular sites. This is built up into a whole new way of seeing and

thinking about space, or the conception of ‘thirdspace’ (1996: 145). Thirdspace embraces a range of what he calls ‘radical postmodern perspectives’ and also includes an interpretation of Lefebvre’s work, particularly *The Production of Space* (1991), combined with Foucault’s concept of heterotopia. He claims that both ‘restructure the most familiar ways of thinking about space across all disciplines’ (Soja, 1996: 11). But is it useful not just to contrast but actually incorporate Foucault’s thumb-nail sketch within Lefebvre’s dense, elaborate, complex reflections on space? Acknowledging that Lefebvre went out of his way to avoid presenting a methodical theory of space, Soja nevertheless condenses and organises his thought systematically. Soja finds ‘thirdspace’ perspectives in Foucault’s notion of heterotopia and goes as far as to equate the concept with Lefebvre’s lived or representational space, building up a new, far-reaching, ‘transdisciplinary’ approach. Soja’s conflation ‘heterotology of thirdspace’ is in some ways surprising as he admits that Foucault’s lecture is ‘rough and patchy’ (154) as well as presenting ‘frustratingly incomplete, inconsistent, incoherent’ examples (162). How therefore can Soja build from this shaky ground such large and embracing concepts? One way is to marry the ideas to others, for example those of Lefebvre, the other significant manoeuvre is to equate the lecture on heterotopia with Foucault’s other work, especially with themes of knowledge and power:

In ‘Of Other Spaces’ is encapsulated the sites of Foucault’s unending engagement with spatiality, with a fundamentally spatial problematic of knowledge and power (Soja, 1996: 162)

This is significant because a few pages earlier Soja had addressed and rejected the idea of incorporating Foucault’s other work in his notion of ‘thirdspace’ and states that it would be a risky procedure as “Foucault rarely addressed the ‘spatial problematic’ directly and explicitly in his major writings (154). In turn, this does not sit comfortably with the extravagant claim that ‘hidden in the underbrush of the Thirdspace...is the body and mind of Michel Foucault’ (145). Soja seems in this sense to want it both ways. But by slipping in notions about ‘power and knowledge’ it enables him to make the large claim that Foucault is envisioning an alternative approach to space, one that challenges and resists all established conceptions. This procedure is also identified by Philo (1992), who in making an even stronger case for aligning Foucault’s work with postmodern geography, nevertheless finds Soja incorporates ideas about power too easily and without attention to the detail of Foucault’s varied historical

studies. He argues that Soja misleadingly attempts to create something fundamental and total with regards Foucault's thought:

... by claiming to find the 'essence' of Foucault's postmodern geography and by in effect hooking up his own version of Foucault's geography to his own version of postmodernism, Soja ends up giving a misleading statement of Foucault's distinctive position (Philo, 1992: 41)

Although Philo's own linking of Foucault with postmodernism does not address adequately the contested nature of the term, the above criticism is important as he acknowledges that Soja is one of the few theoretically minded geographers who has had any sustained engagement with Foucault.

Soja's interpretation of Foucault is disappointing for a variety of reasons. He places Foucault's work within a spatial context by asserting that his historical studies were 'proactively spatialised from the start' (1989:18) and yet there is virtually no discussion or even detailed reference to these studies. In turning to Foucault's lecture of heterotopia, much is made of his brief comments about privileging space over time, but the detail of the text is merely summarised and contains no analytical reflection. He occasionally hints at some underlying heterotopian properties such as a 'relational' quality (17) or an ability to be 'combinatorial, microcosmic, concretely abstract' (1995: 14), but these stimulating ideas are not developed. Such a fragile framework is then equated rather than contrasted with Lefebvre's spatial preference, which in turn is reduced to a radical and open space for conflict, freedom, emancipation and 'resistance to the dominant order' (68). To marry Lefebvre's far reaching spatial narrative, based upon a subtle reinterpretation of phenomenology and Marx, with Foucault's overall work and specific notion of heterotopia requires more than acknowledgment of potential differences (Soja, 1996: 162); it requires a detailed examination of Foucault's applications and studies of space.

4.4 The globalisation of space: Foucault and Heterotopia (a collection of essays, published 2015)

This group of essays edited by Palladino and Miller (2015) complements two previous collections edited by Ritter and Knaller-Vlay, *Other Spaces: The Affair of the*

Heterotopia (1998) and Dehaene and De Cauter, *Heterotopia and the City* (2008). All three present a strikingly diverse set of engagements with Foucault's tantalisingly underdeveloped spatio-temporal concept. The introduction underlines that all the contributions have a critical and political motivation and 'share an ethical commitment towards exploring and valuing other spaces as productive forces in generating novel conceptualizations of im/material space'. The collection is divided into four sections: (I) State and Hegemony (II) Movement, Marginality and Containment (III) Seas and Ships and (IV) Animals, Energy and Ecology. The majority of the contributions stem from cultural, literary and post-colonial studies and, as the title indicates, engage with heterotopias in the 'context of that most unwieldy and hotly contested of historical process, globalization' (Palladino and Miller, 2015: 5).

The editors claim that heterotopia is presented as a 'dissoluble part of homogeneous global spatiality, but also a deviating energy which spins away from it' (6). However, it is the latter deviating energy, a force of resistance, which dominates some of the chapters. For example, in an essay 'An Occult Geometry of Capital: Heterotopia, History and Hypermodernism in Iain Sinclair's Cultural Geography', Tom Bristow critiques the urban developments that took place to stage the 2012 London Olympic Games. For Bristow, the Games are a manifestation of the 'global capitalist culture industry', a homogenous conception of the city. In contrast, Bristow explores Ian Sinclair's novels, poetry and literary criticism to revive local, multiple, contesting powers, to release energies that are 'dislocated from hegemonic power' and 'not constituted by structural relations' (30). Sinclair's work for Bristow makes heterotopia a 'poetic site of resistance'. Bristow briefly refers to the fence around the Games as a heterotopian feature but generally heterotopia is a poetic force 'a negation of the quest for order'. In this reading, heterotopia is opposed to tradition, uniformity and commodity. There is here and in other contributions, as Iain Chambers expresses it in the chapter 'Heterotopia and the Critical Cut', the 'desire to represent modernity as the perfect match of linear time and homogenous space' (112). A simple dichotomy emerges that opposes heterotopia to this tidy and pervasive conception of global spatiality.

I have argued against such sweeping binary thinking about heterotopia elsewhere (Johnson, 20013) and suggested that heterotopia can be used as an actual tool for dismantling such a tendency, an unsettling lens that overlaps with Foucault's (2008: 186) overall 'critical morality' that avoids 'critical commonplace' positions and, referring to his description of textual heterotopias, disturb 'the familiar landmarks of my thought – our thought' (Foucault,

1970: xv). To different degrees, many of the chapters do recognise that heterotopia is not a one-way street but offers different tensions, possibilities, dangers, cutting through and entwining elements of freedom, resistance, energy, regulation, normalisation, control, order and so on. For example, in 'Heterotopia and Placelessness in Brian Chikwava's Harare North', Zoë Wicomb explores heterotopia in relation to post-coloniality, but without assuming that the concept necessarily resists dominant social systems or leads to hope of social transformation. Stella Bolaki's 'Heterotopias of Illness' also uses heterotopia subtly, this time as a 'conceptual tool to think about illness' (81). Illness interrupts and opens up a 'different space', drawing us out of the familiar, 'normal state', a different disturbing play of space and time both of the body and the medical spaces that are occupied. Three illness narratives are explored: the struggle with tuberculosis and confinement in Sioux Sanatorium, the experience of attending voluntarily a clinic in Switzerland for alternative cancer treatment and an account of a mother's struggle with dementia. Bolaki relates the three stories closely with Foucault's outline, principles and features of heterotopia. The responses to institutional spaces are revealed as complex. For example, the experience of the Swiss clinic for the narrator is one of being inside an 'insular bubble', whereas this is contrasted with another patient who describes it as a haven, a holiday, a realm of freedom. This contrast reminded me of a favourite passage in Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*:

At odd moments, the better days, the mental hospital reminded her of being in college those almost two years she had before she got knocked up. The similarity lay in the serious conversations, the leisure to argue about God and Sex and the State and the Good....Outside, whole days of her life would leak by and she wouldn't have one good thoughtful conversation (1979: 86).

In a different context, Diane Morgan's chapter '*L'Asile Flottant: Modernist Reflections by the Armée du Salut and Le Corbusier on the Refuge/Refuse of Modernity*', uses heterotopia to confront stereotypes of authority and control. She explores the history of a barge that was bought by the French Salvation Army, Armée du Salut, and converted by the architect Le Corbusier to be a floating asylum for the homeless and destitute. Like the Armée du Salut's 'People's Palaces' and the more extensive 'City of Refuge', and even their work in Penal colonies of French Guyana, the boat is seen as both embracing difference and acting as a utopian model for a more equal society. Using archival material from the *Armée du Salut's* newspaper, *En avant*, Morgan does not interpret the intervention as a process of

normalisation, a moral crusade to purify the impoverished and return them to God-fearing 'acceptable' lives. She reads it as instigating a heterotopian community that sets a challenge for us all – a social critique and the promise of social transformation. An eclectic multitude, the destitute, the dispossessed, the ill, criminals, political agitators, the lost were brought together in a transient collective as a sort of democratic practice and laboratory for the future – a practised and local utopia. The 'Refuge/Refuse of Modernity' in the title captures nicely the ambivalence of this particular heterotopia.

Other chapters productively engage with Foucault's elusive notion. Mariangela Palladino explores how Gypsy travellers deviate from the sedentary, dominant metropolitan conception of space, evoking their difference and similarity with the everyday, without romanticising their life. John Miller's 'Zooheterotopias' focuses on the fascinating development throughout the twentieth century of the pseudoscience cryptozoology, the study of animals usually thought to be mythical or extinct. However, Abdulrazak Gurnah's contribution 'Writing the Littoral', which looks at the coast of East Africa through the work of Joseph Conrad, Karen Blixen, V. S. Naipaul and Shiva Naipaul, seems out of place and does not refer to heterotopia directly at all except in the epigraph. The fact that it shares colonial and postcolonial themes explored in Wicomb's chapter does not seem to justify its inclusion here. But perhaps the most questionable essay is Mauro Pala's 'From Hegemony to Heterotopias: Geography Epistemology in Gramsci and Foucault'. On various occasions Pala asserts that Gramsci is 'just like Foucault' as in 'just as in Foucault, modernity is launched under the aegis of the bourgeoisie' (20). The sweeping comparisons are never substantiated. More significantly, no attempt is made to confront Foucault's fundamental critique of Gramscian concepts such as hegemony and 'the state'. A reading of Foucault's 1977-8 series of lectures at College de France (Foucault, 2007) would surely indicate serious objections to such assertions as: 'history of states and groups of states' is essentially the 'history of the ruling class' (23).

Overall, I find the most convincing contributions are those that avoid large claims, grand narratives and excessive dichotomisation concerning modernity, globalization and the homogeneous culture of late-capitalism. This collection demonstrates that heterotopia is most effectively used circumspectly.

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