

Some reflections on the relationship between utopia and heterotopia

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Foucault describes heterotopias as 'localisable' utopias or 'actually realised' utopias. In the preface to *The Order of Things*, Foucault opposes utopian to heterotopian textual spaces (1970: xviii). The former are coherent, ordered imaginings, whereas the latter disrupt and shatter speech. In his later lecture to architects, both notions are described as 'spaces which are linked with all the others, and yet at variance somehow with all the other emplacements' (1998a: 178). Here the distinction is drawn rather simplistically between 'unreal' utopias and 'real' heterotopias. The two terms are not opposed; they form a continuum with the 'mirror' placed in between as an 'intermediate experience', somewhere between the real and the unreal. (179). Most of the examples that Foucault provides of heterotopia include various utopian aspects. The Puritan communities founded by the English in America and the Jesuit colonies in Paraguay are obvious instances, but both prisons and asylums are also described in utopian terms in Foucault's wider work (see 1975 and 2006a respectively). Foucault's 'oldest' heterotopia, the garden, and the 'highly' heterotopian cemetery have significant utopian features.

Yet the relationship between these two concepts has tended to be neglected or underplayed in interpretations of heterotopia. Defert does discuss the disquiet in the 1960s and 70s regarding the utopian features of the rationalisation of space within urbanism. He asks rhetorically whether heterotopias could 'trace a furrow in the dominant discourse that unfolded seamlessly in the space of utopia' (1997: 277). Ellin argues that heterotopias might provide an example of a movement from technocratic modernist urban designs to something more humble, apolitical, sceptical and anti-utopian. He suggests the latter spaces are like 'vest pocket utopias' (1996: 92). Others have tended to link utopia with modernity and heterotopia with the heterogeneity of post-modernity (see Siebers, 1994: 20). Vattimo evocatively encapsulates the emergence of post modernity as a transformative aesthetic experience that moves 'from utopia to heterotopia' (1992: 71). The former is based upon some unitary, essential expression of truth, whereas the latter insists on multiplicity and the ungrounded,

ambiguous, transient event. However, all these writers who link utopia and heterotopia tend to take for granted the meaning and scope of the former term. Unlike Levitas (1990), they do not recognise that utopia is as thoroughly problematic and contested a concept as heterotopia.

Amongst all the debate about appropriate definitions of, and approaches to, utopia (see Levitas 2003a: 1-8) the origin of the word is certain. It was invented by Sir Thomas More as the title of his book published in Latin in 1516. The newly minted term was a conflation of Greek expressions (*ou* – not; *eu*-good or well; *topos* – place; *ia* – region). From the start therefore, the word is full of playful irony and ambiguity. It refers both to the good place and no place. Contrary to Harvey's reading (2000: 106), there are strong spatial themes and elements of nostalgia in More's book but it is also full of paradoxes and ambiguities. Kumar argues that the book contains a tension between, on the one hand, a political tract, an indictment of Tudor England, and on the other, light-hearted dreaming of an impossible future (1991: 3). Kumar provides a generally narrow definition of utopia; it is essentially a story, a piece of fiction about an imaginary good society. In this view, More's invention sets out the territory of utopia for the following five hundred years, including a range of conventions for telling the story. However, Kumar does, somewhat reluctantly, allow for a further 'supplementary' category that he calls 'utopian thought' (28). He allows this by arguing that some types of social theory are similar to fiction and rest on a belief in the malleability or perfectibility of humanity. This permits him to include a wide range of texts within the overall utopian enterprise, including the great nineteenth century works of Robert Owen, Saint Simon and Fourier. Nevertheless, the definition remains tight in that he is adamant, for example, that utopia is essentially a Western concept (see Kumar, 1991:35 and Levitas, 2003a: 4).

Levitas argues for a much wider Blochian concept of utopia (1990 and 2001: 27; and see Hudson, 2003: 111-112). In *The Spirit of Utopia* (2000), first published just after the First World War, and in three volumes of *Principle of Hope* (1986), published in two stages in the 1950s, as well as in later essays (1998), Bloch presents an intoxicating blend of Marxism, romanticism and mysticism. For Bloch, imaginative thought is the foundation of hope: 'thinking means venturing beyond' from the mediated present (1986a:4). He traces a diverse spectrum of hope in popular entertainment, architecture, literature, music and art. Glimmers of hope can also be found in day dreams:

Most people in the street look as if they are thinking about something else entirely. The something else is predominantly money, but also what it could be changed into. (1986a:33)

Day dreams have the presentiment of what we want, need and lack, what we hope to find. Unlike dreams, they are not repressed or forgotten desires and experiences, they point to real possibilities (1998: xxxii). Day dreams can be escapist and mundane but they also contain a 'provocative' element that can be nurtured and clarified. Importantly for Bloch, hoping is 'teachable' (1986a: 3). Popular entertainments that express hope are described as 'wishful images in the mirror' and include fairy stories, detective novels, fairs, circuses, gardens, dance and film. Although often merely reflecting 'how the ruling class wishes the wishes of the weak to be' (1986a: 13), nevertheless they can also provide a 'transition' stage and display a drive towards a better life. Unlike Mannheim's distinction, utopian expression and moments can be found in ideological productions (Hudson, 1982: 55) which contain an indicative cultural surplus. For example, the popular adventure story may reflect the dream of which is 'never again be trapped by the routine of daily life' (1998: 183). These wishful images will involve escapism but fleetingly reveal an essential quality of hope, the possibility pointing beyond existing reality. We can learn to extract 'hope-content' from these images. Bloch explores how 'strange-utopian meanings', despite being 'shrill and fraudulent, cheap and uncontrolled, manifest a 'yearning for a constellation in the world, made out of the esoteric and weird things, the yearning for the curious....' (181).

However, day dreams and popular entertainment are not enough; they need to be connected to the intellect and imagination, illuminating something better and rejecting an inhibiting reality. For Bloch, utopia is found in 'illusionary expectations and wish-fulfilment, but its naivety has a heuristic function and belongs to the logic of discovery' or a 'method of delivery of new ideas' (Hudson, 1982: 54). In tracing all these forms of hope, he depicts a necessary movement from the subjective 'not-yet conscious' to the objective 'not-yet-become'. 'Not yet' refers to a present, a search or desire for something better in the lived moment, but also an anticipation. 'Concrete' utopia must be extracted from what he terms 'abstract' utopia, such as forms of compensation or unworldly dreams. As Levitas explains, 'the unfinished nature of reality locates concrete utopia as a possible future within the real' (1990: 89). Concrete utopia refers to features of an 'anticipatory illumination' (*Vor-Schein*) which is on the 'horizon of every reality' but tends to evade attempts to comprehend directly (Bloch, 1986a: 223). As the world is open and incomplete, the problem of ontology therefore

needs to be understood as a 'journey problem' (Hudson, 1982: 23). Ultimately for Bloch, concrete utopia finds its scope and foundation in Marxism, the real possibility of transforming the social (Bloch, 1986a: 208). Dreaming, and other forms of the not-yet-conscious, is seen as necessary in the journey to a better future and nourishment for the 'revolutionary imagination' (Hudson, 1982: 49).

Levitas critiques Bloch's essentialist notion of 'a utopian impulse, an anthropological given that underpins the human propensity to long for and imagine a life otherwise' (Levitas, 2007: 290), but argues that utopian principles are nevertheless 'embedded' in a wide variety of practices and diverse cultural forms. She provides an analytical and inclusive approach that is able to trace the utopian aspects of different cultural expressions rather than trying to pin the concept down to firm categories of thought or representation. Levitas opens up the opportunity to explore utopian features such as form, content and function and how these features change and develop historically (1990:123). 'Form' may include literary models, but also filmic, religious, political and spatial descriptions of alternative societies. 'Content' refers to normative notions of the good society, for example, various projections based on scarcity, distribution, class, gender or ethnicity. The 'functions' of utopia are various and include: 'compensation', for example, daydreams and fantasies; 'critiques' of existing conditions; and 'change', or the capacity to provoke the desire for transformation (2001:28). Levitas argues that utopia is expressive and broadly about the desire for a better way of life. She refers to a crucial quotation by Abensour, which is referred to by E.P. Thompson in his book on William Morris: to 'teach desire to desire, to desire better, to desire more, and above all to desire in a different way' (Thompson 1976 cited in Levitas 1990: 122). For Levitas, this quotation captures a core aspect of utopia: to think and feel outside existing normative and conceptual frameworks, or to desire differently.

In a recent article, she gives illustrative examples within contemporary culture around the theme of 'looking for the blue', a quotation from Dennis Potter's play *Pennies from Heaven*, and concludes that 'the prevalence of utopian yearning in contemporary culture is..... inescapable' (291). She goes on to examine the complexities of moving from the pervasive existential quest for utopia to questions of political practice, from the imaginative, speculative realm to the socially possible, or in her words a move from 'blue to green' (295). Levitas considers that conceiving utopia as a 'method' may help to facilitate the move from blue to green. Such a method concerns the 'imaginary reconstitution of society'. In her Inaugural

Lecture (2005), she outlines distinct but related utopian methodologies. An 'archaeological' approach entails digging out, exposing, engaging with and critiquing various utopian features of political positions found in a spectrum programmes across the left and right. An 'architectural' mode involves the construction of alternative overall models of a better society, connecting up short-term, piece-meal political policies and making the utopian aspect more explicit and constructive. The third mode is described as 'ontological' and returns to the theme of 'educating' desire. The 'imagination of society otherwise involves imagining ourselves otherwise' (20).

From this admittedly very brief account of Blochian thoughts on utopia, are there any links or distinctions that might throw light on the concept of heterotopia? Foucault's work, from the start, thoroughly rejects essentialist and totalising thought, but do the sites of heterotopia provide any glimpse of hope? Do any of them offer 'wishful images in the mirror', embedding a yearning towards a better life? Bloch discusses a number of spatial illustrations of hope, including the garden. But overall, the range of examples of heterotopia does not fit well in terms of embodying utopian hope. Utopian communities, gardens and festivals perhaps encompass hope, but how is it possible to incorporate prisons, asylums, cemeteries and brothels? I go on to argue that there is a relationship between utopia and heterotopia, but rather than 'reading' certain spaces as containing an essential quality of hope, pointing beyond existing reality, heterotopia conceives them as an actual manifestation of utopian features. Heterotopia is a way of looking at and relating certain spaces in terms of the *result* of utopian thought and imagination, as utopian remnants as it were. Foucault's famous exploration of Bentham's panopticon, for instance, conceives the ideal space as a form of utopia with an 'imaginary intensity' that allows multiple applications across various institutions for criminals, patients, schoolchildren, the insane and workers (1977: 205). In Foucault's words, they are 'localisable utopia' and they have changing functions in different cultures and at different stages in history. Their importance, from a heterotopian perspective, is what they actually do and their effects. In a very different sense from Bloch's usage, they are 'concrete' utopia, already present and tangible. However, heterotopias can equally be applied as a 'method' in terms of using the spaces as both a 'concrete technology' and a 'rhetorical machine' (Faubion, 2008:32), a means of illuminating a range of meanings and effects within a specific cultural and historical context.

Lefebvre's 'heterotopy' and utopianism

Lefebvre comes closest to Foucault's concept of heterotopia in *The Urban Revolution*, a book that first appeared in 1970 but was not translated into English until 2003. With what appears to be a direct engagement with Foucault's concept (see Smith, 2003: xii), Lefebvre provides a distinctive use of the related terms 'heterotopy' and 'utopia'. Lefebvre depicts heterotopy in two specific ways. Historically, it is formulated as the 'place of the other' in terms of marginality. An example he provides is the ambiguous spaces of exchange and trade found outside the city in the sixteenth century. Such activities are both excluded and interwoven within the city. These heterotopic parts of the city are populated by an underclass of semi-nomads who are viewed with suspicion: traders, cart drivers and mercenaries as well as 'carvansaries and fairgrounds' (2003: 9). They are inhabited by 'dangerous' people who are easily sacrificed at times of war. Apart from this historical formulation, heterotopy is also defined formally within a conceptual grid, as distinct from 'isotopy' and 'utopia', within his favoured tripartite dialectic (38). Crucially, heterotopy and isotopy provide an explanation for how the utopian urban dimension emerges dialectically by 'uniting difference'. Unlike Foucault, Lefebvre concentrates on this utopian dimension produced by the clash of heterotopy. However, at first sight, Lefebvre's description of utopic spaces may also seem to resemble Foucault's notion of heterotopia. The utopic is a non-place and a real place, 'half-fictional and half-real', closed and open, concentrated and dispersed, near and far, present and absent. It is a paradoxical, contradictory space, opposite the everyday.

Lefebvre's anticipatory conception of utopia incorporates elements from Bloch. For Lefebvre, utopia is the central conception of urban space that cuts through capitalist spatialisations, resisting homogenisation and rationality. He conceives urban space as a generative unification of differences. Something is always happening through assembly and reassembly and creative encounters: 'contrasts, opposition, superpositions and juxtapositions replace separation, spatio-temporal distances' (2003: 125). It is a space where centres are continually created and destroyed. For Lefebvre this creative potential of urban society can be seen most clearly in vast exhibition space. He mentions such an emplacement in Montreal, where 'an ephemeral city rose up from a transformed site, a magnificent city, where

everydayness was absorbed in festival' (131). His critique of urbanism - a politics of space that imposes homogeneity through a process of rigorous planning, suppressing 'symbols, information and play' - highlights these utopian spaces that break up this order: holidays, festivals and celebrations. Such a conception does seem to link with a particular type of heterotopia that Foucault describes as 'absolutely chronic', for example fairs:

... those marvellous empty emplacements on the outskirts of cities that fill up once or twice a year with booths, stalls, unusual objects, wrestlers, snake ladies, fortune tellers. (1998a: 182-3)

For Foucault, fairs and festivals capture time in its most 'transitory and precarious aspect'. But for Foucault this is just one dimension of heterotopia, a specific spatio-temporal unit that is not connected to a unifying framework that depicts the revolutionary and illuminating 'virtuality' within the urban (Lefebvre, 2003: 97- 107).

Lefebvre's work in this respect contains some of the naive optimism found in Bakhtin's utopianism. In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin explores the writer's description of medieval festivals (1984: 218). He reveals the 'carnavalesque' as a way in which laughter and the mocking of authority inverted civil and ecclesiastical traditions through the celebration of idleness, dissipation and debauchery. During these festivities there is a momentary disruption of hierarchical distinctions and barriers, norms and customs, official ordering of time and space, and other forms of political coercion. For a short while established order is replaced by a space of freedom and the self dissolves into a collective spirit (Webb, 2005: 122). Bakhtin's reading of Rabelais has in turn inaugurated much research into popular cultural practices that are said to reveal transgressive, liberatory and utopian features. What ensues often seems to be a competition to find the authentic utopian spirit that is destroyed, sidelined, dissipated or hidden by dominant and coercive socio-economic and political forces. For example, Shields argues, that the pleasure beach, and similar sites, can become 'an open field of social innovation', displaying rituals of resistance and providing a social space that 'liberates' subjects from disciplinary 'micro-powers' whilst acknowledging that such displays are compromised or tempered through various political and socio-economic controls (1991: 94-6). Stallybrass and White thoroughly and convincingly critique Bakhtin's interpretation of the carnivalesque (1986). They find Bakhtin's reading is too simplistic and nostalgic, resting upon unchallenging binary oppositions between high and low, classical and other, top and bottom (see also Hetherington, 1997:15). They object to

viewing the carnival as something that is always opposed to official order and ideology. Instead, they argue that it was a heterogeneous gathering that mixed up opposites in a much more complex configuration (Stallybrass and White, 1986: 18).

Jameson's disruptive utopia within post modernity

Many (see Connor, 1989: 8; Lyon, 1994:99; McHale, 1992: 250; Siebers, 1994; Vattimo, 1992: 68) have linked heterotopia with some formulation of post modernism. If heterotopia and utopia are closely related somehow, could the notion of a post modern utopia reveal something about the relationship? In terms of utopia, Jameson has probably offered the most sustained account of the link with what he admits is a contested conception of post modernism. (1991: xxii). I want to tease out some of his thinking in this respect, in order to see if it throws any light on the concept of heterotopia. Within Jameson's writing on utopia, the process of imagining society and ourselves as otherwise is crucial. In *Marxism and Form*, Jameson argues that the classical Marxist analysis, which saw utopia as a diversion of revolutionary energy into idle wish-fulfilment, has 'undergone a dialectical reversal' (Jameson, 1971, cited in Moylan, 2000: 90). Paradoxically, it is now practical thinking that is a 'capitulation to the system'. Jameson's 'most infamous articulation' (Wegner, 1998: 60-61) and 'most fruitful and troubling intervention' (Fitting, 1998:10) is that utopian texts function 'to bring home, in local and determinate ways, and with a fullness of concrete detail, our constitutional inability to imagine Utopia itself' (Jameson, 1982: 153). For Jameson, utopias are related to failure, and highlight our limitations and weaknesses. Failure is inevitable, but you 'can't fail unless you try to succeed' (Jameson, 1998: 74). The incapacity to conceive utopia is a productive and instructive failure. As he asserts in his book on postmodernism, 'it is the failure of imagination that is important, and not its achievement' (1991: 209). The fundamental function of utopian visions is to 'explore the structural limits of such imaginings' and to 'get a better sense of what it is about the future that we are unwilling or unable to imagine' (1998: 76). He therefore thoroughly problematises the relationship between utopian hope and political practice and commitment. In this respect, utopia is crucial in our present era: 'if post modernism is the substitute for the sixties and compensation for their political failure, the question of utopia would seem to be a crucial test of what is left of our capacity to imagine change at all' (1991: xvi). The limits, gaps, restrictions that are evident in utopian writing, mark the ways in which culture imprints itself on the most 'visionary minds' and therefore points toward some form of transcendence. The restrictions

or boundaries of thought can only become apparent through the utopian attempt to grasp something different. In this way, the literary and cultural analysis of failure takes priority over philosophical and ideological approaches (209).

Jameson deconstructs texts in a radical way; utopia becomes the reading process itself, a practice. In *Of Island and Trenches* (1988), Jameson suggests that utopia is 'analogous to the riddles or *koan* of various mystical traditions, or the *aporias* of classical philosophy, whose function is to provoke a fruitful bewilderment, and to jar the mind into some heightened but unconceptualizable consciousness of its own powers, functions, aims and structural limits' (82), or as Wegner summarises, 'to think in ways alien to our own particular historical enclosure' (1998:62). Utopia is not about this or that alternative but more a methodical tool. In a recent paper (2004), he traces how utopias tend to have two dimensions that can be analysed in different ways. One dimension is causal or existential and is based on the elimination of some identified 'root of all evil', such as private property in More's utopia, or individual possession of the means of production in Marxism. The other dimension is to do with organisation, civic order and political arrangements. Applying Blochian terminology, the first perspective can be characterised as 'wish-fulfilment' and the second as playful 'construction' (2004: 40). Jameson argues that utopian thought has tended to concern a tension between opposites, for example: city and country, planning and organic growth, asceticism and pleasure, space and time, intervention and freedom. He asserts that one side or the other are related to class position and underpinned by ideology, but the unique function of utopian oppositions is that they negate each other or 'provide an ideological critique of its opposite number' (50). For example, the vision of nature undermines the 'complacency' of the city, and the vision of the city undermines the weak nostalgia of those who celebrate nature.

Contrary to Harvey (2000), Jameson argues therefore that utopian thought is essentially dialectical in terms of its themes and its destructive logic. It is not about putting two halves together; the two halves are already there in tension, Jameson argues that utopian thought keeps alive a promise that things can be different; it 'negates all that is', a negative dialectic, impossible and yet necessary. In Marin's terms, utopia is the possibility that everything that is possible hides (Marin, 1984: 197). Jameson's negative dialectic, a 'zero-degree' utopianism, voices a total systemic change: something that disrupts the foundations of what we presently do, think and feel. It faces us with the 'terror of obliteration' of what we hold on to within our

class and ideological positions. For example, it may totally undermine the process of commodification and our present addiction to consumption. For Jameson, this destructive force is an essential prerequisite for any notion of transformative politics. Confrontation with the impossibility of imagining utopia gives us the necessary courage for revolutionary change (2004: 35-54).

Jameson acknowledges that a 'spatial turn' has frequently been used to distinguish post modernism from modernism (1991: 154) and the spatialisations of the former involve fundamentally a pervasive 'textualisation' of the world, deconstructing everything (he mentions the body, the state, consumption) as text (158). Whatever the successes and failures of modernist architecture, music, literature and art, Jameson argues that post modernism offers a new possibility, a 'Utopian anticipation' that is 'foregrounded in a theoretical, non-figurative way', the production of a new concept of space that is embraced by certain art installations, such as those created by Robert Gober. These installations take on the unrealised promise of various avant-gardes that attempted to transform the world, as found in Cubism, Dada and Surrealism (173). Jameson's readings of various art installations, paintings and photographs are complex, but in relation to heterotopia, it is interesting that he considers that postmodernist art is often characterised by a fundamentally relational process, the presentation of various objects that 'are themselves constructed by their relations to each other' (168). What Jameson describes as post modernist utopian art is also linked to a provocation, a 'fruitful bewilderment' that has some resemblance to the brief account of textual heterotopia that opens Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1970). However, Jameson's and Foucault's concepts of space are very different. Jameson traces the destructive or disruptive utopian potential of various modernist and post modernist cultural spaces, suggesting there may be an unacknowledged, underground 'party of Utopia' (Jameson, 1991: 180). Yet despite the wonderful dialectical gymnastics of his thought, post modernist cultural spaces still retain for Jameson the promise of modernism and certain forms of the avant-garde, the Blochian '*novum*, as the breakthrough onto new forms of life itself' (Jameson, 1991: 163). Foucault's thought stems in part from a reading of avant-garde literature that concerns itself with Blanchot's 'thought of the outside' that dismisses any sense of a 'breakthrough' to something else. Heterotopias are not aesthetic spaces and they are not limited to, or defined through, a post modern era. Heterotopias are not related to failure, or the restrictions, or boundaries of thought. They set themselves in contrast to the upper case

‘Utopia’, offering a more modest role, but nevertheless, providing an alternative ‘reservoir of imagination’ (Foucault, 1998: 185).

Harvey’s spaces of hope

In *Spaces of Hope*, Harvey presents an analysis of the relationship between space and utopia (2000). Celebrating the 150th anniversary of the publication *The Communist Manifesto*, Harvey provides a reappraisal of that ‘extraordinary document’, a critique of contemporary notions of ‘globalisation’ and the ‘body’, an argument for a dialectical interpretation of utopianism and, finally, a range of suggestions for a new approach to political activism. It is a diverse text but one with unifying themes particularly, for instance, continuously challenging and undermining Thatcher’s infamous phrase: ‘there is no alternative’ (17). Having charted in chilling detail the ‘mess’ of growing geographical disparities in the his home city of Baltimore city and its stark economic and social decline that occurred during the mantra of the free market, he repeats Roberto Unger’s question: ‘why is it we seem to be such helpless puppets of the institutional and imaginative worlds we inhabit?’ (1987:37 cited 155). It is this question that turns Harvey towards the hope held within the utopian tradition. His project becomes one of attempting to critique and revitalise utopianism in order to discover ‘spaces of hope’.

Harvey broadly discusses two dimensions of utopia: firstly, explorations of spatial, organisational forms, such as More’s Utopia, which Harvey concludes is permeated with modes of authority and control; and secondly, social processes based on temporality, such as Adam Smith’s dream of laissez-faire, or free trade (176). Put simply, Harvey traces the way that spatial utopian thought tends to lack any sense of social change and dynamism, whereas process-oriented utopias tend to produce destruction and degeneration in the ways he has detailed earlier in his book. Harvey argues that to revitalise utopian thought requires a completely different approach that combines the utopias of spatial form and social process, or ‘dialectical utopianism’. He finds promise within more recent utopian novels, for example, Marge Piercy’s *Woman at the Edge of Time* (1979). Here the vision of a new society contains a variety of spatial forms but also includes social struggle of the protagonist, Connie, and an explicit recognition of the process towards a better world: a ‘spatial-temporal dynamic’ (Harvey, 2000: 189). For Harvey the time is now ripe to use such dynamic utopian

visions to try and shape an alternative to the present destructive elements of global and local neo-liberalism. Such an approach would build on the dynamic potential at the heart of capitalism, particularly its imaginative and diverse ability to build innovative institutions and practices. It would, to quote Marx's famous assertion: 'set free the elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant' (Marx and Engels 1972, cited in Harvey, 2000: 206).

Unfortunately, Harvey does not provide a coherent or comprehensive definition of, or approach to, utopia; or at least acknowledge that it is a thoroughly contested concept (see Levitas, 2003c: 143). His project of revitalising the concept of utopia rests on often narrow and misplaced interpretations of the tradition. For example, he interprets More's *Utopia* very crudely. He emphasises the spatial dimension of the book and asserts, 'the dialectic of social process...is repressed' in favour of 'a happy stationary state' (Harvey, 2000: 106). Harvey does not discuss the common view that utopian fiction often works in at least two essential, often ambivalent ways, providing both a critique of contemporary society and a promise of something better. More importantly, although highlighting the strong spatial themes and elements of nostalgia in More's book, he misses the full range of paradoxes and ambiguities that it reveals. Far from revealing More's vision of utopia as stationary, Bloch's sustained account of the text argues that it is an 'example of the utopias of freedom' (1986b: 530). Harvey compounds his narrow reading of More's text by massively misusing the work of Louis Marin. Harvey claims that Marin interprets More's text as a way of selecting a specific spatial ordering to 'represent and fix a particular moral order' (Harvey, 2000: 161). As discussed earlier in my discussion of Hetherington, a central point is that Marin treats Utopia as a literary form that has the potential to display something utterly different from normal discourse and, based on his experience of Paris in May 1968, concerns what he calls 'utopian practice'. The exhilarating experience at that time produced an insightful and critical space, fleetingly exposing and opposing the existing ideology. More's text marks the breaking point between the feudal world and the change to capitalism but rests on the brink, neither one nor the other, empty and yet alive with something qualitatively different.

Harvey, on the other hand, via an oblique reference to Foucault's 'panopticon effect', suggests that Marin's 'imaginative free play is somehow inextricably bound to the existence of authority and restrictive forms of governance' (Harvey, 2000:163). Yet Marin actually argues that More's text has a disruptive function, revealing endless contradictions and a

chance to get beyond ourselves and confront a possible future (Marin, 1984:48). Marin contrasts More's inspirational text with what he calls 'degenerative utopias' such as Disneyland. He provides a semiotic reading of this existing 'utopia'. Harvey is right in confirming unsurprisingly that such a space 'offers no critique of the existing state of affairs' (2000: 167), but turns this conception into the inevitable result of all spatial forms of utopia. The conclusion is that all utopias of spatial form inevitably seek stability and control (173).

In supporting his overall argument, Harvey gives insufficient examples of other spatial utopias apart from the plates depicting the architectural plans of Fourier and Robert Owen. Both of these utopian socialists would have been worth exploring further in terms of Harvey's proposed dialectic. Although we are now dealing with projections of utopian communities rather than fiction, again Harvey overplays the spatial constraints. Fourier, for example, did compile hundreds of minute spatial plans for his communities, but the organisation and practice within these proposals were based on diversity, creativity and freedom (Beecher, 1986). Here passions become the law, a liberation of instincts that break the bonds of 'civilization'. The key to integration is the organisation of life into a multitude of passional groups or series, a melting pot of diverse individuals in terms of age, wealth, character and intelligence. Whether these ideas are treated as fiction, or as Fourier proposed, real plans for communities, they do offer imaginative ways of envisaging new relationships between space and time, closure and openings, authority and freedom. There is an innovative, unconstrained energy at the heart of his vision which, paradoxically, reverberates with Harvey's 'utopianism of process' which he associates with Adam Smith in which 'individual desires, avarice, greed, drives, creativity...could be mobilised' (2000: 175). In other words, Fourier could be used as an example of what Harvey seeks - dialectical utopianism - rather than as an example of restrictive spatial organisation.

To briefly turn to the other side of Harvey's dialectic, different questions of definition and interpretation start to emerge. Put simply, he sets out to identify a 'utopianism of process' and asserts that idealised versions tend to be articulated in temporal terms outside of any sense of spatial constraint (174). He finds this type of utopianism in Hegel's notion of 'historical unfolding', capitalism's liberation of markets and Marx's identification of the class struggle at the heart of historical transformation. He does not engage with those who explicitly discuss the complexities of utopian 'process' and its relation to practice including, as discussed earlier, Bloch, Lefebvre, Marin, Jameson and Levitas. Moreover, although

beyond the scope of this thesis, his remarks concerning the contradictions around the degree of state intervention to sustain liberal and neo-liberal economic and social development (181), do not do justice to the complexities and ambivalent tensions embedded in the history of liberalism and the emergence of neo-liberalism as elaborated, for example, in Foucault's 1978-1979 lectures (2008). Levitas argues that the distinction between spatial and temporal forms may have a useful analytical application, but used descriptively, as Harvey does, involves a crude classification. His schema is based on a narrow, selective range of examples and approaches. Whilst recognising the many strengths of this book, Levitas concludes that Harvey does not address the wide, complex, evolving and contested concept of utopia (2003c:143).

Harvey briefly addresses Foucault's concept of heterotopia within his proposed dialectical utopianism. He suggests that in Foucault's lecture 'the problem of Utopia could be resurrected and simultaneously evaded' (183). Despite Foucault's reference to prisons, hospitals, old people's homes, museums and cemeteries, Harvey also suggests that 'escape' underpins Foucault's account. He calls on Hetherington's notion of 'alternative ordering' in suggesting that these spaces allow 'the other' to flourish. He acknowledges some of the strengths of Foucault's notion: highlighting the various material utopian forms that have emerged and are not 'mutually exclusive'; celebrating spaces where 'life is experienced differently'; and overall, insisting on the 'heterogeneity of space'. This, I suggest, is exactly what Foucault does – no more, no less. It is a brief, undeveloped proposal to think about space differently. However, in building up a critique of heterotopia, Harvey claims that these spaces: (1) provide for Foucault a place for mounting a 'critique of existing norms'; (2) oppose or contrast with 'dominant social order'; (3) splinter 'power/knowledge' formations; and (4) make whatever happens in these spaces 'acceptable or appropriate'(184).. He attacks Foucault for being both naively critical and complacently uncritical. Harvey implies that Foucault is going beyond description and making various implicit value judgments about these spaces. He then questions where we stop in identifying spaces of difference: concentrations camps, shopping malls, torture chambers, militia camps, Disneyland? For Harvey, the idea of these spaces is either trite or menacing. In contrast, I argue that Foucault challenges and disturbs but does not present an idea of an alternative, spatio-temporal utopianism. This is not the purpose of heterotopia. The concept works strategically, offers an analytical framework and encourages us to use actually existing utopian spaces as a tool, a *dispositif*, to examine, highlight and reflect upon changing cultural and historical relations,

functions and effects. Harvey's critique of heterotopia is therefore important in a negative way: distinguishing what it is not.

Utopia and Heterotopia

So what are the similarities and differences between utopia and heterotopia? Rephrasing Defert's question more widely (1997: 277), is it conceivable that the 'minor literature' of Foucault's description of heterotopia could 'trace a furrow' in the diverse and substantial discourse on utopia? Some of Lefebvre's utopian thought may seem to overlap with the concept of heterotopia, particularly the mixture of the extraordinary and ordinary, and yet certain distinctions need to be made at the outset. Heterotopias are fundamentally unsettling places. Children's games, holidays, festivals, brothels, prisons, asylums, cemeteries and ships alter, or at least interrupt, to different degrees what might be described as everyday existence. These spaces have the ability to enclose or dramatise an unsettling spatio-temporal play. In describing generally the space in which we live, as opposed to Bachelard's inner space, Foucault refers to that which 'draws us out of ourselves'. This is crucial. Heterotopias draw us out of ourselves in peculiar ways; they display and inaugurate a difference and meddle with our sense of interiority. They are somehow out of step and in step at the same time. There is no pure form of heterotopia, but different combinations, different intensities, each reverberating with all the others. In a sense, they do not function fully except in relation to each other. Lefebvre's formulations of utopia capture this to some extent but with Foucault there is no inevitable relationship with spaces of transformation or revelatory utopian moments. Although Foucault describes heterotopias as 'actually realised utopias', the conception is not tied to a space that promotes any promise, any hope or any primary form of resistance or liberation. Foucault's account undermines all such essential or primary notions (see Johnson, 2008). There is a negative quality about heterotopia, but not in terms of a negative dialectic. Heterotopia refuses to settle. The examples that Foucault presents are entangled with each other but in a way that disrupts any dialectical sense. Harvey, although providing a damning caricature of Foucault's notion, is therefore completely right when he argues that heterotopia gives no idea as to 'what a more spatio-temporal utopianism might look like' or 'how any kind of alternative might be constructed' (2000: 185). This is not the purpose of Foucault's description which remains at a strategic, descriptive and exploratory level.

Is Marin's utopic play, or Jameson's development of the idea, any closer to Foucault's conception? Marin is explicit in confirming that utopia 'does not have its foundation in hope' (1984: 274). However, as with Bloch's *novum*, and Lefebvre's spatial dialectic, utopia is pregnant with 'expectation' and is concerned with constructing signs of the future from the present. There is a sense of anticipation: the new will spring from the old. The new is something deeply conflicting and 'other' which is masked by the present and rests upon a revelation of novelty. In contrast, Foucault's notion of a different space is not revelatory in any deep sense. Put another way, for Marin 'utopia is not realisable' (275) except as a formulation of a contradiction, whereas for Foucault heterotopias are concrete expressions of utopia. These spaces are important because they are a formulation of the imaginary and actually exist; their virtuality has a local impact with actual effects, rather than embracing a promise. Heterotopia turns back and questions and explores the changing functions and effects of specific spaces. Heterotopia works through a family of principles and produces various thresholds or spaces of ambiguity and discontinuity, but what is important is their position and force at different stages of our lives and their specific reach and capabilities. Seemingly everyday spaces are presented as extraordinary without positing something below, behind or absent.

But if heterotopia holds no underlying promise, perhaps it does connect more to the disruptive process of utopia as envisaged by Jameson. Do both utopia and heterotopia have connections with the riddles or *koan* of mystical traditions, or the *aporias* of classical philosophy, provoking a 'fruitful bewilderment' (Jameson, 1988: 82)? Certainly, Foucault's account of literary heterotopias would seem to fit here and Borges' baffling encyclopaedia, but Foucault sets this conception up in *contrast* to utopia. It is a provocation to think about our established codes of order and test the limits of our thought. Although Foucault's notion of utopia here and elsewhere is simplistic, nevertheless there remains a crucial distinction between the two concepts. With heterotopia, the function is not to highlight 'our constitutional inability to imagine Utopia itself' (Jameson, 1982: 153). Heterotopia may work negatively but it is not about failure or weaknesses of our imagination. It is about the results of our imagination, which although not anti-utopian, would include the dangers and all other accomplishments of utopian conceptions. Both approaches are concerned with thinking about and perhaps undermining our 'historical enclosure' (Wenger, 1998: 62), but heterotopias concern the ability not the inability to imagine utopia.

Heterotopias are always open and reversible. They can be used for reflection because they are manifestations of aspects of utopian imagination that are local and real and packed with history. Many of Foucault's examples of these different spaces have been formulated as forms of utopia and are often replicated in many guises, including the prison, asylum, garden and cemetery, as well as the actual utopian communities that he refers to. Other examples might be much more loosely described as 'utopian' spaces such as the brothel, festival, museum, sauna and vacation village. Heterotopias are fragments of utopia, or utopian debris. Foucault provides a brief sideways analysis of these existing material spaces in order not to anticipate the future, but to reflect upon the present. It is therefore a mistake to try and assimilate the two concepts, as Hetherington attempts to do, or like Harvey, to look for signs of 'alternative' utopian values in heterotopia. Foucault simply takes strangely related spaces - that are often described in real and imaginary terms as ideal, perfect, idyllic, heavenly, complete, intense, excessive - and, as well as tracing other common features, suggests they may act as a tool of discovery of both their history and their relation to the present. Foucault's wider strictly historical work, whether to do with psychiatric power, disciplinary mechanisms, or governmentality, was conducted with the hope that it would produce 'important and even invaluable political effects' and to 'let knowledge of the past work on the experience of the present' (Foucault, 2008: 130). In a very modest way, heterotopia connects to this process. It suggests we learn from these fragments of utopia.

Levitas argues that utopian models are 'holistic, imaginary, critical, normative, prescriptive and (often) future-oriented' although most of them do contain 'descriptions of the present' and are 'present oriented' (2005: 14). Tentatively I suggest that heterotopias reflect the results of these utopian models and at the same time offer a different lens:

Utopian models are:	Heterotopias reflect the results of utopian models and are analysed in terms that are:
holistic	fragmentary
imaginary	concrete
normative	value free
prescriptive	descriptive
present/future-orientated	present/past-orientated

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