The A-Z of heterotopias

A is for asylums and Alice’s mirror
B is for boarding schools and brothels
C is for circuses and castles in the air
D is for digital cities and dividing practices
E is for escape dens and endless encyclopaedias
F is for fairs and ‘that from a long way off look like flies’
G is for garden retreats and gay bath houses
H is for honeymoon hotels and hospitals
I is for ideal prisons and idyllic Sidi Bou Said
J is for Jesuit colonies and journeys to different spaces
K is for kaleidoscopes and kite festivals
L is for libraries and LPUs (local pirate utopias)
M is for Magritte’s and Manet’s mirrors
N is for nudist beaches and Neverland
O is for oases and Occupy’s emplacements
P is for playgrounds and placeless places
Q is for quixotic windmills and quotidien quirkiness
R is for Rousselian rebuses and reservoirs for the imagination
S is for sailing vessels and Scandinavian saunas
T is for theatres and time travellers
U is for utopic pedagogies and utopian debris
V is for vacation fantasy villages and vanishing heterotopias
W is for wonderland and the woods in A Midsummer’s Night’s Dream
X is for X-linked periventricular traces and Xbox ecologies
Y is for young offenders’ institutions and YouTube selfies
Z is for zoological parks and zones of the oppressed.
1 Foucault was attracted to the work of the avant-garde writer Raymond Roussel and his intricate, playful games with words and images.
2 Foucault was staying in the coastal village of Sidi Bou Said in Tunisia at the time of inventing the notion of heterotopia (1966-67).
3 Heterotopia is also a clinical term. X-linked periventricular heterotopia is a neuronal migration disorder, characterised by the presence of uncalcified nodules of neurons ectopically situated along the surface of the lateral ventricles.

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