Real Places and Impossible Spaces: Foucault's Heterotopia in the Fiction of James Joyce, Vladimir Nabokov, and W.G. Sebald

Kelvin Knight

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University of East Anglia

School of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing

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Abstract

This thesis looks to restore Michel Foucault's concept of the heterotopia to its literary origins, and to examine its changing status as a literary motif through the course of twentieth-century fiction. Initially described as an impossible space, representable only in language, the term has found a wider audience in its definition as a kind of real place that exists outside of all other space. Examples of these semi-mythical sites include the prison, the theatre, the garden, the library, the museum, the brothel, the ship, and the mirror. Here, however, I argue that the heterotopia was never intended as a tool for the study of real urban places, but rather pertains to fictional representations of these sites, which allow authors to open up unthinkable configurations of space.

Specifically, I focus on three writers whose work contains numerous examples of these places, and who shared the circumstance of spending the majority of their lives in exile: James Joyce, Vladimir Nabokov, and W.G. Sebald. In each case, I argue that these sites figure the experience of exteriority constituted by exile, providing these authors with an alternative perspective from which to perform a particular kind of contestation. In *Ulysses*, I argue, they allow Joyce to interrogate the notion of a unified Irish identity by bringing into question the space that constitutes the common locus upon which the nation is founded. In Nabokov's *Ada*, they help the author to create a world that transcends the discontinuities of his transnational biography, but also serve to contest this unreal world. In Sebald's fiction, finally, we find a critique of Foucault's concept. In relation to the Holocaust, he questions the validity of the heterotopia by bringing into doubt the equation of space and thought upon which it is established.

Contents

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Abbreviations

References to the following frequently cited texts appear in parentheses with the following abbreviations:

A W.G. Sebald. *Austerlitz*. Translated by Anthea Bell. London: Penguin, 2002.

AA Vladimir Nabokov. *Ada, or Ardor: A Family Chronicle*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970.

LH Michel Foucault. 'Les Hétérotopies.' In *Le Corps utopique suivi de Les Hétérotopies*. Edited, with an Afterword by Daniel Defert. Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Lignes, 2009. 21-36

OS Michel Foucault. 'Of Other Spaces.' Translated by Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics*. 16.1 (Spring 1986): 22-26.

OT Michel Foucault. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2009.

RS W.G. Sebald. *The Rings of Saturn*. Translated by Michael Hulse. London: Vintage, 1998.

U James Joyce. *Ulysses*. Edited, with an Introduction and Notes by Jeri Johnson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Introduction: Resolving the Paradox of Foucault's Heterotopia

Michel Foucault's concept of the heterotopia endures as a source of inspiration for geographers, architects, and literary critics alike. Yet it remains notoriously ill-defined. He first used the term in the preface to *The Order of Things* (1966) to describe an impossible and entirely unimaginable space, a notion he illustrates through reference to a fictional Chinese encyclopaedia described by Jorge Luis Borges. In this compendium, titled the *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*, animals are said to be classified according to the following categories:

> (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies. (OT, xvi)

Where could these groups ever be juxtaposed, asks Foucault, "except in the non-place of language?" Their overlapping and open-ended qualities preclude their simultaneous co-existence in any possible space, either real or imaginary. The category "(e) sirens," for example, seems to belong within the adjacent "(f) fabulous," but could sirens not also be embalmed, or tame, or belong to the Emperor? And is it not possible, perhaps probable, that a stray dog will also be frenzied? The central category "(h) included in the present classification," remarks Foucault, "is indication enough that we shall never succeed in defining a stable relation of contained to container between each of these categories and that which includes them all," while "(j) innumerable" and "(l) et cetera," violate the finite nature of our thought. Here, then, the heterotopia is defined as an unthinkable space in which "things are 'laid', 'placed', 'arranged' in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a *common locus* beneath them all." (OT, xviii-xix)

In December 1966, however, just over six months after the publication of *The Order of Things*, Foucault gave a radio lecture as part of a series on literature and utopia in which he defined heterotopias as "mythic and real contestations of the space in which we live." (LH, 25) It began with a recapitulation of the literary pedigree of the notion of utopia itself, before going on to suggest, somewhat paradoxically, that there are some such mythical non-spaces that can be tied to a specific time and place.

For instance, Foucault argues that the image of the magic carpet found in *The Thousand and One Nights* can be traced back to the microcosmic form of traditional Persian gardens, by way of the rugs that represented these gardens; both spaces allow one to travel to the farthest corners of the earth, so to speak. "One might perhaps be under the impression that novels are set in gardens with ease," he concludes. "The fact is that novels and gardens are probably born of the same institution." (LH, 29-30) Further examples of these semi-mythical sites, illustrated by Foucault through reference to a number of works of literature, include the prison, the cemetery, the theatre, the library, the museum, the brothel, the ship and the mirror, real sites that somehow exist separately from all other places and give rise to similarly fantastic conceptions of space.

Finally, as a result of this radio broadcast, Foucault was invited to give a lecture to a group of prominent architects in Paris in March 1967, a proposal he apparently found ridiculous. "Do you remember the telegram that gave us such a laugh," he asked in a letter, "where an architect said he glimpsed a new conception of urbanism? But it wasn't in the book; it was in a talk on the radio about utopia. They want me to give it again."[1] Despite Foucault's laughter, it is in the transcript of this lecture that the concept of the heterotopia has found its widest audience. Although never reviewed for publication by Foucault himself, the text appeared just before his death in 1984 as 'Des espaces autres', and in translation two years later as 'Of Other Spaces'. Since then it has taken on a life of its own, attracting hundreds of interpretations, applications and adaptations, making the heterotopia a familiar trope in critical thought about spatiality, albeit an ambiguous one. Meanwhile, the original radio talk, first published as 'Les Hétérotopies' in 2005, but which remains unpublished in English, is most often overlooked, or mistakenly assumed to be synonymous with its later incarnation. Although the two cover much of the same ground, with many passages recreated verbatim, they are by no means identical. Most notably, while 'Les Hétérotopies' contains numerous references to works of fiction, 'Of Other Spaces' is almost entirely devoid of literary significance, positing the heterotopia as a tool for understanding primarily material sites. In less than a year, then, Foucault's notion of the heterotopia had shifted from an impossible space to a kind of real place.

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[1] Quoted in Daniel Defert, 'Foucault, Space, and the Architects' in *Politics/Poetics: Documenta X – The Book* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz Verlag, 1997), 274

This thesis looks to restore Foucault's heterotopia to its literary origins, thereby resolving the paradox by which it is seemingly riven, and to examine the changing role and significance of these places – the library, the garden, the mirror, and so on – as a set of literary motifs through the course of twentieth-century fiction. Principally, it focuses on the work of three writers whose fiction contains many examples of the sites that Foucault lists as heterotopian: James Joyce, Vladimir Nabokov, and W.G. Sebald. In contrast to the groups of animals in Borges's encyclopaedia, there is no difficulty in finding any common ground on which to bring together these three authors. They each have a relationship of influence with Borges himself, for instance. In a review written in 1925, the Argentine declared himself "the first traveller from the Hispanic world to set foot upon the shores of *Ulysses*."[2] Despite the obvious contrast between Joyce's encyclopaedic aesthetic and Borges's concise essay-like fictions, Patricia Novillo-Corvalán has shown that a number of interesting parallels exist between their careers: "both are renowned for their polyglot abilities, prodigious memories, cyclical conception of time and labyrinthine creations," she writes, and "for their condition as European émigrés and blind bards of Dublin and Buenos Aires." That Borges felt an affinity with the Irishman is evidenced by the fact that he was to remain engaged in conversation with Joyce for the rest of his life, repeatedly returning to the Irish author in his fiction, his poetry, and his critical writings. As Novillo-Corvalán argues, "Joyce's work loomed large throughout all stages of Borges's oeuvre."[3] In addition to this initial review of *Ulysses* (1922), he published a translated fragment of Molly Bloom's soliloquy in 'Penelope', a review of *Finnegans Wake* (1939), describing the "terror-stricken praise"[4] with which that novel was met, and an obituary of Joyce, in which he suggested that his own creation, Ireneo Funes, a man endowed with an infallible memory, was the ideal reader of *Ulysses*.[5] Nabokov and Borges were contemporaries, both being born in the year 1899, and have often been paired as the creators of similarly metaphysical and labyrinthine worlds, albeit frequently to the displeasure of the Russian. Despite having previously described Borges as one of his favourite writers, and as "a man of infinite talent," his admiration waned to the point where he

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[2] Jorge Luis Borges, 'Joyce's *Ulysses*', in *The Total Library: Non-Fiction 1922-1986*, ed. Eliot Weinberger, trans. Esther Allen, Suzanne Jill Levine, Eliot Weinberger (London: Penguin, 2001), 12

[3] Patricia Novillo-Corvalán, *Borges and Joyce: An Infinite Conversation* (London: Legenda, 2011), 4

[4] Jorge Luis Borges, 'Joyce's Latest Novel', in *The Total Library*, 195

[5] Jorge Luis Borges, 'A Fragment on Joyce', in *The Total Library*, 220

expressed puzzlement at any suggestion of a connection between his own work and the Argentine's "flimsy little fables."[6] Borges even appears anagrammatically in Nabokov's novel *Ada* (1969) as Osberg, a "Spanish writer of pretentious fairy tales and mystico-allegoric anecdotes, highly esteemed by short-shrift thesialists." (AA, 270) Yet Nabokov also alludes to the perceived similarity between himself and Borges by accrediting a thinly-disguised version of his own *Lolita* to Osberg in the same novel. Sebald, finally, owned several volumes of Borges's collected writings and referred to his work in his own fiction, explicitly in *The Rings of Saturn* and elsewhere implicitly.

These three writers also share a set of personal and professional relationships with one another. Joyce and Nabokov met on several occasions in Paris in the late 1930s: in February 1937 Nabokov found himself talking about Pushkin in front of Joyce and the Hungarian national football team. Two years later, he dined with Joyce at the home of Paul and Lucie Léon, where the Irishman gave the Russian an advance copy of part of *Finnegans Wake*. And although, in typically stubborn style, he rejected the notion that he had learnt anything from him, Nabokov, like Borges, was a great admirer of Joyce, or at least of *Ulysses*. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* he called "a feeble and garrulous book," *Finnegans Wake* "a tragic failure and a frightful bore." *Ulysses*, however, he ranked as the greatest work of twentieth-century prose, and lectured on it at length while at Cornell.[7] Sebald, in turn, lectured on Nabokov at the University of East Anglia, where he worked as a Professor of European Literature, wrote a critical essay on his life and work, and listed *Speak, Memory* (1966) as one of his favourite books.[8] Nabokov also appears in each of the four sections of *The Emigrants* (1992), Sebald's second work of prose fiction, at different stages of his transnational biography.

Also connecting these authors is the fact that all three spent the majority of their writing careers, and indeed their lives, living in exile, whether voluntarily so, as in the cases of Joyce and Sebald, or out of necessity, as it was for Nabokov. Joyce left Ireland in 1904 to escape the cultural paralysis he identified in his colonial homeland, and was to spend the majority of his adult life in the three cities listed

[6] Vladimir Nabokov, *Selected Letters, 1940-1977*, eds. Dmitri Nabokov and Matthew J. Bruccoli (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1989), 533
[7] Vladimir Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), 86; 71; 151; 57
[8] Jo Catling and Richard Hibbitt, eds., *Saturn's Moons: W.G Sebald – A Handbook* (London: MHRA, 2011), 264

underneath the final "yes" of Molly Bloom's soliloquy: Trieste, Zurich, and Paris. Nabokov was forced to flee Russia by the Bolshevik Revolution of 1918, and departed Europe altogether for the United States at the beginning of the Second World War, returning to Europe, namely Switzerland, in 1959. Sebald left his native Germany in 1966, in response to the pervading silence that he identified in his country's reaction to the events of the war and the Holocaust, settling in Norfolk after brief spells in Manchester and St. Gallen, Switzerland. Thus all three spent at least part of their exile living in Switzerland, as indeed, did Borges, the honorary fourth exile who weaves his way through this thesis just as Nabokov floats in and out of Sebald's *The Emigrants*. Joyce, of course, was writing *Ulysses* in Zurich between 1915 and 1920, in what Tom Stoppard calls the "still centre of the wheel of war."[9] At the same time, the young Borges was living in Geneva with his family. In December 1940, Joyce returned to Zurich, fleeing Nazi occupied France, but died there a month later. Nabokov spent the last seventeen years of his life in the Montreux Palace Hotel, during which time Sebald was to spend one year in St. Gallen, almost one hundred and fifty miles away, working as a teacher. Although unfamiliar with Nabokov at the time, Sebald later explained that he knew the area around Montreux that he describes, suggesting the possibility of the kind of coincidental meeting between himself and the Russian that he fictionalised in *The Emigrants*.[10] Borges, incidentally, was to return to Geneva at the end of his life, meaning that he, Joyce, and Nabokov are all buried in Switzerland. Indeed, had it not been for Sebald's untimely death in a road accident at the age of fifty-seven, he might have joined them. As Stephen Watts explains, "he used to say, half-jokingly and half in mimesis of Nabokov and others, that to live out his life in a Swiss hotel was one possibility in an increasingly difficult range (rather rage!) of choices."[11] That these writers found themselves gravitating towards Switzerland, the name of which represents a kind of "other space" in our collective imagination, a haven of political neutrality, seems to suggest a direct link between the condition of exile and Foucault's spaces of the outside. Both represent a kind of positive exteriority, a privileged realm from which the exile can gain a new perspective on both his homeland and the rest of the world.

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[9] Tom Stoppard, *Travesties* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), 9

[10] Eleanor Wachtel, 'Ghost Hunter', in *The Emergence of Memory: Conversations with W.G. Sebald*, ed. Lynne Sharon Schwartz (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007), 52-53

[11] Stephen Watts, 'Max Sebald: A Reminiscence', in *Saturn's Moons: W.G Sebald – A Handbook*, eds. Jo Catling and Richard Hibbitt (London: MHRA, 2011), 305

This is not to argue that the heterotopia is the exclusive domain of expatriate writers, but to suggest that exiles have a particularly strong inclination towards these spaces, an inclination which forms the basis of one of the secondary concerns of this thesis.

Principally though, it is their shared interest in the ideas underpinning Foucault's notion of the heterotopia that sees these three writers brought together here. All of them share with both Borges and Foucault an awareness of the contingencies of the systems of classification by which we attempt to order the world. Joyce famously described *Ulysses* as "a kind of encyclopaedia,"[12] but devotes much of the latter half of the novel to subverting the perceived relationship between language and order. Most explicitly in 'Ithaca', he employs the form and language of an encyclopaedia, only to demonstrate its shortcomings and inadequacies. In his lepidoptery, Nabokov was primarily interested in taxonomy, and the formulation of rules by which butterflies can be categorised into species, and was thus aware of the fallibility and improvability of any such system.[13] "I have re-worked the classification of various groups of butterflies," he told an interviewer, "have described and figured several species and subspecies."[14] And this interest in classification seems to have spilled over into his fiction. A provisional title for *Bend Sinister*, for instance, was *Game to Gunm*, a reference to the contents of a volume of the fourteenth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, as displayed on the spine. Lastly, Sebald's works of fiction contain references to a number of strange encyclopaedias, created by writers such as Borges and Sir Thomas Browne, works which seem to anticipate Sebald's own books, in which fragments of history, fiction, geography and photography are brought together according to indeterminate laws or patterns. In his final term teaching creative writing at UEA, Sebald told his students to read old encyclopaedias. "They have a different eye," he said. "They attempt to be complete and structured but in fact are completely random collected things that are supposed to represent our world."[15] More notably, however, these three writers seem

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[12] James Joyce, *Selected Letters of James Joyce,* ed. Richard Ellman (New York: Viking, 1975), 271

[13] For more information on Nabokov's work in lepidoptery, and its relationship to his writing, see *Nabokov's Butterflies*, eds. Brian Boyd and Robert Michael Pyle (Boston, MA: Beacon, 2000)

[14] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, 79

[15] W.G. Sebald, 'The Collected 'Maxims'', *Five Dials* 5 (2009), 9. <http://fivedials.com/files/fivedials_no5 .pdf>. Sebald's words are recalled by two members of his final creative writing workshop, David Lambert and Robert McGill. McGill says: "As far as I'm aware, nobody that term recorded Max's words systematically. However, in the wake of his death,

to share Foucault's fascination with those sites that the philosopher posits as examples of the heterotopia. Three novels in particular, Joyce's *Ulysses*, Nabokov's *Ada*, and Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001) each contain an extensive survey of the places described by Foucault in both 'Les Hétérotopies' and 'Of Other Spaces': the cemetery, the garden, the library, the brothel, the mirror, and so on. More to the point, these two aspects of their work frequently overlap, with these sites allowing writers to open up alternative ways of ordering the world and different modes of perception.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that I am not the first to notice the heterotopian quality of each of these writers' work; all three have had Foucault's somewhat ambiguous ideas applied to their fiction. Enda Duffy sees the heterotopian sites of Joyce's *Ulysses*, the cemetery, the beach, and the red light district, as figures of the city of Dublin itself, which, he argues, "as a colonial capital was an 'other place' in relation to the imperial metropolis." However, he also suggests, somewhat contradictorily, that these sites play a subversive or contestatory role. He defines heterotopias as "closed marginal spaces that actually exist but also have a quasi-sacred role as the repositories of the fantasies of those who inhabit the more mundane real spaces," and suggests that they contribute to the "uncanny strangeness" of Joyce's novel, forcing the reader to "enact the experience of the colonist experiencing the colonial city for the first time."[16] In *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987), Brian McHale posits Antiterra, the alternate world setting of Nabokov's *Ada* as an example of what he calls a "heterotopian zone of postmodernist writing." Such worlds, he argues, are "less constructed than *deconstructed* by the text, or rather constructed and deconstructed at the same time." Drawing exclusively on the preface to *The Order of Things*, he suggests that these textual spaces, in contrast to the worlds of realist or modernist fiction, cannot be structured by a perceiving subject, either a character or a narrator, because they are essentially unthinkable. Yet the techniques by which he argues authors construct such worlds do not live up to this prior definition. Antiterra attains this status, he says, by superimposing several real world locales onto one another, a process which creates an unfamiliar, but by no

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David and I found ourselves returning to our notes, where we'd written down many of Max's remarks. These we gleaned and shared with our classmates." 8

[16] Enda Duffy, 'Disappearing Dublin: *Ulysses*, Postcoloniality and the Politics of Space' in *Semicolonial Joyce*, eds. Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 51

means unimaginable space. Sebald's fiction, finally, has had Foucault's heterotopia applied to it on more than one occasion, in divergent, even contradictory, ways. Dora Osborne, for instance, argues that *Austerlitz* exposes the inadequacies of the heterotopia as a means of modelling the unthinkable space of the Holocaust.[17] More recently, in her PhD thesis, Emily Erin Jones has argued that Sebald engages with Foucault's concept in order to "create a disorienting and destabilizing reading experience,"[18] but exhibits a number of misconceptions about both definitions of the term in doing so. She sees the strangeness of Borges's encyclopaedia as the result of incongruous juxtapositions, rather than the worse kind of disorder that Foucault identifies in its placelessness, and emphasises the disciplinary power structures of heterotopian sites, rather than their mythical qualities.

Therefore, rather than helping us to understand the texts, or to elucidate Foucault's concept, these applications serve only to perpetuate the undefined and ambiguous nature of the heterotopia. Moreover, these various appropriations of the term represent only a fraction of those made in the field of literary studies, let alone by scholars from other disciplines. The remainder of this introductory chapter thus looks to create a consistent notion of the heterotopia. To this end, it carries out a careful examination of those texts in which Foucault defines the heterotopia, a consideration of the strange history of their distribution, an assessment of the reactions to, and misinterpretations of, these texts, and a prudent attempt to position the concept within Foucault's wider *oeuvre*. It also draws connections between these sites and the condition of exile, in an attempt to make the heterotopia particularly useful for the study of Joyce, Nabokov and Sebald.

The Paradox of the Heterotopia

A number of critics have pointed out the inherently contradictory nature of Foucault's two most prominent delineations of the heterotopia, as outlined in the preface to *The Order of Things* and 'Of Other Spaces'. While the former describes an entirely unimaginable space, possible only in language, the latter refers to a set of

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[17] Dora Osborne, 'Projecting the Heterotopia in W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*' in *The Politics of Place in Post-War Germany: Essays in Literary Criticism*, eds. David Clarke and Renate Rechtien (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009)

[18] Emily Erin Jones, *Verschachtelte Räume: Writing and Reading Environments in W. G. Sebald* (Ph.D. Thesis. Harvard University: USA, 2012), 12

real, albeit semi-mythical, places. "The two uses of the term," writes Benjamin Genocchio, "bear a strange inconsistency,"[19] while Heidi Sohn argues that Foucault's writings on the heterotopia contain "a significant paradox that generally is misunderstood, ignored or left out, and that should not go unnoticed."[20] However, through a close examination of the respective texts in which Foucault proposes these contradictory definitions of the same term, and a consideration of the often-overlooked radio lecture, it is possible to identify a number of intersections between the two different meanings, and to begin working towards a unified theory of the heterotopia.

In contrast to Lautréamont's "fortuitous encounter upon a dissecting-table of a sewing-machine and an umbrella," in which, Foucault argues in *The Order of Things*, the table represents the common ground for this meeting of incongruous entities, and "provides proof of the possibility of juxtaposition," Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia finds no physical location in which to unfold.[21] Foucault thus draws attention to the intrinsic connection between thought and space. After all, it is not just Lautréamont's literal dissecting-table, the physical site on which things are juxtaposed that Borges eradicates, he argues, but also, in a superimposed sense, the *tabula*, the grid "that enables thought to operate upon the entities of the world…the table upon which since the beginning of time language has intersected space." Thus he comes to the implications of this notion for the study of fiction. In contrast to utopias, which Foucault asserts "permit fables and discourse," which "run with the very grain of language and are part of the fundamental dimension of the *fabula*," heterotopias "dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences." They "destroy 'syntax' in advance," he says, "and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together'." In eradicating the table, or *tabula*, Foucault suggests, Borges also excludes the fable, or *fabula*, the Russian Formalist notion of the raw material of fiction, the "real" events that are related by a

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[19] Benjamin Genocchio, 'Discourse, Discontinuity, Difference: The Question of 'Other' Spaces', in *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*, eds. Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 37

[20] Heidi Sohn, 'Heterotopia: anamnesis of a medical term', in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, eds. Michiel Dehaene and Lieven de Cauter (London: Routledge, 2007), 44

[21] Comte de Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1966), 263

narrative, or *syuzhet*.[22] Although utopias, as Foucault says, "have no real locality," there is nevertheless an implied imaginary geography that precedes the writing of utopian fiction. Heterotopias, on the other hand, open up a space "without law or geometry," (OT, xix) collapsing the distinction between *fabula* and *syuzhet*, precluding the possibility of an *a priori* referential world, either real or imaginary.

However, less than a year after the publication of *The Order of Things* Foucault gave the lecture to the Cercle d'études architecturales that was to become 'Of Other Spaces'. Here, he describes heterotopias as sites which are "outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality," and as places which constitute a "simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live" (OS, 24). Foucault's lecture begins with the declaration that, in contrast to the history-obsessed nineteenth century, the preoccupation of the present epoch is space. "We are in the epoch of simultaneity," he says, "we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed." (OS, 22) He goes on to trace the history of Western space, from the hierarchized sacred and profane places of the Middle Ages, through Galileo's infinite space of extension, to the modern-day notion of the site, an understanding of space "defined by relations of proximity between points or elements." Today, Foucault argues, "we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another." (OS, 23) However, he says, there are some spaces that "have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect." Of these, he suggests, there are two types. First, there are utopias, "sites with no real place," which "present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down." Then there is what Foucault here calls a heterotopia, "a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted." Between these two categories Foucault suggests one point

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[22] In an essay published the month after *The Order of Things*, titled 'Behind the Fable,' Foucault follows the Russian Formalist distinction between *fabula* and *syuzhet* by defining the fable as "what is related," namely "episodes, characters, functions they exercise in the narrative, events" (in light of the present argument, one might also add places to this list), as opposed to fiction, which is "the narrative system…according to which [the fable] is 'narrated'." "The fable is made up of elements placed in a certain order," he adds, and "resides in the mythical possibilities of the culture." Michel Foucault, 'Behind the Fable', in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. James Faubion (London: Penguin, 2000), 137-38

of intersection: the mirror. "The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place," he says. "But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy." (OS, 24) Further examples of the latter type of space, as we have seen, include the cemetery, the prison, the library, the museum, the garden, the zoo, the theatre, the mirror, the brothel, and the boat, sites that Foucault argues are characterised, to varying degrees, by the following set of principles:

1. Heterotopias are to be found in every culture around the world.

2. The function of any individual heterotopia is liable to change in the course of time. The cemetery, for instance, gradually migrated from the centre of the city to the outskirts in the course of the nineteenth century, reflecting the growing consensus that disease was propagated by the proximity of death, and the growing emphasis placed on individual burial sites that accompanied a decline in the belief of an afterlife.

3. The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing numerous seemingly incompatible spaces in one place. The theatre and the cinema bring a series of places foreign to one another onto the space of the stage and the screen respectively. And the traditional Persian garden comprised four sections representing the four parts of the world, a microcosmic formulation that can be found in many modern day zoos.

4. The heterotopia is at its most effective when it distorts the conventional experience of time. This principle can be divided into two subcategories. First, there are those spaces in which time is indefinitely accumulating, such as the museum and the library. And then there are heterotopias such as the festival and the fairground, the existence of which is temporal and fleeting.

5. Heterotopias feature systems of opening and closing that isolate them from the space surrounding them. Entry to some, the prison for example, is compulsory; to others it is granted on the grounds that one adheres to certain codes of convention. There are others still in which entry itself is an illusion, such as some South American guest rooms, which open onto the outside world, but through which no access to the family home is possible.

In addition to outlining these principles, Foucault subdivides heterotopias into two independent dichotomies. First, he makes a distinction between "crisis heterotopias," spaces reserved for individuals in a state of biological "crisis," women during

childbirth or menstruation, for example, and "heterotopias of deviation," spaces inhabited by those whose behaviour deviates from society's norm, such as prisons and psychiatric hospitals. Then he distinguishes between "heterotopias of illusion" and "heterotopias of compensation," with the first being an illusory space which exposes real space as even more illusory, and the second being a highly meticulous and ordered space, the aim of which is to reveal the disorder surrounding it. As an example of the former, he posits, without explanation, "those famous brothels of which we are now deprived," while in relation to the latter he describes the perfectly regulated space of seventeenth-century colonies, such as those founded by the Puritans and the Jesuits in North and South America respectively.

Given this mesh of intersecting and somewhat contradictory principles, categories and subcategories, one could be forgiven for thinking that this lecture was a practical joke on Foucault's part, itself emulating the impossible classification of Borges's encyclopaedia. As Sohn argues, "spatial heterotopias are exceptions that differ so greatly from all categories that they cannot be fitted and fixed into any rigid taxonomy."[23] Edward Soja, too, folds Foucault's two definitions of the heterotopia together, warning readers of 'Of Other Spaces' not to expect those "ordered surfaces" that Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia breaks up.[24] However, the internal ambiguities of 'Of Other Spaces' pale in comparison to those between Foucault's two definitions of the heterotopia; while one describes a wholly unimaginable space, the other signifies a real, albeit semi-mythical, place. This is not to say that there are not similarities between the two. The third principle of Foucault's heterotopology, the capacity of the heterotopia to juxtapose "in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (OS, 25), seems to approximate the incommensurabilities and the resultant impossibility of Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia. Similarly, it is tempting to identify a connection between the impossible simultaneities in Borges's encyclopaedia, and Foucault's emphasis on simultaneity in his later definition of the heterotopia, as in his description of it as "a simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live." Indeed, in his descriptions of a number of heterotopian sites, he uses language which

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[23] Sohn, 'Heterotopia: Anamnesis of a Medical Term', 49

[24] Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 159

indicates their simultaneous constitution of contradictory perceptions of space. The mirror, he says,

> makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there. (OS, 24)

Likewise, the boat, Foucault's heterotopia *par excellence*, is "a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea." It is both a "great instrument of economic development," and "simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination." (OS, 27) And in the closest approximation of Borges's distorted set theory, the garden "is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world." (OS, 26) The simultaneity of these different perceptions of place, the contrast between the real and the mythical, seems to create the kind of overlapping incommensurability that characterises Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia. But any attempt to superimpose the two definitions in these ways is inevitably undermined by Foucault's insistence that his latter definition refers to a kind of "real place." After all, any disorder created in real space can only ever be at worst incongruous, analogous to Lautréamont's dissecting-table, and never impossible. While language allows for unresolved incompatibilities, real space is constrained by our perception, which is bordered by the limits of what is imaginable.

To begin to explain how Foucault's notion of the heterotopia shifted from an impossible space to a real place in less than a year, we need to return to 'Les Hétérotopies', the commonly disregarded radio talk, broadcast in December 1966, that prompted Foucault's invitation to lecture to the Cercle d'études architecturales. Part of a series on literature and utopia, Defert describes it as "one of those literary games in which Foucault took such avid pleasure," a description that certainly finds resonance in the content of the lecture.[25] Instead of the historical proclamations about the importance of spatiality to our era, it begins with a recapitulation of the literary pedigree of the notion of utopia itself, and the assertion that "there are some countries without a place and some stories that are not chronological." (LH, 23) While 'Of Other Spaces' defines utopias simply as "sites with no real place," (OS, 24) here, as

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[25] Defert, 'Foucault, Space, and the Architects', 276

in *The Order of Things*, they are closely associated with language, being described as the presupposing convergence of an *a priori* imaginary landscape and the narrative by which it is mapped. They are born, says Foucault, "in the minds of men, or rather, in the gaps between their words, in the thickness of their tales." (LH, 23) But there are some such utopias, he argues, somewhat paradoxically, that can be tied to a specific time and place, a time and place which they are said to simultaneously "efface, compensate, neutralise or purify." (LH, 24)

In a further deviation from 'Of Other Spaces,' or rather a way in which the later lecture deviates from the radio broadcast, 'Les Hétérotopies' puts far greater emphasis on the role that the imagination plays in the realisation of these sites. While both end with Foucault's declaration that the ship represents the "greatest reserve of the imagination" (OS, 27/LH, 36), in the radio broadcast he also prefaces his remarks on the heterotopia with a discussion of the spaces of children's play. At the bottom of the garden, in the attic, or on their parents' bed, he says, children can discover the Wild West, the ocean, or the sky. But this is by no means a practice unique to children, argues Foucault. Adults, too, perform this imaginative transformation of space, a practice that finds an outlet not in play *per se*, but in the space of literature. Hence the striking image of the magic carpet at the centre of his lecture:

> if we consider that oriental rugs were originally reproductions of gardens – in the strictest sense of the term "winter gardens" – we understand the legendary value of magic carpets, rugs that roam the world. The garden is a carpet where the whole world has come to fulfil its symbolic perfection, and it is at the same time a garden moving through space. Was it a garden or a carpet then, described by the narrator of *The Thousand and One Nights*? (LH, 29)

In 'Of Other Spaces,' Foucault describes the microcosmic quality of the garden, with its four sections representing four different parts of the world. He even mentions Persian rugs, which he explains, "were originally reproductions of gardens." (OS, 26) But here he goes even further, suggesting that the mythical image of the magic carpet originates from the real site of the garden, via the rugs that depict them pictorially. Both allow us, so to speak, to travel to the farthest corners of the earth. Subsequently, due to its ability to give rise to an alternative configuration of space, Foucault suggests that the garden is a privileged place in the creation of fiction. "We might perhaps be under the impression that novels are set in gardens with ease," he says.

"The fact is that novels and gardens are probably born of the same institution." (LH, 30)

Foucault's radio lecture contains two further references to literary sources, both of which concern the heterotopian site of the brothel. First he references "the festival of all nights in the brothels of yesterday," (LH, 31) as found in Edmond de Goncourt's *La Fille Elisa*, a kind of intersection between heterotopias of eternity, where time ceaselessly accumulates, and those heterotopias that are linked to a specific moment in time. Then he turns his attention to Louis Aragon's *Le paysan de Paris*, a novel saturated with heterotopian places, but in which Foucault again focuses on the brothel. On this occasion, it is the heterotopia's strange system of opening and closing that he attempts to illustrate. "There are some heterotopias," he says, "which seem open, but which can only truly be entered by those who are already initiated. We believe that access is simple and available, but in fact we are at the heart of the mystery." (LH, 33) Thus the individual is caught in a negative in-between, neither inside nor outside. Such is the case, he argues, when Aragon enters the brothel, pursuing "a great abstract desire." "I never for a moment think of the social aspect of these places," writes Aragon, "the expression *maison de tolerance* cannot be pronounced seriously."[26]

Although at times underwhelming, and more than a little ambiguous, the decidedly literary tone and context of this radio lecture, in addition to the circumstances of its subsequent adaptation for an architectural audience, seems sufficient to suggest that the heterotopia was never intended as a tool for the study of real urban space. Instead, it seems to hold the promise of a conception of the heterotopia that sees it signifying a set of literary motifs used by writers to present an alternative configuration of space. From here it is not difficult to see how we might attempt to reconcile the two definitions of the heterotopia. If we understand the term to refer not to real places, but rather to fictional representations of those sites, and of their simultaneously mythic and real dimensions, then the latter definition of the concept finds its own common ground with Borges's encyclopaedia in the realm of language, in which, as we have seen, the simultaneous presence of incompatibilities is eminently possible. However, before we can begin any attempt to fully reclaim the heterotopia for literary analysis, which Defert labels "the site of the heterotopia's

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[26] Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), 118-19

emergence,"[27] it is first necessary to justify such a project by examining the shortcomings of previous approaches from different perspectives.

The Reception of the Heterotopia

In an interview Foucault claimed that he wanted his *oeuvre* "to be a kind of tool-box others can rummage through to find a tool they can use however they wish in their own area."[28] In the case of the heterotopia, however, it seems that many have been far too liberal with their interpretations of his ideas. As Genocchio has remarked, most applications of the term "provide little critical engagement with Foucault's texts, simply calling up the heterotopia as some theoretical *deus ex machina*."[29] A quick survey of the bibliography on Peter Johnson's blog, *Heterotopian Studies*, reveals the vast quantity and diversity of engagements with the concept. Johnson divides responses into a number of disciplinary categories that include 'Art and Architecture', 'Death Studies', 'Digital and Cyberspace Studies', 'Gender, Sexuality, and Queer Studies', 'Education Studies', and 'Marketing and Tourism'. 'Literary Studies', tellingly, is confined to a single category, which it shares with 'Science Fiction' and 'Theatre Studies'. Within these categories, the spaces described as heterotopian include real sites, such as further education colleges, theme parks, and nudist beaches; fictional places, such as Hogwarts and the Star Trek Voyager; and digital spaces, like dating websites and Wikipedia.[30] Certainly, there is no reason to restrict our notion of what constitutes a heterotopia to the examples Foucault gives in his lectures. But as Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter have warned, it is important to remember that "not everything is a heterotopia." Such a multi-faceted and inexact concept naturally lends itself to a wide range of applications; "when putting on heterotopian spectacles," they say, "everything tends to take on heterotopian traits."[31] Until a satisfactory and consistent notion of the heterotopia has been formulated and agreed upon, it seems inevitable that the proliferation of

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[27] Defert, 'Foucault, Space, and the Architects', 281

[28] Michel Foucault, 'Prisons et asiles dans le mécanisme du pouvoir', in *Dits et écrits 1954-1988*, vol. II: 1970-1975, eds. Daniel Defert and François Ewald (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 523. Translation taken from Clare O'Farrell, *Michel Foucault* (London: Sage, 2005), 50

[29] Genocchio, 'Discourse, Discontinuity, Difference', 36

[30] Peter Johnson, 'Bibliography', *Heterotopian Studies*, <http://www.heterotopiastudies.com/bibliogr aphy/?doing_wp_cron=1392397187.1169478893280029296875> [accessed 14th February 2014]

[31] Michiel Dehaene and Lieven de Cauter, 'Heterotopia in a Postcivil Society', in *Heterotopia and the City*, 6

interpretations will only serve to further dilute an already hazy concept. Here, I want to address some of the more prominent engagements with the heterotopia in an attempt to curtail certain branches of thought stemming from Foucault's texts, and to thus open up a space for its subsequent literary restoration.

Geography and Architecture

As a result of the strange distribution history of the texts in which Foucault defines the heterotopia, in particular the pre-eminence of 'Of Other Spaces', the majority of critical engagements with the concept have come from geographical and architectural perspectives. Indeed, for many working in these fields, Foucault's lecture to the Cercle d'études architecturales constitutes a formative moment in the emergence of a new cultural geography, and in the reassertion of space as a subject worthy of critical study. Foremost among these is postmodernist geographer Edward Soja, who, in his own words, uses Foucault's "epochal observations"[32] about the modern predominance of space over time

> as a springboard for a critique of a prevailing historicism in modernist critical thinking, a blinkering of perspective that has persistently constrained our ability to think critically about space and the spatiality of human life in the same ways we have learned to think critically about time and the "making of history."

More pertinently though, Soja draws on Foucault's definition of the heterotopia, in addition to the work of theorists including Henri Lefebvre, bell hooks, and Homi Bhabha, in synthesising his notion of "Thirdspace," of which, he says, Foucault's heterotopology "might be called the micro- or site geography." Like its constituent parts, this term remains more than a little rough around the edges, albeit knowingly so. "In its broadest sense," writes Soja, "Thirdspace is a purposefully tentative and flexible term that attempts to capture what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings." In its closest approximation of Foucault's "simultaneously mythic and real" places, Soja describes it as "a creative recombination and extension, one that builds on a Firstspace perspective that is focused on the 'real' material world and a Secondspace

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[32] Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), 16

perspective that interprets this reality through 'imagined' representations of spatiality." "Everything comes together in Thirdspace," he later adds:

> subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history.[33]

Although Soja barely acknowledges Foucault's reading of the Chinese encyclopaedia, his use of 'Of Other Spaces' to construct a new understanding of spatiality founded in the simultaneity of contradictory perspectives demonstrates an appreciation of the centrality of the same notion to the heterotopia, an appreciation that is made even clearer in his reference, on more than one occasion, to Borges's 'The Aleph.'

In this story, Borges describes the presence in an acquaintance's basement of a "place where, without admixture or confusion, all the places of the world, seen from every angle, coexist."[34] In its simultaneous presentation of all space, from every possible perspective, the Aleph constitutes the most perfect articulation in Borges's fiction of the kind of spatial impossibility that Foucault identifies in the *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*. Therefore, by attempting to synthesise this story with his reading of 'Of Other Spaces' in his definition of Thirdspace, Soja comes close to reconciling the two seemingly contradictory definitions of the heterotopia. This story, writes Soja, expresses

> the radical openness of what I am trying to convey as Thirdspace: the space where all places are, capable of being seen from every angle, each standing clear; but also a secret and conjectured object, filled with illusions and allusions, a space that is common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen and understood, an "unimaginable universe."

And in response to the description, in 'Of Other Spaces,' of the heterotopia as "a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be

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[33] Soja, *Thirdspace*, 155; 157; 2; 6; 56-57

[34] Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Aleph', in *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin, 1998), 281

found in the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (OS, 24), he suggests that "Foucault too has seen the Aleph of Thirdspace."

However, problems arise with Soja's interpretation of Foucault's heterotopia, and of Borges's story, when he attempts to apply them to "real-world" situations. After all, rather than merely an abstract set of notions about spatiality, Soja intends his new conception of geography to perform a useful function in society. Mobilising his desire to transform the way we think about space, he says, "is a belief that the spatial dimension of our lives has never been of greater practical and political relevance than it is today."[35] This, however, prompts us to question how this notion of an unimaginable space, characterised by its simultaneous incorporation of contradictory perspectives, can be practically applied to a real site. It seems that central to Soja's appropriation of 'The Aleph' is a misreading of Borges's story that treats it as an allegory of the modern complexities of time and space, rather than a demonstration of the multi-dimensional capabilities of language. Take, for instance, Soja's reading of Los Angeles in the final chapter of *Postmodern Geographies* (1989), which he approaches through the unimaginable space of the Aleph. As an epigraph, he takes Borges's lament about the difficulties he faces as a writer when confronted with such an impossible object, which I present here in an extended form:

> I come now to the ineffable center of my tale; it is here that a writer's hopelessness begins. Every language is an alphabet of symbols the employment of which assumes a past shared by its interlocutors. How can one transmit to others the infinite Aleph, which my timorous memory can scarcely contain? … And besides, the central problem – the enumeration, even partial enumeration, of infinity – is irresolvable. In that unbounded moment, I saw millions of delightful and horrible acts; none amazed me so much as the fact that all occupied the same point, without superposition and without transparency. What my eyes saw was *simultaneous*; what I shall write is *successive*, because language is successive. Something of it, though, I will capture.[36]

Los Angeles, too, begins the chapter proper, "is exceedingly tough-to-track, peculiarly resistant to conventional description." L.A. is at once everywhere, due to

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[35] Soja, *Thirdspace*, 56; 158; 1
[36] Borges, 'The Aleph', 282-83

its cultural exports, and at the same time everywhere is in L.A., as a result of the global currents of trade, people, ideas, and information that flow towards it. It is a point of intersection on the axes between east and west, and north and south, the umbilicus, as it were, of Foucault's microcosmic garden. Thus, writes Soja, "from every quarter's teeming shores have poured a pool of cultures so diverse that contemporary Los Angeles represents the world in connected urban microcosms, reproducing in situ the customary colours and confrontations of a hundred different homelands." It is also a mesh of military and industrial facilities, universities, theme parks, shopping malls, and residential areas. Soja thus justifies the use of the term LA-leph by referring to "the many simultaneous contraries, interposed opposites, which epitomize Los Angeles and help to explain why conventional categorical logic can never hope to capture its historical and geographic signification."[37]

However, the analogy is not a useful one. While Soja focuses on Borges's own admission of the futility of attempting to capture the limitless Aleph in its entirety, and uses it to illustrate his own inability to provide any totalising description of Los Angeles, we are actually dealing with two very different spaces. It is true, of course, that Borges does not catalogue the Aleph in its entirety, an infinite and impossible undertaking. Nonetheless, he is able to affirm, in language, the existence of a wholly unthinkable space, a place in which images of an infinite number of people, places, objects, and actions, seen from every conceivable angle, are superimposed, but not in such a way that they impede upon each other. Such a configuration could never exist in any real place, not even Los Angeles. Rather than being constrained by a language, the conventions of which do not allow him to portray the wonder of the Aleph, it is in fact only in the non-place of language that Borges is able to construct such an impossibility. Therefore, rather than proposing that Los Angeles is an unimaginable heterotopian space, in and of itself, a place which defies description, Soja might have been better off suggesting that it is only through such description that the contradictions present in the city are fully articulated.

More recently, as the product of a colloquium held in Leuven, Belgium in May 2005, a collection of essays was published titled *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society* (2008). In the introduction, the editors, Michiel

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[37] Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 222-23; 225

Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter, suggest that the book's aim is "to find out whether the concept of heterotopia could be made consistent or whether it should, on the contrary, be given up altogether because its vagueness has only brought confusion and continues to do so."[38] Although it contains some interesting and thought-provoking essays, this volume seems predestined to arrive at the latter conclusion, given that it focuses almost entirely on the highly problematic 'Of Other Spaces', paying little credence to Foucault's two prior definitions of the term. Indeed, in Hilde Heynen's concluding remarks, she attests to the variety of interpretations on show in the preceding pages. "One is tempted to conclude, after reading all the contributions to this book," she writes, "that heterotopia is too slippery a term to be of any fundamental significance in the discourse on space and culture."[39] As she explains, there is a significant difference of opinion between contributors on the fundamental issue of whether we can even consider the heterotopia an actual spatial entity. On the one hand, there are those who suggest that these sites are principally defined by their concrete spatial arrangement and qualities. For example, in their reading of the shopping mall as a heterotopian space, Douglas Muzzio and Jessica Muzzio-Rentas argue that the "size, configuration, internal layout and external design of the shopping mall, as with all built environments, are 'signifiers' that, through culturally determined systems of association, reveal social relations and networks of power."[40] On the other hand, there are those who argue that heterotopias are rather constituted by social practices, and by the ways in which space is used or interpreted. So, for instance, Marco Cenzatti insists that heterotopias, "as spaces of representation, are produced by the presence of a set of specific social relations and their space. As soon as the social relation and the appropriation of physical space end, both space of representation and heterotopia disappear." As he argues, in the case of the prison, "where an apposite physical space has been built to contain a social group and its social relations," the actual building itself "is just a trace of the lived space that it contained, continues to contain, or will contain."[41] Furthermore, Heynen suggests that "from a political point of view it is not clear whether Foucault's heterotopias should be seen as systems that support the societal status quo

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[38] Dehaene and de Cauter, 'Heterotopia in a postcivil society', 6

[39] Hilde Heynen, 'Heterotopia unfolded?' in *Heterotopia and the City*, 311

[40] Douglas Muzzio and Jessica Muzzio-Rentas, 'A Kind of Instinct: The Cinematic Mall as Heterotopia', in *Heterotopia and the City*, 139-40

[41] Marco Cenzatti, 'Heterotopias of Difference', in *Heterotopia and the City*, 81

or as arrangements that subvert it." As she points out, the multiple sites described as heterotopian in the collection offer support to both interpretations. Shopping malls, gated communities, and offshore developments reinforce the dominant capitalist hegemony, consolidating pre-existing power relations and practices of segregation. Meanwhile, raves, sites of homosexual cruising, bonfires, and squats, serve to subvert social and cultural norms.

In an explicit contradiction of the book's express objective, Heynen thus argues that the theoretical value of the heterotopia resides in its very indefinability:

> It cannot be the purpose of a book like this one to fixate, once and for all, the meaning of heterotopia. Rather, it should open up different layers, different contexts and different adumbrations of the term, in order to explore its full potential as a thought-provoking concept that stimulates further investigations into the relationship between space and culture. One could even argue that the wide range of interpretations developed in this book is symptomatic of the undecidability of the notion 'heterotopia' and that this undecidability is crucial and productive in probing our current urban condition.[42]

Confronted with the impossibility of making Foucault's concept coherent for the study of urban space, geographers consistently resort to employing the indeterminate nature of the heterotopia as a boon, suggesting that this openness allows for the exploration of new conceptions of spatiality, the realisation of which is perpetually delayed. Inherent in this way of thinking is the implication that the heterotopia, as a space that defies categorisation, and which contains incompatible configurations of space, also resists definition, as if to present a unified definition of the heterotopia would be to detract from its subversive, and entirely different, quality. But according to this same logic Foucault would be unable to define what it is about the Chinese encyclopaedia that exceeds our comprehension, and yet his reading of Borges forms the basis of his most self-sufficient definition of the heterotopia. Is it not possible, after all, to speak in a commensurable way about the incommensurable, and to express precisely what it is that gives something its disturbing quality? Perhaps we should instead attribute the bewilderment repeatedly experienced when faced with

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[42] Heynen, 'Heterotopia Unfolded', 317; 311

the heterotopia to the unsustainable misinterpretation of it as a way of thinking about material space, and to the impossibility of real places to contain the kind of incompatibilities implied by Foucault's definitions. In its place we should attempt to develop a coherent understanding of the heterotopia as a way of thinking about textual space, and the representations of place in fiction.

Literary Studies

This is not to suggest that there have not been engagements with the heterotopia from a literary perspective, but rather to argue that the discipline has yet to formulate a satisfactory conception of Foucault's other spaces by reasserting its privileged position in the concept's history. Indeed, the diversity of appropriations of the term within the field of literary studies has been, relatively speaking, comparable to that witnessed in relation to its general reception. Given Foucault's definition of the heterotopia as a semi-mythical site that comments upon the society of which it is simultaneously a part, and apart from, it is perhaps not surprising that a number of critics have applied the term to the fantastical and educational worlds of children's literature. Sarah K. Cantrell, for instance, posits J.K. Rowling's Hogwarts as an example of a heterotopian space, a magical place outside of the practices of everyday life, but a site which nonetheless mirrors and enacts many of the political and social issues familiar to us from our own reality.[43] For similar reasons, a number of critics have discussed the heterotopia in relation to science fiction.[44] There have also been a number of appropriations of the concept from the perspective of postcolonial studies, for which the heterotopia represents an alternative conception of space that subverts that of the imperialist culture, in a similar way that magical realism and historiographic metafiction regularly constitute a rewriting of dominant historical narratives. In her reading of Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* (2000), a novel which features numerous heterotopian sites, Victoria Burrows argues that "the notion of heterotopia lends itself to postcolonial critiques and analyses because both are

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[43] Sarah K. Cantrell, '"I solemnly swear I am up to no good": Foucault's Heterotopias and Deleuze's Any-Spaces-Whatever in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter Series', in *Children's Literature* 39 (2011), 195-212

[44] See Joan Gordon, 'Hybridity, Heterotopia and Mateship in China Miéville's *Perdido Street Station*', in *Science Fiction Studies* 30.3 (November 2003), 456-76

quintessentially about otherness and social ordering."[45] However, rather than the variety of these studies, it is one aspect that many of them have in common which proves most frustrating. As a result of the ascendancy of geographical and architectural studies in the reception of the heterotopia, most literary engagements with this primarily literary concept tend to approach it through the prism of its later architectural incarnation. Although many demonstrate an awareness of Foucault's discussion of Borges in *The Order of Things*, the predominance of the geographical notion of the heterotopia means they are compelled to circle back on its original textual formulation, rather than use it as the basis for their own textual applications of the concept.

Of these, perhaps the most successful is Andrew Thacker's brief discussion of the heterotopia in the introductory chapter to his *Moving Through Modernity* (2003), a book that aims to reassert the centrality of experiences of space and movement to the study of modernist literature. Thacker lists Foucault, along with thinkers such as Heidegger, Bachelard, Lefebvre, and de Certeau, as one of the theorists who have made this project possible, providing him with the terminology required to carry it out. He describes Foucault's concept, as outlined in 'Of Other Spaces,' as "a provocative way of combining material and metaphorical senses of space,"[46] and identifies its underlying literary quality in the description of the ship as "the greatest reserve of the imagination" (OS, 27). "This cryptic portrait of the boat as heterotopia," he says, "indicates a fertile link to literary dreams of 'other spaces'." He goes on to make a convincing argument about the contestatory role played by the boat in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, not the one on which Marlow sails up the Congo, but the one from which he tells his story. He argues that this ship is "a contradictory site, fixed by its anchor, yet moving in its narrative space between the Congo, Brussels and London to illuminate the interconnections between the European metropolis and its imperial domains." However, Thacker's analysis is strongest when he attempts to incorporate Foucault's discussion of Borges into his understanding of the heterotopia. In the Chinese encyclopaedia he identifies "a form of avant-garde writing found throughout modernism," which he says can "easily be

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[45] Victoria Burrows, 'The Heterotopic Spaces of Postcolonial Trauma in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*', in *Studies in the Novel*, 40.1-2 (Spring and Summer 2008), 165

[46] Andrew Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity*: *Space and Geography in Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 22

applied to the modernist style of Joyce in *Ulysses* or more widely in *Finnegans Wake*, the disrupted syntax of much of Gertrude Stein, or the patchwork texture of Ezra Pound's *Cantos*." It is in the duality of the two definitions that he recognises "the most important point to glean from Foucault's comments on heterotopias for the study of modernism." "Together," he suggests, "they articulate an interpretation of modernism as a set of responses to changes in the material spaces of modernity." Modernist style, he argues, can partly be attributed to the attempts of writers to articulate the new experiences of space and place that were a by-product of modernity. Indeed, among Foucault's declarations about the timeless and quasi-primitive quality of the heterotopia, it is easy to forget that Foucault defines it as a historically-contingent phenomenon, and that many of the examples he gives are characteristic of modernity. The thinking underpinning our conception of the library and the museum, for instance, "the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive," says Foucault, "this whole idea belongs to our modernity. The museum and the library are heterotopias that are proper to western culture of the nineteenth century." (OS, 26) The cemetery, too, assumes a familiar shape at the same time: "it is only from that start of the nineteenth century," says Foucault, "that cemeteries began to be located at the outside border of cities." (OS, 25) The prison, the cinema, the zoo, and the ship, all appear, or take on renewed significance as a result of industrial, technological, and imperial developments, while advancements in the nineteenth century meant that mirrors became easier and safer to manufacture, and more widely available. Therefore, Thacker concludes, "we should look for those moments in a text in which linguistic or semantic instability is associated with a certain site or location in order to find modernist heterotopias."[47] Although Thacker demonstrates no awareness of Foucault's radio lecture, this proposal seems a concise summation of the notion of the heterotopia conveyed collectively by all of his writings on the subject, and could almost be considered a statement of intent for this thesis's subsequent chapters, albeit in relation to modernism, rather than twentieth-century fiction in general.

Those who have attempted to base their reading of the heterotopia exclusively in Foucault's textual definition of the term, and thus render it useful for a study of fiction, have frequently misunderstood the philosopher's reading of Borges.

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[47] Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity*, 27-28

In *Postmodernist Fiction*, Brian McHale defines what he calls a "heterotopian zone" as a fictional space that is "less constructed than *deconstructed* by the text, or rather constructed and deconstructed at the same time." This is a motif that he identifies in the work of writers including Italo Calvino, Thomas Pynchon, Alasdair Gray, William Burroughs, Nabokov and Borges, and which he suggests is constructed through one of the following four techniques: juxtaposition, interpolation, superimposition, and misattribution. That is to say, the juxtaposition of spaces which our real-world experience informs us are non-contiguous, the interpolation of an unreal territory into a familiar space, the superimposition of two or more real spaces onto each other, or the attribution of certain characteristics or landmarks to a real space which the reader knows to be incorrect. Although McHale's description of a space that is simultaneously constructed and deconstructed by the text seems faithful to Foucault's notion of an impossible textual space, the set of techniques that he outlines by which such a space can be fashioned do not necessarily adhere to this definition. Moreover, the examples with which he chooses to illustrate each of these methods seem to demonstrate a misunderstanding of the heterotopia, as described in *The Order of Things*. For example, he cites Guy Davenport's story 'The Haile Selassie Funeral Train', in which the titular locomotive follows an ostensibly impossible itinerary. "Setting out from Deauville in Normandy," McHale summarises, "it passes through Barcelona, along the Dalmatian coast of present-day Yugoslavia, to Genoa, Madrid, Odessa, Atlanta (in the State of Georgia, USA!), and back to Deauville again."[48] The illogical order in which the train visits these destinations, and the improbability of a transatlantic locomotive, means that the journey demarcates one of McHale's zones; the story juxtaposes places which, according to our real-world map, are not proximate to one another. Yet, if Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia is heterotopian by dint of its entirely unimaginable nature, can we say the same of the space of Davenport's story? It is eminently possible, after all, to conceive of a world in which these places could be linked; in fact, the very premise of a train connecting them seems to suggest the possibility of a common locus on which they could meet. Similarly, to illustrate what he means by "misattribution," McHale refers to a number of texts which in no way exceed what is imaginable. It is perfectly reasonable to suggest, as Walter Abish does in

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[48] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), 45

Alphabetical Africa, that the country of Chad, landlocked in our own world, might have a coastline in a fictional one. And it is by no means impossible to imagine Israel as a land of jungles, monorails, and canals, as Ronald Sukenick does in *98.6*. McHale's definition of the "heterotopian zone of postmodernist writing" thus seems more akin to the notion of an alternate or unfamiliar world, rather than an impossible heterotopian one.

In its place, perhaps we can substitute a set of techniques which can be used to construct a textual space more faithful to McHale's description of one that is "constructed and deconstructed at the same time," and subsequently allow writers to create impossible textual spaces analogous to that of Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia. Indeed, many of these techniques can be derived from Borges, in whose fiction, Foucault says, heterotopias are "found so often" (OT, xix). I have already discussed 'The Aleph', in which the simultaneity of images in the same space exceeds the limits of our comprehension. A similar simultaneity, albeit a less flagrant example, can be detected in the preface to Georges Perec's *Species of Spaces* when he insists that there is nothing "to stop us from imagining things that are neither towns nor countryside (nor suburbs), or Métro corridors that are at the same time public parks."[49] His first assertion seems too contingent upon classifications to categorically affirm or deny; into which grouping, if any, do we place the ocean, the frozen tundra, or the moon? The second, however, seems to explicitly flout the limits of the imagination; the Métro corridor and the public park are such different quantities that it seems an impossible task to superimpose them in one image. The former, by definition, is underground and enclosed, the latter open-air and expansive. Closely related to this notion of simultaneity is contradiction, the presence of conflicting descriptions of space within the same fictional place. One thinks, for example, of 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', in which Borges describes an encyclopaedic planet entirely incompatible with our own reality, only to suggest at the end of the story that the two worlds will merge, with the former superseding the latter. Finally, there is infinitude, the interpolation of infinite models of space within a seemingly naturalistic or finite world.

However, while these techniques demonstrate the ways in which authors can create impossible fictional worlds, akin to those of Borges, they do nothing to help

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[49] Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, trans. John Sturrock(London: Penguin, 2008),5

us map Foucault's two definitions of the heterotopia onto one another. In order to fully superimpose them, thus formulating a unified theory of the heterotopia, it is necessary to consult Foucault's wider *oeuvre*, and in particular his literary criticism. Therein, we find a kind of history of those places that occupy a special place in the collective imagination of a given society, and which constitute the repositories of myth within their cultures. They thus allow writers to articulate a level of fantasy, and, as we reach the twentieth century, an impossibility akin to that found in Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia.

Heterotopias in Foucault's Other Works

On more than one occasion, Foucault expressed reservations about the practice of studying an author's *oeuvre* indiscriminately as a unified and coherent whole. In doing so, he argues, one mistakenly suggests that, at some level, "the *oeuvre* emerges, in all its fragments, even the smallest, most inessential ones, as the expression of the thought, the experience, the imagination, or the unconscious of the author, or indeed, of the historical determinations that operated upon him."[50] Therefore, as Timothy Simons points out, "addressing his work as a whole apparently contradicts Foucault's position on the relation between author and oeuvre."[51] In particular, Foucault questions the relationship that those jottings and fragments which exist outside the official corpus of the author's work pertain to the main body of his or her published texts:

> The establishment of a complete *oeuvre* presupposes a number of
> choices that are difficult to justify or even to formulate: is it enough
> to add to the texts published by the author those that he intended for
> publication but which remained unfinished by the fact of his death?
> Should one also include all his sketches and first drafts, with all
> their corrections and crossings out? Should one add sketches that he
> himself abandoned? And what status should be given to letters,
> notes, reported conversations, transcriptions of what he said made
> by those present at the time, in short, to the vast mass of verbal

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[50] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2005), 27
[51] Jonathan Simons, *Foucault and the Political* (London: Routledge, 1995), 7

> traces left by an individual at his death, and which speak in an
> endless confusion so many different languages (*langages*)?[52]

In light of the current study, this passage seems a prescient warning against any attempt to crowbar the heterotopia into Foucault's wider body of work. Of the three principal discussions of the concept, only the discussion of Borges's encyclopaedia in *The Order of Things*, unarguably the most self-sufficient definition of the term, was actually submitted for publication by Foucault himself. The other two survive in the form of the recording of a radio broadcast and in the reconstituted notes from Foucault's lecture to the Cercle d'études architecturales, the very premise of which he seemed to find laughable. Therefore, any attempt to incorporate the concept into one or more of the theoretical strands that thread through Foucault's *oeuvre* needs to proceed with caution, wary of the fact that his ideas are by no means underpinned by a consistent way of thinking. Nevertheless, it is tempting to study the heterotopia in relation to many of Foucault's other works; in both the language he uses and the subjects he discusses he seems to draw parallels that prove illuminating to an understanding of the concept.

Spaces of Confinement and Fantasy

The particular sites discussed in 'Les Hétérotopies' and 'Of Other Spaces' represent the most conspicuous loci on which to perform a comparison of the heterotopia with Foucault's other ideas. Among these, the site with which Foucault made his most extensive engagement, and with which his name is most frequently associated, is the prison. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), subtitled *The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault presents "a genealogy of the present scientifico-legal complex from which the power to punish derives its bases, justifications and rules, from which it extends its effects and by which it masks its exorbitant singularity." He examines the social and theoretical developments that have underpinned reforms in the penal system, tracing the emergence of incarceration as the principal form of punishment in our society. The prison, he argues, is a product and a crystallisation of the power relations present in a wider disciplinary society. As he argues, the prison "merely reproduces, with a

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[52] Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 26

little more emphasis, all the mechanisms that are to be found in the social body."[53] As such, the prison seems to occupy a problematic position in Foucault's definition of the heterotopia as a site which is said to invert or contest all the other spaces to be found in a particular society.

The lectures are characteristically vague on the ways in which the prison attains its heterotopian status. First, Foucault lists it, along with the psychiatric hospital and the rest home, as an example of a "heterotopia of deviation," that kind of place "in which individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed." (OS, 25) Then he uses it as an example of a site to which entry is compulsory. (OS, 26) In describing these fundamental aspects of the prison, of course, Foucault does nothing to contradict his later history of penal institutions. Soja even goes as far as to suggest that in the latter we can identify "the workings of power, of what Foucault would later describe as 'disciplinary technologies' that operate through the social control of space, time and otherness to produce a certain kind of 'normalization.'"[54] But how do we reconcile Foucault's analysis of the disciplinary mechanisms of the penitentiary with his definition of the heterotopia as "a kind of effectively enacted utopia," and as a "simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live"? (OS, 24) And how can we incorporate Bentham's panopticon into a group of sites that includes the ship, "the greatest reserve of the imagination" (OS, 27), and the traditional Persian garden, the apparent inspiration for the mythical image of the magic carpet? A number of critics have suggested solutions to this problem by arguing that Foucault's heterotopian notion of the prison is not founded upon the same kind of diligent historical research that characterises *Discipline and Punish*, but rather in a number of fantastic literary sources. James Faubion, for instance, argues that

> For the Foucault of the greyest of his years as genealogist, studying
> in the Bibliothèque Nationale through the grey winters of Paris, for
> the Foucault who has discovered in the penitentiary not Genet's
> hothouse but the cold, instrumentalistic and paralytic principle of a
> carceral society, the heterotopia seems to have given way to the

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[53] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991), 23; 233
[54] Soja, *Thirdspace*, 161

cell, contest and reversal to feckless, mechanical resistance, and the imagination to its exhaustion in the repetition of the same.[55]

Peter Johnson, too, identifies a literary source lurking behind the inclusion of the prison in Foucault's lecture, citing Foucault's discussion, in *Madness and Civilization* (1964), of the places of confinement in Sade's fiction, "the Fortress, the Cell, the Cellar, the Convent, the inaccessible Island which thus form, as it were, the natural habitat of unreason."[56] Combined, these two arguments seem to suggest that the shift in Foucault's perception of the prison, from heterotopia to disciplinary machine, can be ascribed to the wider change in his methodology, from archaeology to genealogy. While the former, of which *Madness and Civilization* is an early example, concerns itself with the historical formation of discursive and imaginative possibilities, the latter, of which *Discipline and Punish* is the most famous instance, takes a much more material approach, exploring the relationships between discursive, political, and social institutions. It is perhaps not surprising then that this shift is concomitant with what Timothy O'Leary labels Foucault's "turn away from literature."[57]

Thus, although they deal with similar subject matter, there is a significant difference between Foucault's two studies of the spaces of confinement. While *Discipline and Punish* is grounded in largely historical accounts of disciplinary practices, *Madness and Civilization*, as we have seen, refers to literary representations of madness, and of the spaces devoted to confining the insane, and thus also explores the position occupied by madness in the collective imagination during the period studied. In addition to references to Don Quixote and King Lear, Foucault also describes the Renaissance motif of the 'Ship of Fools', "a literary composition … whose crew of imaginary heroes, ethical models, or social types embarked on a great symbolic voyage." "Scarcely a century after the career of the mad ships," he adds, "we note the appearance of the theme of the 'Hospital of Madmen,' the 'Madhouse.'" However, most interesting is Foucault's discussion of the fantastical spaces of confinement of the late eighteenth century, as cited by Johnson. "One might say," writes Foucault,

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[55] James D. Faubion, 'Heterotopia: An Ecology', in *Heterotopia and the City*, 37

[56] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage, 1988), 210. Peter Johnson, 'Unravelling Foucault's 'Different Spaces'', in *History of the Human Sciences* 19.4 (November 2006), 85

[57] Timothy O'Leary, *Foucault and Fiction: The Experience Book* (London: Continuum, 2009), 58

> that the fortresses of confinement added to their social role of segregation and purification a quite opposite cultural function. Even as they separated reason from unreason on society's surface, they preserved in depth the images where they mingled and exchanged properties.

Thus, in the literary representation of the eighteenth-century spaces of confinement, we witness a departure from any attempt at mimeticism, and from any attempt to document the real fate of the insane. Instead, these dark spaces on the edge of society come to constitute an "imaginary landscape" home to "the strange contradiction of human appetites: the complicity of desire and murder, of cruelty and the longing to suffer, of sovereignty and slavery, of insult and humiliation." "It is no accident," concludes Foucault, "that all the fantastic literature of madness and horror, which is contemporary with Sade's *oeuvre*, takes place, preferentially, in the strongholds of confinement."[58]

Foucault expands upon this idea in an essay on two near contemporaries of Sade, which appeared the year after *Madness and Civilization*. In this piece, titled 'So Cruel a Knowledge' (1962), he compares two eighteenth-century French novels, published about sixty years apart, *Les Egarements du coeur et d'esprit* by Claude-Prosper Crébillon and *Pauliska ou la Perversité* by J.-A. Révéroni de Saint-Cyr. In particular, he concerns himself with the two sets of items and places that these authors use to configure the contrasting worlds of their novels, or perhaps, rather, the sets of motifs that help to configure an understanding of the world at their respective historical moments. In Crébillon, Foucault points out, we find those objects in which reality and illusion are superimposed, items which conceal and reveal at the same time, such as the veil and the mirror, and which thus give rise to a world of masquerade. The veil, he says, is simultaneously transparent and opaque: it hides what it covers, but in doing so it discloses every contour of the body that lies underneath. "To play its role," he writes, "the veil must conform precisely to the surfaces, repeat the lines, course over the volumes without superfluous discourse, and highlight the forms with a glittering whiteness, stripping them of their shadow." Similarly, "the treacherous mirror", that "two-dimensional Cartesian devil," Foucault writes, "masks what it reveals." These spaces and items, Foucault writes, constitute

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[58] Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 7-8; 35; 209-10

techniques of illusion that construct an artful supernature out of little or nothing; images that rise from the depths of mirrors, invisible designs whose phosphorous flares up in the darkness, trompe l'oeil that gives rise to false, yet true, passions … Nature can accommodate every mechanism of desire if it is able to build those marvellous machines in which the borderless fabric of the true and the false is woven.

However, sixty years later, these objects, "whose material density decreases in proportion to the complexity of the meaning they convey," have been replaced, as demonstrated by Révéroni's novel, by "objects that are enveloping, imperious, unavoidable," such as the underground, the cage, and the machine. Here, we are more fully in Sade's territory. Although "error and truth are no longer in question," these spaces give rise to a whole new transgressive experience: "together with death, whose threat they bear, they mark the boundaries of the unhuman and the inhuman – the jaws of the cage close shut on a world of bestiality and predation."

Both sets, it seems, feed into Foucault's notion of the heterotopia. Collectively, Foucault describes them as items and spaces that manifest "a deep geometry." However, what seems more important than this, for our present discussion, is the way in which this essay approximates the set of literary spatial motifs, motifs which configure a certain experience, that I am arguing is constituted by Foucault's lectures on the heterotopia. The clearest indication of a connection between 'So Cruel a Knowledge' and these lectures is to be found in Foucault's assertion, early on in the essay, that "like the convent, the forbidden castle, the forest, the inaccessible island, the 'sect' has become, beginning in the second half of the eighteenth century, one of the great reserves of the Western fantastical imagination."[59] This phrasing directly anticipates the almost identical description of the ship at the end of both 'Of Other Spaces' and 'Les Hétérotopies.' What clearer indication could there be that Foucault intends his heterotopias to be considered the modern-day counterparts of these fantastical spaces and objects, these literary motifs that open up an imaginary or mythical space detached from their real existence?

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[59] Michel Foucault, 'So Cruel a Knowledge', in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. James Faubion (London: Penguin, 2000), 58; 60-61; 62-63; 65-66; 57; 54

The Library is on Fire

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Foucault argues, a new privileged site of the imagination had emerged, one which was to remain largely unchanged until at least a century later, when he described it as an example of a heterotopian space. In the same month that Foucault lectured to the Cercle d'études architecturales, the journal *Cahiers Renaud Barrault* published an afterword that he had written to Flaubert's *The Temptation of St. Anthony* under the title 'Un "Fantastique de bibliotheque"' (translated as 'Fantasia of the Library') (1967). As its title suggests, Flaubert's novel tells the story of Saint Anthony's temptation in the Egyptian desert, detailing his feverish hallucinations across a series of endlessly mutating landscapes, comprising a parade of historical, religious, and mythical figures and creatures, borrowed from numerous different texts and traditions. As such it exhibits an aesthetic similar to that constituted by the magic carpet, transporting Flaubert's protagonist and readers to a range of disparate scenes. However, rather than the garden, it is that other "greenish institution," the one "where books are accumulated and where the slow and incontrovertible vegetation of learning quietly proliferates," that Foucault identifies hovering behind the text. Anthony's delirium is not born out of a similar experience on his author's part, but rather out of ceaseless reading, research, and transcription:

> Possibly, Flaubert was responding to an experience of the fantastic which was singularly modern and relatively unknown before his time, to the discovery of a new imaginative space in the nineteenth century. This domain of phantasms is no longer the night, the sleep of reason, or the uncertain void that stands before desire, but, on the contrary, wakefulness, untiring attention, zealous erudition, and constant vigilance. Henceforth, the visionary experience arises from the black and white surface of printed signs, from the closed and dusty volume that opens with a flight of forgotten words; fantasies are carefully deployed in the hushed library, with its columns of books, with its titles aligned on shelves to form a tight enclosure, but within confines that also liberate impossible worlds.

In that concluding phrase "impossible worlds" it is tempting to identify an analogy between Flaubert's novel, which Foucault describes as an "overcrowded bestiary," and the unimaginable space of Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia. Indeed, of the sites

listed by Foucault as examples of his notion of the spatial heterotopia, the library occupies a privileged position in relation to his textual definition of the term, in the sense that the unusual juxtapositions that occur there do so solely in the realm of language. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault even discusses La Croix du Maine's vision of "a space that would be at once an Encyclopaedia and a Library," (OT, 42) a superimposition made possible by the fact that both essentially consist of the distribution of language in space. But one crucial disparity exists between the respective spaces of Borges's encyclopaedia and Flaubert's novel. While Foucault describes the *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge* as inherently unimaginable, in the *Temptation* the space of the library is mediated by Flaubert's imagination, by "wakefulness, untiring attention, zealous erudition, and constant vigilance." The space of Flaubert's novel, far from being unthinkable, is actually shaped by the author's consciousness. Nonetheless, in its assertion that such mythical spaces emerge from real places, this essay seems to point directly towards the heterotopia. "The imaginary is not formed in opposition to reality as its denial or compensation," concludes Foucault, "it grows among signs, from book to book, in the interstice of repetitions and commentaries; it is born and takes shape in the interval between books. It is a phenomenon of the library." It is not difficult to imagine how the real site of the library could be brought forward to the level of the text in order to create the kind of impossible simultaneity of the mythic and the real that would indeed constitute a textual heterotopia. As it is, the impossibility that Foucault describes here is an impossibility that is yet to find articulation at the surface level of the text by shedding the author's subjectivity or consciousness.

However, as a result of this novel, Foucault positions Flaubert at the head of a long tradition of intertextual writing. "In writing the *Temptation*," he argues, "Flaubert produced the first literary work whose exclusive domain is that of books." Subsequently, he continues, "Stéphane Mallarmé and his *Le Livre* become possible, then James Joyce, Raymond Roussel, Franz Kafka, Ezra Pound, Jorge Luis Borges. The library is on fire."[60] Joyce, I shall come to later. For now, I want to focus on the last name on the list, Foucault's heterotopian writer *par excellence*, Jorge Luis Borges. When Foucault parenthetically remarks, in the preface to *The Order of*

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[60] Michel Foucault, 'Afterword to the *Temptation of Saint Anthony*', in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. James Faubion (London: Penguin, 2000), 104-107

Things, that heterotopias "are to be found so often in Borges," (OT, xix) he could just as easily be referring to either of his seemingly contradictory definitions of the term. The illogical encyclopaedia and the impossible book are prominent motifs in his writing; but so too are the mirror, the library, the garden, and the prison. Indeed, many of Borges's stories seem to represent the most complete articulation of a unified theory of the heterotopia, by constituting a locus on which Foucault's two definitions can intersect. The contradictory encyclopaedic planet of Tlön, for example, owes its discovery to "the conjunction of a mirror and an encyclopaedia."[61] The Aleph, too, is described as mirror-like, and repeatedly associated with those reflective surfaces that Foucault says "offer everything to the gaze without allowing any hold on it."[62] Nataly Tcherepashenets identifies the title-space of 'The House of Asterion' as "a heterotopia of deviation," which is "simultaneously a home, a labyrinth, a prison, and an entire world."[63] And in 'The Garden of Forking Paths', the garden is used as a metaphor for a space in which an infinite number of endlessly proliferating realities are superimposed.

But perhaps the most effective demonstration of the possible reconciliation of the two definitions can be seen in 'The Library of Babel.' In this story, the heterotopian "idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive" (OS, 26), has been carried through to its nightmarish culmination. This space, which is at once a library and the universe, writes Borges,

> is composed of an indefinite, perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries … Each wall of each hexagon is furnished with five bookshelves; each bookshelf holds thirty-two books identical in format; each book contains four hundred ten pages; each page, forty lines; each line, approximately eighty black letters.

These bookshelves, he continues, "contain all possible combinations of the twenty-two orthographic symbols…that is, all that is able to be expressed, in every language." Thus the librarian-narrator tells of a group of infidels, who justifiably speak of "the feverish Library, whose random volumes constantly threaten to

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[61] Jorge Luis Borges, 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', in *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin, 1998), 68

[62] Foucault, 'So Cruel a Knowledge', 60

[63] Nataly Tcherepashenets, *Place and Displacement in the Narrative Worlds of Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 80

transmogrify into others, so that they affirm all things, deny all things, and confound and confuse all things, like some mad and hallucinating deity."[64] As Foucault summarises in his essay 'Language to Infinity' (1963), in this world "everything that can possibly be said has already been said: it contains all conceived and imagined languages, and even those which might be conceived or imagined; everything has been pronounced, even those things without meaning." In contrast to Flaubert's novel, in which the overdetermined catalogue of the library is mediated by the author's mind, and thus moulded into an imaginable, albeit phantasmagorical, world, here the contradictory nature of fragmentary languages is allowed to rise to the surface of the text. As Foucault argues, "standing above all these words is the rigorous and sovereign language that recovers them, tells their story, and is actually responsible for their birth," the language, that is, of Borges's narrative, a language which opens up an impossible space within itself by describing the infinite nature of the library. As Foucault writes, "the most lucid (and consequently the last) of the librarians reveals that even the infinity of language multiplies itself to infinity, repeating itself without end in the divided figures of the same."[65] Foucault is referring to the assertion of Borges's narrator at the end of the story that "*The Library is unlimited but periodic*. If an eternal traveller should journey in any direction, he would find after untold centuries that the same volumes are repeated in the same disorder – which, repeated, becomes order: the Order."[66]

Thus, Foucault posits this story as emblematic of modern writing. "The space of language today," he says, "is not defined by rhetoric, but by the Library – by the ranging to infinity of fragmentary languages." Here language does not assume the discursive form of rhetoric, but is rather "left to its own devices," liberated from the restraints of subjectivity, and free to divide and repeat itself to infinity. The library takes on a kind of autonomy, which allows it to create impossible spatial configurations. "Literature begins," he continues,

> when the book is no longer the space where speech adopts a form
>
> (forms of style, forms of rhetoric, forms of language) but the site
>
> where books are all recaptured and consumed: a site that is

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[64] Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Library of Babel', in *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin, 1998), 112-13; 115; 117

[65] Michel Foucault, 'Language to Infinity', in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. James Faubion (London: Penguin, 2000), 99-100

[66] Borges, 'The Library of Babel', 118

> nowhere, since it gathers all books of the past in this impossible
> "volume" whose murmuring will be shelved among so many others
> – after all the others, before all the others.[67]

By placing the word "volume" in inverted commas, Foucault highlights its double-meaning, its simultaneous signification of both a book and a three-dimensional space. He also draws attention to the interconnectedness of these two definitions, with the implication that the impossible infinite geometry of Borges's Library is constituted by the "fragmentary languages" contained therein. This "language left to its own devices," he seems to suggest, could do nothing other than create this "site that is nowhere."

Spaces of the Outside and Contestation

This relationship between placelessness and language freed from subjectivity is articulated more explicitly in 'The Thought of the Outside' (1966), an essay by Foucault on the work of Maurice Blanchot, which contains several similarities to his lecture to the Cercle d'études architecturales. One of the concessions that 'Of Other Spaces' does make to its literary origins is a brief reference to Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* (1958):

> Bachelard's monumental work and the descriptions of phenomenologists have taught us that we do not live in a homogenous and empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well. The space of our primary perception, the space of our dreams and that of our passions hold within themselves qualities that seem intrinsic. (OS, 23)

Bachelard argues that poetic images have the power to alter our phenomenological perception of space. "The literary houses described by Georges Spyridaki and René Cazelles," writes Bachelard, for instance, "are immense dwellings the walls of which are on vacation. There are moments when it is a salutary thing to go and live in them, as a treatment for claustrophobia."[68] "Yet these analyses," Foucault adds, "while fundamental for reflection in our time, primarily concern internal space. I should like

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[67] Foucault, 'Language to Infinity', 100-01
[68] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1994), 52

to speak now of external space. (OS, 23) Peter Johnson identifies a connection between this description of "external space" ("*l'espace du dehors*") and the "thought of the outside" ("*la pensée du dehors*") that Foucault describes in relation to Blanchot's fiction.[69] Indeed, a number of critics have remarked upon the similarities between the language that Foucault uses to define his notion of the heterotopia, and the language that he uses in his essay on Blanchot. Thacker, for example, points out that in this essay "Foucault twice uses the term 'placeless places' to describe Blanchot's use of language."[70] However, although they remain inherently linked, a closer inspection of this essay reveals a significant differentiation between these two uses of the same phrase. In its later occurrence, in the context in which Thacker quotes it, it refers specifically to Blanchot's language, which Foucault says "unfolds a placeless place that is the outside of all speech and writing."[71] But in its earlier appearance, it is used to describe the recurring settings of Blanchot's narratives, the "houses, hallways, doors, and rooms" which provide his fictions with their ethereal backdrops. Therefore, this essay, which was published between the appearance of *The Order of Things* and the broadcast of 'Les Hétérotopies', represents both a further suggestion that Foucault intended his latter delineation of the heterotopia to principally refer to fictional representations of space, and another potential connection between the two definitions of the term.

In this piece, Foucault posits Blanchot's writing as the epitome of what he calls "the thought of the outside", as manifested in a kind of "language from which the subject is excluded," a language which perpetually forgets what it has just said, and thus precludes for itself the status of discourse. Blanchot's writing constantly undermines and negates itself, but, as Foucault argues, Blanchot "does not use negation dialectically. To negate dialectically brings what one negates into the troubled interiority of the mind." Rather, his language stages "not a contradiction, but a contestation that effaces; not reconciliation, but droning on and on; not mind in laborious conquest of its unity, but the endless erosion of the outside."[72] The use of the word "contestation" both here and in Foucault's definition of the heterotopia as a "simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live" (OS, 24)

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[69] Johnson, 'Unravelling Foucault's 'Different Spaces'', 86
[70] Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity*, 44, n.51
[71] Michel Foucault, 'The Thought of the Outside', in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. James Faubion (London: Penguin, 2000), 165
[72] Foucault, 'The Thought of the Outside', 153; 149; 152

does not appear to be coincidental. In fact, this is a term that Foucault borrows from Blanchot, who describes the power of literature as essentially "the power of contestation: contestation of established authority, contestation of that which is (and the fact of being), contestation of language and the forms of literary language, lastly contestation of itself as power."[73] The concept, argues Foucault, is "one of the most problematical, difficult and obscure of notions, belonging to a tiny current of philosophy."[74] Yet, in an essay on Georges Bataille, titled 'A Preface to Transgression' (1963), he attempts to explain it, describing a philosophy of "nonpositive affirmation," which he argues is

> what Blanchot was defining through his principle of "contestation." Contestation does not imply a generalized negation, but an affirmation that affirms nothing, a radical break of transitivity. Rather than being a process of thought for denying existences or values, contestation is the act that carries them all to their limits and from there, to the Limit where an ontological decision achieves its end; to contest is to proceed until one reaches the empty core where being achieves its limit and where the limit defines being.[75]

This seemingly paradoxical notion of "nonpositive affirmation," synonymous with contestation, is thus defined in contrast to dialectical negation. While dialectical negation says what something is not, and thus "repatriates" nothingness "to the side of consciousness," Blanchot's contestation involves saying what something is to the point where it cannot possibly be so, a point where language breaks through to "the outside", effacing the possibility of what it claims to represent. Thus it is a concept that recurs in Blanchot's political writings, which are characterised by an overarching stance of refusal. Rather than simply an abstinence from political debate, contestation

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[73] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Great Reducers', in *Friendship*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, CA : Stanford University Press, 1997), 67

[74] Michel Foucault, 'Débat sur la poésie', in *Dits et écrits 1954-1988,* vol. I: 1954-1969, eds. Daniel Defert and François Ewald (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 396. Translation taken from Michael Holland, 'An Event Without Witness: Contestation Between Blanchot and Bataille', in *The Power of Contestation: Perspectives on Maurice Blanchot*, eds. Kevin Hart and Geoffrey H. Hartman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 27

[75] Michel Foucault 'A Preface to Transgression', in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. James Faubion (London: Penguin, 2000), 74-75

constitutes an affirmation of this refusal in a space exterior to dialectical relationships, a space that only finds articulation in language.

Therefore, in contrast to dialectical negation, which Foucault says "is tied to the fable of time," this process of contestation, or nonpositive affirmation, "bears a profound relation to space."[76] Dialectical thinking is inextricably bound to ideas about history, progression and resolution. "Only time itself," writes Blanchot, "permits the 'unity of contraries.'"[77] Contestation, in contrast, involves the simultaneous presence of incompatible descriptions of space, to the point where no logical resolution is possible, and they negate each other, completely effacing the possibility of the space that is ostensibly described. The language of the outside, Foucault says, in a way that echoes his description of Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia, forms "a network in which each point is distinct, distant from even its closest neighbours, and has a position in relation to every other point in a space that simultaneously holds and separates them all." Hence the description of the familiar settings of Blanchot's fictions:

> No doubt, this is the role that houses, hallways, doors, and rooms play in almost all of Blanchot's narratives: placeless places, beckoning thresholds, closed, forbidden spaces that are nevertheless exposed to the winds, hallways fanned by doors that open rooms for unbearable encounters and create gulfs between them, across which voices cannot carry, and that even muffle cries; corridors leading to more corridors where the night resounds, beyond sleep, with the smothered voices of those who speak, with the cough of the sick, with the death rattle of the dying, with the suspended breath of those who ceaselessly cease living; a long and narrow room, like a tunnel, in which approach and distance – the approach of forgetting, the distance of the wait – draw near to one another and unendingly move apart.[78]

This paradoxical quality of space is effectively demonstrated in Blanchot's second novel, *Aminadab* (1942), a Kafkaesque narrative which tells the story of Thomas, a

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[76] Foucault, 'The Thought of the Outside', 152-53

[77] Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, Trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 30

[78] Foucault, 'The Thought of the Outside', 149; 153

man who, prompted by a woman waving from the upper floor, enters a mysterious boarding-house, only to discover its labyrinthine, unimaginable, and inescapable nature. Throughout the novel there is talk of a comprehensive plan of the house, but the most that ever materialises is "a most miserable scrap on which a few lines have been drawn at random," suggesting that ultimately this is an unmappable space. "Who could ever encompass the entire house from within," Thomas is asked, "and contemplate it from its heights to its depths in a single glance? Neither you nor probably anyone else." But most incomprehensible is the frequent blurring of the concepts of near and far identified by Foucault above. When Thomas examines the roulette wheel that seems to represent the administrative procedures of the house, and which is set in a hole in the ground, Blanchot writes that the "apparatus was separated from the floor by a few yards, but it seemed that one's gaze had to cross a veritable abyss to reach it." Similarly, a couple of pages afterwards, the sound of knocking on a counter "seemed to come from very far away, although there were only a few rows between Thomas and the desk." Later, describing the rebels who descended to the basement of the house, one of the tenants tells Thomas that "[w]herever they are, even if it is right where you are, they are infinitely far away." Finally, Thomas interrogates Barbe, an employee of the house, about her description of the links between the different floors:

> To judge by what you have told me, between the floor we are on and the one above us, there is such a great distance that when one returns, one hardly remembers having been there and can no longer recall what there was to see. Consequently, any effort to imagine what goes on there is useless. Perhaps one's senses do not provide any help; perhaps thought itself remains idle there and can grasp nothing.

Despite the apparent physical adjacency of the floors they cannot be contained by one unified subjectivity. "You cannot deny that relations do exist between the various parts of the house," says Thomas. "You may as well deny your own existence."[79] Thus, it is in impossible spatial configurations that being is ultimately contested.

From here, it is not difficult to see how Foucault's heterotopian sites could be similarly employed as spaces of contestation. Instead of the simultaneity of the near

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[79] Maurice Blanchot, *Aminadab*, trans. Jeff Fort (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 71; 142; 51; 53; 93; 146

and the far, or the open and closed, it is in their simultaneous possession of contradictory, or rather contestatory, real and mythical dimensions that they resist the possibility of discourse, and constitute a language from which the subject is excluded. The subsequent chapters of this thesis will examine the political, philosophical, and aesthetic implications of such textual spaces.

Heterotopias and Exile

For Edward Said, "it is apparent that, to concentrate on exile as a contemporary political punishment, you must therefore map territories of experience beyond those mapped by the literature of exile itself. You must first set aside Joyce and Nabokov," he says, "and think instead of the uncountable masses for whom UN agencies have been created."[80] It should be evident that this thesis is doing something different. It has little to contribute to the field of refugee studies or the study of the political status of the exile. Instead, it considers exile as a positive movement towards exteriority, made for personal, political and aesthetic reasons, in the works of Said's two exiled writers *par excellence*, and Sebald, who has rapidly earned his place alongside them in the pantheon of expatriate literature. It should be remembered, after all, that Joyce and Sebald were exiles by choice, and that, following his initial displacement, Nabokov refused to settle in any one place. One might argue that his sustained extraterritoriality was itself perpetuated by his initial exile. As he said, "nothing short of a replica of my childhood surroundings would have satisfied me. I would never manage to match my memories correctly – so why trouble with hopeless approximations?" "I propelled myself out of Russia so vigorously," he concluded, "with such indignant force, that I have been rolling on and on ever since."[81] In any case, to suggest that Nabokov's experience was in any way typical of the majority of refugees would be erroneous: within two years of leaving St Petersburg he had taken up a place at Cambridge.

Nevertheless, 'Reflections on Exile', the essay in which Said makes these comments does contain some ideas that seem pertinent to the concerns of this thesis. "While it perhaps seems peculiar to speak of the pleasures of exile," he writes, "there are some positive things to be said for a few of its conditions." Although he

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[80] Edward Said, 'Reflections on Exile', in *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta, 2000), 175
[81] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, 27

acknowledges the inherent sense of loss and displacement that accompanies exile, Said suggests that it also affords the individual a somewhat privileged position of detachment from which to challenge the familiar patterns of thought constituted by our native lands and languages. "Borders and barriers," he says, "which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience." Borges's *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge* seems to enact precisely this transgression of national conceptual boundaries. As Foucault is well aware, it is not for nothing that Borges attributes this fictional taxonomy to a Chinese encyclopaedia. "In the wonderment of this taxonomy," he writes, "the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*." (OT, xvi) In our collective imagination, Foucault adds, "the Chinese culture is the most meticulous, the most rigidly ordered, the one most deaf to temporal events, most attached to the pure delineation of space." And yet, when it comes to speculating about Chinese systems of language and knowledge, Borges leads us "to a kind of thought without space, to words and categories that lack all life and place." "There would appear to be, then, at the other extremity of the earth we inhabit," concludes Foucault, "a culture entirely devoted to the ordering of space, but one that does not distribute the multiplicity of existing things into any of the categories that make it possible for us to name, speak, and think." (OT, xx-xxi) Therefore, although perhaps the product of a constructed Oriental otherness, it is interesting that this alternative mode of thought is couched in terms of nationality and ultimately ascribed to cultural difference.

Like Foucault before him, Said goes on to make this transgression of conceptual boundaries explicitly spatial. "Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home," he says; "exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions."[82] This description of a plurality or simultaneity of places or settings seems correlative with Foucault's definition of the heterotopia, in both 'Les Hétérotopies' and 'Of Other Spaces' as "a simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live." It is perhaps not surprising, then, that Blanchot associates exile with his notions

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[82] Said, 'Reflections on Exile', 185-86

of the outside and contestation, significant precursors to the simultaneous dimensions of Foucault's heterotopia. "The words *exodus*, *exile*," he writes in *The Infinite Conversation* (1969), "bear a meaning that is not negative." Rather, he continues, they "indicate a positive relation with exteriority, whose exigency invites us not to be content with what is proper to us (that is, with our power to assimilate everything, to identify everything, to bring everything back to our I)."[83] Like Said, Blanchot suggests that exile creates the conditions that make it possible to transgress the limits of our thought and subjectivity. As spaces that do likewise by opening up unthinkable textual spaces, one might consider heterotopias a constellation and figuration of the experience of exile. In their juxtaposition of contradictory spaces in the one place, they provide an outlet for the pluralities and simultaneities of exile, and constitute a space from which émigré writers can both reflect on their own condition and exercise their exteriority as a form of contestation.

The chapters that follow demonstrate how these three writers, Joyce, Nabokov, and Sebald, employ heterotopian spaces in relation to three different political, historical and personal issues. The next chapter addresses the state of the Irish nation in *Ulysses*, considering the political implications of Joyce's representation of space. Taking as my starting point Bloom's definition of the term "nation" in 'Cyclops' as "the same people living in the same place…Or also living in different places," I argue that Joyce uses Foucault's heterotopian sites, of which the mirror, the bath house, the cemetery, the library, the museum, the brothel, and the maternity hospital all feature in *Ulysses*, to create an analogous spatial contradiction, projecting the exteriority of his own exile back onto the landscape of his estranged homeland. The heterotopia, I suggest, is a useful tool for understanding Joyce's novel. As a kind of real place that is at once outside of all space, it allows us to reconcile the consensus that *Ulysses* contains an accurate portrayal of 1904 Dublin with the notion that it is often nothing more than a play of language, liberated from subjectivity or meaning. Drawing on Joyce's description of *Ulysses* as "a kind of encyclopaedia,"[84] I examine the national implications of such a form, and argue that we can draw parallels between the novel and Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia, before arguing that this placeless language is itself paradoxically constituted by the

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[83] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 127
[84] Joyce, *Selected Letters*, 271

representation of real places. By eradicating the common locus of place, I suggest, Joyce interrogates the notion of a unified Irish culture or identity that underpinned contemporaneous nationalist thought.

In relation to Nabokov, I examine the ways in which the heterotopia can be used to configure the experience of exile itself, demonstrating how the mirror world in which much of his fiction is ostensibly set is at once both a manifestation of his exile status and frequently associated with Foucault's other spaces. Focusing on *Ada*, Nabokov's longest, and perhaps most unappreciated work, I discuss the make-up of the novel's seemingly impossible cosmology, somewhat analogous to the unthinkable textual worlds of Borges's fiction, before carrying out a survey of its many heterotopian sites, the mirror, the garden, the library, the brothel, and the ship, demonstrating how the alternate world of Antiterra grows out of them. Here, I take as my starting-point the image of the magic carpet, which appears in *Ada* both at the level of the plot and as a self-reflexive metaphor for Nabokov's style, and also in his autobiography *Speak, Memory*, where it is used to describe the way in which he transcends the temporal and spatial boundaries of exile through writing. Just as Foucault suggests that the magic carpet of *The Thousand and One Nights* can be traced back to the Persian garden, I argue that the heterotopian places that feature in *Ada*, the mirror, the garden, the library, the brothel and the ship, give rise to the mythical planet of Antiterra. As in *Ulysses*, heterotopias blur the distinction between the real and the unreal, or the mythical; however, while Joyce presents us with a mimetic portrayal of Dublin, which frequently gives way to an unreal mirror world, with Nabokov we are already through the looking-glass, occasionally catching glimpses back through to our own reality. Therefore, rather than constituting a contestation of "the space in which we live," in *Ada* heterotopias serve to contest the familiar unreality of Nabokov's novels, by which he seeks to transcend the negative effects of exile.

Sebald's fiction, in contrast, interrogates the notion of the heterotopia, questioning its value as a site of exteriority and contestation. In his final two works of prose fiction, *The Rings of Saturn* and *Austerlitz*, I argue, he makes an explicit engagement with Foucault's concept, ultimately rejecting it as a useful representational model, particularly in relation to the Holocaust. As unimaginable textual spaces, irreducible to the limits of a single subjectivity, heterotopias appear to be privileged spaces from which to approach the unthinkable atrocities of the Jewish

genocide, and thus analogous to Sebald's exile, by which he seeks to attain a perspective from which to speak about his homeland's recent history. However, as Sebald demonstrates, the Holocaust is an event that did occur in real space, and thus represents a different kind of the unimaginable, one contained within the very essence of things.

Finally, I attempt to re-historicise the heterotopia, placing Joyce and Nabokov in their respective modernist and postmodernist contexts, before assessing the status of the heterotopia today through Sebald's rejection of the concept.

Same People, Different Places: The Space of the Nation in *Ulysses*

When John Wyse Nolan asks Leopold Bloom whether he knows the meaning of the word "nation" in the 'Cyclops' chapter of *Ulysses*, the response he receives is somewhat contradictory. "A nation is the same people living in the same place," says Bloom. "Or also living in different places." (U, 317) With this self-negating pronouncement, he inadvertently draws attention to the artificial nature of the concepts of nation and nationhood, and in particular the perceived relationship between a country and its territory. Once this equation has been simplified, and the terms "the same place" and "different places" have cancelled each other out, all that remains is the definition of the nation as "the same people," a phrase which seems inadequate to describe the population of 1904 Dublin, as represented by Joyce. Bloom's reasoning is not difficult to follow. As a Jew, he is himself a member of a diasporic race, while shortly before this exchange the Fenian Citizen has invoked the support of "our greater Ireland beyond the sea" for the nationalist cause (U, 316). However, in its explicit juxtaposition of contradictory meanings the absurdity of such a non-referential description is laid bare. After all, how do we define nationhood without at least referencing geographical boundaries and territories? In this chapter I want to argue that Joyce projects the exteriority of his own exile, in the three "different places" that we find listed under the final word of Molly Bloom's monologue – Trieste, Zurich, and Paris – back onto the landscape of his native city through the representation of a number of the heterotopian sites that Foucault describes as "absolutely different" (OS, 24). By opening up contradictory textual spaces, these sites allow Joyce to perform a similar negation of space to that found in Bloom's definition, eradicating the common locus of space upon which nationhood is superficially founded and thus interrogating the notion of a unified Irish community or identity. In so doing, however, he also gestures towards a new, more inclusive notion of the nation, one not based on geographical borders or territories.

To understand what I mean by Joyce's contradictory textual spaces, one need only examine the passages that surround this exchange concerning the definition of the word 'nation'. Immediately prior to it, the conversation in Barney Kiernan's pub touches upon the subject of Edward VII, and in particular his visit to the Catholic University of Ireland the previous year. "And what do you think," says Joe Hynes, "of the holy boys, the priests and bishops of Ireland doing up his room in Maynooth

in his Satanic Majesty's racing colours and sticking up pictures of all the horses his jockeys rode." "They ought to have stuck up all the women he rode himself," suggests Alf Bergan, in reference to the monarch's notorious promiscuity. "Considerations of space influenced their lordships' decision," replies J.J. O'Molloy (U, 317). Despite the obviously humorous intent of this final remark, it serves as a useful reminder of the ostensibly well-defined space of the world of Joyce's novel. The author famously took similar such considerations while composing *Ulysses*. Frank Budgen describes the author composing 'Wandering Rocks' "with a map of Dublin before him on which were traced in red ink the paths of the Earl of Dudley and Father Conmee," and relates Joyce's desire "to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book."[1] However, in this same chapter in which he has one of his characters invoke the limitations of real space, Joyce also performs one of his most explicit violations of them. The gigantic catalogues of Irish produce, heroes, and landmarks that intermittently interrupt the first-person narrative frequently seem to exceed the dimensions of their naturalistic setting, not only in terms of scale, but also in the way that the entities listed therein frequently blur ontological boundaries, making it difficult to imagine any space on which they could meet. Shortly after Bloom's contradictory definition, Joe Hynes produces his handkerchief, which suddenly and inexplicably expands into the "muchtreasured and intricately embroidered ancient Irish facecloth," said to depict many of the nation's famous beauty spots. Thereon, writes Joyce, are portrayed "our ancient duns and raths and cromlechs and grianauns and seats of learning and maledictive stones."[2] Yet many of the thirty-four sites listed in the ensuing catalogue cannot be fitted into any of these categories. They include "the brewery of Messrs Arthur Guinness, Son and Company (Limited)," a Dublin pub called "the Scotch house," "Rathdown Union Workhouse at Loughlinstown," "Tullamore jail," "the three birthplaces of the first Duke of Wellington," "Fingal's Cave," which is in Scotland, not Ireland, and "Kilballymacshonakill," (U, 318) which Gifford and Seidman inform us is not a

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[1] Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of 'Ulysses'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 124-25; 69

[2] Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman translate and explain these terms as follows: dun – fort; rath – ring-fort; grianaun – sunroom of a medieval castle; seats of learning – monasteries; maledictive stones – a heap of stones piled (and added to) as the monument to a disaster. Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 361. A cromlech is a prehistoric megalithic structure.

place, but a name.[3] The sheer quantity of places supposedly represented upon a single handkerchief stretches our imaginative capacity to breaking-point, but this contradiction of taxonomical logic emphatically precludes the possibility of one unified reality behind the image. By overflowing the categorical boundaries demarcated in advance, Joyce's catalogue breaks out of its apparent common locus, taking shape only in the non-place of language.

These few pages thus illustrate a persisting paradox in Joyce's novel, one correlative to the perceived contradiction in Foucault's writings on the heterotopia between real places and impossible spaces. Although the streets of *Ulysses* have been well-trodden by scholarly attention, there remains a significant unresolved tension in the critical consensus surrounding the representation of space in the novel. On the one hand, influenced by the anecdotal evidence, a tradition has grown up that reveres the precise geography of Joyce's Dublin. A number of topographical studies have helped to sustain the impression that the journeys undertaken by Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom can be retraced in their entirety, as indeed is attempted by hundreds of tourists every year. In their guide to the Dublin of *Ulysses*, for example, Ian Gunn and Clive Hart propose, as one of their principal objectives, to "allow the reader, if he wishes, to follow more closely, either in Dublin itself or on the maps, the imaginary course of the Dubliners."[4] On the other hand, however, we have become accustomed to thinking about Joyce as an important precursor to post-structuralist theory, and the assertions of a number of critics that the textual space of his novel provides us with no access to any possible, imaginable, or material reality. As Daniel Ferrer summarises:

> *Ulysses* is a world meticulously anchored to the geographical
> reality of Dublin and to the chronological reality of 16 June 1904,
> while at the same time offering itself to the reader as a perpetual
> referral to a host of other texts, so that it is impossible to tell where
> this dazzling flight of the referent may end.[5]

This chapter employs the unified notion of Foucault's heterotopia outlined in the introductory chapter of this thesis to explain this apparent contradiction. As places

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[3] Gifford and Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated*, 363

[4] Ian Gunn and Clive Hart, *James Joyce's Dublin: A Topographical Guide to the Dublin of Ulysses* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 26

[5] Daniel Ferrer, 'Circe, Regret and Regression', in *Post-Structuralist Joyce: Essays from the French*, eds. Derek Atrridge and Daniel Ferrer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 142

that are outside of all other space, and which have the potential to open up alternative and unimaginable configurations of space within fiction, these sites help us to understand how Joyce can simultaneously be faithful to the map of Dublin found in *Thom's Dublin Directory*, and employ the kind of experimental language that precludes the possibility of any coherent subjectivity or reality. Of the sites represented in *Ulysses*, the mirror, the cemetery, the bath house, the library, the museum, the brothel, and the maternity hospital can all be found in Foucault's lectures, while others, such as Barney Kiernan's pub and the Blooms' home at 7 Eccles Street, exhibit certain of the characteristics by which he defines heterotopias therein. Indeed, given that Foucault posits the colony as an example of a heterotopian space, perhaps there is even a case to be made for suggesting that the entire colonial city of Dublin can be considered one of his "other spaces."

Joyce's representation of space certainly seems to tell us something interesting, albeit slightly ambiguous, about his politics. In addition to highlighting the inherently paradoxical nature of his representations of place, the contradictory spaces of 'Cyclops' seem to also reflect his opinions of the colonial and nationalist projects, and of their respective imaginations. While the actions of the Irish bishops at Maynooth, which many considered an expression of the church's willing submissiveness to the crown, are restricted by spatial limitations, thus confining the King's dominion to real space, Joyce presents a notion of Irish nationalism that surpasses the borders of the contested territory, while simultaneously parodying its impractical and impossible ideals. It is surprising then, that much political criticism of *Ulysses* treats space as a stable and well-defined quantity. In his influential essay 'Modernism and Imperialism', Fredric Jameson argues that the historical phenomenon of nineteenth-century imperialism contributed to the formal experimentation of "first-world" modernist fiction:

> colonialism means that a significant structural segment of the economic system as a whole is now located elsewhere, beyond the metropolis, outside of the daily life and existential experience of the home country, in colonies over the water whose own life experience and life world – very different from that of the imperial

power – remain unknown and unimaginable for the subjects of the

imperial power, whatever social class they may belong to.[6]

This unknowable quantity, suggests Jameson, manifests itself in abstract representations of space within the imperial metropolis, as in E.M. Forster's description, in *Howards End*, of "the Great North Road…suggestive of infinity."[7] "It is Empire which stretches the roads out to infinity," he argues, "beyond the bounds and borders of the national state." In representing the colonial city of Dublin, in contrast, Jameson argues that Joyce has no need for such abstraction. In *Ulysses*, he says, "space does not have to be made symbolic in order to achieve closure and meaning: its closure is objective, endowed by the colonial situation itself."[8] Vincent Cheng has similarly argued that the apparent objectivity of Joyce's novel lays bare the heterogeneity of the colonial city. *Ulysses*, he writes,

> – in its cultural specificity and detailed historicity, set as it is in the
> concrete and material specificities of turn-of-the-century Dublin –
> enacts symptomatically and voices all the diverse discourses and
> ideological positions of 1904 Dublin; in its precision of concrete
> detail and specific representation (each person, each street, each
> building drawn in such particularized detail, distinct and different,
> so as to avoid the "narrative of national cohesions" signified by
> "the many as one"), it attempts to avoid the homogenizing of
> difference.[9]

In this reading, Joyce's well-defined topography serves as a blank screen against which the divides in Dublin society are highlighted. Even Enda Duffy, who has previously applied Foucault's notion of the heterotopia to *Ulysses*, suggesting that these sites contribute to the "derealization" of Dublin in the novel, thus compelling the reader to think their way out of "the territorial imperative that nationalism demands," can only conceive of such a project in terms of the vast swathes of space that Joyce leaves unrepresented therein. *Ulysses*, he argues, "strives for a condition…where any sense of place is erased altogether," and thus "contrasts a busy

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[6] Fredric Jameson, 'Modernism and Imperialism', in Fredric Jameson, Edward W. Said, and Terry Eagleton, *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 1990), 50-51

[7] E.M. Forster, *Howards End* (London: Penguin, 2000), 29

[8] Jameson, 'Modernism and Imperialism', 57; 61

[9] Vincent Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 247

mimeticism about specific details on the one hand with a relentless strategy of omitting most of Dublin from the novel on the other," leaving vast negative spaces as "imaginatively blank cityscapes that might therefore be filled with some other more hopeful version of governance, of community, and of the features that would memorialize it."[10] It is a persuasive argument, but one which refuses to see the sections of Dublin that Joyce does represent as anything but cohesive.

Those who do veer from this sacred objectivity tend to emphasise the importance of internal space in Joyce's writing, as constituted by his use of interior monologue and free indirect discourse. In her introduction to the recent volume *Making Space in the Works of James Joyce*, Valérie Bénéjam cites the address that Stephen writes in his geography textbook in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as evidence of the importance of perception to any understanding of space:

> Stephen Dedalus
> Class of Elements
> Clongowes Wood College
> Sallins
> County Kildare
> Ireland
> Europe
> The World
> The Universe[11]

"Written on the flyleaf of the textbook," she argues, "it inscribes subjectivity within – and even as the organizing principle of – the factual, objective, or political realities of official geography." "In this first instance of the young artist's positioning can already be detected the treatment of spatiality that will unfold throughout Joyce's work," she says: "the prominence of individual perception and intrapsychic subjectivity, and their contrastive interplay with objective conceptions of space."[12] Indeed, it is through such notions of subjectivity that Jameson explains away traces of infinite space in *Ulysses*. "The spatial poetry that has been detected in Forster has, for one thing, no equivalent in *Ulysses*," he says. "'Am I walking into eternity along

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[10] Duffy, 'Disappearing Dublin', 37; 53-54; 46; 54

[11] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Penguin, 1996), 17

[12] Valérie Bénéjam, 'Introduction: Making Space', in *Making Space in the Works of James Joyce*, eds. Valérie Bénéjam and John Bishop (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 1-2

Sandymount strand?' is thrust back into Stephen's consciousness, and marked as subjective."[13] This chapter contends that not all such instances of spatial abstraction in Joyce's novel can be so easily accounted for, and that *Ulysses* contains what Foucault would call external, as well as internal, configurations of space.

Indeed, of particular interest here is the status of textual space in the novel. By this I do not mean the arrangement of words and letters upon the page, but rather what Foucault, following Blanchot, calls "the space of the outside," that linguistic space that opens up at the point where the categories of real, perceived, and imagined space are left behind. As Foucault writes in his essay on Blanchot, "the being of language only appears for itself with the disappearance of the subject,"[14] a disappearance much heralded in Joyce criticism. In their introduction to *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, for example, Derek Attridge and Daniel Ferrer explain how the essays in the collection aim

> not to explore the psychological depths of the author or characters, but to record the perpetual flight of the Subject and its ultimate disappearance; not to reconstruct the world represented by the text, but to follow up within it the strategies that attempt a deconstruction of representation.[15]

Once language is free from subjectivity, left to its own devices, it is not long until it starts to create those "impossible volumes" that Foucault discussed in relation to Borges. Thus, several essays in Attridge and Ferrer's collection describe the unimaginable worlds configured by Joyce's language. André Topia, for example, argues that 'Cyclops' "dissolves all possibility of a unified real underlying the fiction,"[16] while Daniel Ferrer suggests that 'Circe' "shatters the stage, destroys the foundations of representation, leaving us face to face with a system of words and intensities."[17] Similarly, Colin MacCabe, in his *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*, argues that, in 'Sirens', Joyce "destroys the possibility of the text representing some exterior reality, and equally, it refuses the text any origin in such a

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[13] Jameson, 'Modernism and Imperialism', 61
[14] Foucault, 'The Thought of the Outside', 149
[15] Derek Attridge and Daniel Ferrer, 'Introduction: Highly Continental Evenements', in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, 10
[16] André Topia, 'The Matrix and the Echo: Intertextuality in *Ulysses*', in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, 124
[17] Ferrer, 'Circe, Regret and Regression', 142

reality."[18] By applying Foucault's notion of the heterotopia to *Ulysses*, I want to demonstrate that this form of placeless language can in fact be grounded in Joyce's representations of those inherently contradictory, "simultaneously mythic and real," places. In doing so, I aim not to discredit any of these approaches to the novel's space, but rather to reconcile them, demonstrating how Joyce's contradictory spaces allow for such varying interpretations.

To this end, this chapter takes a somewhat circumlocutory approach to Joyce's novel. The first part takes Joyce's description of his novel as "a kind of encyclopaedia" as the starting point for an assessment of the similarities between *Ulysses* and Borges's *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*. It also considers the inherent connection between the encyclopaedic style and the nation, examining the implications that this form of language without geometry carries for the status of Joyce's novel as a kind of national epic. Consequently, it focuses on two episodes from the latter half of the novel in which Joyce most explicitly flaunts, and flouts, his encyclopaedic aesthetic, and in which he most flagrantly opens up impossible configurations of space: 'Ithaca' and 'Cyclops'. Following this, I return to the very first sentence of the novel and trace the emergence of this language of the outside through Joyce's representation of Foucault's heterotopias in the earlier episodes. I argue that although Joyce's linguistic experimentation does not find full articulation until the late afternoon, it can be detected in his characters' interactions with these spaces and places, the mirror, the cemetery, the library, and so on, during the earlier hours of Bloomsday. Finally, I turn my attention to 'Circe' and to nighttown, the most profoundly "other" space in *Ulysses*, in which, I argue, we see the closest concurrence of Foucault's seemingly contradictory definitions of the term heterotopia in the novel, and consequently, Joyce's most compelling examination of a collective Irish unconscious.

"A Kind of Encyclopaedia"

In an essay written in 1976, Edward Mendelson lists *Ulysses* as an example of a genre that he coins encyclopaedic narrative. Texts including Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, Dante's *Commedia*, and Joyce's *Ulysses*, he argues, "occupy a special and definable place in their national cultures," and "attempt to render the full range of

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[18] Colin MacCabe, *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 8

knowledge and beliefs of a national culture, while identifying the ideological perspectives from which that culture shapes and interprets its knowledge."[19] Joyce's own description of *Ulysses* as "a kind of encyclopaedia" is left frustratingly unelaborated, but the national significance of this label certainly seems to be implied. Appearing in the same letter to Carlo Linati in which he describes his novel as "the epic of two races (Israel-Ireland),"[20] we can infer that his insistence on its encyclopaedic form is connected to Stephen Dedalus's desire "to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race," especially when we consider that Mendelson sees his encyclopaedic narrative as derivative of the epic form.[21] Moreover, the only encyclopaedia to appear in the pages of Joyce's novel alludes to the national connotations of such compendia. While fantasising about his dream home in 'Ithaca', Bloom imagines a "fumed oak sectional bookcase containing the Encyclopaedia Brittanica and New Century Dictionary" (U, 665). In this, the most unashamedly encyclopaedic chapter of his novel, the former volume serves as a reminder of the imperially sanctioned nature of the official knowledge which he is attempting to usurp with his own encyclopaedia of the Irish nation.

Mendelson is certainly not alone in commenting upon the encyclopaedic quality of *Ulysses*. In her introduction to the novel, Jeri Johnson details the multitudinous ways in which we can conceive of Joyce's novel as such. "The encyclopaedic aspect of *Ulysses*," she says, "has already been noted in its collecting and preserving like a fly in amber the stuff and junk, the commodities consumed by ordinary Dubliners in 1904." But, she argues, each episode also exhibits its own idiosyncratic encyclopaedic qualities. 'Lotus Eaters' she says, is "a virtual gardener's catalogue of flower names," while 'Cyclops' "flaunts its ability to itemize (parodically, irreverently, erroneously): trees; Irish heroes; Irish livestock and produce; Irish crafts; Irish harbours; Irish mountains," and so on.[22] Furthermore, resonating with Mendelson's suggestion that "encyclopedias are polyglot books that provide a history of language,"[23] Johnson explains that 'Aeolus' is "an encyclopaedia of rhetorical devices," 'Oxen of the Sun', is a kind of "handbook of

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[19] Edward Mendelson, 'Encyclopedic Narrative: From Dante to Pynchon', *MLN* 91 (December 1976), 1267; 1269

[20] Joyce, *Selected Letters*, 271

[21] Joyce, *Portrait*, 288

[22] Jeri Johnson, 'Introduction', in James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998),xxxii

[23] Mendelson, 'Encyclopedic Narrative', 1273

the history of English style," and 'Ithaca' "delights in an ostensibly precise, nominative language worthy of the most abstruse encyclopaedic entries."[24] Given the presence of these competing, overlapping, and bizarre ordering systems, one cannot help but think that rather than striving for totality, Joyce's encyclopaedic narrative demonstrates the impossibility of representing an entire nation. Instead of belonging with *Don Quixote* and *Faust*, perhaps *Ulysses* sits more easily alongside those texts Mendelson describes as "mock-encyclopaedias," such as Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, which, "like the 'Tristra-Paedia' it contains, collapses under the weight of data too numerous and disparate for its organizing structures to bear."[25] If *Ulysses* is "a kind of encyclopaedia," as Joyce insists that it is, then surely it is the kind in which, as Foucault writes of Borges's *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*, "fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry, of the *heteroclite*." (OT, xix)

Andrew Thacker, as we have seen, identifies in Borges's encyclopaedia "a form of avant-garde writing found throughout modernism," which he says "can easily be applied to the modernist style of Joyce in *Ulysses*."[26] However, pinpointing the exact correspondences between the two texts proves more difficult than Thacker anticipates, as is evidenced by those who have attempted to argue that Joyce's novel opens up a similar impossible space to Borges's *Celestial Emporium*. It is tempting to identify an analogy between Borges's juxtaposition of different orders and Joyce's collation of different styles. Brian McHale essentially does as much when he suggests that in its latter half *Ulysses* dissolves "into a plurality of incommensurable worlds." In contrast to the "parallax of subjectivities" that we see in the first half of the novel, epitomised by the simultaneous perception of the same cloud by Stephen and Bloom from their respective locations, and which, McHale argues, "helps to confer stability and solidity on the world outside of consciousness," in the later chapters Joyce employs a "parallax of discourses," or a "parallax of worlds." "In effect," concludes McHale, "to juxtapose two or more free-standing discourses is to juxtapose different worlds, different reality templates."[27] But the use of the word parallax here seems self-defeating, implying in its very definition the existence of a

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[24] Johnson, 'Introduction', xxxii

[25] Mendelson, 'Encyclopedic Narrative', 1268

[26] Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity*, 28

[27] Brian McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 1992), 51; 54

reality to be perceived from different positions. Hugh Kenner too describes "a parallax of styles," but for him this notion does not equate to a plurality of worlds. "Parallax modifies such events not at all," he says, it "modifies only the way different people perceive them."[28] It could just as easily be argued, then, that rather than undermining its unity, the proliferation of styles in Joyce's novel bestows solidity on the world of the novel, just as Stephen's and Bloom's respective sightings of the cloud reassure us of its existence, independently of their individual consciousnesses.

This is not to argue that *Ulysses* does not essentially comprise a "plurality of incommensurable worlds," but rather to suggest that we are looking in the wrong place for the evidence that this is the case. To further illustrate his notion of incommensurability, McHale argues that "characters who are 'at home' in one world need not be so in the world next door." The naturalistic characters who frequent Barney Kiernan's pub in 'Cyclops,' he says, "could not easily be transferred to the flagrantly unnaturalistic, cartoonish worlds of the adjacent parodies – the grandiose public execution, the high-society wedding attended by trees, and so on." Joe Hynes, Alf Bergan, and Bob Doran "could only with considerable strain and incongruity be made to coexist" with characters named Monsieur Pierrepaul Petitépatant and Miss Fir Conifer of Pine Valley.[29] But again McHale's wording betrays the flaws in his argument. It is not that these characters could never meet, but that they "could not easily" meet, and only then with "considerable strain and incongruity." Just as he does in his appropriation of the heterotopia, McHale mistakes the incongruous for the incommensurable; these juxtapositions that he has difficulty imagining are analogous to Lautréamont's meeting of the sewing-machine and umbrella on a dissecting table, or as Bloom thinks to himself in 'Ithaca', "the incongruity of an apple incuneated in a tumbler and of an umbrella inclined in a closestool" (U, 662). "We are all familiar," writes Foucault, "with the disconcerting effect of the proximity of extremes, or quite simply, with the sudden vicinity of things that have no relation to each other." (OT, xvi) Incommensurability exists, rather, in the eradication of the site on which such meetings take place. Instead of the juxtaposition of different ordering systems, it is their existence "without law or geometry" that gives Borges's encyclopaedia its heterotopian quality. Therefore, any

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[28] Hugh Kenner, *Ulysses* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), 106; 151
[29] McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism*, 54

argument that contends that *Ulysses* comprises a multitude of incompatible worlds needs to take into account the way that the novel similarly describes impossible and incomprehensible configurations of space. And rather than in the interstices between chapters, it is within the novel's individual episodes that these spatial impossibilities can be found.

'Ithaca'

The inherent connection between geometry and taxonomy that Borges's *Celestial Emporium* makes apparent, the contingency of order upon a stable and well-defined space, is also attested to by 'Ithaca'. Already described as the novel's most encyclopaedic chapter, 'Ithaca' constitutes a privileged site for a subversion of the relationship between language and reality. While the mistakes and contradictions in many of Joyce's other chapters can be attributed to his use of free indirect discourse, and thus to the erroneous thought processes of his characters, or to the disparity between the authorial voice and the interior monologue, here they are contained largely within the ostensibly objective and precise scientific meta-language of the distant third-person narrator. Consequently, they seem to create a picture of a contradictory and ultimately impossible world. In the very first question-and-response pairing, for example, Joyce presents his readers with mutually exclusive configurations of space, thus precluding the existence of a coherent world underpinning the text, establishing this chapter, from the outset, in the neutral space of the void:

> What parallel courses did Bloom and Stephen follow returning?
>
> Starting united both at normal walking pace from Beresford Place they followed in the order named Lower and Middle Gardiner streets and Mountjoy square, west…Approaching, disparate, at relaxed walking pace they crossed both the circus before George's church diametrically, the chord in any circle being less than the arc which it subtends. (U, 619)

While the question insists that Stephen and Bloom take parallel courses, the response suggests otherwise. Although they start united, by the time they approach Eccles Street they are disparate. As Joan Parisi Wilcox has pointed out, the reference here is to Euclid's parallel postulate and the assertion that "given any straight line, and a

point not on it, there exists one, and only one, straight line which passes through that point and never intersects the first line, no matter how far they are extended." As she explains, this axiom, which essentially states that parallel lines never meet, holds an uneasy position in Euclid's elements, as it cannot be logically deduced from the other axioms of his geometry, and thus provided a starting-point for the non-Euclidean geometers of the nineteenth century. "The tension Joyce creates," writes Wilcox, "by abutting two seemingly contradictory concepts (parallel lines and intersecting lines) is precisely the tension that faced mathematicians as they strove to prove the consistency of Euclid's axiomatic system of geometry."[30] Later in the same chapter, in a phrase strikingly similar to that which Jameson quotes as an example of Forster's "spatial poetry," and which he insists is absent from *Ulysses*, Joyce describes a set of railway tracks as "parallel lines meeting at infinity" (U, 682). If we take this phrase as an axiom of Joyce's own non-Euclidean geometry, then this chapter, in which Stephen and Bloom can be simultaneously parallel, united, and disparate, is representative of infinity, a placeless void, as underlined by the final question in the chapter, "Where?" and the large dot by which it is answered. (U, 689)

It is this placelessness that allows for many of the taxonomical irregularities of 'Ithaca'. While surveying the contents of his bookshelves, Bloom reflects upon the "necessity of order, a place for everything and everything in its place" (U, 662). However, in this chapter, Joyce eradicates the space on which any such sense of order could be established, meaning that things frequently appear out of place. Towards the end of the chapter, for example, Joyce catalogues the contents of the two drawers of Bloom's dresser. In relation to the first drawer, he reels off a list of miscellany that is often quoted as an illustration of the exhaustive nature of the Ithacan narrator, and which includes various items of stationery, several letters, a magnifying glass, and some Austrian-Hungarian currency. Here, the well-defined space of the drawer intersects perfectly with the textual space delineated by the question: "What did the first drawer unlocked contain?" (U, 673) However, when we come to the second drawer, the correspondence is not so apparent. "What did the 2nd drawer contain?" writes Joyce before listing an assortment of Bloom's personal documents, the last of which is "a local press cutting concerning change of name by deedpoll." Given the categorical wording of the question that prompts it, and the

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[30] Joan Parisi Wilcox, 'Joyce, Euclid, and "Ithaca"', *James Joyce Quarterly* 28.3 (Spring 1991), 644-45

unrelenting thoroughness exhibited by this chapter thus far, the reader assumes this catalogue to be exhaustive, detailing everything contained within the drawer. However, if we do assume this to be the case, we soon find ourselves in a contradictory world. The following question demands to know the terms of that newspaper cutting, which, we are informed, tells of Bloom's father's name-change, from Rudolph Virag to Rudolph Bloom, thus prompting a return to the second drawer. "What other objects relative to Rudolph Bloom (born Virag) were in the 2nd drawer?" writes Joyce this time. The response includes mention of an "indistinct daguerreotype" of Bloom's father and grandfather, an "ancient hagadah book in which a pair of hornrimmed convex spectacles inserted marked the passage of thanksgiving in the ritual prayers for Pessach (Passover)", "a photocard of the Queen's Hotel, Ennis," and "an envelope addressed: *To My Dear Son Leopold*." (U, 675) Joyce thus seems to delineate two distinct categories that could respectively be headed "items contained in the 2nd drawer," and "items contained in the 2nd drawer that relate to Rudolph Bloom." Logic suggests that the latter category should be a subset of the former; however, the only item to be found in both is the notice of Rudolph's change of name. In the same way that Borges's overlapping categories contest the possibility of their coexistence in space, in 'Ithaca' we find two different and contradictory conceptions of Bloom's second drawer suspended in the neutral space constituted by the chapter's paradoxical geometry.

Further discrepancies are not so explicitly related to the representation of place, but can nonetheless be attributed to Joyce's eradication of space, attesting to the presence of contradictory worlds in the chapter, worlds which certainly come into contact with one another, but which rarely seem to correspond precisely. Most commonly, they appear in the disparity between question and response, with the language of the latter frequently exceeding or contradicting the boundaries of the categorical remit implied by the former, as if the two were communicating with each other across an abyss. So, for example, upon arrival at 7 Eccles Street, Joyce asks what options are open to the keyless Bloom and Stephen. "To enter or not to enter," comes the response. "To knock or not to knock." Yet the response to the following question – "Bloom's decision?" – implies another alternative:

> A stratagem. Resting his feet on the dwarf wall, he climbed over
> the area railings, compressed his hat on his head, grasped two
> points at the lower union of rails and stiles, lowered his body

> gradually by its length of five feet nine inches and a half to within two feet ten inches of the area pavement, and allowed his body to move freely in space by separating himself from the railings and crouching in preparation for the impact of the fall.

Here the question seems to expect one of the alternatives outlined previously, to knock or not to knock, as a response. The answer, however, introduces a possibility not considered before, and thus subverts the notion that this encyclopaedic voice contains an exhaustive understanding of the world it describes. Finally, following Bloom's fall, Joyce asks if he rose "uninjured by concussion?" "Regaining new stable equilibrium he rose uninjured though concussed by the impact," the reply states (U, 621-22). In the question, concussion is the agent of injury, the two are united in a causal relationship; in the response, in contrast, they are two separate things, quite capable of existing independently. Joyce's eradication of space means that the questions and answers in 'Ithaca' regularly fail to find any common ground, suggesting alternative and often contradictory conceptions of the world, rather than a smooth and ordered surface.

The ultimate end of this eradication of space seems to be to deny Stephen and Bloom any straightforward common ground on which to identify with one another. A number of critics have remarked upon Joyce's refusal to provide the reader with an unproblematic resolution between his two protagonists at what ought to be the climax of his novel. Budgen, for example, describes Stephen and Bloom as "two ships bound for different ports that come within hail and disappear into the night."[31] The at once parallel and divergent courses that they follow from the cabman's shelter to Eccles Street find analogy in the similarities and differences of opinion that they express while walking. They agree, for example, on the superiority of music over the visual arts, and on their respective "disbelief in many orthodox religions, national, social and ethical doctrines." But they disagree on subjects such as Stephen's "views on the eternal affirmation of the spirit of man in literature," and on the cause of Stephen's earlier collapse. (U, 619-20) Perhaps the most conceptual illustration of this lack of common ground is articulated by the discussion of the relationship between their ages, and in particular the miscalculations present in the hypothetical exercise of

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[31] Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of 'Ulysses'*, 259

imagining that the proportion that existed between them in 1883, when Stephen was one year old and Bloom seventeen, would persist indefinitely:

> in 1952 when Stephen would have attained the maximum postdiluvian age of 70 Bloom, being 1190 years alive having been born in the year 714 would have surpassed by 221 years the maximum antediluvian age, that of Methusalah, 969 years, while if Stephen would continue to live until he would attain that age in the year 3072 A.D., Bloom would have been obliged to have been alive 83,300 years, having been obliged to have been born in the year 81, 396 B.C.

If Bloom was born in the year 714, he would turn 1190 in 1904, the year of the present in *Ulysses*, and not in 1952 as stated. Similarly, if he had lived 83,300 years from 81,396 B.C., that would also bring him to 1904, rather than the suggested 3072 A.D. However, to compound the error, in this last calculation, the 1:17 ratio between their ages has been inexplicably replaced by a proportion of 1:70. The ultimate implication seems to be that there is no mathematical table, or *tabula*, upon which we can bring Stephen and Bloom together; they belong to entirely different frames of reference.

Above all though, it appears to be race that proves the biggest obstacle to any mutual understanding between Stephen and Bloom. As Brian Cheyette points out, in 'Ithaca', "Joyce deploys semitic racial difference so as to undermine a too easy sense of narrative resolution between Stephen and Bloom." Although we are informed that neither of them "openly allude to their racial difference" (U, 634), the two do identify a number of "points of contact" between the Hebrew and Irish languages, "and between the peoples who spoke them" (U, 641). However, a number of incidents in this chapter serve to highlight the way in which their racial difference also constitutes a barrier between them. For example, following Stephen's recitation of his story *A Pisgah Sight of Palestine* or *The Parable of the Plums*, we see the following response by Bloom:

> Accepting the analogy implied in his guest's parable which examples of postexilic eminence did he adduce?
>
> Three seekers of the pure truth, Moses of Egypt, Moses Maimonides, author of *More Nebukim* (Guide of the Perplexed) and Moses Mendelssohn of such eminence that from Moses (of Egypt)

to Moses (Mendelssohn) there arose none like Moses (Maimonides). (U, 640)

Although the question implies that Bloom's list of celebrated exiles will serve to reinforce the analogy between the Irish and the Jewish people implied by the title of Stephen's story, he in fact only refers to Jewish thinkers, and thus, as Cheyette argues, "doubly rebuffs Stephen by privileging a Jewish intellectual tradition."[32] Shortly afterwards, following his own rendition of the Zionist anthem 'Hatikvah', Bloom encourages Stephen "to chant in a modulated voice a strange legend on an allied theme" (U, 642). What we are presented with instead, are the lyrics and score to a medieval anti-semitic ballad 'Little Harry Hughes', which Stephen inexplicably sings for Bloom.

Despite their proclaimed mutual "disbelief in many orthodox religions, national, social and ethical doctrines," issues of nationality and religion continue to come between them. They both strive towards a conceptual space outside of such doctrines, yet this mutual exteriority does not represent a meeting of minds. If *Ulysses* constitutes a national encyclopaedic text, as Mendelson argues it does, it presents an Irish nation in which people of different races are unable to find any stable common ground. By eradicating the "same place" upon which they can meet, Joyce exposes the problematic nature of describing Stephen and Bloom as "the same people."

'Cyclops'

As Joyce's most extensive engagement with Irish nationalism, and the site of much spatial irregularity, 'Cyclops' represents a privileged locus on which to interrogate the relationship between Joyce's politics and his representation of space. In this episode, the anonymous and naturalistic first-person narration is intermittently interrupted by highly-stylised third-person insertions that purport to catalogue the history, mythology, and geography of Ireland, but which frequently expand into impossible textual configurations that defy the naturalistic dimensions of their setting, and exceed the remit of their categorical delineations, parodying the overblown rhetoric of the nationalist movement. As Andrew Gibson has shown, this

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[32] Bryan Cheyette, *Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations, 1875-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 227; 229

"gigantism," as Joyce refers to it in the Gilbert schema, is directly borrowed from the historiography and poetry of the Anglo-Irish Literary Revival, and in particular Standish O'Grady. "The very title of the chapter and its 'technic'," writes Gibson, "refer us to O'Grady. Like 'gigantic', 'Cyclopean' was among his favourite adjectives."[33] So, for instance, Joyce describes Bloom's principal antagonist in Barney Kiernan's pub, the Citizen, as possessing mythical proportions, in the image of Celtic legends celebrated by the Irish Literary Revival, such as Finn MacCool. For the most part the terms used to describe him are relative, such as "broadshouldered", "deepchested", "widemouthed", "largenosed", and "longheaded", but when Joyce does use anything resembling quantitative measurements, it is clear that they are altogether incompatible with the dimensions of the tavern. "From shoulder to shoulder he measured several ells," writes Joyce, with an ell being a medieval measurement approximating the length of a man's arm. He goes on to explain that the Citizen's nostrils were "of such capaciousness that within their cavernous obscurity the fieldlark might easily have lodged her nest," and that his eyes "were of the dimensions of a goodsized cauliflower." (U, 284) Other such inflations include the convergence of numerous groups of clerics, monks, and priests, over eighty saints, and eleven thousand virgins on Barney Kiernan's tavern, all prompted by Martin Cunningham's prayer for God to bless all the drinkers present (U, 324-25), and the catastrophic incident at the climax of the chapter, where the biscuit tin that the Citizen hurls at Bloom becomes "an incandescent object of enormous proportions hurtling through the atmosphere at a terrifying velocity" (U, 329), with seismic consequences.

Several other insertions anticipate Borges's illogical taxonomy, in the same way that the sites depicted on Joe Hynes's handkerchief, the "muchtreasured and intricately embroidered ancient Irish facecloth," overflow the categorical remit ascribed to them in advance. In one of the earliest of these set-pieces, Joyce describes the area surrounding Barney Kiernan's pub by parodying the medieval poem 'Aelfrid's Itinerary', which, as Emer Nolan explains, "lists the delights and plenty of the four provinces of Ireland and was known to Joyce in a nineteenth-

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[33] Andrew Gibson, *Joyce's Revenge: History, Politics, and Aesthetics in Ulysses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 114-15

century version by James Clarence Mangan,"[34] an important precursor to the Irish Literary Revival. Thus, Joyce describes a mythical pastoral scene, reminiscent of those popular with the revivalists, in which he lists the fauna and flora to be found in the region. He describes the trees, including "the wafty sycamore, the Lebanonian cedar, the exalted planetree, the eugenic eucalyptus and other ornaments of the arboreal world," and lists the produce brought to market from all over the country: "Thither the extremely large wains bring foison of the fields, flaskets of cauliflowers, floats of spinach, pineapple chunks, Rangoon beans, strikes of tomatoes, drums of figs, drills of Swedes…and tallies of irridescent kale, York and Savoy." By including species that are categorically not native to Ireland, Joyce anticipates the exclusive and narrow-minded definition of the nation to be espoused by the Citizen later in the chapter, and undermines it in advance. One might even suggest that he posits a progressive idea of nationality, more in keeping with Bloom's contradictory definition, which allows for dialogue and exchange between "the same place" and "different places." However, any notion of the Irish nation as a stable site of harmonious diversity is undermined by Joyce's assertion that the landscape contains immeasurable quantities of certain creatures. He describes "the fishful streams where sport the gunnard, the plaice, the roach, the halibut…and other denizens of the aqueous kingdom too numerous to be enumerated," a paradox that essentially equates to infinity. Similarly, he later remarks upon the "herds innumerable of bellwethers and flushed ewes and shearling rams and lambs" (U, 282) and many other species of livestock besides. In parodying the overblown rhetoric of the revival, Joyce exceeds the limits of what is imaginable. Like the category "(j) innumerable" in Borges's encyclopaedia, the open-endedness of these lists precludes the existence of the items they catalogue in the finite limits of space.

But perhaps the chapter's most incongruous catalogue is the list of "Irish heroes and heroines of antiquity" depicted on stones hanging from the Citizen's girdle. Joyce proceeds to list ninety names, some of whom genuinely are mythical Irish heroes, such as Cuchulin, Conn of the Hundred Battles, and Niall of the Nine Hostages; but the list also includes historical, fictional, and fabricated figures,

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[34] Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1995), 109. Joyce's familiarity with Mangan is attested to by an essay, titled 'James Clarence Mangan', which he wrote while at university, and which is published in James Joyce, *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*. eds. Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellman (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1959), 73-83

including Dante Alighieri, Julius Caesar, Adam and Eve, Thomas Cook, Christopher Columbus, Benjamin Franklin, Napoleon Bonaparte, Muhammad, Jack the Giantkiller, Captain Nemo, Patrick W. Shakespeare, and Brian Confucius. In addition, there are titles of novels, operas, plays, songs, and poems, such as *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Man that Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo*, *Savourneen Deelish*, *Arrah na Pogue* and *The Rose of Castile*, as well as Dublin places disguised as people: Dolly Mount, Sidney Parade, and Ben Howth. (U, 284-85) As in Borges's encyclopaedia, the impossibility does not lie in the strange mixture of the real and the fictional, or the vast quantity of terms, but rather in contradictory categorisations, and the juxtaposition of incommensurable entities. After all, how could these people, places, and works of fiction ever be represented as images side-by-side on the stones hanging from the Citizen's girdle?

Given the title of this chapter, and its Homeric parallels, a number of critics have argued that Bloom's multi-perspectivism opposes the Cyclopian narrow-mindedness of the Citizen, the anonymous first-person narrator, and the majority of the drinkers in Barney Kiernan's pub. As the narrator explains, "with his *but don't you see?* and *but on the other hand*," (U, 293) Bloom is able to situate himself simultaneously on both sides of the argument. "The Citizen, who approximates to Polyphemus," writes Harry Blamires, "has a one-eyed view, a fanatical, unreasoning nationalistic passion that makes him incapable of seeing any other side to a question. Bloom is always able to see two sides to a question. He is two-eyed throughout." Thus Blamires argues that the single-minded parodic insertions in 'Cyclops' are analogous to the standpoint of the Citizen and his companions: "Each of the interpolations in this episode has a one-eyed quality: it represents a single style, a single fashion of utterance pushed to its extremest limits: each is a gigantic inflation of a one-eyed approach."[35] In contrast, I would argue that the contestation of space that Joyce performs with these insertions is born out of, and reproduces in magnified form, Bloom's own act of political contestation, what Kevin Hart describes as Blanchot's "relentless questioning of positions."[36] Rather than providing an alternative perspective to the assumptions and arguments espoused by the

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[35] Harry Blamires, *The New Bloomsday Book: A Guide Through Ulysses* (London: Routledge, 1998), 112

[36] Kevin Hart, 'Foreword: Friendship of the No', in Maurice Blanchot, *Political Writings, 1953-1993* trans. Zakir Paul (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), xxii

nationalists, more often than not Bloom undermines the very basis upon which they are founded. For instance, in response to the Citizen's descriptions of violence in the British Navy, Bloom suggests that such behaviour is a universal trait of human nature, rather than a national idiosyncrasy: "But, says Bloom, isn't discipline the same everywhere. I mean wouldn't it be the same here if you put force against force?" (U, 315) Moreover, whether deliberately so or not, Bloom's definition of the nation as "the same people living in the same place…Or also living in different places," subverts the very notion of nationhood upon which the drinkers' Fenian rhetoric is based. Indeed, perhaps it is no coincidence that this discussion immediately precedes the set-piece concerning the "ancient Irish facecloth." Bloom's contradictory definition opens up this contradictory space in which the beauty-spots of Ireland fail to find a common locus. Earlier, exasperated with Bloom's refusal to acquiesce to the uninformed consensus, the narrator says

> I declare to my antimacassar if you took up a straw from the bloody floor and if you said to Bloom: *Look at, Bloom. Do you see that straw? That's a straw.* Declare to my aunt he'd talk about it for an hour or so he would and talk steady. (U, 303)

Bloom's perpetual interrogations do not create the kind of multi-perspectivism that Mendelson describes as a central tenet of the national encyclopaedic narrative. Rather, as is made manifest in the narrator's speculation, they question the very ground upon which such perspectives could ever be held together, in a way materialised in Joyce's representation of space. After all, the textual impossibilities that Joyce creates are equally impossible to see with either one or two eyes. Just as Odysseus puts out the eye of Polyphemus, so Bloom blinds the drinkers in Barney Kiernan's pub by undermining the opinions that they had held as truths. And in putting out their eyes, he also, in a super-imposed sense, effaces the "I" of the first-person narration, the subjectivity by which the Nameless One seeks to present the world, and in particular the Irish nation, in a knowable way. As Brigitte L. Sandquist has argued, the catalogues in 'Cyclops' split "both the *vision* and the *subjectivity* of the narrative," shattering "whatever illusion we may have of a single, unified narrative perspective, reminding us that a coherent, seamless, unified narrative is constructed, not natural." "The ramifications of this split are important for the episode," she concludes, "and for the questions that it poses about nationality, nationalism, and so on. For when we rethink the self, we must also re-examine what

we mean by 'nation'."[37] Therefore, in opening up such unthinkable spaces, irreducible to a single subjectivity, Joyce not only undermines the simplistic notion of the nation held by the drinkers in Barney Kiernan's pub, but perhaps also points towards a new conception of nationhood, one founded in plurality and incommensurability.

"The Cracked Lookingglass of a Servant"

Although this language of the outside does not fully manifest itself until the latter half of the novel, *Ulysses* seems to strive towards this exteriority from its opening pages. This attitude finds articulation in the relationships that Joyce's characters are shown to have with Foucault's other spaces, several of which feature heavily in the novel. As places which have the ability to draw individuals outside of themselves and their own subjectivities, these sites have the potential to open up external perspectives, akin to exile, from which Stephen, Bloom, and Joyce himself can interrogate their own identities, as well as the notion of a unified Ireland. Of these spaces, the most ubiquitous in Joyce's novel is the mirror, the one and only point of intersection between Foucault's categories of utopia and heterotopia. From the mirror crossed with a razor on Buck Mulligan's shaving bowl in the very first sentence of 'Telemachus' to Molly Bloom's handglass in 'Penelope', *Ulysses* features dozens of mirrors, both as physical presences in the plot and as metaphors or reminiscences in the minds of its characters. However, as well as featuring as a recurring motif in the novel, the mirror, like the encyclopaedia, has also been employed by critics to describe Joyce's representational project. "James Joyce's tremendous novel," writes Erich Auerbach in *Mimesis*, is "an encyclopedic work, a mirror of Dublin, of Ireland, a mirror too of Europe and its millennia."[38] Declan Kiberd similarly argues that *Ulysses* "holds a mirror up to the colonial capital that was Dublin on 16 June 1904."[39] Joyce, of course, was familiar with the notion that art can be thought of as a mirror. In 1906 he employed this metaphor in a letter to his publisher regarding *Dubliners* (1914): "I seriously believe that you will retard the course of civilization in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having one good

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[37] Brigitte L. Sandquist, 'The Tree Wedding in "Cyclops" and the Ramifications of Cata-logic', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 33.2 (Winter 1996), 201-202

[38] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 547

[39] Declan Kiberd, 'Introduction' to James Joyce, *Ulysses* (London: Penguin, 2000), lxxx

look at themselves in my nicely polished looking-glass."[40] Moreover, *Ulysses* contains several references to famous uses of this metaphor from literary history. In 'Circe', Lynch quotes Hamlet in describing the "mirror up to nature" (U, 528), while in 'Telemachus' Stephen and Mulligan quote a number of Oscar Wilde's aphorisms on the subject. Given Joyce's awareness of, and participation in, this tradition, we might look to the mirrors that feature in *Ulysses* as instances of a self-reflexive commentary, by which Joyce comments upon his own novel, and by which he critiques the art-as-mirror metaphor itself. Here, however, I also want to explore the idea that the mirrors in *Ulysses* not only symbolise Joyce's use of language, but also in a sense give rise to it, constituting an exterior perspective from which he can write.

For Scott W. Klein, the two intersecting implements in the novel's first sentence, the mirror and the razor, act as symbols for the seemingly contradictory facets of Joyce's style that this chapter of the thesis takes as its starting point. "If language emerges in the linguistic texture of *Ulysses* as a mimetic mirror," he writes, "then it is also incompatibly an agent of adulterousness, the metaphoric razor that cuts away its own grounding in the real, stripping its own pretenses to an authentic marriage or meaning."[41] As the novel progresses, however, the mirror becomes a far more prominent and recurrent motif in the narrative, combining both opposing aspects of Joyce's style in its heterotopian duality as a simultaneously real and unreal space. On the one hand, it presents a familiar reflection, an affirmation of the subject's existence and presence. "In the mirror," says Foucault, "I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself." On the other hand, though, the mirror contests the reality of that which it reflects. "From the standpoint of the mirror," Foucault adds, "I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there." (OS, 24)

Indeed, one might argue that this duality can be detected in the responses to Mulligan's shaving mirror later in 'Telemachus'. Most notably, it constitutes a critique of the traditional notion of the mirror as a symbol of mimetic art; however, Stephen's interaction with it suggests an alternative conception of this metaphor,

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[40] Joyce, *Selected Letters*, 90

[41] Scott W. Klein, *The Fictionsof James Joyce and Wyndham Lewis: Monsters of Nature and Design* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 112

foreshadowing the style of Joyce's later chapters. Towards the beginning of the chapter, Mulligan holds this mirror, purloined from the room of his aunt's servant, up to Stephen's face, prompting the following exchange:

> \- Look at yourself, he said, you dreadful bard.
>
> Stephen bent forward and peered at the mirror held out to him, cleft by a crooked crack, hair on end. As he and others see me. Who chose this face for me? It asks me too…
>
> Laughing again, he brought the mirror away from Stephen's peering eyes.
>
> \- The rage of Caliban at not seeing his face in a mirror, he said. If Wilde were only alive to see you.
>
> Drawing back and pointing, Stephen said with bitterness:
>
> \- It is a symbol of Irish art. The cracked lookingglass of a servant.
>
> (U, 6-7)

"The nineteenth century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in the glass," writes Wilde, in the preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. "The nineteenth century dislike of Romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in the glass."[42] In response to Stephen's apparent inability to recognise his own reflection, exacerbated, no doubt, by the mirror's crack, Mulligan quotes the second half of this dichotomy, which, in turn, prompts Stephen to unleash his own reference to Wilde. In his dialogue 'The Decay of Lying', Wilde has his creation Cyril agree with his counterpart Vivian's theory of non-mimetic art: "I can quite understand your objection to art being treated as a mirror. You think it would reduce genius to the position of a cracked looking-glass."[43] For Wilde, the crack liberates the mirror from the constraints of mimeticism, elevating it to the status of genius, albeit in a limited frame of reference. For Stephen, however, in the context of this metaphor, the crack has a negative effect. Christine van Boheemen-Saaf reads this metaphor through Jacques Lacan's notion of the mirror stage, the idea that the individual's ego is formed via a process of identification with his or her own reflected image. As she explains, "Lacan points out that the vision of the unified self in the reflective surface allows the subject the illusion of wholeness." But the crack in Mulligan's shaving mirror, she argues, precludes any such experience. "In contradistinction to the effect

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[42] Oscar Wilde, 'The Preface' to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Penguin, 2000), 3

[43] Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', in *Intentions* (London: Methuen, 1909), 37

of the mirror in the mirror stage," she says, "a cracked mirror gives us a split and schizoid image of the self." It thus serves as the perfect allegory for Ireland's ambiguous political, cultural, and linguistic relationships with the United Kingdom, what she calls "the contradictory condition of Irish subjectivity."[44] Given the above reading of 'Cyclops', I would qualify this by suggesting that Joyce does present a unified Irish subjectivity, but one which has been formed through an identification with such a cracked mirror, and which is thus underpinned by contradictory and unsustainable ways of thinking. Therefore, combined with the fact that Mulligan's mirror belongs to a servant, for Stephen, this image serves as a metaphor for the misrepresentation of his nation by the Anglo-Irish set and of the complicity of Irish art with the British imperial rulers.

That Joyce has in mind the Irish Literary Revival, in particular, is confirmed later in the same chapter by the associations that Stephen's Wildean aphorism suggests. It is no coincidence that Haines, the English Hibernophile staying in the Martello Tower as Mulligan's guest, claims to have been thinking about it at the moment the milkwoman enters the Martello Tower; this "poor creature," as Haines refers to her, is a thinly-veiled parody of Yeats's Cathleen ni Houlihan, a personification of Ireland as an old woman, rejuvenated by the commitment of young men to her cause. "Silk of the kine and poor old woman, names given her in old times," thinks Stephen of the milkwoman, acknowledging her similarities with this age-old symbol of Ireland. (U, 14) The irony is that Joyce's version speaks no Irish, assuming Haines to be speaking French when he tries to converse with her in what he believes to be her native tongue. The disparity between the old milkwoman and Yeats's Cathleen reveals the distortive capacity of the cracked mirror of Irish art, while Haines's desire to see the Irish as such only serves to perpetuate the backwards representation of the nation, a desire fulfilled in this chapter by Mulligan. As Cheng has argued, Mulligan plays the part of the "native informant" to Haines the ethnographer: "As informant, Mulligan displays an understanding of the imperial ethnographer/explorer's Museum Mentality, searching for what the latter is already expecting to find (and later to exhibit), that "reality" already constructed by an Orientalized discourse."[45] In response to the milkwoman's reference to God, for

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[44] Christine van Boheemen-Saaf, *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan, and the Trauma of History: Reading, Narrative, and Postcolonialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 31-32
[45] Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire*, 152-53

instance, he tells Haines that the locals "speak frequently of the collector of prepuces." (U, 13)

Moreover, that the mirror represents the subservience of Irish art to the British imperial rulers is further attested to by Joyce's identification of it with the ocean in this chapter. As Stephen looks out from the turret of the Martello Tower, Joyce describes the sea as a "mirror of water" (U, 9), while later in the chapter Stephen thinks of Haines as the "seas' ruler" (U, 18). The transitive implication is that the naval and imperial dominance of the British means that they also have control over the way that the Irish see and represent themselves. This notion is further compounded by Mulligan's actions shortly before thrusting his mirror in Stephen's face. "He swept the mirror a half circle in the air to flash the tidings abroad in sunlight now radiant on the sea." (U, 6) Rather than broadcasting anything to the outer world, Mulligan only succeeds in entering into a play of mirrors with the British-controlled sea. This mode of representation, Joyce seems to be saying, can only serve to reinforce British hegemony and to perpetuate pre-existing ways of thinking. It propagates the characterisation of the Irish as primitive Caliban-type colonial subjects, and compels the nation to remain analogous to the green gem mounted on the shiny silver surface of Haines's cigarette case.

However, Stephen's internal response to "the cracked looking glass," and to a number of other reflective surfaces in this chapter, suggest an alternative conception of the mirror as a metaphor for art. It is often remarked upon that Mulligan's mirror prompts the novel's first fully-fledged instance of interior monologue (the second altogether), as if Stephen's vision of himself provokes the introspection necessary to activate his consciousness. "The interior monologue's official initiation," writes Fritz Senn, "takes place fittingly at the moment when, looking at the mirror held out to him, Stephen begins internally to speak to himself."[46] Yet it should also be noted that this first significant occurrence of interiority is also characterised by a desire on Stephen's part to project his thoughts outside of his own subjectivity. "As he and others see me," thinks Stephen following Mulligan's demand that he look at himself in the mirror. "Who chose this face for me? This dogsbody to rid of vermin. It asks me too." (U, 6) Compare this reaction with Mulligan's own interaction with the mirror just a few lines previously, in response to Stephen's insistence that he cannot

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[46] Fritz Senn, 'Joyce the Verb', in *Coping With Joyce: Essays from the Copenhagen Symposium*, eds. Morris Beja and Shari Benstock (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1989) 44

wear grey trousers: "He cannot wear them, Buck Mulligan told his face in the mirror." (U, 6) While Mulligan treats the mirror as passive, repeating what he has already heard into it, and having it reflected straight back, Stephen engages in a dialogue with it, asks questions of it, attempting to position himself in alternative perspectives through its surface. In this respect, the mirror's crack proves advantageous, since it fails to present Stephen with an easily recognisable version of himself, forcing him to interrogate the self-reflection that he sees.

Several other instances of interior monologue, and of this push towards exteriority, can be linked to mirror-like reflective surfaces in 'Telemachus'. Indeed, the novel's first instance of interior monologue, Stephen's "Chrysostomos," is occasioned by the sight of Mulligan's "even white teeth glistening here and there with gold points." (U, 3) A Greek word meaning golden-mouthed, it refers to both Mulligan's physical features, and to his talent for oration. But this unmediated insertion into the narrative lifts both Stephen and the reader out of its apparent context. As Senn points out, this word represents "the first clear disruption of the book's narrative flow. It is the first metaphorical departure from the realist framework of the opening; both its foreignness and its syntax come as a surprise for the reader."[47] Later, when Stephen picks up Mulligan's shiny nickel shaving bowl, we find a more fully-formed instance of interior monologue, but one which again demonstrates a desire on Stephen's part to resist the conventional borders of his own subjectivity. "So I carried the boat of incense then at Clongowes. I am another now and yet the same." (U, 11) The act of carrying the bowl triggers Stephen's memory of his time at boarding school, but perhaps its reflective surface also draws him out of himself, allowing him to recognise the inconsistency of his self. Then, as he, Mulligan, and Haines make their way down to the water, Stephen catches another glimpse of himself, perhaps in "the mirror of water." "In the bright silent instant," writes Joyce, "Stephen saw his own image in cheap dusty mourning between their gay attires." (U, 18) If we take into account Joyce's description of the sea as a mirror, then this striving to occupy the place on the other side of the glass, looking back at oneself, can be considered analogous to a move into exile; both represent a desire to obtain an external perspective of one's own state of affairs, whether personal or pertaining to one's nation.

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[47] Fritz Senn, *Joyce's Dislocutions: Essays on Reading as Translation*, ed. John Paul Riquelme
(Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1984), 139

This duality of the mirror can also be identified in 'Nausicaa', in the contrasting reactions that Gerty MacDowell and Leopold Bloom are shown to have to their own reflections. In the first half of the chapter, focalized through Gerty's consciousness, we find two references to mirrors that reveal much about the construction of her identity, and thus about the constitution of this narrative. First Joyce describes a shopping trip for a new hat: "She did it up all by herself and what joy was hers when she tried it on then, smiling at the lovely reflection which the mirror gave back to her!" Shortly afterwards he reflects on her profound melancholy, explaining her habit of crying in the privacy of her bedroom. "Though not too much because she knew how to cry nicely before the mirror. You are lovely, Gerty, it said." (U, 335-36) When in front of the mirror, in Foucault's terms, she "slips into immediate self-satisfaction."[48] As in Stephen's critique of the cracked looking-glass of Irish art, the mirror serves only to construct a false sense of identity. And the connection between the mirror and art is made evident again in the fact that Gerty similarly finds her image favourably reflected in the language of women's magazines and romance novels, explaining the language Joyce employs to describe her. In a phrase that alludes once again to the national implications of such an attitude, she creates an image of herself as "as fair a specimen of winsome Irish girlhood as one could wish to see." (U, 333) She approaches her encounter with Bloom in the same light, casting him in the role of a romantic hero. "She would follow her dream of love," writes Joyce, "the dictates of her heart that told her he was her all in all, the only man in all the world for love was the master guide." (U, 348)

Bloom, in contrast, is sufficiently detached to appreciate the artificial nature of their tryst. In the latter half of the chapter, which takes the form of Bloom's interior monologue, he thinks of it in theatrical terms: "See her as she is spoil all. Must have the stage setting, the rouge, costume, position, music." (U, 353) Towards the end of the chapter, however, Bloom does almost succumb to the illusion of this performance. Struck by the thought that Gerty might return to the beach, he considers leaving a message for her in the sand with a stick. "I. AM. A." he writes, before giving up. "Some flatfoot tramp on it in the morning. Useless. Washed away," he thinks to himself while writing. "No room. Let it go," he concludes, before

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[48] Foucault, 'So Cruel a Knowledge', 60

effacing the letters with his foot. Yet Joyce provides an alternative motivation for Bloom's change of heart. "Tide comes here a pool near her foot," he thinks. "Bend, see my face there, dark mirror, breathe on it, stirs." (U, 364) In contrast to Gerty, for whom the mirror contributes to her sense of self, and provides confirmation of her constructed identity, Bloom's reflection prevents him from defining himself, by providing him with an external perspective of his own image. It is no coincidence that earlier in this chapter Bloom's thoughts echo those of Stephen as he looks at himself in Mulligan's mirror. "See ourselves as others see us," he thinks when remembering the boys who make fun of his walk in 'Aeolus'. In contrast to Gerty's narcissism, Bloom is able to look at himself from a critical distance. As Cheng says, "Bloom's ability to 'see ourselves as others see us' extends not only to the viewpoints of others different from oneself, but even to an ability and willingness to imagine viewpoints detrimental or derogatory to oneself."[49]

Like Stephen's mirror and Bloom's tide pool, mirrors in *Ulysses* are frequently distortive, so as to refuse Joyce's characters an easy identification with their own images. In addition to the "cracked looking glass" of 'Telemachus', mirrors are also described as "in shadow," (U, 67) "sheeted," (U, 182) "chalked," (U, 227) "sloping," (U, 230) "gildedlettered," (U, 248) "concave," (U, 412) and "convex" (U, 413). Correspondingly, in contrast to the "nicely polished looking-glass" of *Dubliners*, *Ulysses* is a mocking mirror that forces the reader to question the reality that they find reflected therein. Here, however, as suggested, I want to argue that mirrors also contribute to the externalised quality of Joyce's language, liberating it from the subjectivities of his characters. As Bloom enters nighttown in 'Circe', for example, he glimpses himself in a series of distorting mirrors:

> *From Gillen's hairdresser's window a composite portrait shows*
> *him gallant Nelson's image. A concave mirror at the side presents*
> *to him lovelorn longlost lugubru Booloohoom. Grave Gladstone*
> *sees him level, Bloom for Bloom. He passes, struck by the stare of*
> *truculent Wellington but in the convex mirror grin unstruck the*
> *Bonham eyes and fatchuck cheekchops of Jollypoldy the rixdix*
> *doldy.* (U, 412-13)

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[49] Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire*, 183

A number of critics have commented upon the ways in which these fairground-like mirrors, which contort Bloom into different dimensions and identities, anticipate the kind of Circean transformations that he will undergo during his time in the red-light district. As Senn argues, "the deformities prepare for what will happen to him and what goes on in the whole episode in supplementary movements towards gloom and extinction or ridicule and parody."[50] Daniel Ferrer, however, argues that these reflections cannot be considered directly analogous to the forthcoming metamorphoses that the chapter enacts:

> we must not forget that the distortions created by a mirror of this type, while they seem to be random, are, in fact, always predictable, because they are based on a determined law of optics…an accustomed eye can make the necessary adjustments, and therefore any sense of strangeness is rapidly dissipated. But the disquiet produced by Circe cannot be so easily dismissed.[51]

This reading, however, fails to appreciate the heterotopian quality of the mirror, simply treating it as a two-dimensional representation of space. Rather, the distortions that the mirrors present to Bloom, like the crack in Mulligan's looking glass, allow him to see himself where he is not, and as something that he is not, denaturalising his image. They thus draw him out of himself, allowing for the language without subjectivity that characterises the remainder of the chapter, and ultimately the seemingly impossible spaces of nighttown.

Similarly, the mirror above the Blooms' mantelpiece in 7 Eccles Street in 'Ithaca' seems to play a role in constituting the episode's strange encyclopaedic form. About two-thirds of the way through the chapter, Bloom regards himself and the room in its reflection, finally settling on the contents of his personal library. "What final visual impression was communicated to him by the mirror?" writes Joyce. "The optical reflection of several inverted volumes improperly arranged and not in the order of their common letters with scintillating titles on the two bookshelves opposite." (U, 660) The following question demands that these books are catalogued, a process that reveals some familiar titles and topics. There are some books that we know to have been crucial to Joyce in his composition of the novel,

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[50] Fritz Senn, '"Circe" as Harking Back in Provective Arrangement', in *European Joyce Studies 3: Reading Joyce's "Circe"* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 75
[51] Ferrer, 'Circe, Regret and Regression', 129

such as *Thom's Dublin Post Office Directory* and Shakespeare's *Works*. Other titles, however, appear to have a more local influence, with their content seeping into the encyclopaedic narrative of 'Ithaca' itself, albeit inverted and distorted by their reflection in the mirror. For instance, while *Mangnall's Questions*, mentioned in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, is often cited as the inspiration for Joyce's catechistic style, in actual fact we need not look that far. On Bloom's bookshelf is a book called *The Child's Guide*, resembling a volume published in 1828, arranged in a very similar question and response style, titled *The Child's Guide to Knowledge: Being a Collection of Useful and Familiar Questions and Answers on Every-Day Subjects, Adapted for Young Persons, and Arranged in the Most Simple and Easy Language, by a Lady*.[52] Then there are those volumes which concern the subjects that are treated by the chapter, such as *A Handbook of Astronomy*, *Short but yet Plain Elements of Geometry*, and *The Useful Ready Reckoner*, presumably responsible for the list of real and hypothetical relationships that exist between the respective ages of Stephen and Bloom. Just as Borges attributes the discovery of the strange encyclopaedic world of Tlön to "the conjunction of a mirror and an encyclopaedia," so, too, it seems can we ascribe the paradoxical encyclopaedia of 'Ithaca' to the confluence of a mirror and the encyclopaedic titles in Bloom's library.

This suggestion that the mirrors of *Ulysses* help to constitute Joyce's style leads one to question whether further examples of Foucault's heterotopia might have a similar effect. In the same letter to Carlo Linati in which he describes his novel as a "kind of encyclopaedia," Joyce explains that his intention was "not only to render the myth *sub specie temporis nostri* but also to allow each adventure (that is, every hour, every organ, every art being interconnected and interrelated in the somatic scheme of the whole) to condition and even to create its own technique."[53] To this list – hour, organ, art – perhaps we can add the term "scene," which appears as a heading in the Gilbert, but not the Linati, schema. After all, so frequently in *Ulysses* style seems to be dictated by place. Here, however, we encounter the famously exact topography of Joyce's novel. How do we reconcile this precision with the textual impossibilities already described? The following section of this chapter examines the implications

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[52] Fanny Umphelby, *The Child's Guide to Knowledge: Being a Collection of Useful and Familiar Questions and Answers on Every-Day Subjects, Adapted for Young Persons, and Arranged in the Most Simple and Easy Language, by a Lady* (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1854)

[53] Joyce, *Selected Letters*, 271

of the novel's cartographic aesthetic, before carrying out a survey of the heterotopian sites by which Joyce seeks to contest it.

"What You Damn Well Have to See"

Considering its setting in the National Library of Ireland, it is perhaps not surprising that 'Scylla and Charybdis' constitutes something of a meta-commentary on *Ulysses*, and in particular the question of fictional space in Joyce's novel. A number of the thoughts and remarks of Stephen and his companions in this episode cause us to reflect back upon Joyce's own "[c]omposition of place." (U, 180) "Why is the underplot of *King Lear* in which Edmund figures lifted out of Sidney's *Arcadia* and spatchcocked on to a Celtic legend older than history?" asks Stephen, looking for evidence to support his theory on the autobiographical significance of Shakespeare's characters' names. "That was Will's way," replies John Eglinton. "We should not now combine a Norse saga with an excerpt from a novel by George Meredith. *Que voulez vous?* Moore would say. He puts Bohemia on the seacoast and makes Ulysses quote Aristotle." (U, 203) This short passage contains a number of self-referential points. Of course, what Joyce is doing with his modern interpretation of Homer is not too distant from the notion of combining a Norse saga with a nineteenth-century novel. The irony is compounded by the fact that this chapter of Joyce's modern-day epic contains a reference to Meredith's *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* in the form of Stephen's telegram to Mulligan: "*The sentimentalist is he who would enjoy without incurring the immense debtorship for a thing done*" (U, 191).[54] More pertinently, the reference to Shakespeare's geographical slip in *The Winter's Tale*, perhaps the most famous such incident in the history of English Literature, similarly finds its counterparts in the numerous, albeit minor errors in Joyce's own topography, as pointed out by a number of critics.[55] Finally, Eglinton's statement that the bard "makes Ulysses quote Aristotle," leads us to another self-reflexive comment on the space of the novel. Earlier in the chapter, in response to George Russell's declaration that art should "reveal to us ideas, formless spiritual essences…bring our mind into contact with the eternal wisdom, Plato's world of ideas" (U, 177), Stephen arms

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[54] Gifford and Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated*, 226

[55] See, for instance, Sam Slote, 'The Thomistic Representation of Dublin in *Ulysses*', in *Making Space in the Works of James Joyce*, eds. Valérie Bénéjam and John Bishop (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 191-202

himself with a string of Aristotelian rejoinders, including the definition of space as "what you damn well have to see." (U, 178) But although Stephen here appears to favour Aristotelian materialism over Platonic idealism, we need not identify Joyce's own aesthetics in composing *Ulysses* with those of his younger alter ego. Nor, in fact, should we treat Stephen's opinion here as indicative of a consistent mind-set. When asked later in the chapter if he believes his own theory, he replies in the negative (U, 205); meanwhile, let us not forget that by the time we reach 'Ithaca', he is espousing the view, not dissimilar from that of Russell, that in literature we see "the eternal affirmation of the spirit of man" (U, 620).

In any case, a number of critics have hinted at reasons why Joyce might be tempted to negate the unavoidable visibility of space, to escape the "ineluctable modality of the visible." (U, 37) Starting from Frank Budgen's description of Joyce composing 'Wandering Rocks' "with a map of Dublin before him on which were traced in red ink the paths of the Earl of Dudley and Father Conmee,"[56] Jon Hegglund analyses Joyce's cartographic aesthetic, and points out the problems inherent in the focus on the specificities of his Dublin, as championed by critics such as Cheng and Jameson. He questions the objectivity of the author's sources, explaining that the maps from which he worked, like all maps, are politically charged representations of space. In this instance, Hegglund explains, they would have derived from the Ordnance Survey mapping of Ireland in the nineteenth-century, a project by which the British government aimed to assert control over the colonial territory. "While the maps of Dublin in Thom's Almanac may seem neutral and unproblematically factual," writes Hegglund, "the cartographic archive from which Joyce derives the Dublin of *Ulysses* is unquestionably an imperial mapping of a colonial space."[57] Indeed, it is no coincidence that the chapter in which Joyce's cartographic aesthetic is most evident also contains the most explicit demonstration of imperial power. As Thacker has pointed out, the viceregal cavalcade that appears in the final section of 'Wandering Rocks' acts as a mobile visible reminder of colonial power: "The myriad spaces of the episode, with its multiple characters and shifting perspectives, are unified by the all-embracing visibility of the viceregal

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[56] Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of 'Ulysses'*, 124-25

[57] Jon Hegglund, '*Ulysses* and the Rhetoric of Cartography', *Twentieth Century Literature* 49.2 (Summer 2003), 168-69

carriages in the closing coda…The cavalcade operates as a kind of panopticon."[58] But this method of surveillance is only made possible by the highly-visible cartographic grid that Joyce has constructed, and in which he places his characters. Joyce's Dublin comes to resemble Foucault's description of the heterotopian colony, an example of a heterotopia of compensation, "a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled." (OS, 27) Like the prison, it is a highly-organised other space that is defined in opposition to the principal arena of society, in this instance the space of the imperial metropolis, which helps to maintain the illusion of official power. Therefore, given the importance of visibility and the gaze in this assertion of power, Stephen's definition of space as "what you damn well have to see" begins to appear problematic as a model for Joyce's novel; there is a sense that by making the space of his novel highly visible, Joyce is in some way complicit with Ireland's colonial rulers.

Thus, the presence of many of Foucault's heterotopian sites in *Ulysses* manifests a desire to subvert colonial as well as nationalist conceptions of space. For Duffy, these places represent the larger city of which they are a part. He suggests that "sites such as Glasnevin cemetery are not only another 'heterotopic' space, but figures of the city itself," a city whose "status as heterotopia was inevitable because Dublin as a colonial capital was an 'other place' in relation to the imperial metropolis."[59] However, this argument overlooks the nuances of Foucault's description of the heterotopia, and the differences that exist between different examples of his "other spaces". While the colonial city acts as a heterotopia of compensation in relation to the ruling nation, within the scheme of Joyce's novel, the space of the city becomes the primary site of political hegemony. In opposition to the heterotopia of compensation, Foucault posits the "heterotopia of illusion," a space "that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory" (OS, 27). This, I would argue, is the role played by the "other spaces" of Joyce's novel; they contest the dominant cartographic aesthetic that characterises the representation of Dublin and unsettle the specificities of the colonial city, while simultaneously refusing to endorse the alternative nationalist, mythological sense of space. In this sense, the Aristotelian materialism and Platonic

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[58] Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity*, 139
[59] Duffy, 'Disappearing Dublin', 51

idealism that Stephen wrestles with in the National Library find their political coefficients in colonialism and nationalism respectively. Foucault's heterotopias provide Joyce with a space in which he can navigate between the Scylla and Charybdis of these two connected binaries.

"Places of this kind are outside of all places," writes Foucault, "even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality" (OS, 24). Similarly, while we might be able to locate the cemetery, the maternity hospital, and the library on a map of Dublin, in their inner constitution these places efface themselves, opening up a space in which Joyce can offer alternative perspectives and ultimately create impossible textual worlds. Throughout the novel, Joyce's descriptions of these sites exhibit elements of what Foucault calls his heterotopology, the principles that mark these spaces out as different from the spaces surrounding them. In the most literal sense, that they exist separately from the principal urban landscape is attested to by the thresholds that Joyce's characters have to cross to enter or exit them. "Heterotopias," says Foucault in 'Of Other Spaces', "always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable" (OS, 26). In 'Hades', for example, the cemetery gates help to emphasise the unreality of the space they enclose. "The gates glimmered in front," writes Joyce as Bloom and the other mourners turn to leave the cemetery. "Back to the world again" (U, 110). As in Joyce's Homeric model, the 'Hades' of *Ulysses* is cast as an extra-terrestrial space. In 'Scylla and Charybdis', Stephen passes through a series of thresholds on his way out of the library, positioning the scene of the discussion that makes up the majority of the chapter at several removes from reality. First, he and Mulligan exit "out of the vaulted cell into a shattering daylight of no thoughts…The constant readers' room." Then they pass through the turnstile, out of the readers' room, down the stairs, through the "pillared Moorish hall" (U, 206-208), then finally out of the door, where Bloom passes between them, and onto the portico. In 'Cyclops', Bloom's entrance to Barney Kiernan's is barred by Garryowen, the Citizen's growling dog; in 'Oxen of the Sun', Bloom has to be granted access to the maternity hospital by the nurse: "That man her will wotting worthful went in Horne's house" (U, 368), and when Bloom arrives at the "*Mabbot street entrance of nighttown*" (U, 408), he is asked for a password by a "sinister figure" (U, 415). Finally, at the beginning of 'Ithaca', the keyless Bloom is forced to climb over the railings and enter his home through the scullery. In a striking actualisation of the nationalist rhetoric espoused by the Old

Gummy Granny in 'Circe' – "Strangers in my house, bad manners to them!" (U, 552) – Bloom, the Irish-Hungarian Jew, becomes a stranger in his own house. Once he has gained entry, it is as if he is seeing the interior for the first time, as evidenced by his detached observation of the uncanny objects around him: the saucepan and the kettle on the range, the betting tickets on the dresser, and "the incongruity of an apple incuneated in a tumbler and of an umbrella inclined in a closestool" (U, 662). When the narrative asks how Bloom gets into bed, the response confirms his status as an outsider in his own home: "With circumspection, as invariably when entering an abode (his own or not his own)" (U, 683)

Hence we come to understand why the house, Bachelard's privileged locus of psychic interiority, is in this chapter marked by an exteriority of language manifested most explicitly in the episode's impossible geometry, which precludes the possibility of a unified subjectivity underpinning it. In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard describes the house as "a privileged entity for a phenomenological study of the intimate values of inside space," and as "one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind."[60] Thus, 'Penelope' springs from Molly's deep interiority, with the domestic setting helping to constitute this tissue of memory, thought, and imagination. Bloom, in contrast, is denied this kind of interiority. In 'Of Other Spaces', Foucault posits his own conception of space in opposition to that of Bachelard. "Bachelard's monumental work and the descriptions of phenomenologists have taught us that we do not live in a homogeneous and empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well," he says. "Yet these analyses, while fundamental for reflection in our time, primarily concern internal space. I should like to speak now of external space" (OS, 23). Bloom's experience of the house, as described in 'Ithaca', falls into the latter category; for him it is an alien place from which he is barred, and is thus characterised by a language from which his subjectivity is excluded.

In contrast to the specificities of Joyce's Dublin streets, the fact that these sites are a constant of every society also contributes to the sense that they are outside of space, since they could, in essence, be anywhere. Foucault asserts that "there is probably not a single culture in the world that fails to constitute heterotopias." And although he insists that "heterotopias obviously take quite varied forms, and perhaps

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[60] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 3; 6

no one absolutely universal form of heterotopia would be found" (OS, 24), there are some which are inevitably more consistent than others. Of these, the cemetery and the maternity hospital feature prominently in *Ulysses*, and constitute what Foucault calls crisis heterotopias, those places populated by people in a state of biological turmoil. By dint of the universality of birth and death, these primitive creations persist into the modern day, and are present, in one form or another, in every society. Bloom even connects these two spaces in his mind, when he thinks of the respective fates of Paddy Dignam and Mina Purefoy in 'Lestrygonians'. "One born every second somewhere," thinks Bloom. "Other dying every second" (U, 156). "Funerals all over the world everywhere every minute," he similarly thinks in 'Hades'. "Shovelling them under by the cartload doublequick. Thousands every hour" (U, 97). As the portals to a collective underworld, cemeteries resist the kind of emplacement that characterises Joyce's representation of the Dublin cityscape. Just as Bloom's comments on the universality of discipline in 'Cyclops' (like Stephen's suggestion to Mr Deasy in 'Nestor' that a merchant "is one who buys cheap and sells dear, jew or gentile," (U, 34)) undermine the national stereotype to which they respond, so this understanding of the common experiences of birth and death reveal an awareness of the artificial divisions constituted by national borders.

Two further principles of Foucault's heterotopology contribute to the extra-terrestrial, and indeed extra-temporal, character of such sites. First there is his suggestion that the "heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time" (OS, 26). Foucault describes the library and the museum as "heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time," and as examples of "a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages" (OS, 26). One thinks in particular, of Stephen's contemplation in 'Scylla and Charybdis' of the "[c]offined thoughts around me" (U, 186), a phrase which also links the library to the cemetery. "Here he ponders things that were not," thinks Stephen in reference to the librarian, "what Caesar would have lived to do had he believed the soothsayer: what might have been: possibilities of the possible as possible: things not known: what name Achilles bore when he lived among women" (U, 186). The library is not only outside of time then, but also outside of history; it is a repository of the infinite possibilities ousted by time that Stephen thinks of in 'Nestor', and is thus a space in which Stephen can temporarily awake from the nightmare of history. "Composition of place," thinks Stephen in this episode,

invoking the founder of the Jesuits Ignatius Loyola to assist him in his portrayal of Shakespeare's life. "Local colour. Work in all you know. Make them accomplices" (U, 180), he thinks. Yet in this chapter, the librarian's office remains largely unrepresented. Besides the door, the floor, and the "greencapped desklamp" (U, 177), there is actually very little "local colour" in 'Scylla and Charybdis' until, as we have seen, Stephen makes his way out of the library. The majority of the chapter is given over to Stephen's lecture and the ensuing discussion. Appropriately, the library is a largely textual space, allowing Stephen to forge an argument which he does not himself believe. (U, 205) It is not for nothing that Hélène Cixous places Stephen's disavowal at the beginning of her discussion of "how Joyce's work has contributed to the discrediting of the subject."[61] By refusing his lecture a discursive origin in his own consciousness, he anticipates the later chapters of *Ulysses*, in which language, freed from subjectivity, creates unthinkable textual spaces. Incidentally, similar arguments might be made about the wholly textual quality of the newspaper office in 'Aeolus', and Barney Kiernan's Pub in 'Cyclops', since these settings disappear behind their respective discursive atmospheres. The rhetoric of journalese is present in both, directly from the mouths of those present in the former, and in the newspapers that the drinkers read from in the latter. Combined with the nationalist propaganda they espouse, this textual quality allows for the overblown textual impossibilities of that chapter.

Finally, there is Foucault's assertion that heterotopias are "capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible." To illustrate this point he describes the garden, which in its traditional Persian form comprised four sections said to represent the four parts of the world. "The garden is the smallest parcel of the world," says Foucault, "and then it is the totality of the world" (OS, 25-26), a description reminiscent of the pastoral market scene at the beginning of 'Cyclops', to which produce from all over Ireland, and beyond, is said to be brought together on the same site. However, perhaps the most overt articulation of this principle is to be found in 'Circe', in which Joyce presents a constant parade of different settings, and which subsequently constitutes the most effective demonstration in *Ulysses* of the concurrence of Foucault's two different

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[61] Hélène Cixous, 'Joyce: The (R)use of Writing', in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, 15

definitions of the heterotopia, and the most potent contestation of the notion of a unified Irish nation.

"Ce bordel où tenons nostre état"

Of all the heterotopian other spaces in Joyce's *Ulysses*, the nighttown setting of 'Circe' strikes the reader as the most profoundly different. As we have seen, it is separated from the principal Dublin cityscape by "*The Mabbot street entrance of nighttown,*" (U, 408) and by Bloom's requirement to give a password as he enters. "From this point," writes Daniel Ferrer, "only a short step is required to decide that this opening marks a break in the novel, that this strange chapter is indeed a stranger to the novel and may therefore by physically separated from it." But, he argues, there is no basis on which to perform such a separation: "the chapter is inevitably part of the continuum of *Ulysses*, just as 'nighttown', the brothel area, is part of the geographical and social fabric of Dublin."[62] I would like to qualify this argument by pointing out the multi-layered heterotopian quality of nighttown, which allows 'Circe' to be set apart while simultaneously remaining a part of the novel's real geographical and narrative texture. In a sense, this chapter is only different from the rest of the novel in the same way that 'Hades', 'Scylla and Charybdis', 'Cyclops' and many others are, albeit perhaps to a greater extent. Indeed, Joyce's representation of the red-light district fulfils many of the criteria that Foucault uses to define his heterotopian spaces. It adheres to Foucault's assertion that heterotopias operate at full capacity when they negate conventional understandings of time: the entire chapter has a carnivalesque quality that resonates with Foucault's description of "the festival of all nights in the brothels of yesterday," as represented in Edmond de Goncourt's *La Fille Elisa*. The discontinuities in narrative progression, the repetition of occurrences and themes from earlier in the novel, and the presence of deceased characters and historical personages all suggest an altogether alternative notion of temporality. However, by far the most explicit way in which Joyce sets 'Circe' apart from the rest of the novel is in his decision to write it in dramatic form. In a novel composed almost entirely of stylistically 'different' chapters, the typographical arrangement of the words on the page marks 'Circe' out as the most explicitly other, and doubles the heterotopian status of its setting by superimposing an implied stage-

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[62] Ferrer, 'Circe, Regret and Regression', 128

setting onto Dublin's red-light district. Both the brothel and the theatre feature in Foucault's lectures on the heterotopia, and the shared characteristics of these sites, in respect to Joyce's novel, have not gone unnoticed. In his study of the relationship between the form and setting of 'Circe', Austin Briggs points out the inherently performative nature of sexuality, particularly as represented in *Ulysses*. He thinks, for example, of Bloom's interior monologue in 'Nausicaa', where Gerty's display is thought of in theatrical terms: "See her as she is spoil all. Must have the stage setting, the rouge, costume, position, music." (U, 353) As Briggs concludes, "in a sense, nothing on the stage, as in the brothel, can be taken as real: it is 'all an act.'"[63]

L.H. Platt suggests an additional relationship between the form and setting of 'Circe', one which helps us in understanding the significance of this chapter to Joyce's politics. Platt argues that we should consider 'Circe' within the context of the Irish Literary Theatre, pointing out that "*Ulysses* 15 purports to be a play, and theatre was the medium through which revivalism expressed itself most forcefully, most radically, and most controversially."[64] As he explains, the proponents of revivalism "purported to be in the process of somehow dramatizing a national collective unconscious," an aim that frequently manifested itself in representations of space, as we have previously seen in reference to the pastoral scene surrounding Barney Kiernan's pub and the sites portrayed on the "ancient Irish facecloth" in 'Cyclops'. Yet Joyce evidently disagrees with the idea that such idyllic scenes are representative of the Irish character. As Platt writes,

> the opening of *Ulysses* 15 uses landscape just as Yeats used it, as a natural symbol for the collective unconscious, but with the vital distinction that Joyce's landscape is an urban red-light district as opposed to an Irish wilderness, and that the psychological states it evokes are concerned with shame, guilt and survivalism, as opposed to Yeats's romance of dispossession.

The implication seems to be that the brothel, "*ce bordel où tenons nostre état*" (U, 519), as Stephen says, offers a far more accurate representation of the national Irish psyche than the romanticised rural scenes with which the revivalists were so

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[63] Austin Briggs, 'Whorehouse/Playhouse: The Brothel as Theater in the "Circe" Chapter of *Ulysses*', *Journal of Modern Literature* 26.1 (Autumn 2002), 57

[64] L.H. Platt, '*Ulysses* 15 and the Irish Literary Theatre', in *European Joyce Studies 3: Reading Joyce's "Circe"*, ed. Andrew Gibson (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 34

infatuated. In 'Of Other Spaces', Foucault describes the brothel as a "space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory" (OS, 27). The apparent actualisation of the figments of Bloom's and Stephen's inner lives in 'Circe', and the episode's recycling of material from throughout the novel, similarly demonstrates the illusory nature of their daily existences. In the rest of the novel, the divergence between their interior monologues and the words they actually speak exposes the performative nature of "real life". It is only in nighttown that their true characters are externalised. Therefore, one might consider Joyce's choice of the nighttown setting to be an attempt at capturing the true Irish national unconscious, in opposition to the false one proposed by the proponents of the revival. However, as the episode progresses, we come to realise that no such unified national spirit is revealed. Platt explains that "according to the Anglo-Irish directors of Ireland's cultural rebirth, the success of revivalism was crucially dependent on the creation of a theatrical space in which the ceremony of Irish nationhood could be performed."[65] In contrast, I want to argue, Joyce uses the heterotopian quality of 'Circe's' theatrical space to demonstrate the shortcomings of such a project.

It is a commonplace in Joyce criticism that 'Circe' is an entirely unstageable play. However, few engagements with the chapter fully interrogate this instinctive reading, or seek to explain precisely what it is that makes it so impossible to produce. Here, I want to demonstrate that the dramatic form of 'Circe' works in two opposing ways, and thus creates a kind of spatial duality, a simultaneously real and unreal space. On the one hand, it reinforces the materiality of the chapter's space by creating an implied stage-setting on which the action takes place, and consequently makes the incommensurabilities that occur thereon all the more unbelievable. The stage directions constitute a kind of meta-language purporting to provide the reader with access to a concrete external reality, something which is largely absent from all the other chapters, with the possible exception, as we have seen, of 'Ithaca'. And, as in 'Ithaca', Joyce employs this ostensibly objective form in a subversive way, using it to prescribe an impossible world. In much of the novel, such contradictions can be largely attributed to Joyce's free indirect discourse, which allows multiple perspectives and epistemological categories to co-exist at the same level. In 'Circe',

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[65] Platt, '*Ulysses* 15', 39-40; 34

in contrast, if we accept Ferrer's insistence that there is no basis on which to assume this chapter represents a separate level of consciousness, we seem to have no choice but to take what we read at face value and attempt to stage it in the theatres of our minds.

On the other hand, however, the implied theatrical setting serves to naturalise the seemingly impossible Circean transformations which characters and places undergo throughout the chapter. We are all familiar, after all, with the tricks played by playwrights, directors and actors to synecdochically represent the world of the play, a kind of theatrical shorthand employed by dramatists to signify that which exceeds the limits of the stage. As Foucault says in 'Of Other Spaces', "the theater brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another." (OS, 25) And while Joyce perhaps pushes the heterotopian capacity of the theatre to its absolute limits, such metamorphoses, as Platt points out, find their precedent in the Irish Literary Theatre. "If Joyce's play was technically impossible," he says, "revivalist theatre was at least notorious for its technical demands."[66] As an example, he cites the famous transformation that I have already had cause to reference, and which lies at the heart of the Irish Literary Revival, that of Cathleen ni Houlihan (who makes an appearance in 'Circe' as OLD GUMMY GRANNY) from old woman to young girl, rejuvenated by Michael Gillane's commitment to the revolutionary cause. Once we understand that the brothel is an inherently theatrical space, we come to see how Joyce's own play might not be entirely unstageable. As well as documenting and prescribing the events unfolding in nighttown, 'Circe' constitutes a performance, of which Bloom and Stephen appear to simultaneously be the writers, directors, and principal characters, and in which almost anything is possible.

Thus, we are not altogether surprised by Bloom's endless costume changes that see him wearing "*youth's smart blue Oxford suit with white vestslips*" (U, 417), "*court dress*" (U, 440), "*a yellow habit with embroidery of painted flames and high pointed hat*" (U, 469), "*babylinen and pelisse*" (U, 472), a "*nondescript juvenile grey and black striped suit, too small for him*" (U, 512), and "*a flunkey's plum plush coat and kneebreeches, buff stockings and powdered wig*" (U, 526) among many other outfits. Nor are we particularly surprised when the scenery inflates, as in 'Cyclops',

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[66] Platt, '*Ulysses* 15', 35

to dimensions that are incompatible with the naturalistic setting of nighttown. Most notable is the erection of the new Bloomusalem, "*a colossal edifice, with crystal roof, built in the shape of a huge pork kidney, containing forty thousand rooms*" (U, 458). Similarly, the bizarre actions described by some of the stage directions, such as those in the following passage in which Bloom seems to perform a series of impossible feats, are made possible by the chapter's dramatic framework:

> *Bloom walks on a net, covers his left eye with his left ear, passes through several walls, climbs Nelson's Pillar, hangs from the top ledge by his eyelids, eats twelve dozen oysters (shells included), heals several sufferers from king's evil, contracts his face so as to resemble many historical personages…turns each foot simultaneously in different directions, bids the tide turn back, eclipses the sun by extending his little finger.* (U, 467)

Such exploits appear beyond the limits of representation, but the added layer of illusion that the dramatic form bestows on 'Circe' strips this sequence of events of its air of impossibility. After all, is it not possible to stage the appearance of a man hanging from a monument by his eyelids? Or the illusion of a man covering his left eye with his left ear? Although we know that such things could not take place in the real space of nighttown, the theatrical framework serves to make these occurrences seem plausible.

However, as in Borges's encyclopaedia, by far the most explicit way in which 'Circe' stages impossibility is in its juxtaposition of ontologically incompatible elements, thus precluding their simultaneous presence on a common locus. And in this instance, the incommensurable elements juxtaposed are the *dramatis personae* of the chapter, a sample of which I list here in demonstration of their collective heterotopian quality: STEPHEN, BLOOM, THE HALCYON DAYS, MRS BREEN, THE IRISH EVICTED TENANTS, THE KISSES, PADDY DIGNAM, ALL, THE END OF THE WORLD, THE NANNYGOAT, THE HORSE, THE HOBGOBLIN, LYNCH'S CAP, DISTANT VOICES, THE SINS OF THE PAST, SLEEPY HOLLOW. In relation to the Chinese encyclopaedia, Foucault asks where could those categories ever be juxtaposed, "except in the non-place of language?" (OT, xvii) If we ask the same question of Joyce's characters, then the answer seems to be on the stage. Inevitably, to attempt to categorically state what is real and what is unreal in this hallucinatory episode is always going to involve a degree of

speculation. Just as Ferrer argues that we have no grounds on which to detach this chapter from the fabric of the wider novel, so too does he say that there is no basis on which to differentiate between the characters therein: "they are all set on the same level of reality – or unreality," he writes. "There is nothing which could make distinctions between them legitimate."[67] Nonetheless, there are certain assumptions that it seems safe to make when attempting to classify the capitalised speaking roles into groups according to the layers of possibility that they represent, with respect to their conceivable presence in the real space of nighttown. First there are those characters who we infer to be actually present: STEPHEN, LYNCH, BLOOM, FLORRY, KITTY, ZOE, PRIVATE COMPTON, and PRIVATE CARR, and so on. Then there are those that appear in other episodes, but whose appearance in the red light district strikes the reader as incongruous, such as GERTY, MOLLY, ALF BERGAN, and MRS BREEN. Less debatable is the inclusion of a number of characters who the text informs us are deceased, and thus presumably the products of Stephen's and Bloom's imaginations, such as PADDY DIGNAM, VIRAG, RUDOLPH, ELLEN BLOOM, RUDY, and May Dedalus, Stephen's mother, who is designated as THE MOTHER. The same applies to historical literary figures such as SHAKESPEARE, and LORD TENNYSON. Implausibly large groups are given collective voices, for example THE CHAPEL OF FREEMAN TYPESETTERS, THE MOB, THE IRISH EVICTED TENANTS, THE DAUGHTERS OF ERIN, THE CIRCUMCISED, THE ORANGE LODGES, THE GREEN LODGES, THE VOICE OF ALL THE DAMNED, THE VOICE OF ALL THE BLESSED, and most inclusively, ALL. In a chapter that has no apparent limits, this last term could effectively signify the entire world. There are also animals, including THE MOTH, THE NANNYGOAT, THE RETRIEVER, and THE HORSE, mythological figures, such as THE NYMPH, and THE HOBGOBLIN, and inanimate objects: THE SOAP, LYNCH'S CAP, THE BUTTON, THE DOORHANDLE, THE FAN. However, there are some categories which unambiguously preclude their real existence in nighttown. For instance, SLEEPY HOLLOW, the setting of Washington Irving's famous story, could not be present in this district of Dublin. Then there are disembodied voices: THE CALLS, THE ANSWERS, VOICES, DISTANT VOICES, BOYLAN'S VOICE, and MARION'S VOICE. If we are to assume that each of the capitalised

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[67] Ferrer, 'Circe, Regret and Regression', 132

speakers is physically represented in the scene, then how can we account for the detachment of these voices from their respective agencies? But perhaps most impossibly, Joyce gives presence and voice to abstract concepts, ideas, and actions, such as THE END OF THE WORLD, THE HALCYON DAYS, THE KISSES, THE HUE AND CRY, THE SINS OF THE PAST, HOURS, and THE ECHO. In the stage directions, some of these nonentities are fleshed out into fully-formed beings; THE END OF THE WORLD, for instance, becomes a two-headed octopus, while THE HALCYON DAYS are represented by a group of high school boys. The others could likewise be incarnated, portrayed by actors, but only within the space of the theatrical stage-setting; in what reality could they ever co-exist with people (real, fictional, or historical), animals, actions, places, and disembodied voices? 'Circe' thus constitutes a textual heterotopia in its juxtaposition of incompatible categories; like Borges's encyclopaedia, the heterotopian stage acts as a non-place in which completely incompatible elements can exist side-by-side.

It is perhaps not surprising therefore, when the chapter climaxes with a vast chasm opening up beneath the action. Although the stage can bring these incommensurable entities together, it remains an unstable and ultimately unsustainable space. Triggered by Stephen's smashing of the chandelier in Bella Cohen's brothel, a great apocalyptic scene is set in motion. First, the stage directions regurgitate Stephen's apocalyptic thoughts from 'Nestor': "*Time's livid final flame leaps and, in the following darkness, ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry.*" (U, 542) The skirmish between Stephen and Private Carr follows, during which the former shows equal disdain for the representatives of his and his opponent's nations: Cathleen ni Houlihan, in the guise of the Old Gummy Granny, and Edward VII, respectively. If this scene purports to stage a collective national unconscious, then the implications of the void that subsequently erupts seem apparent. The nation, like the church, is founded, as Stephen thinks in 'Scylla and Charybdis', "upon the void. Upon incertitude, upon unlikelihood" (U, 199).

Conclusion: "Incommensurability in the Midst of the Everyday"

Any commentary on *Ulysses* has to contend with the tension that exists between Joyce's self-declared cartographic aesthetic, and the linguistic experimentation that saw his work championed by the proponents of French post-structuralism, who held

it up as the epitome of a kind of writing without any basis in reality. Foucault's concept of the heterotopia proves a useful tool in helping us to bridge this gap between the novel's geographical particularism on the one hand, and its flight from reality and consciousness on the other. As places which are outside of space, sites which can be located on a map, but which undermine their own existence through their inner constitutions, they allow Joyce to unfold a form of placeless language within a conceivably naturalistic framework. In so doing, he manages to present the political discourses at play in 1904 Dublin, giving voice to their respective advocates, but simultaneously manages to undermine the ground which they are contesting. By creating such impossible textual spaces, Joyce's language precludes its own status as discourse, as such constructs could never be contained within a single subjectivity; therefore, he resists the essentializing discourses of nationalism, colonialism, or any political doctrine. Instead he posits a notion of the nation that is contained within the incompatibility of these different voices. In similarly demonstrating how Joyce's novel gestures towards a new conception of the nation, Vincent Cheng cites Homi K. Bhabha's emphasis on the importance of heterogeneity and incommensurability in the narration of the nation.[68] It is from the "incommensurability in the midst of the everyday," writes Bhabha, "that the nation speaks its disjunctive narrative."[69] As Foucault's writings on the heterotopia make clear, space is a privileged locus for the representation of incommensurability, as only in space, or rather the violation of traditional understandings of space, can true incompatibility be manifested. Indeed, Bhabha's description of "incommensurability in the midst of the everyday" resonates with Foucault's definition of the heterotopia as an everyday place which has the capacity to juxtapose entirely different spaces in an inconceivable manner, and thus constitute the "disjunctive narrative" of the textual heterotopia, that type of fictional space representable only in language. As crucibles of incommensurability, these sites thus become the "different places" from which Joyce attempts to capture the diversity and heterogeneity of the Irish nation in language.

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[68] Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire*, 246-48
[69] Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation,' in Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), 311

Nabokov's Magic Carpet: The Time and Space of Exile in *Ada*

In the sixth chapter of his autobiography *Speak, Memory*, the young Vladimir Nabokov chases butterflies through a bog near his family's Vyra estate in Russia, before inexplicably finding himself in a Colorado national park that he was to visit almost forty years later. "I confess I do not believe in time," he writes. "I like to fold my magic carpet, after use, in such a way as to superimpose one part of the pattern upon another. Let visitors trip."[1] That Nabokov uses the magic carpet, a mythical device famed for its ability to traverse space, to also describe a collapse of temporality, seems to betray an understanding of the relationship between space and time symptomatic of his exile status. Forced to abandon his native Russia while still young, the landscape of his past was to remain inaccessible to him throughout his life, except through his considerably vivid powers of memory. Indeed, of the three authors studied in this thesis, it seems fair to say that Nabokov felt the sting of exile most sharply, with a personal biography that can be neatly divided into a number of distinct slices of space-time. While Joyce and his family were similarly driven around mainland Europe by conflict, both he and Sebald left their respective homelands by their own volition, albeit in response to the varying social and cultural paralyses they identified therein. Nabokov, in contrast, was a political émigré several times over, fleeing the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, before being chased out of Europe – first Berlin, then Paris (where he crossed paths with Joyce) – by the rise of National Socialism and the Second World War. He subsequently settled in the United States, chiefly Ithaca, New York, where he taught at Cornell University for almost fourteen years, before the success of *Lolita* allowed him to return to Europe and spend the final seventeen years of his life at the Montreux Palace Hotel in Switzerland. However, of these three writers, Nabokov was perhaps also the most at home in exile. As Brian Boyd writes in the introduction to his biography, Nabokov "could hardly ignore the cataclysms of modern history that so skewed his life. Yet no one has kept more adamantly to his own course – or more determinedly apart from his epoch."[2] George Steiner ascribes this adaptability to Nabokov's linguistic capabilities: "whereas so many other language exiles clung desperately to the artifice

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[1] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (London: Penguin, 1969), 109
[2] Brian Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 3

of their native tongue or fell silent, Nabokov moved into successive languages like a travelling potentate. Banished from Fialta, he has built for himself a house of words."[3] The image of the magic carpet, found at the heart of his autobiography, therefore, seems the perfect symbol of his art, allowing Nabokov to straddle, and thus negate, the spatial, temporal, and linguistic discontinuities that characterised his multinational life in the space of language. As David Bethea and Siggy Frank suggest, "Nabokov wielded his 'gift' in order to *transcend* the painful fact of exile on his famous 'magic carpet' of imagination, memory, and artistic form."[4]

It is not surprising, then, to find the very same image of the magic carpet being used as a metaphor for Nabokov's style in *Ada, or Ardor: A Family Chronicle*, a novel in which he creates an alternate world, known as Antiterra or Demonia, by similarly folding together the different periods and localities of his personal experience. In the closing paragraphs of the novel, which tells the story of Van and Ada Veen, a pair of biological siblings, brought up as first cousins, who engage in an intermittent romantic relationship, Nabokov appends a short synopsis of the preceding four hundred and fifty pages, which includes the following passage:

> In spite of the many intricacies of plot and psychology, the story proceeds at a spanking pace. Before we can pause to take breath and quietly survey the new surroundings into which the writer's magic carpet, has as it were, spilled us, another attractive girl, Lucette Veen, Marina's younger daughter, has also been swept off her feet by Van, the irresistible rake. (AA, 460-61)

Earlier in the narrative, Van, Nabokov's surrogate narrator, uses the same metaphor while lamenting the negative effect of old age on his writing: "I am weak. I write badly. I may die tonight. My magic carpet no longer skims over crown canopies and gaping nestlings." (AA, 174) Just as the figurative magic carpet of *Speak, Memory* brings the non-contiguous and non-continuous into conjunction with one another, so the stylistic one of *Ada* helps Nabokov to create a fictional world in which the history and geography of our own reality has been reshuffled. Most pertinent to our consideration of the image of the magic carpet in *Speak, Memory*, and to the

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[3] George Steiner, 'Extraterritorial', in *Extra-Territorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 7

[4] David Bethea and Siggy Frank, 'Exile and Russian Literature', in eds. Evgeny Dobrenko and Marina Balina *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Russian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 209

relationship between Nabokov's art and his exile, on Antiterra Russia has been superimposed onto North America to form "the Amerussia of Abraham Milton." But, writes Nabokov, "a more complicated and even more preposterous discrepancy arose in regard to time," describing the strange temporal relationship between Antiterra and our own world: "a gap of up to a hundred years one way or another existed between the two earths," he says, "with not *all* the no-longers of one world corresponding to the not-yets of the other." (AA, 21) Thus, for instance, although electricity has been harnessed and subsequently banned on Antiterra by the time the novel begins in the 1880s, planes and convertible sports cars do exist.

However, the magic carpet appears in *Ada* not only as a metaphor for authorial practice; it can also be found at the level of the plot as a "jikker," the flying rug that Van and Ada discover during their first visit to the attic of their family's Ardis estate:

> Rolled up in its case was an old 'jikker' or skimmer, a blue magic rug with Arabian designs, faded but still enchanting, which Uncle Daniel's father had used in his boyhood and later flown when drunk. Because of the many collisions, collapses and other accidents, especially numerous in sunset skies over idyllic fields, jikkers were banned by the air patrol; but four years later Van who loved that sport bribed a local mechanic to clean the thing, reload its hawking-tubes, and generally bring it back into magic order and many a summer day would they spend, his Ada and he, hanging over grove and river or gliding at a safe ten-foot altitude above surfaces of roads or roofs. (AA, 41)

For Beverly Lyon Clark, the magic carpet's duality as both content and form makes it a self-reflexive image of Nabokov's own style. "The process of writing," she says, "corresponds to Antiterran physical feats like riding on a magic carpet." "Antiterra is thus a metaphor for the 'real'-world activity of writing," she concludes.[5] Here, however, I want to suggest that the alternate world of Antiterra is constituted, at least in part, by the jikker, the magic carpet on which Van and Ada glide over the Ardis estate. As a device that traditionally permits instantaneous or rapid transit from one side of the world to the other, it creates the kind of incongruities that characterise the

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[5] Beverly Lyon Clark, *Reflections of Fantasy: The Mirror-Worlds of Carroll, Nabokov, and Pynchon* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), 97-98

geography of Antiterra. As such, the magic carpet makes only fleeting appearances in the narrative; it is obscured behind the world to which it gives rise, just as Flaubert's library is concealed behind the phantasmagoria it engenders in *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*. Nevertheless, the few glimpses we are afforded give us an insight into the make-up of Nabokov's novel, suggesting that the clues to its strange cosmology can be found within its pages.

The magic carpet, of course, is a wholly mythical invention; any suggestion that it gives rise to the unreal world of which it is a part leads to a kind of circularity of thought without resolution. Yet, in his radio lecture 'Les Hétérotopies', Foucault does trace the genealogy of this image back to reality. He describes the microcosmic quality of the ancient Persian garden, with four sections representative of the four parts of the world, before suggesting that "if we consider that oriental rugs were originally reproductions of gardens – in the strictest sense of the term "winter gardens" – we understand the legendary value of magic carpets, rugs that roam the world." (LH, 29) The mythical magic carpet, then, has its origins in the very real space of the Persian rug, and ultimately in the garden. Nabokov, too, demonstrates an awareness of this derivation. In his critical biography *Nikolay Gogol*, he suggests that the Persian rug added to the carriage at the end of the fourth act of *The Government Inspector* "is transformed into a magic carpet on which Khlestakov makes his volatile exit backstage."[6] And in *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov describes the state of reverie he experiences during his first attempts at composing poetry, in the course of which the boundary between the rug and the garden is blurred:

> When I was irrevocably committed to finish my poem or die, there came the most trancelike state of all. With hardly a twinge of surprise, I found myself, of all places, on a leathern couch in the cold, musty, little-used room that had been my grandfather's study. On that couch I lay prone, in a kind of reptilian freeze, one arm dangling, so that my knuckles loosely touched the floral figures of the carpet. When next I came out of that trance, the greenish flora was still there, my arm was still dangling, but now I was prostrate

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[6] Vladimir Nabokov, *Nikolay Gogol* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), 54

on the edge of a rickety wharf, and the water lilies I touched were real.[7]

Not only does this passage make evident Nabokov's awareness of the relationship between the rug and the garden, it also associates both real places with the kind of rift in the texture of time and space, albeit a less extreme example, that the magic carpet was earlier used to describe. This chapter examines the ways in which the real heterotopian places that feature so prominently in *Ada* – the mirror, the garden, the library, the brothel, and the ship – similarly help Nabokov fabricate the mythical world of that novel, while simultaneously grounding this alternate realm in a very tangible sense of reality.

To speak of "reality" and "real" places in relation to Nabokov's work naturally arouses a certain level of suspicion. During his career, the author made a number of proclamations about the questionable status of reality itself. In the afterword to *Lolita*, Nabokov describes "reality" as "one of the few words which mean nothing without quotes."[8] In an interview with the BBC in 1962, he similarly described the impossibility of representing reality. "You can get nearer and nearer, so to speak, to reality," he says, "but you never get near enough because reality is an infinite succession of steps, levels of perception, false bottoms, and hence unquenchable, unattainable."[9] Nor, he argues, should we attempt to attain it through art. In another interview, he describes the reality of art as "an artificial, a created reality that is only reality within the novel,"[10] an idea expressed with more eloquence by Charles Kinbote in *Pale Fire* (1962): "'reality' is neither the subject nor the object of true art which creates its own special reality having nothing to do with the average 'reality' perceived by the communal eye."[11] No doubt Edward Said has Nabokov and his exiled narrators in mind when he writes the following in 'Reflections on Exile': "Much of the exile's life is taken up with compensating for disorienting loss by creating a new world to rule. It is not surprising that so many exiles seem to be

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[7] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, 172-73

[8] Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, with an Afterword by the author (London: Penguin, 2006), 354

[9] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, 11

[10] Vladimir Nabokov, 'Interview with Pierre Dommergues', *Les langues modernes*, 1 (Jan-Feb 1968), 95. Translation taken from Leland de la Durantaye, 'Kafka's Reality and Nabokov's Fantasy. On Dwarves, Saints, Beetles, Symbolism, and Genius', *Comparative Literature* , 59.4 (Fall, 2007), 322

[11] Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire* (London: Penguin, 1991), 106

novelists, chess players, political activists, and intellectuals." "The exile's new world," he adds, "is unnatural and its unreality resembles fiction."[12]

Antiterra, in particular, seems an archetypical example of a Nabokovian world that creates its own rules, the most flagrantly unreal of Nabokov's mythical realms. *Ada*, writes Boyd, "sets us down in his strangest and most contradictory world, his most colourful and comic, his most lyrical and discordant, his most unsettling and profound."[13] For similar reasons, though, a number of readers have disregarded the novel as a piece of pure self-indulgence on Nabokov's part. Martin Amis describes it as the bloated work of an ageing writer, using Nabokov's own descriptions of *Finnegans Wake* as "formless and dull", "a cold pudding of a book", "a tragic failure" and "a frightful bore," to reflect on the Russian's own novel. Indeed, Amis identifies profound similarities between the two texts. "Both novels seek to make a virtue of unbounded self-indulgence; they turn away, so to speak, and fold in on themselves…we see a decisive loss of love for the reader – a loss of comity, of courtesy."[14] Others, too, have remarked, on the comparable nature of these two late works. For Thomas Karshan "*Ada* is the closest Nabokov comes to *Finnegans Wake*, laughing away history, guilt, and prohibition in a puerile frivolity, a farce which mixes comedy and tragedy together into an unbroken gravity-defying giggle."[15] Indeed, while in *Ulysses* Joyce presents us with a recognisable world that frequently opens out onto a mirror world, in *Ada* we are already through the looking-glass in a portmanteau world of Carrollian or Wakean dimensions.

Yet there is also plenty of reality in *Ada*. Not only does its geography comprise re-imaginings of Nabokov's numerous home nations, but the Ardis estate where Van and Ada spend their childhood summers is also furnished with tropes familiar from his autobiography. The Veens, like the Nabokovs, for example, have pet dachshunds; Van shares a talent for walking on his hands with one of his creator's boyhood tutors; and "*le montagne et le grand chêne*"[16] of Vyra, are translated into "the mountain, and the great oak" of Ardis. (AA, 45) As Boyd has

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[12] Edward Said, 'Reflections on Exile', 181

[13] Brian Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The American Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 536

[14] Martin Amis, 'The Problem with Nabokov', *The Guardian*, 14 November 2009, <http://www.martinamisweb.com/commentary_files/MA_Nabokov_2009.pdf>

[15] Thomas Karshan, *Vladimir Nabokov and the Art of Play* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 193

[16] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, 193

pointed out, it was while revising *Speak, Memory* that the ideas underpinning *Ada* first began to crystallise.[17] Furthermore, the name and initials of Van Veen recall those of their creator, V.V.N., while also anticipating the full-blown mock-autobiography *Look at the Harlequins*, in which Nabokov's double Vadim Vadimovich describes a novel called *Ardis* as "my most private book, soaked in reality."[18] Therefore, as well as containing one of Nabokov's most flagrantly unreal worlds, *Ada* also represents his most sustained interrogation of the relationship between his work and reality. The brazenly fantastic and contradictory quality of Antiterra represents a reaction to a sense of reality that increasingly threatens to encroach on the world of his fiction, and thus threatens the authority that Nabokov and Van respectively hold over this world. Here, then, I want to argue that the heterotopian sites that feature in the text constitute glimpses back through the looking-glass to our own reality. Rather than constituting a "simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live," in *Ada* Foucault's heterotopias enact a contestation of the familiar fictional world by which Nabokov seeks to transcend, and compensate for, the negative effects of exile.

In what follows I first examine the novel's strange cosmology, and the relationship between the world of Antiterra and our own reality, designated as Terra, with reference to a number of the more prominent critical approaches to Nabokov's text. I argue that the contradictory worlds of *Ada* constitute a textual heterotopia analogous to those created by Borges, to whom Nabokov makes several references in the narrative. Then, I demonstrate that this impossible fictional universe is actually rooted in a sense of reality, and that the two contradictory worlds of the novel are mediated by Foucault's "simultaneously mythic and real places," the garden, the library, the mirror, the brothel, and the ship.

The Other World of *Ada*

In *Postmodernist Fiction*, Brian McHale posits Antiterra as an example of what he calls a "heterotopian zone," a fictional space that is "less constructed than

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[17] Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The American Years*, 487-517
[18] Vladimir Nabokov, *Look at the Harlequins* (New York : McGraw-Hill, 1974), 234

deconstructed by the text, or rather constructed and deconstructed at the same time."[19] As he argues:

> The alternate world, or Antiterra, of *Ada* has been constructed by superimposing Russia on the space occupied in our world by Canada and the United States, Britain on our France, Central Asia on European Russia, and so on. All of these geographical double-exposures are elaborately motivated: at the level of the fiction, by the science-fiction *topos* of the parallel world; at the level of the author's biography (which in a Nabokov text cannot be ruled out as an irrelevance), by the complex layering of cultures and homelands – Russia, England, France, the United States – that constituted Nabokov's personal experience.

The act of superimposition described here is one of the four methods McHale identifies by which writers are able to construct such a zone. As he explains, "two familiar spaces are placed one on top of the other, as in a photographic double-exposure, creating through their tense and paradoxical coexistence a third space identifiable with neither of the original two – a zone."[20] The geography of Antiterra is certainly strange and unfamiliar, conflating the multiple nations of Nabokov's personal biography. However, to describe it as heterotopian or paradoxical implies an element of geometrical impossibility that is not present in Nabokov's description of this alternate world. In the novel's notoriously dense opening pages the author introduces us to "that tessellated protectorate still lovingly called 'Russian' Estoty, which commingles, granoblastically and organically, with 'Russian' Canady, otherwise 'French' Estoty, where not only French, but Macedonian and Bavarian settlers enjoy a halcyon climate under our Stars and Stripes." (AA, 9) Although not exactly clear, this passage actually does nothing to undermine the possibility of the world described. Conversely, this description of what one eventually infers to be the Antiterran equivalent of North America as a "tessellated protectorate" confers a sense of geographrical integrity on the landscape, calling to mind the interlocking geometrical shapes of our own map of the USA, Humbert Humbert's "crazy quilt of

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[19] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 45
[20] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 46-47

forty-eight states."[21] This is a site in which different cultures, rather than incommensurable spaces are superimposed.

Later, in an attempt to provide the reader with a more global sense of Antiterran geography, Nabokov describes a number of intercontinental train journeys that Van considers taking, reminiscent of Guy Davenport's story 'The Haile Selassie Funeral Train', in which the titular locomotive follows a seemingly impossible itinerary, and which thus provides McHale with another example of his heterotopian zone. "Setting out from Deauville in Normandy," McHale summarises, "it passes through Barcelona, along the Dalmatian coast of present-day Yugoslavia, to Genoa, Madrid, Odessa, Atlanta (in the State of Georgia, USA!), and back to Deauville again."[22] Nabokov seemingly describes similar such impossible itineraries, but accounts for their incongruity with his prescient description of tunnels that pass underneath large bodies of water. Thus, the Antiterran Orient Express, for example, 'joined London to Ceylon and Sydney, via Turkey and several Chunnels.' (AA, 272) As in Davenport's story, there is no reason to assume that, in this alternate reality, these places are separated by water in the same way that they are in our own world. However, even if we assume a basic correspondence between the two geographies, Nabokov avoids plunging his novel into the realms of nonsense through this innovative piece of engineering. Thus, the critical consensus about Antiterra is that it varies from our own world in political history, but remains identical in physical geography.[23] In its geography, it does not violate the possibilities of our imagination.

This is not to argue that *Ada* does not contain impossible configurations of space, but to suggest, once again, that McHale is looking in the wrong place for the evidence that this is the case. Rather than in the geographical make-up of Antiterra, it is through the introduction of the notion of Terra that Nabokov injects an element of heterotopian incommensurability into his narrative. Posited as an alternate world envisaged by the psychotics of Antiterra, it soon becomes evident that this mythical planet is our own extra-textual world, with a geography that corresponds closely, if not identically, with that of Nabokov the author and his readers. As Van, Nabokov's narrator, explains, it is

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[21] Nabokov, *Lolita*, 171

[22] McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 45

[23] Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The American Years*, 536

> sidesplitting to imagine that 'Russia,' instead of being a quaint synonym of Estoty, the American province extending from the Arctic no longer vicious Circle to the United States proper, was on Terra the name of a country, transferred as if by some sleight of *land* across the ha-ha of a doubled ocean to the opposite hemisphere where it sprawled over all of today's Tartary, from Kurland to the Kuriles. (AA, 20-21)

The suspected correlation between Terra and our own world is confirmed by the description of psychiatrist Van's science-fiction novel *Letters from Terra*, in which this imagined realm is represented by "a mosaic of painstakingly collated notes from his own reports on the 'transcendental delirium' of his patients." He describes a patchy British Empire ruled by a king called George, a "super Russia…governed by a Sovereign Society of Solicitous Republics (or so it came through) which had superseded the Tsars," and "Athaulf the Future," who is in the act of "transforming a gingerbread Germany into a great country of speedways, immaculate soldiers, brass bands and modernized barracks for misfits and their young." As Van explains, "proper names often came out garbled, a chaotic calendar messed up the order of events but, on the whole, the colored dots did form a geomantic picture of sorts." (AA, 267-68).

It is this strange set of divergences, Van explains, that causes the very notion of Terra to be labelled "scientifically ungraspable" by the people of Antiterra (AA, 21). But in what way is this situation incomprehensible? After all, both Terra and Antiterra exist as possible worlds; they both form a "geomantic picture of sorts." As N. Katherine Hayles argues, in contrast to the contradictory worlds of many of Nabokov's novels, "there is no difficulty in supposing both can be true at once."[24] That is, at least, until the final section of the novel, when the reader learns that these two contrasting planets are, in fact, one and the same. Following the success of a film adaptation of Van's *Letters from Terra*, belief begins to grow in "the secret Government-concealed identity of Terra and Antiterra." "Demonian reality dwindled to a casual illusion," adds Van. "Our world *was*, in fact, mid-twentieth-century. Terra convalesced after enduring the rack and the stake, the bullies and beasts that Germany inevitably generates when fulfilling her dreams of glory." (AA, 455-56)

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[24] N. Katherine Hayles, *The Cosmic Web: Scientific Field Models and Literary Strategies in the 20th Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 126

Van's reference, at the beginning of his chronicle, to the "'scientifically ungraspable' concourse of divergences" thus betrays an awareness of the two planets' shared identity, arousing suspicion that he is in fact the creator of Antiterra.

The impact of this casual revelation resembles that of Borges's throwaway remark at the end of 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius' that the encyclopaedic world of Tlön will eventually overhaul our own reality, and that the "world will be Tlön." Although the narrator informs us that this encyclopaedic planet has been pared so as to describe a realm "not *too* incompatible with the real world," there remains one major discrepancy which means they are ultimately inassimilable. While Tlön is a perfectly ordered world, "a labyrinth forged by men, a labyrinth destined to be deciphered by men," reality is constructed "in accordance with divine laws (read: 'inhuman laws') that we can never quite manage to penetrate."[25] Borges, in fact, appears in *Ada* anagrammatically as Osberg, the "Spanish writer of pretentious fairy tales and mystico-allegoric anecdotes, highly esteemed by short-shift thesialists" (AA, 270), with whose work Van's *Letters from Terra* is compared. Nabokov also alludes to the comparisons made between himself and Borges, with which he disagreed. Osberg is said to be the author of a novel called *The Gitanilla*, the Antiterran equivalent of *Lolita*, as explained by the Vivian Darkbloom annotations, in which the fabricated author's name is described as a "good-natured anagram, scrambling the name of a writer with whom the author of *Lolita* has been rather comically compared." (AA, 465) But perhaps the surreptitious inclusion of Borges here betrays more of a similarity between the two than Nabokov is willing to admit to. His novel's impossible cosmology certainly seems to resemble that of Borges, Foucault's pre-eminent creator of heterotopian texts. Antiterra, like Tlön, is described as a world in which "reality and natural science are synonymous" (AA, 65), a realm in which world and word align perfectly. Despite the authors' respective declarations, it is entirely unthinkable that either pair of two worlds could be integrated with one another. However, Nabokov's disillusionment with Borges has less to do with the make-up of his textual worlds as what lies behind them. In an interview with *Time* upon the publication of *Ada* in May 1969, Nabokov summarises his aversion to Borges with the following image: "At first Véra and I were delighted by reading him. We felt we were on a portico, but we have learned there was no

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[25] Borges, 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', 81

house."[26] While Borges seems to delight in the textual labyrinths he creates for the sake of the vertiginous experiences they instil, Nabokov fleshes out his textual world, injecting it with meaning and significance. His description of Ardis Hall, and of the wider world of his novel, might thus be understood as his attempt to attach a house to Borges's heterotopian portico.

As for the exact significance underlying the constitution of this world, and the relationship between Antiterra and Terra, the text offers us a number of explanations worthy of consideration. In the third chapter of *Ada*, Nabokov has Van explain how, for some inhabitants of Antiterra, the notion of Terra became mistaken for a kind of afterlife. "Sick minds identified the notion of a Terra planet with that of another world," he writes, "and this 'Other World' got confused not only with the 'Next World' but with the Real World in us and beyond us." (AA, 23) In this confusion between an 'Other World' and the 'Next World', we find anticipated the work of a number of critics who have discerned, in the terms of W.W. Rowe's title, a "spectral dimension" to Nabokov's prose.[27] Most notably, in *Nabokov's Otherworld*, Vladimir Alexandrov argues against the prevailing consensus that Nabokov is "first and foremost a meta-literary writer," and suggests instead "that an aesthetic rooted in his intuition of a transcendent realm is the basis of his art."[28] He takes his lead from Nabokov's wife Véra, who, in her Foreword to the posthumously published collection of her husband's Russian poems, identifies the theme of *potustoronnost* as the "main theme" of his work.[29] The word "otherworld" in Alexandrov's title, he explains, is his "not wholly satisfactory" translation of that term, "a noun derived from an adjective denoting a quality or state that pertains to the 'other side' of the boundary separating life and death; additional possible translations are "the hereafter" and "the beyond." Although Alexandrov does not write about *Ada* at length, this choice of title, with its extra-terrestrial connotations, seems to support his intuition that the novel, "despite its seemingly frivolous and baroque surface, is focused on issues related to Nabokov's otherworld."[30] Despite the implication in Van's words that the proponents of this view are mistaken, thus suggesting that

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[26] Martha Duffy and Ron Sheppard, 'Prospero's Progress', in *Time*, 23 May 1969, 83

[27] W.W. Rowe, *Nabokov's Spectral Dimension* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1981)

[28] Vladimir E. Alexandrov, *Nabokov's Otherworld* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 3

[29] Véra Nabokov, 'Predislovie', in Vladimir Nabokov, *Stikhi* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1979), 3-4

[30] Alexandrov, *Nabokov's Otherworld*, 3; 212

Alexandrov's otherworldly model does not pertain to the relationship between Antiterra and Terra, it is an explanation that he plays with throughout his chronicle, with the name of the latter planet often being used as a synonym for the afterlife. In describing the sojourns of his apparent mother, Aqua (actually his biological aunt), in sanatoria all over the world, Van explains that "her real destination was Terra the Fair and thither she trusted she would fly on libellula long wings when she died." (AA, 22) When the siblings part at the end of Van's first summer at Ardis, Ada insists that she will never love anyone as much as him, "neither in eternity, nor in terrenity, neither in Ladore, nor on Terra, where they say our souls go." (AA, 127) And when forced to admit love affairs with two other men, both since deceased, she concludes that "both are on Terra now, so it does not matter." (AA, 262) However, any metaphysical interpretation of Terra is surely disallowed by the identification this planet as our own world.

Not for Brian Boyd, one of the novel's greatest advocates, who refutes Alexandrov's claim to originality by suggesting that his own work, and that of others, preceded *Nabokov's Otherworld* in its identification of the "beyond" in Nabokov's work.[31] Boyd's monograph, titled *Nabokov's Ada: The Place of Consciousness* argues that the events and composition of the chronicle are influenced from beyond the grave by Lucette, the younger half-sister of Van and Ada, who commits suicide by jumping from a transatlantic ferry. When Ada suggests "a mermaid's message" is responsible for her return to Mont Roux at the end of part four, having fled the previous evening after her reunion with Van, Boyd not only points out that the drowned Lucette is referred to on a number of occasions in the narrative as a mermaid, but also demonstrates the ethereal presence of Lucette throughout this passage. For example, at the moment of Ada's change of heart, we are informed that Van notices a powder box in his hotel room, a coincidence which he considers a "bad blunder" on the part of whatever force controls such things, "since it had been Lucette, now a mermaid in the groves of Atlantis (and not Ada, now a stranger somewhere near Morges in a black limousine) who had favored that powder." (AA, 440) Yet Boyd remains ambiguous on the exact relationship between Antiterra and Terra. He identifies an analogy between Lucette's posthumous influence over the narrative and Van's novel *Letters from Terra*, in the fact that

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[31] Brian Boyd, '*Nabokov's Otherworld* (review)', *Modern Fiction Studies* 38.2 (Summer 1992), 477-78

Van's protagonist, the miniscule Theresa, who is portrayed swimming in a test tube, and thus described as "a micromermaid" (AA, 267), "sends messages to the hero from the putative planet Terra – which many in Antiterra in fact equate with a 'Next World'." However, Boyd is also aware that Terra is closely identified with our own world, and is thus presumably not positing that planet as representative of an afterlife within the scheme of the novel.[32]

Perhaps the best insight into Boyd's understanding of *Ada*'s cosmology can be deduced from his comparison of the novel with Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, a comparison, which as Boyd points out, Nabokov invites us to make by referring to the painting in the narrative:

> In Bosch's masterpiece two wings depicting Eden and Hell flank the central panel of teeming copulators; when the wings are folded shut, their outer sides disclose a picture of the earth in a crystal ball, seen by God. *Ada* works in a similar fashion. It begins with Ardis, which Van presents as first a paradise and then also (while still paradisal) a hell of jealousy; after the expulsion from their youthful Eden Ada and Van move out into a larger world tinted from time to time by a gleam of ether or brimstone. But unknown to Van, the book can be shut up and its whole world looked at from outside, through eyes not his own, and in a completely new light.[33]

For Boyd, it seems, *Ada* contains allusions to a transcendent realm that exists beyond and outside both Antiterra and Terra, and from which Lucette exerts her influence over the world of the novel. But is it not rather the case that the inclusion of the notion of Terra in the novel brings that external perspective of the world forward to the level of the narrative? In contrast to novels such as *Invitation to a Beheading* (1935-36) and *Bend Sinister* (1947), in which the presence of another world subtly manifests itself through patterns and cracks on the surface of the text, before being revealed in the final moments of the narrative, in *Ada* Nabokov gives us our most sustained look behind the curtain of his art. Indeed, given the autobiographical and self-reflexive qualities of the novel, there seems to be a case for considering *Ada* not only as an instance of the meta-literariness against which Alexandrov defines his

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[32] Brian Boyd, *Nabokov's Ada: The Place of Consciousness* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1985), 180-81; 209-10

[33] Boyd, *Nabokov's Ada*, 91

notion of the Otherworld, but also as something of a meta-commentary on Nabokov's own style. With this in mind, the suggestions that Terra represents a kind of afterlife and the patterns and references that Boyd attributes to Lucette, influencing events from beyond the grave, can be understood both as Van's attempt to create a rich and unknowable world, and Nabokov's response to those critics who, prior to Alexandrov and Boyd, were already reading Nabokov as a metaphysical or gnostic writer.[34]

If we follow this interpretation through to its logical conclusion, then Antiterra becomes representative of the magic-carpet world of Nabokov's fiction, with Van Veen, Nabokov's authorial figure within the text, its creator. That Van Veen is the creator of this fictional world is an explanation advocated by Bobbie Ann Mason, who argues that Nabokov's protagonist fabricates this imaginary planet in order to justify his incestuous relationship with his sister. "He is so unable to face the real world head-on," she argues, "that he goes so far as to fantasize that his story did not take place on planet Earth…but on Antiterra, subtitled Demonia, a hell which he argues he must escape through the private, self-reflecting act of incest."[35] But for Hayles, this is a rather simplistic view:

> Some readers, tempted by the usual Nabokovian pattern, have proposed that Antiterra is another solipsistic world of the narrator's creation. But to accept this proposition is to simplify the text and ignore the kind of complexities that Nabokov is exploring. In *Ada*, the conflict is not between a world of illusion in which desires can be fulfilled and a real world that continually frustrates the artist's desire for control. Rather, it is the subtler tension inherent in a real world that seems partly to be amenable to the narrator's attempt to control it and partly to resist those patterns through its stubborn asymmetries.[36]

She points out the significant fact that Van, rather than attempting to suppress reality, or Terra, actually devotes his professional life to trying to understand and communicate with it, albeit largely unsuccessfully, and thus draws attention to the "scientifically ungraspable" nature of his cosmos. It is not difficult, then, to see

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[34] See Vladimir Varshavskii, *Nezamechennoe pokolenie* (New York: Izdatel'stvo imeni Chekhova, 1956)

[35] Bobbie Ann Mason, *Nabokov's Garden: A Guide to Ada* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1974), 12

[36] Hayles, *The Cosmic Web*, 127

where the difference in opinion emanates from. On the surface, one is inclined to agree with Mason that Antiterra is the product of Van's imagination, a fantasy world in which he can justify and relive his incestuous relationship with his sister. As the ostensible author of the novel, he creates this textual world in which reality and science are synonymous. But how do we align this mode of thinking with the fact that the universe of Van's memoir is logically incomprehensible? How can Antiterra be an imagined planet if it is part of a world which is ultimately unthinkable?

The answer to these questions, and the key to understanding the cosmology of *Ada*, I would argue, is actually to be found in the thoughts of one of Nabokov's minor characters, albeit one whose name denotes the whole of Antiterran reality: Van and Ada's father, Demon Veen. During a visit to Ardis, Demon laments the fact that he no longer has feelings for his sister-in-law Marina, with whom, during a three year affair that ended sixteen years previously, he fathered both Van and Ada: "It aggrieved him – that complete collapse of the past, the dispersal of its itinerant court and music-makers, the logical impossibility to relate the dubious reality of the present to the unquestionable one of remembrance." (AA, 198) This "logical impossibility" matches that experienced by the reader of Nabokov's novel in reconciling Antiterra and Terra, the former of which is said to lag behind the latter by anything up to one hundred years, and which gradually recedes into nothingness as the chronicle approaches the present day. Antiterra and Terra are thus representative of the past and the present respectively, an explanation which also, incidentally, explains the strange inversion in Demon's mind by which the distant past takes on a sense of reality superior to that of the directly experienced present. In the scheme of the novel, he is an inhabitant of Antiterra, a world which corresponds with the remembered past.

Indeed, the notion that Antiterra and Terra are analogous to the past and the present seems to be confirmed by Van's treatise on *The Texture of Time*, which he dictates in Part Four of the novel, and in which he laments our inability to grasp precisely that, the pure essence of tangible time. As he explains, any attempt to measure time invariably becomes "bogged down in Space." (AA, 420) "We measure Time," he says, "(a second hand trots, or a minute hand jerks, from one painted mark to another) in terms of Space." (AA, 424) Thus he comes to a discussion of a fictional Swiss town (the name of which brings to mind another of Nabokov's fictional lands, Zembla), which adopted a unique approach to preserving its own past:

> Zembre, a quaint old town on the Minder River, near Sorcière, in the Valais, was being lost by degrees among new buildings. By the beginning of this century it had acquired a definitely modern look, and the preservation people decided to act. Today, after years of subtle reconstruction, a replica of the old Zembre, with its castle, its church, and its mill extrapolated onto the other side of the Minder, stands opposite the modernized town and separated from it by the length of a bridge. (AA, 427)

The pertinence of this passage to the worlds of Nabokov's novel is all the clearer if we note that in detailing the composition of his novel *Letters from Terra*, Van explains the consensus that "our annals lagged by about half a century behind Terra's along the bridges of time" (AA, 267-68). At this point, the bridge is used as a metaphor for the difference in time between the two worlds. But as Van goes on to argue, this model proves inadequate in expressing the temporal relationship that we perceive between the past and the present:

> by making a model of the old town in one's mind (and on the Minder) all we do is to spatialize it (or actually drag it out of its own element onto the shore of Space). Thus the term "one century" does *not* correspond in any sense to the hundred feet of steel bridge between modern and model towns.

This simple spatial model is insufficient, Van argues, because the past and the present belong to two entirely different modes of perception. "The Past," he says, "is a constant accumulation of images," images which "tell us nothing about the texture of time into which they are woven." (AA, 427-28) Rather, they appear to us woven into the spatial texture of the magic carpet, which allows for them to be folded together in such a way that disregards chronology and geography, thus explaining the shuffled nature of terrestrial events on Antiterra. "Our perception of the Past," Van adds, "is not marked by the link of succession to as strong a degree as is the perception of the Present and of the instants immediately preceding its point in reality." (AA, 429) As such, the linear temporality represented by the metaphor of the bridge proves inadequate in connecting these two different conceptions of chronology.

From here, we come to understand why Van elects to represent the past not only as a different world, but as a world completely incompatible with that of the

present. The "logical impossibility" of relating the past to the present cannot be expressed in any simple temporal framework or model. Time allows for change, and for the shift from one state of affairs to another. Given enough time the world of Antiterra could indeed metamorphose into that of Terra. "Only time itself," writes Blanchot, "permits the 'unity of contraries.'"[37] Space, in contrast, allows for such unthinkable impossibilities, as in Foucault's description of Borges's encyclopaedia as a space in which "things are 'laid', 'placed', 'arranged' in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a *common locus* beneath them all," or the space of Blanchot's fiction as "a network in which each point is distinct, distant from even its closest neighbours, and has a position in relation to every other point in a space that simultaneously holds and separates them all."[38] Thus the present world of Terra is not one which can easily be arrived at from the past of Antiterra. In his characterisation of Antiterra as a world entirely incompatible with his own he removes the possibility of communication between the two, and thus affirms the "logical impossibility" that his father contemplates (although in Van's memoir this unspoken thought must ultimately be attributed to the narrator). Therefore, perhaps it is time to reassess the critical consensus that views Van Veen as a self-consumed narcissist, adrift in his own fantasy world.[39] Rather than reaching down into his own interiority to forge this alternate world, he actually consistently attempts to pitch his chronicle outside the limits of his own subjectivity, in a textual world completely inassimilable with his own reality.

To explain why Van sees it necessary to create a "scientifically ungraspable" world in which the past is a different world, incompatible with that of the present, we need look no further than his relationship with his sister. For Hayles, the primary difficulty with Mason's thesis is "the assertion that incest is so heinous a crime that it would be unthinkable for Nabokov to allow a character to practice it and not be insane."[40] Whether Mason does indeed diagnose Van as mentally ill is not as clear as Hayles implies it is. In any case, the opinion that the invention of Antiterra is related

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[37] Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, 30

[38] Foucault, 'The Thought of the Outside', 149

[39] See Leona Toker, '"The Dead are Good Mixers": Nabokov's Versions of Individualism', in *Nabokov and his Fiction: New Perspectives*, ed. Julian W. Connolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 102

[40] Hayles, *The Cosmic Web*, 42, n.8

to Van and Ada's incest deserves more credence. For Van, the very nature of reality is altered during sex with his sister:

> It would not be sufficient to say that in his love-making with Ada he discovered the pang, the *ogon'*, the agony of supreme 'reality.' Reality, better say, lost the quotes it wore like claws – in a world where independent and original minds must cling to things or pull things apart in order to ward off madness or death (which is the master madness). For one spasm or two, he was safe. The new naked reality needed no tentacle or anchor; it lasted a moment, but could be repeated as often as he and she were physically able to make love. (AA, 173).

It is precisely this kind of "new naked reality" that Van is attempting to recreate in his chronicle, a world that is not anchored to the world of things, and which is not concerned with how things "hold together". Moreover, this description of a kind of reality liberated from inverted commas serves to reinforce the notion that *Ada* represents something of a meta-commentary on Nabokov's fiction, echoing the author's comments on the nature of reality and its self-sufficient existence in art.

Here however, I want to argue that this sense of unanchored reality is paradoxically tied to the ostensibly 'real' places of Nabokov's novel. Consider, for example, the following passage detailing Van and Ada's half-hearted attempts to recollect their earliest sexual encounters:

> Neither could establish in retrospect, nor, indeed, persisted in trying to do so, how, when and where he actually 'de-flowered' her…Was it that night on the lap robe? Or that day in the larchwood? Or later in the shooting gallery, or in the attic, or on the roof, or on a secluded balcony, or in the bathroom, or (not very comfortably) on the Magic Carpet? (AA, 104)

Here we see echoed Foucault's description, in 'Of Other Spaces', of the honeymoon trip: "The young woman's deflowering could take place 'nowhere' and, at the moment of its occurrence the train or honeymoon hotel was indeed the place of this nowhere, this heterotopia without geographical markers." (OS, 24-25) For Foucault, like Van, sex affects the nature of reality; the train and the hotel lose their "geographical markers" only "at the moment of its occurrence." Yet there is the implication that the inner constitution of these places contributes to their

placelessness. That Van and Ada neither remember the time and place of their first sexual encounter, nor attempt to do so, reflects Foucault's assertion that this is an event that essentially takes place nowhere. Yet several of the places proposed as its possible setting are heterotopian sites, and thus themselves supposedly outside of time and space. The reappearance of the magic carpet here, Nabokov's placeless (and timeless) space *par excellence*, seems a clear indication that the author wanted to signify the extra-terrestrial nature of this incident, as do the references to the garden, signified here by the larch plantation, and the library, the scene of Van and Ada's first narrated tryst ("that night on the lap robe"), albeit in a less explicit way. For Van and Ada, of course, the taboo nature of the act is compounded by the fact that, not only are they both adolescents, a key demographic of crisis heterotopias, those spaces reserved for individuals in a state of biological crisis or change, but also by the fact that they are brother and sister. Thus this sense of placelessness persists throughout their relationship, with these non-spaces forming the familiar topography of their continued affair, providing the conditions that allow Van to create the "new naked reality" of Antiterra.

Indeed, the fact that the creation of this fictional alternate world is related to both these sites and the relationship between Van and Ada is attested to by a metaphor that Nabokov uses to describe the composition of Van's first book *Letters from Terra*, following the siblings' first major split, the exact same image Foucault uses to illustrate the placelessness of the honeymoon trip:

> One is irresistibly tempted to compare the strange longings and nauseous qualms that enter into the complicated ecstasies accompanying the making of a young writer's first book with childbearing. Van had only reached the bridal stage; then, to develop the metaphor, would come the sleeping car of messy defloration; then the first balcony of honeymoon breakfasts, with the first wasp.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the real activity to which this metaphor refers is "research at the great granite-pillared Public Library, that admirable and formidable palace." (AA, 256-57) As we know, the Ardis Library was the actual scene of Ada's own "defloration." Therefore, in creating the alternate world of his novel, which, in turn, throws the unreality of Antiterra into sharp relief, Van attempts to replicate the "new naked reality" that he experiences as a result of his relationship with *Ada*.

Rifts in the Texture of Space

So far, this chapter has been concerned with demonstrating how and why the universe of *Ada* constitutes a heterotopian world, with its two contradictory planets ostensibly occupying the exact same space. In what remains of it, I demonstrate that rather than being exclusively located in the novel's impossible cosmology, this spatial incommensurability has more localised roots, both in the particular places that make up the landscape of Van and Ada's world, and at the textual level of the sentence. That the otherworldly quality of Nabokov's fiction is manifested on such a level is perhaps most effectively articulated in his critical biography *Nikolay Gogol*. Here he draws an implicit connection between the similarly otherworldly character of Gogol's fiction and his violation of the tenets of geometry. In his reading of 'The Overcoat,' he writes

> the diver, the seeker for black pearls, the man who prefers the monsters of the deep to the sunshades on the beach, will find in *The Overcoat* shadows linking our state of existence to those other states and modes which we dimly apprehend in our rare moments of irrational perception. The prose of Pushkin is three-dimensional; that of Gogol is four-dimensional, at least. He may be compared to Lobachevski, who blasted Euclid and discovered a century ago many of the theories which Einstein later developed. If parallel lines do not meet it is not because they cannot, but because they have other things to do. (NG, 145)

A number of critics have questioned the accuracy of the claims made here by Nabokov about Lobachevski and Einstein. "Physicists see the relation of the two men rather differently,"[41] says David Rampton. Nevertheless, the implication for a reading of Nabokov's fiction remains the same. For Nabokov, it seems, this kind of spatial or geometrical anomaly, what he describes in *Transparent Things* as "a rift in the texture of space," represents the intrusion of a different mode of consciousness, or a different world, into our own sense of reality.[42]

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[41] David Rampton, *Vladimir Nabokov: A Critical Study of the Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 206, n.47

[42] Vladimir Nabokov, *Transparent Things* (New York: Vintage, 1989), 60

One thinks, in particular, of *Invitation to a Beheading*, in which Cincinnatus's prison appears as a stage set flawed by numerous inconsistencies and impossibilities. In the second chapter of the novel, for example, Nabokov's protagonist drags a table towards the highly-positioned window in his cell, in the hope of seeing the outside world. After urging him to step down from the table, Rodion, the jailer, moves the table back to its original place. But as soon as Cincinnatus is left alone again, the table is suddenly not so mobile: "He tried – for the hundredth time – to move the table, but, alas, the legs had been bolted down for ages." Later, in describing "the precious quality of Cincinnatus," Nabokov posits "the fact that the greater part of him was in a quite different place, while only an insignificant portion of it was wandering, perplexed, here," before suggesting that "it was as if one side of his being slid into another dimension."[43] Throughout the narrative, characters and places metamorphose into one another, until, at the moment of Cincinnatus's execution, this flawed world falls apart. As Alexandrov concludes, these holes in the narrative "function as reflections of the novel's central theme, which could be characterized as the imperfection of the material world in comparison to a transcendent prototype."[44]

As has been demonstrated, this notion of a metaphysical realm cannot be applied unreservedly to the world of *Ada*. Any suggestion that Terra constitutes a kind of transcendental afterlife for the people of Antiterra is precluded by the revelation of the two planets' shared identity and of Terra's equivalence with our own world. Nevertheless, this is one of the explanations that Van consistently keeps in play throughout his chronicle regarding the ambiguous relationship between the two worlds. Moreover, as we have seen, *Ada* represents something of a meta-commentary on Nabokov's own style; therefore, the techniques by which Nabokov creates the otherworldly quality of his earlier fiction remain useful when thinking about the way Van represents his own fantastical other world. Van is eager to make explicit the "scientifically ungraspable" nature of the novel's world; these rifts in space help him create the picture of such an impossible world, and allow him to constantly remind the reader of the fabricated nature of Antiterra.

Hence, we come to Foucault's geographical and architectural notion of the heterotopia, those places which are locatable in real space, but which at the same time are outside of all space. Their simultaneous constitution of two contradictory

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[43] Vladimir Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading* (London: Penguin, 2010), 16; 92-93
[44] Alexandrov, *Nabokov's Otherworld*, 89

spaces, the real and the mythical, makes them at once both a perfect microcosmic analogy of the novel's wider universe, and a privileged location in which such spatial disjunctions can occur. The garden, the library, the brothel, the ship, and the mirror all play significant roles in the novel's plot. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter comprises a survey of the most prominent heterotopian places to feature in *Ada*, an examination of the way in which these sites allow Van to create the impossible world of his chronicle, and the way in which, by foregrounding them in his narrative, Van inadvertently allows us to see the cracks in his fictional other world, and to catch glimpses back through to our own reality. First, I examine the sites that allow Van to create Antiterra in the first instance, places to be found on the idyllic Ardis estate of his and Ada's childhood, and which provide them with the space in which to begin their relationship: the mirror, the garden, and the library. Then I look at those places by way of which Van attempts to sustain this impossible world following his own exile from his personal paradise: the brothel and the ship.

Mirrors

Although *Ada* represents the most concentrated collection of Foucault's heterotopian places in Nabokov's oeuvre, much of his fiction uses these sites as spaces in which the seemingly impossible or incongruous can take place. Take the mirror, for example. A number of critics have remarked upon the abundance of mirrors, or similar reflective surfaces, found in Nabokov's work, and on their frequent role as a window between the different levels of reality found in his worlds.[45] In *Bend Sinister*, for instance, the "oblong puddle" which, as Nabokov explains in his foreword, represents a link between his own world and that of his creation Adam Krug, "a rent in his world leading to another world of tenderness, brightness and beauty,"[46] is described as being "like a fancy footprint filled to the brim with quicksilver; like a spatulate hole through which you can see the nether sky." This mercurial puddle simultaneously "contains a sample of the brightness beyond," and "reflects a portion of pale blue sky," reminding us of the mirror's capacity to replicate, but to also open

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[45] See Nils Åke Nilsson, 'A Hall of Mirrors. Nabokov and Olesha', *Scando-Slavica* 15.1 (1969): 5-12, and Alfred Appel, Jr, '*Lolita*: The Springboard of Parody', *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature* 8.2 (Spring 1967): 204-41

[46] Vladimir Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, with an Introduction by the author (London: Penguin, 2010), viii

up an entirely new space on the other side of the glass.[47] In *Pale Fire*, John Shade's poem similarly begins with an image of reflection:

> I was the shadow of the waxwing slain
>
> By the false azure in the windowpane;
>
> I was the smudge of ashen fluff – and I
>
> Lived on, flew on, in the reflected sky.

Here the waxwing is killed by the impact of its collision with the window, but simultaneously flies away in "that crystal land" beyond the glass. The mirror world reflected in the window is here explicitly associated with the otherworldly, and with the notion of a metaphysical realm. Zembla itself, the northern country from which Charles Kinbote claims to have fled, is described as a land of mirrors. Its name, he explains, "is a corruption, not of the Russian *zemlya*, but of Semblerland, a land of reflections, of 'resemblers'," while its language is described as "the tongue of the mirror." Finally, and most pertinent to this thesis's discussion of the way in which these spaces allow authors to figure the experience of exile, Kinbote uses the phrase "the mirror of exile" to describe his own fate.[48] If Borges's Tlön owes its discovery to a mirror (as well as an encyclopaedia), then so too, it seems, do many of Nabokov's other worlds.

In *Ada*, the combination of similarities and differences between the two worlds leads one Antiterran scholar to label Terra "a distortive glass of our distorted glebe" (AA, 21). However, just as the magic carpet operates in the text as both form and content, the mirror functions not just as a metaphor for the relationship between these two worlds, but also as a portal connecting them at the level of the plot. Van Veen is certainly aware of the deceptive and illusory quality of mirrors. In his discussion of the film adaptation of his novel *Letters from Terra*, responsible for the collapse of Antiterran reality, he mentions a debate surrounding the number of extras employed by Vitry, the director, whose name itself implies the vitreous quality of a mirror: "some said more than a million, others, half a million men and as many mirrors" (AA, 454). Earlier, he explains how a card sharp companion of his father's had introduced him to the techniques of his art. "Mr Plunkett," he says, "considered the use of all mechanical media, mirrors and vulgar 'sleeve rakes' as leading inevitably to exposure" (AA, 137). Van later uses this teaching to expose a university

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[47] Nabokov, *Bend Sinister*, 1
[48] Nabokov, *Pale Fire*, 29; 208; 191; 210

friend of his who he suspects is cheating at poker, "a man of many mirrors – small reflecting surfaces variously angled and shaped, glinting discreetly on watch or signet ring…all of which, as any card sharper might tell you, was as dumb as it was redundant." (AA, 138) Susan Elizabeth Sweeney draws a comparison between these passages and Nabokov's comments in his afterword to *Lolita* about his "second-rate brand of English, devoid of any of those apparatuses – the baffling mirror, the black velvet backdrop, the implied associations and traditions – which the native illusionist, frac-tails flying, can magically use."[49] She suggests that Nabokov, like Plunkett, works with sleight of hand, or indeed, in Van's words, "sleight of *land,*" to create an alternate world, rather than relying on mechanical aids.[50] However, while Van might be opposed to the use of mirrors as a method of cheating at poker, in his narrative he utilises them to great effect.

As in many of Nabokov's other works, mirrors in *Ada* rarely reflect our world faithfully, but rather provide access to another world, albeit in a less conspicuous way. Indeed, if Van and Ada create Antiterra as an alternative reality in which they can fulfil their forbidden desires, then the significance of mirrors to their trysts tells us much about the constitution of that world. The reflective quality of the library window, for example, contributes to the placelessness of their first sexual encounter. While looking out of the window at the burning barn, Nabokov writes,

> Van was delighted and shocked to distinguish, right there in the
> inky shrubbery, Ada in her long nightgown passing by with a
> lighted candle in one hand and a shoe in the other as if stealing after
> the belated ignicolists. It was only her reflection in the glass. She
> dropped the found shoe in a wastepaper basket and joined Van on
> the divan. (AA, 94)

What follows thus takes place nowhere, in the conflation of two other heterotopian spaces, with the printed matter of the library and the vegetation of the garden melding into the "inky shrubbery" of the reflection. Later, during Van's second summer at Ardis, Ada distracts her sister Lucette, who has become a recurring obstacle to the siblings' affair, by telling her that she needs to give her brother a haircut. "Van and I

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[49] Nabokov, 'On a Book Entitled Lolita', 361

[50] Susan Elizabeth Sweeney, '"By some sleight of land": How Nabokov Rewrote America', in *The Cambridge Companion to Nabokov*, ed. Julian W. Connolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 67

will retire to the bathroom," she says, "or somewhere where there's a good glass" (AA, 166). One suspects that the mirror is as necessary to their true intention as it is to their false one. By watching themselves in the looking-glass they are committing incest in an unreal space. The presence of the mirror also explains Van's inclusion of the bathroom in the list of non-places in which he might have taken Ada's virginity. Similarly, when Van and Ada attempt to implicate Lucette in their relationship by luring her into bed with them, an occurrence about which Van later expresses regret, he describes the scene "from above, as if reflected in the ciel mirror." He continues:

> we have the large island of the bed illumined from our left (Lucette's right) by a lamp burning with a murmuring incandescence on the west-side bedtable. The top sheet and quilt are tumbled at the footboardless south of the island where the newly landed eye starts on its northern trip, up the younger Miss Veen's pried-open legs. (AA, 330)

For Hayles, this episode is characteristic of "Van's attempt to distance his shame by resorting to movie-like recall." She argues that Van has a tendency to narrate "shameful moments as though they were a movie script," suggesting that, in this instance, "he writes as though he were trying to force his sensuous recall into the impersonal angles of a camera panning across a ceiling mirror."[51] But the metaphorical camera is redundant here. As in the previous examples, the mirror does not play the role of an erotic prop, but rather serves as a tool with which Van can externalise the events that he describes.

However, if mirrors provide Van and Ada with an entry-point into the alternate reality of Antiterra, they also allow for the intrusion of our reality into their looking-glass world. Thus, in his frustration at their inability to find a secluded place at Ardis, Van complains that Lucette seemed "to peep out of every mirror." (AA, 166) At the very beginning of Part Two of the novel, Van spies the reflection of his father reading a newspaper in an airport waiting room's mirror, just as he receives a letter from Ada by courier. Wishing to conceal his relationship with his sister from Demon, who eventually does forbid its continuation, he discreetly signs for, and pockets, the letter. "A flurry and flapping had started in the mirror," writes Nabokov, "but Van declined to act hastily." (AA, 259) And on his first very morning at Ardis, a

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[51] Hayles, *The Cosmic Web*, 132

chambermaid rejects Van's advances for a number of reasons, the last of which is the fact that they are being watched by Monsieur Bouteillan, the butler, in a mirror from the next room. Van asks for her forgiveness before heading outside to another of Foucault's heterotopian sites, thus placing himself at yet another remove from reality. "The butler's hand in the mirror," writes Nabokov, "took down a decanter from nowhere and was withdrawn. Van, reknotting the cord of his robe, passed through the French window into the green reality of the garden." (AA, 45)

The Garden

But in what sense is the Ardis garden representative of reality? And why is this reality green? In her study of *Ada* titled *Nabokov's Garden*, Bobbie Ann Mason argues that Van saturates his chronicle with nature imagery in order to negate the unnatural quality of his incestuous narrative, and to endow his fabricated world with an element of authenticity: "The lavish references to nature – orchids, trees, butterflies, etc. – throughout the text are Van Veen's attempt to legitimize what he fears is an unnatural story by narrating it in natural terms."[52] Hence the greenness with which reality is here tinged. Yet for Nabokov, the most lavish creations that nature has to offer, and in particular butterflies, are more frequently emblems of artifice strangely planted in nature. Describing the "mysteries of mimicry" found in lepidoptera in *Speak, Memory*, he argues that such phenomena demonstrate "an artistic perfection usually associated with man-wrought things."[53] Thus it is worth reminding ourselves that, in accordance with the above discussion of the mirror, at this point in the narrative Van is already through the looking glass, as it were; Bouteillan, the butler intrudes into his fantasy world from the other side of the glass. Moreover, as we have seen, Antiterran reality is a slippery concept. Does this "green reality," which appears in the text without inverted commas, not rather equate to the "new naked reality" that Van experiences as a result of his trysts with Ada, and which I have been arguing is synonymous with the self-sufficient reality of Nabokov's fiction? One thinks again of Foucault's radio lecture, in which he argues that "novels and gardens are probably born of the same institution." (LH, 30) In his online annotations to *Ada*, Brian Boyd suggests a literary source for Van's

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[52] Mason, *Nabokov's Garden*, 23
[53] Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, 98

description of "green reality" in the form of Andrew Marvell's 'The Garden'.[54] This poem is one of the texts that form the key to the code that Van and Ada use to communicate by mail, so that even when hundreds of miles apart their love-making still takes place in 'The Garden', so to speak. It also provides something of a key to understanding the role of the garden in Nabokov's novel. Consider, for example, the sixth stanza:

> Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
>
> Withdraws into its happiness:
>
> The mind, that ocean where each kind
>
> Does straight its own resemblance find;
>
> Yet it creates, transcending these,
>
> Far other worlds and other seas,
>
> Annihilating all that's made
>
> To a green thought in a green shade.[55]

In Marvell's poem the garden provides the conditions for the mind to transcend reality, creating "far other worlds and other seas." So too in *Ada*, the space of the garden allows Van to create the alternate world of Antiterra. Marvell's "green thought in a green shade" which supplants the physical world thus corresponds with Nabokov's own "green reality."

To understand why both Marvell and Van consider the garden a privileged space from which to imagine a transcendental other world, it seems useful to remind ourselves in more depth of what Foucault says about it. For Foucault, of course, the mythical image of the magic carpet stems from the traditional Persian garden, via the oriental rugs that represented such gardens. Essentially, the magic carpet inherits its ability to traverse space from the garden's placeless status, and from its simultaneous representation of one small section of the world, and of the entire world. The garden, in turn, attains this capability by gathering together examples of flora from all over the globe. "The traditional garden of the Persians," says Foucault, "was a sacred space that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world" (OS, 25). Although not so rigidly demarcated, the Ardis

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[54] Brian Boyd, 'Part One, Chapter 7 Annotations', *ADAOnline*, 2014
<http://www.ada.auckland.ac.nz/ada17ann.htm> [accessed 16 February 2014]
[55] Andrew Marvell, 'The Garden', in *Poems of Andrew Marvell* (London: The Folio Society, 1964), 75

garden, like the pastoral scene surrounding Barney Kiernan's pub in *Ulysses*, similarly exhibits species originating from all over the world, as is perhaps best demonstrated by the "variety, amplitude and animation of great trees" (AA, 34) that Van notices upon his first arrival. As the narrative progresses we find species native to northeastern North America, such as the elm, the oak, and the pine, but also the jacaranda, found occurring naturally in the tropical and subtropical conditions of Central America, South America, and the Caribbean; the paulownia and the maidenhair, originally from East Asia; the weeping cedar, hailing from Alaska; the larch tree, most common in Russia and Canada, and many others besides. As Rachel Trousdale has demonstrated, it is through a juxtaposition of species of flora from disparate parts of the globe that Nabokov's inexplicable passage from Russia to America in *Speak, Memory*, which this chapter takes as its starting-point, is first announced. "Nabokov's juxtaposition of orchids and pines is both ostentatiously improbable and easy for an inexpert reader to miss," she writes; "readers must pay scrupulous attention to the plants in order to understand the text."[56] Nowhere is this convergence of different horticultural traditions more evident in *Ada* than at the Ardis garden's "*rond-point,*" which Nabokov describes as

> a small arena encircled by flowerbeds and jasmine bushes in heavy
> bloom. Overhead the arms of a linden stretched towards those of an
> oak, like a green-spangled beauty flying to meet her strong father
> hanging by his feet from the trapeze. Even then did we both
> understand that kind of heavenly stuff, even then. (AA, 46)

As Foucault explains in 'Of Other Spaces', the Persian garden contains a "space still more sacred than the others," where "all the vegetation of the garden was supposed to come together." (OS, 25-26) Thus Van and Ada associate this sacred space at the centre of the garden with an extra-terrestrial, celestial quality.

Perhaps this explains why the garden estate of Ardis is so hard to locate in the scheme of the novel's geography. Although, of course, we cannot categorically assume an identical relationship between our own cities, states, and nations, and their Antiterran counterparts, it seems safe to suggest, given the revelation of the shared identity of Antiterra and Terra, the latter of which we recognise as our own world, that we can accept a certain level of correspondence. If we do so, however, Ardis

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[56] Rachel Trousdale, *Nabokov, Rushdie, and the Transnational Imagination: Novels of Exile and Alternate Worlds* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 75

becomes even more difficult to place. To all intents and purposes, it should belong to a region comparable to New England. We are informed on the opening page of the novel that the towns of Kaluga and Ladoga are located in the American states of New Cheshire (New Hampshire, surely) and Mayne, respectively. (AA, 9) Ardis itself, is said to be near the town of Ladore, which Van situates in relation to the former two towns. However, Ardis bears characteristics that contradict this apparent geography. On his first approach to the estate, Van notes that "the vegetation assumed a more southern aspect." (AA, 34) The suddenness of this transformation only emphasises the notion that Ardis is a place somehow outside of all space. Later, Van describes Ardis as "practically subtropical," (AA, 94) and as being on "the latitude of Sicily." (AA, 47)

The placeless quality of the Ardis garden and the surrounding estate thus allows Van to create the kinds of disturbances in space that he uses to characterise his unreal world. During a cycle ride to a nearby forest Van and Ada stop to contemplate their respective journeys to this point in time, questioning whether they might not have previously crossed paths without realising it. Ada though, dismisses such speculation as irrelevant:

> "But *this*," exclaimed Ada, "is certain, this is reality, this is pure fact – this forest, this moss, your hand, the ladybird on my leg, this cannot be taken away, can it? (it will, it was). *This* has all come together *here*, no matter how the paths twisted, and fooled each other, and got fouled up, they inevitably met here!"

Van evidently disagrees with her. "We must now find our bicycles," he says, "we are lost 'in another part of the forest.'" (AA, 123-124) In response to Ada's attempt to establish the "reality" of their situation, Van deliberately looks to reassert its unreality both through this Shakespearean stage direction, and by suggesting a strange configuration of space-time in which they can be in two places at once. Only a few pages later, as Van leaves Ardis at the end of his first summer there, he asks his driver to pull over at the Forest Fork just beyond the estate so he can say goodbye to Ada. "Stumbling on melons" (another reference to Marvell's poem), Van returns to the Forest Fork, only not to Bouteillan and the car, but to a horse, on which he rides away. (AA, 126-28) Again, it is the incursion of reality, of external concerns, and of the world outside of both Ardis and his relationship with Ada, that prompts Van to flout the consistency of his narrative and draw attention to its artifice. Similarly, in

the following passage, describing Van and Ada's trips to a small island on the River Ladore during their second summer together, it is the threat posed to their idyllic relationship by Ada's infidelities that prompts the impossible images our narrator describes:

> Their visits to that islet remained engraved in the memory of that summer with entwinements that no longer could be untangled. They saw themselves standing there, embraced, clothed only in mobile leafy shadows, and watching the red rowboat with its mobile inlay of reflected ripples carry them off, waving, waving their handkerchiefs; and that mystery of mixed sequences was enhanced by such things as the boat's floating back to them while it still receded, the oars crippled by refraction, the sunflecks now rippling the other way like the strobe effect of spokes counterwheeling as the pageant rolls by. Time tricked them, made one of them ask a remembered question, caused the other to give a forgotten answer, and once in a small alder thicket, duplicated in black by the blue stream, they found a garter which was certainly hers, she could not deny it, but which Van was positive she had never worn on her stockingless summer trips to the magic islet.
> (AA, 171)

Here we see the most explicit localised articulation of the geometrical impossibility writ large in the novel's cosmology. How could Van and Ada watch themselves floating away? How could the boat be both approaching and receding simultaneously? And how could the glimmer of the sunlight ripple in the opposite direction to the water? Even accounting for the fact that these are recollections, the images here remain impossible since they are entirely unthinkable. The illusory quality of "leafy shadows," the shimmering flecks of sunlight, and the ripples and refractions of the water allow Nabokov to entwine the "scientifically ungraspable" quality of his world with the very real place of the garden. Mason argues that the strange patterns of sun and shade on show here "reflect mingling realities", as if to suggest that, in typical Nabokovian fashion, the omniscient author is intervening to expose the unreality of the surrogate narrator's solipsistic world.[57] Rather, I would

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[57] Mason, *Nabokov's Garden*, 136

argue, it is the discovery of Ada's garter, the evidence of her unfaithfulness, and the threat to Van's illusory world that prompts Van to once again reassert its unreality by describing such an impossible scene. Like Foucault's other heterotopian spaces, the garden provides Van with the framework in which to create an unreal world for Ada and himself, thereby denying the unwelcome truths of reality.

The Library

The library too, like the magic carpet and the mirror, exists in a strange double relationship to the text, as both a feature of the plot and one of its structuring principles. Shortly after Van narrates his first sexual tryst with Ada, henceforth to be known as the Night of the Burning Barn, he spends an entire chapter detailing their relationship with its library setting, which concludes with the following paragraph:

> That library had provided a raised stage for the unforgettable scene
> of the Burning Barn; it had thrown open its glazed doors; it had
> promised a long idyll of bibliolatry; it might have become a chapter
> in one of the old novels on its own shelves; a touch of parody gave
> its theme the comic relief of life. (AA, 111)

This sentence seems to enact the metaleptic suggestion it contains that the library could itself become a chapter in one of the books it houses. The ostensibly real place of the library becomes more textual as the reader progresses through the semi-colons, beginning as a heterotopian stage-setting, before promising an "idyll", that is, an episode of pastoral or rural simplicity, suitable for poetic treatment, "of bibliolatry." Finally, in the last clause, the referent to which "it" refers seems to have shifted from the library itself to the chapter written about it, the chapter that Nabokov's readers have just finished reading, with its own theme and parodic touch. Or rather perhaps, the library and the chapter have become one.

As Donald Barton Johnson points out, "the chapter is a compendium of literary allusions, real and imaginary," most of which, as he explains, "deal with matters sexual and sometimes incestuous."[58] Thus, the library, in true heterotopian fashion, is a restricted and ordered space. "Ada was denied the free use of the library," writes Nabokov, "*pour ne pas lui donner des idées*." Furthermore, "every

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[58] D. Barton Johnson, *Worlds in Regression: Some Novels of Vladimir Nabokov* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1985), 131-32

book she took out to read in bed or bower had to be checked by her mentor and charged '*en lecture*' with name and stamped date in the index-card files" (AA, 105). But following Van's arrival at Ardis, and his blackmailing of Ada's governess Mlle Larivière, she is provided with any volume she desires. This, combined with the fact that Van and Ada's first narrated sexual encounter takes place in the library, leads Johnson to conclude that "the proper context for Nabokov's theme of sibling incest…is literary rather than social, psychological, or philosophical."[59] This overlooks the fact that the siblings consult works of entomology and sociology, in addition to Chateaubriand, Rabelais, and Casanova; nevertheless, this chapter allows the novel to read its own context, as well as detail the inspiration behind the protagonists' relationship, which, in turn, contributes to the creation of the world of the novel.

However, of more interest here, is the way in which the library is shown to impact upon the way the characters perceive the world surrounding them, and subsequently assist Van in his creation of Antiterra. When the diminutive and silent librarian Philippe Verger falls from his ladder, "Ada, who had thought she was alone (pulling out and scanning the utterly unrewarding *Arabian Nights*), mistook his fall for the shadow of a door being stealthily opened by some soft-fleshed eunuch." (AA, 105) Her impression is no doubt coloured by the apparently unrewarding text she is reading, populated by such figures. Moreover, the influence of the library over Antiterran reality is by no means limited to the confines of this chapter. Just as the books "crossed lawns and travelled along hedges somewhat in the manner of the objects carried away by the Invisible Man in Wells' delightful tale, and landed in Ada's lap wherever she and Van had their trysts" (AA, 107), so too do Nabokov's literary references permeate beyond the walls of the library, and beyond the limits of this chapter. The recurring image of the magic carpet, for example, derives from the same unrewarding mythical source as the "soft-fleshed eunuch." At times Van gives his readers the impression that his world, in particular Ardis, is nothing more than a tissue of literary allusions. In describing his approach to the house for the first time, he explains that "the romantic mansion appeared on the gentle eminence of old novels" (AA, 34); during Ada's guided tour of the estate he is shown "a sham grotto, with ferns clinging to it shamelessly, and an artificial cascade borrowed from some

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[59] Johnson, *Worlds in Regression*, 132

brook or book" (AA, 40); and on their return from the forest the siblings encounter a "coachman drinking tea" who it is said "came straight from a pretzel-string of old novels." (AA, 124) More specifically, Van describes "the rain that could be discerned," from the library window, no less, "slanting in parallel pencil lines against the darker background of a larch plantation, borrowed, Ada contended, from Mansfield Park." (AA, 181) Like Flaubert's *Temptation*, Nabokov's *Ada*, at least in part, is "born and takes shape in the interval between books. It is a phenomenon of the library."[60]

The Brothel

While the three previously discussed heterotopian sites have been examined in relation to the ways in which they create the conditions necessary for Van to generate Antiterra within the text, it seems that the brothel quite literally played a formative role in shaping the world of Nabokov's novel. In a 1972 essay on inspiration, Nabokov reproduces an early draft of a paragraph that would end up as part of a chapter in which Van describes a "chain of palatial brothels" imagined by his namesake Eric van Veen, and established, after his death, by his grandfather. As Nabokov explains:

> This I jotted down one morning at the very end of 1965, a couple of months before the novel began to flow. What I give above is its first throb, the strange nucleus of the book that was to grow around it in the course of the next three years. Much of that growth obviously differs in coloration and lighting from the foreglimpsed scene, whose structural centrality, however, is emphasized, with a kind of pleasing neatness, by the fact that it now exists as an inset scene right in the middle of the novel (which was entitled at first *Villa Venus*, then *The Veens*, then *Ardor*, and finally *Ada*).[61]

The paragraph in question, in its final incarnation, details Van Veen's final visit to a dilapidated Villa Venus club, where he imagines that the girl he is with is Ada. If we are to take Nabokov at his word that this passage was indeed the novel's germ, then it

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[60] Foucault, 'Afterword to *The Temptation of St. Anthony*', 106
[61] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, 310

seems to suggest that he always intended *Ada* to be the story of an attempt to sustain an unreal world in the face of an encroaching reality.

The first half of the chapter is concerned with describing the establishment of this global chain of brothels, detailing their various designs and constitutions, demonstrating their individual and collective heterotopian qualities. "Eric's grandfather range was wide," writes Nabokov, "from dodo to dada, from Low Gothic to Hoch Modern. In his parodies of paradise he even permitted himself just a few times, to express the rectilinear chaos of Cubism (with 'abstract' cast in 'concrete')" (AA, 275). Boasting styles borrowed from numerous historical and geographical traditions, these brothels have the appearance of being outside of time and space, an appearance compounded by the fact that this chapter exists, as Nabokov explains above, as a kind of set piece, removed from the chronological and spatial fabric of the novel. Adding to the illusory quality of the brothels is the fact that they are situated in hidden and secluded locales. As Van explains, "access to Venus began by a private road and continued through a labyrinth of hedges and walls with inconspicuous doors to which only the guests and the guards had keys." Moreover, the illusory character of these spaces is reinforced by the internal workings of the establishments. "A system of bells that Eric may have thought up all by himself," writes Van, "prevented visitors from running into each other on the premises, so that no matter how many noblemen were waiting or wenching in any part of the floramor, each felt he was the only cock in the coop" (AA, 276). One is reminded of Foucault's comments about the illusory quality of the brothel in Aragon's *Le paysan de Paris*: "There are some heterotopias," he says, "which seem open, but which can only truly be entered by those who are already initiated. We believe that access is simple and available, but in fact we are at the heart of the mystery." (LH, 33)

In Van's case, however, the feeling that he is the only client present may be more than just an illusion. Perhaps, instead of preventing Van from running into any other clients, this system allows him to fabricate the illustrious quality of these clubs. It soon becomes evident that the Villa Venus clubs are nothing more than a product of Van's imagination, an attempt to recreate the world of Ardis, compensating for Ada's absence during their numerous lengthy separations. Not that this fact was ever that well concealed. Although Van insists that they are "in no way related to the Veens of our rambling romance" (AA, 272), it is surely no coincidence that the surname of Eric and David van Veen is identical to the full name of Nabokov's

protagonist and narrator, and that the name of the club itself shares his initials. The suspicion that there may be more of a connection between Van and his namesakes than he is willing to admit is compounded when he lets slip that the deceased Eric is buried "between an anonymous alpinist and my stillborn double." (AA, 279) But the notion that Van imagines Villa Venus himself is made most evident in the comparisons he makes between the clubs and the garden paradise of Ardis, and in his attempts to see every girl he is with as Ada. During his first visit, Van describes how one particular girl, "trembling Adada," was unable to satisfy him, destroying the illusion that he was indeed with Ada herself, back at Ardis. With this rupture in his fantasy, Van falls back on a well-rehearsed technique: describing a flawed and illogical world to undermine the reality of the events he is recounting. "A lorry had got stuck in the mud of a forbidden and unfinished road," he writes, "and its groans and exertions dissipated the bizarre gloom." He subsequently summons every girl in the house and examines them, presumably looking for the closest likeness to Ada, before taking a particular interest in "a pale Andalusian," who revealingly becomes "the ardent Ardillusian." However, she too dismantles his illusion, remarking, as they part, "that her father had constructed the swimming pool on the estate of Demon Veen's cousin," (AA, 278) thus reminding Van, once again, that he is not actually at Ardis, and that she is not, in fact, Ada.

As the intervals between Van and Ada's rendezvous become longer, the "organized dream" of the Villa Venus clubs becomes harder and harder to sustain. In describing that first visit, Van explains how none of the brothels he had previously visited had prepared him for the experience: "It was the difference between a den and an Eden," (AA, 277) he says, in another reference to the garden paradise of Ardis. It does not take much, however, for the latter to revert back to the former, or indeed, for reality to reassert itself over the fantasy. The clubs become places of squalor, disease, and corruption, leaving Van to once again subvert the possibility of their existence by describing a scene difficult to imagine. Thus we come to the passage with which the novel supposedly began:

> On a bed, some way off, lay a pregnant woman, smoking, looking up at the smoke mingling its volutes with the shadows on the ceiling, one knee raised, one hand dreamily scratching her brown groin. Far beyond her, a door standing ajar gave on what appeared to be a moonlit gallery but was really an abandoned, half-

> demolished, vast reception room with a broken outer wall, zigzag
> fissures in the floor, and the black ghost of a gaping grand piano,
> emitting, as if all by itself, spooky glissando twangs in the middle
> of the night. Through a great rip in the marbleized brick and plaster,
> the naked sea, not seen but heard as a panting space separated from
> time, dully boomed. (AA, 280)

With its mingling smoke and shadows, its ruptured walls and floors, and the questionable presence of a ghostly and gaping grand piano, this is a difficult scenario to picture. However, most puzzling is the final image of the sea as "a panting space separated from time." Later, when dictating his treatise on *The Texture of Time*, Van quotes another of Nabokov's characters, the poet John Shade of *Pale Fire*. "Space is a swarming in the eyes, and Time a singing in the ears," he says. (AA, 425) In light of this remark, the phrase "panting space separated from time" appears something of a contradiction, since the act or sound of panting cannot be discerned without time. Yet, by creating this unimaginable world, it seems that Van, however temporarily, is able to sustain the unreal fantasy world of his relationship with Ada. "It was not Ardis, it was not the library, it was not even a human room," he writes. "The ruinous Villa no longer bore any resemblance to Eric's 'organized dream,' but the soft little creature in Van's desperate grasp was Ada.' (AA, 281-82)

The Ship

If Van's notion of the "new naked reality" is of a world that "needed no tentacle or anchor" (AA, 173), then what clearer analogy could it find in the novel than the Admiral Tobakoff, the ship on which Van and Lucette set sail from Europe on a transatlantic cruise, and from which Lucette jumps to her death after Van spurns her sexual advances? For Foucault, the ship is "a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea," thus making it his "heterotopia *par excellence*" (OS, 27). In *Ada*, this placelessness is indicated by Van's description of the Tobakoff's location after one day at sea. Sailing from Old Hantsport (presumably Southampton, where the Nabokov family arrived in May 1919 from Le Havre, also the Tobakoff's starting point) to Manhattan, the ship is said to be "on the meridian of Iceland and the latitude of Ardis" (AA, 373). Although an ostensibly precise geographical marker,

Ardis, as has been shown, is notoriously difficult to locate. This statement certainly seems to contradict the previous declaration that Ardis lies on the same latitude as Sicily; for both statements to be true the Tobakoff would have had to take a significant detour. Further references to the garden-paradise of Ardis compel the notion that we are being invited to draw comparisons between the two spaces. When Lucette is interrupted caressing Van's leg at the pool by their fellow passengers, the latter explains that "Eden was full of people" (AA, 376). Then, as Lucette climbs onto the diving board, Van describes her preparing "to ardis into the amber." (AA, 377) Thus, the ship is added to the long list of crisis heterotopias that are suitable for the act of "defloration." In describing his half-sister's last hours, Van explains that she was invited to the cabin of family friends, the Robinsons, from where, he speculates, "one could hear every word and whine of two children being put to bed by a silent seasick nurse, so late, so late – no, not children, but probably very young, very much disappointed honeymooners." (AA, 387)

It is the ship's placeless quality which also allows Van to contemplate fulfilling further forbidden desires. On a more local level, the ship's unanchored status, and its subsequent unsteadiness, creates the kind of disturbances of space that we have come to associate with the intrusion of different realities into one another. Van describes how, during his first morning on-board "the water slanted and swayed in his bath imitating the slow seesaw of the bright-blue, white-flecked sea in the port-hole of his bedroom." (AA, 373) The incessant swinging of the doors in his cabin, and the "lividly real" appearance of "the slowly widening gap of the sitting room's doorway," (AA, 387) can also presumably be attributed to the motion caused by waves. But most telling is Van's admission that, while sunbathing with Lucette, he only manages "to fan, with every shiver and heave of the ship, the fire of evil temptation." (AA, 379) With every ebb and flow, Van moves further away from Terra Firma, and progresses further into an unreal world in which he can act upon his desire. This sense of unreality created by the sway of the sea is compounded when Van and Lucette enter the ship's cinema "at the beginning of an introductory picture, featuring a cruise to Greenland." As Van explains, "the cinema theatre was swaying in counterrhythm to the cobalt-and-emerald swell on the screen." (AA, 383) Significantly, it is only at this moment, when he is twice-removed from reality, in a heterotopia within a heterotopia, that Van really permits himself to contemplate sleeping with Lucette. That is, at least, until Ada's appearance on screen in the main

feature, *Don Juan's Last Fling*, in which her role forms "a compendium of her 1884 and 1888 and 1892 looks" (AA, 385), reminds him of the pale comparison that Lucette represents to their sister. It is also interesting to note that, while Van has no adverse reaction to the rough journey, Lucette is chronically seasick, and takes medication to counteract the effects of the sway. She is not at home in this unreal world in the same way that Van is.

That Van feels guilty about Lucette's subsequent suicide, and the role he has played in it, is evident in the way it is described. He is eager to portray her leap, from the ship into the water, as an incident that belongs entirely to a fabricated world:

> Although Lucette had never died before – no, *dived* before, Violet – from such a height, in such a disorder of shadows and snaking reflections, she went with hardly a splash through the wave that humped to welcome her…Owing to the tumultuous swell and her not being sure which way to peer through the spray and the darkness and her own tentaclinging hair – t, a, c, l – she could not make out the lights of the liner, an easily imagined many-eyed bulk mightily receding in heartless triumph. (AA, 389)

Most notably, Van draws attention to the textuality of his chronicle by including, or rather neglecting to delete, the editorial asides he makes to his typist, Violet Knox, who later recognises her own name in the phrase "Oceanus Nox, n, o, x." (AA, 389) The "disorder of shadows," "snaking reflections," and "tumultuous swell," all contribute to the sense of disorientation that Van wishes to create, in order to prevent his reader from being able to readily picture the scene, as indeed does the description of the ship as "an easily imagined many-eyed bulk mightily receding in heartless triumph." Surely, Van's only purpose for prefacing this depiction with the adjective "easily imagined" is to draw attention to the fact that this image is anything but. The personifying epithet "many-eyed bulk" seems fairly straightforward, in its evocation of the scale of the ship and its illuminated portholes, but how can we attribute "heartless triumph" to a boat? Moreover, the phrase "mightily receding" verges on the point of contradiction with the adverb connoting strength, size, and excess, while the verb suggests decline, diminishment, and withdrawal. However, that this is simply another attempt on Van's part to negate the effects of an unpleasant real incident is betrayed by his description of Lucette's "tentaclinging hair," which combines his earlier descriptions of Antiterra as a world with no "tentacle," and as a

world in which people do not need to "cling" to things. (AA, 173) The fact that, after jumping overboard, she is branded by the qualities that Antiterra is defined in opposition to, serves to further imply an equivalency between the ship and Van's alternate reality, and perhaps even places this incident, perhaps the most traumatic in Nabokov's novel, as a formative moment in the creation of this fictional world.

Conclusion: The Cloudless Course of Demonian History

This chapter has been concerned with demonstrating how both Nabokov and his surrogate narrator Van Veen use Foucault's heterotopian sites to create an unreal world, one that allows them to overcome the spatial, temporal and moral boundaries that characterise their personal experiences. For Nabokov, these sites play a role analogous to that of the metaphorical magic carpet in *Speak, Memory*, allowing him to fold together the disparate localities and periods of his disjointed life, creating a world free from the rules and possibilities of reality. In Van Veen, he creates a character who exploits this unregulated fantasy, using it to justify his own depravity, in particular his incestuous relationship with his sister. However, by foregrounding these heterotopian places in his narrative Nabokov shows his readers behind the curtain of his art, and contests his own claims about the self-sufficiency of his numerous fictional worlds. By demonstrating how Van invokes the mythical or placeless quality of these sites whenever he is confronted by inconvenient truths or displeasing events, Nabokov casts Antiterra as a kind of denial of reality.

But in addition to these personal reasons for creating an alternate world, Nabokov also hints at a more collective motivation lying behind the constitution of Antiterra. We have already seen how this mythical planet has a political history that diverges from that of our own world, or Terra. In his novel *Letters from Terra*, Van presents a picture of a world pieced together from the accounts of his psychotic patients. He describes, in garbled fashion, the British Empire, the French Republic, the Soviet Union, and Nazi Germany, in each instance explaining the ways in which these recognisable histories differ from the Antiterran state of affairs. However, in the final section of *Ada*, when Van describes the film adaptation of this same novel, we find a much more detailed account of our own history, and a more explicit description of the significant way in which it differs from that of Antiterra. "In contrast to the cloudless course of Demonian history in the twentieth century," writes

Van, "with the Anglo-American coalition managing one hemisphere, and Tartary, behind her Golden Veil, mysteriously ruling the other, a succession of wars and revolutions were shown shaking loose the jigsaw puzzle of Terrestrial autonomies." (AA, 454) As he explains, Vitry, the director, presented "an impressive historical survey of Terra," including the Italian invasion of Turkey, the Russian Civil War and both World Wars. Thus confronted with their own history, it seems, the people of Antiterra can no longer ignore it. "Demonian reality dwindled to a casual illusion," says Van. "Terra convalesced after enduring the rack and the stake, the bullies and beasts that Germany inevitably generates when fulfilling her dreams of glory," he continues, "Russian peasants and poets had not been transported to Estotiland, and the Barren Grounds, ages ago – they were dying at this moment, in the slave camps of Tartary. (AA, 456) The "cloudless course" of Antiterran history thus appears to be an explicit denial of the atrocities simultaneously taking place in the reality of Terra.

In this respect, we see a further connection between Nabokov's Antiterra and Borges's Tlön, which is similarly linked to the rise of National Socialism. When Borges explains that reality yielded to Tlön, he says that, in truth, "it wanted to cave in." "Ten years ago," he writes, "any symmetry, any system with an appearance of order – dialectical materialism, anti-Semitism, Nazism – could spellbind and hypnotize mankind."[62] Rather than providing a site for political or historical contestation, these heterotopian worlds seem only to serve to deny the atrocious events of real history. The following chapter, which examines the relationship between the representation of space and the Holocaust in W.G. Sebald's fiction, explores this idea further, questioning the value of Foucault's heterotopia as a theoretical model when faced with specific historical events, namely the Holocaust.

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[62] Borges, 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', 81

Extraterritorial Spaces: Placing the Holocaust in W.G. Sebald's Fiction

Near the beginning of *Austerlitz*, W.G. Sebald's final work of semi-autobiographical prose fiction, his narrator describes a visit to Fort Breendonk, which lies about halfway between Antwerp and Brussels. During the Second World War, he explains, this fort, part of an inherently futile chain of defences constructed around the city of Antwerp during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was surrendered to the advancing German forces and subsequently used as a Nazi internment and torture camp. Perhaps this explains why Sebald's narrator claims to have been consistently confronted by an overwhelming sense of incomprehensibility as he explored the site, even though a closer examination of his account betrays a far greater level of understanding than he is willing to admit. For instance, he insists that he was unable to imagine the hardships endured by the prisoners detained there, while simultaneously providing a detailed description of precisely what it was that he was unable to envision. "I could not imagine," he writes, somewhat contradictorily, "how the prisoners, very few of whom had probably ever done hard physical labour before their arrest and internment, could have pushed these barrows full of heavy detritus over the sun-baked clay of the ground" (A, 28-29). He finds it "impossible to picture them bracing themselves against the weight until their hearts nearly burst," or to "think of the overseer beating them about the head with the handle of a shovel when they could not move forward." (A, 29) Above all, though, he attempts to articulate his lack of understanding in spatial terms. "From whatever viewpoint I tried to form a picture of the complex," writes Sebald, "I could make out no architectural plan, for its projections and indentations kept shifting, so far exceeding my comprehension that in the end I found myself unable to connect it with anything shaped by human civilization" (A, 25-26). "Even later," he adds,

> when I studied the symmetrical ground-plan with its outgrowths of
> limbs and claws, with the semi-circular bastions standing out from
> the front of the main building like eyes, and the stumpy projection
> at the back of its body, I could not, despite its now evident rational
> structure, recognize anything designed by the human mind, but saw
> it, rather, as the anatomical blueprint of some alien and crab-like
> creature. (A, 26-28)

The acknowledged contradiction here between the fort's "evident rational structure" and its supposedly inhuman and unintelligible layout is further exposed by the acute sense of spatial awareness that Sebald's narrator demonstrates once he has entered the fortress, as he describes its inner constitution in detail. "I hardly dared to go on," he says, "to the point where, at the end of a second long tunnel, a corridor not much more than the height of a man, and (as I think I remember) somewhat sloping, leads down to one of the casemates." "This casemate," he adds, "is a narrow room with walls converging at a sharp angle on one side, rounded on the other, and with its floor at least a foot lower than the passage giving access to it." (A, 32) He even reproduces a thumbnail section of the supposedly unfathomable map, showing the exact location of this casemate in relation to the larger complex of which it is a part. Far from being disorientated, as he claims, it seems that Sebald's narrator knew precisely where he was.

Why, then, does Sebald have his narrator contradict himself in attempting to present Fort Breendonk as an entirely unimaginable space? On a personal level, it seems, he is concerned about his inability to separate the traces of the crimes committed by his compatriots from his memories of his childhood home in the Bavarian town of W. The wheelbarrows used by the prisoners in their labour, he says, resembled "the handcarts used by farmers where I lived as a child for clearing muck out of the stables," (A, 28) while the casemate generates a multitude of associations, including the family laundry room, the local butcher's shop, and the German word for scrubbing brush, *Wurzelbürste*, which, he says, "was a favourite of my father's, and which I had always disliked." (A, 33) "I could well imagine," he admits, upon seeing the mess of the SS guards, "the sight of the good fathers and dutiful sons from Vilsbiburg and Fuhlsbüttel, from the Black Forest and the Bavarian Alps…After all, I had lived among them until my twentieth year." (A, 29) His efforts to describe Breendonk as an entirely unimaginable space thus seem to be a response to the difficulty he encounters in attempting to sufficiently distance himself from the traumatic history of his homeland, and the actions of his parents' generation. But why are these efforts articulated primarily in spatial terms? For Sebald, it seems, as for the rest of us, any attempt to understand the Holocaust seems inherently tied to questions of space and place, albeit in an ambiguous and often troubling sense. The names of Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Belsen have become metonymic figurations of the atrocities that took place within their walls, and of the wider network of genocide

of which they were a part. Yet, as Sebald himself said in an interview, it has "always been impossible to imagine places like Auschwitz or Treblinka, because the dimensions are just too unbelievable."[1] Breendonk, he suggests in the same interview, given to mark the publication of *Austerlitz*, exists in a difficult grey area, perhaps explaining the tension evident in his fictional alter ego's description of the site. "Breendonk is one of the places," he says, "from which one cannot imagine that it exists at all." Yet he also describes it as "a small detention center, a place that can be grasped, that allows one, barely to imagine the things that went on."[2] The incomprehensibility of this site thus seems to be contained not in its spatial configuration, but somewhere else entirely. The unimaginable and unrepresentable nature of the genocide is a familiar theme in Holocaust studies, but in this chapter, as implied by its title, I want to rephrase it in spatial terms by asking how, or indeed where, do we place the Holocaust? Seemingly superimposed in that verb "to place" are the interconnected meanings "to put or set (in a particular place, spot, or position)" and "to assign to a particular category, class, or context."[3] But in Sebald's fiction, particularly in relation to the Holocaust, I argue, these two definitions exist in a more ambivalent relationship, and even threaten to detach from one another entirely.

The problematic nature of attempting to conceptualise the Holocaust in space is evidenced by the attempts of visual artists and architects to create monuments to its memory. Confronted with the question of how to represent the unthinkable in space, they often take recourse to notions of negative space and the void in order to configure the aporia that the Holocaust represents in our consciousness. One thinks, for example, of Rachel Whiteread's *Nameless Library* memorial in Vienna (2000), which ostensibly takes the form of a cast of the internal space of a now absent building. Unlike her Turner Prize-winning *House* (1993), the Holocaust monument is not actually moulded from a real structure, yet the effect is similar. As James E.

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[1] Jean-Pierre Rondas, '"So wie ein Hund, der den Löffel vergisst": Ein Gespräch mit W.G. Sebald über *Austerlitz*', in *Literature im Krebsgang: Totenbeschwörung und memoria in der deutschsprachigen Literatur nach 1989*, eds. Arne De Winde and Anke Gilleir (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), 355. My translation

[2] Rondas, '"So wie ein Hund," 355. Translation taken from Markus Zisselsberger, 'Introduction: *Fluchtträume/Traumfluchten.* Journeys to the Undiscover'd Country', in *The Undiscover'd Country: W.G. Sebald and the Poetics of Travel*, ed. Markus Zisselsberger (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), 13

[3] "place, v.". *OED Online*. December 2013. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/144866?rskey=jCap3r&result=3&isAdvanced=false>

Young says, Whiteread's work makes "brilliantly palpable the notion that materiality can also be an index of absence,"[4] and thus assumes the character of what he calls a "countermonument", a monument conscious of its own problematic relationship to the history that it attempts to represent. As a solid concrete block, with the negative imprint of book leaves cast into its surface, the sculpture prohibits entrance to a space that is no longer accessible, and blocks admission to a library, the contents of which can no longer be read. It essentially demarcates a space, both material and conceptual, which can never again be occupied.

Daniel Libeskind's design for the Jewish Museum in Berlin uses the opposite means to achieve a similar end. Rather than giving positive form to an absence, Libeskind's project is founded upon the notion of the void, an empty space that bisects the building, an inaccessible area that nevertheless shapes everything that surrounds it. But does this focus on negative space adequately encapsulate the absence of thought that we encounter in the face of the Holocaust? There is a sense in which this utter impossibility of thought can never be formulated in real space, a notion expressed by Jacques Derrida when, in conversation with the architect, he questions the effectiveness of Libeskind's void. "My question," he says, "would have to do with the relation between this determined void of yours, totally invested with history, meaningfulness, and experience, and place itself, place as a nonanthropological, nontheological possibility for this void to take place." In opposition to Libeskind's idea of the void, Derrida posits Plato's notion of the *chora*, a concept not entirely dissimilar to our understanding of the heterotopia, which signifies an impossible place that is "neither divine nor human, neither intelligible nor sensible, a place that precedes history and the inscriptions of Forms…it challenges every dialectic between what is and what is not, between what is sensible and what is becoming." Libeskind's empty space, in contrast, lies vulnerable to

> the possibilities for philosophy and dialectics to recuperate and reinscribe the logic of the void, the logic of the absence of presence, and to reconstitute a discourse that is not proportionate

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[4] James Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 107

> precisely to the events of which your [Libeskind's] museum is
> keeping the archive.[5]

That is to say, the void in Libeskind's design, by the inescapable fact of its existence in real space, can never constitute the kind of emptiness that is considered an appropriate response to the Holocaust. As Gaston Bachelard argues in *The Poetics of Space*, rather than a non-space that constitutes the outside of all thought, the void merely represents "the raw material of possibility of being." In a chapter titled 'The Dialectics of Outside and Inside', he laments the "geometrical cancerization of the linguistic tissue of contemporary philosophy." "Philosophers," he writes, "when confronted with outside and inside, think in terms of being and non-being."[6] As implied by the title, he argues that the divisions of outside and inside, of positive and negative space, rather exist in a dialectical relationship, in which the outside is always at risk of being, as Derrida says of Libeskind's void, "reontologize[d]."[7]

Perhaps, then, a more appropriate response to the Holocaust can be identified in the work of Maurice Blanchot, a writer who not only influenced Foucault's conception of the heterotopia, but who was also, in the latter years of his career, preoccupied with the question of how to represent the Jewish genocide. In *The Writing of the Disaster* (1980), the work in which he most extensively engages with this issue, albeit in a characteristically fragmentary fashion, he summarises the paradoxical problem posed by the Holocaust. "The wish of all, in the camps," he writes, "the last wish: know what has happened, do not forget, and at the same time never will you know."[8] There is an imperative to record the Holocaust, but a simultaneous impossibility of adequately doing so. Thus, Blanchot associates the Holocaust with his notion of "the outside", a term of which Bachelard would no doubt have disapproved, but which, as we have seen, actually denotes a kind of unthinkable thought that transcends any dialectical understanding of the relationship between outside and inside. If this thought of the outside constitutes a privileged locus for writing about the Holocaust, then both exile, which Blanchot argues shares a positive relationship with exteriority, and Foucault's heterotopian spaces, those

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[5] Jacques Derrida, 'Response to Daniel Libeskind', in Daniel Libeskind, *Radix-Matrix: Architecture and Writings* (Munich: Prestel, 1997), 111

[6] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 218; 212-13

[7] Derrida, 'Response to Daniel Libeskind,' 114

[8] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 82

sites that constitute a manifestation of this unthinkable thought, could be considered an attempt on Sebald's part to find an appropriate space from which to do so.

Indeed, for Sebald, like Joyce, self-imposed exile represented both a reaction to the historical ignorance that he identified in his native country and an attempt to attain a perspective from which to write about it. In interviews he spoke of a "conspiracy of silence" among his compatriots regarding the events of their recent history, and in particular the Holocaust. "Until I was 16 or 17," he said,

> I had heard practically nothing about the history that preceded 1945. Only when we were 17 were we confronted with a documentary film of the opening of the Belsen camp. There it was, and we somehow had to get our minds around it – which of course we didn't.[9]

Later, while at university in Freiburg, he followed the Auschwitz trials in Frankfurt (1963-1965) with interest, later describing them as "the first *public* acknowledgement that there was such a thing as an unresolved German past."[10] "I realized," he said, "that there were subjects of much greater urgency than the writings of the German Romantics." But the German higher education system did not prove conducive to exploring these subjects, and Sebald became disillusioned by the realisation that many of his teachers had begun their careers during the years of the Third Reich. As Richard Sheppard writes, "the events in Frankfurt caused him increasingly to believe that the post-war German university system had been tacitly colluding in the cover-up which the Auschwitz trials were bringing to an end."[11] As Sebald said,

> the strictures of academic discourse prevented me from saying what I wanted to say or even investigating the kinds of things that caught my eye. Everyone avoided all the kinds of issue that ought to have been talked about. Things were kept under wraps in the classroom as much as they had been at home. I found that insufficient.[12]

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[9] Maya Jaggi, 'The Last Word', *The Guardian*, 21 December, 2001
<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2001/dec/21/artsandhumanities.highereducation>
[10] Christopher Bigsby, 'In Conversation with W.G. Sebald', in *Writers in Conversation with Christopher Bigsby: Volume Two* (Norwich: Pen&inc., 2001), 146
[11] Richard Sheppard, 'The Sternheim Years: W.G. Sebald's *Lehrjahre* and *Theatralische Sendung* 1963-75', in *Saturn's Moons: W.G Sebald – A Handbook*, eds. Jo Catling and Richard Hibbitt (London: MHRA, 2011), 54
[12] James Atlas, 'W.G. Sebald: A Profile' in *Paris Review* 41 (1999), 289-90

Exile seems to have allowed him, to some extent, the freedom to explore the issues raised by Germany's recent history. "Only when I went to Switzerland in 1965, and a year later to England," he said in a speech accepting admittance to the German Academy, "did ideas of my native country begin to form from a distance in my head, and these ideas, in the thirty years and more that I have now lived abroad, have grown and multiplied."[13] Thus he was able to write the four works of prose fiction for which he is most remembered, all of which touch upon the Holocaust, even if it does not form their central concern, and to give the lectures that were to be published as 'Air War and Literature', exploring the German silence in response to the Allied bombing campaign of German cities towards the end of the war.

Yet Sebald rarely affords himself the level of exteriority that Joyce and especially Nabokov find both in exile and in Foucault's heterotopian spaces. In an essay on Nabokov's life and work titled 'Dream Textures,' published in the posthumous collection *Campo Santo* (2003), Sebald describes how the "young emigrants" of the Russian exile's early fiction live "a quasi-extraterritorial, somehow unlawful afterlife in rented rooms and boarding houses, just as their author lived remote from the reality of Berlin in the twenties."[14] In this context the use of the word "extraterritorial" cannot help but remind us of George Steiner's famous reading of Nabokov with that title, in which he posits him as an archetypical twentieth century author. "A great writer driven from language to language by social upheaval and war," writes Steiner, "is an apt symbol for the age of the refugee." In contrast to many exiles, he says, Nabokov "has built for himself a house of words," and thus becomes, "by virtue of his extraterritoriality, profoundly of our time, and one of its spokesmen."[15] Sebald, in contrast, was not so at ease in exile. Although fluent in English, he chose to continue writing in German throughout his career. "Only a guest in England," he said in that same speech to the German Academy, "I still hover between feelings of familiarity and dislocation there too."[16] This contrast between Nabokov's and Sebald's respective experiences of exile is made all the more explicit in the latter's second work of prose fiction, *The Emigrants*, in which Sebald's

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[13] W.G. Sebald, 'Acceptance Speech to the Collegium of the German Academy', in *Campo Santo*, ed. Sven Meyer, trans. Anthea Bell (London: Penguin, 2006), 216

[14] W.G. Sebald, 'Dream Textures: A Brief Note on Nabokov', in *Campo Santo*, ed. Sven Meyer, trans. Anthea Bell (London: Penguin, 2006), 148

[15] Steiner, 'Extraterritorial', 11; 7

[16] Sebald, 'Acceptance Speech', 217

characters repeatedly encounter Nabokov at different stages of his transnational biography. He appears in a photograph taken in the mountains above Gstaad, in which, Sebald's narrator remarks, he bears a striking resemblance to Dr Henry Selwyn, the eponymous protagonist of the first story; in the second story Lucy Landau tells the narrator that it was while reading *Speak, Memory* that Paul Bereyter first approached her and talked to her; Ambros Adelwarth, Sebald's third emigrant, regularly sees a middle-aged man with a butterfly net from the window of the sanatorium that he checks himself into in Ithaca, where, of course, Nabokov was teaching at Cornell; and in the final story, Nabokov makes two appearances, first as the sixty-year-old butterfly collector that Max Ferber encounters in the Swiss Alps near Montreux, and who he attempts, in vain, to paint a portrait of, and then as a ten-year-old boy with a butterfly net in Bad Kissingen in the memoirs of his mother Luisa. But while Nabokov floats ethereally between the different narratives, equally at home in the different countries in which he is seen, Sebald's emigrants seem increasingly perturbed by their exile status and by their respective traumatic pasts.

As John Zilcosky has demonstrated, rather than hopelessly lost nomads, desperate for a return to a happier past, Sebald's expatriate characters are usually striving to escape a traumatic history, albeit with little success. In his opinion, Sebald undermines the traditional travel narrative, in which the individual gets deliberately lost in order to reorient himself, by showing the impossibility of actually losing one's way. As Zilcosky writes, Sebald

> demonstrates how our disorientations never lead to new discoveries, only to a series of uncanny, intertextual returns…Instead of providing accounts of nomadism, Sebald tells stories in which subjects can never become sufficiently disoriented.[17]

In *The Emigrants*, for example, Ambros Adelwarth, despite his far-reaching travels, seems unable to escape the memory of his home. In Constantinople, he and his travelling companion Cosmo Solomon "turn a corner and unexpectedly have a distant view of a blue line of mountains and the snowy summit of Olympus. For one awful

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[17] John Zilcosky, 'Sebald's Uncanny Travels: The Impossibility of Getting Lost', in *W.G. Sebald – A Critical Companion*, eds. J.J. Long and Anne Whitehead (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 102-103

heartbeat," he says, "I imagine myself in Switzerland or at home again."[18] And in Sebald's first prose work, *Vertigo* (1990), in reference to his wanderings through Vienna, the narrator exclaims that had someone traced his route on a map, "it would have seemed as though a man had kept trying out new tracks and connections over and over, only to be thwarted each time by the limitations of his reason, imagination or will-power."[19] Thus, despite Blanchot's insistence that the space of exile is in some sense exterior to our consciousness, for Sebald it remains fully assimilable by his characters' subjectivities.

That space contains the potential to constitute a similar experience of exteriority to exile in Sebald's fiction is made evident by his frequent use of the term "extraterritorial" to also describe particular places. In *The Rings of Saturn* for instance, this word is used to describe a district of the Hague (RS, 81), Orford Ness (RS, 233), and the country house Somerleyton Hall.[20] Moreover, his narratives are saturated with spaces which are described as being miniature realms in their own right, as indicated by phrases such as "self-contained universe," (A, 152) or "an entire world unto itself," (RS, 37) labels which similarly evoke a kind of extraterritoriality, a notion of being outside of all other places. Thus, the connection between these sites and the heterotopia seems self-evident. Indeed, many of the spaces mentioned by Foucault in 'Of Other Spaces' feature in Sebald's fiction, and are frequently highlighted by one of the above epithets, or similar such description. Yet just as Sebald's characters only find reminders of their traumatic pasts in the space of exile, any semblance of exteriority that these extraterritorial places might afford is frequently undermined by the traces of history that they contain, as they regularly evoke memories of colonialism, genocide, or other historical atrocities.

Although Joyce and Nabokov were working within the same European tradition as Foucault, responding to many of the same writers and texts (with the honorary European Borges constituting a particularly pertinent node between them), their respective fascinations with heterotopian sites occurred independently of Foucault's writings on the subject. Joyce, of course, died when Foucault was only fourteen years old, while Nabokov had long been exploring the libraries, motels,

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[18] W.G. Sebald, *The Emigrants*, trans. Michael Hulse (London: Harvill, 1997), 131

[19] W.G. Sebald, *Vertigo*, trans. Michael Hulse (London: Harvill, 1999), 34

[20] Somerleyton Hall is only designated as such in the German original, as a "quasi extraterritorialen Ort." W.G. Sebald, *Die Ringe Des Saturn* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997), 49. In the English translation it becomes "some kind of no man's land." (RS, 36)

prisons, and gardens that make up his looking-glass world by the time the philosopher lectured to the Cercle d'études architecturales in 1967. Sebald, in contrast, makes an explicit engagement with Foucault's ideas, and thus provides us with an interesting critique of the concept of the heterotopia, rather than another demonstration of the capacity of these sites to open up alternative configurations of space. Indeed, Sebald ultimately rejects the heterotopia as a useful, or even possible, textual formation in the wake of the Holocaust. Numerous critics have remarked upon the evident influence of Foucault upon Sebald's fiction, arguing that the author's career as a lecturer in European Literature explains a theoretical awareness that manifests itself in references to Walter Benjamin, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, as well as Foucault. However, those who have sensed an explicit engagement with Foucault in Sebald's fiction tend to focus on his examination of disciplinary power, as most extensively discussed in *Discipline and Punish*. In *The Novel After Theory* (2011), Judith Ryan lists Sebald, along with A.S. Byatt, J.M. Coetzee, and Umberto Eco, as writers who are also academics, thus explaining their familiarity with certain theoretical texts, and their employment of that knowledge in their own fiction. She cites the fact that Sebald's critical works reference Foucault, but insists that this "extrinsic evidence confirms what can also be deduced by close analysis of the narrative texts." Thus, she goes on to examine the Foucauldian disciplinary power structures to be found in both *The Rings of Saturn* and *Austerlitz*. "The theoretical foundation for both books," she argues, "is provided in part by Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*," before suggesting that "Sebald's *Austerlitz* confronts precisely the later developments of the power structures Foucault had studied and that he had refrained from pursuing in *Discipline and Punish*."[21] In *W.G. Sebald: Image, Archive, Modernity* (2007), J.J. Long similarly demonstrates Sebald's familiarity with Foucault, quoting passages of his critical texts that reference the philosopher's work, before examining the "discursive overlaps" between Foucault's work and Sebald's fiction:

> the salient disciplinary techniques [Foucault] identifies, and the configuration of power within which they operate, provide a highly fruitful framework for the study of a wide variety of other practices and institutions that bear directly on the subject of this study,

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[21] Judith Ryan, *The Novel After Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 5-6; 150; 154

namely modernity, the image and the archive in the work of W.G. Sebald.[22]

Finally, in Deane Blackler's study of Sebald's fiction, which uses the phrase "Foucault-inflected" on more than one occasion to describe his language, six of seven mentions of Foucault's name are accompanied by references to, or quotations from, *Discipline and Punish*.[23]

This is not to suggest that there have not been also been discussions of the significance of the heterotopia to Sebald's fiction; however, those who have noticed the correspondences between his work and Foucault's writings on the subject have either misconstrued the concept altogether or misinterpreted its importance for Sebald. In her recent thesis, *Verschachtelte Räume: Writing and Reading Environments in W.G. Sebald* (2012), Emily Erin Jones argues that "Sebald's destabilized narrative and idiosyncratic textual practice constitute a dialogue with the phenomenon of heterotopia articulated by Foucault." In Sebald's discussion of the *Book of Imaginary Beings* in *The Rings of Saturn*, she too identifies an "implicit reference to Foucault's discussion of Borges." However, her interpretation of Foucault's concept is founded upon a crucial misconception that negates the value of her argument. For Foucault, she argues, Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia represents "the disconcerting proximity of extremes," or "sudden vicinity of things that have no relation to each other," (OT, xvi) with which, he says, we are all familiar.[24] But in actual fact, Foucault says that the *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge* awoke in him "the suspicion that there is a worse kind of disorder than that of the *incongruous*, the linking together of things that are inappropriate" (OT, xix). Jones mistakenly argues that Sebald's works of prose fiction constitute textual heterotopias by dint of their inclusion of strange lists, their intermediality, their non-linearity, and their use of bracketed narratives, none of which fundamentally affect the well-defined space of his narratives. She goes on to discuss the presence of many of Foucault's other spaces in Sebald's fiction, but focuses on their powers of exclusion, largely discussing them in relation to the disciplinary structures of power that

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[22] J.J. Long, *WG Sebald: Image, Archive, Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 15-16

[23] Deane Blackler, *Reading W.G. Sebald: Adventure and Disobedience* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007), 121; 130; 173; 184; 198; 200

[24] Jones, *Verschachtelte Räume*, 140; 142

Foucault proposes in his other works, making no concerted attempt to unify the two different definitions of the heterotopia.

Closer to my own project is Dora Osborne's discussion of Foucault's heterotopia in relation to *Austerlitz.* She too identifies "an overt reference to Foucault's essay" in Sebald's representations of place, and considers "the implications of Foucault's mobilization of the term heterotopia as a means of modelling other spaces for an engagement with the most radically other space of the Holocaust." She argues that the heterotopia is ultimately an inadequate model of alterity for the Holocaust, since, although Foucault describes it as an entirely other space, it is said to share a number of qualities with a series of other spaces. "The logic of enumeration and similarity used in the essay," she writes, "questions the appropriateness of using its model for thinking the radical otherness and singularity of the Holocaust."[25] Sebald enacts this problematic analogous relationship between these spaces, she says, by repeatedly superimposing them in the minds of his narrator and protagonist. However, Osborne refers only to the architectural or geographical notion of the heterotopia, and thus does not examine the inadequacy of impossible textual spaces as a way of figuring the thought of the Holocaust.

In this, the final chapter of this thesis, I will demonstrate how Sebald's final two works of prose fiction constitute a critical reading of Foucault's notion of the heterotopia in such a way as to bring into question its theoretical value at the end of the twentieth century, and particularly in the wake of the atrocities of the Holocaust. In *The Rings of Saturn*, I argue, Sebald makes an explicit engagement with Foucault's reading of Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia by referencing a number of texts that bring it to mind, but which ultimately contradict it , such as Borges's *Book of Imaginary Beings* (1969), Sir Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646), and, most significantly, Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (1632). In so doing, I suggest, he aims to expose the shortcomings of a Cartesian way of thinking that equates space with thought, and upon which Foucault's notion of the unthinkable seems to be founded. I take as my starting-point a controversial juxtaposition that Sebald makes in the third chapter of his text between a photo of a herring surplus and an image of the corpses of Holocaust victims, images which Sebald brings together in his mind as a result of the space of his walking-tour. By

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[25] Osborne, 'Projecting the Heterotopia', 59; 47; 50

demonstrating how Sebald rejects the contingency of thought upon space, I aim to dispel the consternation that has frequently accompanied critical discussions of this juxtaposition. Then, in relation to *Austerlitz*, I examine the almost exhaustive correlation between the spaces of Sebald's text and those described by Foucault in 'Of Other Spaces'. These sites, I argue, act as a kind of foil to the sites of the Holocaust that feature in the narrative; while Sebald's characters' knowledge of the historical atrocities that were involved in the construction of many heterotopian sites allows them to dismiss the mythical or unreal quality of these places, the incomprehensibility that characterises concentration camps and ghettos can never be dispelled, since it is precisely within their respective histories that it is contained.

Sebald's Dissecting Table: Space and Order in *The Rings of Saturn*

"Three or four miles south of Lowestoft," where the third chapter of *The Rings of Saturn* begins, Sebald's narrator observes a row of fishermen camped out along the coastline. But fishing, he insists, is not their primary objective. "They just want to be in a place where they have the world behind them, and before them nothing but emptiness." "The fact is," he continues, "that today it is almost impossible to catch anything fishing from the beach," a statement that leads to a lengthy digression on the decline of herring fishing, illustrated by an image of a herring surplus in Lowestoft and a line drawing of the fish that reflects its status as "a popular didactic model in primary school" (RS, 51-53). When we finally catch up with Sebald's pilgrimage, he has left the fishermen behind him and reached Benacre Broad, about halfway between Lowestoft and Southwold, where the sky begins to turn grey. "Perhaps it was that darkening," he writes, "that called to my mind an article I had clipped from the *Eastern Daily Press* several months before, on the death of Major George Wyndham Le Strange," who "served in the anti-tank regiment that liberated the camp at Bergen Belsen on the 14th of April 1945." (RS, 59) As we turn the page we are confronted by a double-page photograph of dead bodies lying on a forest floor, a sight similar to that which Le Strange must have seen that day. Thus, within the space of eight pages, Sebald juxtaposes a picture of herring piled up on the floor of a Lowestoft fishmonger's with the image of corpses heaped on top of one another at Bergen Belsen, a juxtaposition that has provoked consternation from a number of critics. "Is it tasteless," asks Mark McCulloh, "to lump together such qualitatively

different phenomena?"[26] J.M. Bernstein likewise suggests that "the herring holocaust is an ethically thin metonymic focus for the history of destruction of which it and the Holocaust are parts and an ethically dubious allegory for the Holocaust."[27] Long too, questions the ethical implications of such a juxtaposition and suggests that Sebald's historical morality "begins to look like a meaningless gesture in a text that cannot differentiate between the murder of the Jews and industrial trawling for herring."[28] Finally, Anne Fuchs calls it a "daring juxtaposition" that reveals the "common denominator" between the two images: "a cold and objectified biopolitics which disregards the value of life by means of a reductive interpretation of nature."[29] But is Sebald necessarily implying a qualitative relationship between these two images simply by placing them next to one another in the text? This specific question invokes a much broader one: how do things hold together in *The Rings of Saturn*? After all, what common ground can be found by a book that contains meditations on such diverse topics as the skull of Sir Thomas Browne, the life of the Dowager Empress Tz'u-his, and the history of sericulture? In what follows I demonstrate how Sebald's engagement with Foucault, and his critique of the heterotopia, helps us to understand the way in which he uses the space of the Suffolk landscape to bring these subjects into conjunction with one another, while simultaneously avoiding a problematic or trivialising sense of equivalence between the fragments of his narrative.

As Richard T. Gray has remarked, in *The Rings of Saturn* "it is not the distinct narrative elements themselves that are the primary bearers of meaning, but rather the imaginative syntax that brings them into conjugative relationships." This much is attested to by the title of Sebald's work, and the explanatory epigraph from the Brockhaus Encyclopaedia, which tells of the gravitational pull holding the fragments of former moons in orbit around the titular planet, thus creating the appearance of rings. Gray suggests that

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[26] Mark R. McCulloh, *Understanding W.G. Sebald* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 65

[27] J.M. Bernstein, 'Mad Raccoon, Demented Quail, and the Herring Holocaust' in *Qui Parle* 17.2 (Spring/Summer 2009), 46

[28] Long, *W.G. Sebald*, 143-44

[29] Anne Fuchs, '"Ein Hauptkapitel der Geschichte der Unterwerfung": Representations of Nature in W.G. Sebald's Die Ringe des Saturn', in *W.G. Sebald and the Writing of History*, eds. Anne Fuchs and J.J. Long (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007), 173

> an alternative critical approach to Sebald's text, rather than attempting to catalog and establish hierarchies among its diverse fragments, can focus on the transitions and interfaces that underwrite their conjunction, generated in the narrative consciousness that constitutes the text as *text(ure)*.

"These transitions and junctions," he concludes, "are what I designate as Sebald's segues."[30] Therefore, in thinking about the implied relationship between the herring surplus and the image of Bergen Belsen, it seems necessary to reconsider the "segue" by which Sebald's narrator moves from the former to the latter. The seemingly incidental association based on the weather could certainly be seen to suggest an equivalence or resemblance; as we have seen in relation to his visit to Fort Breendonk, Sebald's narrator is not always entirely honest with his readers, or indeed himself, about his thought processes. The mention of the gathering clouds and the use of the word "perhaps" might serve to gloss over the potentially ethically problematic process by which he couples these two topics. However, Sebald smuggles in an alternative, and far more empirical, connection between them when he informs us, upon arrival at Benacre Broad, that Le Strange's "great stone manor house in Henstead stood beyond the lake." (RS, 59) These two narrative digressions are thus principally connected by nothing more than the geographical proximity of their respective metonymic representations.

That space plays a central role in the structuring of Sebald's narrative is implied by his discussion, in the opening chapter, of the office of his late colleague, Janine Dakyns, which seems to serve as something of a model for the entire text. As he says, the reams of lecture notes, letters and miscellaneous documents that fill the room constitute a kind of "paper universe," or "a virtual paper landscape" (RS, 8). Yet despite this glut of information, Sebald relates, Dakyns claimed that "the apparent chaos surrounding her represented in reality a perfect kind of order, or an order which at least tended towards perfection." By arranging her knowledge spatially, by forging it into a metaphorical landscape, she is able to locate everything immediately. As Sebald says, "the fact was that whatever she might be looking for amongst her papers or her books, or in her head, she was generally able to find right away." (RS, 9) That we should compare this "paper landscape" to Sebald's own text

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[30] Richard T. Gray, 'Sebald's Segues: Performing Narrative Contingency in *The Rings of Saturn*' in *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 84.1 (2009), 35

seems to be affirmed on the very last page of the final chapter, when the narrator references "a passage of the *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* that I can no longer find." (RS, 296) Tellingly, this final chapter is the only one with no ostensible geographical location, with Sebald taking Browne's *Musaeum Clausum*, that imaginary collection of books and rarities, "to which there is no access except through the letters on the page," (RS, 271) as his point of departure. In contrast to the walking tour that makes up the preceding chapters, the landscape of which acts in an analogous way to Dakyns's office by allowing Sebald's narrator to locate and arrange the diverse subjects of his digressions, this placeless final episode does not afford him the same ability. However, in relation to the particular juxtaposition between the herring surplus and the Holocaust victims, there is a sense in which this equation of space and order is equally as problematic as any perceived suggestion of equivalence or resemblance between the two images. Sebald's Suffolk comes to represent, in Foucauldian terms, the common locus which "provides proof of the possibility of juxtaposition." (OT, xvii) As Foucault writes, it is this common ground "that enables thought to operate upon the entities of our world, to put them in order, to divide them into classes." (OT, xix) Therefore, by allowing the Holocaust to take root in his landscape, Sebald seemingly implies that it is comparable to the other historical events that he discusses, and that it can be easily assimilated by our thought.

Perhaps this is why a number of critics have chosen to view Sebald's Suffolk as a kind of heterotopian non-space, as if such incommensurable historical events and ideas could never lie in any propinquity to one another, and could only ever "glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry, of the *heteroclite*." (OT, xix) For David Darby the different episodes of *The Rings of Saturn* lack "topographic interrelatedness." Absent from the narrative, he argues, is "the confidence of being able to get from the site of one story to that of the next,"[31] an idea which recalls Foucault's definition of the heterotopia as a textual space in which "things are 'laid', 'placed', 'arranged' in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a *common locus* beneath them all." (OT, xix) Here Darby is not referring to Sebald's far-ranging mental travels, which take the reader to such distant places as The Hague, Uruguay,

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[31] David Darby, 'Landscape and Memory: Sebald's Redemption of History', in *W.G. Sebald: History – Memory – Trauma*, eds. Scott Denham and Mark McCulloh (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 269

the Congo, Ireland, and China, but rather to the seemingly well-defined topography of his pilgrimage. As he says:

> So much of the walk seems to follow paths that are improvised: the walker cuts across fields, climbs over walls, loses himself in labyrinths, real and metaphorical, wanders lost in circles, and nearly comes to grief, blinded in a sandstorm.

"None of it can be held together," Darby adds, "by an act of objective representation,"[32] a phrase which, in turn, mirrors Foucault's definition of the heterotopia as a space that destroys "that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together'." (OT, xix)

Others have made a more explicit connection with Borges, drawing on the numerous references that Sebald makes to the Argentine in his narrative. As Gray argues, Sebald alludes to a number of texts that

> operate not primarily on the diegetic level as narratives that can be integrated into the larger narrative framework, but rather as formal or structural models that serve as paradigms for the organizational architecture of Sebald's own narrative.

"One quality that these structurally-oriented intertexts tend to share," adds Gray, "is their specifically encyclopedic character,"[33] an attribute which makes them an ideal locus for comparison with the Chinese encyclopaedia, especially when one considers that several of them catalogue animals, both real and imaginary, and two of them are written by Borges. Thus, John Beck argues that *The Rings of Saturn* resembles the encyclopaedic planet of Tlön, as described in Borges's 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', which Sebald references on more than one occasion in the text. "Sebald's Suffolk is a Borgesian world where the visible universe may well be an illusion," he says; it is a textual world, an "orderly labyrinth devised and deciphered by man," but which is ultimately incompatible with reality.[34] Mark McCulloh similarly suggests that "the motifs of fluid identity and coincidence by secret design" that recur in Sebald's text can be explained by the notion of "monism" that, he says, "characterizes the belief

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[32] Darby, 'Landscape and Memory', 270

[33] Gray, 'Sebald's Segues', 31

[34] John Beck, 'Reading Room: Erosion and Sedimentation in Sebald's Suffolk', in *W.G. Sebald – A Critical Companion*, eds. J.J. Long and Anne Whitehead (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 81

system of the fantastic invented world called Tlön."[35] However, any suggestion that Sebald is holding Tlön up as a model for his own text seems to be undermined by the passages of Borges's story that he paraphrases. First Sebald references the discussion which takes place at the beginning of Borges's story, between the author and Adolfo Bioy Casares about a novel which, as Sebald says, "would fly in the face of palpable facts and become entangled in contradictions in such a way that few readers would be able to grasp the hidden, horrific, yet at the same time quite meaningless point of the narrative." This, Beck argues, could well be a self-referential description of Sebald's own narrative. But it seems strange that the author would use the word "meaningless" in such a context. Then Sebald quotes from the postscript to the story, in which Borges claims that Tlön is "on the point of blotting out the known world," before dismissing such a suggestion with the question "what is that to me?" Ultimately, the man-made nature of Tlön means that it is incompatible with the real world; therefore, the attempt to "create a new reality, in the course of time, by way of the unreal," proves to be fundamentally flawed. (RS, 69-71) In a book that describes red herrings (RS, 58), the references to Borges's Tlön seem designed to mislead readers in their attempts to interpret the text.

Rather, in looking for structural models for Sebald's text, we should focus our attention on the opening chapter of *The Rings of Saturn*, which constitutes something of a preface to his own narrative, and in which he performs a critique of Foucault's notion of the heterotopia as outlined in the preface to *The Order of Things*. By referring to a number of texts that gesture towards Foucault's discussion of Borges's encyclopaedia, but which ultimately contradict the definition of the heterotopia that he posits in relation to it, Sebald rejects the heterotopia as a structuring principle for his own narrative. Most pertinent for comparison is another text written by Borges, his *Book of Imaginary Beings*, in which he collates creatures from literature and mythology, such as the Minotaur, Scylla and Charybdis, the Cheshire Cat, and several beasts described in the fiction of Franz Kafka. This compendium acts, for our purposes, as a kind of foil to the Chinese encyclopaedia, in that while it similarly demonstrates Borges's fascination with fantastical beasts, here, as Sebald makes sure to point out, they are simply "listed alphabetically," (RS, 22)

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[35] McCulloh, *Understanding W.G. Sebald*, 20

and thus pose no threat to our spatial comprehension. As Foucault writes in reference to the *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*:

> It is not the 'fabulous' animals that are impossible, since they are
> designated as such, but the narrowness of the distance separating
> them from (and juxtaposing them to) the stray dogs, or the animals
> that from a long way off look like flies. (OT, xvii)

Similarly, the very title of the *Book of Imaginary Beings* designates the creatures described within its pages as unreal. Perhaps, then, we should turn our attention to Sir Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, in which, Sebald informs us, the physician "deals with beings both real and imaginary," including the chameleon, the ostrich, the phoenix, and the unicorn. While the Chinese encyclopaedia "localizes [the] powers of contagion" of the real and unreal beasts by putting them into categories of their own, Browne's compendium provokes such contamination. "In most cases," Sebald says of the *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, "Browne refutes the existence of the fabled creatures, but the astonishing monsters that we know to be properly part of the natural world leave us with a suspicion that even the most fantastical beasts might not be mere inventions." (RS, 22) However, Foucault goes on to explain that the strangeness of the Chinese encyclopaedia is neither to be found in

> the oddity of unusual juxtapositions that we are faced with here.
> We are all familiar with the disconcerting effect of the proximity of
> extremes, or, quite simply, with the sudden vicinity of things that
> have no relation to each other. (OT, xvii)

Therefore, despite calling to mind Borges's heterotopian construct, neither of these catalogues can be considered analogous to it. Neither can be considered to violate the stable space of the "table upon which, since the beginning of time language has intersected space," a phrase which points us in the direction of the most important of Sebald's structural models, Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*.

Sebald's reading of this painting is by no means unacquainted with Foucault's ideas. Blackler argues that *The Anatomy Lesson* "fixes forever the image of a victim whose corpse is harrowed in Michel Foucault's formulation after society's own institutionally sanctioned sickness."[36] Certainly, Sebald's description

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[36] Blackler, *Reading W.G. Sebald*, 130

of the event depicted as a "spectacle, presented before a paying public" (RS, 12) resonates with what Foucault refers to in *Discipline and Punish* as the "spectacle of the scaffold."[37] Yet this interpretation largely neglects the astonishing misrepresentation that Sebald identifies at the heart of the painting. As he explains, the left hand of executed petty thief Aris Kindt is both oversized and inverted: the exposed tendons, which ought to be those of the left palm, actually belong to the back of the right hand. "It seems inconceivable," says Sebald, "that we are faced here with an unfortunate blunder. Rather, I believe that there was deliberate intent behind this flaw in the composition" (RS, 17). What we are looking at, he argues, is a direct transposition from an anatomical atlas, like the one that lies open at Kindt's feet, and in which the body is displayed in diagrammatic form, "such as envisaged by the enthusiastic amateur anatomist René Descartes," who, it is said, was present at the dissection, and whose works, Sebald says, "form one of the principal chapters of the history of subjection" (RS, 13). By imperfectly replicating the hand, argues the author, Rembrandt identifies with the victim, exposing his inhumane treatment at the hands of the surgeons. "His gaze alone," concludes Sebald, "is free of Cartesian rigidity. He alone sees that greenish annihilated body, and he alone sees the shadow in the half-open mouth and over the dead man's eyes" (RS, 17).

Claudia Albes thus sees Sebald's reading of the painting as analogous to that by Foucault of Velázquez's *Las Meninas* in the opening chapter of *The Order of Things*. In the copy of a copy, the transposition from the anatomical atlas, she argues, the painting stages, as Foucault says of *Las Meninas*, "the necessary disappearance of that which is its foundation – of the person it resembles," meaning that "representation, freed finally from the relation that was impeding it, can offer itself as representation in its pure form." (OT, 18)[38] However, while Foucault posits Velázquez's painting as the epitome of what Foucault calls Classical representation, in Rembrandt Sebald identifies a far more liminal position. As Tanja van Hoorn remarks, "Rembrandt's painting becomes for Sebald the starting-point for an exploration of the rivalry of two different epistemes,"[39] with the "much-admired

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[37] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 32-69

[38] Claudia Albes, 'Die Erkundung der Leere: Anmerkungen zu W.G. Sebalds »englischer Wallfahrt« Die Ringe des Saturn' in *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 46 (2002), 299-300

[39] Tanja van Hoorn, 'Ordnung in der Wunderkammer: Thomas Browne und die Signatur des Quincunx', in *Cardanus: Jahrbuch für Wissenschaftsgeschichte 6: Naturspiele: Beiträge zu einem naturhistorischen Konzept der Frühen Neuzeit* (2006), 55. My translation.

verisimilitude" of the majority of the painting, typical of Renaissance representation, contrasting with the "Cartesian rigidity" of the Classical era, or Enlightenment. (RS, 16-17)

Perhaps, then, in the sense that it encapsulates numerous different ordering systems in the same site, one could consider Rembrandt's painting a kind of heterotopian space. It certainly has the effect of one. Upon visiting the Mauritshuis in The Hague to see the painting, Sebald describes the feelings of confusion that it provokes in him. "I was quite unable to harness my thoughts," he says, "as I looked at that body being dissected under the eyes of the Guild of Surgeons" (RS, 82). His experience is not dissimilar to that induced in Foucault by his reading of Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia. Such impossible spaces, argues Foucault, possess the capacity to break up "all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things." (OT, xvi) Yet Rembrandt's painting is categorically not heterotopian. Of course, no painting can ever be truly heterotopian: the canvas itself constitutes the common locus on which its different elements meet. But in Rembrandt's painting this common locus is reinforced by another inscribed within the frame: the dissecting table on which Aris Kindt's corpse lies, figured in the painting by the narrow strip of illuminated wood beneath his body. In further illustrating the notion of a common locus in the preface to *The Order of Things*, Foucault refers to Lautréamont's famous image of "the umbrella and the sewing-machine on the operating table," which would become something of a motto for the Surrealists; "startling though their propinquity may be," writes Foucault, "it is nevertheless warranted by that *and* ... by that *on* whose solidity provides proof of the possibility of juxtaposition" (OT, xvii). Borges's encyclopaedia is deemed unthinkable due to its lack of site, or table, and conversely, Foucault argues, thought is contingent upon space:

> I use that word 'table' in two superimposed senses: the nickel-plated, rubbery table swathed in white, glittering beneath a glass sun devouring all shadow – the table where, for an instant, perhaps forever, the umbrella encounters the sewing-machine; and also a table, a *tabula*, that enables thought to operate upon the entities of our world, to put them in order, to divide them into classes, to group them according to names that designate their similarities and their differences. (OT, xviii-xix)

Those who are familiar with Lautréamont's original phrasing will be aware that Foucault has misquoted it here. Rather than an operating table, it is upon a dissecting table, like that beneath Aris Kindt's body, that the poet imagines the meeting of sewing machine and umbrella.[40] Therefore, the two different modes of representation in Rembrandt's painting are seemingly united on Foucault's exemplary common locus. In this instance, however, rather than constituting the gleaming "common locus" which allows thought to operate on the entities thereon, and which devours all shadow, Rembrandt's dissecting table is suffused in darkness and acts as the meeting place for two incommensurable representations, and as the site of an unthinkable atrocity. Indeed, in reading *The Order of Things*, it soon becomes apparent that Foucault's use of the table metaphor is contradictory. Rather than a universal and timeless primary condition for thought to take place, he later describes it as a historically contingent characteristic of the Enlightenment. "The centre for knowledge in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries," writes Foucault, "is the *table*" (OT, 82). For Foucault, it is during this era, of which Descartes's mechanical philosophy was one of the principal foundations, and this era only, that representation, space, and visibility define the boundaries of our thought. For Sebald then, Rembrandt's painting subverts the Cartesian connection between space and thought, demonstrating that a spatial relationship does not necessarily imply a conceptual one.

Therefore, in his representation of the Suffolk landscape Sebald similarly attempts to subvert Cartesian rigidity in order to make the space of his narrative more akin to Rembrandt's dissecting table than Foucault's operating table. From the very opening pages of the text, Sebald invites his readers to question the ontological reliability of its geography. Describing his state of near-paralysis in hospital in Norwich, the narrator explains how he himself had come to doubt the reality of the landscape he had explored a year previously. "I was cocooned," he says, "in an almost complete and, as it were, artificial silence," with nothing to look at but "the colourless patch of sky framed in the window" (RS, 4-5). As a result of this sensory

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[40] This appears to be a misquotation, but perhaps there is a connection between Foucault's description of the operating table ("*table d'opération*") and his insistence that it allows thought to operate ("*opérer*") upon the entities of our world. Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 9. Moreover the operating table has connotations of repair and stitching together, making it a more suitable metaphor for the common locus of thought, in contrast to Lautréamont's original dissecting table, which implies separation.

deprivation, it is not surprising that the existence of the external world is contested. "I can remember precisely how," he explains,

> upon being admitted to that room on the eighth floor, I became
> overwhelmed by the feeling that the Suffolk expanses I had walked
> the previous summer had now shrunk once and for all to a single,
> blind, insensate spot…Several times during the day I felt a desire to
> assure myself of a reality I feared had vanished forever.

"It was then that I began in my thoughts to write these pages" (RS, 3-4), he says. Thus, it makes sense that we should doubt the authenticity of the landscape described in the chapters that follow. As Blackler notes, there is "no really stable ground in the text," leaving the reader to "negotiate her own way through the mental landscape of someone else's subjectivity."[41] Although the narrator informs us that he has reviewed his notes since being discharged, one gets the impression that the world presented is a texture of memory, anecdote, and secondary sources.

The narrative's ostensibly well-defined topography is certainly not as accurate as it first appears. In the sixth chapter of *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald moves a church tower from its historical home on Norfolk's north eastern coast to the Suffolk shoreline that his narrator explores. "Until about 1890," he writes, "what was known as Eccles Church Tower still stood on Dunwich beach, and no one had any idea how it had arrived at sea level, from the considerable height at which it must once have stood, without tipping out of the perpendicular" (RS, 156). The more perplexing question however, as local readers have remarked, is not how it arrived at sea level, but how it ended up in Dunwich. After all, the reason this particular landmark was "known as Eccles Church Tower," is because it was actually located in the small fishing village of Eccles-on-Sea, some fifty miles away.[42] During his initial train journey from Norwich to Somerleyton, moreover, the narrator lists the stops on the line as Brundall, Buckenham, Cantley, Reedham, Haddiscoe, and Herringfleet (RS, 29-31). Yet the station serving Herringfleet has been out of service since 1959, and was only referred to as Herringfleet Junction between 1891 and 1904, after which it was renamed Haddiscoe High Level. Surely, the mistaken

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[41] Blackler, *Reading W.G. Sebald*, 170

[42] Jo Catling, 'Gratwanderungen bis an den Rand der Natur: W.G. Sebald's Landscapes of Memory' in *The Anatomist of Melancholy: Essays in Memory of W.G. Sebald*, ed. Rüdiger Görner (Munich: Iudicium, 2003), 21

inclusion of Herringfleet in this list can be attributed to the recurring motif of the herring in Sebald's book; as Daniel Lash has noted, references to this species are also embedded in the holiday destination of Heringsdorf, where Sebald's friend Michael Hamburger is said to have stayed as a child, and in the name of a scientist fabricated by Sebald called Herrington.[43] But perhaps also relevant is the fact that, while in Lowestoft, the narrator informs us that he owns a guidebook for the town published shortly after the turn of the century. This phantom railway stop could be the result of a similarly outdated source, a map or timetable also dating from the turn of the century, when Herringfleet Junction was in operation, and thus be an example of Sebald emulating Rembrandt in his deliberately inaccurate transposition.

Sebald's trademark use of photography too, which ostensibly lends the text a documentary effect, regularly serves to confound the narrative's geography, with images depicting alternative sites to those that the text implies them to. As a report conducted by the Institute for Cultural Inquiry for the collection *Searching for Sebald* points out, the image which purports to represent the view from Orford Castle does not actually do so, although "the author convinces us he is standing on the steps of a castle."[44] In the same book, Christina Kraenzle points out that many of Sebald's landscape photographs "seem to bear no distinguishing landmarks that could allow the viewer to identify them as stops along the narrator's route through Suffolk." In this respect they serve to contest the Cartesian gaze that she identifies in a number of the book's other images, which she suggests betray photography's inherent complicity in such a world view, and which are thus analogous to the anatomical atlas in Rembrandt's painting. "Shot up close through the wire mesh of its cage," she says of the photograph of the Chinese quail at Somerleyton Hall, "the image produces the effect of coordinates over the camera lens, indicating a link between a calculating view of nature and its subjugation." And in the very first image included in the text, she points out, the narrator's "hospital window, like the aperture of a camera, frames a section of the sky and is curiously covered with gridlike netting, thereby alluding to a link between mapping, surveying, and the photographic image." It is precisely this link that Sebald's landscapes, in their

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[43] Daniel Lash, 'Translation and Repetition: An Architectural Translation of W.G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*,' in *Searching for Sebald: Photography After W.G. Sebald*, ed. Lise Patt (Los Angeles: The Institute of Cultural Inquiry, 2007), 452, n.5

[44] ICI Research Team, 'A Truth That Lies Elsewhere', in *Searching for Sebald: Photography After W.G. Sebald*, ed. Lise Patt (Los Angeles: The Institute of Cultural Inquiry, 2007), 508

intentional placelessness, aim to contest. "The ambiguity of these images," concludes Kraenzle, "negates their power to authenticate or document the journey; instead they offer an alternative mode of perceiving the world, one that is far removed from the empirical gaze suggested elsewhere."[45]

Sebald's descriptions of particular locations along his route similarly serve to subvert the "Cartesian rigidity" present in certain of his visual materials. In the eighth chapter, the author reproduces a section of an Ordnance Survey map showing the area surrounding the town of Orford. Like the anatomical atlas in Rembrandt's painting, this representation serves to reduce the heterogeneous landscape that it depicts to a mere diagram, divesting it of its distinctive character and history. The specific geography of East Anglia serves to highlight this process of cartographic homogenisation, as the layers of history that the author identifies in the region find no correlative on a map entirely devoid of contour lines. On more than one occasion in the text, Sebald describes the space of his walking tour as "the flatland" (RS, 30, 169), and as John Beck points out, in such a landscape "it is easy to fall into Euclidean reveries of line and plane."[46] Combined with the map's superimposition of a rectilinear grid over the landscape, the county of Suffolk comes to resemble a Cartesian plane, a two-dimensional space in which any point can be identified by a set of numerical values, and in which spatial relationships are reduced to a mere matter of quantitative measurements. Therefore, Sebald is consistently inexact in order to subvert the precision of Cartesian coordinates. "Not far from the coast, between Southwold and Walberswick" (RS, 137), begins the sixth chapter, for instance. On other occasions he locates himself "quarter of an hour's walk south of Benacre Broad" (RS, 64), and "a little way beyond the bridge across the Blyth" (RS, 154). Furthermore, his descriptions of distances, areas, and heights are equally approximate. The medieval port of Dunwich, he informs us, now lies beneath the sea, "over an area of two or three square miles" (RS, 155), Rendlesham Forest "covers several square miles" (RS, 228), and the shooting domain of Bawdsey spans "more than eight thousand acres" (RS, 223).

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[45] Christina Kraenzle, 'Picturing Place: Travel, Photography, and Imaginative Geography in W.G. Sebald's *Rings of Saturn*', in *Searching for Sebald: Photography After W.G. Sebald*, ed. Lise Patt (Los Angeles: The Institute of Cultural Inquiry, 2007), 141; 138
[46] Beck, 'Reading Room', 87

J.J. Long argues that Sebald's deliberate subversion of the space of the map constitutes a kind of anti-disciplinary stance. Taking the map of Orford as his starting point, he draws on J.B. Harley's discussion of the power relationships inherent in cartography to explain that "maps are intentional structures that embody social values and power relationships, even though Western cartography seeks to disguise this by conceiving of itself as a scientific exercise."[47] Most noteworthy for Long is the fact that the map contains no trace of the military research centre that existed on the shingle spit Orford Ness during the Cold War, an absence which "immediately alerts us to the overt connection between archives and state power." But he also draws attention to seemingly unproblematic democratic features, such as footpaths and heritage sites, by which he argues the map conversely attempts to demarcate and hierarchize space. By having his narrator trespass across fields, climb over fences and walls, and veer away from the public footpaths, Long argues that Sebald undermines the techniques of control that the map inscribes onto the landscape. The ambulatory character of Sebald's walking tour, argues Long, is complemented by the author's narrative digressions, with both manifesting a desire to challenge the modern obsession with efficiency and productivity. "This tendency to explore byways rather than make beelines," he writes, "goes hand in hand with a narrative technique that is multiply digressive." Nevertheless, despite identifying this analogy between the two strands of Sebald's narrative, Long suggests that the "structuring principle" of *The Rings of Saturn*, the gravitational force that holds the fragments of the narrative together, is a kind of superimposed archival equivalence between the subjects that Sebald discusses.[48] In contrast, I want to argue that Sebald's representation of the Suffolk landscape plays a much more material role in the way he organises his digressions, and that it is the space of the narrator's walking tour that provides the text with its primary structuring principle. "The Enlightenment conception of archive-construction," writes Matthew Edney, "was clearly shaped by a cartographic metaphor. Within the abstract space of the archive, each new

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47 "Maps are never value-free images," writes Harley. "Both in the selectivity of their content and in their signs and styles of representation maps are a way of conceiving, articulating, and structuring the human world which is biased towards, promoted by, and exerts influence upon particular sets of social relations. By accepting such premises it becomes easier to see how appropriate they are to manipulation by the powerful in society" J.B. Harley, "Maps, Knowledge, and Power," in *The Iconography of Landscape*, eds. Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 278

[48] J.J. Long, *W.G. Sebald*, 130; 140; 144

observation could be located in its proper *place*."[49] Therefore, by undermining the abstract cartographic conception of space, Sebald is able to avoid the structure of archival equivalence that Long sees underpinning the narrative.

In the problematic juxtaposition with which I began, for instance, Sebald puts the two images together in a spatial relationship, but not in such a way as to imply any kind of qualitative relationship between them. By subverting the Cartesian space in which he places their respective metonymic figurations, Sebald ensures that the landscape more closely resembles Rembrandt's dissecting table, on which the unthinkable and the intelligible sit side-by-side, rather than Foucault's operating table, or *tabula*, which subsumes everything it contains into a system of comparable similarities and differences. Thus the fishermen who prompt the narrator's digression on the history of herring fishing are located "[t]hree or four miles south of Lowestoft" (RS, 51), Benacre Broad is described as being "halfway between Lowestoft and Southwold" (RS, 59), although in reality it is significantly closer to Southwold, and Major Le Strange's house is said to stand simply "beyond the lake" (RS, 59), even though Henstead lies more than two miles from the broad. Indeed, perhaps the analogy can be extended so that we can think of the two subjects, the decline of the herring and the Holocaust, as analogous to the contrasting elements of Rembrandt's painting. The drawing of the herring and the physiological description that accompanies it certainly betray a certain "Cartesian rigidity":

> its internal structure is extremely intricate and consists of more than two hundred different bones and cartilages. Among the herring's most striking external features are its powerful tail fin, the narrow head, the slightly prominent lower mandible, and its large eye, with a black pupil swimming in the silvery-white iris. (RS, 57-8)

Perhaps then we can consider this representation of the herring as analogous to that of Aris Kindt's left hand; that is, a deliberately reductive view of nature that serves to accentuate the incomprehensible horror of that with which it is juxtaposed, namely the photograph of Bergen Belsen.

"We study the order of things," says Thomas Browne, according to Sebald in the opening chapter of *The Rings of Saturn*, "but we cannot grasp their innermost essence." The possible allusion to Foucault in this quotation seems all the more likely

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[49] Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 50

given that it does not appear to be taken directly from Browne, but rather fabricated or paraphrased by Sebald.[50] In any case, the idea that it expresses articulately encapsulates Sebald's reading of Foucault, and in particular of his problematic and contradictory understanding of the relationship between space and thought, as described in *The Order of Things*. Although we can understand the way that things and events fit together, and the way that bodies and objects interact with each other in space, we cannot fully understand their true character or meaning, their "innermost essence." Sebald suggestively references Foucault's heterotopia, an impossible textual space in which things do not hold together, in order to conversely affirm the importance of space to his representative project, while simultaneously demonstrating that this space does not necessarily make thought possible. *The Rings of Saturn* shows that to represent the unthinkable, one need not create impossible configurations of space. Nevertheless, although the Suffolk landscape provides Sebald with a locus on which to juxtapose the diverse and seemingly incompatible topics which he covers in *The Rings of Saturn*, and thus demonstrate the incommensurable relationships that exist between some of them, it is a highly vulnerable one that is susceptible to erosion. Immediately after his description of the life and death of Major Le Strange, Sebald narrates his walk along the Covehithe cliffs:

> The footpath leads around the tangle, through a bank of gorse, up to
> the loamy cliff-head, and there it continues amidst bracken, the
> tallest of which stood as high as my shoulder, not far from the
> ledge, which is constantly threatening to crumble away. (RS, 64-5)

If the landscape is threaded together by such footpaths, then what clearer indication could there be of its fragility than this threat of erosion? Its imminent disappearance threatens the wholeness of the landscape, and promises to reduce it to the fragmented heterotopian topography that Darby suggests it already is, precluding the possibility of juxtaposition, and eradicating the common locus on which Sebald brings incommensurable entities together. Therefore, in his representation of the erosion of the Suffolk coast, Sebald anticipates this interpretation of his narrative, and the

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[50] The parallel occurs in the original too, as the German translation of Foucault's book, *Die Ordnung der Dinge*, shares its meaning with the English translation, rather than the French original, *Les Mots et les Choses*. In the German original Sebald writes "Wir studieren die Ordnung der Dinge, aber was angelegt ist in ihr, sagt Browne, erfassen wir nicht." Sebald, *Die Ringe Des Saturn*, 30

opinions of those who exclaim that it is unethical or problematic to place the images of the Holocaust and the herring next to one another. For John Beck, *The Rings of Saturn* is "about the erosion of confidence in the power of representation to record a knowable world adequately and thereby control it."[51] In contrast, I would suggest that it is about the erosion of confidence in the power of representation to record an unknowable world. After all, if we cannot place the Holocaust in relation to other historical events, or in space, how do we represent the entirely unthinkable nature of the atrocities committed? And in a text in which space plays such a crucial structuring role, the use of the word "erosion" here is quite literal. As the land disappears from under his feet, Sebald's spatialised knowledge crumbles away, meaning he can no longer juxtapose such incommensurable notions.

"A Higher Form of Stereometry": Architecture and the Holocaust in *Austerlitz*

While *The Rings of Saturn* is more concerned with Foucault's earlier, textual formulation of the heterotopia, questioning the way that we place the Holocaust conceptually, *Austerlitz* engages more explicitly with the later, architectural definition, featuring as it does, a remarkable number of the sites described in 'Of Other Spaces'. The zoo, the cemetery, the prison, the boarding school, the psychiatric hospital, the library, the museum, the garden, the theatre, the boat, the spa, the colony, and the mirror all feature to some extent in both Sebald's narrative and Foucault's lecture. The most immediate explanation for this correlation lies in the occupation of Sebald's eponymous protagonist. As an architectural historian, Jacques Austerlitz inevitably demonstrates an interest in the built environment; but perhaps we can draw an even stronger connection. Just as Sebald speculates in *The Rings of Saturn* that Descartes and Sir Thomas Browne were present at Dr Tulp's anatomy lesson in Leiden in 1632, and creates a series of encounters between his fictionalised exiles and the real Nabokov in *The Emigrants*, can we not similarly imagine that Austerlitz, who, we are told, studied architecture in Paris, was present at Foucault's lecture to the Cercle d'études architecturales in March 1967, just a few months before the text's opening scene at Antwerp Centraal Station? In any case, it seems likely that, within his own fictional universe, he would have been familiar with Foucault's ideas. As M. Christine Boyer explains, in architectural circles

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[51] Beck, 'Reading Room', 75

"Foucault's talk had a life of its own, circulating in notes, being read and misread innumerable times. It was open to countless interpretations because its meaning remained opaque and contradictory."[52]

But as well as accounting for Sebald's inclusion of a large number of heterotopian sites in his narrative, Austerlitz's occupation can also be cited as an explanation for his repression and avoidance of any information regarding the Holocaust and his own traumatic childhood. Born in Prague to Jewish parents, Austerlitz is sent by Kindertransport to Britain in 1939, to avoid the imminent Nazi invasion, and subsequently loses all memory of his origins. It is only in 1991, when in his fifties, that he begins to recover his lost past. Numerous critics have attempted to read Austerlitz's repression pathologically. Anne Whitehead, for instance, suggests that he is "haunted by his unclaimed past and caught in a repetition-compulsion." In his impression that "an illness that had been latent in me for a long time [was] now threatening to erupt," (A, 173) she sees an echo of "Freud's notion of traumatic latency."[53] Here, I want to think of Austerlitz's historical ignorance not simply as the result of his own personal trauma, but as also in some way symptomatic of his chosen profession, not simply in the sense that, as Whitehead says, the defensive structures and fortifications in which he is interested form "an objective correlative for Austerlitz's trauma, mirroring the internal defensive walls that he has constructed," but also in a much more direct way. In recent decades, a number of architectural historians and geographers have lamented the lack of attention paid by their colleagues to the subject of the Holocaust, despite its inherently spatial nature.[54] Robert Jan van Pelt and Carroll William Westfall have even gone as far as to suggest that this academic amnesia stems from the fact that professional architects "had a unique responsibility in the creation and perfection of the death camps." As they say,

> For almost fifty years the great majority of architects and
> architectural historians have circumvented the questions raised by

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[52] M. Christine Boyer, 'The Many Mirrors of Foucault and their Architectural Reflections', in *Heterotopia and the City*, 53

[53] Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 119

[54] See Andrew Charlesworth, 'Towards a Geography of the Shoah', in *Journal of Historical Geography* 18.4 (1992), 464-69, Robert Jan van Pelt and Carroll William Westfall, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) and Tim Cole, *Holocaust City: The Making of a Jewish Ghetto* (New York: Routledge, 2003)

the circumstances that not only were the men who designed
Auschwitz fully qualified architects, but one of them, Fritz Ertl,
was even a Bauhaus graduate.[55]

But rather than this notion of collective disciplinary guilt, I think this silence, and by
extrapolation Austerlitz's repression, can be ascribed to a deeper, more abstract
relationship between the Holocaust and spatiality. I want to think about how, if at all,
the unthinkable nature of the Holocaust as an event is transposed onto the arenas of
its occurrence, the ghetto and the concentration camp, and how, in turn, this relates to
Foucault's definition of the heterotopia as an entirely unthinkable space.

Having suggested that *Austerlitz* engages more explicitly with the later
formulation of the heterotopia, there are times when it promises to synthesise the two
definitions of the term. "It does not seem to me," says Austerlitz to Sebald's narrator,
"that we understand the laws governing the return of the past, but I feel more and
more as if time did not exist at all, only various spaces interlocking according to the
rules of a higher form of stereometry." (A, 261) In this sentiment, which Austerlitz
expresses on a number of occasions throughout the narrative, we find echoes of
Foucault's introduction to 'Of Other Spaces':

> The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We
> are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of
> juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of
> the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience
> of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than
> that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own
> skein. (OS, 22)

Although Foucault does not seem as extreme as Austerlitz here in his refutation of
time, the general idea seems to be the same: things exist in relation to each other
across space, rather than temporally. But in Austerlitz's description of "a higher form
of stereometry," we also see a suggestion of the kind of geometrical impossibility
that characterises Foucault's textual Borgesian heterotopia. Just as Foucault proposes
that the heterotopia "begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of
absolute break with their traditional time" (OS, 26), Sebald conversely suggests that
we can only truly be outside of time when we break with traditional conceptions of

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[55] Van Pelt and Westfall, *Architectural Principles*, 120

space. Without doubt, Austerlitz's opinions on this subject have been influenced by his experience in the Ladies' Waiting Room at Liverpool Street Station, when all the hours of his past life are revealed to him in a seemingly Piranesian vision of "huge halls…with rows of pillars and colonnades leading far into the distance, with vaults and brickwork arches bearing on them many-storeyed structures, with flights of stone steps, wooden stairways, and ladders all leading the eye on and on." (A, 190) In actual fact, what Sebald describes here goes beyond anything that Piranesi, Escher, Magritte, or any other visual artist could ever depict, a space only possible in language, a heterotopia. "I felt," says Austerlitz, "as if the room where I stood were expanding, going on for ever and ever in an improbably foreshortened perspective, at the same time turning back into itself in a way possible only in such a deranged universe." (A, 191) Such a description is reminiscent of Blanchot, resembling this description by Foucault of a typical space in the French novelist's fiction: "a long and narrow room, like a tunnel, in which approach and distance…draw near to one another and unendingly move apart."[56]

However, the Ladies' Waiting Room, which does not explicitly fit any of the criteria that Foucault uses to define the heterotopia, constitutes the only such example of spatial impossibility in Sebald's fiction. In contrast, the sites that Foucault actually defines as heterotopian, those spaces which are supposedly outside of place and time, are not afforded the same exteriority, even though Sebald frequently hints at their heterotopian potential, and thus do not allow Austerlitz the same level of access to his past. In the opening pages of the book, overwhelmed by the monumental status of Antwerp Centraal Station, the narrator takes "refuge" in the city zoo. (A, 2) Upon returning to the station later that day, he thinks to himself that its foyer ought to contain animal enclosures, "just as some zoos, conversely, have little railway trains in which you can, so to speak, travel to the farthest corners of the earth." (A, 5) This notion of the zoo as a microcosm of the world is also to be found in Foucault's lecture, in which he explains that the traditional Persian garden comprised four sections representing the four parts of the world. "The garden is the smallest parcel of the world," he says, "and then it is the totality of the world. The garden has been a sort of happy, universalizing heterotopia since the beginnings of antiquity," he continues, before parenthetically adding that "our modern zoological gardens spring

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[56] Foucault, 'The Thought of the Outside,' 152

from that source" (OS, 26). But the idea that the zoo constitutes a "happy, universalizing heterotopia" seems to be contested by the conflation of the zoo with the railway station in Sebald's narrator's mind. He goes on to explain how the waiting room, or *Salle des pas perdus*, reminds him of the Nocturama of the zoo, in which species from all over the globe find themselves imprisoned in a "topsy-turvy miniature universe," (A, 4) and an "unreal world." (A, 3) However, although he confuses the two spaces in his mind, he does so without really knowing why; it is only when he meets Austerlitz that the true shared significance of these spaces becomes apparent. As Austerlitz explains,

> when Belgium, a little patch of yellowish grey barely visible on the map of the world, spread its sphere of influence to the African continent with its colonial enterprises…it was the personal wish of King Leopold, under whose auspices such apparently inexorable progress was being made, that the money suddenly and abundantly available should be used to erect public buildings which would bring international renown to his aspiring state. (A, 9-10)

As Sebald points out in 'Air War and Literature', zoos "all over Europe owe their existence to a desire to demonstrate princely or imperial power," a line of thinking elaborated on by J.J. Long, who points out that "[e]xotic animals provided a set of concrete synecdoches that represented empire to a metropolitan populace for whom territories thousands of miles away remained abstract and alien."[57] Austerlitz later makes the connection explicit when he talks of the *Ménagerie du Jardin des Plantes* "where large animals from the African colonies had once been put on display…elephants, giraffes, rhinoceroses, dromedaries and crocodiles" (A, 368). The same connotations surely apply to Andromeda Lodge, the Ardis-like garden estate belonging to the family of Austerlitz's school friend Gerald Fitzpatrick, where a variety of species of flora and fauna, alive and dead, can be seen, "all brought back by Gerald's great-grandfather from his circumnavigation of the globe." (A, 117) That this space does indeed afford Austerlitz a level of consolation not proffered by the other heterotopian sites in the text can best be attributed to the fact that he visits during his school years, when he is yet to commence his historical studies proper, and is thus largely unaware of the colonial history of which it is a product.

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[57] Long, *W.G. Sebald*, 42

A similar dynamic can be seen in the two characters' respective reactions to mirrors, objects which Foucault defines as heterotopian due to the fact that they make

> this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there. (OS, 24)

Perhaps this simultaneity of the real and the unreal explains why Sebald's narrator, in a scene reminiscent of that described by Borges at the beginning of 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', says "something about the incomprehensibility of mirror images." (A, 169) But if we return once more to their first meeting in the waiting-room at Antwerp, we remember that Austerlitz wonders to himself "*combien des ouvriers périrent, lors de la manufacture de tells miroirs, de malignes et funestes affectations à la suite de l'inhalation de vapeurs de mercure et de cyanide.*" (A, 15)[58] The appalling history of the manufacture of these objects seems to negate any mythical quality that they might possess, and again dispels the incomprehensibility that the narrator identifies.

However, of all the heterotopian sites in *Austerlitz*, it is the new Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris with which Sebald's protagonist is most disillusioned. In this instance, however, it is Austerlitz's own heterotopian preconception of the library that is contested. As he explains to the narrator, when he was studying in Paris in the late 1950s, he would go to the old Bibliothèque Nationale in the rue Richelieu (also, incidentally, a preferred workplace of Michel Foucault) on a daily basis:

> [I] usually remained in my place there until evening, in silent solidarity with the many others immersed in their intellectual labours, losing myself in the small print of the footnotes to the works I was reading, in the books I found mentioned in those notes, then in the footnotes to those books in their own turn, and so escaping from factual, scholarly accounts to the strangest of details, in a kind of continual regression expressed in the form of my own

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[58] "how many workers died, during the manufacture of those mirrors, of malign and disastrous effects from inhaling mercury and cyanide vapors." Translation taken from Jessica Dubow and Richard Steadman-Jones, 'Mapping Babel: Language and Exile in W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*', *New German Critique*, 39.1 (Winter 2012), 4

marginal remarks and glosses, which increasingly diverged into the

most varied and impenetrable of ramifications. (A, 363)

In this description of "continual regression" we find manifested the heterotopian character of the library, its simultaneously mythic and real qualities. Although contained within a real and finite space, the intertextual networks that connect the books and which allow for them to be arranged in countless different configurations constitutes a mythical space that far exceeds the walls of the library. As Foucault writes in his afterword to Flaubert's *Temptation*, "fantasies are carefully deployed in the hushed library, with its columns of books, with its titles aligned on shelves to form a tight enclosure, but within confines that also liberate impossible worlds."[59] In the new library, however, this mythical quality is absent. As Austerlitz explains, this "hideous, outsize building" is "in its outer appearance and inner constitution unwelcoming if not inimical to human beings, and runs counter, on principle, one might say, to the requirements of any true reader." (A, 386)

Above all, though, it is once again the horrendous history of the site on which the new library stands that proves the biggest impediment to its ability to constitute an unreal or fantastical space. As one librarian tells Austerlitz, on this site "there stood until the end of the war an extensive warehousing complex to which the Germans brought all the loot they had taken from the homes of the Jews of Paris." (A, 401) The truth of the whole affair, he concludes, "is buried in the most literal sense beneath the foundations of our pharaonic President's Grande Bibliothèque." (A, 403) Throughout *Austerlitz*, Sebald uses the metaphor of a boat, Foucault's heterotopia *par excellence*, to signify spaces which facilitate the safe passage of the past through the flood of time. In the archives building in Prague, for instance, where Austerlitz discovers the information he requires to track down his childhood nurserymaid, he explains how "[I] thought that on the rows of galleries I saw a dense crowd of people, some of them waving hats or handkerchiefs, as passengers on board a steamer used to do when it put out to sea." (A, 205) And on more than one occasion, Sebald describes images of Noah's Ark that seem to metonymically represent the time-capsule rooms in which they are found. However, when Austerlitz uses the same metaphor in reference to the new library, the vessel evoked is

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[59] Foucault, 'Afterword to the *Temptation of Saint Anthony*', 106

threatened by shipwreck. "You might think," says Austerlitz, describing the experience of standing on the vast esplanade between the four towers of the library,

> especially on days when the wind drives rain over this totally exposed platform, as it quite often does…that by some mistake you had found your way to the deck of the *Berengaria* or one of the other ocean-going giants, and you would be not in the least surprised if, to the sound of a wailing foghorn, the horizon of the city of Paris suddenly began rising and falling against the gauge of the towers as the great steamer pounded onwards through mountainous waves, or if one of the tiny figures, having unwisely ventured on deck, were swept over the rail by a gust of wind and carried far out into the wastes of the Atlantic waters. (A, 387-9)

For Foucault, the library, along with the museum, manifests the modern desire "to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages." (OS, 26) The Bibliothèque Nationale certainly seems to fit this definition; as Austerlitz says, it "is supposed to serve as the treasure-house of our entire literary heritage." (A, 393) Yet in Sebald's description its cargo of history appears highly vulnerable. Again, Austerlitz's historical knowledge of the construction of Foucault's other spaces, or of the sites on which they are located, is demonstrated to negate any heterotopian qualities that they might possess.

All of this prompts us to question what exactly it is about the Ladies' Waiting Room that gives it its privileged status among all the sites described by Sebald. After all, like the Bibliothèque Nationale amd Antwerp Centraal Station, Liverpool Street is shown to be founded, quite literally, on ethically problematic ground. As Austerlitz explains, the station stands on the site previously occupied by the insane asylum known as the Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem, or Bedlam. "Whenever I was in the station," he says,

> I kept almost obsessively trying to imagine – through the ever-changing maze of walls – the location in that huge space of the rooms where the asylum inmates were confined, and I often wondered whether the pain and suffering accumulated on this site over the centuries had ever really ebbed away. (A, 183)

Furthermore, in another apparent reference to Foucault, he describes how the remains of hundreds of dead bodies were dug up to accommodate the expanding railway network. In 'Of Other Spaces' Foucault explains how cemeteries, heterotopian spaces by dint of their being "connected with all the sites of the citystate or society or village, etc., since each individual, each family has relatives in the cemetery," migrated from the town centre to the outskirts during the nineteenth century. As he says, it is only with the decline in belief of an afterlife that the dead body becomes important, and henceforth "everyone has a right to her or his own little box for her or his own little personal decay." (OS, 25) Similarly, Austerlitz asserts that "[w]hen space becomes too cramped the dead, like the living, move out into less densely populated districts where they can rest at a decent distance from each other." (A, 184) But rather than a movement based on shifts in ideology, Sebald makes it clear that this tendency is rather the result of economic and industrial concerns. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, says Austerlitz, in the construction of Broad Street Station, adjacent to Liverpool Street, "vast quantities of soil, together with the bones buried in them, were dug up and removed, so that the railway lines…could be brought to the outskirts of the city." (A, 186)

Moreover, as the epitome of what the anthropologist Marc Augé calls a "non-place," one would imagine that the waiting room, rather than covering "the entire plane of time" (A, 193), would be devoid of history. In reference to the "transit points and temporary abodes" of modern capitalist society, such as supermarkets, airports, and hotels, Augé suggests, in language strikingly similar to Austerlitz's own description of the supremacy of time in Antwerp Centraal Station (A, 13-14), that

> What reigns there is actuality, the urgency of the present moment. Since non-places are there to be passed through, they are measured in units of time…They are lived through in the present…Everything proceeds as if space had been trapped by time, as if there were no history other than the last forty-eight hours of news, as if each individual history were drawing its motives, its words and images, from the inexhaustible stock of an unending history in the present.[60]

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[60] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* trans. John Howe (London : Verso, 2000), 78; 104-105. For a more in-depth discussion of Augé's Non-Places in Sebald's fiction see Michael Niehaus, 'No Foothold. Institutions and Buildings in W.G. Sebald's

However, as Austerlitz asserts on more than one occasion, the room "had obviously been disused for years" (A, 189), and therefore no longer functions according to its nominal role. There is also the fact that this site has a personal significance for Austerlitz, and therefore triggers an experience of Proustian *mémoire involontaire*. Out of the phantasmagoria comes an image of his younger self: "I recollected myself as a small child, at the moment when I realized that it must have been to this waiting-room I had come on my arrival in England over half a century ago." (A, 193) Then there is also the circumstance that Austerlitz cannot be sure whether this space is a "ruin or a building in process of construction." "Both ideas were right in a way at the time," he concludes, "since the new station was literally rising from the ruins of the old Liverpool Street." (A, 191) As Simon Ward argues, in Sebald's fiction ruins are "sites of broken narration, realms where the imagination actively engages with, indeed transforms, the material environment."[61] In contrast to Foucault's other spaces, which have been shown to be overdetermined with metonymic reminders of historical atrocities, the ruptured space of the waiting room provides Austerlitz with a blank canvas on which to project his memories. However, rather than focusing on the specificities of this particular space, it seems to me more worthwhile to consider Austerlitz's mental state at the point when he steps into this "vision of imprisonment and liberation" (A, 191), a line of inquiry that requires us to think about his own architectural studies, and in particular the internal arrangement of the vast, incomplete, and ultimately abandoned work that consumes his entire academic career.

Numerous sources have been proposed as the inspiration for Austerlitz's project concerning "the architectural style of the capitalist era." During one of their early meetings, he tells the narrator that he is especially interested in "the compulsive sense of order and the tendency towards monumentalism evident in lawcourts and penal institutions, railway stations and stock exchanges, opera houses and lunatic asylums, and the dwellings built to rectangular grid patterns for the labour force." (A, 44) Later, he lists "such subjects as hygiene and sanitation, the architecture of the penal system, secular temples, hydrotherapy, zoological gardens, departure and

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Prose', in *W.G. Sebald: History – Memory – Trauma*, eds. Scott Denham and Mark McCulloh (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 315-33

[61] Simon Ward, 'Ruins and Poetics in in the Works of W.G. Sebald', in *W.G. Sebald – A Critical Companion*, eds. J.J. Long and Anne Whitehead (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 62

arrival, light and shade, steam and gas, and so forth" as his interests. (A, 170) But as he explains, his investigations "had long outstripped their original purpose as a project for a dissertation, proliferating in his hands into endless preliminary sketches for a study, based entirely on his own views, of the family likeness between all these buildings." (A, 44) For Eric Santner, Austerlitz's project contains both Foucauldian and Benjaminian elements.[62] In both its subject matter and its organisation, or lack thereof, it brings to mind Walter Benjamin's incomplete and fragmentary *Arcades Project*, and in particular his studies of what he terms "dream houses of the collective,"[63] spaces such as arcades, winter gardens, panoramas, factories, wax museums, casinos, and railway stations. And although it seems that Santner is referring to Foucault's work on disciplinary structures, there are certainly overlaps between his "systematic description" (OS, 24) of heterotopian places in 'Of Other Spaces', and Austerlitz's "systematically descriptive work" (A, 170) on sites including zoos, prisons, insane asylums, and spas.

However, in Austerlitz's description of his thesis we also find echoes of another theoretical precursor to Sebald's protagonist, Ludwig Wittgenstein.[64] In his notion of a "family likeness" between all the spaces of his research Austerlitz echoes Wittgenstein's famous description of "family resemblances," the idea that a set of things which we call by the same name do not necessarily share a well-defined set of characteristics, but rather belong to a set of overlapping similarities and differences.[65] In his *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein uses the category of activities that we refer to as "games" to illustrate this idea:

> Consider for example the proceedings that we call "games". I mean
> board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on.
> What is common to them all? Don't say: "There *must* be something
> common, or they would not be called 'games'" – but *look and see*

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[62] Eric L. Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 56

[63] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 405

[64] Sebald's narrator actually remarks on Austerlitz's "personal similarity to Ludwig Wittgenstein," (A, 55) a fact elaborated on by Martin Klebes in *Wittgenstein's Novels* (New York: Routledge, 2006) 108-109

[65] The correspondence is even more pronounced in the German originals, with Sebald using the same term as Wittgenstein, Familienähnlichkeiten. W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2001), 48. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen/Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963), 32

> whether there is anything common to all. – For if you look at them
> you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities,
> relationships, and a whole series of them at that…And the result of
> this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities
> overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities,
> sometimes similarities of detail.[66]

Long insists that this Wittgensteinian model does not hold up in relation to Austerlitz's research, suggesting that "the buildings are linked by their disciplinary intention," and therefore "their resemblance is indeed a function of shared criteria."[67] But this seems reductive. It seems more likely that Sebald is prompting us to question the relationship between all these spaces and thus realise the incongruous nature of their grouping. Indeed, in the set of buildings that Austerlitz initially lists, and in reference to which he makes the comment about a "family likeness," the opera house is notable for its lack of disciplinary function. Certainly, it shares, in Austerlitz's terms, a "tendency towards monumentalism" with lawcourts and railway stations, perhaps even prisons and mental institutions. But "the dwellings built to rectangular grid patterns for the labour force" are in no way monumental, despite having a very obvious disciplinary role. Thus the opera house and the workers' dwellings share no obvious common denominator.

If we consider Austerlitz's project to be in some way representative of Foucault's study of the heterotopia in 'Of Other Spaces', then his notion of Wittgensteinian "family resemblances" between the sites of his research prompts us to question the relationships that exist between the different places which Foucault defines as heterotopian. As has been demonstrated, Foucault's principles of heterotopology do not amount to a shared set of criteria equally applicable to each of the spaces described in his lecture, but rather a set of characteristics which pertain in different measures to each example. What common features, for instance, are shared between the boarding-school and the mirror? But while this notion of family resemblances is certainly relevant to a reading of the architectural heterotopia, it has an even closer relationship to Foucault's earlier textual formulation, one that has to do with the fact that the individual members of any Wittgensteinian "family" share no universal common ground. That is to say that, the word "game," for instance, does

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[66] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 31-32
[67] Long, *W.G. Sebald*, 166, n.4

not constitute an adequate common locus for all the pastimes that we group together under that heading. To take two of the examples cited by Wittgenstein, what shared characteristics are there between chess and ring-a-ring-a-roses? On what ground, other than the artificial word "game," do these two activities meet? Thus one might suggest that in *Austerlitz* Sebald folds Foucault's heterotopia in on itself, reading one definition through the prism of the other.

Sebald further attests to this similarity between Wittgenstein's family resemblances and Foucault's textual heterotopia when, upon early retirement from his teaching post, Austerlitz attempts to collect his sketches in a book, an undertaking which proves far more difficult than he expects. Confronted by the incommensurable observations of his research, he gradually loses the use of his linguistic faculties. As he explains:

> If language may be regarded as an old city full of streets and squares, nooks and crannies, with some quarters dating from far back in time while others have been torn down, cleaned up and rebuilt, and with suburbs reaching further and further into the surrounding country, then I was like a man who had been abroad a long time and cannot find his way through this urban sprawl any more, no longer knows what a bus stop is for, or what a back yard is, or a street junction, an avenue or a bridge. The entire structure of language, the syntactical arrangement of parts of speech, punctuation, conjunctions, and finally even the nouns denoting ordinary objects were all enveloped in impenetrable fog. (A, 172)

Here too, as a number of critics have pointed out, we see an explicit paraphrasing of Wittgenstein, who in his *Philosophical Investigations* uses an identical metaphor. "Our language," he writes, "can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods."[68] But in the last sentence of this passage there is also a reference to Foucault, who in the preface to *The Order of Things* writes:

> *Heterotopias* are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this *and* that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because

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[68] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 8

they destroy 'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together'. (OT, xix)

Austerlitz's inability to connect words to other words, and words to things, the complete destruction of his verbal and mental landscape, is a result of the impossibility of connecting the incommensurable subjects of his research. And as if to confirm the heterotopian nature of Austerlitz's affliction, Sebald has his protagonist describe "the horror of finding that even the smallest task or duty, for instance arranging assorted objects in a drawer, can be beyond one's power." (A, 173) In doing so, he once again echoes Foucault, who in further demonstrating the intersection between language and space, explains how

certain aphasiacs, when shown various differently coloured skeins of wool on a table top, are consistently unable to arrange them into any coherent pattern; as though that simple rectangle were unable to serve in their case as a homogenous and neutral space in which things could be placed so as to display at the same time the continuous order of their identities or differences as well as the semantic field of their denomination. (OT, xx)

A more explicit connection between Wittgenstein's and Foucault's thinking is evident in Austerlitz's habit of shuffling his photographs for hours on end, "pushing the pictures back and forth and over each other, arranging them in an order depending on their family resemblances." (A, 168)

Finally then, we return to the question of why it is that the Ladies' Waiting Room at Liverpool Street Station is afforded the heterotopian status that is denied by Sebald to any of Foucault's other spaces. It is, in a sense, I believe, a heterotopia in reverse. Rather than being one of those spaces that "undermine language" and "destroy syntax in advance," (OT, xix) it is as a result of Austerlitz's aphasia, his loss of language, that this empty, disused place appears to be outside of time and space. It is no coincidence that it is after he throws the papers and notebooks of his historical research onto the compost heap that Austerlitz begins his nocturnal wanderings through London, wanderings that eventually lead to this revelation. While at boarding school Austerlitz's history teacher explains how the retelling of historical events is always reliant upon cliché:

> Our concern with history, so Hilary's thesis ran, is a concern with pre-formed images already imprinted on our brains, images at which we keep staring while the truth lies elsewhere, away from it all, somewhere as yet undiscovered. (A, 101)

It is only by escaping the limitations of language, and the pre-formed clichés with which his historical research has equipped him that Austerlitz is able to find this undiscovered place and thus unlock the truth about his past.

However, to argue that the diverse subjects of Austerlitz's historical research find no categorical common locus would be erroneous. Rather, they gesture towards a shared common denominator, albeit one that is initially inaccessible to Sebald's protagonist: the Holocaust. Austerlitz himself hints at this connection on more than one occasion during the narrative, suggesting that his interests may in fact be symptomatic of some urge of which he is unconscious. In an early conversation with the narrator about his research, prior to discovering the truth about his childhood, he explains that he feels as if he is "obeying an impulse which he himself, to this day, did not really understand, but which was somehow linked to his early fascination with the idea of a network such as that of the entire railway system." (A, 44-45) "After the Holocaust," writes Santner, "it is, of course, nearly impossible to avoid the association of railway networks and deportations, an association Sebald surely counted on."[69] Following his experience in the Ladies' Waiting Room, he scolds himself for his ignorance of the Holocaust, suggesting that "the whole history of the architecture and civilization of the bourgeois age, the subject of my research, pointed in the direction of the catastrophic events already casting their shadows before them at the time." (A, 197) Indeed, as Austerlitz learns more about the Holocaust and the fate of his parents, the reader repeatedly encounters hints of his former subjects of study. For instance, Terezín, the site of the Theresienstadt ghetto where his mother was interned, is a fortified town, and thus echoes Austerlitz's interest in fortifications, which he lectures the narrator about during one of their first meetings. (A, 17-24) It is also, as he finds out during his visit, laid out "to a strictly geometrical grid." (A, 267) Furthermore, while the importance of the railway network to the Nazi's facilitation of mass-murder has been remarked upon, the relationship between Theresienstadt and those transitory "non-places" that Austerlitz is fascinated by has

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[69] Santner, *On Creaturely Life*, 56, n.13

not been explored. As Terezín survivor Jana Renée Friesová says, "Terezín was a waiting-room for the gas chambers of Auschwitz."[70] Similarly, writing about Alfréd Radok's film *Distant Journey*, part of which is set in Theresienstadt, Jiří Cieslar says that the director "created a vision of Terezín that resembled a large, crazy and grotesque railway station, a waiting room or antechamber for the extermination camps."[71] The reason for Austerlitz's interest in opera houses also becomes apparent, when we learn that his mother Agáta was an opera singer, and that as a child he had accompanied his nurserymaid Vera to the Estates Theatre in Prague to see her perform in the role of Olympia, in the dress rehearsal of Jacques Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffman*. Finally, the inclusion of stock exchanges in Austerlitz's studies seems to resonate with the description, at the end of the narrative, of the "highly organized programme of expropriation and reutilization" centred around *Les Galeries d'Austerlitz*, now buried beneath the new national library, and with the fact that for "the most part the valuables, bank deposits, the shares and the houses and business premises ruthlessly seized at the time…remain in the hands of the city and the state to this day." (A, 402)

But despite his initial concern that he is personally responsible for his historical ignorance of the Holocaust, and the sense that he should have been aware of a subject so closely related to his own field of study, when he visits Terezín Austerlitz comes to realise that his architectural knowledge is impotent in the face of such unthinkable atrocities. In recent decades a number of writers have attempted to assert the inherently spatial nature of the Holocaust, in response to the perceived dearth of architectural and geographical engagements with the Jewish genocide. In *Holocaust City*, which examines the construction of the Budapest Ghetto, Tim Cole writes:

> With the restructuring of the spaces of the urban and rural
> environment – segregating the "Jew" in ghettos within major cities,
> and constructing death camps in rural areas proximate to rail
> networks – the Holocaust emerges as a profoundly spatial historical
> event.

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[70] Jana Renée Friesová, *Fortress of my Youth: Memoir of a Terezín Survivor*, trans. Elinor Morrisby and Ladislav Rosendorf (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 123

[71] Jiří Cieslar, 'Daleká Cesta/Distant Journey', in *The Cinema of Central Europe*, ed. Peter Hames (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), 47

"Annihilating the "Jew"," he concludes, "was a spatial process from start to finish."[72] As we have already seen, Austerlitz becomes well aware of this during his visit to Terezín, observing the fortified town and its dwellings arranged to a rectangular grid formation. Later, while reading a study of the ghetto written by H.G. Adler, who was himself interned there before being transported to Auschwitz, he learns how "some sixty thousand people were crammed together in an area little more than a square kilometre in size," meaning that each inhabitant had "about two square metres of space in which to exist." (A, 331-32) In the Ghetto Museum he sees evidence of "a world made by reason and regulated in all conceivable respects." He studies "maps of the Greater German Reich and its protectorates, which," he says, "had never before been more than blank spaces in my otherwise well-developed sense of topography," before adding that he "traced the railway lines running through them." He also learns of "the origins and places of death of the victims, the routes by which they were taken to what destinations." (A, 278-80)

But despite this comprehensive overview of the arrangement of the ghetto, Austerlitz repeatedly encounters difficulties in his attempts to understand this place and its history. "From the first, I felt that the most striking aspect of the place was its emptiness," he says, "something which to this day I still find incomprehensible." (A, 266) Then, in reference to the blank façades of the houses that line the streets, he says "I could not imagine…who might inhabit these desolate buildings, or if anyone lived there at all." (A, 267) Later, in response to Adler's book he explains how "in its futuristic deformation of social life the ghetto system had something incomprehensible and unreal about it, even though Adler describes it down to the last detail in its objective actuality." (A, 331) And when he manages to acquire a copy of the Nazi propaganda film of Theresienstadt, titled *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt*, he explains how he was "unable to take in any of it," (A, 343) and says "I could get none of these images into my head." (A, 344-5) Finally, as a result of his findings in the museum, he says

> I understood it all now, yet I did not understand it, for every detail
> that was revealed to me as I went through the museum from room
> to room and back again, ignorant as I feared I had been through my
> own fault, far exceeded my comprehension. (A, 279)

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[72] Cole, *Holocaust City*, 18-19

He understands the Holocaust, inasmuch as he understands the set of relations that it comprised, the internal workings of the ghetto, and its function as part of a larger network. But although he knows what happened and where, he cannot understand why. In contrast to Foucault's "other spaces", the apparent incomprehensibility of which is dispelled by Austerlitz's architectural knowledge, his awareness of the history of the sites on which they stand, and his understanding of the ways in which they function, the unthinkable character of the Holocaust can never be dissipated.

Hence, we come to understand the limitations of an architectural response to the Holocaust, in the fact that Austerlitz can place it geographically, but not conceptually. In his attempts to compile his sketches into a book, he is thwarted by the incomprehensibility of the Holocaust, which seems to be the invisible common denominator between all the subjects of his research. "I could see no connections any more," he says when reviewing the fragmentary sketches of his research, "the sentences resolved themselves into a series of separate words, the words into random sets of letters." (A, 175-6) If we understand heterotopias as spaces which, in Foucault's words, "destroy 'syntax' in advance," (OT, xix) then his studies certainly seem to constitute something of a textual heterotopia; the Holocaust cannot constitute a conceptual common ground on which to bring together these subjects. Yet, this inability to connect words and ideas is not founded upon any irregularities in real space, seeing as the subjects of his research do indeed seem to find a common locus in the Theresienstadt ghetto. Using the same definition, we see that the ghetto is categorically not a heterotopian space. Rather than breaking down language, Sebald's research on Terezín reveals a space that actually generates syntax. While reading Adler's book he explains:

> The long compounds, not listed in my dictionary, which were obviously being spawned the whole time by the pseudo-technical jargon governing everything in Theresienstadt had to be unravelled syllable by syllable. When I had finally discovered the meaning of such terms and concepts as *Barackenbestandteillager*, *Zusatzkostenberechnungsschein*, *Bagatellrepara-turwerkstätte*, *Menagetransportkolonnen*, *Küchenbeschwerdeorgane*, *Reinlichkeitsreihenuntersuchung*, and *Entwesungsübersiedlung*…when I had worked out what they meant…I had to make just as much of an effort to fit the

> presumptive sense of my reconstructions into the sentences and the
>
> wider context. (A, 330)

As a fully integral space, Terezín facilitates syntax, something which becomes even more apparent in Austerlitz's famous eleven page sentence with which he paraphrases Adler's description of ghetto life. The Holocaust is thus demonstrated to be an event which ruptures the relationships between space, language, and thought.

Conclusion: A Darkness Never Yet Penetrated

In contrast to the ambiguity that Austerlitz identifies in most of Foucault's heterotopian spaces, he describes his years at boarding school as "a time not of imprisonment but of liberation." (A, 84) As he explains, this was in large part due to the enjoyment he derived from reading:

> Another crucial factor in my good progress at school was the fact
>
> that I never found reading and studying a burden. Far from it, for
>
> confined as I had been until now to the Bible in Welsh and
>
> homiletic literature, it seemed as if a new door were opening
>
> whenever I turned a page. I read everything in the school library,
>
> which contained an entirely arbitrary selection of works, and
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> everything I could borrow from my teachers – works on geography
>
> and history, travel writings, novels, biographies – and sat up until
>
> late in the evening over reference books and atlases. My mind thus
>
> gradually created a kind of ideal landscape in which the Arabian
>
> desert, the realm of the Aztecs, the continent of Antarctica, the
>
> snow-covered Alps, the North-West Passage, the river Congo and
>
> the Crimean peninsula formed a single panorama, populated by all
>
> the figures proper to those places. As I could move into that world
>
> at any time I liked – in a Latin lesson, during divine service, on the
>
> interminable weekends – I never fell into the depression from
>
> which so many of the boys at Stower Grange suffered. (A, 85)

In this description of another world, we find a number of echoes of the experiences of textual space referred to previously in this thesis. One thinks, in particular, of Foucault's essay on Flaubert, in which he describes the library as a space of fantasy, a place which gives rise to the panoramic world of *The Temptation*. Furthermore, in

his act of stitching together places that do not belong next to one another, Austerlitz emulates Nabokov's rearrangement of the map to form Antiterra, while the mention of the Arabian desert brings to mind the mythical image of the magic carpet, and the microcosmic form of the Persian garden from which Foucault argues it is derived. In contrast to the zoo, the microcosmic arrangement of which is tainted by its colonial connotations, this escape into a textual world still affords the reader a certain level of solace.

However, while the young Austerlitz feels "as if a new door were opening whenever I turned a page," the experience of reading Sebald's own text is quite different. Almost two hundred pages after Austerlitz's description of his literary emancipation, the reader is confronted by his haunting photographs of Terezín, at one point turning the page to reveal a double-page spread entirely devoid of language, simply featuring two side-by-side images of heavy closed doors. "What I found most uncanny of all," says Austerlitz,

> were the gates and doorways of Terezín, all of them, as I thought I sensed, obstructing access to a darkness never yet penetrated, a darkness in which I thought…there was no more movement at all apart from the whitewash peeling off the walls and the spiders spinning their threads, scuttling on crooked legs across the floorboards. (A, 267-72)

The repetition of the door motif in this passage seems a clear indication that, for Sebald, the Holocaust constitutes a shift in the possibilities of the imagination and language to create alternative spaces. While previously it was possible for language to take us behind any door, to construct fantastic and even impossible worlds, now we find ourselves confronted by a very real place, albeit one to which we have no access.

Conclusion

In 'Of Other Spaces,' Foucault prefaces his remarks on the heterotopia with a brief history of space, from the Middle Ages to the present day. In the medieval era, he says, space was rigidly hierarchized: there were sacred places and profane places, protected places and exposed places, rural places and urban places. In cosmology there were terrestrial, celestial and supercelestial places. "There were places where things had been put because they had been violently displaced, and then on the contrary places where things found their natural ground and stability." These intersecting oppositions and hierarchies roughly constitute what Foucault labels the medieval "space of emplacement." Beginning with Galileo in the seventeenth century, he continues, this space of emplacement gave way to the space of extension. For Foucault, the most shocking aspect of Galileo's work was not his rediscovery that the earth orbited the sun, but the fact that he opened up "an infinite and infinitely open space," in which "a thing's place was no longer anything but a point in its movement." "Today," says Foucault, speaking in 1967, "the site has been substituted for extension which itself had replaced emplacement." Modern space, he argues, is characterised by the "site," which is "defined by relations of proximity between points or elements." "We do not live inside a void that could be coloured with diverse shades of light," concludes Foucault, "we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another." (OS, 22-23) It is this latter set of circumstances that Foucault's heterotopia seeks to contest. These other spaces, he says, "have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect." (OS, 24) Heterotopias contest the notion that space comprises a network of irreducible sites by existing in relationship with all other sites, regardless of proximity, and by superimposing numerous different conceptions of space in the one place.

Amid Foucault's comments about the quasi-primitive nature of the heterotopia, and about "the table upon which since the beginning of time language has intersected space," (OT, xix) it is easy to forget that he also defines it as a phenomenon contingent upon a particular set of historical circumstances. The varying configurations of the heterotopia on show in the preceding chapters certainly

bear out this understanding of the heterotopia as a concept the significance of which has changed over the years. In Joyce's *Ulysses*, these sites constitute a contestation of real space, creating rifts in the novel's ostensibly precise topography, opening the material world out onto an entirely textual space. In *Ada* they serve a similar, but simultaneously inverse, purpose. Here, Nabokov uses heterotopias to anchor the flagrantly unreal world of his novel to a sense of material reality. If in *Ulysses* these sites provide access to a kind of mirror world, then with Nabokov we are already through the looking glass; these places allow us to catch glimpses back through to our own reality, and thus contest the self-sufficiency of Nabokov's fictional realm. By the time Sebald is writing, however, these sites have lost their mythic and contestatory powers. In his work they are more frequently associated with the historical atrocities that made them possible, or which they serve to conceal. This concluding chapter of the thesis looks to draw out some of the historical forces – material, intellectual, and literary – that have helped to shape this trajectory. To this end, it begins by seeking to place Joyce and Nabokov in their respective modernist and postmodernist contexts, not to suggest that the works studied in the preceding chapters are emblematic of those movements, but rather to demonstrate how the relationship of influence between these two authors is symptomatic of a broader transition from the former to the latter. Finally, in relation to Sebald, it assesses the status of the heterotopia at the end of the twentieth century, showing how his rejection of the heterotopia constitutes not only a reading of Foucault, or a response to the changing social function of these sites, but also an assessment of the merits of the twentieth-century fiction of which they are a key motif.

The geographical and textual definitions of the heterotopia have frequently been aligned with modernism and postmodernism respectively. On his website *Heterotopian Studies*, Peter Johnson has posted an essay titled 'A Question of Modernity?' in which he evaluates and compares two prominent geographical appropriations of Foucault's concept, one from each of these perspectives: Kevin Hetherington's *Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering* and Edward Soja's Foucault-inflected postmodern geography. Although highly critical of both analyses in terms of their somewhat liberal appropriations of Foucault's ideas, Johnson's essay demonstrates the differing appeal of the heterotopia to theorists of these two movements. Hetherington, he argues, "highlights the fact that many of Foucault's examples gain a particular power and influence during the different stages

of the modern era: asylums, prisons, cemeteries, botanical gardens, libraries, museums and so on." Soja's interest, in contrast, lies less in the particular sites about which Foucault speaks than in the abstract notion of superimposed spaces, the "heterotopology" in which Johnson suggests he identifies "a whole new way of seeing and thinking about space, or the conception of 'Thirdspace'."[1] Although Soja, too, focuses on 'Of Other Spaces,' he identifies in Foucault's lecture an analogy of the mutli-perspectivism found in Borges's Aleph, and thus also calls to mind the textual definition of the heterotopia. This dichotomy is even more pronounced in literary studies, as evidenced by the respective analyses of Andrew Thacker and Brian McHale that have informed the unified model of the heterotopia utilised in this thesis. In *Moving Through Modernity*, Thacker is primarily concerned with Foucault's discussion of the social and geographical sites that Foucault describes as heterotopian, suggesting that the new experiences engendered by these spaces contribute to the literary innovations of modernism. McHale, on the other hand, draws exclusively on Foucault's reading of Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia, in which he identifies the epitome of the kind of contradictory and self-deconstructing fictional worlds of postmodernist fiction. Thus, by resolving the major contradiction in Foucault's definitions of the heterotopia, that between real places and impossible spaces, we also gain an insight into the relationship between modernism and postmodernism

Because of the critical emphasis on notions of interiority and psychology, the heterotopia bears an inherently ambiguous relationship to modernism. In 'Of Other Spaces,' Foucault defines the heterotopia in opposition to such internal or subjective conceptions of space. "Bachelard's monumental work and the descriptions of phenomenologists," he says, "have taught us that we do not live in a homogeneous and empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well." "Yet these analyses," he adds, "while fundamental for reflection in our time, primarily concern internal space. I should like to speak now of external space." (OS, 23) But it is clear that the heterotopia owes much more to these studies than Foucault is willing to admit. In his definition of the

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[1] Peter Johnson, 'A Question of Modernity?' *Heterotopian Studies*, <http://www.heterotopiastudies .com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/3.2-A-Question-of-Modernity-pdf.pdf> [accessed 21st July 2014], 6-7

heterotopia as "a simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live" (OS, 24) (which this thesis takes as the most succinct crystallisation of Foucault's combined writings on the topic), it is the notion of simultaneity that is decisive in determining the impossible or unthinkable quality of such spaces; by juxtaposing contradictory dimensions in the same space without resolution, they exceed the limits of our thought by creating a kind of spatial cognitive dissonance. Yet this definition also seems to rest heavily on the notion of mythic space that Foucault leaves characteristically undefined. The only truly mythical image to appear in Foucault's lectures on the heterotopia is the magic carpet, which, he argues, is inspired by the microcosmic form of the traditional Persian garden. Both spaces allow one to travel to the farthest corners of the Earth, so to speak. In light of this image, one is inclined to consider this notion of mythic space to signify a kind of imaginary realm that transcends the here and now. But perhaps a greater sense of what Foucault means by "mythic" can be ascertained through an examination of a group of writers and artists whose presence pervades Foucault's oeuvre and seems to hover behind his formulation of the heterotopia: the Surrealists.

Surrealism, too, occupies something of a contradictory position in Foucault's studies of the heterotopia. In *The Order of Things* he positions Borges's heterotopian encyclopaedia in contrast to Lautréamont's famous description of "the fortuitous encounter upon a dissecting-table of a sewing-machine and an umbrella," adopted by André Breton as a kind of slogan for the Surrealist movement. In this image, Foucault argues, the table "provides proof of the possibility of juxtaposition," allowing thought to operate upon the entities thereon. The *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*, in contrast, finds no such space in which to unfold. The overlapping and open-ended classifications preclude the possibility of any such space, existing only in a textual realm. "We are all familiar," writes Foucault, "with the disconcerting effect of the proximity of extremes, or, quite simply, with the sudden vicinity of things that have no relation to each other." (OT, xvii) Borges's encyclopaedia arouses in him "the suspicion that there is a worse kind of disorder than that of the *incongruous*, the linking together of things that are inappropriate" (OT, xix). The heterotopia, then, is defined in opposition to one of the defining aesthetic principles of Surrealism: the unexpected encounter. But in the radio broadcast that Foucault gave barely six months after the publication of *The Order of Things*, he used a passage from Louis Aragon's *Le paysan de Paris* to illustrate one

of the principles of the heterotopia. "There are some heterotopias," he says, "which seem open, but which can only truly be entered by those who are already initiated. We believe that access is simple and available, but in fact we are at the heart of the mystery." (LH, 33) Thus, he quotes Aragon's description of a brothel: "I never for a moment think of the social aspect of these places," writes Aragon, "the expression *maison de tolerance* cannot be pronounced seriously."[2] This example is more than a little cryptic; but perhaps this radio talk contains more subtle and revealing echoes of Surrealism. In an interview published between *The Order of Things* and the broadcast of 'Les Heterotopies', Foucault described Breton's work in terms almost identical to those he used in the latter to describe the concept of utopia, used almost synonymously there with the notion of mythical space. Breton rediscovered, says Foucault, "the whole dynasty of imagination that French literature had driven out." For him, he says, "the imagination is not so much what is born in the obscure heart of man as it is what arises in the luminous thickness of discourse." Moreover, in the same interview, Foucault positions Breton at the head of a tradition that includes writers including Blanchot and Bataille, and which he says is "effacing the rubrics in which our culture classified itself, and revealing unforeseen kinships, proximities, and relations."[3] Combined with Foucault's famous studies of René Magritte and Raymond Roussel (who was revered, almost exclusively, by the Surrealists), which appeared either side of his studies of the heterotopia, and which have both been written about in relation to the concept, it seems likely that Foucault had the Surrealists in mind when he formulated his ideas about these spaces.[4]

It is not surprising, then, that Kevin Hetherington has identified "a strong surrealist theme running through [Foucault's] analysis, notably in his emphasis on similitude and the powers of random juxtaposition in creating alternative perspectives." "One can find," he says, "a fascination with the sites of Otherness in Paris in the writings of Louis Aragon and André Breton."[5] This does not do justice to

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[2] Aragon, *Paris Peasant*, 118-19

[3] Michel Foucault, 'A Swimmer Between Two Words', in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. James Faubion (London: Penguin, 2000), 173-74

[4] Michel Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe*, trans. James Harkness (Berkeley, CA: University of Los Angeles Press, 1982) and *Death and the Labyrinth*, trans. Charles Ruas (London: Continuum, 2004). For commentary on the relationship these two texts bear to the heterotopia, see Harkness's introduction to *This Is Not a Pipe*, 4-5, and Johnson, 'Unravelling Foucault's 'Different Spaces',' 86-87.

[5] Kevin Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering* (London: Routledge, 1997), 43

the number of heterotopian sites on show in *Le paysan de Paris* alone, nor to the similar tone in which Aragon and Foucault define them, suggesting a more wholesale influence than Foucault's reference to the brothel might imply. In addition to the brothel, we find meditations on bath houses, theatres, public gardens, and mirrors. "At the baths, a very different kind of temperament tends towards *dangerous* daydreams: a twofold mythical feeling that is quite inexpressible comes to the surface," writes Aragon; "places such as these are so calm, one might be in another country, a guest of some exotic culture." The theatre similarly presents an opportunity for mental travel, displaying the kind of microcosmic formation that Foucault identifies in Persian gardens and zoos: "Any sort of pretext," he writes, "is good enough to justify a procession of five or six naked women representing the different parts of the world or the various races of the Ottoman empire." But it is gardens that hold the greatest sway over the imagination for Aragon. "They reflect faithfully the vast sentimental regions where the city dwellers' wild dreams stir," he writes. "It is almost as though man has rediscovered, through the mirage of his fountains and little gravel paths, the legendary paradise he has never wholly forgotten." In the imaginative experiences stimulated by these sites, the "metaphysical entity of places," Aragon identifies what he calls "a modern mythology," and posits it as an interruption of Enlightenment rationality. "My habits of thought," he says, "have been so conditioned by innumerable tortuous processes that today I find myself unable to place complete confidence in any notion I may have of the universe without first subjecting that notion to an abstract examination." In the intoxications afforded by the modern urban landscape, Aragon identifies the opportunity to transcend this way of thinking, and to give himself over to a more immediate and sensory experience: "I no longer wish to refrain from the errors of my fingers, the errors of my eyes," he writes. "I know that these errors are not just booby traps but curious paths leading towards a destination that they alone can reveal to me."[6] In response to the new experiences afforded by the heterotopian sites of the modern urban landscape, then, the Surrealists began, as Foucault says, to efface "the rubrics in which our culture classified itself," a phrase which immediately calls to mind the bizarre taxonomy of Borges's Chinese encylclopaedia.

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[6] Aragon, *Paris Peasant*, 66-67; 121; 133-34; 27; 22-24

Although the Surrealists have perhaps provided us with the most explicit articulation of this new experience of space, it seems likely that it is one that lies behind much modernist writing. Indeed, those sites that Foucault describes as heterotopias are to be found in much literature of the period. Taken together, Thacker argues, Foucault's definitions of the heterotopia "articulate an interpretation of modernism as a set of responses to changes in the material spaces of modernity, shown in, for instance, Forster's image of metropolitan suburbs in *Howards End* or Imagist poems set on underground trains."[7] Cesare Casarino, likewise, has expounded upon the importance of the ship's status as the "heterotopia *par excellence*," in the constitution of the "modernist sea narratives" of Herman Melville and Joseph Conrad. The literary innovations on show in those texts, he argues, are partially constituted by the unique historical significance of the ship at the turn of the century. "While recording possibly the most glorious moment in the history of the ship," he writes, "the modernist sea narrative is also thoroughly imbued with premonitions of a future in which this heterotopia would be inevitably relegated to the quaint and dusty shelves of cultural marginalia."[8] In light of these studies, other modernist heterotopias appear ripe for examination: gardens in Woolf, brothels in Proust, the zoo and the museum in Rilke's poetry, Thomas Mann's sanatorium, Kafka's penal colony, and so on.

Ulysses, however, remains the most complete demonstration of the modernist heterotopia. If Joyce wanted to create his novel as a kind of modern-day myth, then perhaps these "simultaneously mythic and real" places are equally as important as the Homeric parallels. The thoughts of both Stephen and Bloom in response to these sites articulate the same kind of collective experience of the modern urban landscape described by the Surrealists. But Joyce's novel goes beyond the typical experience of interiority that finds expression in modernist fiction. In chapters such as 'Cyclops', 'Circe', and 'Ithaca', the imaginary overflows into the unthinkable, conflating ontological categories in the same way as Borges's encyclopaedia. Joyce thus demonstrates that the exteriority of writers such as Blanchot and Borges is not formed in opposition to interiority, but rather arises through it, as a natural extension or offshoot. Marilyn French has even argued that the structure of *Ulysses* enacts this

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[7] Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity*, 28

[8] Cesare Casarino, *Modernity at Sea: Melville, Marx, Conrad in Crisis* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 16

very progression from inside to outside. In *The Book as World*, she argues that the respective techniques employed in *Ulysses*, with the exception of Molly Bloom's interior monologue in 'Penelope', lead the reader, roughly speaking, further away from the interiority of the initial style. Each episode, she explains, "moves the characters outward in space to a new place in Dublin, while the narrational comment moves the reader outward in space to a new distance from the action and simultaneously probes some area of consciousness."[9] The reading of *Ulysses* in this thesis suggests that these two progressions are perhaps not as independent of each other as French implies, and that in fact the heterotopian spaces of Dublin help to constitute the novel's increasingly externalised styles.

Joyce thus represents a continuity between the material spaces of modernism and the textual ones of postmodernism. As we have seen, McHale's description of the "plurality of incommensurable worlds" in *Ulysses* echoes his flawed notion of the "heterotopian zone of postmodernist writing."[10] In Foucault's description of the *Celestial Emporium* as a space in which "things are 'laid', 'placed', 'arranged' in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a *common locus* beneath them all," (OT, xix) McHale finds reflected the ontological plurality on show in the fiction of authors such as Thomas Pynchon, Alasdair Gray, Julio Cortázar, and also, interestingly enough, Guillaume Apollinaire, another significant precursor to Surrealism. These spaces, he explains, are "less constructed than *deconstructed* by the text, or rather constructed and deconstructed at the same time," in such a way as to explore "ontological propositions."[11] In denying the worlds of their stories a stable and well-defined sense of reality, one subject to an overarching set of rules or principles, these writers present us with a literalisation of one of the most famous definitions of postmodernism: Jean-François Lyotard's "incredulity toward metanarratives."[12] The grand theories of Enlightenment liberation and progress, argues Lyotard, with their claims to totality, no longer appear adequate to us; they overlook the heterogeneity present in the world and serve to reinforce the hegemonic forces at work therein. Thus, he argues we should replace metanarratives with a localised multiplicity of

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[9] Marilyn French, *The Book as World: James Joyce's Ulysses* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 3-4

[10] McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism*, 51

[11] McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 43-45

[12] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), xxiv

little narratives, modes of thinking or understanding subject only to their own concerns, much like the multitude of different orders on show in Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia. As was the case with the Surrealists, though, this contestation of Enlightenment rationality is seemingly born out of the technological and material developments of the era. In dismantling the socially-constructed reality enshrined by such metanarratives, McHale argues, postmodernism supplants it with a socially-constructed sense of unreality. As he suggests, "postmodernist fiction *does* hold the mirror up to reality; but that reality, now more than ever before, is plural."[13] In the multiple and often contradictory worlds of these authors, McHale finds reflected the fragmented nature of modern life, the competing realities collapsed onto one another in mass media, global communications, travel, fiction, and so on. As Soja argues, in its juxtaposition of incompatible places, the heterotopia serves as a perfect model for the new experiences of space brought about by such developments.

As in Nabokov's *Ada*, however, many authors resort to representations of Foucault's heterotopian sites of modernity as a way of articulating this postmodern ontological plurality. Despite the supposedly transitory appeal of these sites, many of them persist as significant literary motifs well into the post-war era, not necessarily as a reflection of their social function, but in a more metaphorical sense. As places that blur the distinction between the real and the unreal, they allow writers to foreground the boundary between reality and fiction, juxtaposing different ontological planes within the same space. Hence the profusion of libraries, gardens, and mirrors in the fiction of writers such as Umberto Eco, John Barth, Italo Calvino, and Georges Perec. In addition to the persisting significance of Joyce, much of this can be ascribed to the direct influence of late modernists such as Nabokov, and especially Borges. In their respective exiles from the European arenas of war and genocide (Nabokov's literal, Borges's metaphorical), they safeguarded the passage of these images into the postmodern era. Following these authors a whole new mythology springs up around these spaces and objects, a mythology that treats them not simply as the repositories of fantasies, or as sites which serve to stimulate the imagination, but as the border-spaces between the real and the fictional. One thinks of the role played by mirrors in Paul Auster's late postmodernism, the brothel, the

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[13] McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 39

circus, and the prison in Angela Carter's magical realism, and the gardens, cemeteries, museums, and ships of Michael Ondaatje's postcolonial fictions.

Combined, then, Foucault's two definitions of the heterotopia contribute to an understanding of literary history that views modernism and postmodernism as two elements of the same continuum: both describe an aesthetic contestation of Enlightenment rationality, in response to the material and technological advancements made possible by that same Enlightenment thinking. Sebald's fiction seeks to highlight this problematic set of circumstances. Indeed, by the time Sebald is writing many of Foucault's heterotopian sites have been divested of their mythical qualities. Foucault himself, for instance, has shown us that the prison is not a Sadean repository of dark fantasies at the edge of society, but rather a cold and instrumental disciplinary machine. In 'Of Other Spaces,' the prison is a "simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live." Seven years later, in *Discipline and Punish*, it has lost its contestatory power. Here, he suggests that the prison "merely reproduces, with a little more emphasis, all the mechanisms that are to be found in the social body."[14] Derrida, meanwhile, has shown that the archive does not constitute the "fantasia" out of which Flaubert's *Temptation* rises, but rather an institutionally-sanctioned repository of official knowledge. "There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory," says Derrida in *Archive Fever*. "Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation."[15] Sebald himself, meanwhile, seems to be the first to identify the fact that many of those sites described by Foucault as heterotopian – the zoo, the museum, the ship, and so on – have their foundations in European imperialism.

Perhaps the most important precursor to Sebald's treatment of these sites, however, is Walter Benjamin. As we have seen, there is a significant correlation between those sites that Foucault posits as examples of the heterotopia and those that Benjamin labels "dream houses of the collective" in his *Arcades Project*.[16] The subjects of Jacques Austerlitz's sprawling architectural studies in Sebald's final work represent a kind of Venn diagram of these two sets, with examples lifted from each, and several which occupy the intersecting overlap. Given the heterotopia's Surrealist

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[14] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 233

[15] Jacques Derrida, 'Archive Fever: a Freudian Impression', trans. Eric Prenowitz, in *Diacritics* 25.2 (Summer 1995), 11, n.1

[16] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 405

pedigree, the reason for this correspondence seems self-evident. Benjamin, too, was heavily influenced by the movement, especially in his studies of the modern urban landscape, and of the collective experiences afforded thereby:

> He [Breton] can boast an extraordinary discovery: he was the first to perceive the revolutionary energies that appear in the 'outmoded' – in the first iron constructions, the first factory buildings, the earliest photos, objects that have begun to be extinct, grand pianos, the dresses of five years ago, fashionable restaurants when the vogue has begun to ebb from them. The relation of these things to revolution – no one can have a more exact concept of it than these authors. No one before these visionaries and augurs perceived how destitution – not only social but architectonic, the poverty of interiors, enslaved and enslaving objects – can be suddenly transformed into revolutionary nihilism.[17]

However, despite his enthusiasm, Benjamin was also highly critical of the Surrealists. "To win the energies of intoxication for the revolution," writes Benjamin, "this is the project on which Surrealism focuses in all its books and enterprises." But for all their revolutionary potential, this objective is destined to remain unfulfilled, Benjamin argues, due to the Surrealists' "inadequate, undialectical conception of the nature of intoxication." "Any serious exploration of occult, surrealistic, phantasmagoric gifts and phenomena presupposes a dialectical intertwinement to which a romantic turn of mind is impervious," he adds. "For histrionic or fanatical stress on the mysterious side of the mysterious takes us no further."[18] Thus, in *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin defines his objectives in opposition to Aragon's work:

> whereas Aragon persists within the realm of dream, here the concern is to find the constellation of awakening. While in Aragon there remains an impressionistic element, namely the "mythology" (and this impressionism must be held responsible for the many vague philosophemes in his book), here it is a question of the dissolution of "mythology" into the space of history. That, of

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[17] Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia', in *Selected Writings: Volume 2, 1927-1934*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, trans. Rodney Livingstone and others (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 210
[18] Benjamin, 'Surrealism', 215-16

course, can happen only through the awakening of a not-yet-
conscious knowledge of what has been.[19]

The Surrealists, Benjamin believed, were far too susceptible to the intoxicating powers of this modern dream world. In contrast, he called for a "dialectics of awakening," a kind of mass dream interpretation in which the capitalist forces underpinning this phantasmagoria would be laid bare. Thus, he focuses on the Parisian arcades and other "dream houses," which constituted the material remnants of this collective dream, and were thus ripe for analysis.

This, it seems, is what Sebald is attempting through his critique of Foucault's heterotopian sites, albeit without Benjamin's revolutionary zeal. Just as, according to Judith Ryan, Sebald "confronts precisely the later developments of the power structures Foucault had studied and that he had refrained from pursuing in *Discipline and Punish*," so too does he extend Benjamin's project to include the developments that his suicide on the French-Spanish border in 1940 precluded him from seeing.[20] If Benjamin's ambition was to awaken the masses from the collective dream of the nineteenth century, Sebald's is to stir us from that which has persisted well into the twentieth, not in an attempt to forge a renewed sense of class consciousness, but to expose the shortcomings of the Enlightenment models of thought that have led us sleepwalking into the catastrophes of the last hundred years. In Foucault's heterotopian sites Sebald identifies the natural successors of the "dream houses" that so enthralled the Surrealists, and, following in Benjamin's footsteps, aims to dissolve their mythical qualities into the space of history.

One might be tempted to argue that the heterotopia, in its simultaneous constitution of the real and the mythic, manages to avoid the trap into which Benjamin argues the Surrealists fell: "the histrionic or fanatical stress on the mysterious side of the mysterious," which, he says, "takes us no further." Does the heterotopia not contest the mythic as much as it contests the real? This, after all, is what this thesis has argued is the role of these sites in Nabokov's *Ada*; by affording the reader glimpses back through the looking glass to some form of material reality, they expose the constitution of the mythical planet of Antiterra in the imagination of the narrator, and interrogate the postmodernist notion of a self-sufficient fictional world. In the dissolution of this unreal world in the final section of the novel, and the

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[19] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 458
[20] Ryan, *The Novel After Theory*, 154

resurfacing of familiar traces of our own history, one might even identify the kind of historical awakening proposed by Benjamin. Yet while Benjamin calls for a relationship between consciousness and dreaming in terms of a "dialectics of awakening," in Foucault's heterotopia the real and the mythical pertain to one another, in line with Blanchot's notion of contestation, in a resoundingly non-dialectical fashion; like the categories in Borges's encyclopaedia, their "powers of contagion" are localised (OT, xvii). Heterotopias, too, take us no further; they serve only to lead us deeper into the realm of unreason.

Sebald, it seems, was only too aware of this. Not only does he sever the connection between real places and impossible spaces by reinserting Foucault's heterotopian sites into history, thus stripping them of their mythical qualities, he also divests impossible textual spaces like Borges's Chinese encyclopaedia of any contestatory power they may once have had. In doing so, he also highlights one of the major contradictions in Foucault's delineations of the heterotopia – not that between real places and impossible spaces dealt with by the introduction to this thesis – but one that pertains to precisely what it is that the heterotopia seeks to contest. In 'Of Other Spaces,' as we have seen, Foucault describes the heterotopia as contingent upon an understanding of space founded on the notion of the site, which he says has replaced the Cartesian notion of extension. "The site," says Foucault, "is defined by relations of proximity between points or elements." (OS, 23) The heterotopia subverts these relations of proximity by juxtaposing and superimposing incongruous and seemingly incompatible places. In *The Order of Things*, however, the heterotopia is said to subvert a conception of space as "a table, a *tabula* that enables thought to operate upon the entities of our world…the table upon which since the beginning of time language has intersected space." Only this understanding of space is not as timeless as Foucault suggests here. Later in the same text he describes the table as a defining feature only of Enlightenment models of thought. At different times, then, Foucault defines the heterotopia in opposition to both a Cartesian mode of thought that treats space as a grid, and a more variegated understanding of space that is said to have supplanted such a reductive conception, and which treats each site as a product of the unique set of relations by which it is constituted. The obvious conclusion to be drawn from this contradiction is that our modern era is not the product of a rupture in history, as Foucault argues, but rather represents a continuity of such Enlightenment ways of thinking. One might even suggest that by locating the

power of contestation in a notion of unthinkable space, the heterotopia serves to reinforce the Cartesian equation of thought and space. Foucault's concept thus appears to us as more of a reactionary, rather than a revolutionary, concept. Heterotopias subvert Enlightenment rationality, but they provide no constructive alternative. This, finally, seems to be the logic behind the postscript to Borges's 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', and behind Sebald's decision to paraphrase it at the end of the third chapter of *The Rings of Saturn*. The encyclopaedic project of Tlön, which owes its discovery to the conjunction of a mirror and an encyclopaedia, Sebald explains, "aimed at creating a new reality, in the course of time, by way of the unreal." Such an undertaking, however, seems doomed to failure. Thus Borges shrugs off the notion that our world will be eclipsed by this mythical planet. "The world will be Tlön," quotes Sebald. "But, the narrator concludes, what is that to me?" (RS, 70-71)
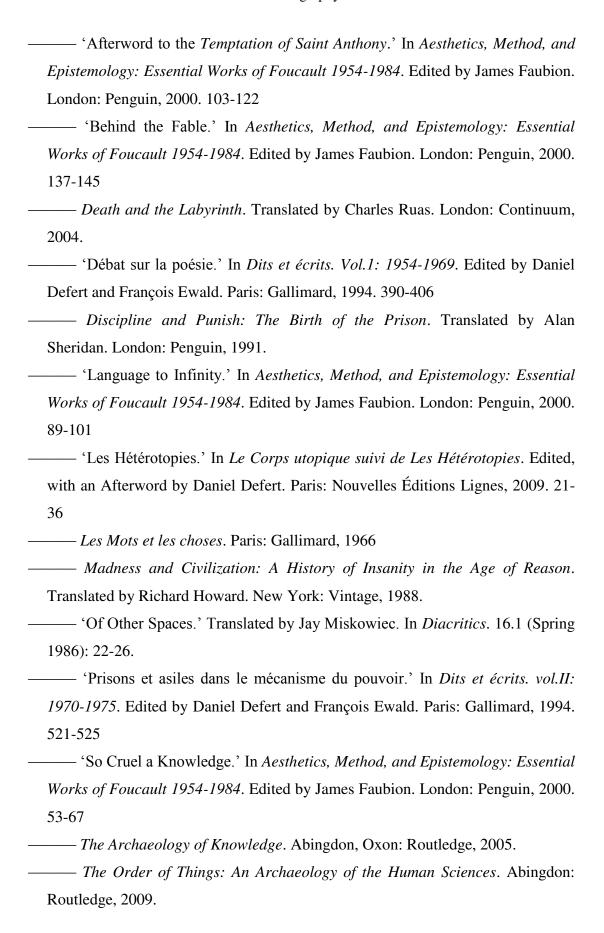
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