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Afterword

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Afterword

Kevin Hetherington

“The sailing vessel is the heterotopia par excellence. In civilisations without ships the dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police that of the corsairs”

Michel Foucault, “Different Spaces” (1998, 185)

As I write this afterword in the end of summer days in August 2019, I ponder on two seemingly unconnected things: the purpose of an afterword in the context of a book on heterotopia and what is happening out in the North Atlantic this week.

The historian of paratexts, which is a term for the bits of a book like the preface, postface, index, title, acknowledgements etc., outside the main body of the text, Gérard Genette (1997), tells us that afterword or postface are rare in literature, certainly in comparison with prefaces (which, of course, are usually written afterwards but put before as an introductory guide). Where they do occur it is often as a somewhat ineffective corrective by the author often included to try to stop the reader developing a poor reading that they have perhaps invited through their clumsy writing or poor argument. With an edited book like this it invites the idea of some overall commentary or reflexion, perhaps on a key theme from the book drawn from one or more of the chapters. However, the reader having done all the work to get to that point in the book probably is not really interested in having it re-interpreted for them by the author or someone else now suggesting a different view or adding something else late in the day that was missing from the main body of the text (Genette 1997, 238-9). To do so suggests that the reader, assuming they have followed the logical order in their reading of the text, should go back and start again or at least re-read parts of it. Likewise, an afterword does not really fulfil another possible function of staving off an anticipated hostile reception by the critics by getting the author’s defence in first. The critics are still likely come to their own view on the text despite that author trying to give a very visible, (defensive?) late steer. As Genette (1997, 239) says “But for the postface, it is always too early and too late.” The issue is, then, how to steer something that either does not want to be steered or is rather difficult to do so?

I am not, though, the author of this book – just another contributor. However, I am one of the authors who, over the last couple of decades, has helped establish a reading of Foucault on heterotopia (Hetherington 1997, 2011, 2015), so perhaps this afterword is as

much to my own work on the subject as it is to this particular volume. After all, an invite to make such a contribution usually relates to some issue of intertextuality – having something of a relevant reputation to speak on a topic with the possibility that I may have something to add. One speaks from author-ity.

However, there is something more pertinent to the issue in question at work as well. Although Genette does not say this himself it is clear that paratexts – and not just afterword and prefaces but all the supplementary texts in a book that are outside the main body of the text: index, title page, acknowledgements, dedications, forewords and so on – can have a heterotopic relationship to the content of the book in which they are bound. They are not the book itself but add-ons whose emplacement relates to but also does not relate to the core work in that it stands somewhat outside of the interpretation that is otherwise given in the body of the chapters. And that relationship can be established by author or audience in their writing/reading of what is placed outside of the main text but in relation to it. It suggests that other readings are possible, that there is always a supplement and that things remain unfinished despite the craft of the author/editors.

I want to use this opportunity and the space in which it arises to say something about Foucault. I do not intend to give an overall steer on Foucault's sketchy essay on heterotopia nor on its now substantial secondary commentary, including in this volume which tries to situate the term in relation to a troubling time in the history of global relations and their expressions of power and control. There is one theme, though, I do want to draw out both in the context of what he said there and the position of that text within his work as a whole (see also Deleuze 1988; Shapiro 2003; Hetherington 2011).

Foucault's essay on heterotopia deals with both places, real and imagined sites or types of site, and the idea of emplacement that is relational (1998). The essay, where he tries to define what he means by heterotopia, mingles together, then, a description of particular types of outsider place: cemeteries, museums, brothels, gardens, and so on, with an idea of space as relational through the notion of emplacement established through a set of six principles. Overall, and in a somewhat chaotic and not fully developed way, what he is trying to achieve is an understanding of the modern and its spatial dynamic (for him that means European modern) by uncovering a logic of emplacement within these places and the mirror that they hold up to society as a whole as it changes. He chooses sites that are somehow other to the recognised or familiar discourse of spatiality of their time.

The confusion in his essay, and the fact that no one has ever subsequently fully disentangled it or come to a definitive reading accepted by the many, is that he does not really

say why these spaces and what relationship they establish to the idea of a wider sense of society. The closest he gets is through using the metaphor of a mirror; in the sense that these are spaces that are other and reveal something about what is understood as same through the relationship they establish. Same/other, normal/pathological, madness/reason – much of Foucault's early work establishes something of this reflective dynamic between these binarisms. Overall, as Deleuze (1988) was first to really point out, what he is exploring is the relationship between the discursive and the figural or between saying and seeing and their different modes of operation within knowledge (see also Shapiro 2003).

As Shapiro (2003) has pointed out, Foucault's work can be seen as developing through three distinct periods and objects of enquiry. The first is his "structuralist" phase with his interest in how discourse is established from speech, the main example being his work *The Order of Things* (1989b [1966]) which focuses primarily on textual sources found in the archive. The third phase is a phase where he becomes interested in the visibilities of power and with mode of governing in societal spatial locations and not just in the archive. The major statement here, of course, is his work *Discipline and Punish* (1977 [1975]) which is concerned with the physical spatial apparatuses of panoptical power within carceral institutions like the prison. The shift between these two phases is often marked out as a shift of emphasis either from archaeology to genealogy (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982) or from the archive to the map (Deleuze 1988).

But what of the time in-between, the second phase from 1967-74 or thereabouts? This, of course the period in which the heterotopia essay was written. What we see in this period is Foucault moving away from the archival sources but not yet moving on to look at the carceral institutions as spatial apparatuses. The main work of this period is the now largely forgotten/unfashionable *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1974 [1969]). We know that in this time Foucault also planned a book on Manet and modern art but only one lecture survives (2009). We know it was also a time of growing political activism for him after the events of 1968 in Paris and his absence from them and his reappraisal of the mechanisms of power within modern society.

While a rather dry and abstract book, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* does introduce a range of interesting concepts around the idea of the spatiality of emergence and the operationalisation of knowledge not found elsewhere in which he tries to establish the relationship between what is seen and what is said or between the discursivity of the archive (the known) and the figural of the map (the as yet unknown but visible) though he was clearly dissatisfied with the outcomes. His ideas on heterotopia are part of this period and are

a brief commentary, albeit elliptically, on the relationship between what is seen (places) and what is said (emplacement principles).

His heterotopia essay is about where things go and what stands out from that and the complexity that surrounds this issue in the present time. Many emplacements are knowable and understandable – they exist within a discourse that is familiar but others are not, they relate figurally as knowledge by being seen rather than discursively as knowledge - understood within a recognisable system of emplacement. Some of these spaces, he suggests, are imaginary – utopia, and others are real sites – those he calls heterotopia (1998, 178). He then goes on to offer a sketch outline of the study of such spaces, or what he calls a heterotopology, (1998, 179) giving brief examples and the effects they can have in allowing us to reflect on wider issues of spatiality within society and the social relations that inform it.

This is one of his first attempts to map out issues of spatial relationality. He had tried to do something similar in the first chapter of *Madness and Civilisation* writing on the leper colony and the ship of fools (1989a [1961]) using there the anthropological language of liminality. In his Heterotopia essay, though, he focuses on identifying the principles of heterotopia of which he notes six: spaces of deviation, spaces with changing function, spaces of juxtaposition of the incongruous, spaces of temporal discontinuity (anachronistic), spaces that are both open/closed to entry, and spaces of contrast or difference (1998). Many of the chapters in this present book light on one or more of these for their analysis through a particular example, real or literary/artistic. What Foucault does not say is why these principles and what their societal functions are – he has not yet developed the theoretical vocabulary for his heterotopology and he takes it no further in his work.

Nor does he carry out what would later come to be called a genealogy of the sites he associates with these principles. The suggestion at this point is that it might be a direction he will take – the library and gallery, in particular, were spaces that interested him at this time – though clearly he does not. What he does do, as Deleuze cogently puts it, is go on through later work to establish a cartographic understanding of the diagram or apparatus of power (1988) as inherently spatialised and that then becomes his focus in his later work on the panoptical carceral institutions of power such as the prison and what they have to tell us about power more generally and its role in constituting modern subjects (1977). In many respects his essay on heterotopia is an early example of such an approach. For some, its unclear formulation or attempt to discursively name figural otherness and fix it are problematic (see Genocchio 1995; Saldanha 2008). For others, including those in this

volume, the lack of a systematic theoretical toolkit leaves open a range of possibilities for its use.

While the language and the mode of analysis may be incomplete in this period of his work, it does retain a playfulness and a space for play that is lost in the later carceral work of mapping out the apparatus and materiality of power within modernity. We find that more clearly when he speaks of surface of emergence in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1974; see also Elden 2001). Without going into a lengthy discussion of that work (one of the freedoms of an afterword, dear reader, is that I do not have to) in a nutshell a surface of emergence is defined as a space in which the already visible but not yet known becomes knowable discursively for the first time – or, where the figural becomes discursive (1974: 41ff). And that happens in a diverse set of spaces, though his own interest has always circulated around the asylum, clinic, and prison.

While I am not saying that heterotopia and surface of emergence are the same concept – they clearly are not – but they do have a kinship; they perform a very similar function for Foucault in opening up to scrutiny in the real world the relationship between what is seen and how it becomes known and the effects that that knowledge can then have. That, too, remains a theme of many of the chapters in this present book. The prosaic and colourful examples associated with heterotopia are lost in this more abstract later term but whichever term we use, both explore the principle of placement that is formed out of the dynamic between what is seen and what is said in a way that leaves open different possibilities to the institutionalised world he was to go on to describe a few years later.

If an afterword can be said to try and give a steer before/after the main reading, can the same be said for heterotopia as a broader idea? I think so. It can hold a mirror up to society but it can also show a glimpse of alternate possibilities. It is not all nailed down, or laid out. It does not provide a clear message, rather a picture of one. Like a ship we can tack. That fluidity, like the meandering sailing vessel is a virtue rather than a flaw.

Steering, then, is also something as a metaphor very much tied up with the imagery of the boat – a theme that fascinated Foucault from his early work on madness and his discussion of the Renaissance ship of fools (1989a, 7-19) through to, and including, the rather cryptic passage that comes at the very end of his heterotopia article (1998) that is the starting point for the chapters in this volume. It is perhaps fitting that he ends his rather elliptical essay on heterotopia (first given as a lecture to some architects) with the idea of the ship. He

says no more about it in his heterotopia essay but it is a major trope in *Madness and Civilisation*.

Whether the ship of fools in the fifteenth and sixteenth century were historically real or not (Foucault is a little vague on his sources on this) they had a real cultural presence in the writing from a book of that title by Sebastian Brandt from 1494 and later in the etchings of Albrecht Durer and paintings of Hieronymus Bosch. All, no doubt, were aware, too, of the unruly ship in Plato's *Republic* as a source of reference in drawing up this space of contrast that supposedly sailed up and down the great rivers of central Europe full of the unruly and mad – making visible what could yet be spoken discursively.

This carnivalesque metaphor, challenging Catholic orthodoxy, not only came into being after the closure of the leper colonies, as Foucault points out, but only 50 years after the beginnings of printing and at a time when the first pre-discursive, pre-Lutheran protestant stirrings must have been in the air. Foucault speaks of this ship as new form within the imaginary landscape of the Renaissance, a challenging space of contrast in which madness became visible before it was known as madness.

Centrally Foucault speaks of those on the ship of fools as prisoners of the passage – one whose state is to pass between but never fully arrive (1989a, 11). And that brings me to the North Atlantic – that great puddle of unpacific weather – that has defined the Western spatial imagination since it replaced the Mediterranean of Ancient times during the Renaissance and the era of European discovery, conquest and slavery. Two things have happened there this week. The first is Greta Thunberg, the sixteen-year-old Swedish climate change activist, who has captured the imagination of the world since she began her Friday school strikes against the inaction to halt climate change. Over the last year she has exploded in the space of social media and become the focus for a newly emergent climate change protest movement called Extinction Rebellion. She is, as I write, about to complete a two week journey on a carbon neutral yacht called Malizia 2 (Malice) under the slogan “unite behind the science.” She is presently on her way to speak at a conference on climate change in New York and chose this mode of travel rather than an aircraft with all its climate damaging emissions. The second, in complete contrast to Thunberg, is that the US President Donald Trump has cancelled a state visit to Denmark after his announcements, also on social media, that he wished to buy Greenland from Denmark were rebuffed. The former Prime Minister of Denmark Lars Lokke Rasmussen spoke for many when he called Trump's suggestion “absurd.”

The discourse of globalisation has always been shaped by a westerly spatial imaginary as much as by its attempt at fixing and exoticizing the east as Other to itself in a discourse of orientalism (see Said 1979). The capitalist world has since the 1400s been oriented westward against the prevailing wind both spatially and temporally. When Columbus set sail to look for a western passage he was not seeking to discover the Americas but to find a new route to Jerusalem (see Todorov 1982). The westward search for what lies beyond the horizon is a key trope in the Western discourse of utopia that underlies notions of expansion, development and progress – an imaginary land that might be found just beyond the western horizon (see Marin 1993).

California dreamings: from the frontier and the expansion of the railroads in the nineteenth century to space exploration and the privatisation of the solar system in the dreams of some of today's billionaire tech entrepreneurs, discovering what lies just beyond the horizon – setting sail “westward” in search of that other space of dreams is what lies at the boundary between reason and madness in the Western capitalist imaginary. It is a space of overcoming, of conquest; following in the wake of the Portuguese Man O'War that first established the charts for this idea of the traversal and the conquest of space (see Law 1986). Madness and civilisation. Always entwined. Both engage with the Atlantic literally and figuratively, “water and madness have long been linked in the dreams of European [Western] man” (Foucault 1989a, 12).

Thunburg's approach follows this direction of travel while also challenging it – laudable, her rational utopianism is uncompromising in its “folly” of demanding the impossible – total societal change within a decade to meet emission targets that would stop the globe from warming up by more than 1.5C – something that would make capitalism unviable on that kind of time-scale. Her clear voice is very much one grounded in Enlightenment reason: that the scientific evidence and models are telling us very clearly that we have to stop doing what we are doing to our planet if we are to avoid likely species extinction from the consequences of our self-induced climate change. This “sainity” is counterposed to the practices of societal “madness” and is grounded in the scientific rationality of an Enlightenment empiricism around tipping points that are entirely plausible and requiring of us urgent action. Consciousness has been roused. But action beyond the symbolic?

She has chosen her voyage on a sailing vessel that doubles as a ship of science to make this point. Following her on Twitter, to date, her journey seems to have been calm and uneventful but there will be a storm of a different kind when she arrives – a storm of media

attention to amplify the Twitter storm that she has created with her highly effective use of social media within her protest and call for action (see also Johnson, this volume). In total contract in his political values Trump, too, speaks here the social media language of rationality and absurdity but to quite different ends. A man who has made his billions from real estate seeks to do a big real estate deal with another country by buying part of its, albeit autonomous, territory. He wants the natural resources that can be found there and which melting ice and permafrost from climate change will make it easier to exploit. The “folly” of his proposed actions is to challenge the very basis of the political alliance that has held the North Atlantic nations together since 1945 seems to escape him. National self-interest, America First, is all that matters and yet the very idea of the USA is grounded within the totality of leadership of that Western world and not its fragmentation. And there is no concern at all for the climate change that has made Greenland and inviting territorial proposition.

Both also speak the language of social media, the 140 character language of Twitter that calls forth bold, forthright, blunt speech acts lacking in subtle discourse. The politics, of course, is very different as are the ethics. Both speak of self-preservation, one on behalf of humanity in the face of its folly, the other of the self-interest of their nation in the face of increasing competition and the threat of declining global influence. And yet both emerge from a state of crisis and of the changing consequences of globalisation. The environmental impacts of folly capitalism – and let’s call it that rather than invoking the false consciousness of speaking instead of the folly of humanity or of “this generation” – and the crisis in the Western alliance that is emerging out of the economic crisis of 2008/9 and austerity politics of neo-liberalism which has allowed nationalism and authoritarian populism to return to the political scene are both the space in which Thunberg and Trump exist. Both speak a language of emergency. One, grounded in a discourse of science, that time is running out to do something about retaining the habitability of our planet, the other, a discourse of unfettered capitalism, giving voice to the extremist discourse of the alt-right within the mainstream such that it risks becoming normalised as part of the political discourse for the foreseeable future. Both, then, in their different ways occupy and constitute a space of heterotopia – a space of challenge and contrast to a crisis of globalisation, in particular, just different challenges, different audiences and different desired outcomes. In many respects each is the embodiment of the challenge for the other.

And yet I have to say that much as I admire Thunberg’s challenge, not least to Trump and what he stands for, it is not Thunberg’s well-equipped sailing vessel on the Atlantic that is the defining heterotopia of our time of global political, economic and environmental

change. Rather it is that set of overloaded small ships on the Mediterranean desperately trying to carry refugees, migrants and the displaced from Africa and the middle-east out of war zones, failed states and areas of drought, famine and resource depletion and into Europe, many of them in the hands of modern-day pirates and slave traders or people smugglers, that take on that role. We see them nightly on television, many of them sinking with hundreds of lives lost each time, some washing up as rotting corpses on the tourist beaches of Europe (see Kluwick and Richter, this volume). We see in them the look of desperation that displacement causes and how that reflects our own actions and responsibilities. And for those who do make it, the modern-day internment camps, detention centres and places for deportation await them as a second heterotopia (Agamben 1998). What is seen and what is said remains disconnected except in a spectacle of horror. And in them we also glimpse a possible future, our future, the future not just of the hundreds of thousands on the move but of countless millions as the truths of global economic crisis, political re-alignment and climate change come to together in their global effects over the course of this century. Here then is the real madness of folly-capitalism and the consequences of environmental change and also the break-up of the Western alliance and its influence through political and social liberalism and values of democracy. It is their visibility that calls forth a need for a new discourse of space no longer defined by the old language of nation-states, territory, and boundary but an open space of the Anthropocene in which we seek to accommodate ourselves to a changing and less benign future that we might have imagined only a few years ago.

Trump and Thunberg. Climate change denier and witness. Both use Twitter as a space in which to speak. Both speak very differently. When she lands, I am sure she will have much to say. However, she has said when she arrives in the US she does not intend to speak to him as he would not listen to her. She is right.

I would not try to put words in her mouth but through her speech and her actions I am reminded of the words of another articulate, teenage girl that we might want to say to him about his many walls and denials,

If by your art, my dearest father, you have
Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.
The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch,
But that the sea, mounting to the welkin's cheek,
Dashes the fire out. O, I have suffered
With those that I saw suffer: a brave vessel,

Who had, no doubt, some noble creature in her,
Dash'd all to pieces. O, the cry did knock
Against my very heart. Poor souls, they perish'd.
Had I been any god of power, I would
Have sunk the sea within the earth or ere
It should the good ship so have swallow'd and
The fraughting souls within her.

The Tempest, Act 1 Scene 2

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