Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopia and postcolonial artistic responses to museum spaces

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Dedication

In memory of my mother and father

Space Traveller

How do we determine polarities of language
Or snowed in coordinates of cold meaning
Whose distance unfolds each word before
Us to engage dead verbs with old stars?

My country extruded a number of our natives
In proportion to the mass of the invaders
In a geography of casual displacement
And we based it on old scientific formulae

But this time I map territories with new words
My chafed body marking a space of transition
From London to Boscobel I am remapping
Rocking and re-joining my orphaned coordinates
# Contents

**Dedication**  
2

**Abstract**  
5

**Chapter 1 Introduction to the Thesis**  
7

**Chapter 2 Retracing Foucault’s heterotopia concept**  
15

- **Introduction**  
15
- **Space, phenomenology, language and power**  
20
- **Antecedents and inception: a critique**  
26
- **Imaginary, metaphoric and actual spaces**  
30
- **Derivations and definitions**  
37
- **Heterotopias and the places of the signifier**  
43
- **Social and corporeal space: terrains of subjectivity**  
47
- **Disseminating heterotopias**  
53
- **Space and the postcolonial**  
56
- **Spatial conclusions**  
68

**Chapter 3 Foundling Hospital Bloomsbury: Space for Curating Childhood & Art**  
75

- **Introduction**  
75
- **Historical context of the Foundling Hospital**  
78
- **The Foundling Hospital as a space for the invention of childhood**  
80
- **The Foundling Hospital as a nascent museum**  
88
- **The Foundling Hospital as a heterotopia of childhood**  
91
- **A space for curating children, childhood and art**  
93
- **Epilogue: the Foundling Museum and the absent spaces of postcolonial childhood**  
96
- **Conclusions: on postcolonial childhood**  
102

**Chapter 4 Spatialisation and Isaac Julien’s Vagabondia**  
105

- **Introduction**  
105
- **Historical and artistic context**  
107
- **Introducing the work: Vagabondia**  
114
- **The site: Sir John Soane’s Museum**  
119
- **Isaac Julien and spatialisation**  
121
- **Mirroring placeless places: mise en scène, mise en abyme & the spaces of Vagabondia**  
129
- **A heterotopia of disruptive language: the vagabond-trickster & spaces of enunciation**  
138
- **Conclusions: the space of the phantasm**  
147

**Chapter 5 Phantasmal Mirrors: Isaac Julien’s ‘Baltimore’**  
156

- **Introduction**  
156
- **The film sequence Baltimore: a synopsis**  
158
- **The sites and their historical contexts**  
161
- **Orpheus, mirrors and the spatial imaginary**  
167
- **Material and imaginary spaces**  
174
- **Conclusions: consolidating the reflections**  
178

**Chapter 6 Conclusions to the Thesis**  
184

- **Spatial thinking as interdisciplinary**  
185
- **Further research and implications for my practice**  
186
- **Declaration**  
190
- **Impact statement**  
190
Abstract


Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopia and postcolonial artistic responses to museum spaces

This thesis is concerned with cultural articulations of space, from the point of view of philosophy and from the perspective of artists responding to museums as key sites of cultural heritage. My central research question is how the concept of heterotopia can be useful in exploring postcolonial artistic responses to museum spaces that tackle questions of personal and cultural identity, arising from key aspects of my own artistic and curatorial practice, as well as my personal biography.

My methodology takes the heterotopia concept as proposed by Michel Foucault in his (1967) Des Espace Autres, as its point of departure and I subject it to a critical analysis. I progress through conceptualisations relating to architectural space and end with delineations of postcolonial cultural domains that are both real and imaginary and relational between one space and another, an understanding of space that is rooted in oppositions that are both geographical and cultural. The heterotopia concept is used to elucidate these themes through artistic responses to museum spaces and with pictorial representations that are both real and imagined. A number of museums have been chosen as sites for analysis, from the Foundling and Sir John Soane’s Museums in London to the Walters Art Museum, George Peabody Library and National Great Blacks in Wax Museum in Baltimore, Maryland, in the USA.
I engage with the works of old master artists Fra Carnavale, El Greco, William Hogarth, J A D Ingres, the Regency architect Sir John Soane and with works of contemporary artists Mat Collishaw and Isaac Julien to tackle questions about the relationship between the postcolonial subject, heritage spaces and cultural identity. To elucidate these questions of the real and imagined articulation of space the thesis contains a detailed analysis of two of Julien’s works that deal with museums: *Vagabondia* (2000) and *Baltimore* (2002).
Chapter 1  Introduction to the Thesis

Historical context: our epoch of space

The launch of the Sputnik by the Soviet Union (USSR) in October 1957 was not just an event in which the momentum of a rocket had been calibrated in relation to the Earth’s gravitational pull to send an artificial satellite into an elliptical orbit of our planet. Neither was it simply the technological triumph of a communist nation being the first to launch a human-made projectile into orbit. The journey of the satellite was not merely the culmination of Newtonian mechanics either, in particular thermodynamics and the associated laws of gravity. Rather the orbit of the Sputnik registered a profoundly new understanding of what we humans understand and experience as space and marked a massive expansion of the problematics around this concept not just as a notion of geometric space-time coordinates but also an experiential reality – as much psychological as it is physical. Gaston Bachelard, who would become one of Michel Foucault’s teachers at the École Normale Supérieure and one of his early intellectual influences, was a philosopher of science who had been concerned with subjects such as thermal
propagation and relativity. Yet Bachelard, under the influence of thinkers like Henri Bergson, suddenly abandoned this approach, publishing his psychodynamically inspired *Poetics of Space* in 1958, the year after the Sputnik was launched. In this text Bachelard explored spatial intimacy at the human scale, from the playful enclosures of childhood games to the signification of dwelling as a place. There is warmth in this text that contrasts markedly with the emergent Cold War that was heralded by the launch of the Sputnik – and the anxiety of the fathomless depth of outer space. It was as if the imperative to extend human curiosity into the infinite dimensions beyond our galaxy had rendered the nature of the Earth as a now dubious spatial reality, becoming somewhat an enigma, and that new paradigms were needed in order to interpret and negotiate it. At the very least, space had become less tangible or at least posed a series of new questions not only for philosophy, Space, as an experiential question, would also become an important concern for political theory, architecture, art, geography and even the prosaic activity of human walking or wandering in urban space – the practice of everyday life – a notion that would later preoccupy another spatial thinker, Michel de Certeau (1984) who, along with Bachelard, Foucault and Henri Lefebvre can be considered to be the principal spatial philosophers of the twentieth century.

A decade after the orbit of the Sputnik, in Foucault’s introduction to the version of his essay *Des Espace Autres* (1967) that was first published in English in the journal *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité* in October 1984, after noting that ‘the ‘nineteenth century found its essential mythological resources in the second principle of thermodynamics’ the philosopher declared that the ‘present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space’. So the inauguration of space travel not only put humans into a trajectory with the infinite extension of what lies beyond our own universe. It coincided with a new scepticism about the nature of space here on Earth, within and between our own terrestrial domains. Foucault was introducing a piece of writing called *Of Other Spaces* which had been released in 1967, not long after his debut publication *Madness and Civilisation*, in 1961, three years after the orbit of the Sputnik. The book launched his own revolutionary anti-psychiatric analysis of asylums as spaces for the confinement of unreason and madness – ending with an image of a much earlier technology of spatial discovery in the image of the ship.
Bachelard’s and Foucault’s texts were published at the end of the 1950s during the great post-war leap forward in the fields of ballistics and telemetry that were so essential for the successful launch of the Sputnik, which was also the start of the technological and political rivalry to dominate terrestrial and outer space between the USA and USSR whose jet propulsion technologies of conflict had been usurped from the Nazis, with the Americans offering sanctuary to the Third Reich’s chief rocket scientist Werner von Braun. So the end of the 1950s concluded a decade of the most tumultuous events in human history with the dissolution of the European colonial empires after the cataclysm of the Second World War that resulted in the complete geopolitical spatial realignment of the world. In the decade that followed the war, the British and French empires began their rapid fragmentation under the forces of anti-imperialist movements, the continuing increase in the global reach of the USA and USSR, the Independence and Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, the Chinese Revolution in 1949 and the Suez Crisis of 1956 all revealed the catastrophic decline in the potency of British imperialism in the Middle and Far East and the inexorable rise of what would come to be known as the American Century. The Pan African Congress was founded in 1959 that would in turn lead to independence movements across Africa, and both Cyprus and most dramatically Cuba achieved their independence in 1959. By this time what would come to be known as the Cold War – that great protracted attrition between communist and capitalist geopolitical space, epitomized by the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis – became synonymous with Armageddon since these territories of the USA and USSR only coexisted because of the threat of Mutually Assured Destruction, the prospect of total annihilation by means of thermonuclear war.

Yet in the inauguration of spatial theory by thinkers such as Bachelard and Foucault, they would not only take different paths in their respective philosophical enquiries – with Bachelard adopting an explicitly phenomenological approach and Foucault avoiding this direction and instead developing a poststructuralist analytical framework informed by vestigial Marxian elements. Astonishingly, these thinkers would expound their spatial theories with the consequences of these seismic global events as barely discernible backdrops, rather than engaging with them as related questions – even though in Foucault’s case, he was personally involved in anti-imperialist politics in North Africa. So, for example, with all of the possible political
connections that one would imagine could flow from an inquiry that contains the word ‘civilisation’, it is remarkable that Foucault avoids any mention of imperialism in his enquiries about the tyranny of reason in his *Madness and Civilisation*. As the geographer Stephen Legg (2007: 268) has remarked, in reference to comments on Foucault’s lack of attention to the question of colonialism, there is a ‘massive forgetting’ yet, nevertheless, there is paradoxically what he calls ‘a metaleptic presence’ of postcolonialism in the philosopher’s work. This means that in spite of its explicit absence within Foucault’s oeuvre, his theories have obvious and urgent postcolonial implications, if not applications. Therefore, colonialism and imperialism can only be properly discerned or even elucidated by means of metonymy, that is to say one has to replace or substitute certain terms which Foucault used figuratively with another, more explicit terminology, in order to reveal the potential for postcolonial analysis. So with the concept of heterotopia, the notion of different or specifically other spaces, and all to which it infers in relation museum spaces in Europe or the West, is what this thesis is about.

Therefore, for example, what if we were to imagine performing this metonymy in relation to the titles of Foucault’s works, such as: Postcolonial Museums (instead of *Madness*) and *Civilisation*, or Museum Spaces and the Other rather than *Of Other Spaces*? This would reinscribe the presence of postcolonialism, to bring it into sharper relief in order that we can analyse it both as a geographical and experiential reality as well as a figure of language and of the imagination in relation to museums. I am paraphrasing Foucault in order to approach museums, like asylums, as spaces in which civilisation itself is somewhat confined, like madness, and as key sites in which – in post-Renaissance Europe especially – civilisation through objects is represented, classified and reproduced through strategies of taxonomy and visual display. This thesis is an artistic response to questions of how museum spaces and the collections of objects within them, operate as signifiers for cultural difference, hierarchy and domination, where questions of national identity are produced and reproduced and where a Western proprietorial ownership can be established in relation to the discursive definitions around what constitutes civilisation or heritage.

This thesis attempts to tackle these questions first of all by a thoroughgoing rereading and analysis of Foucault’s *Of Other Spaces* as a contribution to theory and in order to make audible the silent voice that it obscures in relation to the essential
qualities of space from a postcolonial point of view, or at least the beginnings of a rubric that will inform further research. In my own artistic and curatorial practice, I have been concerned with museum spaces, as territories in which notions of civilisation, identity and difference are articulated, and they have been key sites in which to probe and interrogate notions of marginality within the hierarchies of civilisation and cultural heritage that have been constructed around particular collections of objects. This metonymic action is intended to reinsert a postcolonial analytical dimension into Foucault’s spatial theory and first of all necessitates a re-reading of his work in relation to postcolonial scholarship in order to arrive at a point where the heterotopia concept can be of some use as a postcolonial analytical framework and this is performed in some detail in the first chapter. This necessarily involves a repositioning of the heterotopia concept not only in relation to postcolonial historical contexts but doing so with the historical background in mind to which I have referred above, namely: the context of imperialism and the related issues around identify, subjectivity and culture that enliven the spatial issues with individual experience. Following this theoretical work, I then approach these interrogations of museum spaces through the work of artists in response to a number of very different sites in different geographical locations. The artists about whom I have chosen to write are notable for their consistent attention to museums and questions of heritage in relation to individual subjectivity and identity and especially an understanding of the construction of the human subject in relation to power or oppression as exemplified, for example, in the continuing aftermath of the slave trade.

In the first instance, I choose a site with no obvious relationship to colonialism: the Foundling Hospital and its later Museum and arrive at a postcolonial analysis by way of the dichotomies of absence and presence via the work of William Hogarth and other eighteenth century painters before concluding with J A D Ingres to whom Mat Collishaw has responded. Then the following two chapters deal with the responses to museums by the artist Isaac Julien; first the Sir John Soane’s Museum in London and then to three American cultural institutions in Baltimore, Maryland: the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum, the Walters Art Museum and the George Peabody Library. In this chapter I return to the subject of space, not in relation to the competition between the USSR and the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory but through Julien’s engagement with the prose of African American novelist Octavia Butler and
her Afro Futurism, which imagines a heterotopia on another planet where the human species can evolve into a genderless amalgam of biology and machine. Finally I conclude with a chapter on my own artistic practice, beginning with my visual art practice in relation to curatorial projects as contemporary artistic interventions into museum spaces. I approach Julien’s works as expressions of modernity and double consciousness by making visible phantasmal spaces, as heterotopias of consciousness and as a means of engaging with the politics of the museum.

**The site(s) as representations of personal experience**

Before going on to discuss the theoretical issues around the thesis I would first like to give an account of my personal narrative that underpins the geography of the thesis – how it came about as the result of ‘walking in the city’ as De Certeau (99: 1984) phrased it ‘where the modalities of pedestrian enunciation which a plane represented on a map brings out could be analysed.’ In other words, in my case, a number of sites represented on a map, two dimensionally, through the act of walking and wandering became in effect instances of enunciation. My physical movements as a pedestrian were transformed into a discursive analysis. It was as part of an effort to discover and understand my environment (architectural, geographical and cultural) or to find myself in these domains through some kind of genealogical analysis by which I imagined I might find traces of my own history buried, guided by theory and by wandering through various historical periods. So the problem became: how can I excavate this history through an attention to a specific number of sites within my locality where I have lived for over twenty years. Surrounded by many great institutions – such as the Inns of Court: Gray’s Inn, Lincoln’s Inn, Inner Temple and Middle Temple; the Old Bailey, Saint Bartholomew’s Hospital and the London Metropolitan Archives, the Sir John Soane Museum, the London School of Economics and Political Science – and many more.

As I often passed Coram’s Fields, the site of the Foundling Hospital, I wondered how I could ever be related to its history, how an institution devoted to protecting childhood could ever be related to my own. Was I not a kind of a foundling as the child of immigrants from the British Empire, or indeed as an orphan? I believe this is what first drew me to this site, its connection with childhood and abandonment and that there was a hint of Empire in the colonial connections through its founder.
Thomas Coram and his involvement with the British Colony of Virginia in what is now the United States of America. There was the loss of the physical building itself, now existing as a trace and through the objects in a museum that necessitated a kind of archaeology to recover a lost history through traces on a map and architectural ruins.

It was the same with the Sir John Soane Museum, a site so near to my home, yet far back in history. I had been fascinated by the eccentric Regency architect for years, having made a photographic intervention at Dulwich Picture Gallery, a building which has the important status of being the first purpose built art gallery (whereas the Foundling was the first public art gallery) and was drawn to his work because of its modernity. What possibly could I have in common with this person or his work? It is by means of this effort to connect that I found in Isaac Julien’s work a convenient route into the narrative around the architect, his work and the museum itself which was his former home. More than that, by connecting with the work of this particular artist I could also connect with my own history, both personal and cultural. The trajectory of Julien’s career is largely coterminous with my own, often addressing similar issues, and intimately concerned with the museum as a site of struggle and as a space where identity can be negotiated, renegotiated and rearticulated around different coordinates. Indeed, by focusing on the work of this particular artist I would be able to draw wider connections with this particular in terms of my previous involvement in activism and black politics.

It was these very previous involvements in activism that also connect me to the writings of Michel Foucault. This philosopher represented for me both a challenge and an opportunity. The opportunity lay mostly in the potential of his theories to address what for me were questions of identity as articulated within sexual politics and struggles around identity that occurred in the UK from the 1980s onwards. The challenge was, as it will be argued in this thesis, around applications of his genealogical method to questions of race and colonialism – largely missing from his writings yet tantalisingly within reach as a potential tool for our postcolonial struggles. So it was with this background that my thesis began, both in its selection of sites and the artists I chose to study and the theoretical framework within which I analysed them.
The relationship between the words and its work

Finally, I wish to briefly explain in this Introduction the role and purpose that my curatorial and artistic work serves in this thesis. This thesis is concerned with the nature of my practice which has been to make and curate art works and programmes within museum settings. Furthermore, my practice within museums is not just concerned with making and presenting art work. It is also concerned with the politics of representation in the terms of the arts and heritage workforce – who works in the sector – as well as who has access to or participates or audiences in the programmes within these settings.

I am particularly concerned with how this research is not only an outcome of my activism, photography and curating, which I explain at the end of the thesis, but how it can inform my future practice which is also about management interventions in the museums sector as well as artistic ones.

Therefore I believe the nature of curatorial and management practice and the possibility of developing new knowledge has operational significance for that practice within museums and the wider heritage sector. I am particularly concerned that the main focus of my research is to advance knowledge about museum practice both artistic and curatorial, or to advance knowledge within practice. In my doctoral thesis, the results of practice-led research will therefore result not only in creative outcomes in terms of making, curating or exhibiting new works but actions on the level of organisational culture, initiatives around the workforce and those concerned with expanding audiences through particular strategies aimed at increasing access.¹

¹ In the practice Chapter 8 at page 222 in the thesis, I give examples of this practice in the documentation of my curatorial projects conducted in museums and arts institutions.
Chapter 2  Retracing Foucault’s heterotopia concept


Introduction

After emerging in clinical descriptions in the 1920s (Ritter and Knaller-Vlay, 1998) and existing as an esoteric medical diagnosis for the next four decades, the term heterotopia was inserted into theoretical discourse by Michel Foucault in 1966. Having been co-opted from the field of medicine to architecture, in response to which Foucault reformulated the term in 1967, the word has now migrated to the cultural mainstream via a number of arts and humanities disciplines. As I will discuss in this chapter, the heterotopia concept has made a deep impact on a range of disciplines from cultural geography, literary and film studies, to the history of art and architectural theory and I will trace its development and applications before using it to analyse artistic responses to museums as well as the evolution of my own practice as an artist.
Locations designated as heterotopias include the Pont d’Alma underpass in Paris, site of the fatal car crash involving the late Diana, Princess of Wales (Alfonso and Elliott, 2003); as well as aspects of cyberspace (Doane, 2002); the fantasy topoi of cinema (Jacobs, 2007); Victorian mental asylums (Philo, 2004); visual art (Heyd, 1999); the imaginary *fabula* of literary invention (Burrows, 2008) and even the most recent architectural extension to the Museum of Modern Art in New York (Elderfield, 1998). As the cultural geographer Arun Saldanha (2008) remarked: ‘one wonders whether there is still space left for mainstream society’ which brings into question the idea that a heterotopia is supposed to be a fragment of a whole, as the definition below explains. If so many spaces can be identified as heterotopias then, it does beg the question about what essentially differentiates them from other spaces. So this concern goes to the heart of the shortcomings of the heterotopia idea – targeting its open-endedness, fuzziness and tendency towards conceptual slippage. Yet, paradoxically, I believe it is the very imprecise nature with which the concept was first defined and developed by Foucault that lends it continued appeal. This is how he described the term ‘heterotopia’ in the publication of the first (1986a) full English translation of his essay *Of Other Spaces*:

First there are the utopias. Utopias are sites with no real place...There are also, 
probably in every culture, in every civilisation, real places – places that do exist and that 
are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, 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. 
Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate 
their location in reality. *Because these places are absolutely different* from all the sites 
that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, 
heterotopias. (My emphasis)

Foucault’s complex metaphysical description is in sharp contrast to the stark simplicity of the textbook medical definition (Engel, et al: 2008) revealing the clinical origins to a term of which he cannot have been unaware and to which he never referred:

> Heterotopia is, by definition, the presence of normal cells in an improper location (2008: 2580).

Not only does Foucault’s definition contrast with the original clinical conceptualisation, it also differs markedly from how the philosopher himself introduced the term in the
Michel Foucault’s Concept of Heterotopia and Artistic Responses to Museum Spaces

Chapter 2
Retracing Foucault’s Heterotopia Concept

preface to his (1966) Order of Things which he then explained as a disruption of the normal syntactical, grammatical and hermeneutic rules of language. This chapter is a close reading and interpretation of the literature concerning Foucault’s (1967) text whose brevity and accessible style belies its complex density and disruptive process of composition and development. The edition used in this discussion is the 1997 version that was reprinted as part of Documenta X, and accompanied an essay by Foucault’s partner and literary executor, Daniel Defert. Given Defert’s close proximity to the circumstances in which Of Other Spaces was produced and his significant involvement in its publication and reappearance as a significant text, some weight has to be given to his perspective on the development and application of the heterotopia concept.

The critical timeline of events around which I will analyse the development and shifts unmeaning and emphasis in the development of Foucault’s thinking around the heterotopia concept are:

- **Publication of The Order of Things 1966**
- Radio broadcast from Paris within the same year, December 1966,
- A lecture to a group of architects in Berlin in March 1967

- Of Other Spaces is added to the corpus of Foucault’s authorised writings shortly before his death in June 1984 and published in English in *Diacritics* in 1986

I will attempt to assess the heterotopia concept alongside other related methodologies for understanding space that have emerged before and since Foucault appropriated the term from medicine. My intention in this chapter is to assess the extent to which the heterotopia concept is useful for understanding the complexities of how space is experienced and negotiated by human subjects as well as by a number of practices that might be termed governmental, social, normative or transgressive. Finally, I will suggest ways in which the concept may be used, alongside the spatial theories of Gaston Bachelard and Anthony Vidler, as a basis for taking forward my own research and fine art practice that is concerned with artistic responses to museums, gardens and hospitals in two different epochs. I will draw attention to the work of other spatial theorists whose work can contribute to an understanding of space in relation to cultural and political identity such as geographer Edward Soja,
cultural theorist Homi Bhabha and in particular the work of philosopher and cultural critic Peter Johnson.

I will reconsider Foucault’s heterotopia together with Maurice Blanchot’s concept of literary space, which he proposed as the domain in which imaginative literature takes place. Then we should not be so much dependent upon identifying actual spaces that correspond with linguistic categorisations but rather with the imaginary, the disruptive, the anarchic and those violations of normal syntax that call rational speech into question. These operations of language are not so much reflections, as refractions such as we find in Diego Velázquez’ (1665) painting Las Meninas which Foucault used to illustrate problems of correspondence between language and objects. This was the origin of the idea in the preface the Order of Things published in 1966: that heterotopias are about disruptive classifications, or instances of where referential language breaks down. Furthermore, with the medical definition in mind, such disruptions are neither pathological nor abnormal in relation to the rest of space (or language) that exists outside of the heterotopia. In this sense, the idea of the ‘absolutely other’ heterotopic fragment is not to be taken literally in terms of the actual functioning of the space but rather its operation within the imaginary. It would seem that Foucault was aware of this distinction in his deliberately fragmented elaboration of the heterotopia concept in a succession of interventions both in speech and in writing.

I will explore the nomadic and wandering nature of the heterotopia text and certain elisions, buried themes and ruptures in its development that I need to elucidate again in order to put the text to new uses. As architectural theorist Heidi Sohn (2008) has pointed out, following the literary critic Benjamin Genocchio (1995) that the heterotopia concept is not a neat theoretical package ready to be applied:

The complications and inner conflicts of Foucault’s essay is heightened by the contradicting and diverging usages of the term heterotopia in The Order of Things and in the essay ‘Of Other Spaces’, a significant paradox that is generally misunderstood, ignored or left out, and that should not go unnoticed. (2008: 44)

This point is reiterated by Ritter and Knaller-Vlay (1998) and Johnson (2006: 81) who describe Of Other Spaces as ‘playfully presented’ and ‘briefly sketched, provisional and at times confusing’ and Saldanha (2008) describes it as ‘nomadic’ and ‘an inadequate concept for analysing spatial difference’. He goes on to make a number of
insightful critiques of the concept, the main problem of which, he writes, is its inheritance from structuralism that ‘posits a totality to society from which all actual differences emanate’ (2008: 2080). However, in spite of these well-founded criticisms I nevertheless believe the concept is so powerful that it raises important questions about the nature of space and the relationships with it by human subjects.

One of these questions I want to address concerns the nature of postcolonial space, both real and imaginary. Therefore what is offered here as a political reading of heterotopia is stressed by Marxist spatial theorist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1991) and the American geographer Edward Soja (1996), who has used the heterotopia concept for the development of a postcolonial spatial theory which implies agency, opposition and the possibility of resistance within or to the heterotopic site or to the total body of space. The sense in which I will use the term ‘postcolonial’ builds on that proposed by diaspora scholar John McLeod (2000) which is the historical experiences of colonisation, imperialism and decolonisation, particularly by subjects of the Western European and American empires. In the chapters that use the heterotopia concept to analyse artworks as spatial interventions, I will attempt to elucidate what postcolonial scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988: 260) has called the ‘topographic reinscription’ of imperialism into museum spaces that is implicit within them and reference an epistemic violence in relation to the representational spaces of art works and the subjectivities to which they relate.

There are a number of important dualities that Foucault proposes in terms of the functioning and meaning of a heterotopia as a site of regulation and control. For example, the possibility that a space of deviation is not pre-given or designated but created or fashioned out of another space by actions designed to contest a dominant order or to reinscribe an existing space with a new identity or purpose. These questions will be the basis for the analysis of the spaces in the rest of the thesis. I will attempt to draw out these dualities both as a critique and also as a means of identifying opportunities for developing the heterotopia concept as part of a methodology of analysing the work of artists from different historical periods, using different forms, and my own work which is also about spatial interventions.
Space, phenomenology, language and power

Foucault (1982: 11) said that ‘each one of my works is part of my biography’. Therefore I will refer to his life events in order to shed some light on the phenomenological questions arising from Of Other Spaces. Foucault scholar Johanna Oksala (2012) has helpfully set out a biographical chronology which, although I would not wish to over-determine, I believe reveals some important insights and connections both into Foucault's interest in medicine, particularly psychiatry, his imperative to challenge its conceptual foundations and his antipathy towards phenomenology. This is also an attempt to introduce the personal or subjective into a discussion of why the experiential is largely missing from his heterotopia concept. By way of example I would cite Foucault scholar Judith Revel's (2013) reminder that biography has a valid role to play in the understanding of how philosophical concepts are developed and come into being.

Paul-Michel Foucault was born in 1926 into a wealthy family in Poitiers, a city in west-central France. Foucault's father, Paul (whose first name his son would eventually drop) was a prominent surgeon and professor of anatomy at the medical school in Poitiers and Foucault's father had a strong desire for his son to study physical medicine. However, whilst a student at the Jesuit Collège Saint-Stanislas in Poitiers, Michel took a fervent interest in philosophy – which he studied from 1940-45 and read Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant and Bergson – under the Hegelian thinker, Jean Hyppolite.

Foucault was accepted at the École Normale Supérieure in 1946 and attended the lectures of Maurice Merleau-Ponty in 1947-48. Only partially acceding to his father’s wishes for him to study medicine, Foucault took a course in psychopathology and visited psychiatric hospitals as part of his training. After receiving his licence to teach at the École Normale, Foucault experienced serious emotional problems, attempted suicide and was admitted to the Hôpital Sainte-Anne where he received psychiatric and psychoanalytic treatment. Foucault began to take an interest in Marxism in 1948 after attending the lectures on Plato at the École Normale delivered by Louis Althusser, under whose influence he joined the French Communist Party in 1950. In 1952 Foucault was awarded his Diplôme de psycho-pathologie from the Institut de Psychologie; after studying the works of Freud, Klein and Lacan he started teaching psychology at the University of Lille where he met Gilles Deleuze. He published
Michel Foucault’s Concept of Heterotopia and Artistic Responses to Museum Spaces

Maladie mentale et personnalité in 1954 and attended Jacques Lacan’s lectures at Hôpital Sainte-Anne. After a period of living in Northern Europe, including Sweden and Germany, Foucault was expelled from Poland in 1959 by the police (Mezzandra et al., 2013:16) after being entrapped in a homosexual relationship (Mills, 2003: 19; Falzon et al., 2013) and Foucault’s father dies in the same year. His doctoral thesis, supervised by the physician and philosopher Georges Canguilhem, was published in 1961 under the title, Madness and civilisation: a history of insanity in the age of reason, and became one of the founding works of anti-psychiatry because of its audacious and thoroughgoing attack on the conceptual foundations of psychopathology and the institutional spaces for its confinement.

I think these biographical details go some way to explain Foucault’s fascination with the history of psychiatry in relation to power, his overall critique of Western medico-legal systems and how this lead him to reject phenomenology. He was not just interested in discursive formations within the Western human sciences but how the exercise of power is imperative in the control and regulation of pathology as a strategy of governmentality. Foucault would then develop analyses of mental illnesses as well as sexual deviance as if they were lesions (that is to say, abnormalities that are seen to cause organic change, contagion or damage) and must be managed and controlled by medical science as well as juridical processes. Foucault had personal experience of psychoanalysis where his emotional difficulties, occurring at a time when homosexuality was still regarded by medicine as a pathological disorder (and by the law as a criminal offence). So Foucault’s emotional problems would be viewed as a consequence of his sexuality. His father is described by Joel Whitebrook (2005: 315) as an ‘autocratic and sadistic surgeon’ who tried to ‘force’ his son to become a doctor and subjected him to the hostility of the ‘psychiatric gaze’ when he discovered the emotional difficulties Foucault was experiencing. In some senses, then, Foucault’s biography represents the extraordinary resilience of someone who, having been personally failed by the psycho-medical disciplines, goes on to launch one of the most audacious critiques of Western medicine in philosophical history. Yet, in other ways, however, this resilience (or resistance) can be viewed as having led to a blind sport, when it came to the question of subjectivity. In this regard, it is also interesting that he appropriated a medical term originally formulated to describe a physiological event within an individual body – heterotopia – gave it an entirely new socio-political meaning and then declined to acknowledge its origins.
It can therefore be clearly seen from this chronology that, right from the start of Foucault’s career, a complex intellectual dynamic develops between his father’s medical ambitions, psychological medicine, politics and philosophy as well as his close brushes with repressive political regimes as an activist. To have intimately experienced such pervasive forms of power – the patriarchal, the medical and the juridical – must have convinced the young Foucault that illness and social deviance are inextricably linked and both have the potential to disrupt the individual body and threaten the social corpus as well. As Whitebrook (2005) suggests, Foucault’s personal and intellectual ‘struggle’ with psychoanalysis, psychology and psychiatry (as patient, practitioner and theorist) can be argued to have had a powerful impact on his rejection of the ‘interiorisation of experience’. Furthermore, the very choice of a concept like heterotopia whose origins are in medicine, and then to disconnect it from its origins, reflects Foucault’s own personal fascination and rejection of Western medical knowledge. I believe it was, ironically, personal experience of the most profound kind that informed his critique of phenomenology – the philosophy of experience. Psychiatry, like psychoanalysis and psychology, is likewise regarded by Foucault as a discourse of subjective experience that is insufficiently connected to the structures of the material world. Indeed, there has been a close connection between phenomenology and certain schools of psychoanalysis (see, for example, Legrand and Trigg, 2017) that seek to place the experience of a sovereign and unified (or what Foucault (2012: 103) called a ‘constituted, founding’ subject) at the centre of the analytic relationship and as the locus of all clinical interpretation. In other words, what phenomenology does to psychoanalysis is to help create a form of empathy in order to focus on the individual experience of ‘illness’ rather than upon clinical categorisations or descriptions.

Foucault’s antipathy towards phenomenology, as well as any personal experience, is also related to his critique of the psychological disciplines and his, albeit brief, involvement with structural Marxism (and historical materialism) under the influence of Althusser. This leads him towards a structural or post-structural analysis of social experience and political power in which social and discursive systems are privileged as the dominant frame of his analyses rather than individual experience at the psychodynamic level. It is my view that although Foucault would eventually reject the main foundations of these doctrines, vestigial discursive traces of them remain in his works and he did not manage to entirely rid his thinking of all aspects of
phenomenological concepts when writing *Of Other Spaces*. Such traces are to be found, for example, in those fleeting afterimages of phenomenological prose that unexpectedly emerge and Foucault's well-documented critique of the subject-centred psycho-medical disciplines. Indeed, as I will argue later in this chapter, the faint traces of phenomenology are also to be found in a number of other places in Foucault's successive theorisations of the heterotopia concept.

These biographical details about Foucault's intellectual and political development not only help to explain why he was opposed to phenomenology. They also help to explain those vestigial traces of Bachelard, not completely excised from his increasingly sophisticated development of theories around the configuration and exercise of power through discursive systems. So it is these fragments of phenomenology that uneasily coexist within *Of Other Spaces* alongside a more Althusserian, structuralist analysis of space independent of a relationship with subjectivity because of the risk of relying upon a 'constituted, founding subject'. It is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss the relationship between Foucault and his mentor Althusser (see for example Kelly, 2010:14) but suffice it say here that, although there were many differences between them, both thinkers were anti-humanist, anti-phenomenological and developed socio-political analytical systems that privileged structures (and discourses), or superstructures, above subjective experience.

The subject of experience is very important to the idea of a heterotopia being about deviance (whether cultural, social or political). I would therefore suggest that there are many different possibilities to the dualities that Foucault proposes which at first seem contradictory – such as the idea that a heterotopia can be a space of deviation. For example, the possibility that a space of deviation is not pre-given or designated but is created or fashioned out of another space by means of actions designed to contest a dominant order or to reinscribe an existing space with a new identity or purpose. This would seem especially to be the case in the history of marginalisation of, for example, black, gay or feminist groups which have reformulated a whole range of spaces – from gardens, to streets, and even medical spaces – into radical transformations from their original purpose. This brings to the foreground the problematic of experience or a phenomenological perspective in relation to space.
The issue here is about Foucault’s desire to place clear structuralist space between himself and what Oksala (2005) has called the ‘subject-centred approach of phenomenology’. There are certain elisions, buried themes and ruptures in development of Other Spaces that we need to elucidate again in order to put the text to a new use. Some of these buried themes are the vestigial trace of phenomenology which are to be found in the version of heterotopia that Foucault develops in the radio broadcast that is not so much structuralist but phenomenological in its stress upon the personal subjective encounter with certain archetypal spatial experiences (for example see Pile, 1996:160) in his discussion of the spatiality of Jacques Lacan and Henri Lefebvre). So I would include the mirror which Lacan uses as a metaphor for a seminal moment in psychological development and which we will also discuss as a ‘placeless place’. Then, finally, there is a more structuralist or ‘Bakhtinean’ version, as Defert (1997: 275) terms it, which is transcribed from speech and deals with space as a phenomenon external to human experience. It would appear that Foucault was not writing his heterotopology in isolation from the other spatialised genealogies that he had been working on since Madness and Civilisation, (1961) through to Birth of the Clinic (1973) and Discipline and Punish (1975) and therefore Other Spaces can be read as a text that, even in its brevity, looks back over the different stages of his spatialising genealogies, and refers to some of them indirectly in the form of his mention of hospitals, archives and museums, and yet others which perhaps he might have tackled if it had not been for his somewhat premature death.

In reference to the phenomenological connections with the heterotopia concept, Foucault is reported to have said: ‘of all the contemporary philosophers alive when I was a student, Bachelard was the one I read most’ and that he absorbed ‘an enormous number of things that I have elaborated’ (Miller, 2000: 60). Sociologist Peter Miller goes on to say that Foucault owed a great debt to Bachelard: ‘some of Foucault’s most beautiful pages in Madness and Civilisation, on the aquatic world plied by the medieval ‘Ship of Fools,’ owe a very large debt to the way Bachelard analysed the reverie of water’ (2000: 60). Furthermore: ‘No one,’ declared Foucault in 1954 ‘has better understood the dynamic work of the imagination' than Bachelard (2000: 61). The influence does not stop there: ‘for out of his unusual and sustained encounter with both poetry and modern physics, Bachelard wrested a world view that stressed ruptures, breaks, cleavages, instead of dialectical harmony...’ (2000: 61). Bachelard, of course, was a philosopher of sciences, whose early works published in
the late 1920s, and were concerned with subjects like *Thermal Propagation in Solids* (1926) and the *Inductive Value of Relativity* (1929). However, from the early 1930s Bachelard began to show clear influences of philosophers such as Bergson with works like: *The Intuition of the Moment* (1932) and *The Dialectic of Duration* (1936). Bachelard had thus crossed over from the rational certainty of positive logic to the uncertain, intuitive and discontinuous nature of poetic discourse - and that is exactly what takes place within Foucault’s short essay, but in reverse order, that is to say, from the poetic register to the structural, or from subject to object.

I agree with Oksala (2005) when she says: ‘Foucault’s alternative to the subject-centred approach of phenomenology leads to serious consequences in conceiving change and consequently also freedom’ (2005: 74). However, it is also worth mentioning that it is precisely from what could be called a phenomenological (what Defert (1997: 274) called ‘Bachelardian’) perspective that Foucault first starts to develop the heterotopia concept in his 1966 radio broadcast and in the talk one year later that becomes the basis of the paper *Of Other Spaces*. The influences that he acknowledges are the phenomenological insights of Gaston Bachelard. Following Bachelard (1958), Antony Vidler (1992 and 2000) also revisited architectural spaces from a psychoanalytic perspective. Vidler’s notion of spatial ‘warping’ and his return to Freud’s theory of the uncanny (or ‘unhomely’ as Vidler translates *Unheimliche*) is a deliberate attempt to foreground subjective perception and experience in relation to the spaces of modernity. It is well documented that Foucault was against phenomenology with Legrand (2008) going as far as describing the philosopher’s rejection of the doctrine as ‘violent’.

If phenomenology is defined as ‘the study of structures of human experience from the first-person point of view’ (Smith, 2016) then Foucault appears to have been implacably against it. As he says in a 1978 interview (Foucault et al., 2012) ‘From the moment that you posed the problem in terms of phenomenology, you allowed yourself on the one hand regionalities, ideal regions, but also, on the other hand, a constitutive, founding subject, intuiting or seeing these different regional essences; discontinuity of domains’ (Foucault et al., 2012: 103). The most important part of what Foucault says is about the constitution of the subject. For him, the problem with phenomenology is the danger of experiential essences and a kind of transcendental subject, not to mention the parochialism of locations. Yet I am arguing that the paradox with Foucault’s position is that in spite of these objections, and the
biographical details of how Foucault personally developed his stance against the subject-centred approach of phenomenology, traces of it are to be found in a number of his works and concepts, including his exposition of the heterotopia concept.

**Antecedents and inception: a critique**

Architectural theorist Heidi Sohn (2008) reminds us of the literal etymology of the word heterotopia: its prefix ‘hetero’ referring to ‘other’, ‘another’ or ‘different’ and the suffix derived from ‘topos’ or ‘place’ (2008: 41). Therefore, in this sense the title of Foucault’s (1986a) essay *Of Other Spaces* is a literal transposition of this etymology. When Foucault first used the term heterotopia in *The Order of Things* (1966) he did so with an emphasis not on real physical spaces but upon the imaginary ‘space of literature’. This particularly concerned Maurice Blanchot’s work, for example his (1955) *Space of Literature*, largely devoted to an analysis of the works of Mallarmé and Kafka but more broadly attempted to delineate the imaginary territories in which literature exists and *takes place* for both author and reader. Blanchot himself does not use the term heterotopia but he theorises literature as occupying a ‘space’, a site like a mirror that we can recognise as part of our own world but which ontologically is not.

What I am addressing here is the question of the relationship between heterotopias and language. If we reconsider Foucault’s heterotopia as a ‘placeless’ literary space, then we should not only be so much dependent upon identifying actual spaces that correspond with linguistic categorisations but also with the imaginary, disruptive, anarchic violations of normal syntax that call rational speech into question (that we will discuss in relation to Jorges Luis Borges (cf. page 28) and the disruptive potential of his prose. These are not so much reflections, as refractions, such as we find in *Las Meninas*. In other words, we might also stress the imaginative, perceptual, relation between the subject and space as well as the objective categorisation in particular classes of things. This, remember, was the origin of the heterotopia concept in the preface the *Order of Things*: that heterotopias are about disruptive classifications, or instances of where referential language breaks down. Furthermore, with the medical definition in mind, such disruptions are to be regarded as neither pathological nor abnormal in relation to the rest of space (or language) that exists outside of the heterotopia. In this sense, the idea of the ‘absolutely other’ heterotopic fragment is not to be taken literally in terms of the actual functioning of the space but rather its operation within the imaginary. It would seem that Foucault was aware of this
distinction in his deliberately fragmented elaboration of the heterotopia concept in a succession of interventions both in speech and in writing.

In the original outline of *The Order of Things* Foucault stresses the heterotopia as being located in language and particularly at those points when meaning is breaking down and the normal relation between words and things is subverted and disrupted. It is a point when rationality, or ‘logocentrism’, is itself in question. However, what is it that gives Borges’ writing such disruptive energy? What informs the deviant taxonomic logic, which upturns the relationship between words and things? Bearing in mind Edward Said’s profound comment that ‘Foucault's theories move criticism from a consideration of the signifier to a description of the signifier's place, a place rarely innocent or dimensionless’ (1983: 220), I will extend this idea of consideration of the place of the signifier in order to develop an analysis that includes language so that it allows the heterotopia concept to be of some considerable use in a postcolonial analysis of responses to space and difference by artists from different epochs such as Isaac Julien or William Hogarth. I am therefore suggesting that, although it was undeveloped, right from the beginning the concept of heterotopia was informed by a specific energy coming from a marginal and deviant postcolonial space.

About a year before a twelve-minute radio interview broadcast, in 1966, in which the concept would be cast anew, Foucault wrote in the preface to *The Order of Things*:

> 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 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 opposite one another) to ‘hold together’. This is why utopias permit fables and discourse: they run with the very grain of language and are part of the fundamental dimension of the *fabula*; heterotopias (such as those so often to be found in Borges) desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilise the very lyricism of our sentences. (Foucault, 1974: xviii; stress in original)

In relation to the discussion about subjectivity and phenomenology, the word ‘disturbing’ should be noted because I regard this as an experiential, if not psychodynamic, description from the point of view of the subjective rather than one that is structuralist. So Foucault calls the literary space invoked by Borges a
heterotopia at this time because of its linguistic deviance, its exteriority to the normal syntactic and referential logic within known (Western) systems of classifying of words according to things.

Yet, also important to the development of the heterotopia idea is what Foucault discusses next in *The Order of Things*, after spending some time on the Borges fable. Foucault devotes the whole of the next chapter to an analysis of Velázquez’ painting *Las Meninas* (1656), which is all about a convoluted representation of the world of Spanish monarch, Phillip IV and his family, produced through the multiple spatial planes in the painting and the reflections of a mirror. Foucault does not use the word heterotopia in this chapter but the section is crucial to the point of the whole book which is about the emergence of the human sciences in Europe from the seventeenth century onwards, the importance of vision, in which there is a new relation between words and things (between ‘Man’ and discourse). Foucault chooses to introduce us to that world with a discussion of *Las Meninas* whose closed internal domains of reflections and refractions certainly qualifies it as a ‘placeless place’ as Foucault puts it, a place in which ‘representation undertakes to represent itself’ (1974: 16).

As Peter Johnson, a significant voice in heterotopian studies, puts it: a heterotopia is ‘an impossible and unthinkable space’ (Johnson, 2006: 85) that could only be sited in literature or within a practice that draws on imagination such as visual art. This kind of formulation had a considerable influence on Foucault who later transposes the notion of a ‘placeless place’, in the analogy of the heterotopic site as operating like a mirror, which reflects the rest of social space but is ontologically not part of it. However, equally important as a literary antecedent to the heterotopia concept and the engagement with imaginative discourse within Foucault’s oeuvre is his reading of the work of Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges and his *The Analytical Language of John Wilkins* in the famously bizarre classification of animals from the mythical ‘Chinese Encyclopaedia’ – whose disruptive syntax and unruly taxonomic logic (what I shall later call a ‘postcolonial disruption’ (cf. page 73) is precisely what Foucault would associate with heterotopias. Johnson provides an account of the different emphases that Foucault makes in relation to the heterotopia concept subsequent to his brief mention of it in the preface to *The Order of Things* (1966) and in the radio broadcast within the same year, December 1966, and then the lecture to the architects in March 1967, and attempts to make a case for conceptual inconsistency. A key point I wish to emphasise strongly (pointed out by Johnson, 2008 and Defert, 1997) is the
significant change of emphasis: from heterotopias being located in language in the radio broadcast in 1966 to real physical sites discussed in his lecture to the architects in 1967.

Johnson (2008) reveals the shifts in emphasis – from the imaginary spaces of literature in the opening sequence of *The Order of Things*, to children’s play that mirrors, reflects and contests other spaces and which operate as counter-sites in the 1966 radio broadcast in which Foucault was asked to speak about utopias and literature. Defert (1997: 275) agrees that Foucault ‘made quite different use of his notion of heterotopia’ in the radio broadcast than in the subsequent lecture. It is interesting, in the light of comments below, that Defert described Foucault’s presentation in the radio broadcast as a ‘Bachelardian evocation of the enchanting spaces of children’s games – attics, backyard corners, the Indian’s tent’ before speculating about ‘a science’ of ‘heterotopias, a science of absolutely other spaces’ (1997: 274). Foucault goes on to describe a number of ‘spatio-temporal units’ in ‘places’ that include the mirror, the cemetery and Polynesian vacation resorts as specific categories of ‘space-times’ that can be ‘fleeting like the single time of deflowering in the space of a honeymoon voyage, or on the contrary, stable like the (atemporal) time of accumulated temporalities, stocked in the site of the library or museum’ (1997: 275). However, by the time we get to the 1967 lecture and the text that follows, Foucault starts to speak about specific examples of actual physical spaces and what Johnson (2006: 76) calls ‘a relational disruption in time and space’.

In literary and architectural perspectives on heterotopias, as Henry Urbach (1998) and Gwendolyn Wright (2005) point out, *Of Other Spaces* appeared in an abridged version in 1968 in the Italian journal *L’Architettura*. Daniel Defert (1997: 274) has stated that for almost twenty years the text remained unpublished and was circulated ‘in typescript form’ among members of the *Cercle d’Etudes Architecturales* in Paris who had invited him to give the lecture in 1967 and that Foucault gave his permission ‘in extremis’ for the 1967 text to be added to the corpus of his authorised writings shortly before his death in June 1984. Defert (1997: 274) says that the occasion for the publication of a German translation of *Other Spaces* was an exhibition that was ‘curiously resonant’ with Foucault’s text: ‘*Idea, Process, Result*’ at the Martin-Gropius-Bau Museum in Berlin and was part of the 1984 Berlin International Bauausstellung and the full text of *Other Spaces* was published for the first time for that show (see also Ritter and Knaller-Vlay, 1998: 14). Foucault’s text was published as the curatorial
frame for an exhibition in which 17 architectural fragments of Berlin served as case studies for the urban space of the metropolis as a whole. In this sense, this was an application of the heterotopia concept true to its origins: in the sense of a fragment of an organ. In this case, heterotopia is represented by an architectural scheme of a locale, appearing somewhere else in the body or the urban body as the site of the exhibition, as literally an abstraction, which has wandered from its original location.

There is a certain ‘nomadism’ that both Saldanha (2008) and Soja (1996) have identified in Foucault’s text and is reflected in the convoluted, almost improvised nature of its composition, translation and publication – and indeed its later application. This nomadic and apparently improvised nature can be discerned as certain flourishes in the essay, which seem somewhat capricious. For example, when he says towards the end of the essay that ‘civilisations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure and police takes the place of pirates’ one really wonders whether he thought about the postcolonial implications of the phrase rather than its literary flourish. However, we shall return to this question later (cf. page 56).

**Imaginary, metaphoric and actual spaces**

Foucault had already been in the habit of using expansive spatial analogies in the delineation of his discourse on the nature of institutional power and governmentality. His first major work *Madness and Civilisation* (1961) is very much a spatialised account of the institutionalised medical confinement of madness and culminates in the image of the ship of fools cast adrift from mainstream society, a vessel that he would later describe as the heterotopia *par excellence*. Even his (1976) *History of Sexuality* implicitly relates to heterotopias (although he does not use the word) in terms of what he called ‘non spaces’ where virginities may be lost, or those which relate to ‘ritual purification’. Chris Philo, who has used the heterotopia concept to analyse the history of the mental asylum, (2000) reminds us of the stark opening remarks of Foucault’s (1973) *Birth of the Clinic* in which he declares that ‘this book is about space’. Saldanha (2008) suggests that Foucault’s use of the term heterotopia was deployed as a spatial metaphor, with a somewhat different emphasis, long before the publication of his (1967) essay *Of Other Spaces* which Saldanha claims repeats many of the errors of structuralism because ‘he had not entirely thought through structuralism’s atemporal conception of space/structure and a spatial conception of
Chapter 2

Retracing Foucault’s Heterotopia Concept

history’ that reifies society as a transcendental other. Quoting from an interview with...

the philosopher, conducted in 1976, Saldanha cites a string of such spatialised...

‘metaphors’ or analogies such as: ‘position, displacement, site, field...territory,...

domain, soil, horizon, archipelago, geopolitics, region, landscape’ (2008: 2080).

I take Saldanha to be making a nuanced critique here. He is pointing out how...

consistently Foucault has integrated spatialised language in his works, sometimes as...

part of a systematic space-time analysis of power such as in Madness and Civilisation...

and other times whilst also being critical of some of the fuzziness between metaphor...

and systematic thinking that occurs in Of Other Spaces,

However, contemporary philosopher Thomas Flynn (2005) contradicts this, stating...

that Foucault’s spatialised arguments are ‘beyond metaphor’ and that ‘it is in...

'spatialised' language that Foucault seeks liberation, not only from the suzerainty of a...

homogeneous and universal time and the phenomenology, whether pure or...

hermeneutical, that is its interpretant, but from the metaphor of depth...’ (2005: 105).

This issue of depth is described by Johnson (2008) as a ‘flirtation’, from which...

Foucault would eventually distance himself after realising that it had misled him in a...

futile search for this dimension in the discourse ‘of reason about unreason’ at the time...

of writing of his other great (1961) work that spatialises institutional practices around...

the confinement of insanity: Madness and Civilisation.

To be accurate, if we leave aside the word heterotopia, then all of Foucault’s major...

projects were spatialised in terms of the way that he conceived of institutional spaces...

and power/knowledge systems in relation to specific epistemes, such as those which...

relate to the history of medicine. It is precisely in relation to this question that...

Colebrook (2006) has asked why both Deleuze and Foucault have made such...

extensive use of what he called spatial metaphors and quite rightly questions whether...

this adds up to a theory of space (Colebrook, 2006: 189). Soja too remarks on the...

extraordinary reach of Foucauldian spatial theory whereas arguably more integrated...

concepts such as Henri Lefebvre’s and Michel De Certeau’s have not had such...

widespread influence or appeal (Soja, 1996: 147). However, my view is that the...

criticism that the heterotopia concept is merely metaphorical fails to appreciate the...

effort that Foucault made to systemize his ideas. Foucault proposes six principles of...

heterotopology. In this chapter we shall consider the general principles of Foucault’s...

heterotopology and its ‘relations of propinquity’ and we shall later attempt to re-read...

the text with its medical and literary antecedents in mind. By relations of propinquity,
Foucault was referring to distances of scale and relative proximity (between spaces and people) that demarcated one spatial domain from another and inscribed it with particular functionalities and connect with discursive formations. This relational understanding, I will suggest later (see page 55) is essential as part of a postcolonial spatial analysis.

Heterotopias are ‘effectively enacted utopias’ in which all the other ‘real’ sites that can be found within a culture are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted’. Take for example Foucault’s first principle, which is concerned with heterotopias of deviation or ‘crisis’. These spaces are essentially designed for the purpose of containing pathology or behavioural deviance in order to separate them from the body politic to avoid disruption, or more specifically, infection or contamination of social spaces, therefore they are in this sense normative. Foucault talks about heterotopias of deviation but in a context that mentions only psychiatric hospitals and prisons, but not other types of hospitals or other spaces that function in order to contain deviance such as hospitals for quarantining communicable diseases or institutions for the control of children. In Of Other Spaces Foucault does not propose that they may be heterotopias of ‘infinitely accumulating time’ as in the case of libraries, archives or museums. Yet there is a sense in which heterotopias of deviation (for hospitals such as the Foundling which eventually become museums) can function as a museum or library - as spaces of ‘infinitely accumulating time’ as if they were a museological archive. The Foundling Hospital is a particular example of this diachronic, heterochronic and multi-layered functioning that will be discussed in the chapter dealing with this site.

Foucault proposed two main categories and six principles by which heterotopias are defined. The categories that we shall discuss below are heterotopias as spaces to contain individuals in crisis and other spaces reserved for persons whose behaviour or condition is deemed deviant. Both of these categories, Foucault proposed, operate in relation to six principles. The two main categories into which Foucault proposed that all six principles of heterotopias fall are, first of all, those places for individuals in crisis, that is to say the type of crises that accompany certain critical stages in human maturation and development such as puberty, loss of virginity, old age. Then there are heterotopias of deviation: spaces for those persons whose behaviour is considered to be ‘deviant in relation to the required mean or norm’ (1997: 267). The
idea of the transformation of a spatial function brings us to Foucault’s proposal that ‘as its history unfolds.

, an existing heterotopia can function in a very different fashion’ than the purpose for which it was designed ‘according to the synchrony of the culture in which it occurs’ and he spends some considerable time on discussing the case of the cemetery. The cemetery, he points out, has changed its customary position from always being sited ‘at the heart of the city, next to the church’ (1997: 268) to ‘the outside border of cities’ and explains it by reference to changing attitudes to public health, to death ‘as an illness’ and contagion and a need for ‘the other city’ where each family possesses its dark resting place’ (1997: 268). As a history of the cemetery this might seem simplistic since one could suggest that it is not so much the function of the cemetery that has changed so much as its location from within the heart of cities to their outer fringes. However, in the examples discussed below, we will look at examples of not just where a space has changed position but where its cultural meaning and functioning has also changed or been deliberately subverted.

In the third principle Foucault describes heterotopias that are capable of ‘juxtaposing in a single place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible’ (1997: 268). Foucault gives the example of the Persian garden and the buried cosmological references that can be deduced from its layout as a microcosm of the world. There is a suggestion of multiple layers of meaning such as ‘very old and superimposed meanings’, which I take to be a reference to the classical four-part spatial layout of the Persian garden in terms of water channels that divide the different planting areas. Foucault, after discussing the connection between Persian rugs and the classical layout of an Islamic garden, finally ends with the example of the zoological garden (but interestingly not the botanical garden). This notion of several places being in the same space goes against the basic laws of science as we know it, or perhaps as we once knew it since it carries with it the idea of being in different places at the same time as recent research in quantum physics (e.g. Robens et al, 2015) has suggested: an atom can be in two places at once. However, the sense to which this idea will be used in the present study will be in relation to artistic works such as the triple screen film by Isaac Julien in which a number of disparate spaces, time zones and histories are collapsed into one.
In the fourth principle Foucault makes the link between heterotopias and ‘heterochronies’ when such spaces provide for ‘a sort of break with absolute time’ of which there are two types: those which ‘accumulate time’ such as the library or the archive, which tries to achieve ‘perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place’ (1997: 270), and those which are ‘fleeting, transitory, precarious’ such as festivals, temporary exhibitions and fairs. The idea of ‘absolute time’ is one to which we will return when we consider the paradoxical temporal relations that has been opened up by quantum mechanics.

Foucault’s fifth heterotopic principle proposed that there is a system of ‘opening and closing’ of heterotopias that ‘both isolates and makes them penetrable’ (1997: 270). In other words, heterotopias are not freely accessible and involve rules of egress and ingress and thus some sort of exclusion and/or permission in relation to access, membership or else a rite of passage in order to gain entry. This is important to the present study in terms of considering the culturally closed nature of museum spaces and how artists such as Isaac Julien have made interventions that break the dominant rules of egress and ingress, subverting the purpose and interpretation of the space for another purpose to that for which it was designed.

The sixth principle is that heterotopic sites have a function ‘in relation to all the other space that remains’ either to ‘create a space of illusion’ as in the case of a brothel, or else the spaces of compensation: he places colonies ‘on the level of a general organisation of terrestrial space’ (1997: 271) which gave rise to ‘marvellous, absolutely regulated colonies in which human perfection was effectively achieved.’ As spaces of correction, Foucault cites the establishment of the early Jesuit colonies in South America as examples of a closed system of ingress and egress, which was the foundation of the eventual colonial system. It is the obsessive forms of regulation that these early Catholic missions, especially in Paraguay (see De Charlevoix, 1769), introduced that preceded the establishment of full colonial domination and are referred to, ironically, as ‘perfection’ (1769: 00), a term that people who have had direct experience – as subjects of colonial rule – may be reluctant to use.

So how should we regard Foucault’s heterotopic principles? If we take the meaning of Foucault’s final casting of heterotopia as including the previous definition about disruptive syntax and classification as in Borges’ encyclopaedia then there is no reason why we should take his list as exhaustive (they appear to be just examples
based on Bachelardian archetypes) or that they refer to transcendental categories. I will argue here that this Bachelardian aspect of Foucault’s heterotopology has been overlooked and understated, not only by the philosopher himself, but also by his readers and critics, which has the effect of distancing the concept of heterotopia from its disruptive, Borgesian and postcolonial origins. I attempt to address this deficit in Foucault’s overlooking of colonialism by choosing case studies that deliberately bring these issues to the fore: particularly in the work of British artist Isaac Julien.

The examples of heterotopias that Foucault mentions are not exhaustive but are merely case studies. All spaces that have a specific identity, meaning and purpose, or those which can be included in a topos, or topoi can be referred to as heterotopias. Also the interrelationship between certain categories of spaces such as museums, gardens and hospitals, that depend upon each other’s coexistence is an essential feature of heterotopic space which Foucault defines as a ‘mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror’ (1997: 266) therefore they reflect themselves in each other in terms of their functional definition, their meaning and perhaps even their appearance, for example: the interrelationships between different types of specialist hospitals, or between botanical gardens and museums. Furthermore, we can see this in the procedures and systems of botanical, medical and museological classification, all three spaces - gardens, museums and hospitals are joined. The spaces are connected through procedures of conservation, the control of bacteria, invasive organisms, species and parasites and even the use of certain instruments and scientific procedures such as carbon dating, computerised axial tomography are common to all three spaces and discursive systems. Nevertheless, one is always faced with the issue of which topoi, or classifiers into which certain heterotopias can be placed but not others. It is on the basis of these connections in terms of systems of classifications, discursive categories and their functional interrelationships that the spaces discussed in this thesis have been chosen, using Foucault’s heterotopia model as a starting point for interrogating them.

The spatial fragmentation implied in the medical heterotopia concept has to be considered in relation to the bodies that move within such ‘different’ or ‘other’ sites. We need to engage with these bodies physically and ontologically as well as the wider domain in which they are situated (Soja, 1996). In other words, we need to come to some understanding of how the two are related – the one site and the other – or at least formulate strategies in order to successfully negotiate them. Once again,
this is a political reading of heterotopia that is stressed by Marxist spatial philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1991) and the American heterotopologist Edward Soja (1996) which implies agency, opposition and the possibility of resistance within or to the heterotopic site or to the total body of space. Saldanha (2008: 2084) has criticised this opposition on the grounds that it not only conceives of society as a ‘transcendental other’ but that it privileges ‘wholeness’ and that the ‘science of heterotopology exposes the immediate relationship certain spaces have with a virtual whole called ‘society’ and that this exposes the ‘structuralist latencies of heterotopology’. So there is the potential for more than a hint of binary opposition or dualism in this construct, between the heterotopic site and these other spaces, or between heterotopias and subjects or between heterotopias and society. This issue has also been recognised by Soja (1996: 15) who has attacked what he has termed the ‘bicameralised spatial imagination’ that has dominated the spatial disciplines and has argued for a ‘thirling’ or ‘trialectics’ (as opposed to dialectics) in the relationship between heterotopias, human subjects and other spaces as a means of productively resolving these dualisms by means of an emphasis upon ontology, time and specifically ‘space, knowledge and power’. This is important for my work because in my interventions in spaces such as museums, I have to get beyond the simple opposition of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ and discover another level of engagement in which I can transform their meaning or disrupt their function.

It is issues such as these that have led the cultural geographer Arun Saldanha (2008) to claim that Foucault ‘abandoned’ Other Spaces and Soja (1996) and many others to refer to Other Spaces in terms of its ‘incomplete’ nature and even that Foucault ‘did not quite like’ Of Other Spaces. Johnson (2006:19) quotes from a letter from Foucault to Defert which appears to ridicule an architect who caused ‘such a laugh’ in his invitation to Foucault to present the now famous lecture, after saying that he ‘glimpsed a new conception of urbanism’ as resulting from the heterotopia concept. But this may be poor evidence to justify a claim that Foucault did not attach much importance to the essay. My view is the heterotopia idea was not abandoned but pursued through Foucault’s other genealogical interrogations of certain key spaces of modernity such as prisons, clinics and hospitals. In any case, apparently laughter for Foucault could lead to very serious insights and here should be treated with caution because we know from the preface of The Order of Things, that it is a book which arose, according to Foucault, after encountering the Borges fable and ‘out of the
laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought – our thought’ (1974: xv).

Another way to understand the apparent incompleteness of his heterotopia concept is that Foucault was not only engaging in ‘fearless speech’ but that this is more a literary intervention than a political programme and the material is presented to be used, not just read, to paraphrase Daniel Defert, so there can be no methodological closure and no grand overarching theory or application. One has to perform a sort of genealogy or archaeology and uncover the successive buried layers of the text in order for it to be useful. One of these buried layers is the question of colonialism or what we might now term ‘postcolonialism’, to which we shall later return. It will also be in relation to the question of postcolonialism to which we will use the heterotopia concept in subsequent chapters as an analytical tool to interrogate a number of art works made in response to museums and other important cultural sites and their relation to questions around space and the politics of location.

**Derivations and definitions**

The examples of heterotopias that Foucault mentions are not encyclopaedic but are merely case studies. All spaces that have a specific identity, meaning and purpose, or those which can be included in a topos, or topoi can be referred to as heterotopias. Also the interrelationship between certain categories of spaces such as museums, gardens and hospitals that depend on each other’s coexistence is an essential feature of heterotopic space, which Foucault defines as a ‘mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror’ (1997: 266). Therefore, they reflect themselves in each Other in terms of their functional definition, their meaning and perhaps even their appearance: for example, the interrelationships between different types of specialist hospitals, or between botanical gardens and museums. Through the procedures and systems of botanical, medical and museological classification, all three spaces - gardens, museums and hospitals are joined. The spaces are connected through procedures of conservation, the control of bacteria, invasive organisms, species and parasites and even the use of certain instruments and scientific procedures such as carbon dating, computerised axial tomography are common to all three spaces and discursive systems. Nevertheless, one is always faced with the issue of which topoi, or classifiers into which certain heterotopias can be placed but not others. It is on the basis of these connections in terms of systems of classifications, discursive
categories and their functional interrelationships that the spaces discussed in this thesis have been chosen, using Foucault’s heterotopia model as a starting point for interrogating them.

So far I have discussed the antecedents and inception of the heterotopia concept; the connections between space, phenomenology, language and power and also the imaginary, metaphoric invocation of space as well as actual material spaces. I will now return to the derivation of the heterotopia concept and the vestigial clinical meanings that persist and how, by revisiting them we add other dimensions to the cultural, geographic and architectural connotations that are now most dominant in the meaning of the term.

Essential to the original medical definition is the notion that the heterotopic fragment, whilst it may be abnormal in its siting, does not impair the functioning of the organ or total body from which it has originated, which continues to operate normally. Furthermore, this definition allows the mapping of the essential structure of this concept onto the corporeality of the human subject who is always already ontologically related to the heterotopia site and whose own body exists and reacts in relation to it. As such the concept potentially integrates, as Saldanha (2008: 2081) has suggested: ‘the scales of the body, architecture, the city, and the nation-state through a singular understanding of power/knowledge as [a] fundamental mechanism in modernity.’ It is this microphysics of power that might include the intimate terrain of the body that is strangely missing from Foucault’s previous accounts of heterotopia but is very much implied in the medical origin of the term which is definitely corporeal.

After first making the observation that ‘biology, medicine and architecture have many things in common as they all deal with structures and their effects on the surroundings’, Lax (1998: 115) goes on to describe heterotopia as ‘indicating a phenomenon occurring in the wrong place...Usually this is the description for the normal displacement of normal tissue’ (emphasis added). Lax goes on to give examples that include ‘normal tissue of the adrenal cortex [that] also occur outside of the adrenal gland, i.e. in the kidney or genital area’. However, heterotopia can also describe a phenomenon occurring in a place other than where it is normally supposed to be, such as ‘an excitation of the cardiac muscle in an unusual location’. Interestingly, Lax concludes that it cannot be said for certain when the heterotopia term was first used by medicine (1998: 116). This mystery surrounding the origin of
the term is important for my line of argument because I believe this adds to its nomadic, improvisatory character. It says something important about the manner in which scientific terms and concepts can have a poetic and metaphoric dimension that allows them to straddle more than one discipline – between art and science or biology and architecture, creating an expanded possibility for understanding the phenomenology of space.

It is interesting to contrast the medical and artistic descriptions of heterotopias. The former as events that occur in human tissue during ‘during the embryonic phase of foetal development or, less frequently after birth’ and this usually occurs in organs that have ‘a close spatial relationship in their evolution’. This is relevant because medical science might be viewed as materially ‘real’ or ‘actual’ science whereas the deployment of the heterotopia concept by arts and humanities disciplines are merely allegorical and metaphorical starting points. However, the way I will use the concept in this thesis is that there is an important line of continuity between the medical and the geographical. This is the idea of a fragment being out of place and especially that its dislocation is not necessarily pathological. The vestigial medical sense of ambivalence of the heterotopic fragment (it is neither pathological nor normal) is very important when considering how spaces have been transformed. Their abstraction from the total body of space and the radical transformation of their purpose should not be regarded as abnormal, in the clinico-pathological sense.

In other words, medical science is still not able to determine the origin of the heterotopic tissue and whether it has come from or results in a truly pathological process. (cf. Georges Canguilhem, 1943). Also crucial to the present discussion is the scale of the heterotopic tissue in comparison with the rest of the body or with the mass of surrounding tissue or organs and the question of whether they are truly pathological. This is reinforced by the observation that ‘heterotopic tissue usually occurs in small amounts with a diameter of but a few millimetres or, rarely, 1 to 2 centimetres. Most heterotopias are only found during endoscopical examinations or during surgery performed for reasons of other diseases…. Most heterotopias do not cause any particular trouble’ (2008: 117-118). So this raises the interesting question, in terms of the transposition of the heterotopia concept into social and architectural space, of whether the dislocated tissue or cells should actually be classified as pathological ‘as heterotopic tissue is essentially normal’ (in other words, whether it causes any disruption at all) because it is, as Sohn says, just ‘healthy tissue in the...
wrong place’. An extreme example of this would be, say, some part of uterine tissue being found in the gut – a somewhat bizarre dislocation, to be sure, but one that causes no problems to the function of either the organ in which it is found nor that from which it has originated. It is also a crucial scalar relation between part and whole. However, this is a simplification as not all heterotopias are benign; some are malignant and can be associated with carcinoma, including leukaemia and other serious conditions such as epilepsy.

The illustration at the head of this chapter (US National Library of Medicine, 2017) shows a periventricular heterotopia which is a condition occurring in the cerebral cortex of the brain, caused by genetic mutation, in which nerve cells (neurons) do not migrate to their proper location during the time of the early development of the foetal brain: they are in the wrong place This particular heterotopia is not benign and can be associated with epilepsy, impaired intellectual functioning, recurrent infections and blood vessel abnormalities. It is therefore important that we consider the possibility of a malignant heterotopia, rather than assuming as Sohn does, that they are always benign because I think this assumption reduces the potential of the concept. There are also heterotopias that are associated with carcinomas and other serious conditions – in other words we need to keep in mind the possibility of radical toxicity.

What is also interesting about this illustration is the way it shows the heterotopia as a three dimensional structure, indeed as an event in space and time. One can clearly see the lesion in the form of the abnormal cells are clustered and are quite clearly different from the surrounding tissue. However, what is also apparent is the connection between the heterotopic lesion and its surroundings; it is not separate but part of the overall structure. Therefore, if we are to consider the full potential of the heterotopia concept, the possibility that some of them might have some effect on the rest of the body is interesting because this suggests that a space can have a radical effect on the rest of space or at least disrupt its normal functioning. This would account for the contradictory nature of heterotopias as Hetherington (1986) has pointed out as sites of ‘social ordering’ as well as the ‘ambivalent play of freedom’.

On this basis, I would extend the interpretation by suggesting that we might distinguish between regulated and free spaces; emollient or disruptive – in other words conservative or radical in the potential to affect the rest of society. I will propose the terms: ‘ordered’ and ‘invasive’ to describe the extent of the effects in
Chapter 2  Retracing Foucault’s Heterotopia Concept

relation to the whole of space and the impact on the social corpus – the whole remaining body of space. I am proposing that ordered or invasive spaces be understood in a similar way to microbial or viral infections. Those heterotopias that are localized are those whose difference from the rest of space, and their potential to influence or affect it are limited. Their freedoms are discrete, local heterotopias and are heavily circumscribed by interdictions; indeed their potential to affect all of the rest of space or cause a permanent change in the exercise of power, are contingent only upon that space alone. For example, one might cite the existence of a commune or radical political network in a liberal democracy where there is no potential or there is limited possibility for the whole of the political system to change and yet such groups (regulated and under surveillance) continue to exist and enjoy within their domains a degree of freedom that allows them to exist, live or maintain a practice – in that space alone, yet in a manner that deviates from the norm.

Sohn (2008) has also pursued this analogical relationship between the medical derivation of ‘heterotopia’ and its application to urban/architectural or geographical space by turning the medical analogy back upon itself. Sohn writes a case history of a space, or ‘anamnesis’ which is both a memory and a ‘reminiscence’ as might be used in the Platonic dialogues (Griswold, 2002: 98) but also a preliminary case history taken by a doctor of psychiatrist or ‘the story a patient tells of his illness’ (McCrea, 2002: 55). This is an application of meaning, which allows certain parallels to be drawn between biological and architectural concepts in terms of the abstraction of a part that is representative of the whole, or what might be termed synecdoche. This analogical relationship between biology and architecture is reiterated in the Sohn’s collage entitled Choristoma (2008: 40) which shows a structure comprising pipes, ducts, conduits and architectural forms that is both biomorphic and bionic – an amalgam of machine, body and built environment. This is a manifestation of a kind of cyborgian architecture in which the boundary between human bodies and their machine environment has been entirely dissolved.

Transposed to architecture, the city or to geopolitical space, what we can deduce from the clinical definition is that the heterotopias are not only fragments of ‘the sites that they reflect and speak about’ (Foucault, 1986a: 24) that is to say the organ or body from which they have originated but that the overall normal functioning of the reflected site is not adversely affected by the existence of the heterotopia. This apparent normalisation of what is essentially a dislocation or an aberration is crucial
to understanding how a heterotopia challenges the rest of space without necessarily infecting it or undermining its meaning or functioning. It implies a coexistence that has the potential to disrupt, but does not necessarily do so.

This kind of spatial analysis is important for my work because in my interventions in spaces such as museums, I have to get beyond the simple opposition of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ and discover another level of engagement in which I can transforms their meaning or disrupt their function. It is issues such as these that lead the cultural geographer Arun Saldanha (2008) to claim that Foucault ‘abandoned’ Other Spaces, and Soja (1996) and many others to refer to Other Spaces in terms of its ‘incomplete’ nature and even that Foucault ‘did not quite like’ Of Other Spaces. Johnson (2006:19) quotes from a letter from Foucault to Defert which appears to ridicule an architect who caused ‘such a laugh’ in his invitation to Foucault to present the now famous lecture, after saying that he ‘glimpsed a new conception of urbanism’ as resulting from the heterotopia concept. But this may be poor evidence to justify a claim that Foucault did not attach much importance to the essay.

My view is the heterotopia idea was not abandoned but pursued through Foucault’s other genealogical interrogations of certain key spaces of modernity such as the prison and hospital. Furthermore, apparently laughter for Foucault could lead to very serious insights and here should be treated with caution because we know from the preface of The Order of Things, that it is a book which arose, according to Foucault, after encountering the Borges fable and ‘out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought – our thought’ (1974: xv).

Another way to understand the apparent incompleteness of his heterotopia concept is that Foucault was not only engaging in ‘fearless speech’ but that this is more a literary intervention than a political programme and the material is presented to be used, not read, to paraphrase Daniel Defert. Therefore, there can be no methodological closure and no grand overarching theory or application. I believe the reader has to perform a sort of genealogy or archaeology and uncover the successive buried layers of the text in order for it to be useful. One of these buried layers is the question of colonialism or what we might now term ‘postcolonialism’, to which we shall later return, not only in relation to the image of the ship but in terms of the powerful potential of the heterotopia concept as a tool for spatial analysis in uncovering postcolonial themes in the delineation of real and imagined spaces. It will also be in relation to the question of postcolonialism to which we will use the heterotopia concept in subsequent
chapters as an analytical tool to interrogate a number of art works and their relation to questions around space.

**Heterotopias and the places of the signifier**

I will now discuss *Of Other Spaces* in terms of a postcolonial analysis of both material, social space (that is to say including the experience of the subject) as well as language, the two areas that I have suggested overlap and combine in Foucault’s essay. I have already discussed the multivalent nature of the concept in terms of other readings of the essay, including its medical origins, and in terms of Foucault’s own intellectual evolution through his involvement with psychology, phenomenology and Marxism. I have in mind Edward Said’s helpful (1983) reminder that ‘Foucault’s theories ‘move criticism from a consideration of the signifier to a description of the signifier’s place, a place rarely innocent, dimensionless, or without the affirmative authority of a discursive discipline’ (1983:220). Here I should also like to point out the shift in speaking about spaces to now considering places as well. In order to consider the subject in relation to space and the operations of language within them, I think it is also essential to be aware of the difference between ‘space’ and ‘place’. One of the most compelling is offered by another spatial philosopher Michel de Certeau whose (1984) *Practice of Everyday Life* makes a distinction between a place which is

the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location (*place*). The law of the ‘proper’ rules in the place: the elements taken into consideration are beside one another, each constituted in its own ‘proper’ and distinct location, a location it defines. A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability, a kind of locus, specifically as a plane which is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationship of coexistence. (Emphasis in original).

On the other hand, de Certeau describes a space as occurring

when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities and time variables. The space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it and make it function.
Whilst I would disagree with de Certeau about the possibility of two things being in the same location (on the basis of what we have since learnt in quantum physics) I believe it is instructive to revisit his careful distinction between space and place. This is because he was, not only drawing on Merleau-Ponty’s opposition of geometrical and isotropic spatiality with anthropological space, which is existential and experienced. The reason why this is important to mention here is that we are indeed reconnecting with the phenomenological antecedents to Foucault’s theory and the missing dimension of the subject in the heterotopia concept. Therefore, by considering the problematic of place, one is able to reinscribe the figure of the subject, which is essential if we are to put the text to a new use.

One of these new uses I would prioritise is the consideration of the disruptive potential of language as an essential and related strategy in a postcolonial spatial politics. This means a consideration of language in relation to the spaces and places in which it occurs - particularly postcolonial spaces, the subjects of which experience as a place with its dynamic, a language and even what Raymond Williams (2009: 134) might have called a ‘structure of feeling’ which is to say, an experience that is not institutional or based on the dominant order but that which is lived by and specific to the subject. This is where there is a condition or indeed a position where the subject, or what (after Spivak, 1988) I will call the ‘subaltern’, is forced to subvert the language that s/he has inherited because this langue cannot speak to an other reality. Or to quote Caliban’s riposte to Miranda in Shakespeare’s The Tempest:

You taught me language; and my profit on’t
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language

‘To speak’ as Frantz Fanon (1967) pointed out ‘means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilisation’ (1967: 17). Thus it is precisely that syntax and, the corporeal form assumed by a language within a civilisation that Fanon spatialises as a ‘morphology’ (of which Caliban represents a distorted form) like the individual body in which the clinical heterotopia has arisen, and which Borges also thoroughly disturbs in a lexical and spatial disconfiguration. Indian scholar and feminist critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has also famously addressed this theme in her (1988) ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ when she asked, in
relation to the ‘epistemic violence’ about which Foucault speaks, whether ‘the redefinition of insanity at the end of the eighteenth century was only part of the narrative of the history in Europe as well as in the colonies?’ Also Britton (1999) reminds us how the Caribbean philosopher and novelist Edouard Glissant has depicted in a number of his works ‘the impossibility of authentic expression and its various social and psychological consequences’ (1999: 53). This is certainly the case in the history of madness which can be told from an entirely different point of view to Foucault’s if we take the perspective of the colonial subject as, for example, Sander Gilman (1986) has done.

So Borges upturns the syntax and normalcy of the world as it appears and is structured in the mirror of Western epistemology, in the form of an encyclopaedia, a basic form of classifying all of the objects of knowledge in the world, and he (re)presents them as a fiction or mythology. With Borges’ anarchic redistribution of things there is a sense in which the spatial-temporal order has also been upset. But why, it may be asked is this a postcolonial action, rather than simply a literary one? This is not just because of the claim made by literary theorists like Edna Aizenberg (1992) that Borges is a ‘postcolonial precursor’ which may seem surprising in view of Borges’ statement that he is ‘not politically minded’ (Apostol, 2013). However, it may be further asked, can Argentina be regarded as ‘postcolonial when the country oppressed its indigenous and African populations? However, I would argue that as the country was one of the first colonies of Spain, lured by myths of mountains of silver (Argentium from which its name derives), so in that sense it was one of the first European colonies in the ‘New World’. It is within this space that Borges’ literary works are constructed and he does by means of a number of startling literary inventions such as the Chinese Encyclopaedia, which has been called magic realism. To say that Borges’ work has a postcolonial dimension is therefore only to say that it challenged the European literary canon by proposing new forms based on a historical experience that is a direct consequence of the Spanish conquest of the New World. The world of Borges is a ‘reflection’ with no mimesis, a ‘placeless place’, which reflects what is imaginary rather than what, is tangible and visible - this is the very instance of a linguistic heterotopia in the original sense in which Foucault proposed it. For it is in this mythic fiction of a structured and hermeneutically unproblematic world and according to whose caprices and internal logic that all things in the world are classified. This exposes the essentially arbitrary, contingent and expedient truth on
which all Western taxonomic systems are based and which Borges upsets, in a postcolonial action, in his alternative classification system: it is thus an heterotopia.

Similarly, the mirrored reflection that is a placeless place, a heterotopia, in which the tableau vivant comprising King Philip IV and his family is refracted by Velázquez’ depiction of ‘representation representing itself’. At the visual and linguistic level then, heterotopias are partly about who has the power to represent the world according to words and images, and to place and order of things within classes even before we come to consider the ordering of real spaces. Furthermore, there is another take on language, returning to Caliban’s existential position (which is that he has no place in the material world as well as in the realm of language) if we look again at his speech (You taught me language; and my profit on’t is, I know how to curse) using the theoretical insights provided by Bhabha (2010: 5) because what his statement also represents is a series of ‘message events’ or instances of ‘inter- or transcultural communication’. In other words, the very marginality of Caliban’s position allows him to disrupt and undermine the established operation of language and produce new significations that go beyond the duality of the situation in which he is the binary opposite of his master Prospero. This is an action by someone who could also be called a trickster (in relation to his linguistic dexterity and his disruptive syntax) and this is discussed in some detail in the chapter on Isaac Julien’s Vagabondia (see chapter 4). The greatness in Shakespeare’s play lies in its ability to capture such cultural hybridity at the very outset, the late sixteenth century, of the relationship between Europe and its Others.

So if the heterotopia is a quasi-pathological fragment split off from the main body politic then it would seem to follow that such spaces would necessarily circumscribe social identities and the play of language within them, structured around an assumed pathology or deviance. Such spaces may begin as normative sites, or marginal to the social mainstream and peripheral to centres of governmentality such as the colonial territories, but these same sites can be transformed by the very fact of their marginality. This raises the possibility of different spaces for Other people, where their social identity as ultimately different can be spatially articulated in terms of resistance and transgression and the pathological identity can be dissolved and new ontologies created where there is a different temporal dimension in such spaces, not just diachronies or simultaneities in opposition to the dominant space-time, but
heterochronies where multiple new forms of identity can be created even within the individual subject. This is an important dimension of some of the works we will discuss below (cf. chapters 3, 4, and 5) which take place in, or respond to, museums and other heritage spaces and attempt to conjoin them with other space times.

Literary scholar Natalie Melas (2007: 28) has pointed out the two different stresses that Foucault makes in his elaboration of the heterotopia concept which underwent ‘a marked materialisation from the metaphorical ‘site’ of taxonomic categories to the actually existing common ground underlying disparate spaces. In this sense Borges’ diverse elements become less forbidding and even partly intelligible if instead of seeking conceptual common ground for them, we attempt to think of them spatially, using, for instance, the terms in which Foucault describes the spatial epoch: simultaneity, juxtaposition, the near and the far, the side-by-side, the dispersed’ (2007: 28). These are the ‘relations of propinquity’ mentioned earlier, dimensions of relative distance and scale which are so important for a postcolonial analysis, based so much on topographic positivism, cartographic logic, but also the way in which meaning is constructed in relation to space, time and place. To interfere with this nomenclature of spatial logic is to upset the way in which the world is regulated by all forms of global governance, whether this be hermeneutics or capital. As linguist Nataly Tcherepashenets (2008: 87) points out, the function of real and fictional spaces in Borges ‘makes one question the relevance of the perception of place in terms of conventional dichotomies’. What is being referred to here is Borges’ habit of conflating real geographical spaces such as they exist in South America, along with the free play of magical, fictional spaces that are the result of literary invention. One of the most famous of these is the Borges story On the Exactitude of Science (2000) in which an attempt to make the most detailed map results in a chart that is larger than the territory that it is attempting to describe. The story is an imaginative construction around space in terms of taking to the absurd one of the most important instruments of colonial domination: the technology of the map.

**Social and corporeal space: terrains of subjectivity**

It is fascinating that Defert positions Foucault’s essay in the immediate lead up to the ‘fracas of 1968’ and goes on to describe the essay as ‘one of those literary games in which Foucault took such avid pleasure, his jubilation constantly checked by the
ascetic demands of writing – a restraint that can be read in the didactics of the lecture rewritten for the architects’ (1997: 276). A lot is being said and not said here. The uprisings of May 1968 were every bit as disruptive as the anarchic logic of the Borges encyclopaedia – but perhaps more so at the level of language than in concrete political reality. Read in relation to its dating, the analytical tone of Other Spaces could therefore be seen as a retreat into fragmented sites of resistance, in opposition to a larger normative whole, which had just flexed back into its customary position after the paroxysms of May 1968. So the concept of heterotopia is proposed in the immediate aftermath of this upturning of categories – a period in which temporarily there were real alternative spaces of contestation that corresponded with others that had existed previously only as imagined utopias. In a paraphrase of Nikolas Pevsner’s remark that ‘baroque art made the supernatural tangible’, Defert writes:

After 1968, urban space suddenly rendered capitalism tangible…. Critical discourse was only one variant of a utopian discourse deeply marked by the dream of a space from which capitalism’s inscription would be effaced, just as Thomas More in his Utopia (1516) imagined what the social tie [sic] would become if money could be subtracted from social relations (1997: 277).

Political theorist William Connolly has reinforced this point when he writes of Foucault: ‘Even though his theory illuminates some dark corners of modernity, the general attraction to its strategic orientation is a symptom [sic] of retreat and despair on the left’ (1987: 50). So Defert and Connolly appear to be saying that there was some deliberate mischief, if not insurrection, at the level of language in the literary development of the heterotopia concept, and that the apparently didactic tone of the final text obscures the poetic (Bachelardian) pleasure that Foucault took in this political engagement with space. Within such a context surely one should therefore be wary of the appellation ‘science’ which Defert says was used in relation to heterotopology which even Foucault imagines at one point. This comment echoes the joking reference to the communication from the architect who also speculated about the possibility of ‘a science of heterotopology’ in his invitation to Foucault to give the now famous lecture in December 1967. Considering the phenomenological and poetic overtones of the notes Foucault eventually writes down, surely Foucault’s invocation of science should be taken as a somewhat ironic and playful. Alternatively, perhaps we should imagine ‘science’ in another way as being based upon unstable truths, epistemological rupture, uncertain logic and unconcerned with methodological closure.
- in other words a kind of poetics of space along the lines of what Bachelard produced.

There is a point in the essay when Foucault goes out of his way to pay homage to the work of philosopher of science and phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard and ‘his monumental work and the descriptions of phenomenologists have taught us that we do not live in a homogeneous and empty space’; Bachelard being the only one of his sources to achieve such a mention. (Those other great influences on Foucault such as Georges Canguilhem’s The Normal and the Pathological in relation to concepts of pathology and Philippe Ariès’ The Hour of Our Death in relation to cultural traditions around death is not mentioned). However, although unnamed, one can deduce that Foucault is referring to Bachelard’s (1958) Poetics of Space because it is at this point that he appears to revel for a while in a prose which is clearly phenomenological, if not Bachelardian, and he refers to the fantastic spaces of ‘our primary perception’, dreams, passion and light, and ethereal spaces that can be transparent, dark or ‘sparkling water.’ This does not sound like someone who is violently against phenomenology but one who is paying homage to its status in the development of his thinking and reminds me of Bachelard’s (1948) meditation on water.

It has to be said, though, that there is some vacillation in Foucault’s attempt to distance himself from phenomenology. To put it another way, ruptures in the development of philosophical doctrines are rarely complete, owing nothing to their precursors. So while appearing to linger for moment in Bachelardian poetics, Foucault then goes on to say that these images ‘primarily concern internal space’ and that he ‘should now like to speak of external space… the space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves’ (1997: 264). Here, in this distinction, or opposition, between the internal and the external, I am proposing that Foucault decided to put aside subjectivity in order to place clear, structuralist space between himself and phenomenology. In trying to position his essay in such a place that connections could be established between heterotopias and ‘elements that could have been connected on a temporal axis’ Foucault loses sight of the internal terrain of the subject in relation to these other spaces. Yet, is the idea of combining Bachelard’s ‘internalised’ poetics with the postmodern possibilities of heterotopology as incompatible as it might at first seem? For, in spite of momentary traces of phenomenological prose, it would appear that in his imperative to deal with the external world, Foucault disregarded the internal aspect to both the experience of heterotopias and their operation, or to put it another
Chapter 2

Retracing Foucault’s Heterotopia Concept

way (and using concepts that originate from elsewhere in his discourse) how heterotopias might be structured according to the operation of power as permissive in relation to the fine capillaries of subjectivity within the individual. To put it even more straightforwardly, in his exposition of the heterotopia theory Foucault does not bring out the issues around the intimate experience of power by social beings in relation to the organisation of the spaces that they experience.

At this point it is important to mention the stress that Foucault places on what might be called the intimate operation of power. Speaking in a 1972 interview about the institutional developments that constituted ‘a change of political regime’ which brought about prisons (but not mentioning the origins in the utopia of prison as related to Bentham’s panopticon and as constituting spaces that epitomise ‘heterotopias of deviation’) Foucault refers to power and its ‘capillary form of existence’ as:

the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives (1980: 39).

Conversely, it is this microphysics of power that might include the intimate terrain of the body that is strangely missing from Foucault’s previous accounts of heterotopia but is very much implied in the medical origin of the term which is definitely corporeal. Indeed, we can further propose that, along with the body, one cannot separate the mind or the individual psyche of individuals as integral to the corporeal space into which the ‘capillary form’ of power can insert itself and a phenomenological approach may not be averse to this domain and opens up the possibility of a productive fragmentation of a transcendental social (or the ‘rest of space’) into infinite units of individual consciousness, sensation and experience.

This aspect of subjectivity is essential to addressing issues such as the meaning of heterotopias and how individuals engage them with. Therefore, I would agree with cultural sociologist Kevin Hetherington (1997) when he writes that ‘no space can be described as fixed as a heterotopia’ which ‘always have multiple and shifting meanings for agents depending on where they are located within its power effects’ (1997; 51). These comments were made during a period of expansion in heterotopia studies, e.g. Hetherington’s (1998) The Badlands of Modernity and Chris Philo’s (2000) revisiting of Foucault’s Birth of the Clinic.
Hetherington goes on to say that ‘this paradox of freedom as control and control as freedom is the paradox of utopianism of modernity and the paradox that defines heterotopic conditions’ (1997: 53). Foucault also reflects this view in Other Spaces when he asks of heterotopias: ‘what meaning do they have?’ (1986a: 24) and in his third principle he writes that in the ‘Orient the garden, an astonishing creation that is now a thousand years old, had very deep and seemingly superimposed meanings (1986a: 25). Hetherington’s project aims to interrogate the Palais Royal in Paris as a space of modernity, therefore perfectly illustrating the split that is present in heterotopology between understandings of heterotopias as places of ‘social ordering’ while at the same time as conceiving them as sites for the ‘ambivalent play of freedom’ (see Hetherington, 1986 chapter 4). While these two polarities may at first seem contradictory there is a case for understanding them as aspects of what Foucault might have called ‘permissive power’ – the sort of power that works not by interdiction and prohibition but by the apparent ‘play of freedom’ which is able to simultaneously operate as control, as governmentality, or double as forms of surveillance whilst offering the illusion of a space not only of difference but even of transgression. A good example of this is the way that queer spaces operate in a metropolis such as part of London’s Soho or the abandoned waterfront along New York City’s Hudson River (see, for example, Anderson, 2013: 136). Whilst the wider urban or even national culture may be hostile to sexualities that deviate from the norm, there is the possibility of accessing and experiencing counter-cultural spaces that offer an apparently limitless extent of personal expression within them and temporarily there can be the free play of behaviours that are normally prohibited in the rest of social space. Therefore, the idea of ‘queer heterotopias’ has been proposed by writers such as Sally Munt (2007: 181) in which social ‘shame’ can be transformed and overcome by these spatial transformations. Particularly relevant to what we shall later discuss about heterotopias and ships, queer scholars Jo Stanley and Paul Baker (2015: 25) have noted the potential of the ship on the high seas as a discrete world constructed by gay sailors as a ‘series of spaces’ that enabled ‘features of gay life ashore’ to be replicated on-board, which they compare to Foucault’s concept of heterotopia.

It is relevant to point out here that Foucault would have had direct personal experience of such spaces in the mid-1960s, during the time he wrote Of Other Spaces. This would have been his excursions to San Francisco where he tasted
sexual freedom in the uninhibited and transgressive spaces around Castro Street and its environs; the bathhouses, clubs, bars and designated parks. These were emergent, radical new spaces of ‘polymorphous perversity’ (Miller, 2000: 253) circumscribed by marginality but where new deviant identities could be liberated out of personas and bodies bounded by regulation and oppression. It is interesting, though, in spite of his direct personal experience, that Foucault does not take the opportunity to mention the new queer urban domains when he writes about ‘spaces of deviation’ in Of Other Spaces.

However, in relation to the exercise of power, it is important to recognise that enclaves such as the modern and contemporary urban queer spaces offer simulacra of freedom. They are bounded by social control systems and they are mapped, literally put in their place, often segregated in relation to race and gender, which renders them as somewhat illusory. In other words, the liberation from the established social order that one can experience in such spaces is contingent on a permissive exercise of power by a predominant regime of rights. It is as if freedom is being played out or enacted before it has even been granted, or fully seized, in the rest of the social corpus. It is an ambivalent play of permissiveness within a system of interdiction. Just like the lesion of its clinical namesake, the counter-cultural heterotopic sites coexist as anomalies, and usually cause no pathology in the rest of the social body.

It is not only very recent or contemporary queer spaces in which there is an ambivalence exercise of power and control within urban spaces. For Kevin Hetherington, the Palais Royal in Paris is a case study of a place that was ‘the epitome of a heterotopia that played a significant role in the emergence of modern society in France’, and was ‘one of the first sites in which the utopias of modernity, the ambivalent play of freedom and control, were expressed’ (1997: 17) within this architectural space. In some senses, then, Hetherington’s study mirrors the Baudelarian interests of Walter Benjamin and his monumental Arcades Project whose similarly architecturally grounded social and political history was concerned with the new spaces of the Parisian shopping malls and galleria, as places of modernity, of which the Palais Royal was the prototype of a ‘heterotopia of illusion’ (Shane, 2008: 263).
I would argue that queer spaces are even more exemplary in having the contradictory qualities the ambivalent play of freedom and control, or what I have earlier described as regulated and invasive, and have mutated from regulated spaces and have become invasive. First, consider, for example, the historical trajectory from the earliest queer spaces, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which existed at a time of maximum medical and juridical interdiction against homosexuality – such as the Caravan Club that existed in London’s Covent Garden in the 1930s. Recent scholarship about this space has proposed that it can be seen as a precursor to the repeal of the 1967 legislation that outlawed homosexuality (Cook and Oram, 2017; Galloway, 1983). Likewise, the Stonewall riots that took place in New York City in 1969 can be seen as a struggle over spaces that were transitioning from regulated to free, or ordered to invasive. The Stonewall event was an epic struggle with the police over the right of queer people to use certain urban spaces and the police’s powers to enter them. In this space, the Stonewall Inn, was a zone where gay men could be physically intimate at a time when it was illegal to do so. The mistake of the police was to assume that they could raid this alternative space and meet with no resistance. What unfolded was an epic battle that ended with gay men not only being able to dance together but leading to a whole series of social, legal and medical reforms that are still taking place today (see Kuhn, 2011: 4-5). The police thought they could maintain the old boundaries and as the result of the struggle that ensued, involving direct action and physical conflict, has been the demedicalisation and decriminalisation of homosexuality in most liberal and social democracies and the granting of a number of important civil rights such as anti-discrimination legislation, civil partnerships and equal marriage equality (2013: 4-5). I would therefore like to hold in mind the possibility of ordered and invasive potential of heterotopias when considering the radical potential of spaces whether real and imaginary and their potential for change in ordered or invasive actions.

**Disseminating heterotopias**

There was a rapid dispersal of the heterotopia concept from architecture (the site where Foucault first made his intervention) to other spatial disciplines, especially geography and urbanism (Crampton and Elden, 2007) while also having a considerable impact on cultural studies (Oleksijczuk, 2000) and contemporary art criticism, with *Of Other Spaces* being reprinted as part of *Documenta 10* (David and
Chevrier, 1997). After being delivered at the invitation of members of the architectural profession, the heterotopia concept was then quickly dispersed to the other spatial disciplines. Ritter and Knaller-Vlay (1998) in their introduction to the Affair of the Heterotopia, say that ‘the pleasure in using Foucault’s concept would seem to be undiminished’ (1998: 15) and they conclude by asking: ‘Will there ever be a last text on heterotopia?’ (1998: 19). This trans-disciplinary migration could itself be called ‘post-modernist’, a term which had a similarly close relationship with architecture and cultural studies (Buchanan, 2006: 81; Haddad, 2009).

As I have shown, there have been innumerable applications of the heterotopia concept, many with conflicting definitions often being divided on the binary understanding of what Hetherington (1997) calls ‘social ordering’ or as ‘counter-hegemonic spaces that exist apart from central spaces that are seen to represent the social order’ (1997: 21). After fanning out from the obviously spatial disciplines of architecture, geography and urbanism in the 1990s, the spatialising possibilities of heterotopia as an analytical concept spread to other areas of the arts and humanities and informed a more consciously spatialised ‘cultural geography’ (e.g. Atkinson, 2005 and Anderson et al., 2005). These further applications of the heterotopia concept have not necessarily confined themselves with the real spaces that Foucault proposed in his 1967 lecture, especially on the case of cultural geography.

This veritable pandemic of heterotopias could be regarded as part of the ‘spatial turn’ of social and cultural theory (Lossau, 2009: 62) and perhaps also relates to what Foucault called ‘the anxiety of our era’, which he wrote: ‘has to do fundamentally with space’ (1997: 263). As Fredric Jameson, the leading literary critic and political theorist says, the postmodern world is ‘increasingly dominated by space and spatial logic’ (1984: 53) which he ascribes to the workings of ‘late capitalism’ but which I would suggest is not restricted to capitalism but is related to articulations of power - in whatever political system that the spatial dynamics takes place. I would also agree with the analysis of Antony Vidler that the ‘anxiety’ about which Foucault speaks (to which Vidler devotes an entire volume in his (2000) Warped Space) or the ‘spatial logic’ that Jameson points out, relates to a combination of changes in the physical environment inaugurated by modernity. This is where relations of scale and distance, transparency and translucency, extension and recession, have produced profound uncertainties in the manner in which human subjects relate to their spatial environment. Secondly – Vidler evidences this when he points out the number of
spatially-related mental pathologies (such as agoraphobia and acrophobia) that appear to be historically coterminous with certain developments in modernist architecture and urbanism around transparency and depth – there pose profound difficulties for the human subject in determining a finite position within such spaces. There is also a related difficulty in determining one’s ‘place’, position or scale in relation to the conscious mind and the body. We can intimately ‘know’ certain spaces through representational media without ever having been within them, such as the Pont d’Alma underpass in Paris, and yet once present in such spaces we can experience them as curiously strange and alienating. There has therefore been what might be called an increasing spatialisation of theory and experience, a proliferation of spatialised rhetorical gestures and metaphors that are not only concerned with real spaces but with understandings of theoretical problems in the physical and virtual world around us in spatialised conceptual terms. This is very apparent in the new virtual digital media which are referred to in explicitly spatial terms such as ‘cyberspace’ or the notion that one can ‘visit’ ‘locations’ on the World Wide Web and these new spatial experiences and renderings have given rise to a whole new range of social practices, anxieties, opportunities and risks. One might therefore suggest that there has been the emergence of a type of ‘geopolitics’ in which the old demarcations that once separated physical geography from cultural experience and studies have dissolved. Alongside the subjective (dis)engagement with certain places there are intensified cultural responses and modes of critical analysis extending from the modernist, postmodernist and postcolonial eras as a means of engaging with such spatially determined anxieties.

Following on from the spatial warping analysed by Vidler, in his analysis of architecture, anxiety and modernity, our age could also be termed ‘neo Baroque’ to paraphrase Lambert (2008) whose Deleuzian analysis of contemporary critical and literary spaces takes its point of departure from an architectural definition of the Baroque as a misshapen pearl. There are increasing tendencies to spatialise theoretical problems as a way of isolating them, differentiating between them and addressing them. Not only urban space and time, but also experiences of travel have become distorted and elliptical, with temporal compression, disjunctures and discontinuities being increasingly commonplace especially in cyberspace and increasingly needing to be expressed in spatialised language. Through the nearly supersonic speed of everyday air travel one can arrive at a destination in one time zone before one has left the point of departure or one can witness an event in a time
zone different to where one is positioned. Space has become confusing and unfathomable or even an ‘enigma’ to use the art historian Guido Magnaguagno’s (2011) description of the strange spatial constructions of the painter Giorgio De Chirico. It is this enigmatic quality which partly makes concepts such as heterotopia and other spatialised semantics so enduringly compelling in the postmodern world.

**Space and the postcolonial**

Foucault ends his outline of heterotopology – with the image of colonialism and the brothel as two ‘extreme’ types of heterotopia and with the image of the ship as the heterotopia *par excellence*. My understanding of the use of the term ‘extreme’ in relation to these spaces is that they afford the most radical possibility for departure from the norm. Foucault had already written about the Ship of Fools as a space in which madness could be contained and unleashed from the main body of social space. The ship, set adrift upon the infinite wilderness of the oceans, is a space that allows the greatest opportunity for transgression. Yet Foucault misses the opportunity to connect the sexual transgressions of the brothel with the sadistic pleasures that we know were associated with the physical cruelties associated with chattel slavery and would have made the comparison complete, if not wholly credible. The comparison of the ship with the brothel is not successful because Foucault fails to reference the most extreme possibilities for moral infraction that chattel slavery provided, depending so much on the spatial isolation of the ship, allowed within the perilous transatlantic voyages which involved cruelty, sexual transgression and maritime violence. Instead he provides us with a romantic coda: ‘Civilisations without boats’, he says are places where ‘dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates’ (1997: 272). Well, this is a view of boats that ignores the kinds of meditations on the sea that were available even in the time of J M W Turner, let alone Foucault’s (cf. Turner’s painting the *Slave Ship*, 1840) in which both the sea and ships are depicted as apocalyptic forces of terror by which human life is reduced to property, to be jettisoned overboard if need be, in exchange for profit and insurance settlements.

What I am saying here is that Foucault’s lack of awareness (or acknowledgement) of the connection between ships and colonial history calls into question not only his somewhat naive romanticism around maritime ‘adventure’ but it allows him to fail to provide the kind of analysis he performed in *Madness and Civilisation* where he did
not romanticize ‘boats’ but shows, in effect, that the ship was a heterotopia of deviation, an oppressive vessel for the containment of insanity. One is also reminded of the Chinese Ming Dynasty which indeed forewent the romance of boats, having achieved maritime prowess in the 15th century long before the Western European powers, and abandoned the pursuit of global dominance on the high seas in favour of forming a secure national state within its own borders (Wallech, 2016). The implication of what Foucault is saying is that the Chinese abandonment of maritime adventure has somehow resulted in a lesser form of civilisation, which is obviously absurd. Whether he was consciously intending to say this or not, does leave the heterotopia concept with a significant deficit as well as a compelling opportunity for others to address.

I mention these issues about the terror of the sea because Foucault does not demonstrate that he was thinking about the sea as a site of human tragedy, oppression, atrocity and trauma when he celebrated the existence of ‘boats’ in relation to ‘civilisations’. He goes on to mention the colony again in the closing images of the ship that goes:

from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, it goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures (1997: 272)

What does Foucault mean by ‘precious treasures’? Could this be human cargo or valuable natural resources or expensive commodities? The references are troubling and unsettling, leaving the reader to wonder what to make of them. Yet within the confines of the textual compression that is a feature of Other Spaces, these references to colonialism amount to a substantial proportion of the discussion. However, the manner in which colonialism is mentioned is ambivalent, to say the least, which is to say that Foucault cannot be accused of ignoring colonialism; it is more the case that he misrepresented and romanticised it. Furthermore, he does not develop what he means by an ‘extreme’ type of heterotopia in the colony or that colonies were a form of ‘perfection’. How different is Foucault's image of ships to, say, Paul Gilroy's, whose Black Atlantic (1993: 191) makes a point of stressing the ‘spatial focus’ of aspects of ‘diaspora temporality, historicity and memory’ and for whom the image of the ship ‘immediately focuses attention on the Middle Passage, on the various projects for redemptive return to the African homeland, on the circulation of ideas and activists as well as key cultural and political artefacts’? We will return to this
image of the ship as a site of trauma when we discuss Isaac Julien’s *Vagabondia* (cf, *chapter 4*)

Judith Revel, a historian of contemporary thought (2013:16) makes an interesting intervention building on her work that interrogates discourse theory, biopower and subjectivity, and she reminds us of how Foucault’s philosophical and political development between the ages of 20 (1946) and 36 (1962) takes place against the backdrop of some of the most tumultuous political and military events of the twentieth century that led to the dismantling of the French colonial empire. The beginning of the Indochina conflict, the Algerian independence struggle and anti-imperialist unrest in Tunisia and elsewhere in Francophone Africa – these all take place during Foucault’s formative years. Between October 1966 and June 1968, Foucault was working in Tunisia and was also forced by the authorities to leave the country after his involvement with student resistance to government repression of their anti-imperialist political movement. So now we are into the period in which Foucault develops his heterotopia concept – 1966-67 in the immediate build-up to the student uprisings in France of May 1968 – yet it is the profound lack of impact that all these political events have upon the development of his spatialisations, which seem so obviously relevant to a theorisation of spatial politics, that seem so remarkable for its absence.

One of the most enthusiastic of the early responses to the heterotopia concept is from American cultural geographer Edward Soja who Defert (1997: 274) described somewhat sarcastically as an ‘ardent Californian promoter of heterotopology’. Soja has attempted to address the shortcomings of the heterotopia concept in addressing postcolonialism. He has re-joined Foucault’s concept with the more complete, neo-Marxian system of spatial analysis proposed by Henri Lefebvre where power is ‘ontologically embedded’ (1996: 32) in real and imagined spaces. Soja develops what he calls a ‘trialectics’, to escape the binary opposition of one space with an other, a complex interplay of the old centre and periphery, or between first space and second space, where third space is a site of ‘radical openness’ of ‘othering’ or of difference, where to deliberately choose to occupy such spaces of marginality is to open up the possibility ‘radical subjectivity’ (1996: 98). This idea of marginality as a space for radicalism is clearly related to the work of bell hooks who also deploys spatial concepts to develop her idea of where and how political radicalism can take place; and this is discussed below (cf. *page 59*).
As Victoria Burrows points out in her literary analysis of the work of novelist, filmmaker and poet Michael Ondaatje: ‘the notion of heterotopia lends itself to postcolonial critiques and analyses because both are quintessentially about otherness and social ordering’ (2008: 165). ‘Thus’, she continues:

Foucault’s heterotopology…offers a new way of thinking both about postcolonial othering in time and space, but also, and perhaps more importantly, a new way of conceptualising the othering of postcolonial trauma… (2008: 166).

For Burrows (2008), the concept of heterotopia offers a way of analysing traumatic memories in real places but within the imaginary realm of fiction and in her study of Ondaatje’s Anil’s Ghost, she argues that his ‘ambivalent narrative exposes the way in which the developed world turns away from the postcolonial experience of trauma (2008: 162). What I think is critical about this sort of study is the way that the concept of trauma is positioned not merely to capture the obviously atrocious and physically brutal but what Spivak might call an ‘epistemic violence’ which, in the account by Ondaatje’s of the aftermath of the Sri Lankan civil war, is illustrated in the form of an ambivalence or distance in relation to directly accessing the traumatic memories as a way of highlighting or mirroring ‘the way in which the developed world turns away from the experience of trauma that so often blights the existence of many postcolonial subjects’ (2008: 162).

Soja approaches the postcolonial via the ‘space of feminism’ and critiques of urbanism and geography before moving to the work of bell hooks (2000) in relation to her positions on marginality when she calls for a ‘reconceptualisation of marginality’ as a place where there may be ‘more flexible ways of being other than we are while still being ourselves’ (1996: 117). Soja goes on to cite the work of a number of feminist and postcolonial writers in terms ‘spatialised’ around difference and marginality on whose ideas his notion of a third space of radical openness is heavily dependent, bringing together a number of political voices around race, sexuality and gender. The list is too long to cite: Donna Haraway, bell hooks, Doreen Massey, Adrienne Rich, Gillian Rose, and Virginia Woolf – to name but a few. However, there is an uncomfortable political correctness about the way Soja incorporates so many diverse feminist and other positions within his overall project of ‘thirling’ or ‘trialectics’ – what Doreen Massey (1994: 220) has called a ‘pulling down of hierarchies, the entry of the previously marginalised into the central forum of debate’. Whilst I
appreciate Soja’s postcolonial take on the heterotopia concept, I found his approach uncomfortable. Therefore I do understand Massey’s objection – which I take to be a straightforward charge of political tokenism – as a reference to the way Soja uses these feminist positions superficially, as off-the-shelf characters co-opted as icons of oppression to populate and give credibility to his ‘third space’ of ‘radical openness’, which I found to be lacking in depth. I thought such disparate political and intellectual agendas could not possibly be synthesised in this way. Although it was very helpful to read an attempt to provide a postcolonial dimension to the heterotopia concept and consider gender, the way Soja goes about it often seems forced. By ‘thirding’ Soja is referring to different hierarchies of space: first space is the ‘real’ space – the built form of physical architecture and geographical terrains that can be mapped and seen. Second space is the representation space of the imagination. Third space is a synthetic combination of first and second space, which Soja describes as ‘a fully lived space, a simultaneously real-and-imagined, actual-and-virtual locus of structured individuality and collective experience and agency’. I take this conception of a syncretic space not only as an attempt to overcome the dualism of the real and imagined. Soja is referring to the potential to overcome the material limitations of material space and conjoin it with the expanded possibilities of the imaginary fabula about which Foucault spoke, or breaking free of the liminality of margins that bell hooks proposes.

So even though we do not know what were the ‘unprintable’ comments that Massey wrote in the margin of her copy of Soja’s Postmodern Geographies, the ‘pox’ that Soja claims has been ‘declared on both the new and old houses of geography’ (1996: 121) by feminist geographers would appear to include his own abode. I quote this remark not as ‘tittle tattle’ but because it demonstrates that the reaction to Soja’s ‘drawing down of hierarchies’ from one of the major voices of feminist criticism reflects my own discomfort with the way that he appears to force certain political positions into his ‘third space’. Furthermore, the idea of first, second and third spaces introduces a hierarchy that seems unnecessary as it implies a qualitative difference of the real from the imagined. It is precisely this blurring between the real and the imaginary that I find most attractive about Foucault’s heterotopology. Soja’s ‘Thirding also’ has, for me, uncomfortable reminders of the term ‘Third World’.

Like Foucault before him, Soja also turns to Borges for allegorical help, but this time to the story of the Aleph which, unlike the mythical Chinese encyclopaedia, is not a
system of (anti)classification but ‘one of those points in space that contains all other points’ (1996: 55) which opens up a productive and all-inclusive simultaneity in what Soja terms ‘third space’. Borges’ spatial semantics obviously have enduring possibilities for spatial politics and its extension into postcolonial theory and criticism. Drawing on the work of bell hooks, Soja extends the notion of how the concept of third space (freed from what he sees as the binary first/second space confines of the heterotopia concept) can inform feminist and postcolonial critiques such as the ‘imaginative geographies’ of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha.

When one rereads the work of Homi Bhabha in particular one is aware of how prescient his (1994) and (1995) formulations about ‘third space’ were as they appear to antedate and anticipate in many respects what Soja has attempted to do but without the apparently forced and ill-fitting ‘pulling down of hierarchies’ about which Doreen Massey complained but, instead, arriving at his notion of Third Space via the theoretical positions of Walter Benjamin, Frantz Fanon and Michel Foucault. Bhabha’s spatial language is a rhetorical semantics that is much more clearly concerned with the circumstances in which communication takes place across cultural boundaries (rather than real places), how hybridity is constructed and how the Manichean dualities that so concerned Fanon can be overcome and new articulations of difference can be formed. In an interview with Bhabha published in Artforum (Mitchell, 1995) he explains how he moved from the ideas of Walter Benjamin whose ‘meditations on the disjunctive temporalities of the historical “event”’ led him to:

speculate on differential temporal movements within the process of dialectical thinking and the supplementary or interstitial ‘conditionality’ that opens up alongside the transcendent tendency of dialectical contradiction – I have called this a ‘third space’, or a ‘time lag’.

So Bhabha, like Soja, also uses the term ‘third space’ but constructed rather differently; therefore it should be noted here how Bhabha stresses both the differentially temporal as well as the spatial. In terms of addressing the inevitability of the dimension of time in relation to any space, this is quite different to Foucault’s stress on the accumulation of time, when he speaks of archives or temporal simultaneity as ‘heterochronies’. Bhabha is reminding us that his version of third space involves a disjunction of time in the location and making of a different history. It is also a space, which is more like Foucault’s first linguistic version of heterotopia, that is to say it is about language and specifically an attack on dialectical-
transcendental thinking into which other writers (e.g. Arun Saldanha (2008) have also accused Foucault of lapsing. What is being attempted here is a joining of analytical tools for interrogating the signification of language along with a spatio-temporal analysis of experience. Bhabha also stresses the temporality of the enunciation which recalls Fanon’s passionate insistence on an attention to the conditions in which speech takes place within the master-slave relationship (e.g. Caliban and Prospero in Shakespeare’s The Tempest) or between the coloniser and his Other. What I am talking about here is a consideration of the site in which enunciation takes place, having an influence on meaning – it is an instance of linguistic contextualization – literally putting the signifier in its place. In Bhabha’s (1994) Location of Culture, we are given a further inflection to the same idea. In this account he speaks about the disjunction between the subject of a proposition and that of its enunciation, which is not necessarily embedded or represented in the statement itself but ‘which is the acknowledgement of its discursive embeddedness and address, its cultural positionality, its present time and a specific space’. He goes on to say that:

The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilised in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot ‘in itself’ be conscious. (1994: 53)

For Bhabha, then, the intervention of Third Space ‘destroys the mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed’ and this brings us back to Borges (and Blanchot) or even Velázquez’ Las Meninas again, and the literary, visual or at least linguistic antecedents of the heterotopia concept as a ‘placeless place’ but with the additional emphasis on temporality which is important here because we want to consider time as an essential dimension of space. That is to say the ‘space’ that we are speaking about is somewhere beyond the actual and the tangible but concerned with the operation of the sign in getting beyond the duality of the one and the other. In this sense it is the perfect fit for a postcolonial strategy in which the old centre and periphery relationship is dissolved in favour of the spaces of signification, of the imaginary and of the possible, where post imperial power is not located in a specific place such as the periphery but is globally dispersed in relations of meaning. In this sense it has nothing to do with actual urban, architectural or geographical spaces but the way that ‘meaning is constructed in the message event’
Michel Foucault’s Concept of Heterotopia and Artistic Responses to Museum Spaces

Ikas and Wagner, 2010: 5). This is why, as Julia Lossau points out, Bhabha’s concept of third space ‘has become a talisman of the current academic endeavours to reconceptualise difference by means of spatial thinking…especially in those occupied with literary criticism rather than with material practices’ (2010: 63).

Therefore, at this point it must be stressed that we are back with the same question about the concept of third space, as with the heterotopia concept, in terms of whether it is being deployed as a metaphor and is concerned with language, meaning and communication or ‘positions of enunciation’ (2010: 67) rather than with actual physical spaces. I agree with Lossau that we are principally dealing with ‘spatial rhetoric’ and whilst I appreciate the way – from bell hook’s deployment of the concept of marginality to Bhabha’s notion of liminality – this politics of location has contributed to the conceptualisation of more productive positions around difference, it is in danger of becoming a ‘buzzword’ (2010: 62-63) just as the heterotopia concept can be said to have acquired an aspect of the banal in relation to some applications such as the aforementioned Place D’Alma Tunnel in Paris. More seriously still, ‘the concept of third space cannot help but repeat – the normalisation and objectification of the other – that it set out to interrupt (Lossau, 2010: 71). The literary case studies that tend be cited in these spatialisatons do indeed tend to be those which involve diametrically opposed positions that somehow are reified by their very repetition.

In the introduction to their volume in which the concept of third space is mapped out by a number of writers including Soja and Bhabha, the editors Karin Ikas and Gerhard Wagner (2010) speak about the ‘literalising’ of third space’ and ‘literature as the classic realm of postcolonial studies’ (2010: 5). This analysis was published in the context of a growing interest by cultural theorists to get to grips with Bhabha’s refusal to define the term in his (1994) Location of Culture. For them, and for Bhabha, works such as Shakespeare’s Tempest and Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness are instances of ‘inter- or transcultural communication’ – classic texts from the Western literary canon that involve diametric oppositions of difference. Bhabha gives us one instance of how a third space can arise from such opposition in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness, in which the principal character Marlow encounters a fragment of white worsted around the neck of a Congolese native and it is argued that, rather than operate as a sign of ‘unknowability’ in the ‘estranging realm of untranslatability’ that can simply be ‘read off’, the cloth operates as ‘the thread’ in a ‘mediating third space that designates the dialogical relation between the narrator and the native’ (2009, xiii).
The fragment of worsted has produced a dynamic that goes beyond the duality of the colonial encounter and a new kind of difference, a kind of hybridity, and new structures of meaning have been produced out of the very liminality and marginality of the situation. My position is that the concept of ‘third space’, whilst perhaps preferable to notions such as ‘third world’, has limited potential because it contains within it, old hierarchical notions of ‘centre and periphery’. Whilst I agree that hybridity and the animation of marginality are important processes to identify and that they may have the potential to produce new structures of meaning, I do not think that we need the concept of third space with which to imagine them.

Within the various spatialisations or ‘localisations’ that have taken place within postcolonial studies, whether related to concepts of heterotopia or to third space (without wishing to conflate them) what has been termed the ‘postcolonial novel’ has emerged as an important site of analysis. These are literary narratives that address the postscript of colonialism and imperialism in the present tense. They are often fragmented, discontinuous historical and personal, involving non-linear flashbacks as they are recounted by their protagonists from multiple perspectives and, without wishing to medicalise them, in this sense they could be termed post-traumatic or at the very least concerned with addressing profound experiences of loss from a dissociated position. As bell hooks put it in *Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness*: ‘to speak about issues of space and location evoked pain’ (1991: 145). These literary texts exemplify a paradox in Foucault’ heterotopia theory which is that although he does not make an explicit postcolonial reference within Other Spaces, there is nevertheless some considerable potential in expanding the theory so it can address questions of otherness and marginality in the case studies analysed in this thesis. Postcolonial literary interventions often also involve responses to the Western canon in ways that are aimed not so much at illuminating the senses in which such works misrepresent or stereotype the Other but to address the dynamics of presence and absence through ‘explorations of silences’ (hooks, 1991: 145) that is often at the heart of such representations and are contingent on different or marginal readings of historical events.

Feminist cultural theorist Caren Kaplan (1996) has addressed the way that spatiality and spatial tropes have taken over the humanities, and why it has a special appeal to postcolonial studies in order to address questions around diasporic experiences of travel and concepts of home. It would seem relevant, however, that postcolonial
studies should spatialise literature, not only because the issue of postcolonialism is manifestly a spatial (geopolitical) issue even before it is abstracted, but that the novel itself and literature in general can be conceived of in a specifically spatial manner (Upstone, 2009). This takes us back to the very beginning of the heterotopia concept and its origins in attempts by Blanchot to conceive of literature as being a space. Quite clearly spatial concepts have facilitated a connection between the ‘space of literature’ and the more obviously geopolitical concerns of the postcolonial epoch. However, one cannot help but ponder at the possibility that this explosion of spatiality has something to do with the profound difficulties in affecting change in real time and space and, especially, in dealing with the weight and presence of historical effects.

Many of the so-called postcolonial writers have indeed delineated their positions not from the colonial margins but from the imperial centre (or in ways that dissolve the opposition between the two) and have dealt with the aftermath of colonialism (or the contemporary forms of neo-colonialism) as an on-going crisis of subjectivity, discourse and politics that is a lived experience taking place in real time and space. I think the new (literary and imaginary) postcolonial spaces that they have created are nearer to the definition of heterotopia than that of Soja’s Third Space. The process by which some of the writers that have been co-opted into the genre of the postcolonial novel has often involved a reverse reading of the Western literary canon itself. For instance, the work of Joseph Conrad and even Charlotte Brontë (especially as reinterpreted by Jean Rhys) can now be read as occupying a postcolonial critical space. Victoria Burrows has also pursued this line of analysis in her (2008) interrogation of the works of Michael Ondaatje and their relationship to spaces of trauma. Craps and Buelens (2008) have offered a definition of what might be termed the ‘postcolonial trauma novel’ and have included among these one of the most celebrated – Toni Morrison’s Beloved (1987) – which has itself been the subject of a number of contrasting spatialistions.

There are subtle changes of register between those projects that deal with aspects of the postcolonial novel as concerning real places that are sites of peripheral memories and the subdominant historical traces that are marginalised within dominant discursive practices. There is also the kind of studies that aim to achieve what Bhabha describes as ‘inter- or transcultural communication’ where Manichean dualities are dissolved to produce a ‘third space’ of signification, or what Soja calls ‘trialectics’ and new forms of meaning and subjectivity can be imagined and practiced.
So in this regard it is interesting how Soja, Massey and hooks spatialise Toni Morrison’s quintessentially traumatic narrative of loss towards the end of the system of chattel slavery that existed in the United States. What is at stake here is the very personal, subjective or psychodynamic perspective on space that Foucault strenuously avoids.

One of the ways in which Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* can be considered to be ‘spatialised’ is the emotional ‘relations of propinquity’ that exist or fail to exist between the various characters in the novel. Of course it is a truism to point out that emotional relationships are often expressed in spatial language – the close and the distant, the deep and the shallow – and it is these proximities and affiliations that are most immediately displaced not only in familial connections but also in a paradoxical sense, the domestic intimacy that is shown to exist between slaves and their masters. But there are other more concrete levels to this spatialisation, as Massey (1994) has pointed out especially in relation to the concept of home, or the place of home, which Morrison demonstrates to be something of a chimera under the chattel slavery system in the real space and time distance that opens up between affiliations normally expected to be close. It is from such conflictual positions that bell hooks develops her concept of radical marginality. These literary journeys have had an enormous impact on critical debate and show that such texts, as we would expect from literary forms, have been interested in different ways of representing existing spaces and places but crucially imagining new ones, even by writers whose work can be considered to be part of the postcolonial discourse such as Joseph Conrad. The most important aspect of these texts in relation to the heterotopia concept is that they address the experiential and the subject, precisely the areas that in trying to put distance between his work and phenomenology, Foucault was not able to address. One is reminded of the feminist mantra: the ‘personal is political’, which Foucault’s aversion to phenomenology caused him to exclude.

It is plain to see how all of this has been influential in Soja’s incorporation of literary space into his trialectics. For Soja it is the aspect of marginality via the re-reading of black feminist writers like Toni Morrison and bell hooks, whose works refer to spatial/geographical dislocation, that has informed his notion of third space as a domain of ‘radical openness’ which sounds so much more like a political project than the strategies of communication that arise from readings of postcolonial literature when considered by Bhabha for example. Soja’s incorporation, or perhaps
overarching inclusion of feminism and of bell hooks, particularly her notion of transgressive space, comes out in statements such as:

Everything comes together in what Soja calls ‘third space’: 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 unconsciousness, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history (Soja, 1996: 56).

However, there are other spatialisations within postcolonial discourse that are concerned with heterotopias as actual spaces in which ‘othering’, ‘social ordering’ occurred and which are also sites of trauma. These sites of trauma can include the imaginary island in which Prospero and Caliban find themselves in Shakespeare’s The Tempest; it could be the attic in which Mr Rochester’s Caribbean wife Bertha languishes in Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre, or indeed the domestic spaces of Southern USA during chattel slavery as imagined by Toni Morrison in Beloved. Just as with the concept of third space, these studies have concerned themselves with literature and other art forms as engagements with real spaces and not just the place of the signifier or the imaginary.

Yet, going back to the concept of heterotopia, there are applications of the concept in postcolonial studies that attend to the operation of signs, enunciations and disjunctions within actual physical spaces in a variety of registers not only addressing the imaginative spaces of literature but also what Foucault referred to as actual spaces in which there are accumulated temporalities namely, the museum and the archive. There is scope in a postcolonial analysis as it might pertain to museums that has been under-addressed but was suggested time ago, albeit in a rather limited form and this thesis is an attempt to address this deficit.

Perhaps there can be no methodological closure or systematic consistency of application of the heterotopia concept. This is something that architectural theorists Ritter and Knaller-Vlay remind us (1998: 17). They refer back to the logically discontinuous list from Borges’ mythical Chinese Encyclopaedia at the beginning of the Order of Things and note that when the heterotopia concept was introduced to medicine it had a ‘disturbing aspect’ as ‘it denoted the end of orthotopographic thought, whose mappings assign each functional part of the healthy body to its correct place’. It is interesting that they use the adjective ‘disturbing’, which is quite a
psychological, subjective description and is the same word that Foucault uses in his (1966) description of heterotopias in the preface to the Order of Things. Ritter and Knaller-Vlay ask whether the heterotopia concept has had a similar impact – or has ‘shaken’ – other areas of thought, presumably, architecture, urbanism and geography which have similarly been dominated by what might be termed ‘orthotopography’, which I would define as an enthralment with the material surface appearance of spaces and the mapping of their position or place rather than the inclusion of subjectivity, disruptive language, imagination and (mis)representations and dislocations as integral to the terrain. The opposite of the orthotopographical would be, as Foucault (1998) reminds us, in paying homage to Gaston Bachelard and the phenomenologists: addressing and engaging with ‘the space of our primary perception, the space of our dreams and that our passions hold within themselves’.

Therefore, I would like to propose a re-inscription of Bachelardian poetics into the ‘science’ of heterotopology. In other words, the heterotopia concept needs to contain more of the phenomenological, experiential and subjective in relation to power. This is what I will do when I consider museum spaces in which artists like Isaac Julien have intervened or created. It will become clear that heterotopias are not interpreted as typologies or places that preserve something of their own, whose identity is somewhere else/something completely different to the ‘usual spaces’, but rather that the term is used as an auxiliary explanation for the spaces in which identity dissolves and is reconstituted in some other form – for example as a hybrid’ (Foucault, 1998: 15). This is particularly relevant to the work of artists such as Isaac Julien, which I discuss later, and could also be called ‘creolisation’, or ‘syncretism’.

**Spatial conclusions**

Foucault is said to have ‘abandoned’ the heterotopia concept soon after he proposed it in 1967, (Saldanha, 2008), never mentioning it again in any of his later works. However, as Sohn has pointed out, following art critic and novelist Benjamin Genocchio (1995) the heterotopia concept is not a neat theoretical package ready to be applied:

> The complications and inner conflicts of Foucault’s essay is heightened by the contradicting and diverging usages of the term heterotopia in The Order of Things and in the essay ‘Of Other Spaces’, a significant paradox that is generally misunderstood, ignored or left out, and that should not go unnoticed. (2008: 44)
This point is reiterated by Ritter and Knaller-Vlay (1998) and Johnson (2006: 81) who describe *Of Other Spaces* as ‘playfully presented’ and briefly sketched, provisional and at times confusing’ and Saldanha (2008: 2080) describes it as ‘nomadic’ and ‘an inadequate concept for analysing spatial difference’. He goes on to make a number of insightful critiques of the concept, the main problem of which, he writes, is its inheritance from structuralism that ‘posits a totality to society from which all actual differences emanate’.

I think there is a possible reading of *Other Spaces* in which there is indeed a sort of transcendental other ‘society’ which Foucault pits against heterotopic spaces and he does mention on a number of occasions in terms of the social as being the sort of antithesis of the heterotopia, or the main body of space from which it is abstracted. At one point he does say that ‘there are also, probably in every culture, in every civilisation, real places-places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society-which are something like counter-sites’ (1986a: 24). So yes, certainly, what is set up here is an opposition between an autonomous and transcendental entity that can be described as ‘a culture’ or ‘society’ and its spatial other, or between one site and another. These considerations have implications for possibilities of new forms of difference which perhaps the modifications of the concept by Soja and the marginality invoked by hooks do go some way to addressing the duality of society and the heterotopia which I will extend in the succeeding chapters. Yet, even though as mentioned earlier, there are all sorts of signs of influences from phenomenology in the notion of heterotopia that are only partially obscured by this apparent structuralism, I will attempt them to re-join them in my analysis.

However, if we move from the implied medical meaning and from the Foucault’s literary development of the concept, perhaps we should not read the social as physical and topographical but as partly internal and imaginary, in other words not as a transcendental entity. When Foucault speaks in a more Bachelardian, that is to say, a phenomenological tone such as when he talks about those ‘ethereal spaces’ etc.; and then again when he is speaking of heterotopias on the level of language, there is a marked change - from the analytical to the poetic. Perhaps the internal inconsistency of its presentation has not prevented the concept from causing a huge amount of disruption both within the spatial disciplines and wider afield. Yet, in some senses, we may have to read the concept backwards into Foucault’s more obviously
spatialising projects for the missing elements such as how power and knowledge systems interface with heterotopias.

Perhaps one of the most serious objections to the heterotopia concept is the different ways in which the heterotopic sites have been conceived variously as a domains of resistance, of transgression – with Foucault himself shifting from a definition of ‘counter sites’ in the radio broadcast (Johnson, 2006: 76) to ‘discordant space’ or those which circumscribe ‘subversive, visionary, or sacred space by virtue of its special qualities, its absolute otherness, [which] either keeps a social formation stable (garden), or, more often, forces it to evolve (ship)’ (Saldanha, 2008). What I am objecting to here is the confusion between heterotopias as sites of resistance/transgression and as a controlling environment. This is a confusion that one experiences when reading Other Spaces and is important to the present thesis in choosing spaces for analysis, such as museums, gardens and pictorial spaces that where artists have clearly identified them as spaces of control and regulation and have used this consciousness as part of their strategy of resistance and transgression.

Anthropologist and geographer David Harvey (2000b) has commented that with the heterotopia concept ‘what appears at first sight as so open by virtue of its multiplicity suddenly appears as banal: an eclectic mess of heterogeneous and different spaces within which anything ‘different’ - however defined – might go on.’ Saldanha (2008) makes a similar point when he says: ‘heterotopology is not about analysing increasingly finer degrees of heterogeneity, but the function a ‘different space’, identified by the analyst, has within society as a whole’. The impact of these comments on my own research has been to select my sites for study according to the criteria that Foucault and other spatial thinkers have stated are the essential markers of such spaces. For example, the idea that heterotopias are about sites of derivation or contemplation, that they operate with a certain opposition to other spaces; that they have an accumulated sense of time or that they have historically evolved in such a way that their function has become increasingly specialised with their own rules and procedures. For me these traits mark out heterotopias against the banality of total space or the multiple classifications of locations which are identifiable as discrete locations, and have a purpose (such as rerouting traffic) but little cultural significance. Against such criteria the Place D’Alma Tunnel is Paris does not qualify as a heterotopia but the Palais Royal does.
Michel Foucault's Concept of Heterotopia and Artistic Responses to Museum Spaces

Chapter 2

Retracing Foucault's Heterotopia Concept

Said (1993) and Spivak (1988) have both pointed out that there would appear to be significant lacunae in Foucault's analysis which render it as somewhat Eurocentric. As Spivak (1988: 260) notes: 'Foucault is a brilliant thinker on power-spacing but the awareness of topographical reinscription by imperialism does not inform his presuppositions. He is taken in by the restricted version of the West produced by that reinscription and thus helps to consolidate its effects…'. And this is a serious and well targeted objection for it precisely names the two operations necessary for a postcolonial spatial analysis: the action of not only writing but re-writing, or over-writing a discourse that has literally covered the postcolonial terrain. So as example I would cite Foucault's Birth of the Clinic as an example of a text which amply demonstrates 'a restricted version of the West' in relation to the rise of medical discourse during the late eighteenth century. However, the work is less obviously useful in tackling the imperialist practice of medical discourse as an instrument of power in dominations of colonial space and bodies. Similarly, Madness and Civilisation says nothing about the use of psychiatry as a colonial and neocolonial instrument of control and oppression. What I am saying here is that whilst Foucault's works provide the potential for postcolonial analysis they do so by omission and it is the work of the reader to utilise them as analytical tools for exploring colonialism and imperialism and this is what I will do in succeeding chapters when we utilise the heterotopia concept to analyse art works and responses to museum spaces and cultural heritage.

It is interesting that Spivak makes a distinction between 'power-spacing', a reference to the act of writing, along with 're-inscription', which again is also about writing but in a different temporal register. It is as if she is saying the writing is not only in the wrong place but the wrong time and this brings to mind the very term 'postcolonial' that clearly references supersession or an end to an epoch. Spivak's objection is important because even though Foucault says that there are 'probably' heterotopias in all societies, his account of difference does not explicitly take into consideration spaces that are structured according to ethnicity or culture or those which provide specific cultural identities to be spatially articulated within a larger normative space; although he does mention colonies, it is in a manner that may seem surprising and even disagreeable.

After first making the observation that 'brothels and colonies are two extreme types of heterotopias' Foucault goes on to make reference to the establishment of the Jesuit
colonies in South America and he calls them ‘marvellous, absolutely regulated colonies in which human perfection is effectively achieved’ (1997: 272). Although those spaces are inscribed by ethnicity the opportunities for Foucault to make links between the brothel and the colony are surely missed. For it is the realm of sexuality that surely connects them in the sense that colonies are spaces where sexuality and property are intertwined as in chattel slavery where woman was sexual property. As Pateman (1988: 65) reminds us: ‘free sexual access to slaves marks them off from all other persons as much as their juridical classification as property’ and similarly Coltrane (1998) links sex within marriage as a form of ‘property’. So the connection between the spaces of the brothel and the colony arise from the two overlapping systems of control: that of sexuality of women and of sexuality of slave women taking place within the same space.

The significance of this for our argument and my analysis here is that, in the chapters that use the heterotopia concept to analyse artworks as spatial interventions, I will attempt to elucidate the ‘topographic reinscription’ of imperialism into museum spaces that is implicit within them and reference this actual and epistemic violence in relation to the representational spaces of art works and the subjectivities to which they relate.

As I have demonstrated, Foucault did not propose one version of heterotopia but several, of which the published text Of Other Spaces was the final element of a series of presentations of the concept in writing, direct speech and transcription. This improvised process of invention has left us with the possibility of a multi-layered reading of heterotopias as being concerned mostly with language and classification but also with real or imagined spaces. Furthermore, the shift in emphasis from the heterotopia being theorised as a linguistic spatial disruption to one which focuses on material spaces defined by a cultural or political purpose. These changes in emphasis reveal Foucault’s struggle with phenomenology – on the one hand paying homage to the philosophy of experience typified by Gaston Bachelard, to a post structuralist approach seeking to avoid ‘regionalism’ and the subjective in favour of discursive constructs. When the opportunities arose, Foucault declined to make links between the heterotopia concept and postcolonial questions, leaving it to others to find uses for his theories in interrogating colonial and imperial power relations as a spatialised power system.
Yet in spite of these grave misgivings so many postcolonial critics have been informed and influenced by Foucauldian theory (a body of thought so useful yet simultaneously lacking in a number of crucial respects) including hooks, Spivak, Said and especially Edward Soja and Homi Bhabha whose own versions of ‘third space’ not only reflect the influence of Henri Lefebvre but draw heavily on Foucault, especially in the notion of language and enunciation (Bhabha), conceiving it in explicitly spatial terms. In the evolution of the heterotopia concept Foucault gradually excluded the origin of the concept in Bachelardian poetics which stresses the phenomenology of the subject in the encounter with spaces embedded in the typology of psychological archetypes. However, these poetics remain embedded in the concept of heterotopia in the form of the archetypal spaces outlined in the radio broadcast in which Foucault expounded the concept for the second time.

Foucault avoided mentioning the medical origin of heterotopia, even though the structure of its original meaning in terms of the dislocation of a quasi-pathological fragment appears to remain in vestigial form in his articulation of the concept as relational and coexisting with all other spaces. Those who have utilised the heterotopia concept have mostly avoided returning to its medical origins in order to provide a methodology that governs its application in terms of whether heterotopias are normative or transgressive.

Foucault developed the heterotopia concept in an imprecise, improvised and multi-layered manner. Notwithstanding the many often contradictory applications, the concept remains to have productive possibilities in analysing real and imagined spaces and certain aspects of it has been amplified and developed in postcolonial studies. It can be argued that from the very beginning the concept of heterotopia came from (proto) postcolonial disruptions at the level of language and in relation to classical systems of classifying the natural world and the human sciences implied in Borges’ mythical encyclopaedia. Recent applications of the heterotopia concept to postcolonial studies suggests that it can be used as basis for analysing elements of artistic practice that is concerned with the relationship between museums and subjectivity and identity that will be developed in subsequent chapters.

I have tried to deal with what appear at first sight to be shortcomings in the heterotopia concepts as opportunities to develop them further to analyse my own work and those of other artists in the succeeding chapters of this thesis. I will especially focus on two themes that I have been critical of Foucault for downplaying.
or in some cases misrepresenting. These are the issues around the experience of the subject and how this related to postcolonialism. I have selected artists whose work particularly raises these questions and also projects of my own that are spatial interventions and concern subjectivity in relation to psychiatric systems and classifications, particular the Anxiety Arts Programme that I curated in 2014 and the present Hysteria programme on which I am working.
Chapter 3  Foundling Hospital Bloomsbury: A Space for Curating Childhood and Art

Introduction

This chapter builds on the extended theoretical analysis in the preceding chapter and examines commentaries and historical documentation relating to the history of the Foundling Hospital in London, to provide a spatial analysis of the first institution in Britain for abandoned children. I will also examine the present condition of the site in Bloomsbury now known as Coram's Fields, named after the founder of the hospital Thomas Coram, along with the adjacent Foundling Museum. This chapter is concerned with four key aspects of the history of the Hospital and its location in an area whose subsequent development has obscured the former prominence of this institution as a social and architectural feature on the landscape of London. These are the four main aspects of the Hospital that are of interest in developing this analysis:

1. The General history of the Foundling Hospital

2. The Foundling Hospital as a heterotopia for the invention of childhood

3. The Foundling Hospital as a nascent museum and as a site for curatorial practice

4. The site of the Foundling Hospital as a colony of childhood
The chapter attempts to summarise the main concerns of existing historical documentation about the hospital and concludes by identifying gaps for further spatial research, particularly in relation to the arts activities that were developed by the Foundling Hospital from 1747, its transformation into a museum and the subsequent preservation of the site in Bloomsbury where the hospital once stood as a special area devoted to different aspects of childhood.

This chapter will use Michel Foucault’s (1986) concept of heterotopia to engage with the Foundling Hospital’s well-known involvement in acquiring and displaying art from 1746 up to the relocation of the institution to Berkhamsted in 1952. I will spatially examine the site in Bloomsbury now known as Coram’s Fields on which the Foundling Hospital once stood but which is now the location of the Harmsworth Memorial Playground, the Coram Nursery and the Foundling Museum. I am particularly concerned to understand the meaning and functioning of a multi-layered space and artistic interventions spanning 250 years that to some extent tests the limits of Foucault’s (1986) definition of a heterotopia as ‘an effectively enacted utopia’ or a site that has ‘the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralise, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror or reflect.’

It will be suggested, on the basis of the Foundling Hospital’s multi-layered activities as both a hospital and as ‘England’s first public art gallery’, that the hospital represents a heterotopia that does not fall neatly into the categorisation of spaces offered by Foucault as for example, cemeteries, hospitals, museums or gardens – or indeed the idea of the ‘colony’ as a zone for regulated behaviours and the control of individual bodies. Crucial to my analysis of the Coram’s Fields site will be a definition of curating that takes into account its history and application both to the fields of public health, juridical and administration systems (such as the care and protection of children) as well as to the acquisition, conservation and exhibition of art objects.

This will involve analysis of some key points in the history of the Foundling Hospital:

- The design of the Hospital, as completed in 1741, particularly the rococo Court Room and Picture Gallery as evidence that the form of the hospital was arrived at with the intention to display art
• Detailed analysis of the acquisition and exhibition of art works by the Foundling Hospital

• Discussion of the 1747 exhibition in the rococo Court Room in which William Hogarth, Francis Hayman, James Wills and Joseph Highmore all showed works on the theme of the rescue of infants, the theme of childhood innocence and new ideas about the sanctity of motherhood in relation to the upbringing and welfare of children.

• The transformation of the Bloomsbury site from a hospital to a museum (between 1926 and 1952) and to explore the relationship with adjacent spaces such as the adjoining Brunswick Square Garden, the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children and with Coram’s Fields and the other institutions concerned with childhood, which are now its neighbours.

In this chapter I will argue that it is the simultaneity of different forms of curatorial practice that, in part, make the Foundling Hospital a heterotopic site. I will show how different modes of curatorial practice were brought to bear on the buildings, an art collection and on the preservation of an historical landscape, which has in some senses become an historical theme park. Fragments of the outer wings of the original Foundling Hospital buildings still survive, as do some of the rear ancillary structures. The two outer wings and gatehouses now flank the children’s playground and some of the structures survive as part of the Coram nursery adjacent to St Georges Gardens. Part of the western wing of the hospital is now home to animals of the petting zoo that flank the playground and the stone niche, which once held a basket for depositing abandoned babies, still survives at the centrepiece of main the entrance to the playground. All of these elements have been carefully conserved and are overlooked by the Foundling Museum.

In terms of the vestigial traces of the hospital, I will look at how the site becomes a heterochrony, referencing multiple time zones and historical periods, in the invocation of different times and spaces all at once. The famous Court Room is now in another location, transported in toto from its former position to a place within the museum that was built in the 1930s. The sense of the institution as a colony still persists with its bounded enclosures and discreet rules for the admission of children and adults. The Foundling Hospital is thus a heterotopia in the principal sense in which Foucault proposed the term including the doubling of the space as one of regulation but also a
domain where a new attitude to childhood was inaugurated and eventually transgressed the boundaries of the hospital and was dispersed into the rest of social space, from the familial, to the artistic and even juridical process.

**Historical context of the Foundling Hospital**

There is a well-documented history about the functioning of the Foundling Hospital in Bloomsbury that was the first home for abandoned children in Britain and stood on the site now known as Coram’s Fields between 1746 and 1926 (Nichols and Wray, 1935). The name of the institution refers to the sense in which ‘hospital’ at that time denoted a place of sanctuary rather than the present meaning of a medical institution. The hospital brought enlightened social attitudes to the welfare of children to England which had already been developed much earlier during the Renaissance in Italy through the establishment of such institutions as the *Ospedale degli Innocenti* in Florence designed by Filippo Brunelleschi and opened in 1421 and the *Ospedale della Pietà* which is both a convent and orphanage in Venice and opened around 1346 (Langmuire, 2006: 237 and Heller, 1997:27). These hospitals, which were actually hostels or what we might now call orphanages or children’s homes, were places where parents, particularly mothers, who were unable to look after their children, could anonymously abandon their child and permanently relinquish their parental rights to the institution in return for the guarantee that the child’s future welfare was assured. Once abandoned as *innocenti* in Italy or *foundlings* in England, they stood some reasonable chance of successfully maturing into adulthood and even learning one of the skills that it was compulsory for all children inmates of foundling hospitals to learn (Zunshine, 2005). The various activities such as rope making, sewing and other apprenticeships to which children of the Foundling Hospital were subjected is described in a number of different texts on the history of the institution (e.g. McClure, 1981; Oliver and Aggleton, 2000).

As the first such institution in Britain, the historical literature is devoted to describing the process of the inception of the Hospital, its securing of a royal charter, the care regime within the institution and the different phases of its development from its temporary housing in nearby Hatton Garden to permanent establishment in Bloomsbury; its relocation to Berkhamsted in 1926 and the demolition of the old buildings in the 1950s and the eventual establishment of the children’s playground and Museum (Nichols and Wray, 1935). These are social histories that narrate the story of the foundation and establishment of the hospital as an enlightenment project.
that was a response to the extreme social inequity that existed for poor children, particularly in London, at the beginning of the eighteenth century (Porter, 1982). William Hogarth immortalized this situation in his 1751 engravings *Gin Lane and Beer Street*, depicting scenes of child neglect and the reckless abandon of a society apparently in the process of disintegration as the result of alcohol dependency and abuse.

Against this background, the two principal figures of philanthropist Captain Thomas Coram and the artist William Hogarth emerge as being crucial to both telling the story of how the hospital was established but also how attitudes towards childhood developed. Indeed the institution can be seen as the inception in Britain of the idea of childhood itself as a discreet phase of life worthy of both private and public protection – and especially how this was *visualized* in art. In other words, I am concerned with the use of pictorial space and a real physical site for the articulation of a vision of childhood, which had hitherto been non-existent. Coram, of course, is the sea captain who, having travelled the world and spending a particularly long time in Virginia in the USA, decided to spend the rest of his life campaigning for the establishment and continued operation of the hospital (Wagner, 2004). Both men are mentioned in nearly all commentaries on the history of the hospital but the importance of Hogarth in the present chapter is not only the part he played in making the hospital in effect the first public art gallery in Britain but also how he and his artistic contemporaries used
the imaginary space of painting to articulate a new vision of childhood, using the Bible in order to create what we would now call *empathy* for the plight of neglected and abandoned children.

Rhian Harris (1997) former curator of the Founding Museum, who is director of the Victoria and Albert Museum of Childhood, has written about the ‘enlightenment and self-interest’ in relation to the twin aims of Coram and Hogarth. On the one hand, philanthropist Coram and his hospital project were advancing the welfare of children. On the other, Hogarth and his artistic colleagues were promoting their careers through the philanthropic exhibitions and sale of their paintings and it is these combined activities that leads to the hospital becoming the first *public* art gallery in Britain (whilst Dulwich Picture Gallery is the first *purpose built* art gallery). However, I think this contrast between the philanthropic intentions of Coram and the hospital and the artistic ambitions of Hogarth and his friends can be overstated. For I will argue in my analysis of their works that their artistic representations were integral to the articulation of a new vision of childhood, empathy for abandoned infants and the founding of institutions specialising in their care. Hogarth, of course, had virtuoso technique and compositional skills, and was a committed social reformer whose works such as the *Rakes Progress* are well known for their sharp, often satirical, commentary on the social and political climate in which he lived. Therefore, the Foundling Hospital with its mission to improve the lives of children was not unrelated to his main concerns or artistic practice.

It is these *combined* intentions that can be seen in the institution’s use of visual art, music and architecture to articulate its social vision in relation to ideas about the need to rescue children. I should also add that rescuing children necessarily also accompanied a notion of motherhood, or good parenting, so therefore to some extend the hospital can be viewed as having institutionalised motherhood itself in the way it substituted the role of mothers who were unable to care for their children to articulate a new vision of childhood. Above all, these imperatives were spatially determined, located and constituted in architecture and in the imaginary realms of art and the material of institutional reality.

**The Foundling Hospital as a space for the invention of childhood**

There is a sense in which the Founding Hospital could be seen as a type of colony, in its original institutional sense, and I would like to propose this alongside Foucault’s
use of the term in relation to heterotopias in which he said, surprisingly, that a kind of ‘perfection’ can be achieved. I take the word ‘perfection’ to refer to the effect of administrative technologies upon the behaviours and bodies of those who are the inhabitants of the colony as an effect of regulation or governmentality. The original sense of the word ‘colony’ in relation to institutions of confinement was established by the mediaeval leper colonies, which Foucault talks about in *Madness and Civilisations* (2005) as being the archetypal institutions of total confinement that existed in all European countries and preceded the mental asylum as spaces for the containment of leprosy, or what could also be called a heterotopia of deviation. As Foucault says: ‘Leprosy disappeared, the leper vanished, or almost, from memory; these structures remained. Often in the same places, the formulas of exclusion would be repeated’ in the separation of individuals deemed to be sources of contagion in the socio-clinical sense. (2005: 5).

The Foundling Hospital was obviously aware of its genealogical link with the successors of the mediaeval leper colonies that are the later institutions of confinement and quarantine such as mental asylums, sanatoria, workhouses and finally what we now recognize as hospitals in the medico-clinical sense. In this regard, an important feature of the Court Room is a series of roundels depicting topographical scenes of London Hospitals by Gainsborough, Samuel Wale and Richard Wilson. These vignettes are, in a sense a space within a space – a microcosm of the world of confinement as it existed at that time – the 1740s. The roundels show the hospital as one of the most modern of the elite social and medical institutions in London in the forefront of enlightened social and medical care including Saint Bartholomew’s, St Thomas’ and Bethlem Royal, hospitals and the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich (now Old Royal Naval College) founded 1123, 1173, 1247 and 1712 respectively. So in the mid-eighteenth century institutions such as the Foundling Hospital represented the very latest development in a long line of institutions that succeeded the leper colonies as spaces of confinement.

Therefore the sense of a colony that I am proposing here is that of a space in which there are rules of ingress and egress and which has its own behavioural controls and disciplinary regulations; indeed its own punishments for infractions of these rules. This is a place where the idea of childhood could be developed using a number of strategies including architecture, visual art, medical knowledge and juridical procedure. The leper colony achieved its sense of isolation for reasons of trying to
control infection but it also provided an institutional and political archetype for the establishment of a space in which rules and regulations separate it from the rest of society and could be established, or substituted with its own disciplinary system. This is different to the sense of a colony as a ‘political organisation created by [foreign] invasion (Potter, 2014: 6) which is the meaning that we will address in later chapters.

There is a considerable literature on the history of childhood, including theoretical analyses and historical overviews of the development of the concept itself (see, for example, Ariès, whose *The Hour of Our Death* had an influence on Foucault’s description of cemeteries as heterotopias). These works tackle childhood from the point of view of the advent of an idea of human development, which did not exist before the Renaissance, and gradually develops by means of theories proposed by philosophers like Locke and Rousseau about the transformative potential of education and is inaugurated in the modern age through new ways of educating and rearing children, new forms of artistic and cultural representation, and new legal procedures and institutions devoted to the protection and care of children (Cunningham, 1995; Brown, 2002; Levene, 2007). Some of this literature has focused on the United States and discrete aspects of childhood including the role of motherhood and the evolution of parenting techniques (Kessen, 1979). Yet there is not a substantial literature on the Foundling Hospital as a significant development in the ‘invention’ of the idea of childhood in England (e.g. Cunningham, 2012 and Langmuir, 2006 are notable exceptions) but is more represented as an innovative institution in terms of social reform.

However, within the literature on Foundling Hospital, the subject of art is regularly mentioned as being part of the hospital’s activities almost from its inception but these have been sub narratives as part of the larger story of the hospital’s history rather than issues in their own right. In this chapter, I would like to bring the role of art into the foregound to argue that the work of artists like William Hogarth and composer Georg Friedrich Händel were central to the strategy of the hospital, not just to raise funds but also to articulate a new phase of life called childhood and to use the imaginative spaces of painting, literature and music in which we could imagine this new reality, subjectively through the visual rhetoric of historical and religious painting and through the exaltation of sound. This was a strategy of appealing to subjectivity, to the structure of feeling at the time, in order to inaugurate a new social contract around childhood. This meant stimulating feelings of empathy towards the children by
the aristocratic supporters of the hospital, through the placeless places of literatures, painting and music so that people could imagine a reality that did not yet exist but to propose it as already being part of their own world, as a kind of mirror of a new reality. A number of writers have described the role that art played in representing social issues, for example Matheson (1999: 187-188) points out how:

At the Foundling Hospital, art had been assigned the task of representing and rationalizing the social virtues; in turn virtue had provided the artists with a superlatively respectable showroom for their work, with an audience morally guided to admire the conception and execution of their labour.

There have been numerous descriptions (Nichols and Wray, 1935; Nicholson, 1972; Harris, 1997) of the various art projects that took place at the Foundling Hospital with the involvement of Hogarth in particular but also the composer Händel, whose now famous Messiah oratorio began life as the Foundling Hospital anthem which the children were trained to perform to admiring visitors (Burrows, 1991:105). Hogarth painted murals free of charge for the nearby Saint Bartholomew’s Hospital, after hearing that the institution was about to commission an Italian artist; he eventually became one of its governors, and also provided the visual identity for the Foundling Hospital in designing a coat of arms for the head piece for the power of attorney (an important legal document giving the hospital curatorial powers over children’s property); a shield to go over the door of the old hospital and the coat of arms and uniforms for the boys and girls (Baron, 1987). This is an early example of what we might now call ‘branding’ where artists are employed to give an organisation a unique visual identity through the use of colour, typography and symbols.

A critical point is reached in the association of the Foundling Hospital with artists when John Rysbrack became a governor of the hospital in March 1745. Rysbrack was born in Antwerp (as Johannes-Michel Rijsbrack) and settled in London in the early 1700s, eventually becoming one of the leading sculptors of the 1740s working in a neo-baroque style. He was awarded many high-profile commissions, such as the memorial to Isaac Newton in Westminster Abbey and an equestrian statue of King William III in Bristol (Taylor, 1841: 104; Chilvers, 2017). Rysbrack’s appointment as a governor demonstrated the extent that artists had become integrated into the management structure of the hospital. Rysbrack used his many connections with wealthy high society to support Hogarth’s project for exhibiting art at the Foundling Hospital (Brownlow, 1847). At the General Court of December, 1746 the Treasurer
informed the governors that 'fifteen gentlemen artists have agreed to present performances in their different professions for ornamenting the hospital' and then they were elected governors. The artists were: William Hogarth, Francis Hayman, James Wills, Joseph Highmore, Thomas Hudson, Allan Ramsay, George Lambert, Samuel Scott, Peter Monamy, Richard Wilson, Samuel Wale, Edward Hately, Thomas Carter, George Moser, Robert Taylor and John Pine.

Further, the inclusion of four paintings at the inauguration of the hospital might suggest that, through this association, artists had a role in the development of the idea of childhood as an integral part of the hospital’s strategy to articulate a phase of life that should be subject to institutional care and protection. A key part of this strategy was the inaugural exhibition of four paintings that were hung in the Court Room in April 1747 along with 'entertainment, [a] public dinner, 170 persons and work by four painters' Hogarth, Hayman, Highmore and Wills. All four works were on the common theme of the rescue of infants from abandonment. The Court Room was where the Foundling Hospital's Board of Governors used to meet. The paintings hung there are Joseph Highmore's *Hagar and Ishmael*; Francis Hayman's *The Finding of the Infant Moses in the Bulrushes*; James Will’s *Little Children Brought by Christ* and Hogarth’s *Moses Brought to the Pharaoh’s Daughter*. (Brownlow, 1847; McClure, 1981: 69; Nichols and Wray, 1935: 251).

(Left) Joseph Highmore: *Ishmael and Hagar*; (Right) William Hogarth: *Moses Brought to the Pharaoh’s Daughter*. 
Toni Bowers in her literary analysis of the history of modern motherhood (1996) proposes that Hogarth’s work in particular is an essential aspect of the historicisation of motherhood which, she argues, precedes the oft-quoted example of the impact of philosophical ideas such as John Locke’s (1693) Some Thoughts Concerning Education or Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s (1762) treatise Emile: or On Education. This goes to show how important, and advanced were the ideas being proposed by Hogarth and his artistic colleagues, even though their vision of childhood was presented in the form of history painting depicting the biblical narratives. These modernising ideas about education and childhood gathered pace from the mid-eighteenth century onwards and also connected with the human tragedy and social effects of the separation of young children from their mothers. I would propose that all four works use the space of historical painting to develop a system of empathy for children by appealing directly to the emotion of the viewer. I would suggest that the relationship with the viewer is achieved through an aesthetic form of what would now be called empathy – a word that is now more readily understood as describing human-to-human relationships and has a considerable literature in psychotherapy and counselling, but had its origins in aesthetics and which I believe it would be useful to consider.

Our contemporary understanding of the concept of empathy is generally understood as the intimate, subjective understating of another person’s experience or feelings, rather than a connection with inanimate objects such as art works. However the term originated in experimental psychology and Hegelian aesthetics (Vischer, 1873) and is

(Left) Francis Hayman: Finding of the Infant Moses in the Bulrushes (Right) James Wills: Little Children Brought to Christ. All works c1746, courtesy Founding Museum.
a translation of the German word *Einfühlung* (the verb *einfühlen* meaning literally to ‘feel into’) and was first proposed as a description of how visual appreciation, the apprehension of form in space and time, necessarily involves a projection of the self into the object in view (Eisenberg, 1987). From the beginning of its introduction to philosophy in the late nineteenth century the concept of empathy was concerned with the subjective relation between self and other, or subject and object. Hegelian philosopher Robert Vischer argued that ‘artworks and nature manifest themselves as emotional beings that can be felt with empathy’ (Nowak, 2011). The concept of empathy was thus concerned with the subjective apprehension of objects in space whether they are material or experiential. Empathy is, therefore, generally about feeling with or for an object/Other that becomes, literally, animated. Empathy is quickly brought into other disciplines beginning with experimental psychologist Theodore Lipps introducing it to psychology in 1897 (Hojat, 2007: 5) and eventually moving to psychotherapy (e.g., see Breithaupt, 2012), anthropology and now even design disciplines and museum studies (e.g. Museums Association, 2012). In much of the characterisations by these disciplines empathy is depicted as a worthy, positive emotion, as something for which one should strive as a moral obligation. Psychological empathy is often sub divided into different levels or modalities (e.g. Light and Zahn-Walker, 2012:123) such as: cognitive, taking another’s perspective; emotional, the possibility to actually feeling what someone else is feeling and compassionate, a motivation to act on the basis of someone else’s position. All of these different modalities of empathy are at play in the Foundling Hospital artworks – from emotional through to compassionate motivation. After going through the emotional stages of empathy, therefore, the motivation to act on the basis of someone else’s position was the empathetic stage to which the hospital most desired spectators of the artworks would reach and result in them making donations.

Therefore, what Highmore, Hogarth, Hayman and Wills all do in their respective paintings is to intensify this aesthetic empathy in order to make the viewer feel, and then act, that is to say, empathise for the children (more than their mothers), aesthetically experience what they may be feeling in terms of abandonment and loss and then to do something about it. This is the sense in which the pictorial space becomes phenomenological: the use of representation in order to engage the viewer with an *experience*. In the case of the four biblical tableaux, they also additionally link the pictorial space of the painting as an invocation of a literary space – the Holy Bible.
– in order to propose to the spectator a form of empathy towards children and childhood in a real space – the Foundling Hospital and to relate this to the compassion of Christ.

Highmore depicts the biblical story of Hagar and her illegitimate son Ishmael (Genesis 16:1-16) in which Abram’s wife could not bear him any children due, apparently, to the infertility of her husband, Abram. However she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; so she said to Abram: ‘The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her’. The composition of this painting (the angel in the upper left of the frame) is in itself a reference to a previous study by Hayman that was designed to invoke a more shocking and extreme form of empathy in *Angel of Mercy* (1746) in which a mother is depicted strangling her baby. Hogarth however, shows the child Moses (Exodus 2: 10) being given up by his mother (who has been acting as wet nurse) to the daughter of the Pharaoh. This replicates the acts of mothers who gave up their children to the Foundling Hospital. To the right of the picture, the mother, shown as a nurse figure, is in the act of being paid by a steward. The two female attendants on the left, one black (typical of Hogarth) and one white, is a hint of the child’s identity and a reference to a location, Egypt, hence the small crocodile and a figure beneath a throne, and in the background the pyramids and sphinx can be discerned.

Hayman’s picture also depicts a story relating to Moses, this time the finding of the infant Moses in the bulrushes (Exodus 2: 1-6). This is when the Pharaoh’s daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her slaves were walking with her along the riverbank. She sees the basket amongst the reeds and sends her female slave to get it. The picture shows the moment when she opens the basket and discovers the baby. Finally, Wills’s: *Little Children Brought to Christ* depicts the moment when children were brought to him so he might put his hands upon them and pray. ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these’ (Matthew 19:13-15).

So what we have here are not just four religious paintings about compassion towards children but I am proposing that they achieve their impact through strategies of empathy – both aesthetic and psychological – in order that eighteenth century audiences can imagine a time different from their own in which childhood would be a protected phase of life and be associated with qualities with which we are now familiar such as innocence and vulnerability. Furthermore, I would suggest that this is
what we would now term a phenomenological approach because what the artists are doing is using aesthetic strategies to create a space in which the spectator can not only place themselves in the role of a child, or to imagine the sense of distress that an abandoned infant may feel. Basically, of course, as well as articulating both a state of childhood and compassion towards it, the artist is encouraging the viewer to give money to the hospital. Since the characters in the painting, the pharaoh’s daughter and Abram’s wife, are all depicted as if they were aristocratic persons in fine diaphanous gowns, this allows the wealthy spectators to imagine themselves in the act of munificence in much the same way that the Florentine Medici bankers and art patrons often included themselves as characters in religious tableaux as a way of absolving their sense of guilt as ‘usurers’ or exorbitant money lenders – an activity specifically outlawed in the Bible (e.g. the fresco by Benozzo Gozzoli, painted around 1459 in the Chapel of the Magi, Palazzo Medici-Riccardi in Florence). The point I wish to emphasise here is the picture as an imaginative space, a proximal mirror, which in the case of the paintings at the Foundling Hospital, both articulate and invoke a new empathetic attitude towards children and childhood, through a depiction of the biblical narratives in which the spectator is asked to substitute themselves in the place of the scriptural characters.

The Foundling Hospital as a nascent museum

It is this instrumentalisation of art for a social purpose that led the hospital first to become an art gallery and then to become a museum – and it is an often repeated statement that the Foundling Hospital was ‘England’s first public art gallery’ (Harris, 1997). However, I would suggest that what we have now, in terms of the remains of the hospital, is a little more complex and very much conforms to the notion of a heterochronic space that Foucault proposed. For what we now experience on the site is a literal stacking of both time and space. Not only have some of the interiors of the hospital been relocated along with the artworks (e.g. the rococo plaster work in the Court Room). The site is also now a complex aggregation of all the different functions that previously existed. We can experience the site of the hospital, where the stone niche in which the babies were abandoned, still survives and the general shape of the hospital building in the two surviving wings. However, instead of entering the hospital, one now enters a children’s playground, which has been especially reserved for minors and in which adults unaccompanied by children are not allowed. The
Foundling Museum, which is now sited some 500 metres from where the hospital once stood, is not only a re-creation of one of its rooms, the rococo Court Room, but the grand staircase that once took visitors from the ground floor to the upper levels in which the children's dormitories were located, still survives. This is, literally, very much a stacking, or multi-layered representation of history in terms of time and space or what Foucault calls heterochronic.

It is clear from the architectural plans of the hospital (Survey of London, 1952) that the display of paintings was intended from the beginning with the interconnecting Court Room and Picture Gallery, well-lit with large windows on the ground floor to the front of the building to obviously allow easy public access. These are described in some detail in the Survey of London (1952) and detailed drawings survive. Whilst there is ample documentation in the Survey of London archives, there is no known analysis devoted to the architectural design of the hospital, and especially one that relates to the display of art and that the hospital was quite clearly designed and built with that intention.

The Foundling Hospital was acquiring a painting collection and providing exhibition space for British artists some twenty years before the establishment of the British Museum, the Royal Academy or Dulwich Picture Gallery and even the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, which did not become fully publicly accessible until 1765. The Foundling Hospital, of course with a more modest collection than in Florence, was acquiring and exhibiting works by Reynolds, Hogarth, Gainsborough and Raphael. It would appear that skills not unlike those of a museum curator were required by various officers within the hospital (in collaboration with Hogarth) to identify suitable works for donation and the arrangement of the public exhibitions. The significance of this is that the hospital was an important site for the development of curating, long before it became commonplace within museums or art galleries. However what is most remarkable about the Foundling Hospital art activities is the way that, what is now commonly known as 'education' or 'public engagement' programmes in museums was established in England so early. The only other similarity is the relationship of the composer Antonio Vivaldi with the children of the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice (Heller, 1997: 51).

Former Foundling Hospital administrator John Brownlow’s (1847) chronicles describe in some detail the efforts of the hospital administrator to acquire artworks. The Foundling Hospital was an important stage in the development of public exhibitions of
British art and inaugurated the idea of a public space dedicated to the exhibition of art (Taylor, 1999: 5) and led directly to the founding of the Royal Academy in 1768. However, the nature of these exhibitions, even the 1747 show in the Court Room, is sketchily described (e.g. Brandon, 1999; Lewis et al., 1938). The history paintings by British artists on show at the Foundling Hospital represented an important stage in the development of the concept of a public visual culture in eighteenth-century London (Taylor, 1999: 5 and Lewis et al., 1938). A point that I think is insufficiently emphasised is the imaginative contribution of artists in the invention of childhood in England in the mid eighteenth century. The physical and material reality of the hospital is overwhelmingly privileged above the imaginative potential of art, or its persuasive powers in mirroring social realities at the same time as proposing new ones in the convincing form of religious history painting.

Following the show in the Court Room, the Foundling Hospital, through the efforts of William Hogarth, provided an early venue for contemporary artists to show their work in Britain. The success of this venture led to the formation of the Society of Artists and the Free Society of Artists. Also involved with the institution were the Dilettante Society and the Turks Head Club of artists who arranged periodic banquets or ‘feasts’ as for example one that took place at the Hospital in November 1750, documented by Brownlow (1847: 65) and also Hutchinson (1968). However, there does not appear to be a continuous narrative describing the history of these meetings.

Medical historian J H Baron (1987) (quoting Moss, 1986) makes the point that paintings in eighteenth century hospitals were not there merely to beautify either for the sake of patients or staff but had a ‘propaganda function in stressing the authority, charity or moral rectitude of hospital work’. Yet whilst this utilitarian view is true in certain respects, in some of the obviously themed donations acquired by the hospital and some its commissions, the collection appears to have had a wider appeal. What I am saying is that, although the paintings had a particular local function related to the Foundling Hospitals and accorded to Baron’s description of ‘propaganda’ the works did achieve popularity outside of the hospital. Hayman’s works, for example, achieved their popularity in the context of a public appetite for history painting and was a well-known and popular artist in the 1740s, installing work in such places as Vauxhall Gardens. So what we have here is one of the most important developments in British visual culture. Apart from the patients and staff that Baron mentions there are also the visitors the hospital who were a substantial audience. For it was through the act of
spectatorship in hospitals that, as previously mentioned, England’s first public art gallery was established. The Foundling Hospital realised that the act of visiting mental hospitals to view the inmates was a popular past time for the upper classes. An example of this public spectatorship that was prevalent in hospitals in the mid eighteenth century is the final scene in Hogarth’s *Rakes Progress* which is set in Bethlem Royal Hospital (nickname Bedlam and a corruption of ‘Bethlehem’) that is still an institution for the mentally ill but in the eighteenth century also admitted persons who were indigent. Hogarth shows two aristocratic women shunning their faces in horror as the violently mad Rake is shackled and restrained by his keepers. The point I wish to emphasise about this painting is the way that it includes spectatorship, mirroring the viewer, in a hospital setting. It should be noted that the Bethlem Royal Hospital would eventually develop its own art collection, of works by patients such as Richard Dadd, Louis Wain and William Kurelek, which are now part of a collection called the Museum of the Mind. So art and spectatorship was also practised at the Foundling Hospital with people spending a day out to look at the paintings and the children all dressed up in their uniforms, to pity them, perhaps to hear them sing but above all, from the Hospital’s point of view, hopefully to donate money to the institution. Therefore I am suggesting that the display of paintings at the Foundling Hospital was integral to this well-established regime of visual spectatorship.

**The Foundling Hospital as a heterotopia of childhood**

*Satellite image showing Coram’s Fields, Bloomsbury, London: site of the former Foundling Hospital, bounded by the Foundling Museum, Brunswick and Mecklenburgh Squares.*
A number of sources detail the transformation of the site at Bloomsbury from open fields in the early eighteenth century owned by the Earl of Salisbury (Survey of London, 1952; Levene, 2007: 7) to an urban complex comprising the hospital and the Brunswick and Mecklenburgh private garden squares. Other histories of the hospital document the relocation of the institution to Berkhamsted, in the twentieth century, the demolition of the old hospital and its sale and later re-purchase by the Coram Foundation (which has continued providing services to children up to the present day) through funds provided by the Rothermere publishing dynasty (Richardson, 2000: 237). However, there is also the subsequent child-related developments of Great Ormond Street Hospital nearby in the early nineteenth century and the establishment of the University College London Institute for Child Health as the paediatric research centre for the children’s hospital but these have not been the subject of any study in terms of the unusual development of child-related institutions in this part of London. These later developments, which took place at different historical periods between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, established this part of London as a discrete site for the development of childhood, in both artistic, architectural and medical terms, following the pioneering colony of the Foundling that survives to the present day. What I think is most interesting about these institutions is that, together, they cover most of discursive practices that make up our idea of childhood: the social, the medical and the legal.

The Coram’s Fields site in Bloomsbury, along with the adjacent, Brunswick and Mecklenburgh Squares, the Foundling Museum and the Coram Nursery presently exist as a complex series of interlocking spaces whose interrelationships are mainly determined by the history of the Foundling Hospital. In addition to the nearby University College London Institute of Child Health and the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children are additional institutions devoted to different aspects of childhood, which have not been analysed as being part of an interconnected whole, or as a discreet space. Although these developments are described in separate accounts, no studies could be found of the Bloomsbury site that attempt to join up these interrelated developments into a complex site devoted to childhood. As such the site is very much a heterotopia for childhood in a number of registers: around curating, the medical definition of childhood and its delineation in pathological terms (paediatrics) as well as socially (the Coram Children’s Charity) and culturally (the museum). The space where the hospital once stood is now a playground in which adults are not allowed unless they are accompanying a child. In this I recall Foucault’s
presentation in his radio broadcast of 1966 when, in reference to heterotopias, he spoke about the enchanting spaces of children is now (Defert, 1997: 274). Everything in the playground is designed to appeal to children, from the sense of a secure and protected enclosure to the diminutive scale of the remaining wings of the Foundling Hospital, to the myriad of different enclosures and hiding places where children can play. This very much reflects a heterotopia in terms of rules of egress and ingress and it is heterochronic in the way that different time periods have been aggregated in one space, or upon one another in the overlapping histories of both institutions and the spaces that they once occupied.

**A space for curating children, childhood and art**

The word ‘curating’ is never used in any text about the hospital even though the term ‘curator’ has a long history of being associated with the care of minors and those with mental health problems (Adeleye, et al., 1999: 89) however, I would like to propose the term is important in a spatial analysis of the history of the Foundling Hospital but give it a different inflection from its contemporary usage. Since the time of the Roman Empire the title curator has been used to describe municipal administrators appointed by emperors to take care of specific aspects of urban infrastructure or certain domains of the palatine estate (Boatwright, 2000: 73; Sherwin-White, 1968: 76); for example, Pliny the Younger, who was curator of the bed and the banks of the Tiber in Rome. However, the precise date of when this term shifted to describe keepers of objects in museums is not clear but it seems to emerge from the mid-eighteenth century onwards with the advent of museums as publicly accessible institutions of which the Foundling was the earliest known in the UK terms of an art collection. What I am referring to here is the process by which aristocratic collections of cabinets of curiosities become transformed into public institutes for the display of art, artefacts, natural history or other items of heritage such as ethnographic objects and architectural fragments. The Sir John Soane Museum that I discuss later in the thesis is an ideal example of such a transition happening with the same collection of objects and within the same architectural setting. It is in relation to this transformation from public to private exhibition and display of objects that the term curator undergoes its most radical or modern transformation.

According to legal statutes still existing in a number of Western nation states including the UK, curatorship or *curator ad litem* is also a juridical procedure for taking
responsibility for the welfare of a minor or someone with mental health problems who is unable to care for themselves (Upton and Jennings, 1838: 154; Scotland Regulation, 2001) and this is a procedure which existed during the time of the Foundling Hospital in the form of ‘power of attorney’ which gave the institution rights over a child’s estate. What I am referring to here is the vestigial meaning of curatorship, which still survives embedded in the term now dominated by museum and contemporary art practice. The Latin root sense of the word *cura* means simply *to care* without specifying *for what* is the emphasis I am making here. The reason for this stress is that at the Foundling Hospital curating coexisted in the form of the care of children and also the conceptualisation and exhibition of an art collection – and this takes place simultaneously in one space. I would therefore argue that this taking place of these different modes of curatorship was unique to the Foundling Hospital.

To be precise, there were actually three different but not unrelated modalities of curating that came together at the Foundling Hospital: the care of children, the acquisition and conservation of an art collection and a more contemporary understanding of curating in terms of the conceptualisation of themed public exhibitions. These senses are a wider understanding of the term than is generally accorded in contemporary art as in for example leading curator Hans Ulrich Obrist’s (2008) overview of the evolution of the role of curators from museum keepers to those who conceptualise exhibitions; but this is not, for me, an adequate explanation. Obrist, and many others who discuss the term from a contemporary point of view, never allude to its origins as a reference to the care of persons or places before it became a description for those who look after arts and heritage objects. The pioneering work of the Swiss art historian and exhibition-maker Harald Szeemann (see Müller, 2006) whose method of authorship and conceptualisation of displays by modern artists has determined our contemporary understanding of the role of the curator, apparently to the exclusion of its historical meaning. So profound and dominant has been the shift that Szeemann achieved that he appears to have singlehandedly redefined the role of the curator from one who cares for objects to someone who originates or conceptualises exhibitions. As the Argentinian curator Carlos Basualdo (in O’Neill, 2007) alludes: most contemporary understandings of the term relates to the changing role of the curator from the museum model of a:

discerning critic or the interpretive historian’ to ‘a relatively unfamiliar figure in charge of negotiating the distance between the value system that those other figures had
I would argue that these are all senses that are relevant to the art activities of the Foundling Hospital and its subsequent transformation into a museum. As Paul O’Neill (2007: 15) has remarked during an interview with contemporary art curator Annie Fletcher (who has herself expanded our understanding of curating ‘subjectivity’): ‘the history of curating has yet to be fully established as an academic field of inquiry’. So there is some considerable potential to include the activities of hospitals such as the Foundling in relation to a history of curating. Above all I am emphasizing here that that this evolution of curatorial practice is contingent on particular spaces (and times) and could not have developed without them. As such, it is the recognition that the hospital existed as a heterotopia of curation as a double action, which is also the invention of childhood, that is so important here and whose understanding is greatly enhanced by spatial analysis such as has been attempted here. By heterotopia of curation I mean that this more modern evolution of curatorial practice, like its Roman antecedent, was spatially determined. It evolved in relation to a site – in this case the Foundling Hospital – through the construction of a real space, the hospital institution itself, but also the imaginary fabula of painting which used the biblical narratives to imagine and then inaugurate a new conception of childhood and a more enlightened way of caring for them. So these developments are as much contingent on institutional space as they evolved in literature or philosophy, such as Locke’s treatise *On Education* or Rousseau’s *Emile* or in painting where biblical stories served a more modern purpose. Therefore it seems to me that as well as being Britain’s first public art gallery, the Foundling Hospital was also a laboratory for a socially based curatorial practice from which modern day museums could learn a great deal in terms of what is now called public engagement. Without such an expanded understanding the potential of the scope of curatorial practice, especially as art is now a part of the public health discourse in ground-breaking projects. Examples of this are the arts programme at London’s Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, which has installed contemporary artworks all over the hospital, or programmes such as Paintings in Hospitals. These are instances where art is being initiated in hospital settings for instrumental (i.e. therapeutic) as well as aesthetic reasons. This is also relevant to my own art practice and through curatorial strategies that have taken place in health and hospital spaces such as the Anxiety Arts Festival 2014, Acting Out 2015 and Hysteria, 2017, which I discuss in the chapter on my practice.
Epilogue: the Foundling Museum and the absent spaces of postcolonial childhood


In my initial research for this chapter, my work began with a hypothesis that there could be a direct link between the Foundling Hospital and colonialism – by means of Thomas Coram’s connections in the then British American colony of Virginia in terms of how he accumulated his wealth. Alternatively, I was convinced I might find some records that would show the case of a foundling who was foreign, had come from the colonies or had been born in London to parents who originated from a colonial territory. I thought I might come across evidence similar to what I discovered in Greenwich where in the Royal Hospital for Seamen where I read documents which showed that in eighteenth century London people from the colonial territories; as slaves, indentured labourers or servants, were engaging with a wide range of social and cultural institutions long before the diasporic period of the mid twentieth century. However, no such evidence could be found in searches in the Foundling Hospital’s records at the London Metropolitan Archives. It appears that Captain Thomas Coram, although he had extensive maritime experience, was a shipwright and was not directly involved in colonial administration or exploitation. Further suggesting such a possibility, his father, William, worked as a customs officer in Lyme Regis (Wagner, 2004: 11-16). This was an important port in the eighteenth century that benefited from the triangular trade of goods, slaves and raw materials between North America, Africa
and the Caribbean. Here, in the docks, commercial activities related to the chattel slavery system took place. Therefore I concluded that there was no direct colonial link with either Coram himself or the Foundling Hospital.

However, an installation by the Foundling Museum by contemporary artist Mat Collishaw radically changed my perception of how the concerns of the Foundling Hospital could be given a postcolonial emphasis in a 2010 exhibition entitled Mat Collishaw, Tracey Emin and Paula Rego at the Foundling. Through the present day museum the show continued the 250-year history of the Foundling Hospital's involvement with contemporary artists in order to make responses to the museum's collection and interventions into the on-going discourse around childhood and motherhood. My encounter with the works in this show convinced me that, in my postcolonial hypothesis I had been looking for presence when in fact I should have been looking for absence. Or to put it in a way that connects with the discussion in the previous chapter about the nature of heterotopic spaces, I was looking for material evidence in a real physical place when I should have looking for an imaginary one, in the realm of art.

In some aspects, the 2010 group show mirrors the 1764 exhibition in its articulation of an artistic vision of childhood, that implicitly referred back to the foundation of the hospital and engaged with the present in terms of the continuing concerns over the welfare and protection of both children and childhood. However the show did not have the same conceptual unity as in 1764 when all of the artists made new works tackling different aspects of childhood abandonment and loss. Described by one art critic as a ‘dysfunctional family’ (Adams, 2010) because of their previous intimate personal relationships with one another, the trio of artists took very contrasting approaches to the subject of childhood and indeed motherhood. Emin showed sketches she made in 1991 during a failed pregnancy that resulted in a botched abortion and bronze casts of infant garments such as mittens and socks. Rego, on the other hand, made an installation that focused on the rape of children and represented medical science – specifically obstetrics – as a gruesome and sadistic practice that involves the dismemberment of babies. However it is Collishaw that I want to focus on because his interventions were the most spatially surprising and, in my view, radical and they connected with my original hypothesis that there could be a postcolonial connection with the hospital. Collishaw made a billboard-size light box – Children of a Lesser God – in a reference to the Romulus and Remus fable in which two infants are lying
on a dirty and dishevelled sofa. In an approximation of the ancient Roman myth, instead of a wolf as their guardian, in front of the babies is a snarling Alsatian dog which appears to be either protecting or about to attack them. However, I would like to focus on a series of photographs Collishaw showed in the Foundling show that were made in 2005, entitled *Idle Young*.

Collishaw is known for producing large format, high definition photography and three dimensional installations that tackle big historical and political themes that are also the subjects of historical paintings, such as the *Massacre of the Innocents*, often making references to Old Masters like Raphael and Caravaggio or Renaissance sculptors like Giambologna (Blain/Southern Gallery, 2014). Collishaw uses a variety of techniques to make his images, including analogue photography, digital image manipulation and high resolution scanning directly from objects. The ironically entitled *Idle Youth* series is a suite of seven photographic portraits of Indian street children. The portraits are rendered in Collishaw’s signature painterly tonalities using subtle chiaroscuro, highly saturated colours, shallow depth of field and framed in black ornate mouldings that look as if they might be Victorian.

The girls and boys in the *Idle Young* series are photographed in static poses with vacant expressions and are either standing, sitting or sometimes leaning against a tree or doorway – wearing clean but shabby, ill-fitting clothes whose pastel tones contrast with their dark skin and sombre backgrounds. The portraits are weirdly reminiscent of Joshua Reynolds’ mawkish pictures of children in fancy dress (e.g. *Strawberry Girl*, 1772-73, Wallace Collection, London). We do not know who Collishaw’s subjects are or anything about their backgrounds except that they are children who had either been abandoned or had run away from abusive homes and were living on the streets at the time they were photographed. However, the picture that I would like to focus on is of a toddler boy who is naked except for a necklace, bangle and an *Aranjanam* around his waist, which is a traditional ornamental chain which Indian children wear and is used to measure their healthy physical development. The toddler is standing in a doorway leaning against the frame. However Collishaw appears to have removed the background behind the child, which would have revealed the interior of the building in whose doorway the boy stands. Instead, Collishaw has inserted a detail from a famous painting, that takes us into another distant space that is constructed around a complex series of literary and
visual references and I think it is worth taking a little time to retrace them in a narrative that will take us back to Coram and the Foundling Hospital.

What we see behind the little boy appears to be from Ingres’ (1808) painting The Bather or Valpinçon Bather as it became known, after one of its nineteenth century owners (Musée du Louvre, 2017a). The painting is the famous rear-view is of a curvaceous nude woman wearing a turban with a towel over her left arm (also known as La Grande Baigneuse). Ingres used it in a number of later compositions; however, it is at first not clear from which version because Collishaw has darkened the background. Yet, on closer inspection it becomes apparent that this detail of The Bather, slightly out of focus, is a quotation from Turkish Bath (1862). We can see in front of the famous figure of the bather who in this version is playing a lute rather than holding a towel. Just discernable, many other women are in front of her, positioned around a pool in various languid and seductive poses and two of them appear to be caressing each other. The reason why it matters from which version the detail has originated is because of all the variations that Ingres painted the Turkish Bath is the most titillating and controversial as a classic example of orientalism. By orientalism I mean the European ‘invention’ of the Near, Middle and Far East as places of ‘romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes’ (Said, 1979: 1) that also become objects of expert discourse and serve the purposes of political control and cultural dominance.

Turkish Bath is a most elegant rendition of the instincts that drive what we might now call sexual tourism or to be more specific, the carnal pleasures of the exotic. Commissioned by Prince Napoleon around 1848 (Musée du Louvre, 2017b) it is known that Ingres based his composition on an account by aristocratic traveller and socialite Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, wife of a British ambassador to Turkey, after her visit to a hamam in Ottoman-controlled Istanbul in 1717, and that the sexual connotations of the painting are entirely his own invention (Lewis, 2004: 144). Lady Montagu’s letters were evocative enough to have also inspired Ingres’s other well-known orientalist work: L’Odalisque et l’esclave (1839) (Palmier-Chatelain and Lavagne d’Ortigue, 2002). In the Turkish Bath Ingres appropriated the traditional physical intimacy between Turkish women that is customary in the intensely private space of the hamam, closely associated with the culture of the Ottoman Empire (Peychev, 2015) and turned it into a sexual fantasy about a harem. Ingres’ voluptuous composition, redolent with Western male desire, with a lesbian turn-on, is a reverie
about the allure of the unlimited pleasures of the harem, by offering the spectator a privileged masculine view into a private female space: the *hamam*. Thus the painting becomes a location for a stereotypical ethnographic dream, which achieves a dubious authority through the startling, almost photographic, clarity with which Ingres has rendered the scene (see Bird 2010).

In her *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1993) Lady Montagu had originally described the scene in the *hamam* as:

> many fine women naked, in different postures, some in conversation, some working, others drinking coffee or sherbet, and many negligently lying on their cushions while their slaves (generally pretty girls of seventeen or eighteen) were employed in braiding their hair in several pretty manners. In short, 'tis the women's coffee house, where all the news of the town is told… (1993: 59).

So Montagu was saying the *hamam* is a female space of physical intimacy, communication and relaxation as in the eighteenth century London coffee houses that were mainly masculine spaces. It would appear that, reading the letter some 150 years later, Ingres received encouragement from Lady Montagu’s words, if not to orientalise and sexualise the scene, certainly to sneak into, gaze and represent a spectacle that is supposed to be out of bounds to men. For Montagu admitted she ‘had wickedness enough to wish secretly that [the artist] Mr Gervase could have been there invisible [sic]. I fancy it would have very much improved his art to see so many fine women naked’ (1993: 59). The painter to whom she refers, Gervase Spencer, was himself very much an orientalist, having already depicted Lady Montagu and other members of her clan in Turkish costumes as if they were Ottoman princes.

What is remarkable about the trajectory of this cultural provenance is that it takes us all the way back to Thomas Coram and the Foundling Hospital. It turns out that Lady Montagu was not a libertine on permanent sojourn in the Middle East. Once back in London, she was engaged with public health issues such as smallpox inoculation, the welfare of children and was one of Coram’s most prominent and energetic supporters. (Hamilton, 2017). Therefore Collishaw’s simple act of quotation telescopes us back through successive narrative spaces by means of the contrast between the pallid back of Ingres’ bather and the dark skin of the little boy which not only bring an immediately orientalist dimension to the composition; it also forces the viewer to be complicit in a specular question. As Ingres’ famous nude now serves, literally, as the
background for Collishaw’s portrait, *The Bather* appears to be indifferently turning her back on the little boy, and the spectator as well. This is a spatially complex dynamic that Collishaw has set up – as well as being a gesture of modesty, shame or a metaphor for maternal abandonment – the back of *The Bather* is also a deflection of our gaze, putting the little boy in our line of sight and then interrupting it by placing us in another space, within an orientalist perspective. The presence of the quotation from Ingres’ complicates the viewer’s gaze, rendering it both specular and voyeuristic. It bounces back and deflects our stare at the little boy and provides a virtual mirror into an Other space in which we can question our vision.

Given that Ingres’ *Turkish Bath* is based on an account by someone who was essentially a tourist, the quotation of this painting also challenges the fleeting and exoticising perception of local circumstances by foreign visitors. *The Bather* nonchalantly plays what appears to be a lute as she sits beside a pool, whilst behind her is a little boy who has lost his mother and his home: a montage of decadence and abject poverty in the same pictorial frame. It is as if Collishaw is accounting for the fact that his own photograph, even though it is intended to be a critical commentary, nevertheless constitutes the intrusion of an objectifying and penetrating Western lens that is gendered and he accounts for its masculinity and geographical position in his composition by means of a sophisticated and subtle act of visual quotation.

Through these complex devices Collishaw’s *Idle Youth* series posed substantive questions such as: how did ideas of childhood develop in European nations at the same time as they were involved in colonial exploitation? Above all, what Collishaw does is to bring an interesting and vital postcolonial dimension to the interpretation of the Foundling Hospital. His work asked how colonial subjects fitted into the idea of childhood at the time it was being formulated and fast-forwards us to the present where childhood is still not a universal idea in all parts of the world. The answer to Collishaw’s question is there is an absence in the narrative, an elision or a silence on the question of the colonial subject, who was, invariably a subaltern whose dominion was justified partly on the basis that colonial subjects were, in effect, perpetual children. The Foundling Museum exhibition of Emin, Collishaw and Rego received considerable media attention (e.g. Adams, 2010) because of the high profile artists involved and Collishaw was picked out for attention. He had made the point with an effective geographical gesture that opened up a postcolonial dimension – and it
appeared to be understood – that there is an absence of the colonial Other in the Western narrative around childhood.

Collishaw's installation also connected with the development of the hospital as a kind of colony, that is to say, with its own discrete rules of conduct, and its imperative to create what Foucault (1975: 138) called, in his discussion of penal and correctional systems, ‘docile bodies’ and ‘obedient individuals’. This is what marks out this institution, if not as a colony as such, then certainly a place that drew on the administrative and organisational technologies that were perfected in the colonial spaces of North America, where the founder Thomas Coram worked in the British colony of Virginia,

In his *Idle Youth* series Collishaw used the fictional space of photography to challenge our sense of geographic location and certainty to make a heterochronic link with another space and time. He is using photography as a fictional devise rather than as a documentary medium for recording objective truth and has upset our sense of geographical location by connecting the Foundling Museum with postcolonial spaces. In doing so he extends our position from the territory on which childhood was originally developed and asks us to question its universality. So Collishaw’s concerns are very much of the moment and he reminds us that, on the temporal dimension, our sense of historical location is disrupted by fast-forwarding us to the present in order to connect with the past. He is saying that, even after the passing of 250 years, in some parts of the word childhood is still in development. Childhood is not a transcendental idea; it is a construct specific to a particular regime of truth. Childhood is thus contingent on location and it is defined in space and time by artistic as well as social, medical or political discourses.

**Conclusions: on postcolonial childhood**

I have argued that the collecting and exhibition activities of institutions such as the Foundling Hospital should be considered as a crucial aspect of the development of museum curating in art museums, especially as the Hospital preceded all other public spaces for the exhibition of art in Britain. It would take another sixty-five years, and an entirely different set of circumstances and people, before England would have its first *purpose built* art gallery in the form of the Dulwich Picture Gallery founded in 1811 (Beresford, 1996). Given the Foundling Hospital’s involvement with rescuing
abandoned children and also collecting and exhibiting art (throughout its history and after the demise of the hospital) the hospital is therefore one of the most important developments in the terms of the establishment of visual culture in Britain. Therefore I conclude that there is potential to join up aspects of the literature on the history of curating in museums with social history that have not previously been seen as connected.

What we have in the Foundling Hospital is a heterotopia of deviation, this, remember, is Foucault's first principle which is concerned with spaces designed for persons in crisis, which very much accords to the conditions of abandoned children and in the physical institution itself being a site where their care can be formulated and delivered. However in the artistic activities of the hospital, in the subtle and complex use of art as a form of social propaganda, pictorial and literary space is also used as terrains for imagining what childhood could be, by the invocation and depiction of Biblical narratives.

In terms of the different interpretations of the heterotopia concept by Foucault, I would also say that the Foundling hospital has now become a heterotopia of consolation, since the hospital relocated to another site in Berkhamsted. The site where the hospital once stood is now a children’s playground in which no adult is allowed unless they are accompanying a child. This means the site still retains the rule of ingress and egress that it once had but they have changed. It is now not the children who are vetted and selected for admission – especially their mothers – it is now the adults who might accompany them. For, it is adults who are now seen to pose the greatest potential threat to children, which is the result of childhood having become a juridically, medically and socially protected space.

I believe there is considerable potential to join up this meaning with the other aspect of curating that involves acquisition, conservation and display in relation the systematic commissioning and procurement of an art collection by the hospital, its building of a permanent display gallery for art within the hospital, along with the famous Court Room and the subsequent preservation of the Court Room and Picture Gallery in toto as the centrepiece of the Foundling Museum. Even given the well-known involvement of London hospitals such as St Bartholomew’s with commissioning art, the activities of the Foundling Hospital have to have been on an altogether different scale. In a similar procedure to cultural and architectural historian Paula Lee’s (1997: 387) analyses of the subtle shifts and application in the meaning
and institutional application of the word ‘museum’ in France, there is also potential for interrogating the history of the application of the term ‘curator’ within museums to its current use within the contemporary art world in general – and the Founding Hospital and Museum presently offer ideal case histories. There are other possible, even later, examples of the confluence of curating human subjects and art, predicated on a confined institutional space, such as the Prinzhorn Collection at the Heidelberg University Hospital that had such a powerful impact on the surrealists (Brand-Claussen, et al., 1996).

The Foundling Hospital is a heterotopia for childhood because it is a space where such a protected stage of life could be imagined through curatorial strategies and in the imaginative spaces of painting and as an ‘effectively enacted utopia’ to use Foucault’s term. In other words it is a kind of mirror that both reflected and refracted current social attitudes to children such as the Moses stories which has been continued through the present day museum’s engagements with contemporary artists. The paintings were used, as we have discussed, within a highly sophisticated visual environment as mirrors to reflect and attract potential benefactors and to refract a view of biblical stories so that they could apply to the contemporary condition of children in eighteenth century London, The site is a heterotopia for the curation of childhood in a number of different registers. Not only in the sense of caring for that the word curator originally denotes; it is also about the acquisition and exhibition of art. The artworks are in themselves imaginative spaces where childhood was once proposed and articulated by means of literary references to the archetypal stories of the Bible.

There is potential for analysing the Founding Hospital site with recent theoretical tools such as a ‘heterotopia’ of childhood using Foucault’s (1986) definition of a heterotopia as ‘an effectively enacted utopia’ or a site that has ‘the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralise, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror or reflect.’ In this case the set of relations that are designated, mirrored and reflected are those concerning childhood and the notion of a protective space devoted to minors and to establish that site as the locus of a number of institutions (including scientific and social) and are based on a discrete set of relations to childhood.
Chapter 4  Spatialisation and Isaac Julien’s *Vagabondia*

In this chapter, I will examine Isaac Julien’s response to the Sir John Soane’s Museum in his (2000) double screen installation *Vagabondia*, and I will use Foucault’s heterotopia concept along with other analytical concepts from film, photography and psychoanalysis to analyse how it engages with questions of space and how the work amounts a postcolonial critique of museums. After contextualising *Vagabondia* and its position within the artist’s œuvre, I will study the work in relation to the site where it was made and installed, the Sir John Soane’s Museum, London. This is located not far from the Foundling Museum and is a collection that has great importance in terms of the history architecture and museums and also the way it is arranged, and its significance in terms of its early date as a publicly accessible museum collection. However, I will approach these matters by analysing the response to the Sir John Soane’s Museum collection by Julien. The museum’s collection and Julien’s response to it raises many of the questions discussed in the theoretical chapter about how visual art can be understood in relation to spatial theory, in particular using the concept of heterotopia to interrogate real and imagined space and time from a postcolonial perspective as constituted in language and in the nature of classification in archives and museums. As such Julien’s work is a significant
example of where the artist is consciously working with these themes through a strategy, in relation to which certain elements of the heterotopia concept will be helpful in understanding Vagabondia using the term spatialisation to describe the artists overall approach. Specifically in relation to language, Julien’s works address museums by upsetting the normal correspondences of words to things in an inversion of the usual operation of mirrors; the placeless place in which the reflection does not fully correspond with its object. By a placeless place I mean the mirror as a virtual domain that appears to material but is only virtually so. Julien is involved in this placeless place partly by means of the literary imaginary as a ‘utopian and heterotopian space’ in which such correspondences are thoroughly upset, inverted and turned back upon themselves.

Julien’s Vagabondia is part of a more general strategy in his oeuvre of tackling spatial issues that I will call spatialisation in order to analyse his work in relation to my engagement with Foucault’s heterotopia concept. In its basic dictionary definition to spatialise is simply to render or think of something as spatial or in spatial terms however, I wish to distinguish my application of spatialisation from a number of other positions that are in existence. I am not using the term in the same sense as David Gross (1981) who has famously attacked what he calls the ‘spatialisation of thought and experience’ in modern culture and his quest to prioritise time over space, which I believe is counterproductive and is against our basic social and scientific understanding of the experience of social and natural phenomena. I agree with Doreen Massey who said the ‘equation of spatialisation with the production of “space” thus lends to space not only the character of a discrete multiplicity but also the characteristics of stasis’ (my emphasis), since I agree it is axiomatic that stasis implies a cancellation of time. As geographer Aharon Kellerman (1989: 33) has written ‘Gross defined spatialisation as ‘the tendency to condense time relations – which are an essential ingredient for personal and social meaning – into space relations’.

By extension, therefore, in my use of the term I am distinguishing it from spatialisation as subsidiary to time or as a description of the geopolitical acts of domination such as how the imperial and colonial order required a spatialisation of the world organised around the interests of Europeans, turning ‘distance into difference’ as cultural geographers Haldrup and Koefoed (2009: 39) argue in their discussion of orientalism. What I am concerned with here is spatialisation, as Stacey Warren (2009) suggests,
as ‘a conscious effort to theorise the powerful role space plays in shaping urban conditions’ (2009: 360) and in this case, an artwork in relation to real and imagined space. Specifically, of course I am looking at space in relation to artistic practice and, above all, since I am analysing the work of an artist, and in view of my discussion of the way that experience became excluded from the heterotopia concept by Foucault, I am using the term to refer, as the philosopher Bergson (2007: 16) intended to mean as the process by which the creative mind is ‘spatial by nature’ and consequently has ‘social utility’ (2007: 16). So it is spatial thinking in order to tackle urgent social and political questions and how these are articulated in artistic practice that concerns me. Therefore I will approach these themes by examining how Isaac Julien responded to the Sir John’s Soane’s museum in the year 2000 in a work called Vagabondia that was part of an exhibition entitled Retrace Your Steps, Remember Tomorrow, curated by the leading Swiss curator Hans-Ulrich Obrist. In terms of my analysis of the work, this chapter is structured as follows:

The historical context in which Vagabondia was made

Description of the Sir John Soane’s Museum as a site and why it is important

Description of the work in terms of sequential structure and content

Analysis of work in relation to four areas of concern that connect with my theoretical discussion in the second chapter on the concept of heterotopia:

- Spatialisation – how the artist consciously engages with space in
- Mirroring placeless places: mises en scène and mises en abyme
- Disruptive language: the trickster and spaces of enunciation
- Conclusions: the phantasmal uncanny

Historical and artistic context

Isaac Julien (b. 1960) made Vagabondia in the year 2000 at a pivotal moment geopolitically and in British contemporary art: it is a year that can be viewed from diametrically opposed positions that could be termed optimistic and foreboding. From an optimistic viewpoint, in 2000 the UK was three years into Tony Blair’s New Labour
administration, and there was still some hope for positive political and social change as the new millennium approached; celebrations were planned and various grand civic projects completed. There was the emergence of the term ‘Cool Britannia’, which was a label that was applied to a variety of contemporary culture, from rock bands like Oasis and Blur to the Artforum-branded ‘Young British Artists’ (Corris, 1992) or ‘YBAs’ epitomised by Damien Hirst, Sarah Lucas, Tracey Emin, Mat Collishaw and Gary Hume. As American art historian Wes Hill argued, the YBAs fostered ‘an institutionalized image of contemporary art as a forum for the expression of alternate ideas’ (Hill, 2017: 98) and, I would add, a deliberate moral and aesthetic challenge to the status quo. Therefore British contemporary art was at the forefront of international attention and as Julian Stallabrass (2001: 201) pointed out in his High Art Lite, the shock artworks of the YBAs eventually became ‘media phenomena’. So there seemed to be an inflated sense of optimism in British contemporary art, with the Royal Academy of Art’s head of exhibitions Norman Rosenthal stating that his aim was to ‘vanquish’ the Americans (Stallabrass 2001: 230). This contributed to a new climate where the mass media, which had previously ignored the art world, was now enthralled with the work and especially the lifestyles of artists such as the YBAs and the annual Turner Prize. The art market was buoyant and was showing signs of recovery from an earlier slump (Robertson, 2015: 229) which benefited London’s position with New York as the leading international centres and the upturn in the art market connected with an expanding global museum sector; the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao having opened to huge international acclaim just a few years earlier in 1997. The year 2000 was an abundant year for architecture too with the opening of the Herzog and de Meuron conversion of Bankside Power Station into Tate Modern in London. There was the unveiling of the Norman Foster designed Great Court at the British Museum. Many other cultural institutions enjoyed the opening of new wings and there were ambitious infrastructure projects such as the Millennium Dome (now rebranded as the O² Arena), the Millennium Bridge and the London Eye.

Yet there was a sense of foreboding that accompanied this optimism. Tensions in the Middle East were increasing following the 1991 Gulf War and in the United States, Democratic Party President Bill Clinton, having narrowly avoided impeachment, was in the final months of his presidency and there was anxiety in some quarters at the prospect of a Republican Party administration led by George W Bush. Furthermore, an economic recession was looming in Europe, soon to affect the UK and US. Above all, even more than the year 1984, which George Orwell had prepared the world to
expect as the dawn of an era that would mark the intensification of technological control of civilian populations by governments, the year 2000 had a fateful numerical finality about it. There was a persistent and widely held belief that there was a so-called ‘millennium bug’ in most computer software that would cause catastrophic failure in any system, including aircraft, relying on digital clocks which had not been recalibrated to take account of the new calendar. Addressing this mood of foreboding in the introduction to their pre-emptive (1997) book *The Year 2000: Essays on the End*, psychologists Charles Strozier and Michael Flynn wrote:

> The year 2000 appears everywhere as a subtext, in literature and art; in all the media; in politics especially at the extremes, in all religions, new or old; and in what we might call the American self (1997: 1).

As psychologists the authors were well-placed to assess the prevailing structure of feeling about the millennium and what they called ‘the American self’; since we now know that sense of foreboding in the US would be justified in the events that were to follow in the attacks on New York that took place in September 2001. Yet, for some arts commentators, their view was diametrically opposed. In what appeared to be a deliberate contrast to the Queen’s description of 1992 (when Windsor Castle caught fire and the Prince and Princess of Wales divorced) as an *annus horribilis* (Davies, 2012) art critic Richard Cork’s (2000) branding of the dawn of the new millennium as an *annus mirabilis* was a consciously upbeat perspective that connected with the media-driven Cool Britannia narrative. In support of his view of a year of artistic miracles, Cork highlighted shows like *New British Art 2000* at Tate Britain featuring Julian Opie, Martin Creed, Douglas Gordon and Susan Hiller (2000: 44). He also mentioned the Turner Prize show of 2000 at Tate Britain featuring Glenn Brown, Michael Raedecker, Tomoko Takahashi and Wolfgang Tilmans who was the winner of that year, (2000: 52). Cork’s examples were diverse, citing artists such as Shirin Neshat, Anish Kapoor and Steve McQueen who were all enjoying the ascendancy of London at the cutting edge of international contemporary art.

However, an event that did not fit neatly into Cork’s optimistic round-up of *mirabili* was the 2000 Royal Academy of Arts show: *Apocalypse: beauty and horror in contemporary art* curated by Norman Rosenthal. Although this exhibition constituted an example of Cool Britannia with a star-studded international blockbuster show, its content was definitely responding to the *horribilis* view of the millennium. *Apocalypse* was obviously a deliberately controversial follow-up to Rosenthal’s 1997 *Sensation*
show, and was clearly addressing the dystopian millennial theme. This was a major exhibition featuring works by Jeff Koons, Wolfgang Tilmans, Richard Prince, Luc Tuymans and many other leading international artists such as Maurizio Cattelan and Jake and Dinos Chapman. The works by Cattelan and the Chapmans dominated the show and attracted the most media attention. Cattelan’s (1999) *La Nona Ora* was a life-sized ultra-realistic sculpture of the Pope collapsed on the ground, apparently having been struck down by a meteor that had crashed through the gallery roof. The Chapmans’ (1999) *Fucking Hell* concentration camp diorama, based on descriptions of the atrocities perpetrated at Buchenwald, was a series of dark vitrines containing thousands of miniature Nazi soldiers who were depicted as the captives and where mutants had taken over the camp (Rosenthal and Archer, 2000).

So it was in this conflicted atmosphere of anxiety, optimism and hyperbole that leading curator Hans-Ulrich Obrist, who was then also co-director of the Serpentine Gallery, organised the quiet and understated show *Retrace Your Steps, Remember Tomorrow* that was staged at the small Sir John Soane’s Museum, London, which straddled the end and beginning of two millennia from December 1999 to March 2000. If this exhibition was responding to the twin extremes of how the new millennium was being greeted by cultural and political commentators, it did so in a subtle and nuanced manner. Obrist invited fourteen contemporary artists to look to the past as well as the future by engaging with the Sir John Soane’s Museum collection. The artists responded to one of London’s most idiosyncratic museums by installing their works amongst the heteroclite collection of objects in what is arguably the most ground-breaking architectural creation of Regency Britain. Obrist assembled a veritable *bricolage* of global names, along with the lesser known, that mirrored the unruly eclecticism of the Sir John Soane’s Museum collection which is housed in three townhouses in Lincoln’s Inn Fields London that Soane acquired in 1812-24, rebuilding and merging them into one. The Soane collection mainly comprises architectural fragments, sculpture and paintings. So, appropriately, in *Retrace Your Steps, Remember Tomorrow* there were architects: Herzog & De Meuron and Rem Koolhaas along with visual artists like Richard Hamilton, Rosemarie Trockel, Anish Kapoor and Liisa Roberts, who were exhibited with names that were then lesser known such as Isaac Julien and Tom Gidley. In an interview with fellow curator Thomas Boutoux in which he was asked why he was attracted to working in the Sir John Soane’s Museum, Obrist said:
I had seen the house before; it was on the list of environments that I find very stimulating because art doesn't appear detached from a context, but is, on the contrary, part of the whole. And I must admit that I do have trouble finding exhibitions where I can feel the notion of environment (Obrist and Boutoux, 2003: 304).

It was with this sensitivity to the ‘environment’ that Obrist placed Richard Hamilton’s print *The Passage of the Bride* (1998-99) alongside Hogarth’s *A Rake’s Progress* (1735). As well as being a sardonic response to Hogarth’s sharp social commentary, in one of his final works Hamilton’s study of reflections was a double reference to the more than 100 mirrors in the Sir John Soane’s Museum as well as to his mentor Marcel Duchamp’s (1915-23) large glass *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors*. Anish Kapoor showed two works, *Parabolic Waters II* and *Vortex* (both 1999), that were variations on the kinetics of spinning vessels containing water, the speed of whose rotation forced the liquid into Kapoor’s favourite geometric structures: inverse parabola and concentric ripples generated by whirlpools – mirroring the truncated and pendentive domes that are Soane’s signature style. Tom Gidley’s (1999) *Soane’s Bones* was a short film made in the museum. The work had a soundtrack of incessantly ticking clocks, and visually explored the timepieces and spaces of the museum and various objects in the collection.

However, it is Isaac Julien’s moving image work *Vagabondia* on which I will focus because his work stood out with Tom Gidley’s as being made specifically for the show and were site specific, and Julien was the only artist making a postcolonial response to the museum itself and its collection. Furthermore, it was another example of Julien’s on-going preoccupation with museum spaces as sites where difference, marginality and cultural hybridity can be negotiated, reconstructed and reimagined. In this chapter I am interested in Julien’s response to Obrist’s curatorial sensitivity to the museum as an ‘environment’, which I believe is significant to the discussion in this thesis of concepts of space, and how Julien, framed his work *Vagabondia*. However, before progressing to discussing the work, I will first contextualise Julien’s oeuvre, which does not fit into the binary extremes of apocalypse, and miracle with which the new millennium was being depicted.

Julien is one of four male British contemporary artists with an African or African Caribbean background to have achieved international recognition for their work – including John Akomfrah, Yinka Shonibare and Steve McQueen, most of whom have used moving image as their primary chosen medium with which to tackle urgent
political and cultural questions with a consciously postcolonial perspective. For women artists of a similar background such as Sonia Boyce and the recent Turner Prize winner Lubaina Himid, their practice has been based in a variety of media including painting, photography, moving image and sculpture. In Julien’s case, in his response to the commission from the London Film and Video Umbrella and Obrist to make work for Retrace Your Steps, Remember Tomorrow, he continued to address the themes that he has consistently interrogated throughout his career such as questions of difference, whether this is cultural or sexual, and a consistent engagement with museum spaces as problematic sites where notions of culture, heritage, belonging and even trauma can be examined or challenged. As an artist who began his career making films for the cinema, from the beginning Julien has been conscious of questions of space in relation to culture with his debut (1980) work Territories looked at the place of African Caribbean diaspora culture, such as carnival, as a spatial intervention in late twentieth century London. Julien’s films emanate from his own biography and experience and connect with questions of sexual and cultural identity by looking at subjects like British African Caribbean club culture in Young Soul Rebels (1981) and, as he would do again in later projects, make links with the experience of international diaspora culture – particularly the US where he teaches at Harvard – by looking at the work of African American poet Langston Hughes with Looking for Langston (1987).

Julien’s moving image works are also spaces where he makes links between different aspects of diaspora culture, from the literary works of American writers like Hughes to St Lucian poet and Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott, whose (1990) poem Omeros inspired Julien’s (2002) Paradise Omeros – a meditation on his St Lucian origins and his experience of diaspora. Inspired by the aesthetic legacy of 1970s Hollywood Blaxploitation cinema his (2002) BaadAssss Cinema was a homage to American director Melvyn Van Peebles. Considered chronologically, Julien’s museum works might be viewed developmentally as he increasingly complicates his relationship with museums, how he represents them and the manner in which they function as mises en scène for his moving image works. Julien subsequently moved to making gallery-based installations progressing from single to multi-screen works that interrogate museum spaces such as The Attendant (1993), Trussed (1996), Three (The Conservator’s Dream) (1996) and Vagabondia (2000) and the triple screen Baltimore (2002) that we will discuss in Chapter 5 looking at postcolonial transatlantic questions.
in relation to museums. However, it is the double-screen *Vagabondia* that I will discuss in this chapter, with some reference to the other museum-based works.

*Vagabondia* was included in the 2001 Turner Prize Exhibition at Tate Britain when Julien was shortlisted for the prize, along with Richard Billingham, and Mike Nelson, which was won by Martin Creed. I will return to the subject of Documenta 11 in our discussion of *Vagabondia* later in this chapter but first I will describe the work before contextualising it within the site of the Sir John Soane’s Museum, to which it responds.

In delineating the historical context of the work, I should further point out that in the year 2000 there was considerable excitement for artists like Julien addressing postcolonial questions because of the build-up to the highly politicised *Documenta 11* of 2002 curated by the Nigerian curator Okwui Enwezor, the first person from a non-European background to have directed Documenta and who would go on to curate the 58th Venice Biennale of 2015. Described by its organisers as ‘the first postcolonial Documenta’. Taking place just a year after the 2001 attacks on New York Documenta 11 was a reaction of sorts to those events of which as Enwezor says in his preface, to the Platform3 on Créolité and creolization:

“It is now commonplace to declare that the world changed with the spectacular and traumatizing events of September 11, 2001. What that change represents, however, is still hard to define (Enwezor, 2003: 9).

Documenta 11 brought together the leading voices in postcolonial studies including St Lucian poet and Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott; postcolonial scholar Stuart Hall; historian and curator political theorist Françoise Vergès. Enwezor curated an international range of artists which was truly diverse and combined leading names with those who had not previously been shown together in programmes like Documenta such as The Atlas Group, Thomas Hirschhorn, Mona Hatoum, Bernd and Hiller Becher, Doris Salcedo, Chantal Ackerman, Black Audio Film Collective. Glenn Ligon, Gabriel Orozco and many other leading artists from the UK and the rest of the world who had been involved in postcolonial studies. There were overtly political themes around imperialism and colonialism, globalisation and cultural geography, ecology, landscape, terrorism. It was within these themes that the subject of Créolité and creolization – a specific Caribbean-St Lucian concept of hybridity – was addressed and as a subject pertinent to Julien’s own personal identity, and he
showed his film *Vagabondia*. Julien would work with Enwezor at Kassel, St Lucia and Venice and would tackle at *Documenta* themes that were also addressed in *Vagabondia*, such as ‘créolité’, ‘creolisation’ and questions around art as production of knowledge and even ‘experiments with transitional justice and the processes of truth and reconciliation’. These would also be the themes that took centre stage at Kassel, the traditional epicentre of Documenta and at parallel sessions in New Delhi, Kinshasa, Freetown, Johannesburg, Lagos, St Lucia, Berlin and Vienna, which in themselves challenged the traditional geographical positioning and concerns that usually dominate this important quinquennial European arts exhibition.

**Introducing the work: Vagabondia**

The seven-minute split screen video was filmed in the Sir John Soane’s Museum and comprises two back projections in colour with sound. The London Film and Video Umbrella commissioned the work for the exhibition *Retrace Your Steps: Remember Tomorrow* that was held at the Sir John Soane’s Museum in the same year. The film is an historical fantasy that uses the museum as its mise en scène in order for Julien to address a number of themes relating to cultural identity, and the role of museums in colonialism in constructing concepts of difference. The title of the work *Vagabondia*, is described by Tate (which acquired the work and granted me access) as a reference to the dancer featured in the film based on the black male vagabond who appears in *A Rake’s Progress*, Hogarth’s series of eight paintings (four of which are featured in
the film) showing the social decline and demise of Tom Rakewell, the son of a rich merchant. However, this description is inaccurate and I will analyse the complex derivation of this character in detail below.

The cinematography is filmed in high resolution and highly saturated colour with subtle lighting, and the sound is meticulously rendered. The dramatis personae of Vagabondia comprise five characters. We see much of the action through reflections in the convex mirrors installed all over the house, sometimes one at a time and at other times in stereo. There is the female conservator-curator played by Clare Sylvestre with a voice-over in St Lucian Créole spoken by Julien’s mother, Rosemary. There is the male ‘Trickster’, choreographed by Venezuelan dancer Javier de Frutos (who also collaborated with Julien on the Long Road to Mazatlán (1999) performed by Ben Ash who moves through the museum to a musical score by British composer Paul Gladstone Reid. Finally there is the white male European character of Sir John Soane (actor not credited) and two black women (actors not credited). Julien appears in the film as himself. The characters all appear in upper class European period costumes and are filmed within the different rooms of the museum. The rooms used as mises en scène for the film are: the ground floor breakfast room, the Picture Room; the basement room containing the alabaster sarcophagus of Pharaoh Seti I, the Monk’s Parlour; and the first floor yellow sitting room.

Vagabondia has more than a passing resemblance to a mirror and not only reflects the numerous mirrors that are installed in the Sir John Soane’s Museum but allow us to enter the phenomenological zone of that placeless place which looks every bit like
our own world but patently is not, via the medium of film. Not only is the work a *near but not complete* mirror image of itself but there are points when the two images do not quite synchronise e.g. in one the Conservator is dressed in black leather while she surveys the collection as if she does not work there in anymore while in another she is the conservator dressed in a black pinafore with a white blouse.

The film opens with a split screen mirror image of a table set for two in the breakfast parlour of No 12 at night, lit only by the table lamps. Sitting at the table is the conservator, dressed in a white blouse and black pinafore dress. The music is ethereal and dreamlike, reminiscent of late Ravel. In the background of the frame in an adjoining room, out of focus, where we can see a white man in a dark suit sitting at a table reading, who looks like a security guard. Changed into a black leather jacket, the conservator goes downstairs passing various architectural fragments and she pauses by a white marble bust of Sir John Soane (by Francis Chantry, 1781--1841), She appears to be checking the premises. *Voiceover:* ‘Se plas ma dwol’ she says, ‘this place is very strange’ and she speaks in St Lucian French patois, narrating a story that Julien declines to translate.

The conservator scans Soane’s heterogeneous collection under the dome room with her torch as she walks by. *Voiceover:* *Gadé la, gadé la,* she says, *look at this, look at this.* A male voice appears in the voiceover and reveals the name of the subject of the narrative as Thelma ‘Se plas ma dwol’ she says, ‘this place is very strange’ referring to an uncanny quality to this space. We see a woman (is this Thelma?) in the South Drawing of house No 13 glowing in J M W Turner’s ‘Patent Yellow’, doubly emphasised by Julien, and Thelma whose red dress compliments the intense yellow. She sits at a table with a younger woman who could be her daughter, looking at a book depicting an animated architectural interior in which Isaac Julien appears, as he does in Baltimore, Alfred Hitchcock-like, as a spectator in a gallery. Next we see the (2000) *Portrait of Isaac Julien beside an effigy of T E Lawrence* by John Goto (Mercer, 2001: 9) which was made in the National Portrait Gallery London but we encounter it in the animated view of this portrait in a book presented in a deep space beyond the picture plane, and beyond the actual space of the Sir John Soane Museum itself. It’s the space of memory, of an intangible past that is beyond the reach of the museum itself.
Voiceover: This place is full of history... about the past, nothing we can do can change the present, says Julien’s mother, the off screen narrator. The conservator appears again, back in her pinafore and blouse, seated beside a convex mirror. Behind her the man is still at the desk reading. Mirror image of Sir John dressed in a green morning jacket as he descends the stairs. Another African Caribbean woman wearing an elegant mauve and white dress appears on a yellow sofa reading a book. The room is the first floor drawing room painted in J M W Turner’s Patent Yellow. The camera zooms into the book and it contains John Goto’s portrait of Isaac Julian in the National Portrait Gallery.

We then see a split screen image of tombstones designed by Soane. The music continues to be ethereal and dreamlike. A double image of Sir John appears reflected in a convex mirror in the yellow drawing room. The split image is not symmetrical because he leaves one mirror before the other. The woman in the mauve dress appears again in the drawing room still looking at the book. A close up of another black woman appears wearing a long red dress and the camera lingers over her décolletage, moving down the hemline of her dress and follows her walking to sit down and join the other woman looking at the book. Sir John ascends the stairs, only his feet visible. The conservator turns and looks directly into camera and we see Sir John behind her in the mirror in the yellow drawing room.

Voiceover: 'In death (la mort) we can learn more' we here on the voice-over or is she saying ‘L’amour’ (in love) appearing to refer to some unfinished story or some absent narrative. There is a sudden change in tempo and style of music from modern classical to percussive and fast free jazz. The camera pans a number of objects, with
shallow depth of field, some more in focus than others succeeded by rapid cuts of other objects before briefly pausing on some manacles and chains hanging on the wall. In panning the objects in the museum collection we see the plaster casts of objects such as a Graeco-Roman head of Aphrodite and the cast of a statue of the crouching Venus and fleetingly an iron slave's collar, shackles and manacles. We briefly see the model of a tombstone that Soane designed for himself. The conservator is back sitting at the breakfast table again with the man still reading behind her. It changes from night to day and we see amber sunlight streaming down into the space from the coloured filters in the skylights.

Then we are taken to the Picture Room and we see two canvasses from *A Rake’s Progress An Election*, 1754-55, by William Hogarth. In one screen the conservator walks along the corridor toward the Picture Room carrying cleaning brushes and opens the leaves of the picture hanging room. The trickster appears in the other screen dressed in a red velvet jacket in the other screen twisting, writhing and careening off the walls with his body doubled and folded as he propels himself down the corridor. His movements are awkward and abnormal and he appears to need the walls and the floor to propel him along. He makes a groaning voice as he moves as if he is struggling or in pain.

We then see a shot of the Monk’s Parlour in which the trickster has entered, continuing to writhe and groan. The conservator opens the doors of the picture gallery and again we briefly glimpse two of the Hogarth pictures as she looks down into the
Monk’s Parlour, and the trickster appears careening his way into the space and he sits down on one of two red velvet chairs. The trickster continues to dance to free jazz in the Monk’s Parlour and the conservator closes the picture gallery door and returns to the breakfast room table and the film ends where it began; and it returns to night again.

**The site: Sir John Soane’s Museum**

Sir John Soane’s Museum is formed from three Queen Anne townhouses at numbers 12, 13 and 14 Lincoln’s Inn Fields, London, which were successively acquired and remodelled by the neoclassical architect Sir John Soane (1753-1837) between 1792 and 1824. Soane was such a promising student of architecture that he won a Gold Medal in 1776 and then a Travelling Scholarship, and was sponsored by King George IV to embark on a Grand Tour in which he formulated his own highly idiosyncratic interpretation of the classical architectural orders from his study of the ancient monuments in Greece and Rome. Whilst in Italy Soane met the artist Giovanni Piranesi, from whom he acquired a number of works, and both men shared a fascination with ruins, the play of light and dramatic chiaroscuro. Upon his return to England Soane became very successful and wealthy as a result of a number of high profile architectural commissions that included London churches, the Bank of England and Dulwich Picture Gallery. During his lifetime Soane gradually remodelled the houses to accommodate a growing collection of objects that he acquired for his own use, for teaching architecture students and for what he intended to be both his own home and for public display. Soane obtained an Act of Parliament in 1833 before his death to ensure that the objects in his collection were kept *in situ* within the same setting in which he lived and worked.

The three houses form an integrated complex of small and intimate public viewing spaces centred on the sculpture room and Picture Room and the basement Monk’s Parlour adjoining domestic rooms such as the breakfast room and sitting rooms. The way Soane joined the three original houses results in a seamless progression of interlocking spaces in which there are over 100 mainly convex and flat mirrors along with apertures in the walls and floors offering glimpses into other rooms. There are many roof lanterns whose glass is covered with yellow filters to direct amber beams of sunlight into the rooms that replicate the light of Tuscany. The use of colour in the houses comes to a climax on the first floor drawing room painted in Soane’s friend J M W Turner’s patent yellow.
In 1812 Soane wrote *Crude Hints Towards a History of My Home on L(descent's) I(land) Fields* in which he described the future ruin of his yet-to-be-completed house as a museum and imagined himself as an antiquarian reassembling the house from its fragments. Described by historian Helen Dorey (1999) as ‘one of the strangest and most perplexing documents in the history of English architecture’ Soane’s vision of what was to become his home and a museum is about the romanticism of ruins, especially those from ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, combined with an enlightenment obsession with the drama of specularity. Soane turned his home into one of the most extreme statements of visual culture with every conceivable surface used to display thousands of artworks, architectural salvage and *objets d’art*.

The Sir John Soane’s Museum collection comprises a wide range of objects from different periods including:

- Architectural fragments and casts
- Natural objects, curiosities, ceramics, clocks, furniture, mirrors, books and drawings
- Paintings and engravings including works by William Hogarth, J M W Turner and Giovanni Piranesi
- Casts of Graeco-Roman busts, statues, and roundels by Donatello and Michelangelo
- A miniature sculpture by Giambologna and the alabaster sarcophagus of the Nineteenth Dynasty Egyptian Pharaoh Seti I.

The objects are not arranged by chronology or origin, few of them are labelled and they form an important collection in terms of studying the history of museums and changes in collecting and classification. Unlike the collection of Hans Sloane that was left to the nation and became the British Museum, the museum has the character of a cabinet of curiosities, a gentleman connoisseur’s collection that reflects Soane’s eclectic and whimsical taste, rather than a related series of acquisitions that relate to a systemic display of taste as the foundation of a public museum. Yet the Sir John Soane’s Museum marks an important historical juncture in the transition between private collections and public museums. As such it remains a favourite museum for contemporary artists (e.g. Sarah Lucas, *Power in Woman*, March to May 2016 and Marc Quinn *Drawn from Life*, March to September 2017).
Art historian Donald Preziosi (2003) in his work on art museums as ‘phantasms of modernity’ singles out the Monk’s Parlour for special attention (2003: 76) and describes it as a focal point in Soane’s idiosyncratic design for his remodelled houses and as the space where Soane most indulges his romantic sepulchral fantasies about tombs, grottos and the sardonically morbid. The origin of the Monk’s Parlour is a tale that Soane invented in which he is supposed to have discovered the remains of a mediaeval hermitage whilst digging the foundations for his new house (Woodward, 2010: 169). In Soane’s fertile and romantic imagination the padre is supposed to have been a mediaeval hermit but it was actually a self-mocking self portrait of himself as a solitary man especially after the death of his wife (Waterfield, 1996: 20). According to historian Gordon Campbell (2013) Soane originally:

built a monastic suite (which Soane called the ‘Parloir of Padre Giovanni’), the Monk's Cell (or Oratory), and the Monk's Yard. The word ‘parloir’ (an archaic spelling of ‘parlour’) is used in the sense of a room in a monastery set aside for conversation with visitors (2013: 35).

The parlour is a small double height room adjacent to the chamber containing the Sarcophagus of Pharaoh Seti I and looks out into the Monk’s Yard in which Soane assembled various gothic architectural fragments and casts salvaged from Westminster to form a tomb for the fictional padre. The Monk’s Parlour constitutes a space within a space because it is the room that is most modern in its design in the way it departs from domestic architecture and connects with adjoining spaces and creates spatial drama in its double height, stained glass windows and its skylights. Adjoined with the parlour is the Monk’s Cell, which was actually Soane’s study. Sunlight from the roof lanterns, anticipate the skylights that were to be such an innovation of his Dulwich Picture Gallery and which would become an archetypal feature of modern art galleries and museum buildings.

**Isaac Julien and spatialisation**

In his (2003) essay about the making of Vagabondia, Julien said: ‘much of my work has been about the space of the museum…informed by debates about how art is archived in one way or another.’ (Julien, 2003: 154, my emphasis). So Vagabondia does not focus on particular objects in the museum but rather on the temporal dynamics of the space itself and its potential to tell a different story than the objects.
This is in spite of the fact that one of the largest and most spectacular items, the alabaster sarcophagus of Pharaoh Seti I, was acquired by Soane (out-bidding the British Museum) from the swashbuckling ex-circus strongman and self-taught archaeologist Giovanni Belzoni who removed it from Seti’s tomb in 1820 (Dorey and Thornton, 1992). The sarcophagus is the only object in Soane’s collection that could be described as the typical kind of trophy object that European museums were acquiring from colonial territories from the late eighteenth century onwards; Julien’s camera does not dwell on it but he does focus on the space itself. In fact, the object on which Julien’s camera focuses for the longest time is the Goto portrait of the artist himself standing next to the bizarre recumbent tomb effigy by sculptor Eric Kennington of T E Lawrence crossed-legged in Arab dress holding a *jambiya* (dagger) designed for Lawrence’s grave in Westminster Abbey after his death in 1935. However, the effigy ended up in St Martin’s Church, Wareham, Dorset and was briefly exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery in 1998-1999 when Goto made the portrait. This visual quotation comes across as more of a statement about the film’s *auteur*, in the manner of Alfred Hitchcock’s cameo appearances in his works, than a comment about the Sir John Soane’s Museum. Lawrence, (archaeologist, Middle East diplomat and writer also known as ‘Lawrence of Arabia’) was singled out by Edward Said (1979: 230) as a classic example of orientalism. So Julien’s focus on himself with an object in another museum via a photograph in a book, a device that I will later call a *mise en abyme*, underscores the fact that *Vagabondia* is not about the provenance of particular objects in the Sir John Soane’s Museum collection itself but is about the spatial dynamics of museum spaces and Julien’s personal relationship with them.

For example, even though Julien mentions Hogarth’s *Rake’s Progress* in his (2003) paper about the making of the film and David Dabydeen’s (1985) ground-breaking analysis of the paintings (four scenes from which hang on the cupboard doors of the Sir John Soane’s Museum Picture Room) he does not dwell on them in actuality. Rather he appears to go through them, using the cupboard doors as the threshold to another historical time space between when the paintings were made and the contemporary present and I would call this a spatialised and a temporal action that is heterochronic, especially as here Julien is engaging with what is essentially an archive which, Foucault (1997: 270) as I quoted in Chapter 2, called the ‘perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place’. So it was the space itself that appealed to Julien and its architectural complexity, playfulness and the very fact
that there is no grand imperial narrative into which the collection can be located. Apart from Seti’s sarcophagus, there is no easy reading of Soane and his collection that directly links him or the museum with the spoils of empire as a ‘high citadel of colonial artefacts’ (Julien, 1994), as the artist has referred to other museum collections. It is known that Soane was anti-slavery, which is thought to explain the presence of slave manacles and chains in the collection and which appear in Julien’s film. Also Soane’s antislavery position is evidenced by his association with people like J M W Turner, who was known to be an abolitionist, and also because of the presence in his library of a declaration of rights by the Jamaican antislavery campaigner Granville Sharp (1774) and the letters of Ignatius Sancho (1782) the African, London-based abolitionist. So, unlike his response to the Wilberforce Museum in The Attendant, where he directly engaged with the history of slavery and its aftermath – Julien’s engagement with the Sir John Soane’s Museum is more of a response to the space, which is very much a conceptualising framework, than to the provenance of particular objects. Julien engages with the architecture as a series of dynamic events that signify, memory, absence and the complexities of cultural hybridity.

Vagabondia is an engagement with the spaces by means of references to imaginary and implied absences, phantasmal historical traces that are not physically present within the Sir John Soane Museum but hinted at in the work as off-screen absences – a lost narrative, only random fragments of which survive. These other spaces are implied by the fractured narrative spoken in St Lucian Créole, incomprehensible to all except those who are familiar with the dialect of this small Caribbean island that was a former French and British colony. Location is also implicated in the music – that most spatial of art forms – through utterances that imply different locations or temporalities and cultural identities. This is implied with a shift from ethereal modern classical music to free jazz, or from tonality to atonality. Yet we never manage to see these other places, mediated through the architecture, sound and the persons who inhabit, or perhaps we could even say trespass, into the museum such as the trickster and the phantasmal characters in the fragmented voiceover narrative. These absent places are unnamed but hinted at not only by the presence of persons whose connection with the museum is not explained. The conservator doubles as a black power activist, who instead of attending to the conservation of the objects in her care, uses the iconic Monk’s Parlour as the venue for a deviant choreographic adventure, quite contrary to the usual display of Hogarth paintings that the museum curators reveal in their daily ritual of opening the doors in the Picture Room. Julien’s choice of
this space is well made because, architecturally, it is in many ways the centre of the house and one of the most innovative spaces which in itself could be called a heterotopia in the way it differs from all the other rooms in its double height, dramatic lighting and how it provides sight lines to other areas.

My point of departure for analysing Vagabondia in spatial terms takes account of comments by American literary scholar Robert Reid-Pharr (1994) whose essay was quite early in the Anglophone response to Foucault’s heterotopia theory, and looked at Julien’s early cinematic work Passion of Remembrance (1986) in primarily spatial terms. In my analysis I want to apply the heterotopia concept more rigorously in terms of the how it works in Vagabondia in relation to real and imagined spaces and in relation to language, the concepts of mise en scène and mise en abyme, and the figure of the trickster. Reid-Pharr showed how Julien creates ‘mythic’ cinematic spaces in order to address the dualities contingent upon differences relating to sexuality, race and gender and likens these to the spaces of consolation and deviation proposed by Foucault. However I think this can be extended so I will utilise spatialised conceptual frameworks to explore Vagabondia in relation to the difference between heterotopia as real and imagined places, or as disruptive language or syntax.

My approach here is to look at Julien’s later work Vagabondia, which I believe to be the result of a more sophisticated understanding not only of physical architecture and particularly the geopolitics of the museum but also a more conscious articulation of cinematic space. Julian’s works can be said to be spatialised not only in the way that they address a material geopolitics of the museum, but also the way that they negotiate the literary and the imaginary in terms of Foucault’s initial Borgesian thinking of space as concerning taxonomy and meaning of words in relation to objects as well as places. Julian poses these questions by telescoping us back through the real historical antecedents of the trickster and its literary derivation in a number of double actions that conjoin the spaces of literature with those of the classical museum or the archive; always being aware that such spatial reordering is also a temporal process in different dimensions. Furthermore, Julien uses spatial strategies to upset established orderings of heritage narrative as they relate to specific locations and he suggests new connections between museum spaces and individual subjectivity, identities and histories. Placing another person amongst the collection and then basically ignoring it somehow conjures up the trickster through the presence of the
conservator, being watched all the time by the security guard in the background. By trickster, I am referring to an archetypal character of Yoruba and Caribbean folklore who is represented in the film by the dancer and which we will discuss in more detail below. We then see the unfolding of a dream as if this were the start to a fiction or fantasy, when Sir John Soane descends the stairs, as a character from an absent narrative appearing in the house as a phantasm. Julien’s persistent attention to the museum space amounts to an entire argument about the powerful role that heritage plays in the articulation of culture both at the national and the individual-subjective levels.

*Vagabondia* sits within Julien’s oeuvre in which there are a number of moving image works that address issues of identity from a complex postmodern perspective. The museum space is being used to explore subjectivity from a multi-layered point of view that does not afford easy categorisation as he specialises in offering characters or ‘models’ (rather than actors) as he calls them who ‘perform their own particular imaginary subversion of historical memory’ and are able to perform ‘independently of their indexical markers of ethnicity’ (Julien, 2003: 152). Although much has been written about his work and the unique manner in which he has straddled cinema and gallery, there is one recurring theme in his oeuvre that has been touched upon by a number of writers such as Catherine Fowler (2008) writing about how artist films make use of and transform our understanding of off-frame and off-screen space and Elizabeth Kley (2001) looking at notions of time in the work of artists Slater Bradley, T J Wilcox and Isaac Julien. However, in my view, Julien’s interest in museums in relation to space and time has been insufficiently addressed: this concerns the importance of museums as sites of struggle over meaning, the interpretation of history, memory, trauma, and loss, which have been addressed for example by Stuart Hall in his (1999) mediation on the nature of heritage, or the consideration of museums within postcolonial discourse (e.g. Aldrich, 2009 and Thomas, 2013).

Closely related to these spatial issues are questions of language and taxonomy that exist within the individual psyche and within speech, what could be called a cave of enunciation in third space; real material margins along with imaginary places where time not only accumulates but can be disrupted in its sequential ordering. It would seem that the Sir John Soane’s Museum, with its already disordered arrangement of objects and historical periods, turns out to be the ideal place for Julien to offer the unclassifiable or the incomprehensible. Time becomes spatialised across the split
screen, becoming, in effect, ‘spatial montage’ (Manovich, 2007: 313) – or, more precisely, space-time montage – where one time-place can be simultaneous with another. What in all probability originated as part of a duality, the two time zones of the split screen are structured, as splitting, or as visual ambivalences (neither good nor bad) forcing the spectator to consider the one and the other – the different temporalities or heterochronies that are collapsing into one another. In *Vagabondia*, there is a temporal loop achieved in a particular way with the juxtaposition of two different musical genres.

Up until the moment that the vagabond-trickster appears, Paul Gladstone Reid’s score could be described as coming from the European modernist/classical tradition, with its lush string complex tonality and echoes of Ravel. However, when the trickster appears there is an abrupt shift to free jazz reminiscent of middle period Miles Davis. The function of these two different musical statements is significant in *Vagabondia* as providing temporal structure and also as anti-narrative devices. No longer looking forward and backwards in linear time as the narrator appears to do (in speaking of the life time of individuals and what they may learn from history) in the free jazz section all of this breaks down and we seem to be in an improvised, non-narrative space where there is no clear forward linear movement of the music and not even a clear theme around which it is based. This could again be understood as doubling and contributes to a kind of temporal compression.

This cluster of spatial themes is not accidental and adds up to an integrated practice around space that an application of the spatial insights initiated by Foucault, and the related theoretical approaches developed by postcolonial writers, is crucial to a thoroughgoing understanding of Julien’s oeuvre. Yet, even though there has been some departure from the heterotopia concept by postcolonial spatialisations there are a number of features that they share with the original concept, which will be used here as an analytical frame. First, there is the sense of heterotopias as zones of the phantasm, the imaginary, which Foucault compared with the mirror. Second: the notion of the museum as infinitely accumulating time along with the notion of heterochrony – of multiple time lines and temporalities. I have discussed in the previous chapter how Foucault developed his spatial theories from literary and phenomenological antecedents, starting from the literary disruptions of syntax and taxonomic logic proposed by Borges and then, in reference to material spaces, and also from the phenomenological insights of Bachelard. In the previous chapter I
traced the evolution of Foucault’s idea of heterotopia, which initially concerned language and evolved into a concept for addressing material spaces. These material spaces – graveyards, mirrors, gardens, hospitals, prisons and asylums corresponded, in Foucault’s analysis, to utopian spatialisations, which, in turn have influenced architecture and spatial disciplines such as geography on the one hand, but also postcolonial studies, particularly around literature.

In reference to literature, it has been noted by Julia Lossau (2010) how important spatialisation has been to any discourse, let alone postcolonial studies, that have addressed the imaginary domains of fiction and the third space of enunciations across the dualities of difference in a number of registers. As she points out: ‘there is no meaningful way of speaking that does not rely upon at least some very basic spatial concepts like close and remote, above and below or fore and aft’ (2010: 72). To be clear: this realisation of the tendency of language to spatialise cannot be credited to Foucault, however it does suggest the enduring appeal of spatial theories as tools of cultural and political analysis.

This concern with real and imaginary spatial dynamics has thus been an important dimension of what might be termed ‘postcolonial spatialisation’ which has arisen partly in response to theories such as those proposed by Foucault as well as Soja and Bhabha’s notion of third space, and bell hook’s rendering of ‘marginality’. While Julien’s work has often been critically examined in relation to its postcolonial positioning, the question of how it operates on a number of spatial levels is an important dimension of his work to which I believe there has been insufficient attention. Julien’s work offers an ideal case study of how spatial theory has been concerned on the one hand with real, material spaces and places and on the other hand with the deployment of what has been described as spatial semantics (or space as metaphor) as a critical framework for understanding the contemporary world and concerned not so much with material space as with the critical space of discourse and literature in particular.

There are a number of reasons why I believe it is particularly relevant to look at Julien’s work using spatial theory. The most important is that it offers a view of the artist’s work that is more complex than the two dimensional nature of fixed cultural identity and offers an interpretive framework that does not rely on fixed categories of difference. Looking at the artist’s work in spatial terms is a way of approaching what Julien himself called ‘creolisation’ and what Kobena Mercer (2013: 311) has
described in the artist’s work as ‘hybrid’ in relation to the portrayal of identity within a British social context, or what Pirker (2011: 246) described in Julien’s 2002 work *Perfidies Omeros* as ‘hybrid mental states and territorial transpositions’. So that work is actually about literature, difference and Julien’s connection with his cultural origins but it is still spatialised in the sense that it tackles the politics of location. By considering the work in spatial terms we see how Julien reveals identity to be an artefact constructed and contingent in and around certain locations, what Edward Said (1983: 220) called ‘the signifier’s place’. By speaking about the signifier’s place I take Said to be referring to how meaning is contingent upon location, challenging universalising or transcendent notions around language and truth.

Notwithstanding the limitations and inconsistencies of the spatialisations not only of Foucault but other writers to which I have drawn attention in the previous chapter, spatial theory nevertheless offers the possibility of joining up a number of critical observations about Julien’s work that revolve around the question of space, time and the problem of the museum that have not been brought together by those who have analysed his work. For example Kley (2001: 66) stresses the temporal aspect when she focuses on the manner in which *Vagabondia* ‘sets up a virtual collision between the present and the past’. For Fowler (2008) who also acknowledges Julien’s interruption of ‘the carefully presented collection of history’ within museums, she is concerned with a more abstract and formal duality between ‘on and off-screen space’, between the cinema and the gallery and even when she considers the artist’s work in terms of the Deleuzian ‘fold’ – in relation to the mirrored doubling of *Vagabondia* – the connection with spatial theories (such as Blanchot’s idea of literary space as approximating the condition of the mirror) again offers the possibility of exploring the limits of this idea in relation to Julien’s museum interventions.

Although there are a number of problems associated with the term postcolonialism as it was originally proposed by writers such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (one of the most serious of which is the possibility that it re-inscribes the differences, hierarchies and dualities which it seeks to overcome) it is nevertheless a useful frame within which to consider Julien’s work. This is because he addresses directly and indirectly issues such as the enduring historical, cultural and political legacy of the transatlantic slave trade on one hand but, on the other, what might be termed ‘subjective’ issues of ‘identity’ in relation to sexuality, gender and race. Julien addresses these themes of deployment of language or even what Bhabha has called the intercultural issues of
communication that arise from a spatialised consideration of difference and marginality. These issues are also a concern of writers such as Paul Gilroy and Jean Fisher for their respective insights on issues from cultural syncretism to double consciousness; in relation to Gilroy, I am referring to double consciousness and for Fisher, the syncretism around the archetype of the trickster. Yet Julien, always keen to avoid easy positioning within limited categories especially of race, speaks about *Vagabondia*, and its setting within the Sir John Soane Museum, as a 'space in which we perceive the Empire as a precursor for globalisation' (Julien, 2003: 150). How Julien's works engage with these themes in *Vagabondia* is a central concern of this chapter, in an attempt to engage with a complex work that defies essentialism.

**Mirroring placeless places: mise en scène, mise en abyme and the spaces of *Vagabondia***

Here I will discuss Julien's aesthetic strategy and how it delivers meaning through the concepts of mise en scène and mise en abyme to approach the notion of splitting and doubling and how he joins up with the way he values créolité’, (another term for cultural hybridity that specifically refers to the Francophone Caribbean) reflected in procedures of photography as well as a cultural doubling or layering. The history of St Lucia is joined up with those of a museum, or personal history juxtaposed with those of a nation. By examining these aesthetic devices in terms of their origin and how they are used, we will arrive at how such spatialised devices are instrumental in arriving at a postcolonial critique of museum spaces that integrates the experience of the subject with discursive and structural concerns about the role of heritage spaces in articulating difference and defining identity.

The concept of mise en abyme, which literally means to place into the abyss, originally came from heraldry and was defined as the recurrence within a representation of a sequence of images of a whole such that an infinite series of copies are replicated and recede into infinity (Hawthorne, 1998: 138). However André Gide (1943) who had updated the term from Victor Hugo’s definition, explained mise en abyme specifically in relation to visual reflection as when:

* a small, dark convex mirror reflects in its turn the interior of the room where the painted scene is depicted. Thus in the picture of Las Meninas of Velázquez (but in a different
way). Finally in literature, the play scene in Hamlet (translation by Morrissette, 1983: 142).

As I discussed in the second chapter, Velázquez’s (1656) Las Meninas was an important reference point in Foucault’s development of the heterotopia concept that was described as a placeless place, and of representation representing itself. Another example of such a visual device would be the convex mirror in Van Eyck’s (1434) Arnolfini Portrait in which the whole composition is reflected in a convex mirror; this is a picture to which Gide also refers. So what I take Gide to mean by his references to Velázquez and Shakespeare is that this is a literary as much as it is visual concept. In relation to Julien’s Vagabondia Jennifer Kennedy (2007) has suggested that the work is a kind of mise en abyme in relation to its split-screen form and the artist’s negotiation of the more that 100 mirrors inside the Sir John Soane’s museum which she says gives rise to sort of ‘splitting and doubling’ especially in relation to a subjectivity that might be termed postcolonial.

However, in focusing on the visual aspect I think Kennedy only describes half of the concept; for if we go back to the original definition of mise en abyme we find that is as much a literary as well as a visual concept, which is the way I will use it here, and that there is a more thorough application that I can give it – not only to join up the cinematic and the literary but also to connect with Foucault’s elaboration of the heterotopia which was literary, visual, imaginary as well as material. In remembering the Proustian origins of the idea of mise en abyme it is important to stress that this is a visual transposition of a literary concept that was originally heraldic. In Proust’s magnum opus it is the memory as sensation that triggers the temporal recession in space and time. The text is a literary rendition of an experience, which the reader must spatialise in order to engage. This spatialisation takes place through the imagination when the reader brings the text to life by animating it in space and time. What originally inspired Gide to co-opt the term from heraldry was Proust’s narrator in his À la recherche du temps perdu who says:

I had recognised the taste of the piece of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-blossom which my aunt used to give me (although I did not yet know and must long postpone the discovery of why this memory made me so happy) immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like a stage set… (Proust, 1982: 51).
So what we are dealing with here is the intimate and psychological dynamics of memory and experience as well as infinite spatial recession that is the trigger to the prodigious narrative that Proust unfolds. It is a disruptive memory whose narration exposes the internal dynamics and decadence of the French upper classes in fin de siècle France. The mise en abyme in À la recherche is a disruptive literary narrative as well as visual metaphor and in Gide's mention of Las Meninas we are back in heterotopia territory again because it was this painting that inspired Foucault in his original reworking of the heterotopia concept as visual when he had first proposed it as linguistic.

The reason why we need to join up these two aspects – the literary and the visual – is, I will argue, because what Julien does in Vagabondia is present us not only with a visual mise en abyme in the way he negotiates the mirrors in the Sir John Soane Museum, but also in the fractured créole narrative that he presents to us, so the trigger for what unfolds in the film is literary as well as visual. In my use of the term mise en abyme here, I would like to emphasise the aspect of memory and time as well the infinite succession of reflections in a mirror. This connects with the heterotopia as being both a real and imagined space and also one that is constituted in language. In Vagabondia Julien achieves this through the play of reflections in the mirror, a refusal to engage with particular objects in focus and he instead inhabits the space of the museum with the physical presence of the trickster, that we will discuss in the next section below, and by means of language through Créole.

I am also proposing that Julien's careful and intentional attention to mise en scène is integral to his cinematography which continually references both still and moving images e.g. the work of photographer John Goto and Blaxploitation cinema and the way he handles depth of field. As film theorist André Bazin (1967) defined it the ‘depth of focus brings the spectator into a relation with the image closer to that which he enjoys in reality’ (1967: 35). The principal means by which a photographic artist constructs mise en scène is through depth of field or the extent to which the illusion of depth in a photograph is in focus – this is what gives objects within the picture space their compelling reality and is thus an essential formal component of photographic realism – without which there cannot be a simulacrum of reality in a photograph or cinematic work. This is an important clarification because depth of field is one of the basic techniques in rendering a photograph in focus. The term simply describes how the depth of the photograph, in relation to the film plane, is in sharp focus and this is
controlled by altering the relationship between the lens-opening, aperture, along with the speed of the shutter. If we define mise en scène as the staging or the place of the scene, then it follows from what Bazin is saying that it is the extent to which the photograph is in focus, that determines how compelling is the place of the scene, and determines the effectiveness of the representation. Speaking of Julien’s Baltimore (2003) that I discuss in Chapter 5, Darby English has noted how Julien ‘uses mise-en-scène, sound, and side-by-side screen placement to push the sometimes clashingly different ambiances of…museums and the city…nearly to the point of synthesis but never to resolution’ (English, 2007: 182).

Remembering that Proust wrote that the recollection, the memory of ‘the old grey house upon the street…rose up like a stage set’ (my emphasis) I think the use of the word ‘stage’ is the clue for us to move to considering mise en scène, which is another term for staging and that we should connect the mise en abyme, the abyss with the mirror and the stage, or more precisely, the operations of film, since as André Bazin (1967: 65) has pointed out there is an affinity between Proust’s À la recherche and cinematic forms. Therefore Julien’s staging in Vagabondia does not just rely on the physical spaces of the house; it also joins cinematic and literary space, that is to say, imaginary narrative spaces. This is why he uses shallow depth of field and the foregrounding of his ‘models’ in a dream space, the infinite depth of the abyme, rather than the material objects in the museum. I believe that it is the way Julien manipulates mise on scène along with the invocation of the abyme, that his works achieve their potency and this is part of his challenge to colonial specularity. By challenging colonial specularity, I mean that Julien’s strategy is to upset the intended display strategy of the museum and to substitute his own narrative between the object and the spectator, which he also does in Baltimore, which I will discuss in the following chapter..

Artist film scholar Catherine Fowler (2004) has commented on the way that, as part of a strategy intended to liberate themselves from the linear forward time implied by conventional narrative cinema, installation artists such as Julien are concerned with a ‘vertical investigation; that implies a ‘breaking down’ (2004: 328) of time and space but her avowedly formalist analysis does not explore what this means in the context of Julien’s work in general, or Vagabondia in particular. I think regarding the issues of disrupting the linear direction of narrative time, Julien uses other devices to achieve this, such as the play of reflections in a mirror. Both concepts of mise en scène and
*mise en abyme* are related to the phenomenon of the mirror. In other words they are spaces that are 'placeless' as Foucault might term it, dominated by the reflexivity of the gaze as a dynamic event captured through the medium of cinema but nevertheless real and are sites where individual and national identities are formed and renegotiated. The places of cinema are also spaces of reflection both visually and in relation to thought. Therefore the reason why cinematic intervention into the museum raises a specific set of spatial issues relating to the idea of reflection and difference is that the cinematic space as a 'placeless place', following Foucault's description, at times invokes death. In Blanchot's (1982) *The Space of Literature* in his discussion of Kafka in the chapter that deals with 'the work and death’s space' says:

Kafka feels deeply that art is a relation with death. Why death? Because death is the extreme. He includes death among all that is in his control…’ (1982: 91)

I would suggest that there is a kind of writing, or rewriting, that takes place in *Vagabondia*, a text that takes places from speech, or at least it refers to an absent text, which has yet to be written. There is an invocation of death in the museum, by means of the sarcophagus, the designs for Soane’s own grave. We are given a brief glimpse of the tombstone design that Soane made for his own tomb but, as previously noted, the obviously sepulchral object, the sarcophagus does not concern Julien. Yet we hear in Créole from the voiceover: ‘In death (la mort) we can learn more’. Or is she saying ‘L’amour’ (in love) appearing to refer to some unfinished story or some absent narrative. This is another example of what I will call splitting, or ambivalence: if it is *la mort* that she says then how can we learn more *in death*?

This is a story indeed, somewhat unfinished, whose start and end is unknown and not explained. As literary scholar John Erickson says in his (1998) analysis of postcolonial narrative: this is ‘the narrative…unvoiced (unrepresentable) voice of the repressed cultural/sexual other (Erickson, 1998: 52). The elliptical reference to love or death in the Créole voiceover is, I believe such a narrative voice which is of a repressed other that could be seen as sexual and/or cultural. Julien addresses these subjectivities in *Vagabondia* through the spectacle of the mirror, revisiting eighteenth century scopophilia and the dramatics of display. He exposes museums and the dynamics of difference, the way they do or do not reflect ourselves in the object of the persona of the other. Furthermore, I suggest that the concept of *mise en abyme* is being used by Julien in connection along with a masterful manipulation of *mise en
scène. Along with this he consciously engages with the abysmal space of the mirror in a number of deliberate moments when the film asks the spectator to observe the action through the mirror rather than straight through the lens, with the background tending to be out of focus. This does reflect Andre Bazin’s comments that I discuss later when he reminds us that mise en scène is considered to be not just a manipulation or play on depth but specifically in relation to the photographic concept of depth of field – the amount of an image, its implied depth, that is in focus.

Julien manipulates both mise en scène and mise en abyme through a conscious use of depth of field, or deep focus, to render a visual account of the Sir John Soane Museum that is both highly compelling yet, contrary to what we would expect, totally lacking in realism; becoming dreamingly fuzzy. We are taken beyond the surface of the mirror through the fold of the split screen in a manner that is not dissimilar to the penetration of the surface of the mirror that occurs in Jean Cocteau’s (1950) Orphée. This is the sense in which the notion of the mirror as a ‘placeless place’ may be of some use in bringing together a number of ideas, which have spatial implications. For in the spectre of the mirror we find also the origins of the spatial concepts at the heart of the imaginations of literature, the unfolding of a story, which may be a space just like the mirror, and resembles our own world, even suggesting that we may enter it whilst also being a manifest illusion. The concept of mise en abyme thus renders deep an idea whose surface is only hinted at by the term mise en scène but may be more fully integrated by the conceptual spatialisations that allow us to conjoin the material and imaginary spaces of literature and cinema along with concerns about the nomenclature of Western museum classification.

Some of the images in the mirrors of Vagabondia appear, effectively, as – l’objets petit a – the object-causes of desire as Lacan would term it, in this sense there are many object-causes that are reflected and refracted in the convex mirrors that appear in the film. Not least there is an implication of romance in the appearance of the women who appear in them – from the conservator to those in volupitous gowns – and even queerness which though explicit in Julien’s earlier museum film the Attendant in this work I think it is sublimated into the character of the trickster since as queer theorist Tim Dean (2006: 262) has written in relation to l’objets petit a ‘sexuality reveals desire as determined not by the gender of object-choice, but by the object.'
And in relation to another object of desire, it is always in these mirrors that we see the man whose relationship with the female narrator is never explained and we assume he is a representation of Sir John Soane. Who is this Thelma to whom the narrator refers? Who are the two black women in the yellow drawing room? We see these people mostly in the mirrors but they never explain who they are, speak to each other or explain their interrelationships. He descends and ascends the stairs as the conservator speaks, as she reflects on the objects in his house. It is as if when she looks in the mirror she does not see herself, as she speaks, but sees this phantasmal reflection of the gentleman in velvet breeches. With such devices as the mirror Julien rails against the stubborn flatness of the screen – its two-dimensionality – which he seeks to undermine through illusions of narrative and visual depth. I think Homi Bhabha’s (1994) work on the spatialisation of cultural identity is extremely helpful and relevant to Vagabondia since his analysis is both visual and psychological so I will spend some time on his comments. In relation to the dynamics of the mirror he said:

What is profoundly unresolved, even erased, in the discourse of poststructuralism is that perspective of depth, through which the authenticity of identity comes to be reflected in the glass metaphorics of the mirror and its mimetic or realist narratives (Bhabha 1994: 88).

So I would argue that it is the very ‘authenticity of identity’ that Julien questions through a process of slippage, splitting, projection in relation the spectator’s position in an interlinked chain of visual semantics: the split screen, the mirror, the metaphor of depth through the manipulations of mise en scène (depth of field) and the illusion of spatial recession in mise en abyme; and the continual doubling through the folds in the centre of the image. The split screen that Julien offers requires us to continually question whether it is mirror image, that is to say symmetrical or asymmetrical, a reflection that shows something different to what is in front of it; unlike the optics of the lens, the image of the mirror is virtual. Speaking of how the split screen related to the split in the psyche of the colonial subject, there is also the sense in which Bhabha (1994) speaks of the ambivalence of colonial discourse, where the stereotype is always already unstable on account of the anxiety and doubling on which it is based; Bhabha goes on to say that:

…colonial specularity, doubly inscribed, does not produce a mirror where the self apprehends itself; it is always the split screen of the self and its doubling, the hybrid. (1994: 162).
Bhabha is clearly likening the split screen with the self and in turn with doubling, which means we are in psychodynamic territory. The mirrored split screen, then, is the perfect analogical form of the double of the self as hybrid. This is in spite of the fact that *Vagabondia* is unusual among split screen cinema works in presenting apparently mirror images. Nevertheless what appears to be identical in both space and time turns out not to be so – because there are deliberate asymmetric devices, or what we shall call ambivalences when one frame does not match the other. There is also the sense in which Bhabha (1994) speaks of the ambivalence and doubling in colonial discourse, where the stereotype is always already unstable on account of the anxiety and doubling on which it is based. That means when we look into the mirror, as colonial subjects, we do not see ourselves but something other than ourselves, which is what is achieved by Julien’s aesthetics when he produces virtual mirror images. When the conservator looks into the mirror she does not see herself but Soane as well and so she is doubled but as a hybrid. Speaking of the ‘self’ I would like to return to the subject of ‘splitting’ that Jennifer Kennedy (2007) mentions along with mise en scène, which I believe needs more thorough examination because it is an essential aspect of a postcolonial analysis. I want to connect the notion of splitting with a psychological process, which is extremely important in understanding how artists like Julien address the subjective experience of colonialism or its psychodynamics and how this has impacted on the psyche.

The connections I am making between the split screen, split self and mise en abyme are a way of fully applying Bhabha’s spatial understanding of the split postcolonial self as a ‘screen’ not merely as metaphor but in order to build a psychodynamics of how Julien has articulated a phenomenology of subjectivity in relation to museum spaces. As the curator Okwui Enwezor says in his (2002) essay on *Créolité and Creolization* for the Platform that took place at Documenta 11 in which Julien participated and to whose presentation I have already referred, using the words ‘agglutinations’ to describe to what I am calling splitting, is the very process that produces the doubling from which ‘Creoleness emerges’. As he writes, it is in the ‘agglutinations forged in the contact zone of its historical transmission’ (2002: 51) that we discover the new forms that are presented by Julien in the form of Créole.

Enwezor goes on to describe, using another image of the split self – this time to refer to the ‘Janus-faced projects of European imperialism’ and the ‘global institutionalization of capitalism’, how these configurations can be understood as
‘paradigms of mixing and hybridization’. I am arguing that *Vagabondia* is a space for the celebration of such hybridization, which is a product of that ‘Janus-faced’ historical process. Speaking of the vaunting hubris that invariably accompanied imperial expansion, Jamaican psychiatrist Frederick Hickling (2012) argues in his postcolonial psychoanalytical model that the ambitions of ‘explorers such as Columbus, Cortéz and Cook’ constituted ‘clear delusional beliefs and psychotic hallucinations’ and he wonders ‘how vast populations of European nations bought into the reality...of genocide and the delusional atrocity of racism’. He further suggests that Melanie Klein’s ‘psychoanalytic explorations of psychological splitting...might help us answer some of these questions’ (2012: 68).

It was Klein (1946) who as part of what came to be known as ‘object relations theory’ first updated the concept of splitting from Freud, and stated that the ‘the anxieties which stimulate the mechanism of splitting are also of a phantastic nature’ (1946: 100). Klein was concerned with the phantasmal objects produced in response to attacks on the ego, which produce splitting between good and bad objects, that she called a schizoid mechanism but which could also be called a delirium. Foucault and Fanon, as we will conclude, spoke of delirium associated with the phantasm but not in a pathological sense but as part of a thoughtful response by the object. So I will now return to the split self, the split screen, the doubling produced by the mirror, which is also an effect of the mise en abyme

The concept of splitting can be useful in understanding not only the continual recurrence of this term in postcolonial criticism but also understanding the clearly psychological understanding of the split screen, which I do not believe Bhabha is simply using as an analogy otherwise he would not have referred to the ‘self’ and the ‘phantastic’ nature of the mechanism that Klein was describing: this is what I will return to when I discuss the phantasmal nature of *Vagabondia*. The mirrored split screen, then, is the perfect form of the double of the self as hybrid or in Julien’s case créolité’. This is in spite of the fact that *Vagabondia* is unusual among split screen cinema works in presenting *near* mirror images. There are times when one is convinced that the two images are identical such as when Soane leaves the yellow drawing room, only to discover that he leaves one mirror and walks into the other. So what appears to be identical in both space and time turns out not to be so – because of these deliberate asymmetric devices, or shall we say ambivalences that force us to question our vision
In his foreword to *Black Skin White Masks*, by Fanon, the revolutionary postcolonial psychiatrist to whose work I have already referred, translator Charles Markmann (1986) argues that ‘in the colonial psyche there is an unconscious disavowal of the negating, splitting moment of desire’ (1986: VIII) and that ‘splitting of the colonial space of consciousness’ is ‘marked by a Manichean delirium’ (1986: XIV). As Paul Gilroy (1993: 1) observed: ‘the symbolism of colours… [black and white] adds to their conspicuous cultural power of their central Manichean dynamic’. In *Vagabondia* this delirium, visualised by a counter position of the black and white protagonists, who occupy different planes of the split and are never connected with one another. The delirium as a result of this Manichean divide is expressed in *Vagabondia* by the trickster who, like a spider, acts out this delirium like a *tarantella* (the dance occasioned by the poisoned bite of the tarantula spider) in his extraordinary movements and addresses the split consciousness of the colonial subject by neutralising the split, moving from one frame to another. I shall return to the spider in the section below on the trickster.

However, as postcolonial literary scholar Gloria Pillow (2010: 46) in discussing the literature of post-civil war America observes that ‘splitting can perform an invaluable short-term service for the devalued and/or threatened ego’ and I think Julien’s *Vagabondia* visualises splitting in order to resolve dualities that are imposed by colonial discourse such as the attacks on the ego and the epistemic violence that results from discourses around civilisation and cultural heritage, which museums have an important role in articulating and materialising through the collecting and classification of objects. So créolité is one response to splitting as a resolution of the duality of difference that is expressed in the invalidation of language. So this is why Julien does not care to translate the Créole, because its purpose is about self-acceptance rather than acceptance by others. As feminist psychoanalyst Juliet Mitchell (1986) says, Klein’s object relations theory is about ‘the human capacity to overcome inevitable splitting and move towards acceptance’ (1986: 28) and, I would add, by the self as well as others.

**A heterotopia of disruptive language: the vagabond-trickster and spaces of enunciation**

The dancer who appears in Vagabondia is named by Julien as ‘the trickster’. But this is not an easy or straightforward term to describe because it is a mixture of cultural archetype, historical fact and the phantasmal. Julien (2003) confirmed the twin
sources of the vagabond/trickster in a parallel session, held in St Lucia, of the highly politicised Documenta 11 curated by Okwui Enwezor. Julien spoke extensively about the making of Vagabondia and his interest in the depictions of beggars in Hogarth’s Rakes Progress (which is in the Soane collection) and how he was influenced by David Dabydeen’s (1985) analysis of them. He also confirmed the source of vagabond in Smith’s’ book, not directly but from an account by Gretchen Gerzina (1995). Julien goes on to refer to the double character that he calls the ‘vagabond trickster’ inspired in part by French filmmaker Jean Rouch’s (1955) fake ethnographic documentary Les maitres fous depicting followers of the West African Haouka religion ‘become possessed’ (2003: 152) and another film The Darker Side of Black (1994) ‘about the misanthropic aspect of black diasporic music cultures’ (2003: 149-150). He does not expound on the Yoruba-Caribbean dimensions of the trickster which I will attempt to do in this chapter as another dimension of what I have called Julien’s ‘spatialisation’.

As Enwezor (2003) says, spatialising the trickster is a performative strategy of créolité’ where:

One can use the motif that is found in the Hispano-Caribbean world in particular, but also in the rest of the Caribbean, and outside, going back to Africa, that is, the notion of the trickster as a strategy of passage, or performing identity, but not necessarily representing identity. Another idea is the idea of creole as location. (Enwezor, 2003: 57).

I note Enwezor’s description of Créole as a location and it is worth investigating this figure of the trickster in some detail as it is in itself a mise en abyme that we must enter into because it has been rather simplified by some commentators, for example Bridget Elliot and Jennifer Kennedy, 2006 who say the trickster is a ‘ghostly presence’ that ‘conjures up the spectre of colonised subjects and their cultures, many of which Soane collected and objectified through the profits of Empire’. This is a crude simplification and is not factual. Whilst I would agree that there is an element of the uncanny, in the way Julien engages with the museum, (about which I will conclude), I do not think the trickster becomes exoticised – rather I will show how he actually challenges objectification. Furthermore, as mentioned above, since Soane’s collection cannot be described as colonial trophies and he was not involved in ‘profits of empire’ as Elliot and Kennedy suggest (even though his architectural clients might have been) the collection comprises mostly Greek, Roman and some Gothic architectural
fragments with a painting collection – not objects collected through ‘the profits of Empire’ as Kennedy suggests, the only controversial item being the Egyptian sarcophagus. Therefore I will carefully outline the derivation of the trickster in relation to his being both a real person and a figure of language.

Apart from ‘evoking the memory of a black sailor who formerly busked outside Soane’s house’ Nikos Papastergiadis, a specialist in spatial aesthetics, in his (2005) analysis of *Vagabondia* says ‘the trickster figure is inspired by two sources’. He also cites Rouch’s documentary *Les Maîtres Fous* and the bizarre performances of immigrant and local labourers on the outskirts of Lagos. The second source is an 1815 cartoon of ‘two black London beggars notorious for their costumes’ because one of them had a hat in the shape of a ship (Papastergiadis, 2005: 8) images of which are reproduced below. However, there is much more to the trickster than most writers have attested and in this chapter I will explain its complex derivation as an historical reality and as a cultural artefact.

It is more precisely the case that Julien became aware of the stories of Joseph Johnson and Charles McGee, two early nineteenth-century professional beggars who were presented by John Thomas Smith (1766–1833) a former keeper of prints at the British Museum, in a series of etchings (1815) in a book called *Vagabondiana* (1817). It is worth going back to this text because it gives an idea of how historical facts have been transformed by the artist from a literary-historical to cinematic-imaginary space and in so doing he has elided the character of the Vagabond with that of the trickster. First published in 1817, Smith’s tract gives some idea of the social condition of London in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century: huge socio-economic inequality, the problem of pauperism, vagrancy and begging and as I have discussed in the first chapter, the problem of childhood neglect and abuse. We learn the derivation of the appellation ‘*Vagabondia*’ when Smith, lamenting the prevalence of pauperism and begging in London, says the city is in a ‘state of mendicity’ a blight which he named with the words of the biblical King David who cursed his enemy: that their ‘condition be continually vagabonds and beg’ (1874: 12). The painter Hogarth, of course, made it his business to depict these conditions and characters and also to campaign for social reform. So *Vagabondiana* is a sort of tourist guide to a cohort of people who would have been familiar to the local resident or regular visitor to London at the time. As a round-up of the socially marginal, the book has some similarities to the infamous (1795) *List of Covent Garden Ladies, a compendium of London
Michel Foucault’s Concept of Heterotopia and Artistic Responses to Museum Spaces

prostitutes that was published in 1795 (Rubenhold, 2012). Smith calls his vagabonds ‘characters’ and presents each one with their own discrete story, along with a cartoon illustration beside the text and, in some cases, a full page sketch or what he called an ‘effigy’. The book appears to have been so popular that it was still in print in 1874 and it is the edition from that year, held by the British Library, which I consulted in the present study.

Amongst his gallery of ‘mendicants’, Smith presented two black beggars, Charles McGee and Joseph Johnson, who both earned their living as beggars by wearing unusual costumes and performing imperial songs, which can be seen as both reminiscent of trauma as well as deeply ironic or as Julien (2003: 151) terms it ‘a creolized display of empire’. According to Smith, who does not say where Johnson originally came from: ‘having been employed in the merchant’s service only, was not entitled to the provisions of Greenwich’ by which he meant the hospitality of the Royal Naval Hospital (now the Old Royal Naval College) a charity established by King Charles II to assist incapacitated seamen working for the Crown. Johnson was so badly wounded that he was permanently on crutches and, unable to go to sea, was condemned to make a living by begging, first at Tower Hill in the City and then in Clerkenwell and Covent Garden where he amused passers by singing Alexander Steven’s (1770) song Storm, whose verses both narrate the perils of eighteenth century sea voyages and suggest how Johnson might have ended up in London:

Now the dreadful thunder rolling, Peal on peal, contending, clash; On our heads fierce rain falls pouring, In our eyes blue lightning flash: One wide water all around us, All above us one black sky, Different deaths at once surround us, – Hark! What means that dreadful cry?

By turns Johnson became variously known as the ‘regular chaunter’ (tricky dealer) or ‘Black Joe’ and Smith says ‘novelty, the grand secret of all exhibition’, led Johnson to come up with the idea of putting a replica of a ship called the Nelson on his head, and to give a bow which simulated the movement of the ship. The HMVS Nelson was a gunship built shortly after 1805 in commemoration of national hero Horatio to mark his victory at Waterloo, later converted for service in Australia as a training ship. From the history of this vessel it is clear that Smith’s description of Johnson as having only been employed in the merchant navy was incorrect as the Nelson was clearly a military vessel (Hayter, 1876:5) therefore he should have been entitled to the
hospitality of the Royal Naval Hospital. So Johnson’s commemoration of the ship is both sardonic as well as the permanent mark of a trauma.

The next vignette that Smith presents to us concerns another black man, ‘of great notoriety’ Charles McGee, whom we are told was born in Ribon [sic], Jamaica in 1744 and whose father is said to have died at the age of 108. McGee ventured as far afield as the streets of Staines, Romford and St Albans. In London he was said to regularly stand at the obelisk, which then stood at Ludgate Hill. ‘He has lost an eye, and his woolly hair, which is almost white, is tied up behind in a tail, with a large tuft at the end’ (1874: 24). For McGee his song of choice was the *Wooden Walls of Old England* composed by Henry Green (1773) who was a purser on the gunship *HMS Ramillies*:

When Britain on her sea-girl shore  
Her ancient Druids erst address’d  
What aid (she cry’d) shall I implore,  
What best defence, by numbers press’d  
Tho’ hostile nations round thee rise,  
(The mystic oracles reply’d)  
And view thine isle with envious eyes,’  
Their threats defy, their rage deride,  
Nor fear invasion from your adverse Gauls  
Britain’s best bulwarks are her *Wooden Walls*.

So for ‘Wooden Walls’ we should read maritime prowess as the recitation of this nationalistic sea shanty by a black man who had been gravely injured whilst working on the high seas seems to me to be poetic, consciously ironic and somewhat tragic for someone who was basically a refugee, permanently disabled and was now without any means of income or support. Yet Smith’s response is to write: ‘Black people, as well as those destitute of sight, seldom fail to excite compassion’ and concludes: ‘Black men are extremely cunning, and often witty’ which perhaps was meant to be some kind of warning to possible donors as well as inadvertently introducing us to the persona of the vagabond/trickster as a real historical person represented in time and space inside the museum as a fantasy, rather than outside it as he would have been in the eighteenth century, and even now. So these historical details explain the origin of Julien’s title but also of the De Frutos’s role and choreography, yet as this character is also referred to as the ‘trickster’ this historical detail can only be a starting point for Julien, not an all-encompassing fact. I would suggest that there is much
more to the character of the trickster than these concrete historical references, important as they are, and that by evoking this figure Julien is also referencing the archetypal character of the trickster as an aspect of African cultural heritage that has undergone multiple diasporic refractions and which again takes us back to the issue of language and its potential to be disruptive in time and space and specifically how it works when invoked in a museum.


The archetype of the trickster is thus integral to the vagabond, especially one of African descent. They are twin products of the same cultural and ethnic marginality, exteriority and otherness. As Thernstrom (1980: 648) and Royce (1982: 18) remind us, the vestigial pre-Christian, Greek, meanings of ‘ethnicity’ whose connotations of ‘nation’ and ‘heathen’ are developed in the Bible as referring to pagans and non-Israelites, resurfacing historically and in various contemporary forms as the absolute other. This is what Smith is alluding to when he says ‘Black men are extremely cunning’; this is an invocation of the other, or what Frantz Fanon (1986: 61) referred to as the imago of the absolute other which is mirrored in Western culture and within the individual psyche as the racialised non-self; therefore this could not be better represented than in the persona of a street dweller, or an indigent refugee. However, this is also the historical character to whom Papastergiadis refers as the man who is
supposed to have performed outside Soane’s mansion and who was indeed a vagabond, an itinerant street person who provided entertainment to passers-by, and who even today may not be welcome in the regulated spaces of a public museum. However, Enwezor (2003) warns against such literalism in the interpretation of the vagabond and as Hassan and Dadi (2001: 351) suggest: ‘the vagabond serves as a memory-stimulating device’ not only to remind us of an absent, eighteenth century history of street beggars but the absolute other to serve as a sort of phantasm (about which I will conclude) as a strange uncanny product of the imagination which, for all its realistic rendering, is so at odds with its surroundings that it may as well be an element of a dream.

In order to fully understand the importance and complexity of the trickster in diaspora culture, I must revisit Henry Louis Gates’s ground-breaking (1989) *Signifying Monkey* in which he discussed the topos of the trickster in African, African American, Caribbean and South American cultures. Gates traced the complex genealogy of this archetypal character whose guile, cunning and rhetorical genius facilitates his escape from all sorts of adversity, from its African origins to its dissemination in postcolonial cultures. Gates demonstrated that this figure and the colloquial sign-play around it is a productive model for literary critique that is informed by post-structuralist theory when he gave the etymology of ‘signifying’ in African American slang as a play on language, a technique of indirect argument or of implication and even as the ‘language of trickery’ (1989: 64-74). Gates primarily discusses the trickster, also called Eshu in West Africa (see also Kobena Mercer, 1996 and 2001 for his application of the term trickster to the work of Julien and photographer Rotimi Fani-Kayode respectively and also Jean Fisher’s (2002) *Metaphysics of Shit* for her application of the term to the role of the artist) or Anansi in the Caribbean. The trickster is a figure who, Gates tells us, achieves ‘Hamlet’s direction by misdirection’ – or as Fisher (2002:64) cites, the example of the Yoruba Trickster, Eshu who is ‘the agent who mischievously creates noise to engender a new pattern of relations’. So in Julien’s film the trickster appears in corporeal form as the dancer but it also takes the form of language as well – as s/he does create noise, between a croak and a growl, while Julien performs new patterns of relations with the museum. Therefore, in the figure of the trickster, whether we call him Eshu or Anansi, it is not only a disruptive body on the level of his physical presence, cunning and guile, but it is the particular significance of the trickster at the level of language that is important here. S/he is not only capable of ‘signifying’ in the manner in which Gates describes as a type of
sophistry in argument s/he is also subverting the established meaning of words and their relation to material objects in the real world. Therefore in relation to the slippery operations of signifying with which the trickster is associated, one is reminded of Foucault’s earlier iterations of the heterotopia concept as being associated with disruptive syntax or language.

As Jean Fisher writes in her (2002) *Metaphysics of Shit*, the figure of the trickster ‘articulates the space of ‘otherness’ through language manipulation’ (2002: 67). So the trickster is not only cunning and resourceful in his negotiation of language – he is also physically resourceful too – hence the often-simian appellation as in Gates’s title, signifying *monkey* – so s/he has a virtuosic athleticism that shows his/her body as fully coordinated with his mental agility. The trickster is thus an anti-dualistic figure in that s/he represents a unity of mind and body and can be seen as anti-Cartesian and as a manifestation of an epistemological challenge to Western logocentrism. S/he can change into any species of animal he wants to be, often represented as a spider in some cultures or a monkey or rabbit in others – so s/he challenges the hierarchy of humans and animals in relation to the possession of intelligence. Likewise we must understand that the writhing, careening and awkward contortions of De Frutos are not only of a virtuosic nature, but as I have previously referred to, his movement replicates aspects of the movement of a spider, making his body do unexpected things as it crawls and curls around the architecture of the museum, unconcerned with horizontal and vertical planes – and so we might consider this as a spatialised analogue of language itself, doubling with the creolised music and the physical space in what Julien (2003: 154) calls ‘a scopic synthesis of movement and architecture. Should there be any doubt about how he locates his work within time and space Julien speaks about ‘translating of territory and temporality’ and of his double screen installation, and its narration in the Créole language as ‘the language that I myself grew up with, but was not encouraged to learn because my parents thought it was not proper language’ and goes on to say that *Vagabondia* is ‘a sort of mapping of the dislocations of language, a sort of nontranslation’ (2003: 150). What happens here with regard to language not only reflects the disruptive linguistic operations of the heterotopia but it does also reflect the playfulness with language that is typical of the trickster, as Henry Louis Gates has discussed, Furthermore, Julien links the choreography of Javier De Frutos with the nautical metaphor related to Johnson’s dancing and goes on to describe the different temporalities that he addresses in the film:
I wanted to visually represent several different temporal planes. There is the time of the contemporaneous, which belongs to the Conservator herself, and then there is a psychic time which is represented by her remembering and speaking to herself in Creole. It is these moments that we see the John Soane figure along with two black 18th-century women. Another time belongs to that of the trickster character, who, in modern dress, distils the poetic notion of the vagabond— a literary reference to Claude McKay’s *Banjo* (2003: 152).

As well as noting his conscious planar reference to time and space, Julien’s allusion to Claude McKay’s (1929) Harlem Renaissance novel *Banjo*, who uses the term vagabond to describe persons whose social isolation is occasioned by diaspora, he connects the two shores of the Atlantic time-space. McKay’s (1929: 11) description of his novel’s eponymous hero is of a ‘great vagabond of lowly life (my stress). Banjo’s travels are approximations of the journeys of Joseph Johnson and Charles McGee that ended in them performing outside Sir John Soane’s house and as such constitute the heterotopia as real and imagined space, and as literary space conjoined with the geographical. ‘He was a child of the cotton belt’ says McKay, ‘but he wandered all over America’ and from New York to Marseilles. This is of course a reference to the great circuits of travel and exile that have characterised the diaspora and which replicate the original dislocations occasioned by the Transatlantic slave trade but which, in turn, inform new syncretic possibilities. Continually doubling then, Julien places his vagabond inside the museum to become not so much an exhibit as a phantasmal presence, within a cabinet of curiosities and a spectral presence about which Julien quotes curator and academic Irit Rogoff as saying, is about ‘dreaming oneself in an alternative reality’ (2003: 153). This is partly constructed through music by which the composer of the sound track Paul Gladstone Reid evoked ‘ghosts of past energies’ or indeed a sort of phantasm, a dream-like presence that has no logical connection with its context.

So to position the trickster in relation to spatialisation, I would suggest that in *Vagabondia* Julien is using the trickster as more than a physical presence and historical reference in the Sir John’s Soane’s Museum. This device, along with the Créole voiceover, introduces the sense of a disruptive body and signifying language, which he declines to translate. Julien upsets the order of the museum by placing within it an object-person, indeed an abject person or at least the simulation of such, which both updates the collection as well as disrupts it. The museum becomes a space of enunciation by performing a series of what I earlier referred to as message.
events that do not set out to emphasise difference *per se* but to celebrate hybridity and indeed *créolité* and to use marginality to open up new creative possibilities as bell hooks has argued. This is how Julien connects with questions of empire, not through adversarial responses to controversial objects in the museum collection but by placing within it new objects, both real and imagined. Julien, as we can see from his speaking about different temporalities or planes is fully aware of the spatial and temporal interventions he is making in order to construct these new connections, the ‘translating of territory and temporality’.

I have discussed *Vagabondia* in relation to a cluster of related themes that are spatial, literary and connected to the different dimensions of the heterotopia concept in terms of how Julien’s work is spatialised, and then specifically his various aesthetic strategies that deliver this spatialisation in terms of the placeless mirrored domains of mise en scène and mise en abyme (that relate to real and imagined spaces in literature and in actuality) in which splitting can be both articulated as a form of double consciousness and then syncretically resolved as hybridity or as créolité. I am concluding that these themes can be aggregated within the concept of the phantasm both as the places of the signifier and as a heterotopia. In reference to a psychoanalytic understanding of splitting, which conjoins Bhabha’s observations about the ‘split self’ I made in reference to the conceptualisations of Freud and Klein as a way of bringing together implicit concerns about how the postcolonial psyche is both produced, reproduced and reconstructed in response to the attacks on the ego by the other, and that Julien’s *Vagabondia* is an articulation of this process in relation to museum spaces in general and a particular location in response to which these themes can be addressed.

**Conclusions: the space of the phantasm**

In relation to the articulation of the phantasm, before precisely defining it for use here, perhaps it would be helpful to say that the definition we are working towards here is that the phantasmal is not just an apparition but the result of a necessary psychological object of resistance. My initial point of departure in approaching this conclusion was the nocturnal/diurnal split in *Vagabondia* that I believe should not be overlooked because it is an important means which produces the phantasm in the film. The sequence opens at night – when the conservator is seated at the table in the breakfast room and when she patrols the premises with her torch. It turns to day
when the trickster appears and it returns to night again when he leaves. This gives
the trickster the appearance and quality of a dream or a phantasm, as if it were an
apparition, or the subject of a phantasy-desire and it returns to night when the
trickster disappears, so if this is to be called a dream it must be a daydream. The
sequences filmed at night give the work a somewhat uncanny quality, rendering many
of the objects we see – the crouching Venus and the Graeco Roman statue and the
bust of Soane – as somewhat spectral. Therefore it is understandable that some
writers, e.g. Bridget Elliot and Jennifer Kennedy, (2006) have spoken about 'haunting'
Sir John Soane’s house and that the trickster as a ‘ghostly presence’ that ‘conjures up
the spectre of colonised subjects and their cultures, Even Julien (2003: 153) speaks
of ‘ghosts of past energies’. Therefore it seems to me that in this strategy of
foregrounding of the phantasm, or shall I say its materialisation, that Julien is
addressing absence – of the postcolonial subject in the dominant narratives of cultural
heritage – which as I have discussed earlier in this chapter is vocalised through the
speaking presence of the créole narrator recounting a lost narrative, the evidence of
things not seen, which come into view at night by means of the phantasm. As
Blanchot (1989) says in his discussion of Mallarmé’s *Igitur Catastrophe*:

…the pure destiny of absence, we now have only the speaking presence, the rarefied
but certain evidence of a consciousness which, in the night which has become its
mirror, still contemplates only itself (1989: 115).

That ‘speaking presence’ in *Vagabondia* is Julien’s mother’s voice, a conscious one,
which in the night partly explains what we see in those convex mirrors, an absence
that is somewhat ghostly. Julien (2003: 153) further says that the evocation of ghosts
in the film’s musical score was, he says, to set the scene for some kind of
‘unconscious disclosure’. What is this ‘unconscious disclosure’? Is it similar to what
Choudhury (1996) has discussed in relation to Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* in the
sense of a shadowy presence, which at once signifies an absence, or a mortal past of
which only traces remain? One is reminded of the absent narrative in Charlotte
Brontë’s *Jayne Eyre* where Antoinette, Caribbean wife of Mr Rochester, is a secret, a
mad woman locked in the attic who scandalously bursts out upon his attempt at
remarriage to Jayne – a story that is made uncannily present by Jean Rhys’s
extension of Brontë’s narrative in her (1966) *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Similarly in
*Vagabondia* there is a suggestion of such an absence when we see a gentleman in
breeches and morning coat descending the staircase of the house. Who is he? Is he
Sir John Soane and what is/was his relationship to Thelma? Is this the scene for an ‘unconscious disclosure’ as Julien calls it? Or, as I shall argue, with a psychoanalytic understanding of splitting, is the phantasmal the materialisation of this disclosure? I will decline to use the terms ‘ghost’ or ‘haunting’ as they imply that the trickster, if he is a ghost, is the result of some kind of supernatural ectoplasm independent of the subject. Rather, I would prefer to use the word phantasmal in order to connect with my earlier discussion about ‘splitting’ but also to connect with anxiety and the uncanny as subjective products of psychic space.

Also regarding how I have used the mirror in relation to mise en abyme in particular, to which the phantasm is related, these themes and their consequence, in the context of a house that is also a museum, produce a sense of the unhomely or uncanny, which is a kind of anxiety. By uncanny I mean it in the sense in which Freud (1955) defined it, as unheimlich, literally unhomely which is to say especially a place – or space – that one would expect to be homely which in fact turns out to be disturbing – as if one were in the presence of a kind of malign entity. I think the term phantasmal is more appropriate to describe Vagabondia because it refers to a complex process by which the visual representation or spectacle is produced by the mind, rather than some supernatural presence, a ghost, which has arrived without invitation or indeed, the pathological result of a psychosis or delusion. So what could be the functional purpose of the phantasm? Having said previously that the characters in Vagabondia do not interact, the closest we get to this is when the trickster appears. The conservator suspends her cleaning and looks down from the picture gallery into the Monk’s Parlour at him as he moves around. She closes the Picture Room doors as if drawing the curtains on a stage. That means the phantasm belongs to her and is a product of her imagination. She has conjured up this phantasmal object and placed him in the museum as a site of ‘pleasure and fantasy’ (Julien, 2003: 154). As the philosopher Slavoj Žižek (2000) has observed in his The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology, phantasms are products of an objective reality as it is perceived and, reconstituted by the senses and he quotes Aristotle’s De Anima, which states: ‘never does the soul think without phantasm’ (2000: 24). I have already introduced the psychodynamics of the phantasm in arguments in my earlier comments about splitting, the mise en abyme and in relation to the postcolonial psyche (cf. page 136).
Julien responds to the Monk’s Parlour as the phantasmal epicentre of the three houses that Soane remodelled, it is also the space where the central action in *Vagabondia* takes place with the trickster/dancer. So fittingly the dénouement of the film takes place in the Monk’s Parlour. In this scene the conservator repeats a ritual that happens every day in the museum when the white gloved attendants open the double leafed doors in the Picture Room which, in an ingenious space saving device, is hung with paintings on each side and visitors are allowed to see the various paintings, including Hogarths, concealed within. This is a time when visitors can also peer down through the open doors into the Monk’s Parlour below and appreciate the drama of the space. When in *Vagabondia* the conservator repeats this ritual, she herself looks down through the open doors and sees the trickster careening and crawling in the dappled light from the stained glass windows and crawling around the furniture. This is a moment when the space itself becomes phantasmal, as the vessel for a surreal spectacle, a daydream, which seems to have been conjured up or at least permitted by the conservator herself.

In *Vagabondia* the phantasm operates within the mirror as an invocation of the double of the self, which is just as uncanny as the spectral mirror image – as in Lacan’s theorisation of the mirror stage in the development of the subject. More recently pathologised by psychological medicine as ‘hallucination’, and more specific than a mere fantasy, the phantasm belongs to the realm of what Herman Rapaport (1994) calls ‘dreams, primal scenes and imaginary objects’ (1994: 2) and as such is an essential component of literature and cinema, a visual and literary phenomenon as much as it is spatial. The reader or spectator, the [unconscious] subject, by means of what Schwenger (1999) calls ‘textual envisioning’ requires the phantasm in order to engage with the text (or the art work). In other words, the spectator must empathise with the aesthetic sense of engaging with the object as I described it earlier in relation to paintings depicting childhood. This process of engagement is spatial insofar as to envision the phantasm requires the subject to place it within imaginary time and space, to give it form and to confer dimensions upon it. In a sense the phantasm is the heterotopia *par excellence* as it neither belongs to the register of the normal nor to the pathological, just like some types of heterotopic tissue about which physical medicine is still undecided. In relation to whether it is normal or pathological, the phantasm hovers between the imaginary and the hallucinatory. In *Vagabondia* the phantasm is produced by the mirror, or more precisely by the conservator in the mirror, from an abyme or abysmal space and the trickster is the only character who is
not contained, or constrained by the mirrors but is a phantasmal product of them – a psychological construction, indeed an imaginary space which is in effect a heterotopia – and which, as Foucault’s translator observes of Deleuze’s theorisation of the phantasm (Foucault, 2000: XXII) is to ‘topologise the materiality of the body’ whose ‘phantasms conduct their dance’, just like Julien’s trickster.

In Foucault’s (2000) *The Father’s ‘No’*, an essay curiously resonant with his difficult experience of his own father, he notes that ‘the unwavering line of psychosis is infallibly directed; as it is precipitated inside the abyss of its meaning, it evokes ‘the devastating absence of the father through the forms of delirium and phantasms’ (2000: 16). In *Vagabondia*, this abyss of meaning is represented by the mirrors, through the manipulation of mise en abyme, the shallow depth of field of the out-of-focus mise en scène. That ‘absent father could be Soane, as some kind of dislocated postcolonial patriarch, embedded in the psyche of the conservator, and conjoined by the absent vocal presence of Julien’s mother and that it is towards such a paternalistic interdiction (the ‘no’ of the colonial father towards the always already infantilised colonial subject) that ‘the unwavering line of psychosis is infallibly directed’ (2000: 16). As I have previously argued, splitting of the postcolonial space of consciousness is marked by a Manichean delirium, which is literally acted out by the trickster and of which the psychosis to which Foucault refers is one definite psychic outcome. Yet the function of the trickster as a phantasm is also to ‘topologize the materiality of the body’ (Faubion in Foucault, 2000: XXII) which in *Vagabondia* is achieved by this character within the terrain of the museum and as Foucault (2000) notes in his *Theatrum Philosophicum* ‘phantasms which, in the temporal duality in which they are formed are always the two sides of the fissure from which they are made’ (2000:353). This ‘fissure’ in *Vagabondia* is represented by the split self and screen; and the phantasm resolves splitting, oppositions between good and bad, or the Manichean dualities of black and white which connects with Klein’s notion of splitting. Furthermore in stressing the corporeal nature of phantasms, in *Vagabondia* we see how the phantasm is as Foucault suggests in his (2000) *Theatrum Philosophicum* ‘at the limit of bodies; against bodies’ and ‘stick[s] to bodies and protrude[s] from them’ (2000:346).

The usual location of the phantasm is of course in nocturnal dreams and I have noted that in the case of *Vagabondia*, we are talking about a diurnal event. However as Foucault says in his (2000) text about Flaubert’s, *Afterword to the Temptation of St
Anthony, if we regard the trickster as a daytime phantasmal event then 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’ (2000:104). And vigilance, as we know from the psychopathological literature on trauma, is one way that the subject copes with the constant flashbacks, a term which had its beginnings in cinema (Turim, 2001) and which is now a well-known concept in the psychological understanding of trauma; in other words the phantasm is the product of thought and its purpose above all is to protect.

Therefore I would agree with James Faubion (in Foucault, 2000: XXII) who says of Deleuze’s (2006) *Foucault* that it underscores that ‘Foucault always regards the psyche as being in, and of, a wider world’ to which I referred in my discussion of Foucault’s critique of phenomenology (cf. page 20) and the subject centred disciplines. However, I would further suggest that Julien in *Vagabondia* visually articulates that missing dimension of the spatial experience of the subject that was so obviously lacking in Foucault’s final exposition of the heterotopia concept. Therefore we should regard Julien’s trickster as the result of internal psychic processes as well as external material reality, as both being in the wider material world and the internal reality of the psyche. The museum thus becomes an extension of the conservator’s psyche as the space of the phantasm, a heterotopia constituted in language, literature and in relation to a real space and the phantasm is also the means by which a kind of double consciousness can be activated to which I have already alluded in relation to the originator of this idea, W E B Dubois.

I think it is no coincidence that Herman Rapaport (1994) has proposed that there is a ‘double consciousness’ in the operation of the phantasm and the role it plays ‘in providing permanence to the structure of the subject’s role in consciousness’ and he likens this to the surface of a mirror (1994: 22) as described in Lewis Caroll’s *Looking through the Looking Glass*. Rapaport concludes that the world beyond the looking glass, the phantasm, ‘reveals the difference between that part of the subject that always finds itself as present and that part of the subject that always loses itself as absent’. If Rapaport was thinking of Dubois’ or indeed Paul Gilroy’s definition of a hybridised self, he does not mention it in his book, nor the syncretic understanding of a kind of psychic or cultural ambivalence but I would nevertheless connect them as way of (re)constituting the phantasm. Gilroy’s updates to the concept of double
consciousness is not to identify it as a fault or a pathological condition (which can possibly be deduced from Dubois’ original conceptualisation) but to celebrate a creative response to difference that not only creates new forms of thinking and being but it is one of the most important drivers of modernity of which art forms such as jazz are prime examples; and Julien does make use of the jazz idiom in the film through Paul Gladstone-Reid’s score.

Of course the phantasm is here interned with precisely that (postcolonial) issue of presence and absence (to which Bhabha (1994) refers and is at the heart of interpreting history within museum settings. However, the phantasm in the form of the vagabond-trickster provides stability and centres the subject and Rapaport, like Dubois, uses the term double consciousness to describe the ‘primary and secondary’ processes that are involved in this dynamic, so what I take this to mean is that double consciousness is both an effect and also an affect, which is to say that it is both a consequence of the attacks on the ego by the other and it is also an ontological strategy. In referring to ontology I am connecting with Gilroy’s masterly spatialised recasting of the idea of double consciousness such that it cannot only repudiate the limitations of cultural nationalism, and essentialist concepts of identity; double consciousness is actually the same process that may be described as créolité or hybridity. As Gilroy (1993) reminds us, as I have discussed in relation to Julien’s spatialisations temporal:

> The utopian eruption of the linear temporal order in modern black politics...enforces the obligation that space and time must be considered relationally in their interrelationship with racialised being (1993:198).

It could be that it is more than coincidence that both writers use the term double consciousness to describe a sort of splitting or doubling of the subject and that they are both referring to the same structure, in one case rendered as a negative process and in the other a structure that actually provides ‘permanence’ and which, as I have alluded, Paul Gilroy has described as an aspect of modernity. In the spectral quality that Julien gives to the Sir John Soane’s museum by filming it at night and representing it as the mise en scène for a phantasmal event he transforms a space that is intended to be homely into unhomely and even disturbing. He articulates a culturally determined anxiety in relation to landscape, architecture and heritage that has been explored in other ways by the photographer Ingrid Pollard and whose work...
is discussed by Kinsman (1995) in relation to the deep sense of unease felt at the individual level in relation to cultural heritage in the form of landscape or cultural artefact that constructs a sense of otherness, marginality. This is a dwelling house yet it is also a museum, which is what I mean by uncanny (see Freud 1955 and Vidler, 1992) in the sense that its apparent domesticity gives way to a sense that there is a kind of absent presence of some kind of intangible entity.

*Vagabondia* is an expression of modernity and double consciousness through the phantasmal trickster and his engagement with the museum. For postcolonial scholar Paul Gilroy in his important (1993) work *Black Atlantic*, ‘double consciousness is an ambivalence generated by modernity’ which I believe is related to the concept of splitting, (1993: 117). Quoting from the African American theorist W E B Dubois’ original definition, which Gilroy says was ‘conceived as a description of the special difficulties arising from black internalization of American identity’:

> One ever feels this twoness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts; two reconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder’ (1993: 126).

In *Vagabondia* we see a resolution of splitting and double consciousness as we are deliberately faced with the untranslatable, the unintelligible, the other, that enunciative space across the Manichean cultural divide about which Fanon and Bhabha speak. Julien says the narration was designed to be ‘poetically enticing and incomprehensible’ and ‘purposefully untranslated’ (2003: 153-154) because ‘it holds its own knowledge of such spaces’ as the museum, and mentions how he was struck by the way critics ignored the Créole dialect. The subaltern is indeed speaking and this critical silence to which Julien refers seems to re-enact this cultural divide, a void of meaning that conventional art history is reluctant to address. This is another example of the creolisation or *créolité* about which Julien speaks and can be heard in the music which combines ‘an ensemble of strings, harp, wind and piano, North African percussion, jazz and drums, the score for *Vagabondia* is complemented by the narration in French Créole dialect of St Lucia’ (2003:153). This aggregation of music – of two markedly different genres – and dialect is the very demonstration of *créolité* about which Julien speaks and challenges translation into any known language.
Isaac Julien’s practice can be compared with that of American artist Fred Wilson in the sense that his practice in relation to museums often involves curatorial interventions that are about rearranging or even disrupting museum collections or their order in a manner which exposes the original logic that governs their arrangement, display and classification but also to reference absent historical narratives and trauma in relation to contemporary identities. However I would suggest that for Julien, this is also a form of curatorial practice but his is about the rearrangement of meaning as well as objects and part of the material with which Julien achieves this is language itself. The principal means by which this rearrangement is achieved in Vagabondia is the use through what might be termed a strategy of créolité’ (see Julien, 2004) – a collision between two modes of enunciation that produce a new, third level, or what Bhabha calls ‘third space’, which I discussed as a kind of heterotopia. Julien actually engages with a real material space whilst he is also engaging with an imaginary one that exists visually a cinematic site but also at the level of language. Specifically in relation to language, Julien’s works address museums by upsetting the normal correspondences of words to things in an inversion of the usual operation of mirrors; the placeless place in which the reflection does not correspond with its object. Julien is involved in this placeless place partly by means of the literary imaginary as a ‘utopian and heterotopian space’ in which such correspondences are thoroughly upset, inverted and turned back upon themselves.

In Vagabondia there is an apparent synthesis of the city and museum which takes effect through the device of the vagabond-trickster (a person of the street who becomes part of the museum collection) blending in an element that conceptually ‘clashes’ but is visually coherent and seamless, an operation that could be described as musical in the way that the defining feature of modernist music is precisely its lack of tonic resolution. Above all, the presence of the Trickster in the Julien’s video is more than a concrete historical reference but an intervention at the level of language drives a veritable imaginary in which we can propose a different order of things even within the heteroclite collection of objects that comprise the Sir John Soane’s Museum.
Chapter 5  Phantasmal Mirrors: Isaac Julien’s *Baltimore*


**Introduction**

As I have discussed in the previous chapter, the gallery installations of Isaac Julien interrogate individual identity as a spatialised process that is presented as necessarily involving all kinds of splitting and doubling – both psychoanalytic and visually – often cinematically represented by means of multiple projections. In terms of cinematic form, Julien’s museum films can be seen to have progressed from a single projection *The Attendant* (1993), to a double *Vagabondia* (2000) and then tripling in *Baltimore* (2003), which is the subject of this chapter. I see this progression as demonstrating an increasingly complex engagement by the artist with real material spaces as well as the imaginary *fabula* of cinema.

The *Attendant* and *Vagabondia* were responses to single museum spaces with which connections were drawn, not only with distant geographies but also the internal subjective domains of queer desire and postcolonial identity. In *Vagabondia*, the
physical presence of mirrors allowed me not only to connect the work with certain properties of heterotopias that Foucault describes as spectral or reflective but also to consider how the doubling that mirrors produce allow us to understand postcolonial consciousness in relation to dualities, splitting and hybridity. Until now, all of the sites in Julien’s work that I have discussed so far have been located within the UK. However, with *Baltimore* the source material for the work’s mirror images is outside of the UK, in the North American city of Baltimore, and concern two museum spaces and an archive, and there are two main senses in which I would like to use the concept of heterotopia to inform my reading of *Baltimore*: First, the heterotopia as a zone of the phantasm, and the imaginary, one that precedes ideas of utopia. Second: the notion of the museum as infinitely accumulating time and as heterochronic: of multiple time lines and temporalities. So I would like to use the heterotopia concept to look at Julien’s work in two specific senses. The first, where we might think of that absolutely different space as not only having a physical utilitarian function, for example to cater for some specific cultural activity, but also as one reserved for the enactment of the phantasm as a real event, where the difference between the utopian vision and the material space collapses and operates with the compelling approximation of the mirror.

Julien’s work *Baltimore* was made just two years after *Vagabondia* while the artist had shifted his location from London to the North Eastern United States as a result of his teaching engagements as visiting professor at Harvard University (1998-2002) and on the Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program. This shifting of location from the UK to North America, reflected Julien’s expanded transatlantic consciousness, which began to inform his practice and which was itself informed by Paul Gilroy’s notion of the Black Atlantic, as a spatio-temporal dynamic reflecting the modern terrain of black diasporic culture and mapped by the triangulated contours of the transatlantic slave trade that operated between Africa, Europe and the Americas, including the Caribbean. However, in its spatial reach, conceptual underpinning and aesthetic strategy, apart from being a mediation on the complex tensions between American and African American culture, Julien’s *Baltimore* is also a homage to Melvyn Van Peebles, one of the first African American directors to achieve commercial success, and to whom Julien also makes reference in his 2002 television documentary *BaadAsssss Cinema*, an historical account of the so-called Blaxploitation genre into which Van Peeble’s oeuvre has been included. Therefore in the present analysis, I would like to suggest that there is much more to this work than
what film theorist Catherine Fowler has described as a play between ‘off-frame and off-screen space’ (Fowler, 2008). We need to understand the dynamics and complexity of these spaces and ask what is the point of the spatiality in Julien’s work and why he chooses certain sites to make his works. Here I will attempt to articulate the cultural significance of these museum spaces and what results from Julien’s cinematic engagement with them: from the real spaces of three very different collections, the urban landscape of Baltimore and the materialisation of the spatial imagination in the form of paintings that Julien negotiates through the medium of film which, before discussing further, I will summarise.

The film sequence Baltimore: a synopsis

*Baltimore* features just two main characters, Vanessa Myrie as the cyborg, the African American film director Melvyn Van Peebles as himself and as a wax effigy and Isaac Julien himself in a cameo appearance. There are four distinct spaces in which the film takes place: the urban and suburban environments of Baltimore, the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum, the George Peabody Library and the Walters Art Museum which are spaces that carry with them powerful social, cultural and historical characteristics, if not problematics. The opening sequence is of the Baltimore interstate expressway showing the city centre framed in the distance with background sounds of traffic. In the right frame a white car pulls up in what appears to be an African Caribbean neighbourhood. Unmistakable is the corpulent Isaac Julien, as the actor-auteur, in a cameo appearance shuffling along with a walking stick. In middle frame we see the top left corner of buildings, tree and sky and a dog barking. Julien moves to the left frame and a car screeches to a halt in middle.

Film still from Isaac Julien’s *Baltimore* (2003) Showing the Cyborg (left) and Melvyn Van Peebles (right). Image Courtesy the artist.
Dialogue: *You know what you’re gonna get? You’re gonna get 24 hours, 24 hours to get outta here.* Then the sounds of gun fire and an old man walks across all three frames with a black and white mural in background. Dialogue: *Police! Help! Put 'em up you sonofabitch! Freeze nigga, you wanna die*? – then more gun fire.

The cyborg walks into the foreground in the left frame and we hear: *Bitch! Just what do you think you’re doin’; Are you looking behind you when you should be lookin’ in fronta you?* There is the sound of a helicopter hovering overhead and Melvyn Van Peebles approaches foreground from right in tandem with the cyborg.

Dialogue, with erotic panting: *You gotta sweet, sweet badass!*

Empty suburban streets appear in the right frame and left and repeat shot of the corner of a nondescript building, tree and sky. The cyborg walks towards National Great Blacks in Wax Museum in all three frames with close up in the middle frame emphasising her huge perfectly spherical Afro hairdo. There is a drum roll and Van Peebles enters the Walters Art Museum. He is walking along the sculpture court passing the altarpiece *Virgin Adoring the Christ Child* by Giovanni Della Robbia and various classical statuary. The George Peabody Library appears in centre frame with the cyborg left and right. Then the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum appears with an animated wax work of an African American man waving, then to the left effigies of African American civil rights protestors holding placards saying ‘Freedom now’ – Van Peebles appears centre frame back on the street and cyborg is in the wax museum on the right. Left and right frames are camera pans in the wax museum as the cyborg walks around looking at exhibits – and we see chains.

An image of the Earth from outer space appears centre frame, the cyborg on the left with a wax effigy of a black astronaut (probably Guion Bluford, the first African American astronaut) to the right and the interior of a spaceship in the centre. Van Peebles lights his cigar; we see and hear a pistol being cocked and the cyborg takes off her Afro wig. She holds the gun aiming it at an off-frame threat and she is in the wax museum walking backwards through double doors embossed with Egyptian ankh symbols. The interstate expressway appears again in all three frames; pulsing electronic music reminiscent of science fiction. What appears to be a meteor or spacecraft shoots diagonally across the panorama of the city and the cyborg’s bionic eye showing its internal circuitry is centre frame, flanked left and right by flickering
blue light. Back to in the Walters Art Museum sculpture court, Van Peebles appears in the space as a hologram. The cyborg ascends in the elevator in the George Peabody Library and, in the manner of a rocket launch, a robotic voice counts in random numbers, seven, three, five, two, six...

Egyptian sculptures in Walters Art Museum appear in all three frames with Van Peebles from behind and centred is Osiris. Then we see a painting by El Greco: St Francis Receiving the Stigmata and then Ideal City by Fra Carnevale. The cyborg is walking down the museum corridor holding the pistol. We hear the voice of civil rights speeches: Martin Luther King and Malcolm X and Van Peebles stops to look at the El Greco and Fra Carnevale. There is a close up of the Fra Carnevale painting and the urban piazza it depicts.

The George Peabody Library is centre frame showing the Stack Room and the cyborg is on ground floor looking up into the roof as she walks to the middle of the atrium; Van Peebles is still strolling down the corridor in the Walters Art Museum. Then there is the sound of a door creaking open and he appears in the George Peabody Library just as the cyborg launches herself like a rocket up through all six storeys of the atrium, landing back down on the ground floor centre frame with a close up of her heels as she looks back smugly at Van Peebles. Left frame with shot of top corner of the outside of the library in the middle as she walks out of the atrium.

A close up of Van Peebles again looking at Fra Carnevale’s Ideal City and he walks away to approach the El Greco painting and the wax effigies from the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum start to appear, one by one, in the Walters Art Museum and they seem to be looking at the paintings: Billy Holliday, Frederick Douglass, W E B Dubois and other famous historical and cultural figures all congregate in the gallery. Then Van Peebles approaches a wax effigy of himself, identically dressed in grey pinstripe suite, red sweater and trilby hat, smoking a cigar. Behind them is the painting – Christ and the Tribute Money by Domenico Fetti and we then see the Van Peebles effigy on the left and the real man on the right and in the middle the effigy again but this time in front of other figures from the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum.

We return to the suburban neighbourhood again and a street scene flanks a white, parked car in centre. A dog is barking and there is the guitar twang typical of 1970s
style blaxploitation film music. Some African American women appear, walking down a storm drain and there is a street stroller to the left and right.

Dialogue: *The party’s over, baby. It’s dawn, it’s reality*.

Van Peebles and the cyborg, both dressed in long winter coats, exit from The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum on left and right with street scene centre frame. The helicopter is hovering again and Van Peebles and cyborg walk away with their backs to camera. Again the sound of civil rights speeches and the final shot is a repeat of the interstate expressway and sound of traffic with which the film began.

**The sites and their historical contexts**

Julien uses the museum as a marginal site for negotiating/reflecting difference and imagining new ways of being. In *Baltimore* the artist has decided to focus on three institutions sited in three different locations that illustrate the divided and conflicting narratives that are inscribed in the spatial relations of the city of Baltimore and he addresses what Foucault calls the ‘relations of propinquity’ in terms of the politics of simultaneity of the ‘near and the far and the side by side’ by looking at three different institutions sited in three different locations: the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum, the Walters Art Museum and the George Peabody Library.

The historical and spatial context is that Baltimore is that it is a port ‘city of transients’ (Phillips, 1997: 3) where in the 1830s the young Frederick Douglass, who would become an important theorist of African American cultural identity, worked the docks at Fells Point. Having first established itself in the eighteenth century as a reception point for slaves who would work in the cultivation of tobacco and then wheat production, both of which demanded the copious supply of slave labour, the city became one of the wealthiest and largest urban centres in the North America. Yet by the nineteenth century Baltimore had become a Mecca for free slaves and some of the earliest Black independent organisations such as the Baltimore Mutual United Brotherhood of Liberty were established there to protect the rights of African American freed slaves who occupied both sides of the split affiliations that produced the American Civil War (Phillips, 1997). So contemporary Baltimore carries the discreet traces of this history which can be discerned on the city map where disparate histories are represented by discrete zones of difference, separated by visible and invisible margins and what Foucault calls ‘relations of propinquity’. This is about the
politics of the near and the far, and the side-by-side, the way that social space in Baltimore, as in many Western urban centres, is demarcated by visible and invisible margins of race, class and power. The Jones Falls Expressway marks out these spatial relations; the interstate motorway being the principal traffic artery dividing the main body of the urban space from the suburbs. The northwest sector is an area of parks, golf courses and sprawling housing developments. The more run-down public housing areas are to the east and west, beyond the Jones Falls Expressway and west of Martin Luther King Boulevard (Kurian, 1994: 77). Recently there has been a programme of demolition of these Baltimore public housing estates and thousands of empty boarded up buildings that have represented the decline of the city over the last four decades.

Baltimore has followed the trend of a number of post-industrial American cities, such as Detroit, in experiencing a sharp decline in manufacturing activity and a flight of the white middle class from the city centre to the suburbs. This desertion of the city is partly the result of a collapse in heavy industry such as steel making ‘between 1970 and 2000, when manufacturing jobs in Baltimore County decreased from 66,500 to 35,400’ (Olsen, 2005: 216). For 27 out of the 30 years between 1970 and 2000 ‘the city's population declined by more than a quarter of a million people’ (Segal, 2005). It is this decline that was referenced by Randy Newman in his song Baltimore that was famously covered by Nina Simone in her eponymous album of 1978:

Beat-up little seagull/On a marble stair/Tryin' to find the ocean/Lookin' everywhere/Hard times in the city/In a hard town by the sea/Ain't nowhere to run to/There ain't nothin' here for free

Therefore, by making a work in Baltimore, Julien references a complex and troubled history going back over three centuries and he achieves this by focusing on three institutions that in many aspects reflect and represent this history. More importantly, the kind of geographies being described here link up with the spaces on the other side of the Atlantic that have been discussed in the previous chapter. These are spaces such as the Sir John Soane's Museum and the Foundling Museum in the sense that they are sites where we cannot easily discern the traces of colonisation and empire, yet they are nevertheless sites which have the potential to articulate problems around difference, identity and cultural history. I would therefore suggest that this is indeed a postcolonial strategy on the part of the artist which is reflected in the structure of this thesis: to join up two analytic spaces. It seems to me relevant to
do so by reference to the ideas relating to heterotopias and heterochrony discussed earlier, since we are dealing with institutional spaces that are about the historical accumulation of time and its representation in collections of objects. By choosing three cultural sites in Baltimore: the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum, the George Peabody Library and the Walters Art Museum, Julien set up a deliberate historical collision between what has been separately regarded as American heritage and that which is African American.

The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum is located in the poorer eastern sector of the city and was founded in 1983 by civil rights leaders Elmer and Joanne Martin with the aim of stimulating interest in African American history by revealing little known and often neglected facts of history. The museum interprets this mission with a permanent display of wax effigies of great figures from African American and wider world history from Pushkin ‘the African Russian’ to W E B Dubois, Billy Holiday, Dr Martin Luther King and the former US Secretary of State, Colin Powell. Despite being what could be called a community museum, the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum is one of the most popular attractions in Baltimore, with over 300,000 visitors a year. The collection is housed in a modest two storey structure and the displays feature wax effigies arranged in thematic displays or historical tableaux that are somewhat akin to stage or film sets, many with contextual photographs and objects and slogans such as: ‘we are not afraid’ in front of two African American children behind whom is an effigy of a white male figure in a Ku Klux Klan hood and cloak. The collection is more physically and visually accessible than is usually the case in museums with few of the usual conservation and security measures. The increasing importance of this small regional museum in relation to the wider African American culture is signified by the recent addition of the prefix ‘National’ to its previous name, the Great Blacks in Wax Museum.

The George Peabody Library, described as one of the ‘most beautiful buildings in America’ (Burke, 2007) was founded by the American industrialist and philanthropist in 1857 and was designed in the neoclassical style by local architect Edmund G Lind. George Peabody (1795-1869) was an American industrialist whose multinational business empire eventually covered areas including dry goods such as cotton, railroad construction and banking and stretched from Baltimore to London and supporting philanthropic activities on a grand scale, which are well known in London and the USA, in the fields of housing, education and the arts. Peabody’s business
partner in 1854 was Junius Spencer Morgan the father of John Pierpoint Morgan, the founder of the bank now known as J P Morgan Chase (Parker, 1995: 66-70) which has recently been the subject of controversy concerning the origins of the wealth of its predecessor companies that were involved in the slave trade (Singer, 2008: 89). It has been stated that chattel slaves were used as collateral for loans to Louisiana plantation owners in the 1800s (White, 2009: 198). Whilst Peabody himself was not directly involved in slavery, many of his business partners were and he is known to have taken a decidedly moderate and impartial attitude to the subject of slavery at the time of the debates around its abolition ‘regarding the extremists on both sides as equally mischievous’ (Parker, 1995: 116). Peabody founded some of the first museums in the USA. His inauguration of the Peabody Institute of the City of Baltimore eventually became the George Peabody Library and led to the foundation of the John Hopkins University and Baltimore Art Museum (1995: 198). The dramatic Stack Room of the library, with its six-storey atrium, holds around 300,000 volumes, many of which date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and cover every field of the arts and humanities except music.

The Walters Art Museum is the result of the collecting of William Thompson Walters (1819-94) and his son Henry Walters (1848-1931). William Walters was a grain merchant who eventually established a wholesale liquor business, moved into railroad construction and with his wealth became an avid collector of local artists such as Alfred Jacob Miller (1810-74), who had documented the early fur trade in the Western United States, and the sculptor William H Rinehart (1825-74) before going on to collect contemporary European art such as The Duel After the Masquerade, by Jéan-Leon Gérôme, then an emerging academic master in Paris. William Walters’ son Henry, who continued his father’s railroad business, significantly extended the family’s art collection. Henry apparently had a clear vision of establishing a public educational museum and began collecting major European works such as Ingre’s Betrothal of Raphael and the Niece of Cardinal Bibbiena and Raphael’s Madonna of the Candelabra. In 1902 Henry Walters purchased the entire contents of the Palazzo Accoramboni in Rome from papal courtier Don Marcello Massarenti, which included El Greco’s St Francis Receiving the Stigmata. The present Walters collection comprises a substantial overview of artworks from pre-dynastic Egypt to Renaissance and 20th-century Europe, and includes Greek sculpture and Roman sarcophagi; medieval ivories and Old Master paintings; Art Deco jewellery and 19th-century European and American masterpieces (Johnston, 2001).
So what we have in these three institutions is a triple layered set of issues concerning history, its recording and even its architectural representation, along with notions of heritage. By focusing on them Julien is asking what are the timelines that make up historical narratives about the past, present and future and how they are represented and played out spatially in the geography of a city like Baltimore. They have clearly been chosen not only for their cultural importance to different constituencies, or shall we say identities, but in order to set up a deliberate collision and one that does not result in destruction but in a synthesis or hybrid, where the new is not formed from a duality or a dialectic but form a new third space, as yet to be materially realised.

_Film still from Isaac Julien’s _Baltimore_, (2003) Showing the Jones Falls Interstate Expressway. Image Courtesy the artist._

_Baltimore_ opens with a triple screen shot which is repeated in the middle and end of the film of the Jones Falls Expressway which is, in effect, the fourth site featured in the film, as if to emphasise what is at stake in this physical and psychological margin that separates one space from another, one history from another. This reveals the wider _mise-en-scène_ as the cityscape itself with its internal margin marked by the Expressway, a major highway which is a type of road also known in the USA as a beltway, or what in the UK would be called a ring road or a bypass of which the elevated section of London’s A40, known as the Westway, is a prime example. In recent American political discourse since the election of Donald Trump, the term beltway has come to prominence to define the space inhabited by the elite political class and the rarefied urban domains in which they operate such as the ‘Washington DC beltway’ (see Fields, 2016). So the Jones Falls Expressway, as a beltway, can be seen as both a margin and a threshold between spaces that denote different racial and class histories, demarcating the urban landscape into different relational spaces. These roads express, in effect, as Foucault might term it, the relations of propinquity.
in the near and the far and the side by side, and notions of how racially privileged rights of ingress and egress into and out of the city centre as a culturally, politically and financially elite space. It should also be noted that such roads also signify the violence of a particular kind of urban modernity, or regeneration, whose construction, like the so-called ‘Moses road’ otherwise known as the Cross Bronx Expressway in Manhattan, occasioned the destruction of many poor neighbourhoods that stood in its path so the causeway and its environs eventually signified a ‘place to get out of’ as Marshall Berman (1983: 291) put it. Again, the parallel with London is relevant since Edward Platt’s (2000) ‘biography’ of the elevated section of the city’s A40 motorway also known as the Westway, made comparisons with the Cross Bronx Expressway and Berman’s sharp critique of its destructive environmental and social impact (2000: 215 and 230).

The three screens of Baltimore operate like a triptych of urban space with its outer panels amplifying the centre but they also operate like mirrors often reflecting the three museums in one frame and what we see in another, but with a different perspective or camera angle. I have already discussed Julien’s use of mirrors in the previous chapter on Vagabondia and I want to stress how important and conscious is his use of mirrors in his practice. In their discussion of reflection in the (2008) film version of J M Coetzee’s (1999) Disgrace, literary scholars Zinato and Speck (2014) write about how in that film ‘the mirror serves as a surface where light refracts into black and white and each subject is not only its own ghost but the double or the negative of the other’ (2014: 53). They go on to mention how Julien also deploys the mirror in his (1995) film Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask.

Therefore, I would like to build on this helpful analysis, and my argument will centre upon exploring the different ways in which we can understand the idea of reflection, or mirroring when it is considered as an operation of culture and, rather than speak of ghost, I will analyse the phantasmal nature of what takes place when one museum literally reflects another. I will now probe this play of reflections deeper in relation to Julien’s intertextuality with phenomenology, as an experiential spectral dimension of heterotopias, other cinematic works and with the mirrors of mythology.
Orpheus, mirrors and the spatial imaginary

Even as a triple screen work, *Baltimore* plays with the idea of mirrors but in a different way to *Vagabondia* which very much deals with doubles, as I have discussed. Here, the triple split-screen works to approximate and negotiate the mirror as a *mise-en-scène* of alienation, the site of a mirror that is both specular and spectral, an image that at once confirms our corporeal existence and simultaneously questions it – as Van Peebles does when he encounters his wax effigy – as a fictitious ghostly presence, as something outside of our conscious self that confers a split upon our being, a veritable duality between interiority and exteriority, and even between black and white. I would suggest that Merleau-Ponty was exploring the phenomenology of this kind of experience, of what Marx had also termed alienation, but without the materialist basis in political economy – what he called ‘the ideal, fictitious, or imaginary me, of which the specular image is the first outline’ and he goes on to say:

> In this sense I am torn from myself, and the image in the mirror prepares me for another still more serious alienation, which will be the alienation by others. For others have only an exterior image of me, which is analogous to the one seen in the mirror. Consequently others will tear me away from my own immediate inwardness much more surely than will the mirror (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 136).

Such an observation is all-important in the present discussion, not only connecting with the ideas of Fanon in his phenomenological analysis of alienation but with the notion of the virtual space of the mirror as itself a heterotopia. Furthermore, in this construct of the ‘specular image’ there is a suggestion of the phantasm manifested in *Baltimore* as the cyborg as well as by the wax effigies, as discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the ideas of Foucault, Rapaport and Klein and we shall discuss again below, this time grounded in a notion of a ‘fictitious presence’. The subject sees itself in the mirror as both present and absent, which is often the case in encounters with museum collections and particularly pertinent to subjectivities formed out of the Manichean dualities of the colonial encounter. The museum becomes the portal into another world. Therefore, in taking the position of the subject in relation to the phantasm, there is more than a hint of the phenomenology in the way that *Baltimore* re-enacts the subjective experience of architectural spaces that are reflections of cultural meaning and experiences and how, conversely, they can be mythic spaces for forming new identities.
A number of writers (e.g. Bourne, 2016: 345) have alluded to Julien’s references to Cocteau, especially *Orphée*, in a number of his works. For example, writing about Julien’s (1989) *Looking for Langston* film scholar Dagmar Brunow (2015: 177) says: ‘Julien appropriates the Orpheus myth by relocating it into the new deterritorialised filmic space he creates, a space which combines both the memory of the Black Harlem Renaissance and contemporary queer pop scene of 80s London’. Therefore I am suggesting that in *Baltimore* there is also a ‘deterritorialised filmic space’ that involves the phenomenology of the mirror in the sense of being a portal into another world and that this is not the first time the renegotiation of black identity has been discussed as Orphic. In Sartre’s (1964) reflection on negritude and literature, *Orphée Noir*, he speaks of ‘the black man who asserts his negritude by means of a revolutionary movement’, and the necessity of having to present a ‘revolutionary image’. Sartre also refers to the subjective interiority of this process as looking inwards – ‘into his own soul’ – and that the revolutionary subject operates as both ‘beacon and mirror’, extracting something called ‘blackness’ which echoes Merleau-Ponty’s conceptualisation of the self as being torn by the operation of the mirror. Sartre suggests that black identity is ‘torn out’ of oneself ‘in order to present it to the world’, implicitly as an object.

Sartre’s essay reflects the visual semantics of Cocteau’s (1949) *Orphée*, with which it is almost contemporaneous, and similarly constructs the mirror as the existential portal into a duality of being, into the underworld, the Hades where Orpheus travels to retrieve Eurydice from her mortal slumber. In many ways that mirror-portal in *Baltimore* is equivalent to the doors of the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum into which both the cyborg and Van Peebles enter in order to experience an other world where they encounter the dead objects in not only the wax museum but also the Walters Art Museum. The space into which they finally enter is a heterotopia of the imagination. No one, apparently, is immune from the mortifying operation of the mirror, as the angel Heurtebise reminds Orpheus:

Mirrors are the doors through which Death comes and goes. Look at yourself in a mirror all your life and you’ll see death at work.

There is a play with death in *Baltimore* not only in relation to the mirroring of history in objects but in the narrative with its game with guns and the casual death in blaxploitation cinema: ‘nigger, do you wanna die?’ This is achieved by reawakening the objects, making them walk from one museum to another and they seem animated
like materialised ghosts, alive enough to be intently looking at the artworks. In this reference to the mortal spectrality of mirrors I am reminded of how photography and film invoke a similar existential death by means of the objectification of the subject. Roland Barthes in his (1981) *Camera Lucida* (whose subtitle ‘Reflections on photography’ allegorically invokes the mirror) describes how the photograph is a spectral representation of death in two-dimensional form. As Barthes says:

the Photograph (the one I intend) represents that very subtle moment when, to tell the truth, I am neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an object: I then experience a micro-version of death (of parenthesis): I am truly becoming a specter (1981: 14).

I think Barthes’ observation does not only apply to still photographs; he is also describing an operation of the moving image which is, after all, a succession of still photographs which simulate the effect of motion. As Barthes (1977) says, in his discussion of the nature of images in Eisenstein’s film stills: there is a ‘common opinion with regard to stills which sees them as a remote sub-product of the film… technically, a reduction of the work by the immobilization of what is taken to be the sacred essence of cinema – the movement of the images’ (1977: 66). In Baltimore this spectral invocation of death is partly achieved not only through the phenomenology of images but by means of the wax effigies. So here it is relevant to mention that wax museums have their origins in the Middle Ages where fully dressed effigies were made for funeral rituals, and the display of effigies substituted the real dead body for reasons of preservation (Harvey and Mortimer, 2003). So this play with stillness and death takes place in *Baltimore* not only by means of the Orphic penetration of the mirror and its relationship with photographs, it is also achieved through a conscious dialogue with museum spaces and objects.

Julien re-enacts this mortified history in a photographic encounter and does so with the use of wax effigies in the scene when Van Peebles encounters his wax effigy yet the spectator experiences this as a filmic two-dimensional moment and Julien does this in order to make a point about cultural hierarchies. I would therefore associate the mortifying properties of the mirror in *Orphée*, which Julien partly appropriates as a way of visualising the subjective splitting proposed by Merleau-Ponty’s theorisation of the mirror as necessarily doubling, splitting, a double consciousness in relation to cultural identity and heritage. In this regard I would also link with my earlier psychodynamic discussion of splitting as an important dimension of understanding.
postcolonial subjectivity. Of course, the figure of a ‘black Orpheus’ recalls the political urgency of Sartre’s attempt at a humanist reading of the negritude movement with which his writing was contemporaneous. Sartre (1964) it will be recalled, was famously engaged with the explosive poetry of leading negritude figures such as Léopold Senghor and especially Aimé Césaire (in particular his (1939) Cahier d’un retour au pays natal) from Martinique in the same Francophone Caribbean region as Julien’s St Lucian heritage. Sartre was perfectly aware of this process of splitting when he wrote in reference – to what might be called the black psyche – that ‘in choosing to see what he is, he has become split’ (1964: 30).

Film still from Isaac Julien Baltimore (2003) Showing Melvin Van Peebles with works by El Greco (left) and Fra Carnevale (right) in Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

What is remarkable in Vagabondia is how such themes as splitting are visually addressed, in effect montaged, in relation to how the dominant understanding of humanism is referenced and challenged in Baltimore, I would cite the scene where Van Peebles is contemplating the Renaissance perspective of Fra Carnevale’s Ideal City. Deep down into what is in effect a mise-en-abyme, Melvin Van Peebles strolls nonchalantly past the Old Masters on his way to contemplate his wax double – and the representation of Ideal City. The Ideal City in the Walters collection is one of three versions with the same title depicting different architectural vistas and the Gemäldegalerie Berlin and the Galleria Nazionale delle Marche in Urbino own the other two; The paintings are collectively known as the Urbino Perspectives and are important milestones in the development of perspective in visual art. All of the works are rendered in the same one-point perspective and have been attributed to Fra Carnevale and the circle of Fra Angelica. Carnevale was a Dominican monk, an architect as well as an artist and the paintings are thought to have been produced in
response to a commission for an extension to the Palazzo Ducale of Federico da Montefetro, the Duke of Urbino. The palace now houses the collection of the Galleria Nazionale delle Marche (Damische, 1995: 179-183). Some of the structures shown in the Baltimore painting have a close resemblance to existing buildings, such as the octagonal Baptistery of Florence, and has a formal relationship with Roman temples and is therefore an archetype of Renaissance architecture. By deliberately picking out this painting of the Renaissance ideal city, Julien explores the urban environment of Baltimore as a social and political reality based on an ideal as well as emphasising the difference between ‘space as an abstract entity and the actual fabric of cities’ (Canniffe, 2008: 78). This Euclidian pictorial space reveals itself as the utopian place of the phantasm, operating like a one way mirror that reflects Melvin Van Peebles who is inserted into this idealised site which is the precursor of the heterotopia as dream: the modern city as first visualised.

Therefore what Van Peebles sees in this scene is essentially the architectural vision of princely power, in whose image an urban space has been ordered, presented literally as a rebirth of civilisation, during that period known as the Quattrocento, the highpoint of the Italian Renaissance. So this encounter with Ideal City is also a reflective moment when the painting is made to behave like a mirror in which Van Peebles is reflected. In effect, then, this is a moment of the repositioning of humanism away from its traditional European epicentre and origins and relocating it in African American culture.

The other painting in which Van Peebles, as the most successful practitioner of blaxploitation genre as a liberation genre, is in effect reflected, as a kind of montage, is the El Greco’s Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata 1585-1590. Melvin Van Peebles looks intently at the El Greco. In a sense this encounter with the El Greco work is a moment of irony as well as a sincere historical reference. Ironic in that Christianity was both an important means by which Old Europe conquered the New World; and sincere in the recognition of how Christianity informed the language of the endurance and survival of chattel slavery and the liberation struggles that overcame it – whether this was the coded messages in church sermons that triggered slave rebellions’ or the theological underpinnings that informed the rhetorical power of Dr Martin Luther King (see Harvey, 2011). This is an historical heritage of faith that is recognised in the National Great Blacks Museum in their referencing of the Civil rights movement but not in the Walters Art Museum, until Julien rearranged their collection.
Thus humanism is forced to reflect negritude, or what we might now call the identity of the black subject, in a discourse that did not intend this to occur. It is as if the *Quattrocento* has been fast forwarded to include a new set of issues from the contemporary present: reminding us that the humanism traditionally associated with the European Renaissance incorporated scientific ideas from Arab scholars, for example in the field of mathematics and astronomy (see Freely, 2013). Furthermore, the genealogy of the ideas of statecraft as exemplified in the work of Machiavelli, should properly reference the development of Arab political thought in the Middle Ages which formed an essential part of the rubric of Renaissance statecraft and its modernity (see Ashworth, 2007). These connections remind us that it was the incorporation of ideas and technologies from distant geographies that in turn enabled the European powers to conquer what they called the New World.

Therefore this all adds up to a highly complex terrain on which Julien is articulating an existential ontology of difference between one being and an other, or indeed one world and another. This is a phenomenology of being in the world as what Fanon calls ‘the absolute other’ played out in multiple reflections and refractions. Formally and cinematically speaking this necessarily involves mirrors, reflections, doubles and of course the split screen – but this time in three rather than two dimensions. Another way to understand the subjective world of the mirror that involves an inside and outside, which is structured around a duality, is that it is a virtual space, as a placeless place, or as a heterotopia, a dislocated place. In Foucault’s co-option of the heterotopia concept from medical science, we retain the sense of dislocation but it is used to describe discrete material zones, culturally determined spaces within civil society or in the cities, as distinct from the utopian spaces of the imagination. These are spaces, which are the enactment of utopian thinking as such, and it is their difference from one another, the contradiction between such spaces and their surroundings that marks them out as heterotopias. Such places operate as absolutely different counter sites whilst simultaneously having the property of being able to reflect their surroundings like a mirror whilst not being part of that world. Mirror images such as the kind that we will see in the work of Isaac Julien often have the uncanny quality of the phantasm and cinema, particularly the split screen, is an ideal medium in which to explore the compelling world as a placeless place.

Let us now return to the phantasm which, as I have discussed in the preceding chapter, belongs to the realm of ‘dreams, primal scenes and imaginary objects’
Michel Foucault’s Concept of Heterotopia and Artistic Responses to Museum Spaces

(Rapaport, 1994: 2) and as such is an essential component of literature and cinema and is a visual phenomenon as much as it is spatial. In *Baltimore* the phantasm sometimes takes form as the cyborg and at other times as Van Peebles as his wax double who pursue each other in various real spaces which, by their presence, become phantasmal. They are real people who literally come off the street and enter a different domain in which they are both reflected and transformed and they do this in relation to space – specifically museum spaces. The reader or spectator, the conscious subject, by means of what Schwenger (1999) calls ‘textual envisioning’ requires the phantasm in order to engage with the text (or the art work). The cyborg, as a cinematic device, certainly assists in realising the extraordinary feat of merging three museums. In a sense the phantasm is the heterotopia par excellence as it neither belongs to the register of the normal nor to the pathological. Just like the heterotopic tissue about which physical medicine is still undecided, in terms of whether it is normal or pathological, the phantasm hovers between the imaginary and the hallucinatory. It ‘reveals the difference between that part of the subject that always finds itself as present and that part of the subject that always loses itself as absent’.

The second sense of heterotopia is used specifically in relation to the notion of the museum as a place of infinitely accumulating time, as an archive such as the George Peabody Library or the Walters Art Museum and the possibility of disrupting that linear accumulation by means of ‘heterochrony’, that within heterotopias the forward progress of time can be disrupted, turned back upon itself and stacked like books and documents in an archive. As Catherine Fowler (2008) has pointed out Julien’s work is a negotiation with various structures of time and space but he is especially concerned with joining up the dominant narratives of history with the subjective experience of individuals who are alien and alienated from such temporal trajectories to which they could be seen as marginal in every way. Without wishing to conflate bell hook’s ideas around marginality as the same as Soja’s spatialisatons, central to the concept of heterotopia is the issue of margins. How else could there be, as Foucault says, ‘rights of passage’ to enter heterotopias if they did not have some sort of margin that marks them out and separates them from their surroundings? In Baltimore, the margin or marginality is shown to us through geographical territories, through the discreet categories of knowledge in museum collections and archives and the admissibility of certain objects as history to the exclusion of others; yet these margins are shown to be transgressible. This is an important theme in postcolonial rejoinders to Foucault's spatial thinking - extending and including the possibility that spaces that have been
crucial in the present analysis such as museums could be considered in relation to
the notion of marginality and so called ‘third space’. Soja in his (1996) distinction
between measurable/tangible space, represented spaces proposed a third space,
synthesising the real and imagined that is pitched in the present and the future.
Writers such as bell hooks have added more detail to the contours of what describes
a heterotopia, or contested spaces as marginal and therefore inherently or not
necessarily counterproductive but creative:

I make a definite distinction between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive
structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance as location of radical
openness and possibility.’ In these margins, we can be transformed ‘as we make radical
creative space which gives us a new location which affirms and sustains our
subjectivity’ (hooks, 1990: 153).

This new location is both a real and imagined space that Edward Soja (1996: 100)
(after Henri Lefebvre) calls ‘a space of radical difference’. The ‘space’ that we are
speaking about is somewhere beyond the actual and the tangible but concerned with
the operation of the sign in place of the duality of the one and the other. In this sense
it is the perfect fit for a postcolonial strategy in which the old centre and periphery
relationship is detonated in favour of the spaces of signification, of the imaginary and
of the possible, where post imperial power is not located in a specific place such as
the periphery but is globally dispersed in relations of meaning.

**Material and imaginary spaces**

In many ways Baltimore articulates a transitional journey between first space to third
space: where first space is the material reality that surrounds us and contains our
ambitions, second space is its literal representation or documentation and third space
is the heterotopia of the imagination: a new reality envisioned by the artist after he
has rearranged the three museums and caused them to cinematically coalesce. In a
sequence towards the beginning of Baltimore we see the long, straight East North
Avenue, the marginal space on which the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum is
situated, and the outer panels of the screen depict the pavements of the same street
on which are walking the main protagonists: a woman to whom Julien refers as the
cyborg and a movie director Melvyn Van Peebles. They will engage in a cat and
mouse game of hide and seek with other within three museums that appear to
visually collide and coalesce as one space. We hear the twang of an electric guitar
that fixes us firmly in the 1970s, then gun shots and what would now be considered politically incorrect dialogue from what appears to be blaxploitation movies from the 1970s: *Bitch just what do you think you’re doin’?; are you lookin’ behind you when you should be lookin’ in fronta you?* With this sequence we see that Julien’s work is a complex interplay between different genres in space, time and history in the way that the three museum collections are eventually brought together, the cat and mouse game between the cyborg and Van Peebles and the way that he attends to the cultural significance of the different collections of the three museums, eventually bringing them together within a single space. However this is also a meditation on space, time, history in terms of a conflict between high art and popular culture played out in a game of hide and seek between a cyborg with a spherical Afro, a movie director and the collections of three Baltimore museums that are (in real time) spatially, temporally and culturally separated.

Julien uses Van Peebles, the Wax Museum, the Walters Arts Museum and the George Peabody Library to deal with what he calls the ‘bad pleasure of the stereotype’. Julien avoids repudiating the negative-stereotypical images with more noble ones, as the wax Museum aims to do with its idea of black history, or repudiating the Walters because it has no obvious connection to African American history. Instead he negotiates this terrain by literally reflecting well-known stereotypes from 1970s Hollywood, which twisted the original radical edge of Van Peeble’s *Sweet Baadassss* and turned it into a series of moneymaking stereotypes:

In *Baltimore* it is the bad pleasure you receive from those kinds of images, deemed inappropriate and irredeemable’ (O’Brien and Julien, 2005: 49).

So Julien takes ‘bad pleasure’ by incorporating African American vernacular slang, along with its profanities and visual tropes from street fashion and popular cinema such as *Shaft* (1971), *Superfly* (1972), and to music and hairstyle. In a sense, then, this is another form of *Créolité* that I discussed in the previous chapter, but this time the linguistic form is African American rather than Francophone African Caribbean. Furthermore, Julien creates a hybrid character played by Vanessa Myrie, who has worked with him on a number of other projects, whom he calls a cyborg (but who could also be called a phantasm) conflating characters from cinematic and political history by recouping the Afro hairstyle as something that is both redolent of recent political history as well as a meaningless element of retro fashion, thus exposing hairstyle as an element of what might be called essentialism. Difference, it would
seem, is not innate but open to deliberate modification by the subject, which is the definitive understanding of what is a cyborg. Vanessa Myrie is the historic-cinematic double conflating the personas of both civil rights activist Angela Davis and blaxploitation actress Pam Grier – recycling the stereotype rather than repudiating it and transforming her into a postcolonial critique of representation, who eventually reveals her Afro as fake. Julien achieves these transformations, or substitutions, through the naming of this character as a cyborg; but what is a cyborg and what precisely is it meant to signify? Julien (in Kudláček, 2007) describes her as a ‘cyborg’, ‘trespassing from one location or film into another, she represents the cosmopolitan subject traversing different locations like a nomad’. By invoking the figure of the cyborg, Julien is making a sophisticated statement about the relationship between gender, race and ultimately the conceptual foundations of European humanism.

Cyborg is a term which first appeared in 1960 (Clynes and Kline, 1960) and is partly a conflation of the term cybernetics, which of course is the science of robotics. Clynes was a research scientist and Kline was both a pharmacologist and professor of psychiatry and their paper was meant to be a serious response, in the early phase of the American space programme, to the physiological challenges that the human body faces during extra-terrestrial travel. They proposed artefact organism systems which would extend man’s unconscious, self-regulatory controls’ in order to facilitate extended space travel. In other words, they were proposing technological insertions into human biological systems which, along with drugs, would help our species to survive in outer space. Since these early beginnings in experimental science, the concept of cyborg has evolved into a science fiction trope to describe alien species that are made up of various fractions of human, machine and other animals – the sort of being that would become commonplace in science fiction cinema in the form of such characters as the cyborg assassin in Terminator (1984) or the ‘replicants’ in Blade Runner (1982) and Blade Runner 2049 (2017). However, Samuel R Delany’s (1968) space opera Nova was among the first to speculate about a ‘psychomorphic and heterotopic’ future where cyborg technology is prevalent and where racial identity has become subject to technologies of choice (Tucker, 2005). However the term also references post-humanism because it restores the category human to a condition as one animal species among many and recognises the limits of the knowledge and consciousness of ‘Man’ in relation to the natural world. As literary scholar Thomas Foster (2005: XXI) points out: ‘it is easier to define post humanism as a form of gender trouble than to define how race still matters under highly mediated techno
cultural conditions of existence’ – which is to reference the nub of the problem that cyborg addresses: the possibility of fluidity of gender but also of racial identity as well, as a function of technology and culture. This partly explains the attraction of the cyborg as a post human subject to Julien’s project because his mission is also an attack on all forms of essentialism, whether this concerns gender, sexuality or race.

Feminist theorist Donna Haraway (1991: 149) redefined the cyborg not only as ‘cybernetic... a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as one of fiction’. She proposed the cyborg as a major concept in her attack on all forms of biological essentialism at the level of gender, race, and sexuality, which is what Julien’s character represents with her bionic morphology – especially her eyes and her superhuman physical abilities that enable her to leap through the six storeys of atrium in the George Peabody Library. Acknowledging that at one level the concept of the cyborg constitutes ‘the final abstraction embodied in a Star Wars apocalypse’ Haraway emphasised the creative possibility that ‘a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines’ (1991: 154) which is what we see in Baltimore in its reference to space ships and superhuman beings. Haraway’s construction of cyborg relied heavily upon writers such as Octavia Butler who had first introduced the term to feminist academic discourse in her Xenogenesis Trilogy (1987-1989, later re-titled as Lilith’s Brood) is a literary text with the clear aim of breaking down the dominance or race and gender categories and detonating the binary male/female dualism of a gendered existence and politics. Lilith and her genetically modified progeny – saved from extinction after a missile war in which most of the Earth is destroyed – are saved by an alien species called the Oankali, who have a third sex, in addition to male and female genders, called ooloi. The Oankali are able to manipulate genetics at will and share consciousness between individual subjects.

In an interview with artist and writer Thyrza Nichols Goodeve (2000: 120) Haraway acknowledged her debt to Butler’s Xenogenesis Trilogy, as well as the painter Lynn Randolph. Asked by Goodeve if she thought it was ‘uncanny’ that Butler’s work was ‘the perfect science fiction corollary to essays such as her (1999) The Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies, Haraway replied:

I feel about Octavia Butler much the same way I feel about Lynn Randolph. Octavia Butler does in prose science fiction what Lynn does in painting and what I do in academic prose. All three of us live in a similar kind of menagerie and are interested in
the process of xenogenesis, i.e. fusions and unnatural origins. All three of us are
dependent on narrative. Lynn is a highly narrative painter and Octavia Butler is a
narrator, and, as you mentioned, the use of certain kinds of mythic and fictional
narrative is one of my strategies.

Julien, by invoking this figure of the cyborg, reminds us of the radical intersectionality
that was intended by Haraway’s incorporation of Butler’s cyborg idea into her feminist
manifesto for a post humanist world. Similarly Baltimore is a multi-layered space for
real and imagined histories – even ‘fusions and unnatural origins’ in which the
signification of the cyborg’s Afro hairstyle, for example, can be traced back to images
such as a photograph of Angela Davis speaking at a political rally in California a few
months before her arrest on trumped up charges of murder, kidnapping and interstate
flight in 1970 (Wattenberg, 2012: 183). This image references what has come to be
called intersectionality, the recognition of gender politics, indeed a politics of the body
that includes sexuality, race, class and other differences which has been debated in
relation to the revolutionary politics of the 1960s that not only produced political
figures such as Angela Davis but filmmakers such as Melvyn Van Peebles (see
Davis, 2011). It is not easy to separate the doctored FBI photographs of Davis, which
deliberately exaggerated her Afro hairstyle, which was then an emblem of politico-
cultural deviance, from the fictional representation of political radicalism and social
deviance that informed the role of so many blaxploitation movies including the role of
Coffy (1973) played by Pam Grier. So when, in Baltimore, the cyborg removes her
Afro, revealing it to be a wig, it is as if one of the main visual artefacts of the
revolutionary politics of the 1960s, is seen to be a synthetic item – just an element of
fashion, an artificial disguise in the cyborg’s attire which is just as contingent upon
space time context as the museum in which the gesture takes place.

Conclusions: consolidating the reflections

What I have been discussing is how Julien, having established his own authentic
mastery and ironic take on the genre of blaxploitation, uses aesthetic strategies
derived from popular African American cinema to conjoin the once marginal space of
the National Great Blacks in Wax museum with the Walters Art Museum and the
George Peabody Library. This is achieved through the narrative device of the cat and
mouse game ensues between the cyborg and Van Peebles which in turn gives way to
a syncretic doubling, an interaction between the genre of blaxploitation itself and
objects from the art collection in the Walters Art Museum. As I have argued, the aesthetics of Blaxploitation meet the Italian Renaissance or, to put it another way, with Western Humanism – and appears to consider himself in relation to two very different artworks: one that references the Bible and the other to the system of visual representation known as perspective and how this is used to represent an architectural space. I think most writers who have commented on this film have not paid sufficient attention to this interaction, which is highly significant and illustrates the way that *Baltimore* does not reside within a singular cultural space but attempts to make connections that in conventional art history are often not made (between the Harlem Renaissance and modernism or between humanism and the non-European). Julien deliberately pauses the movement of his camera on three paintings as he appears the critique the heritage and the postcolonial legacy of humanism, in relation to Christianity and how this is represented in pictorial as well as architectural space – spaces that signify a complicity between discursive power and historical events, such as the slave trade. I would also suggest that as a whole *Baltimore* is asking us to consider the relationship between North American heritage, its origins in old Europe and African American contemporary culture and its own syncretic doublings that also connect with Europe with Africa.

Film still from Isaac Julien *Baltimore* (2003) Melvin Van Peebles contemplates works by Domenico Fetti and Fra Carnavale

Julien dramatises a number of deliberate encounters with artworks in the Walters Art Museum, which are designed to make important strategic statements about the relationship between Western Christian-humanistic culture and African American history and politics. By engaging so intensely with the work of Melvyn Van Peebles, Julien is also making connections between African Caribbean, British and African American cultures by joining up the three sides of the triangle that defined the
transatlantic slave trade. We have been dealing with different instances of the phenomenology of the mirror and how this relates to the existential conditions and experience of difference, othering; the phantasmal spaces that can be created through cinema in order to engage with real spaces and reconfigure them so that they make different cultural and political statements.

The way that Julien incorporates elements of the cityscape of Baltimore itself as an active part of the visual narrative is instrumental in his strategy of articulating a spatialised politics of difference by linking museum objects from Europe with aspects from American history which reveal the dominant North American cultural affiliations as themselves based on a syncretic incorporation of European traditions. Julien substitutes the miracle of St Francis receiving the stigmata from a heavenly apparition with another equally remarkable event: the arrival from outer space of an alien object and the appearance of the cyborg who transcends all essential human identities and capabilities when she performs superhuman feats and seems to be at least partly responsible, along with Van Peebles, for the extraordinary spatial reconfigurations that takes place. The fleeting reflections within the triple split screen shows the cyborg as a shattered mirror contemplating an Egyptian artefact and history here is being represented as montage or as a discontinuous set of refractions that imply different time zones. The perfect symmetry of the George Peabody Library is broken down into a series of fragments and there is a disruption of the tendency of photography to replicate the same one-point perspectival viewpoint that we see in the painting by Fra Carnevale is broken up and refracted.

Julien is concerned with the spaces of modernity and the here and now but he is also concerned to make links between the historical spaces described in the Walters Museum, that start at pre dynastic Egypt all the way to contemporary popular culture and other historical time spaces as implicated in the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum. By specifically framing the El Greco painting he achieves the effect of heterochrony, of multiple time spaces. Julien constantly plays with the mirror images of the split screen, which is one way of spatially understanding how he uses Melvin Van Peebles within the museum space to make connections between different spaces of modernity, beginning with the reconsideration of the humanist legacy of the Renaissance as he contemplates it again by placing figures from the Civil Rights Movement and African American culture. In amongst old master paintings that narrate
the story of humanism articulated in a different time space and he is able to link this backwards by setting up these encounters within the museum space.

Film still from Isaac Julien *Baltimore* (2003) Melvyn Van Peebles encounters his wax double and effigies from the National Great Wax Museum in the Walters Art Museum.

The dénouement of the film occurs when the two museum collections, encounter one and the other and in effect become conjoined. What happens here is extraordinary because it is as if Julien is using the cinematic space to join up cultural domains that have been artificially kept apart: the ‘downtown’ contents of the Wax Museum are drawn into the ‘uptown’ humanist-Renaissance space, along with Billy Holiday, Dr Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. African American culture and history and mainstream, dominant American culture collide with European heritage, especially from the Renaissance onwards. The objects from the National Great Blacks In Wax Museum become spectators at the Walters Art Museum in an uncanny scene, which becomes the mise-en-scène for a new museum space that only exists within the imaginary cinematic space. It is a phantasmic event, when Van Peebles encounters his wax double. He appears to confront himself and at that moment he splits up into a series of mirror images, appearing to articulate a particular version of the postcolonial subject as necessarily split, as we have discussed in relation to Dubois, Sartre, Klein, Bhabha and Gilroy – doubled, even fractured into a myriad of fragments – but these coalesce into a new form. However, the syncretic framing is interesting because between Van Peebles and his double is another painting from the Walters Collection, this time a baroque work: *Christ and the Tribute Money* by Domenico Fetti (after Titian) 1618-1620. The two images of Van Peebles – his real self and a wax effigy – frame this painting, which is a morality tale about money and power. The Pharisees tried to trap Christ by asking him whether people should pay taxes to the Romans. Pointing to a *denarius* (Roman coin bearing the image of the Emperor), he replied: ‘Give to the Emperor the things that are the Emperor’s, and to God the things that are
God’s’ (Mark 12:17). So this lesson about loyalty, and the relative powers of temporal and spiritual authority, is retold by bouncing pictures and reflections in a series of mirror images, seemingly simultaneously to refer to the power of money in art – from benefactors and collectors like Peabody and Walters to filmmakers like Van Peebles for whom commercial success, tribute money, allowed him to enter the exclusive white and masculine spaces of Hollywood filmmaking.

So typically playing on the mirror, the double, the simultaneous, near and far and the side by side, we are taken back to the margins again, where we began. This marks the boundary of a wider heterotopia away from the internal spaces of the three museums but out there on the sprawling suburban map of contemporary Baltimore. We come out of third space and go back to first space. In the concluding frames of the film we hear: ‘the party’s over, Baby. It’s dawn, it’s reality’. This is as if to emphasise not only closure but the transition from the imaginary spaces of the conjoined museums – the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum, the Walters Art Museum, the George Peabody Library and all those pictorial spaces – back to the domestic neighbourhood of downtown Baltimore.

We end, symmetrically, back where we began – in the African American neighbourhood around East North Ave. It has been a sort of riotous party, or even a dream in which the normal classification of things in relation to their places or positions has been upended. In the concluding sequence the re-emergence of the cyborg and Van Peebles from the Walters Art Museum and the George Peabody Library takes them out of the doors of the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum and back onto East North Avenue. This passage is indeed from one reality into another or from one world to the next in much the same way that Orphée re-emerges from the underworld where the dead reside and back through the mirror into this world, of the living. In some senses, then, the cyborg has indeed visited the dead in a different time space as if the objects in the museum are mortified, belonging to a petrified world far removed from the streets of the city by means of which they become enlivened.

However a kind of permanent transformation has taken place and the previous cultural hierarchy has been irrevocably upset. Somehow the image in the mirror and its subject have become one, and what was absent becomes present. We can never again perceive these objects in the same way. The external and internal worlds of the mirror have been conjoined and the alienation that is customarily associated with the estrangement of the mirror image has been replaced with what might be called
agency (or ‘agentiveness’ as Heinz (1992), quoting sociologist Mark Orkin, suggests) as a resolution of splitting but an existential strategy of resistance resulting in action. a synthesis, where double consciousness is not a symptom but a new third space, as Edward Soja might term it. Or to put it another way: we have been experiencing the ‘space of radical openness’ that bell hooks wrote about – as a performative site where transformations take place. That final shot of East North Avenue reminds us that we are still in the margins but it has turned out to be a most productive place indeed. This final mirrored aspect is reinforced by the two symmetrical shots of the same door of the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum where, exiting from one is the cyborg and from the other is Van Peebles and in the middle frame is the receding perspective of East North Avenue.
6 Conclusions to the Thesis

Outcomes of my research

have been aiming in this thesis to pursue the place of the postcolonial signifier in museum spaces as it is manifested and imagined and to which artists have responded with diverse strategies, conceptually and aesthetically. The thesis has taken me in unexpected directions and led to a different destination than at first intended. Some journeys appeared to lead to dead ends, such as the Foundling chapter, only to discover a surprising detour, which connected with my original hypothesis about a postcolonial connection between the hospital and artistic responses to it. Originally my hypothesis was to analyse museums, gardens and hospitals as an integrated response to Foucault’s typology of heterotopias. These sites appealed to me because they have been subjects of my visual art practice and in the case of hospitals have been the subject of my political practice and activism in relation to postcolonial questions.
Some substantial work was done on Greenwich as a site that encapsulated all of the original heterotopic typologies: it has a defunct hospital, is a landscaped garden and is the site of a number of museums – as well as being a site that is an important part of the British national identity in terms of empire, maritime power and symbolism of gardens and the natural environment. Therefore originally there was also a chapter on the painter George Stubbs and how his depictions of wild animals raise important questions about the representation of otherness in relation to the nature and its fauna and flora as observed by European artists.

However, the complexities of investigating Foucault’s theory and then applying it to a number of artistic responses to museums produced more material than would be acceptable for this degree, however I hope to pursue these in post-doctoral research, and particularly develop the work undertaken into the paintings of George Stubbs. The writing has been a journey of discovery in which I have been surprised by the complexities of fully pursuing the heterotopia theory in relation to a limited and focused number of sites. It was unexpected that a short artist film could contain so much material for analysis and this is why the other sites were abandoned in favour of concentrating fully on a smaller number of artists and works as it became clear that there would not be enough space in the thesis to include them all and a decision was taken to focus on fewer sites.

Spatial thinking as interdisciplinary

This project has been an attempt to demonstrate what it means to think spatially and to interpret artworks with spatial concepts in mind. The heterotopia concept, or thinking spatially, turns out not to obey disciplinary boundaries – because spatialisation occurs in so many discursive systems as I have tried to show in this thesis – and the challenge in using it is to control the focus of the investigation because a space has so many stories to tell. So the methodology relating to heterotopias can be compared to archaeology in that one has to attend to all of the nuances of the site regardless of the knowledge base or discipline to which they are related. I can appreciate why Foucault likens his methodology of discourse analysis to genealogy because the method of investigation of the lineage of spatial genetics is similar to researching relationships, intermarriages, birth and deaths – reflecting the fluctuating fortunes of different epistememes and their relationship with particular
historical epochs – with no apparent end to the potential levels of detail and analysis that a particular site can yield.

**Further research and implications for my practice**

There is potential for much further research on analysing spatial representations of the real and imaginary, especially in painting and the work I began on Greenwich, George Stubbs and his representations of wild animals holds great potential for further research and publications. I was able to learn more about why architecture, museums and landscape are such an important part of my practice and has inspired ideas for new works. This research has already had a significant impact on my studio and curatorial practice. It is the thinking around these questions of space, power and heritage that led me to make to film *No to a Prince* that I discuss at the end of the Practice section of the thesis. In my curatorial work I have been invited by the Pitt Rivers Museum at the University of Oxford as a curatorial advisor on their Decolonising the Museum programme and I am also working with the Science Gallery at Kings College London on an arts science programme on anxiety. I have been formulating some ideas about further spatial research in terms of spaces of masculinity which I would like to propose to the Slade School of Fine Art at UCL as a post-doctoral project.

**Conclusions on what I set to do in the thesis, whether it has been achieved and how it was done**

My initial proposal for this project set out to tackle the main types of site that Foucault describes as heterotopias: museums, hospitals and gardens. This was not just because these kinds of sites were identified by Foucault as heterotopias, it was also because I had personal connexions with them. I had worked in a hospital, was working in museums and the thesis was originally conceived in my mother’s garden and it is the garden, in the form of the English park, especially Greenwich, which had been the subject of earlier research and was planned to be extended in the present project. However, I soon realised that this methodology was too loose and that it would be impossible to contain such a wide number of sites within one study. I had tried to include an analysis of Regents Park and its Zoo as part of an analysis that would show the zoological garden as a kind of heterotopia in which various
simulations of wildness (if not wilderness) could be recreated as a spectacle of otherness though the exhibition of animals within an Arcadian setting. As my research progressed it emerged that the most important focus should be on museums because not only was there a close connection with my own practice at present, these institutions seemed increasingly important to me as centres of immense cultural power in defining concepts around civilisation and culture and in representing historical events such as the British Empire and the Transatlantic the Slave Trade.

This earlier plan was conceived within a more historical timeline or the logic of its historicity. That is to say what is presented here is the theoretical structure of what Foucault conceived in the 1960s; an analysis of two eighteenth century sites as addressed by contemporary artists Mat Collishaw and Isaac Julien during the early 2000s. The reason why I have chosen to focus on Isaac Julien rather than other artists such as Susan Hiller, Jake and Dinos Chapman and Mark Dion – who all have engaged with museums – is because of Julien’s specifically postcolonial take on these institutions.

Given my comments about the personal aspects to the conception of the Foundling Hospital chapter, it was the very failure to find postcolonial evidence in the material history of the institutions that led to the odd historical discovery in Mat Collishaw’s postcolonial take on the hospital which in turn led back to one of its founders. Therefore, what seems odd, in the historico-temporal sense, turns out to be logic when one considers the content of what was discovered in the research rather than the date of the institutions in relation to other sites studies in the thesis. I do, however, recognise that the shape of the thesis has turned out differently to how I initially envisaged it – particular in relation to the question of historical continuity. I had originally envisaged a wider number of sites to analyse that would have provided greater historical continuity between them and the need to contain the project has resulted in temporal jumps.
Yet the apparent historical discontinuity yielded great rewards in terms of insights into my own curatorial practice around arts and health. By reconsidering the ground-breaking activities of the hospital as being in effect the first public art gallery in Britain, I was able to reconnect with an earlier conception of curating that predated its present understanding especially in the contemporary art practice.

Having said all of this, I think one of the aims of this thesis was to understand my relationship with space, not only as an experiential reality but why it seems to underlie so much of what I do as an artist, as a curator and also in my activism. By making such a thoroughgoing analysis of other artists’ works and how they have visually articulated a number of important spatial questions concerning postcolonial experience, I have been able to gain a deeper understanding of my own practice and it has opened up new areas of possibility.

More than one of these areas of possibility have been how my own professional and artistic practice has been influenced by the process of writing this thesis. Whether not what I exactly set out to achieve in the thesis was achieved, in my practice as an artist and curator, I can see how this period of research and reflection has enabled me to develop new areas of work with museums. In this sense, what I set out to do in the thesis and what I have achieved in my practice have exceeded my greatest expectations. It cannot be unrelated that during the latter part of completing this thesis that in my professional practice I have gained major support for a new major programme around museum education that aims to change the way that museum professionals are trained and recruited. In formulating the aims for this programme, which has been around diversifying the arts and heritage workforce, I have been able to draw on the postcolonial insights of the research in this thesis to give evidence and legitimacy to the outcomes of my professional work.
One such outcome has been the development of a project with the Pitt Rivers Museum at the University of Oxford. The project is entitled Vitreous Bodies and will support the Pitt Rivers Museum to attract a new audience and to build on its ongoing strategy to decolonise the Museum by engaging with its origins in British imperial history. This means working with the Museum in targeting a younger audience with a critical perspective on heritage who are sensitive to a postcolonial critique of museums as well as those who are engaged with contemporary art, especially as produced by artists from diverse backgrounds. I think it is unthinkable that I could have developed this kind of project without the period of research and reflection that that this has provided for me.
Impact statement

This doctoral thesis is intended to be an original contribution to art criticism and museum studies. I intend it to be a source of expertise, knowledge, analysis and discovery to advance diversity through postcolonial studies. As such I believe the text has the potential to benefit both inside and outside academia, especially in the museum and heritage sectors. In relation to public policy, I believe there is potential for this work to be the theoretical basis for creating education and public programmes with delivery partners with whom I work in the museum sector. Also, this research will assist with my influencing work with political leaders and policy makers, arguing for greater diversity in our museums, particularly with the UK Government’s Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport which is responsible for our national museums, and Arts Council England, which supports arts and heritage organisations.

I intend my application of Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopia to analyse artworks, heritage objects and architecture will be of benefit to future scholarship in terms of its subject matter and research methodology. Within academia I hope this thesis will encourage more analysis of artists from diverse cultural backgrounds and provide enhanced and expanded material for the teaching curricula in art history,
museum studies and fine art. Outside of academia the research that I conducted for this thesis will also contribute to my conception of new themes for my public engagement work to inform the curation of future exhibition programmes. During the course of writing the thesis I have developed a substantial curatorial practice and educational work with museums and arts organisations and the research has assisted me to secure a major grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop work-based learning within the museum sector that creates opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to begin careers in museums.

Since the thesis contains a substantial chapter on an artwork made in response to museums in the USA, I believe there are also possible international links to be made in terms of cultural and diaspora studies and I have identified areas for future research. Research material that was produced but could not be included in the thesis will provide opportunities for future dissemination in peer reviewed publications and presentations at symposia and colloquia.
Chapter 7  Studio Practice: Activism, Photography and Curating

Introduction

My practice is a combination of activism, photography and curating which has developed over a long period during various phases of my career. At different times there has been more or less emphasis on one or more of these three activities depending on the nature of the project or the issue I am trying to address. My fine art practice grew out my activism around mental health and the (mis)representation of the black psyche within Western psychiatric discourse and the way that individuals experience the discipline as a social reality. I first began to make photographs with patients to tackle the way that psychiatric hospitals were sites of oppression. My work concerning mental health and race is very much influenced by Foucault's writing on the history madness and addresses the...
missing subject of postcolonialism within the philosopher’s discourse as well as in contemporary experience and politics.

**Photography – still and moving**

My photography has always been concerned with space in relation to architecture and landscape and sometimes combining elements of portraiture. All of this architectural work is around the access to or perception of privileged spaces and views. The series of museum interventions made shortly before commencing work on this PhD was an important inspiration. In these works I combined portraiture with architectural photography to make interventions into collections such as the National Gallery, Dulwich Picture Gallery and the Painted Hall at the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich. My engagement with the architecture of Dulwich Picture Gallery, by Sir John Soane, continues in this thesis with the response to his house and museum by Isaac Julien in his (2000) work *Vagabondia*.

My still photography work is mostly in the large format analogue medium requiring great preparation and negotiation to gain access to these spaces and views and more recently I have been making moving image works. The resulting images are digitised in order to achieve a naturalism that renders the constructed nature of the representation as apparently natural, or to make the extraordinary seem plausible.

These works were meant to place the postcolonial subject in a visual spectacle within museum collections and spaces in order to raise questions about the way that notions of heritage are constructed around cultural difference, superiority and subordination. I return to these in a different register in the film I am making, *No to a Prince*, relating to the series of sculptures in the Loggia dei Lanzi in Florence: Giambologna’s *Rape of the the Sabine Women* and Donatello’s *Judith and Holofernes* (1457–64). These sculptures relate to the political domination of Florence, particularly by the Medici dynasty, and I explore the violence that they depict as a strategy of princely power that articulates a certain kind of statecraft which I reference through the works of Niccolo Machiavelli, particularly in his *The Prince*.

I have continued this interest in museums in my photography and moving image work and in my installations using vitrines. I have made a number of still and moving images examining the nature of gardens as sites of cultural identity, looking at how plants represent national identity and how gardens operate as signifiers for power and
difference. My interest in gardens is connected with my interest in architectural space and how it can be privileged in relation to power. The gardens that I photograph are usually those of the rich and powerful such as the Boboli Gardens in Florence that also relate to the history of the Medici dynasty. I travelled to Morocco to study Islamic Gardens of Ottoman Princes and have been interested in the contrast between these North African landscapes and their European counterparts such as aristocratic gardens or those specialising in botanical display. In the images I made in the Giardino dei Semplici in Florence, for example, I was particularly interested in the representation of savagery and violence through the display of natural history and the referencing of pre-historic fauna.

Installations

Yves Klein _Le Vide_ (The Void) of 1958 at Galerie Iris Clert, Paris. 208.661 x 122.047 x 110.236inch. Image Courtesy Yves Klein Archives.

I have always been interested in the use of vitrines and have for some time been fascinated by Yves Klein’s (1958) work _Le Vide_ (The Void). This work by Klein mocks
the vitrine and its primary purpose to bestow an aura upon objects by making it take the place of its contents. I have been drawn to the vitrine as an increasingly important aspect of my practice because I believe these glass enclosures are discrete spaces within themselves and are an important aspect of the history of visual display, whether this is in commercial marketing of goods and in scientific and curatorial display or in museums and galleries. The vitrine not only represents the obsession of Western culture with the gaze but it also represents the alienation of objects from spectators and re-enacts the otherness and estrangement of the colonial subject. I first explored the use of vitrines in my mental health activism where the drugs used in the treatment of psychiatric disorders were (mis)labelled with their unwanted side-effects to raise issue about their socially controlling consequences.

Later on, in my 2010 installation at the Slade School of Fine Art, *A History of Sorts*, I used the vitrine to display an apparently random collection of objects from my own personal history to raise questions about how we record history and the objects used to represent it. Since then I built a miniature vitrine and have acquired a number of antique versions that I am currently working on to make new displays.

**Curating**

My involvement in curating has grown naturally out of my activism work in addressing the politics of mental health and difference and I do this within an interdisciplinary methodology through various artistic media including visual art, dance and especially music. The ideas for these curatorial interventions were partly inspired by the politics of space, particularly Anthony Vidler’s (2000) work *Warped Space* on the relationship between architecture and anxiety and also the films of Alfred Hitchcock that deal with neuroses such as *Spellbound* (1945) *Vertigo* (1958) and *Psycho* (1960). I particularly regarded this approach to mental anthropology as an engagement with modernity and as a way of addressing contemporary issues around the politics and poetics of mental health through the visual arts. I was also inspired by the scholarship of Gemma Blackshaw and Leslie Topp (2009) and Louis Sass (1992) in terms of their work on the relationship between modernism and madness.

This research led me to develop the Anxiety Arts Festival which I directed for the Mental Health Foundation and took place in 2014. The Anxiety Festival was a substantial cross arts programme in which I worked with curator Bábara Rodríguez Muñoz developing new commissions by Eva Kotátková, Lawrence Abu Hamdan,
performances by dancer and choreographer Latifa Laâbissi and Bonnie Camplin and the composer Jocelyn Pook. The Bonnie Camplin project, *Military Industrial Complex* was nominated for the 2015 Turner Prize and led to further programmes such as Acting Out 2015 which took place in Nottingham. The methodology of the festival was to invade different spaces with anxiety and we worked with venues as diverse as the Wigmore Hall, Freud Museum, Brixton Prison, National Portrait Gallery, South London Gallery, Barbican, University of the Arts London and many others. So this work extended the Anxiety Festival into a number of spaces by engaging with the politics of deviant behaviour starting with the work of Freud and extending to contemporary mental health politics by revisiting work of Ian Breakwell and the Artist Placement Group. We commissioned a number of emergent and established contemporary artists to take part such as Susan Treister, Jocelyn Pook and Jenna Bliss, some of whom were engaged with hospital spaces and social service institutions.

Following Anxiety and Acting Out programmes I worked with the University of New South Wales National Institute for Experimental Arts and supported the development of The Big Anxiety programme that took place all over Sydney in the autumn of 2017. Following these projects, I formed a research, curating and public engagement group called PS/Y devoted to interdisciplinary dialogue between the human sciences and art. We have developed and delivered a new programme called Hysteria which explores the articulation of trauma in the dynamic between mind and body in Western culture. We have commissioned a number of contemporary artists including Cally Spooner, Larry Achiampong and, again, Jocelyn Pook and the programme was supported by Arts Council England and the Wellcome Trust. Documentation about these projects is provided in the forgoing plates, reviews and documents.

The present research has revealed new areas for research and curating around the politics of space and I am currently developing ideas for new programmes around social space as heterotopia that I am preparing for a post-doctoral and book project that will also be realised as an exhibition.
PLATES
Museums

These museum works immediately preceded and inspired this PhD project

Architecture

Errol Francis (2008) *Atrium Burj Al Arab*, Chromogenic print 600 x 425 mm.

Michel Foucault’s Concept of Heterotopia and Artistic Responses to Museum Spaces 201
Errol Francis (2008) *Still Life* Wafi Mall Dubai, Chromogenic print 600 x 425 mm.
Errol Francis (2011) *St George’s Bloomsbury*. Silver gelatin print 600 x 535 mm.
Errol Francis (2011) *Robin Hood Gardens I*. Silver gelatin print 535 x 600 mm.
Errol Francis (2011) *Robin Hood Gardens II*. Silver gelatin print 535 x 600 mm.
Landscape

Errol Francis (2009) *Tate and Lyle* Colour reversal photograph 800 x 1000 mm.
Errol Francis (2013) *London Bridge Quarter*, Colour reversal photograph 800 x 1000 mm.
Errol Francis (2011) *Millennium Dome*, Colour reversal photograph 800 x 1000 mm.
Errol Francis (2011) Providence Wharf. Colour reversal photograph 800 x 1000 mm.
Gardens

Errol Francis (2013) *Spinosaurus, Giardino Orto Botanico dei Semplici*, colour reversal photograph 1000 x 1000 mm.
Errol Francis (2013) *Tyrannosaurus Rex, Giardino Orto Botanico dei Semplici*, colour reversal photograph 1000 x 1000 mm.
Errol Francis (2013) Giardino Corsi Annalena, colour reversal photograph 1000 x 1000 mm.
Errol Francis (2013) *Villa Gamberaia*, colour reversal photograph 1000 x 1000 mm.
Errol Francis (2013) *Villa Gambraia*, colour reversal photograph 1000 x 1000 mm.
Errol Francis (2011) *Jardín Menara*, colour reversal photograph 550 x 400 mm.
Errol Francis (2011) *Jardín Majorelle*, colour reversal photograph 550 x 400 mm.
Anxiety Arts Festival

Throughout June 2014

Exploring anxiety through the arts

Anxiety 2014 featured over 70 events, including new commissions plus UK and world premières.
Introducing Anxiety Arts Festival London 2014

Anxiety 2014 is a new London-wide arts festival, curated by the Mental Health Foundation and taking place throughout June. The festival explores anxiety, looking at its causes, how it affects all of our lives, and how it can act as a creative force. It brings together leading and emerging artists to address anxiety from different angles: from medical, social and historical perspectives to individual, collective and contemporary viewpoints.

Anxiety 2014 presents a dynamic programme of visual art, film, performance, music, dance, theatre and talks spanning venues across London, including leading arts organisations, universities, health care institutions and community centres.

The London festival continues the Mental Health Foundation’s tradition of bringing together mental health and the arts, which began in 2007 with the highly successful annual Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival.

Why a festival about anxiety?

Anxiety disorders are amongst the most common mental health problems in the world and are diagnosed in about 1 out of 20 adults in Britain. Anxiety is experienced by everyone at times and is perfectly normal. However, generalised anxiety disorder is more constant and harder to control and can often affect and disrupt everyday life. By focusing on an all too common experience, Anxiety 2014 aims to open up wider conversations about mental health issues, and to demystify and tackle any associated stigma.

There is also a close relationship between mental disturbance, anxiety and modernism in the arts. The emergence of psychoanalysis at the turn of the twentieth century had a profound impact on artists who were breaking away from classical conventions of representing the world.

This new insight into the psyche influenced artistic vision by focusing on the unique perception that comes from individual experience.

The twentieth century also unleashed a series of rapid social, cultural and political changes that caused deep anxieties for individuals and societies, making an
indelible impression on the arts as well as our sense of wellbeing. The festival’s visual arts, film, communities and performing arts programmes look at the relationship between anxiety and modernity and how feeling anxious has become part of our contemporary condition.

The Mental Health Foundation is the leading charity in the fields of mental health research, policy studies and integrated service development. Established in 1949, the Foundation is committed to reducing the suffering caused by mental ill health and to helping everyone to lead mentally healthier lives by tackling stigma and discrimination, carrying out research and developing practical solutions for better mental health services.

Errol Francis, Artistic Director
June 2014

In the appendices are three reviews, from The Guardian, the BBC and The New York Times that give a flavour of the programme content and demonstrate the critical attention that the festival received.
Bonnie Camplin *Military Industrial Complex* at South London Gallery

Photography by Ollie Hammick © the Artist, Cabinet London and South London Gallery.

Curator Bárbara Rodriguez was a member of my team who curated *The Military Industrial Complex*, Muñoz with South London Gallery, and was one of the key visual arts commissions of the Anxiety Festival which took the form of a study room exploring what ‘consensus reality’ is and how it is formed, drawing from physics to philosophy, psychology, witchcraft, quantum theory and warfare. The Military Industrial Complex was commissioned by South London Gallery and Anxiety Arts Festival London 2014. In 2015 Camplin was nominated for the Turner Prize for her 2014 presentation at South London Gallery as part of Anxiety Arts Festival.
Jocelyn Pook:

Anxiety Fanfare and Variations for Voices and Ensemble

Errol Francis introducing the Anxiety Fanfare and Variations for Voices and Ensemble composed by Jocelyn Pook, performed at King’s Place London as part of the Tête à Tête Opera Festival and at Nottingham Contemporary as part of the Acting Out 2015 programme curated by PS/Y.

https://vimeo.com/135783772

Jocelyn Pook is a leading contemporary composer renowned for her work with film director Stanley Kubrick, choreographer Akram Khan and a number of works for concert hall. I commissioned this work for the Anxiety Arts Festival and premièred at the Wigmore Hall to critical acclaim in 2014 and performed at Tête à Tete Opera Festival and Nottingham Contemporary 2015, Hull City of Culture and Southbank PRS Foundation for Music New Music Biennial in 2017. I have recently commissioned Jocelyn to write another new work on the theme of Hysteria that will be performed at Hoxton Hall London on 14 July 2018.
International Curatorial Consultancy for The Big Anxiety University of New South Wales Sydney 2017

https://www.thebiganxiety.org/staff/

Following the success of the Anxiety Festival in London in 2014, I was invited by the University of New South Wales National Institute for Experimental Art as an International Curatorial Consultant. I worked with the University to establish the Big Anxiety programme, an interdisciplinary exploration of the importance of anxiety as a pathological condition and as a creative drive of modernity. The programme took place at various venues in Sydney in autumn 2017.
PS/Y
Hysteria

http://ps-y.org

Film still from Relic 1 by Larry Achiampong. Image courtesy the artist.

I have formed a research, curating and public engagement group called PS/Y. Our mission is to explore the interface of arts and health sciences. PS/Y develops interdisciplinary projects and dialogue with artists, scientists, arts organisations, academic institutions and communities. PS/Y aims to create new creative insights to engage diverse audiences for an interdisciplinary arts practice that explores the relationship between mind and body in Western culture. PS/Y has previously been involved in delivering Anxiety, London, 2014 and Acting Out, Nottingham, 2015 and The Big Anxiety Sydney, 2017.

I commissioned Larry Achiampong to explore a narrative of colonial hysteria through claustrophobic poetics in Relic 1 at The Chapel, King’s College London October 2017. PS/Y’s Hysteria is a combined arts programme that explored health and illness in contemporary society, focusing on issues of gender, race and cultural identity. The programme took place in partnership with organisations and institutions across London from August 2017 until April 2018.

Hysteria is supported by the Wellcome Trust and Arts Council England.
9  Installations: Vitrines

Errol Francis (2010 & 2018) *A History of Sorts*, in development, antique vitrine 60 x 60 x 45 cm with a copy of Aimé Césaire’s (1939) *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*. Scanned Polaroid photograph.
Introduction

*No to a Prince* is a new moving image work I have made in response to a series of mainly Renaissance sculptures in the Loggia dei Lanzi, Piazza della Signoria in the centre of the city of Florence. The work is about absolute power and its relationship with art, and the title is a paraphrase of a quotation attributed to Queen Elizabeth I who regarded and referred to herself in the masculine form as a ‘prince’. It has been argued that she was well aware of modern developments in statecraft in Renaissance Europe and the historian Lisa Hilton (2014) believes it is unthinkable that the Queen was not aware of the works of Niccolò Machiavelli and his modern ideas on statecraft, in particular *The Prince*. This knowledge seems to be implied in Elizabeth’s riposte to her chief minister Sir Robert Cecil, the Earl of Salisbury, who, during her final illness in 1603, instructed that she must go to bed, and the Queen is said to have remarked: ‘the word ‘must’ is not used to Princes’.

This historical detail, which is really about the gendered nature of power, came to mind when I first visited Florence and encountered the collection of sculptures in the Loggia dei Lanzi on the Palazzo della Signoria towered over by the imposing

Errol Francis (2018) Film still from *No to a Prince* (Bust of Niccolò Machiavelli, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence) single screen DVD projection, 7 minutes.
structure of the city hall, Palazzo Vecchio. I came to realise that there was a connection between Machiavelli and the sculptures in the Loggia because they are connected with the same political dynasty, the Medici – the family of wool merchants for whom Machiavelli worked, who not only invented modern banking through their commercial prowess but became one of Europe’s most wealthy and powerful sponsors of the art which initiated the Italian Renaissance.

Machiavelli’s *The Prince* was written for the Medici dynasty in 1513 just after their return to power in 1512 following a period of exile and the book is dedicated to Lorenzo de’ Medici, the ‘Magnificent’, as a manual of statecraft, a treatise on the exercise of princely power. So when I first visited Piazza della Signoria I was struck by the disjuncture between the aura of power that emanated from the severe architecture of the Palazzo Vecchio, the violence depicted in the sculptures in the Loggia dei Lanzi and how these works function as objects of beauty even though the original intention of those who commissioned them was that should communicate a clear message around the use of overwhelming force against political opponents.

**A space for power**

Loggia dei Lanzi (at one time known as Loggia dell’ Orcagna, also referred to as Loggia della Signoria) is open on two sides and faces Piazza della Signoria, the principal urban square in Florence, under the shadow of Palazzo Vecchio, the seat of civic government since 1299. The name *Signoria*, although it can denote the absolutist power of princes is also a reference to republican governmental authority. So the piazza is a heterotopia of absolute and juridical power manifested in architecture and by artistic representations, sculptures, inspired by mythological and scriptural narratives such as Perseus and Medusa, David and Goliath, Judith and Holofernes and Hercules and Cacus. The Loggia is adjacent to the Uffizi Gallery, whose name derives from the original purpose of the building, *offices*, designed by Giorgio Vasari, as the administrative epicentre of the Medici political regime. The Loggia was built, between 1376 and 1382 by Benci di Cione and Simone Francesco Talenti. The building had military connections preceding its role as a space for displaying sculpture when it was adjacent to barracks used by Allessandro I de’ Medici to house mercenaries called *landsknechts* (in Italian the *Lanzichenecchi* from which the current name of ‘Lanzi’ is a corruption). The Lanzichenecchi were German military pikemen who were engaged by the Medici rulers to put down local rebellions (Moffatt, 2011).
The Loggia was also used as a terrace from where Medici Princes watched ceremonies and pageants that took place on the Piazza della Signoria. The space eventually became an open air sculpture gallery and the history of the installation of the artworks it contains makes clear that this display was not just an act of aesthetic or civic munificence on the part of the Medici dynasty – it had a clear political and propaganda purpose and was a response to political events in which the Signoria’s authority was compromised, threatened or challenged. In 1478 the rival Pazzi family, formed a conspiracy with the Salviati, who were bankers to the Vatican and leading clerics, to kill Lorenzo De’ Medici and his younger brother, Giuliano as they took mass in Santa Maria del Fiore and take over the government of Florence. Giuliano was killed, Lorenzo survived and a prolonged bloodbath followed in which the Pazzi and their followers were rounded up and executed along with leading conspirator Francesco Salviati, Archbishop of Pisa, who was defenestrated from Palazzo Vecchio with a rope round his neck wearing his episcopal robes and hung, along with the other leading co-conspirators from the façade of the Palazzo and their bodies horribly defiled. It is as a result of these events that the Medici ‘converted the heart of the city into an official place of execution, ignoring the appointed gallows, near the Gate of Justice, just outside Florence’s great eastern walls’ (Roscoe, 1803: 245 and Martines, 2003: 125).

Another important example is Girolamo Savonarola, who was a Dominican friar and challenged what he saw as the corruption and decadence of Medici rule, and when the dynasty was deposed in 1494 he become de facto ruler of Florence and he condemned and preached against the secularism of the emergent Renaissance and the excesses of the Catholic Church. The Piazza had previously been the venue for Savonarola’s Bonfire of the Vanities in 1497 when he staged the burning of thousands of objects that he identified as sacrilegious, such as certain books, ostentatious clothes, ornaments and adornments. Shortly afterwards his popularity began to wane and in 1498 after disobeying numerous interdictions he was excommunicated by Pope Alexander VI then arrested, tortured, hanged and burned at the stake in the Piazza della Signoria (Lišch, 2012).
The sculptures in the Loggia dei Lanzi and Palazzo Vecchio

The sculptures reflect these historical events that took place both within the Palazzo and in the Loggia and typify the nature of absolutist juridical power as being targeted at the body. As Foucault pointed out in his chapter on ‘the body of the condemned’ in his *Discipline and Punish*, transgressions of absolutist power must be punished by some form of corporal or capital violence or retribution upon the person. The art historian Christine Cortelli in her (2015) study of Cellini’s *Perseus with the Head of Medusa* has pointed out that the statues in the Loggia represent the absolutist political regime of Cosimo I de’ Medici under whose reign the most barbaric and frequent executions took place, estimated at six per day, carried out in the Piazza della Signoria, directly in front of the Loggia and Savonarola was one of the most high-profile victims.

The Loggia contains some of the most virtuosic sculptural works in the history of Western art, made from bronze and marble (Giusti, 2002: 31). The statues depict movement, passion and violence, challenging the hardness of the materials from which they were made to represent the pliant submission of human flesh. Considered together, the series of sculptures in the Loggia and those immediately outside and within the Palazzo Vecchio produce a spatial continuity that constitute a heterotopia that is a simulacrum of power and violence designed to intimidate and warn anyone who might consider transgressing the authority of the Signoria.

The Loggia contains:

- Benvenuto Cellini *Perseus with the Head of Medusa*, 1545-1554
- Giambologna *The Rape of the Sabine Women*, 1582 and *Hercules beating the Centaur Nessus*, 1599
- Pio Fedi *The Rape of Polyxena*, 1868
- *Menelaus Supporting the body of Patroclus* – a restored Roman statue
- *Medici Lions* – one authentically Roman and the other dating from the 16th century and installed in 1789
- *Five Marble Female Roman Statues*, three of which have been identified as Matidia, Marciana and Agrippina Minor

The violence in this sculptural suite is very much gendered in that women are mostly
the victims (Perseus holding the Head of Medusa, the Rape of the Sabine Women, and The Rape of Polyxena) so the dominant narrative is male violence. The Roman female statues – Matidia, Marciana and Agrippina Minor – silent witnesses, looking on in passive poses from the rear of the group, as if petrified. What is extraordinary about this ensemble is the contradiction between beauty and violence. In spite of the fact Giambologna’s Rape of the Sabine Women – which is finely balanced on the depiction of rape as abduction and with its more modern interpretation as sexual violence – nevertheless it managed to is allure in its 360 degree composition and the way that the artist has forced marble to communicate to the sensuality of a hand grasping a thigh. In this regard it is Cellini that pushes this contradiction to its limit because his executioner Perseus is a lithe boy with the body of Eros. From certain angles his sword which has just decapitated Medusa, whose head he holds aloft, appears phallic and erect. As Cortelli (205: 61) points out, ‘the Medici enjoyed sexualized images of a Machiavellian nature’ and she says that this is what inspired Cellini’s Perseus which ‘glorifies sexual violence’. Yet these sculptures in the Loggia which depict either violence or some kind of subordination or retribution or, in the case of the lions, the identification of rulers with predation, are not alone.

Flanking the left side of the main doors of Palazzo Vecchio is a replica of Michelangelo’s David, another beautiful boy-assassin, the original now in the Galleria dell’Accademia and on the other is a copy of Donatello’s Judith and Holofernes, its original now inside the Palazzo Vecchio, in the Sala dei Gigli. Both sculptures were made in response to political events and they were conceived as anti-Medici works. David was commissioned by the Republican Council of Florence after the Medici had fallen from power to signify the victory of the powerless in response to overwhelming oppressive force. Judith is an allegory of the powerless prevailing overwhelming oppressive force but, significantly, where the perpetrator of the violence is female. Yael Even’s (1991) has described the sculptures in the Loggia as a ‘showcase of female subjugation’ that represents a contest between male and female authority, played out in successive attempts to represent questions of gender in relation to power and violence, where the savagery of Donatello’s Judith and her beheading of Holofernes must be expiated by the decapitation of Cellini’s Medusa by a lithe and strangely androgynous boy-Perseus or balanced by the heroism of David. However, whilst I would agree with this analysis, I think it only applies to the works in the Loggia because this sculptural allegory of political violence extends across the Piazza and into the Palazzo where we see a number of other sculptures depicting male-on-male
violence and subjugation. It is ironic that the statue of David was itself a victim of violence, as Michelangelo’s original used to have a sling but it was smashed along with his left arm in 1527 when a piece of furniture was defenestrated from the Palazzo Vecchio during a riot in the building between the Medici and their political opponents (Gardner Coates, 2016: 106 and Hick Hudson, 2017: 116).

Just outside the Palazzo is Hercules and Cacus (1534) by Baccio Bandinelli. This crude sculptural colossus was the result of an anti-Medici commission, originally intended for Michelangelo, as an accompaniment to his David and whose meaning would be subverted by the Medici after they regained power in 1512 to shift its intended message to suit their own propaganda purpose. The over-sized Hercules has none of the dynamism, or of the other works. Cacus is crouched in submission between the legs of Hercules who holds a club as if ready to strike him down.

Inside the Palazzo Vecchio, two rooms in particular continue the theme of violence and subjugation: the Sala dei Gigli and the Salone dei Cinquecento. The Sala contains Donatello’s original Judith and Holofernes, and the vast and monumental space of the Salone dei Cinquecento celebrates the place of Florence in the Renaissance, in the crucial century of the 1400s, and visually narrates its military conquest over its rival city states, for example Milan in 1440. In the Salone are huge frescoes of battle scenes painted by Giorgio Vasari: the conquest of Siena, the capture of Porto Ercole, the victory of Cosimo I de’ Medici in Marciano della Chiana, the defeat of Pisa in San Vincenzo, the attack on Livorno by Massimilian of Austria and Pisa subdued by the Florentine troops. Underneath Vasari’s fresco is thought to be a lost masterpiece by Leonardo da Vinci called the Battle of Anghiari that commemorates the conflict in 1440 between Florence and Milan in which the Florentines were victorious (Melani, 2012). As the Medici rulers decided to use the Palazzo as their private residence after they returned to power, the Salone was massively enlarged by Vasari and then became in effect the Medici Court Room. Similarly to the Loggia dei Lanzi, the Salone is replete with works of sculpture depicting violence, dominion or military conquest such as the Genius of Victory by Michelangelo, 1533–1534 and Cosimo I de’ Medici commissioned twelve statues (only seven of which were completed) from sculptor Vincenzo de’ Rossi in 1560 representing the Labours of Hercules, in a thinly veiled allegory about the arduous burdens arising from the exercise of power.

The Sala dei Gigli – the appellation ‘Lilly’ denoting the fleur-de-lis symbol of Florence
which covers all four walls – is where Donatello’s original *Judith and Holofernes* now resides. Approaching *Judith*, one is able to move around it and appreciate Donatello’s innovative intention for it to be viewed from any angle. The surprising realisation was that what he created are the final moments of what the condemned sees as s/he approaches the executioner’s block: the view of the executioner from behind and the raised sword before it is brought down to perform the decapitation. In comparison, I was struck by the peacefulness of the diminutive sculpture of an adolescent *St John the Baptist*, the patron saint of Florence by Benedetto da Maiano (c1471) high up on the trabeation of the west door of the Sala dei Gigli, flanked by putti, in stark contrast with the violence of *Judith* (McHam, 2006: 114). Yet gradually, in encountering these two works, the realisation dawns that John too is to become a victim of decapitation through the actions of another woman, for different reasons to Holofernes, as the result of King Herod’s ill-fated promise to his daughter. The high pedestal on which Judith and Holofernes are mounted not only reveals that the statue was once a fountain and the original holes from which water spouted would have replicated blood jetting from Holofernes; neck. Judith appears to be threatening John the Baptist as she faces him with her sward raised from across the room.

Therefore what we see in the Sala dei Gigli are two extremes of fateful female violence: in the case of *Judith*, a woman saves her people through an heroic act of assassination whilst in *John the Baptist*, what we have is the slaughter of the righteous by a despotic ruler, in order to please the perverted wishes of his daughter. So we are caught between the female gender involved in both of these stories, one represented as heroic and the other treacherous.

**The work: *No to a Prince***

I wanted to approach these sculptures in a way that revisits their original political purpose and highlight a disconnection between their meaning and how they are now regarded by tourists or even art history. I also wanted to stress the links between the sculptures, Machiavelli and the Medici through his treatise *The Prince*. The aspect of his ideas I wanted to focus on was the importance of revenge and retribution as part of his principle around the exercise of power and statecraft and to link this with the sculptures in the Loggia dei Lanzi to stress their political meaning more than their aesthetics. I wanted to build a spatial continuity between the Loggia dei Lanzi, installations in the Piazza della Signoria and the Salone dei Cinquecento and Sala dei Gigli inside Palazzo Vecchio.
I wanted to highlight how the sculptures were intended to communicate political messages by depicting allegorical subjects such as Judith and Holofernes, Perseus and Medusa and Hercules and Cacus. Therefore the occasion I chose to make the work was the Festival Orchestre Giovanili, a youth music programme that takes place in the Loggia dei Lanzi every year and I was granted permission to film in the Piazza. However my aim was not to document the whole performance but to explore the counter-position of the young people and the sculptures. I imagined that the performance of a piece of music in the Loggia would emphasise how their meaning has been lost by the lack of connection between the performance and the sculptures as a backdrop and somehow less relevant. I also thought that there would be a degree of innocence of the children as compared with these violent depictions.

The film opens with a pan of the Piazza della Signoria in the dim morning light, with a scrolling quote from Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, as tourists walk nonchalantly by and an event is being set up in the Loggia dei Lanzi and we see Cellini’s *Perseus* being stroked by a tourist’s hand and we see other sculptures in the Loggia including pans of *Perseus with the Head of Medusa*, just a hand from *The Rape of the Sabine Women* and one of the Medici Lions. We hear the ambient sounds from the Piazza which have been montaged with an electronic score composed by Trevor Mathison. From here we see glimpses of Baccio Bandinelli’s *Hercules* before moving inside the Palazzo Vecchio and see a bust of Niccolò Machiavelli. When we return to the Loggia dei Lanzi it is dark and young performers from the Festival Orchestre Giovanili, who stage a festival every year in the Loggia, are getting ready to perform Brahms’ Symphony No 1. They are tuning up by playing the customary note A. Behind the performers we can see *Menelaus Supporting the body of Patroclus, Hercules beating the Centaur Nessus* and *The Rape of Polyxena*.

Eventually the conductor comes to the rostrum and all is quiet and he raises his baton to give the signal for the orchestra to start. However instead of hearing the music proceed the film cuts to the Salone dei Cinquecento and we see close ups of Rossi’s sculptures of Hercules overwhelming his opponent by turning him upside down. Following this the final scene takes place in the Sala dei Gigli where, with the heavily guided cornices and with the gold fleur-de-lis pattern in the background, *Judith and Holofernes* is show from below with the sword before we see its handle grasped by Judith, and other cuts of Holofernes held by the hair. After one final glimpse of the bust of Machiavelli the film ends with a quote from *The Prince*. 
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**Chapter 5: Phantasmal Mirrors: Isaac Julien’s Baltimore**


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*Shaft* (1971) [Film] Directed by Gordon Parkes. USA: MGM. 100 min.


*Superfly* (1972) [Film] Directed by Gordon Parkes. USA: Warner Bros. 93 min.

*Sweet Sweetback’s Baadasssss Song* (1971) [Film] Directed by Melvyn Van Peebles, USA: Melvyn Van Peebles. 97 min.


**Chapter 7: Photography, Activism and Curating**


**Moving Image No to a Prince**


Roscoe, William (1803) *The Life of Lorenzo De' Medici: called the Magnificent,*
# List of Illustrations in the Thesis


*Replica of the Sputnik*, image courtesy of Science Museum London.  


*A View of the Foundling Hospital* (engraving) by Benjamin Cole, from William Maitland’s (1756) The History and Survey of London From Its Foundation to the Present Time. London: T Osborne and J Shipton.  


Satellite image showing Coram’s Fields, Bloomsbury, London: site of the former Foundling Hospital, bounded by the Foundling Museum, Brunswick and Mecklenburgh Squares.  


Film still from Isaac Julien’s *Baltimore* (2003) Showing the Cyborg (left) and Melvyn Van Peebles (right). Image Courtesy the artist.  

Film still from Isaac Julien’s *Baltimore*, (2003) Showing the Jones Falls Interstate Expressway. Image Courtesy the artist.  

Film still from Isaac Julien *Baltimore* (2003) Showing Melvin Van Peebles with works by El Greco (left) and Fra Carnevale (right) in Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.  


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*Michel Foucault’s Concept of Heterotopia and Artistic Responses to Museum Spaces* 273
Film still from Isaac Julien *Baltimore* (2003) Melvyn Van Peebles encounters his wax double and effigies from the National Great Wax Museum in the Walters Art Museum.  


Errol Francis (2008) *Atrium Burj Al Arab*, Chromogenic print 600 x 425 mm.


Errol Francis (2008) *Still Life Wafi Mall Dubai*, Chromogenic print 600 x 425 mm.

Errol Francis (2011) *St George’s Bloomsbury*. Silver gelatin print 600 x 535 mm.

Errol Francis (2011) *Robin Hood Gardens I*. Silver gelatin print 535 x 600 mm.

Errol Francis (2011) *Robin Hood Gardens II*. Silver gelatin print 535 x 600 mm.


Errol Francis (2009) *Tate and Lyle* Colour reversal photograph 800 x 1000 mm.

Errol Francis (2013) *London Bridge Quarter*, Colour reversal photograph 800 x 1000 mm.

Errol Francis (2011) *Millennium Dome*, Colour reversal photograph 800 x 1000 mm.

Errol Francis (2011) *Providence Wharf*, Colour reversal photograph 800 x 1000 mm.


Errol Francis (2013) *Spinosaurus, Giardino Orto Botanico dei Semplici*, colour reversal photograph 1000 x 1000 mm.

Errol Francis (2013) *Tyrannosaurus Rex, Giardino Orto Botanico dei Semplici*, colour reversal photograph 1000 x 1000 mm.

Errol Francis (2013) *Giardino Corsi Annalena*, colour reversal photograph 1000 x 1000 mm.

Errol Francis (2013) *Villa Gamberaia*, colour reversal photograph 1000 x 1000 mm.

Errol Francis (2013) *Villa Gamberaia*, colour reversal photograph 1000 x 1000 mm.


Errol Francis (2011) *Jardin Menara*, colour reversal photograph 550 x 400 mm.
Errol Francis (2011) *Jardin Majorelle*, colour reversal photograph 550 x 400 mm.  


Errol Francis introducing the *Anxiety Fanfare and Variations for Voices and Ensemble* composed by Jocelyn Pook, performed at King’s Place London as part of the Tête à Tête Opera Festival and at Nottingham Contemporary as part of the Acting Out 2015 programme curated by PS/Y.  

Film still from *Relic I* by Larry Achiampong. Image courtesy the artist.

Errol Francis (2010 & 2018) *A History of Sorts*, in development, antique vitrine 60 x 60 x 45 cm with a copy of Aimé Césaire’s (1939) *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*. Scanned Polaroid photograph.  


Errol Francis (2018) Film still from *No to a Prince* (Bust of Niccolò Machiavelli, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence) single screen DVD projection, 7 minutes.  


*Solaris*, ‘a compelling example of how those with an anxiety disorder will try to categorise their feelings’. Photograph courtesy: Moviestore Collection/Rex.  


Dancer and choreographer Latifa Laâbissi performing her version of Mary Wigman’s (1926) *Hexentanz II* (Witch Dance) retitled as *Écran Somnambule* (Sleepwalking Screen).  

Peter Sellers in Stanley Kubrik's (1964) *Doctor Strangelove*, a satire of nuclear politics that responded to the real anxieties of the Cold War era (Image Courtesy Columbia Pictures).
Film still from Caligari by Javier Telllez (image courtesy of the artist) screened at the Anatomy Museum, King’s College London at part of the exhibition The Institution Denied, along with works by Eva Kotátková, Lawrence Abu Hamdan and James, Leadbitter. Kings College London. Photo courtesy of the artist. 288

## Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Anxiety Festival Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I</td>
<td>The Guardian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix II</td>
<td>BBC Global News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix III</td>
<td>New York Times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I: Review: The Guardian

The Guardian

Steve Rose 31 May 2014

You could say that great drama depends on anxiety but this festival, curated by the Mental Health Foundation, sees art as a way to understand and channel anxiety as it’s experienced in the real world (one in 20 British adults are diagnosed with it). The film strand is particularly strong, starting with Hitchcock’s eerie silent The Lodger at the Barbican this Sunday (with live electronic score) and re-viewing classics through the prism of anxiety on every scale, from the personal (Julianne Moore in Todd Haynes’s Safe, pictured; Ian Curtis biopic Control) to the political (Israeli animation Waltz With Bashir), the local (Asylum explores RD Laing’s self-treating 1970s commune) to the far-flung (Tarkovsky’s disorienting space saga Solaris). Various venues, Sun to 29 Jun’

Can film scripts help people understand anxiety?

Laura Barnett 8 June 2014

Anxiety is one of the most common mental health conditions, now with its own arts festival. But can seeing various disorders played out in films such as Solaris and Waltz With Bashir further our understanding?

Anxiety has always been woven into the fabric of film-making. From the nail-biting Hitchcock thriller to the bombastic Hollywood action movie, most films work to keep viewers on the edge of their seats; even a romantic comedy can bring a level of worry about whether everything will turn out as it should.

But can films actually help us understand anxiety as a clinical condition, experienced – according to the Mental Health Foundation – by almost 5% of the UK population?
Safe

Todd Haynes's 1995 drama stars Julianne Moore as a suburban housewife who convinces herself she is being assailed by invisible pollutants. Psychologist Colette Hirsch of King's College London says the character's condition bears many of the hallmarks of generalised anxiety disorder. "There's a lot of ambiguity set up in the film," she says. "This relates very much to the way people with the disorder apply negative interpretations to apparently innocuous things. In a 2010 study, we showed that if you help people to develop a more positive interpretation of situations – more like those used by the rest of the population – this reduces their tendency to worry." If only that treatment had been offered to Moore's character: instead, she ends up ensnared in a sinister cult.

The Headless Woman
This 2008 Argentinian film – called a "masterpiece" by the Guardian's Peter Bradshaw – is a study of the importance of the "tipping point": the moment when a particular experience or incident kicks off an unhealthy cycle of worry. In the film, this comes when the main character, Verónica, hits something with her car, and doesn't stop. Gradually, she becomes convinced that she has killed a child; the director, Lucrecia Martel, cleverly depicts her emotional disintegration.

Solaris

[Solaris](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solaris), 'a compelling example of how those with an anxiety disorder will try to categorise their feelings'. Photograph courtesy: Moviestore Collection/Rex.

In Andrei Tarkovsky's 1972 movie, adapted from a science-fiction novel by Stanislaw Lem, a psychologist, Kris Kelvin, is dispatched to help three astronauts apparently going insane on a distant space station. According to Vyv Huddy, a lecturer in clinical psychology at University College London, the film provides a compelling example of how those with an anxiety disorder will try to categorise their feelings, and then avoid exposure to their source. "We see that tendency towards avoidance in Kelvin's behaviour," he says. "We also get a sense of the anxiety created by being so far away from home, and the different ways people
try to cope." And with Kelvin gradually becoming implicated in the strange world of the space station, Huddy thinks it's a particularly useful film for clinicians, too. "We see how difficult it can be," he says, "to separate yourself completely from the people you are treating."

**Waltz With Bashir**

*Waltz With Bashir* (2008) directed by Ari Folman, a powerful evocation of post-traumatic stress disorder. Photograph courtesy: Moviestore Collection/Rex

Made by Israeli film-maker Ari Folman in 2008, this powerful animation stands between documentary and autobiography: it's an attempt, in film, to recover the director's lost memories of serving in the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Nick Grey, a consultant clinical psychologist at the South London and Maudsley NHS trust, says it is also a powerful evocation of post-traumatic stress disorder, one of anxiety's best-known manifestations. "The film deals with trying to complete gaps in memory," he says, "and also with some of the powerful beliefs that people with PTSD are left with: 'I didn't do enough', 'I abandoned him'. It's those beliefs that keep the anxiety going."
Opening Night


Gena Rowlands starred in her husband John Cassavetes’ 1977 examination of anxiety on- and offstage. She plays veteran Broadway actor Myrtle Gordon, whose confidence is severely shaken after a young female fan is killed in an accident.

Of course all these films – and the many others that describe anxiety, and its treatment – are works of art: none of them can be expected to offer the rigorous analysis of a clinical research paper. What they can do, though, is help cut through the levels of silence and misunderstanding that still surround this complex condition.

These films, and others, were shown as part of the Anxiety Arts Festival that I directed for the Mental Health Foundation and took place all over London in June 2014.
Appendix II: BBC Review and interview

BBC GLOBAL NEWS

A month-long festival in London explores the way that the arts respond to mental health problems.

Tiffany Jenkins, 21 October 2014

Dancer and choreographer Latifa Laâbissi performing her version of Mary Wigman’s (1926) Hexentanz II (Witch Dance) retitled as Écran Somnambule (Sleepwalking Screen).


I am huddled in a group, sitting on the polished wood floor of the house that belonged to Sigmund Freud, the founding father of psychoanalysis. Freud's couch, one of the most famous pieces of furniture in the world, is in the adjacent room. As is his collection of antiquities from Greece, Rome, Egypt and the Orient: he used the objects in his clinical work to make the point that archaeology can operate as a metaphor for exploring the psyche.

We are waiting for the premiere of Latifa Laâbissi’s dance piece Écran Somnambule, a reinterpretation of Mary Wigman’s expressive Witch Dance originally performed in
the early 20th Century. The audience is fidgeting, not just because it’s cramped, but because this event is part of Anxiety Arts Festival 2014, run by the Mental Health Foundation to explore the condition: how it affects our lives, how it can act as a creative force, and why it has become such a prominent issue.

“It is always interesting see how the arts respond to social and political environments, and never more so than with this issue of anxiety.” Barbara Rodriguez Muñoz, visual arts curator of the programme, explains. “Art is particularly well placed to do this, because it is not didactic,” she says. “It can bring an experiential way of understanding something that operates in a different way to telling or lecturing people about it.”

The two dances by Wigman and Laâbissi have both been performed at historical moments which have seen a flurry of interest in psychology and mental health. Wigman was a German dancer and choreographer, a pioneer of expressionist dance. Only a short film clip survives from one of her performances, it flickers for one minute and forty seconds. Wigman is seated, wearing a mask. Suddenly, she bursts into a series of energetic movements that she described as “a rhythmic intoxication.” Ninety years on from this performance, Latifa Laâbissi has slowed down these movements to a dramatic 31 minutes. Laâbissi writhes around, creeping towards us with bent elbows and knees. It is unnerving and many of us discreetly edge away.

The turn of the 20th Century saw the emergence of psychoanalysis, the development of industrial societies and the rapid growth of cities, all of which were followed by the horror of World War I. Artists became concerned with the idea of rupture, the contrast between the old and the modern world and the problems of the machine age. Disillusion with reason was accompanied by an interest in the instinctive and the irrational. The writer Virginia Woolf observed that, “for the moderns”, the interest lies “in the dark places of psychology.”

But when Sigmund Freud was working and when Mary Wigman performed Witch Dance, anxiety did not exist as a medical problem. Today, it is the most common form of officially classified mental illness. And over the past 20 years, the number of recorded mental disorders has proliferated. “We have seen a massive increase in concern about our mental health in recent times” says Errol Francis, an artist who is the festival’s director. He speculates that “the economic downturn and the rapid changes in technology may have had some effect.”
Fretful films

The festival’s film programme begins with *The Lodger*, a silent thriller about a serial killer directed by Alfred Hitchcock, released in 1927. It opens with a young blonde woman screaming, a motif repeated in Hitchcock’s later films including *Psycho*, *Vertigo* and *The Birds*. The themes of suspicion, betrayal and frustrated sexuality, which the director would pursue throughout his career, are all present, as is the use of distorted camera angles and claustrophobic lighting which create the impression of disturbed psychological states.

![Peter Sellers in Stanley Kubrik's (1964) Doctor Strangelove, a satire of nuclear politics that responded to the real anxieties of the Cold War era (Image Courtesy Columbia Pictures).](Image)

Two later movies on the bill, *Dr Strangelove, Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, released in 1964, and *Waltz with Bashir*, released in 2008, show that anxiety can be a reaction to a very real threat and that film can help to explore these fears. *Dr Strangelove*, directed by Stanley Kubrick, is a satire about nuclear politics which mocks the president of the United States and the rhetoric of the Cold War. It broke attendance records when it was released in the US. By encouraging people to laugh at a serious situation, the film helped to release tension and paved the way for others to question government policies.

Todd Haynes’ *Safe*, released in 1995, deals with a more generalised anxiety, in which a character worries about a threat that has no confirmed cause. Julianne Moore stars
as a wealthy housewife who becomes convinced that she is being poisoned by her environment. We never find out if this is the case; the film is effective at conveying anxiety in the abstract.

**Doubts and fears**

“Every age feels that it is the age of anxiety,” says the Irish psychiatrist Dr Patrick Bracken. He is among the critics who question the popular thesis that anxiety is on the rise. “It was a concern of the late 19th Century and what is known as fin de siècle culture. The Cold War period was also felt by many to be a time of anxiety.”

“One of the things that has happened in the past 100 years or so, is that we in the west have shifted away from being a society where emotional states such as low mood or fearfulness were experienced and responded to through a religious and spiritual idiom – for good and bad, to a much more secular and technocratic society,” he says.

At the same time as these social changes, Bracken explains, we have come to frame our problems in different ways. “We are in the midst of an explosion in the use of psychotropic medicines and psychotherapeutic interventions. We are awash with anti-depressant drugs and mental health professionals of all sorts. With a lot of people paid to attend to a problem, there will be a lot of discussion and media interest in that problem. A language of depression and anxiety is now available to people like never before and perhaps this means that more people come to understand their experiences in these terms.” He qualifies that therapy and medicine has an important role to play, but suggests there are limitations to their widespread use.

The questions Bracken raises about diagnosis and the institutional response to states of anxiety are also explored by performances in the festival. “Modern anxiety is associated with medical labels which can be restrictive. Society expects us to act in certain ways” Barbara Rodriguez Muñoz tells me.
Film still from *Caligari* by Javier Telllez (image courtesy of the artist) screened at the Anatomy Museum, King’s College London at part of the exhibition *The Institution Denied*, *along with works* by Eva Kotátková, Lawrence Abu Hamdan and James, Leadbitter. Kings College London. Photo courtesy of the artist.

*Acting-out: The Institution Denied*, is a performance by Czech artist Eva Kotátková, who explores the problems of rules and conformity. The work, about a patient and his psychiatrist, suggests that 'acting out' — the psychological term for anti-social behaviour that occurs when emotions are not mastered — can be an important form of resistance. And in *The Assessment*, the artist James Leadbitter takes the audience through the fraught process of getting a medical diagnosis: patients often feel that the causes of their symptoms are ignored and that they are blamed for their problems.

This is dark stuff — but it shows the enormous creative potential in exploring the problems of anxiety, the low points and the vicissitudes of life. Anxiety doesn’t always have to be destructive.
Appendix III: New York Times Review and interview:

The New York Times

Film Fests for a Few (Oddballs Especially)

Sam Roberts, 29 August 2014


Donatas Banionis in Solaris (1972) Directed by Andrei Tarkovsky and shown at the Barbican Cinema as part of the Anxiety Arts Festival, 22 June 2014. Image Courtesy Everett Collection.

In Britain this summer, the Mental Health Foundation screened 15 films during its Anxiety Arts Festival. “The history of film is the history of anxiety,” the film program curator, Jonathan Keane, was quoted as saying, recalling that in 1896, filmgoers supposedly fled screaming from a Lumière Brothers movie because they believed the steam locomotive on the screen was actually careening right at them. “Film allows us to address our worst fears from a safe distance,” said Errol Francis, the festival director.

Among Mr. Keane’s selections were “Control” (about the Joy Division singer Ian Curtis’s struggle with epilepsy), “Solaris” (in which a psychologist goes to a space station to figure out why the crew went crazy) and “The Headless Woman” (about a
driver who becomes psychotic because she is uncertain whether she has struck an animal or a pedestrian).

Mr. Francis said he didn’t think Mel Brooks’s “High Anxiety” would have trivialized the festival (the performing arts program actually included a one-woman comedy called “Hi Anxiety!”), but Mr. Brooks pronounced himself shocked at the omission of his 1977 film. (In that comedy, the patient entering the Psycho-Neurotic Institute for the Very, Very Nervous is informed where dinner is served and admonished, “Those who are tardy do not get fruit cup.”)

“Whether they are tardy or not — no one at that festival will be getting a fruit cup!” Mr. Brooks said in an interview.

Mr. Francis said he was unconcerned that exuberant promoters might overreach in creating a festival of, say, short films for people with attention deficit disorder, or a Fat Film Festival starring stout actors.

“I think both obesity and A.D.D. would make good topics for an anxiety program, given international concerns about both topics and their relationship with mood disorders,” he said. “If the HBO network can run a website called The Weight of the Nation entirely devoted to showing films ‘confronting America’s obesity epidemic,’ then perhaps the idea is not so far-fetched.”
I am sincerely thankful to the supervision team at the Slade School of Fine Art who supported me during the writing of this thesis: Dr Amna Malik Senior Lecturer and Jayne Parker, Head of Graduate School Fine Art Media (from 2008 to 2018) and Dr Caroline Bressey, Departmental Tutor at the UCL Department of Geography (from 2008 to 2016). Also, gracious thanks to the Head of the Slade PhD Programme and Slade Deputy Director, Professor Sharon Morris and Dr Thomas Morgan-Evans, Teaching Fellow, History and Theory of Art, for their insightful, helpful advice during the final stages of writing.

I am also grateful to Tate Britain for providing access to and viewing of the original split screen installation of *Vagabondia* and the Isaac Julien Studio for access to DVD recordings of *Vagabondia* and *Baltimore*. Special thanks to Jonah Albert at the British Library whose curatorial interventions at the National Gallery were inspirational and who assisted me with the translation of the St Lucian Créole, however any errors are, of course, my own.

Finally, thanks to Caro Howell, Director of the Founding Museum, for her help with accessing the original installation views of Mat Callishaw’s *Idle Youth* series.