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Different Spaces of Other Spaces:

Ambiguity, Comparison, and Play

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### บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยนี้ มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อวิเคราะห์ทฤษฎีพื้นที่อื่นของฟูโกต์ และการทำงานของพื้นที่อื่นในพื้นที่นามธรรม โดยวิเคราะห์จากงานวิจัย 3 ชิ้น ซึ่งอยู่ในชุดโครงการวิจัย “พื้นที่อื่น ๆ ในพื้นที่อื่น: การทบทวนแนวคิดเรื่องพื้นที่อื่นในบริบททางประวัติศาสตร์ วรรณกรรม และวิดีโอเกม” ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ความกำกวม การเปรียบเทียบ และการเล่น คือองค์ประกอบของพื้นที่อื่นซึ่งฟูโกต์ไม่ได้กล่าวถึงในทฤษฎีดังกล่าว ความกำกวมตอกย้ำให้เห็นว่า พื้นที่อื่นตามแนวคิดของฟูโกต์นั้น ทำงานผ่านการปฏิเสธการมีอยู่ที่ปรากฏอย่างชัดเจนทั้งในส่วนของพื้นที่เองและของวัตถุที่อยู่ในพื้นที่ดังกล่าว ในขณะที่การเปรียบเทียบทำให้เห็นว่าการวางเคียงในพื้นที่อื่นจะทำงานได้เมื่อมีองค์ประกอบของการเปรียบเทียบ ทั้งนี้เพราะการเปรียบเทียบสามารถดึงองค์ประกอบที่ไม่ปรากฏของวัตถุ ให้ปรากฏได้ในพื้นที่ดังกล่าวเมื่อมีความสัมพันธ์กับวัตถุชิ้นอื่น ๆ พื้นที่อื่นต่าง ๆ จึงทำให้วัตถุกลายเป็น



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### Abstract

This research paper aims to re-evaluate the concept of Foucault's heterotopia and analyze the logic of heterotopia in non-physical spaces. The scope of this research paper is the three research reports from the research series "Other Spaces as Other Space: Revisiting Heterotopia in the Context of History, Literature, and Videogame". The research paper found that ambiguity, comparison, and play were the other aspects of heterotopia that Foucault had not discussed. The principle of ambiguity highlights that heterotopia functions on the logic of neither-nor. It disavows the sense of presence for the heterotopia and its objects qua subject. Comparison re-affirms that juxtaposition in heterotopia can only be achieved through comparison as the latter brings out the other aspects of objects, putting them closer to the others-as-themselves in heterotopia. Lastly, because play rearranges meanings and expressions of any space, it does affect not only the space itself, but also time, its relationship with other spaces, and the playing subject and non-play subject.

**Keywords:** Heterotopia, Foucault, Ambiguity, Comparison, Play



## 1. Introduction

The concept of “heterotopia” or other space, by the French philosopher Michael Foucault (1986), had been one of the most influential concepts of space in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. It refers to a specific site of power, where the subjectivity of the individuals is suspended. Time in museum functions differently from outside museum as objects from 17<sup>th</sup> century France can be situated next to a vase from China’s Song dynasty (960 – 1279). It can also refer to a space where disciplinary mechanism and surveillance are most intense because it is the site of the marked others. Most importantly, multiple places can exist on the same location in heterotopia. The theatre, for example, is a location where multiple locations *qua* scenes could take place.

The concept also had influenced many other spatial thinkers (Grbin, 2015, p. 305; and Raj, 2019, p. 74). Johnson (2006) argued that Henri Lefebvre’s urban utopia functioned similarly to Foucault’s heterotopia. “By ‘uniting the difference’ ... [it became] a paradoxical, contradictory space, opposite the everyday” (Johnson, 2006, pp. 83 - 84). Despite its name, Lefebvre’s utopia was a historical space whereby multiple activities and types of individuals could be presence while refusing to be homogenized into the hierarchical order of spatial formation. It existed as an out-of-place location for those who had no place, and as a place where the out-of-place activities could take place. David Soja’s thirdspace also functions similarly to heterotopia. While Mesckell-Brocken (2020) showed that Soja’s concept of firstspace, secondspace, and thirdspace were influenced by Lefebvre’s spatial



practice, representations of space (perceived space), and space of representation respectively, she proposed that Soja's thirdspace was a "counterspace" that could undermine the power structure of its surrounding, allowing "place-making" in a "socially excluded" places (Meskell-Brocken, 2020, pp. 243 – 244). Last, but not least, in Marc Augé's explanation of non-place as a paradoxical supermodernity, Foucault's heterotopia was used to explain how politics functions in non-place (Augé, 1997, p. 119). Non-place is a space where individuals can go in and out at will. They are not fixed to such and such place; and yet, their identities are needed when they interact with this space.

However, Foucault's heterotopias were generally mentioned in relation to physical spaces. Despite Warf and Arias' assertion that space has become crucial in terms of knowledge of self and of the world since 1980 (Warf and Arias, 2009, p.4), Foucault's example of heterotopia in "Of Other Spaces" (1986) were mostly related to empirical space, such as the museum (Foucault, p. 26), the Persian garden (Foucault, pp. 25 – 26), the theatre (Foucault, p. 25), and even a ship (Foucault, p. 27). Furthermore, its reiteration was often limited to its six principles, especially juxtaposition and alterity. This research paper, then, aims to re-evaluate Foucault's concept of heterotopia in relation to abstract space in hope to re-discover the overlooked principles of heterotopia; and to stress that heterotopia-as-theory is not limited to empirical space only. If heterotopia-as-theory is understood as a place of other as well, it is possible to see that, as a concept, it always alters itself and its relation to its surrounding.



## 2. Research Objectives

- 1) To re-evaluate the concept of Foucault's heterotopia
- 2) To analyze the logic of heterotopia from three non-physical spaces

## 3. Scope of the Study

This research paper is to make a textual analysis of the three research reports in the research series entitled "Other spaces as Other Space: Revisiting Heterotopia in the Context of History, Literature, and Videogame" (Witchayapakorn, 2021a). Because the three research reports were yet published, the page number might not match with the published ones. The three research reports are:

- 1) "A Paradoxical Place: The Location of Science Within the Sacred Space of Medieval Metaphysics in the Writings of Robert Grosseteste" (Tantikijrungruang, 2021)
- 2) "Gender Politics and Modernist Domestic Aesthetics in Le Corbusier's Writings and Mina Loy's Fiction" (Eamvijit, 2021)
- 3) "Cutscene: The Impossible Place of Play and Non-Play in Videogame" (Witchayapakorn, 2021b)

## 4. Methodology

According to the French critic Roland Barthes (2017b), text is not a matter that one could hold in hands, but a methodology-of treating an object as a text (Barthes, p. 523). It is not only about the possible thread of meanings that could be unthreaded, but also of creating from without—hence, the birth of the reader (Barthes, 2017a,



p. 521). By analyzing-*qua*-treating the three research reports as texts together with Foucault's "Of Other Spaces" (1986), the assimilation between them could bring forth something other from within and without. Through the juxtaposition between a theory of other spaces with other texts, the ambiguity of meanings could be stabilized for a moment. Thus, the play of meaning could be resolved in a sort of playmaking-like any game does-by creating meanings from the texts, not new, but other. The text fills the distance between the maker and the consumer (Barthes, 2017b, p. 526); it puts the reader as the position of the creator, creating from the created, to re-create.

This research paper, as a result, will make a textual analysis of the three research reports to make them other to themselves, becoming a heterotopia of self-meaning-other, by re-forming one argument into another; from an argument about medieval science into heterotopia of ambiguity; a comparison between two Futurist artists into the other space of comparison; and an analysis of cutscenes into a heterotopia of play. Likewise, this would also bring out something other-making them more pronounced-in Foucault's text as the result of textualization.

## 5. Literature Review

### Of Other Spaces

As Foucault said in the beginning of "Of Other Spaces" (1986) that space had always been the obsession of western society (Foucault, 1986, p. 22), so did his interest in metaphor-concept of space found in most of his works which mostly were about the



formation of modernism. From how he viewed history in his archeological phase, to the emergence of medical practice, sexuality, brothels, prison, and panopticons, to name a few. “Foucault’s historical studies are spatial through and through” (Elden, 2001, as cited by Philo, 2011, p. 164). His ideas were often based on spatial metaphor or based on space. For example, Chris Philo (2000) showed that space in Foucault’s *The Birth of Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception* (2003) could be categorized in to three different modes of space: from primary space of disease tabled that deals solely with documents of 2-dimension, to the secondary space of embodiment that deals with patients’ body of 3-dimension, and the tertiary space of institutionalization, which was how, for Foucault, the idea of clinic was conceived.

Likewise, one of his most well-known concepts, panopticon, was about space. How spatial partitioning during the plague and the confinement of the lepers contributed to the emergence of a specific form of power, literalized in Bentham’s panopticon (Foucault, 1995, pp. 200-201). While Foucault could start talking about power in its abstract form, he based his theory on space not only to concretize power, but also limit them to the spatial function. Like a prisoner in panopticon who can always be seen but cannot see who is seeing them, individuals are subjected of their own machination, ever disciplining themselves according to the present form of power. This type of space, of exclusion and confinement, Foucault suggested, allows the subject to be the subject of and subjected to their own condition (1995, p. 202). Or as his teacher Louis Althusser (1918–1990) said about the function of ideology that it allows and ushers the



subjects to “work all by themselves”, giving them freedom to accept their own subjection (2017, p. 776). On both side of abstract and concrete, panopticon can be felt and witnessed by everyone, and yet it does not have any specific form to it. This will be one of the main aspects of heterotopia Foucault discussed in “Of Other Spaces” (1986).

In “Of Other Spaces”, Foucault categorized understanding of space according to the three different periods: medieval, 17<sup>th</sup> century, and modern. During the middle age, things are conceived in terms of their fixed places. Places are the meanings of things. Things cannot move from one place to another. Foucault called this type of space “space of emplacement” or “localization” (1986, pp. 22 - 23), because it emplaces and localizes things in their places. Space and things were strongly related to the point that the thingness of thing was of its location. On the contrary, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Foucault proposed that a new thinking about space had been formed because of the move from religion-based space to scientific one. For Foucault, it was Galileo who re-discovered space as in solar system. That space was infinite and ever moving and changing. Foucault called this space of “extension” (1986, p. 23) because the relation of things and space is not limited. Places are not stable as space-as-in-orbit constantly moving and extending. As a result, things do not situate locally – their essence is not dictated by their position. Individuals experience space as fixed because of the limitation of experience and perception – hence, locally. In the modern period, spaces are conceived as nodes in a network or “site” (Foucault, 1986, pp. 23 - 24), which influenced by structuralism as Foucault mentioned the importance of



structuralism in the beginning of “Of Other Spaces”. Spaces are now thought of in relation to population, of how relation between spaces –spacing–affect their locations and living conditions, how places define one and another. And here is where Foucault’s interest in heterotopia situated: relation.

Like his concept of power-relation, Foucault’s heterotopias *are*, because of their relations with other places as an effect-product of relation. This relation can be thought in two ways. The first was relationality of things in Foucault’s thinking, as mentioned above about structuralism influence, while the second is dependency on utopia. Unlike any relation, heterotopia must be thought in relation to utopia. In the preface from Foucault’s *The Order of Things* (2002), after discussing about the strange attributes of Borges’ s “Chinese Encyclopedia”, Foucault went on to defining heterotopia. Unlike utopia which was a place of imaginary that affirms ideals and fantasy, heterotopia was a place dis-order, real and yet unreal as it exists in language – hence, Borges’ “Chinese Encyclopedia” –and yet unreal because not only it disrupts the language in which it existed in, it could be found in language only (Foucault, 2002, p. xix). It seems as if language is both the place and not-the-place of heterotopia.

While Foucault did not use the word “dis-order”, I believe this quasi- neologism is necessary in describing the specificity of heterotopia. If utopia is about the ideal order, heterotopia both creates order and disrupts the sense of order at the same time. Take Foucault’s discussion of Borges’s “Chinese Encyclopedia” for example. The arrangement of the said encyclopedia establishes a sense of order



– of how different types of animals are put together. And yet, the same arrangement was found on disarrangement. Sense, rule, and order were of pretense only, of form. There is no reason why a sucking pig is to be put next to a siren and in the same place of “*et cetera*”. This dis-arrangement is “the sudden vicinity of things that have no relation to each other” (Foucault, 2002, p. xvii). In other words, heterotopia is a place of non-sense while utopia sense at least in *The Order of Things*.

Lastly, Foucault elaborated that there are six principles of heterotopia in “Of Other Spaces”. Firstly, it exists in every culture. Secondly, the same heterotopia can change its function and relation to other places over time. Thirdly, heterotopia is a place of connection of multiple spaces. The fourth principle is of time. Foucault referred to it as “heterochrony” because heterotopia also affects time (Foucault, 1986, p. 26). It also suspends time, such as a medieval resort. The fifth concerns with its openness and closure. Anyone can be in heterotopia and not at the same time. To enter a heterotopia, a rite is essential. Physically, an individual can be in any heterotopia, but not in terms of subjectivity. The last principle of heterotopia is about its two types of relation with other places. On one hand, heterotopia can expose the illusion of other places. By being a place of illusion, it can expose how other “real” spaces were also constructed from the same illusion. Foucault called this type of heterotopia “space of illusion” (1986, p. 27). On the other hand, heterotopia can act as a place of ideal (utopia), replacing the missing ideal from other places, in which he referred to as “heterotopia of compensation”. For example, a



garden could compensate as a place of natural beauty which is missing from the city.

Heterotopia mostly concerns with concrete spaces. As Foucault said, his concern with spaces were only with the space we live in (Foucault, 1986, p. 23). Heterotopias are spaces that interrupt our ordinary way of living, not in sense that we would feel disturbed by it, but in a sense that our ordinary way of living would change in some degree when we enter heterotopia. Hence, the objective of this paper is to re-evaluate heterotopia by focusing on its form that could be found in different types of objects. Not a real space, but an object such as history, literature, and videogame. The point is not to deny the definitiveness of the concept, but to demonstrate that heterotopia as theory should not be limit to empirical spaces only. It can be assimilated in the analysis of other objects from the scientific discourse in medieval period, a comparative study of futuristic art and literature, and to one of the features in videogame, which could result in the exposure of unnoticed aspects of heterotopia.

### **Mintra's Medieval Science and Space**

Mintra Tantikijrungruang's "A Paradoxical Place: The Location of Science Within the Sacred Space of Medieval Metaphysics in the Writings of Robert Grosseteste" (2021) dealt with the subject of science<sup>1</sup> as a discourse in the medieval period, focusing on the writings of an English scholar and philosopher Robert Grosseteste (1175–1253).

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<sup>1</sup> For Mintra, science should not be limited to empirical research only; it could be a textual analysis and speculative approach. Likewise, science cannot deny its status as myth according to the postmodern stance. Science, after all, is a concept.



The objectives of her research were to argue with one of Foucault's claims in "Other Spaces" where he used the scientific revolution of the 17th century as the divider between the concept of emplaced space and the space of extension (Foucault, 1986, p. 23). Mintra argued that science was not of post-medieval as Foucault implied. Scientific writings could be found as early as in 12<sup>th</sup> century works, especially in Grosseteste's applications of rhetorical *topoi* that localized science in the religious space, implying that medieval was not a space localization where things were fixed in places (Tantikijrungruang, 2021, p. 41). Medieval space, too, was a space of extension as found in 17<sup>th</sup> century.

All in all, Mintra's argument on the scientific aspects of Grosseteste was not only to give a better understanding of Grosseteste's works, but also an attempt to refute Foucault's categorization of space with science<sup>2</sup> (Foucault, 1986, p. 23). However, it was not how Mintra based her argument on Foucault's writing by saying Foucault's conceptualization of medieval was generalized and biased<sup>3</sup> (Tantikijrungruang, 2021, p. 3); it was how Mintra formed her

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted here that Foucault did not say anything about the lack of scientific aspect in the medieval time as Mintra suggested. On the contrary, Foucault said that Galileo's concept of space was either a "discovery, or re-discovery" (Foucault, 1986, p. 23), implying that there had been others before Galileo who had worked on this. It is the concept of Galileo's universe-space itself, not science *per se*. Foucault did not disavowal any scientific writings or studies in the medieval period.

<sup>3</sup> The same thing can also be said about Mintra's argument on Foucault's perception of medieval. It is also a generalization to base one argument about the other's perception on a couple of sentences in one of his writings – in this case, Foucault's "Of Other Spaces" (1986). Bartlett (1994) even said in the beginning of "Foucault's 'Medievalism'"



argument that related to her works tot Foucault's heterotopia. *Aporia* was Mintra's choice of word in describing how Grosseteste wrote most of his works. On one hand, it was the *aporia*-as-doubt that could be seen from how it had "plagued medieval scholarship as a result of religious scholars trying to force aspects of classical philosophy into a synthesis with medieval Christian theology" (Tantikijrungruang, 2021, p. 20). This was a clash or "juxtaposition" between Christian faith and academic interest. On the other hand, contradiction in Grosseteste's work also functioned as *aporias* which can be found in his use of Euclidean words to refer to religious concept, and in his use of both scientific *dialectic* and rhetoric *topos* to write his more scientific works, such as *De Luce* and *De Lineis – De Natura Locorum*.

### **Suriyaporn's Politics of Gender and Space in Futurism**

Suriyaporn Eamvijit's "Gender Politics and Modernist Domestic Aesthetics in Le Corbusier's Writings and Mina Loy's Fiction" (2021) investigated how spaces in the works of the two futurist artists Le Corbusier and Mina Loy were related to their understanding of genders. Le Corbusier's works often represented the male dominated ideology of futurism, but Mina Loy, also a futurist artist, was known for her critique of futurism in terms of the gender politics and politics of space. While Suriyaporn's research dealt with the different types of space, from architectural to arts, and literary, it is her method that is related to Foucault's heterotopia – as a space of comparison.

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that each person has their own idea of medieval, not just Foucault, and this multiplicity could enhance each other understanding of medieval (Bartlett, 1994, p. 10).



Aside from her research result that revealed the patriarchal nature of futurism, especially in Le Corbusier' works and how Loy' s writings worked as a critique of those patriarchic bias, Suriyaporn' s research re-discovered another functionality of Foucault' s concept of space: comparison. Compare-and-contrast as an analysis model is nothing new in the context of literary criticism. In the context of Suriyaporn, it is a new historicist form of criticism where any historical object could be used as a part of the analysis since each object does contribute in some way to its historical meaning – in this case, futurism, and gender politics. However, Suriyaporn' s research indirectly shows that comparison is more than just “to compare”.

### **Korphong' s Cutscene as Play Space**

The objectives of “Cutscene: The Impossible Place of Play and Non-Play in Videogame” (Witchayapakorn, 2021b) were to review what had been said about cutscene in videogame and to reconceptualize cutscene with the concept of *cut-scene*. Cutscene has been known as a non-playable storytelling section of videogame; and it is commonly expressed in a cinematic form, though sometimes they can be found in written or comics form. The presence of cutscene can interrupt the flow of play; it puts the player at the position of the reader-audience. For example, the two film directors, Spielberg and Del Toro, both disliked cutscene because it took away their sense of agency and the flow of gameplay (Witchayapakorn, 2021c, p. 88). However, my research proposed that cutscene – as a spacetime of non-play – can be played around with, and that the very condition of non-play makes play in videogame possible. Without cutscene, or *cut-*



*scene* in this case, videogame would lack a sense of meaning in play, affecting the playability of videogame.

*Cut-scenes* are not just narrative sections; they are everywhere in videogame: a surface of videogame. It is the non-playable that makes play-sense in videogame. *Cut-scene* is the object that cuts and connects. It cuts the flow gameplay, inserting itself between gameplay section and levels. It also connects the flow of game by way of inserting itself between gameplay sections, making it possible to see the relevancy between different sections of gameplay (Witchayapakorn, 2021b, p. 72).

*Cut-scene* is not limited to a scene, but any non-playable feature, such as fonts style, interface, character's face, grass, sky, stones, background music, sound effect, the smoothness of blocks, and so on. These aspects are non-playable, and yet they make the game playable (sensible). They connect the players to videogame, and story to gameplay, making videogame sensible by expressing gameplay according to its theme, tone, or the story. They are not signs, but the sense of sign – how objects are designed in relation to the narrative. They are a surface that holds videogame together, not just fragmented narrative sections. Play in videogame is possible because of this very non-playable aspect, like a skin that holds together organs and bones – a body of play. This does not mean that narrative is the essence of videogame. On the contrary, *cut-scene* is not only about narrative; it is also the effect of non-play from narrative itself.



## 6. Discussion

### Ambiguity of Heterotopia

Mintra formed her argument on heterotopia- as- language which was mentioned by Foucault in his analysis of Borges’ “Chinese Encyclopedia” . Her formulization illustrated how heterotopia- as- concept could be implemented on and found in object- other- than- physical- space. This also emphasized another aspect of heterotopia: ambiguity. As Foucault said, heterotopia could be found in language in which it destroyed (Foucault, 2002, p. xviii). Mintra’s argument could be summed up with the ambiguous nature of Grosseteste’s works and his scientific stance. However, it is ambiguity- as- heterotopia that problematizes Mintra’s argument as well.

By using ambiguity as a ground to stand on, her arguments, as a result, were found on the logic of *neither-nor*, not *both* or *either-or*. The ground had been groundless since the beginning. Words are ambiguous by nature as any structuralist and poststructuralist would say. The fact that Grosseteste had used indefinite words, had shown vague stance on science, and had employed dialectic and rhetoric together, did not mean that he was *both* a scientist and/ or a theologian. It could be *anything*, a neither one nor the other. Hence, to delimit ambiguity with *either-or*, and *both*, heterotopia would be countered with normal spaces, a subsumption of the other, not the other way around. It would not be an *aporia* of neither-nor, but only a space of both-and. There was neither doubt nor impasse: only a veiled certainty that Grosseteste was such and such. This is also related to Mintra’s concept of *aporia*. Throughout her works, it could be seen



that Grosseteste's works followed the rule of God. Everything was localized; and God had always been his frame of reference. And, as a result, the works of the English theologian might not be as ambiguous, or stuck in *aporia*, as Mintra argued them to be. This does not mean that he was not a scientist, but that a space of extension might not seem to exist in medieval as Mintra tried to argue with Foucault in the first place. Grosseteste's works were written with the logic of localization.<sup>4</sup> However, this cannot deny the fact that Grosseteste's work were written as heterotopia (a meeting place of science and Christianity) through the logic of *aporia*. His works worked because of their ambiguity – hence, heterotopic.

### Comparison in Heterotopia

What interesting about Suriyaporn's comparison is how any object could be compared, such as poems, fan, fish, photos, building, and light bulbs; and that most of comparison was based on her interpretation of those objects, of their meanings, not of object-as-such. Her analysis functions as a space where these objects could be put in contact, and gain meanings through comparison, meanings not necessarily related to these objects outside this very space. It seems as if comparison-as-space defamiliarizes objects by focusing on the other sense of the objects – from fish and fan as phallic objects, to light and lightbulb as masculinity and femininity – giving different understandings of the objects and the world, of the other places outside of this heterotopia of comparison.

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<sup>4</sup> A critique of *aporia* in Mintra's research in relation to Derrida's *aporia* and Grosseteste's letter can be read further in Witchayapakorn (2021a, pp. 78 - 86).



This aspect of heterotopia neither brings out the hidden meaning nor denies the general meaning of the object. The meanings are added to the object. The collision between the additional meanings and the objects defamiliarizes the objects' relation to other location outside the comparison space while localizing the objects' place in it. Comparison puts a distance between light bulb and "electronic appliance" as the former is turned into a gendered object in the space of comparison. This does not mean that the objects relation with their *other-meaning* is localized here only. Objects<sup>5</sup> have always been haunted by this otherness. Vicarious causation or the indirect experience is the only possible experience that any object can experience another object, as each object are fundamentally isolated and withdrawn (Harman, 2017, p. 163). The sensual-qualities, either tactile or virtual, of the sensual-object<sup>6</sup> are this otherness: the aesthetics-representation. It is the only way of experiencing the object, and yet not the object itself. And here, in this space of comparison, one sensual-quality or meaning is more apparent than others. This does not imply that the other meanings are denied. The general meanings are put at the distance, leaving space for the other meanings to attach themselves onto the objects – the other meanings that had been on a detour in the first place. It might be possible to even said that this space follows the functionality of the French critic Roland Barthes' mythology. He once described its working as the game of

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<sup>5</sup> Objects here are used in the object-oriented sense where everything is an object, from human to non-human.

<sup>6</sup> The only form of object that other objects can experience.



“hid-and-seek” where one cannot be where the other is. This game is not of finding the hidden meaning as the myth-meaning “has too much presence”; it is a game of stealing and restoration (Barthes, 1972, p. 116 and p. 123). That is to say, the comparison- heterotopia mythologizes<sup>7</sup> the objects by adding meaning to the object, countering the objects’ placement in other space. It shortens and lengthens the distance between objects instantaneously, interrupting the flow between other connection. Fish and phallic, fan as masculine, and kitchen smell and homeliness.

While almost the same as Derrida’s *différance* which “is neither a *word* nor *concept* ... [but] a junction rather than summation” (Derrida, 2017, p. 476), this comparison-space is more in line with Foucault’s explanation of heterotopia because it actualizes utopia through juxtaposition of spaces (Foucault, 1986, p. 24). Derrida’s spatiotemporal is a play of difference and deferral, an *arch-trace* before-as-after the presence of sign (which is not present in itself), referred to as “spacing” (Derrida, 2017, p. 483). Foucault’s, on the other hand, a space, an actuality, a junction realized as presence. Structuralist relation<sup>8</sup> was the logic that flows through both Derrida’s

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<sup>7</sup> Unlike the myth of mythology itself, mythologies are not the false consciousness or the stereotypes. They are a mode of understanding, an inevitable one at that. Like Althusseer’s ideology, Barthes’ myths are neither fake nor fabricated. It a part of the symbolic order that creates a sense of self for the subject as it was myth that interpellated the individual as the subject at the moment of contact (Barthes, 1972, p. 123).

<sup>8</sup> Structuralist is used here both in the structuralism and poststructuralism.



spacing and Foucault's space. And yet, both had not, if only in passing, mentioned how important is *comparison* in the structuralist relation.<sup>9</sup>

From Foucault's example of garden, museum, theater, and encyclopedia, a sense comparison has always been there, but overpowered by the structuralist biases of relation. The objects in the mentioned spaces are different because of they were compared to other objects in those spaces. It is not just a relation, but a comparative one. Friedman (2011) and Felski (2016) both agreed that comparison is important and inevitable; that comparing is not about generalization for the sake of similarities and differences, but to bring out aspects of the objects that cannot be think of on their owns, and to decontextualize the objects to gain a different understanding of them (Friedman, 2011, p. 757 - 760; and Felski, 2016, p. 747).

In other words, comparison as a mode of criticism is the unmentioned aspect of heterotopia. This aspect is not limited to Suriyaporn's work only; but by *comparing* with the Mintra's research and mine, comparison seems to strongly attach itself to Suriyaporn's work the most. The same goes with the affinity of ambiguity-as-heterotopia with Mitra's work, comparing with the other twos. Because the three research reports were being compared, the different aspects of heterotopia were found differently in each. Without this event of comparison, it would be harder, maybe impossible, to realize these aspects.

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<sup>9</sup> Further discussion of how Derrida's *différance* is related to heterotopia in Suriyaporn's work can be read further in Witchayapakorn (2021a, pp. 110 – 114).



## Heterotopia of Play

*Cut-scene* is a space of play, a liminal one, that both connects and cuts through the act of play. Foucault once mentioned that the act of play of children was related to the idea of spatial creation. In the radio interview on 7 Dec 1966, Foucault referred to the made-believe play of children as a ‘localized utopias’, of how they can pretend play to swim in their bed, walking in a castle in their bedroom, and so on (Boyer, 2008, p. 53). Foucault mentioned this type of space to introduce its opposite: heterotopia in which at the time he referred to as “counter-spaces”. For Foucault, the heterotopias were far more significant than space of play, aside from the fact that play was only mentioned in passing, since “only adults invent [heterotopia] – real places situated outside all other spaces destined to efface, to neutralize, to compensate or purify the spaces they oppose” (Boyer, 2008, p. 53). Heterotopias were seen as spaces that counter other spaces while utopia imagined spaces, made real for play. However, from the study of *cut-scene*, it could be seen that the interaction between non-play and play reveals another aspect of Foucault’s heterotopia.

In the context of videogame<sup>10</sup>, *cut-scene* is the other spaces. It is the space and time that suspends the flow of play and connects different levels of game together. As a space of non-procedural narrative, the players’ interaction with videogame are altered during their “stay” in this space. They lose control of their characters; their

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<sup>10</sup> *Cut-scene* can also be found in other settings outside of videogame, from the natural occurrence to how individuals interact with object (Witchayapakorn, 2021b, pp. 136 – 140).



mode of interaction became that of a voyeur<sup>11</sup> and their ergodic paths are blocked and shaped into the non-path of this non-ergodic<sup>12</sup> space. Play as experiment is impeded by this immovable lump. And yet, it connects different game levels together, setting stage for the next scene and play. This very blood clot makes the gameplay flow. Without this counter-space of non-play, the sense of play in videogame would be hindered. That is to say, *cut-scene* both counters and supports other spaces in videogame. *Cut-scene* can even support itself by way of countering itself. The players could play around these non-play spaces, implementing them into their tactics, turning them – the non-playable spacetime – into pieces of their gameplan. *Cut-scenes* cut themselves and others into pieces, to connect and rearrange them. And it is this sense of play – or subjective agency – that is missing from the general aspect of heterotopia.

Foucault's understanding of play is limited to the made-believe aspect only<sup>13</sup> which, in turn, limited them to “localized utopia”. However, “localized utopia” was in fact heterotopia at work – that is, the work of *cut-scene*. Play is, at its most fundamental level, the other space, the spacetime that separates itself from its surrounding. In *Homo Ludens*, a book about the importance of play

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<sup>11</sup> “The reader's pleasure is the pleasure of the voyeur. Safe, but impotent” (Aarseth, 1997, p.4)

<sup>12</sup> For more elaboration of the concept of ergodic see Witchayapakorn (2021b, pp. 25 – 30).

<sup>13</sup> According to Caillois (2001), there were, at least, four modes of game: competitive game, game of chance, made-believe, and game of excitement (Caillois, 2001, pp. 14 – 23).



and culture, Johan Huizinga referred to game and play as “magic circle” that “are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart” (Huizinga, 1980, p. 10). The French sociologist Roger Caillois further explained that play was composed of freedom, alterity, randomness, uneconomic, rule, and fiction (Caillois, 2001, p. 10). Similarly, Ian Bogost argued that the concept of play and fun are related to the exploration and experimentation within the constraint of things to experience the thingness of thing. “If fun is an admiration for the absurd and arbitrariness of things, play is the process by which we arrive at that respect” (Bogost, 2016, pp. 119). All of these imply that play is about cutting the space from its surrounding and rearranging its connection with their surroundings. From Foucault example, the child cut his bedroom and rearranged its function and connection. It was not just about imagination as Foucault believed to be, it was also about imposing new rule (game needs rule), new reality, and new connection with other places. This does not mean that the materiality of the room was changed. Everything is still the same; there might be some rearrangement of the objects – bedsheet and pillows, but nothing was changed drastically. What changed significantly was the relation between the subject and her bedroom, and the link between this room and its neighbor spaces. The child cut the bond and readjusted the room to create a scene of play – hence, *cut-scene*. Furthermore, the play-as-heterotopia reveals that there is other type of subject in



heterotopia, aside from the althusserian subject<sup>14</sup> who lacks agency to affect the space directly because she is subjected and a subject of space. This subject is the playing subject, or subject of play, who can play – creating a scene of cutting – at any moment. The space and time of play can be altered, but only for her alone, and those who play. Only them alone can experience this alterity of space and time that they change for themselves.

## 7. Conclusion

Heterotopia is neither limited to physical space nor to Foucault's six principles of heterotopia. Even though the main argument in his "Of Other Spaces" (1986) focused on the physical living space, Foucault briefly mentioned heterotopia as an abstract space, as an analysis of Borges' "Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge", in the "Preface" of *The Order of Things: An Archeology of Human Sciences* (1989). The aim of this research paper, then, is to reevaluate heterotopia from the side of non-physical space, and to look at the unnoticed aspects of heterotopia. This is not to undermine theory of other spaces. On the contrary, the research paper intends, if possible, to strengthen the concept through re-evaluation. Or in terms of heterotopia, the paper alters the concept-space, making it others to itself, and affecting its relationship with other space-concepts. By

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<sup>14</sup> Louis Althusser, the French theorist and Foucault's teacher, referred to subject as the one who is free to decide her own action with her own agency; and yet, her agency is possible only if she is determined by the higher order, either the Symbolic Order or ideology (Althusser, 2017 p. 776).



analyzing the three research reports, whose objects of study consisted of medieval science, artistic movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and videogame, three aspects of heterotopia were revealed. It also should be noted that these three aspects are nothing new. They had always been in Foucault's description, as could be seen from how the three are inevitably related to the other six principles of heterotopia, especially the principle of juxtaposition. It is only that, through the analysis of the three research reports, these aspects can be seen more vividly.

Mintra's analysis of Grosseteste's writings showed that ambiguity is one aspect of heterotopia. Her argument was based on the ambiguity, in which she referred to as *aporia*, that Grosseteste's works could be both religious texts and scientific writings. Grosseteste specifically created his own discursive space for his works, through *dialectic* and *rhetoric*. However, by further examining Mintra's formulation of ambiguity, it was found that heterotopia worked on the opposite of Mintra's definition of ambiguity. *Aporia* does neither work on the logic of *either-or* nor *both-and*, but on the logic of *neither-nor*. The sense of *aporia* would be lost if such and such is located as *both A and B*, subsumed by the presence. While ambiguity principle of heterotopia was found on Grosseteste's discursive space, it worked differently from Mintra's *aporia*. Grosseteste's discursive space was neither scientific nor religious. It is not a matter of a specific genre, but an affordance of form (Levine, 2015, p. 13).

Another heterotopia is Suriyaporn's research: the comparison of Le Corbusier's and Mina Loy's works. Like Foucault's analysis of



Borges' Chinese encyclopedia, Suriyaporn's research was a juxtaposition of things from paintings, poems, architecture, writings, photographs, to lightbulb, light, fish, and electronic fan. The aim of her research was to show how two individuals from the same school of thought (futurism) had different views on genders; and how such perceptions affect/were affected by their understanding of space. Her research is the heterotopia where objects were put in each other's proximity; and through the logic of comparison, their sensual-qualities (meanings) were affected, suspended and put at the distance. Fish and fan became male object while incandescent light femininity. Comparison-heterotopia rearranges the meanings of objects. While the logic of ambiguity- heterotopia is of *neither- nor*, comparison-heterotopia *and-ad infinitum*.

Play is the last aspect of heterotopia found in the analysis of the three research papers. An analysis of *cut-scene* showed that play is possible even at the spacetime of non-play in videogame, that the player could assimilate this non-play into their gameplan; and that *cut-scene* is not a specific section of narrative spacetime in videogame – it is the surface of videogame. Play in videogame is possible because of non-play, not in terms of binary opposition, but in terms of Lacanian subject-as-zero (suture). As a result, play is one of the missing aspects of heterotopia. Unlike Foucault's claim that play was the localized utopia, the analysis of *cut-scene* revealed that play can create heterotopia as it reorganizes the functions of space and time and readjust the subject relation to that very space, from spacetime of non-play to space and time of play. Furthermore, play emphasized that



the subject is not a passive entity in relation to heterotopia for the subject can create heterotopia-play at any moment. This might be a shift from subject to object in the sense of object-oriented philosophy.

The analysis above also re-emphasize that heterotopia is productive. Despite its other name “counter-space”, heterotopia provides a space for the researchers to create something, that Grosseteste’s works were scientific; that Le Corbusier’s and Mina Loy’s understandings of space were related to gender; and that *cut-scene* is not a space of non-play. If “power produces ... reality ... domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault, 1995, p. 194) and “induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse” (Foucault, 2001, p. 120), then power flows through heterotopia. That heterotopia is the product of *power-knowledge*; and that it also sustains power-relation in turn through comparison, ambiguity, and play. At the least. For example, through the juxtaposition of the three analyses, it can be seen that light is related to heterotopia. It was the subject of *aporia* in Mintra’s work; the metaphor for male and female in Suriyaporn’s criticism of Mina Loy’s and Le Corbusier’s works; and an object of *cut-scene*. Neither a place nor a non-place (as it can take place), light can be conceived in comparison (in relation to other objects) generally speaking. And it can play tricks on perception and experience, especially in its nature in relation to time. But this is another matter that can neither take place here nor there, only t(h)ere. Somewhere else. Some other places.



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