

## Home as Heterotopia: Describing the *unheimlich* through a Foucauldian Heterotopology of Home<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The experience of the *unheimlich*, interpreted by Paul Ricoeur as the sense of otherness in a space, is indescribable in terms of the classic description of home. To generate a new perspective to overcome this “blocked situation,” we reflect on a “heterotopology of home,” i.e., a description of Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopia (an “other space”) as a metaphor for home. After considering heterotopia as a fluid concept that allows “displacement” to the new situation of home, a heterotopology of home is described by summarizing and analyzing the multitude of past readings of home as heterotopia through Hilde Heynen’s framework. A reflection on the heterotopology of home reinterprets the experience of the *heimlich* and understanding of selfhood in relation to the *unheimlich*, as exemplified through Mariana Ortega’s accounts of “hometactics” and “multiplicitous selves” and Georg Simmel’s notion of “the stranger.” In conclusion, we argue that a Foucauldian heterotopology of home overcomes the blocked situation by transforming the perception of home: the experience of the *unheimlich* becomes describable in the terms of home as heterotopia. In this process, the instances of heterotopia are extended from “other spaces” to spaces of everyday life, also transforming the previous description of heterotopia.

**Keywords:** Foucault, heterotopia, *heimlich*, *unheimlich*

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### The *unheimlich* within Home: A Blocked Situation

When thinking about space, one of the oppositions we continue to regard as a simple given is the one between different spaces and spaces of alterity. While an approach towards space based on the notion of alterity, or radical otherness, suggests a separation between certain “other spaces” and the spaces of everyday life, that which is based on difference suggests no such radical separation but comprising only a lack of similarity. In the context of the former approach, it is often assumed that a sense of belonging in space is assured within the spaces of everyday life, in spite of the variegated nature of such spaces. Also, it is commonly assumed that a sense of otherness is experienced only within the other spaces of alterity. In this section, we will take up the case of home, a space of everyday life, to problematize these assumptions.

In many cultures worldwide, in varied forms, home remains a classic and conservative instance of a privileged category of space. The primordially and normative power of home are such that “our bodily encounters in other places are stylized according to the home’s normative stylizing of our bodies.”<sup>2</sup> Home is a “symbolic environment”<sup>3</sup>: the notion of home is imbued with and evocative of a sense of belonging, a being at ease, a being in one’s place in the world. The “personal, intimate, feeling of being ‘at home’ in a place (place-belongingness)”<sup>4</sup> may be related to what Paul Ricoeur calls the “*heimlich*.” Ricoeur interprets the *heimlich* as a fundamental human need, expressed and represented in the deliberate act of building a home.<sup>5</sup>

Many a time, however, the experience of the *heimlich* within home remains a “myth”—it is not simply given in the actual, material space of a home.<sup>6</sup> Home is often the site where the self experiences the feeling of uneasiness as in the feeling of “not being in one’s place, of not feeling at home.” The “sense of loneliness, isolation, alienation, and displacement”<sup>7</sup> experienced in a place may be related to what Ricoeur calls the “*unheimlich*.”

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<sup>2</sup> Janet Donohoe, “The Place of Home,” in *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology*, 23 (Spring 2012), 17.

<sup>3</sup> See Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, “The Home as Symbolic Environment,” in *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*, ed. by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>4</sup> Marco Antonsich, “Searching for Belonging: An Analytical Framework,” in *Geography Compass*, 4 (2010), 645.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Ricoeur, “Uncanniness Many Times Over,” in *Philosophical Anthropology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 264.

<sup>6</sup> Mariana Ortega, “Hometactics,” in *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*, ed. by Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 169.

<sup>7</sup> Antonsich, “Searching for Belonging,” 649.

He observes that, in contrast to the feeling of familiarity in the experience of the *heimlich*, the sense of otherness in the experience of the *unheimlich* is at the “height of its feeling of strangeness.”<sup>8</sup> In Ricoeur’s interpretation, the *unheimlich* is a “realm of emptiness” that haunts us<sup>9</sup>—the *heimlich* expressed and represented in the act of building or constructing a home never succeeds in eclipsing the *unheimlich*.<sup>10</sup>

This brief account of home suggests that the *unheimlich* is experienced even within the spaces of everyday life and is a more common experience than typically assumed. This view aligns with Ricoeur, who considers both placing and displacing oneself as primordial human activities. For Ricoeur, the reality of the *unheimlich* is such that every displaced person experiences it, and it is sometimes even cultivated for itself “an ethics of roaming, of uprootedness.”<sup>11</sup>

As we can see, the experience of the *unheimlich* within the home is indescribable in terms of its classic description. This presents a “blocked situation,”<sup>12</sup> which then invites the generation of a new perspective of home to describe the experience of the *unheimlich* within its space. In recent years, the notion of home in terms of the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* experienced within it has been a poignant theme for many writers. However, many such accounts do not do justice to both the noetic (the subjective) and the noematic

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Ricoeur, “Inhabited Space,” in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 39. The intriguing notion of the *unheimlich* was expounded by Sigmund Freud in a 1919 essay, translated into English as “The ‘Uncanny’” by J. Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1958). Heidegger translates the *unheimlich* as “not at home” to pronounce the normative constitution of humans as beings that are essentially not-at-home in a temporal-historical way (Diego D’Angelo, “To Be or Not to Be at Home. Heidegger and Derrida Reading Sophocles,” in *Kritike*, 14 (2021), 112). Unlike Heidegger, Ricoeur discusses the *unheimlich* to explore “the phenomenon of the strange” in spatial-geographical terms and emphasizes the primordially of both placement and displacement for human beings (Ricoeur, “Uncanniness,” 260).

<sup>9</sup> Ricoeur, “Inhabited Space,” 149.

<sup>10</sup> Ricoeur, “Uncanniness,” 264. To convey our Foucauldian intuition that the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* are actual experiences in a space and not states or conditions given or guaranteed through the material or structural form of the space, we have used the adjective pair instead of the corresponding noun pair *Heimlichkeit–Unheimlichkeit* in our analysis. We thank the anonymous referee for urging us to reflect on this technical distinction.

<sup>11</sup> Ricoeur, “Uncanniness,” 264. Even as we practice the ethics of roaming and uprootedness, it is possible to stay attached and loyal to our “home.” This is what Appiah calls “rooted cosmopolitanism” or “cosmopolitan patriotism” wherein one is “attached to a home of one’s own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people” (Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Cosmopolitan Patriots,” in *Critical Inquiry*, 23 (Spring 1997), 618).

<sup>12</sup> Paul Ricoeur, “Fiction (4): Models,” in *Lectures on Imagination*, ed. by George H. Taylor, Robert D. Sweeney, Jean-Luc Amalric, and Patrick F. Cosby (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2024), 263.

(the objective) dimensions of the intentionality of the act of perceiving home. Often, an individual's inability to experience *heimlich* in a space is understood exclusively in terms of the actions and conduct of the individual, a psychological explanation of the phenomenon of not being at home that overemphasizes a socially decontextualized individualism. Such accounts separate the experience of the *heimlich* from the "politics of belonging"—the dimension of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion—an approach Marco Antonsich cautions us against.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, structural-functional approaches to the phenomenon ignore the subjective elements and read the *unheimlich* solely in terms of the objective structures that constitute the home, such as the patriarchal structures of society,<sup>14</sup> ignoring the personal, individual dimension of the experience of the *heimlich*. Given the shortcomings of these accounts, the invitation to generate a new perspective of home that can describe the experience of the *unheimlich* within its space remains open.

In sum, the *unheimlich*, interpreted by Ricoeur as the sense of otherness in a space, is a more common experience than is typically assumed in an approach towards space based on the notion of alterity. It is experienced even within a space of everyday life such as home—a reality indescribable in terms of the classic description of home. This blocked situation calls for the generation of a new perspective to overcome it. We propose that such a new (and better) perspective can be generated by reflecting on a "heterotopology of home," i.e., a description that takes Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia (an "other space") as a metaphor for home. In the next section, we will engage with the concept of heterotopia to explore the possibility of considering home as heterotopia.

### **Foucault's Heterotopia: A Fluid and Displaceable Concept**

In this section, we will introduce Foucault's concept of heterotopia, contextualize it within his broader theory of space, and describe it in terms of its principles. By engaging with ongoing debates and discussions surrounding the meanings of the concept, we will show that the fluidity of heterotopia is such that it allows itself to be displaced to new situations, such as the situation of home, as a metaphor.

Foucault's concept of heterotopia has become crucial to thinking about space, especially since the spatial turn in the social sciences and

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<sup>13</sup> Antonsich, "Searching for Belonging," 645.

<sup>14</sup> Koshy Tharakan and Payel Chattopadhyay Mukherjee, "At Home as an 'Outsider': Subarnalata and Othappu: The Scent of the Other Side," in *Samyukta: A Journal of Gender and Culture*, 7 (2022), 1–2, <<https://doi.org/10.53007/SJGC.2022.V7.I2.47>>.

humanities.<sup>15</sup> The spatial turn is an ongoing “response to a longstanding ontological and epistemological bias that privileges time over space in all the human sciences, including spatial disciplines like geography and architecture.”<sup>16</sup> Following its “long, slow, and painful undertaking,” it is being reasserted that space matters because “where events unfold is integral to how they take shape” and not only because all our thoughts and actions necessarily occur in space.<sup>17</sup> Foucault’s discussions on the significance of space for the human condition are widely recognized as having led to the spatial turn.<sup>18</sup>

The key text for understanding Foucault’s concept of heterotopia is his “*Des Espaces Autres*” (variously translated as “Of Other Spaces” and “Different Spaces”), originally delivered as a lecture to architects. There have been earlier, and not in the least insignificant, mentions of the concept by Foucault, such as those in *The Order of Things* and a few radio transcripts of his talks. However, “*Des Espaces Autres*” is the publicly available text wherein the concept is discussed in most detail—though often reprimanded for being too short, unsystematized, and ambiguous. The text has had at least four translations from French to English, with as many as three anthologies dedicated to celebrating the concept’s continuing relevance, significance, and mystique in our contemporary epoch. One of the significant differences among these translations lies in the translator’s interpretation of heterotopia’s stance on difference/alterity—i.e., whether or not heterotopia is a space separate from the spaces of everyday life. This paper refers to the fourth translation of “*Des Espaces Autres*” by Dehaene and De Caeter in 2008, who followed the now-classical convention to translate the title of the text as “Of Other Spaces” to emphasize the separation of heterotopias from spaces of everyday life. In contrast, the third translation of the text by Robert Hurley in 1998 puts forward an alternative translation of the title of the text as

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<sup>15</sup> Kathryn Beebe, Angela Davis, and Kathryn Gleadle, “Introduction: Space, Place and Gendered Identities: Feminist History and the Spatial Turn,” in *Women’s History Review*, 21 (2012), 526.

<sup>16</sup> Edward Soja, “Taking Space Personally,” in *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. by Santa Arias and Barney Warf (London: Taylor and Francis, 2008), 11.

<sup>17</sup> Barney Warf and Santa Arias, “Introduction: Reinsertion of Space in the Humanities and Social Sciences,” in *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. by Santa Arias and Barney Warf (London: Taylor and Francis, 2008), 3–10; Maria Cristina Vendra and Paolo Furia, “Introduction: Ricœur and the Problem of Space. Perspectives on a Ricœurian ‘Spatial Turn,’” in *Ricœur Studies*, 12 (2021), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Beebe, Davis, and Gleadle, “Space, Place and Gendered Identities,” 525–527.

“Different Spaces” to assert that heterotopias are not “radically other than the spaces of ordinary life.”<sup>19</sup>

Foucault considers space a historical entity subject to time and power—its history is a history of powers.<sup>20</sup> He begins “*Des Espaces Autres*” with a brief history of the concept of space in the West. According to his account, the contemporary space of “emplacements” has substituted the modern space of “extension,” which itself had replaced the medieval space of “localization.” In the Middle Ages, space was conceptualized as a hierarchic, oppositional ensemble of localized places. However, when space came to be conceived as infinitely extended and open in the modern era, places were dismissed as mere points in the movement of a thing. In contrast, space is conceptualized today as emplacements, i.e., “relations of proximity between points or elements.”<sup>21</sup> Foucault writes:

The present epoch would perhaps rather be the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity; we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and the far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed .... We do not live in a kind of void, inside which we could place individuals and things .... We live inside a set of relations that delineate emplacements that cannot be equated or in any way superimposed.<sup>22</sup>

In other words, Foucault considers contemporary space to be relational and heterogeneous.

In “*Des Espaces Autres*,” Foucault considers heterotopia as one of the two main types of spaces that have “the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspend, neutralize, or invert the set of relations designated, mirrored, or reflected by them.” The other type of space—utopia—is an emplacement with no real place that has “a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society. It is society itself perfected, or else it is society turned upside down.” In contrast to utopias that are “fundamentally unreal places,” heterotopias are real places:

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<sup>19</sup> Email exchange with James Faubion by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Caeter cited in Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces (1967),” in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. and trans. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Caeter (London: Routledge, 2008), 23n\*.

<sup>20</sup> Michel Foucault, “The Eye of Power,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 149.

<sup>21</sup> Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 15.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 14–16.

There are also, and this probably in all culture, in all civilization, real places, effective places, places that are written into the institution of society itself, and that are a sort of counter-emplacements, a sort of effectively realized utopias in which the real emplacements, all the other real emplacements that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted; a kind of places that are outside all places, even though they are actually localizable.<sup>23</sup>

The meanings of emplacements can be explored by describing them by looking for the set of relations by which a given site can be defined. Foucault terms the systematic description of heterotopias via the network of relations that define them as “heterotopology.” It has as its object “in a given society, the study, analysis, description, and ‘reading,’ ... of these different spaces, of these other places, as a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live.”<sup>24</sup>

To describe the concept of heterotopia, Foucault provides us with six principles, which we summarize as follows: (1) Heterotopias are constituted in (probably) all cultures in the world, though in varied forms; (2) Each heterotopia has a “precise and determined function” within a society that may change over time; (3) A heterotopia can juxtapose within it several incompatible emplacements; (4) Heterotopias are often linked to “slices of time,” providing “a sort of absolute break with...traditional time”; (5) Heterotopias presuppose “a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable,” through constraint or submission to permissions, rites, or purifications; (6) Heterotopias have a function in relation to the rest of space, be it the exposing of its being illusory or compensating for its disorderliness.<sup>25</sup>

Despite (or perhaps due to) the description of its principles, heterotopia remains a fluid and fertile concept. Though Foucault himself did not engage further with the concept, it has been kept from being too frozen or sedimented over the years through ongoing debates and disagreements among later theorists regarding its interpretations. These various interpretations can be summarized in terms of their underlying positions by following Hilde Heynen’s framework, bringing them under three key dimensions: i) The role of space (Is heterotopia a recognizable spatial entity? How can the relationship between spatial and social-cultural processes be

<sup>23</sup> Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 17.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 16–17.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 18–21.

conceptualized?); ii) Aspects of politics (Do heterotopias support or subvert the societal status quo?); and iii) The dynamics of human agency (Do heterotopias have the same meaning for all the actors involved?).<sup>26</sup>

The possibility or permissibility of interpreting home as heterotopia is partly based on the same unresolved problematic of the concept that underlies the disagreements among the different translations of the title of “*Des Espaces Autres*”: Heterotopia’s stance on difference/alterity, i.e., whether or not it is an other space, separate from the spaces of everyday life. If heterotopia is indeed an other space, the concept as a metaphor will allow its displacement to new situations, i.e., situations outside those mentioned in its original conception by Foucault—such as the situation of home, a space of everyday life. The process of displacement is not an application of the concept of heterotopia to the new situation of home as an instance of it (subsumption or ordering). Instead, it is a taking of the concept as a metaphor for home to transpose or carry over a new perspective to think about the situation.<sup>27</sup> The interpretation of home as heterotopia involves the activity of “reading,” i.e., a selecting or screening to “set aside the irrelevant aspects and emphasize only what is relevant”<sup>28</sup> in the concept and elaborating how these can be carried over and related to the new situation. In this process, the logical distance between heterotopia and home is reduced—what initially appears remote, and a strange or mistaken use no longer seems so.<sup>29</sup>

In this section, we have shown that heterotopia is a fluid concept that allows displacement to the new situation of home as a metaphor. Such a displacement opens possibilities for the generation of a new perspective that can be carried over to think about and even overcome the blocked situation of home. To explore this possibility, in the next section, we will describe a Foucauldian “heterotopology of home” that interprets home as heterotopia and suggest that the principles of heterotopia can be carried over and related to the situation of home.

### Home as Heterotopia: Describing a Foucauldian Heterotopology of Home

In this section, we will think with Foucault about the classic description of home and the experiences of the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* in the context of his relational understanding of space. We will then describe a

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<sup>26</sup> Hilde Heynen, “Heterotopia Unfolded?,” in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*, ed. by Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter (London: Routledge, 2008), 312–321.

<sup>27</sup> Ricoeur, “Fiction (4): Models,” 264.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

Foucauldian “heterotopology of home” by summarizing and analyzing past readings of home as heterotopia on the basis of their underlying positions through Hilde Heynen’s framework, which we mentioned in the previous section.

In “*Des Espaces Autres*,” Foucault offers suggestions for thinking about the classic description of home. He observes that even in the contemporary epoch of space, “perhaps our life is still ruled by a certain number of oppositions that cannot be touched, that institution and practice have not yet dared to undermine; oppositions that we regard as simple givens.”<sup>30</sup> Home can be considered a space wherein such a “practical desacralization” has not yet occurred.<sup>31</sup> The notion of home is suspended between the materiality of actually localizable spaces and the human need to be in one’s place. Nevertheless, following Foucault, we can see how there is nothing in the order of the home as such—its structure or function or even the intention behind it—that can either thwart or guarantee the *heimlich* experienced within it.<sup>32</sup>

Following the Foucauldian conception of space as relational, we can see that the experiences of the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* within home open four scenarios in relation to the rest of space: first, despite the experience of the *heimlich* within home, we may experience the *unheimlich* in the rest of space. Second, despite the experience of the *unheimlich* within home, we may experience the *heimlich* in the rest of space. Third, the experience of the *unheimlich* within home may seep into, stylize, and shape our experiences of and negotiations with the rest of space, haunting us with an uneasiness linked to the feeling of not finding one’s place in the world. Fourth, in cases of absolute privilege, the experience of the *heimlich* is omnipresent, pervading each and every space as we move through the world. As we can see, among these four scenarios, it is the third that most closely relates to our discussion on the situation of home.

In “*Des Espaces Autres*,” Foucault calls the house, the bedroom, and the bed “closed or semi-closed emplacements of rest.”<sup>33</sup> Whether or not these emplacements are necessary or sufficient parts of homes, he neither qualifies

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<sup>30</sup> Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 16.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 and Ricoeur, “Uncanniness,” 264. See also Lee Quinby, “Resistance on the Home Front: Re(con)figuring Home Space as a Practice of Freedom,” in *Anti-Apocalypse: Exercises in Genealogical Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 143.

<sup>32</sup> Michel Foucault, “Space, Knowledge, Power,” in *Power: The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, ed. by James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 2000), 354–356. By this, Foucault does not mean that the “exercise of freedom is completely indifferent to spatial distribution....” He asserts that architecture “can and does produce positive effects when the liberating intentions of the architect coincide with the real practice of people in the exercise of their freedom” (Foucault, “Space, Knowledge, Power,” 355–366).

<sup>33</sup> Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 16.

them nor exemplifies homes as heterotopias. In other words, the situation of home lies outside those mentioned in Foucault's original conception of heterotopia. Nevertheless, although the problematic of heterotopia's stance on difference/alterity remains theoretically unresolved, several thinkers over the years have interpreted home as heterotopia in their multiple, often diverging, and even contradictory readings<sup>34</sup>—affirming our finding that heterotopia can be displaced to the situation of home. The multitude of these past readings of home as heterotopia can be summarized and analyzed on the basis of their underlying positions, following Hilde Heynen's framework, to describe a "heterotopology of home."<sup>35</sup>

*i) The role of space:* Is home as heterotopia a recognizable spatial entity? On the one hand, reading home with an emphasis on its *spatial form* highlights its heterotopian mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. In this reading, the material or structural form of the home is what makes it heterotopian (Foucault's first principle of heterotopia). On the other hand, reading home with an emphasis on its *actual use and meanings* helps envision it as having the quality to temporarily accommodate heterotopian moments within its form.<sup>36</sup> Here, heterotopia is a dynamic, ephemeral quality of the lived space of the home, actualized by the practices of its inhabitants (Foucault's fourth principle of heterotopia). Both readings provide insights into the "pattern of regular doings" (Foucault's fourth principle of heterotopia)<sup>37</sup> and spatial divisions (Foucault's fifth principle of heterotopia) of domesticity and socialization. These patterns and divisions aim at "separation, exclusion, control and cleanliness"<sup>38</sup> for the home's inhabitants, providing security, privacy, comfort, familiarity, and an either-or understanding of one's and the other's place within society<sup>39</sup> (Foucault's sixth principle of heterotopia). However, in their "logics of purity," prohibition, and discrimination, they may sometimes be inexorable, absurd, and othering even to the inhabitants<sup>40</sup> (Foucault's third principle of heterotopia).

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<sup>34</sup> For examples, see Quinby, "Resistance on the Home Front"; Jennifer M. Bondy, "Latinas, Heterotopia, and Home: Pedagogies of Gender and Sexuality in *Quinceañera*," in *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 9 (2012); Alice Gonçalves, "Spaces of Resistance: Heterotopia and Dystopia in Toni Morrison's *Home*," in *Via Panoramica: Revista de Estudos Anglo-Americanos*, 3 (2018).

<sup>35</sup> Heynen, "Heterotopia Unfolded?" 312–320.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 312–314.

<sup>37</sup> Mary Douglas, "The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space," in *Social Research*, 58 (Spring 1991), 287.

<sup>38</sup> Heynen, "Heterotopia Unfolded?" 313.

<sup>39</sup> Sneha Annavarapu, "Home Is Where the Revolution Is," in *Economic & Political Weekly*, 55 (January 2020), 2.

<sup>40</sup> See Bondy, "Latinas, Heterotopia, and Home."

How is the relationship between spatial and social-cultural processes conceptualized in home as heterotopia? Reading home as a heterotopian *receptor/reflector* renders it a passive role, emphasizing instead social-cultural mechanisms such as “capital movements, labor relationships, discriminatory practices, symbolic transformations, etc.,” the effects of which are felt and registered through various pathways within its space. Reading home as a heterotopian *instrument* presents it as an active “spatial tool for the regulation of behavior, the disciplining of the body or the activation of social interaction” through various techniques of domination and surveillance. Finally, reading home as a heterotopian *stage* for social processes displays both its active and passive roles in making “certain actions and interactions possible or impossible without this influence being decisive for the content [of the actions]”<sup>41</sup> (Foucault’s second and sixth principles of heterotopia).

ii) *Aspects of politics*: Does home as heterotopia support or subvert the societal status quo? On the one hand, reading home with an emphasis on its *immutability* presents it as an instrument of normalization, oppression, violence, and trauma,<sup>42</sup> the representation and support system for exclusion, patriarchy, gender normativity, and hierarchy.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, reading home with an emphasis on its *fragility and mutability* makes it possible to envision it as a potential site for the contestation and inversion of the normative order, for the practice of resistance, subversion,<sup>44</sup> transgression, and greater liberation—an “alternative social formation(s) in the making,”<sup>45</sup> such as a special kind of distributive justice<sup>46</sup> or a radically “inclusive and egalitarian space where dissent and comradeship thrive”<sup>47</sup> (Foucault’s second principle of heterotopia). Such readings are insightful in understanding how the sediments of shared tradition, religion, values, practices, artifacts, and memories in a home not only ground its inhabitants and envelop them in a sense of belonging, but also loom larger than the

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<sup>41</sup> Heynen, “Heterotopia Unfolded?” 314–315.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>43</sup> Annavarapu, “Home Is Where the Revolution Is,” 2.

<sup>44</sup> Heynen, “Heterotopia Unfolded?” 317; Jennifer Brant, “Finding Homeplace within Indigenous Literatures: Honoring the Genealogical Legacies of bell hooks and Lee Maracle,” in *Hypatia*, 38 (2023), 46. Brant documents that bell hooks reconceptualizes homeplace in terms of its potential to be a subversive, feminist site of resistance, renewal, and self-recovery, thus overturning the oppressive nature and sexist norms of the domestic space.

<sup>45</sup> Heynen, “Heterotopia Unfolded?” 318.

<sup>46</sup> Douglas, “Idea of a Home,” 297.

<sup>47</sup> Annavarapu, “Home Is Where the Revolution Is,” 2.

inhabitants themselves, exerting “tyrannous control” over mind, body, and speech<sup>48</sup> (Foucault’s third principle of heterotopia).

iii) *The dynamics of human agency*: Does home as heterotopia have the same meaning for all actors involved? Many feminist readings of home as heterotopia emphasize “the necessity to recognize that embodied subjectivities, decentered and de-totalized as they might be, provide the necessary starting point for a politics of anti-domination.”<sup>49</sup> They have as their central site of interrogation the contextualized, embodied subjects and their ability to “not only live in, but also act upon and transform” their lived space of home.<sup>50</sup> These readings also demonstrate that home can be negotiated to have different meanings and functions for different inhabitants based on their subject positions and social relations and that these meanings, functions, and subject positions can shift or multiply over time (Foucault’s second principle of heterotopia).<sup>51</sup>

Summing up, in this section, we described a Foucauldian heterotopology of home by summarizing and analyzing the multitude of past readings of home as heterotopia on the basis of their underlying positions through Hilde Heynen’s framework. Rather than providing a new reading of home as heterotopia, we built on past contributions to suggest that the characteristics of home identified in these readings relate to Foucault’s principles of heterotopia. In the next section, we will reflect on this heterotopology of home to account for the experience of the *unheimlich* within home so as to overcome the blocked situation of home.

### **Describing the *unheimlich* within Home: A Reflection on the Heterotopology of Home**

In this section, we will reflect on the Foucauldian heterotopology of home described in the previous section. We will show that describing the experience of the *unheimlich* within home calls for a reinterpretation of the experience of the *heimlich* and the understanding of selfhood in relation to the *unheimlich*. We will put forth Mariana Ortega’s accounts of “hometactics” and “multiplicitous selves” and Georg Simmel’s notion of “the stranger” as exemplifications of such a reinterpretation.

A heterotopology of home urges us to reinterpret the experience of the *heimlich* within home in relation to the *unheimlich*. It emphasizes that the

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<sup>48</sup> Douglas, “Idea of a Home,” 304.

<sup>49</sup> Heynen, “Heterotopia Unfolded?” 321.

<sup>50</sup> Bondy, “Latinas, Heterotopia, and Home,” 94.

<sup>51</sup> Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 18 and *Ibid.*

experience of the *heimlich* within home exists simultaneously and in juxtaposition with the realm of power and its forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion at play in that very space, aligning with Antonsich's argument that place-belongingness should not be separated from the politics of belonging.<sup>52</sup> Thus, it does justice to both the noetic and the noematic dimensions of the intentionality of the act of perceiving home. By blurring divides such as private/public, personal/social, subjective/objective, and spaces of everyday life/other spaces, a heterotopology of home contributes to ongoing discussions that contest the assumed givenness of the oppositions that Foucault observes as existing even in the contemporary epoch of space.<sup>53</sup>

The complex and variegated experience of the *heimlich* needs to be articulated in terms of both the personal and the social. Mariana Ortega's account of hometactics can be considered an instance of such an articulation. Ortega notes that in the absence of a pre-given experience of the *heimlich* in the home and to alleviate the experience of the *unheimlich*, selves engage in certain micropractices of home-making to make themselves feel more at home in the world—what she calls “hometactics.” Ortega here follows Michel de Certeau's understanding of “tactics” as “the ‘art of the weak,’ or ingenious, improvised resistant practices performed by those who do not have power,”<sup>54</sup> which itself, in part, follows Foucault's general approach towards power and distinction between tactics and strategies.<sup>55</sup> Power, for Foucault, is an actual practice of people rather than an institution or substance that can be possessed. Tactics are local, singular force relations of power that become strategies when coordinated to form an apparatus.<sup>56</sup> For Foucault, it is in these actual practices of people that resistance is immanent and realized within a totalizing system—the realm in which power is exercised is also the one in which strategies of resistance to it are being developed.<sup>57</sup> Owing to being contingent, decentered, and personal, hometactics are unmappable and offer no surety on “how effective such practices will be, how they can be co-opted, misunderstood, or undermined by others.”<sup>58</sup> Examples of hometactics

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<sup>52</sup> Antonsich, “Searching for Belonging,” 645.

<sup>53</sup> The assumed divide and opposition between private and public spaces has been heavily criticized, especially by feminist theorists. For a detailed discussion, see Quinby, “Resistance on the Home Front.”

<sup>54</sup> Ortega, “Hometactics,” 169.

<sup>55</sup> John Nale, “Strategies (and Tactics),” in *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon*, ed. by Leonard Lawlor and John Nale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 488.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 486.

<sup>57</sup> Foucault, “Space, Knowledge, Power,” 354–356 and Nale, “Strategies (and Tactics),” 488.

<sup>58</sup> Ortega, “Hometactics,” 173.

include arranging things in a space to evoke a sense of familiarity and walking in a city without a map. The *heimlich* forged through hometactics is neither normative (at ease with intelligibility, norms, and practices), authentic (given fully due to one's identity), or pure (normative, authentic, and without the possibility of rupture). Instead, it is a belonging-in-the-making that "'makes do' and is creatively constructed in our everyday dealings in worlds."<sup>59</sup> Borrowing Ricoeur's vocabulary, hometactics can be read as an "appropriation" of the experience of the *unheimlich*—a "play" through which what had been other is made one's own or familiar.<sup>60</sup>

A heterotopology of home also enriches our understanding of selfhood by proposing the productive function that the experience of the *unheimlich* within home can have in self-constitution and self-understanding. Since the spatial turn, the fixed, unified, autonomous, and transcendental identity at the core of the Cogito has more decisively made way to account for heterogenous, shifting, and even contradictory aspects of the nature and constitution of selves who lie at the "changing intersections of different language games" and axes of identity.<sup>61</sup> Ortega's account of "multiplicitous selves" is an instance of such a shift in understanding selfhood. In her vocabulary, the self that engages in hometactics is "multiplicitous," one that "occupies multiple positionalities in terms of social identities...and thus lives in various worlds."<sup>62</sup> The lived experiences of multiplicitous selves that are marginalized are of ruptures and being constantly aware of not being at home in the worlds they inhabit. They must then constantly engage in traveling in and between their worlds,<sup>63</sup> an activity that redefines the search for home as a question of homes, one's home-boundedness, i.e., the longing to come home, and what we come to call home or our place in the world.<sup>64</sup>

However, this "tactical" activity runs the risk of what Ricoeur warns us about constantly placing and displacing oneself: "It is always possible,

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<sup>59</sup> Ortega, "Hometactics," 170.

<sup>60</sup> Paul Ricoeur, "The Canon between the Text and the Community," in *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Exegesis*, ed. by Petr Pokorný and Jan Roskovec (Tübingen: Mohn Siebeck, 2002), 12 and Paul Ricoeur, "Appropriation," in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, ed. by John B. Thompson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 147.

<sup>61</sup> Warf and Arias, "Reinsertion of Space in the Humanities and Social Sciences," 6.

<sup>62</sup> Mariana Ortega, "Hometactics: Self-Mapping, Belonging, and the Home Question," in *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiment, and Race*, ed. by Emily S. Lee (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), 170–171.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Here, one may recall the different notions of "world" such as "*Heimwelt*" (home-world), "*Fremdwelt*" (foreign-world), and "*Allwelt*" (the whole-world) in Edmund Husserl's phenomenology.

often urgent, to displace oneself at the risk of becoming that passerby, that wanderer, that *flâneur*, that vagabond, stray dog that our fragmented contemporary culture both sets in motion and paralyzes.”<sup>65</sup> Although this risk anticipated by Ricoeur is an actual possibility, our discussion of the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia as a metaphor offers mitigatory suggestions following Georg Simmel’s notion of “the stranger.” In traveling in and between worlds, the stranger exercises her “freedom of coming and going.” Her position in the group she has come to today and will stay until the morrow is “determined, essentially, by the fact that [s]he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that [s]he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself.”<sup>66</sup> Then, akin to the concept of metaphor, the stranger generates new perspectives that can be transposed to think about the experience of the *unheimlich* and to help constitute the self through the forged *heimlich*.

In brief, in this section, we have shown that a reflection on the heterotopology of home opens space for contesting the myths of humanity deposited in tradition and culture, as well as critiquing the illusions and prejudices of the self. It generates a perspective to describe the experience of the *unheimlich* at home by reinterpreting the experience of the *heimlich* and the understanding of selfhood in relation to the *unheimlich*. We illustrated the possibility of such a reinterpretation by invoking Ortega’s accounts of “hometactics” and “multiplicitous selves” and Simmel’s notion of the “the stranger.” We observe that Ortega’s notion of forged belonging aligns with the Foucauldian intuition that the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich* are actual experiences within a space, not states or conditions given or guaranteed through the material or structural form of the space. Although the reinterpretation we propose is not without the risks anticipated by Ricoeur, we indicated that Simmel’s notion of the stranger offers decisive suggestions to mitigate them. Ultimately, this reflection provides further evidence that, although Foucault himself did not engage further with heterotopia, the concept is so fluid and fertile that it continues to generate meanings, not only through displacement to new situations but also through engagement with diverse thoughts and thinkers.

### Conclusion: Overcoming the Blocked Situation

A Foucauldian heterotopology of home overcomes the blocked situation of home as the experience of the *unheimlich* within home becomes

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<sup>65</sup> Ricoeur, “Inhabited Space,” 149.

<sup>66</sup> Georg Simmel, “The Stranger,” in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. by Kurt Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950), 402.

describable in terms of the new description of home as heterotopia. In this process, along with transforming the perception of home, a heterotopology of home also transforms the previous description of heterotopia. The displacement of the concept of heterotopia to the situation of home results in the extension of its instances from “other spaces” to spaces of everyday life, modifying its conceptual scheme. In other words, heterotopia is a different space, not an other space. Our interpretation of the heterotopology of home thus contributes to discussions on the problematic of difference/alterity surrounding heterotopias by reasserting the relationality of space advocated by Foucault and suggested by the notion of difference.

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## 170 HOME AS HETEROTOPIA

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