

# THE HETEROTOPIC NATURE OF TRANSMEDIA EXCHANGE

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## INTRODUCTION

In this paper I will examine how participants' experience of story told across multiple media platforms works as world-making in which the exchange creates another collective space alongside the real places inhabited by individual participants. This world-making will be read as a 'heterotopia'. The roles and responsibilities of participants towards this co-constructed space will then be examined.

French philosopher Michel Foucault, in a 1967 lecture to architects, sets down a description and principles of heterotopia. He uses the term by way of a contrast to the concept of utopia. Heterotopia are 'counter-sites' where real places in cultures and civilisations are "represented<sup>1</sup>, contested, and inverted" (Foucault, 1967 trans. by Miskowiec, 1984 para. 12). Foucault's six principles of heterotopia offer a framework for examining the dynamics of a transmedia exchange. This paper explores, through a heterotopic lens, transmedia exchange as world-making (Jenkins 2006). It considers Foucault's six heterotopic principles specifically as they relate to transmedia exchange between participants, and gives some examples of transmedia projects that reflect, specifically, each principle. This paper also challenges the established binary of media producers and consumers in terms of their roles within the co-constructed heterotopia and posits the notion that traditional classifications are dissolved in favour of a non-

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<sup>1</sup> To bring clarity to the use of the word 'represented', which has two meanings in English, I have had this part of Foucault's lecture translated by David Ramonteau. In an email to me (5 June 2015) Ramonteau says: "The sites are not present again in their totality, they are not presented again, in this new entity (heterotopia) but rather they are represented in the same way as a committee will represent a country abroad, so they are presented, shown, but it is not them as such, it is an image or a faithful expression of them." I will use this understanding in my analysis of the principles of heterotopia.

hegemonic reading of the denizens who dwell within the created space as participants with equal but different roles and responsibilities.

Where each transmedia project encompasses, to varying degrees, all of Foucault's principles of heterotopia I have used them here to illustrate a specific principle, each in turn, so as to highlight and focus attentions on that principle for the purposes of closer study.

It is important to note that both Foucault's original lecture and the translation of that lecture into English by Jay Miskowiec (*Architecture/Mouvement/Continuite*, 1984) have been considered 'sketchy', 'provisional', 'confusing', and 'incomplete' (Genocchio, 1995; Soja, 1996; Harvey, 2000; Saldanha, 2008 all cited in Johnson, 2012).

In this paper I will respond to and reflect on the theory building set out by Foucault and in turn through the translation by Miskowiec, *in spite of* its inconsistencies and discrepancies.

Once the heterotopic nature of these transmedia exchanges is identified this paper will describe participants in terms of their denizenship of the created heterotopia, and explore some of the values and codes that exist within this world-making.

## THE ERA IN WHICH WE OPERATE

Foucault's lecture begins with context-building of the current era, although fifty years ago the description still has some relevance. Foucault calls it an epoch of space and simultaneity, of juxtaposition, "of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed." (Foucault, 1967) Our current epoch sees media consumption across multiple-screens and a communication, information and entertainment landscape ruled by online and in-real-life messaging working in tandem and simultaneously. The early 21st century is also a period of the side-by-side.

In describing a language of new media, theorist Lev Manovich identified "the next generation of cinema (would) add multiple windows to its language." (Manovich, 2001 p19) Manovich acknowledges Foucault, in his theory making, as anticipating the "network" society as an epoch of the "side-by-side". His own reading of this era (forty years on from Foucault) suggests "multiple and simultaneously active" windows, frames and links (Manovich, 2001 p324).

The result is a new cinema in which the diacronic dimension is no longer privileged over the synchronic dimension, time is no longer privileged over space, sequence is no longer privileged over simultaneity, montage in time is no longer privileged over montage within a shot. (Manovich, 2001 p325)

Within this understanding, incompatible spaces and times, can overlay each other to create a place of 'otherness', as real as each individual window.

Matt Locke, who established transmedia production house StoryThings in 2011, offers an evolution on from Foucault's epoch of the side-by side, "The culture of the 21st century will be defined by how we synthesize these contradictions - scale and intimacy, spectacle and conversation, signal and noise." (cited in Tsene, Saridaki et al, 2014).

Where fifty years ago society was identifying the contradictions in place, we are now bringing the contradictions together and finding constructive ways to work within the dichotomy.

The denizens of this new world are wrestling too with who they are to each other, and how, together, they will form a community within the heterotopic experience, with all the codes and conventions, pulls and pressures of any society. "We have seen the relationship between audiences and artists (storytellers) move from intimacy to distance and now back to a strange kind of intimate distance" (Locke 2014).

Tim O'Reilly, who used the term Web 2.0 in 2004 to describe the user-generated content age of the internet, has called the current web era: Web Squared, an evolutionary step from Web 2.0. O'Reilly calls this new era "Web meets World" (2009), an era of "augmented reality". This too resonates with an epoch of the side-by-side.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

The specific terms unpacked in this paper, which need clear definition, are heterotopia and transmedia. For an understanding of the first I will look to Michel Foucault, for the latter new media theorist Henry Jenkins.

Etymologically heterotopia is taken from the Greek; *other* and *place*. Rather than offering a single definition Foucault gives a *systematic description* of the "study, analysis, description,

and 'reading' of these different spaces, of these other spaces" (Foucault, para. 13) in the form of its six principles. Synthesising these into a single framing concept, heterotopia could be defined as a space that is simultaneously real and mythic and is separate from, yet exists within, a real place. A heterotopia adds a layer of meaning to the real place in which it exists as it has its own, distinct function and its own entry and exit points.

In this paper, I will offer a systematic description of heterotopias as world-making through an analysis of six transmedia exchanges. Analysis of transmedia exchange has its roots in the understanding of cinema as the moving image - its codes and conventions - is considered the primary ancestor of transmedia story. In this paper I am particularly focused on transmedia works that take their conventions from documentary realism. This is in order to compare works in terms of their heterotopic nature rather than their genre, which is maintained as a common denominator between the works.

In his lecture Foucault describes a number of heterotopias to illustrate his six principles, and together these give some understanding of what is meant by the term. A honeymoon, a cemetery, a garden, a fairground, a brothel, a boat:

...the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, 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 they conceal in their gardens...The ship is the heterotopia par excellence. (Foucault, para 28)

It is then a small step to define, as a heterotopia, the media - viewed as a 'channel' or a 'vehicle' - and more specifically the exchange between media producers and media consumers, and the co-constructed world-making that exists between production and consumption. A microcosm of this is transmedia exchange, which, although arguably not 'new', is a recent addition to the study of media.

Transmedia is a term, specifically an adjective, used in diverse ways but the definition I will consider is that of Henry Jenkins. "A transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole. In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best." (Jenkins, 2006 p97)

Jenkins extends the concept to include the role of participants in this "participatory culture" (Jenkins, 2006 p2).

Transmedia storytelling refers to a new aesthetic that has emerged in response to media convergence - one that places new demands on consumers and depends on the active participation of knowledge communities. Transmedia storytelling is the art of world-making. (Jenkins, 2006 p21)

In early 1990s cultural theory that centred on the media and on television in particular, theorist Stuart Hall (cited in Martin 2007), developed a theory of encoding-decoding that saw audience as participants in the creation of meaning within the media exchange. Audience was viewed as taking an active role as participants, bringing their own ideals and views into their meaning-making of the sent and received exchanges. Jenkins' world-making extends Hall's consideration of audience as active participant.

## WORLD MAKING

It is this notion of active, mutually-beneficial "world-making" through the transmedia exchange between participants that brings us back to Foucault's heterotopia.

A post on the Tribeca Film blog site (Oct 19, 2011) gives a practitioner's view on transmedia that reinforces the idea of world-making.

'Transmedia' is a shorthand for a grab bag of production and distribution practices and audience engagement techniques...What's new here is the idea that storytellers can create deeper experiences for their audiences when they unfold a story and its world via multiple venues, and when they invite consumers to participate meaningfully in that world. (Tribeca Film Blog 2011)

For the purposes of this paper I am exploring the flattening of consumer/producer binaries into a non-hegemonic exchange between participants in this transmedia landscape and how through this 'world-making' participants co-create heterotopia.

## WEB MEETS WORLD

In Tim O'Reilly's defining of Web Squared we are given an understanding of the mechanisms that enable participation in transmedia exchange. "There's a qualitative change happening as the Web becomes more closely integrated with the real world via sensor-based smart phone applications. Web Squared is another way of saying 'Web meets World'" (O'Reilly cited in Jurgenson, 2009). In Nathan Jurgenson's analysis of O'Reilly's concept he places it in the context of "the increased blurring of the digital and material worlds" and cautions against delineating between what is a real place and what is online. This learning can be extended into theorising on heterotopic space as 'real' versus 'virtual'.

Foucault's interpretation of heterotopia argues that they are "real places - places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society" (para 12). Discourse on whether 'online' places are 'real' is rampant across the internet with practitioners, theorists, originators and audience all inputting into the debate. In a contemporary reading, online places are considered to be as real as 'in-real-life' places, and the founding of an online society includes the forming of heterotopias which read as clearly as those concrete manifestations set out by Foucault. Establishing transmedia exchange as heterotopic moves us away from a real/unreal dichotomy in relation to online worlds.

Cultural theory building in the early days of mass-consumed media already suggested that media created space was as 'real' as the concrete world. In the 1990s Henri Lefebvre, in *The Production of Space*, indicated that social space was being overtaken in a real-world sense by illusory space, namely mass media exchange.

The place of social space as a whole has been usurped by a part of that space endowed with an illusory special status - namely, the part which is concerned with writing and imagery, underpinned by the written text (journalism, literature), and broadcast by the media; a part, in short, that amounts to abstraction wielding awesome reductionistic force vis-vis 'lived' experience. (Lefebvre, 1991 p52)

Transmedia exchange extends this notion of illusory space as 'real' to present a landscape where 'online' and 'real-life' worlds work together to co-create a whole in which participants move seamlessly between a world of atoms and one of bits.

"Digital and material realities dialectically co-construct each other...social networking sites are not separate from the physical world, but rather they have everything to do with it...no longer can we think of a 'real' world opposed to being 'online'" (O'Reilly, 2009). It is at this point that the world making of heterotopia and the notion of an 'augmented reality' - a transmedia exchange - collide. O'Reilly: "We need to think with a paradigm that centers on the implosion of the worlds of bits and atoms into the augmented reality that has seemingly become ascendant."

Heterotopia, as described by Foucault fifty years ago, resonates in our current era, through Jenkins, as world-making, made possible in some cases by augmented reality where participants co-construct a real space within, but diametrically opposed to, the existing place in which both reside - a place where the 'real' world is "represented, contested and inverted."

## SIX PRINCIPLES

### *PRINCIPLE ONE: CRISIS OR DEVIATION*

Foucault's first principle states that in all cultures there are heterotopias but they take varied forms within two broad categories: heterotopias of crisis ("privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis" (para 15)) and heterotopias of deviation ("those in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed"(para 16).

In the context of transmedia exchange both cases are found as audiences deviate from the expected form of media consumption to become active participants in world-making. This is often stimulated by crisis as participants require answers to issues they confront in their experience of the 'real world' and demand more in the way of entry points to contribution than the traditional media allows.

*Everyday Africa*<sup>2</sup> is a transmedia project whereby participants capture images of 'their' Africa and upload them to share as collective world-making via the Web Squared tools of mobile phone cameras and Tumblr. The images show an Africa deviant to the accepted norm and countering the macro-media telling of the Africa story. The images on *Everyday Africa* show

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<sup>2</sup> <http://everydayafrica.tumblr.com/>

Africa as thriving, colourful, dynamic and diverse. The collaborative project emerges out of a place of crisis as participants work to counter the common 'outsiders' perception of the representation of Africa. Originators Peter DiCampo and Austin Merrill explain:

"*Everyday Africa*, is an attempt to re-direct focus toward a more accurate understanding of what the majority of Africans experience on a day-to-day basis: normal life." (*Everyday Africa* blog)

Together, participants create a heterotopic telling of Africa that is as real as the established understanding of the place itself. Audience builds a knowledge of the place through the stories told about it in traditional media; then through this transmedia exchange (*Everyday Africa*) that place is overlaid with another space that is itself as tangible and multifaceted, and as 'real'.

### *PRINCIPLE TWO: PRECISE FUNCTION*

In the transmedia exchange *What Lifts You*<sup>3</sup> street artist Kelsey Montague creates a pair of angel wings on a wall and invites the public to be photographed within the framing, then upload the image to Twitter with #Whatliftsyou as a searchable hashtag: a Web Squared mechanism.

In Foucault's understanding *all* heterotopias have a "precise and determined function within a society" (para 17) and that function can change over time. Transmedia exchange too has a deliberate aim, and can morph and evolve. Once participants encounter and begin to grow their own understanding of, and contribution to, the heterotopia they are helping to build, the function of the heterotopia can change. *What Lifts You* has moved from having a function as street art meets social media to a collaboration between participants to promote self worth or conjure feelings of belonging, fun and imagination; a moment of magic-making within the ordinary setting of an urban street.

The function of the piece is to encourage participants to engage with the street art in the course of their everyday life; to become *part of* the street art.

It's interactive. Anybody can come up and see it. You don't have to go to a gallery. People will be able to interact with the piece...Social media allows you as an artist to open up that door and people can feel like they're part of a creative process, which is really what it's all about (Montague cited in Mashable Blog 2014).

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<sup>3</sup> <https://twitter.com/hashtag/whatliftsyou>



It is only through the intersection of the street art and the participant that this specific heterotopia exists, through the transmedia tools of camera and twitter.

As a counter-site to the original wall on which the angel wings were sketched (corner Kenmare and Mott Streets, New York)<sup>4</sup> *What Lifts You* is an exercise in world-making, a heterotopia that has a specific function - a place which represents, contests and inverts the space in which it manifests - quite apart from the wall, the street art, the artist or the audience which brings it into existence.

### *PRINCIPLE THREE: JUXTAPOSING INCOMPATIBLE SPACES*

Foucault's third principal states that heterotopia juxtapose in a single space several spaces.

As an example of this let us consider the National Film Board of Canada's collaboration with six Canadian writers to create *Hyperlocal*<sup>5</sup>, an online storytelling vehicle that overlays voice, graphics and copy, music and sound effects, and images. Each piece in itself juxtaposes a series of often incompatible spaces - those told by the narrator, those described by the copy, and those rendered through images - as well as creating a heterotopia of intersecting and jarring spaces as a whole. On top of this reading of *Hyperlocal* is the place it creates as a 'telling' of Canada alongside, and within, the 'real' geographic location, Canada.

All six *Hyperlocal* writers have contributed pieces about their specific neighbourhoods in various Canadian cities. During this process they make some observations that can in themselves give insight into the heterotopia created by the project.

We don't live in a city. We live in a neighbourhood. And we don't live in a neighbourhood; we live on a specific street. We have to be careful not to confuse background with foreground, we have to be careful not to mistake skyline for home. (Ferguson cited in *Hyperlocal* 2013)

As much as each telling within *Hyperlocal* - and each layer within each telling - stands on its own as world-making, they are all working together and dependent on each other, no matter how discordant the relationship between each, to create the larger heterotopia.

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<sup>4</sup> There are now a number of other Kelsey Montague angel wings drawn on walls in other cities around the world.

<sup>5</sup> <http://hyperlocal.nfb.ca/#/hyperlocal>

"Our community is firmly located in the larger community, that larger canvas. After all backgrounds matter too." (Ferguson 2013)

For Foucault the ultimate example of how heterotopia can juxtapose in a single place several spaces was the garden, which has "very deep and superimposed meanings" (para 20). He saw the garden as "the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world" (para 20). So too can it be said that *Hyperlocal* is the smallest parcel of Canada and yet also its totality.

In *Hyperlocal* Miriam Toews writes about returning to her Mennonite community hometown, much changed into a middle-America 'everytown' since her childhood, and so a different place from the one she had left, albeit in the same geo-location. Her description offers an insight into the layers of 'other space' that are contained within our understanding of place. A heterotopia juxtaposed against the 'real' place.

I went past new housing developments with street names meant to reflect some kind of generic, soap-opera town...My old town was supposed to remain exactly the way it was when I was a kid if only to show how much my life had changed since then...Someday it would be like I'd never been there at all. (Toews cited in *Hyperlocal* 2013)

*Hyperlocal* illustrates too Lev Manovich's reading of transmedia exchange as multiple-windowed, particularly in Heather O'Neill's contribution *The Red Light District*. In this piece two specific, time-based windows are shown onto the same block in O'Neill's hometown and participants can scroll between the two as one is revealed as a layer on top of the other, through a series of stain-like marks. A third 'window' is the voice of O'Neill describing the changes to the block. Together these windows juxtapose three discordant 'other spaces' into a resolved single heterotopia.

#### ***PRINCIPLE FOUR: SLICES IN TIME***

Foucault's fourth principle states that heterotopia are linked to "slices in time" (para 21) and that they begin to function when there is an "absolute break with their traditional time" (para 21). He identifies heterotopias' specific and unconventional relationship with the notion of time; they can, in some instances, be places that are "indefinitely accumulating time" (para 22) such as museums, as well as places where time is "flowing, transitory, precarious" (para 23) like a

festival or fairground. The transmedia exchange *Walking The Edit*<sup>6</sup> gives an illustration of both these forms of heterotopia and their characteristic of representing a slice in time.

*Walking The Edit* creates three slices layered across each other. First, there is the 'real time' layer of the participant walking the streets of their chosen city using their Web Squared mobile device to log their journey. The log then links to a server that translates their path into a series of touchpoints corresponding to a series of video clips - the second slice in time. The third slice is then experienced when the participant 'relives' their journey as a 'movie' made up of the stored video clips played back in the order that corresponds to the participant's path.

Through this transmedia exchange the participant takes an "absolute break from their traditional time". They have experienced a journey of transitory time; accumulated time has then converged with that path to create a heterotopia specific to a slice in time that both exists 'forever' and will never exist again.

#### *PRINCIPLE FIVE: ENTRY AND EXIT POINTS*

To illustrate Foucault's fifth heterotopic principle I will explore the now archived *Yellow Arrow*<sup>7</sup> project (2004-2006). Through this project, an entire other layer of time and space was unfurled across the 'real' cityscapes of 467 cities in 35 countries to create a heterotopia of global proportions with yellow arrow stickers as entry and exit points.

The fifth principle was articulated by Foucault as: "Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable" (para 24).

In Count Media's *Yellow Arrow*, transmedia exchange participants in the role of producers affix yellow arrow stickers with codes on them to landmarks then record a message about that site. Participants in the role of consumers then use their mobile phone to access the information via text message. Participants can take both a producer and a consumer role, switch between the two, or choose one over the other.

The information places another layer of meaning to the site that is only accessible through the entry point of the yellow arrow. The heterotopic space that is created is isolated by the need to take action but is also only penetrable through that same 'way in'.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://walking-the-edit.net/en/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.flickr.com/photos/yellowarrow>

The arrow sticker itself is emblematic of the entry and exit points of the heterotopias - "The arrow is the most fundamental symbol of human communication" (*Yellow Arrow* Blog 2004) - without further information required it signifies a call to action in terms of exchange.

*Yellow Arrow* illustrates the principle that heterotopias are spaces that are "not freely accessible like a public place" (para 24) and that "to get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures" (para 24). The gestures required here are two-fold and depend on which role the participant is taking. Actants as producers must place a sticker and record a message. Actants as consumers must identify a sticker, text a code and receive a message. The yellow arrows are the 'way in' to the created heterotopia for both.

### *PRINCIPLE SIX: A FUNCTION THAT RELATES TO REMAINING SPACE*

*Yellow Arrow* and the project *Te Ngira*<sup>8</sup> share a technology base of geo-locative mobile. This enables originators of transmedia exchange to overlay "other spaces" (Foucault) on to an existing 'real' place. The final principle Foucault asserts concerns what remains in that real place; that the created space has "a function in relation to all the space that remains" (para 26).

*Te Ngira* is a transmedia project designed by Maggie Buxton as part of work towards her PhD at Auckland University of Technology (pending). The exchange centres around Papakura Marae in Auckland where geo locative information chunks are overlaid on the 'real' place of the marae creating "another space", which is heterotopic in its nature. The heterotopia has a particular function in relation to the space that remains around it, the marae.

"Through the portal of their mobile phone users access archival photos, videos of stories told by Marae founders, information about protocol and historical-cultural information linked to carvings and other taonga around the Marae" (*Un-fiction* Blog 2014).

In describing this sixth principle Foucault identified two specific roles heterotopia can fulfil in relation to the space in which they manifest.

Their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space...as still more illusory...Or else, on the contrary their role is to create a space that is other,

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<sup>8</sup> <http://un-fiction.blogspot.co.nz/2014/07/the-papakura-marae-e-learning-project.html>

another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill-constructed and jumbled...(Foucault para 26)

Foucault calls this second role a heterotopia of "compensation" and *Te Ngira* is an example of this. Where marae can be read by visitors and 'outsiders' as secret places with hidden knowledge and un-spoken lore, *Te Ngira* enables a heterotopia ruled by order, transparency and information-sharing, that functions within the role taken by the existing space. As a heterotopia, *Te Ngira* works to represent, contest and invert the space in which it operates.

## DENIZENS OF HETEROTOPIA

Foucault's principles of heterotopias provide a scaffold onto which we can hang transmedia exchange and from there build an understanding of how Jenkins' 'world-making' occurs through such exchanges. Transmedia heterotopias require a catalyst to enter: a drive from audience to deviate from the norm, either for its own sake or due to some incurred crisis. They have a specific function, and function alongside all the space that remains aside from the 'other place' inhabited by them. They juxtapose in a single space, several spaces - Lev Manovich's multiple windows. They have specific entry and exit points and protocols, which make them both isolated and penetrable. They exist within a specific slice in time, which either accumulates or is transitory.

These principles exist through the experiences of the participants engaged in the heterotopia: for the purposes of this study, the transmedia exchange. These are the denizens of the created heterotopia of transmedia exchange which "places new demands on consumers and depends on the active participation of knowledge communities" (Jenkins, 2006 p21).

As denizens take an active role in co-creating their world, they become more engaged in it. It can be as simple as 'taking the controls' rather than being led through the narrative, as early transmedia practitioners working at the University of Auckland, Waldo Granwal and Dr Anna Soutar found during the testing of a project in 1993, "Engage the reader's finger, and the experience changes from one of passive reception to personal engagement."

By adopting a heterotopic reading of transmedia exchange the consumer/producer binary can be deconstructed; participants are denizens co-creating a shared space with different but equal responsibilities and roles in terms of ownership and output.

Also, an understanding of transmedia constructions as heterotopias allows us to do away with dichotomies of 'real/unreal', or 'real/virtual' that plague the areas of new media.

Foucault himself found language to be enigmatic when faced with heterotopia:

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 also opposite one another) to 'hold together'... heterotopias desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences. (Foucault, 1966 xix)

Through their very existence, heterotopias dissolve dualistic notions of consumer versus producer, real versus imagined, actual versus other, they are equalising and non-hegemonic.

Heterotopias break up, collapse and threaten with extinction "age-old distinction between the Same and the Other" (Foucault 1966 i).

In *The Order of Things* (1966) Foucault uses, by way of heterotopic example, a painting of a painter at work. Here he illustrates how subject and object switch roles, how the "seen" becomes the "seeing". This signals the contemporary enigma that has now arisen, of who is producer and who consumer in transmedia works. The discourse also shows how the exchange itself - "the great canvas" - becomes invisible in favour of a fluid morphing of the relationship between participants.

... subject and object, the spectator and the model, reverse their roles to infinity.

And here the great canvas ... exercises its second function: stubbornly invisible, it prevents the relation of these gazes from ever being discoverable or definitely established. (Foucault: 1966 p5)

## FROM 'NERVOUS' SPECTATOR

Building an understanding of participants can begin with identifying specific roles associated with traditional, established media: those of audience, of owner, of producer and of consumer. But contemporary changes to the media landscape, technology, and the expectations of participants have evolved our understanding of these roles, what they demand and what they contribute.

Critical thinking around audience in media exchange was observed in the early days of cinema; for the purposes of this study, a direct ancestor of transmedia projects. In the creation of their works, moving image producers made distinctions between audience as 'acknowledged spectator' and 'unseen voyeur'. The Lumieres' cinema of attractions (1906) - early documentary realism - was arguably made solely to elicit a reaction from the audience, therefore casting audience in the role of participant: "its energy moves outward towards an acknowledged spectator rather than inward towards the character-based situations essential to classical narrative" (Gunning cited in Lister, Dovey et al 2009 p149).

This early media exchange was likened to "a ride on a streetcar or an active day in a crowded city" and understood to stimulate "nervousness" (Lister, Dovey et al 2009 p149).

Jon Dovey, professor of screen media, who heads up the Digital Cultures Research Centre at the University of West England, responds to this in a contemporary context to say the significance of the exchange lies not solely in the act on view, but on "their effect on the audience" (Lister, Dovey et al 2009 p 149).

"This is not the ideal, non-specific and disembodied audience of 1970s film theory. This audience is addressed physically as much as intellectually, the 'nervous', embodied spectators experiencing kinaesthetic 'rides'" (Lister, Dovey et al 2009 p 149).

Into this framework Henry Jenkins, Provost's Professor of Communication, Journalism, and Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California, examines how audience evolves into co-creator through what he terms "participatory culture". The transmedia exchange sees audience not only accept a role as creator, but demand one. "Audiences, empowered by these new technologies...are demanding the right to participate within the culture" (Jenkins 2006 p24).

Foucault's heterotopia, brought into the 21st century, is Jenkins' world-making' enabled by transmedia exchange and its participants. Together, producers and consumers do away with these traditional monikers, and with them traditional roles and constructs, to co-create their collective world, as well as the conventions, codes and values associated with it.

## TO ACTIVE PARTICIPANT

The contemporary media setting reflects the pull of new media towards a flattening of roles. Where in the past participants were divided, although never cleanly, into consumers and producers, the blurring of these is now accepted and accentuated through the portmanteaux "pro-sumers" (Lister, Dovey et al, 2009 p34) and "prod-users"(Bruns, 2008) used within the contemporary industry.

Within the new media landscape there are a number of descriptors for its denizens and each gives a hint of the changed nature of participation, for example transmedia creators Lida Tsene and Maria Saradaki describe their new audience as energetic and seeking interaction "...'homo-zappiens', 'net savvy' and 'power users', the 'internet generation', 'generation M' (media), 'generation V' (virtual), 'generation C' (connected, creative, click)" (Tsene, Saradaki et al, 2014).

Demands on all sides then exist within these transmedia exchanges. Audience seeks a more active role beyond consumption towards production; and producers require advanced input in terms of contributions made.

Jenkins proposes that true fluency in the lingua franca of transmedia 'worlds' requires the ability to both consume and produce; 'read' and 'write': "Just as we would not traditionally assume that someone is literate if they can read but not write, we should not assume that someone possesses media literacy if they can consume but not express themselves" (Jenkins, 2006 p176). Active participation in 'world-making' and in the continued life lived within that world then requires an ability to both *make* and *use*.

In turn, originators of work are devising opportunities for participation as part of the core conceptualising of their project. Jenkins tells us "Storytellers now think about storytelling in terms of creating openings for consumer participation" (Foucault's "system of opening and



closing"). Traditional media is adapting too, to create room for a changed consumer, and the expectation is that this is mandatory in the new landscape.

Paul Nemirovsky, in a paper for MIT Media Lab's INTERACT '03 International Conference, explores both sides of the produce/consume exchange and the technologies and systems that support it, saying, "Systems built for the new audience should encourage free exploration and continuous creation of travel paths throughout the media space." Not only should producers expect participation from consumers they should encourage it and make provision for it; for all participants roles and responsibilities in terms of ownership and output exist, as well as rights around open participation.

Participants within transmedia exchanges can be viewed as a *new audience*, which Nemirovsky offers a definition for: "Active communities based on the principles of non-idiomatic improvisation". The role of this *new audience* is one of traditional audience *and* performer, with the expectation (on both sides) to consume but also produce, although to varying degrees, on a scale which is fluid and ever-changing. The role is "never-ending, going on at every moment of their lives, yet no continuous participation is expected; they are always free to step aside, unconstrained by the obligations of a traditional performer" (Nemirovsky 2003).

Axel Bruns who, in 2008, coined the term prod-user provides a manifesto towards understanding why participants involve themselves in world-making beyond their traditional role of audience or consumer.

The assumption within the produsage community is that the more participants are able to examine, evaluate, and add to the contributions of their predecessors, the more likely an outcome of strong and increasing quality will be....Such contributions may be major or minor, substantial or insubstantial, take the form of useful content or the form of social engagement in or administrative services to the community, but they are nonetheless all valuable to the overall project. (Bruns, 2008 p24)

It is pay-back enough for the denizen of heterotopia to know that by contributing they are improving the quality of the world they are helping to make.

The denizens of Foucault's heterotopia then, in their acts of representing, contesting and inverting the world around them, are active, engaged and co-contributing alongside others:

echoing Marshall McLuhan's "There are no passengers on Spaceship Earth. We are all crew" (McLuhan, 1965 cited in Vallero, 2005).

## CREWING THE HETEROTOPIC BOAT

Not all 'crew', however, are created equal. Jon Dovey gives a spectrum of participation.

We find a whole range of ways that online allows users to move along a ramp from viewer, to posting comments, to exchanging material, to uploading material to shooting, editing and producing actuality based video works as part of an extended online social network. (Dovey, Rose, 2013 p 366)

A transmedia exchange may require inputs from participants that are small yet still significant, still 'world-changing'. Interaction gives participants choice not only over *what* they consume but *how* they consume it, and in so doing changes the form of the heterotopic world they are helping to build. Choices may be as simple as which branch of a story to follow or the pace of their experience (Brush, 2014 cited in *doxmagazine* Blog).

Participants use the content within the transmedia exchange as 'world-making' materials but the ownership remains with the originator. "Despite the control and choice that interactivity can provide, we're not necessarily implicated into the actuality that's being portrayed. In other words, it's not *our* actuality" ( Brush, 2014 cited in *doxmagazine* Blog).

Originators of the transmedia content, to bring their work to life, want and need active, engaged participants to use the materials on offer in order to help create the heterotopia. Not all audience members can, or will want to, participate in the same way or to the same extent, but the more audiences participate in the co-creating of the heterotopic space the more invested they are in the resulting world-making. "The people who do explore and take advantage of the whole world will forever be your fans...if people have to work for something, they devote more time to it. And they give it more emotional value" (Sanchez cited in Jenkins, 2006 p104).

Although participation by consumers is recognised, required, and in some circumstances, expected, Henry Jenkins, in defining participatory culture, states: "Not every member must contribute, but all must believe they are free to contribute and that what they contribute will be appropriately valued" (Jenkins, 2006 p105).

## OWNERS VS WORKERS

Participants, within a setting of world-making, have buy-in, and in some cases are fully involved, in the creation of the heterotopia, but may not hold ownership in the same way as the originator of the work. Responsibilities lie with all participants but true ownership, the ability to initiate and dissolve works, remains with the originator.<sup>9</sup> "Both producers and consumers may now be understood as 'participants' in this new media ecology, while recognizing that they do so from positions of unequal power, resources, skills, access and time" (Jenkins 2009 blog entry 8/4/09).

In analysing Tim O'Reilly's contribution to identifying the role of, and the expectations on, new audience Henry Jenkins identifies the way media owners use the labour of their participative audiences.

O'Reilly describes a world where companies are able to 'harness the collective intelligence' and circulate 'user-generated content' from their consumers, where the key component of any new digital service or platform involves designing an 'architecture of participation' and where user-led innovation fuels the ongoing innovation and retooling of new technologies. (2009 blog entry 8/4/09)

The question is: Who is the heterotopia, a world created through collaboration and participation, built *for*? And who *owns* it? The pulls and pressures of ownership, politics, labour and ideology found in any society are represented, contested and inverted within the heterotopia. Nicholas Negroponte's 'monolithic empires of mass media' (1995) remain but with a predominantly free labour force of newly ordained prod-users working for the 'greater' good from their "army of cottage industries" (cited in Jenkins 2006 p5). At one extreme are participants who are self-labelled 'netslaves' working within 'cyber sweatshops' (Terranova 2000), at the other end consumers just happy to be asked to 'share' or 'comment'<sup>10</sup>.

Heterotopias can be read as "non-hegemonic" (Hetherington 1997) and the changed media landscape is reflecting this. In a study of the *Guardian* newspaper's digital strategy, Moises Limia Fernandez at USC Spain recognises a sea-change in the ownership of media output. "The ownership of the information seems to have returned to the hands of its rightful owners: the

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<sup>9</sup> In saying this, it is important to note that taking projects from initiation to full realisation takes engaged participation and a lack of that can be a death-knell for transmedia works.

<sup>10</sup> Facebook parlance for participating in content.

citizens" (Fernandez 2013). Media is becoming a communal activity, changing its codes and constructs:

The venerable profession of journalism finds itself at a rare moment in history where, for the first time, its hegemony as gatekeeper of the news is threatened by not just new technology and competitors but, potentially, by the audience it serves. (Bowmen, Willis, 2003).

The technology and culture that came out of the advent of Tim O'Reilly's Web 2.0 then Web Squared was proffered to be "a progressive alternative to the alienation of the consumer from the means of cultural production and circulation"(Jenkins, 2009, blog entre 8/4/09). Now production and circulation can become the role and responsibility of audience, as participants, and as labour force. The true 'world-making' exists when traditional producers and consumers dissolve those constructs and take on new roles as participants with equal if different ownership over the resulting heterotopia. Works and materials may originate with a traditional producer but the co-constructed world-making is the responsibility and realm of all participants. In this way the heterotopia remains non-hegemonic, and exists in that context in spite of pulls of power over the various inputs that make up the created space.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has examined transmedia exchange through a reading of the six principles of heterotopia set down by philosopher Michel Foucault in 1967. Foucault's systematic description of heterotopia has been overlaid onto six specific transmedia exchanges to examine how transmedia 'world-making' can be read as heterotopic. The six projects: *Everyday Africa*, *What Lifts You*, *Hyperlocal*, *Walking the Edit*, *Yellow Arrow* and *Te Ngira* all take their codes and conventions from documentary realism as the common primary ancestor.

Together these works provide a systematic description of transmedia exchange as heterotopic. The works fulfil the imperatives indicated by Foucault's principles. Heterotopias need to have a function; to juxtapose in a single place several spaces; to operate alongside the space that remains; they need ways in and ways out; to meet the motivation for participating, whether out of crisis or deviation; and, to link to a slice in time, whether that's fleeting or accumulative.

Foucault's heterotopia was defined in 1967 in an era he named as an epoch of the "side-by-side". This has been contemporised, fifty years on, through the work of Matt Locke, Lev Manovich and Henry Jenkins, who call for a synthesis of the contradictions of the 'side-by-side' towards constructive world-making across multiple platforms (windows) whether outwardly perceived as real or illusory.

Heterotopia has been brought into a 21st century context through the concept identified by Henry Jenkins as 'world-making': transmedia storytelling and its associated participatory culture. In this paper, participants in this world-making have been read as denizens of heterotopia. Their roles as participants have been analysed in terms of a dissolution of the traditional producer/consumer binary.

This paper has considered issues associated with heterotopia as world-making wherein participants take equal but different active roles to co-construct "the other space" that represents, contests and inverts the place within which it is brought into existence.

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## TRANSMEDIA PROJECTS INCLUDED IN THIS PAPER

### *EVERYDAY AFRICA*

DiCampo, P. and Merrill, A. *Everyday Africa* <http://everydayafrica.tumblr.com/>

### *HYPERLOCAL*

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### *TE NGIRA*

Buxton, M. with Imersia Group *Te Ngira* <http://un-fiction.blogspot.co.nz/2014/07/the-papakura-marae-e-learning-project.html>

### *WALKING THE EDIT*

Fischer, U. *Walking the Edit* <http://walking-the-edit.net/en/>

### *WHAT LIFTS YOU*

Montague, K. *What Lifts You* <https://twitter.com/hashtag/whatliftsyou>

### *YELLOW ARROW*

Counts, M., Allen, C., House, B. and Shapins, J. with Counts Media *Yellow Arrow*  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/yellowarrow>