RUBRICA «IL PARLAGGIO»

This is Not a Play: Visual Heterotopias in René Magritte's The Treachery of Images *and Samuel Beckett's Endgame*

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ABSTRACT

This article projects to comparatively study the construction of antirepresentational visual 'other spaces' in René Magritte's The Treachery of Images, a painting that destabilizes and mocks representationalism on canvas, and Samuel Beckett's Endgame, a play that performs a similar gesture on stage. Magritte and Beckett play on the boundaries that have traditionally separated the visible and the invisible in the visual arts and the theatre and construct some heterogenous spaces that destabilize the viewers'/spectators' linear perspectival search for meaning. This is to be done by means of a critical re-appropriation of Foucault's concept of heterotopia that he coined to refer to language's ability to construct and juxtapose a multiplicity of spaces that both diverge and converge. It is to be noted that the term was devised by the French thinker to refer, exclusively, to linguistic spaces. The article seeks to transpose heterotopia from the purely linguistic to the visual. The aim is to show that there is in Magritte and Beckett a self-reflexive gaming with artistic creativity as a process through the creation of visual heterotopias. The focus is accordingly put on the twofold use of aesthetics in art/ theatre to decentralize knowledge and the real, on the one hand, and put into doubt the very means through which they have historically operated, on the other.

PAROLE CHIAVE*: Antirepresentation, heterotopia, aesthetic (meta)space, spectating*

AUTORE

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Painting, like theatre, is an art that relies on the visual occupation-manipulation of space – the space of the canvas for the former and theatrical space for the latter. The affinity between Samuel Beckett's static stage tableaux and visual art has been the subject of some considerable research done on the playwright's stage plays that sought to explain their antirepresentationalism, on the one hand, and historically and aesthetically contextualize it, on the other. Painters whose work has been traditionally comparatively juxtaposed to Beckett's included, to name but a few, Jack B. Yeats, Caspar David Friedrich, Caravaggio, Avidgor Arikha, Tal Coat, André Masson, and Bram Van Velde[1]. One common denominator that has actually constituted the subject of these explorations was the way these works shifted contemporary art's concern from representation-as-outcome to representation-as-process. The present paper does not intend to study these author-centered aesthetic choices; rather, it seeks to approach them textually, à la Derrida, by analyzing and dissecting the very means by which paintings like Magritte's and plays like Beckett's sought to represent their failure to represent, hence Foucault's *heterotopia*.

In his study *This is Not a Pipe*, dedicated to Magritte's polemical parody of a pipe together with its representation in art, Foucault claims that the tradition of western painting from the fifteenth to the twentieth century has been dominated by two principles: *representation* and *reference*[2]. While the former "implies resemblance" and is primarily plastic, the latter "excludes it", and it is rather linguistic[3]. Representational functions have historically been allotted to visual art forms that, following some principles that are as old as Aristotle's poetics, wanted art to reproduce the real. Magritte's *The Treachery of Images* plays on and parodies the centralization of the real in art according to which a painter's skill was measured following how faithful the representation was. The Belgian painter does faithfully reproduce a replica of a pipe that does look like one, that reflects the light emanating from an exterior source, and that is abstracted in space for the viewer to watch and contemplate. Yet, it does so with the inclusion of a referential linguistic sign under the pipe that reminds the viewer that "this" is actually "not a pipe." Beckett's *Endgame*, starting with

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[1] For a better understanding of Beckett's relation with all the painters cited above, see David Lloyd's *Beckett's Thing: Painting and Theatre* (Edinburg University Press, 2016). It is to be noted that the Dutch painter Van Velde was not only one of Beckett's closest friends; he was also the painter about whom Beckett wrote most of his art criticism. The reason why I have chosen to evade obvious and recognizable associations in dealing with Beckett's relation to painting is that I seek an aesthetic exploration of these associations rather than an authorial one.

[2] Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe with Illustrations and Letters by René Magritte*, trans. James Harkness, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 32.

[3] Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe,* 32.

Clov's "[f]inished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished"[4] that declares the end of the play before the beginning of the performance does exactly that in a similar manner. Both works draw attention, rather than to their ability to create a representational space on canvas/ on stage, to moments that come either before or after representation and mark the way it is to be either processed (the moment of authoring) or contemplated (the moment of reception).

There is in Magritte's painting a calculated juxtaposition of multiple spatial and aesthetic layers, and there is in Beckett's play a strategic postponement of dramatic action and a no less strategic demolition of the fabula/story that has been historically considered to be the matrix of dramatic art. In other words, both have *nothing* to say (pun intended). The utopias of classical art forms have proven themselves to be inadequate, according to Hans-Thies Lehmann in his seminal book *Postdramatic Theatre*[5], the moment we started to realize that art performs in a way that is less direct than we actually thought it does.

Hetero(u)topias!

Utopias, be they plastic or dramatic, offer consolation to those who seek it, and perhaps the distinction that Foucault suggests between *utopias* and *heterotopias* in *The Order of Things* can offer us more than a mere critical 'consolation':

> Utopias afford consolation: although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold; they open up cities with vast avenues, superbly planted gardens, countries where life is easy, even though the road to them is chimerical. 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'[6].

The above-quoted distinction provided by Foucault is actually one of the first references that the French thinker makes to a concept as complex as *heterotopia*.

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[4] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame,* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), 12.
[5] Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).
[6] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xviii.

Utopia, Foucault argues, reproduces the same patterns that are to be found in language, whereas *heterotopia* offers a space where such patterns can be contested. Still, and according to Foucault, such contestation is linguistic in essence. However, what my reading of Magritte and Beckett suggests is that there are moments in visual art or, broadly speaking, that art which presupposes the existence of a spectator/viewer, in which linguistic references to space can turn into visual references.

Robert J. Topinka defines Foucault's heterogenous and dystopian spaces as "[spaces] of ordering" that are, paradoxically enough, "both separate from and connected to all other spaces"[7]. Perhaps it was Foucault's 1967 lecture, or perhaps it was the scarcity of references to *heterotopia* in his writings that have helped construct the concept as a very elusive and complex one. Foucault used it to comment on Jorge Luis Borges's *Chinese encyclopedia* in the preface to his book, and it seems that he never actually meant it to develop into a theory of art.

Foucault borrowed the term *heterotopia* from medicine where it has been often used to refer to the transposition (or transplant?) of one organ of the body from its original position (Topinka 56). Michiel Dehaene clearly and simply defines it as a term that refers to 'other space': "The term is used to refer to spaces that constitute a break with normal spaces and accommodate practices that cannot exist in these normalized situations. [...] The world captured by the concept is very broad"[8]. Indeed, the concept has proven itself to be even broader than the limits that Foucault wanted to trace for it – Borges's text. It has been actually transposed to many a domain that ranged from architecture to networking and the development of urban spaces both in time as well as space. "The broadness of the concept," Dehaene argues, "has led to multiple and competing interpretations"[9]. What is of interest to us, however, is that we can think of an exhibition hall where a painting like Magritte's is exposed[10] or a theatre building where spectators gather to watch a play like Endgame as heterotopic spaces where different systems/ individuals/ perspectives meet and compete.

Utopias are imaginary spaces that are constituted out of a fabric of stories/ fictions. Heterotopias, however, are heteroglossic sites where the very mechanisms that have been used to create those fictions are exposed, hence their subversive and realer-than-real thrust, to borrow from Jean Baudrillard. In *The Practice of Everyday*

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[7] Robert J. Topinka, "Foucault, Borges, Heterotopia: Producing Knowledge in Other Spaces" *Foucault Studies*, 9 (2010): 55.
[8] Michiel Dehaene, "Heterotopia," *Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedias in Social Sciences: The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Urban and Regional Studies*, accessed November 28, 2022, http://proxy.library.nyu.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/wileyuars/heterotopia/0?institutionId=577.
[9] Michiel Dehaene, "Heterotopia."
[10] The painting is on display at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Life, Michel de Certeau maintains that "gridding" makes it possible for an observer to detect movement in space and, likewise, heterotopia shall make that movement visible as a subject for observation[11]. Although Kelvin T. Knight claims that Foucault might have never intended the concept to be a "tool" for the observation of any material site[12], it is perfectly understandable that the lack of a secure and logical definition on the part of Foucault himself would make it possible for the concept to become critically, philosophically, and terminologically elastic enough to include all the 'other spaces' that Foucault himself did not include before. The possibility of expanding the term to involve the visual, rather than the purely linguistic, that I suggest here is itself in fact part of that deviation whose explanation is to be found in the nature of the concept itself. However, one cannot share with Knight his attempt at bringing *heterotopia* back to its "literary origins" simply because the limits of the literary are themselves fluid and immeasurable.

In "The Virtual Heterotopias: Re-imagining Nature-Culture Relations," Mihai Burlacu states that *heterotopia* stands for the complexity of postmodern spaces which have blurred the boundaries between what has been traditionally seen as natural and what has been in reality disclosed as simply cultural or discursive[13]. Yet, whereas Burlacu emphasizes the possibility of physically and geographically localizing some heterotopias (the hospital, the prison, the asylum, the brothel, the school, …etc.), I argue here that postmodernism in art has actually made the creation of 'other spaces' possible and that these spaces are not simply physical. After all, Baudrillard has already shown how postmodern transcendence of the boundaries between reality and fiction has created certain spaces that tergiversate between the concretely physical and the abstractly fictional (Disneyland is a good example that one can site here). Postmodernism allows for the construction of other spaces that can be virtual (videogames and the internet, for instance), ones whose essence cannot be localized but can emanate from some other interactive and alternative spaces that are by no means simply concrete. In theatre theory, for example, these alternative other spaces have emerged as a result of the shifts that have occurred in performance towards a more active participatory role for the spectator that Erika Fischer-Lichte dubbed in *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics[14]* as a

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[11] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, (Berkeley: Univeristy of California Press, 1984), 46.
[12] Kelvin T. Knight, "Placeless Places: Resolving the Paradox of Foucault's Heterotopia," *Textual Practice* 31, no.1 (2017): 142, doi: 10.1080/0950236X.2016.1156151
[13] Mihai, Burlacu, "Virtual Heterotopias: Reimagining Nature-Culture Relations," *Český lid* 104 (2017): 184, doi: 10.21104/CL.2017
[14] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, trans. Saskya Iris Jain (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

performance turn in contemporary theatre and Lehmann referred to as *postdramatic theatre* in *Postdramatic Theatre*. Traditional mimetic/ dramatic theatre wanted the relationship stage-auditorium to be a linear give-and-take relationship where meaning is exchanged for some immersive experience of spectating that exorcizes the spectator's feelings of fear and pity through the virtual experience of fear and pity in performance. It was then left to post-Brechtian theatre to debunk that passive give-and-take logic and restore the theatricality of theatre. The question to ask here, therefore, has to do with the possibility of conceiving of a visual – rather than physical – heterotopology.

Foucault on Magritte

"Magritte and Foucault," James Harkness writes in the introduction to his own translation of Foucault's *This is Not a Pipe*, "must have recognized in one another a common fascination with what I earlier gave the inadequate label of visual non sequiturs"[15]. One reason why Harkness might think of his own understanding of heterotopias as 'visual' spaces as 'inadequate' is that the concept was primarily denotatively used to refer to either physical/ concrete or linguistic spaces. Yet, this is justifiable only inasmuch as we put Foucault's conceptualization in the centre and forget or overlook one very important issue – the fact that the concept, after all, was used to refer to *metaphors* created by Borges. Accordingly, limiting the concept to what is purely visible is both critically and ideologically – as will be shown in due course – risky, for a metaphor, by definition, is always intended to create an alternative space that goes beyond the word/ language, hence the prefix '*meta-*.'

Metacriticism, therefore, proves itself to be part and parcel of any identifiable, linguistic or physical, space transcended by heterotopias. In fact, Harkness himself seems to be aware of the meta-spatiality of the concept:

> As cartographers of Heterotopia, both Foucault and Magritte engage in a critique of language-the former historico-epistemological, the latter visual. Each in his way concurs with the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in asserting the arbitrariness of the sign that is, the essentially circumstantial, conventional, historical nature of the bond between the signifier (e. g., a word) and the signified (the object or concept represented). In Saussurean linguistics, words do not "refer" to things themselves. Rather, they have meaning as points within the entire system that is a language-a system, further, conceived as a network of graded differences[16].

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[15] James Harkness, introduction to *This is Not a Pipe*, by Michel Foucault, 4.
[16] James Harkness, introduction to *This is Not a Pipe*, 5.

As long as heterotopology emanates from the quintessential awareness of the discursive (Derrida) and arbitrary (De Saussure) nature of referentiality in language, it is possible to conceive of *heterotopia* in terms of a heterogenous juxtaposition of multiple spaces that can overlap, can erase one another and be mutually exclusive, or can simply relate through their un-relatedness (the case for De Saussure's signifiers and signifieds). It is the arbitrariness of language that makes interpretation possible, and it is the arbitrariness of the things/ ideas that *heterotopia* must stand for that makes it termino*logically* elastic.

For Carl Haddrell, in "Similitude Through Metonymy: Foucault, Magritte, and That Pipe," the distance that has been historically installed between the sign and its referent, the image and the object it is supposed to resemble, has created another no less important distance between *truth* and *vision*, i.e., the human visual representational faculties:

> Foucault's text introduces us to a complex interpretation of the text uncovering labyrinthine paths of interconnectedness between the languages of the visual image and written word. His aim, it seems, is to uncover how, as he said 'a whole complex network of uncertainties, exchanges and feints' (Foucault, 1970, p. 4), that allow us to revel in a potential multiplicity of meanings[17].

The emphasis that Haddrell puts here on Foucault's attempt to open up some new networks of relations within and outside language goes in line with and justifies what I said earlier about the subversive thrust that is inherent to heterotopia. Foucault's reading of Magritte, accordingly, shall be used to justify this aestheticized unmasking of the mechanisms of knowledge production that we said characterizes heterotopic spaces.

Foucault detects in Magritte's art a calculated "assault" on the traditional Platonic and idealistic association between language and the essence of the things it is meant to refer to[18]. It was thanks to De Saussure's structuralist dissociations that he injected in the body of language and that constituted the perfect antidote to representationalism that language's external references have been checked. If words do have to represent something, then they are not supposed to stand for anything outside of the very system out of which they have emerged. If meant to represent something, words can only re-present themselves or their failure to do so simply because the sign in language can refer to nothing outside language. The Derridean notorious

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[17] Carl Haddrell, "Similitude Through Metonymy: Foucault, Magritte, and That Pipe" *Epiphany: Journal of Transdisciplinary Studies* 14 (2021): 165.
[18] James Harkness, introduction to *This is Not a Pipe*, 7.

declaration "il n'y a pas de hors-texte"[19] , in fact, partly reproduces the same Saussurean logic and explains the very reason why structuralism imposed itself as one major constituent of the cultural and philosophical mosaic created by the different theories that are usually placed under the umbrella term *poststructuralism.* The play on art's self-referentiality in Magritte's painting is conceived by Foucault, then, as an aesthetic reproduction of art's inability to stand for something other than itself.

In *This is Not a Pipe*, Foucault explains Magritte's antirepresentational art by means of a philosophical and theoretical distinction that he draws between two concepts: *resemblance* and *similitude*[20]. While the first one presupposes the propaedeutic existence of an external point of reference or, in Derridean terms an *archē*, an origin out of which many copies can be created, the second one presupposes the absence of such an anchor and is therefore more liberating because it destabilizes the authority of a center/model[21]. Although Foucault does not provide a logical link between the binarism resemblance/similitude and the concept of *heterotropia*, one can logically deduce that the latter emerges out of that liberation of reference that is to be reached through similitude. Relations within the simulacrum are governed by an interactive non-hierarchical exchange between and among copies that occupy the same status rather than a hierarchical positioning of a somehow privileged center or origin that is always prioritized at the expense of the copies that it engenders. To put it in simpler terms, the displacement of the real meant that art is no longer supposed to imitate something outside of itself; it rather imitates itself and then, correspondingly, produces an infinite number of imitations (of imitations) that are, in the words of James Harkness, "free from a theme"[22]. Surrealism in art, then, can be understood as a manifestation of this awareness just in the same manner as postdramatic criticism in theatre studies can be approached as an attempt to go beyond the centrality of drama-as-origin of performance. Surrealism is, by way of definition, an expression of art's attempt to go past realism, as postdrama is an exploration of the territories that theatre can open once drama has been transcended/ declared dead[23]. Transcendentalism, therefore, is one reason why I have chosen to group Magritte's painting and Beckett's play together in this paper.

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[19] Traditionally translated as "there is nothing outside the text." In his book *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press,1997).
[20] Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe,* 32-33.
[21] Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, 33.
[22] James Harkness, introduction to *This is Not a Pipe*, 10.
[23] I borrow this metaphor from the title of my own book: *The Death of Drama: Postdrama, Posthumanism, and the Aesthetics of Liveness* (Tunis: Al-Ittihad Publishers, 2021).

Magritte's Surrealism as A-realism

André Breton's famous *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924) was a direct and revolutionary expression of art's desire to do away with the authority of the real, for it preached a new paradigm where reason is displaced and the unconscious is brought to the fore as a center-less substitute for it. Breton, according to Gavin Parkinson, wanted art to be an expression of the uniqueness of each individual in his first manifesto (1924) and then wanted, in his second manifesto (1929), that liberation of the self to produce a collective unconscious/myth that can destabilize all power structures[24]. Following on from Freudian psychoanalytic theory, Breton's version of surrealism centralized the artist's *id*, and this, for artists like Magritte, meant nothing but a substitution of one center (the real) for another (the psychologically 'real'). Magritte's understanding of surrealism in art was in this way different compared to Breton's, for he saw it as an expression of the *ego*, an other-oriented attempt at bringing pleasure and not a self-centered expressionist desire to put the artist in the center of the artwork. The point that I am trying to make here is that both Breton's and Magritte's surrealism(s) are adequate grounds for the exploration of Foucauldian heterotopias, because the new 'other spaces' that are created by the liberation of art from the authority of logic and the real (be they individual or collective, self-oriented or other-oriented) are alternative spaces that representational art has deliberately left unexplored.

The representation of the pipe in Magritte's *The Treachery of Images* is so perfect that one might think that the object of the painting is a real pipe. It is abstracted in space, placed as an object for contemplation, and perhaps it is this abstraction that destabilizes the senses of the viewer, for despite the fact that the pipe looks as if it were real, its dimensions are far from being so. A floating pipe in space might not be seen in reality, so Magritte's painting seems to play on that second chance that is given to the viewer to reconsider the way s/he is to view it. It transforms into a *meta*-painting the moment we realize how the dissociation is actually performed and not just represented. Foucault was aware that the questions we might ask about the painting will certainly undo our initial reaction to it as a faithful representation of the thing that it is said to re-present – a pipe:

> There are two pipes. Or rather must we not say, two drawings of the same pipe? Or yet a pipe and the drawing of that pipe, or yet again two drawings each representing a different pipe? Or two drawings, one representing a pipe and the other

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[24] Gavin Parkinson, "Painting as Propaganda and Prophecy: André Breton and René Magritte in the Shadow of Socialist Realism" *Oxford Art Journal* 41 (2018), 261.

not, or two more drawings yet, of which neither the one nor the other are or represent pipes? Or yet again, a drawing representing not a pipe at all but another drawing, itself representing a pipe so well that I must ask myself: To what does the sentence written in the painting relate?[25]

He refers to the pipe whose shape is reproduced on canvas and the second pipe that is mentioned in the syntactical construction that appears under it: "*ceci n'est pas une pipe*". But the second 'pipe', a cluster of different sounds, is meant to refer – linguistically – to the object that is visually referred to on canvas. The juxtaposition of image and sound seems to undo both.

The signified is accordingly lost in space: What pipe is the painting referring to? – Is it the 'real' pipe that we already know cannot be used? Is it the pipe that is represented in its shape and color as a pipe and is actually a simulation of a pipe? Or is it the 'p-i-p-e' that appears in letters under it but is negated as being not the thing that the represented drawing is supposed to stand for – a pipe that fails to be one? After all, the negation in language which presupposes that the image is 'not' a pipe also presupposes that its representation in language as 'p-i-p-e' is, which is totally paradoxical and misleading. There is here an explosion of heterotopic other spaces that are unrepresented on canvas yet are engendered by the interactions that occur once it is viewed. These spaces engender some multi-layered and even meta-layered explorations of what art is (or what it is not) – a representation of something that exists before or beyond it: "Magritte's drawing [...] is as simple as a page borrowed from a botanical manual: a figure and the text that names it. Nothing is easier to recognize than a pipe, drawn thus; nothing is easier to say-our language knows it well in our place-than the 'name of a pipe'"[26]. However, Magritte's painting does not simply defamiliarize; it un-familiarizes the observer with the very thing with which s/he might think s/he is familiar: art.

The visual contradiction that is created out of the juxtaposition of the image of a pipe to the word 'p-i-p-e' is not as simple as one might think it is, for the demonstrative 'this' presumes that the negation 'not a pipe' is itself representational of the thing that is re-presented. But negation cannot re-present; it simply un-represents. Therefore, spaces that are visually represented through painting are also visually unrepresented through writing:

> But who would seriously contend that the collection of intersecting lines above the text is a pipe? Must we say: My God, how simpleminded! The statement is perfectly true, since it is quite apparent that the drawing representing the pipe is not the pipe itself. And yet there is a convention of language: What is this drawing? Why,

[25] Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, 16.
[26] Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, 19.

it is a calf, a square, a flower. [...] No matter that it is the material deposit, on a sheet of paper or a blackboard, of a little graphite or a thin dust of chalk. It does not " aim" like an arrow or a pointer toward a particular pipe in the distance or elsewhere. It is a pipe[27]. (19-20)

Foucault concludes that what Magritte's painting secretly constructs is a "calligram"[28] that groups together representations of a pipe by trying to represent its failure to represent it. The calligram unravels the moment when our observation of the painting urges us to shift our object of attention to the very process that brought it to life. In doing so, it causes many different other spaces to collide and overlap. Traditionally, a painting was supposed to re-produce the real and re-present it in a transparent way that offers no clues to the viewer/ observer as to the processes that intervened in its creation. Tableaux have been historically contemplated as 'finished' artworks that need to be taken in their totality. However, what postmodern artistic practices[29] have done to art has ultimately exposed the process of creation and invited the observer to be him/herself part of it. Magritte's painting explores those spaces between representation and the failure to represent, on the one hand, and abstraction and the failure to do so, on the other. It transcends the boundaries that have been traditionally thought to separate the artist's space from the aesthetic spaces s/he creates and the 'other' critical spaces constructed during reception. The visual heterotopia that comes out of this otherness in visual art is what makes it possible for us to think that heterotopia can occur both linguistically and visually.

Magritte, Foucault writes, "redistributed the text and the image in space [...] The drawn form of the pipe is so easily recognized that it excludes any explanatory or descriptive text"[30]. Recognition of the subject proves to be only momentary, for the moment it happens, the viewer realizes that s/he must reconsider the way the object depicted needs to be contemplated – that is, if contemplation is to be seen as a critical necessity. Beckett's theatre constructs visual tableaux that are no less perplexing compared to Magritte's.

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[27] Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, 19-20.
[28] Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, 20.
[29] Cf. the non-finito works in contemporary painting.
[30] Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, 25.

Beckett's 'Other' (In)visible Hyperspaces

Endgame is a one-act play in which visible and invisible spaces intermingle and collide. It opens with a brief tableau whose frame is gesturally and theatrically – thus abstractly – framed by Clov's marathon moves at the beginning:

Brief tableau.

Clov goes and stands under window left. Stiff, staggering walk. He looks up at window left. He turns and looks at window right. He goes and stands under window right. He looks up at window right. He turns and looks at window left. He goes out, comes back immediately with a small step-ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window left, gets up on it, draws back curtain. He gets down, takes six steps (for example) towards window right, goes back for ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window right, gets up on it, draws back curtain. He gets down, takes three steps towards window left, goes back for ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window left, gets up on it, looks out of window. Brief laugh. He gets down, takes one step towards window right, goes back for ladder, carries it over and sets it down under window right, gets up on it, looks out of window. […].[31]

Moving to the right and left, tracing the horizontal boundaries of the play's theatrical spaces physically through his body and the vertical ones abstractly through his gaze, Clov opens the performance with "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished" (12). In fact, the 'brief tableau' that is performatively constructed and which, for so many a representationalist can be said to represent a human skull, is ultimately ironically served to the spectators as a finsihed product just in the same manner as Magritte's perfect drawing of a pipe leaves nothing unfinished in a caricaturesque way. The performance of the play, then is aesthetically placed in that space that usually comes after performance, and the different metatheatrical spaces created on stage give the impression that the act of spectating has been ultimately displaced.

There are two different stage spaces that prove themselves to be mutually exclusive in *Endgame*: onstage and offstage. The first is the space for the characters – Hamm, Clov, Nagg, and Nell and the objects that are associated to them – Hamm's Wheelchair and his unfinished teddy dog; Clov's ladder, magnifier and alarm; and Nagg and Nell's dustbins and biscuits. The second space is rather invisible, and the spectators seem to have no acccess to it: The picture with its face to the wall pre-

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[31] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, 11.

vents them from recognition of the object it is supposed to represent; the world outside of which there is nothing but "death"[32] and whose time is "zero"[33] is completely invisible to the spectators just as Hamm's coverd faced in the beginning was[34]; and Nagg and Nell's "sawdust" in their closed ashbins that needs to be changed[35]. Clov's kitchen is another visually inaccessible space that is represented only in Clov's speech but whose existence and dimensions remain doubtful until the 'end' of the performance.

Hamm is blind, and there is one central visual irony that is constructed in *Endgame* that parodies representationalism both in its dramatic as well as theatrical forms. It turns out that Clov's access to language has been constructed by what his *blind* 'master-teacher' (Hamm) has taught him. It follows from this that exchanges like the following one:

> HAMM: [...] What time is it?
> CLOV: The same as usual.
> HAMM: [*Gesture towards window right.*] Have you looked?
> CLOV: Yes.
> HAMM: Well?
> CLOV: Zero.[36]

are not only dramatically but also theatrically and visually ironic. Hamm's perceptual failure – his blindness – exaggerates the arbitrariness of his signifeds in a hyperbolic manner, for his language is contaminated by his own blindness:

> HAMM: [...] Where are you?
> CLOV: Here.
> HAMM: Come back! [CLOV *returns to his place beside the chair*.] Where are you?
> CLOV: Here.[37]

Given his blindness, the arbitrariness of the signifier 'here' is doubled by the perceptual and not just linguitic dissociations that check signification. The play on deixis reaches its peak with Hamm's tragicomic and metatheatrical desire to be placed right in the center of the stage[38], knowing that his blindness prevents every space from being visible and thus undoes positionality. The only connection that

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[32] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, 15.
[33] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, 13.
[34] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, 11.
[35] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, 19.
[36] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, 13.
[37] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, 14.
[38] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, 24.

Hamm seems to have with the real occurs through Clov's perception, one that is ironically impaired by the blind signifiers that Hamm has taught him: "I use the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything any more, teach me others. Or let me be silent"[39]. Clov looks like a Pirandellian character who is looking for an author to write him down yet finds none but a blind storyteller whose access to language is limited by his own blindness. The juxtaposition of two negatives, the world outside and the characters' linguistic and visual perception of it, engenders a visually ironic neutral space that undoes the play. How is the spectator supposed to believe Clov's "zero", "zero", and "zero" that he sees through a magnifer, the same magnifier that he uses to see "a multitude ...in transports ...of joy"[40]? And how can we be sure, after all, that the magnifier 'is' actually a magnifier?

The only thing that Hamm and Clov can affirmatvely perceive is *nothing*, and the contraditcion between the thing that is perceived and their own perception of it becomes clear enough whenever 'nothing' is used simultaneously as a negation of the thing to be perceived/ talked about and as an affirmation of the no-thing as the only thing that can be perceived/ talked about:

> HAMM: I'll give you nothing more to eat.
> NELL: [...] Nothing is funnier than unhappiness, I grant you that.
> NAGG: [...] Nothing doing!
> HAMM: Nothing you can do about it, just wait for it to come.
> CLOV: There is nothing to say.
> HAMM: Moments for nothing[41]

This no-thingness is as elusive as Magritte's pipe, and the attempt to perceive it becomes part and parcel of its failure to be perceived/perceptible. For Martin Esslin, this was justification enough for Beckett's absurdism.

However, awareness of the possibility of understanding nothingness in the play as an affirmation of the crisis of visual and linguistic representation in art rather than as a negation of an ontological meaning (Esslin) is the very reason why Beckett's play, together with Magritte's painting, can be perceived as self-reflexive works that aesthetically reduce themselves to nothing just to deter the viewer-spectator's thematic understanding of them as works *about* nothing. Magritte's reminder that 'this is not a pipe' negates the pipe that is represented in the drawing, the pipe that is referred to in the sentence, and the two pipes that are perceived by the viewer. Hamm and Clov's metatheatrical references to the "thing" as it is "taking its course"[42]

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[39] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, 32.
[40] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, 25.
[41] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, 13, 20, 38, 40, 50, 52.
[42] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, 17;13.

and that "has gone on long enough"[43] – the play itself – construct the stage space as a space for rehearsals rather than performance and subject the character-actors and their spectators to a suicidal game without rules and without an end:

> HAMM: We're not beginning to … to … mean something?
> CLOV: Mean something! You and I, mean something! [*brief laugh.*] Ah that's a good one![44]
>
> CLOV: [*Imploringly.*] Let's stop playing!
> HAMM: Never![45]

If Clov's kitchen is a space where he can "see [his] light dying"[46] (17), then the stage space in the play is definitely one where spectators can see all the meanings they can construct out of their spectating (drama) being negated and displaced. Spaces of/ for artistic creativity have been traditionally separated by an iron curtain from spaces of/ for aesthetic reception; yet, Magritte's and Beckett's un-representationalism transpose the problems of the artist/ playwright and make them part and parcel of the 'finished' product. The 'pipe' is not a pipe, and the play is not a play.

Heterogenous Heterotopias

In *Endgame*, Andre Furlani writes, "le dehors of the original became the 'without'" of *Endgame*, a "negatively defined exteriority increasingly remote and phantasmagoric"[47]. One can even imagine, à la Magritte, a sentence written under the title 'Endgame' that warns the spectators that 'this' is 'not a play' but rather a representation of its failure to become one. Paradoxically enough, and like all of Beckett's early plays, *Endgame* has all that it takes to be classified as a play (character, dialogue, movement, spatiality, performative action, props, light, etc.); yet, it gives nothing to its spectators out of which they can construct meaning.

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[43] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, 33.
[44] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, 27.
[45] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, 49.
[46] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, 17.
[47] Andre Furlani, "The Making of Samuel Beckett's Endgame and Molloy," review of *The Making of Samuel Beckett's Endgame/ 'Fin de partie'* by Dirk Van Hulle and Shane Weller (London: Bloomsbury, 2018) *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms* 27, no. 5 (2022): 491.

It would be confusing to say that *Endgame* is *about* something, for it seems to partake of the search for something about which a play can be written. The 'something that is taking its course' is an object of the actor-characters' fear, because the performance they are supposed to act out seems to have finished just before the act of spectating started. The play plays on this juxtaposition of dramatic and theatrical 'other spaces.'

In "Endgame Earth: Clinging to Optimism", Richard Schechner reads the play as a parable that announces the end of the world and the destruction of the Anthropocene[48]. However, the game in *Endgame* is not thematically played; it should rather be approached as a declaration of the end of a play. "The classical order of language has now drawn to a close," Foucault declares in *The Order of Things*[49], and this is perhaps the reason why it is possible to read *Endgame* as a representation of its failure to represent the end of the world. Amanda Dennis, like Schechner, also links the dystopic spaces that are created in the play to the post-election political context in the U.S., but, unlike him, she seems to be aware that what is at stake in the play is the way the representation of dystopia, itself dystopic, forces language to "[reveal] its mechanisms"[50]. Actually, the play allows for the construction of such environmental (Schechner) or political (Dennis) heterotopias. Other critics, like Rossen Ventizislavov, for instance, focus on the philosophical spaces that emerge out of the characters' failure to exist in time and space that we might read as existential heterotopias[51], while others, like Jesper Olsson, focus on the juxtaposition of human and posthuman spaces in the play that ultimately undoes both[52]. For Courtney Massie, the play emanates from language's castrating failure to become music[53]. It can accordingly be said to construct an auditory 'other space'. The different 'other spaces' that the play provokes and explores might be as varied as the natural, political, musical, philosophical, postdramatic, metatheatrical, and posthuman spaces that are mentioned above. However, there is one particular aspect that is of paramount importance to us here, and it has to do with how all these spaces might be dramatically

[48] Richard Scechner, "Endgame Earth: Clinging to Optimism" *The Drama Review* 64, no.1 (2020): 11, doi: 10.1162/dram_e_00893.
[49] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 294.
[50] Amanda Dennis, "Ordinary Language in Dystopia: Adapting Beckett's Endgame" *Journal of Beckett Studies* 29 (2020): 104, doi: 10.3366/jobs.2020.0292.
[51] Rossen Ventizislavov, "The Spectacle of Failure: Reading Beckett's *Endgame* Philosophically" *Estetika: The Central European Journal of Aesthetics* 2 (2018).
[52] Jesper Olsson, "Stranger Things, Plant Life, and Posthuman Endgames: Reading Beckett with Others" *Humanities* 11(2022).

[53] Courtney Massie, "'Something is taking its course': Endgame's Frustrated Musicality and the Evolution of Beckett's Late Dramatic Style" *Modern Drama* 61, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 42.

constructed (within the text) yet characteristically deconstructed in performance, i.e., visually.

In *The Treachery of Images* and *Endgame*, the gridding is perhaps as perfect as Borges's map[54] and the trousers of the Englishman in Hamm's story[55] and – also like the map and the trousers – cannot escape being imperfectly ironic[56]. If the spatial distribution of color and movement is generally meant to reveal the patterns whose order has been devised by a Magritte or a Beckett, the emptiness with which both works challenge their viewers pushes them to create their own grids. That emptiness is not the simple outcome of absence, for this article has shown that it is, after all, engendered by the juxtaposition of different competing 'other spaces' that negate and neutralize one another, hence *heterotopia*. Traditionally speaking, the space of artistic creativity has often been separated from that of aesthetic response. But the self-reflexive and self-consuming nature of an art that refuses to re-produce nature has been shown to erase the spatial boundaries between the two. The destabilization of representational logic engenders a destabilized viewer whose knowledge of the painting/ performance and whose search for meaning are ridiculed. Perspectival reception of works of art that defy representation is then no longer possible not as a result of the impossibility of perspective but as a result of its multiplicity. The injection of heterotopic spaces into the body of art redirects our attention to the very processes that have been at work while it was being processed. It also shows that the boundaries between the visible and the invisible need to be redefined. Cary Wolfe writes, following Derrida, that the invisible cannot be reduced to the *opposite* of vision, and that our understanding of space needs to take into consideration the limitations of our logocentric human 'vision'[57]. Wolfe's is a posthuman perspective; Magritte's and Beckett's is a meta-human one. Magritte's 'pipe' is not a pipe, and it does not need to be one; Beckett's *Endgame* is not a play, and it does not need to be one. Both works seem to resist comprehension; they rather long for and create those 'other spaces' where what is supposed to be seen always comes à la Godot – 'to come' without actually coming.

[54] Jorge Luis Borges, "On Exactitude in Science" *Jorge Luis Borges: Collected Fictions*, translated by Andrew Hurley (London: Penguin, 1999).
[55] Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, 22.
[56] My own statement is also doubly ironic, and it puts my conclusive remarks at risk because irony can never be conclusive.
[57] Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 166.