

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: DARK MIRROR: HETEROTOPIA, UTOPIA,
AND THE EXTERMINATION CAMPS OF
OPERATION REINHARD

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In Michel Foucault's body of work, the notion of heterotopia stands out as both particularly intriguing and particularly underdeveloped. Introduced in the introduction of *The Order of Things* (first published 1966) and further described in the lecture "Of Other Spaces" (1967), heterotopia has been used by scholars in a variety of fields, from social theory to architecture. Of special interest is the way Foucault describes the relationship between heterotopia and utopia, one defined by its liminal nature and the other by its unreality. This work seeks to shed new light on that relationship, by focusing on heterotopias as threshold spaces between the real social world and the perfected but unreal world to come. I approach the concept of utopia with an eye toward its eliminationist implications, and use three extermination camps established as part of the Nazi regime's Operation Reinhard as cases through which to explore significant features of a heterotopia, how those features manifest in these cases, and what connects these spaces to the world that can be glimpsed in the mirror they

create. Although I primarily use historical cases as a way to expand existing theory, I aim to build upon that expansion by pointing the way toward the development of new theoretical tools for historical-comparative analysis of spaces of both extermination and detention. Finally, I suggest that work might be done focusing on embodied identities as themselves forms of heterotopia, which introduces possibilities for additional analysis of the roles of bodies and identity in cases of certain kinds of mass violence and death.

DARK MIRROR: HETEROTOPIA, UTOPIA, AND THE
EXTERMINATION CAMPS OF OPERATION REINHARD

by

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Preface

A war story is a black space. On the one side is before and on the other side is after, and what is inside belongs only to the dead.

— Catherynne M. Valente, *Deathless*

This all began, believe it or not, with mice.

I was in junior high school. I don't recall now what year it was; what I do recall is that I was a strange and inward-looking kid, ill-suited to a social life for which I had been ill-prepared. Many if not most people recall feelings of awkward isolation as children, but some of us experience it in greater degrees of intensity than others, and my experience was intense. This wasn't the fault of any person in particular; it's what you should probably expect when you cross the emotional upheaval of adolescence with burgeoning mental illness. Not long before, I had been diagnosed with both Attention Deficit Disorder and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (a delightful symptom of which was compulsively gouging wounds in my skin) What happened on this day—which I swear I'm going to return to, the day with the mice—wasn't a direct result of those things, but to the extent that mental illness shapes the disposition of children as a whole, I have to think it played a part.

Okay. Let's get back to the mice.

A lot of my classmates spent free time outside. I tended to spend mine in the computer lab—or, even better, in the library. I was attending a private Quaker school by then, and I guess the collection must not have been as closely curated as a public school's might have been (I found some fairly scandalous stuff now and then in terms

of sexual content) because frequently I stumbled on things that a lot of people would likely deem too *adult* for a kid at the tender age of ten or eleven, not in terms of sexual content so much as in terms of violence. In terms of depictions of just how cruel human beings can be to one another.

So that afternoon, I found Art Spiegelman's masterwork *Maus*.

You see it, right? Kid finds comic book (I had no idea what a graphic novel was and if I had known I would have had no idea why the distinction matters), kid has this kid-idea of what comic books are, kid sees anthropomorphic mice on the cover (kid has always loved anthropomorphic animals), kid picks up the book and cracks it open.

Kid's life is never the same.

* * *

I knew what the Holocaust was. We do teach it in schools. But my memory of that teaching is that it was somewhat abstract, distant, and vague. Lots of people died, yes, and they died because of who they were and nothing more, and they were killed by monstrous human beings as part of an insane project that those monsters believed would make the world a better place. I don't recall much about that last part; the emphasis was on the evil, not on what motivated the evil or what served as its relatively mundane seeds. I don't blame elementary school teachers for not taking a deep dive into the political, cultural, and economic forces that propelled Nazi Germany and its people past the lethal point of no return. Children can understand a lot—they can often understand a great deal more than we give them credit for—but there are still places one should probably be reluctant to go.

Millions of people died. Right, got it. Except what kind of number is “a million”, let alone multiple millions? There's a point beyond which numbers lose their meaning and we cease being able to conceive of relative size. It's all simply huge. “Million” is a stand in for “we cannot express or understand how many”.

When examining mass atrocity, you can go top-down through the lens of those unfathomable numbers, or you can approach bottom-up from the perspective of individual people and what they experienced. People usually adopt both, though both present their own unique difficulties. My teachers must surely have done so. But what I recall, prior to that day with the mice, was the top-down. It was the numbers, which were essentially meaningless to me.

Everyone reads *The Diary of Anne Frank*, but what I remember are the mice.

I suppose we all have to find our own routes to the truth. Some of those routes will necessarily be strange ones.

* * *

What I found in the library that day was actually the second volume in Spiegelman's two volume work, *And Here My Troubles Began*. The book details the day to day existence of Spiegelman's father after he arrives at the gates of Auschwitz, from those gates themselves to liberation and the war's end. The story basically concludes there; unusually, it's the first volume—*My Father Bleeds History*—that covers more of the war's aftermath, and delves into Spiegelman's strained relationship with his father and the past suicide of his mother. While Spiegelman's father concludes his tale with a kind of happily-ever-after, it's clear from both volumes that no end to this kind of trauma is happy, and in fact such trauma doesn't

even end. It carries across generations. It's knitted into the DNA of those who inherit their parents' and grandparents' memories.

I think it was some time before I read the first volume, which also describes the German invasion of Poland and the run-up to the Final Solution's implementation. So it was that I came to the foundations of the Final Solution after the fact. That first day, I was plunged into the individual level details of life and death in the camps—the horror of the trains, the beatings, the abuse, the terror, the rampant sickness, the shootings and the gas chambers. It wasn't about numbers anymore; instead, it was about the story of one man and his desperate struggle for survival in the face of overwhelming odds. Which, although accurate, sounds too much like a movie poster; it was about suffering, presented in the most immediate and explicit possible way.

I remember being both entranced and shaken to the core. I was stunned by the gut-punch of the story, not least because of how it made sense of itself, or rather how it didn't. There was no point to this suffering, no redemption for the people involved. Again, survival was not a happy ending. What happened was fundamentally absurd and yet on a deep level I was haunted by the idea that it was indeed explicable. That it was comprehensible. It was a puzzle to which there was an answer.

(I should note that this was the same year and the same library in which I first encountered Keiji Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen*, his semi-autobiographical manga that tells the story of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and the immediate aftermath. Extreme suffering became something of an obsession of mine.)

From that point on, atrocity and mass death haunted me. In another year in junior high school, I read and wrote about ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In

high school I wrote a lengthy and impassioned term paper about the American press's failure in adequately covering the genocide in Rwanda, and the associated failure of the American government in responding to it, and I discovered the torture and murder committed by the Khmer Rouge in their concentration camps. In college I researched the Japanese atrocities in Nanjing and the horrific crimes of Unit 731. Always, these materials approached mass killing from the level of the individual. Greater social forces were present but were basically backdrops.

I couldn't handle the numbers. It was always about the small, the personal, the vulnerable and the intimate. It was about the mice.

It was terrible, but I couldn't look away. There was an answer, an explanation for why people did these things to each other. I needed to find it.

And in fact, I suspect that it wasn't even so much about an answer as it was simply a need to *see* it. A storyteller myself, I felt compelled to bear witness to stories that many other people would likely avoid.

On into grad school, I found myself falling into the sociology of warfare. While the literature I was reading naturally dealt heavily with state-level institutions and large, slow-moving forces, I continued to return to the individual. I read Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men*, his account of the transformation of gentle, intellectual German policemen into cold-blooded killers as they carried out mass executions of Jews in the forests of Poland.

Yet something I learned from *Maus* that's held true across all these years is that approaching these events via the micro instead of the macro doesn't make any of it more comprehensible, only more visceral. If anything, it makes the entire business

even more difficult to understand. The suffering of one person against the backdrop of the deaths of millions is a knot that can't be loosened, let alone untied. Every attempt only pulls it tighter.

Spiegelman himself wrestles with precisely this. In his own comic, he depicts himself as unable to find a middle ground between journalistic distance and personal proximity. He doesn't know how to write about what his father is relating to him; the subject matter is too enormous to grapple with, and the prospect of doing any of it justice seems hopeless. The result is a feeling of isolation, of loneliness in a world haunted by ghosts. In panel after panel, Spiegelman literally walks past piles of naked corpses. He is surrounded by suffering and death on a massive scale, by a story he cannot escape and yet has no idea how to tell.

It should have served as a warning to me, though I don't think it would have made much difference if I had taken it that way.

* * *

This is not the dissertation I expected to write.

It's certainly not the dissertation proposal I defended. Initially I was going to write a qualitative study of the uses of social media technology in the Occupy movement, something that interested me from the moment I observed the movement's beginnings. I had written about it before, and I liked the idea of producing a long work that would both contribute to the existing scholarship and be somewhat timely, given that social movements and social media were a mix that seemed unlikely to decline in importance.

But not long after that, I found myself completely stuck. I couldn't even get started. A year passed, two, and I hadn't done one interview. After losing my departmental funding, I finally arrived at a crossroads: *Write the damn thing and graduate, or leave the program*. When it became piercingly clear to me that it was going to be impossible to write the dissertation in the form I defended, a radical and yet radically simple idea occurred to me.

Write something else.

I had done work on the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia before, specifically in a lengthy and somewhat rambling two-part essay for the blog Cyborgology. In that essay, I in fact barely touched on heterotopia—it was mainly about atemporality, memory, and the photography of abandoned places—but as a notion it stuck with me, probably because it described an individual experience of physical space with macro-level implications. It was visceral, fluid, widely applicable and difficult to pin down. It was a theoretical toy that invited play.

I knew it interested me. What else did? What else did I already know a lot about, care a lot about, feel like I could contribute to?

I looked at the books on my shelf and I remembered the mice.

The idea of combining heterotopia and death camps was very weird. But it didn't seem impossible, so I picked it up and ran with it.

* * *

In that sense, you could say that I arrived at this work because it struck me as both doable, and something I wouldn't hate to the point of paralysis. But while that may have been a significant part of the root, the experience of reading and thinking

and writing in this body of history has been one of tumbling back into that incomprehensibility. More than once, I've had something of the feeling Spiegelman depicted in his art: I am haunted by a story to tell and am unsure how to tell it. The story is not mine; I'm not Jewish and there are no Jews in my family (somewhat ironically, my family is mostly German on both sides—and no, I don't believe this is a guilt thing). In some ways I think that's made it harder, and in some ways it's probably helped. Regardless, I'm writing about inexpressible horror through the lens of a theoretical notion that doesn't invite intimacy, and that's not a comfortable place to be.

Not that there was any way this was ever going to be comfortable.

Returning to academic writing has been especially difficult; I'm a writer of both fiction and essays, but it's been a long time since I wrote in this vein, and I've never been at ease with the more formal language of academic research. The distance that it encourages in and of itself is frustrating. Am I doing these stories a disservice by writing about them in any way that could be described as *dry*? How am I supposed to write about piles of dead children's shoes in order to explore the meaning of physical space? How am I supposed to write about piles of dead children's shoes at all?

I don't know. I'm writing this as the draft of the thing itself is still extremely rough, but I'm fairly certain that by the time it's finalized, I still won't know.

* * *

What you need to understand going into this is that I'm not grappling with the question of *why*. I'm not trying to explain the camps, or what transpired there. In

terms of our understanding of how the Final Solution happened, I'm not trying to make a contribution. Someday that might be a task I tackle, but if so, I don't think I'm ready for it yet. I don't think heterotopia can make sense of mass killing in these specific cases, if at all, and I'm not inclined to push that point. Someone else might have more luck there. Rather, I do think the camps can tell us something about heterotopia and its underexplored relationship with the far more dangerous concept of utopia, about how spaces where the rules break down can work to shape a space where the rules are lethally hardened and history itself comes to a standstill. I'm telling a story about destruction, about what happens when important aspects of reality itself fall apart.

Perhaps in that sense I might be adding to our understanding of the camps after all. The closest I've ever come to a gut-level comprehension of mass killing is a vision of things falling apart, of the center no longer holding. Of course, that's not actually what happened in the Final Solution; as designed, it was as far from chaos as possible. Indeed, that was the point. As with the worst excesses of utopia, it was order to lethal degree, though those orderings were, to use a phrase that'll become important in the chapters ahead, "alternate". These were *other spaces*.

They were ordered, but I look at them and I struggle to understand. Heterotopia describes a space in which rules are suspended. Even if that translates to order, it may be order beyond my own ken.

I don't know that an abyss looks back. I do know that looking into an abyss changes you. I learned it a long time ago, that day with the mice. When you analyze a system that annihilates humanity, does it damage your own? When you face, as

George Ritzer expressed it, *the irrationality of a rational process*, is there a point at which you leave reason behind?

There's no way to understand *six million*. It's too big. But even the suffering of one person might be larger than any one writer can manage.

All I can say is that I hope I will—I hope I *have*—done the best I can. Whether or not it's worth anything is something someone else will have to decide. In the meantime, this is a story about a moment in history where one world ends so a horrible new one can be born, and it doesn't end happily. It doesn't even end.

But it did begin, with the mice.

December 2017

Dedication

For Sadie.

Acknowledgements

Completing this project and closing out ten years of my life—fifteen, if you count college—would have been impossible without the help and support of a number of people, some of whom I'll probably end up forgetting. But here goes.

First, I want to express heartfelt appreciation for my fellow travelers in the program, many of whom are members of my cohort but plenty of whom are not: The people I drank too much with after evening theory classes; the people I angsted with about papers and research projects; the people whose compassion and commiseration carried me over innumerable patches of rough terrain. The people who taught me how to teach, and the people who taught with me. The people who, when I started to doubt myself and the entire process, reminded me that I wasn't in it alone. My students, too; so many of them filled my life with excitement and a new sense of purpose, the pure and simple joy of teaching people about something one loves.

I want to also thank my friends and colleagues in the science fiction and fantasy (and horror, and romance, and weird fiction, and you know what, genre is a goddamn cage so who cares) literary community, who encouraged me in something that *wasn't* graduate school and therefore kept me grounded. Writing fiction has made my academic writing fuller and richer and more daring and that works both ways, and I wouldn't be a writer if it wasn't for the kind and generous writers around me.

Thanks to all my pan-fandom RP people, and my fandom people in general. If you're reading this, you know who you are.

Special thanks to Patricio, who not only didn't discourage me from pursuing a truly odd idea but was indeed fully supportive of it and pushed me across the finish line.

I owe more thanks than I can possibly express to my parents; despite having both gone through this process themselves, they didn't have me involuntarily committed when I announced my intention to go for a doctorate. My father always told me that PhDs are for people too stupid to know when to quit. I have one now and I'm here to say: Can confirm.

Seriously, I (quite literally) wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you guys. I don't know what to say other than thank you and I love you and I hope I've made you proud.

Thanks in general to my family, to my sister Emma and my brother Paul, and also to my husband's family, who in their generosity and sense of fun have done more to keep me sane than they probably know. In particular thank you to my father-in-law Robert and my brother-in-law Eric, who somehow don't seem to regard my inclusion in their family as an unfortunate error.

As much as I can never adequately express my appreciation to my parents, I will never be able to put into words how much I owe to my husband Rob. Your love and support have carried me through everything, you've been my best friend for almost two decades, and as I like to say on our anniversaries, we haven't yet tried to kill each other in our sleep, which is probably a solid indication of a good relationship. In any case, I hopefully have a few more decades to try to make it all up to you.

Finally, and in some ways most of all, thank you to Professor Emeritus Barry S. Perlman, who introduced me to sociology when I was a very confused student at the Community College of Philadelphia. This is all his fault but he'll likely never know it; as I was writing these lines I looked him up, thinking I might contact him to let me know what became of me, and I discovered that he died in October 2016, not long after retiring.

But on the off-chance that he does find out about this: Thanks, Professor Perlman. Thanks, and also as I said, this is really entirely your fault and you should have warned me about what I was getting into.

And let me take that as an occasion to say that if there's someone in your life who's played the kind of role these people have in mine but who may not know it, find them and tell them so. Tell them thanks. You never know when you might run out of time.

April 2016 - July 2019

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Introduction

The earth bled at Treblinka.

When you take a deep dive into the details of the Holocaust, certain of those details will haunt you, and it can be difficult to say ahead of time which ones. This isn't unique to the Holocaust; dive into the lurching, sickening depths of any event of mass murder and you'll find yourself haunted. You are swimming through haunted waters, among ruins choked with the dead. You perceive these events on a mass scale, but unless you're making a concerted effort to do so, you can never escape the details. The numbers roll over you—hundreds of thousands, millions, images of the old cliché of bodies stacked like cordwood, and the identifying features are lost. Yet details do emerge, wind themselves around you, and hold some part of you down there long after the rest of you has emerged.

To enter the space of the Holocaust is to enter a space both profoundly connected to and profoundly set apart from the daily one we inhabit. If we identify the Holocaust as a historical event in the sense of a period bounded by a beginning and an end, we can experience history itself with a degree of physicality—history as a room through which we can move, or a house containing a series of rooms, each discrete but each part of a whole, different and yet bound by shared qualities and through-lines. Most of us don't wake up and brush our teeth and go to work surrounded by the dead, but some of us do. Some of us are locked into that space by virtue of memory, as survivors or the children of survivors. Some of us enter those

spaces willingly; we have the luxury of exiting them at will—except for when we don't.

There are a number of details that I can't shake loose, and one of them is that the mass graves overflowed and the fluids of the decaying corpses seeped through the soil, and the earth bled at Treblinka.

The earth doesn't bleed. That's simply not a thing that happens. The image of bleeding earth is something from fiction, from a myth or a fable. We can conceive of it, but not as a real thing. According to the rules of most of our lived experience, the majority of us would likely not consider it possible.

Yet there are spaces in the world, spaces inside spaces, geographical and temporal and existing in the liminal places where time and geography meet in such a way that the rules are suspended. One world might end, destroyed, and a new one might slouch from its ashes, not so much a phoenix as a rough beast.

Our linguistic tools for describing that phenomenon are lacking. Not absent; we do possess some of the words. But we don't have them all, and we can't understand what we're poorly equipped to describe.

The Holocaust is an enormous space containing smaller spaces, a mansion containing many rooms. It exists in the city of history, unique but not fully isolated. As a house, it's well-mapped, though new parts of it are constantly being illuminated. Grappling with a body of work on that scale is going to be nearly as difficult as grappling with the event that work seeks to describe and explain, and that's not what I'm attempting here. Rather, I want to grapple with the question of the space itself, the

rooms through which we move, the pile of ashes that was the old world and the deformed new world emerging from them.

* * *

Unpacking the concept of a “space” and the social connotations of that concept can be approached in a number of ways. Michel Foucault offers more than one, but particularly noteworthy is the notion of *heterotopia*—not because it's clearly and robustly defined but precisely because it *isn't*. First mentioned in his 1966 book *The Order of Things* and subsequently expanded on in other texts, its features are somewhat fluid and subject to alteration depending on the context in which it's being used. However, underlying its variations are identifiable through-lines that can serve as guides.

Heterotopia is a space set aside from the rest of social space, yet it retains significant tethers to that space. It is closed off in some way, and entering or exiting may be difficult. A quality of illusion is often present; things are not always what they seem. In the space of a heterotopia, rules might be suspended and alternate social orderings might be possible. Time itself can work in subtly different ways. Foucault called these “heterochronies” and offers the examples of a museum, a space in which time accumulates; and a fairground, which is occupied for only a short time by the separate world of the fair before the structures are taken down and the space is once again left vacant and unused.

Heterotopia usually performs a specific function relative to the society it's bound to. It serves a purpose, though those purposes can vary wildly, and the purposes for which it functions are connected to functions beyond its borders. At one

point, Foucault describes a heterotopia as a space of “compensation”—a kind of mirror of the wider social world, a thing that stands in opposition and whose opposition helps to define what it opposes. If the social world is chaotic, a heterotopia might be (though not necessarily is) structured, neat, orderly and predictable. “Function” in this context is defined relationally, by the nature of the relationship between spaces. “Illusion” works in a similar way, in terms of being defined in its function by its relation to the space it renders illusory within its boundaries. As Foucault puts it:

This function unfolds between two extreme poles. Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory (perhaps that is the role that was played by those famous brothels of which we are now deprived). Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. This latter type would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation, and I wonder if certain colonies have not functioned somewhat in this manner. In certain cases, they have played, on the level of the general organization of terrestrial space, the role of heterotopias. (1967)

Another feature of heterotopia as described by Foucault is often—though not always—bound up in different arrangements of time itself, in how one experiences its passage within that space. In some of them, time accumulates, slows to a crawl, and even stops. In others time moves so rapidly and change occurs at such a pace as to almost shed its own weight. In one heterotopia, time and its effects might be enduring; in another they're completely transient. But each one reveals new aspects of time as we customarily understand it. Each variation refines our comprehension.

While these varying temporal arrangements remain confined to the space, and to cross the border is to enter and exit that arrangement, the connection to the larger social world that I mentioned is nevertheless present. It's meaningful. You don't transform into an experiential blank slate with every step from one space to another; you bring along your memories, your history, and your imagining of your own future. You step into one space, are changed, and carry the new arrangements of you into whatever space you occupy next.

I first encountered the notion of heterotopia in an analysis of time, when I was exploring what it meant to experience memory and imagination in a space completely abandoned by the human beings who constructed it. We experience a past, we “recall” a future—or futures—in terms of the stories we've told about them, and informed by both, we imagine what our present might be. We don't experience time as a linear, steady thing. It is, as with most things, a lot more complicated than that.

A space like a concentration camp invites—and indeed, even requires—analysis as a space apart. It shares that in common with any space defined by its own logic and rules; prisons obviously come to mind, or hospitals, or schools. But in that first encounter, what captivated me was *how we tell ourselves stories* in these spaces. Specifically, how we tell ourselves stories about ourselves, about the meaning of our pasts, about how we can make sense of our present, and most of all, what we imagine our future to be. What it might be, and what it should and should not be.

We can't imagine an ideal future without being led into the idea of how we might bring that future into being. We may not get as far as a plan, not immediately,

but we're pointed in that direction. We're set on that path, and we can follow it, if we wish.

I began this work by wanting to explore that further. I wanted to deepen our understanding of how imagination and the transformation of the world can be shaped by a heterotopia, as a heterotopia shapes us and as we shape it. As I began to connect that desire with a long-running interest in the Holocaust as a historical event which is tethered so profoundly to the past and which reverberates so far into the future, I came to see how one could connect this function of imagination and heterotopia to the concept of the racial *utopia* that the architects of the Third Reich intended to create. They imagined it; they ultimately needed a nursery in which to birth it, a space apart from the world that *was*, that *is*, and that *will be*, and yet was linked to those versions of the world through that process of transformation. The space and the link were defined by their function.

Among other things, I want to highlight the fact that heterotopias aren't merely spaces in which a world is imagined. They can also be spaces in which a world is *created*. And in order for a new world to be created, the old one has to be destroyed.

Which brings me to utopia, to its fundamentally destructive nature, and to the terrible process by which humans usually attempt to bring it into being.

* * *

Given that heterotopia is so fuzzily defined as to allow many different examples to be considered one, and given the features Foucault lays out, it would be easy to apply it to the Holocaust in expansive terms. Doing so might or might not be useful to an understanding of what the Holocaust is and how it happened, and I want

to flag it as a potential avenue for future work. But for now I want to keep a tight focus on the process of destruction and creation, the death and the horrible non-life that almost invariably result when people make a concerted effort to recreate the world in the image of perfection. The active relationship between heterotopia and utopia is so powerful and yet so thinly explored, by Foucault himself and by the theorists who came after him, and very specific parts of the Holocaust as both a temporal and spatial event afford me to do exactly that.

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault draws an explicit connection between heterotopia and utopia, in order to further define heterotopia by contrasting the two. Utopias, he writes, are consoling, orderly, and “permit fables and discourse”, while heterotopias are disruptive and disturbing, places where rules may be suspended or eradicated altogether (loc. 262/8030). In that context, Foucault is referring mostly to heterotopia as a linguistic/discursive concept, but in so doing, he makes the connection between the two unignorable. Heterotopia is essentially a side note in the preface of the book, and therefore so is that connection, but the door he opens contains tremendous possibilities.

Heterotopia and utopia are clearly not the same, and one could even say they're at odds, the one standing as a mirror for the other. But I'm arguing that heterotopia, as a site for a destructive process, can serve to *create* a utopia—or at least as a part of someone's attempt to do so. Destruction and creation go hand in hand; something has to be erased to make room for something else.

A utopia is a perfectly ordered society, a garden civilization. It eliminates uncertainty and permits no deviance. There is no *other*. There's nothing ill-fitting,

nothing out of place. Everything that isn't utopia has to be annihilated, otherwise utopia can't exist. The perfect cannot abide the imperfect.

In a utopia, there's also no *space apart*. A heterotopia wouldn't be possible within a utopia; if a heterotopia is disruptive and contains alternate forms of ordering, it can't exist alongside complete order. Yet I'm going to show that a heterotopia whose function is utter destruction—and which itself exists to be destroyed—can pave the way for its mirror self. If a utopia is made, it might be preceded by a heterotopia in which a world is *unmade*, and which then unmakes itself.

If I'm going I argue for the existence of this relationship, and for its potency, I have to show it in action. I have to isolate a time and place—or times and places—within which it happened. In order to do that, I'm going to focus on the three extermination camps constructed as part of 1941's Operation Reinhard: Belżec, Sobibór, and Treblinka.

* * *

I want to be clear about something that may seem counterintuitive: although I'm engaging with some of the massive body of scholarship focused around the Holocaust, I'm *not* necessarily intending to introduce a new analysis to that body of scholarship, as such. While I hope that this may be of interest to historians of the Final Solution, and parts of it might open opportunities for that kind of analysis, *I do not actually intend to explain any particular part of it*. This is because while I'm closely examining these three cases, my focus is not so much on analyzing them in and of themselves as it is using an analysis of them to expand the body of scholarship focused around heterotopia. Rather than an end, they're acting as the means. In

reading this work, it's vitally important to understand that my approach is not designed to use theory to explain history; it's to use a tightly focused lens of history to expand a highly specific sector of theory. Nor do I mean to contribute to analysis of states or warfare, and while mass killing, atrocity, and genocide in general are important as background context, they are highly distinct from the kind of killing I'm dealing with, for reasons I'll go into in subsequent chapters. Nevertheless, again, I'm hopeful that I might be opening up opportunities for that kind of contribution. The work I'm doing here is barely scratching the surface. It cannot and should not stop where this dissertation does, and in the conclusion I'll briefly offer some ideas as to where it might productively go next.

Why am I restricting myself to these three camps? Why not expand the analysis to Auschwitz, to Dachau, to Buchenwald and beyond? Putting it simply, those cases don't allow me to do what I want to do, because although they were sites of industrialized mass killing, they weren't focused exclusively around that purpose. Auschwitz and the other camps like it were, in part, sites for forced labor, places where killing wasn't the sole function driving design, construction, and daily operation. If these spaces are heterotopias, we need to examine them explicitly for their functions, and many of the Nazi concentration camps performed functions that weren't directly related to killing at all, though extermination may have been the ultimate project of which they were a component.

Bełżec, Sobibór, and Treblinka existed only for killing. They never had any other purpose. They were constructed in direct response to perceived shortcomings in killing methods, to fill an industrial need with industrial facilities. The establishment

of the Thousand-Year Reich—and therefore the creation of a purified utopian society—depended on killing as many undesirable people as possible, as quickly as possible. The gas vans at Chelmno were generally effective but not efficient enough. The mass shooting performed by the Einsatzgruppen was the same, and in fact, in addition to shooting, the death squads at one time made use of grenades tossed into a pit full of people, to gruesome effect. However, these techniques were all “as far as one could go in streamlining the process of mass murder, in the absence of more advanced technology” (O’Neil 2008: 67).

These more primitive processes contained their own drawbacks: when Himmler traveled to Minsk to observe one of the mass shootings, an officer noted that he seemed shaken, and took him aside to point out the psychological damage to his men. What they were going through, he said, would ruin them for life, rendering them either neurotics or brutes (Breitman 1991: 196).

Himmler responded by delivering a speech to the men wherein he expressed regret that they were being put through such emotional hardships. He knew their work was terrible, but it was necessary and in the interest of the greater world to come. They were only doing their duty for the Fatherland, and besides, he himself—along with Hitler—would bear the ultimate responsibility for their actions.

That they were committing acts of horrific destruction was never in doubt by the very men who commanded them. Neither was the belief that there was no other way to achieve a perfected empire. Jews and utopia were incompatible; the impurity of the Jews existed on the level of the blood, and there was no possibility of redeeming them. Moreover, as Germany entered a second World War, they presented

a very real threat; they had “stabbed Germany in the back” in World War I, and should be expected to do so again (Herf 2006). They were a total enemy, and a dangerous one. They had to be destroyed, and that destruction had to be complete—and it had to be carried out quickly if the killers were to be successful and the Reich made secure.

The three camps were built to ensure that success. From inception they were defined by death and *only* death, and any activity that wasn't directly part of the killing process still served its maintenance. The few victims who were selected from the arriving transports and allowed to live as workers were only saved temporarily, and that merely to keep the camps running: they herded victims from the trains, sorted looted belongings and valuables, cut the women's hair, maintained the camps' infrastructure, cooked and cleaned for the officers and administration, and sometimes provided amusement in forms that ranged from singing to cruel “sports” to rape (Arad 1987). Most of them only survived a few days before they were replaced by others. They were kept alive solely to help kill, and then solely to die.

In the end, when their purpose was served, the camps themselves were destroyed, the goal being to leave no evidence behind. The stated motivation for their razing was that others wouldn't look kindly on what happened there, but one could argue that there was a deeper motivation at work. Again, the imperfect can't exist alongside the perfect. If the camps were built for the sole purpose of total destruction, they too would have to be utterly destroyed when there was no more killing to be done.

In short, camps that served some purpose other than destruction aren't useful for my specific analysis of heterotopias that function only as means to utopia via the eradication of the impure. I'm sure it's possible to shed new light on both the relationship between heterotopia and utopia, and the camps themselves, by applying my analytical approach more broadly, but given that at most I'm establishing the groundwork for that kind of application, I don't intend to do so here.

Moreover, again, this isn't necessarily to claim some wholly new and hitherto unrealized form of heterotopia. As I'll describe them, the heterotopias of these three camps share basic features with already established forms, and the only truly novel things I'm introducing are some of the ways in which those features appear and function. Instead, what I want to do is expand on the relationship Foucault alluded to when he linked heterotopia and utopia, and explain the ways in which, again, one can directly serve the creation of the other by its very nature. Another thing I want to be clear about regarding my goals in this work is the question of how I'm engaging with Foucault's writing on heterotopia. What he was writing about at the time is important to go into in some detail, but my focus isn't on understanding that, at least not primarily. Partially this is because it's frankly difficult to nail down precisely what Foucault meant by heterotopia as a single concept, given the differences in how he talks about it at different points in his career: he appears to be describing a constellation of phenomena—or of frameworks—rather than a single idea. But also it's because, as I'll discuss further in the conclusion, my aim is to take these theoretical tools forward into new possibilities for analysis, rather than to focus on what's already been written. Again, it's certainly important to establish the theory I'm

working with as clearly as possible, but that's not the heart of what I'm hoping a reader will take from this particular project.

By the same token, I'm not seeking to expand on the definition of utopia. That a utopian project is a fundamentally genocidal one is not a new claim. Many others have argued that the pursuit of utopia, especially in the modern era onward, is hideously destructive and intrinsically murderous (Bartov 2000). Rather, I'm setting utopia as a goal toward which heterotopias can be oriented, and describing them only inasmuch as is necessary to explore the connection I'm arguing for.

* * *

It's important to proceed by establishing the meaning of terms. In the first of the chapters that follow, I lay out a rough history of heterotopia, as both described and applied, from its first mentions in Foucault's writing to his expanded elaborations, and forward through the ways it's been further elaborated on by other writers. In the second, I outline the concept of utopia as it's used here, in terms of its destructive, lethal potential and how modernity has shaped that potential. In chapter three, I make use of personal testimony and memoir material from both guards/administrators and survivors to break down the structures of the camps themselves, the details of how they were designed and constructed, how they functioned, and how and why they were eventually dismantled; in doing so, I explain the ways in which these details identify the camps as heterotopias and reveal their place in the Reich's larger utopian project. The fourth chapter is devoted to a brief introduction of the idea that the bodies destroyed in the camps can themselves be considered embodied heterotopias within larger heterotopias, as bodies imbued with

an identity connected to a long history of ugly anti-Semitic weaponization. Finally, I will draw all these threads together and consider where someone might proceed from my conclusions.

Throughout the course of this project I'll be making use of not only primary source material but works of theory, not merely to serve as a review of the literature but to put these various elements of scholarship in conversation with each other, and with the historical sources themselves to develop the whole further. In the end, while I'm using theory to analyze specific historical cases, the primary source material is not the end in itself but a way to circle back around to the existing theory, turning it over and revealing new angles and connections, new directions in which the theory can be taken.

It's somewhat difficult to frame this project as explicitly sociological. While it contains elements of sociology, it feels to me as if it straddles the lines between a number of disciplines—history, philosophy, and even literature—without placing itself in any. Nevertheless, the soul of a march toward utopia is a particularly hazardous kind of social change existing within a wider context of historical social organization. Heterotopia is at heart a notion of social arrangements. Therefore it seems to me that it might reasonably have a place in this field, with feet planted usefully in others.

* * *

If a heterotopia is a space one can enter, a room in a house, a utopia never genuinely gets beyond the blueprint stage. One can be planned, but the effort always collapses in the execution of that plan. Utopias arguably don't exist, but heterotopias

do. When they're spaces that exist as part of a specific historical event, they're spaces that exist to create change. These heterotopias make and unmake, and might be tools used to alter and shape, potentially to horrifying ends even if those ends are never reached. Entering that space, you can't help but be changed yourself. You face old rules suspended in favor of new ones, a world that is to some degree recognizable and yet not the one you left. You stand in a room and step through a looking glass into a place where everything is strange, lines are blurred, and the impossible might be possible. Human becomes object and objects are stripped of their meaning. Death becomes a nightmarish form of new life.

You also face your own inability to grasp what you're perceiving, because no one is capable of fully grasping the cases themselves and the context within which they exist. As I said, my ultimate focus is utopia and heterotopia; I'm not seeking to shed specific light on the dynamics of the terrible machine that was the Final Solution. Yet it's nearly impossible, when making use of these cases, to keep them from overwhelming everything else. More than once, going through this material, I found myself locked into a kind of paralysis.

Analyzing the cases of these three camps through my particular theoretical lens involves both the micro and the macro, but most of it is the kind of focus on detail that I mentioned in the preface, the attention to the vulnerable and the intimate. A pile of children's shoes. A survivor's memory of first hope and then terror as he's driven from the trains toward the gas chambers. Yet even in these details, I found myself struggling. There was an emotional distance between me and those details that

I found unsatisfying and even a little troubling. It seemed wrong to engage with these details, with this degree of mass pain and death, and not feel it deeply.

Yet, if I was going through perform the kind of analysis that follows, I'm not sure how else it would have been possible.

This, I think, is one of the great barriers to genuinely comprehending this event. As Elaine Scarry writes, when we truly approach and consider the sensation of pain, our language breaks down. Even—and perhaps even especially—the people who have suffered and survived frequently find themselves at a loss for words. For me, it seemed that the details were where my focus should rest. Yet I was unable to overcome that last barrier, because I intuited that the kind of approach I was adopting would be impossible beyond that point.

To be perfectly frank, the result has been a piece of work with which I'm uncomfortable, and which I don't believe fully accomplishes what I set out to do. This isn't merely because, as I've said and will repeat, many parts of the ensuing argument serve as primarily placeholders for further work. I didn't set out to explain the Holocaust. I didn't even set out to explain these camps. Nevertheless, it seems to me that a deep engagement with them is necessary for a truly compelling thesis, and regardless, it feels like short shrift to neglect at least an attempt to make some sense of these times and places in and of themselves.

Put simply, I don't think I've done this subject matter justice. I also don't think it's possible to do so.

Even at a distance, one struggles with language, both literally and figuratively. As I wrote above, when one enters this space, the rules break down. Everything

disintegrates, and in the end you're left only with the bare fact of what's happened,
and the events you're watching unfold before you.

The earth bleeds.

Chapter 1: Heterotopia

A heterotopia is a space. But it's so much more than that. As I said in the preface and introduction, that *more* is what grabbed me at first—the potential that the notion hinted at, the possibilities lurking just off-screen. I was already interested in the idea of utopia as inherently genocidal, a nightmare rather than an ideal and desirable world, and heterotopia seemed like a way to come at utopia from a very different angle while using utopia to further articulate itself. It presented itself to me as, in short, a cool idea.

Yet as I started working on this project, combining the less visceral (to me) theory with real history that was visceral in the most meaningful possible sense, *cool* gave way to something else. Or rather, it expanded; that “so much more” ended up meaning, well, *so much more* than I initially expected. The marriage of emotional distance and material that could be emotionally exhausting wasn't an easy one. I never anticipated that these concepts would get along perfectly; indeed, that was part of what interested me. But finding myself in the center of that conflict was slightly disturbing. Caught between distance and connection, the desire to conceive of the inconceivable on several different levels at once—in a way, it became its own heterotopia, a mental space where I wasn't sure how to navigate the rules, where the meanings of chaos and order became slippery and the differences between them were no longer distinct.

I'm not certain I ever fully escaped that space, and I'm not sure whether it helped or hurt me in my attempts to bring these ideas together. Perhaps it did neither. In that sense, I may have ended up precisely where Foucault would want me.

* * *

As a theoretical concept, heterotopia is both poorly defined and full of possibility. It does a job that arguably no other concept can do in relation to physical social space and its meaning, and presents a lens through which to understand those spaces. The parts of the social world that it describes have real effects on the lives of real people—in some cases, destructive and even lethal effects. But these are under-explored, and even, in the cases I intend to discuss, not explored at all.

Again, what I want to address is the relationship between heterotopia and utopia, how each defines the other through their placement in opposition to each other, and how one—heterotopia—can be part of the path to the other, though that might seem counter-intuitive. The claim that the two are related isn't new, but *how* they're related is severely underdeveloped. Moreover, this relationship goes far beyond the purely theoretical. It has practical meaning and practical effects, and the ways in which it manifests are more than potentially horrifying. They are potentially lethal on a massive scale.

Understanding that relationship doesn't necessarily explain mass killing itself. As I said in the introduction, I'm consciously attempting to steer clear of any pretense toward offering that kind of explanation, not least because I can't see producing one that would satisfy me, let alone a reader. Nevertheless, I believe that bringing these

components together—heterotopia, utopia, and specific instances of murder on an industrial scale—reveals new facets of all three.

Heterotopia as a means to describe a space set apart, with its own rules and functions, is like one of those words or terms that exists only to articulate a very particular thing, or the experience of a thing. One of those terms that's always resonated with me is the Japanese *mono no aware*, the “sadness of things”, a sensation of bittersweet melancholy sparked by the contemplation of transience—a term for which we have no English equivalent. Heterotopia is like that. It may exist in a variety of forms, but ultimately it can refer to only itself. It's this quality of uniqueness which in part drew me to it to begin with, and which in part makes a study of it worthwhile, especially when it has such profound and material implications.

What kind of world do we want to live in is a question that people are constantly asking and constantly seeking to answer. Often the answer involves some idea of what the perfect society would look like, and, correspondingly, some idea of how one might achieve it. It is these ideas, among other things, that have the potential to visit such catastrophically destructive consequences on certain groups, which means that the process by which people can attempt to create a utopia is worth understanding in and of itself. If heterotopia has a place in that, heterotopia is worth understanding as well, and in order to go further, I have to lay out the foundations of heterotopia as it's historically been described.

Establishment of a Concept

When Michel Foucault introduces the concept of the *heterotopia* in the preface to his book *The Order of Things* (1966), he does so with a slightly puckish air, as if he's presenting to the reader something that amuses him more than anything else (and in fact he does confess that the realization caused him to break into laughter (loc.250/8030)). In this conception of it, he applies it primarily to the “space” of language, particularly as created and used by the author Jorge Luis Borges. Borges lays out a fictional “encyclopedia” in one of his books, which includes a section on the classification of animals—animals categorized in a manner that would be highly unfamiliar to most people:

a) belonging to the Emperor, b) embalmed, c) tame, d) sucking pigs, e) sirens, f) fabulous, g) stray dogs, h) belonging to the present classification, i) frenzied, j) innumerable, k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, l) et cetera, m) having just broken the water pitcher, n) that from a long way off look like flies. (loc. 207/8030)

This list is obviously and patently absurd; indeed, the absurdity is amusing in and of itself (reminiscent of Terry Pratchett or Monty Python, I personally think). But for Foucault, the absurdity went a step further. What the list revealed to him was the sheer impossibility of sensibly juxtaposing those things in the way Borges does. Foucault compares practical juxtaposition in what one might consider the “real world”, and notes that only in language is such a juxtaposition possible (loc. 239/8030). He considers the concept of *utopia*, a world of perfection and perfect order that is also by its very nature impossible, and contrasts it with the language in Borges’s writing and what that writing reveals about the impossibilities which

become possible in the context of imaginative language. He deems language in this sense as a *heterotopia*, a space in which rules of order are troubled and even potentially shattered, where logic can be rearranged in a way that is not only impossible but literally unthinkable anywhere else.

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’. This is why Utopias permit fables and discourse: they run with the very grain of language and are part of the fundamental dimension of the fabula; heterotopias (such as those to be found so often in Borges) 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. (loc. 262/8030)

For Foucault, at this point in his conceptualization of the notion, heterotopia was fundamentally a place of difference, associated with the world of the utopia but standing in contrast to it, switching everything around and acting as a kind of mirror. Where utopia provides order, heterotopia makes space for a kind of chaos. Where utopia soothes and reassures, heterotopia disturbs and destabilizes and creates uncertainty about everything. Utopias hold together; heterotopias facilitate breakage. Heterotopias distort what we can find in the idea of utopia, but they also *reveal* a great deal about the world they stand apart from—or at least such a revelation is possible, in as much as one can learn a tremendous amount about how a thing functions at the point when it ceases to function properly.

For Foucault, the notion that spaces set aside from the rest of the social world contained within their bounds significant implications for that world extends far outside his work on heterotopias specifically. He writes of prisons (1995) and asylums (1988) as enclosed sites subject to strict orderings and re-orderings, where the bodies (more on this in chapter 4) and minds and very identities of their occupants are subject to radical degrees of control and exercises of power. Asylums are spaces wherein those defined as insane are confined and cured. Prisons are spaces wherein human beings come to be defined by the discipline they experience, these spaces acting to produce systems of knowledge and as nodes in a larger network of the disciplinary spaces of schools, factories, hospitals—which, like asylums, serve as spaces within which undesirable people are confined and cured—and similar institutions. These spaces are, again, set apart, but what takes place there serves to shape the ongoing evolution of society as a whole, of the very basis for how we conceive of ourselves and our social relations.

Indeed, Foucault frequently used the concept of space in his writing, even when not dealing with it explicitly. His discursive theory often contained spatial imagery, words like *territory* and *region*, borders between systems of knowledge and power—his reliance on which, he said, was due in part to the classical knowledge of the 17th and 18th centuries, which was founded on the spatialization of objects of science (2013: 140), which was baked in to a degree that necessitated its presence. Moreover, while those borders were important, they were also usually fluid. It's fairly clear when one is in a prison and when one isn't, but the logic of the prison exists outside the prison walls, in part because of the network to which it belongs (2013:

133). The boundaries of his spaces were unstable and disorderly—or alternately ordered, as in the case of a heterotopia. In *The Order of Things*, a heterotopia is fundamentally a way to conceptualize how knowledge can be organized through language, and specifically classification. Here too he uses spatial imagery even when he isn't talking about literal spaces. The recording of things according to familiar or strange systems of classification is how the imagination is solidified in the world.

Although the introduction of *The Order of Things* is less explicitly about literal spaces than his other writing on heterotopias, it (and the rest of the book) are still classic examples of Foucault's tendency to think of power relations and the construction of meaning and knowledge in terms of spatial arrangements. Different spaces play different roles in the shaping of a subject and the change of that subject into more of an object by the social forces and systems of power at work on it. In simpler terms, what produces people can be understood in part in terms of spaces, and spaces play an important role in producing people.

This stance in general and *The Order of Things* in specific can be read as a response to Sartre's humanism and the notion of existential freedom—that each person is a subject who produces meaning in and of themselves and is free to act on the basis of that meaning. Meaning produced by different systems of knowledge driven by arrangements of social power de-centers and even objectifies the subject. This led to many of Foucault's colleagues levying criticism at him for denying the individual any agency (Habermas famously called him a new-conservative) but as Béatrice Han-Pile argues in “The Death of Man” (2010), while Foucault de-centers

the subject in his analysis, his very characterization of power leaves open the possibility of resistance.

It's worth noting, in terms of identifying his spatialized thinking, what the context of Foucault's life was during the time he was working on *The Order of Things* and later *Discipline and Punish*. Observing the violent leftist student protests in Paris during the 1960s, he spent time in Tunisia where similar leftist protests were occurring. Foucault felt sympathy with the protestors (his own students were among those arrested) and was concerned not only with power as shaped through and shaping systems of knowledge and discourse, but also in how literal spaces provided a means for power to act on—and objectify—the physical body of a subject.

These different tensions and contexts, just as they're part of what produced *The Order of Things* and “Of Other Spaces”, are part of what produced the concept of the heterotopia. In a heterotopia, power is arranged differently as the order of everything else changes, whether to render the rest of the social world illusory within it or to stand in orderly contrast to the messiness outside. My own use of heterotopia has a place here: the way power functioned within them rendered the people inside it—victims and perpetrators—from subjects to objects. In order to understand this, one needs to understand the ways in which power was defined relationally, between subject-objects and between the inside and outside of the heterotopia itself. My use of heterotopia presents power in an inevitable way, oppressive and objectifying as Hannah Arendt describes in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. However, I also want to point out that individual instances of resistance did occur, both in outright violent

uprisings (which I don't discuss here) and in struggling to preserve evidence that the Nazis sought to destroy, which I'll go into further in chapter 3.

In truth, it's somewhat difficult to clearly situate heterotopia in the context of Foucault's overall body of work, because it could and does fit into so many of its parts. Some of this is because, again, Foucault never—except in a couple of cases—fully articulates its place. Prisons are arguably heterotopias, asylums are as well, but it's never clear what greater implication that has, and since then it's been generally left up to other writers to sort out, who have detailed specific aspects of the concept without arriving at a single point of agreement (more on this shortly). That Foucault initially confines heterotopia to a system of linguistic classification rather than an actual physical space makes things even more confusing. But it's worth noting here that Foucault implies a quality of destruction to the nature of heterotopias. The destruction of “speech”, “myths”, and “lyricism”, to be sure, and by extension language itself, but there he stops, and in later discussions of heterotopia he never proceeds much further regarding this idea of destruction in a greater and more consequential sense. Destruction is a natural process, one of the oldest; it's also a social process, an intrinsic part of how societies rise and develop and fall. Destruction is vital to change. If a heterotopia is tied in some way to the society within which it exists and which it mirrors, destruction must be part of that. Indeed, it would be impossible to understand the full implications of the notion without that aspect.

What might a heterotopia destroy, or facilitate the destruction of? To what end, and with what effect? If heterotopia is a space where things that wouldn't otherwise be possible become possible, and a utopia is a space which, for all practical

purposes, can't technically exist at all, can one go one step further than he does? Can one link the two in that sense of being and not-being, as a part of a single process, each revealing fundamental truths about the other that can only be understood within the context of that process?

In order to answer those questions, it's necessary to further examine heterotopia as a concept, and a partial history of how it's been defined and used by other scholars.

This isn't as easy as it might be for others of Foucault's suggested notions, because unlike many of them, he never did very much to nail down what a heterotopia actually *is* and how its practical application is meant to work. The closest he ever came can be found in "Des Espaces Autres"—"Of Other Spaces"—a talk he delivered in 1967 to an audience of architects. Foucault was speaking of heterotopia in terms of material, physical space—reasonably, for a group of architects—and focusing on social institutions. But the idea is still used with expansive flexibility, and both its blessing and its curse is how broadly it's set up to be applied.

In his talk—subsequently published in 1984 in the French journal *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*—Foucault lays out several specific types of heterotopia and their characteristics. Among these are heterotopias of deviation such as prisons and psychiatric hospitals, which are defined by strictly policed openings and closings and the relationship of the spaces to constructed norms; heterotopias of crisis, "privileged or sacred or forbidden spaces" (1984: 4) where individuals in a state of crisis are placed or confined (such as menstruating women and children going through adolescence); heterotopias that play specific roles in a society's culture, such

as cemeteries where human imagination is locked between the fact of mortality and the concept of eternity; heterotopias of time (he refers to these as heterochronies) where time is either accumulated and/or frozen, such as museums and libraries, or fundamentally transient and fleeting, such as the space of a carnival or fair, where structures that serve a specific function are erected in order to exist for only a very short time before they are dismantled.

One of Foucault's core arguments in this lecture is an expansion of his original point in *The Order of Things*: that heterotopias exist apart from the rest of society and do so according to their relationship with that society. By examining them, important truths about the society they reflect can be revealed. However, Foucault both expands that original argument and departs from it by his discussion of heterotopias as physical spaces that human beings occupy, rather than the figurative "space" of language and imagination. Further, he identifies these spaces as ones set apart from public space, where one is either forced to enter or must undergo processes—rituals or other practices—in order to be admitted. They "presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable (1984: 7). Not just anyone can enter, and in many cases, once having entered, one cannot leave of their own volition. An important implication here—especially for my argument—is that there is something specific about these people in question that either grants them entry or forces them to enter. These people can be said to possess a certain identity or aspect of identity that places them within a heterotopia, and can completely remove their power once they're inside.

The final characteristic of heterotopia, as Foucault explains it, is that they exist to perform some specific function vis-a-vis the society they're set apart from. Foucault lists two of these functions, describing them as essentially the only two possibilities:

The last trait of heterotopias is that they have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles. Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory (perhaps that is the role that was played by those famous brothels of which we are now deprived). Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. This latter type would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation, and I wonder if certain colonies have not functioned somewhat in this manner (8).

As I'll discuss in chapter 3, my heterotopias are defined in roughly the same way - they actually fill both roles in some respects, and are defined relationally as a transition point between the world that was and the world that might (but never can) be.

Regarding the lecture, I've been unable to find an explanation for *why* Foucault delivered this specific lecture to this specific audience. But while Foucault rarely dealt directly with architecture as a discipline, it wasn't absent from his writing. Again, merely by virtue of the use of spatial imagery, he implies a concern with the design of spaces—perhaps one of the most explicit being the prison Panopticon (1995).

However, Foucault didn't believe that architects as a group were especially powerful when it came to the design and use of physical space, or at least were not as powerful as those filling roles like that of doctor. As far as he was concerned, architects didn't possess nearly as much control over the imposition of order and meaning, and moreover, people were much freer to define and create their own spaces (2013: 16). Nevertheless, design mattered to him. In *The Order of Things* he wrote about the "duality" between building and space, that architecture served to organize patterns of social relations. Indeed, Foucault can be considered at least partially responsible for architects' more recent change in focus from the design of "built forms" to the design of space (123).

Design and function are concepts to which Foucault frequently turns. In terms of heterotopia, for Foucault, the ultimate functions of a heterotopia are identified by how these spaces are arranged and what particularly occurs within them. How they might be used (to confine the deviant), what people might do inside them (experience accumulated time), and what effect they have on the society they reflect. However, while he presents these two possible functions as mutually exclusive and at odds, I'll be making a case for them as aspects that can—though not always do—exist side by side, and even complement each other in some ways. The cases I'm going to make use of will reveal that more plainly in the chapters ahead. For now, I'm merely making a note of it as we continue.

Heterotopia in Context

Although Foucault's work is wide-ranging—over both topics and years—there are certain through-lines that connect most of his writing, which are relevant to the notion of heterotopia. From his earliest work on mental illness and madness (1954, 1961), through to clinics and prisons (1963, 1979), and his later lectures on governments and biopower, one can track the development of theoretical elements that feed directly into how he characterizes heterotopias and utopias, even though those concepts remain difficult to nail down.

One of these through-lines is language and discourse and their roles in the production of knowledge and a recounting of its history. We find this particularly in *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1969), which advocates for a surface approach to language as a means to examine the relations between individual components of language, or “statements”. We also find it in *The History of Sexuality* (1979), which argues for the fundamental connection between the production of knowledge and the workings of social power. We find it in his histories of clinics and prisons, which concern themselves, among other things, with the evolution of medical and scientific language, and the production and control of human beings.

Knowledge production and its history is especially key in *The Order of Things*, along with the history of how those things have shaped the trajectory of the ways in which knowledge is organized, especially into categories. Foucault begins the book with a discussion of heterotopias—and, to a connected but lesser extent, utopias—but its primary focus is discourse and knowledge production. In it, he lays out two major shifts in the organization of Western knowledge, the first during the

seventeenth (the “Classical” era) and the second in the nineteenth (the era of Modernity). The overall transition was one between a general chaos of different forms of knowledge to a more clearly and rigidly defined hierarchical system of categorization, correlated with the rise of knowledge production as a scientific project. At the beginning of the book, heterotopias are also related to categorizations of knowledge, in that those categories may function differently in heterotopic discursive space. Utopias also stand connected to heterotopias—as unreal, placeless places, whereas heterotopias contain elements of reality and are places that may be located.

But these spaces and places in *The Order of Things* are largely figurative, and one has to go back to his 1967 lecture “Of Other Spaces” to find a discussion of heterotopias that admit actual physical space. He describes physical spaces in general in relational terms, saying that we occupy those relations—which is very much in line with his consistent focus on how relations define aspects of discourse, how they are defined by the nature and arrangement of those relations. In addition, as in much of his other work he again places emphasis on the transitions of knowledge production from the Classical to the Modern era. As he puts it in the lecture:

In a still more concrete manner, the problem of siting or placement arises for mankind in terms of demography. This problem of the human site or living space is not simply that of knowing whether there will be enough space for men in the world—a problem that is certainly quite important—but also that of knowing what relations of propinquity, what type of storage, circulation, marking, and classification of human elements should be adopted in a given situation in order to achieve a given end. Our epoch is one in which space takes for us the form of relations among sites.

Moreover, Foucault returns to the question of relational definitions when describing heterotopias themselves:

But among all these sites, I am interested in certain ones that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect.

Foucault refers to mirrors in regards to heterotopia in both in “Of Other Spaces” and *The Order of Things*, so that imagery holds true from instance to instance even if the nature of heterotopia as it's described becomes more figurative and less specific. In both cases, Foucault connects the image of the mirror with both utopia and heterotopia, and in fact, in “Of Other Spaces”, he declares that for him, the mirror actually serves as a kind of analogy for both:

I believe that between utopias and these quite other sites, these heterotopias, there might be a sort of mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror. The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy...The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.

While this articulation of both concepts and the framework through which to understand them is interesting, it's also somewhat problematic; to some degree it

confuses what is already a confusing notion. But it also connects utopia and heterotopia not only conceptually but also, albeit via an analogy, with a specific spatial example. I'm using this as a kind of jumping-off point for my discussion of the relationship between heterotopia and utopia: that a real place can serve—however unsuccessfully—as a threshold or point of transition to a placeless place that doesn't exist outside linguistic representation. One can look *through* the mirror, as it were, and catch a glimpse of it. But by definition it not only does not but cannot exist, and therefore it can never be reached.

Heterotopias, however, do exist, and I'll be describing these three particular ones in detail shortly.

Before we proceed, though, another brief word on utopias. Again, Foucault doesn't write much about them specifically, but in terms of how I plan to address them, they do present themselves as another one of those through-lines. Foucault does explicitly say that heterotopias should be understood as real while utopias remain confined to the realm of the imagined and linguistic, while both bear a connection to the “real” world as a whole—“utopias are inventions based on a reference existing situation; heterotopias are real spaces as alternatives to a reference existing situation.”—but how else can we understand utopias? This is a question I'll be exploring at much greater length in the next chapter, but for now I want to frame them this way: a utopia is an imagined, nonexistent society defined by perfect order and harmony, usually arrived at through an extreme degree of social control, that control generally exerted by an all-powerful state apparatus. It's also by nature

impossible (although of course that has never stopped people from trying to achieve it).

It's worth noting at this point that while Foucault directly contrasts utopia and heterotopia in terms of defining them in relation to each other, his characterization of heterotopia does not in fact seem to *require* utopia in order to exist as itself. His examples, and also those offered by architects and scholars of urban environments, don't explicitly imply a key relationship to utopias, to an ideal world that anyone conceives of or seeks to create. Nevertheless, it's not at all a significant jump from one to the other; every arrangement of space to serve a social purpose, from a prison to a cemetery, does imply certain broad consensus regarding principles along which society should be organized. That organization may not be perfect in anyone's mind, but it is indeed an image of society toward which that organization is oriented.

I point this out in order to recognize that the relationship I'm focusing on here is not universal to all heterotopias, and therefore that its utility in application to all heterotopias is limited. I'm talking about that relationship, but that relationship is not always salient to understanding how a heterotopic space works.

Not directly related to utopias but more regarding violence and war, Foucault introduces a discussion of the violent origins of states and the connection between politics and violence in his lecture series *Security, Territory, Population, The Birth of Biopolitics*, and *Society Must Be Defended*, in conflict with the Hobbesian notion that there is something natural about violence and a state of war. In *Foucault, Politics, and Violence* (2011), Johanna Oksala proceeds from this work and draws both a distinction and a connection between linguistic and physical violence, claiming that

common consensus about the nature of reality is arrived at via political struggles. Violence (as I'll talk about further in subsequent chapters) can be understood as world-making, as a means by which states/governments institute realities. Utopias are impossible worlds that people nonetheless attempt to bring into being, through the construction of knowledge and also by physical means. A Foucauldian framing to political violence points directly toward this conclusion.

Along the lines of connections between Foucault's framing of power and violence—and relevant when I turn to utopias and Hannah Arendt, in the article "Towards an Analytic of Violence: Foucault, Arendt & Power" (2018) Jacob Maze connects Foucault's power and violence to Arendt's in *On Violence* (1970) and *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1966) in that power does not exist in and of itself but comes into being through its use. He writes that this framing presents a symbiotic relationship between power and violence, with power being instrumental in the production of meaning, knowledge and reality, and violence serving a preventative function. In this, again, we can draw connections between that framing and a Foucauldian understanding of how politics and political violence might be used in an attempt to force a new world into being.

If a key element of utopia is social control, one can find that notion represented frequently throughout Foucault's entire body of work. True, when he writes about extreme degrees of control and power, he isn't presenting any of it as perfect or desirable—quite the opposite—but it's also fair to say that most utopias appear as dystopias when viewed from a particular angle, and in fact, utopia as a genocidal concept is one of the ideas on which I want to focus. Regardless, when

Foucault writes about the scientific production of knowledge guiding and shaping the manifestations of social power and control—as in his work on clinics, prisons, and to an extent sexuality—the way he describes those things bears significant resemblance to the way utopias look and function in much of the literature about them. Foucault writes about the control of bodies and the shaping of behavior, especially in regard to the scientific turn in knowledge production and discourse which he says has marked the Modern era; utopias as they're usually presented—at least those written about since the nineteenth century—involve a tremendous to total degree of control on a biological level, sourced in a scientific understanding of society. Modern utopias are garden societies, carefully planned and managed, often (and this is not a uniquely modern feature) via forms of eugenics and family planning guided by the hand of the state (which, of course, was one of the cornerstones of the organization of Nazi society). Utopias and biopower are intimately connected.

Again, this is only a brief summary of the ways one can connect utopias in a larger sense to Foucault's writings, and one could go on in much greater depth. But for the purposes of this work, suffice to say that while he doesn't write directly about utopias in these terms, one can draw useful connections that will be pertinent to later chapters. Much of the key to understanding the relationship between utopias and heterotopias can be found in the physical nature of heterotopias themselves—possessing a physical reality that utopias lack—and the ways in which the real bleeds into the unreal as the ordering of things transforms.

Subsequent and Alternate Orderings

In subsequent writing around the term, it's been commonly—perhaps most commonly—employed in theory by architects and those who study physical space in particular. One piece that does engage with the notion along less material and more conceptual lines is Dehaene and De Caeter's 2008 essay “The Space of Play: toward a general theory of heterotopia”. In this essay, the authors emphasize heterotopia as a space defined by liminality—spaces on the edges of things bounded by transition and the crossing of thresholds—and that the “spaces” from which it sets itself apart are in turn defined by normality and heterotopia functions as a break from them. Others—including Dehaene and De Caeter, in their introduction to the volume their essay appears in—connect heterotopias (as Foucault himself does in “Of Other Spaces”) to actual physical sites such as a shopping mall, which is used frequently (Johnson 2016: 3).

The design and structure of these spaces is the primary focus, especially what those structures say about—and how they affect—social power. In his 1995 book *Landscape and Power in Vienna*, R. Rotenberg examines “symbols of order” and “symbols of liberty” (9) by tracing the ways in which public space is affected by powerful groups. Johnson writes a somewhat severe critique of Rotenberg's analysis by pointing out the lack of nuance in the way Rotenberg articulates the distinction between control and power:

Here the simple antithesis misses the rich couplings that can take place between the modes of power and how people can be governed *through* these couplings. Put another way, the use of Foucault's notion of

heterotopia is set within a non-Foucauldian, top-down notion of power.
(2016: 8)

One of the most in-depth pieces of scholarship regarding heterotopia—and one bearing particular relevance to my argument—is Kevin Hetherington’s 1997 book *The Badlands of Modernity*. In this work, Hetherington approaches heterotopia not from the assumption of heterotopia as essentially oppositional but instead as a space of incongruity, providing “an unsettling or an alternative representation of spatial and social relations” (Johnson 2016: 9). In other words, these spaces are both connected to and existing apart from these conventional representations, not directly opposed to them:

Heterotopias are places of Otherness, whose Otherness is established through a relationship of difference with other sites, such that their presence either provides an unsettling of spatial and social relations or an alternative representation of spatial and social relations. (1997: 8)

For Hetherington, this “Otherness” is central. A distinction can and should be made between it and Foucault’s deviance, because—again—Hetherington clearly decouples heterotopia from notions of marginalization and/or transgression to focus on the concept of an alternate ordering, of an image of the world where the rules have been changed. Heterotopia can function as a kind of Lewis Carroll-esque looking glass, a space which is recognizable to people who enter it but which also differs in key ways that make the space and its rules strange.

A useful principle to bear in mind here is how, when we see an alternate arrangement of something familiar, that thing being rearranged reveals new aspects of itself. We understand how something functions by seeing it when it functions

differently. Further, an alternate ordering inside one space might make possible other ordering outside that space, simply by virtue of having expanded accepted ranges of what's possible.

Regarding Foucault's original articulation of the two cardinal functions of heterotopia as "illusion" and "compensation", I want to make two points at this juncture. First, as I've already said—and I'm by no means the first person to make this claim, given that it stands as an all-pervasive criticism of Foucault's writing on this subject—these characteristics, and especially these functions, are so broad as to be able to include any number of things, which makes writing about them in a useful way somewhat difficult. If a heterotopia is defined in significant part according to the space to which it stands opposed/connected, just about anything could potentially be analyzed as a heterotopia. Heterotopias may in fact not even exist apart from its relationship to these normal spaces (Johnson 2016: 3). Second—and more significant for what I want to examine—is that I claim that it's possible for a heterotopia to perform both the functions of illusion and compensation simultaneously.

Foucault writes that a heterotopia's function "unfolds between two extreme poles". But arguably, it is in fact possible for a heterotopia to do both—to create an illusion such as to reveal the reality of the space that exists externally to it, and to create a space of careful and alternate ordering that stands in contrast to the messiness of the rest of the world as it is. In addition, it's possible for this space to provide a necessary site through which a path of change is charted, a site that appears to exist in opposition to the ultimate goal of that path, while at the same time being necessary to the process of getting there.

We can see a concrete collective example of this expression of heterotopia in the extermination camps of Operation Reinhard. While I'll be offering a more detailed analysis of the camps in chapter three, at this point it's worth briefly going into some of the ways in which these camps were identifiable as heterotopias, in direct connection with how they're described in this chapter.

Deadly Spaces

The camps were created to perform a singular and specific function: to erase Jews (and other undesirable peoples) from the world. These camps existed entirely for that function; as I said in the introduction, they are wholly unlike other camps such as Auschwitz and Dachau in that they possessed no additional purpose—no labor or medical experimentation, no unrelated reason to keep their victims alive. They were built to kill, and when the killing was done, the camps themselves were erased; even if the attempt to leave no trace behind wasn't wholly successful, that was at least the intent. They were spaces of such total and all-pervading destruction that they themselves were built to be destroyed.

It's important to note at this point that while these three specific camps were defined by unique features, they were not the only pure extermination camps in eastern Poland during Operation Reinhard, nor was Belżec the first. That dubious honor goes to Chełmno, a camp which actually served as a kind of prototype for the other three. I'm choosing to exclude Chełmno from my analysis, however, because there are meaningful differences between it and its three successors.

First, it was not a site constructed for the sole purpose of efficient mass killing but was instead a converted manor house that existed well before the establishment of the camp itself; the nature of its construction—or lack thereof—affects the nature of the space itself in that it was not a thing that had to be made in quite the same way. For most of its existence it hadn't been an extermination camp at all, or anything like it; on the contrary, it was dwelling place, a space in which life was centered and death existed on the periphery. Its purpose was a large and diverse collection of elements. Other buildings repurposed for the administration of the camp and the housing of the SS who were stationed there included a firehouse, a school, and a church (Montague 2012: 52). These buildings hadn't been planned for death or built for death, and they were built to last, as part of the daily patterns of existence in a village. Chelmno could certainly be characterized as a heterotopia not unlike the other camps in some respects, and such an analysis would probably be worthwhile, but for the sake of maintaining a sharp focus I'm setting it aside.

Second, the killings did not take place solely on the grounds of the camp but were instead carried out in specially outfitted gas vans, rigged to feed exhaust from the vans into compartments where victims were locked. These smaller, self-contained spaces were not only separate from the space of the camp; they were *mobile*, and this mobility makes the entire killing process at Chelmno fundamentally distinct from the camps I'm dealing with. Indeed, one of the things that makes the Nazi camp death facilities so unusual is their stationary nature; rather than death being mobile and going to the victims to kill them where they were, once the camps were established, the *victims* were transported *to* their deaths. Chelmno was a link between the

Einsatzgruppen and Treblinka, but it and Treblinka functioned in some decidedly different ways.

Therefore, while Chełmno is undoubtedly important to other examinations of Bełżec, Sobibór, and Treblinka within their own context and the wider context of the Holocaust in general, for the purposes of my argument I'm leaving it be and focusing on the unique properties of the remaining three.

For if the three camps themselves were unique among other Nazi camps, the way in which their function was carried out was unique as well. The camps were designed and constructed solely in order to create a world that was *Judenfrei*—where Jews were not only dead but had been erased from existence. Human beings were not only killed, but their bodies were utterly destroyed (though cremation only commenced when burial proved to be badly inadequate). The world within the space of the camps was, in an important respect, illusory—the creation of a world wherein humans were stripped of their humanity and then eradicated, a constant incomplete process toward an eventual end goal.

The end goal—a world without Jews—could be glimpsed through the camps' purpose, though by virtue of their very function it was never attained within the space itself, which was not only not Jew-free but was in fact a site of extreme concentration of Jews as they were destroyed. This was the illusion: the (for the time period in which the camps existed) eternal *Not Yet But Almost* glimpses of the reality the Nazis desired to bring about. That reality in turn was doomed to always be an illusion, a dream they desperately wanted to believe was possible, and indeed wanted to believe was imminent. The Reinhard camps presented an illusion inside that both reflected

the distorted imaginations of the regime outside and was meant to extend outward, to occupy a crucial place in transferring that ghastly fantasy from illusion to reality. That illusion was built on the flesh and blood and bone of human bodies, and eventually on their ashes. It was an illusion—both a thing and a process—of creation that was fundamentally based upon the worst kind of destruction.

I should note here that if one accepts this premise, it's arguable that the heterotopia of the camps did not more clearly delineate the boundaries between illusion and reality but instead blurred them in a way that troubles both.

If we grant that the Reinhard camps were heterotopias performing the function of illusion, how can they also have been performing the opposite “pole” of compensation? Drawing on Foucault’s explanation, the key is that a heterotopia of compensation is “perfect”, “meticulous”, and “as well-arranged as ours is messy, ill-constructed, and jumbled” (1984: 8). Although—as with the disposal of bodies—the results were often mixed and on more than one occasion disastrous, the intent in the construction of the camps was that they would be orderly, smoothly-running “factories of death”. There was no need for anything extraneous to their mission. However, in practice such extraneous hints did exist, such as Treblinka’s well-known “zoo”; the guards carrying out the killing were after all still in some respects human beings.

In fact, that artifact of humanity is curious to me, and when I learned about it I found myself questioning why it was there at all, why the trouble was taken to establish and maintain it. Did the officers and administration feel some need to retain elements of the world outside the camp? Did it serve as an illusion in and of itself, a

part of the camp that allowed the people who worked there to forget, for a little while, what was truly going on and what they were complicit in? We do know that for some of the officers who worked in the camps, the occupation was a troubling one and caused significant emotional strain—which the higher-ups seemed keenly aware of, given that camp officers were afforded a generous amount of leave time.

I wonder if the experience of the zoo, and other things like it, were a kind of distancing mechanism for the killers. For a zoo to exist at a site of mass murder was too absurd to be real; a zoo at an industrial complex might be quite a different thing. Of course, it's that very absurdity that makes the fact of its existence so disturbing.

Regardless, before I explore the ways in which the camps' inner workings functioned as heterotopic compensation, it's necessary to turn first to a (very) brief narrative of how the camps themselves came to be.

The extermination camps were in fact stationary improvements on earlier mobile gas chambers (themselves improvements on the practice of mass shooting), “gas vans” into which victims were stuffed and suffocated by the carbon dioxide fumes generated by the engine as the van was allowed to run. In the short term and with smaller groups, this was effective enough, but as the speed and scope of the slaughter ramped up, other solutions had to be found (Arad 1987: loc. 101/6027).

In addition, interestingly, many members of the *Einsatzgruppen* found it extremely difficult to carry out such shootings, and exhibited symptoms of severe trauma (cite Ordinary Men here). As mentioned in the introduction, Himmler and the

officers under him were genuinely troubled by this. As an eyewitness watching Himmler observe one of these mass shootings relates:

“The other witness was Obergruppenführer von dem Bach-Zelewski... Von dem Bach addressed Himmler: those were only a hundred.... Look at the eyes of the men in this commando, how deeply shaken they are. These men are finished (fertig) for the rest of their lives. What kind of followers are we training here? Either neurotics or savages.” (1987: loc. 110/6027)

Clearly, when it came to transferring a Jewish reality into a *Judenfrei* one—rendering the former the fantasy and the latter the truth—some other method was required.

The camps of Operation Reinhard were set in the countryside of eastern Poland, in lovely but somewhat remote areas. The removal of these spaces from major population centers was in part to conceal what was being done—however righteous many of the Nazis may have felt their task was, they were cognizant of the fact that history might not look so kindly on it or on them—but also to reinforce the cover story that deported Jews were merely being sent to live and work in the East. Should their persistent disappearance be discovered and remarked on, the excuse could be offered that they had merely been taken even further into occupied Soviet territory, vast lands it would be easy to disappear into (loc. 217/6027).

One might argue here that in some ways, this remoteness contributed to the camps' statuses as heterotopias. The camps were built in a specific kind of relation to larger population centers and more densely occupied social spaces, according to proximity to railway lines (Franz Stangl, Kommandant of Treblinka from September of 1942 to August of 1943, actually had the “station” at the camp made up to appear

as a real train station, complete with flowers, a false clock, and a ticket booth). They were also not far from at least small towns, mostly because of the need for some kind of supply infrastructure on which to draw. But precisely because of that proximity, the camps occupied—in fact constructed—a kind of liminal space between remote and largely unpopulated lands and populated civilization. Between those two things lay the camp, a space connected to the two and identified by its relationship with them but also set totally aside from them.

Indeed, it was a space that was wholly unimaginable to most until one had entered it and could not look away. It was a heterotopia of total destruction as part of a project of—ostensibly—construction, a space in theory for the purpose of making a new world through the total unmaking of the old one.

Continuing with the notion of relationships, Hetherington's examination of heterotopic spaces, he describes them as spaces defined by relationships between freedom and control, between the individual and society (39). I want to argue that the camps were defined by both of those relationships, spaces where the individual was systematically dismantled through a process of dehumanization and then finally destroyed in the interest of making a society defined by their absence, and where control was exercised on both the body and the soul for the singular purpose of erasing both.

As many scholars have observed—and those involved in the construction and running of the camps themselves—every aspect of the camps was built according to the structure of a factory, a distinctly modern enterprise. During the mass shootings of the *Einsatzgruppen*, the murders were ideally carried out in as orderly a fashion as

possible, with victims collected at central locations and then led group by group—men, women, and children—to the mass graves where they were killed. When killing commenced at the extermination camps, the technique remained essentially the same, though with additional steps and elements in the process. The task of dehumanization began before arrival at the camps, with victims once more collected and loaded into cattle cars—though some groups were also transported in passenger cars, in part so as to allay suspicion on their part (Arad 1987: loc. 1892/6027)—that transported them to the sites of their deaths. This alone dealt a severe blow to their humanity, and camp guards report finding it much easier to view their victims as non-human when seeing them unloaded, starving and filthy (Sereny 1974).

Immediately after that unloading took place, the methodical destruction of those who were to be destroyed began. Entering the camp was in itself the beginning, passing from the outside world into a world completely separated by virtue of what it was and what it did. Victims were driven from the cars with whips and clubs and shouting, the aim being to force them to move so quickly that they would have no time to reflect on what was happening to them. One of those on the train to Treblinka testified that “[t]he confusion was tremendous, difficult to describe” (Arad 1987: loc. 1147/6027). It was a period of carefully applied disorder confined to a specific stage and specifically to the victims, a form of disorder that was indeed intended to help maintain the overall orderliness of the killing process. From the perspective of the victims, it was arguably the illusion of disorder in the service of maintaining order, because it was meant to help mask their ultimate fates.

Control at this point was focused on bodies, but also on minds. In Treblinka, as the victims were rushed together into a central square and divided into two groups of men and women with children, the same deception that occurred at the killing centers of other concentration camps was practiced: that they had arrived at a transit camp from which they would be sent to labor camps further in the East. A sign in Polish and German informed them:

Jews of Warsaw, Attention! You are in a transit camp [Durchgangslager], from which you will be sent to a labor camp [Arbeitslager]. In order to avoid epidemics, you must present your clothing and belongings for immediate disinfection. Gold, money, foreign currency, and jewelry should be deposited with the cashiers in return for a receipt. They will be returned to you later when you present the receipt. Bodily cleanliness requires that everyone bathe before continuing the journey (Rückerl 219).

Deception in this case was a form of both mental and bodily control, encouraging victims to refrain from panicking by making them believe the lie of their own safety and thereby encouraging them to control themselves even as they were beaten into the gas chambers. To return to the argument above regarding the heterotopias of the camps fulfilling the function of illusion, it's also important to point out that this deception was also itself an illusion, carefully planned and constructed—literally constructed not only in the gas chambers made to appear as showers but also notably in the case of Stangl and the facade of the train station that he ordered built at Treblinka.

From the square, in all three camps both groups were herded into barracks where they were forced to give up their clothing and valuables, the women's hair was

cut, and each group was forced to race through a “tube” to the gas chambers and the graves—or fires—beyond.

This process—of both physical and mental control and destruction—will be examined in more detail later. For now suffice to say that control at all levels was crucial to the functioning of the camps, and it was a form of control built in significant part on the maintenance of an illusion, and it was control entirely oriented toward complete destruction.

Finally, I want to return to the notion of utopia, and how both Foucault and Hetherington discuss its relationship with heterotopias. Foucault presents heterotopias as standing directly opposite utopias in some crucial ways. Hetherington, extending Foucault’s line of thinking, draws a clear connection between heterotopia and utopia while contrasting the two. For Hetherington, heterotopias are spaces in which, while a utopia does not exist there, elements of a utopia can be put into practice and observed. Heterotopias, while they stand opposite utopias in the sense of reflecting them, also stand connected to them in that exact sense: distorted representations of the utopia can be seen within it.

Sobibór, Bełżec, and Treblinka were not utopias. But they were fundamentally embedded in the process of constructing the utopia that the Nazis were determined to build: a world defined by, among other things, a complete absence of Jews. In order to make that utopia, millions of bodies, human beings, millions of vessels for identity had to be not only destroyed but erased from the world. Death and destruction in the camps was far from a fixed status or single event; it was an ongoing process, and a process which extended outward from the present into not only the future but also the

past. When the Nazis invaded Poland and dismantled their government, they did so with the claim that the Polish state had in fact never possessed any legitimate existence (Shirer 2011). When the Nazis set out to murder the Jewish people, they did so in order to create a world in which the Jews did not have, never would have, and never *had* existed in any legitimate sense.

But what is especially important to understand at this point is that, as part of a utopian project, the heterotopia of the camps revealed that project as in itself a specific kind of process. Hetherington identifies this revealing as an intrinsic element of utopia:

Heterotopia do exist, but they only exist in this space-between, in this relationship between spaces, in particular between eu-topia and ou-topia. Heterotopia are not quite spaces of transition - the chasm they represent can never be closed up - but they are a space of deferral, spaces where ideas and practices that represent the good life can come into being, from nowhere, even if they never actually achieve - social order, or control and freedom. Heterotopia, therefore, reveal the process of social ordering to be just that, a process rather than a thing (Preface ix)

As I said above, the camps functioned as a space of Not Yet But Almost for the *Judenfrei* Nazi utopia. This was not only an illusion but a revelation, and as a revelation of a process, it laid bare the full horrific nature of the utopia itself. As Omer Bartov writes more generally of all modern genocide in the name of utopia: "In a century characterized by a quest for perfection, stark reality and intoxicating illusion became each other's distorted reflection" (2000: 4).

In fact, arguably all modern genocide is done in the name of a utopian reality, of a world remade without the imperfection and disruption perceived to be inherent in

certain groups of people. The very existence of these groups is understood by those carrying out the killing as toxic to a desired society, as a blight that must be eliminated before the carefully designed garden can bloom. One might slaughter an entire group out of hatred and fear of the Other, but in the backs of their minds will always be the promise of a better world without the people they're slaughtering.

I want to argue that there was something specific about the utopia that the heterotopia of the Reinhard camps reflected that lay at the core of their destructive mission. Put simply, they were spaces of unmaking because utopia itself required that a part of reality be unmade. While the Nazi regime considered some Jews—those able to work—as useful and even necessary to the building of the Reich and later on to the fighting of the war, their use in that capacity was only ever meant to be temporary. Eventually they were to be erased as individuals and as people, once their usefulness had expired. The world on the other side of that extermination was to be a far better one—even a perfect one, once the other lower races had been conquered and enslaved, and the Master Race took its rightful place as the ruler of the civilized world. In short, these three camps (and all other killing facilities) would never have been constructed had it not been for the desire for utopia. Heterotopia was a space through which the road to utopia ran, and which in fact served to maintain that road as it extended itself toward social and racial perfection. The Nazi vision of utopia was arguably not possible without some form of it.

Therefore, in order to understand the heterotopias of the camps and subsequently the relationship of heterotopia to utopia, it's necessary to briefly lay out how the notion of utopia is being used in this case and the nature of the utopia longed

for. *Understand* is a tricky word here, because heterotopias are, again, puckish, and potentially exacerbate the difficulties in grasping something like the Holocaust just as they offer a potentially useful lens through which to examine some of its aspects. As I said at the beginning of this chapter, now and then I found it confounding rather than illuminating. Nevertheless, as I continued engaging with it on these terms, sense did emerge. I will now turn to utopias themselves, and specifically to the dark logic that underpins their bright vision.

Chapter 2: Utopia

Most of us generally conceive of utopia as a good thing. It's a thing we want, despite—and maybe even because of—its impossibility. I began to rethink this early in my graduate coursework, when I encountered the idea of utopia as a fundamentally apocalyptic social arrangement, the end of history, and the eradication of the imperfect. Presented this way, the line between utopia and *dystopia* was so thin as to be nonexistent. I found that argument both compelling and fascinating, for what it implied about modernity, about order, about what it even means to have a “perfect” society. It articulated to me some of the more horrific motivations of groups like the Nazis: a sincere belief that they were performing necessary work toward an ultimate good.

So when I began toying with the possibilities of bringing heterotopia and organized genocide together, it didn't take long for utopia to assert itself, and in fact it was only after returning to Foucault's writing that I remembered that he explicitly mentioned utopia in relation to heterotopia at all.

Even then, he mentions it only in passing, and only in terms of the difference between the two. *Connecting* the two and analyzing the nature of that connection appeared to me to be a far more interesting job.

* * *

As I explained in the previous chapter, the society that the notion of utopia presents is not merely an aspirational dream. When people envision it, clarify its meaning and what they consider a utopia to be, and begin to develop ideas about how

they might create it, the real-life consequences for real people are themselves very real. When enough people with sufficient power decide to remake a society, they can succeed in enacting change, sometimes to extreme degrees—that in fact, baked into the very proposition is the elimination of the world one seeks to leave behind, that this, as John Carey put it, “is the dilemma the confronts all utopian projects. They aim at a new world, but must destroy the old” (1999: xi). The degree and severity of the destruction may vary, but it’s always present. If, as Foucault posits, heterotopia is bound up in how utopia is defined—and, therefore, how people attempt to bring it about—heterotopia itself should be understood in that context. I have already laid out the terms by which I am approaching heterotopia; it is now necessary to do the same for utopia.

It’s important to be clear about the fact that I’m purposefully excluding a significant amount of the greater scholarship regarding utopia. Given that, as I said in the introduction, I’m more concerned with how one passes through heterotopia to get to utopia, I’ll be largely confining myself to works on utopia that provide both the basic features of utopia and the features that specifically render it dangerous as a practical goal. Again, I’m not so much concerned with claiming a new aspect of utopia as I am with an analysis of how heterotopia and utopia are connected in these cases, and what these cases can tell us about that connection.

From its inception, the concept of utopia has been defined—on the surface—by goodness. More than goodness; it has been defined by the *ultimate* goodness, by the image of a society in perfect harmony, where no part is out of place or ill-fitting and conflict is abolished. Inherent in the concept is its impossibility; a social ideal

type, it can never be reached but instead only exist at the far end of a spectrum, always approached but never reached. Its very name means both “good place” and “no place”, and Foucault, writing about utopias and heterotopias, held that the latter was real while the former never could be (1970). For that reason, utopian worlds have mostly been confined to the realm of the imagination, through propositions and manifestos but also through works of fiction—reasonable, for a concept which is, to a significant extent, inherently fictional.

Indeed, the body of utopian writing, fictional and speculative, is both immense and diverse—diverse, but containing some particular through-lines that I want to call special attention to. Again, the project of utopia contains within its DNA the destruction of the old imperfect world, with dire implications. The utopian world will be made up of people, and if the world is to be perfected, imperfect people must be dealt with somehow. Often in utopian writing they’re remade somehow, transformed from faulty human beings to something above and beyond humanity in order to fit into their new surroundings. However, much utopian writing also recognizes the prospect of misfits, of people who are unable or unwilling to transform, and must account for them. In some utopias, paradises after life itself has been left behind, the solution to this problem is provided from the start, because only the perfect will be admitted, or admission will be a process of shedding the imperfect self. Eugenics is not necessary, nor is genocide (1999: xix). In other depictions, any possibility of friction caused by difference is simply hand-waved; Voltaire’s *Candide*, on arriving in Eldorado, finds a society that exists in perfect religious agreement, without any form of inquisition or coercion.

More often, though, a fictional depiction or a plan for a utopian society explicitly requires the elimination of the unfit. This is frequently accompanied by the idea that criminal elements, like disabled people and the chronically ill, are inherently defective in some way that makes their criminal behavior unavoidable. This itself presents a problem; if undesirables can't be repaired or reformed, what should be done with them? This is where eugenics tends to present itself, or to spill over into outright genocide—or a combination of the two. In his book *Anticipations*, H.G. Wells ruthlessly advocates for the wholesale elimination of the unfit and non-white non-Europeans. “[P]eople who cannot live happily and freely in the world without spoiling the lives of others are better out of it”, he says. Of anyone not white: “[I]t is their portion to die out or disappear”, implying that merely by existing, anyone who doesn't fit his rubric for acceptable humanity is “spoiling the lives” of everyone who does. In Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett's *New Amazonia* (2014), a matriarchal society examines the unborn for physical fitness and kills any who don't meet minimum standards. In *The Republic*, Plato argues for eugenics, as well as the abolishment of the family unit. In terms of undesirable traits baked into the nature of a person or people, More himself insists that the warlike nature of the Swiss(!) demands their eradication (2003).

For some, it is possible to reform undesirable people, to “cure” them, or to arrange society in such a way that they never become a problem in the first place. In *Erewhon* (1970), Samuel Butler presents an approach to crime that treats it like any other illness—that, indeed, suggests that to *not* do so is counterproductive and nonsensical. In *A New View of Society* (2013), Robert Owen argues that criminal

behavior can be prevented through shaping human behavior from birth, and that in fact children can be made to think, believe, and act in any way provided the right variables are put in place early enough. B.F. Skinner (2005) takes a similar and even more extreme approach, proposing that humans be made into utopian citizens through mass psychological transformation (he also advises eugenics). In some utopian fiction, however, while social organization, and behavioral and ideological training, help shape human beings into the citizens of a utopia, things aren't quite so clear. Ursula K. Le Guin's short story "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" presents a society that appears to be perfect in every respect, but only maintains its perfection by endlessly torturing a child via ruthless neglect. In her novel *The Dispossessed* (2003)—subtitled "An Ambiguous Utopia"—depicts a world wherein society is organized as egalitarian and communal, founded by an anarchist thinker; it appears to be a kind of utopia, but again, according to the subtitle, it is "ambiguous", imperfect and subject to question and criticism in the text.

(Note: Incidentally, *The Dispossessed* exists in dialogue with Samuel R. Delaney's *Trouble on Triton* (1996), subtitled "An Ambiguous Heterotopia". Delaney's Triton society is a place of radical difference and fluidity of identity, very much a space of alternate orderings.)

Some make a place for the unfit or less fit in their imagined utopian societies. In *Looking Backward* (1996), Edward Bellamy presents a future society where the population is organized into militarized "work corps", with one corps existing specifically for the mentally and physically disabled, so that they're still able to contribute in some way. A kind of de facto eugenics is also a component of his world,

however, with women choosing husbands based on desirable physical traits, with “poor specimens” commonly remaining unmarried and thus non-reproducing.

This strict and often brutal intolerance—even authoritarianism—in utopian writing can in fact make it difficult to decisively establish where the line exists between utopia and dystopia, in ways that go beyond the ambiguous works referenced above. Some, like George Orwell’s *1984* and Ayn Rand’s *Anthem*, are clearly dystopias, as is the weak and frivolous society of E.M. Forster’s “The Machine Stops”, but a similar society in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, while aspects of it are horrifying, is inhabited by people who arguably are genuinely happy, and which functions quite well, without the shaky foundations Forster imagines. In any case, while some utopian writing critiques the notion of utopia and some presents it without criticism, that brutal intolerance is a through-line running through its majority.

In real world practice, the impossibility of utopia hasn’t stopped people from attempting to make it not only possible but present and immediate. At times the results are benign failure. At other times they couldn’t be further from it. In either case the result is failure—once again, an intrinsic element of utopia is its impossibility—but while the end goal is ultimately never reached, the people who have set that goal might succeed in traveling near enough to it to do very real and very terrible damage.

The Soviet Union, at least in its inception, is an example of this kind of bold attempt and catastrophic failure. While it was conceived as a society that welcomed and even encouraged different nationalist sentiments and ethnic identities all coming together under one Soviet banner, the practice came to be quite different, when

religious and ethnic groups perceived as troublesome were ruthlessly purged (Weitz 2015). Not only were they forcibly deported to remote areas—often to die of starvation and exposure—and sent to gulags, but their houses and community buildings were razed and locations were outright renamed. As Carey wrote, inherent in the project of utopia is total eradication of the old world, not only the destruction of its components but their erasure.

In addition, Lenin deployed discourse that emphasized the biological in describing the enemies of the revolution, though he stopped short of explicitly identifying those enemies as members of specific ethnic groups (2015: 70). The leaders of the Soviet Union were tormented by paranoia, the ambition of their task equally matched by threats to it from within, saboteurs framed as viruses and vermin. Related and also part of the Soviet plan was the task of remaking human beings into Communist utopians, or perhaps to free the true utopian nature that had been in them all along. Those who resisted transformation were additional threats, and threats as part of their very nature.

The Khmer Rouge is another example of a disastrous attempt at utopia, a “Year Zero” aim to remake society so completely and destroy any enemies—or even those who proved ill-fitting—so utterly that the death toll, both from killing and famine, was vast in number. People were driven into the countryside, rural agricultural life was totally reorganized, and state-sanctioned murder was rampant. One became a utopian, at a nearly impossible standard enforced in ways that verged on the cruelly arbitrary, or one was subject to torture and execution. There was no mercy, in part because utopian aims permitted none.

The utopia of the Thousand Year Reich was a racially purified one, but the intended remaking of the Nazi-controlled world was even more expansive. Public education, religious life, entertainment and leisure, and gender relations were all to be transformed as part of the creation of the utopia and the making of utopians. Murderous antisemitism was not only about destruction; the other side of its coin was perverse creation, a kind of “redemptive antisemitism” (2015: 130). A racially purified people would be strong and vigorous, and as the *Volksgemeinschaft* they would live in perfect harmony, returning to a state of order that Nazi ideology held was the core of the function of nature. The most fit would live, thrive, and establish a paradise for themselves, while the unfit would be destroyed or subjugated:

Productive and prosperous, the masters of nature through engineering and science, yet at the same time they would be able to revel in the retreat to a pristine natural order. (2015: 111)

As with the paranoia of the Soviet leaders, Nazi desire to create a *Judenfrei* world was significantly spurred by the framing of Jews as total enemies bent on the destruction of the western peoples in general and German Aryans specifically. Two could not coexist and in fact the Jews were responsible for both World Wars as part of an international plot to dominate that world. There was a sense of urgency, that this generation had to be the one to do the job. As articulated by Goebbels:

The situation is now ready to introduce a definitive solution to the Jewish question. Later generations will no longer have the energy and also the alertness of instinct to do so. Therefore, it is important that we proceed radically and thoroughly. What is a burden for us today will be an advantage and a source of happiness for our future generations. (Herf 2006: 146-147)

For my purposes in this argument, I'll be attending to two key elements of utopia. The first is the requirement of purity—a society without any misfits or conflict is a society that admits absolutely nothing outside its rigid strictures. The second is a narrative that transcends the present and touches both the future and the past—a utopian project is oriented into the future but also, as I will explain, involves remaking the past in a way that accords to that future and the present in which that future is attempted to be made.

First, however, it's important to establish one already well-established point: that the concept of utopia, in the destructive form that led to the creation of spaces dedicated to the slaughter of millions of people, is a fundamental feature of modernity, and inextricably linked with human society in the twentieth century and beyond.

Ideal Modernity

The extraordinarily rapid flood of change and—by many standards—advancement at the turn of the Industrial Revolution and the dawn of the 20th century led to an equally rapid expansion of what seemed possible regarding the arrangement and structure of society. *Progress* as a noun encompassing all this change implied a steady trajectory toward an ever-more perfected world, occupied by an ever-more perfected human species. Speculative fiction presented dreams of a future where war, poverty, hunger and sickness, and even death had been abolished outright, and even as the world was sent reeling by two devastating wars and the invention and deployment of the atomic bomb, at least the western part of that world retained the

optimistic view that the idea of progress encouraged. In short, modernity made utopia seem both possible and plausible.

Utopia as a concept clearly didn't only begin to seem possible in the modern era. In the 16th and 17th centuries, religious radicalism urged people toward visions of purely egalitarian societies, communal kingdoms of God wherein everyone would truly be equal in the sight of the Lord. Further, colonialist voyages of discovery and conquest led to images of the perfect society made manifest in an idyllic colony, literally a new world separated from the faults of the old. Then in the 18th and 19th centuries, visions of utopia were spurred on by real and measurable progress occurring in the present day. Slavery was abolished, in the United States and other nations. Social movements agitating for human rights were on the march. Rates of literacy were expanding at a considerable pace. Of significant importance was the accessibility of the ideas in Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, which, while some groups responded to them with violent rejection, were compelling to many others. The premise of the book presented an image of life in general and humanity in particular as something that could be traced and understood, and therefore potentially managed (Walsh 1962: 119). Many popular lines of social thought adopted the notion that there were specific and even in-bred reasons for the success of some societies and the difficulties of others. Everything was comprehensible, explicable. Therefore everything might be in reach.

Yet, like a narrative heterotopia, modernity gave utopia a dark mirror image—or perhaps it's more accurate to picture the dark image as a second face hiding behind

the bright, hopeful mask of the first. As Chad Walsh writes in *From Utopia to Nightmare*, regarding the evolution (and “waning”) of 20th century utopias:

The decline of utopia and the rise of its nightmare cousin is parallel to the history of this surrealist century, which is at once the partial fulfillment of 19th-century dreams and their negation. The old hope of steady progress, one grants, has been crowned by many concrete achievements, and further ones are possible...A 19th-century *revenant* might at first smile happily, seeing before him the land of his heart’s desire. And yet, it would take him only a few minutes with the daily newspaper and a few hours with a modern history book to discover that progress has worn a double face.

While he doesn't write entirely as if utopia presents—to him—a lethal, oppressive vision, Walsh does make the meaningful observation that a potential for oppressiveness sits embedded into utopia’s figurative DNA. He identifies one feature of this oppressiveness as the intense social control many visions of utopia assume, particularly in Plato’s *Republic*, which he claims as one of the very earliest utopian scenarios offered. He outlines the ways in which Plato separates society into a strict hierarchy of classes accompanied by virtues, with philosophers (representing the virtue of wisdom) as the ruling class and the workers (the vast majority of people, representing the virtues of temperance and obedience) at the bottom (1962: 38). For Plato, perfection in a utopian society is achieved through everyone adhering to their place in this hierarchy rather than disrupting order for any individualistic reason of their own. In order to eliminate selfishness, private property is abolished. Nothing that could stand to disconnect the common good from the individual can be allowed to exist. In fact, Walsh writes, Plato is articulating a perfect relationship between the individual and society, in which the one is largely subsumed in favor of the other.

Here, recall from the previous chapter how Hetherington describes a heterotopia as a space in which one can see ideals of social control and of the individual-social relationship as a process rather than as a fixed state, practiced in fragments but never achieved as a whole.

Plato's utopia perfectly fits the term "garden society", something which is not allowed to grow organically and (on occasion) chaotically but which must be shaped and tended and, when necessary pruned. Reproduction is not left to individual choice but is instead determined by the state—and it shouldn't escape notice that the Nazis began their campaign of mass murder in a smaller-scale campaign of eugenics. This is common to many stories of utopia, to the extent where one might suppose that it would be difficult for many people to imagine a utopian society that didn't function that way (1962: 39).

To put it plainly: in this vision of a utopian society, an omnipotent, omniscient state oversees the fine details of who lives—and, by extension, who doesn't.

Walsh concludes with a direct equivocation between Plato's perfected Republic and a concentration camp. This total, top-down social control makes no allowances for resistance; such resistance would be anti-utopian and therefore subject to ruthless repression. But the thought that anyone might resist is, to some degree, also unthinkable. In a utopia, once fully attained, resistance will be something no one could desire, because everyone will be perfect. As Omer Bartov writes in *Mirrors of Destruction* (2000), a utopian vision is an apocalyptic vision, one in which a perfect society is not maintained by Hetherington's continuous process but is instead locked into time. The existence of a utopia made real presupposes the end of history (152).

Arguably, from this perspective, the ultimate goal of progress is the end of progress itself.

In the meantime, however, progress toward utopia must by definition involve progress toward greater and greater degrees of social control aimed toward a (narrow) conception of the common good. Walsh draws a through-line from Plato straight to the fiction writer H.G. Wells, author of multiple utopian narratives, and pinpoints one primary feature as fundamental to that line:

The keyword from Plato to Wells is *planning* (emphasis author's). Utopia is the dream of replacing societies that have grown haphazardly by a society that knows what the good life is and draws up definite plans for bringing it into existence (1962: 57).

Indeed, if one is going to connect utopia in this sense with heterotopia in the sense I'm approaching the concept, it's vital to emphasize the contrast and tie between utopian social control as something *in progress*—the aspirational process of bringing plans to fruition, a thing situated in time and oriented toward both the past and the future—and something *attained*, no longer being reached for but reached, the story ended, time itself no longer a factor in the way the society works but essentially frozen and brooking no change. Heterotopia—as a distorted mirror of utopia—exists as the former, and therefore the extermination camps of Operation Reinhard existed as both spaces necessary to the progress toward Nazi utopia and as spaces that could not exist within that utopia once it was made real. They were spaces of movement, continually reinforced and (often) refined control wherein a modern assembly line model for murder was in constant motion.

The world was unmade and remade in those spaces, undesirable elements pruned from the garden, but before utopia could be fully realized, the motion would have to be ended and the spaces destroyed. Once again, they were spaces of unmaking which existed only to eventually be unmade.

The Taming of the Natural

I want to return here to a focus on the relationship between modernity and purity, control and planning, and nature and the metaphor of the garden, as an entry point into a more in-depth discussion of utopia as a structured imagining, a story based in the present that extends itself into the past and propels its storytellers into an idealized future.

If we can conceive of utopia as a carefully tended and controlled garden, that analogy invites a consideration of the place of nature in the context of a utopian project, and in the utopian society which is established as the eventual goal of that project. Modernity has been marked in significant part by the endeavor to control nature, to wrestle it into submission and use it for the benefit of humanity. Technology—material and process—has seemed to offer ways to that end, and in so doing, has introduced a kind of tension between the elevation of humankind over nature and the notion that such elevation is in itself natural and inevitable. For utopia, nature is both a threat and an ally, a block and an opening. This notion is not in fact unique to the modern era, though its contemporary forms—and the horrors they afford—are. As Bartov writes:

This quest for dominion over nature characterized most civilizations, both ancient and modern. Its most recent manifestations are related to the industrialization of the nineteenth century and can be found in fascist rhetoric and planning, liberal suburban schemes and garden cities, and postwar “Green” ideologies. The contemporary discourse on ecology, whose roots go back at least two centuries, is especially pertinent in this context, since it involves the relationship between categories of people and types of environment, nature preservation and human habitation, transgressing the laws of biology and setting limits to reproduction (2000: 151)

As I mentioned above, it is impossible to separate modern imaginings of utopia from eugenics, no matter how veiled its place might be. The scientific control of society requires the perfecting of the human animal, and in order to do so, it is necessary to establish a definition of what “human” means as a category. Establishing a category implicitly requires establishing not only who gets to be included in that category but who is excluded as well (Bartov 2000: 150). Therefore, a modern utopia encourages if not outright requires the exclusion of some human beings from humanity itself, thereby excluding them from what are recognized as basic human rights—such as the right to live. As I’ll lay out in greater detail in chapter 4, the Nazis identified Jews (and disabled people) as enemies in biological terms, infecting the body of society. What began as biological cleansing in the euthanasia project proceeded in a direct line to the camps, with the scientific elites who were in charge of it envisioned themselves not so much murderers but more as doctors healing their nation (Hilberg 1993).

This potentially lethal category of creation and refinement is intrinsic to the subjugation of nature, not the eradication of it. Even as nature is brought under tighter

and tighter control, nature itself is used as a justification for utopia's worst excesses. These things happen because they must happen, because—as Hitler and his compatriots believed—human society truly exists in a state of struggle, where the strong dominate or destroy the unfit. In order to create an ideal world, the unfit must eventually be erased from the picture. This is not only not “unnatural” but is in fact in perfect accordance with natural law—while at the same time, nature cannot be depended on to produce a utopian outcome on its own and must be made to do so.

Again, Bartov:

The modern era has become especially preoccupied with the idea of remaking man and society, nature and the environment, according to precisely laid out plans that, at the same time, would remain in accordance with natural and inevitable progression. Hence, too, the perceived need to eradicate resistance to such plans, which by definition is regressive, reactionary, degenerate, or abnormal...All that is called for is merely an acceleration of such inevitable natural processes as selection, evolution, and mutation, or of such inevitable social developments as the disappearance of one class and the hegemony of another (2000: 152-153).

Utopia can be understood as both the end and the fulfillment of nature as a process; it—and this is where time enters the argument—can also be understood as the end and the fulfillment of history. Both are processes that operate according to “laws”, which would-be utopians perceive as working toward inevitable and ruthless (for the best reasons) outcomes. Natural laws govern the natural world, in which human society exists; history governs the social world, in which human society also makes its place. In a modern utopia, all of history has been working toward the moment at which a supremely good people with a supremely good method of social

order rise to sovereignty over the world. Once that end has come to pass, history will no longer serve a purpose. Indeed, any further developments can only be destructive to the perfection that has been attained. In the meantime, no one must be allowed to stand against these natural and historical forces:

Those who do not fit into nature's plan, or the unfolding of history—as interpreted by man—must be eliminated as so much genetic waste, or will be discarded, thrown into the dustbin of history or ground into dust by the wheels of the revolution (Bartov 2000: 153).

How is this relevant to heterotopia, and particularly the notion of heterotopias of making and unmaking? Essentially, in a heterotopia of unmaking—the dark mirror and revelation of a utopian process—it is not only a dehumanized category of human beings who are unmade in the interest of that project's success, but the historical context in which that category existed. The imagining of the future requires a reimagining of the past. The end of history in the future leads to the erasure of history itself.

No human category can be a neat one. No history that justifies the exclusion of humans from humanity can be even vaguely comprehensive or remotely objective. It must always be warped, reshaped, forced into the guidelines that lethal utopia has set for it. If the past presents an image of a world to be rejected as unsatisfactory and unclean, it must be made undesirable. Likewise, the undesirable parts of history must themselves eventually be erased. Instead, a new vision of the past must be created, one where a mythical idealized world existed in order to be remade:

The construction of utopia requires radical mental and physical measures, geared not only toward the future but also to a reorganization of the past.

Holy war or social revolution, for instance, even while they strive to change present reality, derive their image of an ideal future from a selective representation of history, where both that which should be restored and that which must be destroyed are to be found (Bartov 2000: 154).

The creation of an idyllic society requires a return to a society that's been lost.

The creation of a garden society requires a return to an imagined Eden.

Recall that one of the forms of heterotopia that Foucault describes is a *heterochrony*—a space in which time takes on a different form and function from the world it mirrors, whether the time accumulation of a museum or library, or the transience of the fairgrounds. Foucault does not actually characterize these forms as revealing of a process in the way Hetherington does, but in this context one could argue that they are. A heterotopia of time accumulation doesn't maintain itself, nor can it actively accumulate more time on its own. Museums require staff (and in fact the rest of society) to care for and contribute to them; the conservation of science and culture is ongoing as time passes. Libraries require librarians in order to function; the books and other records must be organized and added to. A fair is transient because of the conscious intent of the fair workers, in erecting, running, and then dismantling the fair itself. Transience by its very definition is not a frozen state but instead a thing in constant motion.

These examples work less directly as revelations of a particular social ordering, but do reveal some of the enormously complex ways in which constructions of time order and reorder it beyond the plain quantification that a clock provides.

I argue that the Reinhard camps served this function. They were not only spaces for the unmaking of human beings in order to make a new and more perfect

world, but were additionally spaces in which time and history were dismantled—or at least where the camp’s guards and administration made an attempt to dismantle them. These processes worked both forward and backward in time, and again, because of this destruction the spaces themselves were arguably atemporal, dissolving what we perceive of as the (already somewhat fuzzy) boundaries between past, present, and future.

As I referred to earlier in this chapter, the attainment of utopia can be taken to mean the ultimate end of history, as society settles into a world in which, given that any change is a departure from the perfectly good, change itself is not only unnecessary but defined as an evil. A heterotopia of time accumulation might have a place there, but its meaning would be altered. Likewise a heterotopia of transience; if change is bad, rapid change would of course be even worse. The camps contributed to the potential unmaking of history and time not only in the course of working toward a world in which those things would be true, but also contributed by unmaking the very ability to remember, to memorialize and mourn the dead.

Again, in “Of Other Spaces”, Foucault devotes several paragraphs to the importance of the cemetery in his conception of heterotopia. This is in order to discuss cemeteries themselves—specifically their relationship to the rest of a city, both during the time when they were commonly located within the city itself and the time when they were moved outside it—but also to discuss death and the places where death and memory meet, where a kind of personal terminus of time collides with an imagined eternity.

At that meeting point, Foucault locates the dead—and decaying—body, and centers it as a way to identify a changing relationship with eternity and memory. Prior to the nineteenth century, he says, when cemeteries were located within cities and next to a church, handling of the body of the dead could be almost an afterthought, without the need to lend extreme personal individuality to the corpses that were once people. In the context of a religion that places primary emphasis on life in a heavenly realm, bodies are transient in a way that allows them to be largely disregarded (as in the example of catacombs where individuality of a corpse is lost). However, with the dawning of a less religious age, doubt in eternity brings the body to the fore in a new way (1984: 5). Bodies are clung to as the final remnant of a life and the only material thing that lingers in time after one's own experience of time has ended. They are “ultimately the only trace of our existence in the world and in language” (5).

The body is key to memorialization of a life—the persistence of that life in memory, if eternity doesn't enter the picture. A physical body is not necessary for memorialization, but it is sufficient. The viewing of a body as part of funeral rites is not only a way to say goodbye to the deceased but a way to fix their memory in one's mind. Destroying a body does not destroy the memory or the process of memorial; indeed, one has to consider that bodies are destroyed in cremation. But there's a clear distinction to be drawn between that form of cremation and the cremation that occurred in the death camps; one is specifically part of that process of memorial, while the other is part of a process of destruction and ultimately erasure.

Simply put, the disposal of the bodies of victims in the camps was not merely a practical matter. The unmaking of a world populated by Jews into a *Judenfrei* world

was not merely about ending life. The bodies had to be first concealed and finally destroyed in order to hide evidence of the crime, but also to eradicate the ability to memorialize. It was the unmaking of memory itself.

Utopia and the State

One should note that a running theme in utopian literature—speculative and non-speculative—is the power of the state to remake society and even human beings. Indeed, the state is often the only thing presented as powerful enough to do so. Again, while the Nazi state itself is not so much my primary concern as the specific spaces, how they were defined, and what went on in them, it's worth turning for a brief moment toward the nature of that state and how it helped to shape its utopian aims. The state was arguably totalitarian in its arrangement and in how it shaped the society of its context, and that has meaningful implications. A totalitarian regime is marked by elements of perverse utopianism in how it conceives of itself and its relationship to other nations, especially as regards to warfare and its conduct. As Hannah Arendt argues in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, a totalitarian state seeks to remake the nature of humanity and of the world at large—though its sustainability depends on that goal never being realized (392). This remaking, far from being something wholly new, is seen as work in accordance with the laws of history—essentially a foregone conclusion, a transformation whose arrival was only a matter of time. The globe and every other nation state is its territory by right, and conquest is only making official what was true the whole time (416).

Arendt also paints a picture of the way in which the totalitarian leader—seeing world conquest—envisions themselves in relation to both their people and the people of other nations: that is to say, as a conqueror of all, including their own citizens (416). Again, this is profoundly relevant if one is to consider Nazi aims as utopian; utopianism, being the very embodiment of a perfect society, can't stop at a single nation—or at the very least it's reasonable to suppose that it might see the perfection of every nation and in the end of the entire world as not only the task of its existence but as, as Arendt says and the Nazis believed, a fulfillment of the laws of history, the ultimate performance of what nature intends the world to be (Browning 2004). In other words: according to this logic, the Nazi state was driven to utopianism by virtue of what it was. At the risk of stating the obvious, if it was a different kind of state, it would have wanted different things.

It makes sense to posit that the totalitarian nature of the Nazi state and its alignment with the laws of history and the natural world in part also drove it toward a specifically racial form of utopianism. While—according to Arendt—totalitarianism need not automatically aim toward racial perfection (as in how she identifies common features between the totalitarianism of Stalin's Soviet Union and Hitler's Nazi Germany), it contains the seeds of that worldview. Again, utopianism intrinsically seeks to remake humanity; it must, because only utopians can occupy a utopian society, and humanity as it exists is hardly utopian. A utopian project requires the elimination of the unfit, in whatever form; a totalitarian state organizing that project seeks to totally dominate the world and all its inhabitants. As she writes:

It does not matter whether the “laws of history” spell the “doom” of the classes and their representatives, or whether the “laws of nature . . . exterminate” all those elements—democracies, Jews, Eastern subhumans (Untermenschen), or the incurably sick—that are not “fit to live” anyway. (350)

The place of science in this type of state is also significant as it relates to utopianism and how the path to it is conceived of. The notion of “laws of nature” and that certain societies can align more or less with those laws—determining in part how close to perfection those societies will be—is science-oriented in and of itself. The modern utopia is, again, a garden society, carefully cultivated through a vision of that society as an organism that can be healthy or infected by imperfection in the forms of certain undesirable peoples. If a totalitarian state sees itself as in alignment with those natural laws, and its aim to conquer a world which in effect already belongs to it, a mutilated form of science will be one of the tools it uses to attain that goal, and will in fact be a cornerstone of its ideology—the racism of the Nazi state was founded on pseudoscience, which extended from its propaganda (and the construction of the Jewish enemy at the core of that propaganda, see chapter four). This should be unsurprising. Again, Arendt:

Scientificity of mass propaganda has indeed been so universally employed in modern politics that it has been interpreted as a more general sign of that obsession with science which has characterized the Western world since the rise of mathematics and physics in the sixteenth century; thus totalitarianism appears to be only the last stage in a process during which “science [has become] an idol that will magically cure the evils of existence and transform the nature of man.” (346)

At this point, I also want to mention the argument Arendt makes about the production of concentration and extermination camps in totalitarian systems, as a kind of proving ground for the total domination of humanity which is both a goal of totalitarianism and a necessary quality to keep it in place (438). I'll be discussing the camps in far greater detail in chapter three, but the connection between the camps and the Nazi political system is worth flagging. While Arendt draws little explicit distinction between concentration camps and extermination camps—which were constructed for different methods if not for different end goals (Cesarani 420)—the form of total domination she describes can be said to be present in both, albeit to differing degrees. The prisoners in extermination camps were, by and large, not left alive long enough for the process Arendt lays out to take hold of the vast majority of them, and while the concentration camps were constructed for a variety of immediate purposes, the purpose of the extermination camps was pure mass death. Nevertheless, the total destruction of humanity, the rendering of human beings as objects without spontaneity or agency, can be found in both.

Inasmuch as the camps rendered people into objects, I want to pause a moment to discuss the specific place of the notion of the subject in Foucault's work—arguing against the humanist conception of a subject as possessing both rationality and agency, he claimed that power transforms the subject into an object, in which knowledge and language constructed by that power are both seated and at work.

In this context, as in Arendt's writing above, power obviously dehumanizes. The workings of power on a subject are also part of a process, one wedded to the formation of knowledge and discourse. There are different components to this

process: Science in the modern era produces the knowledge that constrains how the subject interacts with the world and themselves, language creates categories—we should note the alternate orderings of categories that Foucault writes about in the introduction to *The Order of Things*—and the subjects themselves actively participate in their own objectification by identifying themselves in relation to structures of power.

What does this have to do with heterotopias, especially with regard to how I'm employing the concept? Heterotopias as I describe them here function as locations for a process that turns subjects into objects via arrangements of power. It facilitates the transition of subjects into objects according to identities constructed by the state—the Jewish enemy as constructed by the ideology that guided the Nazi regime. The arrangements of power relations in the camps, which I'll explore in more detail further on, both organized the process of objectification and reflected power relations in the utopia to come, the master race wielding absolute power over lesser races, whether they were destined for slavery or death. They also reflected power relations outside the camps, particularly in the territory of the General Government, which was part of the larger project of conquest and domination.

The camps are meant not only to exterminate people and degrade human beings, but also serve the ghastly experiment of eliminating, under scientifically controlled conditions, spontaneity itself as an expression of human behavior and of transforming the human personality into a mere thing, into something that even animals are not; for Pavlov's dog, which, as we know, was trained to eat not when it was hungry but when a bell rang, was a perverted animal. (438).

Again, this will be discussed in more detail in chapter three, which will focus on the details of the camps, their construction, their function, and their effect. For now I want to briefly turn to the question of the how the peculiarities of the Nazi state shaped the conduct of war with regard to the processes that helped lead to the Final Solution, and what lessons we can draw from that regarding the Nazi utopia.

I should be clear that this is a brief aside, which it must be; lengthy books can and have been written about solely this subject, and while the conduct of war is, like the nature of the Nazi state, important as context, it isn't my immediate concern. Given that, I should mark this as a subject that I might analyze further in another work related to this one, with somewhat of a different approach.

I've identified some of the ways in which the features of the Nazi state shaped its vision of utopia and its means of attaining it. Here I mean to identify some of the ways that state was shaped by war and militarism, and how those processes in turn shaped the conduct of the state in military conquest, mass killing, and extreme violence.

The matter of German militarism and how it may have led to the rise of the Nazi regime has long been a concern for scholars of war, history, and politics. The Sonderweg debate and the question—first positive and then later negative—of whether Germany is unique in the history of Europe regarding the relationship between the military, society, and political elites is highly complex (and as I said, I'm regretfully unable to give it the treatment it deserves in this particular work). I want to focus especially on the notion that German militarism bears a specific relation to extreme violence and barbarism in war, and in that, to include the case Isabel Hull

makes in her book *Absolute Destruction* (2006) for the roots of that connection lying in the rise of Imperial Germany and in the German colonial wars of the 19th century.

Hull argues that the Germany of the late 19th and early 20th century was marked by a brand of militarism which, rather than remaining mostly confined to the military, pervaded society at all levels. Moreover, that society not only didn't push back against this trend, but reinforced it and fed it back into the culture of the military in a way that made its more problematic aspects difficult to resist even on the part of those who tried to—in significant part because of the relative lack of civilian political constraints on the military itself (in line with Fritz Fischer and Hans-Ulrich Wehler's suggestions that German militarism was the result of industrial change coupled with insufficient political democratic development). When atrocities occurred, especially in Germany's colonial wars, the power of the nation's militaristic culture eventually overwhelmed the attempts on the part of some in the army to stop them, even if they were initially successful. War naturally produced an intense fear of being killed, and when commanders made an effort to control those emotions by filtering them through regulations and bureaucracies, the result was a tendency to use violence to create order and order to create violence—which then led to a tendency toward extreme violence. Further, she points out that war naturally lends itself toward an inversion of means and ends—violence and killing are supposed to be the means to the end of victory, but it's all too easy for them to slip into being the ends themselves.

I also want to refer back to Arendt's work on totalitarianism and conduct in the colonies—the total control exerted over the colonized by the colonizers,

reinforced with violence (among other things) that served as a model for what was to come in the fatherland.

The militarism shaped in part through colonial war carried over into the First World War, where—once more, the argument goes—it resulted in a unique expression of the enmeshing of society and the military, from which one may draw direct lines to the Nazi state and the logic of its aims. The notion of heroic elites emerging from the trenches, writes Bartov, reforged by the fires of warfare, granted the military legitimacy when it came to political leadership in a system already oriented toward that very thing (1996: 29) (Bartov does link Germany with France in terms of total war, departing from the notion that Germany was unique in that respect and saying that they were both fully mobilized “nations at arms” in World War One).

Regarding the conduct of war and its effects on the psychology of the military, Bartov writes that WWI resulted in two overlapping but slightly different views of war and industrial killing: first that the prime goal had to be the avoidance of industrial killing—of oneself and one’s people—and second that, as the war seemed to indicate, such killing was impossible to avoid, and so the only way to avoid it was to inflict it on others first. The former was passive in nature, but the second was “active, confrontational, interventionist, and promoted involvement in the destruction of others as a means of preventing one’s own annihilation” (40). This again harkens back to Arendt’s writing on the intrinsically expansionist nature of totalitarianism and its utopian aspects: to remake the world in the image of the nation, indeed to bring the globe in line with the laws of history and to take what was yours all along. The attitude Bartov describes is ultimately militarily aggressive on a global scale; the

utopia it seeks to create must be violent, and as Hull says, it will become difficult to distinguish between that violence as a means to an end and as an end in itself.

Suzanne Kuss echoes this, although she also takes a somewhat different tack in something of a response to Hull (2017) when she writes that extreme violence on the part of German colonial forces was more a result of the environment in they found themselves and how the constraints of traditional conduct in war broke down against an othered enemy, linking war and genocide in terms of similar traits (which I recognize but will largely be leaving aside). She writes that “[a] war without limit does not use killing as an instrument to achieve military victory but sets the death of enemy soldiers, the civilian population, and prisoners of war as an aim in itself (6).

In terms of World War 1 and its relevance to the Holocaust, Bartov also argues that the war itself, and not the T-4 euthanasia program, was the first real practice of killing on an industrial scale, and must therefore be thought of as a direct precursor to the Holocaust in that sense. What arose from it was not only an idea of heroism and a military elite, but a notion of just how many people could be killed on an industrial scale and how the means for that killing might be organized. While, as I’ll describe later on, the T-4 program also led to the death camps in terms of the methods of killing themselves and the training of technical and engineering personnel, the camps—as Bartov says—were organized along military lines, staffed by soldiers, and maintaining a military chain of command. The camps incorporated military organization into their design, with watchtowers, mines, and barbed wire. The day was organized in the same way, including for the prisoner workers: there were roll calls and drills (1996: 5).

Indeed, the Holocaust may be understood as the perfection of the logic of industrial killing that the Great War introduced, with only the difference that the power dynamics—which will also be addressed in further detail—of either side were clarified. There was no confusion between perpetrators and victims, between the powerful and the powerless. The arrangement was “*totally* lethal for the inmates and *totally* safe for the guards. And the killing too, needless to say, was *total*” (1996: 49).

Further, while the SS certainly had a special place apart from the rest of the Nazi military apparatus, they were still connected to it and its various parts were helping to facilitate the killing.

Interestingly, Bartov also argues for a more general attitude toward humanity that emerged from WWI as being an important step along the path to the Final Solution, citing two particular writers who were strongly influenced by the atrocities they witnessed. He lays out how in Ernst Jünger and Louis-Ferdinand Céline’s writing about killing and war rested some of the seeds of the ideology behind the Holocaust and what a utopia might look like in the Nazi state, its ultimate violent nihilism, combined fear of and fascination with the unclean and diseased, the need to forget and the desire to remember everything degenerate:

[I]t is the combination of Jünger’s fascination with killing and Céline’s complete and utter disgust with humanity (and himself) that leads us directly to Auschwitz. It is this fear of perversion and boundless attraction to it, this longing for purity and obsession with filth, this indifference to the fate of others and immeasurable hatred of anything human, which we must keep in mind when we turn to discuss the Holocaust (46).

A word about Operation Barbarossa as a manifestation of military aggression:
It would be fair to say that Barbarossa was the core thrust of a military utopian

project. Hitler described the end result of a conquered east as a “garden of Eden”, a land in an idealized, perfected state that would serve only the new order governed by the master race. Barbarossa was an expression of totalitarian limitless expansion, and as a utopian action, it exists parallel to and even overlapping but distinct from the Final Solution. Both were racial in nature and both necessarily involved cleansing, but while Barbarossa involved cleansing the land of the Slavs, the Final Solution of course aimed at the elimination of the treacherous Jewish enemy within (more on this in chapter four) and the prevention of another “stab in the back” during wartime. Both were expansionist but in differing respects, and while Barbarossa was oriented outward, the Final Solution was the treatment of disease in the social body. Both were arguably the result of a form of control defined by extreme violence, of the way a state’s ideology governed the interactions of that state with the rest of the world and, as Arendt writes, the existing people ruled by the state as the already conquered.

Here I want to say a bit more about the military in both the First and Second World Wars, and in particular the way Christopher Browning describes the way the abdication of the military enabled extreme violence in Poland and further east. While German military leaders initially found the barbaric war they witnessed in Poland distasteful and even alarming, they ultimately washed their hands of those atrocities in part because it was the easier path and in part because the driving ideology behind the military expansion—of which the atrocities could be seen to be an unavoidable side effect—was very much in line with an ideology they were inclined to find attractive: the rightness of their cause and the legitimacy of Germany as a ruler of the world. So initial resistance eventually crumbled, and in tolerating the excesses of the

Einsatzgruppen the authorities essentially became accomplices, pushed by their own distaste to look the other way rather than make any more proactive attempts to stop the violence from happening. The Nazi regime “smothered” (loc. 1239) the ability of the army and more broadly society in general to articulate objections that referred back to the moral code of an older world; the erasure of history is a feature of the behavior of a totalitarian state (and of this mode of utopia), and in time it became difficult to clearly remember that such a code had existed.

Browning also points out that victory itself was radicalizing (loc. 1247); it confirmed the rightness and righteousness of the regime and the ideology that fueled them, and encouraged the military and society at large to think of the entire globe as their utopia-in-waiting, once it was conquered. Such high stakes might justify any extremes.

Interestingly, Cesarani and Browning are in slight disagreement regarding the role Barbarossa played in the beginnings of the extermination phase of the Final Solution. While Browning argues that early victories had a radicalizing effect, Cesarani takes the position that it was actually later difficulties in the campaign toward the end of 1941 that pushed things more seriously into motion. Barbarossa was primarily about the enslavement and extermination of the Slavs, but Hitler had also long identified Jews with Bolshevism and as therefore part of a plot on the part of Jews for world domination. A strike against the Soviets was aimed in racial terms at Slavs, but in a political sense—an attack against Bolshevist leaders—it was also in some respects an attack on what Hitler conceived of as “international Jewry”. Given this, one might interpret later frustrations in the campaign as leading to further

radicalized ideology and a ramping-up of identification of the Eastern Front as a war against not only Slavs but the evasive and ever-present Jewish enemy (which I'll speak more about in chapter four). In his account of the radicalization of the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front (1992), Omer Bartov argues that it was a combination of the appalling conditions that developed as the year descended into winter, a breakdown in unit cohesion and discipline, and indoctrinated fear of the Bolsheviks as an existential threat that served to plunge soldiers fully into Nazi eliminationist ideology.

We can also see the radicalizing effect of global war on the notion of the Jewish enemy and international Jewry when we consider the point at which Hitler declared war on the United States, writes Ian Kershaw in *Fateful Choices* (2007). In a speech to the German people, Hitler claimed that Jews were a threat even from across the Atlantic (and Hitler prophesied early in his career that if there was ever another world war, it would be entirely the fault of the Jews). Jews were a global enemy, and eradicating the threat they presented required the extreme measures of a radically destructive global war. Again, from there it would not be at all a stretch to arrive at complete extermination as a solution.

Other military actions played a role. As Cesarani writes, we should also consider Operation Tannenberg instrumental in the shaping of the Final Solution, and part of what enabled it to come to pass. Although Tannenberg was not explicitly intended as an anti-Jewish action, the brutality and mass nature of the killing and oppression of the populace arguably encouraged those on the front lines to think of indiscriminate atrocities as appropriate and even necessary (Dawidowicz 1986). In

line with Hull's writing on the behavior patterns in combat during the German colonial wars, war and the mass killing involved both dehumanized the other and dehumanized the killers, making atrocity a matter of routine. These forms of atrocities and the context in which they occurred can be understood as part of a larger feedback loop and the formation of what violence in conquered lands would look like even before the Final Solution went into effect (Cesarani 793). In the early days of Tannenberg, the combined force of the Wehrmacht, Gestapo, SS, and SD took more hostages and killed more Poles overall than did the Einsatzgruppen alone (Rosino 2003), and complaints and efforts to restore discipline on the part of military authorities ultimately did little to stem the barbarism. Relentless violence was desensitizing and enabled more violence, as Browning writes in *Ordinary Men* (1992), despite the fact that, as Himmler was told by one of his commanders, it was also taking a severe toll on the psyches of those carrying out the violence.

Indeed, Cesarani argues that Tannenberg was, in its way, just as—if not more—important as the T-4 project to the development of the Final Solution. Whereas the T-4 activities were carried out in secret, with the knowledge that they would be harmful to the Nazi image, Tannenberg was done blatantly and in the open, with no serious effort to conceal it (793). The extermination camps *were* kept secret, insofar as that was possible, but by then—coupled with the pattern of industrial killing established by the Great War and the implicit acceptance that this was simply what wars would look like going forward—mass killing was already an accepted method of creating the utopia that the Nazis intended.

The Final Solution was also, obviously, driven in tremendous part by ideology. Importantly, in understanding how the violence of the Nazi state and its military worked, Browning identifies anti-Semitism as the core of Nazi ideology rather than the fringe (to his mind making it indeed unique among European states). When describing the lengths the German police force went to in its mass killing of civilians (1992), Browning points to indoctrination of the force as a part of the professionalism that worked to radicalize them and reorder their norms and values. The work they were doing was presented to them as unpleasant but necessary in the creation of the perfected world to come, and Himmler reinforced this in speeches about the glorious task in which they were engaged. How they spoke to each other is revealing of the way they justified the violence they were committing: “In reassuring each other, comments were made like “Good heavens, damn it, one generation will have to go through this so that our children will have a better life” (loc. 3757).

Bartov also makes this point, referring to the elites who emerged from World War One and how the new age into which they were leading their people would look to science as a key part of its difficult but necessary means, beginning with the T4 euthanasia program and extending into the extermination camps

The organizers of the killing, and those who supplied the scientific rationale and know-how for extermination, were all members of an elite that perceived itself as taking part in a heroic, self-sacrificing venture aimed at the salvation of humanity from the array of Satanic forces threatening it with extinction (32).

Again, the modern utopia is a scientific utopia, and the Nazi utopia—driven by the nature and ideology of its state and military and their position vis a vis the globe—would have to be of that kind.

Utopia is by nature political, with implications toward social power, the management of social inequality, the construction of violence, and the role of state institutions. However, the political nature of heterotopia is less well articulated. Foucault makes allusions to heterotopia as a component in a structure of power, as a kind of chaos standing in the face of order and order standing in the face of chaos. In addition—particularly in his discussion of “heterotopias of crisis” in the lecture delivered to a group of architects—he makes use of the examples of spaces that intersect with identity categories of gender and disability, such as psychiatric hospitals and tents to which menstruating women are confined. Yet that's about as deep as he goes. Subsequent scholars like Hetherington have also written of heterotopia in relation to social power arrangements, yet deeper work there remains to be done. In the link between heterotopia and utopia, we can find some of that hitherto absent work by seeing what this link actually *looks like* in practice, and therefore seeing some of its worst practical effects. This is the point where the (for me) emotionally disconnected meets the visceral, and where for me the most compelling truths are revealed, in the ways these heterotopias performed tasks of ultimate destruction in order to create perfection.

In order to explain the specific ways in which this was done, it is now necessary to turn our attention to the physical and technological design of the camps themselves.

Chapter 3: The Camps

While the features of a heterotopia may be subject to change across applications and iterations, one feature holds true among them all: that of heterotopia as physical space.

I'm examining the nature of a heterotopia of making and unmaking on many levels that aren't confined to the purely physical. That said, the heart of my argument lies in that essential physicality. It is quite simply impossible to understand these three extermination camps without particular focus on how they were physically built, how they were arranged and how their functions occurred within that physical arrangement, how their functions were affected by changes in the requirements placed upon that physical space, and what happened to these spaces once there was no longer any use for them.

As I said before, while I've discussed the state and its conduct of warfare—especially when that warfare slips into extreme forms of violence—those things are significant almost entirely as background. Partly that's because, again, I don't intend to use theory to explain history but rather the other way around, but also it's because the kind of killing I'm dealing with here is highly distinct, in terms of the nature of the spaces in which it happened, the ideology that drove it, and how it was done, which is not confined to death itself. As I'll articulate, while mass death was necessary to the creation of Nazi utopia, it was not *sufficient*. It had to be a specific kind of death, and not only death but the process that surrounded it and indeed extended beyond the space and time in which it occurred. Nevertheless, despite that extension (and

recognizing that one could argue that war is also spatially constrained, at least in some cases, by a theater or a battlespace), this death and the process around it transpired in spaces clearly delineated from the outside world they were designed to recreate in a perfect image, bounded by literal and figurative barriers through which passage was highly difficult and allowed to only a select powerful few (and those even fewer who were able to escape). This is why, although I'm not ignoring states, war, and genocide, for the most part I'm leaving them outside the realm of my focus.

One point I'll be exploring in particular detail is how everything in the camps—the buildings and their design and spatial relation to one another, the presence or absence of people performing specific tasks, the resources available to the camps, and the accessibility of the camps from the outside world—was oriented toward the task of mass death. As I've said, everything within them ultimately existed only for the purpose of killing; no other goal mattered. The forced labor present at other concentration camps that also featured extermination facilities could not be found here, except inasmuch as that labor contributed to the killing process.

Although originally rough and even inadequate in terms of their planning (Cesarani 2016: 459), the camps were physically designed to be efficient, to allow for the work of killing to be as smooth and rapid as possible. They were created according to the logic of the assembly line. Human bodies were rendered components in a manufacturing process that ended in their total destruction, and during the destruction process, separate stations were laid aside for the purpose of stripping away all meaning from what was being destroyed. Possessions and valuables were taken, hair was removed, and even teeth were extracted for their gold. These objects,

rendered meaningful by virtue of their possession by a human being, were stripped of that meaning through the total dehumanization of their owners and by the transfer of their possession to a complete stranger.

This all leads to a final point, and one that connects the physical with the non-physical. By virtue of this kind of destruction—of bodies and of meaning, and eventually of the camps themselves—history and memory were destroyed to make way for a new world. A primary component of the Final Solution's secrecy was that no trace of it was to remain. The camps themselves were not only constructed to destroy but finally to be destroyed. The new world that the camps existed to bring about would last. The work that produced it was to be lost—literally—to the earth.

However, at one point during the operation of the camps, there was a disagreement regarding whether the task of the camps and the men who operated them should be hidden—even erased from history, to the extent that erasure was possible— and, on the contrary, explicit recognition of those members of the SS who had the strength to carry out such a difficult task for the glory of the Reich. This was more a point of ideological disagreement than a debate about practical, literal recognition, but the man who argued in favor of it—the commander of Operation Reinhard, Odilo Globocnik—did indeed make reference to a physical memorial. In a written affidavit, Kurt Gerstein, a chief disinfection officer with the Waffen SS, describes the exchange in an account of an official visit he made to Sobibór and Belzec in 1942, as relayed to him by Globocnik himself:

Then Professor Pfannenstiel: "But what did the Fuhrer say?" Globocnik replied: "The Fuhrer ordered all action speeded up! Dr. Herbert Lindner, who was with us yesterday, asked me: `But wouldn't it be wiser to

cremate the corpses instead of burying them? Another generation may perhaps judge these things differently!' I replied: 'Gentlemen, if there were ever, after us, a generation so cowardly and so soft that they could not understand our work which is so good, so necessary, then, gentlemen, all of National Socialism will have been in vain. We ought, on the contrary, to bury bronze tablets stating that it was we who had the courage to carry out this gigantic task!' The Fuhrer then said: 'Yes, my good Globocnik, you are right!'" (Arad 1987: loc. 1353-1362/6027)

Globocnik was in fact lying about having discussed the matter with Hitler—Hitler never visited Operation Reinhard's headquarters (Arad 1987: loc. 1382/6027)—but according to Arad, it is nevertheless possible that a similar exchange did take place between Globocnik and Heinrich Himmler during Himmler's 1942 visit to Lublin. Regardless, the statement is revealing of a particular mindset and therefore a particular tension which it is reasonable to suppose would exist in the minds of some who were engaged in carrying out the utopian task of the eradication of the Jewish people.

Himmler himself appeared to adopt the attitude that the camps and their grisly work were better left concealed; in a communication with Himmler about the pace of construction, Victor Brack, member of the Fuhrer Chancellery, claimed that "you yourself, Reichsfuhrer, said to me some time ago that for reasons of concealment alone we have to work as quickly as possible" (Hilberg 1985: 240). The act of erasure didn't emerge merely at the end of the killing operations; from the very beginning it was knitted into the fabric of the camps, an intrinsic feature of their figurative design.

Although Hitler made explicit references to the annihilation of the Jews in his proclamations and speeches, framing the act as self-defense against an enemy who

aimed to exterminate the German people (Herf 2006), Himmler himself intended the Final Solution to remain secret. He was clear about that intention, referring in a 1943 speech to the project as “an unwritten and never-to-be-written page of glory [in our history]” (Nuremberg Documents, PS-1919). Not only “unwritten” in the present, but even more, “never-to-be-written” in the future, never to be recorded or memorialized, with the implication that all traces of the process were to be destroyed just as completely as the victims. Indeed, Himmler took care to never put any of his orders related to the Final Solution into writing, determined to leave not even that much of a record—of a task considered vital to the construction of the utopia of the Third Reich.

If a fundamental component of a utopia can be understood as the end of history, then the erasure of those necessary physical and temporal spaces can be understood as a fundamental component of arriving at that end. In other words, the erasure of history in order to end history. The design of this erasure was not only the foundation of the task as conceived, but, as I said in the previous chapter, the foundation of the physical design of the camps and the ways in which they operated.

The Move to Extermination

Although, again, my focus is on how the concepts of heterotopia and utopia come into play in these three specific camps, it's worth devoting some time to an outline of the context of the camps in both the Final Solution in general and the prosecution of the war, as well as how their inception developed as part of a plan concocted by the highest powers in the Nazi state—a plan which in some respects was far less organized and more haphazard than one might expect.

The Final Solution did not begin with plans for extermination; indeed, the adoption of total extermination as an approach to the creation of the utopian Thousand Year Reich didn't truly occur until the summer and autumn of 1941 (Browning 2004). Prior to that—and in fact even for some time after, on which more shortly—the primary underpinning of the Final Solution was deportation combined with a program of repression and terror (which did include mass killings). The nature of those mass killings is important to understand in terms of how the extermination camps came to be; the shootings of the Einsatzgruppen were widely regarded as too emotionally difficult for the SS and Order Police who carried them out despite exhortations and encouragement from Himmler and others, not a sufficiently efficient strategy for clearing the land in the east, and also—and this is significant when one considers the secretive manner in which the camps were constructed and run—far too public, attracting attention and comment from local inhabitants. Clearly, at that point Himmler, Heydrich, and their underlings felt that matters could be improved.

By then, also, it was rapidly becoming obvious that mass deportations alone were not an effective strategy. There was the question of *where* to send the Jews and other undesirable members of the population; Madagascar as a destination was considered for a time and then abandoned when it proved impractical. Conquered land formerly belonging to the USSR was to be not only a bread basket for the rest of the Reich but also a “Garden of Eden” in Hitler’s own terms, and such a garden could not be populated by individuals who were not only considered undesirable but, as I’ll discuss further in chapter four, existential threats to the German people. Finally, as Browning argues (2004), the switch was partially sparked by a sense of “euphoria”

from the early successes of Barbarossa, kicking efforts aimed at creating this Garden of Eden into high gear. Given these elements, and the fact that mass killings were already in progress, coupled with the existence of the euthanasia campaign at home, it was not a huge leap to stationary camps built solely for the purpose of killing. What we must note, regardless, is that in the summer of 1941, extermination camps were in fact only one of several possible ideas under consideration.

While I'm largely leaving aside additional questions of the Final Solution that might be fruitfully pursued at another time, I do want to make note of the role of a couple of those ideas that were circulating or in practice at that time. The first is of the ghettos, which in many respects fit Foucault's description of heterotopias as spaces apart from but connected to the wider social world, where orderings are altered. Ghettos will remain outside my focus mostly because they do not share one crucial feature with the three camps I'm examining: they did not exist for the sole purpose of unmaking human bodies and humanity itself in the service of making a world. Nevertheless, they're significant in that they were spaces set aside for the imprisonment of people who had been categorized as Other—making the spaces themselves Other. The application of different rules, the aspect of confinement and control of who passed across the threshold from one space to another (although of course this control wasn't wholly effective), and the reflection of an imagined perfect world through the glimpse it offered of a world completely absent these undesirable people who couldn't possibly fit into it—this all shares features with heterotopias, and with the camps.

The same features were shared with the other concentration camps—which, like the ghettos, I'm leaving aside for the present because they don't share the feature of total unmaking. But what's important to note is that the logic of the ghettos can be said to exist as a kind of preamble to the extermination camps, and the concentration camps, which had already been operational in one form or another for some time, also can be considered along those lines. The extermination camps were unique, but their construction and design had a source and one can track the development of their guiding principles. Like anything else, they were able to exist because of what had gone before.

Two more elements of the Final Solution should get particular attention here: the mass shootings by the Einsatzgruppen, and the T-4 euthanasia program. Cesarani writes powerfully of the combination of the two: that extermination camps were the offspring of their marriage. He places special emphasis on the mass shootings, where other scholars have identified the T-4 program as the primary parent, arguing that the logic of mass death that underpinned the shootings was simply manifested in a different form in the camps. This is undoubtedly true; however, the T-4 program was still crucial, not least because many of the engineers and designers—and overseers—of the camps were drawn from it. It was in the euthanasia program that first serious experiments with the use of gas as a killing method were done, interestingly not only because gas came to be regarded as more efficient but because it was regarded as more humane (one of the more perverse arguments for the camps appears to be their relative humaneness, not only for those overseeing the killing but for those killed).

The T-4 program was not aimed at removing a direct existential threat of the kind of which the Jews were constructed. But it was aimed at removing the imperfect and the unacceptable as part of building the perfect world to come. Despite its inherent cruelty, especially in some of its experimental methods (explosives), it was not explicitly intended to be cruel; its goal was in fact usually framed as the ending and prevention of suffering. Although war came to be the backdrop—and already was in the case of the Einsatzgruppen—the T-4 program wasn't part of a violent war against an enemy but rather a process of scientific social management. But the program also served to acclimate its workers to the idea of mass death as part of a plan of positive construction, an unpleasant but necessary task for the good of the whole—which was the same justification offered to members of the Einsatzgruppen who found themselves struggling with their work. On their face, the methods of the Einsatzgruppen and the T-4 program might have seemed worlds apart, though the goal of death on a large scale was common to both cases. But in the end they were brought together with horrifying results.

But even once construction on them began, they were not the only elements in play. Deportation went on, and concentration camps that focused more on forced labor continued to devour human lives at an ever-increasing rate. Extermination facilities were added to the ones who had lacked them before. The fact that the Final Solution did not in fact fit together as a seamless whole is evident in the confusion regarding how the Jews should be handled; Cesarani notes that while the approach was primarily to use them for forced labor in camps like Auschwitz (while killing those who were unfit for work), only a few hours to the east ran a program of total,

indiscriminate murder. As he says, it remained unclear, in some respects, what the Nazi architects of the Final Solution even wanted, aside from the eventual rendering of their land *Judenfrei*.

Further, there were problems of resources and manpower, exacerbated by the intensification of the war. Not only did they find themselves stretched thin as the fighting began to go badly, but in fact resources and people appear to never have been properly allocated, at least not across the board, which can be chalked up in significant part to an ironic lack of planning. The killing facilities were frequently unsuited to the volume they were expected to handle, and arrangements were often ad-hoc and piecemeal, especially in the earlier days when gas vans were being experimented with. Even once the camps were established, the motors that delivered the carbon monoxide gas tended to break down, backing up the process for hours and sometimes days and making the victims more difficult to handle. Corpse disposal, too, was a frequent issue, and when Franz Stangl (a former employee of the T-4 program) took over the running of Treblinka in August 1942, he found a camp in a state of total disarray, with stacks of bodies lying in the open (Browning 2004).

Again, it's somewhat ironic that, despite the ways in which the Final Solution is often identified with precision planning, the actual planning was anything but, and instead the program was a somewhat fractured collection of different plans and approaches, not all of which were always in line with each other and many of which were subject to change. And to reiterate, this fractured nature and rolling changes were the result of outside forces, many of which had to do with the course of the war. In addition to the increasing difficulty in allocating resources—not only manpower

but transportation of people along railway lines that also had to accommodate the war effort—the problems can be traced in some cases to shifts in the power structure and who was responsible for what. As Cesarani writes, this was “[R]elated to the shifting balance of power between the SS and the civil administration and also the course of the war”. (469)

What roles which different people played in the design and construction of the camps is also worth brief discussion. Cesarani identifies conflict between the SS and civil administration; he also points out that the resource allocation problems of the Final Solution reflected the war itself, in terms of who had to be brought in to help shore up the process: “In one respect, though, it resembled the Reich war effort in 1942: the lack of manpower for the ‘final solution’ meant that the Germans would have to rely on their allies and local collaborators”. (459)

Who were these local collaborators, in the case of the extermination camps? Which of the Nazi high command was involved, and how? Who was engaged in the camps’ construction and day-to-day operations? I now turn to an outline of that particular rogue’s gallery.

As the high command took care to deliver many orders without documentation, one of the more difficult things to determine with reliability is who precisely knew what about the extermination phase and when they knew it. Nevertheless, it's fairly clear that much of the Nazi government was involved in some respect, whether or not they possessed complete knowledge about what they were supporting. There were also distinctions, naturally, between who was allowed physical access to the camps and for how long they were permitted to be there, and in

what capacity. When we consider how the secrecy of the extermination camps and their relative removal from the surrounding population is in line with their nature as heterotopias—controlled enclosure, boundaries of awareness and knowledge, the hard lines between those spaces and the rest of the social world—it's meaningful that many of the workers who were engaged in the physical construction of the camps were not fully aware of what they were building, although many of them may have suspected that they were engaged in a project with a dark purpose. Those workers tended to be drawn from three sources: the local population, Soviet POWs, and imprisoned Jews forced into labor that would mean their deaths when it was completed. Those murdered Jewish workers were killed because they were no longer useful more than any fear that they might talk, but the effect was the same: their deaths meant increased secrecy.

But the same, again, was not true of the local Polish workers and Soviet POWs. Where they were concerned, secrecy was maintained merely by restricting what they were allowed to know. They were permitted to enter the space of the camps under construction, and then afterward permitted to leave. The nature not only of their work but of who they were determined their relationship with a space defined in significant part by the openings and closings of its borders. They were not a mortal enemy in the way the Jews were constructed and perceived, they were useful, and the creation of the Reich utopia didn't require their elimination. Indeed, the Nazi plan required that they be allowed to live as a source of cheap or even enslaved labor. Therefore, they were a direct part of the project but not the object of its aims.

I also want to note at this point that the way SS leader Odilo Globocnik organized the labor needed to build and run the camps reflected again Cesarani's observation above: that the difficulties in locating sufficient manpower for this part of the Final Solution required him to make extensive use of both the local population and prisoners of war. In rounding up, transporting, guarding, and killing victims, he employed not only local Polish workers and POWs but also Red Army "volunteers", ethnic German militias, regular Ukrainian and Polish police, and of course the SS and Order Police (Cesarani 2016). Again, this arguably contributed to these spaces and their function not being quite such a finely tuned death machine as it was supported to be, but rather a plan and a set of spaces that were often pulled together using whatever materials were at hand.

Regarding the members of the SS who worked in and oversaw the camps, and the Ukrainians who frequently served as guards, knowledge of what was going on was necessarily total. The fullness of that knowledge was directly correlated to the power they possessed in that space; indeed, there was something of a sharp dichotomy in terms of who was fully in the space and the power relations that governed them. Either there was no power to speak of and barely any humanity (Jewish victims/prisoners), or power was utterly total (the SS/Order Police and to some degree the Ukrainian guards). The power relations at play here are also significant to considering these spaces as heterotopias allowing for a glimpse of utopia, given that this was in some respects a microcosm of how the Reich itself was intended to be organized, with the German master race holding supreme power and the full status of humanity, and everyone else either reduced to a subhuman slave

state below them or eradicated entirely. These power relations reflected both how the spaces were constructed and designed, and the goal they were intended to achieve.

There is also the case of the emotional and mental effects on those who inhabited the spaces. Victims and prisoners obviously experienced tremendous emotional distress, and reacted to it in varying ways at varying times—terror, despair, and in some cases defiance. But the camps were also constructed because they were deemed a more *humane* method of mass killing than shootings. The process of utter dehumanization of those to be killed, the speed at which they were supposed to move through the machine; given the emotional damage experienced by many members of the Einsatzgruppen engaged in the mass shootings, these things were intended to make the killing process easier for those in authority carrying it out. But of course that's not how things often went, and members of the SS were granted frequent and extended leave, in part as a reward for participating in what every member of the high command recognized was a deeply unpleasant albeit necessary job, but also to manage the psychological effects of being immersed in such an environment.

Like the victims and prisoners, members of the SS—and the Ukrainian guards—reacted in varying ways to the emotional pressures they were under. Some became especially cruel and engaged in horrific acts of torture, both enabled by and reinforcing the process of dehumanization. Other displayed strange acts of kindness, granting favors for some of the prisoners and giving them sympathetic words, and in at least one case carrying on an illicit love affair with a female prisoner. These can be understood as other ways in which the power relations were manifested and also fluctuated, with cruelty throwing the presence of and lack of power into sharper

relief, and instances of kindness muddying the waters somewhat. They are other examples of how the facts on the ground were not always in accord with the clean, well-ordered plans that were supposed to be at work.

A word about the bureaucrats in Germany and the Polish General Government who dealt with the logistics, usually of transporting victims. As with workers, the amount they were allowed to know was carefully managed, and they hardly ever had any direct contact with the camps themselves. But they were allowed to know some things, and in fact when it became clear the degree to which their involvement would be needed, Himmler and Heydrich took care to gradually increase the amount they knew, giving them reports of mass shootings and other extermination efforts. This was to groom them for the work that was to come, to desensitize them to the prospect of mass murder, and also to reinforce the construction of the Jewish enemy and the claim that the killing was necessary to ensure a bright future. So although for the most part they weren't allowed full entry into the spaces of the camps, they were allowed across that border in that they were permitted a glimpse of what was going on inside it.

But again, information as access was carefully managed, especially in terms of oversight. In June 1942, authority for Jewish affairs was passed from the General Government solely to the SS. When the camps were operating at full capacity, the SS controlled the method and means of their function, policed their boundaries, and managed the power relations that reflected the world to come.

There were, of course, also the civilians who maintained at least some awareness of what was going on very near to their community and yet remained

passively complicit (or actively so by assisting in the capture of escaping Jews). They would often claim ignorance of the camps, despite such ignorance being all but impossible, and like the bureaucrats, they kept their heads down and focused on their work rather than attempting any resistance. Additionally, on seeing camp inmates in a starving and brutalized physical condition, some might tell themselves that the inmates had done something horrible in order to be in such a place and in such a state, both responding to and reinforcing the process of dehumanization in which the camps were already engaged (Bartov 1996: 97).

Designs of Destruction

From the very beginning, the Reinhard camps were meant to be spaces apart, for the sake of secrecy removed from the world they were remaking. Yet they were also meant to be connected to that world by means of the railways, which were to serve as the primary transportation method of Poland's Jews to their deaths. While there were few formal guidelines for facilities that essentially didn't exist prior to Operation Reinhard being set into motion, Arad does describe the foremost ones:

The camps would have to be near the main concentration of Jews in the General Government and near the railways, to facilitate the transports and deportations. The location of the camps had to be desolate places, as far as possible from inhabited areas, to maintain secrecy and to keep the knowledge of what was transpiring within them from the local population. And, third, the camps had to be in the vicinity of the occupied territories of the Soviet Union so as to encourage the belief that the Jews who had disappeared had eventually reached labor camps in the vast areas of the East. (1987: loc. 331/6027)

In his book on Treblinka, Red Army journalist Vasily Grossman described the rural settings for the camps thus: “These places are gloomy and deserted; there are few villages...The soil here is poor and barren, and the peasants do not cultivate it. And so the wilderness has remained wilderness” 2014: 5-6). His description also calls further attention to the secrecy of the camps (about which more later), and specifically to the tight constraints on who could enter these spaces and who was to be kept out at all costs:

Himmler intended the existence of this camp to remain a profound secret; not a single person was to leave it alive. And not a single person—not even a field marshal—was allowed near it. Anyone who happened to come within a kilometer of the camp was shot without warning. German planes were forbidden to fly over the area...The guards who accompanied the prisoners during the journey were not allowed into the camp; they were not allowed even to cross its outer perimeter...The locomotive always pushed from behind and stopped by the perimeter fence, and so neither the driver nor the fireman ever crossed the camp boundary. (2014: 11-12)

This element of policed boundaries should be flagged as another feature of heterotopia. Recall that in the lecture wherein Foucault most clearly detailed the definition of a heterotopia, he used the example of a prison not only for its position of removal—and even opposition—but also for the ways in which a prison is a tightly controlled space regarding who can enter and leave, and when anyone can do those things. The camps were not only removed and obscured from the outside world—indeed, the boundary lines were clearly demarcated enough that there *was* an “outside world”—but of course, only certain subsets of people were permitted to enter, and an even smaller number was permitted to leave. Barbed wire, minefields, and

watchtowers occupied by heavily armed guards all maintained this strict system of openings and closings. The people who were permitted to leave and how they were allowed to go depended solely on their identity, which in turn was intertwined with their place in the function of the camps: guards and administrators were allowed to move back and forth across the boundaries with relative freedom, as were some local workers during the camps' construction and destruction, but Jews were marked for death by virtue of who the state had decided they were, and once they passed behind the barbed wire the only way they could escape was their end. Their persons and bodies had to be eliminated. In that sense, their identities and the bodies in which those identities sat (more on this in chapter 4) were themselves components of the boundaries that enclosed them, which they had no power to break (although a very few were successful in escaping and an even smaller number of those managed to survive the war).

Regarding destruction inherent to the construction of the camps, not only were Jewish workers killed after both the camps' construction and dismantling, but their deaths were incorporated into the process itself. Jews were almost always a fully disposable workforce; after all, they were going to die anyway, so their incidental deaths were inconsequential. As a matter of course, many of them were literally worked to death, their lives sacrificed for the sake of speed. Zelda Metz recalls the brutal conditions of the workers during the expansion of Sobibór in 1943:

In the summer of 1943, I was working on the construction of camp number IV. The SS were in a hurry to finish it, with its barracks and bunkers. To speed up the work, the SS formed a *Strafkommando* (penal

commando). We were to eat while running. Forty to fifty of us died during the construction of the camp. (Novitch, 1980, 131)

As spaces devoted to unmaking, the camps themselves did have to be made first, but even as part of this making, people were unmade. The camps were killing people before they were even fully operational, with forced prisoner labor existing even then only to serve the task of murder.

Returning to the setting of the camps, it's important to note this combination of isolation and connectedness; as heterotopias designed to make and unmake a world, the camps could not be fully set apart. This was for reasons of practicality, because not only would Jews have to be transported to the camps, but the camps were also dependent on the surrounding farms and towns for resources and supplies. Yet the significance of that connection is far more than practical.

The camps were "other spaces", where conventional rules and norms were suspended and normal social logic no longer applied, and where the boundary between life and death, making and unmaking, often blurred even to the point of indistinctness. As I have previously stated, the camps were both dark mirrors of the world as it was and dark tunnels beyond which the light of a new and perfected world shone, guiding those passing through the darkness. They were liminal spaces, existing on the cusp of what was and what would be, isolated by obscurity and physical distance but always connected. Here we can refer back to cemeteries as heterotopias, similar places where lines are blurred between life and death, the present and eternity, memory and forgetting. Only in this case, the camps served the exact opposite purpose.

All three camps—here Belżec—occupy a specific place in the landscape of the Final Solution, one very different from camps like Auschwitz in their singular function and in how they eradicated themselves and (intended to) leave no trace:

Buchenwald survivor David Rousset called the Nazi system of oppression and death a “concentrationary universe,” a counter-cosmic nightmare operating in accordance with its own perverse, inhuman laws. We might think of the Operation Reinhard death camps in view of Rousset’s astronomy metaphor: if Auschwitz-Birkenau was the outsized, malign pole star of this universe, then its black hole was Belżec. Light glinted off Auschwitz-Birkenau because not all those deported to it perished; numerous survivors lived to describe their harrowing experiences there. The physical structure of the camp likewise survived the war as an enduring monument to Nazi inhumanity. For these reasons, Auschwitz has become the infamous symbol par excellence of the Holocaust. Belżec, on the other hand, destroyed nearly all its six hundred thousand deportees before voiding itself from history, leaving scarcely a trace behind. Belżec is the dark star of the concentrationary universe, the charnel black hole at its center. In the Nazis’ kingdom of corpses, it was the Queen of the Dead. (Bryant 2014: 35)

When Operation Reinhard was set in motion, there was little to go on in the way of a model, and indeed no one was certain of how many camps would be required. The concept of gassing was drawn from the already-existing euthanasia program, where the sick and those with physical and cognitive disabilities were killed with carbon monoxide, but nothing on the scale the project required had yet been attempted. The initial stages of the construction of the camps were therefore marked by intense experimentation regarding the most efficient killing methods and techniques, the best ways of “processing” an enormous number of people in the shortest time possible.

Bełżec was the first of the three camps to be built, in November of 1941. It was constructed on the track of a spur not far from the Bełżec railway station, in—again—an area that was remote but not disconnected from the outside world (Sobibór and Treblinka were placed in similar settings). The laborers who carried out this construction were both local Poles and Jewish prisoners (the latter brought in after the Polish workers were dismissed), and while the Poles were allowed to go about their lives once their work was completed, the Jewish prisoners were murdered as part of the killing experiments that were carried out before regular transports began coming in. In the cases of Sobibór and Treblinka a nearly identical procedure was employed, though there the Jewish prisoners were shot rather than gassed.

Therefore, even the camp's making involved the unmaking of the people belonging to the group the camps were established to eradicate. The nature of these heterotopias was built into their figurative DNA from the beginning, and their ends mirrored that beginning. It made logistical sense to execute the prisoners, since—given that their work was complete—there was essentially no practical reason to keep them alive any longer. However, one could also argue that it would have made sense to have temporarily spared them, given that Jewish labor was needed as part of the camps' functioning once the camps became formally active.

Deadly Illusion

The killing process within the camps was, in Hilberg's words, "a combination of physical layout and psychological technique" (1985: 243). The physical aspects of the space and the psychological state of those within that space were inseparable. It's

important at this point to mention once again the significance of the deception intended for the arriving victims, the lie that they were being sent to baths for disinfection before they continued on to labor camps further east. The significance of the illusion the camps' structure and design conjured up served as a form of control, both of victim's bodies (augmented by the whips and shouts of the guards) and of their minds and emotions. While many suspected that they might be going to their deaths, many others desperately believed that it was true, enough that the Nazis' goal succeeded.

This function of illusion was something else built into the camps from the earliest days of their operation. They were already in eastern Poland, potentially making the claim that they were transit camps between the ghettos and distant eastern labor camps more believable. Deception was also always a component of the material details of the camps' construction; SS officer Erich Fuchs describes orders given to him by Belzec's kommandant (and additionally the official inspector of all three camps) Christian Wirth:

Upon our arrival in Belzec, we met Friedel Schwarz and the other SS men, whose names I cannot remember. They supervised the construction of barracks that would serve as a gas chamber. Wirth told us that in Belzec "all the Jews will be struck down." For this purpose barracks were built as gas chambers. I installed shower heads in the gas chambers. The nozzles were not connected to any water pipes; they would serve as camouflage for the gas chamber. For the Jews who were gassed it would seem as if they were being taken to baths and for disinfection. (Belzec-Oberhauser, Band 9, 1782-1783.)

The creation of an illusion within the space of the camps was not incidental, accidental, or an afterthought. It was part of the architecture, and therefore part of the very existence of the space. Killing was the sole practical function of the camps; illusion and the control it facilitated was an intrinsic part of that function. Therefore, we can understand the making of the illusion—a false world within a liminal one—as an essential part of the unmaking and creative destruction the camps were created to do.

Illusion was reinforced by a process of concealment, aimed at both the arriving victims and the surrounding populace. This was done in a variety of ways, but primarily via a system of fences, as relayed in a description of Bełżec:

The entire camp occupied a relatively small, almost square area; the north, west, and east sides each measured 275 meters, and the south side 265 meters. It was surrounded by a high fence of wire netting, topped by barbed wire and camouflaged with branches. Young trees were also planted around it to prevent observation from outside. (1987: loc. 403/6027)

And Sobibór:

The whole camp was fenced off by barbed wire intertwined with tree branches to prevent observation from the outside. Along the fence and in the corners of the camp were watchtowers. All the sub-camps, and particularly Camp III, were fenced off from each other by dense barbed wire. (1987: 490/6027)

The “tube” through which victims were driven in all three camps was lined with fences designed specifically to conceal the truth of where they were, and also to add to their disorientation, their feeling of having fallen into another world. The tube

was also carpeted with sand that was turned over after every group passed through, in order to hide the blood they left behind (Raichman 2009: loc. 247/1275).

It should be noted that this illusion—that the camps were in fact a waystation between the ghettos and work camps further to the east, and the gas chambers were merely showers—was not always successful, even when carefully maintained. Despite efforts at secrecy, rumors of what was truly going on at the camps did make its way back to some of the ghetto occupants, and some at least suspected the nature of the fate waiting for them. In addition, there was necessarily a point in the process where the illusion began to break down, though many may have wished to continue to believe the comforting lie they had been told. In some cases this occurred because of the increasingly harsh treatment of the victims by their killers:

This booth with its small “ticket window” [where victims were to hand over their valuables and receive a ticket as a receipt] was a turning point. It marked the end of the process of torture by deception, the end of the lie that held people in a trance of ignorance, in a fever that hurled them between hope and despair, between visions of life and visions of death. This torture by deception aided the SS men in their work; it was an essential feature of the convert-belt executioner’s block. Now, however, the final act had begun; the process of plundering the living dead was nearly completed, and the Germans changed their style of behavior. They tire off rings and broke women’s fingers; earlobes were ripped off along with earrings. (2014: 28)

Nevertheless, for many victims the illusion was clung to until the very end, sometimes by mere virtue of the inconceivability of a reality so horrible despite the rumors they had heard, and because the rumors didn’t possess the ring of truth. As Raul Hilberg explains:

The arriving Jews, on the other hand, were unprepared for a death camp. Rumors and intimations that had reached them were simply not absorbed. These forewarnings were rejected because they were not sufficiently complete, precise, or convincing...A survivor of that transport recalls: “The meaning of these words (warnings of death by Polish inhabitants) escaped us. We had heard of the death camp of Bełżec, but we didn't believe it”. (1985: 244)

The world of the camps was not only defined by the dark mirror of illusion. As “other spaces”, the camps existed and functioned to one specific end—the eradication of people who could not exist within the coming utopia—and almost entirely to that end alone. Essentially every physical feature of the camps was oriented toward that goal. This is worth remarking on in particular, because as the camps were constructed and better established, they in fact came to resemble the world outside in some important respects.

Given the number of semi-permanent guards and administrators, as well as the groups of Jewish prisoners forced to work as participants in the killing process, facilities that would accommodate long-term residence were needed. Sobibór didn't merely consist of fences, gas chambers, and barracks; among other things, it possessed a bakery, a shoemaker and tailor's shop, smithery and carpentry, and a garden. Treblinka and Bełżec were constructed along similar lines, and again, the former also possessed a zoo. These mundane elements of everyday life—though of course in that setting they were anything but mundane—existed alongside a murderous apparatus with no purpose other than to kill. And in fact all those artifacts of life outside the camps were also dark mirrors of themselves, because they existed only to serve a population of murderers and the slaves of murderers.

We can see here yet another way in which the boundaries between life and death were blurred in a unique sense inside the camps' fences. There, a twisted version of commonplace life was carried on in the literal shadow of death. A routine kind of making—the making of a life that the average person performs every day—occurred in the context of massive unmaking, all overshadowed by the greater image of the world the camp was employed in creating.

I want to return here to the fact that even given the elements described above—and in fact because of them, since they allowed for long-term residence—the camps were uniquely built to serve one purpose alone, and served exactly that purpose; that “[n]othing in this camp (Treblinka) was adapted for life; everything was adapted for death” (Grossman 2014: 11). Once more, that argument is reinforced in the way the camps themselves were constructed, not only in terms of physical layout or design but in terms of how the men in charge of their organization went about it.

As the concept of the camps was developed, efficiency was paramount. As Vasily Grossman describes it: “[P]recise calculation, a pedantic concern for order, a love of detailed charts and schedules—all these German qualities were reflected in the layout and organization of these camps” (2014: 7).

As mentioned above, experiments were conducted in order to establish the best killing method, and experts were brought in to evaluate the work. Christian Wirth carefully investigated the proper and most efficient approach to herding victims from the transports into the gas chambers, and was intimately involved in the oversight of the early process (Arad 1987: loc. 389-421/6027).

The efficiency of the process relied in significant part on—ideally—a carefully ordered and managed procedure, around which the space of the camp was oriented. In an interview after the end of the war, it was described as “a factory of death”, or a “conveyer belt” (Hilberg 1985: 244), and the process followed the step-by-step pattern of mass manufacturing, the impersonal logic of a slaughterhouse. It began with the unloading of the transports, and ended in the mass graves behind the gas chambers—and, later, in the fire and ashes of the grills built once burial was no longer practical for the sheer volume of corpses, and the necessity of more completely erasing all traces of the crime became clear. The basic purpose and function of the camps was largely established from the start; the details of their workings developed more organically over time, in response to needs and obstacles as they emerged, and as part of ongoing efforts to refine the procedure by which millions were annihilated.

As described by multiple witnesses, a key to the efficiency of the killing process was the speed at which things proceeded, which allowed victims little opportunity to consider their surroundings, ponder their fate, or put up any resistance they might still be capable of after a torturous journey in the transports from the ghettos. In his account of life in Treblinka, Chil Raichman describes the experience:

Blows begin falling on us from all sides. The murderers drive us in rows into an open space and scream at us to surrender our gold, money and valuables immediately. Anyone who tries to conceal anything will be shot. Nearly all of us part with what we still have. Then we are ordered to undress quickly and tie our shoes together by the laces. Everyone undresses as quickly as possible, because the whips are flying over our heads. Whoever undresses a bit more slowly—is savagely beaten. (2009: loc. 233/1275)

In his own account, Jankiel Wiernik describes the ways in which the speed and ferocity with which victims were driven into the gas chambers, with the efficiency of the process depending in significant part on the threat and fact of pain (a point I will explore in more depth in the upcoming chapter):

Between 450 and 500 persons were crowded into a chamber measuring 25 square meters. Parents carried their children in their arms in the vain hope that this would save their children from death. On the way to their doom, they were pushed and beaten with rifle butts and with Ivan's gas pipe. Dogs were set upon them, barking, biting and tearing at them. To escape the blows and the dogs, the crowd rushed to its death, pushing into the chamber, the stronger ones shoving the weaker ones ahead of them. The bedlam lasted only a short while, for soon the doors were slammed shut. The chamber was filled, the motor turned on and connected with the inflow pipes and, within 25 minutes at the most, all lay stretched out dead or, to be more accurate, were standing up dead. (1944: loc. 251/823)

The design that facilitated this ferocious speed and efficiency was common to all three camps, with slight variations between them in terms of the placement of specific structures (see appendix). A square provided a location for sorting the men from the women and children, at which point both groups were driven into barracks where their clothes and valuables were taken from them. From there women were forced through a barrack where their hair was cut. After the part of the process where all artifacts of humanity were stripped away, the victims were beaten through the "tube" lined with branches woven through wire to, as I said above, conceal where they truly were and to enhance their confusion. At the end of the tube were the gas chambers, where the ultimate purpose of the camps was carried out. Afterward, the

bodies were removed by prisoners and their mouths searched for gold teeth. Finally they were thrown into mass graves, and, later, burned on the immense “grills”.

Not all victims were killed that way, however. The elderly and sick, those unable to make their way through the gassing, were customarily taken to burial pits—often ironically disguised as hospital facilities—and shot. In addition, some victims were taken straight to the grills and thrown alive onto the fire (Grossman 2014)—instances of casual cruelty in the midst of what was intended by its designers to be an industrial, emotionally detached process. This shouldn't be surprising; while the officers in the upper ranks viewed the operations of the camps as mere work, that work resulted in, and indeed required, such massive levels of dehumanization that the image of the SS seeking perverse entertainment in their killing is all too familiar.

It should be noted that while the camps were designed for efficiency, from the initial processing of victims to their murders to the disposal of their corpses, things didn't always function as planned, and in fact the camps were occasionally subject to literal breakdowns in the mechanisms, “work stoppages” in factories of death. At times, it wasn't uncommon for the tractor engines that supplied the gas to stop working, which resulted in the terrible scenes of gas chambers packed with victims left dark and sealed for hours—and others left standing naked and freezing outside the chambers awaiting their turn—while repairs were made (Sereny 1974: 165, Arad 1987: loc. 1201-1210). It was during these breakdowns that the illusions of safety that the SS had tried to create often broke down as well, not least because the screams of those sealed inside the chambers could be audible to the people outside. As with any factory, one mishap along the line threw the entire thing into disarray.

Disorganization and even chaos wasn't confined to breakdowns. It could affect an entire camp. When Franz Stangl was transferred from Sobibór to kommandant of Treblinka with instructions to put the camp in order, what he found horrified and disgusted him (though his claim regarding loose gems and jewelry is disputed by SS officer Franz Schomel):

It was Dante come to life. When I entered the camp and got out of the car on the square, I stepped knee-deep into money. I didn't know which way to turn, where to go. I waded in notes, currency, precious stones, jewelry, clothes. They were everywhere, strewn all over the square. The smell was indescribable; the hundreds, no, the thousands of bodies everywhere, decomposing, putrefying. Across the square, in the woods, just a few hundred yards away on the other side of the barbed-wire fence and all around the perimeter of the camp, there were tents and open fires with groups of Ukrainian guards and girls—whores, I found out later, from all over the countryside—weaving drunk, dancing, singing, playing music... (Sereny 1974: 157)

Stangl wasted no time in clearing away the corpses and valuables and restoring the nightmarish order of the camp, understanding the importance not only of efficiency but of maintaining the illusion that Treblinka truly was merely a waystation and labor camp.

These times of breakage changed—in small ways in the case of temporary engine failures and in more dramatic ways in the case of the chaos of Treblinka—the nature of the camps as heterotopias. Again, the illusion was damaged or even destroyed, the efficient and focused process of killing was disrupted, and the path to utopia was therefore somewhat muddied. However, the camps remained spaces in which killing and (as I'll discuss shortly) erasure was ultimately the sole purpose, and

in which the rules of the world outside were suspended. In some ways, certain aspects of that rule-suspension were intensified: life became even more deeply surrounded by death as the corpses piled up, and—as I’ll discuss more later on, in more testimony from Stangl among other things—the distinction between human and object was blurred in a new and even more perverse way.

When it functioned as intended, the efficiency of the camps was enabled in part by the clear delineation of different areas within the camps, each existing to serve a specific function. While the line between life and death became blurry in these heterotopic spaces, paradoxically some boundaries were also hardened through spatial arrangements. In all three camps, some sections were devoted to life even in the midst of the killing process, while others were devoted entirely to death. Belżec was divided into two sub-camps; Camp I consisted of reception and administration facilities, which included not only the roll call square and the buildings where hair was cut and possessions were confiscated, but also the living quarters of prisoner workers, guards, and administrators, as well as their laundry and kitchen. Camp II consisted of the gas chambers and burial pits, as well as the living quarters of the prisoners condemned to handle the corpses.

Treblinka and Sobibór were divided according to the same logic. Sobibór consisted of three camps, with the administration area—split into two further sub-camps the “Forward Camp” and Camp I—set aside for the initial reception area and the Jewish workers’ and SS men’s living quarters, Camp II for the barracks where victims’ hair was cut and valuables taken, and Camp III for the extermination facilities. Finally, Treblinka was, like Belżec, divided into two sub-camps, the

“Lower Camp” (administration and living quarters) and “Upper Camp” (extermination facilities).

Thus, in all three camps, the division between the states of life and death were defined in significant part by spatial divisions. For a deportee, passing from one area to another almost always meant a transition from life to death. Even for prisoner workers kept alive to assist in the killing, assignment to one sub-camp or another could mean the difference between life and probable death, as workers tended to be killed in much greater numbers if they worked in the sub-camps devoted to the gas chambers and mass graves (Arad 1987).

Therefore, again, movement from one clearly delineated part of the camp to another reflected a change in self and in the relationship of the self to reality. The boundary between life and death was both blurry and sharply drawn, and arguably was another representation of that “dark mirror” the camps served as. The arrangement was arguably an extreme version of what's true anyway: that live is not a static state of being but a process that we go through every day, and a choice we make every second, even as it's constant being chosen for us. The end of the process is the extermination area, where the final transition into destruction takes place. Within the camps, that last stage was brutally literal.

But there's more, and it's about now we know and remember what's occurred. That last part of the process is of particular importance in terms of understanding these camps as heterotopias. If we consider them, as I have described, heterotopias of unmaking one world in order to engage in making another, then we must consider what was done to the last physical remains of what the camps were built to destroy.

The Erasure of Memory and the Denial of Memorial

In chapter 2 I discussed the significance of memory and memorialization, and in particular the significance of a physical body to those things. A memorial can be made without a physical body, and indeed, particular funeral rites such as cremation involve the complete destruction of the body. However, the destruction of bodies in the Reinhard camps was nothing to do with memorialization. It was quite the opposite. It served the primary function of concealing evidence of the crimes, and the secondary function of eradicating even the memory of the Jews' existence.

After the war and the downfall of the Nazi regime, of course, many and profound memorials were constructed to the victims of the Holocaust, whether or not any physical remains existed—and usually they didn't. But at the time, the potential effect—if the Nazis' Final Solution was successful and remained so—was not only the erasure of people but of the *memory* of people, rejecting not only themselves into a utopia that had no place for them but rejecting a piece of history that had no place in that utopia's frozen time. Arendt argues that the camps—concentration camps and extermination camps both—represented a kind of killing distinct from mere murder in terms of that erasure, that killing was necessary but insufficient, that this form of death was distinct from other forms:

The murderer who kills a man—a man who has to die anyway—still moves within the realm of life and death familiar to us; both have indeed a necessary connection on which the dialectic is founded, even if it is not always conscious of it. The murderer leaves a corpse behind and does not pretend that his victim has never

existed; if he wipes out any traces, they are those of his own identity, and not the memory and grief of the persons who loved his victim; he destroys a life, but he does not destroy the fact of existence itself. (442)

Further, this erasure of the meaning of death did extend beyond these separated, isolated spaces to the families of the dead in the outside world, one of the tethers from these spaces to the new world the creation of which they would ultimately be central to:

The concentration camps, by making death itself anonymous (making it impossible to find out whether a prisoner is dead or alive) robbed death of its meaning as the end of a fulfilled life. In a sense they took away the individual's own death, proving that henceforth nothing belonged to him and he belonged to no one. His death merely set a seal on the fact that he had never really existed. (452)

It should be said that the camps did not start with cremation as a method of corpse-disposal. Rather, cremation as a practice was established when it became clear that the Soviet Army was rapidly bearing down on them, and when, in the specific case of Sobibór, the mass graves that had been formerly used proved inadequate to the task. The corpses buried during the hot summer of 1942 reacted hideously to the environmental conditions and swelled above ground-level, giving off an atrocious and totally unavoidable smell. Additionally, the proximity of the decaying corpses to the water table caused the camp administration to become concerned about the possible contamination of drinking water. Therefore, in Sobibór the reasons for excavating and burning carcasses were twofold.

But in general, more complete concealment of evidence was the more significant purpose. As with the killing process itself, the Operation Reinhard commanders commissioned experiments to discover what disposal methods would be most efficient. Chelmno, the first real death camp established in Operation Reinhard's earliest days, was selected as the staging ground.

It is worth noting at this point that an interesting tension exists between the destruction of memorialization at the camps and a wider tendency to in fact document the world that was to be/had been destroyed. Rather than concealing and destroying what they deemed as anti-utopian culture, the Nazi regime—directed by Joseph Goebbels—organized an exhibit of “degenerate art”. The exhibit wasn't meant to be permanent, but still served as an important showcase of the very things that the Nazis were working to erase. In addition, the regime assembled relics for a museum of Jewish culture, in part in order to memorialize the Nazi triumph in much the way that Odilo Globocnik proposed his “bronze tablets” to serve as a monument to the slaughter that made utopia possible.

This form of showcasing is, as Bartov explains, a fundamental part of the selective erasure of history that must always be part of a utopian project:

[T]he discourse of utopia often refers to precisely those past events whose disastrous consequences had ensured the destruction of their records, leaving behind only scattered remains and traumatic recollections. Thus if utopia is about radically changing the past, it does so both by material eradication and by erasure of memory; it therefore suffers from both chronic and self-induced amnesia, while legitimizing and sustaining itself by means of vivid but highly selective memories. (2000: 154-155)

If we recognize the intentions of Operation Reinhard to work toward the total erasure of every part of a people, we must also recognize this tension between the desire to erase the past and the desire to preserve a mutilated version of it. It would be easy to conclude that the latter desire had no place in the Reinhard camps, but that would not be entirely true; while the camps were not part of the organization of any “museum of Judaica”, a significant side benefit of the mass murder for the camp guards and administration was the plunder of the victims’ belongings.

As soon as the victims arrived on the transports from the ghettos, the process of separating them from every one of their possessions began. All their luggage was confiscated—everything they had brought with them on the assumption that they were indeed to be “resettled” in the east, from clothes and food to gold and jewelry. As they were herded toward the gas chambers, they were forced to strip, and their clothing and shoes were thrown aside to be sorted by workers selected from the crowd. They were additionally searched after undressing, and any hidden valuables were taken; invasive cavity searches were carried out by “Gold Jews” (Arad 1987: loc. 1481/6027), thereby forcing Jews to be complicit in the reduction of human bodies to both objects and means to the end of obtaining objects, before those bodies were themselves destroyed.

This aspect of the killing was highly lucrative. Not only did individual officers and guards take advantage of the opportunity to increase their personal wealth, but an administrative wing of the SS—the Economic and Administrative Main Office—issued formal orders to the commanders of Operation Reinhard regarding how valuables and belongings taken from victims should be handled:

1. All money in bills of the Reichsbank [i.e., German money] will be deposited in Account No. 158/1488 of the WVHA in the Reichsbank.
2. Foreign currency, rare metals, diamonds, precious stones, pearls, gold teeth, and pieces of gold will be transferred to the WVHA for deposit in the Reichsbank.
3. Watches, fountain pens, lead pencils, shaving utensils, pen knives, scissors, pocket flashlights, and purses will be transferred to the workshops of the WVHA for cleaning and repair and from there will be transferred to the troops [i.e., SS] for sale.
4. Men's clothing and underwear, including shoes, will be sorted and checked. Whatever cannot be used by the prisoners in the concentration camps and items of special value will be kept for the troops; the rest will be transferred to VoMi.
5. Women's underwear and clothing will be sold to the VoMi, except for pure silk underwear (men's or women's), which will be sent directly to the Economic Ministry.
6. Feather-bedding, blankets, umbrellas, baby carriages, handbags, leather belts, baskets, pipes, sunglasses, mirrors, briefcases, and material will be transferred to VoMi. Payment will be arranged later.
7. Bedding, like sheets and pillowcases, as well as towels and tablecloths will be sold to VoMi.
8. All types of eyeglasses will be forwarded for the use of the Medical Authority. Glasses with gold frames will be transferred without the lenses along with the precious metals.
9. All types of expensive furs, styled or not, will be transferred to the SS-WVHA. Furs of lesser quality will be transferred to the Waffen SS clothing workshops in Ravensbrück bei Furstenberg in accordance with Order BII of the SS-WVHA.

10. All articles mentioned in paragraphs 4, 5, 6, or little or no value will be transferred by the SS-WVHA for the use of the Economic Ministry. With regard to articles not specified in the aforementioned paragraphs, the Chief of the SS-WVHA should be consulted as to the use to be made of them.

11. The prices for the various articles are set by the SS-WVHA.... Therefore the price of a pair of used pants will be 3 marks, a woolen blanket-6 marks.... Check that all Jewish stars have been removed from all clothing before transfer. Carefully check whether all hidden and sewn-in valuables have been removed from all articles to be transferred.
(Rückerl: 109-111)

Just as the murder and destruction of victims was the purpose of the spaces of the camps, and the task around which every part of them was oriented, this facet operated as both adjacent and directly connected to that task. While the bodies and very identities of Jews were destroyed, their material possessions were “preserved”. Yet, as part of that preservation, all ties between them and their former owners were also severed and destroyed. The things themselves survived. Their *meaning* was erased with the people who possessed them.

Perhaps even worse, and more in line with the part of the process devoted to more literal destruction and erasure, whatever wasn't deemed valuable was disposed of like so much garbage, which included family photographs, letters, and other artifacts of a life—items of supreme importance to the people who carried them into the space of the camps, rendered valueless the instant the threshold was crossed. Vasily Grossman relays an especially heartbreaking description of this vicious form of theft, and of the brutal ways in which some of the most personally significant items were treated:

Items of value were already being taken away to the storerooms, while the letters, the yellowed wedding announcements, the photographs of newborn babies, brothers, and brides, all the thousands of little things that were so infinitely precious to their owners yet the merest trash to the masters of Treblinka were being gathered into heaps and taken away to vast pits already containing hundreds of thousands of similar letters, postcards, visiting cards, photographs, and sheets of paper covered in children's scribbles or children's first clumsy drawings in crayon. (2014: 22-23)

These items had value specifically because of their personal significance, and therefore would have no real practical value in and of themselves; in that way, they were objects of pure meaning, which rendered their destruction uniquely meaningful. They were frozen fragments of time, of family history, and to destroy them was to destroy that history, to erase memory of the most intimate possible kind. The heterotopia of the camps permitted no memory of that sort to be retained. In this way, time itself was unmade.

In addition, while as I said I'm largely leaving concentration camps aside in favor of extermination camps, the process of stripping personal belongings away from victims, indeed removing body hair, was not only dehumanizing but served to further separate human beings from the world they formerly considered home, trapping them on what Hannah Arendt described as another planet. As Lucie Adelsberger spoke of her entry into Auschwitz:

This was where they confiscated the very last vestiges of our belongings; nothing remained, not our clothes or underwear, no soap, no towel, no needle, and no utensils, not even a spoon; no written document that could have identified us, no picture, no written message from a loved one. Our past was cut off, erased... We were put in prison garb, with no underwear,

only a thin chemise... We were given wooden shoes with shreds of Jewish prayer shawls as foot-wrappings... We were cut off from the whole world out there, uprooted from our homeland, torn from our families, a mere number, of significance only for bookkeepers. Nothing remained but naked existence... (2016: 65)

Regardless of whether they were kept and repurposed or disposed of, these weren't only *things*. No personal item is ever merely an item; as I said, all of the belongings taken from the victims before their final dehumanization had profound meaning that was stripped away. But some of the items had more visceral meaning than others, because of the relationship with their owners' literal bodies. According to the testimony of Kurt Gerstein an SS-employed engineer who witnessed killings in Bełżec (Arad, Gutman, and Margaliot 1991: 349), valuables, clothing, and documents weren't the only things taken. Also stolen were eyeglasses and artificial limbs, things which directly assisted in the physical functioning in daily life. When the hair of the women was cut, it was taken to be used for the insulation of submarines.

Objects so intimately connected to a body can be framed as extensions of that body. In the context of the suspended rules of a heterotopia, as the boundary between human and object was broken down and finally erased, the process was especially intensified at specific points where the confiscation of these intimately connected objects (the eyeglasses and artificial limbs) and the rendering of part of the body to merely an object (the women's hair) erased the meaning with which these things were imbued.

A woman might take particular pride in her hair, and care for it as best she could even in the midst of privation and cruelty; all the care and love and pure emotion she poured into it is stripped away from it as it's shorn from her head. It no

longer belongs to her, and in the taking it loses all its significance. It's thrown into a bag with the hair of hundreds of other woman, tangled and at last indistinguishable. In his recollection of the hair-cutting stage of the process, Thomas Blatt confirms the distress women could feel at the loss of their hair, saying that “[a] teenager wept at the loss of her lovely locks, asking not to have it cut too short” (1997: pp, 102).

An artificial limb has helped someone interact with the world, alter it, make a mark on it. An object that we use in that way will take on all the meaning of everything we've needed it for and everything we've used it to do. Eyeglasses don't merely correct vision; they *are* vision, and that gives them weight and power far beyond glass and plastic and metal, whether or not we're aware of it. Here in this space they're snatched away and tossed onto a pile of thousands of others. No one will remember who they belonged to. It doesn't matter, and neither do all the things their owner saw through their lenses.

In their dehumanization, destruction, and total separation from the world of humanity, people were made into objects. As that happened, meaningful objects of every kind were taken from them, further reducing their humanity. Parts of them were *made* objects. The distinction between person and object finally became unintelligible. We can connect this to totalitarianism as described by Arendt, in her claim that the camps served as proving grounds for the total domination of totalitarian society at large (proving grounds, in other words, for the utopia the engine of totalitarianism will create. Camps—concentration camps being primary in her writing but the same process featured in both types of camps, in those destined to be

immediately killed for only a short time and for the slave workers for somewhat longer—destroyed everything human in a human body:

The camps are meant not only to exterminate people and degrade human beings, but also serve the ghastly experiment of eliminating, under scientifically controlled conditions, spontaneity itself as an expression of human behavior and of transforming the human personality into a mere thing, into something that even animals are not; for Pavlov's dog, which, as we know, was trained to eat not when it was hungry but when a bell rang, was a perverted animal. (438)

Franz Stangl makes this explicit when he describes the mindset with which he approached the operations in Treblinka—one in which he could no longer regard human beings as human at all:

“So you didn't feel they were human beings?”

“Cargo,” he said tonelessly. “They were cargo...I remember Wirth standing there next to the pits full of blue-black corpses. It had nothing to do with humanity—it couldn't have, it was a mass—a mass of rotting flesh. Wirth said, ‘What shall we do with this garbage?’ I think unconsciously that started me thinking of them as cargo.” (Sereny 1974: 201)

The erasure of the meaning of personal objects was itself both formal and explicit. Jewish workers tasked with organizing belongings and valuables were commanded under pain of death to remove any form of identification that might indicate the item's origin. The people who would eventually use the material goods should know nothing about the source of their gain, though Arad writes that they might still “surmise” (1987: loc. 2163/6027). In terms of memorialization and the persistence of memory of the dead, this is especially significant in that it is often

through material goods that the memory of a deceased loved one is passed down from generation to generation of a family, through jewelry, watches, other valuables, and assorted special items of clothing. The material fact of the body was destroyed; the objects imbued with the identities and histories of their former owners did not face the same erasive destruction but were figuratively “destroyed” as that essence was stripped from them and new owners took possession of them.

It is important to note that during the final process of the excavation and burning of already buried corpses, Jewish prisoners were perfectly aware of what was driving the work—the complete elimination of evidence—and were able to use that awareness to perform small acts of resistance wherever they could. In so doing, they disrupted the function of the camps’ last gasp as heterotopias, and helped to undermine those functions’ already pointless groping toward a utopia that could never be reached.

The process was viciously focused in its destruction. After the bodies were burned, prisoners were made to collect the ashes and remaining fragments of bone, crush the larger pieces with hammers (Bryant 2014: 98), then run the ash through sifters and crush whatever remained. Nothing was to remain that would reveal what the ash truly was. Not even a shard of bone could be allowed to serve as a memorial to the hundreds of thousands of dead. Vasily Grossman describes one way in which ashes were disposed of in Treblinka, designed to obscure what the ashes themselves were:

Cinders and ashes were taken outside the camp grounds. Peasants from the village of Wólka were ordered to load them on their carts and scatter them along the road leading away from the death camp to the labor camp.

Child prisoners with spaces then spread the ashes more evenly. (2014: 52-53)

Nevertheless, the prisoners found ways to dodge the efforts at erasure, and carefully buried evidence of what had taken place. As Treblinka survivor Abraham Goldfarb explains:

[W]e secretly placed in the walls of the graves whole skeletons and we wrote on scraps of paper what the Germans were doing at Treblinka. We put the scraps of paper into bottles which we placed next to the skeletons. Our intention was that if one day someone looked for traces of the Nazis' crimes, they could indeed be found... (Testimony 03/1846 17-18)

Again, in the last days of the camps, the destruction and death that characterized their existence turned inward toward the destruction of the camps themselves, and the death and erasure of the last Jews working there as part of that process of final destruction. But a component of the process was also the creation of another illusion to mask what the land had been used for. Polish railway worker Jan Piwonaki, at Sobibór, describes what he witnessed:

The Jews who had been put to work on demolishing the camp had to plant new trees after the ground had been leveled. I also know the Jews had to fill in and cover up the holes that had been caused by blowing up the concrete buildings inside the camp. I do not know what happened to the Jews who wound up the camp, but no one ever saw them leave. I heard that all of them were killed. (Schelvis 2007: 191)

Finally, one can't examine the death camps without considering the uprisings in Sobibór and Treblinka—uprisings which, while the majority of the rebels were killed and they never achieved their ultimate aims, which included the destruction of the camps themselves, did result in the escape of a number of prisoners, who then

survived to testify to what they had seen. Defiant in the face of annihilation, they served as living memorials to what the Nazis intended to disappear.

The unmaking of an entire part of the world in the service of making a new one was central to the heterotopia of the Reinhard camps. But it was not a wholly successful one. Though they were finally dismantled and effectively hidden from view, memory persisted, and the truth was revealed. The world was not successfully unmade or remade. Nevertheless, while the camps were in operation, they created a world apart within the fences and minefields, where rules were suspended and the boundaries between life and death, and humans and objects, became thin and in some cases even vanished entirely.

Describing this requires a kind of story. Accumulating records and testimonials of the camps involved constructing a narrative out of narratives, assembling a story not only of historical events but of those small, intimate details that I talked about in the preface, the ones that tend to capture me because they seem both more real and more approachable. All history is ultimately a story, but the lens of heterotopia—and the fact that it's heterotopia that I'm seeking to shed light on more than these camps themselves—complicates that story. The narrative isn't only the linear process of killing: the transportation, the arrival, the journey through the barracks to the tube and the gas chambers, the mass graves and pyres at the end. It's the story of the shoes and eyeglasses, the meaning they carried, and what it signifies when that meaning is destroyed. It's the destruction of the camps as an event in and of itself, and an act that works backward in time, helping to define the space being destroyed while it still existed and functioned.

In that sense, while the camps reveal new angles of heterotopia and its connection with utopia, heterotopia serves as a tool to, if not explain any part of the camps, at least enable new views of them. Yet, again, I found myself wrestling with the sense of distance that that form of analysis was creating. As I read and wrote about the destruction of meaning, I felt as if meaning was really being destroyed in my own experience; I was beholding horrific, wrenching details without *feeling* that horror. I have to note again how that disturbed me.

It was also familiar. It goes back, I think, to that first and primary problem: how do we conceive of the inconceivable? How do we grasp such stunning numbers, only to be brought up short when we have to grapple with the visceral detail? Top-down is unsatisfying, and while bottom-up and the level of the personal appear like a better way, they really may not be. Then to attempt to bring the two together in a way that uses the camps as a means to an end rather than the end in itself provides a whole new tension.

Yet at the same time that it gave me tremendous difficulty, that tension led me to even greater levels of detail, perhaps as a way to address it. If utter destruction is in some respects the key here, then *what is being destroyed and why* emerges as a central question. Not only camps as spaces and artifacts, not only memory, and not only rules, but *bodies*. As with the camps, the destruction of bodies seems to work backward, how and why they were destroyed contributing to the definition of what they were.

One of the core elements that made the total erasure the camps performed possible was the very nature of the bodies being destroyed. They were not merely

physical bodies; they were identities in the deepest sense. In order to understand the core of the heterotopia I'm arguing for, we need to understand the full significance of this bodily destruction.

Chapter 4: Bodies

The argument I'm making in this chapter could be considerably longer. Indeed, entire books could be and have been written about the nature of embodied political identity and what happens when that body is wounded or destroyed. Given that, my aim is to introduce some ideas to build on, some additional implications of this expression of heterotopia that might be expanded in future, in works other than this. While I'm presenting a preliminary argument, I believe that what I argue in this chapter presents significant paths forward in our characterizations of heterotopia and our assumptions about what it can do and be.

Treblinka, Bełżec, and Sobibór were heterotopias, functioning in specific ways for a specific purpose. They existed in a liminal space, relative to the society they mirrored, and also relative to the world that was and the world that might be. Despite the extreme degree of order in their design (if not always in their function), blurriness and even erasure of boundaries were central to how they worked. Life and death, human and animal or object, existence and nonexistence, interior and exterior all were called into question as categories, and arranged in ways the outside world did not allow for.

But there's more to the story. Approaching the camps as heterotopias reveals significant aspects of the notion of heterotopia, possibilities of how it might be applied and how it might manifest. However, there's another way in which these heterotopias can be understood and their identification as such reinforced. They are not only heterotopias in and of themselves, but contained another level of heterotopia, the relationship between the two reinforcing the nature of both. I want to argue for the

existence of not only a heterotopia of making and unmaking in the form of the camps, but a related heterotopia—that of an embodied identity that existed entirely to be unmade.

This heterotopia—the embodied Jewish identity—was not only related to the heterotopia of the camps. It was inextricably linked. Its presence was central to the function of the camps, and justified their very existence. By the same token, the camps gave it ultimate meaning as heterotopia via the process of its destruction. Therefore, these two nested and interlinked heterotopias acted to reinforce each other. They gave each other meaning and definition, and we can't understand one apart from the other. In order to fully make sense of this particular species of heterotopia in this particular manifestation, we need to consider this unique relationship, in how it's possible and how it works.

Bodies are inherently political. This is because identity is embodied, and identity is inherently political. The nature and meaning of embodied identities are situational, and exist along axes of time and space—of geographical location and of history, of every aspect of the society in which those bodies exist and are understood by their owners/occupants and those around them. Indeed, it's misleading to refer to bodies as separate enough from selves as to have “owners” or “occupants”; a body *is* a self in every meaningful way.

A vast body of scholarship (so vast that I can make only relatively brief reference to it) has argued that social power is exercised—and displayed—on bodies, by what they are permitted to do, what they are forced to do, the ways in which both of those things are structured by time, and by the meaning with which bodies may be

coercively imbued. This coercion manifests according to the social inequalities and oppressions present in culture, such that—for example—bodies coded female are acceptably subject to violence that the male body of a cisgender man is not. Bodies that fall outside the category of cisgender male are inherently more accessible, more woundable, more rapeable, more killable, and more controllable in general. As with race; black and brown bodies are bound up with horrific violence—and an equally horrific history of racist violence—in ways that white bodies cannot be.

Violence is a form of control, control is guided in part by the nature of the thing being controlled, so I want to devote some time here to the ways in which bodies have been understood as controllable things, and as objects within which identity is set in the most physical possible way—and therefore subject to control in turn.

Foucault himself has obviously devoted a tremendous portion of his body of work to this precise thing. As I laid out in chapter 2, for Foucault, bodies functioned as sites for the flow and exercise of power, as well as seats of knowledge formation and the effects that process of formation had on society at large. The discipline of a prison and all its associated nodes, the creation of the modern notions of illness and madness in hospitals and asylums, all are deeply bound up with the very self and one's own understanding of who they are and might be. In *The History of Sexuality Volume 1* (1980), Foucault first articulated the concept of biopower, describing the drive to understand our selves—our identity—through knowledge in and of the body. Knowledge of identity works within, but the process is inherently coercive, being imposed from the outside, shaping patterns of thought and behavior.

Again, to reference chapter 2, in Foucault's work bodies were implicitly and often explicitly connected to discourses of space and design. A sick body and the construction of its sickness coincided with the notion that society as a whole could be scientifically managed as a body in aggregate. Cities—especially cities with perfectionist aims—were no longer gardens to be tended but bodies to be controlled and “cured” if they were ill (Vidler 2011: 32). In this we can draw a connection between the management of bodies into an idealized form, and the transformation of a society of people into a utopia. Elizabeth Grosz—along with Mark Wigley (1992), in his case specifically in reference to gender—also expands on the connection between bodies and cities, framing the city as a network of spaces that exert power on social relations and the people who literally embody those relations, shaping its meaning and the identities produced inside them (Gordana 2013: 130). Grosz describes bodies as fluid and indeterminate, “incomplete” until shaped by this network:

The body is, so to speak, organically/biologically/naturally “incomplete”; it is indeterminate, amorphous, a series of uncoordinated potentialities which require social triggering, ordering, and long-term “administration” regulated in each culture and epoch by what Foucault has called “the micro-technologies of power”. (Grosz 1992: 243)

We can also draw connections to the ritualized performance of constructed notions of gender, as theorized by Judith Butler. Gender identity, from this perspective, is not ingrained or “natural” but instead a socially constructed series of performative acts situated in time, a way of knowing derived from doing, with that way being externally imposed by a “disciplinary regime”. Gender, sex, and sexuality are made real and “natural” only because they're constructed as such, and that

construction is done through the acts of the body, and knowledge formed within and about the body. These rituals of performance are, again, not voluntary, but instead are meanings imposed from the outside; what one does and what it means are constrained by norms, and especially by taboos. In short, one performs identity, but one has very little agency in determining what that performance and that identity will be.

Finally and especially worthy of note is cyborg theory as articulated in Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1991), wherein she describes the ways in which Western feminism as it has historically been understood is no longer adequate to grapple with identities that are increasingly flexible and unconstrained by traditional border and boundaries. Identity can't be essentialized, she writes, and the competing dualisms that have helped to define it—male/female, human/animal, organic/machine, etc.—should be rejected. Who we are is in our bodies, but is far more complex than we've understood it to be, both restrained and freed, with the potential for far greater freedoms, and existing within the context of transhumanist technology (indeed, she argues for a rejection of traditional notions of identity in favor of communities formed through mutual affinities). If we want to understand ourselves, we need to understand what our bodies mean, what they can do and be, and how they transcend the limits of how we've defined them and ourselves.

That all being said, the point that I want to draw out in this particular case is that of violence itself, and more specifically, given that the case I'm examining is of genocide, the meaning of violence with the end goal of eradication. Violence against marginalized bodies is a means of social control, part of an ongoing process of domination by dehumanization—in significant part because, as I will discuss in

greater depth over the course of this chapter, the performance of violence on the body of one human by another requires that the body in question be regarded as less human (and, in fact, both bodies and persons are dehumanized by that violence).

But there is a vital distinction to be made between violence in the name of control and violence in the name of total destruction. Violence against a marginalized body is a fundamental part of the domination of every aspect of that body's identity; likewise, violence to the point of destruction is a fundamental part of the destruction of every aspect of that identity. To destroy a body is to destroy a people, not merely by virtue of the fact that if you destroy enough bodies there will simply be no one left, but—even more importantly—by virtue of the fact that each body is a part of that greater category of identity, and that to destroy a body is to destroy the identity itself. To destroy a body in such a way that no trace remains is to erase identity as a whole.

Bodies, argues Elaine Scarry in her 1985 book *The Body in Pain*, have literal weight; they are part of the physical makeup of the world, identity made flesh and therefore made material. This means that violence done to that body—and pain suffered by the same—has world-altering implications in every direction and from every point of view.

In the first part of the book—devoted to “unmaking”—Scarry explores the phenomena of torture and war. Torture and war are to be both contrasted to and connected with each other, primarily in terms of what the experience of either does to the nature of reality as perceived by the people involved in each, and indeed, of reality as an objective fact. The destruction evidenced in torture and war is not only

the dismantling of something but in truth is deeply connected to the act of positive creation:

If as the intricacies of this conflation emerge before us they have the defect of sometimes seeming astonishing, they will also at every moment have the virtue of confirming the obvious; for that torture and war are acts of destruction (and hence somehow the opposite of creation), that they entail the suspension of civilization (and are somehow the opposite of that civilization), are things we have always known and things one immediately apprehends even when viewing these two events from a great distance; the only thing that could not have been anticipated from a distance but that is forced upon us as self-evident once we enter the interior of these two events is that they are, in the most literal and concrete way possible, an appropriation, aping, and reversing of the action of creating itself. (21)

As I've posited in the previous chapters, we can and should understand the heterotopia of the camps as not only a site for unmaking but for unmaking as part of a perverse *making*, an attempt to create a new world by uncreating intolerable components of the old one. The two might appear to stand as opposites, but in this case they in fact stood as two sides of the same brutal coin, with one as a means to the other.

While torture occurred with horrific frequency in the Reinhard camps, it was not a specific end in and of itself, and the process around which the camps were organized was explicitly focused on destruction with pain (officially) taking on a place of total unimportance. But torture is important to my argument for reasons that go beyond the fact that it occurred. Torture, for Scarry, is the setting within which the capacity of bodily destruction to destroy a world is most clearly made manifest.

As Scarry conceives of it, pain is world-destroying in nature because it reduces a human's experience of the world entirely to the suffering being visited upon their own body. The kind of pain that exists as part of torture is differentiated from pain of other kinds by virtue of its intentionality, the unique relationship it helps to forge between the torture and the torturer, and because of the way in which everything around the tortured body becomes a tool in service to that pain, props in a spectacle being acted out:

But whatever the regime's primary weapon, it is only one of many weapons and its display is only one of many endlessly multiplied acts of display: torture is a process which not only converts but announces the conversion of every conceivable aspect of the event and the environment into an agent of pain. It is not accidental that in the torturers' idiom the room in which the brutality occurs was called the "production room" in the Philippines, the "cinema room" in South Vietnam, and the "blue lit stage" in Chile: built on these repeated acts of display and having as its purpose the production of a fantastic illusion of power, torture is a grotesque piece of compensatory drama. (27)

Scarry emphasizes the significance of the *room* to the world-destruction of torture, pointing out that even in normal circumstances, a room is both an expansion of the body—protecting and sheltering the being within it in the same way a body protects and shelters the parts of it that constitute an individual human being—and “a miniaturization of the world, of civilization” (38). A room, in other words, is a space with a unique relationship to the body it houses and to the wider society in which the individual makes a home. Civilization, she writes, can expand the single room into “a house of rooms and a city of houses” (39), a space that both expansively opens and protectively encloses. Torture, by comparison, shrinks everything down into a single

room—literally—noting that these torture rooms are, with perverse irony, referred to in some countries as “safe rooms” or “guest rooms” (40).

Further, she lays out the torture room as not only a space within which torture is carried out, the bodies of the tortured and the torturer are contained, and the tools of torture are kept, but argues that the room itself is an instrument of torture, listing examples of victim’s heads being smashed against walls, lights being endlessly kept on in order to cause disorientation and exhaustion, and doors being slammed in order to alarm, while in other cases the bolt is audibly and repeatedly locked and unlocked in order to induce crippling dread (40).

Taking Scarry’s notion of the room as both structure and instrument of torture, and torture as a method of unmaking, we can conceive of this room as a form of heterotopia of unmaking and destruction, a dark mirror in which the relationship between society and the self is inverted, where the purpose is to dismantle the self entirely, annihilating it in the face of its own pain.

I want to devote some time to this notion, not because of the phenomenon of torture in and of itself. As I have already explained, while torture did take place within extermination camps, it was fundamentally secondary to the camps’ explicitly intended purpose (though to be sure it played a vital role in dehumanizing the victims). What concerns me is the framing of unmaking, and the way in which *unmaking* takes place within the literal and figurative core of the body, and in the core of what's being done to it.

One of the key things that torture and war share in common in this context is the imbuing of the body with political meaning. A body is not merely tortured (at

least not in this sense) because the torturer bears some special hatred for the one being tortured, or because of some intimately personal animosity. A body is being tortured because of the multitude of which it's a part, because it serves as a representative for something bigger and a means of getting at that thing in an immediate way.

In part via the mechanism of confession, torture forces an identity on someone through the physical pain they're suffering, whether or not the confession is genuine. The technical truth or falseness of the confession is irrelevant; all that matters is the undeniable assertion of a particular identity. As Scarry points out, while a trial involves the revealing of evidence in the pursuit of conviction and punishment, torture uses punishment to extract the evidence from the accused. She relays an explicit example of this:

The slogans of the South Vietnamese torturers announce what is there and elsewhere always visible in the process itself: "If they are not guilty, beat them until they are," "If you are not a Vietcong, we will beat you until you admit you are; and if you admit you are, we will beat you until you no longer dare to be one." (41)

War, on the other hand, takes the wounded and destroyed bodies of those injured and killed in it and applies those bodies to a contested ideology. A war is being fought over an ideology that doesn't hold a position of absolute authority; put another way, wars are fought over competing visions of how the world is and/or ought to be, and the significance of the body in war is its incontestable existence. Bodies destroyed in a war lend the abstract material weight, because a body injured or destroyed in war will never *not* be part of that war:

[T]he legitimacy of the outcome outlives the end of the contest because so many of its participants are frozen in a permanent act of participation: that is, the winning issue or ideology achieves for a time the force and status of material “fact” by the sheer material weight of the multitudes of damaged and opened human bodies. (62)

In war and in torture alike, a body is what it is because of what's been done to it, the context of its injury and destruction. The body itself may or may not share the identity and ideology for which it's been destroyed, and it doesn't need to. The only meaningful truth is that self-destroying pain or that frozen participation, and the context in which it occurs. The fact that the body is difficult to dispose of is another major point; as evidence, it is incontestable.

However, while it's possible to draw a number of meaningful connections between torture and warfare—especially as described by Scarry—there are crucial differences, chief among these being the fact that in these three extermination camps, what ultimately worked (though not successfully in the end) as a reinforcement of the racially purified utopia as a legitimate goal was the *absence* of the bodies of the victims, not their frozen participation in the project by virtue of their corpses' visibility. Not even figures served that purpose; while we clearly have estimations of the numbers of the dead, no estimations of those numbers were kept on the Nazi side as proof of the legitimacy of the perfect world they were working to bring into being. No one produced ledgers of the millions killed as a form of argument. The evidence in service to the argument would simply be the absence of Jews once the Final Solution was completed.

Extermination of Jews ultimately justified by ideology and conspiracy theories, not physical traits. Based on perceived actions. However, racial science

reinforced the idea that Jewishness was seated in the literal physical body, thereby tying actions to the body and therefore to identity, and vice versa. The conflation of body, identity, and action as drivers for murder must be understood “If, as Goebbels put it on several occasions, all Jews by virtue of their race were members of an international conspiracy waging war against Germany and were thus Germany’s enemies, then the distinction between Jews’ identity and their actions disappeared” (2006: 151).

Again, the ideological justification doesn't mean that the bodies of the victims were unimportant. On the contrary, everything that was done to them and the context in which those things were done was of paramount importance until the moment those bodies were destroyed. It was necessary to destroy them because of their embodied identities, and those identities were imposed on the very DNA of the victims as part of a complex and lengthy process. This process involved the dehumanization common to all mass murder, but also the ways in which Nazis constructed the meaning of bodies according to the “science” behind their racial laws, and what those laws required be done to the wrong kinds of bodies. The mass slaughter of the Jews was in part justified by the biologization of ethnic identity, which made “Jewishness” impossible to escape from.

The Trap of the Political Body

The Nazi notion of racial purity lay at the core of the utopia of the Third Reich, a perfect world that would endure for a thousand years. That utopia would be achieved when the pure Aryan race dominated the world and enslaved or

exterminated the lesser races. Therefore, this utopia was profoundly biological in nature, and to be achieved through the discipline of managed breeding (Cesarani 2016). Jews were forbidden to engage in sexual intercourse with non-Jews, and in fact the rape of Jewish women by Aryan men was deemed a serious crime primarily by virtue of this fact (Cesarani 2016). In addition, it was generally accepted that “among half-Jews, the Jewish genes are notoriously dominant” (Hilberg 1985: 29). Even those with half-Jewish ancestry were considered far more Jewish than not, and as such irredeemable.

Recall that in the previous chapter on utopia, I noted that such social organization is managed as a “garden society”—that it is often conceived of as being managed along scientific lines. If purity is a foundational notion that underpins utopia, it almost inevitably follows that race will be a component. Utopia inherently contains the seed of destructive racism. As Zygmunt Bauman writes:

Racism stands apart by a practice of which it is a part and which it rationalizes: a practice that combines strategies of architecture and gardening with that of medicine - in the service of the construction of an artificial social order, through cutting out the elements of the present reality that neither fit the visualized perfect reality, nor can be changed so they do. (1989: 65)

For the Nazis, a crucial element in the construction of a racial enemy was the “scientific” process of identifying it. One of the motivations of this was deep anxiety about race down to the level of the individual, about unknown and unknowable heritage that damages one’s racial purity and therefore one’s existence as a legitimate part of the racial Aryan utopia. The very presence of Jews in society was a kind of insidious disease, with cancerous cells so mingled with healthy ones as to threaten the

purity of individual persons. An implied conclusion here is that while a racially pure utopia can be desired and worked toward, and the explicit narrative can be that it's not only attainable but imminent, the underlying narrative is that racial purity can in fact never be achieved, and the work of racially cleansing society never completed.

Writing about “elusive enemies”, Bartov elaborates on this narrative, describing the effect of Jews benefiting financially from the point of the Industrial Revolution and increasingly assimilating into a nation still beset by anti-Semitic prejudice:

If the new economic forces were anonymous and faceless, Jewish emancipation and assimilation created a new kind of Jew who could no longer be identified as such with the same ease as in the past. Seemingly indistinguishable from his gentile neighbors, “the Jew” as an identifiable “other” was disappearing at the same time as his power, according to the anti-Semitic logic, was expanding immeasurably...According to the skewed logic of racial hygiene, the Jews were both the lowest and most insidious race and the most zealous guardians of their own racial purity, even as they threatened to contaminate the higher races with inferior blood. (2000: 105)

Jews were everywhere. Racist “science” presented a way of unmasking them, of rendering a nebulous identity clearly material in the body itself. Yet Nazi ideology also held the notion of purification as something that had to continue as a supporting wall, never finishing and therefore disappearing from the scene. Arendt notes that totalitarianism is an eternally unfinished project; in order to sustain itself, it must never be completed and none of what comprises it can ever be normalized. The war must be eternal and there must always be an enemy to fight, and for the Nazis—while anti-Semitism was a preexisting core of their ideology and not a justification adopted

after the fact—the Jews were just such an existential threat, a supreme obstacle to be overcome before a utopian world could come into being. The “elusive enemy” Bartov writes of is a constant threat no matter how many of them are killed, arguing that “Nazism was not only committed to killing all the Jews but was predicated on the assumption that there would always be more Jews to kill” (2000: 111).

This meant that the ideology that built the gas chambers required more and more victims to sacrifice to the cause of purity, spurring broader bounds of identification; if Jewishness was materially present in the genes, culture and religion no longer mattered. Non-practicing Jews were every bit as Jewish as the most observant. Jews who had all but rejected Jewish identity, who had even converted to other faiths, were dragged back into it before they were killed. Bartov relates the case of Bauchwitz, a Jew who was baptized as a child and then imprisoned in a labor camp under Nazi rule:

When the camp commandant decided to hang him, he requested to be executed by firing squad, in recognition of his service as a German officer in World War I, for which he received the Iron Cross, First Class. The commandant responded, “For me you are a stinking Jew and will be hanged as such.” As Bauchwitz stood on the gallows, he called to the inmates, “Since I die as a Jew, I ask you Jews to say Kaddish after me.” (2000: 144)

What's of greatest significance for my argument is the fact that Bauchwitz died as a Jew, regardless of the identity he claimed for himself, and that the identity forced on him by his murderers determined the manner of his death. His embodied political identity determined how that body was treated, not only in how it was tortured and dehumanized but in how it was killed. To apply Scarry's notion of how

injury and death are inextricably bound up in the body, and the context and manner of injury and death “freeze” a body into participation in a political event aimed at affirming a version of reality, Bauchwitz’s identity as a Jew was made material in his death, solid in a way it hadn't been before. To some degree, Bauchwitz himself appears to have believed this, asking for death rites he likely otherwise would have rejected. Other religious identities could be set down and taken up, but “from Jewishness there was no escape” (Arendt 1968: 87) This attitude is rooted in *Mein Kampf* itself, in how Hitler conceived of Jews as both less than human and treacherous by virtue of their very biological nature (the text is full of eliminationist rhetoric centered around biology), making “of Jews a race from which no individual member of the group could escape his benighted condition” (Weitz 2015: 107).

Ironically, at least one Jew initially identified being forced into a Jewish identity as a positive thing, as something in which all the Jewish people should take pride. Writing on the topic of being forced to wear an identifying armband, Orthodox Jew and Zionist Chaim Kaplan said “[T]he conqueror is turning us into Jews whether we like it or not. Nobody is being discriminated against. The Nazis have marked us with the Jewish national colours, which are our pride” (2016: 269). He later revised that opinion; however, the point is that he perceived Nazi anti-Semitic laws as part of a process that forced a Jewish identity on everyone it identified as a member of that identity, regardless of whether or not they claimed it. Their identity was seated in their physical body, and as such they were never allowed to escape it.

Regarding the political significance in the manner of death, Scarry goes into significant (and frankly beautiful) detail in explaining how the moment of death in

war binds identity to the body in a way that can never be undone, and in so doing, binds the body to every element of the context in which it is violently altered:

[T]he boy in war is, to an extent found in almost no other form of work, inextricably bound up with the men and materials of his labor: he will learn to perceive himself as he will be perceived by others, as indistinguishable from the men of his unit, regiment, division, and above all national group (all of whom will share the same name: he is German) as he is also inextricably bound up with the qualities and conditions—berry laden or snow laden—of the ground over which he walks or runs or crawls and with which he craves and courts identification, as in the camouflage clothing he wears and the camouflage postures he adopts, now running bent over parallel with the ground it is his work to mime, now arching forward conforming the curve of his back to the curve of a companion boulder, now standing as upright and still and narrow as the slender tree behind which he hides; he is the elms and the mud, he is the one hundred and sixth, he is a small piece of German terrain broken off and floating dangerously through the woods of France. He is a fragment of American earth wedged into an open hillside in Korea and reworked by its unbearable sun and rain. He is dark blue like the sea. He is light grey like the air through which he flies. He is sodden in the green shadows of earth. He is a light brown vessel of red Australian blood that will soon be opened and emptied across the rocks and ridges of Gallipoli from which he can never again become distinguishable. (1985: 83)

The Jewish bodies abused and destroyed in the camps were subject to that treatment because of their embodied Jewishness, and the end result of that process was to lend their erasure real meaning and weight regarding the world without them that the Nazis were endeavoring to bring into being. This is one of the most important parts of the heterotopic nature of the camps, as it reinforces the dark mirror of the utopic world-to-come that the camps presented. In that sense, the camps were almost

holy sites in the most perverse possible way, spaces in which a cleansing ritual could be performed that could be carried out in no other space in quite that way. The space itself lends the ritual meaning; it exists for that purpose and for no other, and is set apart in a way that the site of a mass shooting in a Polish forest was not. As Weitz writes, the ways in which people are killed is a powerful signal as to who their killers believe they are, and has tremendous meaning for where each party stands in relation to the other, a “ritual that carries layers of symbolic meaning” (2015: 230).

At this point I want to make my additional argument: that the Jewish body itself, in their relationship to their own destruction, can be understood as a form of heterotopia, one within the other of the camps, and therefore contributing to the ways in which these heterotopias of making and unmaking are fundamentally different from other forms.

The fear and revulsion that Nazi antisemitism attached to “the Jew within” ultimately sprang from the sense that the Jewish identity was a thing apart and separate from the rest of society, a cultural space within which rules were suspended and things that ought to have been predictable and knowable disappeared into indecipherable chaos. Zygmunt Bauman writes of how the social position of European Jews presented, for the gentiles around them, an uncomfortable mix of strata. Jews were pariahs, disliked, distrusted, and marginalized, but they also achieved a degree of status and influence through their work for nobility (1989: 46). There were boundaries drawn between them and the society through which they moved, and yet for Europeans steeped in antisemitism, Jewishness was in some ways difficult to define even though it was clearly delineated.

The religious origin of antisemitism, especially in Germany, is impossible to deny and impossible to overstate in terms of its significance. Jews, in their refusal to accept the divinity of Christ—and even more, the way they were consistently painted as “Christ-killers”—were already anathema in a Christian society, often tolerated but never accepted and always discriminated against. More, because their religious identity and ethnic identity were completely enmeshed, the general feeling was that one could never truly stop being a Jew. Even Jewish converts to Christianity were regarded with dislike and suspicion. Religious notions of purity and uncleanness presented Jews as sullied by sin on the most fundamental level, so severely that only the vengeful fire of God could ever cleanse the world of them. In his 1543 book *On Jews and Their Lies*, Martin Luther expresses this sentiment with particular viciousness:

What shall we Christians do with this rejected and condemned people, the Jews? Since they live among us, we dare not tolerate their conduct, now that we are aware of their lying and reviling and blaspheming. If we do, we become sharers in their lies, cursing and blasphemy. Thus we cannot extinguish the unquenchable fire of divine wrath, of which the prophets speak, nor can we convert the Jews.

Even after the political influence of religion began to subside, this construction of the Jewish identity persisted. It merely found new ways to justify itself. Notions of purity and uncleanness left theology and took on the mantle of racist pseudoscience; what had been identified as religious faith and nature now became a matter of genetics. Jews could only ever be Jews, and nothing, not even their own intentions, could change them:

[T]he post-ecclesiastic enemies of Jewry also took the idea that the Jews could not be changed, that they could not be converted, that they could not be assimilated, that they were a finished product, inflexible in their ways, set in their notions, fixed in their beliefs. (Hilberg 1985: 7)

However, the Nazi racial “scientists” still struggled with how to identify the enemy, especially as laws enforcing racial purity were drawn up and put into effect. Rather than clearly drawn lines based in hard science, there was tremendous confusion regarding whether to identify Jews through religion or through physical attributes. Some Jews were non-religious. Other Jews did not “look like” Jews. The approach swung wildly back and forth, at times proving self-contradictory.

Regarding how a totalitarian Nazi state came to engage with Jewish identity in terms of official policy and law, this became especially and ludicrously blatant in how Jews of mixed parentage and Jews married to non-Jews were categorized. Special, extremely complex rules for “Mischlinge”—these people occupying a racially liminal space—were drawn up and put into uneven practice, which at first determined how someone might take part in public life, and later whether or not they would die. These laws, though they were heavily based on parentage, also took into account whether or not someone was a practicing Jew, and to what degree they could be evaluated as culturally “German”. The confusion regarding how to define identity and how identity was embodied continued, and the end result was that the Jewish body and the Jewish identity were inseparable. As I’ve said in previous chapters, the anti-Semitic core at the heart of the Nazi state drove this in a way that was impossible to avoid or stop. The way the camps were designed, spaces organized around identity and the

erasure of those embodied identities, had its roots in the political organization of the state itself.

One particularly odd exception to the general rules concerned people who were genetically Aryan but were practicing members of the Jewish faith. The conclusion of the court who examined one specific case was that such a person was to be treated as Jewish for as long as they associated with Judaism and the Jewish community, because as they had chosen to consort with Jews, they had taken on the cultural characteristics of a Jew. That person “feels bound to Jewry” (Hilberg 1985: 36), and as such is suspect.

Therefore, here we see strange legal contortions as the Reich struggled to define the intrinsic in-born negative characteristics of Jewishness, unable to fully settle on whether those characteristics were primarily cultural or biological in nature. Regardless, however, as an identity with dire implications for the fate of a human body, the identity was inescapable.

Others and Outsiders

Rather than being fully assimilated members of a nation, the Jews were a nation within a nation, and not confined within the borders of any one nation. Yet they were not exactly nomadic, making permanent homes and building families and lives. They were residents, not visitors, and yet also not quite residents, something resembling foreigners while being unlike any other foreigner (1989: 52). Jews defied easy categorization and occupied a space of porous liminality, though again, they might be considered by non-Jews to maintain an extreme degree of racial purity.

Indeed, some actively resisted full assimilation even as they assimilated, seeking to maintain a separate identity even while they adopted the identity of the nation in which they lived. In this, they were “insiders as outsiders” (2000: 93). As Hannah Arendt writes on the complexities of European anti-Semitism, the representation of the Jew as the incarnation of evil is usually blamed on remnants and superstitious memories from the Middle Ages, but is actually closely connected with the more recent ambiguous role which Jews played in European society since their emancipation. (1968: 354).

By the beginning of the twentieth century, with the rearranging and establishing of nations shaped in part by a catastrophic world war, a national identity that refused to conform to the generally accepted logic of a nation and its people was intolerable. Jewishness as an identity was a space incongruent with the wider social space within which it existed. Indeed, with the creation of the Nuremberg laws, the way the Nazi regime constructed Jewishness extended into the past, rewriting and erasing a part of history that Jews would traditionally have turned to as a source of defense: their service in war. Important documents no longer mattered. Jews no longer had a claim on a vital proof of citizenship and as such their legal status as outsiders was reinforced along with their cultural status. Cesarani: “[N]ation and race were now considered coterminous and...the Jews were aliens in Germany despite what their passports said or what their war record demonstrated” (63).

In Bauman’s words, Jews “were in such a [non-national] void; they were such a void” (1989: 53). They were identified as a nation of sorts, but not a nation that could ever integrate into the nation they lived in. Where national identity was

concerned, they were locked into a space of simultaneously hard borders and fuzzy definitions, into and out of which passage was difficult and inside which was alarming and unfamiliar, an ordering that wasn't wholly unrecognizable and in some respects even mirrored what was considered conventional society, but was also hopelessly other. They not only occupied a heterotopic space but were themselves that space—embodied, and when the lethal pseudoscience of racial hygiene overtook Western Europe, that embodied identity became physical in a problematic way for which there was only one solution.

Obviously not all heterotopias represent threats, and most of them are not subject to destruction on account of that sense of threat. Essentially none of the examples Foucault provides fit into this mold, nor do the other examples listed in previous chapters. Heterotopias perform a function in terms of their relationship to the society they mirror and to which they are connected; that function in significant part determines their nature. But the Jewish identity did perform a function. It provided an enemy against which Nazi ideology and its notion of purity could set itself. Utopia must be a project of cleansing; Jewish identity, in its separate blurry resistance to definition, provided that project with something to cleanse. Its flexibility enabled anti-Semites to embed it with whatever unclean quality they chose (1989: 52).

In performing this role, a heterotopic Jewish identity can be understood as just as much a heterotopia of unmaking and making as the extermination camps in which it and the bodies with which it was inextricably entwined were destroyed. The camps existed for one purpose and one alone: making through unmaking, by their own

design to be unmade once their work was done, thereby completing their parts in the creation of a new and perfect world—even one that could in fact never be attained.

By the same token, the camps required the existence of Jewish bodies in order to exist themselves; without them, they would serve no purpose.

Nazi antisemitism did not create the identity of European Jews in all its richness and complexity. Nor did it alone create the racist pseudoscience that justified the attempt to erase that identity from the world. But it did weave those things together into the Jewish body in a way that both required and justified destruction—which was in turn required for the creation of a perfected world absent Jews. In that sense, Nazi ideology constructed the very bodies that they destroyed, freezing identity into those bodies and then freezing it in a much more final sense by destroying the bodies in the way their identities demanded. Bauchwitz was hanged as a Jew; his embodied Jewishness foreclosed on the option of firing squad as a more honorable method of execution, regardless of whether or not he had rejected Judaism.

In short, the Nazis created a Jewish body which by its nature demanded destruction—which existed solely to be destroyed. To be sure, the initial destruction of the Jewish body did not require the heterotopic space of the camps; in purely practical terms, mass shooting sufficed, although it was considered problematic as a killing technique, and not efficient enough for the task. But once these heterotopic bodies entered the camps, they formed a circuit of project and purpose that made the camps into the heterotopias they became, and which gave the bodies—as they were unmade—the ultimate end for which they were constructed. For this manifestation of heterotopia to be intelligible, both should be understood together.

The Nazis sought to create a utopia free of Jews, racially purified and therefore purified in every way that mattered. In the process they created a separate space where reason was turned on its head, where the boundaries between life and death blurred and the lines between human and non-human disappeared, where truth lost its meaning, where something could be made only when millions of people were unmade. Bodies are at the center of this; indeed, there is no other center. I've argued that the denial of memorial through the erasure of the bodies of victims played a significant role in the way these heterotopias worked to bring about the utopia of which they were a dark mirror, but that denial—and the dehumanization that preceded it—is not fully explicable unless we address why the bodies mattered in the first place, and why it was necessary to specifically destroy them. Without the demonized Jewish identity that the Nazis constructed, aided by centuries of antisemitism, the drive to completely destroy Jews arguably would not have been as intense; as Herf argues, the “Jewish Enemy” had to be created before it could be annihilated. The bodies mattered because of who possessed them.

Indeed, to return to earlier in the chapter and in chapter 2, this notion can be connected back to Foucault's writing on biopower, on social relations constructed and transacted within the space of the human body. Bodies as spaces within spaces ruled by disciplinary regimes, those greater spaces joined in a network that reinforces those regimes; as Grosz writes, again, cities can be conceived of as networks that bring bodies under control. Bodies also as sites of knowledge formation, of knowing the body as a means to knowing the self. How bodies are arranged in meaningful spaces determines how we behave, how we think, how we understand ourselves and each

other—and therefore how we treat each other. Criminal, ill, and insane people are to be controlled in specific ways in specific places; again, those identities are essentialized in the body. *Bodies are spaces within spaces*. They are delineated from one another and from their context by borders, but those borders are in flux, are subject to arrangement, and inside them the space may be ordered in a variety of different ways, with tremendous consequences. A space may figuratively (and sometimes literally) reorder the interior of a body, and the interior of the body will also work to order the meaning of the external space. Different bodies are part of the construction of different social relations, and different social relations determine what happens to those bodies.

Put simply, power over space is power over the space of the body. One leads directly to the other, and the two work in a circuit of social power. As Weitz puts it, “the total power over space is fear-inspiring because it means control over the individual body” (2015: 232).

Imbued with intrinsic and incurable evil, described as not only a dangerous pest but Other in a way that made it frighteningly alien and to some degree incomprehensible except as an enemy, the Jewish identity as regarded by anti-Semites had to be created in order to be destroyed, and it served no other purpose than its own destruction. Within it, the rules of conventional, accepted identity were suspended and logic was perceived as breaking down. In this way, Jewish identities in Jewish bodies served as their own dark mirrors in the context of the camps. They reflected their own absence, the unacceptable present and the desirable future drawn together as they were destroyed.

Again, this chapter should serve as merely an introduction of potential avenues for analysis rather than a truly in-depth analysis in and of itself. Nevertheless, I believe that introduction, like this larger work, holds promise for an expansion of studies of heterotopias, especially regarding the ways in which the notions of heterotopia and utopia are connected through the process from one to the other.

* * *

Everything in the chapters previous leads directly into some form of discussion of the body. In terms of the significance of physical spaces and objects, I've covered the actual structures of the camps and the ways they were used, the organization of belongings and the way they were stripped of their meaning, and the ways in which human beings were drawn into the alternately ordered world of the camps before they were killed. Those paths lead inexorably to the ultimate destruction of both bodies and structures, the ways in which the erasure of corpses and camps made memorialization impossible (or at least that was the intention) and therefore destroyed memory itself, finalizing the camps as places not only cut off from the rest of space but cut off in time as well.

But I could never leave it there. The bodies were treated the way they were *because of what those bodies were*, and that identity was complex and extended well beyond the physical while remaining inextricably tied to it. At some point, it becomes nearly impossible to keep from analyzing these embodied identities as spaces in and of themselves.

Conclusion

One of the images from *Maus* that stayed with me through the many years since I first read the books is a series of panels in which Spiegelman walks down a city street surrounded by corpses.

The visual device isn't frequently repeated. But it crescendos in the image of Spiegelman sitting at his drafting table on top of an immense pile of corpses, all of them nude, all of them barely distinguishable from each other. The sense isn't of *many* but of *one*; of individuals who have melted together into a single omnipresent number. Clearly the references used for the drawing are the photographs of corpses and mass graves taken at the camps, and they're used not merely to convey that sense of overwhelming numbers but to show in the clearest possible way how overwhelmed Spiegelman feels by the enormity of the task he's set for himself. He feels at a loss regarding how to fairly present not only the stories his father is telling him, but the larger historical context for those stories, the incomprehensibly huge numbers behind the smaller and more approachable figures.

There are many characters in *Maus*, but they're manageable, and the story is always centered on a very small number. Yet Spiegelman doesn't see himself surrounded by them—or he doesn't depict himself that way. Instead he's surrounded on all sides by faceless history, by faceless death that defies understanding, let alone description.

As I dug further and further into this project, I felt myself fitting more and more into that image, or perhaps it would be fairer to say that I felt it fitting more and

more to me. I would go for a walk and imagine myself walking between mounds of dead bodies. A key difference is that I wasn't distressed by the image so much as perplexed by it and by what it represented to me: the same basic inability to grasp and convey what I was dealing with, yet without the profound personal connection. The story I was telling was not my story. My connection to it was entirely consensual; it was a thing which, more or less, I chose, and as such I didn't experience it as painful so much as frustrating.

I don't know if I would have found it easier to grapple with the sense of distance and the impossibility of truly engaging the story if it had been my story. I suspect that it wouldn't. Some things might indeed have been easier, but a whole new set of challenges would have arisen. Trying to draw a clear connection between heterotopia, utopia, and the camps might not have been intellectually overwhelming in the same way, but I can't help but believe that the emotional pressure could have been nearly crippling.

Spiegelman was haunted by the weight of his family's history. I've been haunted too, but by the lack of that weight.

* * *

I spoke in the preface and introduction about what originally attracted—a terrible word for something like this but it's the one I'll go with—me to things like the Holocaust, to historical events that were not only exceptional but unimaginably terrible in a literal way. This was somewhat morbid fascination, but as I said, I suspect it was also the tension between the large and small, the intellectual and the

visceral, the desire to understand how something like that happens and the inability to do any such thing.

When I began this project, I was setting out to address the notion of heterotopia, to explore and expand on an aspect of it that I felt had been neglected and which was worth addressing given its very real consequences. Given that, what I was trying to do from the very beginning was navigate the space between the intellectual and what I felt at the level of the gut, actual blood and injured flesh and death. Not only destroyed bodies, but destroyed *people*. When I first encountered and wrote about heterotopia, the idea and its implications captivated me, but it didn't feel as though there was anything truly at *stake*. By charting a path through heterotopia to utopia and presenting heterotopia as—at least potentially—a crucial stop along the way, I hoped to discover what those stakes might actually be, since my own thinking on utopia had, for several years, focused on its more dire possibilities.

Foucault's own writing about heterotopia reads as a man playing with an idea, musing on it and laying out a set of definitions for it, as well as examples of what it looks like in practice. But it never goes much beyond musings on the deeper meaning of physical space. Initially he describes it in terms of language, and of what language allows where imagination and the articulation of concepts is concerned. Later he shifts to space itself, to alternate arrangements of bodies and power, the altering and suspension of social and even spatial-temporal rules. The use of spaces, the ways in which they are and are not occupied, the ways in which they function, the ways in which they appear and disappear and the meanings that each varying aspect imply—all are referred to, but none are presented in much more detail than that reference.

While he lays important foundations for further work on heterotopia, he never gets as far as more rigorous discussions of what it is and what it might be. He leaves that work to others.

Those others do in fact engage with more of heterotopia's practical implications (list them). But for me, none of those are truly compelling as far as stakes are concerned. How space is constructed and arranged touches life/death, reality/unreality, and creation/destruction, and I believed—and believe, and hope I've argued effectively—that heterotopia provides a way to approach those things, and the tension between them. More, heterotopia provides a way to envision what happens when the distinctions between them are blurred, and even vanish altogether.

And finally, one of Foucault's most interesting and most neglected points—something that earns barely more than a passing mention—is the relationship between heterotopia and utopia. Again, Foucault doesn't say much about the political implications of that relationship, and even less about its most basic practical implications. Nevertheless, those implications are there to be worked through. The question of what they were is what initially interested me. The question of what's at stake is why I initially felt this was work worth doing in the first place.

Throughout the course of this project, I've tried to keep those questions my focus. A great deal of that has been for the sake of practicality; a dissertation that sought to explain the Holocaust itself—or even a significant part of it—would be so long as to be presently impractical. Yet, like I said in the introduction, the Holocaust itself proved highly resistant to not being the focus. Even as I tried to keep heterotopia and utopia the center of the dissertation, the Holocaust was like a body

dense enough to create its own gravity well, dragging everything ever-closer to itself. It refused to be a means to an end; I kept turning toward it, and I kept finding myself at a loss. No description of the camps was enough to get at the guts of it. Theory felt like a dodge. There was an event horizon of sheer *realness* which I simply couldn't cross.

At this point, I can't help but return to *Maus*, and Spiegelman's decision to make his characters anthropomorphic creatures with their species tied to their ethnicities and nationalities. In a sense, he dehumanized his own characters, not in the sense of stripping away what made them feel real and meaningful and alive, but literally in the sense of rendering them no longer human. The one time we do see human beings, in a comic from earlier in Spiegelman's career wherein he attempts to grapple with his mother's suicide and his own inability to deal with it or his grieving father at the time, the humans are drawn as distorted, nearly nightmarish figures. I recall being just as disturbed by those human figures as I was by the depictions of the worst atrocities Spiegelman's father witnessed.

I try to imagine *Maus* with humans instead of mice, and it's nearly impossible. I simply can't picture it.

When I was a child, *Maus* caught my eye simply because I liked anthropomorphic animals. But there's something deeper going on. Spiegelman expresses the excruciating difficulty in relaying what his father is telling him in comic book form; he openly wonders if the medium can ever be up to the task. As such, making the characters into animals feels like a breakthrough. It feels like just the right

amount of distance to allow him to tell the story and a reader to experience it. As a device, it's a kind of solar eclipse viewer; through it one can see.

Yet it still means that we're not looking directly *at* the object. We're still working with a filtered image. We still aren't experiencing it as it truly was and is.

I can't escape the feeling that I might have been trying to use theory in that way. That, while my conscious questions were regarding heterotopia, ultimately those questions were merely a lens through which I ended up trying to see the worst of the Holocaust, some of the worst that human beings could do to one another. That, caught between the micro and the macro, these questions were serving not so much as a way to make the incomprehensible comprehensible as to make it possible to behold these events at all. Which, much like the creation of a utopia, would always be an unattainable goal.

In short, I can't help but wonder if I was trapping myself.

* * *

The body might be the purest expression of this problem. As a chapter, I feel that the body-as-heterotopia is one of the most intriguing notions I have here and also one of the most incompletely explored (in that way I suppose I'm only carrying on Foucault's tradition where heterotopia is concerned). Recall Scarry's writing on pain, on the way pain does violence to articulation and destroys language. Pain can be experienced but not fully explained. You can write and think *around* pain, but the space of pain itself is a space in which coherence breaks down into screams.

Atrocity on the level of the Holocaust is not exactly pain, but I believe that it and pain fall, in some ways, into the same category. One can think around it, but to

enter its space is to enter a space in which thought is no longer possible. The process of mass killing was horrifically orderly, but the truth of its horror is incoherent.

In the end, writing about planning and the construction of structures and the processing of belongings feels like another dodge. The body is the prime site of all the pain and all the destruction; the identity of the body is what justifies its destruction to the destroyers, and determines how that destruction will take place. Identity is embodied, especially in the context of racist pseudoscience; what kind of space does that result in? What is the body? What are the truths that we can discover on the level of the body? Perhaps by going into literal flesh and blood, we can finally break through the distance and face what happened and what was done.

Yet clearly that also didn't work. Like I said, I think the notion is an interesting one, but as an avenue for approach, it fails. Or at least I couldn't make it succeed. And once again, that wasn't even supposed to be my goal.

* * *

Where might this work go next, both in terms of the work I might do and in work done by others? While I'm focusing here on a small and specific set of cases, I don't believe that the tools I'm beginning to develop need to be confined to those cases. In this project I've (appropriately) turned the customary order of things on its head, and used the cases to develop the theory rather than the theory to develop understanding of the cases. But now that the theory has been and can be further developed, I see ways in which it could be flipped again, and used to deepen an analysis of why these kinds of spaces in the context of mass killing and genocide look the way they do.

As I've gone through the process of shaping this project, I've begun to glean the larger project that might grow out of it. Taken further along those lines, this would likely form a relatively small part of a larger work that makes use of what I've done here, in a comparative-historical analysis of different instances of camps and other spaces set aside. Genocides and cases of ethnic cleansing almost always occur as part of some larger movement toward a world that those carrying out the violence want to create—a better one, cleansed of the people they've identified as standing in the way of that world. A better future can't come to be unless and until the enemy in their midst has been removed or eliminated. What are the different elements of these different forms of—figuratively if not literally and explicitly—utopia? How developed and well-articulated are they, what do they look like, and how do cultural and political concerns shape them? If they occur in the context of war, how does the war act to shape them as well? If they occur in other instances of institutional upheaval, what role does that play? How can we then take these factors and couple them with the notion of heterotopia to better understand why these “other spaces” look and function the way they do?

This need not even be confined to mass killing; spaces of detention of many kinds might have a place among the cases. Concentration camps in general could reasonably be included, or other spaces of alternate ordering of legal status such as the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay could be examined using these tools—the world we want to create and why we've constructed these spaces in the pursuit of that world. The current humanitarian crisis at the United States' southern border is worth examining: what about the confluence of cultural and political variables in the Trump

administration—and how it has rearranged intuitions and eroded norms—has led to the construction of these concentration camps to house people of a particular legal status? “MAGA” implies an imagined ideal past to which its followers want to return, one with a strong ethnonationalist element. If the camps are heterotopias, what about the relationship between utopia and heterotopia can illuminate the nature of their establishment?

And finally, how have the ways Donald Trump has drawn on and reinforced the construction of a specific enemy played a role? The enemy that stands in the way of the new world must be identified and presented as incompatible with that world, leaving no option but their removal. How does that construction shape these spaces? How can we compare other cases of the enemy within that must be destroyed?

These are only a few of the places I see this project potentially going next, but there are likely many others. In short, the preliminary work done here opens the way for many other avenues of investigation, both drawing on methods already in use and pushing them forward into new areas.

* * *

But in the midst of considering where else this might go, the other fact I can't escape is that, unlike Spiegelman, this is not my story to tell.

As I said at the beginning of this conclusion, when it comes to distance, one exists between me and my subject matter that doesn't between Spiegelman and his. The Holocaust is not a story I grew up with, either as a piece of family history that no one will discuss or as one that people can't help discussing. I might have learned the

basic points of the Holocaust in schools, but when I picked up *Maus*, it was still essentially an alien story to me.

Even so, I felt a fascination with it that I likely couldn't have resisted even if I wanted to, spurred in significant part by a desire to understand. But I think there was an even more basic motivation behind that fascination: an instinctive desire simply to look and see in full, to grasp the complete reality of the core elements of the events. We feel an irresistible urge to look at horrific things; we slow down and turn our heads to catch a glimpse of a particularly gruesome traffic accident. The impulse doesn't hold true across the board, there are always people who feel it to varying degrees or don't feel it at all, but so many of us are compelled to look at something horrible, precisely because *it is so horrible*.

Something inside us needs to look, and keep looking until we've processed the horror.

If that was in fact one of my semi-conscious motivations for starting this project, there's no way I was ever going to be able to achieve that end. The fact remains that I did start the project, and I did continuously wrestle with my inability to process. What I've since come to believe is that perhaps theory in general and heterotopia in particular has served as my own anthropomorphic lens. That, shaped by my initial lack of personal connection to my subject matter, I've created my own filter through which to glimpse the horror. Understanding through analysis has been a way to work *around* the Holocaust without ever truly engaging *with* it. Yet it insists on direct attention.

I don't think this work provides a solution to that problem. It's simply a flaw running through the entire dissertation, defining it even as it weakens parts of it. Indeed, looking at it from the other side, I'm not certain that I *want* to correct it. I'm not certain that it requires correction, even it is in fact a weakness. I feel that it may be an important weakness, a line running through my personal history—and lack thereof where the Holocaust is concerned—and shaping what this project has ultimately become. If it prevents me from making sense of the history, regardless of whether or not that was my explicit aim to begin with, it also helps to explain why the problem exists in the first place, and why we find it elsewhere,

In the end, understanding something like the Holocaust is in itself a liminal space in which to stand, a place where coherence is turned on its head and none of the traditional analytical tools work in quite the ways they should. The space does serve a purpose: like any heterotopia, it defines not only itself but everything outside it, everything to which it stands in opposition.

In the introduction, I used the image of bleeding earth as a way to frame the ways in which a story like this passes through the territory of the fantastic, and I find myself there again. The fantastic is not reasonable; it merely is. When one emerges from it, they may not carry with them any expanded understanding of what is. What they carry is an expanded vision of what might be, a larger dream of the future. And some of those dreams are nightmares.

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