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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Prison as a Heterotopia: Deviation, Crisis, and Temporality in Rene Denfeld's *The Enchanted*

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| ABSTRACT
Rene Denfeld's *The Enchanted* presents a harrowing exploration of incarceration, trauma, and systemic marginalization. This article applies Michel Foucault's theoretical framework on heterotopia—specifically heterotopias of deviation, crisis heterotopias, transitory heterotopias, and heterochronia—to critically examine the prison as a liminal space where societal norms are both reinforced and contested. The novel portrays prison as a heterotopia of deviation, illustrating how society isolates those deemed abnormal to enforce conformity. Through this lens, *The Enchanted* highlights the prison's role in shaping identities through cycles of punishment rather than rehabilitation. Additionally, while crisis heterotopias traditionally refer to spaces designated for individuals undergoing significant life transitions, the novel's depiction of the prison suggests that perpetual surveillance and suffering create an ongoing state of crisis. This environment compels prisoners to construct an imaginary world as a psychological refuge from oppression. The prison is also examined as a transitory heterotopia, revealing the contradiction between its intended function as a temporary corrective space and its reality as a site of sustained violence, which often impedes reintegration into society. Lastly, the novel's engagement with heterochronia underscores the prison's disruption of conventional temporalities, illustrating how incarceration warps the perception of time and reinforces existential stagnation. By employing Foucault's heterotopian analysis, this article demonstrates how *The Enchanted* critiques the penal system, exposing its failures and the deep-rooted power structures that shape the experience of imprisonment.

| KEYWORDS
Heterotopia; incarceration; Foucault; marginalization; trauma; temporality.

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1. Introduction

Rene Denfeld's fictional novel, *The Enchanted*, offers a profound exploration of injustice, trauma, and the dehumanizing effects of incarceration. Interwoven with the main plot are the stories of several inmates, highlighting their individual struggles and the systemic issues within the prison. This article deploys Michel Foucault's concepts of heterotopia of deviation, crisis heterotopia, heterochronia, and the evolving and transitory nature of heterotopias to reflect on the prison as a space of otherness, where societal norms are both reflected and subverted. Simultaneously, Foucault's notions on the history of Madness, how Madness emerged as a disease and evolved, provide a critical framework to interrogate how the novel depicts the intersections of madness, marginalization, and power in a heterotopian space. An analysis of these elements provides a lens through which the novel's discourse is better understood. Deviation and its subsequent repercussions are the most noticeable theme in the narrative of *The Enchanted* as Denfeld presents a critical examination of society's relentless pursuit of excommunication and confinement of these oddities. Employing Foucault's theories on heterotopia of deviation demonstrates the hierarchies between the normal and the deviant and a desire to suppress individuality and enforce conformity. Moreover, through Foucault's heterotopia of deviation, prison becomes a site for illustrating the contradictory nature of societal norms. In this sense, there are invisible tensions between

societal exclusion and potential transformation within this heterotopia. This assessment renders an insight into this work's exploration of the defective system of the prison.

Crisis heterotopias are indirectly applicable to the prison setting in *The Enchanted*, as the prisoners potentially experience a form of crisis within their confinement. The constant surveillance, lack of privacy, and exposure to suffering create a perpetual state of crisis for the inmates. From this perspective, the dungeons and the solitude they offer transform these places of punishment into safe havens for the inmates undergoing brutal and inhumane treatments. This constant crisis also leads to the creation of an imaginary world, the enchanted world, by the prisoners as an escape from the harsh realities of their living conditions. Prison in *The Enchanted* also serves as a transitory heterotopia. Like prisons in general, the prison in *The Enchanted* functions as a space of temporary confinement for individuals who have committed crimes, with the goal of correction or rehabilitation. The narrative follows characters, including the white-haired boy and York, processed through the system upon arrival, assigned work and cellblocks, and subject to the prison's disciplinary rules. Their sentences reflect a designated period of removal from mainstream society. However, while the prison's primary concern should be the possibility of rehabilitation and a return to normalcy, the novel quickly dispels this simplistic notion of transience, revealing the brutal realities of prison life that often hinder genuine transformation. For instance, the unnamed narrator, trapped in the dungeon, finds solace in books and constructs a magical world to cope with the trauma and isolation.

This suggests that the experience of imprisonment, notably in such extreme conditions, leads to profound psychological shifts that persist even after release. The novel depicts the prison as a space where violence and abuse are not only tolerated but often thrive. The unchallenged power dynamics among inmates indicate how the prison environment perpetuates cycles of harm, shaping individuals' identities and limiting their opportunities, making a true return to society difficult, if not impossible. That is to say, the transitory nature of the prison originates not from its temporary confinement of individuals but from its constant adaptation to the evolving demands of power and control. Therefore, applying Foucault's heterotopia to the narrative of the novel demonstrates the prison not just as a physical structure but as a complex microcosm reflecting the anxieties, desires, and contradictions of society.

2. Literature Review

Contemporary literature often reflects modern anxieties related to social justice, power dynamics, identity, and memory, especially within carceral or marginalized contexts. The advent of postmodernism, characterized by fragmented narratives, unreliable narrators, and the deconstruction of literary forms, has influenced how these themes are presented. This narrative style has allowed authors to challenge conventional storytelling and explore psychological depth, historical trauma, and institutional critique. Although The Enchanted primarily explores incarceration, it resonates with contemporary concerns like marginalization, systemic violence, and psychological trauma—topics frequently addressed in postmodern fiction. Within this literary framework, Rene Denfeld's The Enchanted (2014) demonstrates how modern authors embed such concerns into their fictional worlds through layered, often metafictional, storytelling.

While critical engagement with The Enchanted remains limited, existing scholarship includes works that analyze its treatment of trauma, magical realism, and prison reform. For example, scholars such as Kristin M. Syers (2017) have examined the novel's depiction of death row and psychological isolation, while others have focused on its ethical implications for restorative justice.In broader literary studies, Foucault's concept of heterotopia has been applied to carceral spaces in the works of Michel Foucault (1986), Johnson (2006), and Dehaene & De Cauter (2008), offering a theoretical foundation for interpreting prisons as heterotopias of deviation. Although not always directly applied to Denfeld's text, these frameworks provide valuable insights into how spaces of confinement operate symbolically and materially in literature. By synthesizing scholarship from carceral studies, magical realism, and spatial theory, this article contributes to a growing body of interdisciplinary work concerned with the socio-political functions of prison in fiction.

3. Methodology

This study incorporates an interdisciplinary approach to deconstruct Rene Denfeld's *The Enchanted*. Initially, it fosters a painstaking textual and subtextual analysis of this novel to unearth the nuanced ways in which these literary works converge with Michel Foucault's theories of heterotopia. Constituting largely on emplacement, heterotopia of deviation, crisis heterotopia, and heterochronia as the foundation for this research, enabled an extensive interpretation of each work. Not only each respective work analyzed for any traces of other spaces, tangible or intangible, but the narrative spaces have been observed to deduce their dominant heterotopias. Furthermore, these heterotopias are juxtaposed to unveil how they corroborate or repudiate Foucault's concepts. This method facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of how heterotopias beget systems that dictate isolation, identification, confinement, and excommunication.

4. Results and Discussion

Foucault's concept of "heterochronia" extends a conclusive lens through which to analyze *The Enchanted*. Heterochronias, as spaces that disrupt the conventional experience of time, forge alternative temporalities within the dominant flow. With its setting in a death row prison and its infusion of magical realism, *The Enchanted* offers an alluring example of how heterochronia manifests in both physical and psychological dimensions. The prison in the novel can be interpreted as a physical manifestation of heterochronia as it stands as a stark contrast to the temporal rhythms of the outside world. The routines, the endless repetition, and the looming specter of death all contribute to a distorted sense of temporality. This resonates with the narrator's experience in the dungeon. Time becomes fluid and unreliable, marked by a blurring of past, present, and future. The narrator's visions and their profound connection to literature offer a form of escape from the crushing weight of linear time, creating moments of reprieve within the oppressive reality of confinement. Further, prisons perform as time capsules, preserving archaic practices and social structures that have long since disappeared from mainstream society. This is evident in *The Enchanted*'s depiction of the prison's antiquated architecture and brutal punishments, which hark back to earlier eras of penal practice. The framework of heterochronia manifests the complex interplay of individual and collective temporalities in the novel, affirming the prison as a site where the past, present, and future collide.

4.1 Behind Bars: A Short Journey Through Prison History

To fully comprehend the heterotopia of prison, it is essential to explore the historical and social backdrop of the prison and how its function shifted and evolved. Prior to the nineteenth century, imprisonment was neither the primary form nor the dominant manifestation of punishment. Instead, public executions with elaborate rituals of torture and corporal punishment were favored. This was a public spectacle intended to deter crime and reassert the sovereign's power (Foucault, 1995, pp. 32–33). This approach focused on the body of the condemned as the primary site of punishment (p. 131). The issue with this system was not only the extreme form of punishment, but also the immunity of a selected few to these penalties. According to Giorgio Agamben (1998), a fundamental paradox at the heart of sovereignty is that the sovereign, who holds the power to decide on the exception and suspend the law, is simultaneously "outside and inside the juridical order" (Agamben et al., p. 15). This also instigates a situation where the law can be abolished by the very entity that it empowers. The paradox of sovereignty, therefore, pinpoints the inherent inconsistency and ambiguity of the juridical order, disclosing the exception as the bedrock of the rule. However, there was a shift in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries towards a more discreet and "humane" approach to punishment, with a focus on reforming the individual: Punishment had gradually ceased to be a spectacle. And whatever theatrical elements it still retained were now downgraded, as if the functions of the penal ceremony were gradually ceasing to be understood, as if this rite that 'concluded the crime' was suspected of being in some undesirable way linked with it. It was as if the punishment was thought to equal, if not to exceed, in savagery the crime itself, to accustom the spectators to a ferocity from which one wished to divert them, to show them the frequency of crime, to make the executioner resemble a criminal, judges murderers, to reverse roles at the last moment, to make the tortured criminal an object of pity or admiration. (Foucault, 1995, p. 9). The transition from public executions involved a process of gradual changes, including the abolition of the pillory and the use of prisoners for public works. This shift was stimulated by a confluence of factors, such as Enlightenment ideals of reason and human perfectibility, concerns surrounding the efficacy and barbarity of public executions, and the emergence of new prison models (pp. 55–56). This shift was mirrored in legal reforms and the development of new theories of law and crime. Nonetheless, the public execution continued to haunt penal systems, leading to further measures to conceal executions from public view. This transformation in punishment reflects a broader shift in power dynamics.

With the objectives of punishments shifting, the need for a more cautious practice emerged. Imprisonment initially held a marginal position in the penal system, often attributed to arbitrary royal decrees and regarded as a symbol of despotism (Foucault, 1995, p. 119). Thus, prison's rise to prominence as the dominant form of punishment in the nineteenth century marks a turning point in how society handles crime and deviance. The prisons intended to morally and spiritually rehabilitate individuals and prepare them for reintegration into society through a series of deciplinary acts (pp. 119–120). The "body" of public torture, then, succumbed to a new focus on the "soul" (Foucault, 1995, p. 16). This shift indicates a transformation in the way power functioned. This newfound disciplinary power, unlike sovereign power, is characterized by its focus on the scrupulous control of bodies and minds, rather than inflicting pain and inducing terror (Foucault, 1995, p. 136–137). Discipline, contrary to earlier forms of power like slavery, operates through subtle techniques of surveillance, normalization, and individualization to produce docile and useful subjects. The prison, for Foucault (1995), is the prototypical example of disciplinary power in action (p. 209). The institution of prison, therefore, aims to govern and subjugate every aspect of the individual's existence. This extends beyond simply depriving humans of liberty; it encompasses their physical training, work habits, daily conduct, moral attitude, and state of mind (p. 236). This system, however, blurred the lines between disciplinary control and legal punishment, subjecting individuals to accelerating levels of surveillance and regulation rooted in minor infractions or perceived deviations from societal norms.

Despite its focal position in the carceral system, the prison has consistently been censured for its failure to effectively diminish crime and maintain social control. One such critique is that prisons actually increase the number of criminals through the inhumane

conditions of confinement, the encouragement of recidivism, and the creation of a closed milieu of delinquency (Foucault, 1995, pp. 266–267). The recurring failure of the prison indicates that its function transcends simply eliminating offenses. The prison instead contributes to "differentiate" illegalities, establishing a hierarchy of deviance and control, and using delinquency as a tool for broader social surveillance (pp. 272–273). Therefore, the prison, although purported as a humane alternative to earlier forms of punishment, ultimately functions as a more pervasive mechanism of social control, blurring the lines between deviance, criminality, and punishment.

However, the delinquents were not the sole demographic experiencing imprisonment. Initially interwoven with social and economic elements, confinement arose as a response to poverty, unemployment, and moral transgressions. In the seventeenth century, this practice, termed the Great Confinement, saw the establishment of institutions like the Hôpital Général in Paris, where individuals deemed deviant were incarcerated (Foucault et al., 2013d, p. 47, 54). These repurposed hospitals were not only medical establishments but places for moral correction, where inmates were subjected to strict discipline and forced labor with the purpose of reforming their character (p. 73). Since the ethical framework of the time perceived poverty and idleness as moral failings, confinement was justified and considered as both a punishment and a support (p. 60). Rather than being propelled by humanitarian concerns, this shift was facilitated by an intricate interplay of social, political, and economic factors. The primary reason for this change was the advance of industrial capitalism which generated a decline in the economic benefits of confinement, as industrial institutions failed to effectively manage poverty and unemployment (2013d, pp. 67, 70). Another important factor in this shift was the evolving nature of work under industrial capitalism which demanded an available workforce, rendering the restrictive nature of confinement obsolete. This realization, coupled with increasing criticism of the inhumane conditions within these institutions, led to a gradual decline in the practice of confinement, at least for the poor and unemployed.

Detention and confinement extended beyond the poor and unemployed. It also included the insane, venereal-disease afflicted, homosexuals, and religious dissidents (Foucault et al., 2013c, p. 78). This combination of individuals depicts an ambiguous understanding of deviance, where moral transgressions, mental illness, and social inadequacy are conflated under the umbrella of "unreason" (Foucault et al., 2013). Over time, the confinement's focus realigned towards the insane, as other categories of deviance were gradually detached and governed through other systems of control (2013e, p. 396). Moreover, with the growing discernibility of madness within these institutions, along with their protests against their treatment, the issue of mental illness required immediate attention. The liberation of the insane from traditional captivity lacked a definitive break from the past. Instead, it constituted a restructuring of control. While physical restraints were removed, a new type of confinement emerged in the form of the asylum, where medical authority substituted moral correction (2013f, p. 426). The asylum objectified and medicalized madness, transforming it from a manifestation of unreason—a societal and moral issue—into a mental illness requiring specialized treatment (2013c, p. 87). However, this shift exceeds scientific advancements. The asylum, like the prison and despite its medical facade, perpetuated the power dynamics of confinement, imposing upon the insane a new system of surveillance, judgement, and control.

4.2 Enchanting Escapes: The Allure of Imagination

The enchanted world of the novel, *The Enchanted*, starts in a high-security prison, stark and unforgiving. Within this harsh reality exists another world, visible only to some. This is the world the unnamed narrator, a prisoner, sees, a world rich in symbolic imagery that blurs the line between reality and fantasy. Foucault (2000b) posits crisis heterotopias as spaces designed for individuals experiencing a rite of passage or a period of liminality and transformation (p. 179–180). Prison, as well as being a heterotopia of deviation, creates a perdurable state of crisis as an organization for punishment and rehabilitation. Not only is it physically set apart from the outside world, but it also exists in a liminal space that challenges societal norms. The setting emphasizes the status of the prisoners as outsiders, individuals who have transgressed societal boundaries and are now subject to a different set of rules and expectations. Many of the characters in *The Enchanted* grapple with profound personal crises, produced by traumatic experiences, mental illness, or the consequences of the inmates' actions. The prison alters to a space where the prisoners confront these crises, albeit in a distorted and often violent manner. What is more, crisis heterotopias accommodate contradictory elements. Joseph Pugliese (2009) drawing upon this concept explores two particular islands that function as both penal colonies and tourist destinations (p. 663). According to Pugliese, these islands simultaneously house two contrasting realities: The 'epoch of simultaneity' articulates the possibility of temporally juxtaposing two absolutely dichotomous figures – the wealthy tourist from the Global North and the utterly disenfranchised refugee from the Global South – within the same geographical space (Lampedusa); this same space at once positions the 'near and the far' 'side-by-side' in order to bring into focus the faultline of the border that assembles and configures the 'dispersed' in its matrix. (Pugliese, 2009, p. 664)

This contradiction attests to the discriminatory nature of crisis heterotopias for the less fortunate and marginalized communities. *The Enchanted*'s prison constitutes a similar heterotopia to these islands. For the inmates with connections and resources, the prison is safe and a place of relative leisure; while for the ordinary and the deviants, it is a space of inconceivable torture and punishment. Plus, the inmates' suffering and the "rape shed" in *The Enchanted*, is as invisible or unimportant to the outsiders as the refugee crisis to tourists in the islands. This duality in the idea of prison for the outsiders has its roots in the different perspective the outsiders have of this heterotopia. Hanneke Stuit explores how the experience of playing a prison escape game in a former

prison in Breda, the Netherlands, disrupts players' preconceived ideas about prisons and prison cells (Stuit et al., 2020). According to Stuit, escape rooms rely on the common tropes and images found in the carceral imaginary, such as the "lure of the prison cell," which presents the cell as a space of liminality and escape (2020, p. 307). This lure is furthered by popular prison escape narratives and metaphorical constructions of transcendence, often centred on the prisoner's ingenuity and heroism. In this light, York's focus on his upcoming execution as a kind of escape complicates this notion, presenting it not merely as freedom but as a release from the confines of the broader heterotopia of deviation. However, the experience of playing the game inside the former prison disrupts this romanticized perception of the prison cell (Stuit et al., 2020, pp. 315–316). Thus, the physical space of the prison, particularly the panoptic design of the building, makes players feel trapped and surveilled much like the real prisoners. *The Enchanted* similarly and vividly portrays the constant surveillance and lack of privacy experienced by prisoners: "Here we have no privacy. We are trapped, naked to one another at all times" (Denfeld, 2014, p. 140). Therefore, the real-life experience of being a prisoner in an actual prison, even though it is an escape game, shatters the wall between the individuals within and beyond the scope of heterotopias.

The prison environment also manipulates the perception of time, producing a sense of temporal disorientation. Characterized by a blurring of past, present, and the future, the narrator's experiences underline the dungeon's function as a heterochronia. Foucault (2000b) introduces the concept of heterochronia as a disturbance or distortion of linear time, often involving the accumulation of different temporal layers within a single space (p. 182). In *The Enchanted*, with its historical weight and the narrator's layered experiences, the dungeon integrates disparate temporal elements, building a sense of temporal disjunction. Furthermore, the dungeon exists as a palimpsest—a repository of past experiences and narratives—layering the present moment with reverberation of former occupants and events. The physical structure, as well, conjures up a sense of historical depth, suggesting the passage of time and the piling of stories within its walls. Then, the narrator's creative imagination and power of storytelling plays a crucial role in establishing the dungeon as a heterotopia. The dungeon becomes a site where the tangible and the imagined intersect, creating a layered spatial experience. It is through his detailed descriptions and imaginative leaps that he invites the reader to enter his enchanted world, a space that resides within and beyond the physical confines of the prison.

The narrator's enchanted world, existing within this environment, represents a counter-site and a personal heterotopia within a broader heterotopic space. His engagement with literature, facilitated by the prison library, is crucial in shaping his perception of reality and creating a personal space that resists the dominant order of the prison. Although the inmates never step foot in an actual library, their solitary cells transforms into a library-like heterotopia in which they experience the literature they read. As Catherine Moran states: "A library in the middle of a community is a cross between an emergency exit, a life raft, and a festival. They are cathedrals of the mind; hospitals of the soul; theme parks of the imagination" (Moran, 2012, as cited in Radford et al., 2015, p. 733). To Foucault (2000b), libraries, as repositories of knowledge and imagination, accumulate time ad infinitum; in this heterotopia, "time never ceases to pile up and perch on its own summit" (p. 182). Books and reading, subsequently, induce a heterotopic experience since they liberate impossible worlds within the confines of solitary imprisonment and create portals to alternative realities, capable of eliciting "dreams and visions" (Denfeld, 2014, p. 25). In Foucault's words, Dreams are no longer summoned with closed eyes, but in reading; and a true image is now a product of learning [connaissance]: it derives from words spoken in the past, exact recensions, the amassing of minute facts, monuments reduced to infinitesimal fragments, and the reproductions of reproductions. [...] The imaginary is not formed in opposition to reality as its denial or compensation; it grows among signs, from book to book, in the interstice of repetitions and commentaries; it is born and takes shape in the interval between books. (Foucault et al., 2000a, p. 106). The magic world, as the product of imagination and reading experience, in turn fosters a heterotopia that reproduces the heterotopia of the library. Foucault (2000b) also describes heterotopias as spaces that create multiple places or times simultaneously within the same physical space (pp. 178–179). Libraries offer this experience by containing within their finite physical space a vast and potentially infinite virtual space of knowledge and imagination accessible through books (Radford et al., 2015, p. 736). Much like how the physical layout of the library fosters unexpected discoveries and encounters with new knowledge and perspective, the inmates who delve into literature and transform their cells into small libraries, form and encounter ultimate realities.

Contrary to heterotopias of deviance that suppress the non-normativie based upon the dominant culture, crisis heterotopias constitute a safe space for the deviants to exist. In fantasy literature, a portal creates a metaphorical transition for the characters, transmitting them from a dystopia to a utopia and vice versa (Conkan, 2016). The experience of reading, similarly, transports the inmates, particularly the omniscient narrator, to a different realm, cultivating a compensatory, idealized alternative to the real world. According to Regan (2020), there exists an underlying tension between crisis and deviant heterotopias (p. 22). Within this oppressive environment, characters of *The Enchanted* carve out crisis heterotopias as spaces of refuge and meaning-making. Whether it is the libraries or the experience of reading books in the dungeons, the characters in *The Enchanted* use books to mold a "magic world" to "shelter the tender nugget of life within" (Denfeld, 2014, p. 54). The narrator's emphasis on the transformative power of stories also reinforces this concept: "Life is a story. Everything that has happened and will happen to me is all part of the story of this enchanted place" (p. 25). This function is reminiscent of the compensatory and illusory principle that Foucault attributes

to heterotopias (2000b, p. 184). Therefore, the enchanted world offers a sense of order and meaning in an otherwise chaotic and dehumanizing place. Moreover, building upon Daniel Defert's ideas, Kelvin Knight (2016) argues that Foucault's heterotopian sites function as a textual space of contestation (pp. 15–16). Heterotopia, according to Knight is not a real urban place, but rather a fictional representation of simultaneously mythic and real sites such as the mirror, the garden, the library, and the prison (2016, p. 15). These sites constitute an unimaginable textual space due to the juxtaposition of incompatible and contradictory dimensions in the same place. Thus, literature and literary worlds of books constitute a heterotopia as significant as any real site and place.

The narrator's enchanted world, however, is not merely a passive escape into fantasy; it is an active process of meaning-making and resistance through storytelling. Robert Topinka (2010) believes that, fictional heterotopia operates much like the real heterotopias Foucault describes: It is a space where the telescoping of many spaces in one site leads to the intensification of knowledge and the revelation of the governing principles of its order. For Foucault, heterotopias map the space of existing knowledge, making order legible. (p. 56) In the novel, this telescoping of spaces within the prison disrupts conventional understandings of justice, morality, and human nature, forcing the reader to reconsider the systems of order that govern society. Moreover, as Topinka argues, it clearly demonstrates that heterotopias problematize received knowledge and destabilize the ground on which knowledge is built (Topinka, 2010, p. 56). The novel further explores this by emphasizing the power of stories and imagination in shaping reality within the prison walls. Thus, The narrator's fantastical stories offer an alternative form of knowledge and power within the confined space of the prison. The narrator's ability to find enchantment amidst the bleakness of the prison brings to light the stark contrast between the illusionary space of their imagination and the harsh reality of the physical prison.

Since this magical world is visible to a few of the inmates, it possesses a system of isolation and openness only available for the prisoners. They see "every cinder block, every hallway and doorway" as leading to "secret stairs" and "stone towers" that open up to "wide, clear air" (Denfeld, 2014, p. 7). This points to a space that is simultaneously hidden from others but completely open to the narrator, which further echoes Foucault's observation that heterotopias have systems of opening and closing, making them both isolated and penetrable (2000b, p. 183). The magical world only exists because of, and in contrast to, the oppressive conditions of the inmates' confinement. However, the prison environment, as a heterotopia of deviance, actively works to suppress the emergence of crisis heterotopias, enforcing conformity and limiting individual expression (Denfeld, 2014, pp. 121–122). The protagonist's access to books is also subject to the whims of the prison authorities (p. 94), depicting how even small spaces of freedom are fragile and vulnerable. This magnifies the interdependence between the heterotopia and the dominant social space, as described by Foucault (2000b, p. 184). Thus, the enchanted world offers not simply a retreat from reality, but also a form of resistance, a way of asserting individuality and finding meaning in a space designed to crush the human spirit. In other words, the transformation of the prison's physical space into a world of magic and enchantment helps the narrator to reclaim a sense of agency and freedom. On this basis, the narrator's enchanted world is not a separate reality but a reimagining of the existing one, where the oppressive features of the prison are transformed into sources of wonder and possibility. However, despite creating a different world within the prison, the reality of confinement, violence, and the death penalty remains. The heterotopia of the prison reveals the power structures at play but offers no transcendence.

York might also possess such an enchanted world. However, his enchanted place is less clearly defined and more personal. His enchanted world is deeply intertwined with his personal history and experiences. His "magic world" is a mental construct, a space where he shapes his identity and navigates the complexities of his past and current reality (Denfeld, 2014, p. 54) highlighting the heterotopia's ability to juxtapose seemingly incompatible elements. The narrative hints at York's need for a "safe place", suggesting an internal refuge rather than a tangible, external space (p. 54). His enchanted world, accordingly, is a form of compensation for this lack, providing him with the sense of security and wonder that was absent from his reality. This perfectly resonates with Foucault's concept of heterotopias as spaces that compensate for deficiencies or imbalances in the dominant social order (2000b, p. 184). More importantly, however, is that this interpretation perfectly aligns with a more uncommon form of heterotopia, i.e. the heterotopia of festival or the Polynesian villages. As Foucault outlines the fourth principle of heterotopias, festivals, fairs, and these villages simultaneously "abolish" and "regain" time (p. 183). York and the lady's magic world similarly function as a liminal, chronic, and transitory heterotopia that temporarily breaks the connection between the self and the reality of the surroundings. While this magic world is private and internal for York, it is also accessed through multiple interactions with the lady and Troy. The lady's visits and attempts to understand his inner world establish a point of connection, suggesting a system of "opening and closing" that regulates access to this heterotopia. The lady's attempts to "build him a castle" further blur the lines between the tangible and the imagined (p. 63). Nevertheless, this heterotopia eventually loses its soothing power as York grows older and aware of the extremity of his conditions.

Additionally, York experiences the heterotopia of deviation due to his physical appearance as well as his psychological state. According to Susan Schweik (2009), "modernity [...] was controlled appearance" (p. 86). Schweik states that the "ugly laws," enacted across the United States starting in the late nineteenth century, were ordinances that prohibited individuals deemed "unsightly" or

"deformed" from appearing in public (p. 86). These laws aimed to remove individuals with disabilities from public view (p. 89). Often targeting the poor and other "undesirable" individuals, these laws were predicated on flawed assumptions about disability being contagious and burdensome to society (pp. 90, 91, 95). Suffering from the effects of congenital syphilis, York bears physical deformities, specifically notched teeth and a misshapen body (Denfeld, 2014, p. 204). Beyond the physical, York also tolerates psychological effects, described as "strange currents" and a "hard tree that wanted to push and push" inside him, potentially connected to the disease's impact on his brain (p. 116). His unconventional appearance directly correspond to the language of the ugly laws, which targeted individuals who were "diseased, maimed, mutilated, or in any way deformed" (Schweik, 2009, p. 85). Moreover, it is Shirley's untreated syphilis leads to York's congenital condition. This generational impact of disease and societal neglect further emphasizes the far-reaching consequences of inadequate healthcare and discriminatory practices like those embodied by the ugly laws. These laws thus significantly define the borders of the heterotopia of deviation that surrounds York and his mother.

A deep sense of understanding and similar experiences connects York and the lady. The lady's past, particularly her experiences with her mother's deviance, can also be connected to Foucault's concept of heterotopias, not as physical spaces, but as psychological and experiential zones that reflect and refract societal norms and anxieties. Her upbringing, shaped by her mother's intellectual disability, signifies as a form of heterotopia. Her childhood home and the social interactions stemming from her mother's difference produces a distinct space operating under different rules and expectations compared to the normal world. Much like Shirley and York, the lady and her mother are exposed to sexual abuse on account of the mother's deviance: Her mother seemed to wear an invisible beacon when the lady was a child. Even a trip on the bus could be a hazard—invariably, some creep would want to sit next to the retarded woman and her pretty daughter. How many times she had hopelessly tugged her mom's dirty sleeve only to be shushed—you be quiet!—her mom thinking the nice man wanted to talk to her, when it was really the tiny dark-haired girl sitting next to her whom he met with his gloaming eyes. (Denfeld, 2014, p. 111)
The lady's childhood exists in a eternal state of juxtaposition. She explores the contrast between the normal world, with its expectations of conformity, and the world she shares with her mother, where difference is the norm. Her past is not merely a collection of memories; it is a living force that continues to influence her present. The invisible heterotopia of deviance that shadows her entire life and the constant negotiation of contrasting realities shape her social skills, her ability to empathize with others, and her understanding of the world.

In contrast to York, the lady's understanding of and relationship with her mother's deviance evolves over time. Initially, she feels compelled to distance herself from her mother's world, seeking refuge in books and striving to be normal. However, as she matures, she develops a deeper appreciation for her mother's love and resilience. She learns this skill by listening to the stories of people in similar situations. Storytelling and sharing individual histories, if inclusive, facilitate empathy and help "develop a shared culture as a first step in ending and recovering from cycles of traumatic events" (Zembylas & Ferreira, 2009, p. 7). The lady, through her work, begins to heal and recover from her traumatic past. This leads to a different attitude towards life and, as a result, a different life from that of York. The lady moves between the prison and the outside world and has access to more liberating heterotopias. Though her work exposes her to the darkness of the prison, she maintains a sense of freedom and detachment. Her character further complicates the relationship between crisis and deviant heterotopias. She operates within the deviant heterotopia of the prison, yet demonstrates an understanding and appreciation for the crisis heterotopias that her clients create. She recognizes that these spaces, though often born from trauma, are essential for their survival and sense of self. While York personifies the deviant subject detained and shaped by the system, the lady attempts to bridge the gap between these two opposing spaces, seeking understanding and a degree of agency for those trapped within. Still, the lady grapples with the ethical implications of her work as she questions the effectiveness of freeing individuals so profoundly influenced by the heterotopia. This internal conflict is intensified when she discovers the truth about York's syphilis. On the one hand, she believes this information could exonerate him of the crime. On the other hand, she recognizes his right to make the decision of whether or not he wants to pursue a new trial. Thus, by giving him the chance to choose the trajectory of his life, the lady returns agency to York, allowing him to determine his own path within the confines of the heterotopia.

The unmarked grave of York's mother portrays a heterotopia where societal norms of remembrance and individual recognition are disrupted. This disregard for Shirley's existence underscores the demeaning effects of these spaces and a broader dismissiveness of the soul. This pushes the marginalized community further into their arbitrary heterotopic space. According to Foucault (2000b), the individualization of death, coupled with "the bourgeois appropriation of the cemetery," and "an obsession with death as a 'disease'" generated a culture that feared death as much as any fatal disease (p. 181). Since this shift emerged as a result of a decenralization of the soul in the nineteenth century, it converted cemeteries from emblems of social hierarchy to places "where each family possessed its dark dwelling" (pp. 180–181). In the world of *The Enchanted*, however, the class system remains as untouched in the cemetery and the society as the mad and the "town slut" is deprived of a proper burial and a decent grave in act of absolute erasure (Denfeld, 2014, p. 53). Nevertheless, the lady's determination to ensure her mother has a proper

grave upon her passing signifies a resistance against this exclusion and elimination. In this sense, this act is an attempt to disrupt the heterotopia of the graveyard and reclaim the mother's individual identity.

4. Conclusion

As demonstrated, *The Enchanted* houses two general heterotopias, one is a tangible and physical construct, while the other is a mental and imaginary space. Each of these spaces contains microheterotopias that reflect the same principles Foucault attributes to these displacements. Whereas prison and the cage create concrete and visible barricades to separate the deviants, reading and imagination build illusory realms that shelter the deviants from the real world. Denfeld's *The Enchanted* also utilizes the prison setting, a quintessential Foucauldian heterotopia, to explore the complex and often contradictory relationship between madness, reason, power structure, and society. The novel refrains from offering easy answers or solutions; it rather invites readers to confront the uncomfortable realities of confinement, punishment, and the limits of human understanding. By weaving together fantastical elements with gritty realism, Denfeld creates a space where the boundaries between deviant and normal become blurred, prompting reflection on the ways in which society constructs and defines these concepts. The novel serves as a powerful reminder that the spaces individuals create to confine and control those deemed "other" are ultimately reflections of their own anxieties and fears. Ultimately, the narrative portrays the ways in which heterotopias discriminate against one group and favor another.

This duality of heterotopic space—both physical and mental—reveals how systems of control operate not only through visible institutions but also through the internalization of confinement. In *The Enchanted*, the imaginary realm crafted by the unnamed narrator becomes a means of reclaiming agency in an environment defined by powerlessness. This mental escape, however, is not merely a coping mechanism; it becomes a silent form of resistance against the systemic forces that seek to erase individuality. Foucault's notion that heterotopias juxtapose multiple incompatible spaces resonates here, as the prison embodies both oppression and the potential for introspection. The enchanted world blurs the boundary between delusion and liberation, suggesting that even within spaces designed to dehumanize, the human spirit persists in constructing meaning. Thus, Denfeld's portrayal of these layered heterotopias challenges the reader to reconsider how institutional spaces affect not just bodies but minds, and how the internal landscapes of the marginalized offer insights into the failures of societal justice.

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