

## Terror, Spatiality, and the Future in Maria Irene Fornes's *Terra Incognita*

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To articulate the past historically [...] means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.

—Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” *Illuminations*

Thinking of the present creatively is like thinking of Grand Central station as a place to write. [...] When you think of the past you not only have a better perspective. But your mind can also pick up nuances of behaviour and feelings that are very subtle.

—Maria Irene Fornes interviewed by Maria M. Delgado, *Conducting a Life*

Walter Benjamin detects in historical assessment a sense of urgency in the present, a process of thought that travels back from the present moment towards a past condition in search of a phenomenal connection. In its temporal perspective, this outlook suggests timelessness, a mental journey in time that sweeps away the time differences and gives precedence to the similarity of conditions. Working through the spaces of memory and history, this line of thinking may advance into futuristic considerations, especially when danger is regarded as a precondition, a warning as to what is to come in the future. For the Cuban-American playwright Maria Irene Fornes (1930-2018), such a moment of danger came about in the early nineties with the Gulf War.<sup>1</sup> Commissioned in 1990 by INTAR's Max Ferra to write

a play for the quincentenary of Christopher Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas, Fornes was impelled to ponder the conditions in the Persian Gulf in the light of the conquest of the Americas. This process opened a new vantage point from which to view and review the present, while at the same time allowing for speculations on the future.

These two geo-political conflicts are channelled into *Terra Incognita* (1991),<sup>2</sup> rendering the actual moment of danger as a possible picture of the apocalypse. An early synopsis of the play emphasised the "1991 Gulf War accounts concerning American soldiers advancing along the road to Basra and bulldozing retreating Iraqi soldiers [...] various accounts of torture, riot and murder, and of the use of child soldiers" ("Synopsis").<sup>3</sup> It should be noted, however, that the play does not make any reference to the Gulf War despite significant media coverage of it at that time. Instead it seems to take a more universal approach and confronts the idea of war itself. In a rather obscure representation of two completely discrete territorial conflicts, *Terra Incognita* disrupts conventional spatial conceptions in order to construct a new space wherein history is synchronised with the present. In this play, synchronisation depends mainly on mixing realistic characters with non-realistic characters and realistic locations with non-realistic physical presences, such as a café with a ship pulled by a monk. By creating a space that cannot exist in reality but is still anchored in the real world, this synchronisation problematises issues regarding the future, or, rather, the lack of a future. As Rob, one of the characters in the play, asks at a critical moment, "is this the end of the world?" (115).

The main argument of *Terra Incognita* is rooted firmly in the production of spatiality, as the play's title, which translates into English as 'unknown land,' would suggest. Spatiality corresponds to both the social and political practices of terror and the alternative spaces opened up in *Terra Incognita* to resist such terror; it provides the grounds, both literally and metaphorically, from which to examine the inscribed modes of terror in the play. The main focus of this essay is, then, on the use of spatiality in examining the 'travel stories'—various topographies and dimensions—through which Fornes presents her futuristic visions.

In bringing out how the play counteracts terror by means of spatiality, Michel Foucault's formulation of *heterotopia* will inform the main line of the argument. In order to underline what makes the use of spatiality distinctive in *Terra Incognita*, I would like to start by clarifying what I mean by spatial experimentation as opposed to the orthodox representations of spa-

tiality in contemporary theatre. In *Staging Place*, Una Chaudhuri coins the term *geopathology* to describe “the characterization of place as problem” (xii). Chaudhuri argues that drama of the second half of the twentieth century is structured around a sterile design, which delivers “the experience of place as an unresolvable conflict between home and exile, belonging and alienation” (259). Such a formulation inescapably involves no more than two antipodal options, which reinforces a reductionist playfield by defining its axis and ruling out representations of diversity. In such a limited circuit of space, there is no compromise: one either belongs to a place or is displaced from it. Chaudhuri also notes the existence of another form of drama that responds to this metaphorically confined spatiality. She writes:

In the emerging drama of multiculturalism, it seems to me, are the outlines of a new *heterotopic* account of the relationship between persons and places. This account begins by creatively confronting the problem of place, regarding it as a challenge and an invitation rather than a tragic impasse. (15)

Borrowing the term heterotopia from Foucault, Chaudhuri suggests that layering out other spatial possibilities through multicultural perspectives surmounts a binary closure of the representation of space. In *Terra Incognita*, Fornes also resists this closure, challenging what is understood by geopathology.

Foucault’s ideas on spatiality are often attributed to his writings that problematise space as a power field, particularly emphasising the relation between power and knowledge. But before developing his ideas around power-knowledge dynamics, he presented a lecture on space entitled *Of Other Spaces* (1967), where he defines the twentieth century as the “epoch of space” (22).<sup>4</sup> This lecture features Foucault’s concept of heterotopia as one of the two main types of site 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” (24). The other site, utopia, differs from heterotopia in that it corresponds to real places only through analogies. Heterotopias, on the other hand, must be real places. Foucault’s perspective is one that challenges the way we think about real-life locations, i.e., how real-life spaces do not exist as mere buildings or structures and how they can be considered in relation to one another. The material existence of heterotopias is crucially important as they remind us that real-life sites are replete with sets of relations that relate to other real sites in one way or another. When we perceive the sites surrounding us as

heterotopias, the sets of relations that pertain to these spaces, both inside and out, become less imagined and more real, thereby reaching beyond the material reality of that site and allowing a clear perspective from which to make reassessments about spatiality.

Heterotopias provide fertile ground from which it is possible to examine terrorised and alternative spaces in theatre as reflections of real-life spaces. Real-life institutions and places may be symbolically represented on stage and problematised through the notion of heterotopia. While the stage mirrors real-life spaces and their sets of relations, it does so by obscuring, subverting, or attacking these relations, an attitude that attests to the heterotopic quality of theatrical representation. Foucault makes another, yet related, point in his essay: that theatre (as well as cinema) can represent several incompatible spaces that lie next to one another in a single place, making it possible for the spectator to shift attention among divergent modes of spatiality. Such diverse modes of spatiality allow for a fresh process of reviewing the social and political mechanisms that define the space of contemporary life. Moreover, theatre is in itself a heterotopic space where spectatorship requires a temporal break from other social institutions. Upon accepting the invitation to enter a space that has its own rules and system—seating arrangements, structure of the auditorium and the stage, required silence during performances—spectators are temporarily cut off from the outside spaces and exposed to a distinct set of relations.

An opera written by Fornes and composed by the Puerto-Rican musician Roberto Siena, *Terra Incognita* treats history and colonisation as a parallel space to the present, supporting this spatiality with music, singing, and readings of book excerpts, which in their turn resist the conventional stage language and its dependence on conversational rhetoric. Essentially, the use of sung dialogue contributes much to the play's resistance against realistic conventions, which in turn feeds into the heterotopic space in *Terra Incognita*, posed against spaces of conflict, violence, and war that have existed throughout history. Through a diverse approach to space, Fornes layers various types of spatiality, from which she creates alternative modes of locality. As a result of the relationship between the representations of terrorised spaces and the depictions of relatively unexplored spaces, Fornes's visions of the future unfold.

Giving the example of cemeteries that remind human beings of "dissolution and disappearance," Foucault writes, "the heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with

their traditional time” (26). The temporal break in this case is caused by American foreign policy in Iraq during the Gulf War, which, in Fornes’s configuration, is parallel with another case of terror in history. The heterotopic space in *Terra Incognita* installs itself as a commentary on the given spaces produced by globally practised terror. As a note to its capacity of presenting an alternative—only this time in terms of perception and interpretation—the play makes a linguistic reversal of the term, *terra incognita*. If, for Christopher Columbus, the term implied an unexplored piece of land open to conquest in the physical and geological sense of the word, for Fornes, it means an unknown dimension where the rules of colonisation, the desire to own a piece of the Earth, and the terrorising of the land as well as the human bodymind do not exist.<sup>5</sup>

In 1492, Columbus sailed west from the port of Palos in southern Spain, which in *Terra Incognita* accommodates the three characters of the play: Amalia and her brother Rob, who are Americans of Spanish origin, and their friend Georgia, who is “a curious and thoughtful American” (59). Fornes’s characterisation of the tourists is notably based on their national identity as Americans and the ethnic heterogeneity attributed to the nation. In the 22 brief scenes of the libretto—all with brief episodic titles—these three tourists have drinks and pass the time at a street café, exchanging notes on their experiences and discussing subjects ranging from linguistic operations, maps, and wars to figures drawn from Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian history. The existence of distinct cultural lineages in the formation of ‘American’ identity is underlined throughout the play as the tourists make small discoveries related to language, history, and culture, thereby raising questions about issues such as nation, belonging, and language.

The other two characters of the play, Burt and Steve, are residents of Spain and outsiders to the tourist triangle. The anachronistic presence of Burt and Steve, who embody contemporary characters with historical memories, indicates a continuing experience in mind, if not in body. Body is marked as a strictly transient form compared to the itinerant idea of terror, because the contemporary bodies of Burt and Steve operate as vehicles used to relate their historical memories. Burt represents the voice of Columbus, who was originally Italian but was sponsored by the Spanish monarchs, Queen Isabel and Ferdinand V, on his voyage west. He is a “cheerfully demented” (59) person who actually has verbal and emotional contact with Amalia, Rob, and Georgia. Steve, at the opposite pole, embodies Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, an evangelical priest sent to Latin America. Observing both the

Spaniards and the indigenous peoples that they encountered, he recorded in a book the terror inflicted by the Spaniards on the natives. Otherwise a mostly silent observer (much like de las Casas), Steve quotes excerpts from de las Casas's *History of the Indies* (1512) throughout the play.

*Terra Incognita* starts with a faint sound of *saetas* (religious Flamenco music) coming from a distance as the American tourists, Rob, Amalia, and Georgia sit around a table looking at a travel brochure laid among other props such as road maps, a phrase book, and a dictionary. The music and operatic singing are the main means by which the dramatic text is audio-visually formulated, granting the play a mode of transcendence. This transcendent quality challenges the usual perception of time and space by requiring a different degree of attention and contributes towards the play's heterotopic space by producing "a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory" (Foucault 27). If terrorised spaces are a reality of the world, then granting an illusory quality to them (despite their status of reality) may remind us of the possibility of change by revealing them as constructs. Arthur J. Sabatini sees in opera the potential "for imaginatively representing social life, transhistoric consciousness, and landscape" (325). *Terra Incognita* uses this potential to its utmost by combining a socio-political critique with the historical and beyond, as well as with the geographical and narrative spaces. Where, for instance, jazz, Cuban pop, and dance are the main means of asserting what Scott T. Cummings observes in Fornes's 2000 play, *Letters from Cuba*, as desire defying the logic of time and space (565), it is the pressure of the immediate sense of danger conveyed through the operatic singing that surpasses this logic and provides the theatrical capacity for heterotopia in *Terra Incognita*. Accordingly, with its Andalusian origin and reference to multicultural diversity, the *saeta* establishes the cultural significance of music and dance in Spain, but more importantly it highlights the mindset of the play, which is about accepting differences against the existing climate of hatred.

The comfort suggested by the tourist scene and the distant sound of music is immediately challenged by the appearance of a ship with black sails, pulled by a hooded monk, entering from the right side of the stage and disappearing to the left. Mythically, the appearance of a ship with black sails signals some sort of failure, loss, or disaster. In *Terra Incognita*, the failure is that of humanity, which will gradually become the centre of the tourists' discussion from different angles. As the ominous ship disappears,

the tourist scene resumes. Amalia gleefully writes in her diary that “it’s 9:20 and there’s been no argument yet” (62) and talks to Rob and Georgia about the achievements of Prince Henry the Navigator. Amalia’s diary-keeping becomes a remarkable image in the play that overlaps with the idea of historical tracking established by references to historical figures and the play’s connection with historical evidences of terror. In line with her note-taking in her diary, the play makes notes of history, hence marking a move from the personal to the public and from the territorial (the land and the page with property rights) to the spatial (borderless Earth and history).

Amalia’s diary-keeping also sets the time scheme of the play. It is 9:20, as she notes down in her diary in the first scene, yet curiously, two scenes later time turns back to 9:13, and this time, she mouths the words “first argument” as she writes (69). The retrograde shift in time denotes a malfunction in the characters’ relationships with each other. The ‘A picture’ scene between these two time settings occupies a key position in explaining this retrograde movement in time and feeling. Noticing a picture of the café in the tourist brochure, Georgia makes both an existential and a metatheatrical statement by identifying a picture within a picture:

This here is our table. You’re sitting here. I’m sitting here. At this table. [...] On the wall of the café in the picture, is a picture of the inside of the café. And in the picture of the inside of the café. On the wall of the café—is a picture of the inside of the café. (65-66)

In this linguistic *mise en abyme*, Georgia gets further into the picture until it gradually becomes a dot that eventually vanishes in a ‘puff.’ As it is obvious from Georgia’s situating of herself and Amalia in the picture, this reductive procedure does not exclude their presence. In this photographic image, the picture captures and symbolises both the place (the café) and the bodies of the characters. When they realise in the end that there is “no picture. No wall. And no café” (68), Amalia and Georgia faint in demonstration of their symbolic disappearance, which seems to underline the temporariness and the insignificance of the human within the larger scale of history. This representation also bestows upon the play an emphasis on the connection between spatiality and corporeality as the café and its customers make up the focus and are treated on the same level. As a heterotopia, the café with a picture of itself is positioned against cultural spaces that are built upon and impose the idea of permanence and self-importance. From this viewpoint, the mirrored image of the café in the picture on its wall, combined with Amalia and Georgia’s representation, appears as a criticism of the human

attitude of self-importance as well as permanence. Moreover, this representation alters the mode of conception, insofar as it invites a closer, deeper insight into what is beyond the present time. Amalia and Georgia's illustration of disappearance from the actual world creates a symbolic gateway for an underlying space to open up for the attention of the audience as the play progresses in a seemingly linear mode. If time is devolving forth into the past as suggested by Amalia's diary keeping, then perhaps the future is posited as history, in which case a crucial question arises: is there any room for hope in the future?

The position of the audience largely contributes to the spatial perceptions of the play; the building of the café remains behind the audience, a design that reduces the significance of the demarcation line between the auditorium, the stage, and the café, whilst also creating an effect of enclosure for the audience. Looking at the brochure, Georgia says, "look at this (*She looks at the building behind the audience. Then she looks at the picture and points to it again.*) See this café? [...] (*Pointing to the café downstage.*) is this café" (65). The boundary between the theatrical space and the theatre space is obliterated with this underlying invitation to the audience to consider themselves a part of the play's stage spatiality.<sup>6</sup> The audience is thus made to feel that they are enveloped as a part of the stage to experience the human malady (as Amalia and Georgia call it). This communication level ultimately asks for the audience's mental participation in its "other space," where the tourist experience becomes a view of life not only for the characters, but also for the audience.

Throughout the play, the café at the port remains as the fixed setting, constructing the basic stage spatiality through which the audience relates to other spaces. As well as creating a space of emplacement for the tourists in a foreign country, it also accommodates the bodies of the acting cast and the audience, thereby bringing together the imagined and real worlds. However, the café also produces a mode of displacement due to its temporariness; it offers a medium that provides a level of comfort with no sense of belonging. Likewise, Spain, where the café is situated, is not the homeland for any of the three characters or for the American audience. Amalia and Rob's Spanish origins bring to mind questions about the construction of national identity, as they are considered to be tourists in Spain. Moreover, the port at Palos renders problematic the issue of belonging; both as the place of departure for Columbus and the point through which the audience looks at the world, it lays the ground for discussing issues of discrimination based on nationality and ethnicity.

In this foreign land, language, a crucial element in the formation of national and regional identities, is problematised as an imposed formula that often transmits the meaning of a word in another language through its own code systems. As Benjamin asks, “Wherein resides the relatedness of two languages, apart from historical considerations? [...] all suprahistorical kinship of languages rests in the intention underlying each language as a whole” (74). The rupture between the intended and the produced meaning is exemplified in both semantic and semiotic instances in the play. Georgia relates the story of how she got lost while looking for a shop where she spotted a red hat. Mistaking the word “partida” (broken) for “Perdida” (lost), she faces complications, as she is assumed, by the local people of Palos, to be heart-broken. Likewise, Rob tells Amalia and Georgia how nobody seemed to understand when he searched for shoe polish by using the English words for it or when he tried to explain it by using gestures. The mental procedure that translates one language into another is subtly revealed as a complicated one that entails misinterpretation and confusion produced by word associations and preconceptions in the native tongue. Georgia, for instance, assumes that Isabella stands for Elizabeth in Spanish, but this, as Amalia explains to her, is a result of attaching the ‘La’ of “La Católica” (as in Isabel La Católica) as a suffix to Isabel. Likewise, Amalia explains that the English call the Infanta of Castille an elephant (as in Elephant and Castle), which is obviously a kind of linguistic high jinks. While opinions vary about the origin of the name Elephant and Castle, which is an area in southeast London, it is commonly believed to be a corruption of Infanta of Castille.<sup>7</sup> What is important here is that these examples from the play provide evidence of the potential semantic gaps between languages and show to what extent the original meaning might be modified when it is filtered through a different linguistic formula. In *Terra Incognita*, the linguistic differences may create confusion based on the differences in “intention underlying each language,” but they are nevertheless conveyed as joyful instances, as opposed to the hatred and misjudgement they create in the real world. Numerous other examples, such as the intermittent appearance of the shrouded ship of failure and the characters’ spirited repetition of some random words, reinforce this attitude of playfulness throughout the play.

Besides the linguistic operations, issues of home, national identity, and cultural differences are dealt with in the “Newspapers” scene, which shows the futility of discrimination as Rob reads aloud news items from the paper. Although the news items are not listed in the play, Fornes’s note explains that they are “about war, injustice, violence” (79). After Rob’s reading of

the news and his speech about how greed causes catastrophe, Amalia starts the next scene by asking, “where are we in relation to all this? [...] us here in Spain. How do these people see us? As part of what? As part of that?” (80). Her sudden realisation of “us” turning into “them” in a different territory develops into a long monologue about the cause and the nature of crime at large. Recalling the reduction process in the “A Picture” scene, Amalia uses the metaphor of a drop of water to describe the human existence at its most minimal:

If God could, he would (*As she puts her finger in a glass of water*)  
come back (*As she lets a drop of water fall on the table and points  
to it*) and say, ‘Look at this drop of water. Therein lies everything.’  
(84)

As well as hinting at the impotency of God to alter the existing atmosphere of terror, this illustration of the meaning of existence resounds through the spatial structure of the play. What is suggested by this speech is a denial of all the complications and associations beyond the value of simple existence. The assertion that all meaning is ultimately hidden inside a drop of water subordinates the temporal and spatial dimensions that are so often used to differentiate between periods and territories, which in turn challenges the us/them distinctions coded by such differentiations. Here, the drop of water suggests discovery of meaning in smallness and simplicity, which appears to be a heterotopia that problematises all the spaces of the world defined by greed and other complex human feelings as well as the outcomes of feelings such as violence and terror.

Amalia’s worries about being blamed by the Spanish as an American are also addressed in a different context that connects the personal to the political. When Rob holds her responsible for choosing the café at which they sit, Amalia responds, “you always have to blame someone else when things go wrong [...] so you can feel superior and oppressed at the same time” (98). This, by Rob’s definition, is a defect of his generation, which ironically puts the blame on a whole generation, but at the same time depicts the issue of responsibility as a political problem rather than a personal one.

Both Georgia and Amalia agree that blaming others instead of taking responsibility is a malady that affects many people (99). This is a thematic concern that highlights once again the play’s resistance against self-informed, normative standards. As Amalia puts it simply, it is “never us [...] It’s always them” (99). Disapproval of diversity in ideas is studied here in its most personal and simplest form, without attention to the cultural, ra-

cial, or religious registers that often mark it. However, the problem is only seemingly simplified. Fornes goes down to its core in the same way that the picture in the café is lost within the pictures displaying itself; yet, the focus of the gaze remains. In parallel with the formulation of the audio, visual, and other stylistic devices, the main theme is initially dealt with in such a way that it contributes to the concept of spatiality, as it pins down the problem regardless of the socio-historical conditions.

In contrast with Bertolt Brecht's warning about the dangers of representing a historical event by stripping it of its distinguishing marks of social conditions, the thematic space in *Terra Incognita* is produced through a blurring of specifying historical conditions and the social structures that inform these events.<sup>8</sup> With regard to this, Rob's reading of news items on war and the speeches around historical figures exemplify facets of history without exposing them as products of a particular circumstance. Rather than showing terror as the natural outcome of historical conditions, the play emphasises that it is the result of a human malady:

GEORGIA: When you make someone else responsible for  
your own life...

AMALIA: That's how the world ends.

GEORGIA: It just dies.

AMALIA: Simply. (99)

Lack of responsibility is thus pinned down firstly as the basic human flaw, and then as the reason for terror that may consequently bring about the apocalypse. Significant in these lines is the relation between the human mind and space. The refusal of a human being to take responsibility creates an opposing position for someone else who should take responsibility instead. The production of this basic dichotomy by the human mind leads to disputes, clashes, and wars that eventually bring the end of the world.

Although history is not revealed through a dialectical materialist approach in the play, it has a more tangible presence after Steve and Burt take their place on stage and divert attention to the American Indians slaughtered by the Spaniards in the fifteenth century. As figures drawn from history, Burt (the voice of Columbus) and Steve (de las Casas) introduce two sides of the events that took place during the Spanish invasion of the Americas. Burt is a trickster figure much like Dr. Kheal in Fornes's play of the same title (1968) or Isidore of *Tango Palace* (1963). Like his literary predecessors, Burt uses

a kind of self-catechism technique, as his questions are either too perplexing for his addressee to answer or they are addressed to himself. In Fornes's writing, this technique characterises the rhetoric of the oppressor. Burt differs from Dr. Kheal and Isidore in that he represents the oppressor and the oppressed at the same time.<sup>9</sup> Although Columbus wreaked much suffering upon the American Indians, he himself was also treated unjustly (he was even claimed to be mentally unstable) when Queen Isabel and her husband refused him the rights to a piece of land they had promised. The idea of ownership of the land that contaminated the West Indies after Columbus's journey is mocked as Burt, who is both "a derelict" (59) and a historical figure, declares to the tourists that "the land where you're standing is mine, in perpetuity" (111). In practice, ownership cannot entail a personal perpetual right due to the ephemerality of the human body. This is clearly expressed in the character of Burt; even though Columbus finds representation in the present through theatricality, physically he looks like a ruined person.

This ruined image of Burt may be related to the fact that the actor playing this part has to embody two different characters (Burt and Columbus) at the same time, thus emanating an impression of fragmentation. Besides, the nature of his character (Columbus) as a sort of historical relic may explain his derelict look, which, one may argue, is also partly related to his awareness of the atrocities he has caused. As a sign of his guilt-ridden consciousness, a scene displays Burt feeling threatened by the way Steve looks at him: "You have nothing against me because I cut the hands off Indians?—I didn't. Didn't you know that? They were laughing at me. (*He falls to the floor and convulses as if with an epileptic attack*)" (103). It looks as though Burt's theatrical body cannot reconcile itself with his historical memory. He embodies a sense of historical assessment through the orientation of his character as a body that exists in the present and a memory that is locked into the past.

Burt mainly talks about the earliest ideas regarding the universe or the shape and the substance of Earth as a circle, a square, or an egg yolk. This juxtaposition of various views on Earth furnishes the play with an understanding of the evolution of ideas through time and space and, hence, stresses the differences in the reception of these ideas at different times. As the tourists laugh at these dated notions, Burt questions the integrity of their contemporary views by asking, "what do we think now? Or do we think? Think-think" (102). The implication seems to be that even if a sound per-

ception of the universe is scientifically achieved, human beings are nonetheless as violent as ever. Just as Amalia, Georgia, and Rob laugh at past misconceptions, future generations will presumably think poorly of contemporary misjudgements and misdeeds, especially because the extent of destruction is the same, if not worse, as the times when the grasp of the world was relatively limited.

What is changing is not only our conception of the world but also the borders and the constructs that mark the landscapes of the world. When Gregory Bateson explains the way in which information is perceived in the mind, he draws a parallel between the mind and the map, concluding that “what gets onto the map, in fact, is *difference*” (457). Comparing two maps of southern Spain, Georgia notices that “they look different, don’t they? Does this look the same as this?” (77). This scene renders problematic the fact that the markers of territories, which have been changing in time, are also changing the way we relate to differences. The borders materialised on map drawings only establish and uphold differences by means of creating constructs like national or regional identity. As Deleuze duly observes, the modification of maps is “not a matter of searching for an origin, but of evaluating *displacements*” (63). Georgia assumes that they are lost when there is no Palos on the first map she looks at. With the absence of Palos on the map, the tourists feel dislocated. On the second map, though, Georgia manages to find Palos. When she looks again from the second map to the first, it is to note, in accordance with Deleuze’s observation, that not only Palos but also a road in the same area is displaced in the first map.

The connection between the human bodymind and the landscape is again and quite overtly expressed when Amalia identifies the practice of constructing, destructing, and restructuring as a process that extends from the external space to the human mind:

Things are built—then abandoned—then rebuilt. A bridge is built—it’s repaired—then it collapses. A dam is built—the land is razed—there’s a landfill—a town is built. It starts to crumble. [...] the ashes pile—and pile again. Layers—upon layers of ashes pile and pile. There are ashes in the air—the air is contaminated—animals cough—the race is contaminated—the senses atrophy. Fumes disintegrate brain cells—common sense atrophies. We don’t recognize ourselves—we can’t see the physical world. Common sense is replaced by non-ideas expressed by non-words, and non-gestures. (76)

The repetitive, associative, and almost frantic discourse of this passage points to the extent that the future is under threat from the destructiveness of its past. Also notable is the use of present tense throughout the monologue, which reveals time both as a stationary (captured in the present) and as an on-going agent; temporality is neutralised to show how regular this continuing process has become. As a continuing process, the built, destroyed, abandoned, and rebuilt bridges and cities turn into ashes, which in turn contaminate the air and jeopardize all living forms in the final stage.

Another curious link between spatiality and corporeality can be examined in terms of invasion. Spatial invasion finds its expression in human bodymind as the invasion of the mind by greed, selfishness, and ownership, which then leads to a more physical invasion introduced in the play by memories and news items on bullying, rape, and slaughter. In the "A Drop of Water" scene, for instance, Amalia distinguishes self-centredness as the grounds of terror: "if you think only of yourself you get crazy and frustrated and wild and mean and cruel. That happens to the ones who are in power as well as to the ones who're not" (83). By plainly explaining the mental basis of rejecting personal, ethnic, racial, or national differences, the play establishes a link between the personal space (the bodymind) and territorial conflict. Discussions over differences, destructions, and power issues involve the human bodymind and territories at once, producing a resistance to the space opened up by the same. It is through this resistance that the play constructs a heterotopic spatiality to challenge the terrorised territories.

Amalia suggests that the only solution to terror, on both personal and global levels, is "to be curious about others. To want to know someone other than yourself" (82). This process of learning about others is not a selfless act. On the contrary, it constitutes self-awareness in a similar line with Bakhtin's or Sartre's thought. Despite the differences in their conceptualisations of the self and the other, both Bakhtin and Sartre emphasise that self-awareness can only be achieved through the other, as the appearance of the other destabilises the central position of the self.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, Amalia says, "you see, and you wonder, and you feel another, and you learn. And you love and that's how you feel a natural person" (83). Unless this course of learning is achieved, terror will realise itself on the territories of the world as well as the bodymind just as it did during the Gulf War and the invasion of the Americas. By suggesting ways to overcome this sense of terror, the play reveals the possibility of an alternative world.

Steve mainly acts as a storyteller, recounting from Bartolomé de las Casas's history book the mistreatment of the American natives by the Christian Spaniards. His vivid and detailed descriptions of the greedy acts of the Spaniards echo Rob's reading of the news about the Gulf War. Steve's recollection of the Spaniards' violence puts into perspective the crimes committed during the Gulf War. As Edmund Husserl writes:

In respect of that which it [recollection] reproduces, let us say a past event, there lies in it a relation to the actual present. It posits the past and necessarily posits with it the relevant field of view, though in a dim, vague, undetermined way; brought to clearness and thetic distinctness the latter would have to permit of being developed in a context of recollections thetically carried out, and to terminate *in actual perceptions, in the actual "hic et nunc"*. (392)<sup>11</sup>

The process of recollection in *Terra Incognita*, though it may primarily function on Husserl's model, does not terminate in the actual here and now since time and space in the play are only seemingly fixed in the present, which actually merges with the past. When Burt and Steve's anachronistic presence on the stage is considered, recollection opens up a space that assigns the past as a physical part of the present.

In a more private recollection scene, Rob reveals to Steve the story of being bullied as a child. As the influence of this physical attack proves to be haunting, Rob gradually becomes troubled. Corporeal invasion, which is closely linked to territorial invasions in the play, is acted out in changes in physical condition, such as convulsions, trance, or distress on the stage. After recalling this childhood memory, Rob delivers a speech about the end of the world with vacant eyes and in a trance-like manner:

ROB. If you look into a crystal ball and ask, "Crystal ball, will there be such a thing as the end of the world?" (*Short pause*) The crystal ball doesn't answer.—Why don't you answer, crystal ball? Will there be such a thing as the end of the world? [...] Why don't you answer? (*To Steve*) Is this the end of the world? (114-15)

In his introduction to a collection of Padua Hills plays (which includes *Terra Incognita*), John Stepling observes that "somehow the plays and performances, at their best, seemed to reflect the sense of having reached the end of something" (5). Rob's statement describes the current state of the world as apocalyptic, indicating the extinction of life with a particular emphasis on the extinction of human compassion and tolerance for difference.

The ship appears on the stage twice more towards the end of the play. It may primarily represent the atrocities committed by the Spanish colonisers of the Americas five hundred years ago, yet the historical coordination between the past and the present in the play also indicates continuity, as the ship is *still* sailing. After the play posits terror as an exercise that concentrates all temporal and spatial dimensions into one, the ship reappears briefly and this time, its “black cloth is now tattered. The ship is filled with garbage” (106). This image of the ship evokes Benjamin’s model of the angel of history. To Benjamin, history cannot be imagined as a uniform, self-contained entity that is detached from the present; it is “the now” that substantiates the past. In other words, one cannot ponder the future without considering historical developments. Benjamin allegorises this approach through the angel of history, who looks towards the past with its wings spread and filled with a storm blowing from Paradise. While the storm creates a pile of ruins in front of the angel, it also makes it impossible for him to close his wings, thereby pushing the body of the angel backwards into the future. Like Benjamin’s angel of history, the image of the ship that grips the imagination from the very beginning of the play is suggestive of a systematic activity, a sense of recurrence that is often attributed to history.<sup>12</sup> As the storm of time drives forth the angel of history and the black-sailed ship alike, “the storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward” (249). The ship provides a central visual image that illustrates mobility, continuity, and a great deal of historical weight, thereby constructing a narrative space in which the interconnection of past, present, and future is symbolically demonstrated on stage. By connecting the present with the past and the future, this space belies an understanding of the present as “now” and invites criticism on the persisting exercises of terror beyond any given time. Like the angel of history, who sees the various catastrophes the world has experienced in a single pile of debris accumulating in front of him, the play’s temporal porousness condenses all acts of violence into a single space, pointing at the connective tissue that binds them all. Another visual image that supports the idea of continuity in the play appears in the “Conga Line” scene. During this brief scene, involving nothing more than Burt, Amalia, and Georgia forming a conga line, the only noteworthy line, “I’ve been around” (112), is uttered twice by Burt. What Burt means by this line is that he has been around both temporally and spatially, which suggests that what he represents, i.e. invasion and terror, has persisted through time and space.

Apart from suggesting continuity in time and space, the reappearance of the ship towards the end of *Terra Incognita* illustrates how detrimental the effects of human activity are on both human bodymind and geographical space. As yet another striking picture in the play's repertoire of images, Steve takes a physical stance as the mast of the ship. He says, "you have to really know what you're doing because if you don't and the wind is very strong. You can either capsize the boat, or the boom can come across with such force that it can rip the boat apart" (111). The image of Steve balancing the ship, giving directions on how to keep a boat afloat, and mentioning the risks involving balance may be a report on unsupervised and misdirected history. Authorities across centuries have employed sets of ideas suitable for their ages in order to fully exercise their power, to follow self-interest, or to win battles. That means there has always been a claim on the human bodymind as well as on the pieces of earth. From this standpoint, the ship represents an ideal heterotopic space. Foucault writes that as "a floating piece of space, a place without place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself [...] the ship is the *heterotopia par excellence*" (27). By this very quality of being a space of its own, a place that is not attached to any geography, the ship casts a commentary on the terrorised spaces through its appearances on stage, suggesting through the remarks of Steve that the world may come to an end if human beings do put a stop to their violent acts.

*Terra Incognita* ends with another long monologue by Steve concerning the slaughtering of the American natives. Rob, troubled by his recollections of being bullied, gets even more distressed by the actualities of history in Steve's speech, yells at Steve to shut up, and then begins sobbing. Later, the three tourists get in a car to leave the place, but it is not clear where they are headed. This final scene thus closes the gap between the personal (as presented in the story of Rob) and the public (as in the facts about the slaughtering of the natives). By visiting Spain, the three tourists have agreed to enter an unknown territory which, it seems, has allowed them to think about a different culture and experience its peculiarities. In Amalia's words, entering this foreign land means "to want to know someone other than yourself" and, as discussed earlier, such openness to the world is the solution to acts of violence and terror that have persisted in the world across centuries. This move from the self to the other can also be observed in how Rob feels about the way the native Americans were treated. As the self becomes invested in the other, one becomes many and the markers of nationality melt into the all-encompassing notion of humanity.

In *Terra Incognita*, celebration of multiculturalism is condensed into the acknowledgment of human value in each and every individual, which Amalia describes as bliss (“to know that others exist”). Identifying with a larger group on the basis of ethnicity and nationality is not necessarily renounced, but it is demonstrated as a superficial political construct that upholds the us/them dichotomy. The play triumphs over the establishment of difference by constructing a heterotopic space where the specificity of space and time, territorial borders, and religious, racial, ethnical, and national sovereignty lose their prescriptive significance. *Terra Incognita* provides its audience with the “better perspective” of the past that Fornes claims is necessary in creative production. She employs this perspective through visual and theatrical devices such as a picture within a picture, diary-keeping, and the black-sailed ship as well as through discussions over ownership, linguistic operations, and the us/them dichotomy. Intolerance, greed, and self-centredness create an atmosphere of catastrophe, which is resisted by alternative spaces that reveal other possibilities and argue for friendship and the acceptance of differences. With its implications of continuity, *Terra Incognita* seems to suggest that terror will pervade into the future. If the following words of Glenda Frank —“the past intrudes upon the present with an implied question: are we repeating history? And if we are, can we, the accidental tourists, change the cycle?” (98)— are true, the future is merely and rather alarmingly a playing field for history to repeat itself.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The global political atmosphere was fraught with conflicts at the time. It was right after the disputes over borders had led to a long-lasting war between Iran and Iraq (1980-1988), which was followed by Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Another long-term conflict, the Yugoslav wars, broke out in 1991 and ended in the country being divided into pieces after ten years of fighting.

<sup>2</sup> Major productions were staged by INTAR in 1991, at Dionysia Playwrights Festival in Italy in 1992, and at the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Padua Hills Playwrights Festival in California in 1994. In 1997, the play was co-produced by INTAR and Women’s Project and Productions in New York.

<sup>3</sup> As there is no direct reference to the Gulf War in the play—which is typically Fornesian—, the reader may have questions regarding this piece of information. The synopsis from which the quotation was drawn was published on a website

devoted to Fornes's work, but the website no longer exists. Sadly, there is no other source of information that links the play to the Gulf War.

<sup>4</sup> Foucault gave this lecture in March 1967, but it remained unpublished until after his death. The following references are to this publication unless otherwise stated.

<sup>5</sup> The word *bodymind* has come into use as a result of the belief that the human body and the mind are an integrated whole and cannot be considered separately.

<sup>6</sup> Hanna Scolnicov differentiates between the terms "theatre space" and "theatrical space," defining the former as "the physical space in which a performance takes place" and the latter as the spatiality produced by the production. For further information, see Scolnicov, pp.11-26.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the possible origins of *Elephant and Castle*, see Brown.

<sup>8</sup> According to Brecht, not specifying the particular social structures that produce a certain historical condition suggests permanence, which conflicts the whole discourse of change in epic theatre. See Willett, p.190.

<sup>9</sup> To some extent, Isidore and Dr. Kheal have the qualities of the oppressed as well; however, theirs is more a form of self-oppression formed by the burden of their own ideas.

<sup>10</sup> For detailed discussions of Bakhtin's and Sartre's views on the construction of the self, see Holloway and Kneale, pp. 71-88, and Wicks, pp. 30-57.

<sup>11</sup> The emphasis belongs to Husserl.

<sup>12</sup> Brecht, like other Marxist thinkers, opposed this view of history, as it suggests a reading that ignores class and social considerations. Also, because such a view indicates permanence through recurrence, it encourages, in a sense, submission to the conditions.

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