



## Article

# “The World Had Forgotten about Us”: Heterotopian Resistance in Richard Flanagan’s *Wanting* and Lloyd Jones’s *Mister Pip*

Charlotte Wadoux

Carré International, Université Caen Normandie, 14000 Caen, France; charlotte.wadoux@unicaen.fr

**Abstract:** This article explores how the different forms of heterotopias present in Richard Flanagan’s *Wanting* (2008) and Lloyd Jones’s *Mister Pip* (2006) articulate problematic identity politics and cultural memory. In *Wanting*, the collocation of Mathinna’s story with that of the lost Franklin expedition offers a form of reclaiming. This article argues that Flanagan’s novel moves from heterotopias of deviation to a crisis heterotopia, displacing and debunking the compensation function of the colonial heterotopia to highlight the crushing of Aboriginal identity. This shifting heterotopia is doubled by Mathinna’s heterotopic carceral body, that is, body as confined space, which qualifies the act of reclaiming. In *Mister Pip*, heterotopias concern cultural memory as the island of Bougainville, secluded from the rest of the world, turns into the repository of the villagers’ culture juxtaposed with the reading of Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (1860–1861). This article argues that Jones’s creation of a palimpsestic heterotopia allows him to resist Eurocentric views as well as to actualize postcolonial concepts. Jones’s novel calls for a dynamic appropriation of literature. Matilda’s ‘Pacific version’ of Pip’s story reflects the cracks in the Victorian and contemporary exploitations of the island. Readers’ immersions in these heterotopias do not provide an escape from but a thoughtful commitment to the past.

**Keywords:** Flanagan, Richard; heterotopia; hybridity; Jones, Lloyd; *Mister Pip*; postcolonial rewritings; reclaiming; *Wanting*



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## 1. Introduction

Fictional sites are always heterotopias, since, for John Thieme, “the act of rendering them in language inevitably renders them ‘other’” (Thieme 2013, p. 118). In particular, this ‘otherness’ marks narratives that stage crosscultural encounters in postcolonial fiction. Branded by the history of the British Empire, it is little wonder that postcolonial spaces should yield tales of “development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place” (Ashcroft et al. [1989] 2002, p. 8). Identity certainly is one of Michel Foucault’s concerns when developing the concept of heterotopia in the 1960s. This concern appears most strikingly in the radio talk ‘Le corps utopique’ (1966), in which the body is presented as a fence through which to read the ‘I’ (Foucault 2009, p. 10). The concept of heterotopia, as it thereafter appears in both Foucault’s radio talk ‘Les hétérotopies’ (1966) and his article ‘Of Other Spaces’ (1967), offers a paradigm both depending on and defining society. The following article seeks to explore neo-Victorian variations on the heterotopic models defined by Foucault in two novels which respond to Charles Dickens’s representations of Australia.

For Foucault, heterotopias are of two main kinds: crisis heterotopias to which are sent “individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis” (Foucault 1986, p. 24) and heterotopias of deviation, defined as “those in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed” (Foucault 1986, p. 25). The heterotopias follow five principles: they are found in every culture; their function evolves according to cultural changes and as time passes; they contain multiple and incompatible places; they are also heterochronies; and

they have a system that both allows and restricts entrance. Foucault's heterotopology is often seen as contradictory; however, as Kelvin T. Knight argues, it is only so if we try to apply the concept to real architecture or spaces. Focusing mainly on Foucault's two radio talks and *The Order of Things* (1966), Knight demonstrates that heterotopia is a paradigm fit and conceived for literature rather than for real urban spaces per se (see [Knight 2017](#), p. 147).<sup>1</sup> Knight's understanding serves as a guideline to this article's approach: looking at the different types and functions of heterotopias present in the two neo-Victorian novels delineates the different levels of reader commitment to textual space and textualized history.

Postcolonial neo-Victorian fictions offer a wide exploration of 'other spaces' that were often kept at a distance in Victorian fiction. This is especially the case with rewritings of Dickens's works. Thieme points out the ambivalent reception and responses to Dickens in what he calls postcolonial "con-texts" because of Dickens's dual and contradictory representations of Australia, reduced to the site of convict transportation in *Great Expectations* (1860) but to a version of Arcadia in *David Copperfield* (1850) (see [Thieme 2001](#), pp. 102–3). This article focuses on two responses to *Great Expectations*: Richard Flanagan's *Wanting* (2008) and Lloyd Jones's *Mister Pip* (2006). While the first presents a clearly affiliative response to Dickens, Jones's novel is more nuanced, celebrating a form of appropriation and hybridity. In both novels, space has a striking importance not merely as a setting but as a powerful device to explore historiography and identity politics. This article contends that both novelists use heterotopias in various ways to articulate problematic identity politics and cultural memory.

Flanagan's novel, *Wanting*, is divided into two distinct narratives. The first is set in Tasmania in the 1840s and relates the life of Mathinna, a young Aboriginal girl adopted by Sir John Franklin and his wife. Lady Jane's aim is to educate the young girl, but Mathinna fails her expectations, and when the Franklins have to leave the island, she remains behind, sent to an orphanage and doomed to decay and death once out in the streets. The second narrative focuses on Dickens in the 1850s and his relationship with the young Ellen Ternan. The link between the two periods is Lady Jane, who asks Dickens to write a play to confound any suspicion that her husband might have turned to cannibalism on the lost Franklin expedition (1845–1846).<sup>2</sup> *Mister Pip* is not set in the nineteenth century but focuses on the island of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea during the civil war raging in the 1990s that opposed the autonomous island's absorption into the larger state. Matilda, the protagonist and narrator, tells the reader of her traumatic experience and the way in which her white teacher, Mr. Watts, helped her and her friends to 'escape' from the horrors of the war by reading *Great Expectations*. However, the book unleashes the violence of the Papuan soldiers, or 'redskins', on the villagers as they discover the name 'Pip' written in the sand and mistake it for a real individual. As the inhabitants are unable to prove that Pip is only a character in a story (the novel having been hidden and then destroyed), the soldiers burn the village before slaughtering Mr. Watts (who lied about his identity) and Dolores (Matilda's mother). Matilda is able to escape from the island and later becomes a Dickens scholar. While writing her PhD dissertation Matilda suffers from depression, which she overcomes by writing the narrative that composes the novel.

Firstly, I explore the multiplicity of heterotopias that Flanagan uses in *Wanting* to try and reclaim the Aboriginal Mathinna while debunking colonial discourse. However, this act of reclaiming is qualified by also reading the representation of Mathinna's body as space through Foucault's focus on the body as a site of containment in 'Le corps utopique'. The subsequent consideration of *Mister Pip* underscores a more efficient use of heterotopia as a device of resistance, which both articulates and overthrows Eurocentric representations. Jones's novel thus presents Victorian England as both a therapeutic heterotopia and a heterotopia of illusion, while the island and novel turn into a palimpsestic space celebrating hybridity.

## 2. Heterotopic Down Under: From Historical to Individual Trauma

As a former penal colony, Victorian Australia may be construed as a heterotopia of deviation, to which, according to Foucault, people whose behavior transgresses the norm are sent (Foucault 1986, p. 23) and where a form of compensation is established to safeguard the status quo. For Foucault, colonies offer a form of compensation by creating a real other space that is ordered, offering a contrast with the chaos of everyday space (see Foucault 2009, p. 34). Victorian Australia further aligns with two other heterotopic principles: it is “outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate [its] location in reality”, and, as both island and colony, it has “a system of opening and closing that both isolates [it] and makes [it] penetrable” (Foucault 1986, pp. 22, 26). Flanagan’s Australia in *Wanting* plays with this traditional view of the colony, which in the novel is marked out as a different time-space, almost carnivalesque and grotesque, a distorted reflection of the center of the Empire: “another time in another world, an absurd, upside down, bastard imitation of England” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, pp. 57–58). This marks Australia as a heterochrony, a fact further highlighted by the dual structure of the novel which underlines a “break with [ . . . ] traditional time” (Foucault 1986, p. 26). Hence, Flanagan’s Australia is a heterochrony from the standpoint of England (as a colony) but also for the reader of this neo-Victorian novel (doubly removed via the dual plot). The heterotopic space turns itself against the colonial power, turning into a prison not only for the convicts but also for the representatives of white authority, as in the case of the Aborigines’ paternalistic ‘overseer’ during their exile from the Tasmanian mainland: “One world had ended and another begun, and [the Protector aka George Robinson] was no longer moving through that old world in wonder, but trapped in Wybalenna, in a new horror he could not escape” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 57). This sense of entrapment is one way for Flanagan to respond to colonial discourse. In this heterotopic space, Flanagan sheds light on one particular character, Mathinna, a young Aboriginal girl who lives in Van Diemen’s Land, now known as Tasmania. Focusing on the multiplicity of heterotopias developed by Flanagan in the narrative set in Tasmania, this section is interested in the way Australia turns into a set of “relations among sites” (Foucault 1986, p. 23), allowing for a complex response to the colonial past.

Mathinna’s story is framed by different types of heterotopias that give a palindromic structure to the narrative with, at its center, the *Erebus*, the ship on which Mathinna is raped by her adoptive father, Sir John Franklin. In other words, the rape scene is the touchstone around which *Wanting* articulates a gradual movement from heterotopias of deviation to crisis heterotopias.<sup>3</sup> As we shall see, be it at the beginning or at the end of the novel, Mathinna is enclosed in heterotopias that reflect an Othering of her body either perceived as in crisis or deviant. Mathinna first appears to the reader running to the Protector’s house through the Aboriginal settlement of Wybelanna where space is segregated, suggesting enclosure: “She ran past the homes in which the blackfellas lived, [ . . . ] past the chapel, and she kept running, up the slope of the hill to the most important building in the settlement of Wybelanna” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, pp. 9–10). However, this seemingly ordered space, potentially fitting the compensatory value of heterotopia, is soon challenged. The villagers refuse to call Mathinna by the name Robinson gave her: “Her real name was the one he had christened her with, Leda, but for some reason everyone else called her by her native name” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 10). The irony of the passage, stemming from Flanagan’s decision to shortly undertake Robinson’s viewpoint, emphasizes failure. Mathinna seems to escape the white authority of naming, protected, for now, from the symbolic meaning of her imposed name.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the failure of this ordered space strikingly appears in the settlement transformation into a cemetery: “They kept dying. [Robinson] was surrounded by corpses, skulls, autopsy reports, plans for the chapel and the cemetery” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 19). The Foucauldian compensation is unachievable, leaving Robinson only with bitter dreams: “His dreams were full of their dances and songs, the beauty of their villages, the sound of their rivers, the memory of their tenderness” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 19). The opposition between the settlement and the indigenes’ lost villages shows a past beyond recovery, the utopian dream turned into ashes.

The settlement testifies to the way in which the heterotopic space of the colony is used to picture an unstable and crumbling power, thereby reclaiming Mathinna and Indigenous people from their white-constructed Otherness.

This crumbling power is likewise inscribed within the topography of Hobart Town and the architecture of Government House to which the orphaned Mathinna is sent. The town and the island constitute a dual space that soon gives rise to disappointment marked by an ominous sense of catastrophe: “The island’s capacity to transform everything into unreliable memory even before it happened, or in spite of it never happening, was already apparent in that crumbling edifice [of Government House], which, though only thirty years old, was already a relic of magnificent decay” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, pp. 107–8). This passage conflates temporality and space: the mansion and the island seem to be atemporal, telescoping past and future. Atemporality also hints at the elusive nature of Mathinna’s historical records, which enables Flanagan to have her raped by Sir John Franklin, then Governor of Van Diemen’s Land, an event that does not appear in any records but might, theoretically, have happened. The novel thus underscores the unfixed nature of cultural memory, of both history’s iconic and forgotten subjects. This atemporality and the emphasis on decay here as elsewhere identify Government House as a transposition of *Great Expectations*’s Satis House, where clocks have stopped and decay spreads. For Catherine Lanone, this transposition “revisits Dickens to suggest his enduring presence, but also to highlight the plight of the unknown child, displacing the focus and contesting the very notions of center (London) and periphery (the doomed settlement of Wybalenna and Van Diemen’s Land)” (Lanone 2012, p. 24). When she arrives at the governor’s mansion at the age of eight, Mathinna is Pip-like, unaware of the decay of the house and believing herself transported to a fairy-tale world: “She saw instead a palace of the type she had heard the Protector describe” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 108). Mathinna is unable to read the house for what it is and mistakes “musty smells of dead huntsman spiders and stale possum piss” for “the fragrance of God” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 108). The fairy-tale is ‘complete’ when Garney Walch, who conveys Mathinna to her new abode, refuses to hurt the child’s feelings as passers-by look at her with contempt, telling her that she is “going to be their new princess” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 113).

This fairy-tale plot dooms Mathinna as she turns into a scientific experiment in education. Mathinna is Othered, considered as a complex, if not contradictory, scientific object rather than subject in the eyes of Jane Franklin: “For Lady Jane, what saved the child from being a child was that she was a savage, and what saved her from being a savage was that she was a child” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 51). This chiasmic formulation epitomizes Lady Jane’s contradictory feelings towards Mathinna, the childless woman’s maternal longing for a child and her philanthropic ambition to know, control, and educate Mathinna. This conflict takes on a temporal and spatial dimension: “Lady Jane had declared the Van Diemonian Aborigines there a scientific curiosity as remarkable as the quagga roaming free in the Ménagerie du Jardin des Plantes” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 56). The quagga, a now extinct subspecies of zebra from South Africa, turns into a metaphor for the dying and almost extinct Van Diemonian Aborigines, whereas the Ménagerie stands for Lady Jane’s Hobart. The image encapsulates Mathinna in a heterotopia of accretion as she becomes part of the many objects of study accumulated by Lady Jane. The heterotopic image enables Flanagan to point out the dehumanizing effects of the scientific ambitions of the colonial project. As Tammy Ho Lai-Ming suggests, this episode allows Flanagan to “[shed] light on Aboriginal children’s experience with the English colonisers” of traumatic “removal and relocation” (Ho Lai-Ming 2012, p. 16), an anticipation of Australia’s Stolen Generations.

Not only does the mansion allow a criticism of the colonial enterprise, but it also prefigures Franklin’s loss of his position as governor following the economic crisis suffered on the island: “And so, with the boom over, the island suffered and seethed and began planning its vengeance. The Franklins continued exploring, reporting and holding soirées. For Sir John and Lady Jane were keen observers of everything, save the people around them” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 106). The verbal forms alongside the repetition of “and” in



the first sentence offer a sense of complete action (“suffered and seethed”) and of deliberate intention (“began planning”). The island’s agency contrasts with the stasis in which the Franklins seem stuck. Whereas Mathinna’s delusion is rendered in the fairy-tale mode, that of the Franklins is conveyed through Ancient Grecian motifs, best exemplified by Lady Jane’s creation of her colonial temple, a glyptothèque, which Ho Lai-Ming reads as an ominous sign of the impending rape in its association with Zeus (see [Ho Lai-Ming 2012](#), p. 33).<sup>5</sup>

While in the first part of her narrative Mathinna is set apart as the Other, standing for Aborigines as a whole, the second part focuses on a biological crisis, transforming historical trauma into individual trauma. This shift occurs on the *Erebus*. For Foucault, the ship is the heterotopic space *par excellence*, a space allowing for dreams, adventures, and fiction ([Foucault 1986](#), p. 27). The *Erebus* is defined as a liminal space in a liminal moment, that of a carnivalesque fancy dress party. The ship contains two heterotopic layers: the dancing floor and the captain’s cabin. The first still corresponds to the apex of deviation as the construction of Mathinna as Other reaches its climax during the ball.<sup>6</sup> The second epitomizes Mathinna’s crisis: she is raped by Sir Franklin, an event from which no way back is possible and which leads her to her downfall.

The heterotopic space of the ship enhances the ball, which plays on an illusion of belonging,<sup>7</sup> as well as giving rise to the emergence of Mathinna’s alternative subjectivity through dance. For Ho Lai-Ming, the ship is used “to portray and heighten the estrangement that Mathinna experiences among the foreigners” ([Ho Lai-Ming 2012](#), p. 19). In a zoomorphic mock-society, Mathinna is first cast as an unknowing envied princess (see [Flanagan \[2008\] 2010](#), p. 147) but soon turns into an object of contempt as she trespasses against the norm. The dance allows for a dialectic questioning of norms, as Flanagan appropriates the codes of late-twentieth-century representations of the Corroboree in Australian literature. As Melinda Jewell notes, variations in quadrille were not exceptional in the nineteenth century but resulted from the lapse of time between the moment when the dance was learned in Britain or America and the moment it was taught in Australia (see [Jewell 2011](#), pp. 106–8). Flanagan{ XE “Flanagan, Richard” } subverts this historical phenomenon as he conflates the social dance, a predominantly white activity, with the Corroboree, an Aboriginal rite, which reflects Mathinna’s awakening to her hybridity{ XE “hybridity” }: “It was as though she was approaching some truth of herself, and people were applauding her for it. [ . . . ] Her movements were no longer steps or skips or slides but something magical that had taken hold of her body” ([Flanagan \[2008\] 2010](#), p. 150). Nevertheless, the epiphany is not achieved but crushed by the colonial gaze{ XE “colonial gaze” }:

Her eyes had never felt so sharp, so able to see and know everything—but she failed to notice the gasps, the shaking of heads, the angry and dark looks as on and on she span and now jumped, as she felt not the wax with which the oak deck had been prepared *but the earth of Van Diemen’s Land*, as with two deft movements she kicked off her shoes and became a kangaroo absolutely still, except for its head, click-clicking around, then a stamp, two leaps, and she was flying. ([Flanagan \[2008\] 2010](#), p. 151, added emphasis)

The bodily sensations open up a heterotopic space: suddenly, Mathinna both is and is not on the deck, which morphs into “the earth of Van Diemen’s Land”. Mathinna awakens and embraces her roots, but then the disapproval of the onlookers turns the princess into a monster. The shift is marked by the dash and the change of focus from her body to the spectators’ bodily reactions (“gasps”, “shaking of heads”, and “angry and dark looks”). For Lena Steveker, the passage presents Mathinna as “the exotic Other of colonial discourse, thus uncritically perpetuating the racist ideology of Victorian imperialism” ([Steveker 2014](#), p. 75). Nevertheless, this awakening-as-Othering, as it were, can also be read in a more nuanced way as Flanagan’s avowal of the unavoidable limitations of reclaiming.

Flanagan cannot fully reclaim Mathinna, because her trauma is not merely historical but individual. Flanagan twists the association of transitory spaces with honeymoon as conceived by Foucault (see [Foucault 1986](#), p. 23). Instead of being a site of amorous

defloration, the ship turns into the site of a rape: the cabin Mathinna is brought to is almost reduced to a bed—"a room only fractionally longer and wider than the cot in which he laid her to rest" (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 152). What we have here is a conflation of a reduced heterotopic space, the bed in the captain's cabin, and of a heterochrony—time is suspended in this scene—within the heterotopia of the ship, so that the bed seems to be both in and out of the ship: "Far away, the ball continued, the band played on" (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 152). The rape is only signified by the mythical reference to Leda and is inscribed in the locatable yet *un*represented space of the violation itself:

He was all things and all things were him. Looking down on Mathinna, her diminutive body, her exposed black ankles, her dirty little feet, the suggestive valley of her red dress between her thin legs, Sir John felt thrilled.

And after, was thrilled no more. (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 152)

Flanagan's depiction of Franklin as a pedophile writes back to historical accounts of Mathinna depicting her as a temptress.<sup>8</sup>

This moment crystallizes the shift from heterotopias of deviation to crisis heterotopias. The locus of crisis heterotopias "is the individual, created by a state of abjection. The crisis individual leaves society so as not to infect it and creates a heterotopia by doing so" (Faramelli et al. 2018, p. 4). Flanagan slightly distorts this interpretation: Mathinna's crisis follows from her contamination by the scientific and sexual desires of the Franklins. The different crisis heterotopias that Mathinna goes through thereafter, from the orphanage where the Franklins abandon her to Hobart's back alleys where she descends into drunkenness and prostitution, are all testimony of a failed cultural encounter, which results in incomplete acculturation. In the depiction of St John's Orphanage, for instance, Flanagan reenacts *Oliver Twist*'s adventures displaced to the colony, so that while Oliver "reveals to the reader the secrets of London's criminal underbelly" (Mullan 2014, n.p.), Mathinna reveals those of the imperial system. The location of the orphanage emphasizes solitude and oppression, its broken architecture leaving no space for possible escape (see Flanagan [2008] 2010, pp. 184–85). What is more, Mathinna is estranged from her fellow orphans by her increasingly animalistic behavior, which makes her abject in the eyes of Lady Jane on a visit to the institution shortly before her departure for England (see Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 192). For the Warden and Lady Franklin, Mathinna's education has failed, and they reduce her to a savage, rejecting her previous, more 'Western' behavior as pure pretense (see Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 193). For a short moment in the narrative, Flanagan has Lady Jane feel remorse and acknowledge her own destructive behavior, as she gazes down, unseen by Mathinna, upon the orphanage courtyard at her former adopted 'daughter':

She wished to be the mother she had tried so hard never to appear, to put her nose in Mathinna's hair and comfort and protect her, and revel in her difference and not seek to destroy it, because in that moment she knew the destruction of that difference could only lead, in the end, to the terrible courtyard below, and the white coffins below that. (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 195)

Her regret is marked by topographic imagination, which endows her with a form of second sight.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, Lady Jane leaves the girl behind, dooming Mathinna to descent into destitution and an early death. For Mathinna, there is no escape from the violence of the colonial empire, and though she is freed from the orphanage after the Franklins' departure, she remains estranged and in crisis. She remains alienated from both black and white communities, as when she speaks "in a manner that was neither white nor black, but in a strange way with strange words that made no sense to anyone" (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 213). A part-accultured subject, Mathinna does not belong anywhere, and the rest of the novel unfolds her downfall until her death. As Ho Lai-Ming points out, "[t]he novel reminds us not to forget historically silenced individuals but also makes it clear that fiction can offer no remedies for past injustice and violence" (Ho Lai-Ming 2012, p. 23). Flanagan thus displaces and debunks the compensation function of the colonial heterotopia to highlight the crushing of Aboriginal identity.

### 3. The Carceral Body: The Map of Mathinna's Haunting Embodiment

Reading Tasmania as a heterotopia of deviation underlines a major motif in Flanagan's writing, that of Tasmania "not as [a] landscape of hope, but one of historical and personal trauma: a colony and space of migration, the embodiment not of freedom but of enclosure" (Ben-Messahel 2018, p. 108). The latter dichotomy is present from the first appearance of Mathinna in the narrative where she is strongly associated with the land:

A small girl ran fit to burst through wallaby grass almost as high as her. How she loved the sensation of soft threads of fine grass feathering beads of water onto her calves, and the feel of the earth beneath her bare feet, wet and mushy in winter, dry and dusty in summer. She was seven years old, the earth was still new and extraordinary in its delights, the earth still ran up through her feet to her head into the sun[.] (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 9)

In this passage, Mathinna has a natural connection to the earth, seeming to merge with the natural world surrounding her; the gerund "feathering" seems to turn her into a kind of bird. The image is Edenic, one of innocence soon to be corrupted, as the repetition of "still" foregrounds. From the start, the focus is on her feet, the point of contact between her and the ground. Throughout the novel, Mathinna's feet articulate the relation to space with a gradual shift from a dynamic body, moving in space and refusing the docility embodied by the shoes Lady Franklin wants her to wear, to a carceral body "characterized not by kinesis, collision, and resistance but by stasis, confinement, and enclosure" (White 2018, p. 81).

When he was twenty, Flanagan came upon Mathinna's portrait which led him to investigate and write Mathinna's story (see Flanagan 2011, 00:45-01:10). Flanagan's attention was especially piqued by the discovery, once the frame of the watercolor had been removed, of Mathinna's bare feet, hitherto cropped out of the picture. The feet thereby become a riddle to which Flanagan's novel attempts to provide an answer. In the novel's version of the watercolor, Mathinna's portrait is "marred only by one detail: her bare feet" (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 197). A copy is ordered "with shoes", but "it had somehow lost the delightful spontaneity of the original" (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 197). Mathinna's bare feet thus stand for her resistance to 'civilisation' as well as her authenticity. The truncated feet also "provide a metaphor for the historically marginalised, who are often deliberately 'cropped' from official narratives" (Ho Lai-Ming 2012, p. 17). Mathinna herself has been turned into a 'portable property': a poignant little girl, an orphan, presented in a commodified portrait. Her feet turn into shackles that tether her as a symbol of colonial constraint. For Robert G. White, a body which itself turns into a space of confinement is a carceral body, functioning "as heterotopic site, a system of opening and closing through which power functions spatially. This is not a body *in* space; rather, it is a body which reflects and occasions space—a body *as* space" (White 2018, p. 88, original emphasis).

The more the novel goes on, the more the emphasis shifts to the dirtiness of Mathinna's feet, which then contaminates her whole dead body: "The back of the body [ . . . ] was crawling with so many lice it more resembled an insect nest than a human being" (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 250). Throughout, her dirty feet, untamed, seem to hint at a body that is pathologized by Lady Jane for whom shoes are a means of control: "She will be shod and she will be civilized" (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 117). Not only does Mathinna's body turn into a carceral body under the grip of Lady Jane, but it is also confined and spatialized by Sir Franklin's eroticized colonial gaze. The shape of Mathinna's body is mapped by Franklin throughout the section devoted to her stay in Hobart predating the rape. Franklin maps out her body, hinting at her sensuousness: "Gleam of teeth, swirl of red, puddle of eye, dance of feet" (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 132). The sexualization of her body reaches its climax in a passage focusing on her growing breasts:

by nine he noticed her budding beneath her virginal white-silk Regency dress with its high waist and low collar. By ten there was a swelling suggestion of breasts and, with it, a changed attitude—more knowing, more devious, he felt in

his more frustrated moments, and also more attractive[.] (Flanagan [2008] 2010, pp. 141–42)

The half-concealed body is sexualized, construed as a deviant object so that Franklin characterizes her as “an adult at ten” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 142). Geographical terms map her body as Franklin refers to her as a “tabula rasa” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 127) and compares himself to a disoriented compass (see Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 135). Eventually, the rape scene conflates the two constructs, as Flanagan calls upon the traditional trope of the raped female body as a metaphor for colonial expansion, as Franklin “[l]ook[s] down on Mathinna, her diminutive body, her exposed black ankles, her dirty little feet, the suggestive valley of her red dress between her thin legs” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 152). Mathinna’s body thus serves as a metonymy for Australia: named Flinders after the island she comes from, she is also constantly associated with Australian fauna (wallabies, black cygnets, possums, and cockatoos). This association can also be seen in Mathinna’s kangaroo-skin garb, an image that the author returns to when Lady Jane, on the visit to Robinson’s, stresses that she specifically wants the child she had earlier “watched dancing in the white kangaroo skin” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 70). Flanagan may be suggesting that the whiteness of the animal skin contributes to Lady Jane’s attraction to the girl. At the moment of her death, as she struggles to get her head out of the puddle into which she is forced by a fellow Aborigine, Mathinna’s feet reappear in a hallucinatory flash, reproducing in part verbatim the initial description of her as a child: “She was flying through wallaby grass, her body no longer a torment but a joy. Soft threads of fine grass feathering beads of water onto her legs. The earth was her bare feet, wet and mushy in winter, dry and dusty in summer” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 247). The passage actualizes what was only a supposition earlier. Mathinna fuses with the natural world, turning into a sort of bird. The passage reads as a transformation from the heterotopic carceral body to Foucauldian utopian body: death seems to free Mathinna, whereas in life she was tethered.<sup>10</sup> Her transformation into an animal provides the climax of her association with the Australian land and fauna that pervades the whole novel.

Mathinna’s body, however, is also liberated from constraint in the space of the page as she haunts the narrative set in London in the 1850s, her feet creating a contact zone of sorts: “[Lady Jane] remembered the softness of those dark eyes; the sight that once had angered her and now moved her so, of those bare feet. [ . . . ] I am so alone, she thought. Those bare, black feet” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 28). Mathinna’s spectral body may be conceptualized in heterotopic terms: it is a space both absent and present which opens up temporal contact zones and debunks Lady Franklin’s ‘scientific’ experiment as an illusion. Franklin’s gift of the girl’s portrait to Lady Jane upon their departure from Tasmania prefigures Mathinna’s spectral presence in the London sections. The scene takes place on a ship, which locates the child at a “distance [ . . . ] thanks to the sea” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 197). The version of the painting that Franklin offers his wife is the truncated version that we know: “His oval frame neatly cut Mathinna off at her ankles and finally covered her bare feet” (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 197). Mathinna is contained, ‘framed’, the excision of her feet reminiscent of the violence of the rape, itself signified as a blank in the novel as we have seen. Throwing the portrait into the sea, Lady Jane further rejects Mathinna’s body and creates a ripple effect that contaminates the London narrative. Importantly, the portrait can also be linked up to the heterotopic motif of the mirror. Foucault defines the heterotopic function of the mirror as follows: “it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there” (Foucault 1986, p. 22). Interestingly, the reflection is distorted in *Wanting*: it is by looking at Mathinna that Lady Jane sees herself, by remembering her onetime ‘daughter’ that she recognizes her loneliness. As Margaret Harris puts it, this is “a crucial marker of [Lady Jane’s] denial of love for the child, and her destructive suppression of maternal feelings” (Harris 2018, p. 145). This further points to the “ambivalence” that Elizabeth Ho identifies within the neo-Victorian agenda that both “includes ‘writing back’



to empire—a reinterpretation of canonical Western texts and a critique of entrenched master narratives—as an act of revision” and “serve[s] as perpetual reminders of the racialized past” (Ho 2012, pp. 11–12). Indeed, Mathinna’s body is construed as a space that is contained, penetrated, a carceral body, which is only empowered in the present absence of her portrait and ghost, thereby offering a bitter reclaiming.

#### 4. “The World Had Forgotten about Us”: Subverting Eurocentric Representations

If *Wanting* presents a heterotopia of compensation that ambivalently reclaims Mathinna and the colonial past, *Mister Pip* presents a heterotopia of illusion “that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory” (Foucault 1986, p. 27), a space which collapses the dichotomy center/periphery. *Mister Pip* challenges “the ideas both that the dispossessed are of necessity voiceless, and that silence, where it does exist, must invariably reflect disempowerment” (Heilmann and Llewellyn 2010, p. 69). Focusing on the modern history of Papua New Guinea, the text illustrates a recent shift in Pacific historiography from an island-oriented view of history highlighting the colonial encounter’s “fatal impact” on indigenous populations to a more global view of events (Lal 2007, pp. 196–97). The colonial encounter—when Matilda’s grandfather meets a white man for the first time (see Jones [2006] 2008, p. 5)—only mediates the Civil War that shook Bougainville in the 1990s.

The heterotopic site of Bougainville, both *in* but not *of* the world, provides a site of resistance against a Eurocentric view, which silences the indigene trauma of this civil war. The island is cut off from the rest of the world, literally so by the sea and by the blockade imposed by Papua New Guinea, and also figuratively as Matilda notes that “the world had forgotten about us” (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 49). A change of perspective is enacted here. Jones challenges Gayatri Spivak’s (1994) notion of the silent subaltern with a twist; it is not that the female subaltern cannot speak but that the Western world will not listen. The pronoun “us” displaces the Eurocentric dichotomy Us (white) vs. Them (black).<sup>11</sup> Speaking from the heterotopic space thus allows a shift, enabling a resistance built on the experience of the island and bearing witness to the localized conflicts that took place on Bougainville. The war seems to align itself with the surrounding ocean and jungle, creating a stifling environment: “We were surrounded by sea, and while the redskins’ gunboats patrolled the coastline their helicopters flew overhead” (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 9). Here, as elsewhere in the novel, weapons are woven into the natural landscape, which normalizes the war.

Jones’s novel confers a tangible reality to the space of the island, offering a contrast with the text’s representation of England. Both Victorian and contemporary England are presented as illusory places in the novel while occupying different roles. The reading of *Great Expectations* mediates Victorian England and creates a heterotopic space for the children, a means to escape from their ordinary life. The children’s first reaction to Victorian England is expressed in terms denoting the contradictoriness of heterotopic spaces: “We could not imagine air so cold that it made smoke come out of your mouth or caused the grass to snap in your hands. *We could not imagine such a world*” (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 34, added emphasis). The focus is not so much on the plot of Dickens’s novel than on its spatiality, concentrating especially on the Kent marshes. ‘Marshes’ is a word that at first bewilders Matilda and for which she must find an equivalent in her own reality:

At night I lay on my mat wondering what marshes were; and what were wittles and leg irons? I had an idea from their sound. *Marshes*. I wondered if quicksand was the same. I knew about quicksand because a man up at the mine had sunk into it, never to be seen again. (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 24; original emphasis)

The words denoting the English landscape are endowed with a magical quality, which stems from their sound and the use of italics in the text. “*Marshes*” enables Matilda to imaginatively ‘travel’ as well as triggers her own storytelling. Her equation of the marshes with the quicksand allows her to make sense of the text but also offers a way to appropriate Dickens’s novel and use it to tell her own story.

Reading becomes a means for the children to cope with the trauma of the war. For Monica Latham, the novel provides the children with “a soothing parenthesis” (Latham 2011a, p. 26) to explore. Victorian England turns into a displaced heterotopia of illusion or vacation: the Polynesian villages of Foucault’s text (see Foucault 1986, p. 26) are replaced by Dickens’s England. The therapeutic value of reading comes into full view when Mr. Watts decides to reread Dickens’s novel so that “we would still have another country to flee to. And that would save our sanity” (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 93). Jones’s use of Dickens’s England shows that in a chaotic world, heterotopias may be used to restore a certain form of order and stability: “It was always a relief to return to *Great Expectations*. It contained a world that was whole and made sense, unlike ours” (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 67). According to Cora Kaplan, “*Great Expectations* functions in *Mister Pip* as a kind of parable and cautionary tale for the traumatic transformations and inevitable losses of traditional societies—here the cultures of the non-white poor—in a violent, globalized world” (Kaplan 2011, p. 84). I would add that *Great Expectations* further functions as a mirror, which enables Matilda to make sense of her world and, at the end of the novel, to assert herself as a Pacific version of Pip. The Foucauldian mirror image sheds light on the narration of this novel: the narrating Matilda is not in Bougainville but is writing in her room in London, trying to come to terms with her trauma. The reflection on her experience in Bougainville takes on a therapeutic value through writing, pointing out the flexibility of heterotopias. The juxtaposition of the two spaces thanks to the ‘mirror’ of the page points out the illusory nature of Matilda’s life in London where she is not truly ‘alive’ but depressed, confined to her small flat which contrasts with her colorful and vivid life on the island.

While Dickens is praised on Bougainville,<sup>12</sup> Matilda’s ‘encounter’ with Dickens in England turns into a rejection. Matilda clearly undermines Dickensian scholars and writes back to the canonical Dickens. For Mark Llewellyn, Matilda’s rejection comments “on a continued desire to understand and re-interpret canonical texts within a more global, intellectualised and emotionalised schema” (Llewellyn 2008, p. 179). Matilda pinpoints the contradictions of the Victorian author as she notes: “The man who writes so touchingly and powerfully about orphans cannot wait to turn his own kin out the door. He wants them out in the world” (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 247). In Matilda’s narration, Dickens’s sons turn into imperial subjects, mapping the whole Empire as they are dispatched to India, Australia and Canada (see Jones [2006] 2008, p. 248). Arguably, Matilda does not construe them as colonizers but as orphans of a different kind.

Eventually, Matilda confronts ‘Dickens’ in the shape of a dummy on display in Rochester. The figure, part of the Dickens museum at Eastgate House, offers a grotesque parody of Robert William Buss’s *Dickens’s Dream* (1875):

The tour ended in Mr. Dickens’ study. A mannequin of the author himself reclined in a leather chair, his legs sprawled before him, his hands in gentle repose. His sleepy eyelids at half-mast. We had walked in on Mr. Dickens while he was daydreaming. Behind the restraining rope, the man standing next to me heard me whisper, ‘I have met Mr. Dickens and this is not him.’ (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 255)

For Matilda, the truth of Dickens does not lie in Rochester nor in any other part of ‘Dickensland’. For her, Dickens belongs to the Pacific and is embodied by Mr. Watts. For Dana Shiller, this ‘encounter’ with Dickens’s mannequin shows that “[t]here are no originals anymore and no copies, only Matilda’s version of Charles Dickens, which manifests itself most solidly, at the end of Jones’s novel, as inspiration for Matilda’s auto-biography” (Shiller 2012, p. 99).<sup>13</sup> The passage also presents the reader with a heterochronic heterotopia, the museum, a space where “time never stops building up and topping its own summit” (Foucault 1986, p. 26). The creolization of the canonical text rejects this stasis and, to a certain extent, brings Dickens back to life. Matilda, and through her Jones, asserts the power of narrative: “my Mr. Dickens had taught us kids that our voice was special, and we should remember that whatever else happened to us in our lives our voice could never be taken away from us” (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 256). As Dianne F. Sadoff shows, this final

remembering, as well as the embedded remembering of *Great Expectations*, points to an act of “cultural preservation” while disseminating the children’s and “Dickens’s literary scene of trauma” (Sadoff 2010, p. 184). Matilda is able to come to term with the trauma of Mr. Watts’s death—he was chopped up and fed to the pigs by the redskin soldiers after being unable to prove Pip’s fictitiousness—as her narration ‘re-members’ him: “I have found I can *reassemble* Mr. Watts at will and whenever I like, and my account so far, I hope, is proof of that” (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 203, added emphasis). The silenced teacher is reclaimed and given a voice again.

The relation between place and reading highlights Jones’s postmodern and postcolonial approach to truth and place. The knowledge of England that the children derive from *Great Expectations* is biased and only reflects a certain perception of London. The novel articulates this plurality of truth:

We soon learned there were many Englands, and Mr. Watts had only been to two or three of them. The England he visited was very different from the one Mr. Dickens had lived and worked in. This was a challenging notion for those of us who had never been anywhere, because we had the feeling that life on the island was much the same as it had been for our grandfathers and their grandfathers, especially after the blockade was imposed. (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 29)

Jones contrasts the static environment of the island—characterized by tradition and by the war—to the changing world of England. The representation of London is linked to Mr. Watts’s own experience of London, which is filtered through the Dickensian novel: “He said everything was vaguely familiar since he had already been led around London by Mr. Dickens” (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 83). London seems to be at once both far and near in time as Mr. Watts reads about Pip’s journey to the city: “The distance from Pip’s house in the marshes to the ‘metropolis’ of London was about five hours. [ . . . ] But five hours was nearer than a century and a half and a whole lot closer than half a world away” (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 83). Pip’s reality seems closer to the children than their own isolated situation. Nevertheless, London is also a space that defies understandability: “We heard that Pip was scared of London’s ‘immensity’. *Immensity?*” (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 83, original emphasis). The receptacle of Mr. Watts’s memory and of his white identity, London estranges him from his child listeners, who cannot grasp the city and only know it in piecemeal fashion through *Great Expectations*:

We had an idea he was back in London with his younger self staring in that lit window—this was one of those moments that reminded us of Mr. Watts’s status as the last white man on the island. There he stood before us, one of a kind, with a memory of a place none of us kids had visited or seen or could imagine except in the way supplied by Mr. Dickens. (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 84)

London/England for Mr. Watts functions as a heterotopia of compensation which, though defined by multiplicity, offers a reassuring sense of order. Mr. Watts’s enthrallment with the metropolis contrasts with Matilda’s later experience of England, which proves bitterly disappointing.

Matilda’s depiction of Kent bears witness to dramatic changes since Dickens’s lifetime, as she notes that “the landscape from *Great Expectations* is gone, that its fabled marshes lie beneath motorways and industrial estates” (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 249). Matilda’s account characterizes the place she came to know through her reading as an illusion, a fable. Rochester is reduced to a postcard, a simulacrum marked by the excessive presence of Dickens, as she enumerates the numerous puns based on Dickens’s novels used as restaurant names, turning Kent into a palimpsest. While the England depicted by Mr. Watts in his reading of Dickens enables the children to dream and escape the harsh reality of the island, the English setting described by Matilda once she moves there is marked by disillusion. Dickens’s London fails as a heterotopia of compensation for Matilda and instead turns into a heterotopia of illusion. The fiction of England is contrasted with the reality of Bougainville to which Matilda returns. This return enhances the epigraph of the

novel, “characters migrate”, a quotation from Umberto Eco, which sets the novel under the sign of spatial movement and exchanges. Functioning in a way akin to the epitaphs on the graves of Pip’s parents in Dickens’s novel, the epigraph both marks and shapes the identity of the protagonist of Jones’s text. It underscores the displacement of Pip’s story in the Pacific and the equation of Pip and Matilda on which the novel ends: “Pip was my story, even if I was once a girl, and my face black as the shining night. Pip is my story, and in the next day I would try where Pip had failed, I would try to return home” (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 256).

## 5. Heterotopias of Accretion and Crossfertilization

*Mister Pip* advocates a positive crossfertilization between Western and Eastern cultures. Jones offers a creative challenge to critical concepts of hybridity “as camouflage, as a contesting, antagonistic agency” (Bhabha [1994] 2004, p. 277) and of Spivak’s silent subalterns. As Ho argues, “neo-Victorianism offers those situated in various postcolonial moments and specific locations a powerful conceptual and aesthetic vocabulary for exploring the past—which, in turn, offers ways of coping with the temporal palimpsests of the present” (Ho 2012, p. 6). Arguably, within the heterotopic spaces of the school and of the Watts’ spare room, *Mister Pip* not only challenges Eurocentric representations but refuses binarism altogether in a celebration of the power of the palimpsest. Latham observes that in Jones’s novel, “memory, literary and oral heritage are often expressed in terms of rooms or spatial containers” (Latham 2011a, p. 29). This is especially the case of the island school, which may be construed as one of Pierre Nora’s “site[s] of memory{ XE “site of memory” }” (or “*lieux de mémoire*”), cultural sites “where memory crystallizes and secretes itself” (Nora 1989, p. 7), and which he describes as “the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it” (Nora 1989, p. 12). The school on Bougainville corresponds to Nora{ XE “Nora, Pierre” }’s idea that such sites emerge from the absence of “spontaneous memory”, pointing out a need for the creation of archives and the organization of memory (see Nora 1989, p. 12). Nora’s concept comes close to the heterochronic quality of heterotopias that Foucault associates with libraries and museums (see Foucault 1986, p. 26). Both foreground the idea of a space *for* time, highlighting that the need for such spaces “belongs to our modernity” (Foucault 1986, p. 26). Foucault points to the evolution of the function of the heterotopic space of the library in Western society, transforming from “the expression of an individual choice” in the seventeenth century to “a perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place”, a signifier of “modernity” (Foucault 1986, p. 26) associated with the masses. Nevertheless, the palimpsestic space of the school in *Mister Pip* in part reverses this development: I contend that Jones’s representations of heterotopias of accumulated time generate a creative site for memory as the expression of (Matilda’s and the children’s) individuality.

As aforesaid, the school allows the Bougainville children to decipher the ungraspable violence of the situation, through the transformation of *Great Expectations* into a textbook for culture and survival. Lloyd Jones’s novel is thus far from “a kind of cultural sickness that distorts the mind rather than liberates its potential”, as Llewellyn would have it (Llewellyn 2008, p. 179). Daniel Defert understands heterotopias as ritualized ruptures (see Defert 2009, p. 42), which is precisely what happens with the reading of *Great Expectations* so that the school, in fact, turns into a multilayered, palimpsestic space: its main aim is not to deconstruct the canon or to attack the colonial system. Jones{ XE “Jones, Lloyd” }’s novel celebrates hybridity{ XE “hybridity” } and cultural encounters that are embodied in the school, which is qualified as a site of enlightenment, as Mr. Watts asserts, “I want this to be a place{ XE “sense of place” } of light” (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 16). The hybridity of the school emerges from the mixture of Mr. Watts’s reading of *Great Expectations* and of the children’s mothers’ stories. As Jennifer Gribble{ XE “Gribble, Jennifer” } notes, the novel’s focus on those stories, as well as its use of a heroine, acknowledges the matrilineal culture of the island while articulating identity formation, so that the encounter with



*Great Expectations* inaugurates “a process of mutual affirmation, a cross-fertilization{ XE “cross-fertilization” } in which stories bring people and ideas together and empower them” (Gribble 2008, p. 190).<sup>14</sup>

Jones’s rewriting of *Great Expectations* relies heavily on heteroglossia as Pip’s canonical Victorian story is put on an equal footing with the inhabitants’ local stories and words of wisdom. This becomes most apparent when Mr. Watts tells the story of ‘his life’, especially the passage devoted to the spare room and its white wall, another palimpsest. This room is prepared for the Watts’ future baby Sarah. Mr. Watts and his indigene wife Grace decide to cover up the wall with inscriptions: “It had started with Grace writing her relatives’ names on the walls of the spare room. [ . . . ] Mr. Watts and Grace put up their separate histories and ideas. They argued like roosters” (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 184). Jones seems to create a visual “Third space”, that is a space between the ‘You’ and ‘I’ which produces meaning (see Bhabha [1994] 2004, p. 53). Nevertheless, the verb “separate” and the couple’s argument suggest that the wall may be read as much as a space of colocation as a “Third space”, stressing the *lack* of interweaving and hybridity. As Caterina Colomba observes, this “visual ‘Third space’ [ . . . ] tellingly remains unexplored as the premature death of the baby annuls that possible hybridised future” (Colomba 2017, p. 281). If hybridity fails here, it nonetheless strives and flourishes on the island. As Latham puts it: “Mr Watts’ tale around the fire contains a multitude of stories, multicoloured threads which he weaves in order to compose a believable story—a story which temporarily enables him to survive” (Latham 2011b, p. 86). In this climactic moment, Jones acknowledges the heterogeneity and the multivocality of the islanders and realizes the program set by his working title for the novel: ‘Inventing the Pacific: Last Chance’ (see Bedell 2007, n.p.).

Colomba argues that compared to other rewritings of *Great Expectations*, Jones’s novel is “unconventional”, since instead of “challenging the fixity of colonial texts through operations of textual hybridisation, as well as by processes of intertextual and metatextual dismantling and reassembling”, *Mister Pip* uses Dickens’s hero to “problematiz[e] the concept of ‘home’ and the act of ‘returning’, as well as [to] explor[e] the process of constructing one’s identity” (Colomba 2017, p. 276). Inscribing Pip’s name into the sand as part of her family tree, Matilda chooses her own lineage: she chooses Dolores, Mr. Watts, and Pip. The heterotopia of Bougainville, a palimpsestic space which enshrines the school within which Matilda finds Victorian England, is the locus of Matilda’s identity.

## 6. Conclusions

Richard Flanagan and Lloyd Jones explore disturbing places, giving a special importance to unstable postcolonial spaces, such as the troubled genocidal Tasmania or the war-torn Papua New Guinea. As illustrated, heterotopias shed a new light on their neo-Victorian postcolonial projects. Both writers strive to debunk Eurocentric views of the Antipodes. Flanagan’s narrative turns the Western model of the colony, as it appears in Foucault, upside down, instead presenting Australia as a grotesque reflection of England. Uncovering the various heterotopic spaces present in the novel emphasizes its structure which highlights the impossibility for Mathinna not to be thought of as an Other. Flanagan’s efforts to reclaim Mathinna’s story as part of Australian identity takes on a biopolitical turn when considering Mathinna as a carceral body. Nevertheless, the ambivalence of the heterotopic images present in the novel points to the limits of such a reclaiming. Jones’s use of heterotopias contrasts with Flanagan’s in this regard, since his island becomes an efficient countersite, resisting Eurocentrism. Jones’s heterotopias challenge such well-trodden postcolonial concepts as the so-called ‘silent subaltern’ or Bhabha’s hybridity, calling for a rethinking of those concepts.

Both Flanagan’s and Jones’s novels also call for a rethinking of the transmission of the past in spatial terms. Displacing Dickens in the Antipodes opens up a new dialectic relation to the canon, refusing stasis. In the midst of Civil War, the heterotopia of Dickens’s England allows Jones to offer a form of order and stability. Jones moves swiftly between tangible heterotopias (such as the school) to imaginary spaces (Dickens’s England) creating

a concentric heterotopia at the center of which lies the encounter with the book. Contrary to Bhabha's conception of this encounter as a marker of Western domination, Jones foregrounds reading as an empowering experience of 'other spaces'. Displacing Dickens in the Pacific, Jones presents us with a palimpsestic heterotopia that refuses the death of the author and calls for further dynamic appropriations of the Victorian canon.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In fact, the radio talk 'Les Hétérotopies' opens with fictitious and imaginary spaces before turning to real spaces (Foucault 2009, pp. 23–25), whereas in the essay Foucault grounds his argument in the history of space in Western culture (see Foucault 1986, pp. 22–24).
- <sup>2</sup> Since this paper focuses on the representation of Australia, I do not deal with the second plotline of the novel.
- <sup>3</sup> For Foucault, these are not opposites; rather, heterotopias of deviation are the evolution of crisis heterotopias, and in fact, they sometimes overlap as in the case of retirement homes (see Foucault 1986, p. 25).
- <sup>4</sup> As many a critic has observed, the name chosen by Robinson calls to mind the legend of Leda and Zeus, thereby prefiguring her rape.
- <sup>5</sup> The narrator mocks Lady Jane as the comment on the use of the term shows: "using the fashionable Greek word for a building to house sculpture" (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 103).
- <sup>6</sup> The ball scene is quite ambivalent, however, as the white characters are also Othered by their animal costumes. Strikingly, Lady Franklin condemns her husband's costume (a black swan) as making him look ridiculous (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 146).
- <sup>7</sup> Indeed, when she arrives at the ball, Mathinna is the center of attention, envied by the guests who want her to acknowledge them, but her attraction proves illusory as they soon turn against her.
- <sup>8</sup> In James Bonwick's account, Mathinna is depicted as a "Tasmanian beauty", as he focuses on her "black, bright, glossy and oh! so beautiful" skin (Bonwick 1870, p. 383).
- <sup>9</sup> What's more, the reference to coffins is reminiscent of the opening in which Wybellana is compared to a cemetery thereby creating a mirror image. The passage builds its topography on various strata, on the one hand, telescoping the orphanage and the cemetery, a heterotopia *par excellence*; on the other hand, creating textual echoes which foreground Mathinna's demise.
- <sup>10</sup> The heterotopic quality of Mathinna's body is also conveyed by her liminal status, which appears most strikingly in the last pages of the novel: "half-hyena and fully a princess, queer, lost, belonging and not belonging" (Flanagan [2008] 2010, p. 251).
- <sup>11</sup> If the passage quoted above presents us with a traditional binary opposition, the novel also opposes Bougainvillean and Papuan people, an opposition which is rendered in colors: "According to us we are black as the night. The [Papuan] soldiers looked like people leached up out of the red earth. That's why they were known as redskins" (Jones [2006] 2008, p. 9).
- <sup>12</sup> Dolores, Matilda's mother, is an exception to the novelist's admirers, as she feels estranged by the language of his Victorian novel (see Jones [2006] 2008, p. 35).
- <sup>13</sup> This appropriation, which breaks the dichotomy original/copy, is to be found in different postcolonial accounts of the encounter with literature from the Empire, as also in the case of Naipaul who, as a child, would adapt Dickens to Trinidad (see Thieme 2001, p. 104).
- <sup>14</sup> Beverly Taylor also comments on this aspect of the novel. For her, "Jones's novel crystallizes the contrast between island life and the "outside" world when parents of the children appear in the schoolroom to relate bits of island folklore, myth and wisdom" (Taylor 2009, p. 101).

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