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PUNITIVE HETEROTOPIA IN ANN TURNER'S CELIA (1988)

A quarry, in the sense of a pit for splitting rocks, derives from the Latin quadra, a square. A square, having a dihedral symmetry of four, order eight, is a shape of balance, stability and order. However, a quarry is also a site of violence – a place where the natural world is systematically gutted and emptied-out through drilling and explosion. Such a location provides a dangerous though exciting location for children to play, as they do in Ann Turner's coming-of-age directorial debut Celia (1988).

This paper itself is split into two parts. The first part charts how the children (and camera) of Celia transform an Australian quarry into the kind of phantasmal, non-hegemonic space which Foucault (1986) refers to as a 'heterotopia'. The second part charts how the heterotopia of the quarry is corrupted through Celia's imitation of an adult model of retributive justice. As such this paper has a two-fold purpose: Firstly, to illustrate how editing and cinematography can spatially re-configure a real off-screen place as heterotopic on-screen, giving external expression to a phenomenon experienced by children as part-imaginary; secondly, to argue that because the child's heterotopia is fundamentally other to adult systems of law and order, it is ethically and ontologically wrong to submit children to adult systems of justice.

In Celia, the titular 9-year-old (Rebecca Smart) and her friends spend their evenings play fighting in an abandoned quarry outside a suburb of Melbourne, Victoria in the months of December 1957 to February 1958. The quarry in Celia is a space of violent disorder, a stage upon which stones are hurled and holes filled with rotten meat for other children to fall into – actions in a tit-for-tat cycle of gang warfare that escalates to the mutilation of Celia's beloved pet rabbit Murgatroyd by her rival Stephanie (Amelia Frid). The quarry is transformed from a rational, rectilinear site of

work to a gutted, irrational space of violent play. Damousi (2009) reads a psychological dimension to this violence, asserting that '[t]he oppressive restraints of suburban life are relinquished in the quarry [...] where the tensions, fears and heightened anxieties of the children are played out and ritualized.' The quarry is therefore a space outside of the social order of the adult world, encapsulating 'the vast expanse of the unconscious' (ibid.).

Damousi divulges the symbolic function of the film's quarry scenes without explaining how this unruly space is created cinematically. By contrast, in a paper on film space and the world of childhood, Annette Kuhn (2010) demonstrates how cinematography maps out space in the films Where is the Friend's Home? (Abbas Kiarostami, 1990), Mandy (Alexander Mackendrick, 1952) and Ratcatcher (Lynne Ramsay, 1999). She argues of film that 'through its organization within the frame of spatiality, liminality and motion, the medium is capable of replaying or invoking states of being that are commonly experienced as inner' (p.95). So, following Kuhn, we should ask how Turner, cinematographer Geoffrey Simpson and editor Ken Sallows, use 'spatiality, liminality and motion' (ibid.) to establish that the quarry in Celia is, far from being just a square in which stones are squared, a semi-phantasmal space; a make-believe frontier situated midway between a tangible wasteland and a child's unconscious.

The quarry is introduced on-screen eleven-and-a-half minutes into the film after a scene in which Celia attends a church service with her family. Celia wheels her bicycle out of frame to the left; the film then cuts to Celia cycling in the opposite direction, entering frame left at the edge of the quarry. Since the viewer is given no indication as to the geographical location of the quarry in relation to the church and Celia enters at the same side of the frame she left, a temporal-spatial ellipsis is created, as though Celia has just materialised at the site of the quarry. The camera then pans across with Celia as she runs down the path leading to the pit. This movement is in lieu of an establishing shot, so that the viewer's movement into the space of the quarry is closely matched with Celia's own. Furthermore, the diegetic sound of the bike's wheels upon gravel blends almost imperceptibly with the non-diegetic soundtrack. Consequently, the auditory space of the film world and the outer world of the

cinema/viewing space are experientially blurred in a way analogous to how the liminal space of the quarry blurs Celia's phenomenological world with her unconscious.

Seemingly from Celia's POV we see the figure of her grandma (Margaret Ricketts) appear from behind a mound of rubble in extreme long shot. However, the audience knows that Celia's grandma was discovered dead by Celia at the beginning of the film, and so "granny" must be a spectre of her granddaughter's imagination. As Celia walks towards this vision of her grandma, the camera clings in close-up to Short's face in a tracking shot. As with much of this primary quarry sequence, the view of the camera is not identical to Celia's point-of-view, but in sympathetic collusion with her emotional and psychological experience of the film world.

Of course, when Celia reaches the bottom of the slope there is no grandmother in sight. The soundtrack cuts abruptly with Celia's recognition, the bittersweet piano music replaced by the buzz of cicadas, embodying the return of the real. Celia's gaze lingers momentarily upon a hut, before the film cuts to a mid-shot of Celia and then – in a moment of spatial bewilderment – an upwards tilting shot of Celia and her grandmother picnicking on a boat in the middle of a lake. The eagle-eyed viewer might recognise that the lake is one of the quarry's pits filled with water, but failing that, the shot appears utterly incongruous with those that have preceded it. Only the continued soundtrack of cicadas ensures the viewer's sense of continuity. It is not signalled whether this shot represents a memory, dream or hallucination. As such, by the end of this first quarry sequence we have reached a point at which the real landscape has been subsumed by the imagination of the child.

The second quarry sequence further defines the setting as a phantasmal space structured by the child's imagination. Again with no establishing shot, we cut abruptly from a suburban garden to a low-angle shot of Celia stood upon a rocky outcrop, head framed against the blue sky. The simple, uniform colour tonalities of the shot make the location seem abstracted, iconic. However, the spatial uniformity of the quarry is blasted as Celia raises her arms before her, points her hands in the shape of a gun and shouts 'bang!' Celia shoots at a 45° angle from the camera, her line of sight

cutting across the quarry diagonally. The shot-reverse-shot edit between her and the two children she shoots draws an invisible line between them, yet without an establishing or long shot to put their relative positions in context, we do not know the distance between them, so the pit below becomes an unknown expanse, a void magically bridged.

After another child is shown pretending to be shot by Celia, the cutting rate decreases as the game winds down. The camera tilts and pans slightly up-left, showing children at various levels along the banks, stratifying the landscape. Then, mirroring the camera's movement, Stephanie's gang are shown running down a slope of the quarry diagonally from the top-left of the frame to the bottom-right. Celia's gang runs away up the slope, the train of children snaking in a clockwise direction, no longer moving in a straight line.

One can thus see how the rectilinear space of the quarry is sequentially disrupted – at first cut through its horizontal axis with diagonals and then stratified vertically, before finally being all but scribbled upon as the children leave their weaving trail through the sandy dirt (see Fig. 1).
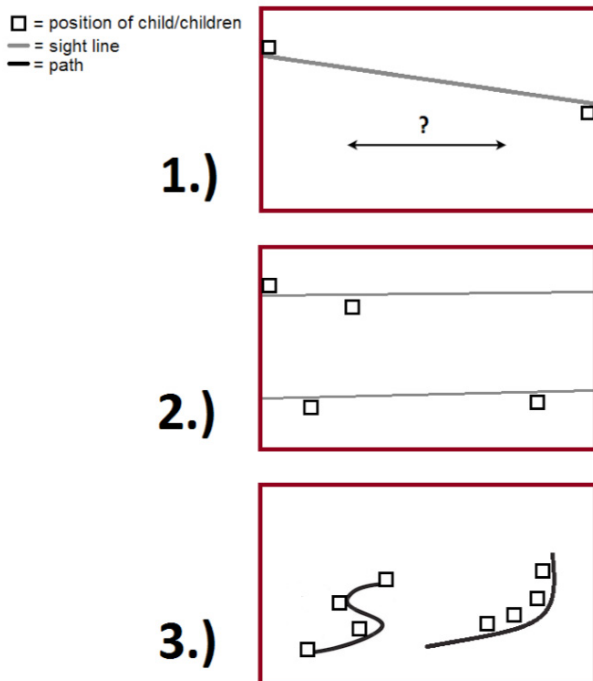

Fig. 1

The chaotic disturbance of the quarry as a stable place is both a product of the children's games and reflective of the violence of their play. Damousi and McCalmont both point out that the children's games draw from, mirror and distort the social games, politics and popular culture of the adult milieu which their play provides a (partial) respite from (Damousi, op cit. and McCalmont, 2009). Celia visits the cinema on two separate occasions with her parents where she watches a newsreel depicting the 'great rabbit muster' of Henry Bolte, the conservative Victorian premier from 1955 to 1972 who, in an attempt to control the "plague" of rabbits decimating Victoria's farmland, authorised myxomatosis to be introduced to the state's rabbit population and decreed that pet rabbits be exterminated or else relocated to Melbourne Zoo. It is this policy which apparently inspires Stephanie's branding of Celia's rabbit. Likewise, we see Celia and her friends watching a heist movie at the cinema, in which an armed assailant shoots a woman dead – likely the kind of picture the gang are imitating when they pretend to shoot one other at the quarry.

The idea of children drawing inspiration from the culture they consume, restaging scenes from television and films, is common to "moral panic" arguments about children's viewing habits, as Craig Martin commented to Ann Turner in a 2016 interview with her for Senses of Cinema. Debates pertaining to the potential impact of violent media upon children are variably supported or disputed by research within the disciplines of sociology and psychology, with some studies (Boyatzis, et al., 1995; Groebel, 1998; Anderson and Dill, 2000; McHan, 2010) concluding that children's behaviour is negatively impacted by exposure to such media and others (Kaplan and Singer, 1976; Gunter, et al., 2000; Fleming and Rickwood, 2001; Freedman, 2002) reviewing the evidence to find little to no causal link. However, despite differing conclusions, all such research tends to start from the a-priori assumption that children consume popular media (television; film; games) and that such media is – to some degree or other – important to them.

Indeed, in the conclusions from a piece of ethnographic research carried out in two Sheffield and London primary school playgrounds, Chris Richards remarks that 'popular media' was 'among the most available and enjoyable resources' for children to draw upon in their playground games.

However, he also notes that such texts were 'not simply followed as pre-determined templates for play' (2013, p.395), implicitly disputing the most literal-minded social learning accounts. The children he studied were able to engage imaginatively with the media they consumed, re-combining tropes, characters and motifs in a loose, non-dogmatic *bricolage* of fun.

Yet, the inspirations children draw from the adult world may not be only fictional. McCalmont (op cit.) notes that when Stephanie's gang hurl rocks at Celia's gang 'she uses not the language of the child's world but that of the adult's', shouting 'Dirty Reds! Dirty Reds!' at them.

McCalmont (ibid.) summaries the film's portrayal of the 'world of adults' thus:

> [A] claustrophobic and brutally unfair place governed by incomprehensible rules and statements of fact that [...] seem strangely distant and unreal due to the fact that they mostly issue forth from the same cinema screen as the detective stories the family pay to see for fun.

McCalmont's description is somewhat reductive since it reduces the 'world of adults' to the patriarchal figures and systems exhibited in Celia, neglecting the more positive, nurturing representations of adulthood in the film, such as Celia's grandmother. However, McCalmont is astute in recognising that for Celia and her friends the adult realm is just as alien and incomprehensible as the movies they inattentively watch – both offer semantic systems which they incorporate piecemeal into their own ontological paradigms. It is as though they scavenge for symbols amongst the world of the adults which they bring home with them to the world of children and make use of as and when.

Several writers (McNamee, 2000; Johnson, 2006; Richards, 2013; Chang-Kredl and Wilkie, 2016), recognising the existence of a separate child's realm constructed through the rituals of play, turn to Michel Foucault's concept of 'heterotopia' (1986) in order to theorise this phantasmal space.

'Heterotopia' perhaps remains more productively perverse if it remains

undefined – the danger being that soon as you define a heterotopia within certain parameters; it becomes a utopia, doomed to ossification or failure. For Foucault there is no especial relationship between heterotopias and hope. The heterotopia is, to quote Johnson, 'about conceiving space outside, or against, any utopian impulse or framework' (p.84). That is to say, heterotopias upset stable, clearly defined spatial boundaries. They do this through treating such boundaries as though they were eminently permeable and open to radical reconfigurations. If you take, for example, a child in a school playground, they might only be allowed to play within certain parameters, yet these are superseded in the child's imagination. So, the tarmac of the playground becomes lava and the monkey bars swinging vines etc.

In their piece on childhood subjectivity and heterotopia, Chang-Kredl and Wilkie describe the heterotopia simply as 'a site that juxtaposes incompatible spaces' (p.308). Arguably this definition is too broad as one can expand or contract the boundaries of a theorised site as one sees fit in order to allow juxtapositions that would render non-heterotopic sites heterotopic.

It is instructive therefore to return to Foucault in order to sharpen and clarify our understanding of heterotopia. For Foucault, 'A heterotopia is, unlike a utopia, a real place, but a place which functions as a self-contained microcosm, containing, testing, or inverting other real places within it' (p.3). Academics cited by Arun Saldanha (2008, p. 2083) who provide examples of heterotopias, including: Vancouver's public library (Lees, 1997), ethnography exhibits (Kahn, 1995) and Main St. in Disneyland (Philips, 2002), focus on the latter part of Foucault's statement (i.e. the fact that the heterotopia contains, tests and inverts other places) to the neglect of the fact that a heterotopia must also function as 'a self contained microcosm' (op cit.). That is to say, the heterotopia must not only hold fragments and reflections of other societies within itself, but must simultaneously function as an autonomous space within mainstream society. It must be of a larger society and also other to it.

It is this indeterminacy which allows the heterotopia to be mapped onto the cinematic imaginary since films are simultaneously phantasmal projections

upon a screen and documents of the real, material locations and objects the camera was pointed towards. Indeed, in Foucault's published lecture he refers to cinema as an example of heterotopic space, remarking that 'the cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space' (p.8). Previous academics (Kuhn, op cit. and Powrie, 2005) have specifically related the concept of heterotopia to films with child protagonists on the grounds that such films suture their adult viewers into a child's world, furthering the pre-existing dislocation between the space of the cinema and the space of the film.

Turner, in interview, makes it clear that she deliberately wrote and directed Celia in such a way as to suspend adult judgement upon her child protagonist's behaviour (Turner and Martin, op cit.). Peter Shelley explains that Turner endeavoured not to label the adversarial, even violent behaviour of the children in the film as 'cruelty' because 'she didn't perceive it as such when it was occurring with her as a child' (2012, p.117). Turner is thus united with Powrie and the other listed academics as seeing the realm of childhood as a world apart. She recognises that her experience and moral understanding of the world was profoundly different as a child than as an adult. To honour a child's perception of reality, we must consider labelling aspects of reality in their own terms, not ours. As adults we should not merely state authoritatively that our adult perception of the world is "true", while a child's perception of reality is distorted through immaturity – that the labels adults put on things have epistemological weight while the labels children put on things, don't. This position is upheld by academics/researchers working within the so-called "new sociology of childhood", such as Boocock and Scott (2005), Kallio (2008), Bolin (2014) and Barnikis (2015).

We can see therefore how the quarry in Celia would not be a heterotopic space when, say, occupied by adults squaring stones, but becomes heterotopic through the rituals (both violent and playful) enacted by the children within it. The quarry is possessed of inherent qualities (vastness; openness) which makes it an ideal candidate for such transformation, being unbounded enough that the children are able to successfully impose their imaginations upon it; but it is the fact that the children within it construct

their own counter society with their own rules and rituals which ensures its heterotopic status.

However, such a counter society can never be utopian, since the heterotopia is never "outside" of mainstream society, but always exists in conversation with it. This means, to quote Jason Dodge, there can never be a 'wholesale negation' (2015, p.323) of the values of mainstream society within the heterotopia. Power always creeps back in.

Reviewers (Maslin, 1990; French, date unknown; Damousi, op cit.) and Ann Turner herself note that by the end of Celia the title character's behaviour has become inextricably bound up with the playing through and, ultimately, replication of, adult power games. This consensus is likely influenced by Celia's actions in the last third of the film, in which judging her uncle John (William Zappa) guilty for the death of her rabbit and believing him to be an evil fairytale monster called a hobyah, she fatally shoots him with her father's shotgun. She then uses the quarry at the site for a mock trial in which her friend Heather (Clair Couttie), who was in the house when Celia shot John, is made to play the role of the accused and is almost hung to death.

If the heterotopia serves a function, that role is, according to Foucault, to 'create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory' (p.8). At the end of the show trial Celia pronounces: 'Justice has been done and the case rests forever.' Clearly, the ritual that has taken place has not provided justice in the sense of true retribution since Celia herself remains unpunished. Celia's words highlight here that the judicial system's smooth operation is not whatsoever dependent upon the correct allocation of blame. There merely has to be somebody to fill the role of the guilty party. Justice within the world of adults, Celia has cynically realised at the end of the film, is often little more than a hollow ritual composed of signs and symbols ossified through tradition. From having experienced the injustice(s) of the adult world, she now introduces this same injustice to the realm of childhood represented by the quarry.

As such, the mock trial signifies the moment at which heterotopia becomes dystopia. In the place of imaginative games which transformed the landscape of the quarry through play, we are left with the grotesque mimicry of an adult institution. Perhaps most grotesque is the fact that Celia, in saying 'justice has been done and the case rests forever' frames retributive as restorative justice. While Celia, as the perpetrator, has received closure, Stephanie, daughter of the victim, has not. Under a true system of restorative justice, the needs of Stephanie as a victim would be addressed and Celia would be required to make amends in a way appropriate to her position as a 9-year-old girl. Throughout the film Celia has been 'the hapless victim of trauma, betrayal and systematic oppression' (Martin, op cit.) and found that responding to these experiences with compassion and integrity just left her more abused. So, at the end of the film, she has decided to join the ranks of the abusers, rather than be encouraged through adult supervision to deconstruct the whole paradigm of abuse.

It is hinted at the end of the film that Celia's mother suspects that it was Celia who killed her brother-in-law, yet chooses not to do anything with this information. Martin condemns Celia's mother for this, comparing her to the mother of the murderous Rhoda Penmark in The Bad Seed (Mervyn LeRoy, 1956); he writes: 'Both mothers learn that their prepubescent daughters are killers and rather than seek justice, step into the role of accomplice.' Martins' words here suggest that justice could only look like Celia's punishment under the law – perhaps imprisonment; maybe worse. However, I submit that the film might be presenting Pat Carmichael's unconditional love for her daughter as potentially redemptive and offering a different model of parenting to the corporal punishment provided by Celia's father. Sandra Bloom (2001, pp.89-90), in arguing for a societal shift towards restorative justice, draws a parallel between retributive systems of justice and the way in which parents sometimes punish children; she reflects:

> The justice system reflects a fundamental imbalance of power between administrators of justice and those under its purview, just as a fundamental power imbalance exists between parents and children. The primary questions to be answered under the present

rules are, "What laws were broken?," "Who broke them?" and "What punishment do they deserve?" Not surprisingly these are also the typical questions addressed towards children by authority figures.

To sentence a 9-year-old child through an adult court is to apply an adult paradigm to a social order that is fundamentally alien to it. After all, in terms of rights and privileges, children are not full political subjects in the eyes of the law. The semi-mythic realm of childhood has its own systems and rules. To quote Blake Morrison's provocative and sometimes unsettling book on the murder of James Bulger: 'Wouldn't it be more appropriate for T & V [Thompson and Venables] to be tried by ten-year-olds, rather than adults, since this would mean, as juries are supposed to mean, judgement by one's peers?' (2011, p.100). Morrison's question is rhetorical, but it expertly problematises the "commonsensical" view that adults should have the right to condemn children according to an adult system to laws. While Celia's mock trial is a sad corruption of the games she played earlier in the film, it contains a kernel of emotion logic, which a real courtroom trial would have lacked. While Celia shooting her uncle was real (both for John Burke and his daughter Stephanie); in intent, it was a crime of the imagination (shooting a hobyah); as such, the crime is punished with an execution that likewise belongs to the realm of myth and ritual.

Complicity or indifference when faced with the crimes of children like Celia is not acceptable; but neither is the pretence that children occupy spaces governed by the same rules as adults. The games and rituals of childhood may sometimes resemble those of the adult world, but they are fundamentally "other" to them.

In *Celia,* the activities of Celia and her gang transform the quarry into a heterotopic space. It is a space quite apart from the adult realm. The games and rituals of childhood may sometimes resemble those of the adult world, but they are fundamentally "other" to them. This is not to argue that the heterotopias of childhood are innocent or free of cruelty and violence, merely that they be recognised as *different* to the everyday world of adults and that this fact must always be considered when society is confronted with a child who has broken the law.

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