

Foucault's Heterotopias and History in Greenaway's *Suitcases*

Maria Daskalaki

In an attempt to exemplify Peter Greenaway's fascination with heterotopias, alternative organisation and History, this essay will focus on deciphering the meanings in his film trilogy *The Tulse Luper Suitcases*, using textual evidence mainly from the first and second part. It will also occasionally draw on Greenaway's museum practices, since the Museum is a heterotopia that holds a prominent place in Greenaway's work. The theoretical premises behind all the interpretations attempted lie in the work of Michel Foucault, which will serve as the fundamental background and will provide the stepping stone for the film analysis throughout the essay. As this paper will argue, these two thinkers share a nominalist view of history, which is reflected in Foucault's work and illustrated in Greenaway's cinematography. The goal of this essay is thus to draw parallels between their worldviews in an attempt to interpret Greenaway's work through Foucault's theory.

In 1967, Michel Foucault gave a lecture to a group of architects which was translated and published under the title "Of Other Spaces" in 1986. During the lecture he borrowed the concept of *heterotopia* from the field of medicine¹ and applied it to architecture in order to refer to "places of otherness" that are created based on their difference in relation to other sites. Kevin Hetherington defines heterotopias as "spaces of alternate ordering" that consequently offer themselves to alternative ways of doing things (viii). One of the masters of "alternate ordering" is the British *artist universalis* Peter Greenaway, whose obsession with re-organisation permeates his filmography as well as his curatorial work. In 2003 he initiated an extravagant multimedia project called *The Tulse Luper Suitcases*, which would consist of three source-films and one feature film,

1. The term *heterotopia* originates in the study of anatomy referring to parts of the body that are misplaced, displaced, or abnormally formatted, as in the case of tumours. It stems from the Greek words *heteros* meaning "other" and *topos* meaning "place". See <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heterotopia>.

92 DVDs, exhibitions, web sites, television episodes, CD-ROMs and books. In its discussion of this artist's fascination with heterotopias, alternative organisation and History, this essay will focus on the film trilogy, using textual evidence mainly from the first and second part. It will also occasionally draw on Greenaway's museum practices, since the Museum is a heterotopia that holds a prominent place in Greenaway's work. The theoretical premises behind all the interpretations attempted lie in Foucault's work, which will serve as the fundamental background and will provide the stepping stone for the film analysis throughout the essay. As this paper will demonstrate, these two thinkers share a nominalist view of history which is reflected in Foucault's work and illustrated in Greenaway's trilogy. The goal of the essay is thus to draw parallels between their worldviews in an attempt to interpret Greenaway's work through Foucault's theory.

Greenaway's ambitious project revolves around the fictitious character of Henry Purcell Tulse Luper (J. J. Fields) who is a journalist, archivist, prolific writer, geologist, traveller and professional prisoner. For personal and political reasons, he is constantly being moved from one prison to another and has therefore reached the conclusion that the human condition can be reduced to a constant state of imprisonment. However, ingenious as he is, he has turned it into a form of art. He does research, participates in artistic, scientific and historical ventures, writes stories, and generally tries to capture the world in ninety-two suitcases which eventually end up in a museum. The suitcase is a key element in the project and ninety-two is a number that is repeated throughout, with ninety-two characters in the film, ninety-two suitcases, ninety-two DVDs and so forth. It is the atomic number of uranium, which for Greenaway is elemental for the twentieth century. He believes that when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, the whole world went from being based on the element of gold to being based on the notion of uranium ("Tulse Luper Suitcases Lecture" par. 2). Therefore Luper, with his suitcases and cunning as he is, piques the interest of jailers throughout the world and becomes the centre of the political, geographical and art history of the twentieth century. His adventures begin in the year when uranium was discovered, 1929, and end with the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, thus covering a significant part of the century. Each part of the trilogy is divided into several episodes. "The story of Tulse Luper could hence be said to constitute its own network of historiographic metafiction through a maze of media" (Peeters, "Left Luggage" 323).

In "Of Other Spaces", Foucault talks about "heterotopias of deviation" where individuals are put when they deviate from the norm or the law, such as psychiatric hospitals and prisons. One of the principles that constitute heterotopias for Foucault is that they "always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place", but entry is often compulsory, as in the case of a prison (25-26). "Discipline sometimes requires enclosure, the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself"

(Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 141). As mentioned above, the notion of the prison and its actuality as a place abound in Greenaway's trilogy both literally and figuratively. From an early age Luper expects that he will spend his life being "a prisoner in jails both real and imagined". He is indeed transferred from prison to prison and his jailers themselves are often practically imprisoned. In the second part of the trilogy *Vaux to the Sea*, Luper is a prisoner at a Vaux Chateau in the Trianon pavilion where his jailer General Foestling (Marcel Iures) admits he has been a prisoner all his life; a prisoner of the army. In the same scene Luper notes that "everything in the world has been created to be put into a book, a prison or a suitcase". In one of his conversations with the General later on, when Luper claims that people should perhaps be curious about what the ultimate prison is, the General replies that it is a coffin. As an image, the coffin appears several times within the film. Through Luper's interaction with Foestling, the audience is exposed to the idea of several more heterotopias: "the intrinsically heterotopic figure of the novel in a suitcase" since Luper is a writer, "the suitcase [as] a portable heterotopia – an 'other space' that is always there and here at the same time" (Elliot and Purdy 8-10) and of course, the prison itself which can take several forms.

The prison in one shape or another is along with the suitcase undoubtedly the most recognisable and recurrent motif in the trilogy, occasionally taking the form of other heterotopias as described by Foucault. For example, heterotopias have the ability to juxtapose several places that are in themselves incompatible into a single real place. One of these places is the cinema, which is a rectangular room at the end of which three-dimensional space is projected onto a two-dimensional screen (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 25). Another trait of heterotopias "is that they have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles. [One of] their role[s] is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory" (27). For Foucault, one of these spaces that create an illusion of power is the brothel. Interestingly enough, after Vaux Chateau, Luper is kept prisoner at a cinema called Arc en Ciel in Strasbourg in 1940, which also serves as a brothel for German Nazi officers. One can only admire this *mise-en-abyme* that Greenaway invented of a heterotopia (brothel) in a heterotopia (cinema) in a heterotopia (prison). An even more impressive frame in the film is when there is a coffin on stage (the ultimate prison according General Foestling), while on the cinema screen (the cinema being Luper's current prison) there is the frame of an actual prison in a film (see Figure 1). This level of self-reflexivity is one of Greenaway's signatures which have justifiably gained him the title of a playful meta-director and an exceptional place in the minds of the viewers who enjoy his games. Additionally, that multiplicity of functions reflects Foucault's words in "Of Other Spaces", when he says that "heterotopia has a precise and determined function within a society and the same heterotopia can, according to the synchrony of the culture in which it occurs, have one function or another" (25).



Fig. 1. *Heterotopic prison mise-en-abyme: A prison on the screen of a cinema house that is a prison, behind the ultimate prison: the coffin.*

After escaping from Arc en Ciel in 1941, Luper fulfils responsibilities as a painter's model, a maid and a tutor for the Moitessier family on the French coast. Mr. Moitessier (Ronald Pickup) is an anatomist who pays for dead soldier's bodies to be delivered to him, so that he can do his medical research. It is there that Luper has the inspiration for a fictional narrative – which he actually writes in his Moscow prison in 1950 – called *Augsbergenschfeldt*. It is about an early-17th-century anatomist searching for the human soul which he believed was an anatomical property like the cortex of the brain or a section of the heart. With this story and with supporting visuals of the corpse's organs shown outside the body and suitcase 58 which contains body parts (see Figure 2), in a sense Greenaway returns to the original meaning of "heterotopia" in medicine. In the study of anatomy in particular, it refers to parts of the body that are misplaced, displaced, or abnormally shaped. However, the director soon brings us back to Foucault's heterotopias, using Mr. Moitessier's statement that "the cinema is the only means that we've got these days to escape from our prisons. I often take my children to the cinema. Strangely enough, they like escape movies. A small genre but not undistinguished"



Fig. 2. *Original Heterotopias: Displaced and misplaced parts of the body.*

Other examples of heterotopia according to Foucault are the garden and the boat. The former, following the third principle of heterotopias, brings contradictory sites together: "The traditional garden of the Persians was a sacred space that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world" (25). The latter for Foucault is the heterotopia *par excellence*:

the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens, you will understand why the boat has not only been for our civilization, from the sixteenth century until the present, the great instrument of economic development... but has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination. (27)

Thus, images of the garden and the boat, even in combination, could not be missing from Greenaway's frames (Figures 3 and 4). Knut Åsdam believes that the internet at its beginning constituted a heterotopic space and compares it to Foucault's boat, in the sense that it is also a place without place and is changeable in relation to the surroundings. He maintains that it is difficult to say what its position is, since it is "not one thing but rather a structure that is creating its own heterotopic spaces, points of deviation and assault-groups" (403). If we ignore the fact that the internet at times reproduces a place of liberal capitalism, it could indeed be argued – as it has been by many – that it constitutes a heterotopia. This did not escape Greenaway's vision. By extending his *Tulse Luper Suitcases* project to the internet and expanding it through labyrinthine hyper-texts, he moves beyond Foucault's examples and gives them a new dimension.



Fig. 3. *The Oldest Heterotopia: The Garden.*



Fig. 4. *Heterotopia par excellence: The Boat, with a little garden in it.*

To return to the notion of the prison, it would be useful to examine where Greenaway's obsession with freedom and imprisonment stems from and where he converges with his alleged alter-ego, Tulse Luper. According to Greenaway, film-makers have always been prisoners of four tyrannies: the tyranny of the text, the camera, the actor and the frame. It is unquestioned today that every director needs a text to build their work on and around. About actors, Greenaway believes that "so many films are set up to create a space for an actor to perform, that it would seem sometimes that the cinema is a vehicle for their appearance alone". When it comes to the tyranny of the camera, he feels there is a "necessity to bypass the lazy, mimetic, passive recording eye" and finally, "we view all the plastic arts through a rigid frame" ("Cinema Militans Lecture" 10). In his effort to free himself from the tyranny of the text, Greenaway among other things says that "*The Tulse Luper Suitcases* was written out indeed in words, albeit with a text of some complexity that makes it look more perhaps like a vertical and horizontal musical score than a conventional film-script". But while conventional cinema tries to hide its textual origin, the trilogy abounds in narrative so extensive that it is "often negated by excess" and constantly interrupted and fragmented by "side-bars and listings and sub-narratives, as to make conventional narrative continuity problematic" (8). The tyranny of the camera according to Greenaway can only be overcome through the use of anti-camera language. This entails demonstrating the artificiality of the medium and mixing up several genres, as well as performance being "interspliced and elaborated with animated maps and diagrams, cartoon simplicities and cartoon complexities, static and animated texts, multiple typographies and multiple calligraphies" (11) (see Figures 5 and 6). The artificiality of the medium and the anti-camera language are supported through the use of fragmented sound and music, voices that recall scratched discs, and the use of experimental minimalist music with repetitive structures.



Fig. 5. Example of Greenaway's idea of anti-camera language.



Fig. 6. Example of Greenaway's idea of anti-camera language.

Finally, the tyranny of the frame is surpassed by the director when he tries to develop a “multi-screen language” with past, present, future, fast, slow and repetitions among other things, across “screen devices of innumerable continuities”. In this way the frame comes alive and “is no longer a passive jail of four right angles” (9). The last sentence reflects Greenaway's obsession with imprisonment and freedom, which may explain his other fixations on the Museum and History, to which we shall now turn.

Throughout the trilogy and the whole project, there are both references to exhibitions in museums and actual exhibitions. For Beth Lord “the museum is a site... through which we can *liberate*² ourselves from the power structures of the past. Museums ... consciously [seek] to move away from ‘total history’ to reveal the contingency of political orders and historical events” (11). Maricondi, however, believes that “if all that remains of [Tulse Luper] who disappears after being held in ‘successive prisons’ is his suitcase, it is ironic that his only legacy would itself end up in a prison of sorts – the museum” (23). Greenaway seems to share Lord's sentiment that a Museum can be liberating, but only if it succumbs to the artist's experimental and unconventional practices as we shall see below. Even his films have been characterised as “museum films”, “exploring in their representation of the world, the possibilities offered by different curatorial systems of collecting and collating” (Testa 262-263).

For Foucault, museums are heterotopias that accumulate time. In them, time never stops building up. In the seventeenth century, museums were the expression of an individual choice. By contrast, according to Foucault, the will to establish a general archive – a single place – where all times and all forms are placed belongs to modernity. “The idea of constituting a place of all times that

2. The italics are mine, in order to emphasise the liberating potential of the Museum.

is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organising in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place”, belongs to the western culture of the nineteenth century (26). Beth Lord maintains that what makes a museum a heterotopia is threefold: “its juxtaposition of temporally discontinuous objects, its attempt to present the totality of time, and its isolation, as an entire space, from normal temporal continuity” (3-4). However, the aim of museums today has shifted from “accumulating everything” or “constituting a place of all times that is itself outside time” to juxtaposing discontinuous objects. This is the reason why Lord speculates that it is this spatial aspect which makes a museum heterotopian, distancing it from what Foucault calls “heterotopias of time that accumulate indefinitely”. In fact, according to Lord, that is not the essential definition of a museum, but merely a historical contingency (4). The Museum is still viewed by some as an “Enlightenment institution whose power to collect and display objects is a function of capitalism and imperialism, and whose power to form individuals is exercised through... the ordered deployment of knowledge within an institutionally controlled... space” (Lord 2). In her effort to defend it, Lord claims that the Museum is progressive in the sense that it is moving away from the Enlightenment values of universal truth and reason because it in fact critiques them, even though it must rely on them to perform that critique (3).

Despite the fact that Foucault’s account reduces the Museum to a space that displays the totality of History, Lord asserts that it does not constitute a heterotopia because of all the different objects in it, but

because it presents a more profound kind of difference: the difference between objects and concepts. What every museum displays, in one form or other, is the difference inherent in *interpretation*.... The museum is the space in which the difference inherent in its content is experienced. It is the difference between things and words, or between objects and conceptual structures: what Foucault calls the ‘space of representation’. As we will see, the space of representation *is* the heterotopia. (5)

As such, Foucault finds heterotopias disturbing because they destroy the syntax which causes words and things to “hold together” (*Order of Things* xix). “They undermine the relation between words and things.... In other words, heterotopias are spaces of the *difference* of words and things... in which contingent fragments of a large number of possible historical series become evident” (Lord 10). John Rajchman notices that Foucault criticises several deep structures as being unfree because they rule out others. One of the examples is how we use organic integrity or authorship in order to group and interpret artwork, excluding alternative readings and ways of circulation (5-6). Consequently, since heterotopias are spaces in which things are “arranged differently”, they offer the opportunity of liberation from conventions and constructions, which is what Greenaway did in one of his exhibitions called *Some Organizing Principles*. He used widely diverse and varied artefacts such as ship models, scientific equipment, toys, and paintings turned to display their labelled backs, to show how obsessive museums are with

archiving. The turned painting functioned as a substitute for the artefact – as “a surrogate exhibit, which dr[ew] attention to the arbitrariness of museum selection; hence the attraction for Greenaway” (Pascoe 207). The main idea was the unavoidable necessity of organising principles, which is highly arbitrary nonetheless, and reflects the ultimate aim of civilisation to “order the chaos” as Greenaway puts it (Pascoe 208).

By revealing the classification and categorisation of art objects in this didactic taxonomical manner, Greenaway questions the impartiality that lies behind such systems of categorisation. In a different exhibition called *100 Objects to Represent the World*, he juxtaposed art objects of alleged high artistic prestige with items of low cultural reputation and with objects that completely lacked cultural credentials. “In other words, this was an exhibition whose taxonomy was subjectively subversive, seeking to undermine the five orthodox categories of taxonomy that museum culture generally sees as relevant” (Pascoe 210). This unorthodox grouping adds to the idea of the Museum as heterotopia, since for Foucault heterotopias are spaces of Otherness: inside them unequal objects are juxtaposed, thus causing us to reconsider the way we think and the order of our thinking. Their mode of ordering results in a shock effect (Hetherington 42), which according to Barnes accounts for Foucault's calling heterotopias “counter sites”. This is because “they suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror or reflect” (qtd. in Barnes 574), which is exactly what happens in Greenaway's exhibitions. Additionally, by employing such techniques, “the museum become[s] for Greenaway... [a] means through which he can grant his audience a great deal more control over spatiality and temporality than is permitted by the cinema” (Galway and Maricondi xxiv). At the same time, he reveals both how museums are shaped by subjectivities and how the constructions and conventions of representation and viewership function without being adequately reflected upon. The latter is something that he does in his films as well, since as is apparent, Greenaway is engaged in a constant effort to eliminate any conventional tyrannies by revealing and subverting their artificiality and arbitrariness. Especially the *100 Objects to Represent the World* are a theme that emerges in the trilogy as well (but with 92 objects instead of 100), reflecting the director's desire: “I want to make films that rationally represent all the world in one place. That mocks human effort because you cannot do that” (qtd. in Pally 5). According to Di Stefano, Greenaway unveils how “the concept of the authenticity of the museum object and the reality of a constructed film set are shifting, blurred, and fluid constructions” (46).

When Foucault gave his lecture on “Of Other Spaces”, he declared that his era was “the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed” (22). This juxtaposition which entails grouping of things not commonly found next to each other and therefore causing confusion is what gives heterotopias significance and marks them out, according to Hetherington (42). Foucault's fascination with unconventional juxtapositions is more evident in his book *The Order of Things*, which as he says arose from Borges's *Chinese Encyclopaedia*, in which

animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies. (qtd. in the preface xv)

Foucault believes that the mere act of enumeration which brings all those incommensurate items together has a power of enchantment all its own, and language serves as the only place – or rather non-place – where they can be juxtaposed (xvii). Since things are arranged in sites so diverse, Foucault finds it impossible to invent a real “*common locus*” for them, hence ascribing to *Utopias* the quality of consolation: “although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which [those things] are able to unfold” (xix). Heterotopias, though able to allow the *Chinese Encyclopaedia* to unfold, are disturbing in Foucault’s opinion because, as mentioned above, syntax is destroyed in them. Hence through this inability of things to “hold together”, their old order is shuttered and replaced by a new one (xvii).

Foucault did not elaborate on his notion of heterotopias, but other thinkers took the initiative to take the idea further and sometimes enrich it or modify it. Genocchio for example, maintains that

the heterotopia is thus more of an idea about space than any actual space. It is an idea that insists that the ordering of spatial systems is subjective and arbitrary in that we know nothing of the initial totality that it must presuppose. It is an idea which consequently produces/theorizes space as transient, contestory, plagued by lapses and ruptured sites. (43)

It could be argued that Greenaway’s film trilogy and curatorial practices encompass this “fantastic, untroubled region” that constitutes Foucault’s *Utopia*. They also represent the figurative place where the new order is allowed to emerge, where the subjectivity and arbitrariness of spatial systems is revealed and totality is rejected. Greenaway himself has said “I mock those universal systems like the alphabet and the number structures [that] I use as an alternative and support to the narrative, because, again, they are only man-made devices” (qtd. in Sampson 12-13). Indeed, his whole *Tulse Luper Suitcases* project revolves around a fabricated figure and the arbitrary number ninety-two, while he explores the possibility of riddles, games, random numbers and letters among other things as alternative means of organisation. He also juxtaposes incompatible items, as for example in the *Arc en Ciel* cinema where Luper is being kept prisoner and where under the seats he finds among other objects coins, flies, a dead rabbit and a gun. He also creates curious lists of things, as if violently jerked out of their contexts, such as lists of “dirty laundry items”. Greenaway’s films and exhibitions are artificially utopic heterotopias: places of otherness, where Greenaway’s incongruous objects are able to unfold. Elliott and Purdy believe this unique articulation “in spatial configurations determined by seemingly arbitrary and heterogeneous principles of classification” creates an overwhelming impression (“*Skin Deep*”

262). It seems that this overwhelming sensation is transferred from the director to the audience, deriving from the joy that Greenaway himself finds in his "impossible taxonomies, elaborate fantasies and overload of information" (Fail 30). He recognises the human drive for establishing order, but at the same time challenges the viewer to acknowledge the mere conditionality of human construction, "the arbitrary rational systems and the procedures of data formation [that] are joined by the institutional will to order" (Testa 97).

Heidi Peeters reckons that the logic behind what first seems to us as utter haphazardness in Greenaway exposes the haphazardness behind the logic we use to date historical events ("Left Luggage" 333). It also reflects his playfulness, and Greenaway seems to confirm this: "atomic numbers are fixed and sacred; they will not change right out to the very edges of the known universe. So the significance of Armageddon being represented by 92 is both, shall we say, a profundity but also something to play with" (web interview par. 5). What is intriguing is how Greenaway's trilogy extends beyond the haphazardness of dating historical events and goes on to question the very concept of History. Throughout the films, the phrase "There is no such thing as history, there are only historians" features in spoken and written forms (Figure 7). During his interviews and lectures, Greenaway always emphasises this fixation of his and explains how he tries to make a use of history fashioned for the present by paying homage, borrowing, quoting and reprising, since he is suspicious of so called "truths" (Sampson 12). In his own words:

One of the major metaphors of the project is the saying that there is no such thing as history, there are only historians, that history, in effect, is a highly subjective business recorded with vested interests.... Consequently we have tried to give a cinema audience alternatives, certainly in keeping with the interactivity choices laid down in our ambitions, but also to demonstrate that there is no singular verity. ("Cinema Militans" 10)



Fig. 7. An example of "There is no such thing as history, there are only historians"; a recurrent phrase in the trilogy and the project.

The multiple interpretations of history are often exemplified by using different actors to play the same role and thus interpret the same material, by simultaneously overlaying them in many different forms and by using several repetitions, bifurcations and other devices.

This nominalist view of history unavoidably evokes Foucault, who is known “for his resolutely non-teleological, non-objectivist, and non-essentialist conception of history” (Saldanha 2087). Foucault claims that humans of the nineteenth century are “dehistoricised”, since they find themselves intertwined in their own being with “histories that are neither subordinate to [them] nor homogeneous with [them]”, thus leading to a complicated network of different heterogeneous times (*Order of Things* 402). John Rajchman, in his account of Foucault’s history, puts it as follows:

[Foucault] is suspicious of conceptions of historical reality which come both from traditional narrative and from the idealist postulation of essences which are then realized in history. He maintains that no single objective order underlies all that happens and that there is no single aim towards which everything must tend. . . . Foucault’s history tries to ‘disperse’ what is presumed to be essentially whole. We have no whole lives, since there is no one thing to which all things attributed to us refers. (8-10)

Therefore trying to reduce the classification of humanity to a single system is pointless. There is no unifying element under which our histories can gather, thus leading the discipline of history “from a universal of Unity or Totality to a universal of Disunity or Plurality”. Consequently, history is diffused and distanced from social holism, which Foucault finds intellectually empty and politically dangerous (Rajchman 10). Rajchman also notices the discrepancy between Foucault enlightening his present, but not being a figure of the Enlightenment. Kant defined the Enlightenment as an emancipation from self-imposed immaturity and indeed Foucault adhered to that, but at the same time his nominalism was “directed against the universalism of the Enlightenment” (13). As a nominalist, he was against the idea that there exists a “universal history to realize a completely free society. . . . Thus freedom does not basically lie in discovering or being able to determine who we are, but in rebelling against those ways in which we are already defined, categorized and classified” (Rajchman 15). Fascinatingly enough, all this is conjured up in Greenaway’s obsession with the ideas of freedom versus imprisonment, alternative classification and History.

Another point in which Greenaway and Foucault converge is captured in the words of Thomas Flynn when he says about Foucault that “as befits a historical nominalist, he insists that ‘power’ does not exist, that there are only individual relations of domination and control” (35). One of the many ways to interpret this would be “History does not exist; there are only individual relations of control” – or historians, hence accurately reflecting Greenaway’s fixation. Indeed, both Foucault and Greenaway share “a profound distrust of essences, natures, and other kinds of unifying, totalizing, and exclusionary thought that

threaten individual freedom and creativity" (Flynn 39-40). Greenaway has clearly illustrated his militant attitude toward freedom and creativity and against grand narratives, explicitly justifying those who characterise him as postmodern. Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition* suggests – indeed demands – the rejection of the so-called “truths” and meta-narratives that Greenaway is suspicious of. Lyotard defined *postmodern* as “incredulity towards metanarratives” (xxiv) by which Western thinking has abided. Hutcheon took it further:

What the postmodern writing of both history and literature has taught us is that both history and fiction are discourses, that both constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past... In other words, the meaning and shape are not *in the events*, but *in the systems* which make those past ‘events’ into present historical ‘facts’. (89)

Greenaway also believes in the mediated form of History which is always filtered through single moments, historians and subjective experiences. He questions history books, historical films, documentaries and news reports among others, because they claim to present an event as it happened. In the *The Tulse Luper Suitcases* trilogy, he mocks actual history experts by mixing facts and fiction and by introducing pseudo-experts who say different things and talk at the same time. When he presents this parodist contempt of his, through television, books, the internet and other media on which we usually rely to learn about history, he essentially undermines our knowledge and convictions.

Furthermore, he aims at alerting his audience to and freeing them from the epistemic powers that holds them “prisoners”, as in the case of Luper whose prison is not only the cell, but also the epistemic powers that put him there in the first place. In order to achieve that and expose the multiple authorities of history, Greenaway stresses now and again that he wants to make a multiple point film. Indeed, he shoots with many cameras at the same time to multiply the viewpoints and presents his stories as if infinitely re-written. One of his ramifying stories is one that always begins with “once upon a time, there was a beautiful woman who loved unwisely” and then changes little by little. The films themselves are divided into separate episodes, playing on the idea that History is no more than a collection of narratives which give an account of past events. Even when the “experts” intervene, they recount a single event differently, thus presenting several points of view on the same “truth”.

Another instance where the multiple narratives are illustrated and actual historians are being mocked occurs when Luper is living with the Moitessiers. The father of the family has the habit of asking his male servants to dress as females without him being conscious of the dressing up. Therefore Luper finds himself being dressed as a woman and treated as such by the whole family. When they ask him to pose as a live model for a traditional drawing session, the guests are faced with a complex situation. In the eyes of the Moitessiers, Luper remains a woman even when he is naked, but the guests naturally perceive him as a man. Therefore, the characters are in a situation where they are forced to choose what

they will reproduce during the drawing session. Another “expert” then appears to comment on the situation. Speaking about the draughtsmen, he says that the dinner guests were subjected to a quandary: Were they to paint what they saw? Or did they paint what they expected to see? Or did what they wanted? They came to draw a woman, but they were confronted with the body of a man. If they painted Luper as a woman, they were subscribing to the law of the occupying forces, that a household could employ a female servant but not a male. If they painted Luper as a man, they would be obeying their eyes, but they would betray the Moitessiers. They were all political collaborators of one description or another. They were also determined to feed at the Moitessier table, the “expert” concludes, mocking actual historians who submit to “occupying forces” and “obey”. The drawings of the draughtsmen were then collected and when combined they constituted the content of suitcase number fifty-five: Drawings of Luper (Figure 8). Since none of those drawings alone was enough to represent reality, only the whole suitcase could hope to approach the state of Luper, as is the case with History and its multiple narratives. This interpretation is confirmed by Greenaway’s claim that his ideal world history is a

history of every single one of its members, but we know that’s a mocking proposition, which could never be entertained... but I was always fascinated by Borges, that the map of the world is the same size of the world, so you have to invent a parallel world to run alongside a real one. (web interview par. 8)



Fig. 8. The draughtsmen’s dilemma.

In conclusion, Greenaway’s work is permeated by heterotopias that merge, stand out, agglomerate and allow alternative orderings, thus paying homage to Foucault and his vision of places of otherness. By using anti-camera language and devices that challenge the tyrannies of cinema, he liberates himself and the audience while at the same time raising their awareness. He exposes them to the arbitrariness and artificiality of classification as we know it and as formulated by epistemic powers, hence remaining loyal to Foucault’s ideas and ideals. Moreover, since the *Tulse Luper Suitcases* are a postmodern work of art, they abound in non-linear narratives, causality that seems pointless as there is no true cause and effect, and time

that eludes chronological linearity. That is because according to the artist, narratives, time and causality are governed by and filtered through subjective experience, thus meaning that any possible patterns perceived are illusory. Similarly, universalising or totalising systems are challenged in postmodernism and subsequently in Greenaway's work. He does not claim authority, but parodies and problematises History as well as the way the media shape our view of it, thus sharing Foucault's nominalist view of history. Accordingly, as a true postmodernist, he renounces any grand narratives. To achieve that, he employs constant divisions, hybridisations and ramifications throughout the project, rendering himself unclassifiable. That way, not only does he undermine humanly constructed classification, but also triumphantly and personally eludes it, travelling from film to film with Foucault's heterotopias and history in his ninety-two suitcases.

Cultural Studies, University of Leeds, UK

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