

**Heterotopic experiences in cinema and art:
Camila O’Gorman and other places**

***Experiências heterotópicas no cinema e na arte:
Camila O’Gorman e lugares outros***

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Abstract: This text sets out to analyse heterotopic experiences in Argentine cinema and art evoking the figure of Camila O’Gorman, based on Michel Foucault’s theorizations on the concept of heterotopia. To undertake this analysis, we turn to two of his texts: (i) “The utopian body” ([1966]2006) and (ii) “Of other spaces” ([1984]1986) in which Foucault presents and discusses the concept of heterotopia. As the corpus to be studied here, we have selected the movie *Camila* (1984) by the Argentine director Maria Luisa Bemberg and the collage by the Argentinean writer and artist Enrique Molina, used to illustrate the cover of his novel *Una sombra donde sueña Camila O’Gorman* (1994). The works chosen are discursive materialities revolving around Camila O’Gorman, a young woman transformed into an Argentine historical myth after being tragically killed in the nineteenth century.

Keywords: Heterotopia; Heterochrony; Discourse analysis; Foucault; Camila O’Gorman

Resumo: Este texto tem como objetivo analisar experiências heterotópicas do cinema e da arte argentinos em torno da figura de Camila O’Gorman a partir das postulações teóricas de Michel Foucault (2013a; 2013b) sobre o conceito de heterotopia. Para realizar tal análise, utilizamos como base dois textos, a saber: (i) *O corpo utópico - As Heterotopias* (2013a) e (ii) *De espaços Outros* (2013b), nos quais Foucault se propõe a apresentar e a discutir o conceito de heterotopia. No que diz respeito ao *corpus* de estudo, selecionamos a obra cinematográfica *Camila* (1984) da cineasta argentina Maria Luisa Bemberg e a *collage* do escritor e artista argentino Enrique Molina que ilustra a capa de seu romance *Una sombra donde sueña Camila O’Gorman* (1994). As obras selecionadas são materialidades discursivas sobre Camila O’Gorman, uma jovem que se converte em um mito histórico argentino após ter sido tragicamente assassinada no século XIX.

Palavras-chave: Heterotopia; Heterocronia; Análise do discurso; Foucault; Camila O’Gorman



1 Introduction

The concept of heterotopia first appears in Michel Foucault's work in texts from the 1960s: in two radio broadcasts made in 1966, *Les hétérotopies* and *Le corps utopique* (Foucault, 1966), in the preface to his book *Les mots et les choses* (Foucault, 1966), and in a lecture given in Tunisia in 1967, based on the first of the radio broadcasts (*Les hétérotopies*) and published later under a new title, "Des espaces autres" (1984). In these texts, Foucault invites us to reflect on the heterogeneity of the spaces in which we live as sites that "draw us out of ourselves" and where we encounter intersecting marks of "our lives, our time and our history" (Foucault, [1984]1986, p. 23).

The heterogeneity to which Foucault refers is useful when it comes to thinking about the importance of spaces for human beings and societies, especially his conceptualization of heterotopias as "absolutely other spaces" (Foucault, 2009, p. 25).¹ Setting out from a reflection on the heterotopic potential of spaces proposed by Foucault, we develop an analysis of our own chosen corpus: the film *Camila* (1984) by the Argentinean director Maria Luisa Bemberg, and the collage illustrating the cover of the novel *Una sombra donde sueña Camila O'Gorman* (1994) by the Argentine writer Enrique Molina.

As well as constituting a fertile historical Latin American narrative through which analyses of diverse kinds may emerge, we considered this corpus fertile terrain given the connections that can be made between the concept of heterotopia and the life history of Camila O'Gorman, a young Argentine aristocrat who caused a scandal in the Buenos Aires society of the first half of the nineteenth century when she fell in love with her parish priest, Ladislao Gutiérrez.

Camila's love is reciprocated but, naturally, rebuffed by the young woman's family and by the ecclesiastical and political authorities. Motivated among other factors by a ruthless need to maintain his image, Adolfo O'Gorman, Camila's father, agreed to the search for the couple launched by the army of the governor Juan Manuel de Rosas. Camila and Ladislao fled Buenos Aires and settled in the town of Goya in the Corrientes province of Argentina.

¹ Michel Foucault, *Le Corps Utopique, Les Hétérotopies*. Paris: Lignes, 2009. All citations from this version have been freely translated into English.

In Goya, Camila and Ladislao lived together for four months in a house that the couple turned into the region's first school. Despite assuming new identities, Camila and Ladislao were found, imprisoned, sentenced to death and executed by the Rosas government's firing squad.

Camila became the protagonist of different forms of resistance to the authoritarianism of the Church and State, as well as to the judgment of her family and the nineteenth-century aristocratic society. During these processes, Camila lived in different spaces, including: (a) the family home in Buenos Aires; (b) churches; (c) the house in Goya; (d) prison.² These spaces maintain relations between themselves and, as heterotopic spaces, can "suspend, neutralize or invert" the set of relations designated by themselves, as Foucault indicates (1986, p. 24).

It is also worth emphasizing that, in Argentina, Camila O'Gorman was converted into a national historical myth, representing the resistance to and confrontation of the ethical and moral coercions imposed by the government and the Church whose discourses are perpetuated and reiterated in Argentinean society even today. Some of the repercussions of her life history are analysed by Perissé (2016, p. 3):

The cruel and excessive killing of two young people who loved each other emphasizes, in Argentina, the sick years of a morally repressive nineteenth-century society, of an ethically hypocritical Church and a highly authoritarian government. On the opposite side, Camila O'Gorman, by defending and fighting for love until her final days, is converted into a feminine symbol of resistance and courage that is perpetuated in Argentine society through her representation, to the present day, in diverse artistic and literary works like lithographs, biographies, theatre plays, novels, films, poems and so on.

Here we argue that Goya – the place to which the couple flee – can be correlated with the concept of heterotopia insofar as the town appears simultaneously real and imaginary; in other words, it actually exists, it is the place of physical dislocation, of exile, but it is the location where Camila and Ladislao will live their utopian reality, their love, a love unacceptable to their peers. For Neves-Correa (2018), heterotopias are the opposite of nowhere, they are spaces present on the margins of our society. Camila and Ladislao are, in a certain form, pushed to the margins by a society that rejects them and they see

² In this text, we use 'Church' (upper case) to refer to the institution and 'church' (lower case) to refer to the physical space.

no alternative other than to move from a place they could call their own to another, a (non)place, given that they can only fit in if they turn into other people.

After this introduction, the remainder of this article is organised in four parts: in the second section, we discuss the concept that anchors our analyses, heterotopia, as formulated by Foucault ([1966]2006, [1984]1986); in the third, we present some reflections on cinema as a heterotopic and heterochronic experience, as well as analysing the form taken by the relationships between Camilla and the spaces that intersected with her over the course of her life; in section four, we propose an analysis of Enrique Molina's collage, connecting it to the concept of heterotopia and Camila's image; finally, in the fifth section we present our final considerations.

2 Theoretical path: the mixed experience of the mirror (utopia and heterotopia)

Speaking about heterotopia presumes a discussion of the notion of space that, according to Foucault (2013b), comprises the great obsession of the twentieth century. Gregolin (2015) reminds us that this is one of the central questions of Foucault's thought: modernity conceives space to be more important than time. The concept of heterotopia proposes a shift in the notion of place that, from a conventional perspective, corresponds to a deictic category.

Exploring the concept of scenography, Maingueneau (2008, p. 88) defines deixis as "the set of localizations in space and time presented by an act of enunciation." The conventionalism of this definition, which limits the analysis of the notion of space (and time) to the spoken, allows us to appreciate the amplification contained in Foucault's proposal, which aims to study the heterotopic nature of our relations with spaces in a science that he calls heterotopology.

For Foucault (2013a), there is no such thing as neutral space, essentialized in a self-enclosed definition. Rather, there exist hybrid, nuanced, divided and superimposed spaces. In the author's words:

We do not live in a neutral and white space; we do not live or die or love within the rectangle of a sheet of paper. We live, die and love in a space that is gridded, cut up, variegated, with zones of light and shadow, differences in

level, with steps, hollows, bumps, durable regions and crumbling, penetrable, porous regions. (Foucault, 2009, pp. 23-24)

Gregolin (2015, p. 196) argues that “space and meaning meet in discourses and produce effects,” in other words, bodies establish relations with these regions and these connections generate multiple meanings and conceptions about spaces that are not situated anywhere; instead, they are other spaces, “they are like *counter-spaces*” (Foucault, 2009, p. 24).

These counterspaces are like the inventions conjured by children in their games of make-believe: situated in a particular place, they pretend they are in another, the elements around them representing other things that satisfy their fantasy, imagination, the magic of play. By pretending that the big bed of their parents is an ocean (Foucault, 2013a), for example, they create a fantastic and thus fictitious space, but one located in a real space. However, adult society, even before children, also organises its counterspaces to what Foucault calls situated utopias or “real places outside all places” (Foucault, 2009, p. 25).

The utopia can be comprehended, then, as a point of origin from which the concept of heterotopia develops. As a source of heterotopic thought, utopia possesses diverse meanings, such as the construction of an imaginary of societies deemed perfect from political and social viewpoints, for instance. Utopias, according to Foucault (2013a), truly have no place. A heterotopia, however, would be a kind of utopia that has a precise, real, localisable place. In heterotopic thought, inhabited space transcends geometric and geographic space, as Foucault explains:

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. (Foucault, [1984]1986, p. 24)

Conceiving utopias as the genesis of the heterotopic potential of spaces, we can reflect on the intrinsic relationship between utopia and heterotopia provoked by the existence of a ‘mixed experience’ (Foucault, [1984]1986, p. 24), which functions as a

kind of mirror. When we look in the mirror, we see that we are inside, in another space, reflected in a real projection of ourselves. At the same time, we know that we ourselves are not there in concrete form but rather our reflection, which makes evident the potential of the ‘virtual space’ (Foucault, [1984]1986, p. 24) in which we observe ourselves through the glass. Utopia and heterotopia are like two sides of the same coin in which it is possible to combine the irreal and the real, the abstract and the concrete, the ideal and the material.

The debate on heterotopias is highly productive since the concept comprises an alternative that allows us to reflect on space beyond the dual perspective of real versus imaginary, given that, as emphasized above, heterotopias are simultaneously real and imaginary. These different spaces, other places, are “mythical and real contestations of the space in which we live” (Foucault, 2009, p. 25), providing the possibility of renewing frozen and conventional notions of place. In this sense, it can be argued that heterotopias enable a critique of the idea that language possesses an exclusively representational capacity; they help undo the immediate correlation between world and words, exposing the fact that language not only represents the world but, through language, the speaker can act on this world (Rocha, 2014).

To develop his notion of heterotopia, Foucault presents us with the principles of a science he called heterotopology. One of these principles, which interests us especially here, states that heterotopias have “as a rule juxtaposition in a real place of various spaces that would or should normally be incompatible” (Foucault, 2009, pp. 28-29). Theatre and cinema exemplify this principle since we are faced with a screen that transports us to another space (and time). The cinema experience matters to us especially here since it features “a large rectangular stage at the back of which, on a two-dimensional space, a new three-dimensional space is projected” (Foucault, 2009, p. 29); there is a simultaneous overlapping of spaces and times, which Foucault (2013a) calls heterochrony.

Foucault states that “heterotopias are frequently linked to singular slices of time” (Foucault, 2009, p. 30), assuming a kind of kinship with heterochronies, which constitute another principle useful for this work. As a heterotopic space and a heterochronic realization, cinema is a region of transitory occupation (Foucault, 2013a) with the potential to transport us to other spaces – even if the audience is situated in a precise and localisable space – and to other past or future times relative to the moment of the

cinematographic experience, characteristics typical of fictional language. Cinema is a real place that can combine spaces and times on screen that are usually incompatible: distinct places around the world and different times across the history of humankind.

Along these lines, the present article proposes to reflect on the concept of heterotopia through the selected corpus, seeking to analyse the following questions: (a) how are the heterotopic spaces lived by Camila O’Gorman constituted; (b) how does Camila relate to these sites; and (c) how tenuous was the heterotopic experience lived by Camila?

3 Camila O’Gorman: intersections between other spaces (and times)

In this section, we develop an analysis of the film *Camila* (1984) from two vantage points: (i) the cinema as a heterotopic and heterochronic experience from the audience’s perspective, and (ii) other spaces and times as heterotopic and heterochronic experiences from Camila O’Gorman’s perspective.

3.1 Cinema as a heterotopic and heterochronic experience

In 1985, the film *Camila* (1984) by the Argentine filmmaker Maria Luisa Bemberg acquired international fame following its nomination for an Oscar in the Best Foreign Film category. Although it did not win the award, the Hollywood nomination cleared the path not only for the globalisation of Argentine cinema but also for the internationalisation of Camila O’Gorman’s story as a national myth.

The film was part of the New Argentine Cinema that emerged in the 1980s in the post-dictatorship context; *Camila* questions the dictatorship’s abuses of a past that still resonates in Argentine memory. For Foucault, cinemas are, like cafés and beaches, spaces where we can live a determined heterotopic experience for a determined moment. The author associates the conception of heterotopia with heterochrony, arguing that, as cited above, heterotopies are frequently linked to singular temporal slices (Foucault, 2009, p. 30) – not an eternal time but a chronological time, a time with a certain duration.

From the audience’s perspective, one can say that cinema, through the intersection of different spaces and times projected on the screen, is capable of transporting the viewer

to other spaces and times. Despite possessing a localisable and situatable space, cinema is the place of concretization of utopias, daydreams, dreams made possible through cinematography. It is the potential site for an enjoyment that causes heterotopic and heterochronic displacements, intersections and juxtapositions.

Intriguing here is the articulation that Foucault develops between space and time, especially in thinking about cinema as a locality that enables “enclose all times in a single place” (Foucault, 2009, p. 30). In *Camila*, we are transported back to the nineteenth century and the different spaces occupied by the protagonist. Simultaneously, we are invited to comprehend the production of meanings constructed in the time-space relationship, imagining Camila’s life as a woman both resigned (forced to accept the husband chosen by her family and marry him just as her sisters have done) and silenced (unable to express an opinion on politics like the men of her family – her father, brothers and brothers-in-law) as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Camila O’Gorman and her father, Adolfo O’Gorman, when the young woman is reproached for expressing her political opinion at the dinner table.



Source: *Camila* (1984)

The experience of watching a cinematographic work like *Camila* makes it possible to visualize the relations established between individuals from Argentine society and the spaces that they occupied / disputed / lived in the first half of the nineteenth century. With the passing of time, we can observe aspects that disappeared and others that still perpetuate themselves years or even centuries later.

Compared to what we live today, the spaces occupied by women in the nineteenth century were emphatically far more limited and restricted. Today, however, many spaces are still occupied mostly by men and the voices of women are very often silenced or

discredited. In many job interviews, for example, female candidates are judged on the possibility that they may become mothers (or the fact they already are), as if the mother were the only parent responsible for caring for children, an idea testimony to how the female image is still linked more to the home and to domestic tasks than to the work market.³

Nonetheless, as Camila's story shows, it is clear that women have been seeking and creating their own heterotopias over the centuries as potential spaces where they can insert themselves, since, as Foucault highlights (2009, p. 25), "there is probably no society that has not constituted its heterotopia or heterotopias."

According to Azevedo's study of the relations between cinema and space (Azevedo, 2009), the cinema viewer is an 'itinerant traveller': though apparently being immobile, the audience is transported through fantasy and desire to territories mobilized by the film experience. For the author, this place where the filmgoer is taken is "traversed by multiple times and spaces" (Azevedo, 2009, p. 124). The observations made by Azevedo (2009) dialogue with the ideas of Foucault (1966,[1966]2006, [1984]1986), since this temporal and spatial traversing is also evinced through the concepts of heterotopia and heterochrony discussed in this work. These traversings, lived by Camila O'Gorman, are the topic of the analyses proposed in the next topic.

3.2 Camila O'Gorman and the desire for other places

In the movie *Camila* (1984) by Maria Luisa Bemberg, the main character lives in four spaces: (a) the house of the O'Gorman family in Buenos Aires; (b) the Catholic church; (c) the house of Camila and Ladislao in the town of Goya, Corrientes province; (d) the prison in Santos Lugares, Buenos Aires province. Setting out from the concept of heterotopia formulated by Foucault, we can ask: how do these spaces constitute heterotopic experiences lived by Camila O'Gorman? How do the relations between Camila and these sites unfold? And finally, just how tenuous and volatile was the heterotopic experience lived by the couple before their execution?

³ A study undertaken by the Parent in Science movement reveals the disparity in the productivity of men and women (with and without children) during the pandemic. The results are available at <https://bit.ly/3NpSGuj> Consulted: 27/03/2022.

The house of the O’Gorman family is the first space lived by Camila. From an early age, the young woman experiences the house in other ways, exploring inhospitable or seldom frequented areas such as, for instance, the attic where she spends her time hiding. As a result of this, she is constantly reproached by her father and brother. Camila, in her house-universe, seeks other, different, diverse spaces, non-traditional or unconventional. For her, the attic was the space where she could dream, idealise, imagine. The attic, as Figure 2 shows, harbours her dreams and allowed Camila to inhabit the space in her own way.

Figure 2 – Camila O’Gorman hiding in the attic



Source: *Camila* (1984)

As was common in the nineteenth-century Argentine aristocracy, the family house was an extension of the spaces of the church – in other words, both the localities were linked and interconnected: families went to mass regularly and the priests constantly visited the homes of the faithful. On one of these visits to the house of the O’Gorman family, the Jesuit priest Ladislao Gutiérrez meets Camila and they fall in love. The desire between the young couple grows during their furtive encounters in the church, which is also where they exchange their first kiss.

According to Bachelard (2008), the natal home evokes protection, intimacy, security and, in the same way, we can infer that the church also symbolically evokes protection, support and assistance. The protection of the family home is represented by the father as an earthly paternal figure, while that of the Church is represented by the heavenly father, God. However, these spaces are subverted insofar as Camila does not fit

into either of the conventionalised standards. At home, the young woman's behaviour is the subject of her father's rebukes. At church, her sinful attitude is equally deemed intolerable. Camila is out of place.

In the heterotopic subversion of these spaces, Camila renounces the protection of both paternal figures, since, transgressing the earthly social law and committing what for the Church amounts to sin, she no longer has the right to this protection; she is fated to the punishment allotted to her.

Camila's family house and the Catholic church that they frequent emerge as kinds of counterspaces in which one can live a simultaneously mythic and real experience (Foucault, 2009, p. 25): that is, she is permitted to dream in a repressive and authoritarian home and also fall in love with a Jesuit priest. In this sense, the O'Gorman family home ceases to be a space of protection and becomes a space of tension, conflict and detachment. In the same way, the Catholic church becomes an unwelcoming, hostile and criminalizing place.

The house of the O'Gorman family and the church are, therefore, spaces that push Camila to move away and find in the town of Goya a possible countersite for the concretization of her utopia: living as the wife of the priest Ladislao Gutiérrez. Goya is a real, true, effectively localisable town (Foucault, [1984]1986, p. 24), but at the same time it is outside anywhere, dislocated, separate from reality. It is the precise and real location of the utopia of Camila's love: a place that can be situated tangibly on the map and that simultaneously harbours the dream of refuge, as if the love between Camila and Ladislao was possible in this place and this time, and that there both of them were safe.

Even though impossible in this space and this time, the love between Camila and Ladislao is possible and realisable in another (heterotopic) space and in another (heterochronic) time. Goya is configured as a place that opposes all other spaces (Foucault, 2009, p. 25), like a contestation, an affront, a negation of the spaces in which Camila lived previously. It comprises a site of rupture in terms of the recollections and memories of her natal home and is established as the place that allows the dreamer-Camila to 'dream in peace' (Bachelard, 2008, p. 26).

Based on the ideas of Foucault, we can suggest that 'the mixed experience' – that is, the simultaneously real and mythic experience of Camila and Ladislao in the town of Goya – is constituted as another space, which would be therefore the 'non-Buenos Aires',

and by another time, the ‘non-nineteenth century.’ To concretise their utopia in this heterotopic experience, they need to assume new identities: Valentina Desau (the ‘non-Camila O’Gorman’) and Máximo Brandier (the ‘non-Ladislao Gutiérrez’). In these spaces, Camila and Ladislao encounter gaps, cracks and crevices that are at once possible and impossible. The house in Goya displays the attribute of perfection, as cited by Foucault as one of his principles in which heterotopias assume a specific function in relation to the rest of space, able to become perfect spaces: “another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled” (Foucault, [1984]1986, p. 27).

Camila’s heterotopia withers, however, with the same speed as when parents uncover the game of the children who imagine their bed as the ocean: “this is the pleasure, in sum, because when the parents return, they will be punished” (Foucault, 2009, p. 24). The heterotopia of Camila O’Gorman and Ladislao Gutiérrez is unravelled the moment they are identified, denounced, imprisoned and finally shot by Rosas’ troops without trial.

The prison to which Camila is taken is, in Foucault’s terms, the space where individuals are allocated whose behaviour deviates from the average or the required norm (Foucault, 2009, p. 27). These are the heterotopias of deviancy: the spaces destined for those who stray from what society considers correct, adequate and appropriate. After all, how would a young woman dare to confront the power relations established by the State and the Church? How could she dare to question the model of womanhood conceived for her era and her social group? How would she dare impose herself and express her opinion amid an authoritarian and conservative patriarchal family/society?

Prisons, for Foucault, are examples of spaces that possess “a system of opening and closure” that people enter and leave not at their own will but under obligation. This system of opening and closing is responsible for the isolation of these locations in relation to the surrounding space (Foucault, 2009, p. 32).

In Camila’s case, it was not enough simply to keep her isolated, imprisoned, sidelined, displaced from her social environment. Camila had to be given the kind of ‘exemplary punishment’ (de Arriba, 2013d, p. 33) that served to show society how such behaviour was unacceptable and unforgiveable. It was necessary to teach the people that the questioning figure of Camila could never be an inspiration for other young women of the period. Despite being pregnant at the time, Camila was executed by the Rosas firing

squad on August 18, 1848, with the blessings of the State, the Church, her family and Argentine society (Adami, 1990, p. 11).

Figure 3 – Camila O’Gorman and Ladislao Gutiérrez, buried in the same coffin after their execution.



Source: *Camila* (1984)

We can propose that the town of Goya and the prison are heterotopic spaces with which Camila relates in distinct ways: Goya is the town to which the couple travel voluntarily and that allows them to make their most intimate daydreams a reality. It is, therefore, a ‘dream house’ (Bachelard, 2008, p. 34) that not only harbours dreams but also allows them to be heterotopically realized. In Goya, Camila and Ladislao are together, united, inseparable. Prison, on the other hand, is the locality to which the couple are forcibly transferred and where solitude, absence, finitude are imposed. It is return to reality, the destruction of the utopia, the erosion of the heterotopic experience. Camila and Ladislao are separated, split up, incommunicable.

The heterotopic experience in Goya fades and transforms, giving way to another heterotopic experience, this time in prison. Both are constituted as places of rupture: the former provokes the rupture with everything that Camila lived previously, while the latter causes the interruption of Camila’s life, leading to her death.

4 Camila O’Gorman: juxtapositions and encounters in the collage of Enrique Molina

Figure 4 – Collage, 1994



Source: MOLINA, Enrique. Cover of *Una sombra donde sueña Camila O’Gorman*, 1994, Seix Barral.

For the launch of the film *Camila* in 1984, the poetic novel of Enrique Molina, *Una Sombra donde sueña Camila O’Gorman* (1973), was re-edited and published by various Argentine publishers. Ten years later, in 1994, the Seix Barral publishing house released another edition of Molina’s book. The cover is illustrated with a collage by the author himself. Molina’s artwork reveals aspects that dialogue with the surrealist avantgarde movement, such as, for example, the intersection between the real and the dream, encountered, in the juxtaposed image of the two Camilas.

In the foreground, the collage shows the protagonist characterised physically as the model woman conceived for her period and social group. An elegantly dressed woman with her body adequately covered, her hair combed, with a facial expression suggestive of humility and a melancholic gaze that verges on submission. This representation would be equivalent to the Camila that existed in the real.

In the background, Camila appears partially naked with a facial expression that seems to reveal a degree of contentment with a posture that dares to raise the head slightly.

This is a Camila who, until breaking with her social imprisonments, is not real: it is the Camila dreamt by herself who will become real through a heterotopic experience.

The real Camila, in real spaces, must maintain behaviours imposed on women; she should be ‘beautiful, modest and home-loving,’ a notorious expression used to dispute a meaning of womanhood still possible even in the twenty-first century.⁴ A meaning resisted by being strongly attacked and rejected as a description of twenty-first-century woman by movements closer to feminism, for example.

Forced to maintain a type of behaviour with which she does not identify, it is as if Camila was not being herself but playing the role attributed to women during the period, resigned and at the same time rebellious when, in her natal home, she dared express her views about politics. On the other hand, when she runs away with the man she loves, she gives a new meaning to the relationship with the space that she comes to occupy; it is a heterotopic experience. Thereafter, this woman manages to exercise freedom over her own life: her love choice, her own body and form of acting in the world. The Camila dreamt by herself becomes embodied and transcends the dream universe; it is when a utopia finds a place and thus comes to be called a heterotopia (Foucault, 2013a).

If we take the image of the protagonist in the background to represent a freer Camila, we can affirm that female liberty was something secondary, something that had to remain on the margins, in the shadows, on the utopic plane, given that the social dispositifs of the family, State and Church, which dictated values hypocritically ignored in practice, were the same ones that disparaged women, silencing their voices and their intellectual potential.

Camila’s nudity transcends the bodily dimension and implies the rejection of institutionally imposed standards. The image of Camila in the background reflects a woman who casts off such standards and the advantages derived from her lineage and makes real – at least for the few months during which she lives with Ladislao – the woman she dreamt of being.

The objectification surrounding the female figure in a dictatorial society, however, placed her in a situation that could be highly dangerous – after all, the institutions could decide whether a woman lived or died irrespective of any existing laws. When she was

⁴ These three adjectives correspond to the title of the report published by the Brazilian magazine *Veja*, presenting **Marcela Temer**, wife of the then vice-president Michel Temer – and ‘almosty first lady’ in the publications words. Source: <https://bit.ly/2Xbk5ei> Consulted: 14/10/2021.

executed, on August 18, 1848, Camila was pregnant and yet was still not spared the ‘exemplary punishment.’

In that context, behaviours like those of Camila were only acceptable if they remained at the level of idealisation, in the background, in the shadow of the morally admissible actions; made concrete, they would provoke the consequences that she faced: summary sentencing to death without the right to a trial, a basic element of justice in any society.

5 Final considerations

Over the course of this work, we have foregrounded the figure of Camila O’Gorman, seeking to analyse the cinematographic work *Camila* (1984) and the collage by the Argentine writer and artist Enrique Molina, which illustrates the cover of his novel *Una sombra donde sueña Camila O’Gorman* (1994), from a heterotopic viewpoint. The concept of heterotopia formulated by Foucault (2000; 2013a; 2013b) proved extremely useful to the analysis that we undertook with the selected discursive materialities about Camila, considered an Argentine historical myth due to her passionate and tragic life history.

By proposing the possibility of conceptualising the existence of a place at the centre of the duality of real place versus imaginary place, Foucault expands the notion of space to include a third perspective. In this way, the spaces inhabited by Camila – the house of her parents, the church, the house in Goya and the prison – can be comprehended not only from the geographic viewpoint but also the heterotopic viewpoint – that is, places where unacceptable, unimaginable, surreal events are realized, where they become real due to the heterotopic relation established by the protagonist.

When we set out to relate heterotopic aspects with the experiences of Camila O’Gorman, we sought not only to apply a theory that could help us comprehend how the relations with the different spaces that Camila occupied/inhabited contributed to shaping her character, the person she became. Beyond this application, especially considering language as a form of action in the world, we believe in the importance of actualizing Camila’s resistance to the forms of oppression experienced by women in the nineteenth century and that persist today in many parts of the world.

Over the course of these analyses and discussions, we argue that Camila not only symbolises an ideal of engaged femininity from/in her time but also a representation of

the consequences of arbitrary acts, characteristic of authoritarian governments, supported by a society protected by the pretence of defending supposed good customs and sustained by distorted views of religious foundations of any kind.

Narratives like Camila's need to be actualised, just like those of the holocaust and the enslavement of black people, for example, so that by reflecting on these events we can avoid committing the same mistakes and/or becoming the victims of snares laid by discourses of hate, however concealed they may be. We need Camila's impetus and courage to vie for other spaces and occupy them, making them heterotopic, making real the utopias that make us happy and stimulate our humanity, and that any firing squads are aimed exclusively and metaphorically at the attempts to wipe out the kinds of individual freedoms claimed by Camila.

Contribution

Poliana Coeli Costa Arantes: Supervision; Writing – analysis and editing; **Evânia Maria Ferreira do Nascimento:** Writing – original draft; analysis and editing; conceptualization; **Luísa Perissé Nunes da Silva:** Writing – original draft; analysis and editing; conceptualization.

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