

(UP) AGAINST THE (IN) BETWEEN: INTERSTITIAL SPATIALITY IN GENET AND DERRIDA

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To be against (opposed to) is also to be against (close to, in proximity to) or, in other words, up against.
Jonathan Dollimore¹

‘Contre,’ meaning as it does both opposition and proximity, is comparable to the ambivalent figure of the interstice and the deconstructive notion of ‘espacement,’ sharing in the way these limit-concepts blur the distinctions between inside and outside, self and other, presence and absence. Whilst Jean Genet’s early work (such as the novels *Our Lady of the Flowers* (1942) and *Miracle of the Rose* (1943)) is usually associated with the bounded space of the prison, the hypervirility of its inmates, and a monologic authorial voice,² Jacques Derrida’s *Glas* (1974) identifies an *interstitial* aesthetics in these texts, an oscillatory ‘style navette’ which radically subverts the notions of spatial enclosure, narcissism and corporeal essentialism.³ The interstice therefore appears a potential site of resistance, an immanent source of critique that is (dis) located in the fissures and cracks of conventional architectonics, emerging from within the panoptic architecture and the supposedly ‘docile bodies’ of the disciplinary regime.⁴ Genet’s reassertion of bodies and spaces deemed unacceptable by 1940s French society constitutes a resurgent materiality that overflows literal and metaphorical segregations, identified by Derrida as an ‘element of contagion’ that affects the corporeal, the spatial and the textual alike.⁵

What is at stake in this discussion is an unprecedented encounter between Derrida’s work on Genet and his writings on the ‘deconstructive’ architecture of Bernard Tschumi, bringing into relief the spatio-corporeal emphasis of Genet’s texts and their implications for a reconceptualization of our built environment. By reading these works in relation to each other, we can explore how interstitial strategies take into account the materiality of bodies and the dynamism of their gestures and interactions. Given the complex imbrication of themes involved, an exploration of the interstitial shall be necessarily interdisciplinary, tracing the intersections and overlaps between discourses in order to see how far they might usher in new ways of thinking and being.

First of all, the (inter)textual nature of *Glas* shall be explored, in order to discern the ways in which its disjunctive style echoes that of Genet’s work, and how they both necessitate an ‘interstitial’ style of reading. The role of ‘aberrant movement’ in Derrida and Genet shall then be examined, in the oscillatory notion of *espacement* and the restless vagabondage of the thief, before going on to a discussion of columns in *Glas*, both in relation to Genet and to the architectural writings of Hegel. The concept of inscription shall be crucial here, and how Genet’s depictions of tattoos and graffiti resonate with Derrida’s writings on the ornament. Finally, a discussion of the relationship between architectonics and architecture in Derrida’s work shall be undertaken, so as to determine how far interstitial strategies might enable a rethinking of architecture itself, as well as of the politics it might house.

INTER-TEXT

In contrast to Jean-Paul Sartre's monumental work *Saint Genet: comédien et martyr* (1952), *Glas* defies the conventions of academic discourse, operating from within the tradition but only so as to enact a 'critical displacement,'⁶ a strategic intervention or internal fracturing. As Gregory L. Ulmer observes in his essay 'Sounding the Unconscious,' this is a highly post-structuralist text which, 'far from wanting to eliminate dysfunctional contingencies, attempts to write with them.'⁷ Moreover, speaking in 1991, a close friend of Genet's, Leila Shahid, claimed that *Glas* was the only critical work he approved of, the only one he accepted. Shahid attributes this to a certain 'proximité' between their modes of thought and their common exposure of the disorder in the system; Derrida in the realm of philosophical discourse, Genet in relation to the literary text.⁸ This shared disorder is of a highly textual nature. Not only is the bicolumnar structure of *Glas* inspired by Genet's 'Ce qui est resté d'un Rembrandt déchiré en petits carrés bien réguliers, et foutu aux chiottes,'⁹ but also the digressions, parentheses, italicizations and intertextual citations that constitute the morsellated style of *Glas* are all features of Genet's oeuvre (albeit to a lesser degree). As Genet writes in his final work, *Prisoner of Love* (1986), 'reading between the lines is a level art; reading between the words a precipitous one.'¹⁰ This interstitial mode of reading is precisely what deconstruction requires, inhabiting the structures and identifying their instabilities, rather than attacking them from without.

In order to engage with such a fragmentary text, the very method of our analysis is put into crisis. As Roland Barthes writes in *The Pleasure of the Text*, the writerly (post-structuralist) 'texte de jouissance' can only be addressed by another writerly text, a text written 'in its fashion.'¹¹ Indeed, the 1986 English translation of *Glas* by John P. Leavay, Jr. and Richard Rand is accompanied by *GLASsary*, a collection of essays by Leavay, Ulmer and Derrida himself, presented in a fragmentary form that echoes that of the original text. Likewise, the fact that there is an entire website dedicated to *Glas* further emphasizes its hypertextual quality and defiance of interpretative closure.¹² In *Glas*, Derrida's multiple citations often blur into one another, their footnotes amputated. Demarcations between references (including those to Saussure, Sartre, Bataille, Poe and Mallarmé) are troubled, whilst the sources of others are hard to identify. This leads to a somewhat paradoxical state of affairs, in which Derrida's defiance of interpretative mastery is met with a proliferation of critical interventions, attempting to identify every path in his labyrinthine text.

However, whilst Derrida's intertextuality may lead to charges of deliberate obfuscation, it succeeds in displacing the conventional academic emphasis on ownership and conceptual 'territorialization' which attempts to deny the disseminatory nature of thought. Instead, Derrida indulges his wish 'to make writing ungraspable,' problematizing the role of the signature in academic discourse by pointing to its paradoxical position both 'inside and outside' the text.¹³ Inserted 'paraphs' (as 'the abbreviation of a paragraph: what is written on the side, in the margin,' with this very definition given in 'paraphical' form, in a smaller font without capitalization or full stops, and incapsulated within a larger body of text), ensure a textual deterritorialization, a writing 'in the margins of margins,' as Derrida puts it.¹⁴ This intertextuality and disruptive *mise en page* is also crucial to Genet's novels. *Miracle of the Rose* and *Our Lady of the Flowers* contain a vast number of references to other texts, such as prison discourse and its anthropometric archives on inmates, graffiti, newspapers and magazines such as *Paris-Soir*, *Défective* and *Cinéma*, the poetry of Villon and Rimbaud, love letters, song lyrics, popular adventure novels (such as those of Paul Féval) and the fragmentary 'Divinarian' (in *Our Lady of the Flowers*).

In contrast to God as author and architect of the Divine Book of the world, Derrida and Genet produce texts that defy coherence and unity, sacrilegious works that fissure the ideal forms of being and knowledge. As Derrida declares in *L'Oreille de l'autre* (1982), "I believe that a text such as *Glas* is neither a philosophical

text nor a poetic text, it circulates between these two genres...,"¹⁵ whilst his assertion in *Of Grammatology* that 'the idea of the book, which always refers to a natural totality, is profoundly alien to the sense of writing'¹⁶ ensures that *Glas* is read as an 'anti-book,' a freeplay of textual excess that defies the bounded and binding concepts of 'logocentrism' and 'phonocentrism' and liberates writing in defiance of *telos* and closure.

Whilst the relationship between text and architecture is highly complex, and shall be explored later in the essay in relation to architectonics and the buildings of Tschumi, it is necessary to point out here the associations between the *mise en page* of text and architectural (de)construction. In *Le Modulor*, modernist architect Le Corbusier writes that architecture is not only 'l'art de bâtir les maisons' (and cars, ships, and planes), but also 'l'art typographique' of newspapers, magazines, and books,¹⁷ a point taken up by Fulvio Papi in *Filosofia e architettura* in relation to the similarities between Derrida's work and 'l'architettura poetica di Mallarmé.'¹⁸ Mallarmé's *Un Coup de dés* (published posthumously in 1914) and Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* (1913-16), which both disrupt the conventional *mise en page* of poetry, are therefore similar to the fragmentary spaces of Derrida's *Glas* and Genet's texts (particularly 'Ce qui est resté...', but also his novels), with all requiring the reader to read 'between,' skirting the interstices between the black ink of text and the white spaces of the paper. Whilst Derrida, in *Positions*, does not include Genet in his list of subversive authors (focusing instead on fissures, breaches and infractions in the work of Mallarmé, Bataille, Artaud and Sollers), his identification of their 'excessive' style as a 'structure of resistance' is clearly similar to his observations on Genet in *Glas*.¹⁹ The excessive notion of *espacement* as the resurgent spatiality of that which is supposedly 'without space' (most notably, writing), alerts us to the highly dynamic nature of the interstice – a movement whose discontinuous and 'aberrant' nature requires further analysis.

ABERRANT MOVEMENTS IN THE INTERSTICE

As conveyed by the Derridean concept of *espacement*, writing and spatiality are inextricably connected, despite the phonocentric tendency of Western philosophy to repress this association. Similarly, the gestures, movements and impulses of the body are often neglected in favour of the cerebral and rational, conveying the 'somatophobia' of much of Western thought. Our explorations of the interactions of bodies and spaces in Genet's novels is inevitably complicated by their multiple definitions. Hegel's 'dialogical syllogisms and the architectonics to which they give rise'²⁰ imply the coherence and unity of an *a priori* Kantian space, governed by Euclidean geometry and mirrored in the rationality of the Cartesian ego and the normative physique of Vitruvian man. In contrast, the poetic *écriture* of Genet's 'counter-text' suggests a radically different interpretation, stressing discontinuity, dynamism and heterogeneity, and therefore more suited to the (postmodern) theories of Einstein, Mandelbrot and Reimann. Similarly, the (anti-)type of subjectivity that this entails is at odds with the self-sufficiency of a rationalist consciousness and 'docile' corporeality, engaging in dynamic processes, incoherence and contradiction instead. This counter-text is excessive, with its interstitial dynamic mobilized by the theory of *espacement*. As Derrida writes in *Glas*:

Let us space. The art of this text is the air it causes to circulate between its screens. The chainings are invisible, everything seems improvised or juxtaposed. This text induces by agglutinating rather than demonstrating, by coupling and decoupling, gluing and ungluing [*en accollant et en décollant*] rather than by exhibiting the continuous, and analogical, instructive, suffocating necessity of a discursive rhetoric.²¹

Spacing is therefore an ‘unstable’ concept, with the confrontation between the two juxtaposed but separate columns of *Glas* (between Hegel and Genet, the canonical and the criminal), setting up an ambivalent dynamics of contamination and contrast - a circulation that radically destabilizes the conventional linearity of academic discourse and its associated style of reading. The bicolumnar architecture of *Glas*, with its ‘unequal columns, they say distyle [*disent-ils*] each of which – envelop(e)s or sheath(es), incalculably reverses, turns inside out, replaces, remarks, overlaps [*recoupe*] the other,’ means that the text is constantly put into crisis by ‘the infinite circulation of general equivalence’ that operates inside each sentence, between the individual ‘stumps’ of writing, and also ‘within each column, and from one column to the other.’²²

The parenthesis explaining Derrida’s pun (the homophonic relationship of the architectural term ‘distyle’ and the French for ‘they say’ ‘*disent-ils*’) alerts us to the way in which the translation of *Glas* into English further emphasizes the ‘circulation’ of languages it puts into play. ‘Translation,’ etymologically derived from the Latin ‘carrying across,’ relies on the operations of the in-between, as opposed to notions of stability and self-sufficiency, and would therefore seem to resonate with the deconstructive project of textual freeplay and *différance*. Indeed, whilst Derrida admits in the preface to *GLASsary* that he had wanted to write an ‘untranslatable’ book, translation is in fact always already at work. There is no pure, original language, so that the translations within Derrida’s text (such as Mallarmé’s ‘Les cloches’ translating ‘The Bells’ of Edgar Allen Poe²³) are echoed in the proliferation of parentheses that the English translation has to provide in order to explain Derrida’s word-play. Ultimately, as Derrida goes on to acknowledge in *GLASsary*, ‘one is never enclosed in the column of one single tongue.’²⁴ Perhaps here we might consider the two columns of *Glas* as a form of oblique translation, a bizarre dialogue between the unlikely couple of Hegel and Genet, as the reader’s attention shuttles back and forth, not only between columns, in a ‘style navette,’ but also between the unpredictable spacings of the text and the sometimes inexplicable juxtaposition of words.

*Espace*ment also evokes the ambiguous figure of the interstice, and is related to the equally complex derridean notions of *chora*, *différance*, the trace and the supplement. Derrida’s reading of the Platonic *chora* in *Chora L Works* (a series of discussions with the architect Peter Eisenman) as something which defies the logics of non-contradiction and binarity, implies the internal heterogeneity and instability of all structures, neither ‘sensible’ nor ‘intelligible’ but a third genus which escapes conceptual capture.²⁵ Crucially, *chora*, spacing, dissemination and *différance* are highly dynamic concepts, involving hybridity, an ongoing ‘corruption’ of categories, and a ‘bastard reasoning.’²⁶ Derrida identification of *différance* in *Margins of Philosophy*, as an ‘unappropriable excess’ that operates through spacing as ‘the becoming-space of time or the becoming-time of space,’²⁷ chimes with his description of *chora* as an ‘unidentifiable excess’ that is ‘the spacing which is the condition for everything to take place,’ opening up the interval as the plurivocity of writing in defiance of ‘origin’ and ‘essence.’²⁸ In this unfolding of *différance*, spacing ‘insinuates into presence an interval,’²⁹ again alerting us to the crucial role of the interstice in deconstruction, and, as Derrida observes in *Positions*, its impact as ‘a movement, a displacement that indicates an irreducible alterity’: ‘Spacing is the impossibility for an identity to be closed on itself, on the inside of its proper interiority, or on its coincidence with itself. The irreducibility of spacing is the irreducibility of the other.’³⁰

This movement of continual dis-placement is similar to Jonathan Dollimore’s notion of the ‘perverse dynamic’ in *Sexual Dissidence* as the anti-teleological and ‘aberrant movement’ of displacement, deviation and per-version.³¹ Dollimore’s association of an ongoing ‘erring’ of bodies and thought with a ‘dissident sexuality’ can be read into the spaces and bodies of Genet’s texts. ‘Interstitial’ spaces (dynamic, transitional and ‘in-between’ officially recognized social sites) are a main feature of both *Miracle of the Rose* and *Our Lady of the Flowers*. In the latter, the attic where the transvestite prostitute Divine lives, overlooking

Montmartre cemetery, is suspended 'between heaven and earth,'³² whilst the prison stairwells in *Miracle of the Rose* are described as 'vibrating' with the echo of the erotic encounters that occur there, the rigid architecture of the prison destabilized by a subversive dynamics of desire.³³

Corridors, the bars of the city's *bas quartiers* (such as Pigalle), alleyways, backstreets and the *terrains vagues* of Barcelona in *A Thief's Journal*, as well as public parks such as the Tuileries in Paris, frontiers, coastlines and peninsulas, all function as transitional spaces that defy surveillance and control, constantly shot through with the unpredictable and subversive movements of 'un-docile bodies': orphans, criminals, transvestites, pimps, traitors, corrupt policemen, and beggars.

Genet's illegitimacy (abandoned by his mother soon after his birth) and his vagabondage (never owning property, constantly moving from hotel to hotel, country to country), is echoed in the aleatory nature of his prose as well as the 'bastard path' of *Glas* itself.³⁴ As Derrida writes in the Hegel column, it is a text that operates by dehiscence, 'zigzagging – by à-coups, fits and starts, little successive jerks, while touching, tampering with the borders,'³⁵ an ongoing 'va-et-vient' that defies segregation (literal or metaphorical), with the creative force of the vagabond gestures and movements of the thief.

This dynamism, however, is also paradoxically at work in the bounded space of the prison cell. Crucially, 'dissemination' is not only a movement, or digressional 'deviance' of meaning, but is also a 'resistance from within the system,'³⁶ reminding us that the interstice is always already internal to a system, despite the system's attempts to repress it. The emergence of Genet's texts from within the prison cell is echoed by Derrida's own personal experience, recounted in *Counterpath*. Of his incarceration in Prague in 1981, Derrida says that it 'constituted the voyage that, in my whole life, was the most worthy of the name,' with the emergence of what was most 'new' occurring from within the narrow space of the prison.³⁷

GRAPHEMES AND GRAFFITI

In *Glas*, Derrida's explorations of the grapheme 'gl' contributes to what Henry Sussman (in 'Hegel, Glas, and the Broader Modernity') calls his 'philosophy of marks,' circulating between words and meanings, dislocating the linearity of semantics with the freeplay of textual *différance*.³⁸ The motif of marks is continued in that of graffiti and inscriptions, both in relation to Hegel's writings on architecture in Part Three of his *Aesthetics*,³⁹ and to Genet's depictions of prison graffiti and tattoos in his novels. Inscription, rather than imposed on a pre-existing surface, is constitutive of the notion of surface itself, problematizing our perception of inside and outside, and reasserting once again the ambiguity and undecidability of the interstice. As such, it is similar to the derridean notion of the *supplement* as 'neither a plus nor a minus, neither an outside nor the complement of an inside, neither accident nor essence, etc.'⁴⁰ This seems reminiscent of the debate surrounding ornament in architecture. The Viennese architect Adolf Loos famously condemned it in his 1908 text, *Ornament and Crime*, seeing it as a pathological phenomenon, with tattoos and graffiti as proof of its criminal degeneracy.⁴¹ However, as Mark Wigley points out in *The Architecture of Deconstruction*, Derrida opposes this condemnation, contradicting Kant's view in his *Critique of Judgment* that ornamentation is merely a form of 'inauthentic finery.' In contrast to this, Derrida argues that ornament is not a detachable addition, but is in fact 'constituent'. And I quote here from Wigley: 'The ornament is an outside that always already inhabits the inside, an intrinsic constituent of the interior from which it is meant to be banished.'⁴²

In defiance of the whitewashed walls of prison architecture and modernist buildings, graffiti emphasizes materiality – its scrawled lines and words bearing the trace of corporeal gestures. Rather than the disciplinary aims of official inscription (the names of prison benefactors laying claim to the 'moralization'

of inmates), graffiti troubles the efficacy of enclosure. The 'prière d'insérer' piece, a loose sheaf of text added to the original edition of *Glas*, draws our attention to the architectural motif of its typographical columns, originally borrowed from Genet's text on Rembrandt and referred to in the opening pages. Derrida's own columns are 'truncated' at both top and bottom, beginning and ending mid-sentence, and are inscribed with 'interpolated clauses, tattooings, incrustations.'⁴³

This theme of inscription is reminiscent of a passage in *Our Lady of the Flowers*, when the narrator describes the prison ritual of tattooing:

Thousands and thousands of little jabs with a fine needle prick the skin and draw blood, and figures that *you* would regard as extravagant are flaunted in the most unexpected places. [...] The grimacing of all that blue on a white skin imparts an obscure but potent glamour to the child who is covered with it, as a neutral, pure column becomes sacred under the notches of the hieroglyphs. Like a totem pole. Sometimes the eyelids are marked, the armpits, the hollow of the groin, the buttocks, the penis, and even the soles of the feet.⁴⁴

The reference to columns and hieroglyphs recalls those in Hegel's *Aesthetics*. Seeking out the 'origin' of art in symbolic architecture, Hegel refers to Egyptian obelisks and the phallic columns of India, inscribed with openings and hollows (the *Öffnungen* and *Aushöhlungen*, cited by Derrida in *Glas*⁴⁵). However, as Derrida discovers, this is a fissured origin, reliant on what even Hegel acknowledges as a 'wavering between Architecture and Sculpture' (despite the latter's posteriority in Hegel's evolutionary account of art). A 'middle ground hard to determine,'⁴⁶ as Derrida puts it, this destabilizes Hegel's perception of the artistic Ideal as an 'inherently solid unity.'⁴⁷ Instead, architecture emerges as an incomplete and imperfect discipline, compared to the imperfect, 'transitional' and 'impotent' forms of nature, such as 'hybrids and amphibia.'⁴⁸

In Genet's description of prison tattoos (creative and subversive, as opposed to the disciplinary imposition of penal branding), the architectural metaphor no longer appears repressive, since its anthropomorphic focus is displaced. Bizarre imagery on unexpected parts of the body blurs the boundaries between the human and non-human, between the body's boundaries and the outside world, recalling the hybrid forms alluded to by Hegel, as well as his descriptions of the *arabesque* as 'distorted plant-forms and animal and human forms growing out of plants and intermingled with them.'⁴⁹

Graffiti and incisions also raise the theme of wounds and grafting that Derrida identifies as key to Genet's texts, and the role of 'protheses' (such as the wooden leg of an imprisoned child in *Our Lady of the Flowers*, or the bunch of grapes that the one-armed Stilitano puts into his trousers in *The Thief's Journal*). As forms of 'parantheses' in the body, these graftings disrupt the integrity and perfect proportions of Vitruvian man and the Corbusian Modulor, indicating alternative modes of embodiment instead. Likewise, *Glas* operates by 'stumps' of writing (inspired by the incomplete 'je m'éc...' of Genet's 'Ce qui est resté...'), and their graftings, cuttings and gluings:

Every thesis is (bands erect) a prosthesis; what affords reading affords reading by citations (necessarily truncated, clippings [*coupures*], repetitions, suction, sections, suspensions, selections, stitchings [*coutures*], scarrings, grafts, postiches, organs without their own proper body, proper body covered with cuts [*coups*], traversed by lice).⁵⁰

From out of the fissures and cracks of these fragmentary bodies, from the seams [*coutures*] which 'do not hold at any price,' there oozes the repressed materiality of the text, the 'fluid sperm, saliva, glair, curdled drool, tears of mil, gel of vomit....' that Derrida discerns in Genet's work.⁵¹ Rather than the upright

patriarchal phallus, we have an ‘anthérection,’⁵⁵² a (de)construction that refuses what Wigley calls the ‘traditional psycho-architectural logic of erection.’⁵⁵³ Instead of the authoritarian and monumentalizing logic of phallogocentrism, *Glas* ‘bands erect,’ shot through with fissures, perforated with ‘a variety of inlaid judas holes, crenels, Venetian shutters [*jalousies*], loopholes.’⁵⁵⁴

ARCHITECTONICS AND ARCHITECTURE: FROM THE PANOPTIC TO THE POSTMODERN?

Underlying this discussion of the interstice is the question of ‘the authority of the architectural metaphor,’ and the supposedly analogous relationship between architectonics and architecture in Western thought. The hierarchical *Aufhebung* of Hegel’s ‘savoir absolu,’ and Kant’s ‘architettura della ragione’ (to quote Fulvio Papi) are examples of a negative reading of architecture, seeing it as complicit with ‘la prigione metafisica,’ the metaphysical prison that incarcerates thought in an Aristotelian ‘art of systems.’⁵⁵⁵

As Denis Hollier writes in *Prise de la concorde* (1974) (his book on Georges Bataille published in the same year as *Glas*, and translated into English as *Against Architecture*), Bataille viewed architecture as a ‘prison-warden’ complicit with authoritarian hierarchies, constituting ‘the keystone of systematicity in general,’ and organizing ‘the concord of languages’ into ‘universal legibility.’⁵⁵⁶ He quotes from Bataille’s 1929 article for *Documents*, that ‘each time that *architectural composition* turns up somewhere other than in monuments, whether it is in physiognomy, costume, music, or painting, one may infer a prevailing taste for divine or human *authority*.’⁵⁵⁷

However, whilst Derrida often explicitly rejects the architectural metaphor, claiming in a footnote in *Rogues* that ‘architecture is not architectonic. All coherence is not and has not always been systematic’⁵⁵⁸ (and also in *Psyché* that, ‘contrary to appearances, ‘deconstruction’ is not an architectural metaphor’⁵⁵⁹), the issue is much more complex than a simple denial. In ‘Architecture Where the Desire May Live’ Derrida indicates this ambiguity: ‘One could say that there is nothing more architectural than deconstruction but also nothing less architectural.’⁵⁶⁰ What is at stake here is a rethinking of architecture against itself and in defiance of the authoritarian associations of architectonics, questioning the concepts of system and structure. So, following Hollier’s preface to the 1989 edition of his book on Bataille, rather than the ‘spectacular architecture’ of Bataille’s analysis, and rather than the ‘vigilant architecture’ described by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (his work on the prison in the Nineteenth Century), we might conceive of an architecture ‘in-between,’ explicitly identified by Hollier as that of Bernard Tschumi, with its architectural deployment of derridean *espacement*.⁵⁶¹

Ultimately, since Derrida admits in conversation with Eisenman that ‘we cannot avoid metaphors. We know they are inadequate but we cannot simply avoid them, just as we cannot avoid buildings,’⁵⁶² we must not simply reject the architectural metaphor, but rather destabilize it, revealing its inherent fissures and the way in which it can generate an alternative type of building, not repressing the interstice, but putting it into play. As Wigley observes, deconstructive discourses engage in ‘a certain kind of interference with the institutional mechanisms that conceal, if not *incarcerate*, a certain forbidden, improper, and, above all, *illegitimate* architecture’⁵⁶³ (italics my own). With these themes of incarceration and illegitimacy we are once again returned to the work of Genet. Just as Bataille admits in another article for *Documents* that, despite the efforts of philosophers, ‘l’espace est resté voyou’⁵⁶⁴ (remaining a roguish spatiality that defies conceptual capture), so too do Genet’s thefts, vagabond movements and subversive texts defy the panoptic architecture of the carceral institution and the ‘rigorous edifice’⁵⁶⁵ of the bourgeois society that supports it. In contrast to the Panopticon imagined by Utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham (c.1787)

and used by nineteenth-century French architect Abel Blouet in the construction of La Petite Roquette in Paris and the Maison Paternelle at Mettray (with Genet spending time in both institutions), we must therefore conceive of a dis-obedient architecture which defies rigid spatial segregations and the exposure of inmates to a controlling centralized gaze. Instead, we might imagine a bastard architecture for undocile, aberrant bodies, which would operate in/with the in-between.

Derrida's essay on Tschumi, 'Point de folie: maintenant l'architecture,' is crucial here. Writing on Tschumi's Parc de la Villette (Paris, 1985), Derrida calls the distorted cubes of its 'folies' an 'architecture of the event' and 'the experience of spacing' itself – a post-structuralist architecture that echoes the post-structuralist texts of deconstruction.⁶⁶ Whilst Derrida reminds us that there is an 'architecture of architecture,' a normative tradition (founded in Vitruvian proportion and the teleology of dwelling) that 'regulates all of what is called Western culture,' he goes on to assert that deconstruction 'would do little if it did not go after architecture as much as architectonics,' not in order to destroy, but so as to destabilize conventional structure.⁶⁷ With *folies* scattered across a points-grid and enabling the disjunctive play of chance events and inventive combinations, Tschumi's 'transarchitecture' does not reveal deconstruction itself, 'since there never was such a thing,' but rather, as Derrida contends, 'what carries its jolt beyond semantic analysis, critique of discourses and ideologies, concepts or texts, in the traditional sense of the term.'⁶⁸ Like the 'little continuous jolts' of Genet's texts, the jolts of Tschumi's *folies* enact a 'general dislocation,' deconstructing 'the semantics of architecture' with the dissociative effects of spacing ('le dis-joint,' or 'the madness of the trait').⁶⁹

Whilst in his *Aesthetics*, Hegel views poetry as 'the polar opposite of architecture'⁷⁰ (with poetry escaping the 'heavy spatial matter' of the latter, its dematerialization and disembodiment in opposition to the architectural form), in the case of Genet's highly poetic prose, the materiality of architecture and bodies is not denied, but put into play with poetic invention. As with Tschumi's concept of 'crossprogramming' (in which a building is used in ways that contradict its 'intended' function), Genet's poetic imagination subverts spaces, dislocating them from their conventional use. Thanks to this interstitial and imaginative art, the narrator of *The Thief's Journal* remarks that "'the most meager shelter became habitable. I would sometimes adorn it with an artful comfort drawn from what was peculiar to it: a box [*loge*] in the theatre, the chapel of a cemetery, a cave, an abandoned quarry, a freight car and so on."⁷¹ And whilst the narrator appears to wish he were suited to 'the fluting [*cannelures*] of the fake columns that ornament facades, [...] the caryatids, the balconies and the freestone,' and also to 'the heavy bourgeois assurance which these things express,' he also goes on to admit that this is not the case, rejecting the enclosure of the bourgeois interior for an ongoing vagabond existence.⁷²

CONCLUSION

What Derrida calls Tschumi's 'architecture of heterogeneity, interruption, non-coincidence'⁷³ appears similar to Michel Foucault's concept of the heterotopia in 'Des espaces autres'.⁷⁴ A form of 'other space,' a counter space or contestatory space capable of juxtaposing incompatible elements, the heterotopia has been adopted by postmodern urban theorists such as Edward Soja to emphasize that social space is polysemous and antagonistic,⁷⁵ so that, associating this idea of the counter-site with the subversive (non) space of the interstice, we might therefore be able to envisage the in-between as a source of resistance. As Genet writes in *Miracle of the Rose*:

The origin – the roots – of the great social movements cannot possibly lie in goodness [...] A man must dream a long time in order to act with grandeur, and dreaming is nursed in darkness. [...] And what we see of just and honorable institutions at the surface of the earth is only the

projection, necessarily transfigured, of these solitary, secret gratifications.⁷⁶

These repressed interstices of society, if reasserted, can destabilize the apparent solidity and homogeneity of the system – an insistent ‘return of the repressed’ from within. As with the system of ‘opening and closing’ of the Foucauldian heterotopia, operating as an oscillatory hinge-site, Genet’s ‘style navette’ and Derrida’s deconstructive *espacement* take place in and as the in-between, inhabiting the structures that they want to critique. According to Henry Sussman, ‘Genet’s philosophical poetry can be adequately appreciated only to the degree that it is read against the backdrop of the mainstream post-Enlightenment Western ideology whose terms it borrows, empties, subverts, and reconfigures,’⁷⁷ with Genet’s illegitimacy, criminality, homosexuality and vagabond tendencies opposing the Hegelian values of family, (heteronormative) civil society and Christianity. The revelation by *Glas* of Genet’s subversive strategies and also what Sussman calls the ‘seismic instabilities’ in Hegel too⁷⁸ indicates an immanent resistance that, rather than seeking out refuge on the margins, operates from within. Hence Derrida’s aim in *Glas* ‘not to arrest the career of a Genet,’ to keep his subversive force ‘unbridled,’ admiring his political activity with the Palestinians, and the way he ‘leaps where that explodes [*ça saute*] in the world.’⁷⁹

Inspired by the subversive movements, counter-discourses and re-inscriptions enacted by Genet’s characters, a reconceptualization of architecture against the normative ideals of bourgeois society promises a wide-ranging impact on other disciplines. For, as Derrida writes:

Deconstructions would be feeble if they did not first measure themselves against institutions in their solidity, *at the place of their greatest resistance*: political structures, levers of economic decision, the material and phantasmatic apparatuses which connect state, civil society, capital, bureaucracy, cultural power and architectural education...⁸⁰

Ultimately, as Wigley writes, deconstructive discourse ‘involves occupying the cracks in the official architecture, the hidden recesses of the institution’s structure rather than any of its officially designated spaces, forcing the cracks to see what they hide.’⁸¹ The creative interactions of bodies and spaces in Genet’s texts, foregrounded in Derrida’s *Glas* and accommodated by the architecture of Tschumi, constitutes an ‘experience of spacing’, maintaining a disjunctive state in which rupture and association are in continual interchange: a ‘*socius* of dissocation,’ a ‘relation without a relation,’ as Derrida puts it.⁸² The synthesis of Hegelian dialectics is avoided, making sure that difference persists, subverting the desired self-sufficiency of ideologies, institutions and idealized concepts of body and space. After all, ‘the crack is what one must occupy’⁸³ and it is in the ambivalence of the interstitial that we are confronted with otherness, without and within, always up against the in between.

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NOTES

1. Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence. Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 229.
2. In particular, Jean-Paul Sartre, Georges Bataille and François Mauriac.
3. Jacques Derrida, *Glas*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 270.
4. As described by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*. (London: Allen Lane, 1977)
5. *Glas*, 1.
6. *Glas*, 5.
7. Gregory L. Ulmer, 'Sounding the Unconscious'. In John P. Leavey Jr., ed., *GLASsary*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 27.
8. Leila Shahid, in Jérôme Hankins, ed., *Genet à Chatila*. (Paris: Solin, 1992), 18-66 (62).
9. 'What remained of a Rembrandt torn into small, very regular squares and rammed down the shithole.' *Glas*, 1.
10. Genet, *Prisoner of Love*. (New York: NYRB, 2003), 3.
11. Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), 22.
12. www.hydra.umn.edu/derrida/glas.1.html
13. *Glas*, 64 and 4.
14. *Ibid*, 25 and 45.
15. Quoted by Leavey, 97.
16. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 18.
17. Le Corbusier. *Le Modulor*. (Boulogne: Éditions de l'architecture d'aujourd'hui, 1954) i.
18. Fulvio Papi, *Filosofia e architettura. Kant, Hegel, Valéry, Heidegger, Derrida*. (Como: Ibis, 2000), 77.
19. Derrida, *Positions*. (New York: Continuum, 2002), 69.
20. *Glas*, 4.
21. *Ibid*, 75.
22. *Ibid*, 1.
23. *Ibid*, 150-155.
24. Derrida, *GLASsary*, 17.
25. Quoted in Jeffrey Kipnis and Thomas Leiser, eds., *Chora L Works. Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman*. (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1997), 15.
26. *Ibid*, 25.
27. Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*. (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982), 6 and 13.
28. Derrida, *Chora L Works*, 19 and 10.
29. *Ibid*, 203.
30. Derrida, *Positions*, 94.
31. Dollimore, 113.
32. Genet, *Our Lady of the Flowers*. (New York: Grove Press, 1991), 79.
33. Genet, *Miracle of the Rose*. (London: Penguin, 1971), 218.
34. *Glas*, 6.
35. *Ibid*, 5.
36. Derrida, *Positions*, 46 and 84.
37. Catherine Malabou and Jacques Derrida, *Counterpath. Traveling with Jacques Derrida*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 32-33.
38. Henry Sussman, 'Hegel, *Glas*, and the Broader Modernity,' from Stuart Barnett, ed., *Hegel After Derrida*. (London: Routledge, 1998), 260-292 (282).
39. G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art, Volume 2*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).
40. Derrida, *Positions*, 43.
41. Adolf Loos, 'Ornament and Crime', from *The Architecture of Adolf Loos*. (London: The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1985), 102
42. Mark Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt*. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993), 84.
43. Quoted by Leavey in *GLASsary*, 28.
44. Genet, *Our Lady of the Flowers*, 213.
45. *Glas*, 254.
46. *Ibid*, 3.

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47. Hegel, 641 and 614.
 48. Ibid, 628.
 49. Ibid, 658.
 50. *Glas*, 168.
 51. Ibid, 209 and 139.
 52. Ibid, 130.
 53. Wigley, 76.
 54. *Glas*, 3.
 55. Papi, 19 and 77.
 56. Denis Hollier, *Against Architecture. The Writings of Georges Bataille*. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989), ix and 33.
 57. Bataille quoted in Hollier, 115.
 58. Derrida, *Rogues. Two Essays on Reason*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 171.
 59. Quoted in Claudia Brodsky Lacour, *Lines of Thought. Discourse, Architectonics, and the Origin of Modern Philosophy*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 2.
 60. Derrida, 'Architecture Where the Desire May Live,' in Neil Leach, ed., *Rethinking Architecture. A Reader in Cultural Theory*. (London: Routledge, 1997), 319-323 (321).
 61. Hollier, xi.
 62. Quoted in *Chora L Works*, 70.
 63. Wigley, 22.
 64. Bataille, 'Espace,' from *Oeuvres complètes I. Premiers écrits 1920-40*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), 227.
 65. Genet, *Journal du voleur*. (Paris : Gallimard, 1949), 205.
 66. Derrida, 'Point de folie,' from Bernard Tschumi, ed., *La Case vide*. (London: A.A, 1986), 5.
 67. Ibid, 8-9.
 68. Ibid, 13 and 15.
 69. Ibid, 19.
 70. Hegel, 968.
 71. *Glas*, 9.
 72. Genet, *Journal du voleur*, 191.
 73. Derrida, 'Point de folie,' 15.
 74. See Foucault, 'Des espaces autres', from *Dits et Ecrits: 1954-88*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1994).
 75. Edward W. Soja 'Heterotopologies. A Remembrance of Other Spaces in the Citadel LA,' from Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson, eds., *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 14-31.
 76. Genet, *Miracle of the Rose*, 34.
 77. Sussman, 265.
 78. Ibid, 273. Instabilities including the 'unassimilable, unclassifiable' role of Antigone in the system of kinship. *Glas*, 150.
 79. *Glas*, 36. Genet's book on the Palestinian revolt, *Un Captif amoureux*, was published in 1986, the same year as the English translation of *Glas*.
 80. Ibid, 15.
 81. Wigley, 53-54.
 82. Ibid, 17.
 83. *Glas*, 207.