(Re)configuring Crusoe’s Habitation: an application of space syntax theory to Robinson Crusoe

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This essay applies space syntax theory to an analysis of the habitation built by Robinson Crusoe on his island. In so doing, it aims to provide a new perspective on the near-universal critical view that Crusoe’s stay on the island, and within it his construction of a built environment, forms part of a linear, monologic recapitulation of Western civilisation.

The essay adopts the dual approach of space syntax. First, Crusoe’s habitation is objectively analysed as a configuration that co-constitutes socio-cultural patterns of meaning and motion, considering its levels of integration, segregation and intelligibility. This section exposes fundamental problems with the critical views outlined above, for two reasons. First, because it reveals that spaces are in constant flux, simultaneously producing and being produced by socio-cultural conditions. Second, because the same configuration can be read syntactically in a number of ways depending on starting point.

My second section considers the language in which Crusoe’s habitation is expressed as reflective of the phenomenology of these spaces as the lived imaginative/emotional experiences of Defoe’s character. It is argued that within the meanings made syntactically possible, the choice and experience of meanings is less to do with Crusoe’s cultural/civilizational progression than with Defoe’s rendering of the fluctuations of his character’s individual subjective experience.

From this, I hope to prove that an application of space syntax highlights the fact that the spaces of Crusoe’s habitation are fundamentally heterotopic: rather than simply creating and evolving in value, they are spaces where value is continually contested and inverted. Finally, the essay suggests that the conclusions drawn from considering the space syntax of Crusoe’s habitation might lead the way to viewing Robinson Crusoe and the novel form evolving in the eighteenth century as heterotopias.

Keywords: Crusoe, Defoe, space, heterotopia, phenomenology

What is space syntax?
Space syntax, like this essay, is predicated on the idea that space is something we think with rather than about (Hillier, 1996). The built environment is conceived as a grammatical system in which morphological units (spaces) are formed into syntactical units (configurations). These configurations allow for different levels of segregation, integration, and intelligibility to be experienced by individual subjects within the configuration. Segregation and integration are measures of how easy it is to move from one space to another and how connected each space is to the others within the configuration. Intelligibility measures how far the whole is comprehensible to an individual when within any of the constituent spaces. These three things shape patterns of movement. They also render the built environment as co-constitutive of culture. That is

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1 to say that the way spaces are configured not only reflects/is constituted by socio-cultural patterns, but also generates/constitutes these socio-cultural patterns (Bafna, 2003; Vis, 2009).

If space is something we think with, space syntax suggests that depending on one’s positioning within the configuration, the configuration itself changes, since the levels of segregation, integration and intelligibility are not constant from space to space. There are as many different configurational syntaxes as there are spaces within the configuration (Hillier, 2005). This allows for what is herein termed reconfigurational polysemy.1

Crucially, while these aspects can be mathematically formulated for a whole configuration and measured objectively, segregation, integration and intelligibility are fundamentally experiential. Space syntax therefore attempts to bring together the objective analysis of entire configurations with the phenomenological analysis of configurations as lived experience, where the individual not only experiences the configuration bit by bit, and from different perspectives of both physical movement and imaginative/emotional engagement.2 These experiences are still subject to the syntactical possibilities of the configuration: we cannot experience what is non-experienceable, but the way in which we experience the configuration varies depending on where we are within the configuration, as well as how we approach spaces imaginatively and emotionally.

Space syntax and this essay

This essay is fundamentally concerned with the interplay between Robinson Crusoe’s habitation and socio-cultural value/meaning. It aims to provide a new perspective on the near-universal critical view that Crusoe’s stay on the island, and within it his construction of a built environment, forms part of a recapitulation of civilisation more or less from scratch.3 While allowing that an evolution does take place to some extent, this essay argues against those critics who have argued that this process is categorically linear and/or part of a restriction of meaning and imposition of a monologic, Western-colonial value system.4

In doing so, the essay adopts the dual approach of space syntax theory. First, Crusoe’s habitation is objectively analysed as a configuration that constitutes socio-cultural patterns of meaning and motion, considering its levels of integration, segregation and intelligibility. In this section, I argue that an application of space syntax theory exposes fundamental problems with the critical views outlined above, for two reasons. First, because it reveals that spaces are in constant flux, simultaneously producing and being produced by socio-cultural conditions. Second, because the same configuration can be read syntactically in a number of ways depending on starting point.

My second section considers the language in which Crusoe’s habitation is expressed as reflective of the phenomenology of these spaces as the lived imaginative/emotional experiences of Defoe’s character. It is argued that within the meanings made syntactically possible, the choice and experience of meanings is less to do with Crusoe’s cultural/colonial value system. Rather than simply creating and evolving in value, they are spaces where value is continually contested and inverted (Foucault and Miskowiev, 1986).

Finally, the essay suggests that the conclusion drawn from considering the space syntax of Crusoe’s habitation might lead the way to viewing Robinson Crusoe and the novel form evolving in the eighteenth century as heterotopias. This in turn leads to a consideration that the essay might also be seen as taking a new step in the scholarly collabo-
ration between literary studies and space syntax. Thus far, there have only been three works produced which apply space syntax to fictional spaces and, all being by architects, their aim has been to look at how such applications can inform architectural practice (Hanson, 2012; Psarra, 2003; Sailer, 2016). My work comes at the field from the opposite perspective, seeing space syntax as a valuable critical tool in the analysis and understanding of the novel, both in terms of how authors construct plausible fictional subjectivities through their characters’ interactions with space, and in terms of how we might view the morphology of the novel as a form.

Analysis of the habitation as syntax
Crusoe’s habitation, by which I mean the tent/cave complex that is his first permanent built environment, and the only one to be referred to as “habitation”, takes on four different configurations during his 28 years on the island. These four configurations are as follows in Figure 1.

Figure 1.
Justified graphs of four configurations of Crusoe’s habitation.
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1. Cave + Tent + Green (the space outside the tent and within the fence or, in the first incarnation, within the ring of chests and planks);
2. Cave + Tent + Green + Outside;
3. Cave + Tent + Green + Outer Green (the space between the second fence and the first fence);
4. Cave + Tent + Green + Outer Green + Clearing (the space between Crusoe’s wood and the outer fence) + Outside.\(^5\)

In order to facilitate the objective application of space syntax theory to these configurations as wholes, I have presented each configuration as a justified graph with Crusoe’s tent as the core. These graphs visualise the level of integration/segregation of a configuration by rendering it into layers of depths. Every space that is one movement, or one depth, away from the core will be represented in the layer immediately above the core; each space that is two movements, or two depths, away will form the second layer, and so on. The more integrated a configuration is from the perspective of the core, the fewer layers in the graph. This would be termed a shallow-core structure. The more segregated the core, the more layers: a deep-core structure (Hillier, 2005). I begin with the tent as the core, since this is where Crusoe places himself at his most vulnerable.

Configurations 1 & 2: Crusoe’s architecture as co-constitutive of socio-cultural conditions

The first thing to consider in the syntactical analysis of Crusoe’s habitation is that there is a recurrent pattern of what might be called dis-integration. Configurations 1, 3 and 4 make the outside part of a different syntax to the configurations’ core system (the part of the configuration that includes the tent). In most works of architecture, patterns of movement are created between the outside and the inside, making the outside a morphological unit in the syntax of the configuration, but Crusoe’s immediate architectural instinct is to break spatial communication with the outside world. Configuration 1 forms a syntax, but one which speaks a fundamentally different language to the exterior of the island. To put it another way, it is a fragment of language without any syntactical link to the spatial language around it. It lacks the conjunction or punctuation to make it grammatically unify with the beyond, and this can only be supplied by Crusoe’s ladder, which acts as the conjunctive cipher to crack the code separating the language of his architecture from the language of the island.

Configuration 1 therefore immediately exemplifies space syntax’s claim that architecture reflects and generates socio-cultural patterns. Crusoe is isolated: he is the only survivor of a shipwreck on an island that he believes to be uninhabited. His socio-cultural condition is one of isolation. And configuration 1 reflects this condition: in a state of isolation there is no possibility of co-presence within a piece of architecture so there is no need to build a syntax which creates a flow of movement into the configuration. The key word here, though, is “creates”. While the configuration’s dis-integration from the outside reproduces the fact that there is no society with which to integrate, it simultaneously generates the impossibility of such integration, were it possible. That configuration 1 is both a response and a stimulus to isolation, ties into one of the key phenomenological instabilities of the novel: Crusoe both fears isolation (he responds to being alone by building a fence around himself) and desires it (he builds a fence which functions to keep him alone). Crusoe reflects on this duality upon his terror at discovering the footprint of a man on his travels about the island: “To Day we love what to Morrow we hate; to Day we seek what to Morrow we shun; to Day we desire what to Morrow we fear…” (Defoe and Crowley, 1998, p.156). Crusoe considers this “strange”, but we see that in fact this flux between binary opposites is inscribed within the syntax of his earliest architectural work, the architecture serving

\(^5\) There is a small proviso to this development, since in the first description of his habitation, Crusoe mentions that his tent is in fact a double tent, with a smaller one within and a larger one above, which would make an additional space within the configuration, resulting in an inner tent space and an outer tent space. However, since this is mentioned nowhere else in the novel, and there is no reference to movement through any such two spaces, I have not included this configuration in my analysis. For illustrations of the habitation in its various iterations, see http://crusoehouse.blogspot.kr.
to emphasise and create the novel’s status as a site of constantly contested and inverting meaning – a heterotopia.

Within Crusoe’s dis-integrated configuration, we see in configuration 1 that the tent is the most integrated space in the syntax; it is the only space which connects to both other spaces. This suggests very early on that which comes to be an overriding meaning of his later configurations: the centrality of the individual Crusoe himself, and his control over the socio-cultural functioning of his space. Within the configuration, the pattern of movement created means that in both directions, one must pass through the tent in order to reach the further-most parts of the configuration. The tent can never be bypassed and it is the only space from which the rest of the configuration is intelligible: from the green, one cannot know the presence of the cave; from the cave, one cannot know the presence of the green. Only the individual within the tent can comprehend the whole. Thus, the architecture reproduces Crusoe’s unilateral possession of the habitation, while at the same time it is the nature of the configuration which he has built that makes such panoptical control possible.

In configuration 2, Crusoe responds to belief that there are no beings to fear on the island, and we see a syntax which speaks less of Crusoe as panoptic isolate, and more of Crusoe the craftsman at home on the island. The key change is the opening of a door to the outside world, meaning that the outside becomes a morphological unit in the configuration. This changes not merely the syntax, but the language of the configuration. For the first and only time, Crusoe’s architecture speaks of the possibility of co-presence within the core system, since beings from outside have access to the inside (though given the inside’s unintelligibility from outside, this is not a syntax which calls for co-presence, merely one which allows it). This reflects the socio-cultural conditions whereby the only beings that Crusoe believes might enter are animals good either for food or for domestication. By the same token, the cave – which is now fully excavated and designated as a “Warehouse or Magazin, a Kitchen, a Dining-room, and a Cellar” (Defoe and Crowley, 1998, p.74) – becomes the integrated centre of the configuration, acting as the link between inside and outside, private and public, and as multifunctional working environment. This creates a pattern of movement which co-constitutes the culture of craftsmanship prevalent at this stage of Crusoe’s life on the island, since the directional flow is fundamentally altered: the door means that it is no longer necessary to go to the trouble of using the ladder to get in and out. In configuration 1, the flow of movement made the cave somewhere that Crusoe would only go into if he specifically wanted to; having entered via the green, he would then flow into the tent, where he could either remain or decide to move into the cave. Now, the green’s role is removed and all purposeful movement must pass through the cave, the work-hub of the configuration. Wherever one is in the configuration, one must have already been into the cave and so work is now an inevitable part of any experience of the configuration. The new syntax enables work to take the key cultural role just as much as it reflects the fact that this is the case.

Configurations 3 & 4: reconfigurational polysemy
Configurations 3 and 4 mark a shift both backwards and forwards in spatial meaning: once the foreign footprint is discovered (during the phase of configuration 2), Crusoe re-dis-integrates his architecture from the outside. The building of the second fence means that the door of the cave now opens onto another section of the interiorised syntactical arrangement. Communication with the outside ceases and the external world becomes no longer of the same language as Crusoe’s habitation. While some critics have seen this as a regression to Crusoe’s arrival
on the island, and the move back to dis-integration does bring configuration 3 close to configuration 1, it also marks a step forward in architectural sophistication. In particular, configurations 3 and 4 create the conditions for control of the interior through the complexification of levels of intelligibility. There are now two greens, which form concentric semi-circles, yet between which there is no flow of movement. This allows for powerful internal unintelligibility since anyone in the outer green can have no comprehension of the inner green, and these spaces which are physically adjacent are in fact the most segregated from each other. The knowledge discrepancy between the occupant of the tent and an occupant of the outer green is no vastly greater than would have been the discrepancy between tent and green in configuration 1. This creates the conditions for the arrival of Friday, the savage that Crusoe rescues and converts both into a Christian and into his servant, since not only does the architecture now create a pronounced social hierarchy based on spatio-conceptual exclusion, but it can also create a liminal prison: a space which holds Friday in a kind of inescapable internal-external suspension. This is best seen when we compare the justified graph of configuration 3 above, with a graph in which the outer green is the core as in Figure 2. The configuration is vastly different from this core perspective, exemplifying the tenet of space syntax theory that positioning within a configuration changes the configuration itself. When Friday is placed in the outer green on his first night in the habitation, the configuration in which he finds himself is a deep-core structure with almost zero intelligibility: he is spatially three depths away from the other “end” of the configuration, and even if he could conceive of this movement, which is impossible from his position, he would find himself adjacent to where he began and further from the outside than he was to begin with. Crusoe, in the tent, can trust in his configuration to determine behaviour without needing to be able to see all parts. He is shrouded by the unintelligibility of his syntax just as Friday is shrouded within it. And Crusoe is one depth away from the green, from which only he possesses the conjunctive cipher – the ladder – to escape, should he need to. Thus we see that what seems like a regression is in fact a progression, and that even a simple spatial configuration – two concentric semi-circles, a tent and a cave – possesses fundamentally different meanings depending on where one finds oneself positioned within it.

Finally, configuration 4 marks a further sophistication: no longer a single sentence, Crusoe’s final habitation is two sentences of the same language with an unbridgeable semantic gap between them. It is, in effect, two mutually unintelligible fragments which can only be conjoined by the application of Crusoe’s cipher. The core system remains the same as configuration 3, but the addition of the exterior fragment allows for further liminality, and where configuration 3 created the socio-cultural conditions necessary for Friday’s arrival, configuration 4 creates the conditions necessary for the arrival of the savages who hold a Spaniard and Friday’s father as captives, and for the warfare that Crusoe conceives as possible. Thus, the spatial configuration that an individual in the exterior fragment experiences looks like in Figure 3.

Figure 2. Justified graph of configuration 3 (Figure 1) with the ‘Outer Green’ as core.

Figure 3.
Configuration 3 with outer green as core

A = Tent
B = Cave
C = Green
D = Outer Green

To the Spaniard and Friday’s father when placed in the clearing, as to any potential invaders, the core system simply does not exist. And the clearing, by connecting – almost unintelligibly – with the outside, creates a space which is part trap, and part funnel. The Spaniard and elder Friday can be held there comfortably, because the interior system, significantly referred to at this point as “our” (Defoe and Crowley, 1998, p.240) by Crusoe to highlight the fundamental social division between those on the inside – Crusoe and Friday – and those on the outside, is totally unintelligible to the outsiders, and the only possible flow of movement for them is away. Equally, in the case of anticipated warfare: an enemy is caught with a choice between unimaginable siege, since they cannot read the interior syntax, and barely comprehensible retreat, both of which leave invaders vulnerable, and Crusoe and Friday safe and triumphant. The fundamentally different experience that those inside have compared to those outside comes about because the configuration itself is so altered depending on one’s position. Configuration 4 allows for dis-integration even within the configuration, and thus takes the reconfigurational polysemy of Crusoe’s architecture to a higher level.

The impossibility of linearity and monologism

In one sense, the application of space syntax to Crusoe’s habitation can be seen to support the critics who see the novel as in part a recapitulation of civilisation, with Crusoe turning the formless and threatening wilderness into a domesticated proto-colony. Or, in the language applied frequently in the work of eco-critics on this subject: Crusoe can be seen to turn undefined, unsymbolisable space into controlled, constrained, monologic place, with the terms space and place used as defined by Yi-fu Tuan (Geriguis, 2014; Marzec, 2007; Smit-Marais, 2011). After all, there is, as has been shown, an increasing level of architectural sophistication which develops as the habitation moves through its different incarnations.

But the objective syntactical analysis above highlights the fundamental problem with such critical assertions. Crusoe’s habitation can never be seen as either moving in a linear fashion from one meaning to another, or as monologic: in being fundamentally co-constitutive of socio-cultural patterns, the configurations are always in flux, always both reflecting and generating meanings. And, as the two graphs depicting configurations 3 and 4 exemplify, the configurations all mean fundamentally differently depending on where one finds oneself within them: each configuration possesses reconfigurational polysemy because it simultaneously means in as many different ways as there are spaces. The whole keeps all these meanings in suspension, forming a unity of mutually contesting and supporting meanings.

Thus, these critics are guilty of what Daniel Carey has termed “palimpsestic reading” (Carey, 2015) of the novel: they overlay the novel with a critical agenda which the text itself only partially supports. For example, Marzec, author of the most influential ecocritical reading of *Robinson Crusoe*, asserts that the novel moves towards a conclusion in which Defoe constructs Crusoe’s true individuation...
through an erasure of inhabitation. Marzec claims that Crusoe refuses to inhabit the land, which he affects to prove by emphasising the displacement of the word “habitation” by the word “wall” in Crusoe’s description of his dwelling (Marzec, 2007). Yet, because Marzec’s argument rests on the fact that the verb “inhabit” does not denote a separation of man from land, he fails to mention that after this displacement to which he points, Crusoe refers to his configuration by the term “habitation” 28 more times. Crusoe also uses the word “wall” a further 47 times, referring both to the configuration analysed here, to his second architectural construction which he calls his bower, to the wall of the cave, and the wall of the second cave he discovers. The point is, of course, that polysemy is in the nature of Crusoe’s spaces because how they are termed depends on how they are seen experientially by the subjective consciousness of Defoe’s character – a consciousness which, like and at least partially because of his built environment, is always in flux.

A second example serves to highlight a different kind of palimpsestic reading, but one which falls into a similar trap: that of imposing linearity where none exists. Seidel, in an essay which tends towards a phenomenological understanding of Crusoe’s built spaces since he sees them as subject to Crusoe’s imagination creating fictions of experience, nevertheless says this:

That Defoe was thinking of Crusoe as a… time capsule is clear… from the way he refers to his habitat. His second night’s lodging is a… hut made from… chests and boards… Next, he fabricates a tent… and soon enough he is talking about his “Settlement” (p.48), his “Habitation” (p.53), his “Storehouse” (p.55), his “Camp” (p.66), his “Home” (p.79), his “Country-House” and “Sea-coast House” (p.81), and his “Fortress” (p.49). (Seidel, 2008, p.196).

The key here lies in the page references: Seidel structures his argument based on an assumption of culture as linear. He attempts to highlight the semiotic shifts in the meanings of Crusoe’s built spaces as a transition from the primitive to the modern, yet as he does so his argument is undermined by the structure of the novel itself, since the page references are not chronological. The fortress, in fact, takes us back to the very beginning of Defoe’s paradigm shifts. Upon actually considering the terms that Seidel chooses to place in his list and the order in which he does so, the linearity he tries to construct becomes untenable: surely a “hut” is less primitive than a tent, since a tent is nomadic; surely a “settlement” implies a more sophisticated and broader scale of structure than the generic “habitation” or the temporary “camp”, etc. Not to mention that in fact Crusoe gives himself a “habitation” a page earlier than he gives himself a “hut”, while he calls the tree in which he sleeps on the first night an “Appartment”, yet this has no place in the list (Defoe and Crowley, 1998, p.48). The novel simply does not permit itself to be imposed upon in this way and any attempt to do so ignores what the novel says about its built spaces: the same space can have many meanings, not in linear sequence, but in any sequence, depending on the objective and experiential meanings of a given space at a given time – neither of which are or can be unitary or linear.

Building subjectivity through space: the phenomenology of the habitation

To complete the argument that the assertion of linear progression from meaning to meaning is inaccurate, we must now add to the consideration of Crusoe’s built environment as objective configuration by exploring the other side of space syntax: the phenomenology of the individual character’s experience of the built environment. It is phenomenology which supplies the slippage back and forth between
The night on the island) that he describes himself as “King and Lord of all this Country indefeasibly…” (Defoe and Crowley, 1998, p.100). Confidence makes him a king, and terror makes him a castle. Only phenomenological fluctuation can explain the temporal disjuncture between kingship and encastling; it cannot be read as part of a thematic concern with the linear recapitulation of civilisation.

Equally, as can be seen in Table 1, the constant flux of meanings is demonstrated by the fact that Crusoe frequently refers to his habitation by a variety of terms with seemingly conflicting connotations in very quick succession, suggesting that subjective values are always fluctuating, demonstrating the phenomenological sophistication of Defoe’s characterisation. For example, when Crusoe brings Friday to the habitation for the first time, Crusoe refers to it as “my Hutch” and “Fortifications” in the same sentence, collocating and conflating the exaggerated homeliness and modesty of the first term with the warlike power of the second, creating a dual sense of security for himself at this time when his configuration is being co-habited for the first time in 25 years.

Table 1: Terms used by Crusoe to refer to his habitation between finding the footprint and leaving the island – a period covering configurations 2, 3 and 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Number of Uses</th>
<th>Page references</th>
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<td>8</td>
<td>159, 162, 165, 194, 201, 220, 229, 263</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apartment</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Residence</td>
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7 For a reading of Crusoe’s 2nd cave which takes a similar phenomenological approach, see Novak, M. (2008), p. 445-468.
One final example can serve to clarify the fact that phenomenological characterisation is the central factor in Crusoe’s naming and experience of his habitation: the use of the term “my Cell”. This occurs only once, immediately after Crusoe has taken the theologically driven decision not to massacre any cannibals who might come to the island. It can only be this imaginative/emotional state of mind which causes him to cast himself as monk or ascetic, to add to – and not to replace – the previously adopted roles of homemaker, king and emperor.

Crusoe’s habitation is not a world where one meaning simply effaces another in a linear progression; it could not be further from Marzec’s monologic place, nor from Seidel’s time-capsule. It is a world formed by the fluctuating confluences of objectively analysable spatial configurations and the phenomenological impulses of an individual consciousness.

Conclusion: heterotopia
Here we can turn to Foucault’s definition of a heterotopia to bring the two strands of my argument together:

… real places… which are something like counter-sites… in which real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted…. The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. (Foucault and Miskowiec, 1986, p.25)

Objective syntactical analysis of the configurations shows that Crusoe’s habitation is syntactically heterotopic in its co-constitutive duality and reconfigurational polysemy. The built spaces on the island are both productions and producers, made by and making culture; and they are at the same time singular and multiple. This suggests that in terms of meaning-making, built spaces on the island can juxtapose all meaning if they are able to in their essence juxtapose seemingly mutually exclusive processes. These levels of existence are conflicting but unified, which is the essence of heterotopia.

Then, we see that Crusoe’s habitation is phenomenologically heterotopic in the lived experience of the character. It is shaped by the experiential imagination into so many different semantic forms, not sequentially as other critics have attempted to argue, but simultaneously representing and contesting these forms.

One final example should serve to emphasise this point: the cave. Crusoe describes it during the phase of configuration 2 as “Warehouse or Magazin, a Kitchen, a Dining-room, and a Cellar” (Defoe and Crowley, 1998). Heterotopism is immediately obvious as the cave becomes a site in which other sites are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted. It is both industrial and domestic, and it even distorts space: it is both above and below ground, and in so being it makes vertical that which is horizontal. This terrific feat of imaginative heterotopising is made possible by the cave’s positioning as the integrated centre of the habitation where its connection to both inside and outside, private and public, realms situates it perfectly as a site of imaginative polysemy.

More than this, the cave twice becomes potentially a grave. The first time comes in the journal entry immediately following the previous description: the ceiling of the cave falls, and had Crusoe been under it, he “had not needed a grave-digger” (Defoe and Crowley, 1998, p.75). This makes the cave even more radically heterotopic, because the grave might be termed the ultimate heterotopia. All eventually come to it; it is the architecture of the unmaking of man and culture – just as here it is the imaginative form taken by the cave in its unmaking. It is man’s final act of architecture, his final dis-integration from the natural world just as he becomes engulfed by that world, thus functioning as a true emblem of
mortality by expressing the underlying nature of all man’s built spaces: it is part of the mortal experience of death, Heidegger’s “shrine of nothing” (Heidegger and Hofstadter, 2001, p.176). That Crusoe’s most polysemic space is the one that can become this shrine of nothing, this meaningful/meaningless man-made architecture of absence, serves to highlight how heterotopism is a fundamental result of Defoe’s character’s efforts at inhabiting the world.

This is summed up in Derrida’s conclusion in his phenomenological reading of Robinson Crusoe alongside Heidegger’s The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World—Finitude—Solitude: “the world is always constructed, simulated by a set of stabilizing apparatuses, more or less stable, then, and never natural, language in the broad sense, codes of traces being designed…to construct a unity of the world that is always deconstructible…” (Derrida, 2011, p.8). That these efforts are linguistic, resting as language does on morphology and syntax, and architectural, based on design and construction, highlights the conceptual unity between space syntax, Heideggerian phenomenology, and literary fiction.

What an application of space syntax to Crusoe’s habitation shows us is that the polysemy inherent both objectively and subjectively in Defoe’s fictional configurations is a result of creating unities out of semantic differences, and that this strategy of building deconstructible unities plays an important role in Defoe’s building of the subjective character of his narrator. This shapes the novel’s depiction of the built environment more powerfully than the politico-thematic concerns which critics typically place at the centre of their analyses of Crusoe’s architecture. If creating unities out of differences is the essence of heterotopia, then it seems merely the natural opening of a terminological umbrella to extend this from Crusoe’s habitation to the novel Robinson Crusoe to the eighteenth century novel itself. After all, if the critics who have undertaken to study the rise of the novel since the middle of the last century are agreed on anything, it is that the new form took from and included within its singular whole aspects of myriad extant textual genres. And if we consider these generic borrowings as morphological units brought together in the syntactical configuration of the novel, then what other name but heterotopia could one give to a site where elements of conversational narrative, travel account, journalism, family conduct manual, history, romance, diary, memoir, epistle, and more are blended and held in suspension in a whole where all these generic spaces coexist and yet are denatured and renatured as something else: the novel?

Thought of in this way, it is no surprise that recent scholarship on the eighteenth century fascination with novelty has seen fit to link the rise of the novel with that of the wunderkammer – also a site in which morphological units from disparate original languages are assembled in heterotopic unity (Park, 2010). Park states that such sites of novelty had appeal precisely because of their “ability to hold in suspension an object’s state of being both real and unreal, and both distant and close” and “to make real objects seem illusory, and illusory objects seem real” (Park, 2010). Like Crusoe’s architecture, then, we can say of the novel that it can juxtapose all meaning if it is able to in its essence juxtapose seemingly mutually exclusive processes. Foucault concludes that heterotopias must either be illusory spaces which expose every real space as even more illusory, or be spaces which create another space as ordered as our real space is disordered (Foucault and Miskowiec, 1986). The novel is both, and so here again functions to unite the disparate and contesting in a single site: it is pan-heterotopic. By incorporating potentially all the spaces of reality into the unreal space of literature, it exposes the unreality of real space; while it is also a contained world, a world ordered by the grammar of language.
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and where time and space are crystallised forever so you always know where you are.

Finally, if a consideration of a single novel from the perspective of space syntax can lead to a better understanding of both literary characterisation and form as predicated upon syntactically intelligible and polysemic morphological arrangement, it is to be hoped that we might look forward to further fruitful elucidation brought about through the scholarly collaboration between architectural and literary theories.

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