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Cinema as “Heterotopia”: Contesting Society’s Past, Present, and Future

The “heterotopia,” writes Foucault, is an “imaginative” space of “dreams” and “adventure” in which reality is at once “represented, contested, and inverted.” In what ways does cinema – as a form of simulation that plays an important mediating role in the way we construct our relationship with reality – function as a kind of heterotopia: a space at once conceptual and concrete that serves multiple roles, from normative to imaginative, in the construction and reproduction of a society’s culture? Three presentations employing Foucault’s theoretical concept respectively address – through the forms of the historical epic (Lou Ye’s *Summer Palace*), realist drama (in contemporary Brazilian and Venezuelan cinema), and science-fiction (*Avalon*, *2046*, *Cyborg She*) – how world cinema today can serve as a laboratory of the social and political imagination with which to “represent, contest, and invert” a society in terms of its past, present, and future.