

Between the Oneiric House and Heterotopias: Polly Crosby's *The Illustrated Child* through Bachelardian and Foucauldian Lenses

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*The present reflections on the treatment of place and space in the debut novel by a contemporary English author, Polly Crosby (b. 1980), *The Illustrated Child* (2020), are mostly inspired by Gaston Bachelard's topoanalysis, mentioned in his Poetics of Space, which ascribes the house a crucial role in the life of a child. The combination of the youthful protagonist and the setting of the novel, Braër, an old solitary farmhouse amid the Suffolk countryside, provides fertile ground for the consideration of multiple phenomenological notions of this French philosopher, who has recently become of interest again to artists, architects and academics. In addition to the house itself, special attention is paid to his conception of the attic and of the casket in confrontation with how they are presented in the novel. This initial kinship of the setting with Bachelard's writing is further reinforced by the significance of water in the narrative, which resonates well with his treatment of the imagination of matter, namely in his book *Water and Dreams*. In the latter part of this paper, the focus shifts to the novel's specific secondary locations tracing the protagonist's rare but significant journeys from the intimacy of home to the outside world. These destinations, among which the most important are the circus and the nursing home, recall and offer confrontation with the concept of heterotopias introduced by Michel Foucault in his seminal essay "Of Other Spaces".*

Keywords

Polly Crosby; *The Illustrated Child*; Gaston Bachelard; topoanalysis, imagination; heterotopia

The reflections of space and place within this paper deal with the debut novel of Polly Crosby, published in the UK as *The Illustrated Child* and in the US and

Australia as *The Book of Hidden Wonders* (2020), which started up the further-reaching career of an already well-established regional author, whose fictions typically include thinly populated East Anglian settings, a limited cast of characters frequently featuring an artist, and finally a location dominated by a prominent ancient building. It is the last-mentioned feature that allows for the inclusion of Crosby's novels (also referred to as historical mysteries) among the numerous fictional representations of English country houses. Considering the noticeable "widening of the spectrum of the types of settlements the country house might stand for ... [including] all kinds of dwellings, ranging from old, converted gentrified farms and cottages to mediocre, shabby seaside villas" (Topolovská 160), the setting of Crosby's first novel, an old remote Suffolk farmhouse, seems to add an interesting specimen to this topos.

With respect to the author's rendition of this specific setting, namely her emphasis on the emotional and imaginative potential of the house, the most relevant theoretical framework for the discussion of space and place in the novel appears to be the phenomenological approach as represented by Gaston Bachelard (1884–1962) and his concept of topoanalysis. However dated this source may appear, it is evident that "architects, urban planners, visual artists, and video-makers are increasingly finding [in Bachelard] ... the philosophical resources to nourish an alternative thought and practice aimed at promoting a harmonious relationship with the elements of nature, its landscapes and rhythms, while supporting an existential approach to habitat more in terms of care than of planning" (Pierron 5). In confrontation with the present contemporary literary text, his observations prove equally inspiring. This choice is further supported by the artistic element inherently present in Crosby's writing, acknowledged as the influence of her grand uncles, all prominent book illustrators, and namely Charles Robinson's drawings in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*.

...echoes of the Robinson brothers' influence run through the book like an underwater stream. There are strange inventions and contraptions in my story, drawn from my obsession with Heath Robinson's comic work, and because my novel is about children's books, it is packed full of descriptions of pictures and paintings, the influence of my great, great uncles' stunning illustrations shining through. ("Family Secrets")

Bachelard's "topoanalysis" and related notions mentioned in the *Poetics of Space*, namely those concerning the concept of the attic and the casket thus constitute

apt commentaries on Crosby's portrayal of the ancient farmhouse and objects found in it. Equally relevant for the consideration of natural, elemental space in the novel is Bachelard's treatment of "water and dreams" in his eponymous essay. As the initial focus on the house and its immediate surroundings shifts in the latter part of this paper to several different locations visited by the protagonist, namely the circus and the nursing home, a further relevant spatial concept explored in *The Illustrated Child* is Foucault's heterotopia as defined in his text "Of Other Spaces".

It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss in detail the novel's convoluted plot, but what should be mentioned at the outset is yet another work of art, namely the author's inspiration by Kit Williams and his picture book *Masquerade* (1979), which gave rise to "armchair treasure hunting", a phenomenon making literally millions of people go out in search of a golden bejewelled hare buried by its author somewhere in Britain. As Crosby explains in an article for the website of the Bridport Prize (of which she is a laureate), *The Illustrated Child* is "a story about a father who creates a series of picture books starring his daughter. As the books become famous, fans uncover a treasure hunt hidden within them. But the daughter begins to suspect that the clues in the books ... won't lead to gold or jewels, but to a secret that her dad has hidden in the books, just for her" ("Family Secrets"). The book's protagonist and (rather unreliable) narrator Romilly Kemp (aged 9-16), enjoys a free-range childhood in the mentioned solitary ramshackle Suffolk farmhouse and its surroundings, with only rare contacts with the outside world. As the novel progresses, her father, Tobias Kemp, a former university teacher turned into a freelance artist, sinks slowly into the haze of dementia, while Romilly, "home-schooled" most of the time, spends long days, weeks and months almost exclusively in the company of her Siamese tomcat Monty.

For Romilly, imagination and daydreaming become essential tools for grasping the microcosm of her existence in the house, a maze of mysterious rooms, surrounded by an equally mysterious garden. It proves to be a very conducive environment, since "our imagination can work freely in a space that protects our subjectivity, that is in a space in which we are free from the demands of 'diurnal life', including social interactions, production of knowledge and production of objects" (Chimisso 4). Symptomatically, Bachelard's hermeneutics of space ascribes the house in the life of a child a crucial role.

An entire past comes to dwell in a new house The house, like fire and

water ... to recall flashes of daydreams that illuminate the synthesis of immemorial and recollected. In this remote region, memory and imagination remain associated, each one working for their mutual deepening. In the order of values, they both constitute a community of memory and image. Thus the house is not experienced from day to day only, on the thread of a narrative, or in the telling of our own story. Through dreams, the various dwelling-places in our lives co-penetrate and retain the treasures of former days. And after we are in the new house, when memories of other places we have lived in come back to us, we travel to the land of Motionless Childhood, motionless the way all Immemorial things are. (*Poetics* 5)

The “hundreds of years old” Braër, is indeed also a “new” house and the first true home for the protagonist, since Romilly hardly remembers the house in London where she spent her babyhood and early childhood. Her own as well as her father’s account of it resonate remarkably well with Bachelard’s dismissive notion that “the inhabitants in big cities live in superimposed boxes, [which] ... lack one of the fundamental principles of distinguishing and classifying the values of intimacy” (*Poetics* 26–27).

‘It must have been quite big, because there were more people living in it.’ I had a hazy memory of closing my bedroom door so that I could sit still and quiet and alone in the small space. It was a busy house where I never had a moment to myself. There was always raucous laughter, occasional yelling. ‘It was very different to Braër.’ ... ‘It was a small flat. No room for thinking, or painting. Too many people, not enough space’. (Crosby 21, 35)

As the reader gradually learns from fragments of dialogues between the father and daughter, they have been traveling the country since she was about four years old, sofa surfing and staying in B&Bs, once even joining a circus for a while. Without this particular house, she might have never discovered the past events that shaped their present life nor come to terms with her own identity within the family relations. Although the plot is largely driven by the gradually revealed clues presented step by step in the books created by her father, the house is an equally prominent force in the novel because of its “oneiric significance” (Chimisso 4). As Bachelard puts it:

the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind. The binding principle in this integration

is the daydream. Past, present and future give the house different dynamisms, which often interfere, at times opposing, at others, stimulating one another. In the life of a man, the house thrusts aside contingencies, its councils of continuity are unceasing. Without it, man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life. It is body and soul. It is the human being's first world. Before he is 'cast into the world', as claimed by certain hasty metaphysics, man is laid in the cradle of the house. (*Poetics* 6–7)

Bachelard's topoanalysis explores the house "from cellar to garret", but as the author himself admits, it is not a method in the strict sense. Hence it should be justifiable to emphasise in the case of *The Illustrated Child* only the latter, since the garret or attic, which becomes Romilly's true kingdom, is the most important location in the house. Moreover, apart from the "oneiric values attached to the attic ... [and] the elevated qualities of a nest ... it can also be a source of terror similarly to the cellar" (Chimisso 7). It is a huge bedroom filled with souvenirs of the past inhabitants, with a secret space under the floorboards, a dream place where her dreaming takes place. A place, which can only be reached by a rickety, two-flight stair, because "lastly we always go up the attic stairs, which are steeper and more primitive. For they bear the mark of ascension to a more tranquil solitude" (*Poetics* 26). Symptomatically, the attic space is introduced to the reader before any other room of Braër is even mentioned.

I pushed open the three-foot high door that marked the entrance to my vast bedroom ... It was the shape of a tent, one of those old-fashioned tents – a huge triangle. And it felt like a tent too: when it was windy outside, the air caught beneath all the beams vibrated until you felt like there was nothing but thin canvas between you and the sky. (7)

Romilly's attic bedroom is perhaps the most frequently mentioned space in the house, the setting of many crucial scenes of the novel, and the site of her dreamlike visions, such as the one experienced during her recovery from a serious injury towards the end of the novel.

My bedroom became my whole world. Dreams and reality interwove: Monty jumped onto my white duvet, becoming a polar bear padding across Arctic lands; the man in the moon hung in the circular window, his evil eye

spying through the muted coloured glass; my father ambled past the bed on all fours, his hands and feet grizzlybear paws preserved in salt. (327)

Intersections of the novel's imagery with Bachelard's poetic reflections about space are manifold. Further surprising correspondence may be found with his notion of the miniature as well as with references to various hiding places such as drawers, chests, caskets, and wardrobes mentioned in chapter three of his *Poetics of Space*. An illustrative example of such a miniature is a special birthday present, which Tobias Kemp creates for his daughter. It is a box, which could be described as "a bit Heath Robinson", i.e., reminiscent of various contraptions created by Polly Crosby's great uncle, William Heath Robinson (1872–1944), a British cartoonist known for his humorous illustrations of fantastical inventions involving large numbers of components, often in order to achieve a very simple purpose.

it was like no other box I had ever seen before. It was almost rectangular, and carved from pale, honeyed wood. Here and there knots stood, with little twigs sprouting from them as if the wood was still evolving. I could make out tiny wooden hinges all over it, miniature doors that opened in many different ways. As I tilted it, things rolled around inside, hitting invisible walls as though they were trapped in the tiny rooms of a house. (228)

The things hidden inside the box are related to crucial people and events in Romily's early life, which should help her to reveal the concealed causes of their present existence. As such, it may also be considered a Bachelardian casket par excellence, since a casket "contains the things that are unforgettable for us, but also unforgettable for those to whom we are going to give our treasures. Here the past, the present and a future are condensed. Thus, the casket is memory of what is immemorial" (*Poetics* 84). Romily's inspection of the box reveals further resemblance with Bachelard's notion of "a lovingly fashioned casket ... [with] interior perspectives that change constantly as a result of a daydream. We open it and discover, that there is a dwelling place, that a house is hidden in it" (*Poetics* 86). As the protagonist's imagination blends with daydreaming, her diminished alter ego enters the enigmatic interior of the box to encounter the same haunting images that pursue her mundane existence at Braër.

I studied the box. What other objects were in there, hidden deep inside?
I imagined myself small enough to climb in, and I crept through its carved

walls into countless tiny rooms, worming my way through Dad's mind. Inside the box, all was ornate and glowing. Minute paintings hung on walls and rich red rugs kept my feet silent as I padded through. It was like a museum of my father, a memorial to a man I didn't understand anymore, and I didn't want to leave. (240)

Later, as she imaginatively re-visits the space inside the box, her inspection of its interior becomes even richer in terms of sensual perception and accommodates a broader range of memories of past encounters, both real and imaginary.

I dreamt I was inside the box, inside the museum of Dad's mind. I was padding barefoot along the velveteen rugs, admiring the richness of the paintings all around me. The rooms each smelt different, cinnamon in one, candyfloss in another. I came to a room where a summer breeze blew lightly, fragranced with the smell of meadow grass. A door ahead of me began to slowly close, and I glimpsed a familiar, dirt-encrusted foot retreating. At the same time, the smell of Parma Violets drifted across to me and I ran towards the door, but it closed just as I reached it. (253)

Apart from the memories of past encounters hidden in the gift-box, even deeper, half-forgotten memories of the heroine are often evoked by the presence of water, which is in the Bachelardian context intrinsically linked to both dreaming and remembering. While all four elements are richly represented in the text of the novel, water in its various forms and states is clearly the most prominent one. This may be partly explained, as Crosby admits, by being inspired by the flat landscape of the Fens, once made famous by Graham Swift's novel *Waterland*, and her "real affinity with watery places, especially the beautiful reedy habitats of Norfolk, like Strumpshaw Fen and Smockmill Common, where the River Tas meanders through" (Blincoe), but this element's significance for the novel is not just regionally symptomatic with respect to its East Anglian setting.

Significantly, at the very beginning of the novel, we learn that Braër was "surrounded on three sides by a moat clogged with cowpats and slime" (5). The moat, guarded initially by an ugly gargoyle atop an old fountain (later destroyed by the father, but still haunting the place from beneath the surface) is an essential feature of the farmhouse, which "managed to stay afloat by clever use of a pump to draw water away into the moat" (288). The surprising absence of any reference to a cellar or basement at Braër, as if the massive

structure of the building lacked grounding, is thus explained and still in compliance with Bachelard. The cellar is according to him associated with (and possibly substituted by) water and the house is seen as “a natural being, whose fate is bound to waters that plough the land ... the enormous stone plant would not flourish if it did not have subterranean water at its base...” (*Poetics* 24). The presence of the water element also reinforces the plot, which makes multiple use of the literary device of “a double”, appearing both in the heroine’s half-forgotten past and her half-imagined presence. Water, as Bachelard puts it “by means of its reflections, doubles the world, doubles things. It also doubles the dreamer, not simply as a vain image but through his involvement in a new oneiric experience” (*Water* 48). This notion resonates clearly, whenever Romilly sits down by the moat.

Leaning over, I inched forward to see my reflection in the moat, curious to see how different I looked with my mole covered up. But Braër’s high wall cast a thick black shadow over the water, and all I could see when I looked down was an eerie silhouette that had no eyes and no mouth, and yet managed to stare right into me, penetrating to my very core. (185)

Bachelard’s observation, that “water’s reflection is central to both imagining and remembering” (Slattery, 68), reminds us of the two acts of consciousness crucial for Romilly’s quest to reclaim her identity and integrity. A mere reflection, however, does not provide an adequate clue for solving the riddle of the past. The recurrent references in the novel to deep, dark waters seem to confirm Bachelard’s question: “Is it really possible to describe the past without images of depth” (*Water* 56)? The mnemonic quality of water in the novel stretches even beyond the immediate material perception into a realm mediated by illustrations in a book written and given to the heroine by her grandma Beatrice.

I stopped on a black-and-white drawing of a fountain in a formal garden. It was a huge, intricate structure, depicting woodland animals gathered around a pool in the shape of a giant leaf. One or two were dipping their heads to drink ... The fountain reminded me of something ... I tried to remember where I had seen it before ... I could almost hear the drip, drip of water trickling from the fountain ... I thought of the gargoyle fountain that Dad had sunk beneath the moat’s surface. (151)

All references to water eventually prove to be not just incidental. In accordance with the tradition stretching through Bachelard all the way back to Heraclitus, water is also bound to death. This ancient archetypal connection is primarily linked to a tragic event in the family history, which was caused by water, albeit indirectly, and which Romilly gradually unearths. The water's lethal aspect is attached also to a special secret location, a small pond surrounded by a circle of poplars amid the fields. Seen through the eyes of a teenage girl it is a magic lake, where two crucial incidents take place. During the first visit, it becomes a site of an erotic awakening experienced in the imaginary company of her friend Stacey, whose existence remains enigmatic throughout most of the novel.

I gasped. A small, perfectly round lake lay in front of us, the water brown and brackish. We stood as if we were in a church, shivering, waiting for something. And then the sun broke over the tops of the trees and a ray of light pierced the water. The opaque lake became gold before our eyes, revealing the long, wet fronds of weed that lay horizontally on its bed ... Whereas my breasts were little more than tiny protuberances on my chest, hers were alive, rolling down towards her stomach, settling on the skin there, the nipples like eyes gazing into her tummy button, only to jump upwards and gaze at the sky as she bounded into the water. As the first cold droplets landed on her skin, her nipples shrank and darkened like sea anemones sensing an exploratory finger. (198)

Admittedly, the complex treatment of "amorous waters" in the opening chapter of *Water and Dreams* covers much broader problematics, but the notion that "water evokes *natural* nudity, a nudity that can keep its innocence" (*Water* 33), clearly resonates with the initiation nature of this episode for the youthful protagonist. Later, however, and more importantly, the same water reservoir, this time during the winter, becomes a stage of Romilly's desperate voluntary encounter with death followed by a literal as well as symbolic re-birth.

I dropped my head, tears melting into the snow, and I realised I could no longer feel my body. I was becoming part of the lake, part of Stacey, and I cried openly now, knowing what it meant. I closed my eyes and waited. ... I awoke, unsure how long I had been lying there. I was shivering violently

... I pulled myself up slowly, my coat crackling with frost, my body numb from the cold ... I crawled across the lake's surface, the ice so silent I wasn't sure if it had ever really cracked. I pushed through the tangle of trees, marvelling at the whiteness all around, and began the tentative journey home. (390, 392)

The watery repertoire of the novel is not limited by the immediate presence of the moat and repeated visits to the lake. The rumoured Norfolk "shrieking pits", "millions of years old, ancient holes that have filled up with rainwater" (19), though never actually visited physically, haunt Romilly's imagination same as the dreamy vision of a drinking fountain surrounded by forest animals. Water is also a necessary component in ritual "potions" prepared at various occasions and even when contained in a washing up sink, it seems to be equipped with the regenerative power bringing back the illusion of the past long gone.

I crept into the kitchen. Dad was standing by the sink, his hands submerged in steaming washing-up water... As he stood by the window in the pool of light, he appeared to grow younger, his hair gleaming, his skin changing until I convinced myself that he had become the dad who used to carry me over his shoulder up the stairs to bed ... Perhaps the warm, sudded water was sustaining him, flowing up through his fingertips to tenderly massage the follicles of his scalp, turning him into the father I remembered, the father I wanted him to be again. (315)

The fleeting moment described above brings back the memory of the seemingly timeless idyll, so characteristic for the initial stage of the Kemps' isolated existence at Braër in the first part of the novel. With hardly any contacts to the outside world, their dwelling, marked by the change of seasons rather than events featuring in newspaper headlines, seems to be governed by the cyclical rather than linear perception of time. Although this nearly Arcadian idyll eventually proves to be illusionary, it continues to exist, perhaps intentionally, at least in the first books created by Tobias Kemp. Romilly, however, gradually realises, what is mentioned in the retrospective contemplation included in the Prologue, that "children grow up, and as I grew taller and wiser, Romilly Kemp in the book stayed young and innocent" (1). The Bachelardian, timeless model of dwelling thus meets here a kindred Heideggerian concept, which is, nevertheless, marked by a perceptible awareness of temporality. The affinity

of Bachelard's and Heidegger's hermeneutics of place is also mentioned by Clara Chimisso, who points out that the former, in particular,

presented our relationship with space as pre-scientific and indeed pre-reflective, and in this it recalls Heidegger's presentation of how the *Dasein* inhabits the world ... However, one of the many differences between Bachelard's and Heidegger's hermeneutics is that in the former's time is irrelevant. Time for Bachelard is the dimension of science, and does not play a role, indeed is negated, in his exploration of our pre-discursive relationships with images, including images of space. (Chimisso 10)

It would seem natural, that the heroine's perception of temporality would be reinforced in confrontation with the "outside world", which, however, as we shall see later, is not always the case. Looking closer at the few chapters and sections describing occasions, when Romilly ventures further than to the nearby village, we find out that the places she visits have one curious thing in common. All her destinations could be described in terms of Michel Foucault's heterotopias, namely a circus, a museum, a cemetery, and a nursing home. This coincidence recalls Joan Ockman's observation, that "Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* with its timeless reverie of felicitous space leads, at least by one route, to Foucault's seminal essay ... in which [he] suggestively proposes to shift the problematic of Bachelardian topoanalysis from intimate space to 'other spaces' – spaces of crisis, deviance, exclusion, and illusion; in other words, to heterotopoanalysis" (Ockman). Among the mentioned heterotopic locations appearing in the novel, especially the nursing home and the circus aptly complement the above spatial reflections.

With the father's progressing dementia in the second part of the novel, he is eventually on his own accord institutionalised in a nearby nursing home, where his daughter can easily come and see him. "Nursing homes as heterotopic sites, according to Foucault ... exist on a spatial continuum between the home and the cemetery ... [since] similar to modern cemeteries, residents in nursing homes (collectively) 'disappear' ..." (Sayers, Brunton, 20). Along with rest homes and psychiatric hospitals, prisons and retirement homes, it is an institution identified with both crisis and deviation (Foucault 25). The name of the nursing home, Briar View, is rather reminiscent of Braër, and in Crosby's treatment it represents yet another type of country house. Unlike the ancient farmhouse, however, this setting lacks the imaginative, integrating power of memories and daydream. It is a heterotopic place, where time passes at

a different pace, or it may occasionally appear, that it has stopped completely. Foucault speaks about a situation when men arrive at “a sort of absolute break with their traditional time” (26) and so does Tobias Kemp, when accepted to Briar View. Romilly, in turn, perceives the building as a sleepy (rather than dreamy) place upon her first arrival there, and then, when leaving for home, it feels like a real prison.

My first impressions were of a sad, tired place. It looked like the house of someone quite grand who had passed away. It was vacuous and yawning. All the windows and doors were closed, and yet a smell – something between the brine of tinned tuna and the grease that coats old carpets – leeches out from between the bricks ... As I walked back along the driveway, I imagined the tall hedges drawing together behind me, Briar View disappearing behind them like some mystical fairy tale tower, holding my poor broken dad captive. (348, 351)

While the nursing home becomes prominent in the final part of the story, references to the big top pop up repeatedly throughout the novel, appearing both as a real location and as an imagined/illustrated space. Although Foucault does not mention it explicitly, indicating fairgrounds instead, as “marvelous, empty sites on the outskirts of cities that teem once or twice a year with stands, displays, heteroclit objects, wrestlers, snakewomen, fortune-tellers, and so forth” (Foucault 26), numerous studies point out that the circus, indeed, is a worthy candidate for a heterotopic site par excellence. Whitney S. May in her article on heterotopic doubling in cinematic circuses indicates the qualities of this setting, which are also relevant to Crosby’s protagonist.

The circus elicits this remarkable comingling of internal and external sensory experiences by nature of its contradictory character, which provides a space wherein reality irrupts ineluctably into fantasy...In essence, the circus is a place frenetically preoccupied with interrogating understood borders... Within the charged *entre deux* space that remains of this displacement, circus-going subjects are granted singular terrain on which to encounter, and make sense of, themselves and, by extension, their positions within the real world. (May 31–32)

Initially, Romilly only vaguely remembers the time when they joined the circus after the disruption of their family. Later, she visits the same circus twice during

the time span of the novel – once with her father as a special treat for her ninth birthday, and once six years later, on her own, searching for the details of her past existence. During the interim, the big top is re-imagined, re-told in bedtime stories, re-enacted while playing alone at home, and also used as a decoration above the entrance of Thomas Kemp's garden shed/studio. Most importantly, it becomes a significant setting for his picture book series.

Following the first book's success, the second book, *Romilly and the Circus*, came out the next summer, just after I turned eleven... My favourite page was a picture of the interior of the circus. It was the painting I had seen Dad working on in his study a couple of years ago. Cantering round the ring was a gleaming white horse, pink feathers crowning its head. A beautiful woman balanced on its back, one dainty leg lifted in a perfect arabesque, a feather headdress sitting jauntily on her head. It was the lady we had met at the circus, the one who had given me the feather to take home. I often thought about our outing there, the shyness I had felt when she plucked the feather from her hair and gave it to me, how awestruck I was by her beauty. (87-88)

Additionally, the circus experience, as presented in the novel, shares a surprising quality with the oneiric house: it evokes a similar atemporal sensation as Romilly's existence at Braër. Not only is it by "virtue of its liminal intersections ... a place that resists placement ... in order to consider the breadth of the circus's reflective power as a heterotopia, we must also take into account its inherent suspension of time ... Once inside the Big Top, time loses its restrictive properties for subjects already spatially alienated from the outside world." (May 34). The circus environment in Crosby's novel thus complements rather than contradicts the timelessness and the integrating power of Braër.

In conclusion, we could thus say that with respect to the (a)temporal character and kinship of the "oneiric house" and the above heterotopic sites, the reading of *The Illustrated Child* through both Bachelardian and Foucauldian lenses side by side, should no longer seem improbable or merely random. Significantly, Foucault himself pays tribute to Bachelard's "monumental work" before introducing his own theory, noting that "we do not live in a homogeneous and empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well". He is referring to the "space of our primary perception, the space of our dreams and that of our passions" (23), the same realm, which is so symptomatic of Crosby's

debut fiction and which, mediated through the voice of her youthful narrator, abounds in vivid, heightened, multisensory sensations and imaginations, that imbue both internal and external spaces.

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