Laughter is generally the privilege of the insane...
(Baudelaire, *On the Essence of Laughter*)

Introduction

In my essay I am not going to construct a general theory of laughter in Foucault's works. That would have been a radical and challenging task though, and I slightly regret to have to leave it to some other, more systematic mind. All I have to suggest here is an analytic of several episodes in the body of Foucault's books, essays, interviews, where laughter comes into play. I will try to show the function laughter plays in these episodes without suggesting that this function is necessarily the same. Laughter is not a smile, where at least one could detect its location, - it's a disembodied faceless voice which doesn't stay within its own belongings and tends to traverse them every time we think it's in our hands.

It is probably useful to say that this paper is not about humor and it won't teach one how to be funny. If the reader was expecting to find something like this, she'd better go directly to the bibliography page - other authors will take care of you. Check for Lewis Carrol or Doug Adams references, that would be my suggestion.

Here I was simply trying to deal with the issue of how the mind comes to freeze some memories, precisely memories...
which are traumatic. I use the word 'freeze' in a manner in which a psychoanalytic author would use it - meaning fixation 
or/and forgetting - most common ways of dealing with trauma.
My first encounter with Foucault was certainly traumatic - a 
shock disclosed by laughter which I wasn't able to articulate 
effectively. I couldn't cope with the text's denial to keep identity, 
with its rejection to have a meaning. I had a simple hermeneutic 
problem of how I was supposed to read the text when Foucault 
says 'I am here laughing at you' and 'don't ask me to remain the 
same'. Due to my incapability to digest such statements (prob­
ably caused by my old platonic belief that our mind operates 
through establishing identity and difference among things) I de­
veloped a fixation on these statements and turned to the body of 
commentaries in search for help. It didn't take much time to 
realize that in the body of commentaries on Foucault forgetful­
ness (as the second common way of dealing with trauma) 
prevailed.

My basic intuition that led me through the way was that 
the 'laughing encounter' in what we call 'archeological period' of 
Foucault works is somewhat close to the 'clash with power' in his 
genеalogical writings. In the essay The Life of Infamous Men he describes this clash by using metaphors of 'flash' and 'light­
ing'. I found these metaphors extremely helpful, for they hint at 
the revealing quality of this encounter, position this encounter 
as a certain disclosure, clearing which brings to sight some­ 
thing which would otherwise remain hidden. I dare to suggest 
that laughter refers to order (archeology) the same way as clash 
refers to power (genealogy).

Laughter ------ Clash

/                        /

ORDER ------ POWER

The other intuition - somewhat melancholic - was that 
one could see laughter which is 'generally the privilege of the 
insane' as a certain promise hinting at the utopic possibility of
the place or moment where power machine collapses. In this kind of fantasy laughter is not a simple resistance to power but a complete - though maybe only momentary - escape from the power-resistance grid itself. This fantasy, no matter how utopic, is necessary and comforting. Whether this moment of infinite improbability can be turned into a constant and conscious strategy is an entirely different question.

My third intuition was that Foucault's laughter turns out to be a form of terrorism - a strategy which was later adopted by Deleuze and Guattari; so the laughter has at least three faces: revelation (knowledge), utopia (promise) and terrorism (strategy). I will try to unfold all three ideas during the course of the article.

Otherwise, this paper is about hermeneutic and experimentation - it deals with the issues such as 1) how excavation of meaningful response was interrupted by a little earthquake, 2) how to proceed under these geological circumstances, 3) how to throw yourself on the ground and miss, 4) all mentioned above and many others. If you were careful enough you could see that some of those issues belong to the category of experimentation, some of hermeneutic, some don't belong to any of them, but don't worry - that is precisely the point.
coastline where one formation ends giving space to another, returning suddenly and then giving space again. This hiccup of history is paradigmatically described in the introduction to the book, with most brilliance Foucault is capable of. This introductory chapter stands aside from the rest of the book, doesn't unfold in the following chapters. In the very next chapter Foucault starts his discussion of Las Meninas, and after that jumps directly into historical matter of the 'classic period'. Introduction stands aside as a book-in-itself, keeping certain integrity. Trying to locate this chapter geometrically in relation to the following chapters one could say that it exists in a metaspace, revealing the very form, strategy and methodology of the book, scheme of the experience one is going to go through. I always had the feeling that all Foucault wanted to say in the book (from the point of methodology, form, experience) he already said in the introduction. Let us look at it closely.

The very first passage of the Introduction says: 'This book first arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the page, all the familiar landmarks of my thought - our thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography - breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things...' The shattering laughter described through the abundance of tectonic metaphors is Foucault's response to the 'Chinese Encyclopaedia', a fantasmatic classification of animals invented by Borges. Though entirely fictional, this classification is capable of producing monstrosous effects on Foucault who is struck by the 'stark impossibility of thinking that'. This passage from Borges presents a certain order totally different from 'all landmarks of our thought' revealing the order we are accustomed to as itself fictional, or better to say revealing the separation between fiction and reality as a theoretical fiction, or optical illusion. The impossibility to think through the classification results from the absence of the common ground, that is, unity of classification, which grants the passage, as Foucault says with 'monstrous quality' or 'absurdity'. We can see here that laughter Foucault experienced is not related to something humorous or funny, but is rather a fright as
This encounter has a parodic quality, and as every parody it plays with resemblance. Chinese Encyclopedia resembles order, in fact is a sort of order, which however we cannot operate with. We cannot divide things and group them according to this table, they slip back into indifference and - the other way round - produce differentiations where we would not expect. This inverted image of order shows that the order we are used to in its essence is also a non-order. The rupture in with laughter shatters is not a rupture within the order, but the groundlessness of the order itself. It opens a void in which our familiar order 'hovers' as ungrounded, infinitely contingent, and can be seen in a certain estrangement, 'unfamiliarity'. A void between 'orders' is also a void of greater importance - a void between the 'order of things' and the subject capable of seeing it in its contingency. Not that one can voluntarily leave one order of things for the sake of the other changing them as a disguise. At the opposite, Foucault's puts emphasis precisely on the horror one feels while encountering otherness, complete failure to imagine its possibility. But the positive outcome of this horror is that one is also capable of distancing oneself from one's own familiar order, revealing its axiomatic charac-
I think that this Preface is a well staged experiment on the reader, as well as most of other texts of Foucault. I believe that descriptions play the same role in Discipline and Punish - they open the same void, produce the same distance. Take for example the slaughter of Damian in the very beginning of D & P - this scene of torture is not offered to us for voyeuristic purpose only, as a spectacle for our contempt. Think of both repulsion and recognition it produces in the reader, both surprise and fright. The description of Damian's death is not capable of initiating laughter the way that a passage from Borges does because of its proximity to us - we still take this kind of order/power operating through public executions too seriously, we recognize ourselves in it, and the fear one feels is the sign of this recognition. Only the detailed description produces a degree of uneasiness which is a possible sign of distance. I would use the metaphor of 'little earthquakes' in relation to the use of detail in this description as compared to a large tectonic rupture in the Order of Things.

Episode II: Unheimlich, Anxiety, Laughter

Foucault describes his experience of laughter in terms of uneasiness and anxiety. "The passage from Borges kept me laughing a long time, though not without a certain uneasiness that I found hard to shake off." (p. xvii) Three following conditions are said to contribute to this uneasiness - impossibility to think, to speak and to visualize (perceive). All those signify a certain ruination - ruination of the subject of thought, speech, perception. Ruination isn't just a destruction. It can be defined as experience caused by encounter with something which dis-

 inefficient that he could succeed in that, he could not make of others. But, the positive result of this horror is that man is also capable of distancing himself from his own order, revealing the axiomatic character of the order - the order that has to be accepted, believed in, be taken as natural in order to exist at all.

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Ruination of thought is linked to the failure of imagination, collapse of geometry, impossibility to visualize, distribute given entities in space: "...there is a worse kind of disorder than that of the incongruous, the linking together of things that are inappropriate; I mean the disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry, of the heteroclite... it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a locus beneath them all." Foucault calls these impossible places 'heterotopias' in opposition to 'utopias'. "Utopias afford consolation...", he says, "Heterotopias are disturbing." (xviii)

How these heterotopias are possible at all, then? Foucault gives his answer - in the place or better non-place of language, for here space and language appear to be separate from each other. "Where could those things meet, except in the immaterial sound of the voice pronouncing their enumeration, or on the page transcribing it? Where else could they be juxtaposed except in the non-place of language?" (xvi)

However, three pages later Foucault abandones this possibility, pointing that heterotopias damage language as well as imagination and thought, that a-topias are necessarily a-phasias as well.
"The uneasiness that makes us laugh when we read Borges is certainly related to the profound distress of those whose language has been destroyed: loss of what is common to place and name' (xix) This distress is also the anxiety of the aphasian who creates a multiplicity of grouping only to find out that they 'dissolve again, for the field of identity that sustains them, however limited it may be, is still wide not to be unstable; and so the sick mind continues to infinity... teetering finally on the brink of anxiety." (xviii)

The uneasiness that laughter provokes, comes from the subject's inability to sustain its own identity, which is possible only through establishing the identity of the discourse, the identity of meaning, space, geometry of the visible. A certain element of excess emerges at the routes of Foucault's work and causes ruination before the book actually starts - this strange relation between the order and its disruption, symbolic totality confronted by fundamental disorder, moment of chaos that falls outside of representation. Charles Shepherdson refers to it as 'a certain ghost, traumatic element which haunts Foucault's work as a perpetual possibility of madness itself' (p. 21). He also suggests that this element which has no place in the symbolic order, namely because it causes a rupture in it, manifests itself as a trauma that cannot be integrated and reveals itself through laughter and anxiety, has a strange resemblance to something which Lacan would call the real.

In fact, if we admit that in the first pages of the Order of Things Foucault tries to invent some kind of language which allows to speak about anxiety, it will let us put Foucault in a context much wider than the context of his own works only. There is a long tradition of thinking about anxiety, which probably starts with Kierkegaard and goes through Sartre, Heidegger and Lacan into late XX century. It is possible to interpret Foucault's 'aphasia' in terms of the encounter with the real in the works of Lacan. The question also arises about the possible relation between
Foucault and Heidegger. The question to be articulated is whether what Foucault calls 'disorder', 'heterotopia' is the same as what Heidegger calls Being or Lacan calls the Real.

I think that such equation is a very tempting enterprise because it allows to position Foucault in the tradition of philosophy, which he himself denied by saying he was not a philosopher but simply a historian. It also allows to introduce an ontological dimension in his thought. Saying for example, that the Preface to The Order of Things introduces a possibility of something like the Real or the Being would elevate Foucault's thought above the level of historical 'relativism' and disturbing contingency of the discursive formations. It allows the dimension of depth to (re-)appear behind the interplay of surfaces. However, I think this attempt is misleading. What I suggest here is to turn to these thinkers themselves and to see what they have to say on the topic on anxiety.

Heidegger: What is Metaphysics?

"What is metaphysics?" is a question Heidegger developed in his Inaugural Lecture, after he had been appointed to the Chair of Philosophy as a successor of his teacher Edmund Husserl, the author of the 'Philosophy as a Rigorous Science'. In this lecture Heidegger posits the question of Nothingness as a key to metaphysics. He seeks to uncover the possibility of the mode of 'awareness' which is non-scientific and which hopefully would disclose the nature of metaphysics.

Being different both from mere 'absence' of a being and from mere negation of a being, nothing is neither the effect of the negation as a logical function, nor it lies within the field of logical awareness. Logic, Heidegger claims, itself presupposes nothing as its condition. The form of 'negation' remains 'foreign'
The form in which nothing reveals itself is, therefore, 'mood', a type of awareness which is not dependent of an intellectual grasping of something. The mood in which 'man is brought before nothing itself' is 'Angst' (dread, anxiety). What distinguishes Angst from fear is its objectlessness. This non-intentional character of Angst is of particular importance for Heidegger for it indicates that the one who is anxious is actually driven beyond the totality of beings, exposed to a lack of being in a way. However, nothing is encountered in the state of anxiety not as something isolated, apart from the things in the world, but as one with them. The essential point emphasized is that in the state of anxiety things tend to slide away, sink, that the control over things strangely weakens. The emergence of nothing make things change. Or I would say, the directionality of things changes. The world seems to flee from the subject. The things loose their character of being-ready-at-hand for Dasein. Heidegger claims that anxiety reveals 'things as they are', but certainly not as they are experienced in our average everydayness. The Anxious is driven beyond the familiar disclosedness in which the beings are meaningfully manifest (which means they can be used and spoken of) into the field of estrangement. As in Foucault's case, the subject is confronted with something he cannot operate with, 'unfamiliar'.

Heidegger explicitly refers to this experience as 'Unheimlichkeit', that is, the experience of not being at home in one's own experience. 'In Angst, we say, there is being-not-at-home' (in other translation, 'being ill-at-ease'). This being-not-at-home, doesn't imply that there is a 'home' somewhere, a 'natural place' where Dasein belongs to, and where it would be free from the scary encounter with nothing, but rather that this Unhomeliness is a necessary characteristic of Dasein and is its essential belonging.
And also, this experience of general unfamiliarity is somehow always-too-familiar for Dasein, for, as Heidegger says, anxiety - implicitly - is always there. One is always ‘teetering on the brink of horror’. This philosophical gesture implies that unfamiliarity of the Familiar (things lose their meaning) and familiarity of the Unfamiliar (the primordial character of anxiety) are ontologically prior than familiarity of the familiar (disclosedness of things as being-at-hand, as being referential, orderly).

Anxiety or Unheimlichkeit brings Dasein for the first time before beings as such, therefore brings forth the possibility of metaphysics. Bringing Dasein face-to-face with the world in its groundlessness, the 'mood' shows that though Dasein necessarily exists in the world, the world is not the place of its authenticity, not its home.

The Language of the Real

Borrowed partially from Freud essay on uncanny, partially from Heidegger's lectures on Metaphysics, uncanny or Unheimlich becomes a technical term in Lacan's writings. Uncanny cannot be described better as simply an anxiety provoking event, let's say, a certain excitement, which has no reason, comes without being due, as a surprise. Anxiety should be distinguished from fear: one can be afraid of a concrete person or object; fear should be provoked by an object, it has a cause, while anxiety doesn't have a cause. It is provoked by uncanny.

The paradigmatic example of the uncanny to which both Freud and Lacan refer is the double. The importance of un-
In contrast with earlier psychoanalytical authors that perceived anxiety as being simply a bad thing, something to get rid of, Lacan, more in a Heideggerian manner, admits that anxiety has positive quality, precisely because it brings the subject in touch with the real. Real is something lacking in the symbolic order, something that cannot be registered in it, can be approached, but never grasped. Real creates so called 'holes' within the symbolic which show incompleteness of the symbolic structure. Real falls outside the operations of knowledge and the logic of representation.

In a way, given that all three mentioned authors try to develop a language in order to speak of anxiety, they approach more or less the same results. All three of them

1) describe the anxiety provoking encounter as excessive, not having a cause, a surprise, shock;
2) speak about the collapse of language/failure of the signifier;
3) speak of the encounter as a certain rupture, or a chain of ruptures;
4) suggest the ruination of representational logic; the subject is unable to separate himself from the 'mood', is contaminated or absorbed by it.

However, in spite of all similarities among three figures, I think that Heidegger and Lacan have more in common with each other than with Foucault. The major difference that I see lies in the interpretation of the meaning of anxiety. In Heidegger and Lacan the function of anxiety is 'revealing'. Angst reveals beings as beings in the black light of nothing, bringing forth the
possibility of metaphysics. For Lacan anxiety discloses the real as the impossible limit of the symbolic order, reveals the latter as always disrupted and incomplete. Laughter in Foucault reveals the existence of the order, but at the same time it opens a possibility for experimentation. Laughter brings subject to ruination which in fact leads to a possibility of renovation. The function of laughter indicates the possibility of the movement of experimentation.

Episode III: How to throw yourself on the ground and miss.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy has this to say on the subject of flying.

There is an art, or, rather, a knack to flying. The knack lies in learning how to through yourself on the ground and miss. Pick a nice day, it suggests, and try it. The first part is easy. All it requires is simply the ability to throw yourself forward with all your weight, and the willingness not to mind that it's going to hurt. That is, it's going to hurt if you fail to miss the ground. (Hitchhiker's Trilogy)

Paradoxically enough, I am willing to claim that Foucault's point is somewhat similar to the suggestions from Hitchhiker's Trilogy: he suggests the possibility of throwing oneself on the ground and miss. Only the ground means something different – it means the order. Showing the groundlessness of the order means in a way hovering above it, for the order is a ground. But for the sake of this hovering the subject has to give up his will, to be able to operate, has to loose a certain degree of 'sanity' and has to be able to sustain the shock of non-identity.

"No, no, I'm not where you are lying in wait for me, but over there, laughing at you... Don't ask me who I am and don't
In this passage laughter comes into play again, but the function of it is different. It no longer bares resemblance with the figures of ontological thought, such as Real or Being, doesn't suggest a rupture in discourse, failure to signify, collapse, but rather reveals itself as a conscious strategy. This strategy is connected with something Foucault calls fiction, which is an important concept in *The Order of Things* as well as in the *Archeology of Knowledge*. Since the episode with Chinese Encyclopaedia implied that every order is fictional, and that the very distinction between fiction and reality is a kind of illusion or fiction itself, the notion of 'fiction' opens infinite space for experimentation. Fiction or 'writing' is perceived by Foucault as a space free from the law of compulsory identity, a heterotopia where subject can experiment with the change or metamorphosis - become a fly, become a snail, become a monster. What Foucault seems to suggest here is a form of terrorism through writing - where the enemy of the order changes places and masks and becomes invisible and flees at the moment one tries to catch him. A lizard. This terrorism can take different forms: apart from the metamorphosis - the strategy later adopted by Deleuze and Guattari (see 'How One Make Oneself a Body Without Organs'), Foucault also uses another strategy: making the reader and the text itself come face to face with its own contingency, where he puts into question its own capacity to bare a meaning, where meaning collapses in laughter. This type of subjectivity, that is not linked to identity and is experimentally produced in the non-space of writing, is capable of 'missing the ground' and hovering in-between. Though Foucault elaborated the concept of subjectivity and subjectivation (as self-production along with subjection) much later, one can see the trace of the concept already in the archeological period, or at least there is an intuition that "the struggle for subjectivity presents itself as the right to difference, variation and metamorphosis" (*Deleuze*, p. 106).
како право на разлика, варијација и метаморфоза." (Deleuze, p. 106)

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