

EDITORIAL

Cultural spaces and types

In an age dominated by cultural paradigms such as *identity* (through a quest of points of reference), *change*, *another/the other*, *alterity* (through a continuous transgressing of borders), *movement*, *separation* (through the implicit 'preserving' of dividing lines between centre and margins), *market* (through the putting of centres at stake, through their continuous labelling, negotiating and shifting) and *disposability* (through increasing difference and divergence in cultural practices and styles), studies on cultural spaces and types are meant to raise the readers' awareness that *interaction* is a valuable tool for the understanding (and, why not, smoothening!) of so much 'pride and prejudice' contained within the borders of human cultural experience.

The notions of *variety* (perceived as absence of sameness, routine and monotony) and *diversity* (experienced as difference) circumscribed to the area of spaces and types also support the departure from traditional models of interpretation and the use of interdisciplinary strategies which might better illumine the 'handing down' of (inter) cultural messages. The semiotic approach (feeding on methods provided by linguistics, pragmatics and anthropology, as well) will reveal, on the one hand, different modes of representation, of production and of interpreting space and its architecture, and, on the other hand, a complexity of intercommunicative patterns between and among individuals or communities inhabiting such spaces. The gliding along a diachronic or/and a synchronic axis of cultural spaces and types, with the help of semiotic tools, also requires the redefining of concepts such as: reader (through acts of observing, decoding and translating interactions), text (as architecture of symbolic representations) and discourse (as spatialisation of cultural messages). Thus, in spite of the variety and diversity of articles in this volume (which is inevitable if we take into consideration the 'large umbrella put up' by the topic under discussion), there arises a guiding thread running

subterraneously, and yet, rapidly forging its way to the surface of a semiotics of space: *inhabiting space* means living and experiencing culture which is an act of communication.

The process of intercultural communication through the study of spatial discourses sends towards the understanding of some fundamental problems issued by the development of knowledge in the late decades of the 20th and the early decades of the 21st centuries:

- space communicates an individual's and a community's identity within an act of reciprocal influence as far as it implies the study of territory, distance and relationship between being and object, being and being or object and object;
- it reveals the limits and the possibilities of both the social and the private self's manifestations;
- it displays the power and the weakness, the construction, ruining and destruction of the self;
- it shapes the behavioural codes of individuals within communities through the managing and marketing of 'wheres' and places;
- it may acquire the attributes of a discourse of (self)advertising;
- it records the changes in mentality along a historical axis. Thus, each age foregrounds a bundle of cultural types with specific symbolic spaces of trait-display. A few examples will serve the point: the seafarer, the warrior and the bard/scop vs. the water-roads, the battlefield and the hall for the Anglo-Saxons' age; the knight, the lady, the pilgrim and the priest vs the battlefield, the castle and the cathedral for the medieval age; the scholar, the courtier, the (pirate-)sailor/traveller vs the university, the court, unknown lands/seas for the Renaissance; the scientist, the philosopher, the banker, the tradesman, the artist, the newspaper man vs closed or open, private or public, man-made or natural spaces for the 17th and 18th centuries; the master, the gentleman, the snob, the governess, the whore, puppets and dolls, industrialists and colonists inhabiting houses, homes, halls, markets, offices, empire, (social) stages etc. for the 19th century; MPs, politicians, media people, stars, labourers, business people, soldiers, spies, natives, foreigners etc., etc. displaying themselves on more or less expensive counters in local, national or international markets where everybody and everything is weighed, priced, used and, then, thrown away as disposable or useless;

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- the role of language as:
 - a. seismograph which minutely registers and pinpoints all the changes produced within a history of mentalities;
 - b. means of communicating through locutionary, illocutionary and per-locutionary acts the relations establishing themselves between or among the participants in a communicational act;
 - c. vehicle of transmitting a community's cultural values through an act of 'translating' (when both signifiers as formal elements and signifieds as elements of content are equally important), thus preserving and enriching them with every act of reading;
 - it manipulates an individual's or a community's identity through archetypes and symbols, which may suggest the theme of rootedness or disrootedness, the longing for a sense of belonging through the search of a fixed place, or, on the contrary, the restlessness of adventure, of moving from margin to (an ever shifting) centre. Again, a few examples might open the gates to further studies: maps, houses, lists (of objects or names), (bunch of) keys, political dances, banquets, exhibitions etc. and their rhetoric highlight not only spatial practices but also interpersonal strategies within communicational processes; the way in which receivers (consumers) respond or react to such messages shows their desire to share or their intention to reject/to dispose of codes, roles, positions; the decoder of the discourse of space should take into account all textual and contextual elements in order to share the same thoughts and feelings with the sender of the message;
 - being already embedded in a constructed system of the world/reality/ideologies (Searle, 2000), the discourse of space raises not only the question of mediation through structures and ways of transmitting messages (written or oral, visual, verbal or nonverbal texts) but it also raises the problem of showing and telling differences (inside vs outside; here vs there; Romanian vs English vs French vs Polish vs European vs global space and types;), of representation through language and of interpreting the signs within a given cultural system. If we take into account the temporal dimension of culturally-founded sign systems, then, the semiosis of space and type reveals the act of generating an always structured discourse in

a changing system. Thus, we may refer to the notion of *space-within-space*, where the layout of a text may be considered as a structured and structuring *architecture* able to set the boundaries, to define and reveal a being's becoming in and through an intentionally constructed or appropriated-by-man space meant to serve his goals.

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