

Summary

Experiencing Space, Creating Space. Literature and Art

The subject of this book is space considered as the environment in which man, that inhabitant of the world of material things, creatively encounters his own inner landscape. These interactions take place in the imagination, which here is understood not merely as the function of recalling images of absent objects of perception or imposing on them subjective meanings but, above all, as the human ability to associate images with meanings in the sphere of culture – among others, for example, in literature, works of art, or architectural designs.

Many contemporary makers and interpreters of culture are aware of the importance of space as an object of cognition that links internal experience with the world of objects. The American poet Charles Olson wrote: “the measure of work now afoot is the depth of the perception of space, both as space informs objects and as it contains.” Thus the title of this volume reflects a certain basic intuition: a work of culture is the result of the subject’s dynamic interaction with space.

This book comprises seven essays, with an introduction by Stanisław Jasionowicz entitled “The Experience of Space.” The essays have been grouped in three sections, the first of which is called “From Natural Space to Artistic Space.” In the first text of this section, Magdalena Worłowska (“Land Art – in Search of New Spaces for Art”) writes about the role of the

natural landscape in the shaping of the contemporary artistic imagination via an analysis the land art movement, which is based on the artist's intervention into the natural landscape. Worłowska addresses several varieties of this type of interaction, ranging from the artist's deep incursion into the natural space to an empathetic dialogue with nature. In the second essay of this section ("Natural Space and its Linguistic Echoes: The Novels of José Ángel Sainz") Nina Pluta analyzes themes of self-cognition among the protagonists of the contemporary Spanish writer's *Volver al mundo* and *Ojos que no ven*, paying particular attention to the narratives' boldly limned study of the relationship between the subject and physical space. Contemplating the role language plays in expressing and transcending this tension, based, in part, on Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue and cognitive linguistics, Pluta considers the possibility of the "mythical realism of space" as a type of modern novel narrative structure, which has emerged in an era of contestation of traditional systems of symbols.

The second section, "Space of Literature and Art," begins with Przemysław Michalski's ("Ecstasy, Emphasis, and Ekphrasis, or about 'O!': Four Poems by Czesław Miłosz") look at Czesław Miłosz's fascination with art, which, as the poet himself claimed, enchants ordinary things. The author presents the manner in which Miłosz experiences doubly mediated space – in both painting and the in the poetic act in confrontation with a work of art. The literary ekphrasis that Miłosz proposes in four poems, each titled "O!" is the poet's contemplation of the role of spatially-imagined objects within the self-expression of the subject. Agnieszka Kukuryk ("Literary and Painterly Space in Victor Segalen's *Peintures*"), in turn, explores to the connections between text and image through the prism of the spatial categories conceived by the French writer Victor Segalen, who was fascinated by China. The "discovery" of Far Eastern art by Western Europeans coincided with the formation of modern sensibilities based on the notion of transcending boundaries between various "languages of art."

The third section, "Literary Space," deals with literary representations of space, which to a greater or lesser degree, shape or are shaped by the subject. Alicja Rychlewska-Delimat, in "Experience of Space in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*" depicts the world of the medieval imagination suffused with cultural connotations while evoking the poetics of "places of power." The opposition of city and nature in the epic poem by the Italian humanist and poet leads the author see the protagonist's peregrinations as a search for the Center. In the essay "The North as a Space of Inspiration: Literary Visions of the Genesis of the Strasbourg Cathedral in the Novel *Erwin von Steinbach* by Theodor Schwarz," Tomasz Szybisty

studies nineteenth-century visions of the essence of the Gothic style, in this case seen through the eyes of novelist Theodor Schwarz, who was captivated by the structure of Gothic cathedrals. In his novel of 1834, Schwarz ties his vision of Gothic architecture as “mathematical structure” to the northern “country of ice.” He shows that the cardinal directions and their landscapes, in this case the North and the ice of the Arctic, hold enormous potential for the imagination, and inform the novel set in the thirteenth-century age of cathedrals. The dynamic of the geographic and cultural dichotomy of the North and South also acquires a special significance here. In the last essay in this group, Paulina Jarzabek proposes a journey to the poetic landscapes of Montreal, an “autobiographical place” as well as an uncertain, inconspicuous space for the contemporary collective experience. For each of the twentieth-century francophone Canadian poets selected by the author, writing is both the “voice of place” as well as evidence of the difficult art of the “poetic inhabiting of space.”

The idea for the book arose from the desire to juxtapose analyses by various authors writing on phenomena emerging in different linguistic circles and “moments” of Western culture. The authors are scholars of modern languages and literatures associated with the Institute of Modern Languages and Literatures and the Atelier for Comparative Study in Western Culture at the Pedagogical University of Krakow. The present volume is the first in the *Imaginarium* series, the premise of which is a multidimensional look at important themes and problems in Western culture, especially from the perspective of the imagination.

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