

SPACES, PLACES AND HETEROTOPIC ENTITIES IN POSTMODERN FRANCOPHONE AND ENGLISH-AMERICAN LITERATURE

Alina ȚENESCU, Assistant Professor, PhD, University of Craiova

Abstract: In this paper, we aim to make use of different disciplinary methodologies in order to analyze the issue of place and space in Postmodern Francophone and English-American literature, as well as the specificity of spatial perception and representation in the novels chosen as our corpus of study. Not only are the authors in our corpus (Elisa Brune, Edgar Gunzig, Thomas Gunzig, Nathalie Gassel, Jean-Philippe Toussaint, John Brunner, Patrick Chamoiseau, Alison Lurie) interested in the issue of space and moving within space, but they also try to render the impact that the new postmodern places have on characters that populate their novels.

The different readings of space and its meanings by the characters in the chosen corpus of study can lead us to the recognition of a particular language of space in Postmodern literature. The issue of places, spaces and heterotopias must be understood from the perspective of definition and analysis of space/spaces in Francophone and English-American literature, starting from an anthropo-semio-semantic perspective and must be tackled allowing an orientation of the research towards the study of space as it is perceived by the authors and characters in our corpus of study and a typology of the representations of heterotopian spaces and of the peculiarities of space architecture with these authors.

Focusing on an anthropo-semio-semantic approach, using the comparatist method, we contend that, within our corpus of study, spatial entities are defined through a wide imagery, bring about a complex mental cartography of space and that writers, just as geographers and anthropologists often connected to postmodernism, aim to comprehend and make us readers understand the contemporary emergence of alterity/difference and identity as a central issue in larger multicultural, multi-layered, multipolar spatial entities. The idea of postmodern place as heterotopic entity keeps drawing the attention in the current context of postmodern discussion of the issue of spatial identity both in literature and in social sciences.

Keywords: heterotopias, otherness, Postmodern literature, representation, spatial practices

1. Introduction

The universe specific to Postmodern Francophone and English-American literature evokes the changes that take place in society, transforming the perception that people have of time and place and brings forth a constant of the fictional space: the omnipresence of heterotopias within the framework of which there is circumscribed a new individuality marked by extreme contemporaneity¹.

More than understanding the new way in which Francophone and English-American writers at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of 21st century conceive, perceive and think spaces, places and heterotopias, it is essential to explain the complex organization of a conceptual system operating in the process of awareness and comprehension, perception and

¹ The concept of extreme contemporaneity is tackled in *Novels of the Contemporary Extreme* by Alain-Philippe Durand, Naomi Mandel, Henrik Skov Nielsen, Mikko Heskinen, Paula ruth Gilbert, Colleen Lester, Martine Delvaux, Jason Summers, Ralph Schoolcraft, Lawrence R. Schehr, Sabine van Wesemael, Martine Guyot-Bender, Jean-Michel Ganteau, Kathryn Everly, Catherine Bourland Ross and Adia Mendelson-Baoz.

representation of the postmodern space in the works of the writers chosen as our corpus of study.

The corpus chosen for the study of spatial perception and representation in Postmodern Francophone and English-American literature is represented by excerpts from works by eight writers: Elisa Brune, Edgar Gunzig (*Relations d'incertitude*, Paris, Ramsay, 2004), Vincent Engel, (*Opera mundi*, Bruxelles, Le Grand Miroir, 2009), Nathalie Gassel (*Récit plastique*, Liège, Le Somnambule Équivoque, 2008), Jean-Philippe Toussaint (*La télévision*, Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 2006), John Brunner (*La ville est un échiquier*, translated by René Baldy, coll. Science-Fiction, Presses Pocket, Paris, Calman-Lévy, 1985), Patrick Chamoiseau (*Texaco*, Paris, Gallimard, 1992), Alison Lurie (*La ville de nulle part*, translated by Elisabeth Gille, coll. Bibliothèque étrangère Rivages, Paris, Rivages, 1988).

2. An anthropo-semio-semantic approach for the study of heterotopias in Postmodern literature

As far as spatial perception and representation are regarded in postmodernity, it is highly appropriate to make use of an anthropo-semio-semantic approach, an interdisciplinary approach that might be able to show us how to look at things around us and to re-teach us how to think space.

If in classic anthropology, symbolic universes, as means of recognition for people, function as signifier spaces within which the individuals define themselves in relationship to the same criteria and procedures of interpretation and as societies identified by cultures conceived as whole totalities, with postmodernity, this perspective changes since researchers (Augé, 1992, Lefebvre, 1996, Foucault, 2009) become aware of the fact that this was based on an organization of space that the postmodern space destabilizes and renders relative. We contend that the same is true of the semio-semantic approach in literature, since postmodern space functions rather as an indicial space, postmodernity revealing a reality which is this time fragmented, disrupted, divided into fragments.

In the Francophone and English-American literature of the generation 2000, space is deconstructed and spatial meaning is constantly constructed and reconstructed, due to the postmodern relativism which supposes a constant flow, a constant transformation. If the anthropological space was defined as a symbolized space, as a space with a certain use, coherent with a certain culture and social structure, the *heterotopia* (Foucault, 1967, 1984, 2009) or the *space other* could be considered as space that has more layers of meaning or relationships to other places than those perceived at surface and those that immediately meet the eye of the viewer. The *space other* is the space of otherness, a space that can be simultaneously physical and mental. In Postmodern literature, these spatial representations symbolize what the individual/author who perceived and conceived them wants to say about them. Places are linked to concrete spaces, but also to particular perceptions (cf. Zamfir, Vlăduțescu, 2003:13) to different subjective attitudes and to the relationship that us, as inhabitants or passengers, maintain with the peculiar spaces where we live or that we transit.

3. Heterotopias and heterotopic entities in Postmodern Francophone and English-American literature

Unlike traditional places, based on localized inhabitation and a feeling of belonging, heterotopias are meant and conceived to be experienced by transitory social actors: shoppers, consumers, tourists, the homeless, the prisoners, the visitors and the migrants. Heterotopias are characterized by settings whose spatial architecture seems to encourage conviviality, communication and care, but paradoxically cannot conceal the indifference and neutrality towards others.

Foucault coins the term and classifies heterotopias, identifying several types, amongst which *heterotopias of time* - such as museums which enclose in one place objects from different times and styles and which exist in time but also outside of time because they are built and preserved to be physically unaltered by time - and *heterotopias of deviation*, institutions where individuals whose behavior is outside the norm are placed (such as the prison). We will illustrate and analyze these two categories with examples from our corpus of study (Elisa Brune and Edgar Gunzig – the prison, Vincent Engel – the museum) to which we will add the disco (illustrated in one of Nathalie Gassel's novels), the organic heterotopia reflecting urban space (with Jean-Philippe Toussaint and John Brunner), heterotopia as *mise-en-abyme* (with Patrick Chamoiseau) and the multi-layered heterotopia (with Alison Lurie).

Heterotopia thus befits a category for the circumstances in which characters/people experience and are confronted to spatial categories that are reflections of unconventional reality (such as the prison as void with Elisa Brune and Edgar Gunzig) and might take as a starting point the celebration of place (as relational space that can be endowed with emotion, memory, identity, history).

3.1. The prison as heterotopia and space of coercion

In the novel *Relations d'incertitude* by Elisa Brune and Edgar Gunzig, prison is represented as a heterotopia and it is codified as a *void* space, starting from the most extreme personal and cultural experience of the subject who lives inside this coercive space. The prison as space is symbolized by means of a reality of the universe of quantum physics – the void, one of the study objects of the character who inhabits the carceral space, which brings about the remodeling and reshaping of the character:

« [...] le vide prenait une dimension entièrement nouvelle pour moi. Ce n'était plus seulement cet objet conceptuel et mathématique, sur lequel on peut travailler comme on pourrait le faire sur un éléphant rose, ou tout autre principe imaginable sur le papier. Le vide était cette fois une réalité, la réalité de mon expérience personnelle, intime, profonde. Je voyais une résonance évidente entre ma situation et mon objet d'étude. J'étais pris entre deux vides. [...] » (Brune, Gunzig, 2004: 118-119)

The prison as enclosed, confined space and as space of uncertainty is a space whose perception is determined by the dynamism of reception and by the awareness of aggressiveness specific to its referential system. Yet, it is within the anonymity of the prison that Edgard, the author's *alter ego*, becomes aware of and feels the community of human

destinies subject to isolation, depersonalization, but it is also within the penitentiary that the prisoner tries to discover the interstice of freedom and of temporary suppression of the constraints he is being submitted to. For the character Edgard, the prison constitutes a totalitarian institution which does not allow any organized opposition and whose aim is to destabilize, to dehumanize and depersonalize the detainees through different mortification and humiliation techniques. Edgard's self-representation is thus that of an isolated individual, physically separated from the world where he had previously lived. Edgard conceives new spatial and temporal reference marks, linked, on the one hand, to the limitations and restrictions of access, of circulation and to the carceral routine, and on the other hand, to the new social relationships and forms of socialization. Edgard tries to constantly oppose the institutional oppression of the detention camp at Puna which he perceives as void: a void (negative space/ the lack of matter) that must be "destabilized" so that it turns into "matter" (positive) and that it leads to freedom.

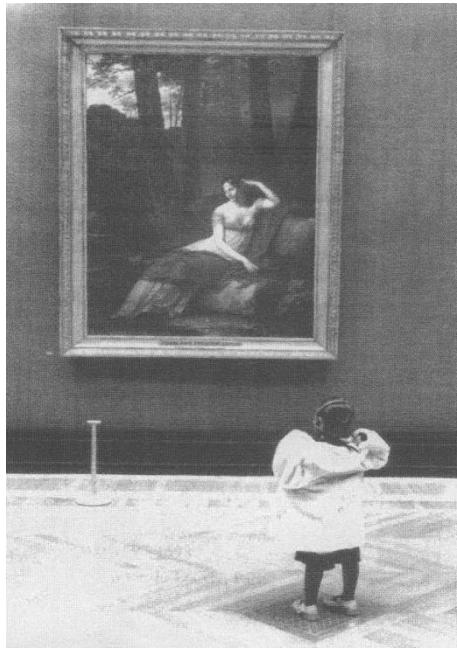
In *Landscape and power*, W.J.T. Mitchell asserts that "An empty space is not the same thing as an empty place. An empty place is filled with space, as if space were the negative void that rushes in when place is vacated. It is the spectral absence that "fills" a hollow shell or a clearing in the forest." (W.J.T. Mitchell, 2002: 98). As readers, we become aware that for the character in the novel *Relations d'incertitude*, who lives for a certain period of time inside the prison, this heterotopic space is at a certain moment perceived as a "negative void" and that for him, acknowledging the void in a given place (the detention camp at Puna) is synonymous with admitting a fact, but at another moment, it also supposes the idea that the void (negative space/principle) can be positivized and turned into matter. The void helps Edgard to decline the shortcomings, the constraints against which stand up a feeling of nostalgia and the desire to constantly resist the detention regime. The same perception can be thought of as a breaking point with the exterior environment and, at the same time, a renewal, a transformation of the codes of representation and self-representation through a constant work of the character on these codes. Once the void (*negative* principle and indicial trace of lack) is "destabilized" and it is turned into matter (*positive* principle), it becomes a productive void, a peculiar urban heterotopia that occupies a place and emerges at the moment when a latent energy becomes apparent and helps to re-launch the character's possibilities of evasion.

3.2. The museum as heterotopic urban entity

In *Opera Mundi*, Vincent Engel guides his readers through the halls of an imaginary museum, very close to his heart, in order to bring forth and discover their relationships with art, their ways of perceiving works of art and to understand the ineffable emotions which derive from this sensory experience. We follow the journeys and wanderings of an old artist, Mr Black, who spends his life recopying an old master painting, without respite, until the copy detaches itself from its model. His wandering inside the space of the museum crisscrosses the path of a little girl who vows her boundless admiration to a Joséphine which will be removed from the museum for restoration and intertwines with the route of a woman who tries to transmit her souvenirs to her son by means of a painting.

Their choices of specific routes and paths inside the space of the museum, their subjective perceptions of objects in space, their peculiar spatial practices are enhanced by

original photos taken by Emanuel Crooÿ who seizes, captures the fragile and fleeting instant when the individual and the work of art meet up in an original manner.



L'impératrice Joséphine, Pierre-Paul Prudhon, Paris, Le Louvre, 2002; photographer: Emanuel Crooÿ

The particular subjective treatment of the relationship between space and time by the characters and the visitor-photographer define the museum as *space other*, as heterotopia. We thus encounter a temporal heterotopia, since the museum in *Opera mundi* is above all an accumulation of different temporalities, bringing about and comprising specific tastes, specific knowledge and an ensemble represented by collective memory.

The journey inside the museum is carried out through a specific path or route by each visitor: it happens seldom with certain characters and more often with others. Mr Black has been coming to the museum every day for the past thirty years:

« Trente ans qu'il vient, tous les jours. Tous les jours, il dit bonjour à l'employée et montre son abonnement. On lui a déjà dit que ce n'était plus nécessaire, que tout le monde le connaissait dans la maison. D'autant que, pour faire la manœuvre, il doit déposer son matériel, la boîte à peintures et pinceaux, le chevalet, la toile, la palette, extirper son portefeuille et, de celui-ci, la carte plastiquée qu'il renouvelle tous les ans, religieusement. Mais il répond chaque fois qu'on ne sait jamais, quelqu'un pourrait essayer de prendre sa place en copiant son aspect, un sosie réel ou fabriqué. Et comme Mr Black passe ses journées à copier des toiles de maîtres, la remarque allume des rires polis. Personne ne lui dit qu'il y a peu de chance qu'on copie jamais un copieur. [...]

Personne ne sait d'où il vient, où il vit. Ni de quoi. On raconte bien des choses. Que, dans le temps, il était amoureux d'une gardienne de salle mais qu'il n'a jamais osé se déclarer. D'où sa visite quotidienne dans la salle où se trouvait sa Joconde. Mais la jeune femme était partie et Mr Black était resté. Il devait donc y avoir une autre motivation [...]. Mr Black est un homme posé, aimable, timide c'est vrai - mais doit-on mettre à l'asile tous les timides ? S'il avait continué de

venir après le départ de cette personne, c'est qu'elle n'était pas la cause principale de ses visites quotidiennes au musée. » (Engel, 2009 : 7-8)

The place perceived by Mr Black is to be found neither in the urban space of everyday life, nor in the traces and heritage of a city rich in history, but rather in the superposition of two spatial and temporal units, which exist in order to associate present and past, to link the present of Mr Black to his past.

The museum in *Opera mundi* is at the same time a space-time of a public experience and a space-time of intimate emotions and gestures. For each character, and also for the photographer Emmanuel Crooÿ, the space of Vincent Engel's imaginary museum renders relevant a unique experience of reflection, perception, evasion or appropriation.

The characters' spatial practices are placed by the narrator under the sign of irony: the readers discover that the imaginary museum in *Opera mundi* is not at all a simple place for contemplation; it appeals to the senses and emotions of the visitors, of the museum guard, but it constraints, at the same time, the body, the walk and the movement of the museum guard within a specific relationship to the place: his everyday walk through the halls of the museum establishes a similarity between his job and the world's oldest profession:

« Le point commun entre le plus vieux métier du monde « le plus ennuyeux, c'est la marche à pied. Péripatéticien. Gardiens de musée et prostituées, même maux des jambes. Sans le savoir, ils se retrouvent chez le pédicure. Pour le reste, d'accord, il y a des différences. Encore que... les clients seuls prennent du plaisir. Des voyeurs, pour la plupart. Parfois de vrais amateurs, reconnaissons-le. Les pires : ceux qui tentent de communiquer. Après ou avant, ils restent immobiles, regardent l'objet de leur convoitise et cherchent, par le regard ou la parole, à le faire parler. Livrer leur secret. [...] » (Engel, 2009: 9-10)

Wandering each day or sometimes through the halls of the museum means discovering objects or slicing space or specific routes so that they be perceived in a new light, not the habitual one, but an unusual light and perspective, highlighted for an instant by the artist-photographer (Emmanuel Crooÿ). The space of the imaginary museum is apprehended by specific functions and peculiar reference marks which link them to each other. The space of the museum is a *chronic* heterotopia by the movements and choices of each visitor, who select each time another path and another route that make possible for them to discover other art objects or interdict themselves certain paths and journeys; Mr Black has interdicted himself for thirty years to visit the contemporary art exhibit hall and has banned himself from entering through its door:

« Il y a une salle, pourtant, dans laquelle Mr Black ne s'est jamais rendu, sinon en coup de vent, comme un curieux : celle des expositions temporaires d'art contemporain. Depuis trente ans, on en a vu passer, de toutes les couleurs et pour tous les goûts ! Pour être précis, il faut dire que les oeuvres peintes y sont rares ; il s'agit le plus souvent « d'objets », de constructions, d'assemblages, qui ne manquent parfois pas d'intérêt ni même de beauté, mais qui sont, le plus souvent, d'un ridicule accompli. Cela n'empêche qu'il y a toujours foule le soir du vernissage de l'exposition et que chacun y va de son compliment auprès de l'artiste à l'honneur. [...] L'artiste revient toujours le lendemain ; et quand il constate qu'il a épuisé

son public potentiel [...], il ne revient plus avant le démontage, se consolant de poncifs sur la médiocrité du public et l'impossibilité pour la masse de comprendre la création véritable.

Mr Black ne vient jamais aux vernissages, même s'il y est le plus souvent invité. Mais il passe toujours le lendemain. Quand l'exposition lui plaît, il revient plusieurs fois. Mais il évite toujours de parler à l'artiste. [...] » (Engel, 2009: 21)

We become aware of the fact that inside this heterotopia, the relationship to space and time is not constraint anymore, the visitors' choices of paths and journeys through the museum are almost infinite in number and their bodies are liberated through walking and wandering using *other* landmarks, other lights, other sensations which are allowed by this space continuously reinvested with meaning.

The subjective perception of the space of the museum in *Opera mundi* by a mother who tries to convey her memories to her son by means of a painting reveals the fact that the museum is a heterotopia linked to a heterochrony, a cleavage with traditional time. Inside the space of the museum, this mother is under the impression of refinding, rediscovering her childhood and of being able to offer her child a bit of her childhood. Yet, she sometimes feels like digging through and crossing a void space, and of being entrapped within a *space other*, where she can no longer see anything and where she is on the verge of missing her rendez-vous with the past:

« [...] Pourtant, quand je lui ai dit que je voulais lui montrer quelque chose que j'aimais beaucoup, quelque chose de magnifique, comme il n'en avait jamais vu, que j'avais découvert à son âge et que je n'avais plus vu depuis longtemps, quelque chose que je voulais revoir, quand je lui m dit, à mon fils, que ce serait un secret entre lui et moi, que je lui offrais un morceau de mon enfance que personne ne connaissait, pas même sa mère, il a eu fait intrigué. [...] » (Engel, 2009: 53)

On the spot where she finds herself at a specific moment, she becomes aware that a heterotopia – which used to distinguish itself by the accumulation of art objects from all times and which constituted a place of all times which was outside the time – is gradually transforming itself into a non-place, an uninteresting place for the young generation which is continuously seeking the perpetual movement, the three-dimensional view and the hyperreality of media products, such as the video games:

« On ne devrait pas venir au musée avec les enfants. Ça ne peut pas les intéresser. Ça ne bouge pas. Eux, les images immobiles, pas la peine d'essayer. Les tableaux ? Ceux qui ressemblent au monde sont trop vieux, ce n'est plus leur monde; et les autres, les modernes, ne ressemblent à rien. Les sculptures au moins sont en trois dimensions, comme leurs jeux vidéo ; mais Nintendo n'a pas encore pensé à mettre en scène Pygmalion dans des aventures cosmiques. [...] » (Engel, 2009 : 53-54)

3.3. The discotheque as euphoric heterotopia

With Nathalie Gassel, in *Récit plastique* (2008), the exacerbation of sound and noise does not represent the internal fear of miscommunication inside a heterotopia, or the attempt to overcome a source of hindrance to communication, but it symbolizes a possible refuge

from one's own obsessive thoughts (regarding isolation) in the anonymity of a public space where people communicate as little as possible and as neutrally as possible, or, on the contrary, a withdrawal to oneself and the possibility to recover oneself in a place of one's own inside the collective performance space of the discotheque:

«Durant de longues années, je sortais dans des boîtes. Là où il n'y a pas l'isolement, où nous sommes tous unis dans l'ouverture immense d'un dancing, dans le bruit exorbitant de la musique. Alors que, dans mon appartement, mon corps souffrait de la solitude parmi des livres, des papiers, des objets. Je suis reconnaissante au lieu de nous englober tous, massivement. Condensation prodigieuse au mètre carré, fini, le sentiment d'abandon, mais l'instinct et l'énergie de la promiscuité où nous sommes dans le surgissement de muscles et cris de chair. Alors qu'il ne se passe rien, l'ancestrale sensation de désastre intime a disparu. [...]» (Gassel, 2008 : 15)

Communication blurred by noise becomes euphoric with Nathalie Gassel, since the narrator feels that inside the heterotopic space of the discotheque there is no real solitude and all people dancing, shouting, partaking the collective performance, are united within the “immense opening of a dancing, in the exorbitant noise of music” (*o.t.*). Whereas inside her private interior place at home, she would be subject to isolation amongst books, papers, objects, – the female narrator feels grateful to the anonymous neutral space of communication that is able to encompass all the individuals, condensate and agglutinate all bodies and identities.

Within a space where everything is invaded by high-tech music and noise, the condensation of one's self and the feeling of abandonment are counterbalanced by the latent manifestation of the energy driven by promiscuity, by indiscriminate mingling of bodies and cries of flesh.

Whereas the gigantism of the place leads to the agglutination (cf. Durand, Mandel ed., 2006: 34) and desindividualization of people who are inside it, there is a certain *comfort* felt within the *enclosed* space of the discotheque where the hi-tech environment on the one hand hinders real forms of socialisation or renders them as simple and as neutral as possible, but, on the other hand, engenders a temporary euphoria of noise under the spell of which the “ancestral sensation of intimate disaster” (Gassel, 2008:15, *o.t.*) has disappeared.

3.4. The organic heterotopia reflecting urban space

In the novel *La télévision* by Jean-Philippe Toussaint, during a plane flight over the city of Berlin, the narrator perceives and describes the city as a *space other* inhabited by an organism *other*, an immense organism with a flat, regular, uniform body. La Siegestsäule, the iconic Berlin monument designed by Heinrich Strack after 1864 in order to commemorate the Prussian victory in the Danish-Prussian War becomes an organ isolated in the heart of its heart-shaped network of deserted avenues, while the buildings of the Philharmonie and Staatsbibliothek are perceived as fractured limbs of a human body or as fractured wings:

“Vu d'en haut, à trois ou quatre cents pieds d'altitude, la ville, immense, que le regard ne pouvait embrasser d'un seul coup tant elle s'étendait de toutes parts, semblait être une surface étonnamment plate et régulière, comme écrasée par la

hauteur, uniformisée, [...] que traversait parfois une grande artère, où l'on pouvait suivre la progression de minuscules voitures qui semblaient évoluer au ralenti dans les rues. Assis à l'arrière de l'avion qui filait fluidement dans le ciel, je reconnaissais ici ou là quelque monument dont les formes caractéristiques se profilaient en contrebas, la Siegestàule, isolée au cœur de son étoile d'avenues presque désertes, ou le Reichstag[...]. Plus loin, passée la porte de Brandebourg, non loin du pont de la Potsdamerstrasse, comme des ailes de cerf-volant fracturées, des gréements de navires échoués en bordure de la Spree, se dessinaient les formes métalliques et dorées des bâtiments de la Philharmonie et de la Staatsbibliothek". (Toussaint, 2002: 178-179)

The squares of the city become a mere reflection of a newly constructed ideal *space other* in a fictional South American state that becomes a main character and pawn in Brunner's fiction. The narrator and protagonist of the novel divides the characters/pawns into "black" and "white" teams on the chessboard space of the city, reflecting the political struggle in the novel plot that never seems to get solved, as well as its complex and ambiguous nature. The chessboard metaphor overlaps the organicist metaphor when the narrator does not only imagine himself to be a white pawn on the checkerboard space of the city, but feels and is told that his work is also that of a white cell, meant to eliminate and destroy the pathogenic germs of the city blood circulation:

" [...] J'arrive ici et l'on me dit que mon travail sera, en quelque sorte, celui d'un globule blanc chargé d'éliminer certains germes pathogènes de la circulation sanguine de cette cité. Au début, l'idée me semblait passionnante ; mais il ne m'a pas fallu longtemps pour comprendre que c'était un travail répugnant. Le globule blanc, finalement, n'est pas tellement différent des bactéries qu'il doit phagocyter. Imagineriez-vous des germes en train d'implorer un leucocyte pour qu'il leur laisse la vie sauve ?" (Brunner, 1985: 319)

3.5. Heterotopia as mise-en-abyme

With Patrick Chamoiseau, in *Texaco*, the urban space of a city *other* is created by self-generated action. The narrator suggests that the residents of Morne Abélard live in a city whose core or cortex is characterized by self-generated behaviour. The pattern of evident anatomical connections between the urban microspaces (strange dwellings made up of boxes and squares) is consistent with the narrator's proposal that the city as space and heterotopic community is involved in self-generated, spontaneous action.

The image of the city as self-conceived entity revolves around the notion of operant behaviour. This urban self-conceived entity exists and functions of its own accord and the essence of the city consists in its own ability to change, to transform itself, to evolve within a continuous game of *mise en abyme*. Each resident lives within a box or square, and each box and square are comprised within another box or square. Spontaneous actions within this urban entity seem to be self-initiated and self-engendered. These terms refer both to decisions when the inhabitants can act and as to which action to choose when there are no external cues that can lead them to the appropriate action and when all their dreams and energies are mingled within each other:

“Les gens du Morne Abélard connaissaient mon désir d’une case. Moi, centre de leur misère, je vivais dans un trou. Plus d’un était venu me l’arranger. Carlo (un Barbadien inquiet, vivant à petites suées depuis qu’il avait fui d’un navire au radoub) m’avait porté une série de planches-caisses que j’avais refusée. J’étais située entre un dalot qui drainait les eaux sales des cases posées plus haut, et une caloge de poules que nourrissait Carlo. La case de Carlo [...] s’appuyait sur la mienne. [...] Toutes ces cases formaient une toile de matoutou-falaise dans laquelle nous vivions comme des grappes. Avant même la communauté des gens, il y avait celle des cases portées l’une par l’autre, nouées l’une par l’autre à la terre descendante, chacune tirant son équilibre de l’autre selon des lois montées du Noutéka de mon pauvre Esternome. Les rêves se touchaient. Les soupirs s’emmêlaient. Les misères s’épaulaient. Les énergies s’entrechoquaient jusqu’au sang. C’était une sorte de brouillon de l’En-ville, mais plus chaud que l’En-ville. Les rues étaient encore des passes, mais chaque passe était plus vivante qu’une rue [...].”(Chamoiseau, 1992: 304)

The heterotopia called *In-City* is generated by the constant effort that has self-shaped the urban space of Morne Abélard. Even though the urban community has a cosmopolitan and heterogeneous composition (it draws closer a former army soldier from the 14th War and a secretary) and even though the air and atmosphere of the spontaneous urban entity might make the inhabitants and visitors feel safe, the fragmented design and geography of this peculiar urban space described in Patrick Chamoiseau’s novel make us aware of the fact that the freedom of the city will be ensured and allowed by suffering, entrapment within strange closed dwellings that resemble to boxes or squares, embedded one within another, carried one by another, linked to each other through a channel or a pass that crosses the lives, the intimacies, the dreams and destinies of residents, so that any real free movement is actually impossible. The In-City thus resembles a heterotopia of deviation.

3.6. The multi-layered heterotopia

With American novelist Alison Lurie, in *The Nowhere City*, the metropolis becomes a gigantic motorcar care center, a space where cars become rulers. The *Nowhere City* is the Post-Postmodern Los Angeles metropolis, a *heterotopia* made of layers of fault lines or fault zones – that is of geological shifts as well as of cultural, social and political shifts. The slices of heteropian space slid into each other, leaving traces of a most peculiar urban landscape: all we are left with is a conglomerate of non-places drawn together or melt together into a giant motorcar care center. Houses, hotels, restaurants, hospitals, spas are now meant to be dwelling places for a new race, that of motorcars. All restaurants, hospitals and cosmetic centers are hosting giant luxury mechanical beings and constitute shelters where the motocars are washed, fed and dressed:

“L’air était figé ; la rue vide, à l’exception des grosses voitures garées le long du trottoir, luisantes de vernis et allongeant, mi-grimace mi-sourire, la fente de leurs chromes. Elles semblaient plus grandes, ou tout au moins bâties sur une plus grande échelle que les maisons.

Conçues, elles, pour des géants aux habitudes luxueuses ; les maisons, pour des nains internationaux. Paul avait déjà remarqué qu’à Los Angeles les automobiles formaient une race à part, presque douée de vie. La ville était pleine d’hôtels et de

salons de beauté, de restaurants et d'hôpitaux à leur usage : immenses et coûteux édifices où elles étaient garées ou lavées, nourries ou pansées. Elles parlaient, elles avaient leurs mascottes : des chiens ou des singes en peluche qui regardaient par la vitre arrière [...].Leurs klaxons chantaient sur plusieurs tons, et des affichettes collées sur leurs pare-chocs annonçaient: « Si Vous Pouvez Lire Ces Mots, Vous Êtes Sacrement Trop Près » [...].” (Lurie, 1988: 16).

The glistening heterotopia of the supermodern era is conceived as a conglomerate of glass skylines and trendy restaurants which turn into dwelling places and care centers for the giant mechanical inhabitants that have displaced the human dwellings that were so ubiquitous in postmodernity. That is why the air is now frozen and clad and the streets are deserted and devoid of human presence. The only witnesses to this new urban community of cars are the stuffed toys and plush pets which the cars talk to and which stare at them from behind the shop window panes.

4. Conclusions

The readings of spaces as well the representations and meanings of heterotopic places in our corpus of study have helped us to recognize different perspectives on the understanding of spatial functioning in Postmodern Francophone and English-American literature. The essential is not to draw a raw line of separation between various heterotopic entities or between different heterotopias (heterotopias of time and heterotopias of deviation, one-layered and multi-layered heterotopias) but to propose a *balanced* vision on the comprehension of the significance and functioning of place and space which integrates both places and heterotopias/places *other*, coercive and non-coercive spaces, media spaces and non-media spaces.

Stereotyped mental images associated with heterotopias are subverted in Postmodern literature so that they bring about peculiar images (such as that of the city as motorcar care centre) and the spatial imagery in our selected corpus of study rather relies upon the conceptualization of space as a system of complex experiences and sensations. Postmodern literature constructs and reconstructs spatial, emotional, sensory experiences through the richness of the metaphorical thought built around the conceptualization of one's body and perception of spatial movement and sensations.

Sources

- Brune, Elisa, Gunzig, Edgar, 2004, *Relations d'incertitude*, Paris, Ramsay.
- Brunner, John, 1985, *La ville est un échiquier*, translated by René Baldy, coll. Science-Fiction, Presses Pocket, Paris, Calman-Lévy.
- Chamoiseau, Patrick, 1992, *Texaco*, Paris, Gallimard.
- Engel, Vincent, *Opera mundi*, Bruxelles, Le Grand Miroir, 2009.
- Gassel, Nathalie, 2008, *Récit plastique*, Liège, Le Somnambule Équivoque.
- Lurie, Alison, 1988, *La ville de nulle part*, translated by Elisabeth Gille, coll. Bibliothèque étrangère Rivages, Paris, Rivages.
- Toussaint, Jean-Philippe, *La télévision*, Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, éd. 2006.

Bibliographic references

- ***, 1997, *Recherches en Communication, Le récit médiatique*, no 7, Université Catholique de Louvain, Presses de Université Catholique de Louvain.
- Augé, M., 1995, *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. J. Howe, London, Verso.
- Augé, Marc, 1992, *Les non-lieux. Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*, Paris, Editions du Seuil.
- Bonazzi, Alessandra, 2002, "Heterotopology and Geography: A Reflection", in *Space and Culture*, Sage publications, 5, pp 42-48.
- De Certeau, Michel, Giard, Luce, Mayol, Pierre, 2003, *L'invention du quotidien*, volume 2, nouvelle édition, Paris, Gallimard.
- Dehaene, Michel, de Cauter, Lieven (Eds.), 2008, *Heterotopia and the city: Public space in a postcivil society*, London, Routledge.
- Durand, Alain-Philippe, *Un monde techno*, Berlin, Weidler-Buchverlag, 2004.
- Durand, Alain-Philippe, Mandel, Naomi, eds., *Novels of the Contemporary Extreme*, Continuum, New York, 2006.
- Foucault, Michel, *Le corps utopique, les hétérotopies*, présentation de Daniel Defert, Éditions Lignes, 2009.
- Foucault, Michel, 1975, *Surveiller et punir*, Paris, Gallimard.
- Foucault, Michel, Conférence de 1967 « Des Espaces Autres » in *Dits et écrits* (éd. 1984 et éd. 1994), Tome IV, « Des espaces autres », n° 360, pp. 752 - 762, Gallimard, Nrf, Paris, 1994 ; (conférence au Cercle d'études architecturales, 14 mars 1967), in *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, n°5, octobre 1984, pp. 46-49.
- Greenberg, Reesa, Ferguson, Bruce W., Nairne, Sandy, *Thinking about Exhibitions*, London, Routledge, 2007.
- Hetherington, Kevin, 1997, *The badlands of modernity: Heterotopia and social ordering*, New York, Routledge.
- Kohn, Margaret. 2003. *Radical spaces: Building the house of the people*, Ithaca, NY: CornellUniversity Press.
- Lakoff, G., Johnson, M., 2003, *Metaphors we live by*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Lefebvre, Henri, *Rhythmanalysis: Space Time and Everyday Life*, Trans. Stuart Elden, New York, Continuum, 2004.
- Lefebvre, Henri, *La production de l'espace*, Paris, ANTHROPOS, (1996), réed. 2000.
- Maffesoli, Michel, 2003, *Notes sur la postmodernité. Le lieu fait lien*, Eds. du Félin.
- Mehigan, Timothy, 2008, *Frameworks, Artworks, Place: The Space Perception in the Modern World*, Rodopi.
- Menegaldo, Hélène, Menegaldo, Gilles, 2007, *Les imaginaires de la ville entre littérature et arts*, Presses Universitaires de Rennes.
- Merriman, P., 2004, "Driving Places: Marc Augé, Non-places and the Geographies of England's M1 Motorway." *Theory, Culture and Society* 21(4-5): 145-167.
- Mitchell, W.J.T., Editor, *Landscape and Power*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2002.

- Moles, Abraham, Rohmer, Elisabeth, 1982, *Labyrinthes du vécu, espace : matière d'actions*, Librairie des Méridiens, collection « Sociologie au quotidien », Paris.
- Morse, Margaret, 1998, *Virtualities, Télévision, Media Art, and Cyberculture*, Bloomington, Indiana UP.
- Omhovère, Claire, 2011, *Perceptions et représentations de l'espace dans le monde anglophone*, Nancy, Ed. PU Nancy.
- Sansot, Pierre, Mijkel Dufrenne, 2004, *Poétique de la ville*, Paris, Editeur Payot Collection Petite Bibliothèque Payot.
- Segaud, Marion, 2010, *Anthropologie de l'espace. Habiter, fonder, distribuer, transformer*, Paris, Éd. Armand Collin.
- Soja, E.W., 1989, *Postmodern Geographies, The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, Verso, London.
- Veivo, Harri, 2001, *The written space: semiotic analysis of the representation of space and its rhetorical functions in literature*, *Acta Semiotica Fennica X*, Yliopistopaino, Helsinki.
- Vinay, Dharwadker, ed., 2001, *Cosmopolitan Geographies: New Locations in Literature and Culture*, New York, Routledge.
- Wheeler, Leslie, 2010, *Heterotopia*, New York, Barrow Street Press.
- Zamfir D., Vlăduțescu, Ș., 2003, *Percepția și audiopercepția, o abordare operațional-constructiv-cognitivă*, București, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică
- <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%C3%A9t%C3%A9rotopie>. Page consulted on the 20th of November 2013.