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Literary hybridizations and contemporary representation of space. “Dissonant” space in selected works by DeLillo and W.G. Sebald

The representation of space in contemporary literature finds various examples and interpretations. During the past few years, the critical debate over the notion of “space” has not only considerably progressed: it has also seen a series of theoretical bifurcations explored with methodologies from distant scientific fields. In one of his most interesting essays, Gilles Deleuze went back to the famous Shakespearean verse of *Hamlet* “Time is out of joint”, in order to retrace the relationship between time and movement operated by Kant, proposing a reading of space that released it from time’s hegemony. Slipping into a more urbanistic theorization, Michel De Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life*, began to conceive the figure of the pedestrian in direct interaction with the urban space as an “act of enunciation” necessary to establish a discourse between space and subject. Another of the most acclaimed critics who dealt with such a revalorization of spaces, investigating its most emblematic relations with historical and cultural traditions, is Edward Said. In such a book like *Culture and Imperialism*, one of its aims is to propose a systematic review of the effects that colonialism had on communities exploited by a dominant power. The tendency towards hybridization that characterizes the critical debate on space finds one of the pillars of contemporary European research in Bertrand Westphal’s *Geocriticism*, which seeks to open up the field of research on space to the different fields of human sciences.

An author like W.G. Sebald, in some of his most known works – *Austerlitz* or *The Rings of Saturn* – includes a series of photographs of the described places in order to create a parallel dimension to the textual one, revealed by the images. The story progression denotes constitutive research in the narrative scenario’s orchestration dependent on expedients that corroborate the image of space told through real and documented elements. This explains the reason for a hybrid writing, which often tends towards a more essayistic format, which, thanks to the collection of historical and anecdotal data, composes a reliable setting on which history can be based.

The preconditions for approaching this problem are also rooted in in a narrative structure of post-modern ascendancy. An author like Don DeLillo builds his poetics

from the perception of a differently connected (or fragmented?) reality that modifies the perception and dimension of the spatial-geographical framework. Let's think at *White Noise* or the more monumental *Underworld*, in which the security guaranteed by a capitalist and extremely secure urban model produces a curiously uncertain style of writing, where musical motifs, advertising signs, voices in the streets, continually break into the text, almost as if they wanted to reveal the fractures in a spatial texture that is in fact fundamentally dissonant. These examples allow us to reflect on how much space representation issue has tremendously evolve over the years, and how a comparative approach makes it possible to investigate a series of literary cases (marked by potential hybridity) that propose solutions of an evolving transition.