LITERATURE AND SPACE: TEXTUAL, ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL SPACES OF TRANSGRESSIVENESS

Jola Škulj

Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Ljubljana, Slovenia

82.0

Regarding literature and culture – both as logic and a structure of responses – a discussion of their semiotic situation can be grasped through holistic views of dialogism. The idea of transgressiveness is employed (and detailed on grounds of textual ongoing semiosis and cultural semiosphere) to approach spatial realities as reference frames of any literature and culture, hence their inevitable hybridity, asymmetries, irreducible particularities and diversities.

Key words: space / transgressiveness / otherness / textual semiosis / border culture / identity as dialogism / semiosphere / Bakhtin, Mikhail M. / Lotman, Yuri M. / Peirce, Charles / Fish, Stanley / Ricoeur, Paul / Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty / Moretti, Franco

> "We *communicate* by *crossing barriers*: leaving our [*svoj*], or making another's [*čužoj*] our own. Transmission of information is therefore always simultaneously an appropriation (or assimilation) of it. But there is always a *gap* between our own intentions and the words – which are always someone else's words – we speak to articulate them. The gap may be greater or smaller, however, depending on the "fit" between what we believe and what we are saying."
>
> (Holquist 1981: 424)

> "The other is the stranger" whom it is impossible to reduce to myself, to my thoughts and to my possessions."
>
> (Emmanuel Levinas)

An exchange of views on the issues of space and literature involves a variety of possible standpoints. It implies both space in literature and literature in space. Thus divergent concepts of space can be considered

with reference to literature: the *semiotic* space of text, the space of *artistic* representation within it, or more generally, the domain of literary art forms (which is a spatial arrangement in itself also when intertextuality is implicated), space as a *cultural* code of literature and other artefacts, *geocritical* space related to the ramification of literatures and cultural grounds, and so on. We can also focus on literary topographies – the space as grasped in representations. A comprehensive theoretical analysis of the spatial aspects of literatures (as textual, artistic, cultural, geocritical, topographical concepts) appears to be a pertinent project to examine closely and re-evaluate the existing and future reality of smaller (e.g. Slovenian, Estonian, Dutch, Macedonian, etc.) as well as of other European literatures in the face of globalization. Literature as the body of writings of a particular language – or just of a particular cultural territory – and as a specific textual activity, allocates in semiotic (and artistic) space manifold interpretative strategies. Literatures, no doubt, inscribe in themselves cultural memory, and as verbal praxes of art through their forms of enouncement they preserve consciousness of our own cultural terrains and represent a historical record of our own living reality elapsed in time. In any of its senses space represents a *reference frame* for literature.

Focussing the discussion on the idea of space (and the *spatial*) as we find it in the case of literature, and scrutinizing it in depth, perhaps can not guarantee in advance that our thoughts, observations and arguments can be reduced to instances of carefully limited field of reflections. We can neither anticipate nor presume conclusive or strictly fixed angles from such expert talk if the framework of the debate is restricted to the theme "Spaces of Transgressiveness". Anyhow, being *limited* in the debate of a peer group can indeed imply *unimaginative* debate – a debate *lacking inventiveness* and, consequently, fruitful dialogue on the subject. The heterogeneous scope of the topic "Literature and space: Verbal Art at the Edge" and a wide-ranging view of the idea of space as grasped by the word *extent*, Latin *extensio*[1] (*extendere*, to stretch out) can not prevent us from examining and thematizing it from selective viewpoints, oscillating between more concrete meanings of space (geographical, geocritical, even geopolitical etc), its more strict literary sense as a textual (and, of course, also intertextual) space, and even more evasive aspects of literature and art (and its constitutive elements) as terrains of the poetic (as well as existential or ethical) value.

The idea of space itself is rather tricky and troublesome. Space is – according to *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* – "meant to stand for a *boundless extension* which supposedly contains everything or every thing of a certain sort [...] it does not refer to anything that can be exhibited in sense-perception". Following the same source, the idea of space is "rather the nothingness outside all things", "*a boundless, all-encompassing expanse*", an expanse "identical with the void postulated by the atomist philosophers". "According to Cornford (1936), the 'invention of space' as a boundless, all-encompassing container occurred in the fifth century BC. However, it is more likely to have occurred in the late middle ages. At any rate, the idea[2] was rampant in Cambridge in the 1660s, when

Newton made it a fundamental element in his work on motion. In a posthumous paper[3], Newton stressed that *space evades the traditional classification of entities into substances and attributes*, and *has 'its own manner of existence'*. Until the publication of this paper in 1962, philosophers took Newtonian space for a substance, and most of them thought this to be utterly absurd. In view of the role of all-encompassing space in Newtonian physics, Kant regarded it as a precondition of human knowledge, contributed once and for all by the human mind. Newton had written that *the points of space owe their individual identity to the relational system in which they are set.* [...] Thus, Newton's concept of *space* provides the prototype for what is now known as a (categoric) mathematical *structure*, which can be roughly described as *a collection of objects fully specified by a list of mutual relations*." (*Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, V. 1.0, London: Routledge; my italics.)

Choosing a restrictive framework to elaborate the theme "Literature and space: Verbal Art at the Edge" can probably not prevent lively scholarly engagement and intellectual exchange. Among the objectives to launching the discussion and opening up the sub-theme of "Spaces of Transgressiveness" is the need to reconsider and re-evaluate the views on a number of spatial aspects of literatures, on present claims about the status of literatures, and on their ongoing existence. A particular point is to revise certain judgments and considerations about our cultural histories, to rethink the ideas of our cultural identities, views on national literary corpuses and literary canons, which have all certainly changed in the last hundred and fifty years, as the idea of the nation has. Literature is a unique and irreplaceable materialized record of inventive existence of people in a particular language territory, and through its inscriptions it transparently exposes to view articulated powers, abilities and the distinct self-understanding of people in given situations through history. Behind the idea is the need to re-examine some of the key arguments and positions in contemporary literary criticism, cultural theory and artistic policies and to reformulate the epistemological issues underlying debates on literature in views of a post-colonial initiative of planetary reality of cultures and cultural pluralism. The idea of transgressiveness implies Bakhtin's notion of *otherness* [Russian *čužoj*], all that is the opposite of one's own [Russian *svoj*] – place, point of view, possession, or speaking person. Otherness as a fundamental concept in Bakhtin's philosophically-grounded approach to dialogism "does not (as does "alien" in English) imply any necessary estrangement or exoticism; it is simply that which someone has made his own, seen (or heard) from the point of view of an outsider. In Bakhtin's system, we are all *čužoj* to one another by definition: each of us has his or her own [*svoj*] language, point of view, conceptual system [*krugozor* or horizon] that to all others is *čužoj*. Being *čužoj* makes dialogue possible." (Holquist 1981: 423) The theme of "Spaces of Transgressiveness" is launched to promote a stronger theoretical debate on issues of the intercultural openness of literature in Slovenia (as well as elsewhere in the region of Central Europe) and on the ever redefined cross-cultural identities of Europe. The aim of the

proposed exchange of ideas is to explore the role of culturally heterogeneous spaces inscribed in modern literary production (i.e. central/peripheral, natural/urban, private/public, national/trans-national/regional), and to consider more closely the multilingual experiences of authors whose works transgress cultural and linguistic borders.

To address the problem indicated by the title, two aspects of transgressiveness related to semiotic space are to be touched on at the start: the textual and the cultural.

Textual Space, Open-ended Semiosis, Transgressive Competence

As an entity of invention and (of reading consumption) literary art – although the claims about autonomous status of its representational strata can be in a sense justifiable – puts in writing a set of interests and concerns. Literature as an illocutionary act, inscribes in itself verbal instances, their immediacies and urgencies. As a praxis of language communication it purports a "way of thinking, a form of life, shares us, and implicates us in a world of already-in-place objects, purposes, goals, procedures, values, and so on" (Fish 1982: 304). Literature is apprehended through reading contracts, and is available "within a universe of discourse that also includes stipulations" (id). But literature has the prerogatives to authorize an understanding that operates across given language situations. Recent literary studies have become aware of literature as a *logic and structure of response* and find it necessary to reconsider a naïve theory of utterance meaning. The earlier structuralist views of proponents of a deviation theory of poetic language (e.g. Mukařovsky) had been overcome when the focus was relocated on the reader's role (their reading response) rather than the artefact. Although methodological scrutiny of literary phenomenology (cf. Ingarden) or literary hermeneutics (cf. Gadamer) took into consideration such a viewpoint much before post-structuralist debates on the instability of the text and the unavailability of determinate meanings, the angle of analytical insight into the issue became more exhaustively promoted only by current literary studies and their methodological platforms. An awareness of always already embedded differences in the relations between signs and their referents in the physical world or the world of ideas certainly introduces new instances of discerning literature. It generates advanced theoretical debates about it and also brings forth fresh inventions and matrices of writing literature. Recognizing "the *fluidity*, the 'movingness', *of the meaning experience*" post-structuralism claims to be a step bringing into focus the objective of "the active and activating consciousness of the reader" (Fish 1982: 44; my italics). In an early article, "Literature in the Reader" (cf. *New Literary History* 1970: 2, 123-162) – which Fish later called his manifesto on the theory of interpretive communities and reprinted it as an opening chapter in his book *Is There a Text in This Class?* – he asserts: "In place of the objective and self-contained text I put 'the basic data of the meaning experience' and

'what is objectively true about the *activity* of reading'; and in order to firm up the new 'bottom line' I introduced the notion of the 'informed reader'" (Fish 1982: 22) The ever-shifting factuality of text is extended to the territory of the reader's actualization, i.e. on the level of pragmatics, or to employ Manfred Jahn's view, to the reader's own context of "cognitive narratology". "There are as many meanings as there are readers and no one of them is literal," Fish argues, commenting "the infinite capacity of language for being appropriated" (1982: 305-306). Literature is indeed given to us in an open ended semiosis[4].

Peirce, long before Fish, had been quite aware of the semiotic situation we attribute to literature. In *A Letter to William James* he wrote: "We must distinguish between the Immediate Object, i.e., the Object as represented in the sign, – and the Real (no, because perhaps the Object is altogether fictive, I must choose a different term; therefore:), say rather the Dynamical Object, which, from the nature of things, the Sign *cannot* express, which it can only *indicate* and leave the interpreter to find out by *collateral experience*." (cf. EP 2:498, 1909) Reading instances involve us simply in the realm of "immediate objects, i.e., the objects as represented in the signs", and the reader's proximity to the text in the reading process of literature is nothing but a meeting with open-class elements. At this point Fish raises an objection about the objectivity of the text, arguing that, although it seems "immediately available" and was claimed to be a "palpable objectivity [...], the objectivity of the text is an illusion and, moreover a dangerous illusion, because it is so physically convincing". (Fish 1982: 43) The immediacy of text related to the reading process cannot corroborate textual objectivity, because in such cases immediacy is simply contiguous in space, time, or relation. The text certainly is the 'ongoing accomplishment' (in Fish's words), an infinite entity, a space transgressing the limits of its writing, or a boundless extent in which objects and events occur and have relative position and direction. The reading selves and texts are both "constituted by the way of thinking and seeing that inhere in social organizations". But could we in fact agree with Fish in his conclusion that "then there can be *no adversary* relationship between text and self because they are the necessarily related products of the *same* cognitive possibilities" (Fish 1982: 336; my italics)? As any dialogic relation – and it is essential that dialogue is, by rule, always characterized by *conflict and contradiction* – reading could not but involve negotiations between reader and text. Fish argues "that communication occurs only *within* [...] a system (or context, or *situation*, or interpretive community) and that the understanding achieved by two or more persons is specific to that system and determinate only *within* its confines". He maintains "that the more perfect understanding [...] – an understanding that operates above or across situations – would have no place in the world even if it were available, because it is only in situations – with their interested specifications as to what counts as a fact, what it is possible to say, what will be heard as an argument – that one is called on to understand." (1982: 304) The weakness of the claim is that it categorically denies "*an understanding that operates above or across*

situations" (my italics). But communications as exchanges of verbal ideas – and reading is an exemplary instance of communication – are, by rule, *instituting*[5] processes, and at least to some degree inventive instances in their roots. So any participation in communicative process calls upon us basic economy, the management of *available resources*, i.e. the participation of our inventive or resourceful thinking. Communicative processes involve us in new situations and intricacies, transmit new details and disclose new facets of the world we are living in. Communication is never a one-way street. Any actual or effective transaction of verbal ideas or thoughts is a *responsive* enterprise enabling negotiations. It establishes an interaction of an individual with one or more other persons and demands that the other is able to deal skilfully and promptly with new situations, difficulties, etc. If transgressive thinking is not employed on the receiver's part of the communicative channel, if the addressee is not *open to otherness* or cannot trigger their own inventive potential and give power to new meanings, no one can expect communicative transactions of texts to be carried out or to be able to accomplish their mission. In this context we can employ the notion of transgressive competence[6].

Cultural Spaces in Borderland Territories

Cultural spaces located at the crossroads of cultures, from remote periods and modern ones, are exemplary dialogic. How can the complex reality of cultural life behind the borderland literature be comprehended? How can the semiosphere that grounds the cultural reality of the literature in such territories be explained? The semiosphere is a notion invented by Lotman and defined as "the semiotic space necessary for the existence and functioning of languages" (Lotman 1990: 123), and as "that synchronic semiotic space which fills the borders of culture, without which separate semiotic systems cannot function or come into being" (Lotman 1990: 3). In cases of borderland literatures the semiosphere is certainly different and its complexity calls for critical re-examination now more than ever, when literary studies employ ground-breaking methodologies aware of the need to overcome totalizing insights and concepts. The semiosphere does not overlap with the notion of cultural code, nor with the view of national literature, and particularly not in the case of cultures in border territories. How can we consider (and evaluate) the semiotic space of the Slovenian cultural existence and the effects of its shifting realities through history if we agree that culture in borderlands creates "its own type of internal organization" and also "its own type of external disorganization" (Lotman 1990: 142)? Cultural spaces are semiotic realities which through their historical existence unfold the indeterminate and unpredictable role of the processes that remodel them. Being borderland (the land forming a border or frontier also in a cultural sense) implies an uncertain, intermediate district, space, or condition; but at the same time, the boundaries operate as a mechanism of semiotic (cultural) individuation. The boundary is a *zone of semiotic polyglotism*, which both separates and

unites; it represents the co-existence of differences, an encouraging meeting point of ongoing cultural contradictions, and of confronting incongruent traditions. At boundaries, semiotic space transposes otherness and authorizes the one's won cultural potential to articulate the self in intersection with others. At boundaries the ever- shifting processes of cultural spaces are intensified. As a site of exchanges, borderland territory maintains the semiosphere in a state of creative ferment. As a border zone artistic experience of coupling and mixing different cultures, Slovenian cultural space openly – though probably unconsciously – embraced an idea of the *extreme edge of the semiosphere as a site of incessant dialogue*. Its best founding literary texts and "mythic" figures bear witness to how Slovenian cultural space willingly acknowledged otherness as *an open set,* and identified it as an eloquent image to activate the economy of its own cultural (and nation's) survival. But was not it paradoxically at the same time an obstruction to its own recognizable self?

To consider textual memory as a history of borderland territory more effectively (i.e. to read well the memory in texts as semiotic storage) two points in question are to be detailed: first, the nature (or identity) of culture in borderland territory; and second, the culture as facts in a given semiosphere.

On the nature of culture in borderland territory, and on identity issues. Histories of literatures and cultures in borderlands (as well as border-crossing regions) testify to the presence of numerous multilingual residues and surviving traces of contacts. The multilingual nature of these areas in earlier periods and, simultaneously, the incidence of diverse interests (political, economic, cultural) on the territory, with disparities in philosophies (or in sets of principles) behind language differences, certainly empower the invention of a borderland cultural identity (as well as a political and economic one) through a different profile. Such cultures are not only defined by establishing their existence dialogically through their past cultural relations; they are also, as far as the features of their identities are concerned, much more essentially grounded in dialogism. The cultural sense of self, providing distinctiveness and continuity in its cultural existence over time, is in such places certainly much more alert to establishing itself on a solid basis and for its enduring existence. The realization of a cultural self in a border region is a responsive act. (Slovenia is good example: its national identity was long accomplished through cultural pursuits as a substitute for a state and economic sovereignty.) In border regions dialogism is a basic need: it is a philosophy and a way of life. Dialogue is not just a simple instrument foregrounding cultural identity; it is a more or less deep-seated structure. To understand better the invention of borderland identities Derrida's note on invention is quite helpful. He argues that it "distributes its two essential values between two poles: the *constative* – discovering or unveiling, pointing out or saying what is – and the *performative* – producing, instituting, transforming". (Derrida 1991: 206) Concerning the invention of cultural identity and the scenarios of a nation's being the first value focuses the Self in *its very presence*, in the state of being present-at-hand (as things are), *identity as sameness*

(Latin: *idem*) and the second, the performative value which implies "producing, [ongoing event of] instituting, transforming", brings into focus the self as self-ness, *identity as selfhood* (Latin: *ipse*)[7]. Performative value focuses on the self in a pragmatic relation, involving (the interests of) the co-existing other. Selfhood is, to quote Heidegger, "one of the existentials which belong to the mode of being of *Dasein*" and "to the same sphere of problems belong such concepts as being-in-the-world, care, being-with, etc." (Ricoeur in Wood 1991: 191) Specificity in the constitution of borderland culture can be found in its innate experience of cultural differences, in its approval of the reality of differences, in its recognition and respect for the existence of the other (and otherness). Borderland cultural identity is grounded in the acknowledgement of validity of the gap between the self and otherness of the other. Dialogue is its primary constituent, the very mode of its existence. Its mode of being involves its open identity. In borderland literatures, the self is in responsive and interested dialogic relation with otherness, and the other is accepted as a distinct, individual entity. The *hetero*-cultural experience ingrained in borderland identity grants the culture, which is usually minor or peripheral, its affirmative approach to the diversities of other cultures and, of course, within itself. The specific, unstable history behind culture in border regions, which is very familiar with its own multifaceted reality in the passage of time, equips it with its inherent awareness that *selfhood is not* inevitably *sameness*. Self has a capacity for survival or strong healthy growth precisely because of its hybridity[8]. The self of a borderland culture, its very status of being an individual reality existing over time, enables the culture to unfold its different faces of identity not escaping or evading the very core of its being (nor its self-confidence) and not denying itself as a distinct entity in its many-sided dynamism. Self through its alterations (Late Greek *hetérosis*) – that is, through being hybrid (= formed or composed of heterogeneous elements) and not hubristic (= insolent or disrespectful or unaccustomed; Greek hybris excessive pride or self-confidence, arrogance) – cares for its future and economizes its qualities and intrinsic worth. *Hetérosis* or hybrid vigour – to employ terms used in genetics – with reference to selfhood or the identity of a culture, is a sign of a capacity for survival or strong healthy growth.

A borderland culture is a manifestly retold story. Through such an identity, cultures in border regions clearly reveal their capacity for survival. There is an inherent requirement for the continuation of a meaningful or purposeful existence of semiotic spaces having given and transgressed (constantly transformed) languages as a cohesive resource. Slovenian culture as a case of a cultural border territory confirms the persistence of such a force openly interacting with otherness – not from weakness, but as a forceful and promising, dynamizing option of survival economics. The nature of culture in border regions reminds us that reducing the meaning of identity to sameness (*idem*) and forgetting that selfhood (*ipse*) may imply diverse possibilities of existence arises from a metaphysical understanding of being which dominated European thought until the beginning of the last century and the modernist breakthrough. As memory

kept in semiotic spaces demonstrates selfhood embodies an ample storage reshaping culture. Only in reductionist (metaphysical) thought can a blindness to complex issues of reality occur. Identity is a fact, an entity quite concrete in its being, an actual ongoing condition or circumstance, not something postulated. Culture is not a sum of phenomena, but a *living totality*, where the notion of totality should be understood pragmatically (not metaphysically), i.e., as something inconclusive in its character, an *open, non-finite entity*. Understanding cultural identity as dialogism implies that the measure of authenticity or originality of an inherent national subjectivity has a lesser role than it played in the minds of the romantics and throughout the nineteenth century. Culture is a meeting point of several cross-cultural implications. In the notion of the "soul of a nation" (Herder[9]), which is related to the topic of cultural identity, the conceptual frame of the idea of the national is due to a romantic view of an absolute and autonomous self which is, of course, inadequate at a time of a mutually related world and a post-national concept of state (citizenship).

It appears that in the globalizing world (and in the new reality of integrating Europe in process) borderland or peripheral countries, with their particular experience and the demanding task in their histories of inventing and instituting cultural identities on border crossing territories surely become well-equipped with views of dialogism or "scopic vision" (Spivak 2003: 108) to challenge and overcome still persistent totalizing attitudes (and politics of) a *planetary* vision of culture (and the world). Borderland cultures exhibit supplementary qualities of conceivably more sensitive and responsive approaches to otherness. Views on the heteronomy of cultural worlds are there more palpable, and in border regions the fact of "*the ungraspable other as the figured origin of our definitions*" (Spivak 2003: 32) is much easier to apprehend. The metropolitan countries – another geocritical notion found in literary and cultural studies (Moretti, Spivak) – lived through less distressing experiences of inventing their identities and are – as a result of their own cultural role in the past (as colonizers) – frequently less perceptive of the heteronomy of cultural worlds. Metropolitan cultures (far from the boundaries or *limes*) become used to their unthreatened position at the centre of a circle where there is no movement, nor other angles of insight. A central point or axis, a *line used as a fixed reference*, represents – as known from physics – a site of no exchange.

Franco Moretti (2000: 54-68) in his comparatist claims, finds peripheral views on cultures very instructive. The edge is resourceful; it enables a different point of view, and is highly aware of multiplied focuses. Awareness that the other is never accessed directly, nor with certainty suggests different reading practices. The same points in challenging task to overcome totalizing insight into a planetary vision of culture and to practice "scopic vision" are found by Gayatry Spivak in her Wellek Library lectures when charting her future view for the field of reformed comparative literature as a border-crossing discipline "honed by *careful* reading" (2003: 108). Aware of a "forever deferred arrival into the per-

formative of the other in order not to transcode, but to draw a response" she advocates "a role of comparative literature in a responsible effort" (2003: 13).[10] But the ingredients of such ideas were inherent in Bakhtin's concept of dialogue. Yuri M. Lotman also turned to the legacy of Bakhtin in the last decade of his life in his elaborate work *Universe of the Mind* (1990) on text, semiospheres and the semiotics of history.

On culture as facts in a semiosphere. Texts are semiotic data, although due to their semiotic life, i.e. their ongoing semiosis, their identity as "transmitted and received texts is relative" (Lotman 1990: 13). Lotman argues that because of "*cultural traditions* (the semiotic memory of culture) and the inevitable *factor of the individual way* with which this tradition is revealed to a particular member of a collective, /.../ it will be obvious that the coincidence of codes between transmitter and the transmittee is in reality possible only to a very relative extent." (1990: 13; my italics.) By reason of the "inner, as yet unfinalized determinacy of its structure" text "acquires semiotic life" (Lotman 1990: 18). Texts "preserve their cultural activity" and "reveal a capacity to accumulate information, i.e. a capacity for memory" (id). The text's memory, "the meaning-space created by the text around itself [always] enters into relationship with cultural memory (tradition) already formed in the consciousness of the audience" (id). This means that texts are to be seen as "important factors in the *stimulus* of cultural dynamics" (id) and are themselves "a *reservoir of dynamism* when influenced by contacts with new contexts". (Lotman 1990: 18, my italics) A text is involved in a semiotic space and it results in "the complex semiotic mechanism which is in constant motion" (Lotman 1990: 203). A text has its life in the reality of semiosis and *a* reality becomes "the single-channel structure" (Lotman 1990: 124) for decoding (or extracting meaning from) its encrypted message. When *a* reality happens to be the text's communicating channel – and we must bear in mind that natural language is constantly renewing codes and that (as Lotman also reminds us) "living culture has a 'built-in' mechanism for multiplying its languages" (1990: 124) – then that "single-channel" is realized in a plurality of options. An ongoing event of *cultural tradition* and *the individual mode* of entering into the text, both factors are involved in an ever changing platform of circumstances. Text turns out to be "immersed in a semiotic space and it can only function by interaction with that *space*" (Lotman 1990: 124-5; my italics). Semiosis entails "the whole semiotic space of the culture in question" and this is the space Lotman terms it the *semiosphere* (by analogy with the *biosphere* as Vernadsky defined it). "The semiosphere is the result and the condition for the development of culture, [...] the totality and the organic whole for living matter [JS culture] and also the condition for the continuation of [JS cultural] life." (Lotman 1990: 125) *Living culture is a function of the semiosphere in its particular space-time.* "The semiosphere is marked by its *heterogeneity*." (Lotman 1990: 125) A semiotic space is "at one and the same moment and under the influence of the same impulses" still "*not /.../ a single coding structure, but a set of connected, but different systems*". (Lotman 1990: 125; my italics) In Lotman's notion of the semiosphere "the possibility of a pre-

verbal or non-verbal modelling system" is suggested, as Han-liang Chang commented in his paper *Is Language a Primary Modelling System? – – On Jury Lotman's Semiosphere* at a conference on cultural semiotics: Cultural mechanisms, boundaries, identities, in Tartu (Estonia, 2002). In his earliest explanation, published in Russian in 1984, Lotman found the semiosphere "a *semiotic continuum* filled with semiotic structures of different types and with different levels of organization" (republished in Lotman 1989: 42-3). In another definition he defined the semiosphere as "the semiotic space necessary for the existence and functioning of languages, not the sum total of different languages"; in a sense it "has a prior existence and is in constant interaction with languages . . . Outside the semiosphere there can be neither communication, nor language." (Lotman 1990: 123-124)

Here we are back to the issue how to comprehend the semiosphere of the borderland literature. Are the effects of past shifting realities on border cultural territories as ever remaining in existence? Lotman considers a semiosphere "as a *single* mechanism" and argues "that all elements of the semiosphere are in dynamic, not static correlations, whose terms are constantly changing" (1990:127). Is it correct to say that all possible contacts having come down to us from the past are latent in the ever-modifying semiosphere? Lotman is affirmative on the issue: "In the history of art [...] works which come down to us from remote cultural periods continue to play a part in cultural development as living factors. [...] What 'works' is not the most recent temporal section, but the *whole packed history of cultural texts*. [...] In fact, everything contained in the actual memory of culture, is directly or indirectly part of that culture's synchrony." (1990:127; my italics) The semiosphere represents a holistic world model (as claimed by Mikhail Lotman) behind actual cultural processes, although one should see it as a constantly re-read entity, a reworked actuality, or a re-defined network of cultural traces shaped through ongoing dialogism. The idea of the semiosphere is an exemplary observation on spaces of transgressiveness. Lotman remarks: "Besides, at all stages of development there are contacts with texts coming in from cultures which formerly lay beyond the boundaries of the given semiosphere. These invasions, sometimes by separate texts, and sometimes by whole cultural layers, variously effect the internal structure of the 'world picture' of the culture we are talking about. So across any synchronic section of the semiosphere different languages at different stages of development are in conflict, and some texts are immersed in languages not their own, while the codes to decipher them with may be entirely absent." (Lotman 1990: 126) The distinct notion of semiosphere is capable of grasping cultural deposits enacted in the extensive dormant network and the "continued process of emission and transmission of energy [...] not only between historical periods of one culture, but also between inter-cultural and cross-cultural systems" (Han-liang Chang 2003, here quoted from an electronic version of his paper). By employing the idea of semiosphere "as a generator of information" the debate on the literature and space can be more elaborate and can shift our views to a "post-positivist realist" conception of objectivity (Satya P. Mohanty). It enables us to

grasp the cross-cultural realities of individual cultures and the valuable dialogue behind their historical routes, which are asymmetrical because the structure of the semiosphere as an expression of "the currents of the internal translations" (Lotman 1990: 127) is in itself asymmetrical. A thorough (semiotic and hermeneutical) approach to the semiosphere of cultures can provide insights into the obvious asymmetries of cultures in history and help us to bridge the inevitable "untranslatability" of art. Lotman's "philosophy of culture", his complex theoretical observations on the dynamism and phenomenology of culture actually semiotically intervened in the debate about history or, to be more precise, it brings to the fore a view of different routes behind the histories of literatures and their spatio-temporal contexts. His work responded to Bakhtin's heritage, while at the same time attaining a more complex perspective on mechanisms of culture as that universe of mind, which in literature – like tales of Mnemosyne – preserves facts and advocates (re)readings of consciousness in the semiotic spaces of texts to map past modes of human historical existence. The challenging and inspiring idea of the semiosphere is one of those epistemological issues in the recent uncompromising critique of universalism which provide us with an elaborate and useful conceptual alternative to the earlier notion of objectivity. Such ideas seriously constitute an invitation to reconsider some of the key arguments and positions in contemporary views on literary histories. As a concept grasping comparativist residues in semiotic data it is at hand to be for a future planetary vision of a responsive comparative literature. Re-imagining the discipline, Spivak in her criticism of (cultural) area studies programmes, reminds us that comparative literature was made up of Western European "nations" (cf. 2003: 8), and through her further comments she re-evaluates certain aspects of literature teaching practice at philological departments. In her ideas for a "depoliticized" and "an inclusive comparative literature" (2003: 4) as a "loosely defined discipline [...] to include the open-ended possibility of studying all literatures" (2003: 5) she claims that "the real 'other' of Cultural Studies is not Area Studies but *the civilization courses* offered by European national language departments, generally scorned by comparative literature" (2003: 8). Similarly Moretti finds the close reading practiced by national literary scholars, especially, of peripheral or – as Evan-Zohar (1990) calls them – 'weak' literatures, very rewarding. Both actually support more detailed insight into literatures, into their spatio-temporal placement and their real, verifiable ties with other texts and literatures, and such answers can be well obtained through detailed analyses of the semiosphere. Such encouragement to focus on literatures and space can be understood as an advocacy to understand better the multitudinous world of literatures, their diverse cultural grounds and intricacies. Through notions like semiosphere on the list the discussion of literature and spaces can bring us closer to grasping representations of alterity in a remodelled comparative approach, to understand correctly the asymmetries of literatures and historical movements, and to realize within literatures their much more incongruent nature, their heterogeneous development, and the inner hybridity outlining their "tradition". The view may well "*confirm the*

inequality of the world literary system: an inequality which" – as Moretti argues – "does not coincide with economic inequality [...] and allows some mobility – but a mobility *internal* to the unequal system, not alternative to it" (2003:78).

To conclude, I am back to the view of the semiosphere of Slovenian culture, which is due to border contacts exemplary asymmetrical. Diverse border languages certainly multiply its heterogeneous entities. Slovenian edges (the Karst region, Carinthia, Prekmurje in Eastern Slovenia) are strong "area[s] of semiotic dynamism [...] where new languages [of art] come into being" (Lotman 1990:134). Formed by border-crossing reality and the intrusions of alien cultural codes into canonic norms, Slovenian culture has been actively exposed to the mechanisms of semiotic individuation, as its best authors Trubar, Prešeren, Kosovel, Kovačič, Boris Pahor, Tomaž Šalamun, etc. testify. The periphery of a culture as a zone of contact with otherness is most sensitive for its own "untranslatability" in Lotman's sense. As border-crossing literature its ground is rewarding for the working mechanisms of the semiosphere – for mechanisms of ongoing dialogue, as well as of constant "translations" – and manifestly inscribes in itself its own need for asymmetry and for its own otherness.

NOTES

[1] Cf. *Dictionnaire latin-français*. Version électronique de Gérard Jeanneau.
extensio (extentio), onis, f. : - 1 - extension, allongement. - 2 - diffusion.
extense, adv. : d'une manière étendue.
extendo, tendi, tensum (tentum), ere : - tr. - 1 - étendre, allonger, élargir, agrandir, étaler, déployer (au pr. et au fig.). - 2 - étendre à terre, coucher, renverser, terrasser. - 3 - étendre (en parl. de la durée), prolonger, reculer; passer en entier. - 4 - au fig. étendre, augmenter, agrandir, accroître. - 5 - étendre à, attribuer par extension, comprendre dans.
– se extendere magnis itineribus, Caes. BC. 3, 77 : se lancer dans de longues étapes, forcer les étapes.
– rami se extendunt, Virg. : les branches s'étendent.
– extendere pugnam, Liv. 27, 2, 6 : prolonger le combat.
– pretium extendere, Just. : hausser le prix.

[2] By 1600, space had become a familiar ingredient of natural philosophy. In Bruno's words: "Space is a continuous three-dimensional natural quantity, in which the magnitude of bodies is contained, which is prior by nature to all bodies and subsists without them but indifferently receives them all and is free from the conditions of action and passion, unmixable, impenetrable, unshapeable, non-locatable, outside all bodies yet encompassing and incomprehensibly containing them all." (1591: 1.8; quoted in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy.*)

[3] According to *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* "much needless discussion might have been forestalled had Newton's manuscript 'De gravitatione et aequipondio fluidorum' (On the Gravity and Equilibrium of Liquids) not remained unpublished until 1962. In it he boldly asserts that space is neither a substance nor an attribute of a substance, but has 'its own manner of existence' (1962: 99, 132; my italics). According to Newton, each point of space is the

particular point it is by virtue of the relations it has to the other points, and the only source of its individuality (*individuationis principium*) is the post it holds in the system of such relations.

A conception of space as a purely relational system or mathematical structure was also put forward by Leibniz in his polemic against the view of space as a substance, which he imputes to Newton. Leibniz characterizes space as the abstract order of co-existing things. If we forget the peculiarities of each thing and retain only its 'situation or distance' to the other things, we obtain the notion of the thing's place, which may be taken by anything. 'And that which comprehends all those places, is called Space' (Leibniz 1716: §47). [...] Since space is neither [a substance nor an attribute of a substance], he maintains that it is no more than a *well-grounded phenomenon, lacking genuine reality* (see Leibniz, G.W. §11)."

[4] Defining semiosis Charles S. Peirce writes: "It is important to understand what I mean by *semiosis*. All dynamical action, or action of brute force, physical or psychical, either takes place between two subjects (whether they react equally upon each other, or one is agent and the other patient, entirely or partially) or at any rate is a resultant of such actions between pairs. But by "semiosis" I mean, on the contrary, an action, or influence, which is, or involves, a cooperation of *three* subjects, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant, this tri-relative influence not being in any way resolvable into actions between pairs." ('Pragmatism', 1907, EP 2: 411)

In critical comments that "semiosis has been trapped within a semiological or linguistic and psychological definition" Edwina Taborsky asserts:

"Semiosis refers to the generation and usage of signs. What is a sign? A sign is the means by which free energy is transformed by codification into constrained matter or information. Semiosis transforms energy from states of thermal and kinetic potentiality to spatiotemporal instantiations within multiple processes of codal constraints of organized relations. Codification is the formation of organized connections or relations with other forms of energy organization. Semiosis, then, is a relational process of codification by means of which networks of codification develop to transform energy into spatiotemporal instantiations of matter or information. [...] A genuine semiosis is a generative process, where the signs, activated within their predicates, seek out and develop pragmatic links with other semiotic sentences by means of which they interpret, expand and actually create their identities. The sign as a generative sentence is a speculative gaze that is focused on past networks, other networks and the future pragmatics of purely hypothetical and experimental networks. This semiosic sentence operates within all three cosmic realms, the physico-chemical, the biological and the socio-conceptual and is the basis for all informational processes of energy."
(http://www.library.utoronto.ca/see/pages/semiosisdef.html)

[5] From Latin *instituere* to set, put up, establish, form of *statuere* to place, to stand.

[6] Some literature on transgressive competence can be mentioned:

Daston, Lorraine (1992). "Objectivity and the Escape from Perspective", *Social Studies of Science*, vol.22, 597-618.

Daston Lorraine and Peter Galison (1992). "The Image of Objectivity", *Representations*, no. 40, 81-128.

Nowotny, Helga (1999). "The Need for Socially Robust Knowledge", *TA-Datenbank-Nachrichten* (Forschungszentrum Karlsruhe), Nr. 3/4, 12- 16.

Nowotny, Helga (1999). "The Place of People in Our Knowledge", *European Review*, vol.7.2, 247-262.

Gibbons, Michael, Camille Limoges, Helga Nowotny, Simon Schwartzman, Peter Scott and Martin Trow (1994). *The New Production of Knowledge. The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies*. London: Sage.

Galison, Peter and David Stump eds. (1996). *The Disunity of Science: Boundaries, Contexts, and Power*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

[7] Distinction between two different kinds of identity is elaborated in the Ricoeur's view on the issue in his article "Identité narrative", first published in *Esprit* 1988. He discussed the idea few years after his main work *Temps et récit* (1983-5) was published and it was printed in English translation as "Narrative identity" together with revised and reworked papers of a Warwick Workshop in Continental Philosophy organized in 1986, where Ricoeur was among participants. Being aware of the considerable difficulties attached to the question of identity as such Ricoeur intervened into it and put forward a thesis that "the concept of narrative identity offers a solution to the aporias of personal identity" (in Wood 1991: 192). To resolve difficulties relating to the notion of personal identity he knew the conceptual framework should be submitted "to analytical scrutiny [that] rests on the fundamental distinction [...] between two main uses of the term of identity: **identity as sameness** (Latin: *idem*, English: *same*, German: *Gleich*) and **identity as selfhood** (Latin: *ipse*, English: *self*, German: *Selbst*)". (Cf. in: Wood 1991: 189). The main problem, however, is that "**selfhood is not sameness**" (p. 189). Ricoeur acknowledges, "the confusion is not without cause, to the extent that these two problematics overlap at a certain point" (p. 189). He insists that the break which separates *idem* and *ipse* is "frankly" ontological, not just grammatical, or even epistemological and logical. (Cf. in Wood 1991: 191.) I refer to Ricoeur's distinction in an earlier article. (Škulj 2000: 411-419.)

[8] In the first one of her Wellek Library lectures in May 2000, entitled *Crossing Borders*, Spivak referred to "the irreducible hybridity of all languages" (2003: 9).

[9] Satya Mohanty (1997: xii) finds Herder's views already as "powerful attacks on the Enlightenment's universalist conceptions of reason, morality, and history, arguing instead for the irreducibility of cultural particularity and diversity".

[10] "If a responsible comparativism can be of the remotest possible use in the training of imagination, it must approach culturally diversified ethical systems diachronically, through the history of multicultural empires, without foregone conclusions." (Spivak 2003: 12-13)

REFERENCES

ARA, Angelo and Magris, Claudio, 2001. *Trst, obmejna identiteta*. Ljubljana: Študentska založba. (In Italian: *Trieste. Un'identità di frontiera*. 1982)

Bakhtin, Mikhail M., 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. by Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press.

BAKHTIN, Mikhail M., 1986. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

BHABHA, Homi K., 1994. *The Location of Culture*, London/New York: Sage.

BHABHA, Homi K., 1996. "Culture's In-Between". In: Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds.). *Cultural Identity*, London: Sage, 53-60.

CAWS, Peter, 1994. "Identity: Cultural, Transcultural, and Multicultural". In: David Theo Goldberg, ed., *Multiculturalism. A Critical Reader*. Oxford (UK) and Cambridge (USA): Basil Blackwell, 371- 387.

CHANG, Han-liang, 2003. "Is Language a Primary Modeling System? On Jury Lotman's Semiosphere." In: *Sign System Studies. An international journal of semiotics and sign processes in culture and nature* 31/1: 9-23.

Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, 8 volumes, vols. 1-6, eds. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, vols. 7-8, ed. Arthur W. Burks. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931-1958. [CP]

CORNFORD, Francis Macdonald, 1936. 'The Invention of Space'. In: *Essays in Honour of Gilbert Murray*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 215-35. Reprinted in Milic Capek (ed.) *The Concepts of Space and Time*, Dordrecht: Reidel, 1976, 3-16.

DERRIDA, Jacques, 1991. "Psyche: Inventions of the Other". In: Peggy Kampf, ed., *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*. London: Harvester.

EVEN-ZOHAR, Itamar, 1990. "Polysystem Theory". In: *Poetics Today* 11:1: 9-26.

EVEN-ZOHAR, Itamar, 1990. "Laws of Literary Interference". In: *Poetics Today* 11:1: 53-72.

EVEN-ZOHAR, Itamar, 1990. "*Polysystem Studies*". Special Issue of Poetics Today 11:1: 1-268.

FISH, Stanley Eugene, 1982. *Is There a Text in This Class?* London and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

GOLDBERG, David Theo, ed., 1994. *Multiculturalism. A Critical Reader*. Oxford (UK) and Cambridge (USA): Basil Blackwell.

HALL, Stuart and du Gay, Paul, eds., 1996. *Cultural Identity*, London: Sage.

HOLQUIST, Michael, ed., 1981. *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin.* Austin: University of Texas Press.

LEITCH, Vincent B., 1983. *Deconstructive Criticism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

LOTMAN, Yuri M., 1989. "The Semiosphere". *Soviet Psychology* 27: 40-61. (In Russian 1984)

LOTMAN, Yuri M., 1990. *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of a Culture*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd Publishers.

LOTMAN, Mikhail, 2001. "The Paradoxes of Semiosphere". *Sun Yatsen Journal of Humanities* 12: 97-106.

DE MAN, Paul, 1971. *Blindness and Insight*. New York: Oxford University Press.

MOHANTY, Satya P., 1997. *Literary Theory and the Claims of History. Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

MORETTI, Franco, 1999. *Atlas of the European Novel*. London and New York: Verso.

MORETTI, Franco, 2000. "Conjectures on World Literature". *New Left Review* (Jan.-Feb. 2000): 54-68.

MORETTI, Franco, 2003. "More Conjectures". *New Left Review* (Mar.-Apr. 2003): 73-81.

NEWTON, Isaac, (1962). '*De gravitatione et aequipondio fluidorum*' (manuscript *On the Gravity and Equilibrium of Liquids)*.

RÉE, Jonathan, 1991. "Narrative and Philosophical Experience". In: David Wood, ed., *On Paul Ricoeur. Narrative and Interpretation*, pp. 74-83.

RICOEUR, Paul, 1991. "Narrative Identity". In: David Wood, ed., *On Paul Ricoeur. Narrative and Interpretation*, pp. 188-199.

Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Version 1.0, London: Routledge.

SCHMELING, Manfred and Schmitz-Emans, Monika, eds., 2002. *Multilinguale Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert*, (Saarbrücker Beiträge zur vergleichenden Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft, Bd. 18). Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.

SPIVAK, Gayatri Chakiravorty, 2003. *Death of the Discipline*. New York: Columbia University Press.

STAM, Robert, 1997. "Multiculturalism and the Neoconservatives". In: McClintock, Mufti and Shohat, eds. *Dangerous Liaisons. Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*. Minneapolis and London, 188-203.

ŠKULJ, Jola, 1999. "Comparative Literature and Cultural Identity: A Bakhtinian Proposal". In: Tötösy/Dimic/Sywenky 1999, 209-217.

ŠKULJ, Jola, 2000. "Literature as a Repository of Historical Consciousness: Reinterpreted Tales of Mnemosyne". In: Vervliet, Raymond and Estor, Annemarie (eds.). *Methods for the Study of Literature as Cultural Memory : volume 6 of the proceedings of the XVth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association "Literature as Cultural Memory", Leiden, 16-22 August 1997*, (Textxet, 30). Amsterdam; Atlanta (Georgia): Rodopi, pp. 411-419.

ŠKULJ, Jola, 2002. "Multilingualism as Strategy of Modernist Dialogism". In: Schmeling, Manfred and Schmitz-Emans, Monika, eds. *Multilinguale Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert*, (Saarbrücker Beiträge zur vergleichenden Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft, Bd. 18). Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, pp. 105-117.

ŠKULJ, Jola, 2004. "The Role of the Other in a Nation's Self-Interpretation: On Identity Issues and on Imagology". In: *East-European Images of the Self and the Other: Ethnic, National and Gender Stereotypes in Literature and Literary Studies of Eastern Europe, 4-5 November 2004, Budapest.* Budapest: ICLA Hungarian National Committee, p. 18.

TABORSKY, Edwina. *Semiosis.* http://www.library.utoronto.ca/see/pages/semiosisdef.html

The Commens Dictionary of Peirce's Terms. Peirce's Terminology in His Own Words. http://www.helsinki.fi/science/commens/dictionary.html

The Essential Peirce. Selected Philosophical Writings. Vol. 1 (1867-1893), eds. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel, 1992. Vol. 2 (1893-1913), edited by the Peirce Edition Project, 1998. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. [EP]

TÖTÖSY de ZEPETNEK, Steven, Dimić, Milan V., Sywenky, Irene, eds., 1999. *Comparative Literature Now: Theories and Practice. Selected Papers. Théories et réalisations. Contributions choisies du Congrès de l'Association internationale de littérature comparée, tenu à l'Université d'Alberta en 1994.* (Bibliothèque de littérature générale et comparée, 5). Paris: Honoré Champion.

VERVLIET, Raymond and Estor, Annemarie, eds., 2000. *Methods for the Study of Literature as Cultural Memory : Volume 6 of the Proceedings of the XVth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association "Literature as Cultural Memory", Leiden, 16-22 August 1997*, (Textxet, 30). Amsterdam; Atlanta (Georgia): Rodopi.

WHITE, Allon, 1986. *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press; London: Methuen.

WOOD, David, ed., 1991. *On Paul Ricoeur. Narrative and Interpretation.* London: Routledge.