

Karin Ikas and Gerhard Wagner (eds), *Communicating in The Third Space* (Routledge, 2009)

The much-discussed yet still-enigmatic concept of 'Third Space', primarily propagated by Homi K. Bhabha in his *The Location of Culture* (1994), is taken up by Karin Ikas and Gerhard Wagner in their edited volume *Communicating in the Third Space* (2009) to raise a critical debate on third space in this age of globalization where inter- and transcultural communication has become a norm rather than an exception. This interdisciplinary volume brings together authors and critics such as Homi Bhabha, Ulrich Beck, Edward Soja, Julia Lossau, Robert Young and Bill Ashcroft in a single collection to explore the 'theoretical premises' and 'empirical implications' (2) of the increasingly popular notion of third space at the turn of the twenty-first century. As Bhabha's theory of third space has gone beyond its origin in postcolonial studies, this volume of essays provides a perfect interdisciplinary and intercultural platform to reconstruct its 'logical, philosophical, psychological, sociological, geographical, and – not to forget – political meaning' (2).

Homi Bhabha himself sets the tune of the volume in the Preface as he refers to a scene from Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness* (1899) where Marlow comes across a Congolese man who has tied a bit of white worsted around his neck. As Marlow tries to interpret the ambiguous sign that 'lies in-between the relative familiarity of a badge and the relative unknowability of a Congolese propitiatory act' (xii) he enters a third space. Ikas and Wagner argue that in order to enter a third space one should take into account the social and political circumstances in which that intercultural communication takes place. Bhabha's unwillingness to offer a clear and concrete definition of third space leads this enigmatic and elusive concept to trigger off a range of new interpretations and ideas that are divided into five broad categories in this volume, addressing the contemporary relevance of third space in areas as diverse as inter- or transcultural communication, spatial turn, theorising the third space, 'literizing' the third space and locations and negotiations.

To invoke the contemporary relevance of intercultural communication Ulrich Beck considers the concept of cosmopolitanism, which, in the twenty first century, stands for realism and has become cosmopolitical in its core. According to Beck it stands above other notions in social sciences such as hybridity because cosmopolitanism rejects 'the either/or alternative between territorial-bounded national and ethnical identities without denying the historical narrative behind them' (22). Britta Kalscheuer introduces the concept of transdifference or transdifference positionalities formulated by Breinig and Lösch as an alternative approach to inform intercultural communication theories with aspects of power.

Edward Soja and Julia Lossau take their turn to analyse the concept of space in third space. Soja's Thirdspace breaks the Firstspace-Secondspace dualism and comprises such related concepts as 'place, location, locality, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory and geography' (50) that attempts to come to terms with the representational strategies of real and imagined places. He proposes a 'trialectics of spatiality' (57) which is a process, a dynamic force and 'recombinational and radically open' (50). Lossau aims at 'critically rethinking the complex relations of

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identity, difference and space' (63) because she finds third space as a concept is not fully capable of avoiding the pitfalls of traditional concepts of identity and difference.

In the theoretical realm, Robert Young argues that Bhabha's third space is not a space as such but rather a site – 'the non-place of no-fixed abode', 'a site in the sense of situation', 'a site of fading, of appearance and disappearance' (82). Young then compares and elaborates his analysis of this particular site as a site of enunciation, argued in Emile Benevise's *Course on General Linguistics* (1971). In order to bring together the thirdness of third space on the one hand and the issue of postcolonial subjectivity on the other, Ikas and Wagner introduce the transclassical logic of German-American philosopher, Gotthard Günter that upholds an additional value on rejection. Ikas and Wagner demonstrate that postcolonial subjectivity can best be explained with this logic of rejection, which is neither the one nor the other but something else.

Bill Ashcroft cites examples from *The Tempest* to analyse how inter- or transcultural communication can occur in compositions, written in the colonial language, English. Ashcroft highlights the use of language, which is 'a zone of difference, struggle and transformation rather than a zone of identity' (120), a tool of resistance and 'a Third Space of enunciation between the poles of cultural identity, a space within which cultural identities themselves are transformed' (120). Karin Ikas explores the south western part of the United States bordering Mexico as a classic example of a real and imagined space in-between as people in the Mexican-American borderlands have more than one physical, ethnical and cultural identity. She takes up the much debated term 'Mexifornia' and illustrates the social and political reality of the day through *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea* (2000), a dramatic piece by controversial Chicana lesbian author, Cherríe Moraga.

In the final section of this volume Frank Schulze-Engler analyses literary texts, specifically from non-Western cultural locations, such as Caryl Phillips's *Cambridge* (1991) and *Crossing the River* (2000), Channa Wickremesekera's *Distant Warriors* (2005), Witi Ihimaera's *The Uncle's Story* (2000) and Wole Soyinka's *Ìsarà: A Voyage Around 'Essay'* (1991). He argues that the concept of third space has largely remained confined within the 'normative framework of the Western nation-state' (155) and similar situations in non-Western cultures needs to be looked at. He opens up an interdisciplinary dialogue between a variety of third spaces created in the 'context of globally interlinked multiple modernities and transnational connections' (166). In Wagner's opinion, Bhabha's theory of nation goes beyond the typical concept of nation and contexts of postcolonial discourse. That it can be applied to other cases where power relations are asymmetrical and the dominant definition of identity is challenged is elaborated by Wagner through his study of the Polish Revolution of the 1980s.

This competently edited volume is a significant and relevant study in the field of postcolonial discourse and inter- or transnational cultural studies in its great scope and rich heterogeneity. In its diverse range of analysis this volume of essays communicates well enough to students, scholars, researchers and critics interested in exploring new and alternative interpretations of different third spaces in transition.

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2

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