



Literatures and Cities of the Strangers

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1 / the relation between literature and space is an old history with the most characteristic cases the 19th century writers. The first fundamental assumption of this participation is that Literature is treating the most important challenges of the urban space, the new urban phenomena at the time of their creation. Therefore it can mobilize the next stage of a comprehensive theoretical approach for urban phenomena, by providing materials and tools to the contemporary currents of reflection on the city and architecture.

2/ Today a huge network of connections in all the levels of the reality embraces the entire planet, at the same time two parallel phenomena coexist: The global connection and the local disconnection. In cities connected with global networks (in the developing but also in the western countries), we observe a parallel important marginalization of the local population. Modernism and tradition clash violently, producing big spatial transformations.

3/ A paramount challenge for contemporary metropolitan centers is the presence of foreigners, a concept with different meaning from the past. The history of contemporary city cannot be conceived but as correlated with the history of immigration waves. Today the concept of foreigner does not concern exclusively the immigrant as in the past, but also the mixed origin persons, the socially excluded, the non-conform to the basic norms of urban space. The figure of the stranger opens a different perspective-point of view for analyzing the globalization phenomenon, that suggests the demolition of all kinds of frontiers, but at the same time is recreating and reproducing exclusion, and ostracisms projected in the space. On the other hand the strangers in their quality of persons living in a transitional or intermediate condition, they approach the given and natural element of the space in a way different from the perception of the native population. Therefore they are connected to the coming transformation of the space. They bear the avant gout of the future (W. Benjamin)

4 / A second fundamental assumption of this contribution is that contemporary literature, rich in displacement chronicles written by native, exiled and mixed-origin writers, with the stranger as a departing point , is renegotiating the phenomena of the contemporary urban space , drawing a new geography, but also the marks that can give to us a picture of the future in the new metropolitan centers. Writers with a pluralistic identity (Indians, African Americans writing in English... Moroccans, Algerians, Africans writing in French...) , but also native writers traversed by the conscience of the mixed character of the contemporary multicultural world, motivated by the energy and the cleverness of the intermediary , of the internal exile, of the displacement, they formulate new questions regarding simple life problems in the cities , problems that become more and more global and important in a complex world. The notion of inhabitation is changing drastically. Mobile, subject to transformations, the house returns from different itineraries to its archaic dimension, the idea and the experiment of the urban shelter. The public space of the cities is deconstructed and reconquered from strangers of every kind. New forms of sociability are emerging. New spaces of confinement in the national identity are created, miniaturized islands of national origins.. Suburbs, underground railways, pavements, parks, squares etc , are transformed in contemporary shelters, filling the gap of social cohesion in residence areas, literary reversing the use of the public space in the cities.

5 / The subject is developed with the use of representative literature texts and images, but also with exemplar cases that suggest that literature is locating and preannouncing the burning challenges of the contemporary urban space, but also can formulate new ideas and experimentations on the space of contemporary metropolitan centers.