

HERITAGE AND MEMORY STUDIES



Edited by Cristina Demaria and Patrizia Violi

Reading Memory Sites Through Signs

Hiding into Landscape

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Reading Memory Sites through Signs



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Heritage and Memory Studies

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*Edited by
Cristina Demaria
and Patrizia Violi*

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For a Semiotics of Spaces of Memories

Practices of Enunciation and Narratives from Monuments to Global Landscapes of Inheritance

Cristina Demaria and Patrizia Violi

Abstract

This chapter offers an introduction to the semiotic approach to the space of memory. After defining in what terms space is a language, we focus on two key concepts: narrativity and enunciation. The former, which should not be equated with a story or plot, is understood as the fundamental organisation of meaning, the form that structures our experiences. The latter concerns not the physical production of a text but the traces left by the enunciator in the text, and, more specifically, it may be represented by the architectural style of a building, the form of an urban plan or the display in a museum. In the second part, we present the theoretical and methodological specificities of the contributions in this volume.

Keywords: Semiotics of Space; Semiotic Methodology; Cultural Memory; Narrativity; Enunciation.

This Book

This book aims to present the most relevant concepts of semiotic methodology to a wide audience of scholars and researchers working on memory who may not be familiar with a semiotic approach. In order to do so, we have decided to focus on space, analysing different kinds of spaces, real and virtual, from cities to monuments, from architecture to urban practices, from museums to spaces represented in documentary films or imagined through digital devices. Such a choice implies two main questions: why space? And why semiotics?

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As we will briefly explain in this introduction, from a semiotic perspective space is in itself a language, or, to use Jurij Lotman's words (1992), a modelling system, capable of giving shape to the world and at the same time of being modelled by it. Space talks about our values and the structure of our society, but also, and maybe in the first place, about what we have been, about our past and the transformations it has undergone. Space therefore represents a highly privileged vantage point for the understanding of our memory of the past, as well as – as we shall see throughout the chapters of this book – of the way in which space itself produces memory, rewriting, transforming, interpreting and sometimes erasing it. Space is indeed the storage of our collective memory, where we can find and read the traces of memorial processes: no study of cultural memory can neglect the spatial traces left by it.

Why can semiotics be important to scholars working on these topics within different frameworks and even different disciplines? We believe that semiotics can offer a very useful 'toolkit' to analyse the relationship between memory and space, approaching the various problems of this particular field with a transversal and unifying methodology, thus making fruitful comparisons possible. Semiotic tools can sharpen our analysis, deepen our intuitions in a more coherent and structured framework and allow us to compare different analytical approaches. Obviously, memory studies scholars will find some familiarities with our approach and the way we analyse various spaces; however, far from being a negative element, this shows the communalities of our work within the discipline, at the same time enriching this field of study with the contribution of semiotic methodology.

In order to demonstrate the use of semiotics for this kind of analysis, we asked a number of semioticians with a long practice of research in different spatial environments to write one chapter, each analysing a specific place, using semiotic methodology. We believe that the main added value of semiotics is to provide the analyst with a set of strong methodological tools and heuristic categories that can provide a more precise, detailed and thoughtful analysis. In doing so, semiotics can shed light on the underlying structure hidden behind any given object endowed with content; it is not limited to linguistic texts.

The chapters in the book do not appear in strictly geographical order; although most of the contributions concentrate on cases related to the Italian Fascist past, the itinerary suggested privileges a criterion based on two parameters: on the one hand the analytical and theoretical tools utilised, on the other hand a typology of spaces, from concentration camps (Salerno) to monuments (Panico, Lorusso), monumental architectures

(Mazzucchelli), museums and archives (Pezzini, Sozzi), urban spaces (Marone) and mediated forms of space representation and construction, such as audio-visual (Demaria) and digital devices (Violi), concluding with an original, unusual and very distinctive analysis of the transit of objects, specifically coins, through different geographical and social spaces (Hammad). It is no coincidence that all the case studies – but for Hammad's contribution – are concerned with difficult heritage of different kinds: Italian Fascism, the Holocaust, Latin American dictatorships. This is due to the central role traumatic memories play in the construction, reconstruction and transformations of the competing memories that arise after difficult and tragic pasts, as well as the crucial relevance they acquire in what we call 'spaces of memory'.

All analyses in their different forms utilise some of the main semiotic analytical tools that will be briefly described in the following paragraphs: narrativity and enunciation in the first place, then structural semantic analysis and articulation of semantic categories, with their processes of transformation and resemantisation, as well as the notions of interpretation – with the related concepts of model and empirical users –, semiosphere and encyclopaedia.

For a Semiotic of Space

Before describing each contribution, we present a short summary of the main ideas of a semiotics of space. The starting point of a semiotic approach to space is the very basic idea that space is in itself a language: space always speaks to us of something else: social relationships, power positions, gender issues, economic hierarchies and so on. In more technical terms we could say that space is a semiotic system, that is, a system of elements correlated to given meanings, or, to use Louis Hjelmslev's (1953) terms, a function between two functors: expression and content.

Such an intuition was already present in Lévi-Strauss's (1955) well-known analysis of a Bororo village, where a first partition separates the centre – the space of men and ritual dances – from the external circle of the periphery, where women are confined. Moreover, the village is also divided orthogonally, according to the different clans who live in the same space. In this way one's position in the space of the village at the same time signifies one's gender and clan.

Other, more familiar, examples may illustrate this point: in a sports competition, when the three top athletes are awarded their prizes, they stand

on a podium that has three different heights according to their placement in the competition, so that the athlete who won the first prize always stands on the higher podium. Spatial differences signify different values, as in the seating arrangements at a highly formal dinner, where the placement of the guests is decided according to their status: the most important or influential persons sit closer to the guest of honour.

These are not exceptional cases; all spaces, with their particular morphology, shape social positions, hierarchies and social roles. Take the case of a classroom: there is a teacher's desk, generally on a raised platform to make her sit in a higher position in front of rows of desks for the students. This configuration establishes not only different statuses endowed with different power positions between teacher and students, but also different access to the right to speak and interact; in fact, it establishes an overall underlying concept of culture, knowledge and education.

It would be misleading, however, to think that the expression plan is made up only of material objects: walls, buildings, houses, artefacts, chairs, tables and so on. These are elements that imply and suggest precise ways of interaction with the users of the space, and they structure interactions among the users themselves; thus, all the actions and activities performed in a given space are also an integral part of the expression plan, which is therefore a syncretic system.¹

The content of a spatial system is the complex net of meanings that that space conveys: in a school classroom, for example, the content is the set of values that, in our culture, are related to knowledge transmission, education, discipline and so on. In a museum, the content can be the value of art, high culture or memory, as in the case of the Libeskind Museum in Berlin, here analysed by Isabella Pezzini.

Space and society mirror each other in a double relationship: society inscribes its values and norms in space and, on the other hand, space embodies and makes visible the values of society.

Each space foresees a given use which is 'embedded' in its morphology: a street is made for walking, a window to be looked through, a classroom to teach in. This foreseen usage is created by the people who design and project the space. They assume the abstract actantial role of the addresser, to which corresponds the role of the receiver, called addressee.

¹ In semiotics, a syncretic text is a text made up of many different semiotic systems, such as for example an audio-visual text, which includes words, images and music. In the case of space, the expression is a composite level, where there are objects and also people performing actions and interacting with each other.



All places have their implicit inscribed standard use, which is not only a way to act and move in that space, but also a set of allowed or disallowed behaviours: you cannot speak aloud or eat in a church, you do not kneel in a restaurant. Behaviours are manifestations of given values that are socially shared: in this way space shapes our values, beliefs, and actions.

Umberto Eco (1979) has defined the notion of Model Reader as the ideal reader who understands and actualises the interpretation intended by the author; the Model Reader should not be confused with an empirical reader; it is instead an abstract notion that could be defined as the set of implicit instructions that every text foresees for its correct interpretation.² Paralleling such a notion, we can refer to the concept of the Model User to indicate the foreseen way of using a given space, including actions, practices and behaviours. The Model User is the ideal user, who accomplishes the project embedded in a space by following the ‘instructions’ that are implicitly inscribed in it.

Real users, however, are not necessarily Model Users and do not always follow the instructions for the use of a place. We can thus have a gap between the project of a place, with its foreseen uses, and the effective uses actualised by people, as empirical real users. The practices performed by users, although not necessarily affecting the physical morphology of a place, transform its meaning, that is, its content. We call such a change in meaning resemantisation, which can be planned (top-down) or spontaneous (bottom-up). In this volume there are examples of both, in the chapters by Gianfranco Marrone and Mario Panico respectively.

Resemantisation is what often happens with historical monuments: the Coliseum in Rome was a theatre for popular entertaining shows at that time, such as those featuring Christians being devoured by lions. Today, fortunately, this function has changed into a touristic attraction. Another example is a street, made to be walked in, which becomes the venue for young people to meet, making transit almost impossible, as happens in good weather in Bologna, in the streets close to the university. This is a clear example of an unforeseen practice that spontaneously resemanticises a public area of transit into a meeting place. But a similar transformation can also happen as the result of a carefully planned decision. At the time of

2 The notion of ‘correct interpretation’ is obviously more complex than this. Especially for complex text, such as literary texts, it might not be so easy to define what is the right interpretation. If a train schedule has only one possible reading, Joyce’s *Ulysses* has many possible interpretations. There are nonetheless some interpretations that are certainly wrong. In the case of space, however, there much less complexity; it is not that difficult to see what purpose a given building or artefact has been made for.



writing, when restaurants in Italy are allowed to operate in outside spaces only because of the pandemic, many streets in our cities have completely transformed into dining places, crowded with tables and chairs. These examples show how the 'same' place can acquire many different meanings while remaining physically unchanged, and can stratify multiple senses, depending on the kind of actions performed there. From this perspective, practices are more important than material morphology.³

However, resemantisations are rarely so radical as to completely lose the original meaning of a space; more often, some properties that were central to the definition of a given space become part of its peripheral semantic field. The idea of centre and periphery comes from the seminal work of the Russian semiotician Jurij Lotman (1984), who created the term 'semiosphere' for the continuum that enables social life, in analogy with the notion of the biosphere, the continuum that makes biological survival possible. A semiosphere can be imagined as an environment, a semiotic space outside which semiosis cannot exist; it can refer both to the global space of semiosis of a given culture and to some local field of that environment.

Each semiosphere is structured around a more culturally stable centre and a more variable and fluctuant periphery. Spatial resemantisation can affect the basic meaning of a place, moving some elements or functions that were previously in the centre towards the periphery of the semiosphere. The information relegated to the periphery does not disappear completely but remains available for further reattribution of sense. Eco (1979) describes this phenomenon as *narcotisation*; applied to space, this means that an original function can always be restored in time; for example, a street which was transformed into an open-air restaurant can return to its original content of a thoroughfare.

The widely diffused phenomenon of resemantisation shows that, in a spatial system, the correlation of expression and content is not fixed – practices and users' habits can modify the meaning of any place, together with the system of values connected to that particular place. This appears very clearly in the case of so-called 'contested heritage': monuments erected to celebrate a political regime and its system of values that become unacceptable when those values change, as happened with the Nazi-Fascist or Soviet regimes. At that point, monuments can be resemanticised in various ways. In this volume, three chapters deal with the difficult heritage of Fascist monuments and architecture: Mario Panico shows how bottom-up

3 This very idea can be found in de Certeau (1984) and is here discussed in Daniele Salerno's chapter.



protest practices trigger a resemantisation of monuments related to the memory of the Italian colonial past, Anna Maria Lorusso analyses a case of ‘top-down’ resemantisation, and Francesco Mazzucchelli analyses the transformations of Fascist monuments in Italy, addressing the issue of dissonant and difficult heritage.

The continuous process of rewriting and transforming the uses and meanings of places makes space a semiotic *system with a variable signification*, an unstable and changeable system whose sense is never rigidly defined, where different practices and actions continuously modify its content.

Finally, two important semiotic concepts – narrativity and enunciation – are widely used in the semiotic analysis of space. The notion of narrativity is probably one of the most basic concepts of the semiotic methodology: it constitutes the fundamental organisation of meaning, the form that structures and gives sense to all our experiences. Narrativity is not limited to novels or stories, but underlines all kinds of texts, from scientific treatises to cooking recipes, and it represents the deeper structure of semiotic objects.

Space, too, can be analysed from this perspective. As we have already noted, any constructed portion of space, whether a single building or the design of an entire city, presupposes an addresser: the abstract instance – be it a single person, a group of individuals or an institution – that wants, designs and produces that space, foreseeing a given use for it. The functional role of the addresser underlies the first phase of any narrative, setting the goal and the motivation for the following action. This phase is called ‘manipulation’, which should not be interpreted in its usual meaning but as the attempt to make another subject (the addressee) perform a given action. Manipulation thus is more than simple communication between subjects: rather, it is causing another subject to do something. For example, in a supermarket, the design of the space may suggest a given path among the various sections of the place from the entrance to the exit, ‘forcing’ people to follow it. In this case, we could say that the users are ‘manipulated’ in order to perform the sequence of actions foreseen for them. Another example is the case of a museum, analysed by Isabella Pezzini: here the manipulation by the addresser consists of making the addressee perform the visit according to the path and modalities foreseen for that action.

In the case of space, the manipulation by the addresser concerns the function and use of that space; the addresser inscribes in the space the instructions for its ‘correct’ or intended use, which, as we saw, the addressee can follow or not, giving rise to a set of different actions, possible variants in the ‘story’ of the place. The action – called ‘performance’ – represents the core of the narrative structure and can be seen as the use of a space,

which can be either the realisation of the foreseen use or an alternative use, one which deviates from the intended one. Finally, the performance can be sanctioned, in a positive or in a negative way; the 'sanction' represents the last phase of the narrative schema.

As an example, we could think of a beach in Italy, with its chairs and umbrellas, where people (the addressee) are expected to pay, sit and enjoy their time at the sea. This is the foreseen use of the beach, but other 'deviant' uses are possible. Somebody can sit without paying, bringing their own chairs: such behaviour would be negatively sanctioned, and the person would be forced to leave. It is frequent, on Italian beaches, to see immigrants who try to sell cheap merchandise to holiday-makers. This is not a foreseen use of the beach, and it is sometimes tolerated and sometimes not. When peddlers are banned, this is a negative sanction. As such an example shows, the 'meaning' of a given place can vary greatly, depending on whether it is a leisure site or our working place.

Finally, we consider the semiotic notion of enunciation, which should not be understood here as the physical production of a text (the physical utterance in a spoken discourse, or the act of writing in a written text) but as the traces left by the enunciator in the text itself, through the use, for example, of the first or third person. In relation to space, enunciation can be represented by the architectonic style of a building, by the form of a city plan, by an exhibition in a museum, or by the different choices on how to set up a place of memory, as discussed here in Paola Sozzi's chapter, where multiple enunciators are present in the same space, with their various voices, displaying different perspectives of the very same place. In space, too, there can be a form of enunciation that is in line with the values and style of the enunciator, a kind of 'first person' – as is the case in some Fascist buildings – or a form of distancing in what parallels a third-person voice in speech. Examples of these cases are analysed in Francesco Mazzucchelli's chapter.

So far, we have sketched a synthetic picture of the most relevant concepts of classical semiotic theory developed especially between the 1960s and the 1990s. However, since then, semiotics has developed significantly, opening up to new fields of inquiry and also, to some extent, to methodological innovations.

Probably the most important transformation has been the shift of attention from pure systemic structure to the temporal dimension of semiosis: at its foundation, semiotics was mainly concerned with the synchronic dimension of sign systems, that is, their structural organisation in a given moment, without taking into account the changes to which sign systems

are subjected over time. Contemporary semiotic inquiries, on the contrary, are characterised by widespread attention to the diachronic dimension of semiotic processes, as the growing interest in the study of memory processes shows.

New attention has been accorded to historical, cultural and social phenomena in contemporary semiotic research, widening the field from the strictly textual – especially literary – analysis that prevailed in the 1970s. The reading of Jurij Lotman's cultural semiotic has certainly been an important influence on this turn, but it is not the only factor. New fields of inquiry have been opened and new branches of the discipline explored. Sociosemiotics has opened the field to the investigations of social interactions and practices, rediscovering, in some way, the original inspiration that lay at the basis of Saussure's foundational work, who defined la *sémiologie* as the study of the social life of signs.

The combination of a diachronic dimension and socio-cultural concerns has widened the range of semiotic objects to be considered well beyond traditional texts, incorporating the inquiry of social practices and all forms of experience, with increasing attention being paid to the bodily basis of sense.

Perception and sensory experience are no longer considered to be purely physiological processes outside the realm of semiosis, and their complex structuring of our processes of sense making have been revealed, together with their constitutive links to feelings, emotions, affects and passions.

The present work can be seen in at least two ways as a result of a similar cultural turn. First, all the case studies discussed here deal, from different angles, with memory and forms of remembering where the diachronic dimension is central. Secondly, they focus on space, and the way in which space is transformed, inhabited and used to transmit the past through various forms of artefacts. From monuments to urban places, from museums to new technological devices, the underlying basic assumption is that space is first and foremost where our cultural memories leave their traces.

Contributions to the Volume

The volume opens with an essay centred on a semiotic reinterpretation of Pierre Nora's seminal category of *lieu de mémoire*, as a way of constructing and intertwining memories and spaces. In 'Stories that Shape Spatialities. *Lieu* and *Milieu de Mémoire* through the Lens of Narrativity', Daniele Salerno argues that, in Nora's conceptualisation of *lieux de mémoire*, an acknowledgment is lacking of the coexistence of a plurality of meanings and experiences

underlining the practices of production, interpretation and consumption of any space of memory. However, in a semiotic perspective, spaces are the result of an act of polysemic, and pluri-isotopic construction carried out by different actors, that is, of a dynamic and on-going process that the concept of *lieu de mémoire*, as an interpretative category, somehow obscures. A semiotic investigation, and, specifically, the category of narrativity as one of its main tools, can indeed shed light on how a spatial dimension may bear witness to the multiple ways a past is produced, interpreted and lived. Salerno's essay thus discusses how spatiality is always already dynamised by different practices and narratives that may either follow established itineraries and rituals, or propose new interpretations, new paths and new subject positions and actantial roles that are able to destabilise, and sometimes even disrupt, the fixed and mnemonic meanings of a place as a space of memory. These meanings are activated by the contexts and frames that are at play within a place in a given historical and political time, thus following not only a *logic of location* but also a *logic of action*. By reinterpreting Nora's dichotomy *milieu* vs *lieu*, Salerno proposes two semiotic models of spatiality: the spatiality of position (*lieu*) and the spatiality of situation (*milieu*), applying them to the analysis of the former Italian transit camp of Fossoli – the camp where Primo Levi was detained before his journey to Auschwitz – and of its configuration both as a *lieu*, and as a *milieu*, of memory.

The ways in which new narratives and practices of interpreting and experiencing spaces of memory may be aimed at disrupting their established and institutional meanings are further explored in Mario Panico's 'Interpretation and Use of Memory. How Practices Can Change the Meanings of Monuments'. In thinking of a monument both as an act of enunciation and as a hub of pedestrian re-enunciations, Panico here concentrates on the study of protest practices developed around two monuments built to celebrate figures tied to the Italian Fascist and colonialist past, as if it were a time worthy of being remembered. Drawing from Umberto Eco's semiotic theory, the general aim of his chapter is to investigate forms and actions of 'memory reversal', that is, of resemantisation of monuments that conceal Fascist Italy's troubling past in Africa. By exploring how protest practices create the possibility to investigate different types of subjectivity that can be 'activated' by the monumental space, the essay also demonstrates how their analysis may deepen the understanding of the cultural mechanisms of magnification or narcotisation of historical events; to use Eco's terms, of their freezing or thawing. Often, these mechanisms remain 'unsaid' by the monument, either because of the economy of the monument's enunciation,

or due to choices that led to the ideological filtering of memory as the result of cultural modalities of cancelation, cross-reference and latency of information. As Panico's reading convincingly shows, acts of forgetfulness are not always the result of political manipulation, but of practices of filtering that are necessary in order to prevent cultures from being saturated with irrelevant details that can otherwise be deduced at the contextual level, or in the cooperation between the addresser of the values inscribed in the monument and its many addressees.

By continuing the investigation of monuments as receptacles of conflicting and competing acts of remembrance, Anna Maria Lorusso dwells on yet another example of uncomfortable memories of Fascist Italy, focusing in her article on the case of Bigio of Brescia, a sculpture commissioned in the early 1930s by Marcello Piacentini, one of the most important architects of the Fascist period. Representing, through a colossal male body, both the ideals of the vigour of victory and the new virility promoted by Fascist regime, the Bigio was removed from Piazza della Vittoria – the main square of the northern Italian town of Brescia – in 1945, and never returned to its place. Yet, although the sculpture was removed, the debate around it has never blown over, and continues today. However, the vicissitudes of its history, along with the public debate about its meanings, uses and processes of symbolisation, have moved beyond the binary division between a pro-Fascist and an anti-Fascist position. Lorusso explores this debate and its complex instances with the help of the category of 'ideology' as formulated by Eco in *A Theory of Semiotics* (1975), in which ideology is a form of rhetoric, a strategic organisation of an 'interested' discourse that selects and presents its arguments in order 'to hide the contradictory nature of one's own semantic-cultural system', that is, what Eco calls 'encyclopaedia'. Lorusso thus retraces the positions for and against the statue itself, along with its proper location, that are still competing within different discursive spheres, each centred on a different axiology, a different system of value: from that of political discourse, which oscillates between pride (the right wing) and shame (the left wing) and that of aesthetic discourse, which celebrates the expressive and symbolic force of the sculpture, to its cultural representativeness and the instances promoted by what could be called a 'civic discourse' that appeals also to monetary values. What the article very thoroughly demonstrates is that the history of this *cumbersome* and *immeasurable* monument, which has been *uncomfortable* from the time it was erected – both Fascist and popular, loved and mocked – points to memory policies and memorial solutions that can never be considered adequately without taking into account their internal contradictions and the different historical contexts



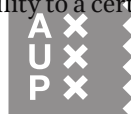
that accompany any monument's life, both in actual and material spaces, and in competing discursive and immaterial spheres.

In his chapter on 'What Does Fascist Architecture Still Have to Tell Us? Preservation of Contested Heritage as a Strategy of Re-Enunciation and "Voice Remodulation"', Francesco Mazzucchelli, too, addresses the notions of dissonant and difficult heritage, reframing them through the semiotic theory of enunciation that we presented at the beginning of this introduction and that Mazzucchelli here further expands. He starts from the idea that architecture, especially ideological and totalitarian architecture, owns a peculiar 'voice', through which it addresses its users. Any subsequent work of restoration or refurbishment of these architectures is then an (implicit or explicit, conscious or unaware) attempt at 're-modulating' this voice and transforming the relationship between the building itself (as a subject) and its user. This idea is used to analyse some Fascist buildings in Italy and their transformations after the fall of the regime. The case studies explored are examples of monumental architecture built in Italy during the Fascist period and restored or refurbished in the last few decades, and Mazzucchelli attempts to describe specific and controversial cases of 'difficult heritage management' in Italy. The essay effectively shows how the notion of enunciation might be an extremely useful tool to differentiate among the diverse meaning effects generated by different solutions of restoration of the original architecture, aimed at resemanticising and transforming its ideological narrative. Four forms of enunciational re-modulation are identified – silencing, preserving, re-writing, engaging – depending on how the new enunciation overlaps the previous (ideological) one.

Isabella Pezzini's essay brings us from the uncomfortable memories of Fascist Italy to the exploration of what, for decades, has been the paradigm of any discussion of traumatic memory and the Holocaust, by examining two spaces of remembrance built in the urban area that was the heart of the Nazi regime: the Jewish Museum designed by Daniel Libeskind, and the Memorial conceived by Peter Eisenman, both in Berlin. These two renowned *milieux de mémoire*, to go back to Salerno's chapter, enshrine the same story with a different slant, due to the very diverse architectural 'gestures' inscribed in their design, the type of urban memory space they represent and the kind of interpretation they are subjected to. Furthermore, Pezzini's essay introduces a methodological and theoretical aspect that is further discussed in Paola Sozzi's article, that of the museum as a complex cultural unit, as a *semiosphere*: a place of knowledge that expresses some of the values that characterise the cultural perspective of a society towards, in this case, the Shoah, and its political and aesthetic manifestations in the country of

the perpetrators. In investigating the relationship between identity and memory, and in asking what identity and what memory these two spaces stand for, Pezzini elaborates Paul Ricœur's contribution to the topic by focussing on the *narrative* dimension through which this relationship can be re-articulated over time. The identity of a place, and the memory in which it is rooted, can in fact be conceived both as permanence and repetition of a more stable nucleus of characters, recognisable through time (identity as *idem*), but also by a dynamic and contractual aspect, through which a place reconfirms its very identity (as *ipse*), through continuous acts of commitment. These acts ensure the coherence and credibility of interior and exterior images that form the cultural heritage (both material and immaterial) of a museum, as much as that of a memorial. Starting from this theoretical background, the essay discusses how these two very different spaces may activate the competences and attitudes of their visitor/Model User, that is, her knowledge, desire and possibilities to move, see and feel. The visitor here becomes the subject of a story within which she should, or must, perform certain type of actions, and experiences definite emotions. The museum and the memorial can be thus considered as particular kinds of *device* that manipulate all visitors, albeit with different effects: the Jewish Museum a very complex, highly regulated and prescriptive 'affective' machine; Eisenman's memorial a more exposed and sober funereal maze. Both, however, devise a structured space that posits the bodily interaction with its visitors as an 'inescapable assumption', of its effectiveness as well as its interest as a place of remembrance.

In Paola Sozzi's 'Making Space for Memory. Collective Enunciation in the Provincial Memory Archive of Córdoba, Argentina', we enter another museum and audio-visual archive of testimonies, here about Argentina's past, but one that tells another story, that of another time and another continent, but also that of a space that can be considered as a trauma site. During the military dictatorship that ravaged Argentina from 1976 to 1983 with its state terrorism, the museum now known as the Provincial Memory Archive housed the Córdoba police's intelligence department, which operated as a clandestine centre of detention and torture. It is thus a place materially connected to the memory of the atrocities committed by the dictatorship, whose material traces are displayed; but it is also a public space that nowadays maintains deep bonds with activism, performative arts and social practices of elaboration of national and local collective grief. The article analyses all these peculiar past and present connections by focusing on how the museum 'makes space for memory', not just by giving a material, social and cultural visibility to a certain narrative of the Argentine past, but



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also by transmitting this past thanks to the implementation of a very specific enunciation strategy, in which *what* is said becomes significant in light of *who* says it, and *how* it is said. The chapter thus also problematises the very positions of the addresser and addressee of a space of memory, along with the – sometimes too static and homogeneous – figure of the victim. The Cordoba Museum is indeed envisaged by its public as a safe space, a secure milieu where many different voices and identities meet, giving birth to a dynamic, collective and inclusive recounting of the period also known as the Dirty War, which saw the disappearance of thirty thousand people labelled as supposed ‘enemies of the state’. In the Provincial Memory Archive, the relatives of the victims, the exiled and the survivors tell their stories from a different portion of space, providing not only different experiences and emotions for the visitors, but, considering this very polyphony of voices, also a sense of reliability and credibility. In sum, the museum, the way it has been designed – its ‘voice’, to use Mazzucchelli’s term – produces a powerful reality effect of both the inscribed memories and the space in which they are contained.

‘Ruins of War. The Green Sea and the Mysterious Island’, Gianfranco Marrone’s essay, brings us back to Italy, specifically to the sea front promenade in Palermo in Sicily known as the Foro Italico, where the debris of the Second World War’s first carpet bombing in Italy lay for six decades. The solution was meant to be provisional, but, as the author recalls, ‘there was simply so much rubble, and no one was concerned about moving it elsewhere.’ The rubble remained there as a weird and troubling extension of the city, an enormous new space with no specified use – a *terrain vague* – until the end of the twentieth century, when it was reinvented first by migrants in search of public spaces to gather and socialise, and later by the local government, which commissioned the intervention of the architect Italo Rota, who defined its borders by turning it into a green lawn next to the sea. In wondering how we can read and classify the space of the Foro Italico, Marrone reconstructs the complex genealogy of this ambivalent urban area in Palermo by utilising the semiotic square, an elementary structure of signification that, in this case, articulates and expands the semantic category that opposes nature and culture, the sea and the city: to which of these domains does the Foro Italico belong? Or was it neither culture nor nature when it was a mass of rubble? Can we today think of the green lawn as a continuation of nature into the urban space? In answering these questions, the essay explores how the invisible memory of war has been inscribed, or, better, concealed, and substituted by a different kind of cultural heritage, tracing all the phases through which a liminal space such as this one has

been transformed both into a 'natural' place defined by culture, and into a cultural place that mimes the nature it borders. As it explores the semiotic operations at stake in each phase of the existence and use of Foro Italico up to the present, the author also meditates on how this former accumulation of rubble and ruins of war remains a sort of 'mysterious island', a third space that is not once and for all 'closed', and is not natural. At the same time, the Foro Italico is a space where peaceful co-habitation and dialogue between migrants and locals are now possible, and where a new culture of co-existence, and new memories, can find their place between the sea and the city, to which they finally start to belong.

Cristina Demaria's 'Turning Spaces of Memory into *Memoryscapes*: Cinema as Counter-monument in Jonathan Perel's *El Predio* and *Tabula Rasa*', turns our attention from the investigation of actual and material spaces and their semiotic functioning to their mediation and remediation through languages and technologies of representation, such as those of documentary cinema. The essay questions not only how cinema can turn a space into a mediated landscape of memory, how it can interrogate *what* is remembered *there*, but also whether the role of cinema could be that of a monument or even of a counter-monument. Returning to post-dictatorship Argentina, the author analyses the ways in which the ESMA Space for Memory and for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights, another former clandestine centre of detention and torture, located in Buenos Aires, is framed by two documentary films directed by Jonathan Perel. Both films stand as distinct recordings of the construction of ESMA as a space of and for memory, turning this loaded space into a perturbing cinematic landscape that in turn calls into question the identity of the place it depicts. In producing such a landscape, both documentaries represent a critique of monumentality in their very construction of cinematic time and space, depicting a *milieu* where affect becomes available, and *where* memory itself is displaced, questioned and dispersed, re-inscribed in small details and sounds; avoiding adding up its fragments to an easy 'reconciliation'. As the author argues, this is why these two documentaries can stand as counter-monuments: not so much since they take their place in the landscape but because they provoke and challenge the very place they recount, interrupting its spatial continuity and the historical teleology of post-dictatorial narratives of transition.

Testimonies of another nearby dictatorship – Chile – and its places of horror, gathered during a post-dictatorial transition thanks to the construction of a virtual environment through which they can be transmitted, heard and experienced, are at the centre of Patrizia Violi's analysis of *AppRecuerdos* in Santiago, a challenging proposal for new ways to imagine and explore an

urban landscape and its memories. The application contains 129 recorded files offering recordings of different kinds of narrative (songs and official speeches, personal and anonymous short narratives) of episodes from the years of Pinochet's dictatorship, narrated in the first person by someone directly involved in the event. Every narrative is linked to a specific location in the centre of Santiago, and a recording of it is automatically activated as the user passes by with the app turned on. The app contains a map that shows where each recording can be listened to. This contribution deals not simply with a mediated space of memory or the recreation of an audio-visual landscape, but with the opportunities that contemporary digital devices present to turn places into virtual spaces – suspended between the past they recount and the present in which they are experienced – that literally start to speak their various embedded memories.

Stratifying the temporalities of the urban space and mixing personal experiences and historical truth, the app and its voices re-signify the memories of Santiago's many spaces of horror, thus creating an interstitial, transitional space, which does not correspond to any specific legal status, and whose truth escapes a strict verification criterion. Violi's essay hence is also a meditation on how smart cities and the technologies on which they are built can be turned into actual political practices, into ways to unveil the dramatic memories that are hidden under the surface of an urban landscape such as that of Santiago de Chile. As the author argues, AppRecuerdos is a political and memorial creation that re-writes and enforces a new gaze on urban space, adding layers to what is visible and audible, opening it up to the intertwining of the private and the public, the personal and the political, individual experience and history, towards a form of social and political engagement with the past and the spaces – virtual and material – through which we re-live it.

The volume concludes with Manar Hammad's '500,000 Dirhams in Scandinavia, from Mobile Silver to Land Rent. A Semiotic Analysis', an essay that differs greatly from the previous chapters in scope, object, the space it investigates and the kind of history it seeks to reconstruct and illustrate. It stands out therefore as an extremely well-informed example of how a semiotics of space can be thought of not only as a tool to describe actual sites of memory, but also as a sound method to develop an archaeology and a genealogy of past trajectories of migrations and exchanges between continents, cultures, costumes and religions. Hammad's dense, detailed and meticulous essay originates in the author's discovery that many Scandinavian museums had very large collections of silver dirhams minted in *Dar al-Islam* in their vaults, raising questions about the mechanisms and the

actors responsible for the transfer and hoarding of such coins. Attempting to interpret the concentration of these coins and their hoarding, Hammad enlarges the domain of a spatial semiotics investigation, here supported by a large quantity of historical data (economic, numismatic, anthropological and political). The result is an accurate and ‘thick’ semiotic reading that sheds light on the correspondences between material spaces and cultural and social spaces. As the first semiotician to promote a variant of spatial semiotics based on the interaction of human actors with the built environment, objects and space of movement, Hammad proposes exploring yet another level, that of the formal syntactic symmetry of physical space and social space, and, in between, the economic space where objects circulated between subjects. All these spaces are characterised by imbricated and meaningful interactions and signifying practices related to deep values and to the transformations of Scandinavian society, which account for behaviours with respect to its lands and silver. The result of Hammad’s reading is a highly original and innovative study that raises questions on a continental scale, as it attempts to construct a semantic micro-universe in which groups of hoards and the maritime routes that permitted the accumulation of silver coins from *Dar al-Islam* are treated as a form of spatial enunciation, that is, a non-verbal enunciation involving the Scandinavian society in relation to both its internal territories and distant centres of influence. Although, as the author himself admits, his entire analysis remains a hypothetical construction that remains to be validated by comparison with archaeological and historical data, it nevertheless presents a challenging reconstruction of a social, cultural and economic space of inheritance and memory, stemming from the ‘voices’ and the narratives told by material objects and archaeological remains.

Even though they are devoted to different kinds of case studies, to diverse typologies of spaces and to their varied forms of conceptualisation, mediation and re-mediation, all the chapters in this volume offer a detailed and coherent perspective on how memory is created, debated, mobilised and constantly challenged once it is inscribed into places. It is a semiotic perspective that may provide the practitioners of memory studies with apt and effective tools to enrich our understanding of the meanings – the narratives and the frames – that underlie memory sites: their design and the practices of their material and immaterial production and use, which point to diachronic and synchronic strategies of resemantisation and enunciation, to the working and re-working of specific ideologies and to the narrative structures that are inscribed in their itinerary or are re-invented by their users. Guided by a semiotic methodology, the reflections that follow show how every place

is the result of stratified spaces and the interaction between many actors, logics and temporalities that play with its borders, with the values that it is designed to transmit, with the relationship that it establishes with its users and vice versa. From the transition camp of Fossoli (Italy) to the social and economic spaces of pre-modern Scandinavia, passing monuments and museums along the way, including their media- and new media-re-designed experience and representation, our ever-changing landscape of memory, with its links to national and international contexts, politics of memory and identity, is here interrogated, scrutinised and understood in new ways, as is the past that is remembered there.

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