UNITY IN DIVERSITY –THE ATTRIBUTE OF MAJOR SEMIOSIC NON-VERBAL CONSTRUCTIONS

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Abstract

The vast domain of the gardens – defined from a semiotic perspective as major semiosic non-verbal constructions, is usually made up of heterogenous elements connected to each other through various relationships, so that to create a meaningful whole. The heterogenous elements – be they natural or artificial, created by people– are selected, arranged, combined and ordered in a targeted manner to form a coherent whole, producing a unity in diversity – the attribute or the defining characteristic of any garden. The constitutive elements are involved in different levels of communication, starting from biological communication up to cultural symbolism, from personal cognition up to social identities, enabling a better understanding of the garden's design, related to the multitude of social, philosophical, religious, and cultural discourses, as well as the traditions which give them a meaning. The gardens represent a space of convergence where nature and culture (art, science, techniques) intertwine, complementing each other, creating a whole, in other words a unity in diversity.

Key words: spatial semiological structure, non-verbal communication, cultural symbolism

Any garden is the result of man's action, as he projects and designs it, but also of the nature's involvement, so we can say that the garden is a cultural alive phenomenon, continuously modifying itself, exhibiting a high semiotic heterogenousness. The art of gardening produces significant semiological structures being a combinatorial art, an art which is born fromand within the tension between art and nature. Starting from the definitions of the two founding poles of the garden: culture and nature, the paper aims to highlight the way in which the particular elements, arrangements or parts of the garden have been assembled and connected to form a coherent, meaningful whole, providing that unity in diversity which is present in almost any major semiosic non-verbal construction.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In specialized literature assigned to biosemiotics, it has been evidenced that any relationship between a living organism and its environment is always a semiotic one, so gardens have been considered by (bio)semioticians asmajor semiosic non-verbal constructions, made up of heterogenous elements, with a complex semiotic potential, connected to each other through various intrinsic meaningful correlations to create a significant whole. Gardens can differ enormously in appearance and purpose: they can be large or small, geometric or natural, bound or unbound, wild or tamed, with flowers or without. They can contain blossoms, trees, shrubs, flowers, lawn, rocks, sand, fountains, canals, ponds, temples, ruins, follies, statues, and other elements semiotically interelated, or can contain none of these.

Each elementfrom a garden usually holds an individual symbolic content.This is why it is not enough to understand the garden itself as simply a combination of parts. The aesthetic principles are embedded in the spiritual and intellectual experience.The garden may be considered a spatial structure or a stage which facilitates a dialogue between nature and culture, in other words a place of communication between people and nature, or humanity and universe, where art, science, and nature become most intimately interlocked.

Taking a historical perspective and examining the development of garden art, we can assume that as a cultural phenomenon, this spatial entity organized by people, may involve a combined semiotic approach, unifyingSaussurian and Peircean semiotic paradigms. Regardless of the ancient time or modern period, through its gardens, each civilization has expressed its own image about happiness and desire to live in a beautiful natural environment. "Garden - making is a significant activity in man's pursuit for a happy life. East and West alike, over thousands of years,

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different people had been performing this practice, which has formed an individual subject of art and science". (*Chou W*.,1993).

We have already mentioned that gardens have two founding poles: culture and nature. What does culture mean? How can we define nature? We can hardly give firm answers to these questions. The etymology of the modern term "culture" has a classical origin. In English, the word "culture" is based on a term used by Cicero (106 BC – 43 BC), in his *Tusculan Disputations*, meaning the cultivation of the soul or *"cultura animi"*. Using an agricultural metaphor, the Roman philosopherwanted to describe the development of philosophical soul which was understood teleologically as the one natural highest possible ideal for human development. To understand better what we mean by garden as a *cultural* phenomenon, here are some definitions of culture as we have found in the dictionaries, but nevertheless culture is more than the sum of its definitions.

Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.

Culture is a way of life of a group of people - the behaviors, beliefs, values, and *symbols* that are passed along by *communication* and imitation from one generation to the next.

Culture is *symbolic communication*. Some of its *symbols* include a group's skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, and motives. The meanings of the *symbols* are learned and deliberately perpetuated in a society through its institutions.

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and *transmitted* by *symbols,* constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts.

Semiotics of culture was of particular interest for linguists and semioticians from the Tartu School (Estonia), who viewed culture as a hierarchical semiotic system consisting ofa set of functions correlated to it. The study received a research ground also in Japan where the idea that culture and nature should not be contrasted and contradicted but rather harmonized. From semiotic perspective, culture may be defined as a type of human symbolic activity, creation of signs and a way of giving meaning to everything around, in other words culture is understood as a system of symbols or meaningful signs.

From the definitions presented abovetwo outstanding aspects should be highlited: 1) culture means communication and communication is culture; 2) culture represents a system of symbols or meaningful correlated signs.

Speaking about the other founding pole of the garden – the nature, within the various uses of the word, in the broadest sense, Nature is the natural, physical, or material world or universe.

In his paper, *Semiotic ecology: different natures in the semiosphere*, (1998), Kalevi Kull, a well known biosemiotics professor at the University of Tartu, Estonia,has pointed out that without understanding the semiotic mechanisms which determine the place of nature in different cultures, one has little hope of solving many serious environmental problems, and of finding the stable place of culture in nature. Kull Kalevi speaks about the "multiple natures" and he delimits or splits nature in various ways. Nature is not unique, there is not one nature, but several. When living with nature we cannot avoid the building of a second nature and the replacing of the first According to the Estonian biosemiotician, Zero nature is nature itself (e.g., absolute wilderness). First nature is the nature as we see, identify, describe and interpret it. The second nature is changing as a result of "material processes" again, this is a "material translation "in the form of true semiotic translation, since it interconnects the zero and the first (or third), controlling the zero nature on the basis of the imaginary nature.The third nature is a virtual nature, as it exists in art and science.The third nature is entirely theoretical or artistic, non-natural nature-like nature, built on the basis of the first (or third itself) with the help of the second. The Estonian biosemiotician Kalevi Kull assumes that nature is a complex of processes and not a pattern.This aspect may be considered as an example of unity in diversity as an attribute of any major semiosic non-verbal construction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In his work *Semiotic ecology: different natures in the semiosphere*, 1998, Kalevi Kull has stated thatwhen people apply certain models, or certain general linguistic patterns upon nature "we have in view the building of second nature". This can be easily demonstrated when considering the notions used to describe gardens. The rules of "order"can be seen as belonging to (and coming from) certain traditions of gardening schools. However, these are probably something much deeper, since regardless of the particular school, the rules always apply idealised forms to nature. Namely, rules like these originate from the discretisised descriptions of nature, from the linguistic nature, as limited by the general mechanisms of perception and operation.

If garden and landscape design is concerned with the relations between humankind and nature, it is largely determined by one or the other of the conflicting philosophies about how human beings do or should relate to nature. Specialized literature about garden art has emphasized different attitudes towards nature reflected in Eastern and Western

gardening.The difference is mostly subjected to different gardening ideas with the infiltration of philosophical foundation, aesthetic ideology and cultural background, which reflects the evolution of a nation's view of nature, life and world. The relationships between humans and nature are always connected to deep cultural processes.Gardens, though to a great extent depend on nature, are the creation of mankind. Therefore, mankind's thought, especially their attitude towards nature has full expression in the styles of gardens. In ancient times, mankind lived harmoniously with nature, either in East or West.However, mankind's aesthetics changed profoundly in that the development of productive forces enabled mankind to overcome nature, making mankind go against nature. Human beings tended to believe that "man dominates nature" and "mankind is the dictator of nature", showing man's contempt for nature. In this respect, human beings separated themselves from nature and went to the opposite direction to realize their existence. The Western classic gardens of geometrical style exemplified this trend of thought. East Asian traditional philosophy, conversely, pursued harmony between mankind and nature. On this basis, the garden makers in the East (we have in view especially Chinese gardens), at the very beginning, regarded beautiful nature as an aesthetic object, and their aim was "to study from nature, to recreate through artistic sublimation", creating landscape gardens.(Zhou Wuzhon, 2005) Harmony between man and nature - one of the themes of sustainability - was an integral part of the philosophy and way of life of the ancient cultures of Japan, China, and other far-eastern counteries. This is reflected in their traditional styles of garden design, and still has an impact on their modern societies. East Asiangarden is inspired by the notion of humans as a part of nature.The garden respects nature: the nature cannot be controlled or changed, because nature has its own law and its ongoing track. Nature is always the ideal one must strive for in an Eastern garden. Nothing overly fancy or against the natural flow we see in nature will fit well in such a garden. East Asian gardens demonstrate the wisdom, experience and the mystery, the unique relation between man and nature, when the human being is able to improve the nature, by showing its essence, by not pressuring, but relating to its laws. The Eastern garden promotes natural beauty, focusing on the beauty of nature. Most often Eastern garden making is characterized by freedom, change and winding. It originates from nature, but goes beyond nature. It integrates perfectly artificial beauty with natural beauty, demonstratingpeople's profound understanding and appreciation of natural beauty.

The Eastern garden is intended to engage the viewer in an elevated, transcendental, level of engagement. From the beginning of garden making, this interaction between viewer and garden, has been one of the driving forces in the creation of the Japanese gardens. Without this pronounced concern of the garden-makers, the gardens would have become relatively sterile spaces, filled with grand artifice, but lacking soul. The use of symbolism in the gardens is intended to provide a certain language of engagement, formulating a common ground between viewer and garden. (Ketchell R., 2015).

The Western traditional nature philosophy believes that man can conquer nature, emphasizing the idea that humans are nature's masters. The Western gardens demonstrate man's ability to tame and control nature, or the triumph of man over the environment, and the new scientific understanding of space as infinite. For example Versailles, in its gardens and palace, communicates a visual story of power of Louis XIV. It is a symbol of the system of absolute monarchy, which Louis XIV espoused.

Western-style gardens pay attention to architectural order and organization of geometric patterns, presenting the style of uniform layout and order. The line and geometry have been thought as the aesthetic standard. With neat, precise, and uniform expression of art, Western-style gardens stress the beauty of artificial creation and skills of mankind. The garden style dominating the Western European continent was geometrical style, though there once were various others. In the layout of a garden, geometrical style emphasized on the axial symmetry of geometrical patterns-even flowers and plants are regularly trimmed into geometrical symmetry. The style laid emphasis on artificial beauty or geometrical beauty, rather than natural beauty.

Due to the differences in natural conditions, historical origins, social environments, cultural backgrounds and religious factors, the gardens inthe East and the West developed in a diametrically opposite way from the very beginning. The former has been seeking natural beauty, and the later was in pursuit of artificial beauty.

CONCLUSIONS

Gardens are a place where culture and nature combine to form a single entity, a place where different cultures can co-exist,providing that unity in diversity which is present in almost any major semiosic non-verbal construction.The specific

organization of the garden space within its natural environment contributes to a different aura for each garden. In this way, the particular implementation of the elements contributes to a unique experience for each visitor.Most gardens consist of a mix of natural (flora, fauna, soil, water, air and light),and constructed elements (paths, patios, decking, sculptures, systems for drainage, lights and buildings, but also living constructions such as flower beds, ponds and lawn) although even very "natural" gardens are always an inherently artificial creation, which is in fact"the second nature".

It must also be remembered that gardens are always a work in progress, never a finished production, so that the individual elements one encounters today may not have been part of the original design, and may not be in the future. The heterogenous elements (natural and artificial), are selected, arranged, combined and ordered in a targeted manner to form a coherent wholeand are involved in different levels of communication, starting from biological communication up to cultural symbolism, producing a unity in diversity – the defining characteristic of any garden. In a garden the communicative processes are achieved through a wide range of sign systems: iconic, indexical and conventional (symbolical). To illustrate cultural symbolism we may use as an example the dry garden, or flat garden, which is perhaps the most well-known style of Japanese garden. In this garden, pebbles are used to suggest water, and ripples are suggested by lines made by raking. Several upright boulders are typically placed inside the pebbled area, suggesting islands. Each elementfrom an Eastern garden usually holds an individual symbolic content. For instance, in the Chinese gardens, the rocks, mountains, trees, cloud, and wind were all endowed with spirit, which for Chinese people was a type of energy that flowed through all elements of the universe. Specific spirits were also believed to live in wild and sacred areas, and the spirits of the ancestors were believed to play an active role in day-to-day life. Speaking about the symbolism of the Japanese garden, Robert Ketchell says: " the garden was a creation that proceeds from the idea of concentrating, refining, condensing the elements of Nature, to recreate Nature in a supercharged form. In doing so the garden is intended to act a filter, removing the impurities (stresses) of daily existence, and rekindling a positive charge or energy within the viewer. The garden acts as a healing or restorative space, protecting and nurturing the household and the occupants" .

These lines underline the fact that Nature is not unique, there is not one nature, but several (multiple natures). We may consider this aspect as anexample ofunity in diversity: the first nature is nature as filtered via human semiosis, through the interpretations in our social and personal knowledge; second nature is the nature which we have materially interpreted, this is materially translated nature, i.e. a changed nature, a produced nature; the third nature is the interpretation of interpretation, the translation of translation, the image of image of nature.

The presence and use of symbolism, especiallyin the Eastern garden, adds layers of meaning and communication to the garden for the viewer. The sources of symbolism and reference are varied drawing on religion as well as cultural references. The various signs, symbols and references contained and used in the gardens have a language of their own, they are incorporated into the garden fabric, in order to allow the viewer of the space to "travel" through his imagination. The garden lays out a certain set of moulds into which the viewer is invited, through intuition, belief and imagination, to add his or her own contribution. This is then a "coming together into Unity", garden and viewer fusing, the one beginning to flow into the other, with the flowing comes a healing. Which was after all, the primordial purpose of garden space not only in Eastern gardens but in almost any major semiosic non-verbal construction.

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