

EDITORS' FOREWORD

Instability has marked the current climate of the humanities profession in the past few years. In light of the economic and social transformations and changes, as well as policy changes in higher education in the world, humanities scholars have been led to feel the need to reassess their place in academia. Often derided for their preference of the ivory tower over the real world and the impracticability of their results, humanities scholars, like us, have had to pause and think about what they – we – do. In this moment of pause we came to the conviction of what we have known all along; humanities might not be as removed from sciences as the traditional classification of disciplines would suggest: both research interests and research methodologies utilized by scholars of humanities show more overlaps than differences with one another. We live in the same world, study the same world, and do so with an equally exacting scientific rigor. Should there be any doubt about it in- and outside our profession, we need to act. *TOPOS – A Journal of Space and Humanities*, the first issue of which we have the honor to announce, grew out of the felt need to give voice to our conviction.

We have long felt the need to articulate our common goals and interests. Taking stock of our ongoing and past research interests, methodologies, educational foci, and unsaid, though always implied, convictions, the research groups at the English and American Studies Institute, University of Pannonia in cooperation with the University of Pannonia Press have embarked on the arduous project of starting a Hungarian and English bilingual journal, assuming and accepting the responsibility of starting a conversation between scholars representing different disciplines, disciplinary traditions and perspectives, not afraid of enhancing their individual emphases by an intellectually vibrant and forward-looking engagement with broader perspectives.

The fact that the journal grows out of the endeavor of an English and American Studies institute has a bearing on our vision and research directions. As scholars working in various disciplines who meet at the crossroads of English and American Studies in Central Europe we cannot lose sight of the immediate and the local as well as of the international and the global since the interconnections of these work towards both the homogenization and the differentiation of our disciplines.

Therefore, with a view to the spatial turn in contemporary critical studies in the humanities and social sciences, we are channeling our research interests and endeavors into the study of the relation between social space and society in recognition of the fact that space is inextricably linked with culture. We seek to mine the interpretative power of space from the level closest in, the human body, and all through the various scales of

human spatiality (a room of one's own, the home, regions, countries, continents, geo-cultural allegiances). Ultimately, while recognizing the discursive construction of space, we wish to explore the multifaceted ways to address the locatedness of individuals as social beings as well as their performance in communities, networks, and cultures that cannot be described with the help of territorial metaphors. Some of the themes we wish to focus on in our next issues are (without the objective of giving an exhaustive list): inner and outer space (the construction of inner and outer space; interiority/exteriority – physical, spiritual, emotional space; the construction of bodyspace; of social space; knowledge and the production of space; diversity within and without; intersections of space and identity; the road to identity; voyage literature and the impression of expansion), Gothic spatiality, the aesthetitization of displacement, the gendering of space (gendered spaces; the re-spacing of gender), in between spaces, the verbal icon (outer and inner iconic features; the outer and inner space of the literary text; mode and genre as resulting from metaphorization; the macro- and micro-layers of the literary text), language as space, lingual space (language communities; the (self-)construction of language communities; language policy; the management of linguistic diversity and identity construction), geoculture (the history of territorialism; cultural territorialism; global designs and local communities; transnational cultures and networks; local communities and cultures; transnationality), utopias, environmentalism, and many more. As we move forward, we need your assistance in perfecting our vision. We strongly encourage you to submit manuscripts that reflect our passion for curiosity and broadening perspective coupled with intellectual rigor.

We aim to lead the journal into intellectual territory that offers opportunities for a broad and rich discussion in and with the humanities. Our editorial policies reflect a dedication to long term development. We wish to maintain high standards of acceptance, supported by double blind peer review. The members of the editorial and advisory boards for each issue represent several disciplines and geocultural traditions. We strive for promptness in publication, helped by an online electronic journal, where manuscripts are published as soon as they are accepted. All accepted manuscripts are accompanied by an abstract or summary in English and Hungarian. Upon request, the online journal also provides author information, including author reputation score.

We welcome manuscripts both in highly specialized sub-disciplines and in a wider scope of interest. The journal speaks to the whole academic community in various disciplines, including faculty members of higher education, research institutes, and students – as one of the educational goals of higher education research communities is to channel research results into the classroom, and, ultimately, into the everyday world.

Believing in the importance of both formal and less formal professional dialogues, we have started a thematic conference series to be held in Veszprém each year. The first conference, taking place in 2012, the year that marks the 200th anniversary of Charles Dickens's birth, the writer who immortalized nineteenth-century London by contributing to the invention of urban literature and of the modern urban subject, focused on the city.

It proved to be an intellectually enriching professional event with scholars arriving from disciplines, whose fundamentals are traditionally seen alien: Geography, Architecture, Sociology, History, Modern Literatures, Ancient Literatures, and Arts. Together we explored what possibilities imaginative writing and critical thinking offer for understanding how the culture of cities and urban consciousness have been shaped in the process of creating urban life. A selection of the papers presented will be published in our next issue.

We publish book reviews also. Unique to *TOPOS* book review section will be our selection policy. We do not wish to limit our attention to recent arrivals but by recognizing major contribution to our profession, we wish to continue reminding our readers of the importance of classic books that still hold relevance for research, and that represent a standard of scholarship not easily surpassed by current texts even in light of a perceived progress. We believe in the need to pause for a moment from time to time and pay tribute to those who laid the foundations of the ways we conceive of the world.

Lastly, a few words about the issue readers hold in their hands. The papers appearing in this issue focus on two area studies: American and Australian Studies. The articles and essays in both fields grew out of exchanges between Hungary and the United States and Australia, respectively. Several of the first collection of papers were delivered and written for the America Week, a by now traditional academic professional program series held each year in Veszprém with the participation of distinguished Fulbright visiting scholars and professors from the United States and scholars, professors, and students from Rochester University, New York, USA, with which the English and American Studies Institute, University of Pannonia has had a long standing and both professionally and intellectually rewarding joint Master's Program in American Studies accredited by the State of New York. The America Week is an event that faculty and students eagerly look forward to every year. We honor and celebrate our common effort and success with a selection of papers presented here.

The second collection was inspired by the Australian Studies Symposium held in Budapest this year, where scholars based in Hungarian institutions of higher education looked back on two decades of professional activities – starting with setting up the first

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Australian Studies program in Hungary. The papers presented attest to the vitality of Australian Studies programs across the country as well as to the energy and vision of the scholars, without whose efforts no program can become successful.

In our effort we invite your contribution, advice and commentary in all aspects of the journal. We rely on your support as we continue to move forward,

Andrea F. Szabó
Szilárd Szentgyörgyi
Éva Bús