

Summaries of articles

Perception of Landscape, Action on Space: Switzerland in the 18th Century

F. WALTER

Every society is characterized by its own particular conception and symbolic representation of space. Thus 18th century observers display a renewed interest in Switzerland. Travellers describe their experience in terms peculiar to the semiotics of the classical ages. Nevertheless, their accounts are already intermingled with a certain subjective outlook which announces romanticism. The spatial archetypes common to all descriptions are often altered with respect to reality and relate to the order of nature and society. The specific character of the Swiss towns provokes reflections on the concept of order, i.e. the organization of space. This discussion on planning is chiefly held on the local and regional scale, and it is led by people anxious to act upon the economic cycle. However, there is no spectacular application nor can there be encountered any examples of spontaneous and original town-planning. Space does remain a constant in the legal and political discourse. By associating spatial with social change the leading classes of the aristocratic cantons hope to protect themselves from it.

Change and Permanence in Popular Culture: Reading Practices during the Belle Époque

A. M. THIESSE

Although the history of literacy and of schooling is the subject of a number of important studies, little is yet known concerning the evolution of reading practices in the popular milieu. The present study deals with the period 1900-1914 and is based upon written sources and on the results of a survey covering approximately one hundred working class subjects born before 1900. The role of reading in popular culture is examined by studying its various uses, its presentation in autobiographical discourses and the popular patterns of distribution of printed matter. The question is whether this broadened access to books and to reading correspond to a radical change in popular culture, or if one finds fined elements in the popular cultural heritage.

International Market of Translation

D. MILO

Translations seem to be an ideal field to research for cultural studies focused on the users' aspect of culture, for they are governed mainly by a real demand of the

public. The examination of the translations made throughout the world these last fifty years (the Index Translationum supplying the data) permits us to maintain that this is a highly structured field. The destiny of any author depends on the destiny of the group he belongs to much more than on the intrinsic value of his work. Several rules determine the high and lows of each group in this « stock market ». Thus, when non-legitimate literature (thrillers, children books) goes up, legitimate literature (Goethe, Tolstoy) goes down; there is a direct correlation between non-legitimate literature and that of the XXth century; a modernization of the market tends to precede its de-legitimation. And the most striking discovery we made concerns the role of the Second World War in our « stock market »—it stopped an accelerated process of delegitimation in the 1930th and even reversed it temporarily.

R. GREW and P. J. HARRIGAN
with J. B. WHITNEY

French Students in School, 1829-1906.

Computer-assisted analysis of the official statistics on enrollment in France's primary schools reveals some significant patterns. Enrollment was greater earlier in the century than usually recognized, with growth rates highest at the beginning. Variation among departments steadily decreased across the century, yet the rank order of departments of enrollment changed remarkably little. And the famous lois scolaires generally confirmed trends already well established. The data on French schooling thus gives evidence of a systemic development rooted in local society, an impression confirmed by closer analysis of the global figures in terms of regularity of attendance, age of students, duration of schooling, and summer enrollment. This in turn permits a revised periodization of the history of French schooling and an independent picture of regional differences.

Le Directeur-délégué de la Publication : François FURET

Imprimerie Nationale

Commission Paritaire des publications et agences de presse, n° 20 816.

N° 1 - Dépôt légal : février 1984

4.565.001.5