

A Cemetery – Interpretative Perspectives

Jan Adamowski

(Summary)

A cemetery is a multidimensional space in both social and cultural sense. For that reason, an analysis of the subject requires the use of varied and complementary methods and tools in the research process. It is a space of individual and communal memory. The remembrance process at the cemetery is realized in different manners and forms of a semiotic character. Because of its features, the simplest and the most basic form of memorialization is a stone. It is a metonymy of an entire tomb as well as a symbol of a lasting and eternal memory.

Experiencing a cemetery in cultural terms is conveyed through various symbolic formulas such as: a city of the dead – a cemetery is an urbanized inhabited space (inhabited by the dead, who can be identified through the gravestones, but also by the living people); a cemetery is also a landscape park; it is an open air museum and as such it can be treated as a space of aesthetic value; it is an unique cultural text organized by a structure of signs on numerous taxonomic levels.

The symbolic meaning of a cemetery is built by the means of verbal signs such as epitaphs and tombstone inscriptions, and by nonverbal signs such as the cross (and its equivalents), figurative sculptures, artistic signs, photography, flowers and vegetation.

Keywords: cemetery, verbal and nonverbal signs, cultural text, remembrance space

Jan Adamowski
Maria Curie-Skłodowska University
Institute of Cultural Studies
Maria Curie-Skłodowska Sq. 4, r. 020B
20-031 Lublin, POLAND
jadamowski@poczta.fm