

PRELIMINARY NOTES

In 1923, William M. Handy published a four-volumes-work for the journal *American Society of Culture* entitled *The Science of Culture*. It focused on good manners, dining etiquette, fashion, and the rules of polite conversation: nowadays, we would label it as a book on ‘social mores’. However, it was only with the establishment of the ‘Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies’ at the University of Birmingham in 1964 that the so-called ‘Cultural Studies’ really took off in English-speaking countries.

Within a few decades – especially from the beginning of the 20th century to the 1940s – scholars, either individually or as members of schools of thought, began to work – with different theoretical approaches and across different disciplines – on new methodologies and topics that go under the label of ‘cultural history’. Examples of this new scientific interest were the *Annales* school, which was founded in France in 1929 in the wake of the anthropological and sociological research developed by Gabriel Tarde, Marcel Mauss, and Emile Durkheim; the work of the Dutch historian of civilizations Johan Huizinga, who in the 1933 issue of the journal *De Gids* described Aby Warburg’s research as «a laboratory for cultural sciences»; and the investigations conducted by Max Weber and Georg Simmel in Germany. At the same time, eminent researchers in Italy – who are largely neglected nowadays, such as Paolo Mantegazza, Cesare Lombroso, and Camillo Sante De Sanctis – were attempting to combine social and natural sciences, psychology and historical-religious studies, medical science and biology, sociology and philosophy.

Soon after the Second World War, thanks to the innovations introduced by structuralism in the social sciences, all these efforts to bridge different fields of research in the name of multiculturalism and cross-disciplinarity

gave rise, in Germany as well as in England, to the aforementioned field of 'Cultural Studies' (later mostly developed in the US) and its German counterpart, the *Kulturwissenschaft(en)*. In Italy and France, on the other hand, the new topics and methodology were not included among the officially recognised-academic and scientific branches of knowledge.

The present issue of *Azimuth* aims to analyse this intellectual constellation from different points of view, gathering all these efforts and different ways to study cultures under the label of 'cultural studies'.

In this frame, the opening essays by Lawrence Grossberg and Hartmut Böhme have the paradigmatic task to establish the state of the research and its problems with reference to the disciplines of cultural studies (Grossberg) and *Kulturwissenschaft* (Böhme) in their respective countries and scientific communities. The articles by Mena Mitrano and Antonio Lucci attempt to establish a link between cultural studies and *Kulturwissenschaften*, as they developed in their countries of first elaboration, and the Italian Thought. They aim to bring to light a possible hidden tradition (Lucci) or a contemporary line (Mitrano) of thought in Italy, which one could ascribe to the field specified by the definition of 'cultural studies'. The essays by Joachim Fischer and Andrea Borsari provide a thematic study on two basic lines of the German declination of the studies on culture. They discuss Philosophical Anthropology as a set of theories of culture made available by the new reading of three main works by Cassirer, Scheler, and Plessner (Fischer), and the contribution offered by the Cassirer-Simmel debate to the origin and new development of the *Kulturphilosophie* (Borsari). The survey by Giacomo Scarpelli refers to classical authors in the canon of the *Kulturwissenschaft* (Freud and Warburg above all), and examines the figure of the goddess Diana of Ephesus, providing a practical example of 'cultural' analysis.

The three final essays emphasize some major points characterizing the Anglo-Saxon field of studies on cultures. Michele Cometa focuses on the relationship among processes of subjectivation, the birth of the Self and the manipulation of tools from an anthropological, archaeological, and neuro-cognitive perspective. Gilberto Mazzoli analyzes the example of Environmental Studies as a paradigm to understand the links between nature, culture, and environment, developing further the *longue durée* approach started in the last century by the *Annales* School. João Cezar de Castro Rocha, from his Latin-American point of view, reflects on the connections among cultures, art, and literature, applying René Girard's anthropological theory of mimetic desire to an aesthetic-visual context.

Finally, it is an honor for us to publish for the first time as an appendix to the issue an article by Friedrich A. Kittler, entitled *Nietzsche oder die Er-*

findung der Kulturpolitik – thanks to the courtesy of Susanne Holl and the valuable work of transcription, review and introduction made by Sandrina Khaled and Tania Hron, curators of the Kittler *Archiv* in Berlin. They deserve our special thanks for making possible the publication of a priceless contribution by the great German *Medienwissenschaftler*, who passed away in 2011, about the origin of the *Kulturpolitik* stemming from Friedrich Nietzsche's reflections.

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