

Introduction to the Issue: “Third Spaces, Borders, and the Cries for Liberation”

“The cave of making can be a dark and desperate place. From time to time, the darkness is dispelled by flashes that dazzle the obscurity.”¹

— Homi Bhabha, Preface to *Communicating in the Third Space*

“As a deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?” — Psalm 42:1–2

Bhabha’s notion of the “third space” is especially apt for this issue, where marginal voices continue to speak from the historical shadows of empire, colonialism, and the contemporary abuse of religious power. As themes of domination, resilience, and survival emerge, exemplified by the *beatas* who drew strength from Scripture, Bhabha’s “third space” becomes a conceptual aid for exploring liminal sites of negotiation, hybridity, and transformation. These are spaces where identities are not fixed but performed, where cultures meet not to merge but to enter into dialogue, and where the dispossessed find agency through acts of re-reading, re-telling, and re-living. These sites, as illuminated by Bhabha, are not neutral ground but dynamic arenas of enunciation, identification, and negotiation, often shaped by asymmetrical power relations.

The longing expressed in Psalm 42, “As a deer pants for streams of water,” evokes a profound yearning for connection and sustenance. In Co’s paper, this yearning resonates with the community of *beatas* who, despite colonial and ecclesiastical restrictions and lacking direct access to the Bible, creatively embraced scriptural fragments through liturgy, homilies, prayers, and sacraments to enrich their inner and communal lives. Their desire for *shalom* and their inventive appropriation of spiritual nourishment, even in the

¹ Homi Bhabha, “Preface: In the Cave of Making, Thoughts on Third Space,” in *Communicating in the Third Space*, ed. Karin Ikas and Gerhard Wagner (NY: Routledge, 2009), 10–15.

absence of formal access, exemplify a subtle form of resistance, one that testifies to the enduring human spirit's capacity to find meaning and solace amidst imposed borders.

The concept of borders, both literal and metaphorical, runs throughout the contributions in this issue. Dy-Liacco's paper on "self-hating Jews," for instance, challenges the Israeli narrative that frames Jewish opposition to the state as antisemitism, revealing how dominant discourse attempts to control identity and dissent by creating an "enemy within." This directly relates to Bhabha's "third space" as a site where dominant naming frameworks are disrupted. Similarly, Foley's paper grapples with the possibility of decolonized Roman Catholic homilizing in the U.S., underscoring the struggle against entrenched colonial structures within religious discourse and practice. Referencing Bhabha's analogy of a choir, this reflects the "precarious tension involved in holding the thought, or the note, in common, vibrating beyond the control of any one voice." These tensions underscore the challenges and necessity of creating spaces for genuine dialogue and transformation. Lazing and colleagues shed light on the clergy sexual abuse (CSA) crisis by distinguishing between static and dynamic transparency. While static transparency focuses on information disclosure and legal compliance, dynamic transparency emphasizes a fluid, multidimensional, communicative, and dialogical approach that prioritizes the needs of victims and survivors. This shift resonates with Bhabha's idea of a dialogical site where mastery or sovereignty is relinquished. Dynamic transparency, in centering the personal and symbolic, seeks to dethrone entrenched power structures by fostering genuine communication and prioritizing survivors' voices above all else. Finally, Asiones and colleagues explore Pope Francis's World Communications Day Messages, identifying essential competencies for enhancing intercultural communication: embracing a faith-based perspective, cultivating empathetic listening, and communicating truthfully and charitably in a multicultural context. These practices—open dialogue, active listening, and respectful disagreement—are essential for nurturing a "culture of encounter" that resists prejudice and promotes mutual understanding. This aligns with the

transformative potential of the third space, where, as Bhabha muses, a word or symbol loses its power to dominate when it becomes open to multiple meanings. It is in these moments of communicative vulnerability and sincere engagement that the possibility of liberation and empowerment truly arises.

In our contemporary world, where the legacies of empire and coloniality manifest in new forms, from violence and migration to the disruptions of digital technology, the "third space" becomes increasingly vital. These tumultuous realities often mirror historical power imbalances, pushing individuals and communities into "in-between" spaces. In such zones, dominant norms are challenged, and new forms of resistance and agency can emerge. Understanding and renegotiating power, as well as fostering critical intercultural communication, become urgent tasks in these third spaces. It is here that alternative pathways to dignity and well-being may be discerned, where dominant narratives are questioned, and where a "living flux of meaning" begins to take shape.²

In closing, this issue holds out the hope that liberation and empowerment in these "third spaces" can be enabled through humanity's communicative power. This power lies in our capacity for inclusion, storytelling, and honoring the "deep minds" of others, where the "depth of being" emerges through metaphor and liberative symbols, in short, through sacramental communication. As we navigate these crucial third spaces, we are reminded of the enduring promise in Psalm 126:5–6, *"Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy. Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them."*

May these labors of faith and scholarship spread flashes that dazzle the obscurity.

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² Christopher Richard Baker, *The Hybrid Church in the City: Third Space Thinking* (VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 22–35.