

CHRISTOS S. ROMANOS



HUMAN BOUNDARIES

ORAL SONG, TEXT,
HYPERTEXT

Human Boundaries explores dimensions of human sensibility (oral, literate, and electronic). It defines their territoriality and deals with the boundaries of human perception. The dimensions are examined in connection with cultural crystallizations: oral song, historiography, literature, art, and technology. Its focus is on the perception of time and space as well as the persistent regard for the referent (natural tendency of man and woman to keep at least a partial grip on physical reality).

Oral sensibility is first explored in relation to the oral tradition of Cyprus and then in terms of a text situated between the oral and literate. The text, *The Memoirs of Makriyannis*, was “written” by an illiterate. Oral sensibility is also viewed in the context of art in a rigorous comparison of A. Diamantis (a studio artist) and M. Kashalos (a naïve artist).

The persistent regard for the referent is further explored in relation to the nature of the historical novel. The focus is on Walter Scott’s *The Antiquary*. Although the novel is not considered historical, it is shown that it delineates the boundaries and defines the nature of this genre.

A landmark in modern Greek literature, *Life in the Tomb*, brings the focus on electronic sensibility. In the same context, it is pointed out that the narrator in Diderot’s *Jacques the Fatalist* foreshadows the role of the interactive viewer in the electronic age; changes in the art of Cézanne anticipate changes in the perception of cyberspace; and, with the help of quantum theory, the oral singer is viewed as a prototype for the author as well as the interactive viewer.

Human Boundaries ends with a meditation. The letters of the alphabet are compared to electronic bits. The question of physical reality is brought to the foreground in connection with human perception. Through its synoptic approach, *Human Boundaries* provides a fresh model for cultural inquiry.

Christos S. Romanos is an independent scholar with a Ph.D. in comparative literature. He is the author of *Poetics of a Fictional Historian* (1985), a study of modern Greek literature from a comparative perspective focusing on the work of Alexandros Kotzias. Romanos lives and writes in New York.