

# THE FANTASTIC OF PLACE AND THE FANTASTIC OF SPACE: TWO MODELS OF TRANSGRESSION

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## Abstract

The aim of this article is to show that narrative space does not always have the same function within the fantastic transgression. Therefore, two theoretical models based on a distinction between 'space' and 'place' are proposed here. While in both models narrative space is a thematic protagonist, its function within the Fantastic is diametrically opposed in the two cases. In the Fantastic of Place narrative space is seen as the *host* of the fantastic agent, while in the Fantastic of Space, space is the *agent* of the transgression, provoking the breach of logical laws. The notions of 'emplacement' and of 'boundary', inextricably related to 'place' and 'space', are explored in relation to these two models. This differentiation will point to different thematic aspects arising from fantastic transgressions in which narrative space plays a role.

## Keywords

Narrative Space; Place/Space; the Fantastic; Transgression.

The definition of 'fantastic' in the present article concerns a narrative form distinct from other literary forms of the supernatural, and designates the incursion of an impossible element in a realistic frame (BESSIÈRE, 1974; JACKSON, 1981; ERDAL JORDAN, 1998; CAMPRA, 2000; ROAS, 2001, 2011). Therefore, a characteristic of fantastic narratives is that the supernatural transgresses the pre-established textual realism. It is the problematic coexistence of two excluding orders (the realistic and the supernatural) that generates the fantastic transgression.

Given that a realistic environment is a pre-requisite of the fantastic transgression, several theorists (e.g. CAMPRA 2001, p. 176; ROAS, 2011, p. 46-48) have emphasised how narrative space is a fundamental tool in reproducing the "effect of realism" (BARTHES, 1968, p. 84-89), or "referential illusion" (VILLANUEVA, 1997, p. 105-108). For example, the naming and describing real spatial referents (streets, cities, etc.) allows the reader to recognise the space described as a realistic setting. But is the role of narrative space in the Fantastic to be restricted to the mimetic effect?

Mieke Bal, one of the few narratologists who has recognised (if not in the context of the Fantastic) a function of narrative space beyond that of a mere container of the action, distinguishes between "frame of action" and "thematized space" (BAL, 2009, p. 139). She reminds us that whereas the function of space in many texts can be predominantly situational, in others it is "an object of presentation itself" (BAL, 2009, p. 139). Then it becomes central to the plot as well as within the discourse, in so far as it "influences the fabula, and the fabula becomes subordinate to the presentation of space" (BAL, 2009, p. 139).

In this sense, there is a large variety of examples in the history of the Fantastic where space appears "thematized". In these examples, the questions of where the action happens (situational function), how this place is described (discursive level) and how it influences the characters and the events (story level) are fundamental to fully comprehending the text. Among early works, we find the seemingly deserted Venta Quemada inn from *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa* (1804), E.T.A. Hoffmann's "The Deserted House" (1817), Usher's mansion ("The Fall of the House of Usher", E.A. POE, 1839), the reappearing door of "The Door in the Wall" (H.G. WELLS, 1911), and many Lovecraftian enclaves such as Innsmouth, Arkham, Dunwich and Kingsport. As regards early Postmodern texts, we find Jorge Luis Borges' aleph ("The Aleph", 1949), Julio Cortazar's condemned door at the hotel Cervantes ("The Condemned Door", 1956) and the mansion from "House Taken Over" (Julio CORTÁZAR, 1944), exercising an inexplicable power upon its inhabitants just as Shirley Jackson's Hill House does (*The Haunting of Hill House*, 1959). More recent examples comprise John Barth's entrapping maze (*Lost in the Funhouse*, 1968), the devouring house of José B. Adolph ("La casa", 1975), the stairs which only go upwards ("La escalera de Sarto", Ricardo DOMÉNECH, 1980) and the Möbius shaped metro station of "Dejen salir" ("Exit", José FERRER-BERMEJO, 1982), to quote but a few fantastic narratives where space is a thematic protagonist.

Space as theme has been included within some theoretical studies of the Fantastic. This is the case in Roger Caillois' study (1958), in which space appears mentioned as fantastic motif and yet not as category. From a linguistic angle, Rosalba Campra (2001) is one of the few who discusses the transgressions operated by space. Nevertheless, in most thematic studies space does not appear as independent thematic category but is presented as a consequence of the transgressions of time (VAX, 1973, p. 30; TODOROV, 1970, p. 120; BERTHELOT, 2005, p. 26).

However, a closer look at thematic lists of works demonstrates that narrative space, even if thematically central, does not always perform the same function in every text. Due to the particular configuration of any fantastic text – the real and the supernatural in problematic coexistence – a further question needs to be addressed: how does narrative space relate to the transgression of the realistic laws in the fictional world? It is when addressing this question that we observe significant divergences on how space “influences the fabula” (BAL, 2009, p. 139). This renders the category of ‘space as theme’ insufficient when dealing with narratives of the Fantastic and opens a conceptual ground that has not been properly explored to date.

## 1. The Fantastic of Place and the Fantastic of Space

In order to establish a clear differentiation between the ways in which space intervenes in the fantastic transgression, I propose two theoretical models: the Fantastic of Place and the Fantastic of Space. While there is a wide range of critical analysis from a multitude of academic perspectives on the binary of space/place (cf. JAMMER, 1954; BOLLNOW, 1963; LEFEBVRE, 1974; CARTER *et. al.* 1993; CASEY, 1997; WESTPHAL, 2007), a brief – and perhaps oversimplified – conceptualisation drawing from Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) and Marc Augé (1992) will suit our aim here, which is to concentrate on the application of this binary to the study of fantastic transgressions.

From the Greek *topos* and the Latin word *locus*, designating the locality ‘where something is placed’, the notion of ‘place’ stands fundamentally for the articulation, or materialisation, of ‘space’. Anthropologist Marc Augé (2008 p. 36-43) argues that ‘place’ has three characteristics: identity, relations (to each other, to what frames it, to the human being) and history. Therefore, from an anthropological perspective the idea of ‘place’ is a human invention, constricted by ritual markings that invest it with meaning and attached functions and values. Philosopher and geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has extensively dealt with this distinction in *Space and Place: the Perspective of Experience* (1977):

Open space has no trodden paths and signposts. It has no fixed pattern of established human meaning; it is like a blank sheet on which meaning is imposed. Enclosed and humanised space is place. Compared to space, place is a calm centre of established values. Human beings require both space and place. (TUAN, 1977, p. 54)

This quote sums up our central distinction concerning space/place, a conceptualisation which also became the starting point of Bertrand Westphal's geocritical method for Comparative Literature studies (2007, p. 5). 'Place' is understood as framed space, and 'space' as a wider entity constituted by the physical properties of these places and by how these places relate to each other. Space is articulated and divided into places and conversely places are located in space.

Therefore, in relation to the relatively precise idea of place, space is an abstract physical category composed of a set of relations and dimensions. Places, in contrast, are constricted by a set of frames which define their physical shape, make them mathematically measurable, and allow them to be mapped or localised within a coordinate system. Thus 'emplacement' and 'boundary' are two principles which distinguish the more precise idea of 'place' from the more abstract of 'space'. In this article, these two principles will be analysed in relation to the fantastic transgression, showing how they function first in the Fantastic of Place and second in the Fantastic of Space.

In the passage quoted above, Tuan also remarks that 'place' and 'space' are not concepts that exclude each other. And yet, their distinction will be of particular importance to the two models of the fantastic developed in this chapter. Since narrative space consists of both places and spaces, the crucial difference is that of *where* the dramatic effect of the fantastic is directed: place-centred fantastic stories focus on a particular site (or a group of them), and on what occurs *in* it (or them). Therefore, in the model I have denominated the Fantastic of Place, a site acts as receptacle of the supernatural.

This contrasts with the other model. The Fantastic of Space deals with a more complex fantastic transgression, since it affects the laws of space. Space is what causes – and not what hosts – the fantastic transgression.

A clear example to illustrate this distinction is "La casa" ("The House", 1975) by Peruvian José B. Adolph. The action is set in a seemingly normal house in an unidentifiable city. As the story unfolds, we are told how this building devours its occupant, a random man who, on his way to work, had been unexplainably drawn to it. Since it is in one way or another the catalyst of the fantastic, space here cannot be reduced to a tool to construct the realistic environment of this story. As regards the transgression, what needs to be addressed is: what is of more importance, the house as 'place' or as 'space'? What is to the fore is not the fact that the action is happening in this particular place. Rather, the fantastic transgression resides in the physical impossibility of a space literally devouring a man. Thus, this short story works as an example of the Fantastic of Space: a literary phenomenon where the normal laws of physical space ruling our extratextual experience are not respected.

## 2. Emplacement

### 2.1. Place as Host of the Transgression

The first characteristic of place-oriented transgressions can be traced back to the philosophical and aesthetic importance endowed upon the setting within the Gothic-Romantic tradition of the Fantastic. This was highly influenced by Edmund Burke's aesthetics of the Sublime in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). The Sublime, as Burke understood it, appeals to primal passions, anticipates our reasoning, and consequently terrifies since it is never fully graspable. This theory is embodied in the Gothic enclave, primarily devoted to conveying an uncanny atmosphere by being typically isolated, hard to access, and in decay, between life and death: "silent, lonely, and sublime", just as Emily described her first glimpse of Montoni's castle in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (RADCLIFFE, 1992, p. 227). Central features of the Gothic enclave – high intensity and physical threat, symbolic projection of the character, man's supreme sensitivity when in isolation – reflect an understanding of 'place' as an ideal *medium* for the exceptional to be experienced. From this angle, the (architectural, geographical) characteristics of certain places are considered as facilitating the apparition and perception of events beyond the boundaries of human reason.

A short story that clearly shows this relation between place and event is "The Suitable Surroundings" (1891) by American author Ambrose Bierce. Consider the following excerpts:

[...] Let me ask you how you would enjoy your breakfast if you took it in this street car. Suppose the phonograph so perfected as to be able to give you an entire opera,—singing, orchestration, and all; do you think you would get much pleasure out of it if you turned it on at your office during business hours? Do you really care for a serenade by Schubert when you hear it fiddled by an untimely Italian on a morning ferryboat? [...]

My stuff in this morning's *Messenger* is plainly sub-headed 'A Ghost Story.' That is ample notice to all. Every honorable reader will understand it as prescribing by implication the conditions under which the work is to be read. (BIERCE, 2004, p. 100-101)

In this short story Mr Coulson, a writer, challenges his friend Marsh to read his recently published ghost story (which I will refer to as 'the manuscript'). But in order to achieve the desired effect he asks Marsh to read it in what Coulson considers "the suitable surroundings": "You are brave enough to read me in a street car, but—in a deserted house—alone—in the forest—at night! Bah!" (2004, p. 101). For that purpose, the writer suggests the abandoned Breede's House, which has the reputation of being haunted after the owner committed suicide there. Marsh spends the night in it but next morning his

corpse is found in the house with the manuscript. It turns out that this manuscript is not a ghost story at all: it tells about the suicide of Breede on that same night, the 15<sup>th</sup> July, and the reasons that drove him to this act.

The circumstances of Marsh's death are not clarified and this opens up the ground for rational or supernatural interpretations. While he might have been killed by old Breede's ghost, it is also suggested that he might simply have died during the night, scared by what he was reading and, most importantly, terrified by *where* he was reading it. This has led some scholars to state that "the significance of the location" is enough to generate Marsh's mortal panic attack (T. BLUME, 2004, p. 183). His death at the 'haunted' house may be attributed to the psychological fear connected with those 'suitable surroundings', as the title indicates: namely, the associations triggered in his mind by the place in which he is reading the manuscript.

Bierce, through Mr. Coulson's voice, condenses explicitly the spatial conventions of the ghost story: a silent night broken by the screech-owl, a dilapidated house reputedly haunted, lost in the woods, and entered alone in the dark with the only help of the dim light of a candle. By so doing, he is playing with the idea that certain events need a specific frame, or place, to generate the desired effect.

In relation to the Gothic topos, Bierce's short story also foregrounds that which the reader may associate with a particular 'place' after decades of literary tradition. As the writer character established in relation to the subtitle 'Ghost Story': "Every honourable reader will understand it as prescribing by implication the conditions under which the work is to be read" (2004, p. 100). He is ironically capturing a long tradition of the Fantastic based on the conviction that the aim of the literary text, in particular of the short text, is to provoke a specific effect – generally of fear – in the reader. Therefore, in order to achieve this effect the atmosphere generated by the place of the action is equally or even more important than the actual events narrated. This echoes the famous works by H.P. Lovecraft, stating that "Atmosphere is the all-important thing" (2008, p. 19).

Many of Lovecraft's fictions are exemplary of this. Consider this initial paragraph from *Through the Gates of the Silver Key* (1932). Its opening anticipates the strange case of Randolph Carter, who disappears by transcending the human tridimensional perception of space and time:

[...] in a deep niche on one side there ticked a curious coffin-shaped clock whose dial bore baffling hieroglyphs and whose four hands did not move in consonance with any time system known on this planet. *It was a singular and disturbing room, but well fitted to the business now at hand.* (LOVE-CRAFT, 2005, p. 264, emphasis added)

Note how the use of the atmospheric and the premonitory bears notorious parallels with Bierce's story. In particular, the last sentence captures how the environment is used to generate a sense of the extraordinary projected in this room where the events will be narrated.



The use of 'place' in order to generate a particular effect coincides with Edgar Allan Poe's influential essay "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846). Poe's practice of the short story is strongly conditioned by his belief in the unity of form and effect: every element is directed towards the provocation of a single effect which will be concentrated in the final resolution. Therefore, the effectiveness of that which is told will depend on how 'suitable' the elements of the story are, including the location and the atmosphere. The best literary example of this theory is the narrator's arrival at the Usher mansion, where the duality of house/family and its imminent downfall is already metaphorically anticipated by the "barely perceptible fissure" (cf. "anticipatory metaphorical image" CASAS, 2010, p. 12):

Beyond this indication of extensive decay, however, the fabric gave little token of instability. Perhaps the eye of a scrutinizing observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn. (POE, 2004, 201-202)

In contrast with this tradition of the uncanny literary topos, a large variety of short stories are emplaced into a completely ordinary setting (e.g. "The Tell-Tale Heart", POE, 1843; "Who knows?", MAUPASSANT, 1890). Particularly in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the fantastic setting distances itself progressively from this Gothic horror enclave that 'calls for' the supernatural. Then the location of the action seems to be precisely the least important aspect in the generation of the Fantastic. Instead of being in the foreground, location acts as an unnoticed backdrop where the supernatural surprisingly arises. This 'ordinariness' of the setting became decisive in the evolution of the Fantastic (cf. ROAS 2011, p. 15-20).

However, this does not imply that the place of action is not important to the plot. Its situational function is still central but, to some extent, it is being reversed: instead of being the site which evokes this premonitory sensation, it is a place which the reader does not directly associate with the supernatural.

In the corpus of the Fantastic of Place, the place of action plays a central role in the narrative, particularly due to the attributes attached to this enclave. However, it has to be born in mind that no matter how relevant its atmospheric function is in the story – whether terror-inducing or ordinary – the place itself is physically normal and not impossible in accordance with our extraliterary laws. Although the place of action might initially be presented as exceptional – as it is the case of "The Nameless City" (LOVECRAFT, 1921) and Borges' city of "The Immortal" (1949) – it is later revealed that this anomaly is due to the exceptional phenomenon it hosts and not to its own physical impossibility. Instead, as in the classic motif of the haunted house, another element (the ghost, for example) breaches the realistic laws.

## 2.2. Space as Agent of the Transgression

The role of 'place' as outlined above contrasts with the Fantastic of Space. To show this, consider the following passages from the previously mentioned devouring house of "La casa" (José B. ADOLPH, 1975):

[...], he realised he had lost his left hand, apparently sucked up and dissolved by the wall. He watched the clean stump with surprise and fear: a blood stain was growing on the wall. The hand did not exist anymore. [...] the house would eventually be satisfied. [...] the tiles were segregating parts of his organism which had been previously devoured [...], the house vomited. (ADOLPH, 2009, p. 587-588)<sup>1</sup>

As these passages show, this house is portrayed as literally the supernatural subject. It becomes a fantastic space because it has the agency of provoking – and not just evoking, as described in the section 2.1. – the events. 'Events' are here simply understood as "the transition from one state to another state, caused or experienced by actors" (BAL, 2009, p. 6) and 'agent' as that which performs an action or act, and influences the course of events; "those [elements] initiating these processes, and more specifically, influence the patients, modify their situation (improving or worsening it), or maintain it (for the good or the bad)" (PRINCE, 1987, p. 4).<sup>2</sup>

While in literary theory agency has been a function traditionally attributed to human characters or to 'humanised' entities, such as talking animals and animated objects (cf. PRINCE, 1982, p. 71; MARGOLIN, 2005, p. 52; BAL, 2006, p. 12), many short stories of the Fantastic remind that a space can also be an entity capable of causing action and events. This is clearly seen in texts such as "El museo" ("The Museum", José María MERINO, 1982) and "Habitante" ("Inhabitant", Patricia ESTEBAN ERLÉS, 2008), where the narrator's house, in both cases, exercises an uncontrollable power over the protagonist, as if acting as a physical and mental magnet for the human being.

In the first short story, leaving the museum-house becomes impossible for the protagonist for more than forty years. All that time, despite his plans of going somewhere, a force arising from this space has kept him tied to the house, "entrapped in the domain of an arcane power that did not allow [him] to move away [...]" (MERINO, 1982, p. 156). Other passages reinforce the portrayal of

<sup>1</sup> All translations of non-English literary works are mine.

<sup>2</sup> I am aware of the subcategories of "agency". Mieke Bal for example refers to the differences between "actor" ("the agent that acts"), "actant" (who makes the action move forward) and "character" ("the actant in his own individuality, with the broad meaning conferred by tradition") (BAL, 2006, p. 36). Herman distinguishes between "participants" and "non-participants" in the storyworld (2002, p. 115-69). Similarly Prince, refers to "existents" (passive) and "events" (active) as two basic constituents of the story (1987, p. 28). For my part, I will use the more general term "agent" to designate the phenomenon of space as an intervening entity in the action, and being involved in the narrated events.



the museum as a dominating agent over the human character (“I sensed my look and my presence being reclaimed from the museum as an enormous wish not willing to let me leave”, 1982, p. 156).

The house of “Habitante” is averse to any modification effectuated by the one who inhabits it: for instance, just after the protagonist has started to paint a wall in blue, she feels a strong urge to revert it to its original white colour. Only then can she “sigh with relief, when [she] finally gets to leave it as it was before”, ESTEBAN ERLÉS, 2008, p. 56). The narrator ends up abiding by that which the house ‘expects’ from her and thus she ends up imitating the steps of the previous inhabitant, who ended up drowning in the swimming pool of the house.

### **3. Boundary**

In the introduction to this article it was mentioned that an inherent property of ‘place’ is that it is constricted by a system of frames to make it measurable and localisable. The physical boundary is a fundamental way of articulating space into a defined place. Thus the notion of ‘boundary’ is a spatial tool to circumscribe, while it also avails as a reference for spatial oppositions such as up/down and in/out. Without a referential notion of ‘boundary’, ‘space’ would be otherwise incomprehensible and unattainable: there would be no volumes against which bodies could be measured and compared. Equally, the notions of ‘distance’ and ‘location’ would have no meaning in the absence of a referential system of coordinates.

In the textual world, as Marie-Laure Ryan (2012) has emphasised, physical boundaries are amongst the most fundamental elements of narrative space in creating and defining “the physically existing environment in which characters live and move” (RYAN, 2012, p. 8). At this point, a distinction between two types of boundaries might serve to show how this principle functions differently in the Fantastic of Place and in the Fantastic of Space. This difference lies in that which will be denominated a ‘stable’ versus a ‘fantastic’ boundary.

#### **3.1. The Stable Boundary: Thresholds**

The clearest example of a stable boundary is the motif of the threshold in the Fantastic.<sup>3</sup> While it is often a site in which a high emotional intensity is concentrated, indicating “a moment of crisis, at an unfinalisable – and unpredictable – turning point” (BAKTHIN, 2003, p.61), in the vast majority of cases the threshold frames the access into the supernatural. The function of this form of boundary is to provide a stable spatial frame to separate the realistic and the fantastic domains, but in itself there is nothing physically im-

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<sup>3</sup> Further analysis of this motif within the Fantastic can be found in CESERANI (1999, p. 107-108) and specially in CASTRO (2002, p. 122-166).

possible about it. This is the case of the mysterious entrance to “The Deserted House” (E.T.A. HOFFMANN, 1817), H.P. Lovecraft’s doorstep at “The Thing on the Doorstep” (1937), the courtyard’s threshold featuring in “The Man on the Threshold” (J.L. BORGES, 1949) and the door interconnecting the narrator to the Fantastic in “The Condemned Door” (Julio CORTÁZAR, 1956).

In other texts, the threshold facilitates the supernatural apparition. “Climax for a Ghost Story” (1919), by the English writer I.A. Ireland, may serve as an illustrative example. In this very brief story, a locked door holds a man and a girl inside a room. After a brief exchange of words, the girl exits the room by traversing this door:

“How eerie!” said the girl, advancing cautiously. “—And what a heavy door!” She touched it as she spoke and it suddenly swung to with a click.

“Good Lord!” said the man. “I don’t believe there’s a handle inside. Why, you’ve locked us both in!”

“Not both of us. Only one of us,” said the girl, and before his eyes she passed straight through the door, and vanished. (IRELAND in MANGUEL, 1983, p. 49)

This text very clearly exposes how a physical border, impenetrable to humans, is crossed by the ghost. What then is physically impossible, the door or the girl? It is this girl who is attributed with the supernatural characteristics necessary to cross through this door, but the door itself is not endowed with such supernatural power. Thus this threshold is not the element which transgresses the physical laws of reality. As in the very large majority of traditional stories of the Fantastic, the threshold is either that which facilitates the access into another domain or, as in “Climax for a Ghost Story”, this physical boundary is transgressed by another character. In all these cases, what is important is that it remains a stable frame of the realistic environment: it is a referential architectural element.

### **3.2. The Fantastic Boundary**

In contrast, some narratives call into question the boundary as constructing relations of distance, reference and location. David Roas’ “Excepciones” (“Exceptions”, 2010) is a clear example. This story is concerned with a man who ‘fails’ (ROAS, 2010, p. 135) to cross the threshold into his house. Every time he tries to go over this threshold he finds himself outside again. The spatial dichotomy of in/out becomes obsolete: since ‘inside’ does not exist any more for the character, ‘outside’ loses its meaning in opposition to it. Although this element is not the central theme but rather the trigger to portray how excited about and suddenly indifferent to the extraordinary people become, Roas’ story still shows how in transgressing the stable notion of boundary (the threshold that should provide access into the house) spatial oppositions (here outside/inside) are invalidated.

Similarly, Jacques Sternberg's "L'étage" ("The Stairs", 1974) represents the invalidation of the dichotomy of up/down. Every time the character goes up these peculiar stairs he finds himself immediately back on the ground floor.

Another example is "La escalera de Sarto" by Spanish author Ricardo Doménech (1980). A professor of Art History discovers a very peculiar architectural piece: some stairs which "serve only to go up" (DOMÉNECH, 1980, p. 36). These stairs have no final point, since they keep ascending infinitely. Once the subject accesses it, this "evil" (1980, p. 32), "unheard-of" (1980, p. 32) structure invalidates the opposition of up/down, as well as that of inside/outside. The short story seems to indicate that if there is no conceivable bounded structure there is no subject: the professor ends up disappearing in this impossible construction.

Further transgressions of a 'normal', 'stable', 'realistic' boundary are the endlessly rolling train of "Tandis que roule le train" ("As the Train Goes", Éric FAYE, 1997) and the tunnels in "Le tunnel" ("The Tunnel", Jacques STERNBERG, 1974) and "La Sanction" ("The Sanction", Jacques STERNBERG, 1974). These three short stories are based on a very similar fantastic transgression: the characters are travelling in a never-ending railway, with no envisageable ending boundary. Therefore, they are suspended in space – which may also be read as a state of existential suspension – where they are incapable of determining where they are, how long the journey has been and when it will end.

An equally disturbing transgression is that of what can be called the 'elastic boundary'. This is what Quebecois writer Claude-Emmanuelle Yance offers in "Rien n'a de sens sinon intérieur" ("Only Inner Sense Makes Sense", 1987). Starting with a loss of balance sensed when looking through his window, the protagonist observes how the landscape around him shrinks progressively. The two buildings on both sides have been slowly approaching each other to form an elliptical shape. This short story challenges the very possibility of having a reliable, objective boundary outside one's own subjective perception and thus the possibility of generating an objective referential system to orientate oneself.

#### 4. Conclusion

Since narrative space does not play a fixed role within the narratives of the Fantastic, two theoretical models based on a distinction between 'space' and 'place' have been suggested. While 'space' is here taken as an abstract category which comprises physical laws, 'place' is understood as a definable and localisable entity.

This distinction, if applied to the fantastic transgression, accounts for two ways in which narrative space can operate. In the Fantastic of Place, narrative space is the *object* of a transgression being performed by another agent (such as a ghost or a vampire). In the Fantastic of Space, it acts as the agent, the *subject* of the transgression, provoking the breach of the logical laws.

The notions of 'emplacement' and of 'boundary', inextricably related to 'place' and 'space', serve to ground this distinction with textual examples. As shown in both models, narrative space is a thematic protagonist, yet its function within the Fantastic is diametrically opposed. This differentiation might point to different thematic aspects arising from fantastic transgressions in which narrative space intervenes.

As regards 'emplacement', the first model presents place as host of the Fantastic that remains at the foreground in the action, since it 'allows' or 'evokes' the supernatural. However, in the second model 'where' the supernatural happens is less relevant than 'what' this space produces. Inverting the schema of the Fantastic of Place, spaces in the Fantastic of Space seek to modify the natural, realistic emplacement of the elements within the storyworld. This is portrayed by the agency – for example, physical and psychological power – a space has upon the character's movements.

The notion of 'boundary' can be employed to articulate these two domains, as the motif of the fantastic threshold shows. In some examples it separates and joins the natural from and to the supernatural domain. At other times it might be the limit against which the transgression operates, as in the example of the ghost that crosses the physical frontier of a door or wall. The fantastic threshold in fantastic narratives, often a place which concentrates turning points and dramatic tension, may not be what causes the fantastic effect. In contrast, there are texts in which an architectural boundary does not serve to create the effect of realism but to transgress it. This spatial transgression destroys the notion of a 'reliable' 'objective' system of distances and references. Exemplary of this is the alternation of supposedly static distances between buildings ('elastic boundary') or the absence of a boundary present in our extratextual spaces ('absent boundary').

Although not systematised, various studies have drawn the attention to the representation of 'place' and its evolution in the Fantastic (e.g. JACKSON, 1981; AGUIRRE, 1990; FOURNIER KISS, 2007). However, the fact that the fantastic transgression can be a phenomenon performed by space – the Fantastic of Space – has been almost completely neglected, with very few exceptions (e.g. CAMPRA, 2001). Finally, just as the function of narrative space differs from one model to the other, so too is it true that not all transgressions of the Fantastic of Space are a single one. A further analysis of this second model, which is outside the scope of this article, would necessarily imply a more extensive reflection on how space intervenes in the human – and textual – construction of reality.

### **Resumo**

*O objetivo deste artigo é mostrar que o espaço narrativo nem sempre tem a mesma função na transgressão fantástica. Portanto, dois modelos teóricos sobre uma distinção entre 'espaço' e 'lugar' são propostos aqui. Enquanto em ambos os modelos o espaço narrativo é um protagonista temático, sua função no Fantástico é diametralmente oposta nos dois casos. No Fantástico de Lugar, o espaço narrativo é visto como apresentador do agente fantástico,*

enquanto no *Fantástico de Espaço*, o espaço é o agente de transgressão, provocando a ruptura de leis lógicas. As noções de 'plataforma' e 'fronteira', inseparavelmente relacionadas a 'lugar' e 'espaço', são exploradas na relação com estes dois modelos. Esta diferenciação apontará para diferentes aspectos temáticos, surgidos a partir de transgressões fantásticas em que o espaço narrativo desempenha um papel.

**Palavras-Chave:**

*Espaço Narrativo; Lugar/Espaço; o Fantástico; Transgressão.*

**GARCIA, P. O FANTÁSTICO DE LUGAR E O FANTÁSTICO DE ESPAÇO: DOIS MODELOS DE TRANSGRESSÃO**

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