

WHY TO THINK SPACE? IS IT POSSIBLE TO BE WITHOUT EXISTING?

POR QUE PENSAR O ESPAÇO? É POSSÍVEL ESTAR SEM SER?

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ABSTRACT: we propose to discuss spatiality in fiction departing from *O lugar teórico do espaço ficcional nos estudos literários* by Marisa Martins Gama-Khalil (2010). In proceeding that way we highlight the importance of that text as an instrument to propel the verticalization of the studies on this narrative element, enabling us at the same time to investigate the relation between space and time in both real and fictional spaces. Our proposal is constituted by a dialogue between texts that ruptures in a *continuum*, even if temporary, in consonance with the notion of exotopy by Bakhtin (2006). This concept sustains itself on the dialogical character, allowing us to reveal the differences and tensions between the texts under discussion, that way achieving better understanding of the **theoretical position of space**. Throughout our writing we gradually present plausible answers (be them affirmative or interrogative) to propel thought towards the first section of our title, i.e.: why to think space? At the end of our theoretical periplus we perceive that the fact that man creates things and objects, that he generates himself while being finite leads us to interpret **being**, which is provisional and thoroughly pervaded by uncertainties, as the condition of **existing**.

KEYWORDS: fictional Space; Time; Movement; Literary Studies.

RESUMO: propomos uma reflexão sobre a espacialidade ficcional, tendo como ponto de partida *O lugar teórico do espaço ficcional nos estudos literários*, de Marisa Martins Gama-Khalil (2010). Ao adotar este procedimento, colocamos em evidência a importância do referido artigo como instrumento para impulsionar a verticalização dos estudos deste elemento narrativo, ao mesmo tempo em que nos possibilita investigar a relação espaço-tempo no espaço do real e ficcional. Trata-se de um diálogo entre textos que se rompe num *continuum*, mesmo que provisório, e que está em consonância com a noção de exotopia de Bakhtin (2006). Concepção esta que se pauta no caráter dialógico, possibilitando desnudar as diferenças e tensões entre os presentes textos e chegar a um melhor entendimento do **lugar teórico do espaço**. Ao longo de toda a escrita, apresentamos, gradativamente, respostas plausíveis (afirmativas ou interrogativas) para impulsionar o pensamento sobre a primeira parte do título deste artigo, que se configura na indagação: por que pensar o espaço? Ao final de nosso périplo teórico, percebemos que o fato de o homem criar coisas, objetos, gerar a si mesmo e ser finito, leva-nos a crer que o **estar** que é provisório e todo impregnado de incertezas é condição de **ser**.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: espaço Ficcional; Tempo; Movimento; Estudos Literários.

Aiming to at least outline an attempt of living up to the title we have chosen or of possibly treating its investigative content seriously to the point of fulfilling its sense with plausible answers (being them affirmative or interrogative), we assume as key-reference *O lugar teórico do espaço ficcional nos estudos literários* by Marisa Martins Gama-Khalil (2010). A text that unfolds itself over the white of the paper (virtual or non-virtual) and superposing it, because the text is also body, hence space, made concrete by

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phraseological connections, resulting in a unity of sense in the context of scientific production.

However, we must emphasize that this superposition results concrete in a dialogue that ruptures in a *continuum*, even if temporary, and that is fixated by the use of the space of theory, allowing us to better understand the **theoretical position of space**. Thus, being in consonance with the notion of exotopy by Bakhtin (2006), in regard to Human Sciences, based upon, during the activity of research, in its non-characterization by any type of fusion between the two viewpoints in question (that of the researched and that of the researcher); on the contrary, it would be characterized by establishing itself through the dialogical character that reveals the differences and tensions between one and the other. Not to mention that space, in this theory, is a dimension that permits writing, leaving traces and also the existence of two distinct subjects: “of that that lives the instant and the pure to-become and of that that lends her/him a supplement of vision, exactly because being outside.” (AMORIM, 2006, p. 101).

Presented our proposal, we begin tracing it with a comment by Gama-Khalil (2010) regarding language as an essential element of Literature, based upon presuppositions by Foucault: even if language is temporal its being is spatial and language “restitutes, in itself, time because language is writing.” (FOUCAULT *apud* GAMA-KHALIL, 2010, p. 216). This given the fact that, “in general, there are only significant signs with their meanings, through **substitution** laws, **combination** of elements” and also the fact that “what permits a sign to be sign is not time, but space.” (FOUCAULT *apud* GAMA-KHALIL, 2010, p. 227, 228, bolded emphasis added).

That way, believing in the coherence of those ideas, we propose to let resound even more the words **superposition** and **connections**, **substitution** and **combination** by simply repeating them here to make possible, in advance, to recall them and risk questions in search for more sustainable basis to the proposition that language has more to do with space than with time. Yet the fact that language is written (is space, body) would not be the primary condition for happening, **existing**, being time?

Onward from the same place (that of our writing), we enter again the space of Gama-Khalil's (2010), that initiates by listing literary examples in which space is highly relevant, the main constitutive element, i.e. in those works, it is space that generates effects of meaning. In accordance with the author, the procedure of treating those examples as images suggests what the purpose of her article is. At the end of our reading, however, we have testified that it not only suggests but also potentiates her arguments on the importance of space as fictional element so that, consequently, we believe it might

expand possibilities of propelling literary criticism to adopt a more verticalized attitude towards the studies on space. And this given that the *raison-d'être* of Literary Studies is the experiencing of its own object.

Our periplus departs from the following narratives: ***A terceira margem*** by Guimarães Rosa (1962), ***A jangada de pedra e Objeto quase*** by José Saramago (1988, 1998); ***Dom Quixote*** by Cervantes (1978) and ***Vidas Secas*** by Graciliano Ramos (1998); ***O alienista*** by Machado de Assis (1981) and ***O cortiço*** by Aluísio de Azevedo (1993).

The voyage finds new propulsion displaying Foucault's theory about language and literature, paraphrased here on our third paragraph, focusing on the text-reference itself, in which such display presents an objective that diverts from ours: to understand the reasons why literary criticism preferred, for many years, to bias its vision of Literature under the guidance of time. Thus, throughout her writing, Gama-Khalil (2010) recalls the philosopher to stress the importance of considering space as a fictional element for Literary Studies to consider, showing the particularities of literary language, and also to broach on his presuppositions regarding the question of spatiality. Her writing functions the same way when recalling Barthes. It all leads us to believe that this procedure is justified by the consistence of those theoretical standpoints related to the topic of the text.

Barthes (2007) conceives the spatialities of a given literary narrative not as being accessory, "but as potentialities that might uncover ideologies being revised, unmasked, rendered problematic", and conceives the relation between space and other fictional elements (personages, time and narrator) as being not only functional, "but also semantic, i.e. in respect to the order of meanings generated by space, without depending on the manner it is displayed through discourse." (GAMA-KHALIL, 2010, p. 222, 223). Foucault instead structures his web of studies having as object the **subject**, but applying space as methodology:

[...] only departing from the viewpoint of positionings and spatialities we can better know the subjects and their languages, among them the literary. And in a foucauldian perspective knowing is "also a question of localization, of collocation in a given place, of the opening to thought of a given space." (ALBUQUERQUE JÚNIOR; VEIGA-NETO; SOUZA FILHO *apud* GAMA-KHALIL, 2010, p. 217).

While pondering the ideas of Barthes (2007, 2004) and Foucault (1968, 1999, 2000, 1995, 2001) inscribed on the works ***Aula, O rumor da língua, As palavras e as coisas, Microfísica do poder, Foucault: a filosofia e a literatura, Michel Foucault: uma trajetória filosófica para além do estruturalismo e da hermenêutica***, and ***Ditos & Escritos III***, the researcher constructs her web of arguments opposing those works to other texts that

present lacking viewpoints towards the topic of narrative spatialities. On those others, space is treated as mere description or, in contrast with the narrative flow, marginalized to the point of being conceived as slave to the other elements of fiction. By that means, Gama-Khalil (2010) begins her counterpoint with the description of the singularities of many works, among which we mention some but stressing more that of Vitor Manoel de Aguiar e Silva (1988). The graveness of his situation will justify the recurrence of our references, not only because his study-guide was read by a large group of Literature teachers taking academic action, but also because it was read, probably, by Letters students.

In his *Teoria da Literatura*, Aguiar e Silva (1988) dedicates a chapter to novel in which he amply debates its constituents, like personage, narrator and time, but relegates the question of spatiality to a section named **A descrição** (The description). This title itself allows us to perceive the marginal position in which narrative spatialities are allocated in his work, bearing in mind that description encompasses other narrative elements, such as the function of presenting details concerning personages. Subsequently, Gama-Khalil (2010) describes in detail *Categorias da narrativa* by Philippe Hamon (1976), that also conceives space as mere description, given that his research focuses on realism and verisimilitude. The same she does in regard to the texts *Narrar ou descrever* by Georg Lukács (1968), *Fronteiras da narrativa* by Gérard Genette and *As categorias da narrativa literária* by Todorov (1976).

Through the counterpoint between differing conceptions, we believe she reaches a consistent critical analysis on the topic, on one hand accomplishing with mastery her writing goals, and on the other sharpening the curiosity of our senses, propelling us to diligently take part (as readers and/or researchers) on the crew of voyages traveling the studies that discuss literary spatialities.

Nevertheless, when reached such conclusions, still one question echoes: would this not be the moment to design a study guide such as that of Vitor Manoel de Aguiar e Silva with an equal or alike title, but presenting revised attitude towards spatialities, given the factual penetration this kind of work has in the market? We believe that, in this manner, a beginning researcher might construct a coherent view of the narrative elements as soon as his/her acquaintance with Literary Studies begin, knowing that the tendency of those beginners is to seek for a more compact discussion on a given topic to later, being that the case, take a deeper look in specific readings.

Still in what regards such conclusions concerning the text by Marisa Martins Gama-Khalil (2010), we can assert that those are ratified when we notice that the voyage around

this yet not fully esteemed continent called fictional space ends up in a literary piece that shares an analogous focus with the previously mentioned pieces. In spite of that, this time with the transcription of the text itself – *O fio da fábula* by Jorge Luis Borges (1999) – allowing the careful reader to experience what was already exposed through the practice of theory.

Proceeding this way, Gama-Khalil (2010) corroborates and highlights the characteristic of Literature as “a language that folds upon itself to, as Barthes would say, cheat language itself or, as the formalists would, to provoke defamiliarization.” (GAMA-KHALIL, 2010, p. 232). At the end of the theoretical space there he is, Borges (1999) presenting the thread and the labyrinth, but losing themselves on the path of narrating, remaining only, according to the narrator, our beautiful duty of imagining, as readers, that there is a labyrinth and a thread.

As preparation for the outcome of the fable, all happens as it follows: Theseus could not know that, on the other side of the labyrinth he was in, there was another labyrinth, the temporary, the one that is there but doesn't exist, i.e. time. And, as we interpret, there was, in turn, in a predetermined place inside this labyrinth a different myth: the one of Medea. What propels us towards the following set of inquiries: will both sides – a concrete labyrinth, a striated space (according to Deleuze's theory (1995)) parallel to another that is at the same time abstract/concrete – configure a between-place or a state of affairs? At the center of the first labyrinth (where the thread may potentiate striation or dissolve over itself, be smooth) there is a myth (raison-d'être of this labyrinth) parallel to the other myth, the one in an undetermined place, but predetermined – is the labyrinth lost because of this relation? And more: is it stuff that dissolves over the pilgrim-time (smooth space) or is it time that dissolves over stuff, marking the surface of all with its smooth, sliding (dissolving) manner, that can also, contrary-wise, wrinkle, wither and change colors up to the moment of death?

Departing from Borges' text (1999), a fictional one, something stands out to be clear: spaces are characterized by mutual combination, by connections, subtraction of elements, superposing themselves, juxtaposing themselves, relating to one another as points that integrate a web and that crisscross one another in a sort of weaving. This perception of ours dialogues with Foucault (2001) when he contrasts the different focus of human thought in the XIXth and the XXth centuries:

The great craze that had obsessed XIXth century was, as we know, history: themes of development and stagnancy, themes of crisis and of cycle, themes of accumulation of the past, great surcharge of dead, threatening cooling of the world.

It is on the second principle of thermodynamics that XIXth century had found the essential of its mythological resources. The present epoch might preferentially be the epoch of space. We live in the epoch of the simultaneous, we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, of the nearby and the far off, of the side by side, of the disperse. We live in a moment when the world experiments itself, I do believe less as a great highway developing straight through time that as a web reconnecting points and crisscrossing its weaving. (FOUCAULT, 2001, p. 411).

Moreover, it is not by coincidence that time is treated as spatiality in Borges (1999), even if we consider his abstraction in contrast with the concreteness of the word **labyrinth**. It happens thus since all events (the extinguishing of certain animals, terrorism, the Black Plague, the establishment of democracy etc.) take place in a determined space, regulated by power relations, as Foucault renders explicit quite well in his studies. Even History as science that studies man **in space and time** only realizes itself as such because registered in text form, hence having spatial nature.

A different example we might recall, given its conceptual relevance in academic world, is the notion of **event** by Deleuze, composed by space, by physical depth, by stuff in general. The author departed from stoic thought, when it considered present, past and future not as three portions of the same temporality but as two simultaneous readings on time, each one completing and excluding the other. "Only present exists in time and reunites, absorbs past and future, but only past and future insist in time and divide up to the infinite each present time." (DELEUZE, 1998, p. 6).

Present is considered to be limited, something that measures as causes the actions of bodies and measures in depth (*Cronos*) the state of their combinations, as long as past and future are not limited, abiding themselves as effects (*Aiôn*) to the surface of incorporeal events. The differential aspect of stoic theory relies on the fact that it demonstrates the necessity of both readings as well as their mutual exclusion and the definition of boundaries between **physical depth** and **metaphysical surface**, between **things** and **events**.

The concept of event by Deleuze sustains itself based on this conception of time. *Cronos*, the time of bodies-to-bodies, of combinations, of causes, of actions and passions, of souls and bodies, and *Aiôn*, the one of events that are non-material, incorporeal, invisible (pure withholding), movements infinite and infinitive resulting from interactions expressed through propositions. They are infinite verbs, pure to-become.

Infinitive immediately express the sense-event as absolute virtual movement that exceeds modes and times. It is not a special time modality like *Cronos*, or time considered <<in abstract>>, but *Aiôn* as paradoxical time of sense-event, between-time non pulsing, past and future simultaneously, already-there and yet-not, non-

extensive <<instant>> infinitely subdividing each present time in the two opposite directions. (DIAS, 1995, p. 101, 102).

If *Aion* and *Cronos* are two simultaneous readings of time, complementary and exclusive, nothing would then guarantee that, during some interactions, bodily states simultaneous to the already-there and the yet-not do not take place, not to mention that man himself is the between-being, **the Middle** in a deleuzian view. Both readings of time would not be only ways of searching for a didactic understanding, a linear one of the dynamic complexity of the world of man, of its transitoriness and incompleteness? Is not **O fio da fábula** by Borges (1999), apart of explaining anything (explaining is not its role), more efficient in what regards the comprehension of human nature, of its existing and being in the world?

We would mention, but not to demerit Deleuze's work (mainly in what respects his two readings of time), that when he considers, as a XXth century man, body and being/existing as **time** he goes at least contrary-hand to the foucaultian prognosis of that century as the moment of focusing human thought on the matter of spatiality. Hence would this not be the case of creating a theory of spatiality composed of two simultaneous and not exclusive readings of space, and that would also encompass the temporal issues?

Would we conceive space in a manner that would dialogue with Foucault's viewpoints on the subject as well as with the exotopy by Bakhtin (2006), but being aimed towards man as the constructor/discoverer of many an ample knowledge lore and not only pointed towards specific positions such as the artist or the researcher? Would this be of any use to Literary Studies?

Therefore, we are headed back to the idea that spaces relate to one another as Foucault also thought: let us suppose the existence of only one dimension, the point. So, let us imagine we are looking from distance a point and gradually as our regard comes near it we can perceive it as galaxy. From inside this galaxy we may choose a point in which we can, by adopting the same procedure, find the solar system. From the solar system, repeating the procedure and so forth, we would see Earth, then a town (a built space, for example), a minor region of this place, a house, a man, a cell, its nucleus, a molecule, its nucleus, an atom. Or we could proceed in a reverse fashion, limiting our trajectory, e.g. from the atom to man as following: an atom related to other atoms generates a molecule, interrelated molecules generate cells, and those generate tissues, and those generate a man that will enter in relation with someone from the same species, generating another man, cheating this way the limited quantity of movements determined by his nature of **existing as** homo sapiens.

Feet pierced on Earth, he pulsates, he moves in a *continuum* of generations while the planet also moves, making light and darkness possible, that which man denominated night and day and thenceforth decided to fractionate into a mathematics (at least inaccurate) of hour and minutes, seconds and milliseconds. Time would not be then some human construction to fit us into the illusion of being able do adequate Earth's movement, the movement of this pulsating being, to precise measuring apparatuses, the so called atomic clocks – machines that are movement as well? A one second lag as that of July 30th, 2015 or people considering this to be unacceptable – which one is more absurd?

Back to our *parcours*: we might carry out our voyage of man relating to his world interiorly and exteriorly. Relating to those of the same species or those of different one, to natural space, objects and things, to constructed spaces such as areas of knowledge and arts (Music, Literature, Theater, Dance, Plastic Arts, Cinema), all spatial. Finally, spaces in relation.

By that means, seeking for supporting more all we have said, we'll return to or very beginning, to this point with only one possible dimension that encompasses all others, and we'll so assert: geographical coordinates function to localize each point on Earth's surface. They are imaginary lines drawn horizontally and vertically (latitude and longitude), lines that have as principle of usage the gradation, in which a certain degree (one of the 360 parts in which Earth may be divided) is fractionated into 60 minutes that, by their turn, are then fractionated, each one, into 60 seconds. Lines crossing one another, finding one another at determined points, producing successive spatial striages (degrees) associated to time. Does time supports those spatialities, for they are not fixed but mobile?

We understand that it is not possible to dissociate, speaking practically, time from space. However, if the question is put of the preeminence of one above the other, that must be grated to space, since time is made concrete over the surface of space. We apprehend the passing of time over a sheet of paper when it yellows, i.e. time materialized over the materiality of space. (GAMA-KHALIL, 2010, p. 228).

When it comes to Literature, yellow might be a symbol of tradition, permanence, existing. A type of language that even in its last and creating moment is spatial. That justified by the relation the creator maintains with all his/her collection of memories and knowledge (spaces). Not to mention that the creative process does not proceeds in a linear fashion. It requires, e.g. connections, comings and goings, substituting, inventing other turns to say the same differently. When it comes to the ultimate moment of the existence of such a text, it is from **here**, it lies: when on paper, it is from yellow to ashes

(ashes to ashes) and, when virtual, it is from the space of nothing of an instrument called computer.

Finally, only one question remains: how many threads are necessary to define the **theoretical position of space**, according to the notion of exotopy by Bakhtin?

The world turns, man creates things, objects, knowledge and generates himself and, thus, being space that produces spaces and extinguishes itself in the end, leads us to conclude that **being**, that is provisional and thoroughly pervaded by uncertainties, is the condition of **existing**. Is time the world? No. The world is time. The world simply turns and turns and we continue to sink in this human abstraction named time. And if, given all that, we are only left to imagine the existence of a labyrinth and a thread, as Borges suggests (1999); if man is one space creating another, that of fiction (*O fio da fábula*)... we'll leave this space of writing thoroughly assured of the coherence that lies on investing in a higher verticalization of the studies on fictional spatiality; and we leave this space of ours with, obviously, a fictional space in hands.

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