

Patricia García, *Space and Postmodern Fantastic in Contemporary Literature: The Architectural Void*, Routledge, Nueva York y Londres, 2015. ISBN 978-1-138-82422-5.

Among young scholars entering and dwelling in academia, a question that comes up very often in discussions is how to write about theory without making it too abstract. From my own experience, nowadays there is a surge of the 'personal touch' in order to keep academia alive and questioning. In other words, the new scholar aims at creating her space. Patricia García's book offers a genuine taste and example in this regard: a young academic with real contributions to make towards the understanding of the Fantastic while at the same time adding her own view, introducing writers into the fantastic studies spectrum, and opening new questions for discussion and further research.

García's presents an insightful question: what is the role of space in the Fantastic? For García, space, with a focus on the postmodern fantastic, is not the locale in which the impossible transgressions occur, but rather, space as the element that converts stories into the

fantastic scene. It is, in her words, in the 'Fantastic of Space'; that is, a fantastic genre «where the impossible element is spatial» (9). Moreover, she distinguishes, with a solid theoretical base, space from place, in which the latter refers to fantastic literature in which «the impossible happens in space» (9). García, thus, moves along and further the Spatial Turn by finding its potentialities in the Fantastic literature.

The first move that García makes is to assert that the reader is an architect with «the power and skill (*tekton*) to manipulate the origin (*arché*) into 'liveable' space» (1). Space, in this regard, is created by means of architecture; however, the space by itself may not be suitable or fitting for all readings. Here is where García brings in the fantastic texts that she explores: «In this modality, the impossible supernatural element *does not take place in space* but is rather *an event of space*, bound to some architectural element or to the (normal, logical) physical laws governing this dimension» (2).

Ranging from Peruvian José B. Adolph, Spanish Ángel Olgoso and Cristina Fernández Cubas, to Quebecois Claude-Emmanuelle Yance, among others, García opens the boundaries of a definition of the Fantastic into a new paradigm in which the everyday architecture remains but it is also forced into re-consideration.

Space is necessary for the architect; that is, the reader. Thus, García questions, «[H]ow do space and transgression interact? Does space play the same role in each text of the Fantastic? Should the role of space be reduced to a tool used to construct the realistic environment of the story?» (17). From my reading, García's main argument is that it is in the space that these stories create and project that the logical and the apparently real foundations are transgressed. The Fantastic, then, must combine the everyday life (cf. Michel de Certeau) and the impossible in order for this effect to take place. For instance, García terms the 'extratextual real' as the space that the reader occupies, but may also be destabilised by the story. Hence, García argues for the 'fantastic effect' theories, with basis on David Roas's work, but in terms of the spatial, while at the same time amplifying Roland Barthes's 'effect of realism'.

The 'extratextual' that García

refers multiple times throughout her book is of utmost importance for that spatial referent. In her analysis of Adolph's story «La casa», García explains: «This house is portrayed as being literally the supernatural subject. It becomes a fantastic space because it causes—and not just evokes—the events ... Thus, this short story works as an example of the Fantastic of Space: a literary phenomenon where the normal laws of physical space that rule our extratextual experience are not respected» (26). There has to be an extrapolation between fiction and non-fiction in order for this fantastic effect of the spatial to displace the reader's conception of the real. And, this effect comes not from what it happens in the text, but rather from where they occur.

García selects stories that put the reader in the disjunctive of not knowing what to make of them, which is not new in the Fantastic genre. However, García makes a distinction with what she calls the 'Postmodern Fantastic'. While the events in the Gothic and the Romantic, as well as in other forms of the Fantastic tradition, would be set in certain places, in the stories that García compiles the space acts as the plateau that creates the fantastic effect: Fernández Cubas's «Mi Hermana Elba» and Olgoso's «Los palafitos» constitute 'fantastic

holes', 'hideouts', and give García material to introduce the Fantastic into the discourse of possible worlds.

Of the most compelling and interesting addition to academia by García, three in special caught my attention: psychastenia, the Möbius effect, and the fantastic rhizome. By psychastenia, which appears in chapter 2, «Body: (Not) Being in Space,» García combines Roger Caillois's theoretical explorations with Adolph's and J.G. Ballard's fiction in order to «designat[e] a distortion that takes place when the subject begins to regard himself not as self but as a particular place» (70). The entity becomes the space it occupies, and hence the spatial turns into the focus of the fantastic text. Likewise, in chapter 3, "Boundary: Liquid Constructions," Deleuze and Guattari's work comes in as a fantastic rhizome that refers to «a reality that is interconnected but whose actual connections only some characters can perceive» (105). Thus, the extratextual and the textual find themselves by creating the space that makes the fantastic into a possible impossibility to experience. Along the same lines, García then highlights what she calls 'the Möbius effect' in chapter 4, «Hierarchy:

Spaces Inside-Out.» Such effect is «a self-contained space where outside and inside cease to be oppositional categories» (122). With no hierarchies or polarities in-between, the space takes reign of the fictional.

Space is not a category in García's book. It is rather an area of fiction and literary studies to explore. Her contribution towards the understanding and questioning of the Fantastic are of much relevance as those past boundaries are becoming more liquid and the conception of the body is changing in the everyday life. García's conclusions lead into this dimension of keeping the questions open. While she does provide a rich insight into her analysis, García acknowledges that there is *space* for more to be done. This last point validates García's main point: the architecture of life is an artifice, to be found perhaps more easily in the Fantastic, but with an effect that stretches itself beyond the fictional and enters into the labyrinth of the real.

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