



THE URBAN DIMENSION OF LITERATURE. PARISIAN URBAN SPACES AND ARCHITECTURAL SPACES IN THE LITERATURE OF THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY

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Through this paper I present the first results of my research concerning the link between literature and urban and architectural spaces. The goal of this research is to point out the relationship of the textually formulated space, its formation time, the time of reception and the relationship of textual world and real world, and therefore the chronotopical relationship and its representation. Literary and literalized spaces and built architectural as well as built urban areas are examined and the question “Are literary spaces real spaces?” is raised and discussed. A collective discussion of the basic requirements for examining literary and literalized spaces is facilitated through a thorough comprehension of the relationships between the environment of space considered in literature and architecture – i.e. the ratio of space, time, author, recipient, the real world, and the cultural positioning of literary texts. Case studies imply individual literalized spaces, autobiographical spatial relationships, positioning of the author/writer and expand to movements in space.

Keywords: Architecture, Literature, Paris, Urban space, Literary space.

Introduction

Are literary spaces real spaces?

The consideration, investigation, and discussion of architectural and urban spaces in literature – here in particular the narrative text genres – require an examination of two premises in order to approach the literary representation of space. These two paradigms postulate a contextualization of narratives in terms of their experienced and built environment.

First, these two basic requirements are explored regarding their suitability; do these approaches stimulate the research on the interaction of literalized spaces¹ and built architectural as well as built urban areas?² In order to relate real and literary space a 'reality check' of literary space in relation to its real counterpart is required.

Therefore, the distinction between literary and purely fictional spaces is revealed. As Hemingway's Paris is to be discussed more closely throughout my study his representation is drafted and serves as paradigm of literary space. His general conception of space implies an amalgamation of components and different spaces of real correlations on the one hand as well as a definition and distinction as culturally shaped entity on the other hand.

¹ Cf. Paitti 2009, 19.

² The term 'literalized' suggests a real and existent spatial template upon which a fictional space is created.

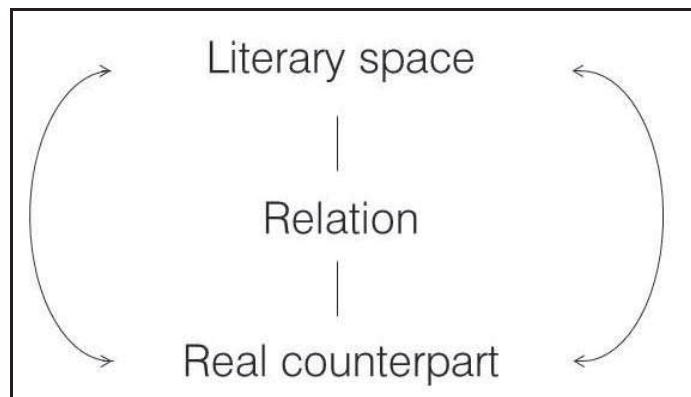


Figure 1. Literary space in relation to its real counterpart. Drawing by Armin Stocker

Narrative spaces can also be defined as [...] fictionally created and constructed space. This fictional space is a textually conceptualized category [...].³ Spaces as for example Kafka's 'Schloss' are purely imagined and without correlation to the real world.

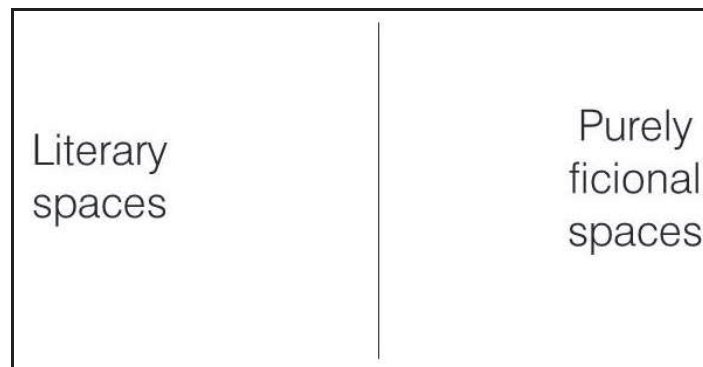


Figure 2. Boundary between purely imagined spaces and real world. Drawing by Armin Stocker

Reciprocity of Time and Space

Moreover, spaces that correlate with the common conception of the real world should be considered; in order to investigate the reciprocity of literary and real streets, squares, outdoor and interior spaces the following question is raised: Are literary spaces real spaces?

This elementary question is considered in terms of architectural methodologies as well as contemporary literary devices on space configuration.⁴ Postulating the premise that Hemingway's depicted Paris of the 1920s resembles the real Paris of the 1920s prompts the question whether his representation of reality can correlate with the existing and experienced reality. Moreover, the issue on the reciprocity between time and space is raised.

Hemingway's representation of space is segmented among three different time axes; the time of the novel's action (the Paris of the 1920s, or more precisely: one depicted space – may it be an urban space, an interior space, or a path from A to B through the city at the time of action) is represented on one time axis, the production time of the text postulates a second axis whereas the time of reception constructs a

³ Cf. Ein literarischer Atlas Europas, [<http://www.literaturatlas.eu/forschungsmaterial/glossary/>], in: <http://www.literaturatlas.eu/>] 01.04.2015

⁴ Cf. Hallet/Neumann 2009, 11ff.

further axis; the latter refers to the date or time when the recipient first encounters and later engages with the text.⁵

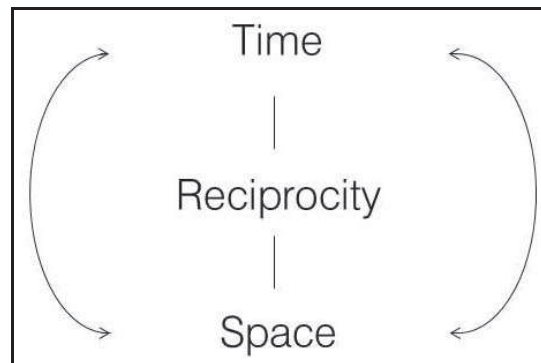


Figure 3. Reciprocity of time and space in narrative text genres. Drawing by Armin Stocker

Two Worlds - Representation and Representative

The correlation of space with particular points on one time axis induces an accurate definition and re-negotiation of this space. In adherence to the architectural configuration and examination of space a conceptualization of the term requires the utilization of architectural methodologies; thus, the application of plans, drafts, photos as well as descriptions. (However, the three-dimensional methodology of architectural representation is not considered in this context; the presentation of and association with this architectural scale model would imply a mere copy of existing spaces and not foster insights on the reciprocity of literary and reality.) In reference back to the question on the reality of literary space Bakhtin's thesis on representation and representative should be explored; the represented world, he argues, can never merge or fuse with the representative world. Though the boundary between those two entities cannot be removed they are firmly connected to and mutually depend on each other [...]⁶.

In *Oracle Night* Paul Auster establishes these reality boundaries according to the perception of the author or narrator; moreover, the tension between real and represented world corresponds to the inner conflict of the protagonist and his access to the real world:

It was a treacherous place that existed in my head, and this place I have just been to. At both places at the same time. In the apartment in the story that I have since continued to write in my mind.⁷

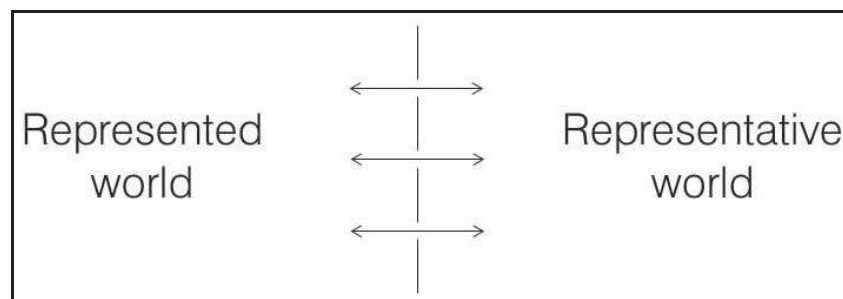


Figure 4. Representation and representative, boundary and connection. Drawing by Armin Stocker

⁵ Bakhtin, Michail M. *Chronotopos*. Berlin. Suhrkamp. 1986/2008.

⁶ Bakhtin, Michail M. *Chronotopos*. Berlin. Suhrkamp. 1986/2008.

⁷ Auster, Paul. *Oracle Night*. New York: Henry Holt. 2003.

Literalized Space and Literary Space

The premise referring to literary spaces as representatives of existing counterparts without rejecting the separation of these entities allows for an accurate correlation and comparison of literary and literalized spaces.⁸ This correspondence is facilitated through architectural and textual methodologies. In referring back to Hemingway's Paris the assumption is postulated that existing spaces are considered in order to correlate them with their literary counterparts. Literary spaces can be extracted and their correlations can be conversely considered and examined.

According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the room is seen and felt, things in the room approach the observer who detects them intentionally and experiences them as things in the world. In reference to Paul Cézanne's imagery Merleau-Ponty advocates the natural vision of everyday perception, e.g. a round dish is perceived as round; the mundane experience revealing an elliptic shape as suggested by Euclidean geometry is therefore rejected.⁹ In his *Spatial Poetics* Gaston Bachelard develops a similar approach to the spatial term; particularly in terms of encountering atmospheric spaces that resemble his childhood and are evoked by literature.¹⁰ Bachelard argues that space is defined in terms of a collective space (sub-) consciousness.¹¹ The possibility of delineating literary spaces and their correlations of counterparts in the real world is deployed on a temporal loop. An existing space of the narrator's everyday life is translated into a literary space. As recipients we read this literary space and associate it with a correlation in the real world.

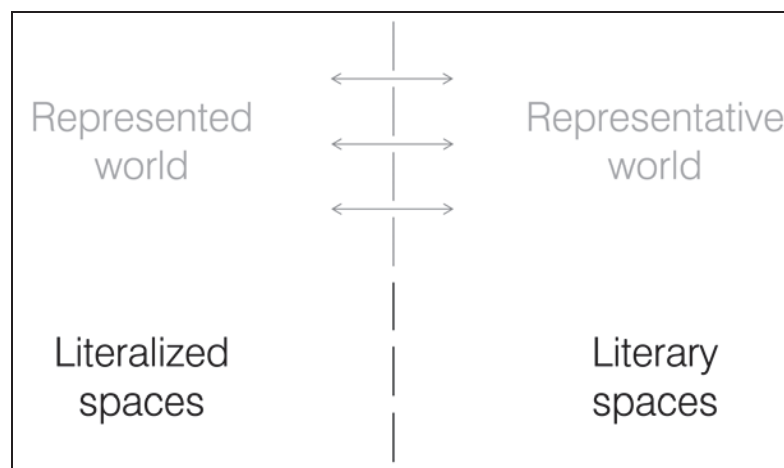


Figure 5. Literalized space and literary space, correlation and comparison. Drawing by Armin Stocker

We therefore follow the traces of the existing world into the literary world and then back to the real world on three time axes. The examination and investigation is drafted upon Jean Paul Sartre's postulate that considers space as experienced relationship in terms of Lewin's topological approach in order to describe the objective and subjective world.¹² According to Sartre's sentence, "The human and the world are two relative entities and the principle of their existence is relation."¹³

⁸ Cf. Bachtin 2008, 192.

⁹ Cf. Günzel 2006, 114f.

¹⁰ Dünne, Jörg / Günzel Stephan (Eds.): Raumtheorie. Grundlagentexte aus Philosophie und Kulturwissenschaften, Frankfurt Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag. 2006, 123.

¹¹ Ibid. 10.

¹² Cf. Günzel 2006, 126.

¹³ Ibid.

Upon having gained knowledge and having comprehended the framework and historical as well as cultural positioning of the text, the analysis of literary space becomes readable and contextualized. Time and space merge and turn into a reasonable and meaningful whole.¹⁴

In the artistic chronotope the space gains intensity; by contextualizing it with the movement of time, the subjects and the plot its dimension¹⁵ and identity is shaped. The spatial identification proceeds from analysis to subjective text experience and eventually to an objective representation of literary space.

In *Space and Movement in Literature* Wolfgang Hallet and Birgit Neumann identify space not merely as "the room [...] of action, but also [as] cultural signifier."¹⁶ The literary world is therefore perceived as "historically determined exchange between author and reader [who are] both involved equally. [...]"¹⁷

Case Studies

A collective discussion of the basic requirements for examining literary and literalized spaces is facilitated through a thorough comprehension of the relationships between the environment of space considered in literature and architecture – i.e. the ratio of space, time, author, recipient, the real world, and the cultural positioning of literary texts.

Case studies imply individual literalized spaces, autobiographical spatial relationships, positioning of the author/writer and expand to movements in space. Ernest Hemingway's parameters of the 'Autobiographical' have had a strong impact on my choice to lecture on the relationship of the urban and literature. Hemingway's attitude towards the city of Paris is enshrined in the well-known quote about the *Moveable Feast*¹⁸ and may be assumed to be common knowledge. The Paris of the 1920s was a refuge for artists, writers, and star aspirants, adventurers, poets and other Americans who wanted to flee from the Puritan society and were attracted by the favorable franc-dollar exchange rate. For some also the prohibition in their homeland might have been a reason to go abroad.

Upon reaching Paris with his first wife Hadley Richardson in 1921 as a foreign correspondent he encounters a city in the "Roaring Twenties;" he was therefore penetrating a particular place at a particular time which was and still is represented by many publications and films. On behalf of this concise basis the first case study drafts a representation of the space-time relationship of the author Ernest Hemingway, the city of Paris in the 1920s, as well as the literary and literarized areas by means of three spaces; these three spaces derive from Hemingway's everyday life as well as from his narratives.

1 74 rue du Cardinale Lemoine and 39 rue Descartes, Paris

On December 20, 1921, Ernest Hemingway and Hadley arrive in Paris. They move into their apartment at rue du Cardinale Lemoine on January 9, 1922. This apartment is their experience realm as well as a literarized space on behalf of Hemingway's prose. In *Paris, A Moveable Feast* he depicts the cheap apartment.¹⁹ From 1922 to 1926 Hemingway resides in this, as he refers to it, poor area²⁰ with his wife and later with his son. In his early time in Paris Hemingway rents an office at 39 rue Descartes for writing purposes.

Similar to the apartment this room lacks all comforts; the author writes about his arduous climb over six or eight stairs, a malfunctioning fireplace due to the rain²¹ and his inevitable escapes to 'A Good Café on the Place St. Michel'²² due to his poor living conditions.

¹⁴ Cf. Bachtin 2008, 7.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Cf. Hallet/Neumann (Eds.) 2009, 11.

¹⁷ Ibid. 18.

¹⁸ Cf. Hemingway, 2007.

¹⁹ Cf. Hemingway 2007, 4.

²⁰ Ibid. 20.

²¹ Ibid. 2.

²² Ibid. 7.

These descriptions are prose extracts as well as autobiographical facts and foster the comprehension of the reciprocity between representative and represented world.²³

An investigation of these literalized spaces requires the use of architectural methodologies and a systematic analysis according to specific research questions. In the initial approach the question on the author's spatial configuration is left unanswered; the template of a real and experienced space unravels his reduced aesthetic and crafty modifications of an already existing space. Rather, the issues on the localization within the urban configuration, the transformation of the space between the points on the time axis and therefore the time of the novel's action and the time of reception are relevant. The present is significant. It is common knowledge that the area of the 1920s "which couldn't be any more miserable"²⁴ is by no means characterized by poverty at present.

Actually, today no 'area' within the Boulevard Périphérique can be regarded as poor, particularly with respect to areas along the Seine and in the vicinity of the Panthéon. This comparison, the relation between space and time, is not to be answered in concise polemics. Currently, the area of depicted buildings in the city, the apartment respectively the room of the building and its installations are documentable via plans, photos and equipment descriptions.

This documentation drafted on both points on the time axis correlates plot time with reception time. At this moment of representation "[...] work and represented world enter and enrich the real world; the real world impacts the work and the represented world within the moments of his creative procedure as well as in the course of his later life; the work is therefore continuously revitalized by the reader's fertile perception."²⁵

2 27 rue de Fleurus, Paris

A further address in the experience realm of the narrator is 27 rue de Leurus, a street next to Jardin du Lucembourd, in the 6th Arrondissement. Gertrude Stein and her spouse Alice B. Toklas used to live there. Gertrude Stein was as self-appointed Grand Dame of the artistic scene and also coined the term and movement 'Lost Generation'.²⁶ As writer she promoted the local Parisian art and literature scene of the 1920s and invited to regular Saturday parlours. These gatherings were visited by writers such as John Dos Passos, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound or artists like Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso who were little or unknown back then.²⁷

Hemingway describes his visits and depicts Gertrude Stein's apartment in his remembrance book on Paris. "We have loved the big studio with the great paintings. It was like one of the best rooms in the finest museum except there was a fireplace and it was warm and comfortable and they gave you good things to eat and tea [...]"²⁸

3 rue de l'Odéon

A space of production and distribution of literature, a literalized and literary space which is considered as last example for literary spaces and chronotopes in the urban design. This space is perceived as chronotope from various angles. In cooperation with her friend, the bookseller Adrienne Monnier, Sylvia Beach founded a bookstore and library for English literature known as 'Shakespeare and Company' at rue Dupuytren 8. In 1921 this shop moved to rue de l'Odéon. Not only Hemingway literarized this bookshop.²⁹ Sylvia Beach launched James Joyces *Ulysses* for the first time; literary scholars like Ezra Pound, F. Scott Fitzgerald, or André Gide used the library as venue, warm room, and postal address.

²³ Cf. Bachtin 2008,192.

²⁴ Cf. Hemingway 2007, 20.

²⁵ Cf. Bachtin 2008,192.

²⁶ Cf. Hemingway 2007, 18 f.

²⁷ Cf. Troller 2008, 101 ff.

²⁸ Hemingway 2007, 20.

²⁹ Cf. Hemingway 2007, 20 ff.



Shakespeare and Company Bookshop, rue de l'Odéon. From right to left: Ernest Hemingway, Sylvia Beach, two unknown women. Photographer: Unknown. Source: Reynolds, Michael: Hemingway: The Paris Years. New York-London 1999.

The story of 'Shakespeare and Company' was told and shaped by fiction and non-fiction writers as well as travel journalists.³⁰ What remains is a space which comprises experience realm, literary and literalized space; a space that is simultaneously secured and revitalized at George Whitman's 'Shakespeare and Company' at rue de la Bûcherie. This space has been and still is existent in time and space – in the present tense as well as in films³¹, books, and interviews, such as the one I conducted with one person of staff in April 2015.

³⁰ Cf. Troller 2008, 105 ff.

³¹ Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris* (2011) or *Before Sunset* starring Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy are two among many examples.



Shakespeare and Company Bookshop, rue de la Bûcherie. April 15th 2015. Photo by Armin Stocker

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