

УДК 81  
ББК 81.0

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**‘SPACE’ INTERPRETATION  
IN CONTEMPORARY  
ENGLISH  
FICTIONAL DISCOURSE:  
FEMALE PERSPECTIVE**

Статья описывает ряд трансформаций, которые претерпевает пространство как основной компонент структуры художественного дискурса, созданного современными авторами-женщинами (С. Таунсенд, К. Эллиотт, К. Свон, Э. Гилберт). Утверждается, что пространство в данном типе дискурса обнаруживает устойчивую и ярко выраженную корреляцию с эмотивным фоном, создаваемым героями, и приводит к экспликации ряда его морфологических свойств.

**Ключевые слова:** *художественный дискурс, хронотоп, протагонист, объективная реальность, персонификация, ирония.*

DOI: 10.18522/1995-0640-2016-4-80-84

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Space is the component of a diad universally termed as ‘chronotopos’ after the fundamental works devoted to time and space study within the fictional discourse – works written by M.M. Bahtin, D.S. Lihachev, Yu.M. Lotman, V.N. Toporov etc. This phenomenon organises and systematizes the fragments of objective reality in the mind of a reader that results in his cognition’s mapping the world around. It also contributes to the construction of a discourse proper subordinating the techniques and methods applied by the writers on their way of representing the pieces of objective, macro reality within the frames of subjective, individually created, micro reality of a fictional discourse. The investigation of a set of these approaches developed by the modern female writers is of great interest due to the fact that they, first of all, reflect the contemporary tendencies in the way the space is treated and perceived by the English language speakers, thus being a culturally marked phenomenon, and, secondly, it embodies a purely female, gender marked way of the ‘space’ treatment. Though the female writers’ interpretation of space is much influenced by the authors’ belonging to one and the same language speaking community, there were some notable and significant peculiarities found that can be accounted for by the impact of individual style each of the authors, undoubtedly, has. Yu.M. Lotman suggests two approaches to the interpretation of the fictional space: (1) it is the model of world typical of an author that is expressed in accordance with his spatial relationships [Lotman, p. 414] and (2) a continuum where the characters are

placed and where the action is carried out [Lotman, p. 417]. Therefore, analyzing the space represented in the fictional discourse it is important to take into account not only the author's understanding of the world realized in a certain idea of space, but also the system of characters, places, surrounding objects in their relations and possible correlation that contributes to integrity of the fictional discourse.

The first peculiar feature of a modern female fictional discourse is the creation of the emotionally dependent space characteristics: the protagonists are put into a limited, close space of a dwelling – most often a flat – in which they have to overcome a great loss in their lives going through depression and fear, moral torpor and grief. Thus, these narrow and physically restricted horizons aggravate the characters' low spirits and bring about the suspense in the narration: the more deeply they suffer from being engrossed by negative emotions, the more ardently they strive for pushing the boundaries of the space they find themselves in (this is the case with Lucy Fellowes from C. Alliott's "A Married Man" who is trying to pull through the sudden death of her husband and being left alone with two small boys decides to leave a flat in London leaping at the chance of emotional resurrection that can possibly be found in a large and lofty estate in the country; the author of "Eat, Pray, Love" – E. Gilbert – going through a divorce leaves a limited space of a dwelling and starts travelling around the world – consequently, the space becomes exceedingly unlimited and wide incorporating the territory of three countries visited by her in the search for positive emotions; the female protagonist of "Christmas at Tiffany's" by K. Swan also tries to soothe the pain caused by the betrayal of her husband by abandoning the estate for travelling to her friends residing in three different cities; the protagonist of "Number Ten" by S. Townsend endeavours to become closer to the nation after a disastrous psychological and emotional fall in order to boost his flagging career of Prime Minister by leaving the comfortable space at Downing Street, 10 for travelling around Britain). There are other cases when one witnesses the reverse process of the protagonists' relocation from vast territories to extremely narrow ones. The latter also become the metaphorical embodiment of stress and despair: *It was Tony Threadgold who had prised the boards from the front door, but it was Prince Philip who had taken the key from his wife, turned it in the lock and entered the house. It was ludicrously small, of course. 'I had a wendy house bigger than this', said the Queen, as she peered into the main living room. 'We've had bloody cars bigger than this', said Prince Philip as he stomped up the stairs. The whole interior was papered with anaglypta. It had been painted magnolia throughout [Townsend, 2003, p. 22].* The protagonist's dissatisfaction with present life conditions and wasted opportunities alongside with the recollections of far gone happy and careless existence in the palace make the character – Prince Philip – abstract himself from the other members of the royal family metaphysically and physically. So, the spatial anticlimax becomes apparent: a lavish palace is replaced by a dilapidated house that is, in its turn, substituted for a miserable bed. *That evening, Prince Philip prowled around the bedroom muttering to himself. He stared out of the window.*

*The street teemed with relations. He saw his wife and his sister-in-law coming out of his daughter-in-law's bungalow. He could see his son digging the front garden, in the dark, the bloody fool! Philip felt trapped by his relations. The buggers were everywhere. Anne, hanging curtains, helped by Peter and Zara. William and Harry yelling from inside a wrecked car. He felt like a beleaguered cowboy in the middle of a wagon train with the bloody Indians closing in. He got back into bed. The vile broth, now cold, <...>slopped over onto the silver tray and then onto the counterpane. He did nothing to stem the flow. He was too tired. He pulled the sheet over his head and wished himself somewhere else. Anywhere but here [Townsend, 2003, p. 131].* Thus, the fictional space is most often graded in size transferring either from the limited premises of a flat, a house into the vast territory of a country or a borough or from a wide area of a palace into a shabby house or a small room.

The second peculiar feature that is logically connected with the first abovementioned one is that the space represented in the contemporary fictional discourse created by women-authors has such morphological features that are strongly contrasted in terms of quality and form. Hence, the antithesis underlines the idea of juxtaposition of different objects in the fictional space contributing to the comparison of their physical properties. It makes the idea of space subjectively invented and developed by the author more substantial and realistic, helping the latter to reconstruct a three-dimensional space, forcing it to resemble to some extent the phenomena of objective reality: *The walk from the back of the palace to the front made Jack breathless: he was out of condition. It was a long time since he'd walked so far. 'How many rooms have you got?' he found himself asking the Queen as they trudged along the endless corridors. 'Enough', said the Queen. 'Four hundred and thirty-nine, we think,' said Charles helpfully. As they turned a corner a low grumbling growl could be heard, as though a hibernating bear were being prodded awake with a stick [Townsend, 2003, p. 9].* The items placed in the discursive space – palace, rooms, endless corridors – obviously have the characteristics of the physical reality's objects: height, width and length. Such an exaggeration makes it possible for the author to create a multidirectional vector of irony. On the one hand, the unreasonably huge sizes of the royal castle are emphasized – they are so enormous, that it seems to be practically impossible to get from part of it to another not feeling stress or discomfort. On the other hand, introducing such a description S. Townsend makes fun of Jack Barker, a new Prime Minister of Britain, a leader of the Republican government, who hasn't walked long distances for a long time.

Another bright example of the detailed description of fictional space: *The hall looked imposing as usual – even a bunch of daisies in a teapot would be imbued with gravitas in these baronial surroundings – but it looked the same as it probably had at every party that had been thrown here in the last two hundred years. The antler-framed chandeliers flickered with as-yet-unseen candlelight, thick swags of ivy were draped around the austere family portraits, slightly fraying faded ceremonial flags hung from brass holsters in the walls, and the enormous stone fireplace had been filled with a profusion of garden flowers and thistles – it was too warm for a fire tonight [Swan, p. 16].* Such

colorful and positive description rich in epithets and imaginary objects competes with another way of space characterization provoking 'spatial' antithesis: *Cassie watched as the city rose up towards her, leaping out of the ground in huge sculpted shards of steel and glass, the famous river meandering like a copper snake between them <...> But now here she was – first decision made. The last place she'd wanted to come had been her first. It was as far outside her comfort zone as she could imagine, everything she'd never wanted – loud, bright, glaring and blaring. A great honking, seething mass of urban humanity that would guarantee to distract her, at the very least, from the ruins of her own life* [Swan, p. 23]. Physically comfortable and emotionally insecure house is replaced by the city that is not convenient to live in but that is capable of curing psychological wounds being a metaphorical remedy for the "ruins in life".

It allows to pinpoint one more peculiarity of the space in female discourse – in a rather large number of contexts it is constantly moving and developing, there are rare cases of its being stagnant. Female discourse of today discloses fictional evidences of the space's exaggeration enhanced by onomatopoeia, hyperbole and personification used with the reference to fictional space: *The warmth, the strength, the classic lines, the fact that Agas are always hot and ready for action appealed to me. The Aga has many of the qualities one would like, but so rarely gets, from a lover* [Townsend, 2001, p. 1]. The sequence of homogeneous nouns describing a stove is replaced by the adjectives *hot and ready for action*, that implies the implicit comparison with a close person who is ready to come for help at any minute. The following sentence intensifies the description of an object of fictional reality (*the stove*) reconstructing associations with a beloved person. The furnishings of a house can give rise to humorous interpretation of the space as it becomes ironically hostile to the protagonists: *It's an uphill battle because the fleas adore the hothouse temperature at our place. It turns them on: when they are not jumping out and biting my legs, they are jumping on to each other. My sofas and chairs and carpets are now flea maternity wards. You can practically hear the champagne corks popping* [Townsend, 2001, p. 99]. The space condensed to the sizes of separate furniture pieces (*sofas, chairs, carpets*) is metaphorically reconsidered by the author up to the dimensions of a ward in which the insects are feasting and celebrating. The space undergoes such transformations due to the emotions that dominate the protagonist – she is irritated, is going through physical discomfort and contempt (the depth of these negative emotions is enhanced by the juxtaposition of onomatopoeic elements (*popping*) and of the irony found in description of joy that the fleas experience).

So, the analysis of the modern fictional discourse created by women-authors showed that their interpretation of space is based on attributing such qualities to it as developing, moving and rarely stagnant. The space can become extremely condensed and tiny being diminished up to the size of separate furnishings or, on the contrary, be lavish and extravagantly vast. The conclusion that is worth paying special attention to is that the strong correlation of protagonists' emotional background and the dimensions of the space described was established.

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#### **'Space' Interpretation in Contemporary English Fictional Discourse: Female Perspective**

The article reveals the set of transformations that the space being a vital element of the fictional discourse structure undergoes being introduced into the narration by the modern female authors (S. Townsend, C. Alliott, K. Swan, E. Gilbert). The article also represents the basic characteristics attributed to 'space' as a key component reinforcing the whole narrative structure of the female discourse.

The author states that the space in such discourse proves to be much influenced and strongly correlated with the emotional background the protagonists have creating suspense and climax or, on the contrary, anticlimax in the narration. It is suggested that the fictional space is most often graded in size, in its morphological characteristics and qualities. Moreover, the space is prone to be moving and developing than being stagnant.

**Key words:** *fictional discourse, chronotopos, protagonist, anticlimax, objective reality, emotionally dependent space characteristics, suspense in narration, onomatopoeia, personification, irony.*

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