Space plays an important role in narrative as the environment in which characters move and live and in which the action takes place. It is the material condition and also the cultural frame for the narrated story, in that it is often linked to such crucial topics as power relations, conceptions of history, of memory, of the body and of identity. Despite this importance there is little established terminology for describing space in narrative besides the approaches of Juri M. Lotman and Michail Bakhtin (Lotman 1977/1970, Bakhtin 1981/1938). Lotman focuses on spatial relations (like left-right, up-down, inside-outside etc.) and asks for their semantization with cultural values (Lotman 1977/1970: 217-231). Bakhtin developed the term ‘chronotope’ for the interplay between space and time in the novel (Bakhtin 1981/1938: 84). This term can be used to correlate structures of space with concepts of time or with patterns of actions.

Whereas these thoughts appear in the context of larger theoretical works on respectively the structure of literary texts (Lotman) and the history of the novel (Bakhtin), van Baak published in 1983 a study devoted only to space in narrative in which he elaborates on both Lotman’s and Bakhtin’s concepts and illustrates them with many examples from Russian literature (van Baak 1983). Both approaches, as well as their combination, allow some major insights on space but are also restricted to a few particular aspects (spatial relations or the interplay of space and time or action). They need to be completed if one is interested in textual creation of space, in its structuring during the process of narration and in aspects of meaning that lie beyond relational features.

To do so I would like to take a very basic concept of space as the surroundings of the characters in a literal sense. This concept is narrower than for example that of Gabriel Zoran, who suggests the criteria volume, extension and three-dimensionality for defining narrative space (Zoran 1983: 312). It is also more inclusive than for example topography which, in its literal sense, comprises only those objects connected with the surface of the earth and which are large enough in dimension to be registered on a map (cf. Miller 1995; Böhme 2005). Metaphorical uses of spatial concepts as, for instance, in ‘room to negotiate’ or ‘to face obstacles’ are not covered by this definition; neither is Joseph Frank’s concept of ‘spatial form’, which he uses to denote the impression of simultaneity in modern literature (Frank 1963).
For analytical purposes I would like to treat two aspects of the narration of space separately: the level of space and its properties in the narrative world, and the way this space is narrated in the presentation of a story. For this sake I would like to use Genette’s distinction of discours and histoire (Genette 1980/1972: 27, Footnote 1). According to Genette, discours means the how of the representation of a story, organized by the parameters time, mood and voice. Histoire denotes the narrated story in its chronological and causal sequence of events. Whereas Genette’s distinction refers only to the story and its presentation, Matías Martínez and Michael Scheffel have suggested expanding this double perspective to all phenomena of the narrative world, ending up with a distinction between discours and narrative world (Martínez/Scheffel 1999: 23 f.). This elaboration makes it possible to model even space from this perspective.

As there have already been some efforts to distinguish levels of the narration of space with the help of a distinction between what and how, these will be briefly discussed. Seymour Chatman treats space in the context of his distinction between story and discourse (Chatman 1978: 96f. and 101-107). By ‘story’ he understands the narrated story while ‘discourse’ denotes the way of narrating it. Chatman distinguishes between the ‘story-space’ and ‘discourse-space’ and defines the latter as space which is narrated as perceived (cf. Chatman 1978: 96.) In her introduction to narratology, Mieke Bal uses a similar dichotomy which she names ‘fabula’ for the narrated story and ‘story’ for its presentation (Bal 1985). According to Bal we have ‘locations’ on the level of the fabula, which are the physical surroundings of the narrated events (Bal 1985: 133-142). On the level of the story she conceives of spaces as units of perception (Bal 1985: 214-217). Here she distinguishes two forms: space as the surroundings of the perceiving character (frame) and space as an object of narration (thematized space). Without reference to this terminology, Gabriel Zoran provides a distinction of three levels especially designed for space in narrative: he distinguishes a ‘topographical’, a ‘textual’ and a ‘chronotopical level’, denoting physical, action-related and vision-related layers of space (Zoran 1984). While the chronotopical level can be seen as modeling the how of narration, the topographical level can be seen as modeling the what. Zoran adds to this vertical structure of space a horizontal one in which units of space emerge during the process of reading: ‘places’ on the topographical level, ‘zones of action’ on the chronotopical level, ‘fields of vision’ on the textual level.

To sum up, on the side of the discours important techniques have been mentioned, others have been neglected. Textual creation, for example has been granted comparatively little attention. Perception has
been perhaps overemphasized, such other forms of thematization as description, reflection, simple mentioning and event-relation have been treated too concisely. The well-established discussion on description in narrative, in particular, has to be taken into account here (cf. for example Kittay 1981; Hamon 1981/93; Lopes 1995; Wolf 2007). The definition of units of space seems to be a necessity but there are very few criteria for the limitations of these units. This is for the discours and I will try to present some thoughts on these neglected aspects in my paper. On the side of the narrated space, too, there is an emphasis on units. Aspects of meaning are underrepresented. This is why I will try to add some thoughts on space as an element of the narrative world by integrating the approaches of Lotman and Bakhtin and some of my own suggestions.

I am especially interested in the interplay between the textual means on the one hand and, on the other, the processes of completing and structuring the information given there. This is why I will not only talk about the text and its structures but also about a mental model in which the information of the text is completed and structured with the help of common-sense knowledge derived from reality, literary tradition or works of the same author. The need to conceptualize space as a mental model has already been pointed out by David Herman and Marie-Laure Ryan (Herman 2002: 263-299, Ryan 2003). Both concentrate on the modeling of story worlds during the process of reading by actual readers. Differing from these approaches, I would like to see the mental model as a construct of the literary critic, one which is attributed to a model reader and which can be completed only after the text and its context have been analyzed. I contrast to Ryan I do not claim that the mental model has the form of a map, as this implies a very narrow perspective on locations and relations, one which is rarely the aim of a literary text. Rather, I would like to analyze how aspects of physical space are related to historical and literary knowledge attributed to a model reader.

I decided to deal with space in fictional narrative texts and I shall now briefly explain why I limited myself to this form of spatial representation. I decided to deal with space in fictional narratives, because they create their own worlds with their own logic. This possibility stems from the fact that fictional texts “do not advance claims of referential truthfulness” (Schaeffer 2009: 98) and that characters, spaces or events there have a different ontological status from real entities even if they refer partly to such entities (cf. Doležel
1998: 1-28). Given these two components, fictional narratives offer the possibility of assigning differing and additional qualities to spaces of reality and even of creating new spaces.

I restricted myself to *textual* narratives because I think that there are some particularities of narrating space in the textual medium. First and foremost this concerns the creation of space achieved through words and not through pictures, sounds, deictic gestures or objects. These basic means also lead to particular techniques of structuring space. In texts, space can, for instance, be described or reflected upon whereas in film it is structured through camera movements and cuts, in art by frames around pictures or by the position and shape of objects, in a performance by shifting light or by moving characters and objects.

Finally I decided to concentrate on *narratives* because I think that although such other fictional texts as poetry or drama may possess some narrative structures (cf. Hühn/Sommer 2009), they do not provide the same conditions for the representation of space. In drama, for example, space has a double reference to the space of the stage and the space of the real world; it can be created in stage directions or mentioned in dialogues and was long restricted by the unity of place. In poems, too, the representation of space is determined by specific conventions of genre (as for example those of idylls) and subject to the convention of lyrical shortness and to metrical rules. Before comparing the presentation of space in narrative with that of drama and poetry, the particularities of each genre must first be elucidated.

Let me now give a brief overview of the structure of my paper: I shall start with a definition of the space of the narrative world as mental model. On the level of the *discours* I will then distinguish between means of creation and techniques of narration that have to be figured out by a model reader. These means will be followed by strategies of narrating space. From the perspective of space as an element of the narrative world I will conclude with some notions on the qualities of space. I shall illustrate my terminology using examples from German, French, English and American fiction. In the end I will address the question of which terms can also be used for non-fictional narratives.

**SPACE AS A CONTAINER FOR CHARACTERS IN NARRATIVE**

During the second half of the 20th century there was a strong tradition of phenomenological approaches to space in narrative relying on the concept of lived space (*espace vécu*) (cf. Merleau-Ponty 1962/1945; Bachelard 1994/1957). These efforts were concentrated and systematized in the extensive monograph by Gerhard Hoffmann (Hoffmann 1978). Hoffmann’s work is based on Elisabeth Ströker’s tripartite concept
of lived space, which conceives of mood space (gestimmter Raum), space of action (Aktionsraum) and space of vision (Anschauungsraum) (cf. Hoffmann 1978: 55-108). Some questions may show which problems arise in applying his terminology to texts. Where to categorize spatial objects that are only mentioned, do not belong to a space of action and are not perceived? What about qualities that do not depend on mood (like central, peripheral, technical, artificial, soteriological and so forth)? Is it useful to see the mood space as a space or would it not be better to see mood as a quality that can be assigned to the space of vision as well as to the space of action? The main disadvantage of Hoffmann’s terminology seems to be the fact that one cannot describe techniques of narrating (like perceiving, narration of events, comment, description etc.) separately from qualities.

Using the example of Hoffmann’s concept I tried to show that a conception of space tied to certain non-spatial qualities leads to restrictions and difficulties. This is why I shall use a definition of space as an object with an inside and an outside that serves or may serve as the surroundings of characters. A space therefore is something characters can reside in or go into. Spaces can contain one another and a place is a particular point in a space. The generic term for spaces, places and topographical objects is spatial object. This definition is based on a common-sense definition of space where a field is a space in the same sense as a part of town or a hotel room. Lakoff/Johnson point out that man tends to divide his whole environment into containers:

We even give solid objects this orientation, as when we break a rock open to see what’s inside it. We impose this orientation on our natural environment as well. A clearing in the woods is seen as having a bounding surface, and we can view ourselves as being in the clearing or out of the clearing, in the woods or out of the woods. A clearing in the woods has something we can perceive as a natural boundary – the fuzzy area where the trees more or less stop and the clearing more or less begins. (Lakoff/Johnson 1980: 30)

The prototypical space is materially fixed in three dimensions but the material manifestation of the borders is facultative: “But even where there is no natural physical boundary that can be viewed as defining a container, we impose boundaries – marking off territory so that it has an inside and a bounding surface – whether a wall, a fence, or an abstract line or plane.” (Lakoff/Johnson 1980: 29)
The definition ‘surroundings of a character’ allows the inclusion of cases in which objects that are not usually made for people become the surroundings of characters, as in the following scene from Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*: “At that instant the portrait of his grandfather, which hung over the bench where they had been sitting, uttered a deep sigh and heaved its breast.” (Walpole 1972: 59) The two dimensions of the picture turn into a three-dimensional space at the very moment when the grandfather becomes a living creature starting to breathe and move.

Mobile objects are an exception from this definition. They only serve as spaces if they are surroundings for characters. This is the case with the ferry in the following line of *Manhattan Transfer*: “On the ferry there was an old man playing the violin. He had a monkey’s face puckered up in one corner and kept time with the toe of a cracked patent-leather shoe. Bud Korpenning sat on the rail watching him, his back to the river.” (Dos Passos 2000: 3) The observer and the musician are both placed on the deck of the ship that serves as the setting in this case. Contrary to this, there are no characters located in the train in the next example from the same novel. “He pushed up the window and leaned out. An L train was rumbling past the end of the street.” (Dos Passos 2000: 12) The train which is merely seen by Thatcher remains a simple object and does not become a space.

**THE TEXTUAL CREATION OF SPACE**

It is common ground in narrative theory that fictional worlds are incomplete compared with real worlds (cf. Doležel 1998: 1-28). As fictional narratives do not advance claims of referential truthfulness dealing with space the question arises of what spatial objects are part of the narrative world in question. To answer this question it is necessary to examine the textual means of creating space. In the following I will not talk about means of representation because this implies a mimetic relationship. Instead I would like to indicate by the term creation that space is created by the textual means the author uses as well as by the inferences made by a model reader.

Textual means of creating space have been granted very little attention. Those dealing with this question all emphasize that it is necessary to account for concrete nouns as well as for indirect references, especially in the form of metonymies (cf. Chatman 1978: 102; Sternberg 1981: 66; Ronen 1986: 422). I shall deal first with linguistic means and discuss inferences about space in a second step.6
In German, French and English, the space-referential means can be toponyms, proper names, generic terms, deictic terms and other concrete nouns that mark spaces. I differentiate between toponyms and proper names, because the term ‘toponym’ denotes only such geographic entities as ‘La Normandie’, ‘Seattle’, ‘Lake Michigan’, ‘die Elbe’ etc. To equally cover expressions like ‘Bernsteinzimmer’ (Amber Room) or ‘Gryffindor’, I use the term ‘proper name’. It includes denominations for those objects that are surroundings of literary characters, such as the name ‘K.I.T.T’ for a car. Generic terms comprise such expressions as ‘Staat’ or ‘le quartier’ but also such terms for interior rooms as ‘dining-room’ or ‘le grenier’. Another category is formed by objects that normally serve as locations for characters, like ‘airplane’, ‘gondola’ or ‘Kutsche’, but also for unusual objects, like ‘le placard’, ‘box’ or ‘Konservendose’. To denote spaces, one can also use the deictic terms ‘here/ici/hier’ and ‘there/là-bas/dort’ as well as such various other nouns as ‘inside’ or ‘outside’, ‘la patrie’, ‘im Freien’, ‘darkness’, ‘der Osten’ etc. Except for the deictical terms, all these groups form open lists.

The following lines from Flaubert’s *L’Éducation sentimentale* contain some of these textual means: “Il sauta gaillardement de son cabriolet sur le trottoir de la rue d’Anjou. Quand il eut poussé une des deux portes cochères, il traversa la cour, gravit le perron et entra dans un vestibule pavé en marbre de couleur.” (Flaubert 2000: 37) ‘Rue d’Anjou’ is a toponym, ‘cabriolet’, ‘trottoir’, ‘cour’, ‘perron’ and ‘vestibule’ are generic terms for spaces and spatial objects.

Places and spatial relations are denoted by prepositions, prepositional phrases and deictic terms. Prepositions and prepositional phrases can be understood differently depending on whether they are used deictically (with regard to position of the utterer/perceiver) or absolutely (regardless of location). Absolute referential systems can be intrinsic (regarding the orientation of an object), topological (regarding inclusion, contact and proximity), geographic or metric. In the following passage there are several prepositional phrases and a deictic term:

[…] wo sich der Pfad nach den neuen Anlagen in zwei Arme teilte. Den einen, der über den Kirchhof ziemlich gerade nach der Felswand hinging, ließ er liegen, um den andern einzuschlagen, der sich links etwas weiter durch anmutiges Gebüsch schachte hinaufwand; da, wo beide zusammentrafen, setzte er sich für einen Augenblick auf einer wohlangebrachten Bank nieder […] (Goethe 1987: 287)
The locations of the paths are communicated by the prepositional phrases “nach der Felswand hinging” und “durch anmutiges Gebüsch sachte hinaufwand”. The reference system in the first case is topological, i.e. the relation between the path and the wall is one of contact regardless of the location of the viewer. The reference system in the second case is a deictic one, because it is with regard to the viewer’s standpoint that the path goes up (seen from the hilltop, it would go down).

These linguistic means do not automatically denote a physical space because they can also be used metaphorically. The model reader has to distinguish between a literal and a figurative meaning of these expressions. Only the literal use leads to the creation of concrete spatial objects in the reader’s mental model.

In addition to the linguistic means already described, it is necessary to deal with forms of creating space in which none of the above-mentioned means of referring to physical space apply. There exist at least the following forms of ‘inferences on space’ as I term them: The existence of spatial objects can be mentioned without denoting the physical objects. Moreover, roles or events can imply spatial objects where people usually stay or where events usually take place. The doctor mentioned by the first-person narrator in *La folie du jour* in the middle of the narrative evokes a room in a hospital: “‘Vous dormiez’, me dit le médecin plus tard.” (Blanchot 1973: 22) Here the narrator gives for the first time information about the setting of the narrative which the reader could not have guessed from the highly abstract reflections before. Furthermore, there are hints for the model reader to draw conclusions regarding the spaces themselves from the objects usually found in them. The following lines from Hofmannsthal’s novel *Das Glück am Wege* may serve as an example: “Für mich war es, als hätte man sie in einen schmalen, kleinen Schacht gelegt und darüber einen schweren Stein und darauf Rasen.” (Hofmannsthal 1975: 10) The first-person narrator describes by means of ‘shaft’, ‘heavy stone’ and ‘lawn’ the elements of a tomb without indicating the location explicitly.

**Narrative strategies for narrating space**

Space can be narrated in various ways. It can be mentioned by the narrator or by the characters, it can be anthropomorphized, allegorized, perceived or described, it can be the setting or the object of reflections. In the following I will treat only the two extreme poles of the appearance of space in a narrative text: space as presented during the narration of events and space as the object of description.
My argument in the following is that narrating space leads to the formation of spatial units through the *discours*. First I will deal with the units of space that emerge when an event is narrated. This question seems to be easy to answer when an event takes place in a three-dimensionally fixed space, as for example in the following sentence from Flaubert’s *L’Éducation sentimentale*: “Il le rencontra un soir, et l’emmena dans sa chambre sur le quai Napoléon.” (Flaubert 2000: 51) It is easy to identify the mentioned room as the spatial unit here. But what about cases where an event does not take place inside but next to an object? In the following passage from *Manhattan Transfer* by Dos Passos, a man is sitting under a gas lamp: “A young man sat huddled on the curb beside the gas lamp. Thatcher found himself standing over him pushed by the crowd from behind.” (Dos Passos 2000: 13) One could also suggest the whole street or indeed Manhattan as the relevant unit of space. With respect to the narrated event – Thatcher leaning over the young man – units as big as the whole street or Manhattan do not seem to be the relevant area. Ronen talks about frames as “the actual or potential surrounding of fictional characters, objects and places” (Ronen 1986: 421) but does not mention criteria for their delimitation. Nor does Zoran for his ‘zones of actions’ (cf. Zoran 1984: 323 f.), Bal for her ‘frames’ (cf. Bal 1997/1985: 134) or Hoffmann for ‘Szene’ (cf. Hoffmann 1978: 534-583 f.). I would like to propose conceiving of the extension of the spatial unit in consideration of an analogy with the *object region*, a concept from cognitive psychology (cf. Grabowski 1999: 47-49). It helps to develop Ronen’s or Bal’s concept of *frames* and Zorans *fields of vision* as narrative units of space where the spatial expansion remains vague (Zoran 1984: 323-325, Ronen 1986: 421, Bal 1997: 134). The object region is the area where people stay or act around an object in everyday life. It is three-dimensional and has an inside and an outside in the same way as a space. Whereas a text can use typical object regions from the actual world, it can also form regions that they create themselves. To indicate that a narrated region is different from an object region I will call the spatial components of narrated events ‘event regions’.

If the narrated event is a movement, several spatial objects will be amalgamated to one event region. This case will be referred to as ‘movement region’. In the subsequent sentences from Flaubert’s *L’Éducation sentimentale* the place in front of the house of Mme Arnoux and the hotel are united in one region because of Frédéric’s movement: “Par un mouvement absurde, il rentra dans l’hôtel, comme si elle avait pu s’y
trouver. À l’instant même, elle arrivait peut-être dans la rue. Il s’y jeta. Personne! Et il se remit à battre le trottoir.” (Flaubert 2000: 305)

My point was that during the narration of events there emerge event regions, which themselves have the form of spaces. This spatial character of the event regions is the main difference between the narration of events and other modes, such as description, deliberation, argumentation or comment. Spatial objects can equally be grouped to units in these modes, but the units are not spaces in themselves. I will call the spatial objects that are mentioned in non-event based modes ‘mentioned spatial objects’. As it would exceed the scope of my paper by far if I dealt with all the other modes, I shall focus on description as the opposite of event narrating.9

As to a definition of description Genette’s proposal has been of strong influence for some time. He defines narration as the rendering of objects and characters in motion whereas description is the representation of objects and characters at rest (stasis) (Genette 1969: 57). The debate of the 1980s and 90s shows that the criterion of rest poses some problems. Obviously there is a strong desire to characterize also as descriptive sentences that are not purely static.10 This leads most theorists to the conclusion that it is not possible to define this term. Instead it is frequently stated that a description can be recognized intuitively (Hamon 1972: 465, Hamon 1993: 33, Bal 1981: 105, Bonheim 1982: 19). The two monographs on description follow this opinion and do not define their key term (Hamon 1993, Lopes 1995).11 Despite this disavowal they obviously have an implicit criterion for description that is based on the idea of the attribution of qualities. Therefore the following passage, which is obviously focussed on the narration of events, would be classed as descriptive: “J’allai dans les bibliothèques. Je m’étais lié avec un employé qui me faisait descendre dans les bas-fonds surchauffés. Pour lui rendre service, je galopais joyeusement sur des passerelles minuscules et je lui rapportais des volumes qu’il transmettait ensuite au sombre esprit de la lecture.” (Blanchot 1973: 18) While the narrator of Blanchot’s La folie du jour is telling us what he is doing in the library, we are also provided with some details of this location: there is a basement where it is much too warm and where small gangways lead to the shelves. But despite these pieces of information about the spatial qualities I would like to argue that the above-mentioned text passage belongs to the narrative mode because its subject is the movement of the narrator.
I think that it is not possible to identify a mode ‘description’ if one marks all those passages as
descriptions where qualities of an object or a person are offered or where they can be developed.\textsuperscript{12} I
would prefer to use a recent definition suggested by Werner Wolf:

In contrast to narrative, which typically consists of meaningful actantional representations, the
descriptive provides ‘existential’ representations. [...] In literature and other media, the objects of
description are concrete phenomena that can be fictitious or real but are all represented with a
noticeable emphasis on their sensory appearance. They are frequently static (spatial) and visual,
but dynamic (temporal) objects and other sensory qualities can also be relevant. The main
purpose of descriptions is not the mere identification of such concrete phenomena but their vivid
representation through the paradigmatic attribution of qualities. (Wolf 2007: 35)

Wolf emphasises spatial and sensory presence and the attribution of qualities. Passages containing events
can also be descriptions if those elements are not embedded in the narrated time, i.e. if they are typical
events or actions of a collective identity (cf. also Chatman 1990: 31). In the following example from
Scott’s \textit{Ivanhoe} we have several events of this kind which do not disturb the descriptive character of the
passage:

In that pleasant district of merry England which is watered by the river Don, there extended in ancient
times a large forest, covering the greater part of the beautiful hills and valleys which lie between
Sheffield and the pleasant town of Doncaster. The remains of this extensive wood are still to be seen
at the noble seats of Wentworth, of Wharncliffe Park, and around Rotherham. Here haunted of yore
the fabulous Dragon of Wantley; here were fought many of the most desperate battles during the Civil
Wars of the Roses; and here also flourished in ancient times those bands of gallant outlaws, whose
deeds have been rendered so popular in English song. (Scott 1964: 28)

The hunt of the Dragon as well as the fighting during the War of the Roses and the actions of the outlaws
are presented as recurring events. This is why I prefer to talk about them as qualities of the forest,
appearing in the descriptive mode, and not as particular narrated events.

As in the above-mentioned example, the description of space is often linked to the narrated perception of
space. There are some characteristics of narrating the perception of space, which I shall deal with after
giving a definition of narrated perception. We can speak of narrated perception of space if an act of
perception is indicated by a *verbum sentiendi* or if one of these is implied. Important devices in the latter case are subjectivity, the relation of the perception to the perceiving party, and topicality. If perception is narrated I will call the perceived area a ‘region of perception’. It can be co-extensive with the event region: “Il considérait les fentes des pavés, la gueule des gouttières, les candélabres, les numéros au-dessus des portes. Les objets les plus minimes devenaient pour lui des compagnons, ou plutôt des spectateurs ironiques ; et les façades régulières des maisons lui semblaient impitoyables.” (Flaubert 2000: 305) Frédéric, the protagonist of Flaubert’s novel *L’Éducation sentimentale* is walking up and down the street in front of the house of his beloved Mme Arnoux. What he sees – the flagstones, the eaves gutter, the candelabras, the facades of the houses with their numbers – is all part of the event region. Thus, the event region and the region of perception coincide.

The region of perception can also be different from the event region. This is the case in the following example, in which we learn what Frédéric can see from the window of a coach: “Et l’américaine l’emporta. […] Des champs moissonnés se prolongeaient à n’en plus finir. Deux lignes d’arbres bordaient la route, les tas de cailloux se succédaient.” (Flaubert 2000: 27) While the coach is the event region of the act of perception, the trees on each side of the road, the piles of pebbles and the fields represent the region of perception.

I shall now elaborate on some techniques of narrating the perception of space: the position and the mobility of the perceiving party in space and the sequence of details of spatial perception. If perception is narrated one can often determine the place where the perceiving party is situated. In most cases this place is explicitly mentioned, as in the following example from Goethe’s *Wahlverwandtschaften*:

13 “Und so gelangte man denn über Felsen, durch Busch und Gesträuch zur letzten Höhe, die zwar keine Fläche, doch fortlaufende, fruchtbare Rücken bildete. Dorf und Schloß hinterwärts waren nicht mehr zu sehen.” (Goethe 1987: 303) While in this example the position of the perceiving party is indicated with the concrete noun ‘hill’, the perceiving party can also just be situated in a space without a particular point being mentioned: “Le 15 septembre 1840, vers six heures du matin, la *Ville-de-Montereau*, près de partir, fumait à gros tourbillons devant le quai Saint-Bernard. Des gens arrivaient hors d’haleine ; des barriques, des câbles, des corbeilles de linge gênaient la circulation ; les matelots ne répondaient à personne ; on se heurtait ; les colis montaient entre les deux tambours […]” (Flaubert 2000: 19) To be able to see how the
pieces of luggage are going up one would have to be at the harbour at this very moment, but the description does not imply a definite position, as the objects and actions could also be observed from a higher place in the harbour, from the ship or from the middle of the crowd.

A moving perceiver is also often implied, as in the following example from Goethe’s *Wahlverwandtschaften*:

> Dieser stieg nun die Terrassen hinunter, musterte im Vorbeigehen Gewächshäuser und Treibebeete, bis er ans Wasser, dann über einen Steg an einen Ort kam, wo sich der Pfad nach den neuen Anlagen in zwei Arme teilte. Den einen, der über den Kirchhof ziemlich gerade nach der Felswand hinging, ließ er liegen, um den andern einzuschlagen, der sich links etwas weiter durch anmutiges Gebüsch sachte hinaufwand; da, wo beide zusammentrafen, setzte er sich für einen Augenblick auf einer wohlangebrachten Bank nieder, betrat sodann den eigentlichen Stieg und sah sich durch allerlei Treppen und Absätze auf dem schmalen, bald mehr bald weniger steilen Weg endlich zur Mooshütte geleitet. (Goethe 1987: 286 f.)

The surroundings are not only mentioned, but it is clear that it is Eduard who is perceiving everything. He himself sees his way fork up and how narrow and sometimes steep it is.

Another aspect of the perception of narrated space that should be considered is the sequence of the perceived spatial details.¹⁴ In her study on space descriptions, Wenz uses principles of perception from cognitive psychology to analyze textual descriptions (Wenz 1997: 30 f.). I shall use them with some modifications. A chronological sequence is the convention if the perceiving party is in motion. If it is static, there are such principles of perceptual significance and of subjective distance as near-far, foreground-background, figure-ground, centre-periphery, up-down, light-dark or static-dynamic. Alternatively, there is the principle of topographic contiguity for stable descriptions.¹⁵ It says that spatial coexistence is mapped by linguistic contiguity showing either a sequence from near to far or a radial structure with a centre as a starting point of the description. The following example presents a description mapping the perceptual code according to which we always perceive the figure before we perceive its background: “Ich saß auf einem verlassenen Fleck des Hinterdecks auf einem dicken, zwischen zwei Pflöcken hin- und her gewundenen Tau und schaute zurück. Rückwärts war in milchigem, opalinem Duft die Riviera versunken, die gelblichen Böschungen, über die der gezerrte Schatten der schwarzen Palmen fällt, und die weißen, flachen Häuser, die in unsäglichem Dickicht rankender Rosen einsinken.”
In the haze the narrator first perceives the yellowness and then the shadows of the palms. This particular code of perception repeats itself in the case of the houses (figure) on the darker roses (ground) because they are lighter and therefore more conspicuous.

The principles mentioned here can be considered conventional, but they are far from having the same mandatory status as, for example, the chronological order of time. In the same way that you find a description composed according to such a principle, you may also come across descriptions of spatial objects that do not follow it but rather reverse it, such as in the following passage: “Den runden Fleck in meinem Glas begrenzte schwarzes Tauwerk, messingeingefaßte Planken, dahinter der tiefblaue Himmel. In der Mitte stand eine Art Feldsessel, auf dem lag, mit geschlossenen Augen, eine blonde, junge Dame.”

The young blonde woman who is attracting the attention of the narrator is certainly the most conspicuous object of his range of vision through the binoculars. Nevertheless she is not mentioned first. Probably in order to create suspense we are first presented with the usual details of a ship, which is at the brink of the visual field. For literary texts, conventions of narrating perception that are typical of authors, genres or ages are of even greater importance than the above-mentioned principles. An example can be found in the next passage from Goethe’s Wahlverwandtschaften:

At first this seems to be a description following the above-mentioned principles by going from near to far and back again. In the beginning, we are told that Eduard, Charlotte and Otto, looking down the hill, see small ponds. Then we learn what is at the other end of the valley. The description seems to follow the spectators’ eye, because the narrator now reveals what they see when they let their eyes return: shadows
and hills, bushes, forests and clusters of trees. In the end we realize that the narrator has passed over a spatial object that is obviously so conspicuous that the spectators must have seen it at their first glance downwards: the cottonwoods and the plane trees on the bank of the pond, which are directly below their position. The fact that this is mentioned last is due to the special symbolic function of these trees at the pond: the trees were planted on the day of Ottilien’s birth and are related to her death, as well as to the death of Eduard’s and Charlotte’s son.

Given these distinctions between units of the *discours* it is possible to compare the number and extension of event-regions, movement regions and regions of perceptions in one or more narratives (for example in one genre). It seems possible to me to integrate these units into the systematic differentiation of Ruth Ronen (and Marie Laure Ryan who elaborates on Ronen’s terms in her contribution to the *Living Handbook of Narratology* in 2009) who chose to take immediacy and the explicitness of space as criteria to distinguish different limitations of space (Ronen 1986; Ryan 2009: 421-423). Ronen distinguishes the immediate surroundings of actual events (frames), the general socio-historico-geographical environment in which the action takes place (setting), the space relevant to the plot (story space) and the implied space to be completed by the reader (narrative world). The units of space in the *discours* that I have tried to develop can come in here as a refinement of the story space.

**QUALITIES OF SPACE**

The creation of space and the narrative strategies are narrative means of the *discours*. In this last section, I intend to explore some aspects of space as an element of the narrative world. Spatial objects can be characterized through physical and non-physical qualities but also through actions, events and characters situated inside or next to them. Furthermore, each of these pieces of information can be classified according to the position of the text in which it is found, where it stems from (from a character or the narrator), how frequently or explicitly it is mentioned and how foregrounded it is. In addition, the information can be factual, hypothetical, counter-factual or subjective. Even if one excludes the symbolic meanings of spatial objects, this variety poses a considerable challenge for a narratological conceptualization of space.

In order to find physical qualities of space that are significant in more than one text, I shall return to the above-mentioned concept of space as a container surrounding the characters. This combination is meant
to systemize Lotman’s, van Baak’s and Hoffmann’s suggestions regarding anthropologically constant spatial relationships, and to support them with the results of cognitive science (Lotman 1977/70: 217-231, van Baak 1983: 50-55; Hoffmann 1978: 6). The distinction between inside and outside, a boundary and the three-dimensional extension of space are therefore fundamental. Relations between spaces bring topological concepts like inclusion, contact, proximity and delimitation into view. The position of man in space leads us to the importance of the opposition of ‘here’ and ‘there’. As man is positioned in reference to three spatial axes, there are six basic directions: up, down, in front, behind, right, left. The following example shows the oppositions of in front/behind and up/down:

J’allais à cette maison, mais sans y entrer. Par l’orifice, je voyais le commencement noir d’un cour. Je m’appuyai au mur du dehors, j’avais certes très froid ; le froid m’enveloppant des pieds à la tête, je sentais lentement mon énorme stature prendre les dimensions de ce froid immense, elle s’élevait tranquillement selon les droites de sa nature véritable et je demeurais dans la joie et la perfection de ce bonheur, un instant la tête aussi haut que la pierre du ciel et les pieds sur le macadam. (Flaubert 2000: 20)

The first-person narrator is situated in front of the house but he can see the opening of the court inside through the open door. Then he feels himself growing until the dimensions of his body match the coldness so that his head is in the sky and his feet are down on the pavement.

In addition to the individual physical qualities of spatial objects I would like to treat a more complex type of information linked to spatial objects, which I call models of space. These consist of two components: a pattern for the physical space and a typical series of events. The latter is often linked to roles of characters as well. There are at least three types of such models of space: anthropological, institutional and specific. Before I deal with these three types, I should like to comment on how the term, model of space, relates to the concept of chronotope developed by Bakhtin in his investigation of the manifestations of time and space in the novel. He claims that his term covers the interplay between space and time (Bakhtin 1981/1938: 84). The idea of interplay remains without definition, and Bakhtin identifies two types that can be found through history of the novel: the Greek adventure novel where the actions cover large distances while biographic time comes to a halt, and the idyllic novel where the space remains the same while one generation of inhabitants supersedes the next. In my view it is very useful to have a term for the interplay
of space and time whereas time means order, duration and frequency. To describe spatial structures and their combination with actions, I would like to use the term model of space.

Anthropological models of space like street, path or house have been described by phenomenologists. Bollnow, for example, has compiled important meanings linked to the human experience of paths, streets, walks, sacred spaces, doors, windows, and beds (Bollnow 1963). Bachelard was the first to describe personal spatial objects like houses, hiding places and caves, and then drawers, chests, nests and shells as “houses of the things” (Bachelard 1994). The spatial component of those models of space is organised in spatial patterns. A cave, for example, is always likely to be a space with a more or less dark inside and with an opening on usually only one side. The sequences of events linked to the anthropological models of space can be fixed only for individual texts or complete works of an individual author and not in general.

Institutional models of space, the second type of models of space, include for example school, church or university. Here we can assume spatial patterns as well as scripts and roles. A church, for example, in the West often has a section where the congregation is seated, an altar, and a place from where the sermon is preached. As a third type of models of space, I deal with those specifically linked to a particular plot, such as Atlantis to Platons Politeia or Polyphemus’ cave to the Odyssey. In the following passage, the narrator tries to find an appropriate specific model of space for the dolphins and the sea he views from the ship:

Dann sprangen dort, wo golden der breite Sonnenstreifen auf dem Wasser lag, drei Delphine auf und sprudelten sprühendes Gold und spielten gravitatisch und haschten sich heftig rauschend und tauchten plötzlich wieder unter. Leer lag der Fleck und wurde wieder glatt und blinkte. So tanzen vor einem feierlichen Festzug radschlagende Gaukler und Lustigmacher, so liefen betrunkene, bocksfüßige Faune vor dem Wagen des Bakchos einher [...] Jetzt hätte es dort aufrauschen müssen, und wie der wühlende Maulwurf weiche Erdwellen aufwerfend den Kopf aus den Schollen hebt, so hätten sich die triefenden Mähnen und rosigen Nüstern der scheckigen Pferde herausheben müssen, und die weißen Hände, Arme und Schultern der Nereiden, ihr flutendes Haar und die zackigen, dröhnden Hörner der Tritonen. Und in der Hand die rotseidenen Zügel, an denen grüner Seetang hängt und tropfende Algen, müßte er im Muschelwagen stehen, Neptun, kein langweiliger, schwarzbärtiger Gott, wie sie ihn zu Meißen aus Porzellan machen, sondern unheimlich und reizend, wie das Meer selbst, mit
First the narrator uses the model of ceremonial procession. He only names the persons in their roles, but the idea of a procession is also linked to an abstract spatial schema: proceeding from one culturally marked point to another, for example from a castle to a monument. The second model of space stems from Greek mythology. The explicitly mentioned coach of Bacchus with his aspirants also implies space. As Bacchus is the god of fertility and wine he is most often associated with fertile nature, where fountains of milk and wine appear at the command of Bacchus’ followers. By evoking a mole nuzzling in clods of earth, the narrator remains within the imagery of fertile nature. Finally, the attempt at giving a meaning to the upcoming dolphins is a return to a model that is closest to the sea. The dolphins are considered Nereids and Tritons announcing Neptune’s arrival in his characteristic environment: a shell-carriage.

CONCLUSION
In this paper I have tried to sketch out fundamental aspects of a theory of space in narrative. I limited the subject to the physical space of the narrative world and chose a functional definition in which spaces are understood as objects with an inside and an outside which serve as surroundings for characters. This definition also allows us to deal with objects in fictional texts that are usually not made for human beings but become surroundings of characters in a narrative world. The space of the narrative world is conceptualized as the mental model of a model reader. This means that it is possible to account not only for textual structures but also for inferences presupposed by a prospective reader. In that way it is possible to consider historical literary and non-literary knowledge not explicitly indicated in the text. This is important because information about the space of the narrative world often remains implicit.

On the level of the discours I first described means for creating space through linguistic means and through inferences. Then I showed that narrating space entails a special structuring of the spatial objects, which differs depending on whether space is communicated in the process of narrating events or during non-event based modes. In the first case, event regions emerge, which themselves have the form of spaces, whereas, in the second case, describing, deliberating or commenting on space does not lead to spatial structures. The mentioned spatial objects, as I call the spatial objects treated in non-narrative modes, may also be grouped into units, but the units are not spaces in themselves. In order to treat one of the non-
narrative modes in detail I focused on description. I then elaborated on perception of space as an important narrative strategy that often comes with description of space. The position and mobility of the perceiving party and the sequence of the perceived details were shown to be central parameters of the narrated perception of space.

On the level of the narrative world, I developed terms for analyzing individual physical qualities and models of space. These qualities were derived from the aforementioned concept of space as a container surrounding characters. In this context the distinction between inside and outside, a boundary and three-dimensional extension, as well as such topological concepts as inclusion, contact, proximity and delimitation are crucial for the human conceptualization of space. The position of man in space implies the opposition of ‘here’ and ‘there’, his positioning in reference to three spatial axes leads to the six basic directions up, down, in front, behind, right, and left. Models of space present themselves as combinations of a spatial component and a component of action. I differentiated between anthropological, institutional and specific models. An interesting point for further investigation concerning the space of the narrative world would be structures of space on the macro-level.

My findings serve to analyse the basic features of creating and narrating the space of the narrative world and some aspects of its meaning. Each of the terms may serve to interpret a single text but it can also be the subject of an individual historical investigation in order to explore how the narration of space has been changing over the centuries.

While I proved the value of my terminology by analyzing samples of seven literary narratives I would also like to give some indications of its use for non-fictional narratives. Both the concept of space and the explicit means for creating space can be used equally to describe space in fictional and non-fictional narratives although it should be clear that the number of objects serving as spaces is restricted in non-fictional texts. Concerning the implicit creation of space one should take into account that the completion of space can be presupposed for non-fictional narratives and has to be proved for each piece of information in a fictional text. Moreover, the comparison of the amount of narrated spatial information in the discours with the actual world is much more important for non-fictional narratives than for fictional ones. The narrative strategies as well as the findings concerning individual physical qualities and models of space may also serve to analyze space in non-fictional narratives. An interesting point for further
investigation could be the transfer of specific models of space from fictional narratives to non-fictional ones.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 1: Linguistic means for the creation of space.

**Reference List**

**Primary Sources**

Blanchot, Maurice


Dos Passos, John


Flaubert, Gustave


Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von

Hofmannsthal, Hugo von


Scott, Sir Walter


Walpole, Horace


**Secondary Sources**

Baak, Jost van


Bachelard, Gaston

1994 (1957) The poetics of space, translated from the French by Maria Jols; with new foreword by John R. Stilgoe (Boston: Beacon)

Bakhtin, Michail


Bal, Mieke


Böhme, Hartmut (Hg.)

2005 *Topographien der Literatur. Deutsche Literatur im Transnationalen Kontext. DFG-Symposion 2004*

(Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler)

Bollnow, Otto Friedrich

1963 *Mensch und Raum* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer).

Bonheim, Helmut W.


Buchholz, Sabine; and Manfred Jahn


Chatman, Seymour


1990 *Coming to terms* (Ithaca/New York u. a. Cornell University Press)

Dennerlein, Katrin


Doležel, Lubomír


Frank, Joseph


Genette, Gérard


Grabowski, Joachim

Hamon, Philippe

Herman, David
2002 Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative, Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press.

Hoffmann, Gerhard

Hühn, Peter
Hühn, Peter; Sommer, Roy

Ibsch, Elrud

Jannidis, Fotis

Lakoff, George; Johnson, Mark
1980 Metaphors we live by (Chicago/London).

Lotman, Jurij M.

Lopes, José Manuel
1995 Foregrounded Description in Prose Fiction (Toronto: University of Toronto Press).

Martínez, Matías; Scheffel, Michael
1999 Einführung in die Erzähltheorie (München: Ch. Beck)
Miller, J. Hillis


Merleau-Ponty


Ronen, Ruth


Ryan, Marie-Laure

2003 “Cognitive Maps and the construction of narrative space” in *Narrative theory and cognitive science* edited by David Herman, 214-242 (Stanford, CA: Publications of the Center for the Study of Language and Information)


Schaeffer, Jean-Marie


Schlottmann, Anke


Sternberg, Meir


Wenz, Karin


Wolf, Werner

2007 “Description as a Transmedial Mode of Representation: General Features and Possibilities of Realization in Painting, Fiction and Music in” in *Description in Literature and Other Media* edited by Werner Wolf, and Walter Bernhart, 1-89 (Amsterdam: Rodopoi).
Zoran, Gabriel


---

1 I am very much obliged to Christine Knoop and Bernd-Dieter Fischer for help with the English version.

2 For a detailed discussion of studies on space in narrative see Dennerlein 2009: 13-47.

3 For the concept of the model reader used in this context see Jannidis 2004: 15-83.


5 This concept is inspired by the common-sense concept of geography developed by Schlottmann (Schlottmann 2005: 43).

6 For a systematic overview see figure 1 at the end of this text.

7 ‘Inference’ means a non-necessary conclusion, which in most cases equals an abduction.

8 An event in its basic sense equals any kind of change of current state see Hühn 2009.

9 For a systematic analysis of the modes of narrative see Wolf 2007.

10 Find some representative examples discussed by Ronen (see Ronen 1997: 423-425).

11 Despite the lack of a definition there has been an interesting study on historical changes of descriptions of space by Elrud Ibsch (Ibsch 1982). She accounts for the internal organization of description, its place in narrative texts and its relation to the level of action.

12 Bal for instance, also considers those sentences as descriptions in which not only properties of an entity are presented, but which also contain a certain event (Bal 1981: 105). Herman, to cite a recent example, defines descriptions as text types that entail “ascriptions of properties to entities within a mental model of the world.” (Herman 2008: 452)

13 In some cases it is even hard to define a point of reference in the narrative world, as Meir Sternberg has pointed out (cf. Sternberg 1981: 70).

14 Without restriction to narrated perception, Meir Sternberg has dealt with the issue of ordering spatially existing entities. He has shown that entities existing in space (like characters, objects and spaces) have no natural order and therefore always need external ordering principles like spatial points of reference, causal-chronological frames and hierarchical orders (as for example political, legal and psychological) (cf. Sternberg 1981).

15 For a discussion of these principles in a semiotic context see Wenz 1997: 28-31.