

The Impossible Encounter. The Construction of the Ambiguously Fantastic in Argentine Short Fiction (1862-1910)

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This dissertation concentrates on the textual analysis of five short stories from the period 1862-1910, all of which share the same characteristic: they all present the coexistence of a natural and a supernatural domain, being these two domains incompatible according to the premises proposed by the text.

Considering that these stories appear in a historical period in which reason is seen as the means to achieve 'civilisation' and 'progress', the ambiguous coexistence of these two orders appears as a challenge to the hegemony of reason and, in an extended sense, as a challenge to the modernisation project. Furthermore, considering that the authors of these stories belonged to the dominant classes, be it politically or intellectually, the challenge comes from the same social classes that formulated the official discourse.

In order to understand how these texts construct the ambiguity between a natural and a supernatural domain, the following questions were posed: At which levels of the texts is the mentioned ambiguity created? How is it created? How is it kept throughout the stories? When studying the use of narrative techniques, it could be seen that the technical preoccupation is very much present in these stories, and that the creation of a natural and a supernatural domains is in great measure a product of the narrative act. When analysing the use of motives, figures and themes, it could be seen that through these, the stories inscribe themselves in the gothic tradition and in the wider tradition of the supernatural in literature. This contributes to the creation of the supernatural domain. The motif of the threshold and its associated motif, the motif of the gothic castle, were shown to play a fundamental roll in the structuring of the textual space in which the coexistence of the domains will take place. The analysis of the use of the discourses of science and progress showed that science not always contributes to the creation of the natural domain, as well as confirmed the presupposition that the discourse of science and the discourse of spiritualism were not separated by clear limits. A study of the social, cultural and political context in which the stories were published, partly by studying the press of the period, contributed to a better understanding of the dialogue that these stories kept with their context.

The stories are Juana Manuela Gorriti's "Quien escucha su mal oye" (1865), Eduardo L. Holmberg's "El ruiseñor y el artista" (1876), Eduarda Mansilla's "El ramito de romero" (1877), Atilio Chiappori's "La corbata azul" (1904) and Leopoldo Lugones' "Un fenómeno inexplicable" (1906).

Key words: Argentine literature 1862-1910, the ambiguously fantastic, fantastic literature, literary genre, Juana Manuela Gorriti, Eduardo Ladislao Holmberg, Leopoldo Lugones, Eduarda Mansilla, Atilio Chiappori.