

**‘The book and the labyrinth were one and the same’ :
Narrative and architecture in Borges’ fictions.**

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Abstract

The strong presence of architecture in Borges’ fictions called for a study of their narrative structure. The intention was to examine the contribution of spatial models to his literature and the ways in which his stories can serve as tools to understand architecture. The analysis revealed a narrative strategy based on the relationship between the linear progression of the text, and a geometrical symmetry that relates all narrative elements beyond their temporal positions in the linear sequence. The depiction of space combines eye-level experience with panoramic description to express this relationship. The architectural models are drawn from specific historical, cultural and ideological contexts to reinforce the philosophical content in the fictions. The paper concludes that fiction and architecture create representations of reality based on a rigorous intellectual order and set within the infinite compounds of combinatorial possibility. At a more general level this study justifies the importance of a wider cultural framework for both architectural design and analysis. If architecture is an integral part in Borges’ creations, it cannot exist in isolation limited in its own modes of operation.

Keywords

spatial narrative, the role of narrative as metaphor in architecture, geometry, architecture as a metaphor for structuring text

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'If a straight line is the shortest distance between two fated and inevitable points, digressions will lengthen it; and if these digressions become so complex, so tangled and tortuous, so rapid as to hide their own tracks, who knows - perhaps death may not find us, perhaps time will lose its way, and perhaps we ourselves can remain concealed in our shifting hiding places'

(Carlo Levi, from Calvino’s Six Memos for the Next Millennium, Vintage, 1992).