The Analysis of the Element of Space in Negative Utopias by Antoni Lange, Jan Dobraczyński & Vladímir Páral

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Relational Character of Space

Hanna Buczyńska-Garewicz proposes to comprehend space from the perspective of the "hermeneutics of place". Namely, understanding space means treating it as a relation rather than an ultimate existence. The source of every space, that is to say realized space, lies in sensation, experience, mood, and action. This is the life experience that establishes space, not the other way round. The space of life is subjective, relativized, but primarily emotional, full of particular meanings and content (Buczyńska-Garewicz 2006: 10-13). The hermeneutic perspective enables to treat space not only as a place or a territory. Analysing selected aspects of space, the importance of the perception of space, its determination, sense of social systems, relationships between individuals, communities and even civilizations in the negative literary utopias can be noticed. The vision of an alternate reality is also described as a spatial vision (expressed as a territory, a specific place for the possibility of (re)life that has boundaries and tangential places as well as an abstract area in respect to the possibility of action). When talking about literary utopias we treat them as those of literary texts that present decrease of the world, society; thus they are the opposite of a perfect, utopian vision—the opposite of positive utopia.

> The Platonian legend about Atlantis should be claimed as a crucial text for creating and developing utopia—a new literary genre. It seems that positive literary utopias are related rather to this myth, and generally a picture of a perfect world. On the other hand, negative utopias show a loss of the god-like light (Juszczyk 2014: 15)[1].

It is worth to instance Joanna Czaplińska who claims positive utopias present to a reader these spheres of a social life that need to be changed when we want to reach perfection. There can also be included a plan of an action which helps to reach goals. What is more, negative utopias are nothing more but extrapolation of an existing order, an obscure vision of a diminishing society which not only will not reach perfection, but also will become its opposition (Czaplińska 2001: 30-31). Negative utopias are perceived as their (i.e. positive utopias) extreme opposites, based on a completely dystopian concept of reality (Juszczyk 2014: 91). It should not be forgotten that there is such kind of dependency in every perception—this assumption is a base for the aforementioned analysis of the space category in the discussed literary texts. As it is emphasized by Krzysztof M. Maj, every utopia (no matter: negative or positive) is both a dialogical and critical genre (Maj 2014: 163).

Space, as one of the literary elements presented in negative utopias, plays a significant role in defining characters' ideas and values. The awareness of limits and the lack of this awareness, or the moment of coming to the realization that they exist situate utopian relatively to anti-utopian elements. The division also relates to a closed space of orders, bans, limitations of characters' liberties (these actions misinterpret the principles of utopia), as well as the space "beyond", so the space of "normality". However, it is important to remember that characters' ideas and values which are noticed by readers do not always relate to literary implementations which are, above all, associated with narrator's limited knowledge or psychic evolution of the main character. Not only is the element of space limited to the area of life, but it also includes the sphere of values, outlook, and habits. By forbidding, it is possible to influence people's behaviour, who adapting to new reality, will be stuck in not perfect world or will stand up to it and fight for their own utopia. This raises the question: to what extent the space of "my" utopia may be the space of the utopia of "someone else"? Thus the space is both the territory (distinguished by ideological distinctness, being an utopian and dystopian place) and the area of life (the area of enslavement

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[1]   Unless stated otherwise, all translations from non-English texts are mine.

by totalitarianism, consumption, civilization, ideology, or technology). Moreover, space may also be a battlefield of symbolic power. According to Elżbieta Rybicka, space as a battlefield is not an immovable object but it exists as a dynamic part of the relation, expressed with forward planning in the processes of various strategies' collision conflict (Rybicka 2011: 203). Spatial creations in the novel are in opposition to each other to form constitute grounds of their being and serve indirect characterization of literary characters (Markiewicz 1996: 139). Consequently, Lyman Tower Sargent asserts, that "in our pride we commit utopia and violate the boundaries of our allotted sphere" (Sargent 1994: 27).

This chapter focuses on the element of space in three novels: *Miranda* by Antoni Lange, *Wyczerpać morze* [*To Drain the Sea*] by Jan Dobraczyński, and *Země Žen* [*World of Woman*] by Vladímir Páral. As Ivo Pospíšil states considering the issue of utopia—the positive and the negative ones, they relate to those social projects which existed in the past, i.e. feudalism, capitalism, fascism, nationalism, communism. On the one hand, it is possible to present the positive ideal (the adjective *positive* is significant in this context); on the other hand, the negative image that is rooted in criticism of an ideal can be shown, concerns which result from fulfilling utopian visions or an attempt to put them into effect (Pospíšil 2014: 14). Negative utopias are, therefore, the literary presentation of an ideal that is available "not for everyone."

The Limits of Utopia in Antoni Lange's *Miranda*

Miranda by Antoni Lange[2] is a kind of review and literary journey at the same time. In this novel of 1924 the writer fates travelling Pole, caught up in the war. The story covers the years 1915-1919, Jan Podobłoczny, the main character, fascinated by the esoteric, has a chance to get to know the society considered utopian. Jan had met Miranda when he was still in Poland, before his essential journey started. This female character is the key to the whole work, as Miranda, Damajanti (living in a utopian island and representing a superman) and Lenora (spectrum materialized by Miarand) are three emanations of one character. Jan falls in love with Lenora and after leaving Poland his beloved appeared in a form of Damajanti. It is worth mentioning

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[2]   A Polish writer, a translator and a literary critic. He lived since 1862 to 1929. The greater part of his work is poetry but he is also considered a precursor of Polish science fiction.

that the author himself mentions about the three threats when he refers to his own literary work. The first one is the analysis of the opportunity for creating a perfect society—a utopia; the second threat applies to achieving excellence in human existence by dual transformation—one of the needs for such is the psychological transformation—the one that is ideal due to Nirwidium; the other need, which is the third threat in *Miranda* at the same time, is the technical transformation (Lange 1987: 6-7).

Lange's work is a literary journey to the land of happiness, which was able to become such, and it seemed to be such indeed as Tommaso Campanella describes. The traveller, Jan Podobłoczny, led by coincidence, reaches the place described in *The City of the Sun*—after thirty years of its publication. Jan learns the story which contradicts utopianism proposed in the seventeenth century. Thirty years after publishing *Civitas Solis*, the crisis began and the golden era of Sun residents ended. All ideas proposed in the famous utopia turned out to be illusion, which did not prevent the allegedly ideal system from collapse. The republic would have been the most fortunate in the whole world if it had not been for the degradation of human nature, as Wiśwamitra, one of the residents, claims.

Science fiction prose such as *Miranda* shows many utopias both positive and negative ones, related to stories about an unusual invention—according to Smuszkiewicz, fantastic technological inventions or extraordinary scientific discoveries appear in novels which are in fact the reflection of the reality. As a result, literary elements undergo metamorphosis (Smuszkiewicz 1987: 6). In *Miranda*, the invention was Nirwidium that is the punctum of material (Karel Čapek defined it as the absolute). Nirwidium becomes the base of the power of Sun, therefore, it is possible to solidify the astral and create a superhuman being. Overcoming the material form, it becomes possible to achieve utopia—Lange writes:

> […] only when the miserable human being material has been overcome […] when he prevailed on our island spirit liberated from the flesh, only then an important realization of this world described by Campanella could begin (Lange 1987: 121).

In *Miranda* the utopian elements are represented through the city. The space beyond the city is anti-utopian, where people still wage wars, focus their life on possessing goods, becoming richer and more powerful. As Paweł Wojciechowski maintains, Lange affirms the image of integrated culture. The particular female characters are personifications of specific cultures: Keety (Miranda) corresponds to the European culture, Lenora embodies the Orient, whereas both, combined together, are

reflected by Damajanti. Whilst the city means peace, happiness, homeostasis, harmony and nirvana (the Orient), European culture stands for the threat of hell, guilt, punishment, and sin (Wojciechowski 2010: 200-201).

However, there are some elements in city which contradict the utopian image of the perfect society of its residents. It is possible to notice them from the perspective of a real human being since the problem lies in the fact that life of the person of Nirwidium is led by different values and this lifestyle requires numerous sacrifices from the non-Nirwidium people. The writer makes it clear that the freedom offered by the mythical society will not satisfy everyone. This is not only a matter of internal freedom traps, but above all the problem of lack of maturity to accept it (Wojciechowski, 2010: 211).

Not everyone is "mature" enough to be ready for rejecting their material body and existing as an astral body itself. Rebels propagate the idea of free will, which meets with incomprehension. They claim that the real free will is inseparably connected with the material body of a human being which allows to make an effort, take a risk, cater needs, or fighting for survival.

> We are in complete bondage [...]—concludes Czerwaka—we lost the most precious things, namely the intensity of the spirit, effort, relentless sense of risk and struggle for existence, i.e. all of this that develops real freedom of the human will (Lange 1987: 90).

The residents, who are striving for perfection, cannot accept the rebels. Thus the rebels are sent into exile to live in Kalana on the fringe of City of the Sun and the boarder with Teluria. According to the residents of the city, Kalana is famous for pillage and banditry. Despite the attempts to provide them with the opportunity to make an honest living, Kalana's residents did not want to obey law and order.

According to Buczyńska-Garewicz, experienced space surrounds people is related to their lifestyle, and is relative, not absolute. Although it is impossible to mark out its borders, experienced space ought not to be called definite for its open and continuously variable; its mobile horizon results from the subjective character of existence (Buczyńska-Garewicz 2006: 20-21). The relativity of space indicates also that it is perceived as utopian or anti-utopian world. On the one hand, the rebels reject this kind of utopia; on the other hand, they choose freedom. Even though the change is not imposed on them, they must abandon the city, their previous living space, as they are considered to be the strangers. According to Jacek Zbigniew Górnikiewicz, the strangers may be perceived as an immigrant in a foreign country, who are trying

to enter the new world, which rejects them at the same time. In consequence, they begin to consider the world as gloomy and hostile place, and they become such themselves (Górnikiewicz 2014: 366-367). Nirwidium is the only way to achieve the ideal, therefore, it requires a sacrifice. However, one can question whether the ideal equals sacrifice or compulsion. The space of the city is closed, not only because of its geographical location as an island but also due to the fact that it is considered to be a mental space not allowing different choices. Therefore, assuming that not only does the existence of places depend on human beings but also human beings are dependent upon places, the places in which we live may determine to a certain extent who we are. The relationship between a man and its place appears to be peaceful coexistence, reciprocal, co-defining (Buczyńska-Garewicz 2006: 36-37). Therefore, the rebels do not attempt to return to the city as they do not want the city to be their place. What they want is to shape space according to their own rules and principles.

Wyczerpać morze and the Problem of the Responsibility for Place

In *Miranda*, space is a matter of choice. A different situation is presented in *Wyczerpać Morze* [*To Drain the Sea*] by Jan Dobraczyński, published in 1961. The novel shows the post-apocalyptic image of The Old Continent coming to an end. In the future, nuclear bomb explosions occur and nearly the entire territory of Europe becomes destructed. Newly arrived Africans arrange temporary rescue camps so the survivors could save their lives. Human activity creates a particular place as easily as this place can be devastated or demolished, for the human place may become impoverished due to spiritual destruction, lack of former mythology and sense. The surroundings ought not to be material only but also spiritual. One must be responsible for a place and this responsibility is in the same time human self-responsibility. The place we stay in shows who we are (Buczyńska-Garewicz 2006: 38-39). The catastrophe in Europe is not only the result of the bomb explosion, but all the actions leading to the lack of devotion to a place are at the root of the disaster. In the novel, the space of a small village is presented in the beginning. Then, the village transforms into workers' housing estate, into economic migrants' ghetto, into rescue camp for the European survivors. It seems as if the space had always been temporary, like the immediate attempt to solve problems, but nobody wanted to be responsible for that place as they did not believe it could have lasted for ever.

The space of camps for the Europeans is the space in which African workers lived previously. That area becomes adapted to the needs of survivors (there is a hospital, masses are celebrated, dancing parties are held, and even a theatre is going to come into being). However, this space is not at all temporary. It lacks perspectives for the future—the camp fulfils the function of a place of death. Beyond that space there is no other life but it itself does not guarantee surviving. African people do not try to rebuilt Europe or move European citizens to their territory. They stay with them until European people eventually die of the radiation sickness caused by combings. African people make use of this situation and conduct research on the effects of the bomb explosion in order to prepare for such a scenario in the future and be able to assure African citizens safety.

The notions of desire of revenge or recolonization would not be accurate to describe this phenomenon but repeatability of situations and behaviour draw reader's attention. The Africans do not want to dominate the Europeans but they do not attempt to help them either. According to Bauman, the consecutive cycles of heydays and crises leave behind immigrants trying to settle down in countries they have to live in now. These immigrants have no other choice but to become another ethnic minority. Native residents, however, must learn to live in the neighbourhood of diasporas. Both immigrants and natives are expected to adapt to these conditions. Tendencies to separate may be noticed on both sides and are followed by self-intensification of chain of behaviour (Bauman 2011: 57-58). The nature of Africans shows that such a chain is likely to be broken.

It is hard to expect that the space, which, for Africans, was of European domination, influence, continual appropriates and transformations, it has been somehow recovered and would become common again. As Ryszard Stefański maintains, European prosperity had been created through colonies exploitation and an attempt to keep them. Even though European modernity had its foundations of national and social class antagonisms, those antagonisms appeared to unitive at the same time: European nations were civilized enough to "enlighten savage and primitive humanity" but, despite the idea of equality propagated in Europe, equal treatment towards Asian or African organizations was almost impossible to imagine (Stefański 2014: 137-138). African space seems to be independent—the former colonies do not exist anymore, European domination has ended. However, Africa is still the part of other culture, which is much wider than African culture itself. African people, undergoing the process of colonization, who are strangers in both their land and Europe, have to

look for their own identity because, according to Bauman, the identity is not given to anyone once and for all but one has to own it, it needs to be taken into possession again and again, and every time one should choose from a different set of opportunities—which, as far as we know, is going to change but we do not know its direction (Bauman 2004: 30). Therefore, Zekić claims that a matter of individuality becomes not only a problem of an individual, but of the whole nation which, when asserting its cultural uniqueness, should also define its identity (Zekić 2008: 68). For the African, finding their own identity means complete separation from Europe. Therefore, their passive attitude—lack of response—appears to be a kind of an answer to European long-lasting domination, dictating terms, values, outlook, and lifestyle. However, it is worth considering how far Africa could function on its own and to what extent European values are strange. From European perspective, the lack of dialogue with the others appeared to be their end, as Bauman states: We accept a dialogue, reach an agreement how to control these totally dissolute and liberate interdependences, therefore, we sail together. Or we are like a shipwreck (Bauman 2005: 4).

For the Europeans the space of camps was introduced in an unnatural way— their inhabitants were referred to that space and they had to adapt to it. They were forced to live within its closed borders, there was no life for them beyond that space; living there did not provide them with the promise of surviving, but only gave them a shelter until their death.

Artificial Divisions and Borders as the Source of Homelessness

In the Czech novel from 1987 *Země žen* [*World of Woman*] by Vladímir Páral[3], spatial creations are also artificial places—material but not spiritual ones. Inhabiting means openness to different content which has not been acquired yet. The act of inhabiting does not narrow the world down but it expands it. However, cutting off from the broad horizon or closing oneself in borders may be regarded as homelessness and inability to live in their own house (Buczyńska-Garewicz 2006: 40). The characters in the book live in space, but they also create space which is subordinate to ideology, space of division, separation, and diversity.

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[3]   A Czech writer born in 1932. His work is characterized by a description of social phenomena (motive for many of his novels known as little stabilization) often dominated by irony and sarcasm.

In the novel, Vladímir Páral presented the mechanism of falling into extremity, the mechanism of discrimination being rooted in the attempts to introduce equality of rights, and the mechanism of taking over the power and being subordinate to it. This negative utopia tells about the world which is created once again, however, this time by women who are in charge of organizing social life, hold office, and form the army in this brand new world. Men are temporarily isolated, as their role is limited to serving women. In the novel, the reader learns about the reality described by both men and women. What is important: descriptions are varied because the male protagonists are divided into two groups: men who do not like the present reality and those who have not adjusted to it but do not oppose the existing order. The same applies to women: there are those who fully accept the changes and those who want to bring back the past.

As a result of increasing frustration of women, who were feeling sexually discriminated, the reality, which was familiar to the reader, has changed. The development of technology led to changes in lifestyle, which seemed to be faster and easier, but not to women. In fact, women had to run the house, grow up children, and take care of their husbands. Men's activity did help make life easier but it was only men's life which became easy. The miraculous invention that brought men's world to an end was the MAXIM system, which helped to maximize and optimize user's life. After introducing data such as health condition, job, family, social life, dreams, or expectations, the system proposed solutions to make life better. This way, men began to use healthy diet, go jogging every night, and finally leave their homes to live in the other part of the city, called the city of joy. They spent there four days in men company only; they played football, drank beer and barbecued. Therefore, their family lives were thought to improve, since the separation from their families helped them avoid to be stuck in a rut. While men were staying in their men part of the city, women were living together; apart from the absence of their husbands their lives were just the same.

The situation changes when the foreign extraterrestrial civilization orderes to introduce remedial programme under the threat of the Earth destruction. The programme involves destruction of weapons and technology aimed to spread domination and violence, transferring all the power to women, and reeducation of men. As soon as all the necessary changes are done, the new order and the new division between women and men is introduced. In place of the City of Joy there is a men's camp which residents are allowed to meet with their families only at the weekends,

provided they got a pass (if a man was not married, a bachelor, or a divorcee, a pass was given under extraordinary circumstances only). Men do only physical jobs, they are taught to do the housework and take care of children.

Seeking for better life, close to the ideal one, men created the space which in fact has become their prison. They are stuck in the camp, in the city sector for men whose presence there cannot be called residing. Every day is limited to physical jobs, exercising and resocialization—acquisition of women's outlook. Men are deprived of any space (their houses are subordinate to women's will, who are now in power; men cannot make themselves at their own homes, they are not even guests there, the only role they have is carrying out women's orders: cooking, cleaning, serving). As a result a kind of dehumanization of a man can be noticed—living is a typically human oc-currence, it belongs and is significant only for a human condition (Buczyńska-Garewicz 2006: 129). Men do not feel the closeness, intimacy of the place they stay in and, therefore, they are homeless. Homelessness means lack of an own place and lack of assimilated surrounding area (Buczyńska-Garewicz 2006: 130). The camp is the place where men stay passively—like the Europeans in the idea of Dobraczyński.

In Páral's novel, the thesis about negative effects separating people, creating ste-reotypes, artificial borders, imposing roles is repeated several times: talking about the past city division into the City of Joy and the family city, one of the characters calls the past something fabulous, but the life in separation appears to be the tragic result of actions aiming to divide, not coexist: "—It was fantastic.—But it ended badly.—Yes, like everything that divides people. […] But every division of people leads to disaster" (Páral 1999: 168). Although the bygone City of Joy was in the vicin-ity, so it was comprehended and inhabited by men (not women), the camp is some-thing entirely foreign, and therefore it cannot be understood.

The life in the camp is in contradiction to men's life before the MAXIM system was introduced and after that, too. Even though they also stay in the men's part of the city, among almost only other men, they are enslaved by women—subordinate to their power and discipline. Men are surrounded by nothing that could bring them entertainment, or even necessities; food is limited to simple dishes which contain no meat—meat was considered to be the source of men's violence (women could still eat meat dishes). What is unusual, women who stay in the camp—holding military offices, government representatives—also adapt their lifestyles to the conditions dic-tated by that place. For instance, Renata Souhalová gets rid of her femininity, she perceives the relationship between a man and a woman merely as men's need for

copulation, where men are animals which are not able to love. She does not mind peculiar, severe living conditions in the camp, as she does not know any other world.

Taking over the power and reorganizing space, women do not abolish the division created by the MAXIM system, but instead they turn the poles of the situation the other way round. Michael Kimmel, who wrote about social structures of gender relations, describes the notion of exercising power. According to Kimmel, the quality of exercising power is not dependent on gender which may be proved by such women as Indira Ghandi or Margaret Thatcher. The particular position requires specific behaviour from the person who holds it, regardless of their gender (Kimmel 2015: 162). In order to fight for women's rights, restrain women discrimination, and social dissatisfaction, the new system, in fact, gave rise to violence, inequality, dictatorship, and stopped the progress. The image of women is changing in the novel from victims to persecutors. Limiting one's world by limiting space leads to walling it off from the others. The change, which was introduced after the threat of planet destruction, only intensified existing spatial and spiritual divisions, announcing revolution which might not have been stopped. However, if the revolution itself appears to be destructive, the world created by men and then "improved" by women at the end of the novel seems to disappear.

Conclusion

Referring to subjective experiences, the notion of space appears to be highly relative and, therefore, it is necessary to introduce the notion of experience to the analysis of the element of space (Buczyńska-Garewicz 2006: 13). It is worth noticing that the vision of an alternative reality, or the reality at all, which appears in negative utopias, is also a spatial vision, comprehended in such categories as familiarity, strangeness, otherness, membership, freedom, captivity, or the opportunity to live or survive, or develop. According to Rybicka, literary narrative maps equally create and hack ideological maps; what is more, they build critical cartographies and counter maps (Rybicka 2014: 367). The analysis of the element of space as the established existence, not the absolute one, indicates that it is subjective and of relative character rooted in relationality. The negative utopias discussed in this chapter show the importance of the element of space in translationg into spatial categories such themes as power struggle, domination, sense of security, chance of development, and experiences presented in the novels discussed above.

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