

# ***The Impact of Space on the Psyche of the Protagonist in George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty Four***

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## ***Abstract:***

*In literature the concept of space is regarded as the physical element of the events occurring in the novel or a story, that is to say that any artistic creation is accompanied by its own space being real or fictional, which serves as a container for the plot and the events of any narrative.*

*The purpose of the present paper is to illustrate the influence of the physical space on the psychological space of the protagonist in George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty Four. It is also an attempt to differentiate between the 'Panopticon Space' and the 'Heterotopic Place' in the novel.*

*In George Orwell's novel the room above the antique shop stood out as a special place that contrasted the other spaces in the novel and it had a noticeable impact on Winston. From his experience with the room it became*

*evident that a change in the physical environment could bring about radical changes in one's physical as well as mental health which opens the door to a query, since a space could have a positive impact on an individual physically and mentally; then would it be possible to intentionally reverse the effect?. In other words would it be possible to immerse an individual in a physical setting that would negatively affect his physical and mental health. And could these surrounding be manipulated and controlled to achieve the desired change in one's behavior?.*

*Keywords :Space, Panopticon Space, Heterotopic Place, Transsgressivity*

## **1. Introduction**

*of their study became spatiality; a concept which relates to the distribution of objects and bodies in space and their relationships towards each other. Michel Foucault for instance; argued in his lecture *Of Other Spaces* (1967); that space outpaced time and has advanced to the forefront in the contemporary era, and he called for the study of the interrelation between sites and the distribution of bodies in space. According to Henry Lefebvre the production of space is related to the Marxist theory, as it is a conscious process which reflects the social strata. Yi Fu Tuan also emphasized the idea of conscious production of space and he argued that 'Man' divides and arranges space consciously to suite his 'body', which includes a particular attention to the social hierarchy of space which reminds man of where he stands in society. Thus from these definitions of space it appears that space is a multidimensional entity, and each dimension has its own structure, rules and norms which dictate the relationship between the bodies and objects spread into that specific space. In other word the broad term of 'Space' englobes the urban spaces which are the outcomes of human architectural designs, it also englobes the social space in which we live and interact with each other as well as the personal space of an individual.*

## **2. Space conception in *Nineteen Eighty Four* (Henceforth 1984)**

*In George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty Four* the protagonist Winston is in his own quest for meaning. A search during which he undergoes a stream of thoughts, and enquiries concerning life style in London under Big brother's watch. The space which contains the narrative in the novel is crucial to render fully the experience of the protagonist. The living spaces in the novel; such as his apartment, the hallways, his workspace, the canteen, all have been*

*designed by the government of INGSOC to maintain a solid grip and a firm control over the individuals, this control begins with the first dimension of space which is the concrete physical spaces, and ultimately spread to the third dimension which is the psychological space. In the Orwellian London the social and the cultural dimensions of space have been carefully designed and uniformly conceived, leaving no room for individuality, or any other form of freedom. The living spaces have been homogenously manipulated to enable a total hegemony; which ultimately facilitate the manipulation of the third dimension of space which is the psychological one.*

*The quest for meaning of the protagonist in the novel; culminates in one space in particular a counter-site in contrast with the dystopian society conceived by the government and it is the room above the antique shop. This new space which contrasted with the other spaces in the novel and which supposedly dodged Big Brother's watch; becomes his space of crisis, where his knowable and unimaginable are merged. In this new space he experienced the feeling of privacy, individuality and knowledge. Towards the end of the novel he lands in the ministry of love, more precisely in room 101 another type of spaces used by the government of INGSOC to erase the effect that this counter site had on him and to take away the knowledge discovered and imposed a logic violation.*

*such as the architecture, the buildings and living environment are all carefully designed to indoctrinate the individual's thoughts, and affect him from the outside towards the inside. The main hypothesis is that the city is architecturally conceived as a 'Panopticon'. The concept of the Panopticon design is to permit to a single guard to observe several residents of an institution constantly without them being able to know whether they are watched or not, and this lack of knowledge will impact their psyche; thus they will be conditioned to live in fear which will ultimately result in a tangible change of their behavior. In this gigantic Panopticon that George Orwell has created in Nineteen Eighty Four, there still remain on space supposedly uncontrolled by the government of INGSOC, the room above the antique shop; where the Protagonist is presumably able to evade Big brother's watch, thus this counter-site becomes his Heterotopic place in the homogenous space. And this Heterotopic place has a different effect from the Panopticon space on the psyche of the protagonist. The Heterotopic place which; were his conceived and perceived are merged to form a new space of consciousness where his living acquires a meaning.*

### **3. The 'Heterotopic Place' in contrast with the 'Panopticon Space'**

*in spite of the connection and codependence of the two concepts of Space and Place, Yi Fu Tuan's space and Place: The Perspective of Experience (2001) has contributed into making a clear distinction between these two concepts. According to Tuan's theory; 'Space' in the broad sense becomes a Place as it acquires definition and meaning and starts having its own specific characteristics and an aura of its own, and this process that marks the shift from Space to Place; through conferring an atmosphere on a place is interlinked with the human senses and modes of perception, thus a place can only be defined through the interaction that occurs via the direct and indirect modes of perception:*

*It is impossible to discuss experiential space without introducing the object and places that define space (...).Space is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning.(Tuan 136)*

*the distinction between space and place from a different perspective. He referred to two different sorts of spaces, 'The Homogeneous Space' which excludes the particularity of minority perception and 'The Heterogeneous Space', which is presented as the outcome of the transgression on the homogenous space. According to Westphal transgression relates to the crossing of boundaries outside which exists 'a marginal space of freedom' (Westphal), and when this transgression occurs repeatedly it becomes a customary habit it turns into what Westphal termed as 'Trangressivity'. Westphal further clarifies that this repeated transgression occurs repeatedly it becomes a customary habit it turns into what Westphal termed as 'Trangressivity'. Westphal further clarifies that this repeated transgression would result in the creation of a new space far from being homogenous, an intimate space outside of the boundaries of the enclosure. It creates for the individual a zone of intimacy, guarded against external intrusions and allows the synthesis of all differences:*

*This is a secret space, space of hyperbaton one where the individual deploys a supplemental personal truth, protected from the eyes of the world and from the prescriptions of the code. This tension between a normatively sanctioned unity and the need for freedom emerging at the margins of the law.' (Westphal,44).*

*Within the same theme of the intersection between the homogenous space and the heterogeneous space, and the distinction between space and place, we may*

refer to Michel Foucault who also focused on, the crossing between the macroscopic space and the individual space, through his introduction of 'Heterotopia'. Unlike the Panopticon space of surveillance, this space is described as a counter-site, which has the property to contradict the homogenous spaces. He referred to these counter sites as Heterotopic site which he also described as 'a place outside of all places'. According to Michel Foucault; Heterotopia is another name for the sphere of intimacy that resists the pervasive codification in the macroscopic space attributed to the state apparatus. Foucault further argued that the Heterotopia spaces, could be also termed as 'the crisis heterotopia' which are sacred or forbidden places reserved for the individual in time of crisis. Foucault also mentioned that 'crisis heterotopia' are being replaced by 'heterotopias of deviation' which are reserved for individuals with deviants behaviors by the norms and practices of a given the society. He finally attributed to these counter sites the function to create a space of illusion or compensation:

*Either their role to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space , all the sites inside which human life is partitioned....Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create space that is other, another real space as perfect , as meticulous , as well arranged as ours is messy , ill constructed and jumbled'(Foucault,8).*

This new secret place which Tuan , described as the outcome of the individual's perception and interaction with space ; and which is also the result of what Westphal described as a transgression on the macroscopic space , and which Foucault described as a Heterotopic place of intimacy that resist the prevalent classification in the Macroscopic Space. It was also advanced in the Lefebvrian Schema of 'Trialectic of Space' as being the 'Lived Space', which accounts for the living experience of the individual. According to Lefebvre the first and the second space will permit the understanding of the ideology and politics behind the conception and the perception of a particular space. However, none would account for the individual's contact with that space, especially if we take into consideration, what Tuan refers to as 'The Experiential perspective of space', That is to say that each and every one would probably have a different representation based on their interactions and experiences of a space or a place in particular.

#### **4. The Heterotopic place in 1984 and its impact on Winston**

*Space in the novel has been designed as some sort of a Panopticon, and within the narrative we can witness how the protagonist is affected by the macroscopic space that has been designed homogeneously allowing no individuality. However, in the second section of the novel the protagonist Winston commits what Bertrand Westphal referred to as an act of a recurrent transgression on the homogenous macroscopic space. Westphal argued that the act of 'Transgressivity' creates for the individual a zone of intimacy, guarded against external intrusions. When committing this transgression on the homogenous space which is designed as a Panopticon Winston found an intimate place which procured a marginal space of freedom. Thus through this act of repeated transgression he created a counter-site that contrasted with the Panopticon architecture imposed by the Government of INGSOC. In the novel this new place of freedom was the room he rented above the antique shop, which became the protagonist's zone of intimacy, and which from the protagonist perspective; clearly contrasted with scrutiny prevailing in Oceania. In the light of Tuan's distinction between space and place, we may conclude that this new microscopic space that resulted from the Protagonist transgression on the Panopticon space engendered what Tuan referred to as a 'Place', because this new counter-site had a distinct atmosphere and an aura that opposed the other spaces in the novel which is further illustrated by Winston's interaction and perception of the room. In this room the protagonist started having what Tuan referred to as 'The Experiential perspective of space', which involves the interaction with a space with all our modes of perceptions. And the minute description of the warmth and friendly atmosphere is what turned the room above the antique shop from a space to a place with an aura of its own.*

*The 'Place' that resulted from the protagonist transgression on the Panopticon space and which emerged as a counter-site that contrasted the other spaces in the Orwellian London, is introduced towards the end of the first section. However it was not until the second section of the novel that the protagonist made the move to rent the room and it was encouraged by his love affair with Julia and their need for a private and a safe place as mentioned in the novel (Orwell 172). Winston was aware that by renting this room, he was committing a transgression on the homogenous space as he described his act of renting the room as being madness, 'conscious gratuitous suicidal folly' (Orwell 173), but the desire for privacy and the temptation of having a hiding place was stronger than the fear of being caught. Thus we may say that by committing what Westphal termed as 'Transgressivity' on the homogenous space that has been designed as a Panopticon, Winston opened the door to a new place which stood as a counter site in the*

Orwellian London, and, in the Foucauldian term the room above Mr. Charrington's shop has become his Heterotopic place. The most distinguishable feature of this room, above the antique shop, is the feeling of privacy and intimacy which was induced by the absence of the gazing and spying of the 'Telescreens' which was also a manifest contrast with the Panopticon space of surveillance.

*In the warm dim light the place looked curiously inviting...the room had awakened in him a sort of nostalgia, a sort of ancestral memory. It seemed to him that he knew exactly what it felt like to sit in a room like this...utterly alone, utterly secure, with no body watching you, no voice pursuing you (Orwell, 122).*

The room, therefore, stands as a counter site which has the property to contradict the Panopticism created in the Orwellian London. In addition to the most significant feature of the room is that it had no apparatus of surveillance, and this particularity provided what Foucault termed as a sphere of intimacy that contrasted with the rule and regulations imposed by the government. The room above the junk-shop could be also viewed as a shelter in which the protagonist managed to hide thus it constituted what Foucault termed as a 'Crisis Heterotopia' which are places reserved for the individual in time of crisis or which are reserved for individuals with deviant behaviors by the norms and practices of a given the society. Likewise in *Nineteen Eighty Four* Winston was fully aware of the folly that he was committing when he decided to rent this place, in order to nurture his love affair with Julia and he was also aware of his deviance from the rules imposed. Thus we may conclude that the room above the Junk shop is the Heterotopic place in the novel as it is presented as a counter site to the Panopticon architecture in the Orwellian London, and it has also welcomed the Protagonist in time of crisis, and served as a shelter to cover up his deviance, and most importantly it created a space of illusion or compensation a characteristic that Michel Foucault had also attributed to these counter sites.

The Heterotopic place in the novel had a noticeable impact on the protagonist both physically and psychologically. Its physical impact on the protagonist is made apparent in Orwell's first portrayal of the protagonist in the opening pages of the novel which contrasted with his physical portrayal of the protagonist in the heretic place. Early in the novel Winston is described to be ill and weak his meagerness is emphasized by his uniform and he was described as a 'smallish frail figure' (Orwell, 4), more over the additional detail

*of the varicose ulcer above his right ankle, made the character appear aged and ill. In contrast there were clear physical changes that occurred in Winston's portrayal in his Heterotopic place.*

*Winston had dropped his habit of drinking gin at all hours. He seemed to have lost the need for it .He had grown fatter, his varicose ulcer had subsided...his fits of coughing early in the early morning had stopped. The process of life has ceased to be intolerable ...now that they had a secure hiding-place, almost a home, it did not even seem a hardship that they could only meet infrequently , what mattered was that the room over the junk shop should exist' (Orwell,189).*

*The above passage from the text illustrate not only the physical changes, but the psychological changes as well , through depicting the change in the protagonist attitude, towards life as the process of living did not appear to be so insupportable anymore . In this Heterotopic place, the protagonist feels it to be safe and secure to live. The room symbolizes a space of freedom, a safe zone, and it creates for Winston and Julia a space of illusion, which procures a sense of optimism and hope as clearly stated in the following quote*

*There were also times when they had the illusion not only of safety, but of permanence. So long as they were actually in this room, they both felt, no harm could come to them ...the room itself was a sanctuary'(Orwell, 191).*

*This Heterotopic place in the novel embodied the personal space that was missing in the Panopticon space. The feeling of protection, and welfare that the protagonist experienced in this Heterotopic place contributed to nurture his hopes and dreams. The room, indeed, has a distinct atmosphere and an aura that opposed the other spaces in the novel which is further illustrated by Winston's interaction and perception of the room. In this room the protagonist started having what Tuan referred to as 'The Experiential perspective of space', which involves the interaction with a space with all our modes of perceptions. However both Winston and Julia were fully aware that the counter-site that they have created willnot be able to resist for long Big Brother's watch, as they both knew that they created an illusion and it was only a matter of time before they were discovered:*

*Both of them knew- in a way, it was never out of their minds that what was now happening could not last long. There were times when the fact of impending death seemed as palpable as the bed they lay on...In reality there was no escape (Orwell 190)*

*Towards the end of the novel the protagonist is forced back to the Panopticon space. In the final section, he is arrested and imprisoned in The Ministry of*



Love where he physically tortured and psychologically broken. The final stage of his rehabilitation occurs in room 101 which is similar to what Foucault referred to as a 'laboratory of power', in this room he is confronted with his biggest fear, which takes away his final power of resistance, thus he ends up completely and fully psychologically broken, which by the norms of the government of INGSOC; Winston Smith is considered to be fully rehabilitated and fit to return to the society as he did not constitute a heresy in the gigantic Panoptic space anymore.

### **5. Conclusion**

Throughout this work it may be possible to observe that the interaction of the protagonist with the Panoptic space contrasted clearly with his interaction with the Heterotopic Place. In the panoptic space the protagonist is almost just a shadow of himself, he is a simple body placed within the hegemony imposed by Big brother's regime, however in the Heterotopic place the protagonist regained human features and has begun to acquire a life of his own. In this vein it may be possible to confirm that the space in the Orwellian London has been consciously and meticulously designed to keep a firm control over the psychological space of the individual. The Panoptic space had a clear impact on the psyche of the observed subject, considering that the simple fact of the constant scrutiny was sufficient in coercing the individual to behave in the desired manner. And in contrast the lack of surveillance and the feeling of privacy the protagonist experiences in his Heterotopic place have nurtured another form of behavior.

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