

NEGATIVE SPACES: LEVELS OF NEGATION AND KINDS OF SPACES

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1. "DON'T THINK ABOUT AN ELEPHANT": WHAT KINDS OF SPACES DOES NEGATION BRING UP?

There are important rhetorical and stylistic effects produced by describing a situation as *not X* rather than simply positively describing the same situation. I would like to examine some of these uses of negation in literary texts, setting them in the frame of Mental Spaces theory. An understanding of Mental Spaces, and in particular of what I shall call alternatives, is helpful in elucidating the effects of negation on the text-building and text-understanding processes.

It has long been recognized by linguists and psychologists that bringing up a negative evokes the corresponding positive, in a way that bringing up a positive does not bring up the corresponding negative.¹ *Joe left at six* does not necessarily indicate any presupposition that things might have been otherwise, but *Joe didn't leave at six* certainly suggests that someone had a mental scenario involving his leaving at six. One obvious piece of evidence for this phenomenon is the accessibility of negated scenarios (and entities in them) as "given" for subsequent reference, as in (1)-(2), taken from Fauconnier (1984) 1995:

- (1) Too bad you were never baptized; your godfather could take care of you.
- (2) I didn't buy a car. There was no room for it in the garage.

Someone who was never baptized presumably does not have a godfather; but the mention of the frame of baptism (even negatively)

¹ See Horn 1989, especially chapter 3, for a very useful survey of psychological and philosophical research on the asymmetry between positives and negatives. Ducrot (1972, 1973) has one of the most interesting discourse-based accounts.

makes accessible not just the role of a godfather, but the alternate positive scenario wherein baptism did take place and the godfather exists to help out in the present. Similarly, mention of non-car-buying allows definite pronominal reference to the car that would have been bought in the alternate positive scenario.

These generalizations are readily made technical within the framework of Mental Spaces Theory, a very general theory of the relationships and mappings between cognitive and linguistic domains (Fauconnier 1984 [1995], 1996, 1997; Fauconnier and Sweetser 1996; Fauconnier and Turner 2002).² Mental spaces can, among other things, be frame-structured understandings of situations. Significant difference between mental spaces and possible worlds include the following: (1) mental spaces are incomplete, locally coherent structures, and (2) mental spaces are explicitly *cognitive* entities; every mental space is ascribed to some cognizer or cognizers, and there is no access to an objective world outside those perceived and cognized.

Fauconnier 1984 [1995] argues that the existence of a **negative space** necessarily involves a corresponding positive space in contrast with it. Dancygier and Sweetser (1997, in press [2005]) have focused on the **alternative space** relationship which exists between incompatible fillers of the same real or imagined space/time situation, such as positive and negative counterpart spaces. Linguistic forms which conventionally set up such alternative spaces include *or*-conjunctions and conditionals, as well as negatives. Dancygier and Sweetser argue that a crucial distinction between predictive and non-predictive conditionals is the alternative spatial relationship set up in predictives: when we say *If it rains, they'll cancel the tennis match*, in order to get a standard IFF reading it is necessary to set up two alternative and incompatible spaces, once involving rain and no alternative, the other involving a game and no rain.

Returning to negation, consider example (3), in the context where it is said of a completely empty refrigerator. It is certainly true that there is no milk inside an empty refrigerator; there is also no bread, no cheese, and no lettuce. However, the linguistic choice of *no milk* marks the speaker as comparing the non-contents of the empty refrigerator specifically with an imagined situation where the refrigerator contains milk, rather than with situations wherein it contains bread, cheese, or lettuce:

(3) *There's no milk in the refrigerator.*

As mentioned above, there are other linguistic builders of **alternativity** besides negation – but most positive linguistic forms don't inevitably and regularly build alternative spaces; the way predictive conditionals and negatives do. The range of forms that build negative alternative spaces is wider than overtly negative forms, and includes forms with implicit semantic negation (cf. Horn 1989). For example, as Fauconnier and Turner (2002) comment, a gap in an array of chairs may be called *the missing chair* as in (4); presumably this is because the array prompts us to pattern completion, and thus to an imagined scenario where the gap is filled by a chair:

(4) Put the media cart where the missing chair is.

Reference to a dead person, an imaginary entity, or just about any other counterfactual situation has some of the same effects and can result in the same alternative spaces – wherein the dead person is alive, the imaginary entity real, and so on (Fauconnier and Turner 2002).³

The hypothesis of mental spaces theory, then, is that negatives evoke a more complex mental space structure than corresponding positive forms: the positive forms regularly evoke one mental space fewer than the negatives. Interestingly, this hypothesis is consistent with another robust finding, namely that negatives take longer to process than equivalent positives,⁴ which suggests greater cognitive complexity in negatives. Mental spaces theory makes a proposal as to *what kind* of cognitive complexity is involved; now let us examine how that complexity plays out in some examples from English literary texts.

2. NEGATIVE SPEECH-ACT AND METALINGUISTIC SPACES: *PRAETERITIO* AND MORE

Many linguists have noticed that linguistic markers can apply not just to the content of an utterance, but to aspects of the speaker's epistemic processes and to the speech interaction.⁵

³ Pp. 241 ff. pp. 263 ff.

⁴ See Clark 1974, Wason 1961, and summary in Horn 1989 chap. 3.

⁵ Halliday and Hasan (1976), Traugott (1982, 1989), and Hopper and Traugott (1993) have in different ways developed an understanding of the contrast between such domains. I will here use my own past terminology (Sweetser 1990) and refer to

² An introduction to some of these issues is also to be found in Sweetser and Fauconnier (1996).

Dancygier and Sweetser have argued in various works⁶ that evocation of the ongoing speech-act interaction, as well as of the metalinguistic choices of form to match an intended meaning, are spaces which can be referred to linguistically, implicitly as well as explicitly. An introduction such as *If you need any help, my name is Chris* purports to perform the speech act of introduction conditionally on the addressee's potential need for help. *If* does not here mark a conditional relationship between the contents of the clauses; the speaker's name will not be Chris *if* the addressee needs help, and something else if he does not. In an example such as *Susie's fiancé, if that's the right word for him, came to the party last night*, we see a conditional relationship which is about the choice of labels rather than about content: this is a *metalinguistic conditional*.

A very obvious class of rhetorical uses of negation is negation of the speaker's in-process speech-act intentions. Austin (1962) notes that performative speech act force typically cannot be negated felicitously (we don't say things like *I hereby do not order you to do X*, or *I do not state that X*). However, we can come pretty close, when context allows speech-act force to be in question; Searle (1969) therefore distinguishes between negation of the content within a speech act, and negation at the speech-act level. Cicero was famous for his semi-performative use of the implicit negative *praeterito* ("I pass over") - in contexts on the order of "I pass over [i.e., don't mention] the fact that you murdered your brother and are sleeping with your mother"; so the term *praeterito* has come to refer to such mention via "non-mentioning". In (5), Shakespeare's Mark Antony certainly means to imply that he has praise to utter, and in fact he goes on to utter some of it:

(5) I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
(Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, 3.ii)

In (6), Trollope does intend to criticize Mrs. Proudie's character severely, even as he says (Antony-like) that he will not do so; and he has certainly thus evoked the frame of criticism, into which readers will fit the subsequent characterization:

(6) It is not my intention to breathe a word against the character of Mrs. Proudie, but still I cannot think that with all her virtues, she adds much to her

content, epistemic and speech-act mental spaces, adding Dancygier's (1998) concept of a *metalinguistic space*.

⁶ Sweetser 1990, Dancygier 1998; Dancygier and Sweetser 1996, 1997, 2005.

husband's happiness. (Trollope, *Barchester Towers* 20)

In (7), Dickens lets one character question another's speech-act intentions. She does it in the negative, but clearly expects (and receives) a positive affirmation that such are her interlocutor's intentions. Standard modern English uses such as *Don't tell me that X* and *You don't mean to say that X* serve similar functions. In this case, unlike *praeterito*, the negation serves to contrast the speaker's point of view with the hearer's: the negated space is the hearer's normal expectation (where the speaker does not mean to say X), while the alternate positive space is the one now suspected to be the speaker's actual intention. The contrast between the two points of view, in turn, highlights the speaker's surprise at the idea of the point of view presumably being espoused by the hearer.

(7) "You never mean to say," pursued Dot... "that it's Gruff and Tackleton the toy-maker?"
John nodded. (Dickens, *The Cricket on the Hearth*,
Chimp the First)

At the level of a metalinguistic space, speakers and writers can negate the choice of a particular word. Horn (1985, 1989) has differentiated such metalinguistic negation from content negation; for example, someone can say *Fluffy didn't shit on the floor*, *Cindy dear, he had an accident on the carpet*. Such a speaker is not denying the content of the negated constituent (e.g., the dog's having left detritus on the carpet), but rather refusing to accept a particular linguistic expression of that content - which may have been used or suggested by an interlocutor in the context. As with other negations, of course the rejected linguistic expression is brought up for examination in being metalinguistically negated - even if it was not previously present in the context. Cicero's auditors in Roman courtrooms presumably noted that in "passing over" mention of them, Cicero was presupposing that his addressee had committed dreadful crimes. And similarly, when an author denies the applicability of a word, the reader or hearer presumes that something motivates such a denial, and wonders, for example, who or what could have brought up the scenario where the rejected word does apply - thus creating the necessary context of the alternate "negative" space.

Thus, Jane Austen in (8) is describing her heroine Emma Woodhouse's brother-in-law, John Knightley. No previous statement that he is ill-tempered has been made, but although the author denies

the applicability of the phrase *ill-tempered* as too severe, she is about to go on to detail a character whose principal failing is in temper. In particular, we come to understand that Emma (partly from concern for the peace of mind of her kindly, silly hypocondriac father) is inclined to be critical of her brother-in-law's lack of patience and tact; perhaps it is she who might have wanted to use the term *ill-tempered*:

(8) He was not an ill-tempered man, not so often unreasonably cross as to deserve such a reproach; but his temper was not his great perfection...he could sometimes act an ungracious, or say a severe thing. (Austen, *Emma*, chapter 11)

In (9), Anthony Trollope rejects both *industrious man* and its opposite *idler* as descriptions for his novel's protagonist, the Reverend Septimus Harding:

(9) Mr. Harding's warmest admirers cannot say that he was ever an industrious man; ... and yet he can hardly be called an idler. (Trollope, *The Warden* 8)

The reader, wondering why these descriptions are brought up, might conclude that some people would disparage Mr. Harding's level of industry, and others could attempt to defend it. But why? We might first observe that Mr. Harding is not a strong or energetic character, though a dutiful and decent one – so he would be unlikely to present a “gung-ho” level of obvious industry. But further, in the surrounding text, it is made clear that evangelical low-church 19th-century Anglican clergy – who are generally social, political and educational religious activists – are critical of less “activist” high-church clergy as well as of the forms of high church worship. Mr. Harding's work as a cathedral precentor (in charge of music), and his scholarly work on traditional church music, are to them emblematic of useless and frivolous clerical occupations as opposed to “real work.” But further, as we shall see, in this particular passage there is an added thematic factor involved; Trollope constantly defines this particular character in negatives, which has further rhetorical effects to be discussed in section 5 of this paper.

Dickens gives a general rhetorical function to his negation in (10). As he denies having an overt reason for his choice of a *door-nail* simile, he of course brings up the question of why he has then

already used it. *I don't mean to say* X is almost canonically followed by *but* in English; when a speaker wants to clear away undesired interpretations, it is often because she is about to say something potentially controversial. In this case, Dickens plans to stand up for his choice of wording, despite its lack of obvious motivation beyond conventionality.

(10) Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail. Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the dearest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile, and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for. You will therefore allow me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail. (Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* 9)

It is perhaps unnecessary to add that the effect of Dickens's particular use of this rhetorical device is humorous. His use of the casual-register idiom *dead as a door-nail* is perhaps intended to be amusing in itself, but even more clearly humorous is his pretended assumption that he needs to defend this usage against imagined objections, as a defender of comfortably accepted tradition (Dickens the reformer!) against critical rationality.

Given the works by cited above (in particular Halliday and Hasan 1976, Sweetser 1990, Traugott 1982, 1989), it would be reasonable to ask whether negation in the *epistemic* domain is also used for distinct rhetorical purposes. I shall leave this question for future examination, partly because it is not always evident how to distinguish such examples from content negation (cf. Sweetser 1990, discussing the same problem with *or*). Since it is normally the case that putting forward a statement involves standing by that statement to some extent (greater or lesser) as a belief, statement of content and beliefs about the content often do run together.

However, I would like to finish this section with just a couple more observations on the interaction between negation and other aspects of space-construal, both of which have potentially important effects in space-building. The first is interaction between negation and role-value mappings. In (11), the writer W of the insurance accident report uses the phrase *a tree I don't have* to describe a tree adjacent to the driveway where the accident occurred. This description is apt, because W means that no such tree is present

in a similar spatial relation to W's own driveway – it was the unexpected presence of the tree that caused the collision. So the reading is not that W does not own that particular tree (we might already have guessed that much), but that W does not own any filler for the role *driveway-side tree*:

- (11) Accident report: "I turned into the wrong driveway and ran into a tree I don't have." (That is, there is no tree at the corresponding location relative to W's own driveway, so the role of appropriately adjacent tree is unfilled for W's driveway.)
[Example taken from Fauconnier's (1997) citation of an Ann Landers letter]

The second is the interaction between negation and negative epistemic stance. The speaker of (12), as we observed earlier, feels comfortable referring to your godfather once the frame of baptism has been brought up, albeit negated. However, the use of *could* rather than *can* reminds us that the speaker is taking a *negative epistemic stance* (in the sense of Fillmore (1990a, b) towards the relevant space; that is, she does not present the space containing the godfather-caregiver as having strong likelihood or plausibility compared to other alternative options. We know what those other options are, because we see unmarked verb forms in *were never baptized* (rather than *would never have been baptized*), and understand that the speaker accords positive stance to the space where baptism did not occur.

- (12) Too had you were never baptized; your godfather could take care of you.

A parallel situation can be seen in a conditional such as *If you had been baptized, your godfather could take care of you*, where the negative stance towards the described space of baptism is clear from the verb form *had been baptized*, and is continued in the embedded care-giving space with *could*. But the conditional does not simultaneously present both spaces, as does (12); the hearer is left to infer the other, more epistemically positive space.

We have thus seen a variety of ways in which negation can modify other aspects of an utterance than the content, as well as some of the interaction between negation and other factors such as role-value contrasts and negative epistemic stance. We have seen that although speech-act and metalinguistic uses of negation share the

general "negative" property of setting up alternative spaces, the rhetorical results of such space set-up are varied – as varied as the reasons a speaker or writer may have for bringing up the rejected positive linguistic scenario. Contrasting alternative spaces in this way may mark surprise, create irony, or just evoke an alternate view which readers need to attribute to a character or to the narrator.

3. A MORE COMPLEX SCENARIO: CONTENT NEGATION INTERACTS WITH SPACE-BUILDING

The following excerpt from a Georgette Heyer novel shows how an author can exploit the ambiguity of negative space-building to comic effect, as she lets one character misunderstand another character's negative utterance.

- (13) "... Yes, I thought nothing was too good for my Sukey, so pretty as she was, and with her Pa's genteel ways and all! Ah well! I often think now that her brother wouldn't have grown up to despise his ma, however much money had been spent on sending him to a fashionable school!"
A gusty sigh prompted Serena to say: "Indeed, I didn't know you had had a son that died! I am so sorry!"
"Well, I didn't, not exactly," said Mrs. Floore. "Not but what I sometimes feel it just as much as if he had died, for I'm sure he'd have been a good, affectionate boy. The thing was I always longed for a son, but the Lord never blessed us with more than one child..." (Georgette Heyer, *Bath Tangle* 95)

Serena takes Mrs. Floore as intending to build the space structures in Reading (1), while Mrs. Floore is in fact intending to build the structures described in Reading (2). The basic problem here is whether the phrase *her brother* has reference in both spaces, or just in the negative one. The verb forms do not tell us the answer to this question; all they reveal is that Mrs. Floore takes a negative epistemic stance (*wouldn't have grown up*) towards the negative space wherein the brother grew up to despise her. Possible reasons for this negative stance include the assumption that the brother's entire existence is fictional, and the conflicting alternative assumption that a real brother died young (making his growing up counterfactual).

- Reading (1): Base space (characters' "real world") history where Mrs. Floore had a son, Sukey's brother, and he died before growing up. (Her daughter Sukey, on the other hand – now

Lady Susan Laleham - did grow up to despise her merchant-class mother when she married into the nobility on the basis of her father's family connections and her mother's wealth.)

Alternate negative space where the son grew up and was loving to his mother.

- Reading (2): Base space history where Mrs. Floore had no son, and thus has only one child, her daughter Sukey, who has grown up to despise her mother.

Alternate negative space wherein she had a son as well, and where he grew up to treat his mother better than Sukey does.

4. "FAMOUS LAST WORDS": NEGATION AND FORESHADOWING

Since negation automatically brings up the alternate positive space, it follows that it is an effective rhetorical vehicle for ironic foreshadowing of the opposite situation - more effective than a positive statement. In the following examples, all taken from early chapters of the works of Jane Austen, we see Austen's presentations of some of her heroes and heroines' initial views on marriage and the choice of a mate. These views are expressed negatively, and without exception, they are completely reversed in the later course of the plot development.

In (14), the speaker shows awareness of the likelihood that in the future Emma Woodhouse will change her negative attitude and want to marry; indeed this is the ultimate resolution of the novel's plot. In (15), it is the narrator who tells us that Elinor Dashwood's sister Marianne has resolved never to learn to govern her feelings; and in (16) we see Marianne's own impetuous statement that she will never marry a man who does not fully share her romantic artistic sensibilities. Marianne will - painfully - learn the value of self-command. She will also marry less romantically than her more "sensible" older sister, matching not with her romantic first love, but with an older husband who is loving and loyal (and financially secure) but not dashing and demonstrative; he finds Marianne's romantic artistic tastes charming but doesn't participate in them.

(14) "She always declares that she will never marry, which of course means just nothing at all."
(Austen, *Emma*, chap. 5)

(15) She had an excellent heart; -her disposition was affectionate, and her feelings were strong; but she knew how to govern them: it was a knowledge

which her mother had yet to learn; and which one of her sisters had resolved never to be taught.
(Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, chap. 1)

(16) "I could not be happy with a man whose taste did not in every point coincide with my own."
(Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, chap. 2)

In (17) and (18), from successive chapters of *Pride and Prejudice*, we see Mr. Darcy's first recorded statement about Elizabeth Bennett, and her first statement of her intentions towards him. Elizabeth will in fact dance with Mr. Darcy soon; and he will find her handsome enough to tempt him not only to dancing but ultimately to passionate love and two separate proposals of matrimony. She refuses the first proposal, so *he* becomes the "slighted" party; and the success of his second proposal depends on his putting aside both the arrogance manifested in (17) and his resentment at the earlier rejection.

(17) "Which do you mean?" and turning round he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said: "She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me; I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men..."
(Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, chap. 2)

(18) "Another time, Lizzy," said her mother, "I would not dance with him, if I were you."
"I believe, ma'am, I may safely promise you never to dance with him." (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, chap. 3)

Near the end of the first volume of *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth receives a proposal from her distant cousin, Mr. Collins, which she immediately and definitely (though politely) refuses. Mr. Collins is stupid, hypocritical, conceited, self-interested and mercenary; he cannot recognize sincerity when he hears it, nor believe that Elizabeth (her fortune being very small) will disinterestedly refuse an offer from such an eligible prospect as himself - a clergyman with a good living, who also stands to inherit her father's entailed estate. So he won't take her refusal as serious, but tells her that he is sure she will accept him, saying that young ladies often refuse a man more than once before accepting him (he variously attributes this practice to "delicacy" or modesty, and to vanity - a wish of "increasing [the suitor's] love by suspense"). Elizabeth, in trying to convince him that

she is serious, makes the statements in (19).

(19) "I do assure you that I am not one of those young ladies (if such young ladies there are) who are so daring as to risk their happiness on the chance of being asked a second time. I am perfectly serious in my refusal. ..." (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, chap. 19)

The irony here is more subtle than in the preceding examples, since this statement carries no ironic implications with respect to Elizabeth's relationship with Mr. Collins: she is not risking her happiness in rejecting him, and will never wish for a second proposal from him. However, as mentioned above, she will also refuse Mr. Darcy the first time he offers for her hand, late in the second volume of the novel. Of course, she will not do this from flirtatious motives, but because she dislikes and disapproves of him (for a mixture of accurate and mistaken reasons). However, once their misunderstandings are cleared up and her feelings towards him have changed, her eventual happiness with him will depend on his proposing to her a second time – although, being honest, she will first have reproved herself for expecting that any man would be so weak as to make a second proposal once rejected.

5. NEGATIVE SPACES AND VIEWPOINT

Another well-known fact about negation is that double negation, however similar in truth conditions to a positive statement, produces a rhetorically distinct effect.⁷ The reason for this is clear, in Mental Spaces theory: *he has been observant of her feelings* evokes only one mental space, while *he has not been unobservant of her feelings* evokes several. We begin with the fact that *unobservant* evokes both a negative space and the corresponding positive one (being observant), and then an added negation (*not*) creates a third space, the negative alternative to *unobservant*. As Lakoff (1969) and others have observed, negation of a psychological or cognitive predicate can sometimes be very close in meaning to negation of the contents of the psychological or cognitive state.⁸ *I think Susie is not coming* and *I don't think Susie is coming* can carry almost identical messages. However, they need not; it is the latter which allows the speaker more easily to subsequently say, when Susie arrives, *I wasn't*

wrong: *I just said I didn't think she was coming* (see Dancygier 2004).

The upshot of all of this is that constant double negation, particularly involving psychological predicates, draws the reader or hearer through a bewildering range of mental spaces, and can give a remarkable portrait of such "multi-space" psychological situations as uncertainty, vacillation, or repression. Examples (20)–(26) are all taken from Trollope's *The Warden*. As mentioned in describing example (9), Trollope's clergyman protagonist, Mr. Harding, is very much not a hero. Although kindly, gentle, decent and fairly intelligent, he is timid and indecisive, and has trouble facing conflict or socially uncomfortable situations. The convoluted embedded negations in (20) show his unwillingness to take a positive decisive stance in a difficult situation. He does not want a social activist to woo his younger daughter, since social activists stir up conflict with the system. But he also does not want to be unfair to a morally good person, social activist or not. Further, he does not want conflict with his family members, but he cannot avoid it: his older daughter's energetic and strong-minded husband is eager to take direct action against John Bold's suit, but the lively younger daughter herself seems favorable to her wooer. Mr. Harding can't make up his mind, and has good reason to repress full expression of any of his conflicting opinions, since all of them would offend someone close to him. His muddle expresses itself in structures such as *He would not... reject (=not accept) the man... because he differed (= did not agree) on such subjects from himself*.

(20) Mr. Harding himself has seen no reason why his daughter should not love John Bold. He has not been unobservant of her feelings... He has never spoken to Eleanor about her lover; he is the last man in the world to allude to such a subject unconsulted... had he considered that he had ground to disapprove of Bold, he would have removed her, or forbidden him his house; but he saw no such ground... He would not, however, reject the man his daughter loved, because he differed on such subjects from himself. (Trollope, *The Warden* 21–22)

Since Mr. Harding shies from social unpleasantness, he sets a high value on courtesy, and in particular on refraining from expression of unpleasant emotions. In (21), he is playing cello music, to an audience of residents from the Hospital (a residence for indigent and

⁷ Horn 1989, chap. 5, 1–3, provides a helpful discussion of linguistic and logical approaches to different kinds of double negation constructions.

⁸ Again, see Horn 1989: chap. 5, for a discussion of approaches to negation and psychological predicates.

disabled elderly men) of which he is the Warden or director. Although not all these retired 19th-century workers are classical music lovers, they do like Mr. Harding, so they put on a decently pleased front, and everyone is reasonably happy. This hypocrisy is harmless in itself, since it protects the feelings of both sides, just as they want it to. The formal negations reflect the negative social structure of repression, which is characteristic of Mr. Harding's preferred life-style:

(21) I will not say that they all appreciated the music which they heard, but they were intent on appearing to do so...and they were not unsuccessful. (Trollope, *The Warden* 26)

In these passages, Trollope particularly exploits the way in which sentential *not* and lexical negation (such as *un-*) can interact. As has been pointed out by linguists, *not unhappy* does not mean *happy*: since *unhappy* is a polar negative (the opposite of happy), not can negate that polar status while still not reversing it. The result is a "mid-range" interpretation which is neither happy nor unhappy, neither successful nor unsuccessful.⁹ The negation here makes it clear that there is a real difference between being successful at appearing to appreciate music (no negative space with respect to the success, though *appear* brings in a new space) and not being unsuccessful (two negative spaces evoked, including the failure space). Again, this suits our protagonist, who would hate to express any extreme opinion.

(22)-(25) give us added evidence of the same phenomena. Mr. Harding's old friend, Bishop Grantly, shares his aversion to conflict and social discomfort, and disinclination to active decision. They converse together in (22)-(23) in a common language of never-too-positive ways of stating possibly unpleasant eventualities (which are not improbable or not to be opposed), and of responding to them (e.g., not whistling). In (24), we see more of Mr. Harding's restraint and self-repression; he is in fact much displeased by the news, but we are told only that he fails to express particular pleasure. He is as averse to active, positive hypocrisy, as he would be to active, positive rudeness. And in (25), we see a final negative summation of his situation at the end of the book (after he has lost most of his income and moved to a small apartment): we are not told that he is contented or happy, but that he is not discontented or unhappy. Certainly he is

not the sort of person to want to face up to his own discontent, or to impose it on others; and, we have some reason to believe that this actually does help him be more contented with his lot. But it is not an enthusiastic positive delight.

(22) "...and to tell you the truth" - he hesitated as he brought out the dreadful tidings - "I have sometimes thought it not improbable that he would be my second son-in-law." The bishop did not whistle: we believe that they lose the power of doing so on being consecrated...but he looked as though he would have done so, but for his apron. (Trollope, *The Warden* 38)

(23) "I don't mean to oppose him; it is he who opposes me; if anything is to be done in defense, I suppose Chadwick will do it..."

"Oh, the archdeacon will see to that; were the young man twice his brother-in-law..."

Mr. Harding reminded the bishop that the archdeacon and the reformer were not yet brothers, and very probably never would be; extracted from him a promise that Eleanor's name should not be mentioned in any discussion... (Trollope, *The Warden* 39)

(24) The warden did not express himself peculiarly gratified at this intelligence... (Trollope, *The Warden* 157)

(25) He is neither a discontented nor an unhappy man...within a twelvemonth of Eleanor's marriage his determination to live at his own lodging had been so far broken through and abandoned, that he consented to have his violoncello permanently removed to his daughter's house. (Trollope, *The Warden* 265-6)

Our overall picture of Mr. Harding is of someone passive, uncertain and indecisive. The opinions and feelings he has, he doesn't hold or stand by strongly. He reacts rather than having an independent viewpoint, and represses his actual viewpoints when they might lead to conflict. Trollope's use of multiple negations helps considerably in presenting this character internally. He does not have to tell us in words that Mr. Harding is vacillating or conflict-averse: Mr. Harding's own negative space-embeddings play out his character. (26) gives us Mr. Harding's final utterance, at the close of the novel, wherein he defines his own character truthfully, modestly, and

⁹ See Zimmer 1964; and for general discussion of this topic, see Horn 1989: chap. 5.

negatively against other people's attempts to define it positively and respectfully, but inaccurately. He is now no longer the Warden of the Hospital, but only holds the much less well-paid and less prestigious office of cathedral precentor.

(26) It was long before the people of Barchester forgot to call Mr. Harding by his well-known name of Warden. It had become so customary to say Mr. Warden, that it was not easily dropped. "No, no," he always says when so addressed, "not warden now, only precentor." (Trollope, *The Warden* 266)

Mr. Harding's self-abnegation is, in the end, presented by the author as good in some respects; at least it is honestly humble, and thus preferable to the arrogance and egotism of some of the players in Church politics who surround him. Their hypocrisy is much worse than his: he only tries to avoid or hide social conflicts and maintain social comfort for himself and others, but they pretend to be humble and kind and socially responsible when they are really personally ambitious, greedy and manipulative. Of course, we conjecture that ideally a single person would be simultaneously humble, honest, kindly, energetic and socially active; but it is a rare character portrait in Trollope which lacks flaws. Trollope never gives us, for example, a definite judgment between Mr. Harding's character and that of his aptly named future son-in-law John Bold, whose overconfident character generally has all of the above-mentioned virtues except humility. Bold would probably give his social circle more cause for positive admiration than Mr. Harding, and would also actively offend more people. But Bold, whose faults as well as virtues are positive ones, of course does not think or speak in double negatives.

6. CONCLUSION

My conclusion is perhaps not a surprising one for mental space theorists. Since building alternative mental spaces has the general property of invoking contradictory scenarios simultaneously, one would expect it to be useful for literary purposes where the author means to evoke such scenarios. And it is. Irony is one clear example; nothing can be interpreted as ironic without some contrast between voices. Of course, a positive statement can be interpreted ironically, when context provides a contrasting viewpoint or situation, as when a person who has just made a particularly stupid mistake says *Well, that was brilliant of me*. But negation automatically offers two mental spaces in the right content

relationship for potential ironic interpretation.

Equally predictably, speech-act negation on the speaker's part can have *praeteritio* effects; while speech-act negation of the hearer's presumed speech-act marks surprise and inability to assimilate it on the part of the speaker. Double negation, with its triple spatial structure, offers special facility for the portrayal of indecisiveness and confusion, while the interaction of morphological and syntactic negation is exploited (at least in our Trollope passages) not just to convey non-extreme opinions, but thereby to mark a character as cautious and weak in his opinions.

Besides the particular functions resulting from negative space-building, negative spaces of course participate in general mental space construction and can be misconstrued like any other linguistic form. As we saw in section 3, a hearer can inappropriately "float" (Fauconnier 1984 [1995]) presuppositions such as an entity's existence from the negative to the positive space. Authors can exploit such misunderstanding scenarios to create humor and other effects.

I cannot claim that I would automatically have predicted each of these uses of negation before examining literary texts, although all are clearly compatible with (indeed, once noticed, fall out readily from) a mental-spaces understanding of negation. Presumably someone who combined a perfect, God's-eye understanding of both linguistic structure and literary goals would be able to predict the stylistic uses of negation and other constructions. However, given that none of us are yet quite at that level of understanding, we can hope that researchers will continue to test their grammatical generalizations on literary texts, and to study literary texts in an effort to understand the functions of grammatical forms.

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