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Editor's Note

Participations and Assessments is an academic journal devoted to providing publishing opportunities for the faculty of the Department of English at the Academy of Management/Społeczna Wyższa Szkoła Przedsiębiorczości i Zarządzania in Łódź. As we proudly come out with this publication's second volume it is worth pointing out who we are. We employ nearly forty full-time and part-time teaching staff specializing in British and American literature and culture, methodology, linguistics and various fields of practical English language training. We offer full-time and weekend courses on both the BA and MA levels to several hundred students. The fact that we continue to attract large numbers of students at the time when higher education is in crisis and private colleges and universities disappear on short notice, is for us a matter of pride and encouragement.

Participations and Assessments serves two purposes: first, publishing quality research and compelling essay work; second, offering faculty and students access to texts that are related to their instructors' expertise and may be useful in the classroom. In other words, we want the journal to be helpful, both intellectually and educationally, for the tasks carried out in our department. We hope it will be possible to both continue and expand such a mission. It would be wonderful if we could devote a whole issue to both teachers' and students' own creative work in English such as short stories, memoirs, chronicles, anecdotes, class games, jokes, etc. Being heard through such a magazine, having it as a vehicle that may be a living and working process, not simply an academic artifact, is a truly exhilarating experience.

The contributions that we offer in this issue are an exciting mix of literary, cultural and linguistic considerations and enquiries. In Part I, we begin with discussions which, without being utterly pessimistic, deal with what is perceived as the murkier edges of life. One analysis deals with how literature reflects, but also diminishes, the feelings of fear and anxiety evoked by mortality, another with the noticeable upsurge of narratives, both fictitious and autobiographical, which focus on and try to make sense of illness and suffering. One contributor delves into the area of vampire film and fiction where she surveys both traditional monstrosities and their more recent preoccupation with “queer” strands such as pedophilia, sadism, masochism, necrophilia, cannibalism, masculinized females, feminized males, miscegenation, and so on. Among the more traditional literary topics we have a critique of Kate Chopin's turn-of-the-century novella The Awakening from the perspective of gender performativity, a theory which sees identity as a social construct; a look at Paris as it was depicted in the works of Ernest Hemingway and Francis Scott Fitzgerald; and an evaluation of Henry Roth's novel Call It Sleep, which so effectively shattered
both the illusions of immigrant life in America, and the various romantic myths associated with the Jewish culture.

Part II of this publication belongs to linguists and opens with a text which discusses a practical approach to the analysis of stress-assignment in English. The focus is on verbs and nouns and the use of the syllabification procedure in a classroom environment. Another study addresses the notion of teaching autonomous learning and learner autonomy in classroom situations. Various techniques and strategies helping to build the students’ awareness of the learning process are followed by the author’s own experiences and observations. One paper deals with the problems which beset students who engage in translating contemporary British fiction. The devil is, the author claims, “in the details”, which means in sometimes trivial and easily translatable lines. A touch of real-world political language is captured in the article which surveys, from the perspective of cognitive semantics, the video Dreams of Obama and tries to establish how metonymies and similes are used by the film’s commentators. A lighter note is struck in the critique dealing with the Beatles’ lyrics, where the texts of several songs are discussed with the aim of examining how the metaphors they contain reflect Fab Four’s creativity, spontaneity and various subtle and eloquent ideas.

All texts have been double reviewed, which, in this case, means, anonymously peer-reviewed by our faculty, and then appraised by an outside reviewer. I would like to thank the authors and reviewers for cheerfully accepting this kind of double scrutiny. I am convinced that the comments, criticisms and praise help us all to be an even more experienced, dedicated and passionate group of educators.

Krzysztof Andrzejczak
Part I

Katarzyna Małecka

“There is ... a flavour of mortality in lies”: Literary and Cultural Representations Of The Correlation Between Death and Deceit

Death may not be the most popular dinner table conversation or make for stimulating chitchat during a work-out session, but it has certainly been written about, painted, sculpted, filmed, analyzed, medicalized, acknowledged, and denied in ways so elaborate and numerous that one has to wonder why it is considered a taboo in the first place. However, “death has always been distasteful to man and will probably always be” (Kübler-Ross 16), which makes the attempts to tame it continue to proliferate. As an emotionally driven field, literature abounds in images aiming to diminish the feelings of fear and anxiety evoked by mortality. The need to appease death angst has been expressed in such comforting famous lines as “And death shall have no dominion,” “Death be not proud,” “And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die,” or “Death once dead, there’s no more dying then.” Yet, no matter how one interprets these reassuring thoughts, or what one’s religious status in life is, in the end, “Death represents Nature’s final victory over culture” and “[i]t is our perishing, not our bestowals of meaning, which is necessary” (Eagleton 163). While it is hard for many people to ponder mortality in a constructive and self-enriching way, from time to time one hears random thoughts such as “I will not live forever so let’s have fun tonight” or “You won’t take this money to the grave so buy this insanely expensive sweater.” Consciously or unconsciously, mortality underpins many, if not all, human actions, and often, without even realizing it, we find it handy. This analysis approaches death as a phenomenon that inspires as well as helps to debunk lies and deceit, which constitute an equally integral part of human nature. The works discussed here are a rather eclectic selection of poems, fiction, non-fiction, and visual artistic representations, all of which reveal different aspects of the co-dependence between death and lies.

Emily Dickinson has been hailed as the master of “poetic indirection,” a title justly earned as, indeed, the diction in much of her work resembles a unique,
intense poetic shorthand, which, “by manipulating the reader/textual interface, confounds linearity and increases a poem’s interpretative possibilities” (Farnoosh 77). While many of her poems resemble challenging puzzles, and her unusual punctuation delays coming to unambiguous solutions, Dickinson has also mastered the gift of cutting through the layers of social norms and appearances with a surgeon-like precision. In one of her more straightforward poems, searching to find a meaning other than spiritual in connection to death, the speaker confesses briefly in a matter of fact tone: “I like a look of Agony, / Because I know it’s true – / Men do not sham Convulsion, / Nor simulate, a Throe – / The Eyes glaze once – and that is Death – / Impossible to feign” (#241). The whole poem consists of eight lines, the above six of which juxtapose “Agony,” “true” and “Death,” two abstract nouns and an adjective, with three synonymous verbs implying deceit: “sham,” “simulate” and “feign.” In short, the speaker expresses her appreciation for the “Agony” of “Death” because, in contrast to most other life events and human behaviors, the moment of one’s death is free of pretence and, thus, strangely likeable through its utter lack of artificiality. It is tempting to see this way of justifying death as a form of psychologically destabilizing response to some of the speaker’s experiences in witnessing deathbed scenes. Indeed, “any perceived encounter with death can disturb our equanimity” and cause that “[w]e no longer feel safe in the world” (Kastenbaum 70), which, in turn, may lead to any number of reactions varying from simple sleeping disorders to severe pathological behaviors, such as challenging death by, for instance, driving recklessly over the speed limit. While admitting one’s affection for the pain of agony constitutes a slightly unusual response to death anxiety, the logic of Dickinson’s premise in “I like a look of Agony” is hard to counter or condemn on the basis of glorifying death because the speaker simply reveals the uncomfortable truth that very few dare admit: it is life’s innate ephemerality that makes us insecure and vulnerable long before the ultimate end ever comes, but since many choose not to face this fact, life frequently turns into a series of moments filled with a barrage of unnatural behaviors and socially accepted masks used to cover its transience and, thus, the true mortal self. The speaker likes “a look of Agony” not only because it is “true” in the sense of being excruciatingly painful and, thus, impossible to fake in contrast to everything else in life, or because it is “true” as in the natural, cyclical order of things; she likes it because “[n]othing more graphically illustrates how unnecessary we are than our mortality” (Eagleton 210) and, in consequence, how important it is to live more candidly. In Terry Eagleton’s words, “To see the world aright is to see it in the light of its contingency. And this means seeing it in the shadow of its own potential non-being” (210). Distrusting surface reality, Dickinson frequently “dwells ... on nature’s appearances, death’s certainty, and an uncertain immortality”
In “I like a look of Agony,” the epistemological assurance of the line “because I know it’s true” (emphasis mine) testifies primarily not to the fact that the speaker is certain there is never any pretence at the moment of dying but to the sad truth that there tends to be a certain degree of sham in everything else, including the belief in an afterlife which the poet herself, in spite of her faith, was skeptical about. “Death” as one thing “Impossible to feign” constitutes an axiom to measure one’s actions against since only by honestly “acknowledging that our lives are provisional, we can slacken our neurotic grip on them and thus come to relish them all the more” (Eagleton 210). The ingenuity of this lyric lies in how, in spite of the verbal clarity, it manages to involve the reader into digging beyond the seeming pathology of the fascination with agonal pain in order to discover the truth it seeks to convey. Also, even more importantly for its main message, the poem itself is guilty of a slight trickiness as it attempts to tame death by implying that the true drama of life is not the fact that we will die, or even die painfully, but that were it not for death there would hardly be any truth in the world at all. While certainly much more candid than many other ways of stripping death of its negative connotations, this line of reasoning is still a cunning but hard-to-swallow attempt to justify the cruelty of mortality. Nevertheless, the poem’s craftiness makes one see through many preconceived ideas since to perceive death as the only elicitor of truth in life certainly requires much open-mindedness.

Coming to terms with the agony of dying is a drastic, even if effective, way to authenticate life. Like Dickinson’s truth-capturing “look of Agony,” multiple stories about people who find out they are seriously or terminally sick and decide to revalue their lives also serve to enable the audience to get in touch with mortality and, in turn, evoke more honesty in life. Philip Roth’s Everyman (2006) is a fictional pathography of a nameless, “71-year-old multi-divorced, successful advertising man who is facing his physical deterioration and approaching death without the aid of religion or philosophy” (“Introduction”). We meet this nameless character on the day of his burial and the rest of the story is told through flashbacks which constitute a fairly unique narrative line “formulated [mostly] out of a medical history” (Roth, “NPR”). After his first serious confrontation with illness during his hernia operation at the age of nine and an almost fatal “ordeal with appendicitis and peritonitis” at thirty four, the main character “knew … he was as liable as anyone else to falling seriously ill” (Roth, Everyman 42). At fifty six “his EKG showed radical changes that indicated severe occlusion of his major coronary arteries” (42), initiating yearly hospitalizations and multiple heart procedures, leading him to a blunt personal diagnosis that in his sixties “eluding death seemed to have become the central business of his life and bodily decay his entire story” (71). Just before his health hazard strikes and gains its momentum, the character cheats on his
second wife Phoebe with a model half his age, which, as he points out, involved a lot of “planning,” “premeditation,” and lies (118, 119). Incapable of telling the truth, even after his wife confronts him, he recalls her bitter words about his deception: “[L]ying is so commonplace and yet, if you’re on the receiving end, it’s such an astonishing thing” (121). The character does not believe in karma or any kind of religious retribution, and yet, the latter sentence about the nature of lying is exactly what his illness and “bodily decay” become to him: “commonplace and yet, if you’re on the receiving end, … such an astonishing thing.” The same way his wife becomes enraged with his lies, he begins to hate his brother Howie who, although older than him, “had inherited the physical impregnability” while he inherited “the coronary and vascular weaknesses,” resulting in “six metal stents lodged in his arteries along with a cardiac alarm system tucked into the wall of his chest” (99).

*Everyman* is a bitter, poignant novel whose main character, with harrowing honesty, deals with decay and old age. Recalling how his sons from his first marriage consider him “an impostor,” “a cunthound,” and “a fake through and through,” he admits he does not “claim either moral rectitude or perfect judgment” (96), but he has no intention of letting himself be guilted into making last minute amends for his life choices, openly expressing his frustration with his family’s harsh judgments, which, he observes, minimize “his decency” and maximize “his defects” (97). Except for phone calls from his good-natured daughter Nancy, he is left to come to terms with his illness and aging alone, addressing what is true for everyone: mortality needs to be processed and acknowledged individually, preferably with as few illusions as possible, since fake acts of attrition, sympathy, consolation or death denial in any form do not alter the reality or finality of death. Like the Everyman of the fifteenth-century morality play, this character also walks towards death by himself, attempting to assess his life in the process, but his main objective is not Christian salvation. Roth stated that he “wanted [his everyman] to face death the way most people [nowadays] do, and that is without the consolation or comforts that come from religious belief” (Roth, “NPR”). Indeed, in contrast to the allegorical play, this moral account of life relies on handling mortality “head-on with no belief in the divine and certainly no belief in an afterlife; death is there and it is oblivion” (Roth, “NPR”). During one of his hospitalizations, the character leaves “the space for religion blank on the hospital admission form, lest the word ‘Jewish’ prompt a visit to his room by a rabbi”:

Religion was a lie that he had recognized early in life, and he found all religions offensive, considered their superstitious folderol meaningless, childish, couldn’t stand the complete unadultness – the baby talk and the righteousness and the sheep, the avid believers. No hocus-pocus about death and God or obsolete fantasies of heaven for him. There was only our bodies, born to live and die on terms decided by the bodies that had lived and died before us. (Roth, *Everyman* 51)
In her 1969 study, Elizabeth Kübler-Ross observes how technology and the medicalization of society may have contributed to our denial of death, replacing the illusion of immortality previously offered by religion (27-29). With unprecedented scientific development in most fields, facing mortality in the twenty-first century has become even more of a challenge because the ability to prolong life almost indefinitely feeds an even more intense denial about its limits and sets one up for an even harder fall when death finally comes. *Everyman* uncompromisingly addresses modern delusions about the end of life. Having his life extended with the help of “all the intimidating machinery designed to keep cardiac patients alive” (73), Roth’s protagonist does not let his vision be blurred by any kind of “hocus-pocus about death” and, realizing how artificial his biological life has become, he mockingly points out that his defibrillator, “with its wire leads attached to his vulnerable heart,” is “to correct his heartbeat – and confuse death” (75). Days before his final, fatal operation, visiting the cemetery where his parents are buried, the character rebelliously bemoans human fate: “[L]ife’s most disturbing intensity is death. It’s because death is so unjust. It’s because once one has tasted life, death does not even seem natural. I had thought – secretly I was certain – that life goes on and on” (169). Anger is one of the stages of dying and, supposedly, more difficult to deal with than the stage of denial because it can often be “displaced in all directions” (Kübler-Ross 64). In contrast to the character’s earlier resentment towards his brother, this bitter, cemetery confession is directly aimed at death, stressing how nearly impossible it is to be steadfast and candid about life’s vulnerability and temporality. Featured on the novel’s closing pages, this cathartic release leads to an ending which is as syntactically blunt and final as Dickinson’s matter-of-fact description of “Agony” and “Death”: “Cardiac arrest. He was no more, freed from being, entering into nowhere without even knowing it. Just as he’d feared from the start” (Roth 182).

Religion and science help deny death’s finality by promising eternal life and delaying the inevitable. However, one of the most paradoxical configurations where death and delusions co-exist, or rather where mostly delusions exist, is the modern mortuary business, which leaves very little space for thoughts on mortality. In many modern, especially western, cultures, death is simply not welcome at the funeral. Evelyn Waugh’s novel *The Loved One: An Anglo-American Tragedy* (1948) provides a satirical portrayal of how the glossy arrangements for a modern funeral belie the gruesome reality of death and serve to trick the bereaved into spending more money than necessary in the time of grief. After his uncle Sir Francis Hinsley is fired by a film studio and commits suicide, Dennis Barlow, an aspiring English poet and pets’ mortician, goes to Whispering Glades, one of Los Angeles’ most exuberant necropolises, to arrange for the funeral. As a young man who “came of a generation which
enjoys a vicarious intimacy with death” (Waugh 37) and who handles pet cremations at a place called the Happier Hunting Ground, Dennis is not so much saddened by his relative’s sudden death as he is “pleasantly exhilarated” by the opportunity it has provided to explore Whispering Glades (38). After driving through the “largest in the world” Golden Gates, he notices “a singular and massive wall of marble sculptured in the form of an open book” on which the founder’s “Dream” regarding the inspiration for creating Whispering Glades is incised (38-39). The inscription ends with the words “ENTER STRANGER and BE HAPPY” (39). Dennis needs no further encouragement and soon he is being helped by a “Mortuary Hostess” clad in “a white smock” who, in high diction and with little emotional engagement, suggests “disposal” options:

“Now, Mr. Barlow, what had you in mind? Embalmment of course, and after that incineration or not, according to taste. … Normal disposal is by inhumement, entombment, inurnment or immurement, but many people just lately prefer insarcophagusment. That is very individual. The casket is placed inside a sealed sarcophagus, marble or bronze, and rests permanently above ground in a niche in the mausoleum, with or without a personal stained-glass window above. That, of course, is for those with whom price is not a primary consideration.” (42-43)

These are just a few preliminary arrangements and further decisions are to be made such as, for instance, which casket to select or in which zone of the memorial park the Loved One is to be located (“Zones of course vary in price,” Waugh 43). As Jessica Mitford mockingly comments in *The American Way of Death Revisited*, “nothing must be left to chance” during the funeral transaction (21). Waugh’s description mocks the basic levels of deceitful techniques routinely administered by the modern American undertaker during an intake: the always taken-for-granted ritual of preparing the body for viewing, the euphemistic terms applied not only in the case of body disposal but throughout every step of selling the funeral, and, of course, the financial aspect, which craftily weaves its way into the former two factors and can nowadays amount to as much as almost $8,000 for “the total average cost for an adult’s funeral” (Mitford 17, Cf. Matson 63). While Dennis Barlow makes “no hasty choice” and consciously picks the coffin as well as the kind of smile his uncle should bear on his “hideously” disfigured-by-hanging-but-entirely-restorable face (Waugh 46, 55), an average person, exposed to the same procedure and then some, constitutes easy prey to the greed and Newspeak of the funeral business. For instance, at no point during their tour through the morgue does the “Mortuary Hostess” mention that embalming is not a necessary procedure and that Barlow could save a lot of money by just having his uncle cremated without any additional costly services from an embalmer, a cosmetician and a florist. To the contrary, the clinically clad and outspoken hostess assumes that “embalmment,” which, in contrast to embalming, sounds less like a corpse-restoring procedure and more
like “refreshment” or “ornament,” is not up for debate. She does not, however, fail to boast about Whispering Glades’ embalmers who can make anyone “presentable,” even “if he’d sat on an atom bomb” (Waugh 47). Jessica Mitford points out that many modern American undertakers benefit from “[p]opular ignorance about the law [relating] to the disposal of the dead” and “[p]eople are often astonished to learn that in no state is embalming required by law except in certain special circumstances, such as when the body is to be shipped by common carrier” (26). Seldom presented with money-saving options, the bereaved, at their most vulnerable, are shamelessly manipulated into further unnecessary purchases such as a pricy coffin, even in the case of cremation, or “the vault, a cement enclosure for the casket,” which, like embalming, is an easy “moneymaker” (Mitford 28). Apparently, in North America, lying about what is really legally binding and what is not used to be standard practice among morticians until 1984 when the FTC ruled it unlawful, yet even today, “honesty is still an elusive quality in the trade” (Mitford 28). In spite of being allured by the exquisite environment of Whispering Glades, undoubtedly sponsored in its entirety by many duped bereaved, Dennis Barlow, a mortician himself, turns out to be a harder target and politely, but openly, resists the hostess’ ruse to pre-arrange a funeral service for himself. His reply to the proposal regarding “the form of final preparation” comes across as an unintentionally sarcastic comment on the American way of death: “I am a foreigner. I have no intention of dying here” (Waugh 53, 52).

The “–ment” words referring to various methods of body disposal have obviously been coined by Waugh to strengthen the comic effect, yet the terminology which has been invented and routinely used by the funeral industry in contemporary America is equally ridiculous and “as ornately shoddy as the rayon satin casket liner” (Mitford 17). Mitford provides multiple examples of such verbal meandering which replaced “the direct and serviceable vocabulary of former times: ‘Undertaker’ has been supplanted by ‘funeral director’ or ‘mortician.’… Coffins are ‘caskets’; hearses are ‘coaches’ or ‘professional cars’; flowers are ‘floral tributes’; corpses generally are ‘loved ones,’ [and] cremated ashes are ‘cremains’” (17). An interesting fact about “cremains” or “cremated remains” is that, unlike the word “ashes,” these terms are professionally distant yet personal enough and, thus, “less likely to encourage scattering” (Mitford 52), which, of course, would be financially much less lucrative for the business. A respectable funeral director should include as many “deathless words” in his vocabulary as possible and always remember to say “‘service, not funeral; Mr., Mrs., Miss blank, not corpse or body; preparation room, not morgue; reposing room, not showroom; drawing room, not parlor’” (Mitford 52). And, of course, the interment “is done not in a graveyard or cemetery, but rather in a ‘memorial park’” (52). In other words, “ENTER STRANGER and BE HAPPY.”

“There is … a flavour of mortality in lies”…
The aim of the modern funeral industry is to deprive the word “death” of its sting as soon as the bereaved appear on the doorstep, which, allegedly, is to facilitate the grieving process. Sadly, regardless of what fancy verbal array or semantic nuances are applied to camouflage the departure of the loved one, the dead remain dead, and ambiguous vocabulary or costly “embalmment” “revamp[ing] the corpse to look like a living doll” (Mitford 51) will not make the deceased more alive or grief less real. Of course, emphasizing the finality of death in front of the bereaved, most of whom are already quite traumatized by the loss they suffered, would not be the best strategy both financially and psychologically. Also, considering “that the average individual has to arrange for a funeral only once in fifteen years” (Mitford 25), it is understandable that people who handle dead bodies for a living would like this living to be well compensated. What is slightly more difficult to fathom, however, is the need to make a profit by intentionally misinforming the grieving about alternatives during the funeral transaction, especially that no refund is possible. Equally disturbing seems the compulsion to create an illusion of “a well oiled performance in which the concept of death play[s] no part whatsoever – unless it [is] inconsiderately mentioned by the clergyman who conduct[s] the religious service” during the funeral (Mitford 51).

Gratuitous compassion, candid information and more than only routine assistance in the process of grieving are generally not part of the funeral package in many modern cultures, but morticians are not alone to blame for the status quo. Unless the will of the deceased was to have a lavish funeral for which s/he had made arrangements and left instructions, the grieving have few sound reasons to participate in the automated funerals, which, generally, leave little room for true grief. Social customs and the need not to be burdened by formalities in the time of grief are among the most popular excuses for choosing a well-trodden path. Also, especially nowadays, because death denial seems to be growing proportionately to the advancement in modern technology and medicalization of life, people prefer to postpone dealing with mortality by delegating the handling of a corpse entirely to effective professionals who, in the long run, may not make grief more bearable but who, for the duration of a funeral, will certainly make everything more convenient and aesthetically pleasing, even if unnatural. Funeral rites are as old as the human race, which unquestionably testifies to their importance in the mourning process. However, a more traditional wake rather than a short viewing in a cemetery chapel or a less automated burial in the company of loving people would probably be more beneficial for the grieving process by helping the reality of death sink in at a more individual pace (Cf. di Nola 28-29, Parkes 188-189). An undistracted look at the corpse, while potentially traumatic, can be an important step in coming to terms with one’s own mortality in an honest, even if unpleasant, way. This was
one of the reasons behind such medieval phenomena as transi or danse macabre, captured in various sculptures, paintings and poems, in which the proximity of the dead to the living was supposed to help people accept the perishability of the body. Many depictions of danse macabre, especially before 1460, feature multiple pairs consisting of a transi and a living person following each other in an uncoordinated dance in which only the disintegrating dead, or skeletons, seem animated, and the living appear to follow helplessly and numbly, as if dead (Vovelle 131). The pairing emphasizes that everyone has their individual death to go through, and the corpses’ animation aims to encourage the lifeless living to engage in contemplating mortality more frequently without so much resentment. Although this is a rather drastic way of acquainting oneself with death’s inevitability, there is yet another, more life-validating message in it. The energetic dead of danse macabre, while frightening, are also free, fearless and rid of all social limitations such as work status and life station. They lead people from different walks of life but the hierarchy pertains only to the living, reminding everyone that death is the great equator. Besides, the dancing dead have no need to pretend to be anyone else but themselves because they simply cannot, and, thus, their vivacity indirectly mocks the living for postponing liberation and candidness in behavior until the grave when, obviously, it is too late to authenticate one’s life. While the idea that the dead never lie and encourage the living to strive for a more genuine existence might not have been the primary intention of the medieval artists, it resonates in such varied, non-dogmatic works as, for instance, Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s “Bobok,” several of Dickinson’s best poems, Edgar Lee Masters’ Spoon River Anthology, or Tim Burton’s Corpse Bride.

In “Bobok” (1873), the freshly buried dead continue to live for some time by inertia, conversing and arguing among themselves in a rather noisy fashion. Suddenly, a group of them realize how little of this inter-terrestrial existence they have left and suggest that they should spend this time “cast[ing] aside all shame” (Dostoyevsky). One of them, Klinevitch proposes,

I don’t want us to be telling lies. That’s all I care about, for that is one thing that matters. One cannot exist on the surface without lying, for life and lying are synonymous, but here we will amuse ourselves by not lying. Hang it all, the grave has some value after all! We’ll all tell our stories aloud, and we won’t be ashamed of anything. … All that was bound and held in check by rotten cords up there on the surface. Away with cords and let us spend these two months in shameless truthfulness! Let us strip and be naked! (Dostoyevsky)

This rowdy underground conversation is overheard by and told through the diary of Ivan Ivanovitch, who leaves the cemetery frustrated by the “depravity of sodden and rotten corpses” (Dostoyevsky). Because the narrator suddenly sneezes, the dead fail to reveal the most shameful truths about their earthly lives and become dead quiet, but Ivanovitch decides to come back another
day to find out more details because, in spite of their loose behavior, the dead have “some secret unknown to the living, which they carefully concealed from every mortal” (Dostoyevsky). What Ivanovitch fails to comprehend is that part of this secret has already been revealed to him in Klinevitch’s words.

In Tim Burton’s animated film *Corpse Bride* (2005), the land of the dead is also pictured as a deceit-free place. Burton contrasts the grey Victorian world of arranged marriages, broke, affected aristocrats, and artificial customs with the colorful and energetic underworld where the dead have no more secrets and never lie. Multiple lies rule the lifeless society of Victor and Victoria, the newly engaged young couple, who are the only uncorrupted people in their sham environment. Yet, even the shy, sensitive Victor, who accidentally marries Emily, the title corpse bride, lies to her at first in order to go back to the land of the living. Although dead, Emily is hurt, especially since she has already been deceived once by a man who turned out to be a conniving dowry hunter and, instead of marrying, murdered her. Victor finally resolves to honor his vows and marry Emily, who, moved by his kindness and honesty, releases him from his promise. The gruesome truth about how Emily died is narrated in a danse macabre style by a band of dancing and singing skeletons who cheerfully intone: “Die, die we all pass away / But don’t wear a frown cuz it’s really okay / And you might try ‘n’ hide / And you might try ‘n’ pray / But we all end up the remains of the day.” In other words, as Philip Larkin observes in “Aubade,” “nothing more terrible, nothing more true” (Larkin 190), and, yet, before we know it, we find ourselves singing along with Burton’s skeletons because the tune is as gripping as it is gothic.

Emily Dickinson also had an penchant for the macabre. In most of her strong work, the poet questions the notion of a Resurrection and begins with “death, the only certainty in life” (Wolff 263) by allowing her speakers to probe the afterlife from the perspective of a corpse. Although she “did not doubt God’s reality,” Dickinson would take nothing for granted and earnestly “grapple[d] ... with faith by matching Christ’s fable and the promises in it against the evidence offered by the visible world” (Wolff 261, 263). Poems like “I heard a fly Buzz –,” “Because I could not stop for Death –” or “I felt a Funeral, in my Brain” “are pitched with biting satire against [the sentimental] ... vogue for posthumous comfort” offered by her contemporaries (Wolff 261). Featuring the voice and thoughts of a doubting corpse, the poems imply that regardless of what unfounded beliefs and lavish rituals we impose on death, it appears to be final in its disruptive power, and the only unequivocal closure during a funeral is achieved by the deceased.

In *Spoon River Anthology* (1915), Edgar Lee Masters gives the dead of a small Midwestern town cemetery a chance to tell their life stories of “domestic violence, clandestine affairs, illegitimate children, under-the-table deals, and
The characters in the collection are the former Spoon River villagers “whose names form the titles of the 243 verse monologues plus one epitaph ‘Many Soldiers’” (Hartley 5). The medieval danse macabre dead were paired with representatives of different professions; in Masters’ dramatic monologues, the dead represent varied professions, which include lawyers, bankers, teachers, carpenters, prostitutes, poets, doctors, housewives, farmers, soldiers, butchers and many others, all of whom deliver their self-epitaphs “in a loose free verse that permitted slang, shorthand phrasings and casual locutions of all kinds” (Bruner 86). Lois Hartley observes,

Perhaps Masters’ free verse rhythms are not especially subtle, but his seriousness, ironic humor, and power are transmitted through the simple rhythms, and through the terse, unadorned statement. The poems are not memorable for striking metaphor, subtle cadences, or imaginative diction. They are memorable for insight into ordinary lives; they are memorable because the speakers seem to be speaking the truth. ...

Most of the speakers do not know more than they knew in life; if they have found out anything about immortality, they seldom hint at such knowledge. They are concerned chiefly with what happened to them before death. Some of them keep their old delusions, but they are entirely honest, while formerly they might have been hypocritical. (6, 7)

Masters seems to have deliberately used simpler, unimaginative diction so that his characters would not be constrained in their candid confessions by “the rhyme-and-metered formalism that he had previously practiced along with most other poets of his time” (Bruner 86). Their conversational statements are ironic, serious, funny, poignant and, in each case, as powerful and devoid of ornaments and illusions as the two dates divided by a hyphen that are traditionally engraved on tomb stones. Apart from the straightforward tone and honest revelations of personal secrets, truth-seeking is directly or indirectly referred to in many of the epitaphs. A general accusation against deceit in life comes from Seth Compton, the founder of Spoon River’s “circulating library,” who scorns the inhabitants for not wanting to seek the difference between lies and truth during their lifetime: “For I could never make you see / That … no one knows what is true / Who knows not what is false” (Masters 156).

A useful and necessary coping mechanism, deceit is as much part of human nature as death. In Heart of Darkness, Marlow says he despises lying because “[t]here is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies” (Conrad 57). The statement is irreversible since there is hardly a trace of lies in death, which, of course, does not change the fact that, like Roth’s Everyman, we frequently feel cheated when faced with a loss, grief and our own mortality because “once one has tasted life, death does not even seem natural,” because secretly we are
“certain – that life goes on and on” (Roth 169). The fear of death leads to death denial, a lie in itself, which underlies many human actions and illusions, such as sentimental visions of heaven or the conduct of the modern funeral business. Terry Eagleton observes that “[i]t is partly the illusion that we will live forever which prevents us from” behaving “a good deal more virtuously than we do” (211, 210). If “immortality and immorality are closely allied” (Eagleton 211), then maybe death with its potential power to elicit a more truthfully existence can be seen as an equally useful phenomenon as lying. If not, then oh well, we apparently still get another chance to voice the truth after “inhumement, inurnment, immurement,” or, in the case of fussy liars and delusion-seekers, “insarcophagusment.”

Bibliography


Just as the part of the marriage oath used in the title is often forgotten when a lasting illness or disability enters a relationship, so did literature use to forget about illness as a suitable subject for artistic explorations. Looking at the history of literature, in any language, most protagonists exhibit perfect health, which is taken for granted both by the author and the reader. One could hardly imagine Hamlet with asthma, Heathcliff with eczema or Becky Sharp with a sexually transmitted disease. Sometimes characters would complain of a minor medical problem – they catch a cold or have a headache (like Jane Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice*) while those who suffer from something more serious would conveniently die. Even when physical pain of any sort is mentioned, it would not be analysed in detail, neither is it presented as a formative experience that changes the characters and their self-perceptions. The notable exceptions, such as Leo Tolstoy’s “The Death of Ivan Ilych” (1886) or Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain* (1924), are indeed few, and far between.

Virginia Woolf, whose career both as a writer and a patient intertwined, wrote a short essay commenting on this unwillingness of literature to focus on illness. In *On Being Ill* (1930) she wonders why, “considering how common illness is,” it “has not taken its place with love and battle and jealousy among the prime themes of literature” (pp. 3-4). She blames the artists’ and thinkers’ preoccupation with the mind as the ‘true’ self for the neglect of the body, hinting a deep fear of one’s corporeality might be lurking behind. Being entirely dependent on the vulnerability of one’s flesh has made people pretend it does not really matter – the spirit is to matter. The pun is unavoidable here – the matter does matter, especially when it hurts. For Woolf, illness makes us dramatically change perspective as it diverts us from our accustomed ways and habits. Being unable to participate in the bustle of every day activities, we re-evaluate their importance. Human relationships may also be seen differently with the insight illness offers. We realize our loneliness and the indifference of the world to our suffering. Finally, we become aware that language – especially its cultured, sophisticated, literary form – is completely inappropriate to express
raw, physical pain. “We need,” Woolf says, “more primitive, more sensual, more obscene” ways to render all possible shades of aching (p. 7).

Putting Woolf’s arguments aside, the lack of any significant number of illness narratives before 1950s can be explained by the simple fact that both the writers and the readers did not need to explore the subject in more detail. Since the standards of hygiene were low, and knowledge about the prevention and treatment of medical complaints scarce, most people took living with some minor or major health problems for granted. Furthermore, as illness was a part of daily life, those unwell stayed at home and were looked after by family members, still participating in the life of their community. Even those expelled from the community because of the infectious character of their illness, formed their own settlements which mirrored ordinary life. Leper colonies, with their shops, schools and graveyards, can serve as a classic example here. People were born, got ill, and died often in the same bed, which made the notions of health and disease intertwine. There was no discrepancy between how an individual experienced his/her plight and how medicine interpreted it, due to the simple fact that medical authority was shaky. The situation started changing with new discoveries in the field of natural sciences in the 19th century. Scientists usurped the power over life previously claimed only by religious leaders. Though they could more efficiently treat many medical problems, their convictions about their infallibility and instrumental treatment of patients terrified many. The rapid development of chemistry, biology and medicine found its reflection in sensational fiction about evil doctors and their sinister experiments. Mary Shelley’s Victor Frankenstein, R. L. Stevenson’s Dr Jekyll, Dr Moreau, and Griffin – the Invisible Man are all men of science who assume that the pursuit of knowledge is beyond morality. For them, human beings and their bodies (including their own corporeality) are only material on which tests are conducted. Still, as Mark Micale observes, most doctors until the early 20th century obtained liberal arts education, which allowed humanities and medicine to “enjoy a mutually rewarding relationship” (Beveridge, p. 2). Many well-known writers were, by training, clinicians – Anton Chekov, Arthur Conan Doyle, Mikail Bulgakov, and William Carlos Williams (Ibid., p. 1). One could also mention here Karl Jaspers, who trained as a psychiatrist before turning to philosophy. Nevertheless, the gap between the scientific, impersonal model and individual experience started drastically widening in the second part of the 20th century, leading to two incompatible visions: that of disease, which is a medical entity, and illness, which is a personal understanding of bodily symptoms and the way they affect life (Cassell 1978 and Kleinman 1988). The specialization of science led to its fragmentation and decontextualisation. Disease and medical care are no longer integrated into daily life, the ill are cut off from their homes and relatives and looked after and decided about by strangers in hospital wards.
Medicine reduced human experience to malfunctioning organs, imbalanced hormones, and faulty genes. Many ordinary physiological processes (such as menopause, pregnancy, and even aging) or character traits (shyness, impulsiveness or pessimism) are viewed as abnormal. The growing pathologisation and medicalisation of every day life allows for the incursion of trained ‘specialists’ into private, or even intimate experience. Diagnosing an illness means conducting various tests and interpreting them against the non-existent ‘norm’ while treatment equals the administration of pills. Nearly all of it is described in a highly specialized language patients do not understand and often fear. The fact that ‘disease’ is an abstract idea as it never exists in isolation from a person who lives with it escapes most practitioners (Szumowski, p. 197). Undeniably, “medicine has grown significantly in its ability to diagnose and treat biological disease” (Charon, p. 3). Simultaneously, however,

[...]

In many countries medical treatment also includes “corporate and bureaucratic concerns” that make it even more devoid of sympathy and respect (Ibid., p. viii). Anne Hunsaker Hawking criticizes modern medical practice even more harshly. She claims that

patients fear their treatment more than their disease, (...) a hospital experience is compared to incarceration in a concentration camp, (...) the elderly are subjected – sometimes by family and sometimes by physicians – to processes that can only prolong dying at the price of indignity and suffering (p. xii).

The result of this tendency is, on the one hand, a growing distrust of lay people towards medical professionals and pharmaceutical companies and, on the other hand, dissatisfaction many doctors encounter with their jobs. Patients write down their illness stories to share their pain, make sense of their suffering, and educate the general public. Doctors argue for the reintroduction of humanistic element into medical training and practice, developing narrative skills among practitioners, which has led to the establishment of the so-called health humanities, medical ethics and narrative medicine.

If literature is concerned, the rise of innumerable books about being ill is a direct result of the separation between the notions of illness and disease in contemporary science and culture. Illness narratives, or pathographies as some prefer to call them, are usually authored by patients, but often their relatives and doctors contribute to their stories, comment on them in a preface or afterword, or, sadly, edit their family members’ notes after their death. For instance, Jenny Hendriks’s father edited his daughter’s journal and supplemented it with his own reconstruction of events when Jenny died after a
decade of struggle with anorexia. The book appeared as *Slim to None. A Journey Through the Wasteland of Anorexia Treatment* (2003). Likewise, the 1990s witnessed an outburst of testimonies written by relatives (most often parents or siblings) of deceased AIDS victims. They addressed the issues of stigma, both towards homosexuality and AIDS. For instance, the well-known Caribbean author, Jamaica Kincaid published a memoir about her bisexual bother, simply entitled *My Brother* (1997). Another famous example of a testimony written by a relative is *Iris* (1998), a memoir by Iris Murdoch's husband, John Bayley, popularised by its film adaptation of 2001. It presents the life of the unconventional academic and writer and her descent into Alzheimer's disease, which completely annihilates her intriguing personality. The book was published when Murdoch was still alive, yet irreversibly changed by her illness. Accounts by relatives prove that illness is not a matter of an individual only, as it affects personal relationships and family plans. The strain of looking after a loved one who may sometimes become irritable, controlling and attention-seeking, is a cultural taboo few dare to voice. One is supposed to sacrifice oneself caring for the sick, exhibit fathomless patience and devotion. Being unable to do so suggests selfishness and lack of love. Nevertheless, real life seldom, if ever, accepts such easy interpretation and judgement. Arthur W. Frank gives an example of a story written by a wife of a man diagnosed with leukaemia, whose personality changed when he realised he might die. He became abusive and possessive, jealous of his wife's job and health (pp. 46-48). Those looking after relatives with dementia express exhaustion and frustration. Family members of AIDS victims also lament the fact that the illness was self-inflicted by years of sexual promiscuity and/or drug abuse which they were unable to prevent. Such texts offer a multifaceted view on illness, which far exceeds loss, mourning or criticism of the medical establishment.

The great majority of illness narratives, however, are authored by the ill themselves. A special importance if rising awareness is concerned must be given to books authored by famous people: athletes, actors, TV celebrities, writers. One should mention here baseball player Dave Dravecky’s *Comeback* (1990) on cancer in his pitching arm, cyclist Lance Armstrong’s *It’s Not About the Bike* (2000) and *Every Second Counts* (2003) on cancer, comedian Gilda Radner’s *It’s Always Something* (1990) on ovarian cancer, black feminist Audre Lorde’s *The Cancer Journals* (1980) on breast cancer, William Styron’s *Darkness Visible* on clinical depression (1990), and John Updike’s “At War with My Skin” (1989) on psoriasis. All of them were well-established in their fields when they published their books, so they cannot be accused of trading pain and contributing to the dubious genre labelled as ‘mis lit’ (misery literature). Moreover, though some of them have won their battles with illness and made a spectacular comeback, like Lance Armstrong, others, like Radner, died soon after completing their
books (and were, in all likelihood, aware of their grim prognosis) so they could not benefit financially in any way from selling their stories. They all attempt to fight prejudice and hypocrisy accompanying illness as well as the exclusion from public life it causes. They prove that fame and wealth do not make anyone less vulnerable to pain and death – an obvious fact often forgotten. Though probably all diseases have been reflected in illness narratives, AIDS, cancer, heart problems, neurological and psychiatric disorders are predominant. It is not only proportional to the number of sufferers, but also reflects the fear of these illnesses, the invasive course of treatment associated with them as well as the fear and misunderstanding that surrounds them.

An explanation why so many illness narratives are being published and why many readers turn to them, though they are definitely not ‘entertaining’ and sometimes even not very skillfully written, is not complicated. Modern medical treatment de-humanises patients, who “complain that doctors or hospitals treat them like numbers or like items on an assembly line,” lamenting “their singularity is not valued and that they have been reduced to that level at which they repeat other human bodies” (Charon, p. 27). In order to restore their individuality, patients write not only about the pain of the illness but mostly focus on social, personal and spiritual consequences of becoming ill. They write about shattered plans, failed hopes and mourn the loss of life they wanted to lead. For instance, Lori Shiller in *The Quiet Room* (1994) tries to come to terms with unfulfilled ambitions. As a teenager, she wished for a professional career, friends, a loving husband and children. She took for granted she would be able to replicate the happy and secure life of her own parents. Instead, she started hearing terrifying voices, suffered unpredictable mood swings and became locked in a psychiatric hospital. She will never have a full-time, demanding yet fulfilling job, she should not have children as her schizo-affective disorder might pass onto them. Most of her friends became alienated from her when she was locked away, while making new ones (not to mention of forming a romantic bond) is extremely difficult because of the mental illness stigma. She voices the concerns of many mentally ill and their relatives that do not interest psychiatrist, who talk of neurotransmitters and genes. Some consequences if an illness are less profound, yet they can be equally irritating. Illness robs us of aspects of life we used to take for granted, changes our habits and perceptions. Louise DeSalvo describes in *Breathles. An Asthma Journal* (1997) she had to quit eating out as the mixture of smells in restaurants made her breathing difficult. One could argue millions of people cannot afford eating in restaurants, millions suffer and die of hunger so DeSalvo’s petty complaints are irrelevant. Yet, on the other hand, her narrative perfectly shows the subjectivity of illness tale. For a sociable person and a lover of food, the sudden inability to enjoy the simple pleasures of life deprives her existence of something valuable and meaningful.
Likewise, in *The Unquiet Mind* (1995) Kay Jamison describes how she had to stop horse riding since lithium treatment made her lose physical balance easily simultaneously contributing to mental equilibrium. Again, one could argue horse riding is a snobbish hobby, yet for an active person who loves contact with nature being deprived of it can be a great blow. Hilary Mantel in *Giving up the Ghost* (2003) mourns the loss of her slim figure as a result of invasive hormonal therapy administered to treat her long-misdiagnosed endometriosis. She cannot wear the clothes she likes and feels grotesque and obese. Furthermore, her skin is covered in spots and she starts getting bald. She feels as if her body was no longer hers since it has grown so unfamiliar. The private tone of tales about illness show that individual suffering cannot be compared, evaluated or ridiculed. What is irrelevant for some, might be of crucial importance for others. Of course, one does not have to eat out, ride a horse, be slim as long as one stays alive. But, on the other hand, what is the value of life without fun, pleasure, fulfillment? Medicine, obsessed with the prolongation of the duration of life at any cost, often forgets that its quality is more important for many patients.

Mourning one’s loss and inability to participate fully in life is one of many emotions illness evokes. Others include “anger, despair, guilt, worry” (Kleinman, p. 44), “confusion, shock, (...) jealousy” (Ibid., p. 45), humiliation, shame and shock. Many texts challenge the cultural construction of illness, especially AIDS or cancer. There are testimonies of cancer victims who led a healthy lifestyle and never smoked, individuals with HIV who got infected as a result of surgery or blood transfusion, people with serious mental disorders who come from wealthy and loving families. All prove that illness is unpredictable and inexplicable, while chances of survival are random. Yet, in a scientific age people expect to be able to plan their lives, avoid illness taking recommended precautions and successfully treat it with the latest drugs and surgeries, which gives us a sense of control over our lives. Illness shatters these illusions exposing our vulnerability to suffering and death. Tales presenting the lack of coherence in life are called by Frank “chaos narratives” (pp. 97-114). They voice helplessness and absurdity of human condition.

Another recurrent theme in illness narratives is the spiritual potential of losing one’s health. As Rita Charon, an authority of narrative medicine, states today it is more likely to be sickness than, say, the loss of faith that propels a person toward self-knowledge and clarifying of life goals and values. It is when you are sick that you have to question whom in your life you trust, how much life means to you, how much suffering you can bear (pp. 177-178).

In a world that views illness, disability, and pain as unnecessary inconveniences, such an approach is indeed striking. Some critics claim that illness narratives have replaced stories of religious conversion which
proliferated in the previous centuries (Hunsaker Hawkins 1999). Both religious crises and threatening illness make people reexamine their lifestyle and values. Both can be perceived as journeys or even quests the aim of which is to gain insight and redefine one’s life. Recently, Susan Sontag’s metaphor of illness as travel to the kingdom of the sick became very influential (Frank, p. 9). Indeed, hospital wards with their uncommon routines, rules, restrictions and values are like a visit, or even an exile, to a foreign country. Few come back, cured or in remission, unchanged by the experience. Ironically, two types of approach can be distinguished in those who have survived the initial stage of their illness. Some become activists, vigorously campaigning for the rights of the ill and exposing the maltreatment they receive. For instance, the poet Audre Lorde’s experience of breast cancer made her even more aware of racism, classism and sexism pervading the American society. Only a few days after her mastectomy, her nurse is more concerned with Lorde’s blunt refusal to wear a prosthesis than by her loss, pain and rather poor prognosis. For Lorde, the insistence on women to hide their status of cancer survivors, to wear a padded bra and pretend every thing is fine exhibits the hypocrisy of the American society. The poet, instead, adapts a persona of a fearless and unabashed black lesbian Amazon warrior, simultaneously full of compassion for her sisters and rage against the society. When her cancer returned a few years later, Lorde rejected the medical treatment she knew could not save her, only prolong her life at a price of painful procedures. She chose the way to meet death, preferring to “go out like a fucking meteor,” instead of lingering (Henke, p. 118). Another activist worth mentioning is Clifford Beers, the author of *A Mind That Found Itself* (1907). He founded the Mental Health Hygiene Movement, as he suffered abuses from those who were meant to treat him and after his recovery devoted his life to the improvement of the fate of asylum inmates. In the first chapter of his autobiography he writes:

A narrow escape from death and a seemingly miraculous return to health after an apparently fatal illness are enough to make a man ask himself: For what purpose was my life spared (p. 7)?

The answer often entails sharing one’s story, fighting for patients’ rights, organising support-groups and other forms of social activism. Some authors advocate the treatment they received and recommend it to others who share their illness. It might be unorthodox one, like the Scottish antipsychiatrist R D. Laing’s attitude to schizophrenia described in Mary Barnes’s book. In *Mary Barnes. Two Accounts of a Journey Through Madness* (1971) the author is allowed to reach the pit of her psychosis, regress to infancy and come back reborn and healthy (at least in her opinion). Others, like Kay Jamison in *An Unquiet Mind*, propagate scientific approach and a regime of medication to keep their illness at bay. Simultaneously, knowing the horrible consequences of manic-depression,
Jamison speculates if, given the hypothetical choice, she would opt to have it. The answer is, surprisingly, a positive one. In her own words:

I honestly believe that as a result of it I have felt more things, more deeply; had more experiences, more intensely; loved more, and been more loved; laughed more often for having cried more often; appreciated more the springs, for all the winters; (...) seen the finest and the most terrible in people, and slowly learned the values of caring, loyalty, and seeing things through. I have seen the breadth and depth and width of my mind and heart and seen how frail they both are, and how ultimately unknowable they both are. (p. 218).

This passage might strike the readers as odd, as medicine views any illness as pathology to be eradicated, not as a precious yet difficult gift to be cherished. Still, many people who live with a chronic illness identify with it as an essential part of their selfhood that enabled them to see life differently. Needless to say, in Jamison's case, living with manic-depression has not only enriched Jamison's private life but also helped her to become a world-known scholar, author of seminal books and an indisputable authority of affective disorders. On the other hand, other survivors opt for a quiet, private life and learn to enjoy simple things since they know how easily illness can claim them back. Their attitude is not resignation but wise acceptance of the frailty of human life. A perfect example of such appreciation is the coda of Marya Hornbacher's *Madness. A Bipolar Life* (2008), a sequel to her acclaimed *Wasted. A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia* (1998). After years of debilitating fight with eating disorders that nearly claimed her life, deliberate self-harm and manic-depression, Hornbacher accepts her limitations. She no longer criticizes herself for minor imperfections or sets unrealistic goals to herself. Instead, she is grateful for country trips with her husband, Scrabble games with her father, eating out with friends and finding her two dogs in her bed when she wakes up. “I relish my life” (Hornbacher, p. 279) is one of the final sentences in her memoir.

Illness stories have proliferated enormously over the last few decades and are now recognized as a separate literary genre, encompassing texts with a varied degree of fictionality, from autobiographies, memoirs and diaries to vaguely biographical novels and creative nonfiction. Yet, as Hunsaker Hawkins observes, validity of illness narratives “does not depend on verifiability or fact” (p. 187). She argues that in a world dominated by postmodern and deconstructive discourse which questions and undermines notions of “the self and the validity of any objective record of experience,” viewing them as “ambiguous and self-contradictory” (p. 188) ordinary people desperately seek first-hand accounts of authentic human experience. Irrespective of the fashion in academia, “humans tell stories to make sense of their lives, and use this process to cope with suffering” (Day and Smith, p. 96). Undeniably, telling one’s story of illness is propelled by a fundamental need most humans share
– looking for meaning in one’s life and its tribulations, especially suffering and death. Despite the advances in technology and sophistication of modern ideas we are left helpless facing the most elemental mysteries of our existence: who we are, why we live and why we die. Science will never be able to answer these questions in a satisfactory manner. Learning from art about how others endeavoured to cope with these dilemmas will not solve them for us yet can make us feel less lonely in our own quest.

Bibliography


Transgressive Sexualities as Portrayed in American Vampire Fiction and Splatter Film.

Transgressive social-sexual relations are the most basic common denominator of gothic writing, and from the moment in the early pages of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, when the anti-hero Manfred presses his suit on the fiancée of his deceased son (and she flees into the “long labyrinth of darkness” in the “subterraneous” regions of the castle), a gothic trope is fixed: terror is almost always sexual terror, and fear, and flight, and incarceration, and escape are almost always colored by the exoticism of transgressive sexual aggression.

As it may be concluded from the above example, extreme beauty (in distress) and extreme ugliness (of character) are both concomitant with sexual perversity.

In fact, the function of transgression in gothic fiction is more extensive: it has been a testing ground for many unauthorized sexualities and genders, such as, masculinized females, feminized males, miscegenation, and all kinds of abnormalities commonly categorized as queer.

In this brief study I attempt to approach the question of “queer gothic” in Anne Rice’s vampire saga and American splatter films as, in addition to examining the representations of same sex desire, they offer a historical model of queer theory and politics: transgressive, sexually coded, and resistant to dominant ideology; but they also construct the notion of “traditional” gothic monstrosity – the abject that transgresses both the moral and biological boundaries. It is not merely because monsters and queers tend to blur the distance between the real and the imagined; also the ease with which the monstrous form can take the imprint of sexuality or gender, suggests that Gothic form is precisely designed for the purposes of multiple interpretations. We can, as if, read homophobic discourses running through the body of the monster.

Yet, the monster – similarly to the term ‘transgression’ itself, is no longer totalizing. The monstrous body that once represented everything is now represented as potentially meaning anything – it may be the outcast, the outlaw, the parasite, the pervert, the embodiment sexual and violent urges, the foreigner, the misfit, the homosexual and the transsexual. Monstrosity is almost a queer category, as it always represents the disruption of categories,
the deconstruction of boundaries, the presence of impurities and transgression of sexes and sexualities.

Eve Sedgwick has made homosexuality an integral feature of Gothic horror. She calls attention to the paranoid Gothic as a genre fraught with tension between “normal” relations between men and perverse sexual relations between men. In Gothic, slippage occurs between these two already unstable categories and the monster, or the agent of the fear, becomes easily recognizable as queer. Homosexual, according to Sedgwick, becomes equivalent to the unspeakable in Gothic Romance and, we might add, by the end of the 19th century, secret and unlawful desires are euphemisms for homosexuality (Kosofsky Sedgwich 46-47).

At this point, it seems useful to mention that the dynamic, by which this queer figure is isolated and made to bear the anxieties of culture at large, has become a familiar one in Western experience. For instance, in the discussion of the role of anti-Semitism in Fascist thinking, specifically in Hitler’s arguments in Mein Kampf, Slavoj Žižek argues that in order to “explain to the Germans the misfortunes of the epoch, economic crisis, social disintegration, moral ‘decadence,’ and so on,” Hitler “constructs a terrifying subject, a unique cause of Evil who “pulls the strings’ behind the scenes and is the sole precipitator of the series of evils: the Jew.”(Žižek 17-18)

This technique is a familiar one in Western culture: gypsies, blacks, Asians, and other ethnic and cultural groups have been handled similarly in different cultural and historical situations. So had the figure of the sodomite before, during, and after the period that Žižek is describing. The venom poured on the transgressive figures in the preceding quotations is that reserved for the cultural enemy, the figure that threatens the entire edifice of cultural respectability. And the sodomites do just that. (Žižek 20)

For centuries the process of their identification took place as public spectacle, and like all identification it had a largely public function. These men were identified as monstrous, and the threat they posed was considered so serious that they had to be covered with filth as a sign of their crimes. Their “contamination”

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1 Sedgwick points out that many of the early Gothic Romance authors were linked in one way or another to some homosexual scandal - Lewis was openly homosexual, Beckford was driven out of England for homosexual philandering, Walpole was linked to homosexual attachments (70-74).

2 The sodomite functions similarly in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century culture, performing a critical action by his unserious display. Zizek explains how this can be so. The figure he describes is so valuable as a tool of cultural inversion because of a surplus of meaning that can only be understood in terms of enjoyment: “the surplus on which this mechanism relies is the fact that we impute to the ‘Jew’ an impossible, unfathomable enjoyment, allegedly stolen from us” (182)

3 She describes the vampire as “the double ‘she’ in combination with the queer fanged creature...The vampire is the queer in its lesbian mode” (100).
caused them almost to cease to be human. (Swift 114) They were transformed into monsters to the degree that they threatened heteronormative culture with the dark, unknown otherness of sexual transgression. Like hideous monsters, these creatures were constructed as figures of deformity in order to display outwardly the inner depravity their sexual interests were imagined to reflect.

And so, the disgusting filth poured from the bowels of the murky cities, as it were, produced an identity that in its abjection ceased to be human. This subjectivity has been most usefully theorized by Julia Kristeva. In her study of abjection, *Powers of Horror*, she associates “dung, guts, and blood” and other forms of bodily effluvia with the kinds of processes described. For Kristeva, the matter that the body detaches, produces and corrupts is a sign of abject identification. “Excrement and its equivalents,” she says, “(decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by non-ego, society threatened by its outside, life by death.” She contrasts these things with “blood,” which “stands for the danger issuing from within the identity (social or structural).” (Kristeva 109)

The body of a sodomite, as well as his practices, suggests a collapse of this distinction. The sodomite is a threat that comes from both without and within. He is the excremental non-ego and bloody identity, blended in this image of monstrosity. That is what makes his presence so uncannily tormenting (ibid. 109) and what instantly brings the cultural and literary concept of a vampire to mind; the creature that craves blood to reanimate and persist its dead body and duplicates ones of his kin by exchanging bodily fluids.

Numerous critics have attempted to locate the vampire within the tangle of sexual connotations. Sue-Ellen Case, for example, was interested in the vampire in the nineteenth century as a lesbian vampire and as a markedly queer and outlawed body (100).

Of course, vampiric sexuality as it appears in *Dracula* has also been described as homoerotic and as heterosexual exogamy. But it is Anne Rice who, like no other author of vampire fiction, mesmerizes her readers with homoerotic desire.

*Interview with a Vampire* begins in the gay district of San Francisco, and the scene between the vampire Louis and the gay “boy” who interviews him after they have met in a “bar” is a straightforward parody of a queer seduction. Such scenery cannot be accidental. Rice is interested in male-male desire and uses the imagery of gay life to give characters substance and texture. She makes Lestat—Louis’ companion but also opponent, and an actual protagonist of the *Vampire Chronicles* - culture’s prototypical gay predator, roving in the darkness with an insatiable appetite that is usually satisfied by the blood of a troubled and beautiful male. Rice has more than once expressed her attraction for this widely transgressive hero, a super-human blond who moves with the grace of
a dancer and takes his prey with a lusty abandon that fulfills – violates – every cultural taboo (Badley111). Elegant, powerful, thoughtful, and queer, Lestat offers a different version of masculinity.

Lestat and Louis form a vampiric couple in the Interview; Lestat, in the sequels to come, is a devoted friend of Nicholas from The Vampire Lestat; Armand, Daniel, and David, the central characters who emerge throughout the Chronicles – all these dazzling young men can be read as gay. To understand the Chronicles, in fact, they must be read as gay, and their relations can only be understood in terms of male-male desire.

What interests me here is how the homoerotic bonds that surface everywhere in Rice’s Vampire Chronicles function as part of the self-consuming culture that has produced them. For Nina Auerbach, “Rice’s infraction of this final Stoker-instigated taboo brings a special electricity to Interview with a Vampire, giving its predators a glamour more socially engaged vampires lack.” (153). Rice’s vampires represent culture’s secret desire for, and secret fear of, the gay man, the need to fly with him beyond the confines of heterosexual convention and bourgeois family life to explore unauthorized desires and at the same time taste his body and his blood, to see him bleed and watch him succumb to death in life. So, while Lestat is the Dorian Gray of the 1990s, he remains witty, beautiful and forever young, at the same time, for all his stature Lestat is the passive, the bloodied, and the castrated male. He represents “the 1990s’ hope that masculinity can survive the emasculation that terminal straightness finally represents, as well as its fear that every man is always already castrated by desire.” (ibid.154) Lestat is queer. That is, because heterosexist culture needs him as a reflection of its own dark secret.

The deep complexity between vampirism, sexuality, and culture is played out most vividly in the theatre that vampires inhabit and open early in the Chronicles. The concept behind the “Theatre of the Vampires” is, after all, similar to the early rationale of gay liberation. “We will make a mockery of all things sacred,” Nicholas says. “We will lead them to ever greater vulgarity and profanity. We will astonish. We will beguile. But above all, we will thrive on their gold as well as their blood and in their midst we will grow strong” (265). This defiant speech, reminiscent of so much of the politics of the “gay revolution,” suggests how threatened culture can become by the secret it hides. What Nicholas preaches is the invisibility of the gay man, the ease with which he can work his way into the hearts and wallets of the society that takes him for one of its own. This is a bold stance, and again and again in The Vampire Chronicles the ease with which Rice’s vampires coexist with the mortal world around them is both starling and fully convincing. Of course, the vampires pay a price for the open mockery of culture that the open secret of their desire represents. For them the price is a sell-out to the tormented immortality the vampire world represents.
The “Theatre of the Vampires” is also like a trendy gay disco of the 1970s, fascinating, thrilling, and deadly. It beckons with the call of desire and threatens with the curse of the unnatural. In her essay “Tracking the Vampire,” Sue-Ellen Case suggests what is so threatening about queer desire: “Unlike petitions for civil rights, queer revels constitute a kind of activism that attacks the dominant notion of the natural. The queer is the taboo-breaker, the monstrous, the uncanny. Like the Phantom of the Opera, the queer dwells underground, below the operatic overtones of the dominant; frightening to look at, desiring, as it plays its own organ, producing its own music” (Case 188).

Slavoy Žižek helps to explain why late-twentieth-century culture would need the homosexual as its particular fetish. Playing upon his reading of Lacan, Žižek explains that the homosexual is the figure who is foreclosed in the Symbolic and returns as a symptom of the culture that would reject him (The Sublime 73). The vampire represents the return of the repressed in a culturally significant way. Both the inside culture and outside, both the charming man and a wickedly deceptive one, both the phallic aggressor and the always already penetrated one, the vampire represents everything the culture desires and everything it fears. In Bodies That Matter, Judith Butler maintains that “much of the straight world has always needed the queers it has sought to repudiate through the performative force of the term.” (223) The vampire also fulfills the needs of the straight world that attempts to repudiate the lure of darkness.

Readers of The Vampire Chronicles, like the audience in the “Theatre of the Vampires,” desire voyeuristic participation in something they want to believe and disbelieve at the same time. Their attraction to these creatures of the night is also repulsion. They need to witness the homoerotics of this world and reject its power at the same time. This is an uncanny relation but also a tremendously powerful one.

Becoming a vampire in Rice’s novels “means transcending socially constructed sexuality to realize one’s sexual nature completely. The vampire had always covertly implied a perverse or displaced sexuality – that is displaced from the genital to the oral stage, and combining phallic penetration with ‘feminine’ orality and nurturing.” (Badley 123)

Above all, vampiric transgressed sexuality manifests itself as a productive force which transform the blood of the native into the lust of the other, and as a force which unites the threat of the foreign and perverse within a single, monstrous body.

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That more than two hundred centuries of macabre literature would function in this way is in itself queer, and queer, too, is the manner in which normative
sexual relations are articulated and codified. The matter with the horror film – its natural offspring – is even more complex and more...nauseous.

The horror film, and splatter film in particular, has typically been theorized as a misogynist genre that provides a showcase for masculine aggression and provokes a sexual response to the spectacle of female mutilation. What is more, the splatter film occupies a key place in terms of preoccupation with not simply the external monstrosity/queerness of the body but the increasingly voyeuristic quest to show what lies below skin. Its radical potential lies not only in the identification it forces between the male viewer and the female victim; its queer tendency lies in its ability to reconfigure gender not simply through transgression or inversion but by literally creating new categories.

In a film like The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2 (1986), race, class, but first of all, gender and sexuality are thoroughly scrambled as categories and what emerges are queer identity formations literary sutured together from the scraps of flesh that survive the chain saw. As Kim Henckel, one of the film’s scriptwriters observes, “Leatherface is one of those characters who is what he wears – his character changes according to the face he puts on” (quoted in McCarty 16) so does his gender and sexuality when wears a “power mask” made from his female victims’ skins. Gender fluctuations in this film are intense – the mask represents a certain circulation of skin as disguise, as gender, as something that does not fit, as transformative, as metaphor for transformed subject positions from male to female, female to male, victim to murderer.

Buffalo Bill of the Silence of the Lambs so wants to transform himself, to escape being what he is, that he believes sexual reconstruction will fulfill his destiny. Mimicking “female” technology, he sews; he tailors for himself a complete “girl suit” out of women’s skin. His transformation of his male identity is part of a project to assume and transcend women’s power of reproduction, which he identifies with the moth as an emblem of metamorphosis.3

Gender construction and its failures in particular open out onto the category of the human which appears at the limits of proper gender as the “inhuman,” or “less than human.” In other words, improperly or inadequately gendered bodies represent the limits of the human and they present the horrid arrangement of skin, flesh, social mores, pleasures, dangers and wounds. Gender is monstrous in the horror film and it exceeds even the category of human. The genders that emerge triumphant at the gory conclusion of a splatter film are literally posthuman, they punish the limits of the human body and they mark identities as always stitched and sutured (McCarty 63).

3 One might say that the serial killer who cannibalizes, incorporates, or wears women’s skin acts out what cosmetic surgery, as a technology for producing “man-made” women does. Janice Raymond in her book The Transsexual Empire views transsexual surgery as an attempt by patriarchy to dispossess women of their bodies, their humanity, and hence as a kind of genocide. (92-99)
So much for the monsters. The bodies that splatter in horror films are interestingly enough properly gendered “human” bodies, female bodies, with all the conventional attributes of their femininity. Female bodies that do not splatter are often sutured bodies, bodies that are in some way distanced from the gender construction that would otherwise sentence them to messy and certain death. Clover has named the improperly gendered, de-girled being as the “final girl.” And so, the final girl, as embodied by Stretch in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*, represents not boyishness or girlishness but monstrous gender, gender that splatters and then is sutured together again as something much messier than male or female (53). It seems then that monstrosity and humanity reside at one and the same time in the gendered skins that monsters and victims take on and off.

The gender fluctuations and/or transgressions can also be observed at the level of the camera “gaze,” which, according to Laura Mulvey was inherently male; the patriarchal unconscious that structured the film form, gendered it narrative codes and the spectator’s role, with woman as image and man as “bearer of the look” (57-68). The spectator, coded male, was given a womblike arena for projecting his desires onto a passive (female) screen object. Women on the screen were overvalued (fetishized) or punished as targets of male sadism.

Carol Clover also sees identification between the woman and the monster, but from a different perspective. Her study of male spectatorship and slasher films, from *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* through *Nightmare on Elm Street*, argues that men watch horror films to experience the masochistic “female” emotions denied them in their gendered lives. In these films, point of view shifts from killer to victim, to a “final girl” who represents the triumph of the spectator-survivor. Horror allows the spectator, positioned as male, not only the predatory gaze but also the pleasures of otherness and empathy of experiencing vicariously his own embodiment, which he is taught to perceive as “female” (Clover 62). Thus horror, especially in the 1980s offered males an outlet for transgressing supermasculine norms. They could experience victimization, traditionally coded as female, to express and deal with body panic, while safely distanced by the gender-coded gaze.

We might say that extreme beauty and extreme ugliness are indeed linked to sexual perversity. Vampiric sexuality blends power and femininity within the same beautiful body and then marks that body as distinctly alien. Buffalo Bill’s and Leatherface’s gruesome costumes represent androgynous monstrosity or monstrous androgyny.

In the discussed above cases the grotesque effect of the macabre literature and film is achieved through a kind of transvestism, a dressing up that reveals

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Angela Carter – quite bitterly - wrote in *The Sadeian Woman* (1979): “A free woman is a monster.”
itself as costume. Gothic is a cross-dressing, drag, a performance of textuality, an infinite readability, and there are themes that are readily accessible within macabre fiction and film where the tropes of doubling and disguise tend to dominate the narrative. What is more, my view pressures the formulation of horror not only as masculine pleasure, but it can be recuperated for feminine, feminist, and queer forms of pleasure.

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Małgorzata Myk

Undoing Edna: Gender Performativity in Kate Chopin’s
The Awakening

Kate Chopin’s 1899 novella is certainly not a text that has suffered from a shortage of interpretations. The critics who seized at the opportunity of explicating it drawing from the myriad scholarly perspectives offered chiefly by the currently burgeoning fields of feminist theory, gender studies, and queer theory, have certainly produced a wealth of both bold and insightful, even if sometimes puzzling and radical, critical analyses, all of which unanimously emphasize the fact that The Awakening is a text which in significant ways problematizes the notion of subjectivity and enquires about a possibility of narrativizing identity, in particular gender identity, differently; not as something essential, natural, and stable, but rather as something constructed over time, processual, always implicated in language, and, last but not least, transgressive and performative. In a way, the following analysis attempts an approach polemical to the dualistic readings of the text, such as that of Joyce Dyer’s, who summarized Edna Pontellier, the novella’s heroine, as “one whose mission is to begin the painful process of bridging two centuries, two worlds, two visions of gender. So appropriate as a turn-of-the-century piece, The Awakening is about the beginning of selfhood, not its completion” (116). Instead, I would suggest that the most insightful interpretations of Chopin’s work are the ones that try to destabilize the dualistic reading that Dyer proposes, and concentrate on the ways in which it foregrounds uncertainty and instability, going beyond the notion of selfhood, rather than trying to hail its beginning, especially if it is presupposed on the binary vision of gender, for such a vision seems to undermine the significance and complexity of Edna’s struggle.

Among the most compelling and thought-provoking analyses to date, some readings are certainly worth a special mention here. Valerie Rohy, for one, suggests in her book Impossible Women, Edna’s story may be seen as a narrative alternative to Emerson’s masculine ‘self-reliance’ (45). On a more radical note, in “The Metaphorical Lesbian: Edna Pontellier in The Awakening,” Elizabeth LeBlanc reads the character of Edna using Bonnie Zimmerman’s notion of “the lesbian as sign who is a disrupter of heterosexuality, a presence standing outside the conventions of the patriarchy, a hole in the fabric of gender dualism” (237-
Another provocative reading of *The Awakening* comes from Mary Biggs's article “*Si Tu Savais*: The Gay/Transgendered Sensibility of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*,” which contends that Chopin’s work should be read as a queer text. It is not my intention to challenge these critics, or to argue, for instance, that Chopin’s characters are, or are not, gay, lesbian, or transgendered. Instead, it is important to have in mind these interpretations in order to recognize that one of the underlying questions of *The Awakening* is not simply the question of the screened homosocial reality of the New Orleans society of the 1890s seen against the backdrop of the strict social codes alleviated by the affluent lifestyle. More importantly, Chopin’s focus is on the idea of gender as instable, which manifests itself in the characters’ fundamental uncertainty about fulfilling their gender roles as well as in their attempts to challenge and dismantle socially predetermined fixed notions of gender through subversive acts characteristic of Judith Butler’s idea of gender performativity. Approaching *The Awakening* through the lenses of Butler’s constructivist approach to gender repays study in that it provides a useful perspective on the text for those students who encounter Chopin’s work for the first time during their American literature courses. Moreover, considering the continuing impact of Butler’s influential theoretical insights, the following essay may also serve as an introduction of sorts for those interested in gender theory as applied to the study of literature.

In her 1990 *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Judith Butler famously writes: “Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” (140). In their analyses of the ways in which Chopin’s text portrays the nature of gender roles in the late-nineteenth century Creole society, most critics underscore a similar instability and tenuousness of gender identity in *The Awakening*. Alluding to the controversy caused by the book’s publication in 1899, when Chopin distanced herself from the novella's heroine after having received a number of either extremely unfavorable or dismissive reviews, Janet Beer defines the novel as “deeply disruptive of prevailing social mores, with Chopin’s heroine dissident in every way from received notions of womanly propriety,” and further argues that Edna “fulfills the worst fears of the male-dominated social order” due to the fact that she is a sexually and economically independent woman (167; 175). To understand how Chopin complicates the question of Edna’s identity, it is necessary to examine the conflicting forces constructive of femininity in America of the end of the nineteenth century. In particular, the concept of the New Woman elucidates the nature of contemporary gender roles and social patterns that Edna so vehemently refused to accept.

In *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg argues that through the idea of the single, highly educated,
economically autonomous New Woman, the society ‘measured’ “the ‘naturalness’ of gender and the legitimacy of the bourgeois social order” (245). Furthermore, the fact that the New Woman was at that time frequently defined by decidedly androgynous characteristics, combined with a number of derogatory labels (e.g.: Masculine Woman or Mannish Lesbian), meant that by trying to defy the patriarchal social order, a woman automatically acquired masculine characteristics and her sexual orientation was immediately questioned. Whereas critics often note that Edna displays certain masculine characteristics, calling her a masculine woman does not seem accurate, just like identifying her as a lesbian is a statement that is not, as it seems to me, sufficiently substantiated in the text. Instead, as several critics rightly observe, Edna’s position appears liminal and her gender identity could perhaps be best defined as a state of in-betweenness. Through the character of Edna Chopin problematizes the masculine/feminine binary. Although she is frequently described as unwomanly, she comes across as “handsome” rather than beautiful and is “almost devoid of coquetry,” Edna does not come across as mannish (25; 81). Moreover, even though she is not perceived by her husband as an ideal mother and refuses to sacrifice herself for her children, there is hardly anything in the text revealing that Edna is actually a bad mother. It is rather her husband who expects her to raise the children in a particular way and behave towards them according to certain traditionally established social conventions. By showing Edna as a figure who does not conform to the Victorian “Angel in the House”-model of femininity, Chopin questions the social construction of gender and offers a tentative possibility of its deconstruction.

Trying to define Edna’s ‘in-betweenness,’ Cristina Giorcelli focuses her analysis of the novel on its ambiguities and dichotomies, with the caveat that, even though Edna represents a transitional state of being, the transition remains impossible (118). She also discusses other aspects of liminality in the novel, focusing on Chopin’s treatment of time, space, and language, which emphasize the merging of Edna’s conflicting gender characteristics. Significantly, like other critics, Giorcelli also implies that “by possessing and developing androgynous characteristics” Edna manages to overcome gender restrictions (122). Giorcelli makes it clear that Edna’s transition can only ever be an unrealized potentiality. This argument brings to mind Butler’s gender performance and its inherent limitations; the compulsion to perform one’s gender identity following the social norms or a desire to undo the stifling corset of prescribed gender roles through strategic repetition of the norm that can never be fully sidestepped.

An important contribution to the discussion of Edna’s gender identity and its underlying ambiguity has been made by Todd McGowan in his essay “The Awakening of Desire, or, Why Edna Pontellier Isn’t a Man.” McGowan rightly observed that Edna is far from accepting “a masculinist definition of selfhood,”
and makes a crucial point stating that she “does not want to be a man; what animates her, instead, is a sustained refusal of the satisfaction and security offered by symbolic identity” (48-9). Moreover, as McGowan further argues, Edna also rejects femininity when it threatens to impose the same kind of symbolic identity upon her (58). Most importantly, he states that her refusal to fully accept any of these gender roles stems from her attempt to “break from the oppressiveness of habit” (57). This argument, as it will be demonstrated further in this essay, is relevant to viewing Edna’s actions in the context of Butler’s insistent emphasis on limitations inherent in what she terms the citationality of norms, that is the way in which the socially constructed norm is repeatedly and compulsively re-enacted.

Edna’s liminality and rejection of stable and socially acceptable identification can be perhaps interpreted as Chopin’s intentional construction of the character of Edna as a figure of uncertainty. To quote Bonnie Zimmerman, Edna emerges as “a sign” of transition and disruption of exclusively patriarchal social order based on clear cut dualism of gender (qtd in LeBlanc 238). Janet Beer makes a very similar observation saying that Edna’s conduct throws into flux not only preoccupations of female sexuality but the category of woman in its entirety (178). Beer further quotes Butler’s premise about seeing gender as a free-floating artifice independent of sex to argue that “Edna Pontellier’s rebellion confutes conjugal, maternal, and social structures of womanliness; she unsexes herself, taking to the streets, walking, talking, eating, drinking, smoking, gambling, forming sexual liaisons in the public spaces of New Orleans” (179). In *The Awakening*, the idea of abandoning the confines of a particular sexual identity and balancing on the verge of gender dualism leads to the realization that gender identity is fluid and undergoes constant transformation. Giorcelli suggests that Edna gradually learns “how to enter the fluid element” and implies that Chopin construes the category of a woman as fluid (115). Along the same lines, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar have famously emphasized the novel’s idea of fluidity in their article “The Second Coming of Aphrodite: Kate Chopin’s Fantasy of Desire.” They trace Chopin’s use of imagery of fluidity and liminality to Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* and transcendentalists, and argue that Chopin advocates the advent of fluid female imagination and female fluency (111).

To be able to understand the nature of performativity of gender in Chopin’s text, it is moreover crucial to understand that Butler’s notion of gender performance is as much about emancipation as it is about its impossibility, limitation, and implicit prohibition. Clarifying her own argument advanced in *Gender Trouble*, Butler writes in *Bodies That Matter*:

Performativity is neither free play nor theatrical self-presentation; nor can it be simply equated with performance. Moreover, constraint is not necessarily that which sets a limit to performativity; constraint is, rather, that which impels and sustains performativity ... [P]erformativity cannot be understood outside of a
process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And
this repetition is not performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a
subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability
implies that “performance” is not a singular “act” or event, but a ritualized
production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through
the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death
controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist,
determining it fully in advance. (95)

To begin with, there is a scene in The Awakening that might serve as
emblematic of the text’s focus on gender performativity, as well as indicative
of a certain anxiety connected with revealing its transgressive potential, so
pervasive throughout the whole novella. It is a scene during the dinner that
Edna prepares for her circle of friends, at which Mrs. Highcamp decorates
Edna’s would-be lover Victor Lebrun with a garland of roses and with her
white silken scarf. Lebrun immediately engages into a performance, poses
for the women, and then starts singing, which instantly disconcerts Edna.
The incident ends with Victor trying to appease angry Edna as she violently
tears the garland of roses away from him. Although he finally kisses Edna’s
hand in a conventionally apologetic gesture, her peace of mind is not restored
and the whole evening becomes another “discordant note” among Edna’s
many strange moods (114). Interestingly, even though Victor easily slips into
the female role to entertain Edna’s guests, who seem to thoroughly enjoy the
spectacle, Edna appears to be the only person who feels uneasy about Victor’s
performance, as if she subconsciously felt that it might have exposed not only
her unstable emotional state but also her discomfort about the way in which
Victor playfully inverts gender roles to the tunes of a song that directly alludes
to her relationship with Robert. This playful theatrical performance of role-
playing exposes a sense of anxiety connected with the character’s latent desires
to overcome the socially constructed gender identity. Moreover, it is not so much
that the short performance during which Robert’s brother playfully surrenders
his masculinity and acquires feminine attributes threatens to frustrate Edna’s
idea of her male companion; rather, it awakens her uncertainty about her own
identity. Victor’s performance also playfully alludes to an uncanny physical
similarity between Edna and Robert that the critics of Chopin’s novella have
so often emphasized. The text is punctuated with performances that take place
during parties, dinners, and soirées musicales, which further emphasizes the
mood of playful and parodic questioning of the idea of the social construction
of the characters’ gender identity. The social context of these instances of
performativity brings to mind the main premise of Butler’s theory of gender
performativity, namely, that gender identity is always contained within the
frames of the systemic dominant discourses and hierarchies. It is therefore
exclusively from within the system of power that subversion can occur, and,
even if enacted systematically and successfully, it may or may not effect its revision and restructuring (6). Both uncertainty about and desire for gender performance as transgressive are contingent on the impossibility of their full articulation and realization within the confines of social conventions.

Within this context, *The Awakening* could perhaps be read as a text about Edna Pontellier’s exploration of the new possibilities of performing her gender in her relationships with both men and women. As Elaine Showalter aptly observes, Edna finds herself at the crossroads of the nineteenth century reality of very close, although never homosexual emotional relationships between women and the post-Civil War social reality in which “the homosocial world of women’s culture began to dissolve as women demanded entrance to higher education, the professions, and the political world” (205-7). Even though she is capable of considering women like Adele and Mariequita attractive, there is little indication of sexual desire behind these non-sexual signs of admiration. To reinforce this idea, in her analysis of *The Awakening*, Showalter mentions the nineteenth century ambivalent notion of women’s “passionlessness,” i.e.: the belief that women’s sexual desires are different from sexual desires of men, which showed women as other in terms of desire yet simultaneously created strong emotional bonds between them. Showalter’s argument points to the fact that Edna has to learn to dismantle and recreate her own gender in her relationship with members of both sexes. Therefore, it can be argued that Chopin portrays Edna as a character who occupies a largely undefined space between male and female gender and tries to form her gender identity against the backdrop of changing structures of the social reality that she inhabits.

Reading Chopin’s text in the light of Butler’s idea of gender performativity entails seeing Edna as a character who embodies a fundamental anxiety about gender as a socially-determined construct. Described at several points in the text as a largely unidentified creature, Edna gradually learns to recognize “the unfamiliar part of her consciousness” until her “newly awakened being” starts to acquire the ability of self-expression (28; 129). Her conversation with Alcée Arobin toward the end of the novel shows how Edna articulates her internal struggle and a desire for change: “I’m going to pull myself together for a while and think—try to determine what character of a woman I am; for, candidly, I don’t know. By all the codes which I’m acquainted with, I’m a devilishly wicked specimen of the sex” (105). The transformation of Edna’s self and her breaking free of social constraints ultimately lead her to the point when she begins to radically question the sense of her life, her relationships with men, as well as the socially imposed sense of duty toward her children:

*There was no one thing in the world that she desired. There was no human being whom she wanted near her except Robert; and she even realized that the day would come when he, too, and the thought of him would melt out of her existence, leaving her alone. The children appeared before her like antagonists who had overcome her; who had*
overpowered and sought to drag her into the soul’s slavery for the rest of her days. But she knew a way to delude them. (138)

*The Awakening*’s final scene of suicide, Edna’s ultimate liminal performance, is a moment of radical self-knowledge and a subversive bodily act that Butler theorizes in *Gender Trouble*. The sea becomes a symbol of the limitless artifice of free-floating social signifiers to which Edna finally yields in the hope of transgression. The novella’s ending suggests destabilization of such categories as “discrete gender” and “specific sexuality” that can no longer function as reliable stable points of reference (Butler 128).

Finally, it is not accidental that the opening scene of *The Awakening* focuses on the status of language and linguistic performance that frames the characters’ experience. The image of the caged parrot that speaks an unintelligible language has puzzled the critics, and only a few pertinent interpretations of this image can be found among the novel’s vast body of criticism. Since this essay explores the notion of gender performance, the question of language, an inherent element of Butler’s idea of performativity, should be examined in greater detail. First of all, according to Butler, performativity should be seen as citationality of norms. In other words, performativity is not an isolated act, but rather a plurality of acts enacted as a reiteration of a set of norms which “conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition (*Bodies that Matter* 12). Butler’s approach resists linking performativity exclusively to the notion of a theatrical act. Instead, at the foundation of her philosophy of gender lies a linguistic approach, namely J. L. Austin’s performative speech acts theory. In Butler’s *Undoing Gender*, she further advances her argument on the relationship between language and embodiment; speech acts and bodily acts: “language carries bodily aims and performs bodily deeds that are not always understood by those who use language to accomplish certain conscious aims” (199). In the same work, however, she stresses the idea that “[t]here is always a dimension of bodily life that cannot be fully represented” (199). Consequently, she conceives of performatives as “discursive productions” whose effects extend beyond the actual time of their pronouncement, and which “continue to signify in spite of their authors, and sometimes against their authors’ most precious intentions (*Bodies That Matter* 241). Once again, language is performance with potentialities contingent on the existing power relations and social codes.

Language as performance is also an important part of Chopin’s project, and *The Awakening* explores the potentialities and limitations of linguistic performativity in interesting ways. In her essay titled “A Green and Yellow Parrot,” Dyer argues that Chopin’s novel shows the author’s need to fight imitative behavior (33). Dyer interprets the text’s initial image of the caged bird as “a symbol of dullness and stupidity” (37), and says that although the parrot is gendered as male, its situation is essentially female because it stands for the
confines of domesticity (34). Obvious as these observations sound, they once again ascertain the in-betweenness of not the actual, but the symbolic gender of the bird and its language, at the same time identifying linguistic restrictions as a metaphor for the whole novella. Importantly, it is striking that we do not hear Edna speak very often, not only because Chopin uses the third person omniscient narrator, but because whenever we actually hear Edna’s voice, it sounds characteristically restrained and evasive. Even though the power of her utterances escalates with Edna’s gradual ‘awakening,’ reading about her thoughts and dreams is far more revealing that reading the actual words she speaks. Moreover, we much more often have a chance to hear other characters speak to her than hear what she actually thinks. Giorcelli, who also notices the evasiveness of language in the text, points to Chopin’s frequent use of ‘as if’ structure, the “hypothetical, circuitous, basically unreal adverbial clause” as a way of emphasizing the novella’s ambiguity and relating Edna’s inner world to the outside reality (120).

Along the same lines, Patricia Yaeger makes a remarkable argument about Chopin’s representation of language, saying that the novel’s subversive and transgressive force should be located in Edna’s search of language. Yaeger sees Edna’s quest for self-articulation as impossible to realize due to the fact that she “inhabits a world of limited linguistic possibilities, of limited possibilities for interpreting and reorganizing her feelings, and therefore of limited possibilities for action” (314). Along these lines, Yaeger inquires whether the novel can still be perceived as subversive and emancipatory, and suggests trying to identify “a new dialogic ground” for interpreting women’s contradictory desires in the absence of language (314). She also aptly identifies the novella’s “discontinuous linguistic space in which the communicative function of language itself is called into question” (333). Yaeger’s deconstructive analysis shares a common ground with Butler’s theory. Like Butler, Yaeger believes that action is precluded in the absence of language. Moreover, recognizing the potentialities of “discontinuous linguistic spaces,” she argues that constraint, also linguistic constraint, is, like in Butler’s theory, inherent in the idea of language performance. For Edna, Yaeger notes, the linguistic performance at least entails an articulation of the “incessant need for some other register of language, for a mode of speech that will express her unspoken, but not unspeakable needs” (336). The Awakening’s emphasis is placed primarily on the question of performing gender that has been destabilized and that is in the process of being further dismantled and remade. Like Butler, Chopin appears to challenge the construction of “the category of women as a coherent and stable subject,” also by refusing to identify with any of the text’s female characters, all of which represent such stable identities (e.g.: Edna’s friend Adele Ratignolle represents the ideal of Victorian femininity confined to the domestic sphere, while Mademoiselle Reisz is a free spirit and an independent artist who is the opposite of this ideal).
(Gender Trouble 5). Ultimately, however, what Edna’s difficult self-discovery affects is not the onset of any stable sense of selfhood, but desire, so that Edna comes to represent “transgressive sexuality” in a culture that Chopin boldly imagined as one whose “energy would arise from the liberation and celebration of female desire” (Gilbert and Gubar 84, 94). Embracing the liminal nature of female desire, Chopin’s conflicted vision in *The Awakening* is essentially about uncertainty and anxiety that remain potentialities yet to be realized.

Bibliography


The quote which constitutes the title of the present essay is derived from a song of the same name. “The Last Time I Saw Paris,” with lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II and music by Jerome Kern, was used in the 1941 film Lady Be Good. The Nazis’ entering the French capital in June 1940 apparently prompted Hammerstein, a songwriter and director of musicals, to produce the now-famous refrain:

The last time I saw Paris
Her heart was warm and gay,
I heard the laughter of her heart in every street café.

The song won Hammerstein and Kern an Oscar and later lent its title to a 1954 film, starring Elizabeth Taylor and telling the story of an American in post-World-War-II Paris. The Last Time I Saw Paris is a loose adaptation of Francis Scott Fitzgerald’s 1931 story Babylon Revisited. Unlike the film version, Fitzgerald’s work, written in the wake of the 1929 stock market crash, is set before World War II. Its protagonist, Charlie Wales, is an American who, having lived in Paris in the Roaring Twenties, returns to the French capital during the Great Depression. As glimpses of Charlie’s Parisian days return in flashback, it becomes clear that his and his wife Helen’s lifestyle was very much like that of Francis Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald when they lived in Paris in les années folles. This chapter in Fitzgerald’s biography inevitably brings to mind the other famous literary expatriates the author of The Great Gatsby mixed with in Paris, such as Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein and Ernest Hemingway. The aim of this essay is to set two works by the latter, The Sun Also Rises and The Snows of Kilimanjaro, against the Fitzgerald story in question, with particular focus on the way Paris is depicted in the three works and the way in which both writers’ visions of the French capital complete each other.

The Sun Also Rises is generally acknowledged as the manifesto of the Lost Generation, to which both Hemingway and Fitzgerald belong. The two epigraphs for the novel – a quote from Hemingway’s conversation with Gertrude Stein and a citation from the Book of Ecclesiastes - reinforce its generational
character. A reading of Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*, a posthumously published collection of sketches in which the writer looks back on the twenties – both his own and the century’s – and reminisces about his years in the French capital, gives the reader an insight into the Parisian genesis of the term *Lost Generation*. The sketch in question is entitled “Une Génération Perdue,” which is the original, French-language version of the phrase. Hemingway recalls how Gertrude Stein, his literary mentor and the guru of the expatriate American intellectuals and artists in Paris, had her car repaired at a Parisian garage. Dissatisfied with the service provided by a French mechanic, who happened to be a veteran of the Great War, Stein complained to the young man's boss. The latter rebuked his employee with the words which Stein thought were applicable to Hemingway and his peers as well, and which, translated into English, became one of the two aforementioned epigraphs: “You are all a lost generation.” Interestingly, Hemingway, who was to produce what is arguably the most acute literary portrayal of the “Génération Perdue,” strongly objected to his generation being branded as a host of “young people who served in the war” and, as a result, had “no respect for anything” and would only “drink [themselves] to death” (*Moveble Feast* 26). Nevertheless, the expression stuck both in Hemingway’s mind and the popular consciousness, and *The Sun Also Rises*, which was originally to be entitled simply *The Lost Generation*, forever combined the destinies of those who matured in the trenches of World War I and 1920s Paris.

In *A Moveable Feast*, Hemingway remembers that he pondered upon Stein’s words in La Closerie des Lilas, “one of the best cafés in Paris” (69), in which he later worked on *The Sun Also Rises*. Located in Montparnasse, the artistic heart of Paris during the first three decades of the twentieth century, La Closerie appears on the long list of Parisian addresses which a meticulous reader of the novel is able to draw up. Not only did Hemingway write his first novel in the French capital, but he also chose it to be the novel’s setting. Out of the three parts which make up *The Sun Also Rises*, Book One as well as the first two chapters of Book Two are set in Paris, and only later is the action transferred to Spain. The City of Light provides a dramatic backdrop to the strained relations between the American and British expatriates Hemingway’s novel is peopled with. The image of Paris is largely filtered through the consciousness of the narrator, American journalist Jake Barnes, but the other main characters’ responses to the city they have adopted as their own are also evoked.

The way Hemingway’s protagonists feel about Paris seems to constitute some sort of a dividing line, indicative of their situation and the power relations within the group they form. On one side of the dividing line are the narrator and Lady Brett Ashley, the novel’s central couple, whose love is tragically doomed to remain platonic due to the young man’s World War I wound, which left him castrated. Jake and Brett express their fondness for Paris on several
occasions, as does Jake’s friend, American writer Bill Gorton. On the other side of the division between those who love Paris and those who fail to do so is Robert Cohn, another American man of letters. Interestingly, the division reflects Cohn’s position in the expatriate community, foreshadowing, in the first, “Parisian” part of the novel, the conflict which is to erupt later, when the protagonists make a trip to Pamplona.

Unlike Cohn or Brett, Jake does not explicitly express his attitude to the French capital. When a fellow American asks him whether he finds the city amusing, Barnes retorts with a quick “yes,” which his interlocutor interprets as a sign of irritation. Instead, the protagonist’s liking for Paris manifests itself in the condensed yet evocative descriptions which enable the reader to catch glimpses of the cityscape:

Crossing the Seine I saw a string of barges being towed empty down the current, riding high, the bargemen at the sweeps as they came toward the bridge. The river looked nice. It was always pleasant crossing bridges in Paris. (Hemingway, Sun Also Rises 36)

The opening paragraph of Chapter 5 shows Jake to be in tune with the city, its rhythm, energy and movement. We follow the narrator as he starts his day in Paris, his morning routine fitting in with that of the busy metropolis:

In the morning I walked down the Boulevard to the Rue Soufflot for coffee and brioche. It was a fine morning. The horse-chestnut trees in the Luxembourg gardens were in bloom. There was the pleasant early-morning feeling of a hot day. I read the papers with the coffee and then smoked a cigarette. The flower-women were coming up from the market and arranging their daily stock. Students went by going up to the law school, or down to the Sorbonne. The Boulevard was busy with trams and people going to work. I got on an S bus and rode down to the Madeleine, standing on the black platform. From the Madeleine I walked along the Boulevard des Capucines to the Opéra, and up to my office. ... All along people were going to work. It felt pleasant to be going to work. I walked across the avenue and turned in to my office. (31)

The passage quoted above exudes vitality and optimism, which counteract the mood of disenchantment and hopelessness typically associated with the Lost Generation. It also seems to act as a counterbalance to the feeling of desperation which overwhelms Jake when he is alone in his room at night, pondering the tragic irreversibility of his situation. Paris appears to be the locus of renewal, its healthy dynamism being an antidote to the ills plaguing Jake and other members of the Génération Perdue. In the pleasurable promise of a new Parisian day, in its refreshing combination of invigorating sights and, as we may presume, smells and sounds, Hemingway’s protagonist is likely to find, temporarily at least, the answer to the novel’s central question: “how to live in it” (129).

Of all the expatriates Jake mingles with in Paris, no one seems to understand the pain and dilemmas inscribed in the fate of the Lost Generation better than
Brett Ashley. “I’ve talked myself all out to Jake,” Brett states, realizing that she does not have “a friend in the world. Except Jake here” (Hemingway, *Sun Also Rises* 51). The deep personal understanding which bonds the two soul mates extends to their mutual appreciation of the city they live in. “[D]oes your ladyship have a good time here in Paris?”, a Greek aristocrat asks Brett, to which she laconically replies “Rather” (24). Later in the novel, it is Brett who asks the newly arrived Bill Gorton whether he has “been in this pestilential city long” (65). Though the adjective she uses may be said to have negative connotations, it soon becomes obvious that she uses it humorously. In the course of the conversation which ensues, Brett, who has just been on a trip to San Sebastian, remarks: “I was a fool to go away. … One’s an ass to leave Paris” (66). With her characteristic enigmatic sense of humor, she also notes that the French capital is “a strange city” (65).

As the novel unfolds, it soon becomes clear that Brett went to San Sebastian with Robert Cohn. Their leaving Paris and spending a short time in Spain marks the beginning of a misunderstanding which catalyzes the explosion of antagonisms between the characters. Madly in love with Brett, Cohn sees their brief sexual liaison as merely a prelude to long-lasting romantic devotion. Despite evidence to the contrary, he fails to accept the fact that Brett, the New Woman personified, is perfectly capable of detaching sexuality from emotional commitment or, as she herself bluntly puts it, “He can’t believe it didn’t mean anything” (Hemingway, *Sun Also Rises* 157). Cohn’s obstinate refusal to face the reality and his pathetic behavior only serve to aggravate the other characters’ hostility to him, visible from the very beginning of the story.

In one of the novel’s opening scenes, Cohn visits Jake at his office, trying to persuade the journalist to join him on an expedition to South America. Robert complains about his life being uneventful and his being unable to live it to the full. The exchange which takes place between the two men opposes Paris to the South America of Cohn’s dreams, but also emphasizes the gulf between him and the other expatriates. For Robert, Paris becomes the embodiment of everything he hates about his life. Uninterested in the exotic trip, Jake attempts to discourage his friend from indulging in the mirages of faraway destinations and suggests Cohn should focus on the here and now instead of trying to escape from himself:

‘South America hell! If you went there the way you feel now it would be exactly the same. This is a good town. Why don’t you start living your life in Paris?’
‘I’m sick of Paris, and I’m sick of the Quarter.’
‘Stay away from the Quarter. Cruise around by yourself and see what happens to you.’
‘Nothing happens to me. I walked alone all one night and nothing happened except a bicycle cop stopped me and asked to see my papers.’
‘Wasn’t the town nice at night?’
‘I don’t care for Paris.’ (Hemingway, *Sun Also Rises* 10)
Cohn’s rejection of the French capital is symbolic of the qualities which separate him from the other members of the expatriate community. He does not feel at home in Paris, and neither is he entrenched in his milieu. There are several factors which contribute to Robert’s alienation. One of them is his Jewishness, for which the other characters reproach him on several occasions. Another is his affair with Brett, whom all the men in the novel find desirable, and the consequent jealousy it provokes. Finally, there is Cohn’s nature: bookish, quixotic, adventure-loving. In fact, Jake suspects that Cohn’s dislike of Paris is rooted in his bookishness. Following the conversation about living life to the full, Barnes concludes: “South America could fix it and he did not like Paris. He got the first idea out of a book, and I suppose the second came out of a book too” (10). Later on, when Jake himself wonders what it is that makes him hate the Boulevard Raspail, he thinks of Cohn again:

Perhaps I had read something about it once. That was the way Robert Cohn was about all of Paris. I wondered where Cohn got that incapacity to enjoy Paris. Possibly from Mencken. Mencken hates Paris, I believe. So many young men get their likes and dislikes from Mencken. (36)

Robert Cohn’s attitude to the French capital betrays certain qualities which alienate him from people such as Jake, Brett, her fiancé Mike Campbell or Bill Gorton. From their point of view, Robert’s intellectualism and adventurousness might be irritating\textit{ per se}, but they are also inextricably linked with one central difference between him and his peers: though he belongs to the Lost Generation, he has not – like Jake or Mike – served in the war nor has he seen its atrocities first-hand, as did Brett, who was a nurse and whose beloved died during the war. Unlike the other young people in the novel, Cohn is not a “true” representative of the Lost Generation, because he has not lost anything in the Great War or because of it. He is liable to illusions, because he has not been disillusioned by the tragic generational experience he has not shared. Since he has not lost faith in old-fashioned values, he has an idealistic view of love and upholds a chivalric code of honor, which ridicules him in the eyes of his peers. Cohn’s thirst for adventure, which leaves Jake indifferent, brings to mind an adolescent’s way of thinking about war as an exciting experience. A comment Hemingway makes on the regulars of la Closerie des Lilas in \textit{A Moveable Feast} perhaps best sums up the reasons why Cohn’s being a nonveteran exacerbates the distance between him and the other young people in the novel:

There were other people too who lived in the quarter and came to the Lilas, and some of them wore Croix de Guerre ribbons in their lapels and others also had the yellow and green of the Médaille Militaire, and I watched how well they were overcoming the handicap of the loss of limbs, and saw the quality of their artificial eyes and the degree of skill with which their faces had been reconstructed. There was always an almost iridescent shiny cast about the considerably reconstructed face, rather like that of a well packed ski run, and we
respected these clients more than we did the savants or the professors, although
the latter might well have done their military service too without experiencing
mutilation. (Hemingway, Moveable Feast 70)

“In those days,” Hemingway concludes, “we did not trust anyone who had
not been in the war, but we did not completely trust anyone” (70).

If Robert Cohn’s dislike of the city is presented in terms of his bookishness,
what one may call, paraphrasing Hemingway, the other characters’ “capacity
to enjoy Paris” is, by contrast, associated with their immersion in the life of
the metropolis, in its beauty and its people. “It’s pretty grand,” exclaims Bill
Gorton on his return to Paris after a stay in Vienna and Budapest. “God, I love
to get back” (Hemingway, Sun Also Rises 68). He says so to Jake as the two of
them walk on the Ile Saint-Louis, admiring the Seine with its bateaux mouches,
the Notre Dame cathedral, the majestic architecture and the bright lights of the
city. With his characteristic terseness, Hemingway evokes not just the cityscape,
but also the people, offering the reader subtle cameos of Parisian life: “A man
and a girl passed us. They were walking with their arms around each other”
(68). When at some point during their stroll Jake asks Bill if he fancies a drink,
the latter answers, “I don’t need it” (68). While the reply may be taken literally,
it may also mean that Bill, who is no stranger to the Lost Generation’s habit of
drinking their troubles away, does not need any intoxication other than the
positive, healthy stimulation provided by the city, with its enchanting sights,
engaging inhabitants and music coming out of nightclubs.

Walking seems to be one of Jake Barnes’ favorite Parisian activities: he
strolls around Paris alone or in the company of friends. When Brett suggests
waiting for a taxi, Jake states, “You wouldn’t walk across the street,” to which
she retorts “Not if I could help it” (Hemingway, Sun Also Rises 20). Once in the
taxi, however, she wants the driver “to drive around” (20) so that she can spend
some time with Jake and confide her misery to him. Frequently, the reader
follows the narrator of The Sun Also Rises as he traverses various sections of
the city, crosses bridges and shuttles between the Right Bank and the Rive
Gauche. Hemingway makes a point of recording the numerous places and
place names the text of the novel is peppered with. While reading The Sun Also
Rises, it is possible to mark out on a map of Paris the various routes taken by
the protagonist. Jake’s peripatetic habit may be seen as small-scale reflection of
the nomadic lifestyle of the generation of misfits and déracinés he belongs to. It
may also be one more way of experiencing Paris, of absorbing the myriads of
impressions it conveys and stimuli it offers. For Hemingway, the French capital
and movement appear to be inextricably linked: Paris is a spectacle you move
with and take with you when you are no longer there. The famous epigraph for
A Moveable Feast, let us remember, reads: “If you are lucky enough to have lived
in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays
with you, for Paris is a moveable feast.”
In *The Sun Also Rises*, the perpetual motion Paris is in is emphasized even when the characters are not going or driving anywhere. This is the case when they indulge in what is referred to as “café life” (110) in *A Moveable Feast*. The Parisian café is an inescapable fixture in the landscape of the 1920s, inherent in the lifestyle of the literary and artistic expatriates:

> I went out on to the sidewalk and walked down toward the Boulevard St Michel, passed the tables of the Rotonde, still crowded, looked across the street at the Dôme, its tables running out to the edge of the pavement. Someone waved at me from a table, I did not see who it was and went on. (Hemingway, *Sun Also Rises* 25-26)

For Jake and his friends, a café is more than a place where they can get something to drink or eat, socialize or simply pass some time. Jake makes it clear when he observes, “We went out to the Café Napolitain to have an apéritif and watch the evening crowd on the Boulevard” (11). People-watching is an important element of being in Paris as well as becoming part of the city. It gives Jake and the other expatriates an opportunity to partake in the life of the French capital. Sitting on the terraces of the innumerable Parisian cafés, with their frequently marble-topped tables, the characters are both inside and outside, at once sheltered from the flow of the crowd and communing with it:

> It was a warm spring night and I sat at a table on the terrace of the Napolitain after Robert had gone, watching it get dark and the electric signs come on, and the red and green stop-and-go traffic-signal, and the crowd going by, and the horse-cabs clippety-clopping along at the edge of the solid taxi traffic, and the poules going by, singly and in pairs, looking for the evening meal. (12)

It is Paris itself that Jake and the other *habitués* of the numerous Parisian cafés watch going by with almost cinematic dynamism, which lends a visual directness to Hemingway’s text. The café table constitutes a vantage point from which the expatriate reaches out and embraces the city which is not his hometown, but which has become his own by choice. For a man like Jake, who has to carry the burden of his wartime experience, it may also be a way of escaping from the suffering and frustration which torment him by shifting attention away from himself and focusing it on other people instead. The latter, though unknown to the observer seated at a café table – or perhaps precisely because of that – seem to offer endless possibilities. Though Hemingway, with his penchant for understatement, does not say so explicitly in the novel, it is possible that Jake shares the feelings the writer expresses directly when discussing café life in *A Moveable Feast*. There, Hemingway looks back on the people who frequented the most popular Parisian cafés. Among them were those he knew by sight or in person as well as the “much nicer-looking people that,” as Hemingway recalls, he “did not know that, in the evening with the lights just coming on, were hurrying to some place to drink together, to eat...
together and then to make love" (Moveable Feast 87). “The people that I liked and had not met” (88), as the writer calls them, personify the promise which is inherent in the city itself and which may be one of the reasons for his own and his protagonist’s intimate relationship with Paris.

While, as has already been noted, Jake and his friends are inclined to marvel at the splendor of the Parisian cityscape and the wonderful architecture, they do not seem to be attracted by the glamour and luxury which are typically associated with Paris. It is true that in the opening lines of Chapter 6 Jake mentions waiting for Brett in the sumptuous Hotel Crillon and writing letters to fill his time. “They were not very good letters but I hoped their being on Crillon stationery would help them” (Hemingway, Sun Also Rises 36), Barnes observes. Knowing the protagonist’s character, however, one is more likely to assume that the remark about the stationery stems from Jake’s sense of humor and irony rather than from whatever modicum of snobbishness he may be suspected of. In fact, the Paris depicted in The Sun Also Rises is very much a working-class one. While the expatriates in the novel are all writers or journalists and some of them come from privileged backgrounds, like Robert Cohn, “a member, through his father, of one of the richest Jewish families in New York, and through his mother of one of the oldest” (4), or are, like Brett Ashley, aristocrats, if not by birth, then at least by marriage, the Parisians Jake and his friends encounter are members of the lower classes. The minor characters in the “Parisian” section of Hemingway’s novel are cochers, concierges and restaurateurs. One of the “Parisian” scenes is set on the Left Bank of the Seine, in a bal musette, a kind of dance hall where the java, the waltz and the foxtrot are danced to the accompaniment of the accordion, the French national instrument. “Five nights a week the working people of the Panthéon quarter danced there,” the narrator notes. “One night a week it was the dancing-club” (16). In his description of the place, Hemingway emphasizes its popular, working-class character. The “dancing-club” is a family business, with the owner’s wife and daughter helping him run the place, where “There were long benches, and tables ran across the room, and at the far end a dancing-floor” (16). It is the owner who plays the accordion, helping himself with “a string of bells around one of his ankles and beat[ing] time with his foot as he played” (16). Elsewhere in the novel, Jake and Bill Gorton pass the Café Aux Amateurs, with its “long zinc bar,” the terrace where “working people were drinking” and the “open kitchen” in which “a girl was cooking potato-chips in oil” (68). The reader is able to visualize the entire scene in its striking simplicity: “There was an iron pot of stew. The girl ladd[ed] some onto a plate for an old man who stood holding a bottle of red wine in one hand” (68). The seemingly insignificant details which Hemingway registers serve to add local color and recreate the almost rustic, unsophisticated air of the Left Bank in the 1920s.
Not only does Parisian working-class life provide the backdrop for Hemingway’s novel, but it also gives the American writer an opportunity to create several portrayals of ordinary French people, with whom the expatriates interact. There is Madame Lecomte, the owner of a restaurant on the Ile Saint Louis. As if to trace the historical circumstances of the French-American symbiosis, the narrator explains that “Bill had eaten at the restaurant in 1918, and right after the armistice, and Madame Lecomte made a great fuss over seeing him” (Hemingway, *Sun Also Rises* 67). While the Lost Generation, of which Jake is the *porte-parole*, may be associated with cynicism and irony, the relations between the expatriates and working-class Parisians are presented with warmth and humor:

‘Doesn’t get us a table, though,’ Bill said. ‘Grand woman, though.’ …
‘You’ve got the world here all right,’ Bill said to Madame Lecomte. She raised her hand. ‘Oh, my God!’
‘You’ll be rich.’
‘I hope so.’

The friendly exchange between Bill and Madame Lecomte is followed by one between her and Jake. “You never come here any more, Monsieur Barnes,” the owner says, advising Jake, who complains about the risk of running into “Too many compatriots,” to “Come at lunch-time,” when there are fewer clients (67). Another human cameo in the novel is connected with the concierge in the building where Jake lives. In the middle of the night, the woman engages in a noisy argument with a drunken Brett Ashley, whom she calls “a species of a woman” (28). The concierge’s anger, however, subsides the following day, and she radically changes her mind about Brett, whom she now refers to as “Very, very nice” and “of very good family” (46). The narrator refrains from commenting on the real reason for this sudden change when he later finds out that in order to win Madame Duzinell’s approval Brett used – besides her famous charm – a large sum of money. Barnes does pass any judgments; instead, he tells the reader a humorous anecdote about the concierge’s former career as a drink-seller “at the Paris racecourses” (46), which, she believed, had sharpened her eye and taught her to distinguish people she considered respectable from those she did not, an ability she later practiced on Barnes’ guests.

As the quote used in the opening paragraph of the present essay shows, Paris is often referred to as “she” in English. It is worth noting that the Parisians whose portraits Hemingway paints in *The Sun Also Rises* are women. Apart from Madame Lecomte and Madame Duzinell, there is Georgette Hobin, a young prostitute whom Jake buys dinner one evening and who later accompanies him to the *bal musette*. Interestingly, the French girl fails to share the enthusiastic way many of the expatriates feel about Paris. In a conversation with Barnes, she declares her dislike of the French capital and complains about
feeling miserable there, but when he suggests she should consider moving elsewhere, Georgette replies, “Isn’t anywhere else” (12). A similar exchange, this time more humorous, repeats itself when the two run into Jake’s friends at a restaurant. “You love Paris, do you not?” a Canadian expatriate asks the girl, who reluctantly retorts “No, I don’t like Paris. It’s expensive and dirty” (16). Her response meets with the disbelief of the Canadian woman, who perceives Paris as “extraordinarily clean. One of the cleanest cities in all Europe” and one which “does have nice people in it” (16). The clash between the two women’s diametrically different perspectives emphasizes the French capital’s special status in the mythology of the generation whose chronicler Hemingway is and the effect of the city’s magic on that generation.

This Parisian magic still worked when, a decade after The Sun Also Rises, Hemingway published The Snows of Kilimanjaro, the story of a well-known writer who, faced with his imminent death, looks back on his life. The events which take place as Harry, the protagonist, is lying on the cot which is to be his deathbed are interspersed with the events of his youth shown in flashback. Harry’s life story is that of the typical Hemingway hero, and as such it includes war and violence, activities like skiing, hunting and traveling, failed relationships with women, a drink problem and an overall sense of frustration and disappointment. Though set in Tanzania, at the foot of “the highest mountain in Africa” (1687), the story evokes other locations which traditionally make up the Hemingway geography. Some of the italicized vignettes, which contain Harry’s reminiscences of his earlier days, as well as the protagonist’s conversations with Helen, the woman in his life, send the reader back to the French capital.

In fact, it is not one Paris, but two Parises that appear in The Snows of Kilimanjaro. There is the “later” Paris, the one Harry visited with Helen, staying at the Crillon or some other luxurious hotel. There is also the “early” Paris, that of Harry’s youth, part of which he spent as an expatriate living in the peripheral Jardin des Plantes district of the city. The two “versions” of the French capital correspond to the way Harry perceives his life, which he divides into pre- and post-Helen. Being very wealthy, she is able to offer him a luxurious and seemingly trouble-free lifestyle. Paradoxically, however, it is precisely Helen’s wealth and her way of life, which he starts sharing with her, that, Harry feels, destroy him. He blames Helen for his misfortunes, especially for the fact that he has wasted his talent and can no longer write, knowing deep down that, being a kind, devoted woman ready to cater to her man’s every whim, she is not really to blame. To Helen’s rich, idle friends, whom he despises, Harry opposes his former Parisian neighbors from the Place de la Contrescarpe, just as he opposes the comfort he now lives in to the modest living conditions he could afford as a struggling young writer.
“You never would have gotten anything like this in Paris. You always said you loved Paris. We could have stayed in Paris or gone anywhere” (Hemingway, *Snows of Kilimanjaro* 1689), Helen says, referring to what happened on the African safari, during which a scratch on Harry’s leg became infected, leading to gangrene and, ultimately, to the protagonist’s death. What Helen fails to realize is that the glamorous city they “could have stayed in” is different from Harry’s Paris, “the Paris that he cared about” and “had never written about” (1700). As Harry knows, “It was not her fault that when he went to her he was already over” (1692). His true self is associated with the other Paris, the working-class neighborhood of the Place de la Contrescarpe and the Rue Mouffetard. Hemingway’s portrayal of the district in *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* is replete with evocative details. Despite the omnipresent poverty, dirt and lack of comfort, the area strikes the reader as strangely beautiful and moving:

…the flower sellers dyed their flowers in the street and the dye ran over the paving where the autobus started and the old men and the women, always drunk on wine and bad marc; and the children with their noses running in the cold; the smell of dirty sweat and poverty and drunkenness at the Café des Amateurs and the whores at the Bal Musette they lived above. (1698)

Even without Hemingway’s comment that “There never was another part of Paris that he loved like that” (1699), Harry’s fondness for the place, the people who inhabited it and the life he led there at the time is obvious. If Helen’s money, which gives the couple access to luxurious Parisian spots, evokes Harry’s disdain, if he sees the life of the wealthy as empty and boring, the poverty of his former Jardin des Plantes neighborhood, which is emphasized throughout the Parisian vignette, seems to be the key to simplicity, authenticity and, paradoxically, a life rich in possibilities, interesting and fulfilling.

The destitution pervading the area is also the key to real human contact and understanding: “He knew his neighbors in that quarter then because they all were poor” (Hemingway, *Snows of Kilimanjaro* 1699). Harry’s Parisian neighbors were ordinary, unsophisticated people, proud of their proletarian origins, which were inextricably linked with one of the most tragic events in the history of the city:

They were the descendants of the Communards and it was no struggle for them to know their politics. They knew who had shot their fathers, their relatives, their brothers, and their friends when the Versailles troops came in and took the town after the Commune and executed any one they could catch with calloused hands, or who wore a cap, or carried any other sign he was a working man. (1699)

The Parisians Harry mixed with at the time were friendly and helpful, capable of warm feelings and disarming in their genuineness, unpretentiousness and often unintentional humor. There was “The Concierge who entertained the trooper of the Garde Republicaine in her loge, his horsehair-plumed helmet on a chair”
(1698); the neighbor who nearly jumped for joy when she found out about her husband’s successful performance in a cycling race; the taxi driver who always “drank a glass of white wine at the zinc of the bar” (1699) before taking Harry to the airport; the cleaner who complained about working hours being shortened, since it left her husband more time to get drunk after work.

In such an environment, Harry was capable of the two things he now lacks: true feelings and creativity. “And in that poverty, and in that quarter across the street from a Boucherie Chevaline and a wine co-operative he had written the start of all he was to do” (Hemingway, Snows of Kilimanjaro 1699), working in a room which overlooked the Parisian skyline. The Jardin des Plantes neighborhood was a source of fresh ideas and inspiration, just as it was a locus of genuine human relations. The latter may be understood not just as relations with neighbors or friends, but also, on a much more personal level, as Harry’s ability to love. At one point in the story, he admits to himself that he has never truly loved Helen, has lied to her and made romantic gestures out of habit rather than love. This lovelessness is, however, contrasted with his memories of other women he did have true feelings for. Unsurprisingly, these memories are also evoked within their Parisian context, as Harry recalls “having quarrelled in Paris before he had gone out,” missing his beloved and “follow[ing] a woman who looked like her in some way, along the Boulevard, afraid to see it was not she, afraid to lose the feeling it gave him” (1696).

While there are analogies between Hemingway’s depictions of the French capital in The Sun Also Rises and The Snows of Kilimanjaro, Francis Scott Fitzgerald’s Babylon Revisited focuses on a different dimension of 1920s Paris and presents it from a different perspective. Jake Barnes and Harry are fond of the city, especially of its working-class facet. For Fitzgerald’s Charlie Wales, by contrast, the Paris of the Roaring Twenties, the time which preceded two crises – the one in his personal life and the one affecting global economy – is the eponymous Babylon, connoting excess, irresponsibility and shame. At one point in The Snows of Kilimanjaro, Hemingway introduces a character called Julian, modeled on Scott Fitzgerald. The short passage in question focuses on Julian’s fascination with the rich:

He remembered poor Julian and his romantic awe of them and how he had started a story once that began, “The very rich are different from you and me.” And how some one had said to Julian, Yes, they have more money. But that was not humorous to Julian. He thought they were a special glamourous race and when he found they weren’t it wrecked him just as much as any other thing that wrecked him. (Hemingway, Snows of Kilimanjaro 1700-1)

In real life, the story referred to by Hemingway was Fitzgerald’s The Rich Boy. As to the rejoinder, it is generally believed that Julian’s anonymous interlocutor was Hemingway himself. In Fitzgerald’s prose, Julian-Fitzgerald’s fascination with glamorous life and the subsequent disillusionment it entailed
finds its parallel in Charlie’s relationship with Paris. Like Harry in *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, Charlie seems to divide Paris into two different cities, pre- and post-crisis. However, unlike Hemingway’s protagonist, he far from feeling nostalgia for the past. He also appears to be immune to the French capital’s present-day charm.

Charlie returns to the Babylon of his youth to regain custody of his daughter, who, following the death of her mother, has been taken care of by her mother’s sister and her husband, American expatriates living in Paris. Though Charlie’s mind is set on being reunited with his little girl, his visit to the French capital inevitably becomes an unsentimental journey. He returns to the places he once frequented, which now seem part of another life. Hardly any of the former expatriate regulars now stop by the Ritz bar, which is “not an American bar any more” (Fitzgerald 1497): “he felt polite in it, and not as if he owned it. It had gone back into France” (1497). The bartender is surprised to find out Charlie has cut down on drinking and embarrassed to tell him the story of one of Charlie’s former friends, who has been banned from entering the Ritz due to his insolvency. Though Charlie is “not really disappointed to find Paris [is] so empty” (1497), he is struck by the lifelessness of the once-vibrant hotel. The contrast between what the protagonist now sees and his memories of what the Ritz was like a mere “year and a half ago” (1496) marks the end of an era.

Like the characters in *The Sun Also Rises*, Charlie is exposed to the sights and sounds of the city, but, unlike them, he fails to drink them in. Paris is as picturesque as ever, with “the streets … in movement,” “the bistros” which “gleamed” and “The Place de la Concorde mov[ing] by in pink majesty” (Fitzgerald 1497), but its charm seems to be largely lost on Fitzgerald’s protagonist. Though he takes a roundabout route to admire “the magnificent façade” (1498) of the Opera, he cannot help, as the taxi crosses the Seine, “[feeling] the sudden provincial quality of the left bank” (1498). As he tours the city, it dawns on Charlie that in a sense Paris is over for him: “I spoiled this city for myself. I didn’t realize it, but the days came along one after another, and then two years were gone, and everything was gone, and I was gone” (1498).

For Charlie Wales, Paris is “spoiled” because it represents what his brother-in-law calls the “crazy years” (Fitzgerald 1507): the years of hedonistic living, extravagance, waste and carelessness. When Charlie runs into Lorraine Quarrels, “one of a crowd who had helped them make months into days in the lavish times of three years ago” (1501), he does his best to avoid her and her companion, afraid of these “ghosts out of the past” (1501). With shame, Charlie recalls one of his many Parisian pranks: riding a stolen tricycle with Lorraine around the Place de l’Œtoile in the middle of the night, an incident he views, in retrospect, as symptomatic of his past “condition of utter irresponsibility” (1507). In fact, the way Charlie feels about Lorraine, whom he used to find
attractive, may be said to parallel the way he feels about Paris: “his own rhythm was different now” (1501). That he is no longer in tune with the city becomes visible when Charlie spends the evening in Montmartre. Revisiting the places where he used to enjoy himself, “where he had parted with so many hours and so much money” (1499), he “see[s] Paris by night with clearer and more judicious eyes than those of other days” (1499). With the wisdom of hindsight, his Parisian years strike him as marked by “vice and waste” (1500): a waste of time and a waste of money, a life of dissipation which made Charlie a bankrupt in every sense, leading to his losing his family. As he fails to get his daughter back, this time due to an unfortunate coincidence and his sister-in-law’s failure to believe that he is a changed man, Charlie realizes the dream he was seemingly living in the French capital in the 1920s has ultimately turned out to be a nightmare.

“When good Americans die they go to Paris,” claimed Oscar Wilde. The three texts discussed in the present essay deal with Americans who were lucky – from Hemingway’s point of view – or unlucky enough – in the light of the Fitzgerald story in question – to go to Paris in their lifetime. In choosing this particular city as a place to live, Jake Barnes and his fellow expatriates, Harry in The Snows of Kilimanjaro and Charlie Wales in Babylon Revisited become emblematic of one of the most interesting and picturesque episodes in the history of US literature and culture: the American “colonization” of Paris in the 1920s. In addition to recording this cultural phenomenon in textual form, Hemingway and, to some extent at least, Fitzgerald pay tribute to the City of Light, and join the long line of artists and intellectuals enchanted with the magic of “the world’s most beautiful city.” The characters’ attitudes to Paris may vary, reflecting their life experiences and the changes their personalities undergo, but the city’s charm lives on. Perhaps it is so because, as Hemingway puts it at the end of A Moveable Feast, “There is never any ending to Paris and the memory of each person who has lived in it differs from that of any other.” Nevertheless, the American writer concludes, “We always returned to it no matter who we were or how it was changed or with what difficulties, or ease, it could be reached” (182).

Bibliography


Henry Roth’s *Call It Sleep*: A Different Look at the Jewish Immigrant Experience

Henry Roth’s book, *Call It Sleep*, is not typically included in a course on Jewish-American literature. Discovering, or rediscovering, this gem of a novel is a pure literary and linguistic delight. The story describes the life of a young Jewish immigrant boy and his family in New York between the years 1911 and 1913. In an excellent example of modernist literature, it is through the eyes of little David Schearl we see the real America: it is an America of alienation, confusion, and violence, a tarnished land where a family struggles between its Jewish heritage and American acceptance. And as Roth breaks down the illusions of immigrant life, he also shatters the romanticism associated with the Jewish culture, illustrating how a pious patriarchal social order could be a façade to cover up the cold realities of family hostilities.

The so-called Golden Land myth is quickly dispelled. The story opens with a ship of immigrants arriving to “the stench and the throb of New York tenements” (9). David and his mother, Genya, arrive to meet the father, Albert, who has preceded them to the new country. “You must have suffered in this land,” she says to her husband (11), adding with disappointment, “Then here in the new land is the same old poverty” (12). Albert answers bluntly: “You need… strength in this land” (13). The statue of Liberty foreshadows the hardships: as the sun slanted, “her features were charred with shadow,” her “depths exhausted,” her “masses ironed to one single plane” and her “halo wore spikes of darkness” (14). As their lives progress and adapt, it is clear this is not the America legends and traditions have led us to believe. This is a “cursed land” (126), a “stinking land” (158), a “new and violent world” (143), a “wilderness” that is “alien and diverging” (145). The candy store, which David’s Aunt Bertha later talks of setting up, may be an accurate metaphor of immigrant America. “A candy store!” she exclaims. “Life would be lusty that way…. It would be like living at a fair all the time” (170). But the glitter of sweetness eventually materializes into a burden. Later, she curses her husband: “A candy store he saddled me with…,” calling it a “penny business,” screaming, “you’ve given me a candy store to age me….” (380-81). The wonders, riches, and opportunities are not as easy to come by as initially expected, and spirits dampen. When David,
at one point, sings “Sweet land of liberty… Land where our fodder died!”” there seems to be a strong underlining of truth for struggling immigrants. David’s mother sums it up: “One grapples this land at first closer to one’s self than it’s worth” (153).

There is an immediate desire to toss away the old Eastern European ways, as illustrated when Albert angrily throws David’s straw hat into the water when mother and son first arrive. “You should have left it behind!” he yells (15). Still, David’s family appears to maintain some Jewish religious and cultural tradition, though it lacks a sincere belief. “I pretend…” David’s mother confesses (65). This certainly must have been a sensitive area for a Jewish writer in the 1930s when the book was first published. But in following the modernist approach to art, Roth illustrates the true and real circumstances of a Jewish household. Jewish immigrants were not all holy scribes victimized by American assimilation; in the case of Albert Schearl, he engages in an excellent job of victimizing his own family. The struggles in a new land certainly would have exacerbated the strain and trauma, but in the case of David’s family, America alone cannot be blamed for his father’s hostilities and selfishness. Albert calls David “the prayer” (73) in reference to the tradition that the son prays for his father after the father’s death. Ironically, in a way, Albert is already dead, in terms of human relations, and perhaps he unconsciously realizes this. The father uses the faith for his own selfish needs and satisfaction. He demands that David attend a cheder to begin studies in Hebrew and Jewish law, perhaps to ensure that David is a prayer. “I want to make sure he’ll become at least something of a Jew…” his father concedes (210). Yet while this is important to Albert, he, himself, fails to practice the teachings of any remnant of Jewish warmth or respect, especially in the case of one of the most highly-regarded relationships, that of father and son. He berates and physically abuses his son, beating him mercilessly throughout the book. David is a “clown” (15), a “fool” (25), an “idiot” (134), a “false son” (282), among other things. “Shudder when I speak to you,” the father scorns (77). For David, life around his father is “too terrifying” (28), the cause for “an endless spool of nightmare” (128), a man “he hated” (78), someone he views as “a foe” (114). When David accompanies his father on a milk run, he is to protect the wagon’s merchandise while Albert makes the deliveries. “You’ll be the dog…,” his mother tells him (267). Sadly, that is precisely what David is – treated worse than a dog.

Roth also dispels the belief that all Jews came to America to escape religious persecution. This was likely true for the majority of Jewish immigrants, yet, as illustrated in the novel, there were others who were simply escaping the horrors of their own families. As David’s Aunt Bertha proclaims, her sole motive was to escape “that tyrant of a father…” (159), adding that “I’m too glad I escaped” (153). We begin to see another view of the so-called pious Jew of the
old country; it is not as beautiful and romantic as it is traditionally portrayed. As Aunt Bertha describes David's grandfather, Reb Benjamin Krollman: “His praying was an excuse for his laziness. As long as he prayed he didn’t have to do anything else…. He had to take care of God....” (152). And, yet, violating the religious code of honor in the homeland resulted in beatings and harsh beratement. As Genya slowly reveals her secret, of having had a relationship with a non-Jewish boy, we see the cruelties that could be inflicted in the old patriarchal Jewish family. “He seized me and slapped me across both cheeks,” Genya told of her father’s anger. “And then he plucked off his black skull-cap and threw it in my face and stamped with his feet like a child in convulsions....” (201). Denounced as a “false slut” (201), as “dung” and “foul” (202), Genya could be forgiven and redeemed only if she married a Jew. Six months later she met Albert. The pressures of family and social expectations were “pushing me toward the canopy” (166), this despite her husband’s brutal personality. The narration illustrates well the injustices and the harsh attitudes that prevailed among families in Eastern Europe, anger and punishment that may have come frighteningly close to the anti-Jewish sentiment that often existed outside the Jewish communities.

Sexuality, another key area of Roth’s modernism, is a taboo that is explored through much of the book. The realities of sexuality and sexual drive certainly were not topics easily discussed at this time, especially in the older, conservative Jewish community. The narrative touches on several aspects of sexual taboos, from the attraction Luter has toward David’s mother to the suggestion that David might have been conceived by a non-Jewish father, hints of adultery and pre-marital sex which definitely would have added furor and dynamite to such a powder-keg subject. But modernism shows the world as it really is, and contrary to religious beliefs and the wholesome myths of the shtetl, all this likely was associated to some extent with Jewish life in the old country, and followed the immigrants to the new land. As a young boy, David quickly begins to understand the sensitivity surrounding sexuality. He observes Luter’s eyes on his mother; and when he is trapped into playing “bad” with Annie, who introduces him to the notion of “de knish,” immediately he “knew he had crossed some awful threshold” (53). Roth portrays the realities of childhood exploration, realities which, while innocent enough, would likely make even the most liberal of adults uncomfortable. Through his eye of modernism, the reader is seeing the uncertain and difficult turning point in a child’s life. This becomes even more frightening for David when the sexuality begins to involve a non-Jewish person. Later in the book, when a non-Jewish Polish boy seeks a sexual encounter with David’s cousin Esther, David is haunted. “Did I feel ‘er! Oh boy!” the Polish boy, Leo, exalts (350). David, however, cringes and knows a punishment, somewhere, is looming. This is also an example that illustrates
how David is caught between two worlds: he wants to befriend Leo and be accepted, and yet the prevailing attitude of the other culture clashes sharply with his and his family’s beliefs. Leo seems to be the symbol of freedom and American assimilation. David initially strives to be like Leo, to befriend him, to accompany him everywhere, but he also knows that he is very different from Leo, and that creates a difficult barrier to overcome. Leo appears to have a freedom from everything – parents, tradition – and that appeals to David.

While David is increasingly adjusting to American culture, his mother feels herself being left behind. A distance is slowly growing – a cultural, social, and language gap. As Genya points out to her son: “Your Yiddish is more than one-half English now. I’m being left behind” (120). She even concedes her weakness and insecurity in the new language: “...How they must have laughed at my English....” (114). Genya is “so mixed” and “lost” (119), going through a feeling of “nervousness,” feeling “uncertain,” and “insecure” (116-17). At one point, the narrators notes that David “began to feel uneasy” with “Yiddish speech” which “seemed out of place” in mainstream America (147). Over time, and perhaps through paranoia, his mother appears to share such observations. She feels increasingly “humiliated”; Albert, subsequently, suggests that her “life has been as sealed as a nun’s” (335). It is interesting to note how the parents are being left behind in the immigrant experience. They are in a microcosm of the old country – an island – in America, and the children, mentally at least, are moving away. This seems to be increasingly painful for Genya. She senses she is losing her son. “You can stay with me for a while, beloved,” she says. “You don’t have to go...” But, as the narrator notes, David “all this time... had wanted very much to... escape” and “He squirmed free” (130-31). The Jewish mother, who has often been referred to as an icon of love and responsibility in American culture, is seen in a different light through this modernist work; the immigrant Jewish mother apparently could be a lonely and depressed soul left behind.

The questions over religion and God also weigh heavily with David, but answers are hard to come by. When his mother suggests he ask the rabbi, Yidel Pankower, David answers: “You can’t ask him anything” (241). David’s search for answers and understanding leads him to Christ and the cross, a notion that is sure to make members of the Jewish community cringe. Judaism and Christianity become very closely integrated in David’s life, and, perhaps in reality, that is the way it truly is. Seeking some emblem of strength to help him survive his fears and weaknesses, David is innocently attracted to Leo’s beliefs of the cross and the rosary. “An’ yuh ain’ ascared a’ nothin’ w’en yuh god dat on?... Chee!” (305). Unfortunately, when David seeks answers from the rabbi, he is ridiculed. “Fool!” the rabbi revels. “Go beat your head on a wall....”; David is left feeling “ashamed” and standing “mute” (257). The insensitivity
of the religious elders is exposed, and perhaps held accountable for David’s search for truth through another faith. What makes this even sadder is the fact that the rabbi views David as “a true Yiddish head” (234) and “a crown... among rubbish” (387). While the religious leaders are screaming that America’s melting pot is steering Jews away from their faith, this narration suggests how Jews, themselves, may also be pushing their people away from Judaism.

*Call It Sleep*, first published in 1934, incorporates several interesting modernist narrative techniques. There is a nice touch of Yiddish and Hebrew intermixed with the Yiddish-English dialect which creates a strong sense of realism. The speech definitely captures the moment of the immigrant experience: the warmth, the humor, the frustration, and the fear. Streams of consciousness are used to reflect David’s thoughts, the thoughts of a little boy struggling in a new land. Gertrude Stein’s notion of insistence can also be found sprinkled in the text of David’s thoughts: “Like it, like it, like it. I – like – it. I like cake but I don’t like herring. I like cake, but I don’t like what? I like cake, I don’t like, like, like, herring...” (95). In the last chapter, there is an interesting alternation between two modes of narrative – juxtaposition between David’s subconscious and what he hears around him. Together, all these narrative tools add to a more realistic portrayal of David’s world. Coupled with the social, cultural, and religious elements of Jewish life, the reader encounters a true Jewish immigrant experience – David’s immigrant experience – and, quite likely, a taste of Roth’s childhood in New York’s Lower East Side. *Call It Sleep* leaves the reader reflecting on a Yiddish richness of Jewish culture that, sadly, has diminished over time.

**Bibliography**

A Practical Approach to Stress-Assignment in English

1. Introduction

It is widely recognized that there is no single phonological theory of stress and stress assignment. There are quite a number of rivaling phonological approaches to these issues, ranging from orthodox Metrical Phonology, through Government Phonology to Optimality Theoretic one. This paper, however, will not present a theoretic approach to the afore-mentioned stress assignment, in the sense that it will only include certain practical procedures that might be used in class (e.g. while teaching English phonology) and any theoretic background will necessarily be only rudimentary.

Naturally, even though the approach to stress-assignment is, as mentioned, practical, it is, nevertheless, based on certain theoretical assumptions. First, it is assumed that stress is, by and large, a derived phenomenon. Thus it is not represented in the phonetic/phonological (melodic) make-up of a particular word, but rather computed by means of syllabification and stress-assignment rules. Stress, it appears then, is not independently coded in the way the actual pronunciation (melody) is. We will not discuss any philosophical stance behind this particular choice of assumptions, as this would clearly exceed the scope and aim of this article.

Second, it is also assumed that syllabification is always strict and unambiguous. This means, in turn, that any syllabification procedure that we will apply, should always yield one and only one candidate and that within syllabic constituents a given melodic unit (sound) may occupy a single branch only. Therefore in this particular approach ambisyllabicity, as such, would appear quite exotic and bizarre even, and will naturally be ruled out.

These are the two basic and fundamental theoretical assumptions used throughout this paper. There will also be some minor, low-level assumptions that will, of course, be introduced as we go along in due time and course.

It has to be stated that our approach is not without its drawbacks, as is, in fact, any approach to stress-assignment. And the author is first to openly admit it, the assumptions chosen might be challenged, the approach is certainly not
particularly enlightening when it comes to expanding the theory of stress and stress- assignment. Contrary to a lot of strictly theoretical approaches though, it contains an element of practicality and may be moderately easily followed and applied to show a derivational side of stress. This, unfortunately, cannot really be said of purely theoretical approaches, with the myriad of so many rules, subrules, repair strategies, stipulations and exceptions, that at times it proves to be extremely difficult to observe any regularity at all. Our approach then is heavily student-oriented rather than solely scholarly.

This approach to stress-assignment of ours is almost in its entirety based on Harris (1994, 2006), where an inquisitive reader is greatly encouraged to go to find an extensive discussion of both theoretical framework and practical implications. Additionally a minute segment was inspired by Optimality Theory (Prince and Smolensky, 1993) but not really in any technical sense but rather generally in spirit.

2. Syllabification

Syllabification or parsing words into syllables would be but a trivial act, were it not for the consequences it might have for the way stress is later on assigned (note again that we assume that stress is in fact assigned not encoded, and additionally we will leave aside the theoretical discussion of what a syllable really is and whether it should in actuality be recognized as a separate entity and provide only a watered-down working description of syllables as sequences obligatorily centered around vowels and optionally containing consonants at their edges). Consequently, since syllabification is so crucial to stress, a very strict and consistent procedure for it will be required. It will then have been observed that stress assignment is read-off in a way from the syllabic structure, which itself is read-off in turn from the phonological (melodic) component. Before we discuss the very syllabification procedure, let us take a look at the internal syllable structure.
We recognize three different levels (tiers) involved:

1. Melodic (phonological). This is where phonemes (sound qualities) are included and shown (in our approach this level is strictly phonological and not phonetic, and thus, for example phonetic sequences of syllabic consonants are re-analyzed as /a/ plus a corresponding consonant)

2. Skeletal (timing). Here only the quantity of sounds is shown with no reference to the actual quality (melody) in the traditional form of X’s. A single timing unit (X) is assigned to all consonants and short vowels, and two X’s to long vowels and diphthongs.

3. Syllabic. This level shows syllabic constituents and their relations. The only obligatory part of this structure is the peak (or the rhyme more generally) which may only be occupied by a single vowel and vowel only, the onset and coda are always consonantal and optional.

We are prepared now to move on to the discussion of the syllabification procedure. As an example we will use the word *extra*. Initially let us say that instead of the complete pronunciation (transcription) we will only resort to the so-called concrete consonantal form. That is, only the exact qualities of consonants will be shown and V for vowels in general. This is to show that vowels play an indexical role in phonology rather than information bearing (take the word *consonant* as a simple example, if we erase all vowels the word is maybe not easily but still recognizable *c n s n n t*, however if all consonants are deleted the word is hardly decipherable *o o a*), and while they are essential as syllable-centers, they remain only marginal in syllabification proper. So the word *extra* will be represented as /VkstrV/ (and moreover it will prove that the precise and exact knowledge of the melodic make-up of a word /actual pronunciation/ is not needed in order to correctly predict /derive/ its stress pattern).

The first step in this syllabification algorithm is listing all the potentially possible syllabifications (candidates) for a given string. No syllabification can be excluded from further considerations at the stage. So for our example of *extra* we get (| stands for the syllable break) the list as below:

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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>VklstrV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Vks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vkstl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Vklstr</td>
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</table>
During the second step all the candidates are analyzed phonotactically. That is all onsets and codas are investigated and if a given sequence proves to be illegal (phonotactically impossible in English) then the candidate with the particular sequence is excluded. There are two assumptions involved here. First, no syllabification may contain illegal sequences and more importantly second assumption: word-medial onsets and codas should also be possible word-initially and word-medially. In our example two candidates are excluded, namely: 1 and 5, because they contain illegal sequences (onset and coda respectively).

The final step is connected with the application of Onset Maximization, which is a natural (in a phonological sense) and universal tendency for consonants to be syllabified in onsets rather than codas. Here is also where we apply elements of Optimality Theory. We will simply mark each violation of Onset Maximization, and at the end the candidate with the minimal number of violations will be taken as the syllabification for a given string. Thus, the final candidate (the winner) is optimal. As mentioned above, the entire syllabification procedure can be challenged on a couple of points, its undeniable advantage, however, lies in the fact that it may be used practically with virtually no theoretical background and the algorithm yields a single syllabification at the end in a way that is not ambiguous. Returning to our example, we notice (see below) that clearly the candidate 1a is the one with the minimal number of violations (! denotes a single violation of Onset Maximization)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>VklstrV</td>
<td>!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a</td>
<td>VksltrV</td>
<td>!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a</td>
<td>VksstrV</td>
<td>!!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now that we have identified the syllabification for the sequence /VkstrV/, a syllabification tree may be drawn as below:
3. Stress-assignment

In this section we will assign stress to melodic strings that have already been syllabified. Recall again our assumption that stress is assigned and predictable indeed. As in the previous section, we will not discuss theoretical issues of the nature of stress and for our purposes we will take stress to mean a collective manifestation of prominence. We will make use of general observations made by Harris (1994: 53-4) concerning stress-assignment in two major grammatical categories: nouns and verbs (it is apparent then that stress is dependent upon not only the melodic composition of a string but also its grammatical category). We begin with nouns:

(SN) Stress in nouns falls on the rightmost heavy syllable and otherwise on the antepenult. By default, it will fall on the penult in words consisting of two light syllables.

Before we move on, a definition of the terms heavy and light is evidently required. And so a light syllable is a syllable with a single timing unit (X) within its rhyme constituent (in fact this is the essential reason why the rhyme
Przemysław Ostalski

is recognized as an independent constituent, as that is where the weight of the entire syllable is calculated. A heavy syllable, on the other hand, is any syllable with at least two X's within its rhyme portion (with the exception of word-final consonants – extrametricality). Incidentally, it will have been noticed that to precisely calculate the weight of a syllable in a particular string, the string itself must be precisely parsed into syllables. For iff a clear-cut and unique syllabification has been performed, may the weight calculation be precise.

We exemplify the stress-assignment in English nouns with *algebra/Vld3VbrV/* beginning with a list of all potential candidates:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vlld3VlbrV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vlld3Vb1rV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Vlld3VbrlV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vlld3VbrV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Vlld3VbrlV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Vld3Vb1rV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Vld3VbrlV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Vld3Vb1rV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Vld3Vb1rV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is obvious that candidates 1, 2, 3, 6 and 9 are phonotactically illegal and are eliminated accordingly. Next, we count the number of violations for Onset Maximization in the remaining candidates:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>Vlld3VlbrV !</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a</td>
<td>Vlld3Vb1rV !!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a</td>
<td>Vld3Vb1rV !!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a</td>
<td>Vld3Vb1rV !!!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Candidate 1a has the minimal number of violations and it is taken as the syllabification for the string analyzed. We can then draw the tree as below (note that /d3/ being an affricate is assigned a single timing unit):
If we now calculate the weight of the three syllables, we obtain the following weight make-up: HLL (heavy-light-light), applying the stress-assignment rule SN, the stress pattern */VI d5V brV/ is predicted. And the word algebra is stressed and pronounced */ældʒəbra/ indeed, which confirms the predictive power of the whole syllabification and stress-assignment algorithm.

Having analyzed the example of an English noun, we can turn to stress-assignment in verbs now.

(SV) Stress in verbs falls on the final syllable if it is heavy; otherwise the penult receives stress.

As an example of stress assignment in verbs, we will use the word guarantee /gVrVntV/: (note that the final vowel is long, although the exact quality of a vowel does not have to be taken into account, its quantity undoubtedly does). As before, we begin with a list of candidates:

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>gVlVnVntV:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>gVlVnVntV:</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>gVlVnVntV:</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>gVlVnVntV:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>gVlVnVntV:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>gVlVnVntV:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>gVlVnVntV:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For phonotactic reasons, candidates 1 and 4 are disregarded (as they both contain illegal onsets /nt/, this may be straightforwardly confirmed by the fact that no word in English begins with the sequence /nt/ and as stated earlier all word-internal onsets and codas must be possible word-initially and also word-finally) and we proceed to Onset Maximization:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>gV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a</td>
<td>gV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a</td>
<td>gVr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a</td>
<td>gVr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The candidate 1a is optimal as it is the one with the minimal number of violations of Onset Maximization. Thus we obtain the following tree for the word *guarantee*.

The weight make-up for this string is consequently LHH, applying the rule SV, we predict the following stress pattern /gV rVn Vt/: and our prediction is confirmed again as the actual pronunciation and stress-pattern of the word *guarantee* is /ɡærəntiː/. 
4. Summary

We have attempted to demonstrate that the procedure may be practically applied to correctly predict stress pattern of phonetic strings. The procedure itself consists of the three-step syllabification component and stress assignment rules for two major grammatical categories. This approach, although it entails a substantial degree of oversimplification in theoretical matters and strict adherence to the assumptions presented (which, of course, might be labeled as pure dogmatism or at least arbitrariness), has some rather interesting practical side. It allows for a unified presentation of stress-assignment, while simultaneously displaying a derivational aspect of stress. To reiterate, the main advantage of the algorithm discussed lies in its practicality.

Bibliography


Introducing elements of learner autonomy into a group of adult students

Introduction

One of the principal aims of higher education is to promote autonomous learning. Students are expected to think, learn and behave critically and independently to meet the demands of the so called “learning society”, which requires people to develop their capabilities, as new knowledge and new skills are integral parts of our culture. Autonomy in learning is the ability to think creatively and independently, to take responsibility for the learning process and to evaluate one’s strengths and weaknesses. Such attributes help the graduates to engage in lifelong learning. Consequently, the students are far better equipped for their future work and career. Success at university is associated not only with the learner’s competence but also with their relative independence from teachers, disposition to change, desire to take initiatives, openness to new ideas, ability to make choices and the will to learn.

The main aim of this paper is to show how different elements of autonomous learning can be realised in real classroom situations at the level of university education. Observations carried on a group of undergraduate students will be presented and discussed. All of the lessons are planned as student-oriented, including some of the key elements of learner autonomy.

1. The importance of age and motivation in language learning

Age seems to be an important factor in learning a foreign language. Adult students learn voluntarily and most of them have clear aims and personal goals. Therefore, they are likely to feel more committed and motivated. Adults seem to have a longer concentration span than children do. Moreover, adult classes tend to be more disciplined and co-operative. This could be due to a fact that people learn with age to be more patient, to co-operate with others for joint profit. However, adult learners are often inhabited about expressing
their thoughts in a foreign language, because they are worried about making mistakes and fearful of criticism and losing face. Being more self-conscious than children, adults are less willing to take risks and prefer to stay on the safe side.

Positive attitude and motivation are related to achieving success in second language learning. Positive motivation in the students can be developed by creating safe and supporting learning environment. That’s why it is very important for the teacher and the learners to co-operate.

2. The concept of learner autonomy

In a traditional classroom the teacher is the instructor who teaches the language while the learners are being taught. In autonomous learning the focus is no longer on teaching but on learning. The learners become responsible for their own learning and the teacher is to help them as a facilitator.

Autonomy means taking charge of the learning process by the students. The learner is no longer regarded as passive, following the teaching programme only, but is seen as an active agent, taking decisions regarding his learning. Autonomy understood as “the active exercise of the learner responsibility” (Holec 1988 8) involves:
- taking risks
- self-management
- self-correction
- developing social skills
- co-operation
- self-assessment (Holec 1988 26)

Autonomy means that “learning is more than the teacher tells you to do” (Dahmen & Toorengurg 1996 5). An autonomous learner is a person who has developed appropriate skills, such as the ability to identify one’s own needs, to clarify one’s own objectives, to find the necessary resources and to evaluate one’s own progress. Making decisions about the learning process is one of the most important aspects of independent learning. An autonomous class is able to make decisions about:
- objectives: What do we want to learn?
- means: How do we want to learn?
- implementations: How are we going to get organized?
- monitoring: Are we on the right track?
- evaluation: How are we going to decide that the learning has been efficient? (Dam & Gabrielsen 1988 47)

Progress and evaluation usually create most difficulties in autonomous learning. Both the learners and the teachers are used to assessing the end
Students take achievement or proficiency tests, which evaluate their knowledge of the language. Such tests focus on the result of the learning process, but not on the process itself. In learner autonomy it is believed that the process and the product are mutually dependent and that the process is where the real learning takes place.

Autonomy also means “the ability to learn”. As Holec puts it “a learner who is able to learn is autonomous” (1988 9). Knowing how to learn is not only taking charge of one’s learning programme, but it also means being able to define what to learn, how to learn and how to assess oneself and the results obtained.

2.1. Teacher’s role

Learner autonomy starts with self-reliance and autonomy among teachers. “The teacher should himself become an autonomous learner-teacher so as to be able to impart learning autonomy on his own pupils.” (Holec 1988 6)

In autonomous learning the teacher is seen as a facilitator rather than an instructor. He is a consultant as well as a participant and co-learner in the learning process. The role of the teacher in an autonomous class is seen as the following:
- focus on learning rather than teaching
- be engaged in the learner’s learning process
- be open to learners’ ideas and suggestions
- support learners’ initiative
- observe and analyse learning behaviour for later evaluation with learners
- map out working methods and ways of evaluating progress in collaboration with the learners
- be a consultant as well as a participant and co-learner in the learning process (Kijowska 200 25)

In learner autonomy the focus is on learning rather than on teaching. Student learning time becomes more important than teacher teaching time. While planning a lesson the teacher should ask himself a question “What are the learners going to be able to do at the end of the lesson?” instead of “What am I going to teach during the lesson?”

A good teacher should also be sensitive to students’ learning styles. It is the role of the teacher to help the students work out learning strategies which work best for them and train the students’ abilities to learn independently using different strategies. Strategy training gives opportunities for the learners to increase their awareness of the learning processes available to them.
2.2. My first steps to learner autonomy

Learner autonomy means taking responsibility by students for their own learning. Students choose, plan, negotiate, share, co-operate and evaluate. As a result, they develop awareness, responsibility, reflection and independence.

Introducing learner autonomy is, however, a long and difficult process, which needs to be done step by step. One of the first steps could be giving students a choice, showing them options without making decisions for them. Being given a choice always enhances motivation, which is very important in learning. Having made the decision, the students automatically become responsible for this bit of their learning.

The role of a teacher is to facilitate appropriate and affective learning. I tried to think of various types of activities for different types of learners: listening to the tape and to the other members of the group for auditory students, pictures, charts and wall displays for the visual students and acting out scenes for the kinestetic ones.

3. The specifications of the project

The main aim of the experiment was to introduce elements of learner autonomy into the classroom and observe the students’ response. The experiment was carried on a group of undergraduate students, ranging from 21 to 43 years of age, doing their BA degree in the system of extramural education. The group met twice a month and each session lasted four teaching hours. The course-book used was Advanced Masterclass together with various additional materials. The main themes were centred on weather phenomena, social problems, education, health and beauty. Each session, apart from the language focus, contained elements of learner autonomy.

4. Introducing elements of learner autonomy in the classroom

For the purposes of this study, six sessions, i.e. 24 teaching hours, over the span of three months, were conducted. Selected techniques to promote autonomous learning together with the traditional ones were used to teach different language areas and develop different skills. Various activities were introduced to satisfy individual learning styles. The students were encouraged to choose, plan, find and use resources, make their own decisions, work in a team and co-operate, share their knowledge with the other members of the group and to evaluate their own work and the work of the other learners. I tried to increase the students’ motivation and to build their awareness of the learning process and the responsibility for their own learning.
4.1. Choice and decision making

One of the first steps towards learner autonomy is choice. I decided to present the students with the following options:
- choice of homework
- choice of grammatical activities
- choosing a theme to work on

At the end of each session the students were given a choice of activities to do as their homework, e.g. write a weather forecast or a mock news report about a disaster, or bring an article and read it aloud in class or tape TV news and bring the tape to the classroom. The students seemed to like the idea of choosing their homework, however they tended to choose the activities they had already known, such as writing a report. Only one person brought an article to class, nobody taped the news. Open activities, such as find proverbs about a given theme, turned out to be too difficult, the students managed to find one or two examples only. This could be due to the fact that they did not know how to use resources.

The students were also given an opportunity to choose which grammatical exercises they wanted to do. At the beginning they faced the problem of choosing which exercises to do, as they wanted to do all of them. Being told that all the activities practised the same grammar point and they were at the same level, the students managed to choose, but they asked if they could take the rest of the activities to do as their homework.

As far as choosing a theme to work on was concerned, the students were asked to prepare an oral presentation on a topic of their own interest. This task did not create any problems as they had already been familiar with such type of an exercise.

On the whole the majority of the students appreciated the idea of being given an opportunity to choose. However, some of the learners found it difficult to make their own decisions. They seemed to feel safer with the more traditional way of teaching.

4.1 Setting up a self-access centre

The main aim of setting up a self-access centre was to encourage the students to read books, newspapers and magazines in English outside the classroom in order to improve their knowledge of the language. The students were asked to bring any authentic materials they had, such as books, magazines, video tapes or CDs. Most of the books, both full versions and the simplified readers, were provided by me. The students were asked to choose something from the library and then to report to the rest of the group during the following session.
This turned out to be a brilliant idea, the students were very willing to borrow books and having read one they wanted to read more. People who chose to read a simplified reader at the beginning wanted to read a “real book” next time. As one of the students said jokingly, they became “hungry for books.” The students reported what they had read, whether they found it interesting, worth reading or simply boring. This technique made the students aware of the fact that learning could be a pleasurable experience. Their active involvement showed growing self-confidence and their motivation for learning had increased.

4.3. Working in a team: co-operation, negotiation and sharing

Group work fosters learners’ responsibility and independence, improves motivation and contributes to a feeling of co-operation in the class. Working in a group, students develop such skills as co-operation, negotiation and sharing. Having done an exercise, the students were encouraged to compare their answers in pairs and in groups. Stronger students helped the weaker ones. This technique turned out to be very beneficial as the students monitored each other and corrected each other’s mistakes.

Group work and pair work are excellent opportunities for the students to practise speaking. Adult learners feel less intimidated to talk in a group than in class, even shy students become more open and willing to participate. Learners in the target group were already familiar with the technique. They enjoyed group and pair work as they felt more confident and relaxed.

4.4. Evaluation

Self-assessment and evaluation of the process as well as the product were perceived as something very difficult by the students. To start with, they found the idea of answering the question “What did I learn in today’s class?” rather strange. It took them some time to realise that learning was their own responsibility. This technique helped the students identify the areas of difficulty and their own learning styles.

During the last session of the project the students were asked to reflect on the previous five sessions. Did they find the new techniques stimulating? Was group work effective? Did they like the idea of choice? The majority of the students found the elements of learner autonomy introduced effective, however everybody pointed out that self-directed learning was much more demanding on the student and time consuming.
4.6. Learner diary and building up students’ awareness of the learning process

The students were encouraged to reflect on their own learning and the progress they had made. A learner diary was introduced to help the students observe and reflect on their own learning. At the end of each session the students were asked to answer a question “What did I learn today?” The learners did not know what to write at first, but when they got used to the idea they found it very useful. It was an opportunity to look back at the lesson and reflect on one’s own learning and time management. The students wrote about what they had learned, what kind of problems they had experienced, how they participated in the lesson. The use of the diary and the introspection session helped the learners become more conscious of the learning process and express their feelings about their experience of learning.

Conclusions

Building learner autonomy is a long and difficult process. At the beginning the students were rather distrustful and unconvinced about the new classroom techniques. With time most of the students became more and more enthusiastic and got involved in the lessons. However, some remained unconvinced. In the group of reluctant students there were both very good and rather poor learners. Some people do not like changes and do not want to take decisions. Moreover, adults are generally less willing to take risks than children do and they find accepting innovations difficult. Too little instructions from the teacher can cause frustrations as the learners might have specific expectations regarding the degree of directions provided by the teacher. It is a real challenge for the instructor to provide the correct amount of guidance, enough to help the learner identify areas of difficulty, but at the same time allowing them to use their judgement how to learn best. In autonomous class students learn that they have right to make choices and it means that “autonomous behavior may also involve choosing not to be autonomous, but to rely on traditional, more authoritative teaching procedures.” (Baj & Niżegorodcew 1998 43)

I believe that my experiment helped the students understand that they are responsible for their own learning and they can do a lot of things on their own. The students developed their ability for independent learning and as a result their self-confidence and motivation had increased.
Bibliography


Metaphors, metonymies and similes in *Dreams of Obama*

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to analyse several concepts from the perspective of Cognitive Semantics. The source of the selection is a sixty-minute video entitled *Dreams of Obama*, created and directed by Michael Kirk, which was aired on January 20, 2009 on the television programme entitled Frontline, distributed by the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). The whole plot centres around Barack Obama’s rise to presidency with a dozen interviews conducted for the purpose of the movie creation. All the comments provide an insight into the mechanism of Obama’s presidential campaign, his actions, and fruit of his labour. The interviewees present their viewpoints and observations on Obama’s character, core beliefs and political skills while attempting to obtain the highest office in the country.

Commentators communicate via language which speakers of English use to talk about various aspects of life in ordinary, everyday discourse. The opinions and comments on Barack Obama’s rise to power employ a rich array of metaphors and metonymies, out of which only a small number will be presented here.

2. Types of metaphor

Conceptual metaphors are common in our everyday language, and they refer to one domain in terms of another. Thus, the metaphorical process can be better understood by presenting the relationship between the conceptual domains (Lakoff and Johnson, Metaphors 52-54), and “we adopt this convention to emphasize the point that understanding typically goes from the more concrete to the more abstract concept” (Kövecses, Metaphor 7). To understand such a metaphor one needs to understand that there also exists a set of correspondences between such domains, called mappings. There are three basic types of conceptual metaphors: *orientational, ontological and structural.*
2.1. Orientational metaphors

Kövecses states that ‘orientational’ is related to the fact that most metaphors reflect body-based spatial orientations, such as UP-DOWN, CENTER-PERIPHERY, etc. A closer look at the UP-OWN orientation leads to the conclusion that in most cases the concepts that are characterized by an upward movement have a positive evaluation, whereas those which convey the idea of a downward movement are their opposites, such as MORE IS UP, e.g. Speak up, please, or LESS IS DOWN, e.g. Keep your voice down please; CONTROL IS UP, e.g. I am on top of the situation, or LACK OF CONTROL IS DOWN, e.g. He is under my control (Kövecses, Metaphor 36)

Lakoff and Johnson in their famous book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) claim that “orientational metaphors have a basis in our physical and cultural experience” (14) and “which values are given the priority is partly a matter of subculture one lives in” (23). Therefore, one should bear in mind that a successful analysis of spatialization metaphors requires coherence with the cultural values of a given society.

2.2. Ontological metaphors

Ontological metaphors allow us to perceive various abstract qualities and experiences as objects, substances, containers, etc. Therefore, the experiences which are rather hard to define, such as ideas, activities and emotions, become more clearly delineated and viewed as entities (Kövecses, Metaphor 34). Such metaphors often help to evaluate our experiences in a rational way, serving as a tool for referring, quantifying or setting goals. They are best illustrated by the following expressions: INFLATION IS AN ENTITY, e.g. Inflation is lowering our standard of living, We need to combat inflation; THE MIND IS A MACHINE, e.g. I’m a little rusty today, He broke down; THE MIND IS A BRITTLE OBJECT, e.g. The experience shattered him, He cracked up (Lakoff and Johnson, Metaphors 26-28)

2.3. Structural metaphors

In the case of structural metaphors, source domains have a clear structure and are more concrete or physical, whereas target domains tend to be rather abstract and not so clearly delineated. Conventional metaphors are grounded in everyday reality and their use is often unconscious. Such metaphors are illustrated in the following examples: LIFE IS A JOURNEY, e.g. She’s gone through a lot in life; ARGUMENT IS WAR, e.g. I defended my argument; IDEAS ARE FOOD, e.g. I can’t digest the facts, or THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS, e.g. We
have to construct a new theory (Kövecses, Metaphor 30). These metaphorical expressions are conventionalized and present the natural ways of talking about various subjects by most speakers.

3. Metonymy

Another conceptual mechanism which can be found in the video is metonymy. Radden and Kövecses state that metonymy involves the substitution of one concept for another, however, both concepts are closely associated or contiguous (21). Lakoff and Johnson also maintain that in metonymy “we are using one entity to refer to another that is related to it” (Lakoff and Johnson, Metaphors 35).

The essential difference between metaphor and metonymy is that in the case of metaphorical conceptualization there are two unrelated domains (Lakoff and Johnson, Metaphors 35). In metonymy, the entity that directs attention is called the “vehicle entity” (Kövecses, Metaphor 144), and it provides access to the target concept. Both entities belong to the same domain, and there must always be a close relation between them.

The concepts of ‘Picasso’ in She loves Picasso, or ‘Hemingway’ in Does she own any Hemingway? (Kövecses, Metaphor 144) are examples of such a conceptual relationship between kinds of entities, where THE PRODUCER STANDS FOR THE PRODUCT.

4. Simile

The video also uses similes which employ the words ‘like’ or ‘as’ to compare two distinct concepts, so as to make the expressions more colourful and vivid. Similes are very common in written and spoken language, they express a resemblance between entities by saying that one is like or as the other. They are best illustrated by the following expressions: He fights like a lion, She swims like a dolphin, He drinks like a fish, She is as brave as a lion, or He is as busy as a bee.

5. Metaphor and metonymy in politics

People can understand the language of politics when politicians communicate to them via the language that is part of their ordinary reasoning. The goal of every politician is to be understood by the widest possible audience, thus, various types of rhetorical and pragmatic devices are utilized to achieve this. Rhetoric in politics is omnipresent, the oratory skills are employed to create the sense of empathy and understanding of the needs of the nation. Such semantic
devices as metaphors and metonymies are often employed by politicians, as they help to win the support of the society in their attempts to gain power.

One of the ways in which metaphors and metonymies function in the language of politics concerns the worldview problem. In America, for example, the worldview centres around the perception of liberal and conservative values through the metaphor of family. Both parties use the metaphor of ‘the nation as a family’, yet assign entirely different meanings to ideas and concepts (Lakoff, Moral 35). Liberals and conservatives have two distinct conceptual models of the ideal family, and they use different systems of metaphors to express their political views.

6. Analysis

6.1. Orientational metaphors

Orientational metaphors are conventional metaphorical concepts that frequently occur in the documentary. Most of such metaphors found in the documentary movie involve the spatial orientation of UP-DOWN.

(1) ...the buzz was that there is this young up-and-coming state senator from Illinois...
   – FORSEEABLE FUTURE IS UP, STATUS IS UP

(2) Obama and his team designed a detailed two-year plan to put him at the highest possible political peak going into the 2008 election cycle
   – INTENSITY IS UP

(3) Can Senator Obama regain the upper hand?
   – HAVING CONTROL IS UP

(4) His goal was to elevate out of that moment into something broader
   – RECOGNITION IS UP

(5) But in the second year, they began to raise Obama’s visibility
   – HIGHER STATUS IS UP

(6) Back down ... your time will come
   – LACK OF INTENSITY IS DOWN, PASSIVE IS DOWN

The whole intricate process of Barack Obama’s climbing the political ladder, is reflected by the classic metaphor of STATUS IS UP and CONTROL IS UP. Expressions such as the highest political peak, built up, elevate and raise are all conceptualized by means of the body-based UP schema, as they involve a sense of an upward movement. All of the above metaphors involve the same spatial orientation, they are related to the same concept of power and political position.
6.2. Ontological metaphors

Nature provides one of the richest sources of metaphors. The metaphors use our knowledge of animals and plants. Personification, that is, attributing human properties to abstract ideas, is also employed (Kövecses, Metaphor 35).

Animalization means using animals as source domains to facilitate interpretations of human behaviour. Not only do conceptual metaphors such as PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS describe human behaviour through animal attributes, but they also influence the way in which character traits are perceived and understood. The following metaphor was used by one of the commentators while describing Obama’s strategies in his run for the seat of state senator.

(7) Obama was a little bit too much of a lone wolf in the 2000 campaign

The expression reveals something important about the politician, the way he handles difficulties and faces challenges. Calling Barack Obama a lone wolf also creates a set of certain expectations, which are understood through the source domain that is represented by the animal or by the features that are typical of it. Barack Obama’s independerce in making various political decisions can be the target domain, and the metaphorical meaning of the expression indicates that although the person may be part of the group, he either does not participate in what others in the group do or he simply prefers working without assistance. The statement that Barack Obama was ‘a little too much of a cunning fox’, would call up different mental associations and connotations. Thus, the above metaphor presents Barack Obama as a strong politician, capable of making important decisions without the assistance of other people from his political party.

Ontological metaphors use personification where human properties are attributed to nonhuman phenomena (Lakoff and Johnson, Metaphors 25-26). Wrestling with the identity refers to the concept of dual nationality but does not only mean that a person may be a citizen of two countries at the same time. In this context, the duality is rather connected with the racial/ethnic dilemma that Barack Obama was faced with.

(8) He was wrestling with his own identity and his own place in this world

This time the metaphor is a part of the comment on Barack Obama’s problem with his ethnic duality. In expression (8), the source domain is wrestling, that is a kind of physical fight. Thus, the target domain is Obama’s ethnic identity, which is perceived via the personification metaphor of ETHNIC IDENTITY IS AN OPPONENT: the emotional struggle with his identity that Barack Obama was going through is viewed as fighting an opponent.
6.3. Structural metaphors

Structural metaphors are also present in the video. The concept of DESTINATION is used in various metaphorical expressions which conceptualize a career, where the process or progress is presented as a journey towards a destination.

(9) You came to the Senate to get things done, and the excitement of ... you know, getting things done and nothing's really happening. I'm sure he's thinking there should be more. I don't think he would have been a long-term senator. He's not on the path to be in the leadership to stay three, four terms.

In expression (9), the source domain is DESTINATION, whereas the target domain, in this case, can be understood as a GOAL or PURPOSE, that is the wish to become a long-term senator. The metaphor PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS is a part of the complex metaphor A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY, in which objectives on a life’s journey are understood as destinations. Johnson describes the metaphorical concept LIFE IS A JOURNEY, where paths lead to particular destinations on a life’s journey (113-114). He also claims that progress can be understood via the metaphorical interpretation of the PATH schema, which is “one of the most common structures that emerges from our constant bodily functioning. This schema has all the qualifications a schema should have to serve as the source domain of a metaphor” (116).

(10) He came to the Senate... almost immediately with everyone’s high expectations, with everyone’s assumption that this was a man who was on a fast track

The expression a fast track may be analysed in a similar way, as it involves basic elements of the PATH schema, such as the beginning and the end, as well as a number of points between them (Johnson 113). The source domain can be understood as a running track used for sprinting events by athletes, and Barack Obama is viewed as such an athlete ‘on the fast track’ to his destination, whereas the target domain may be the progress in achieving the desired political status. Covering the whole distance to the very end of the track is a long-term activity, which can be viewed as a kind of race. In the present case, the metaphor can be formulated as POLITICAL PROGRESS IS A RACE.

Other sport and games are a very popular source domain for the target domain of POLITICS, they play an important role in the metaphorical description of Barack Obama and his rise to presidency.

(11) So he had bigger plans than that, but he was very aware of the importance of being a team player
In expression (11), the source domain is A TEAM GAME. There seems to be one more aspect of being a team player, and this single aspect may refer to a number of rules a team player must obey to be involved or to win a game. Therefore, the target domain is A POLITICAL ACTIVITY, and the metaphor presents Barack Obama as a player in a political team, which involves certain knowledge of rules used to pursue his goal.

Many comments in the video reflect the metaphor POLITICS IS A NATURAL FORCE. The source domain concepts may represent various nature-related metaphors used by the interviewees in Dreams of Obama, all reflect the lack of public confidence and the uncertain direction of American politics.

(12) Eventually, as the race drew closer, the controversy erupted that threatened Obama’s candidacy, those sermons by Reverend Wright..

(13) Eventually, the river of Wright’s controversy receded..

Literally, volcano is a dangerous natural phenomenon, and the eruption involves expelling lava and ash from the volcanic vent, wreaking havoc and causing damage to surrounding areas. The metaphorical eruption in expression (12) is connected with the unexpected controversial speech on race relations delivered by Jeremiah Alvesta Wright (The Senior Pastor of Trinity United Church in Chicago).

Obviously, it came to light at the wrong time for Barack Obama, in the midst of his presidential campaign. This metaphor could be formulated as SUDDEN CONTROVERSY IS A VOLCANIC ERUPTION. The target domain of controversy can be understood as ‘the lava coming out’ – the controversial sermons delivered by Jeremiah Wright who ‘erupted’. The potential dangers of the eruption - the controversial sermons could have caused damage to Barack Obama’s reputation at that stage of his campaign.

In expression (13), the river is the source domain, and the target domain is the controversial political activity – the sermons which were preached, the spread of controversy, a kind of strong tide that could have caused the damage. The metaphor can be formulated as POLITICAL CONTROVERSY IS A FLOOD.

Another expression to be considered also presents Barack Obama engaged in political activities.

(14) For twenty years, he had been relentlessly and carefully working his way up, navigating treacherous political waters

Expression (14) is based on a metaphor POLITICAL ACTIVITY IS A DANGEROUS SEA JOURNEY, which also involves the sub-metaphor of PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS. Barack Obama being a senator from Illinois and making different important decisions can be compared to a sailor who has
to move very carefully in order to avoid encountering an obstacle or hurting himself – navigating the dangerously unstable and unpredictable political situation. The concept *navigating* is related to a perilous sea journey toward a certain destination. This context features Barack Obama as an agent poised to deal with external forces, since navigation demands courage and determination. The concept *treacherous waters* might imply that the danger comes from ‘the waters’, e.g. powerful whirlpools, traps or storms, and therefore, navigating such waters requires a lot of diplomacy, caution and experience – skills which are essential in politics.

6.4. Metonymies

A small number of metonymic expressions found in the video are presented below:

(15) I knew that much of this was rhetorical, and when he said that there is no *white America*, no *black America*.. I kind of winced a little bit because I know that there is certainly a *black America*.. but I understood where he was coming from..

(16) Back in Washington, many of Obama’s advisers thought he should run for the presidency

(17) The whole nation is watching as *Chicago* has sent a powerful message

(18) He can barely show his *face* in public without creating some kind of sensation

(19) In 2000, Obama set his sights on a congressional *seat*, but not just any congressional *seat*. This one was held by yet another older, highly regarded figure in the black community, Congressman Bobby Rush

In expression (15), *black America* and *white America* are concepts which describe two ethnic groups: the African-American people and the white/Caucasian population of the United States. The use of adjectives that depict colours, naturally evokes the reference to skin tones, and in this context, to the ethnic groups. Thus, this kind of metonymy may be understood as DEFINING PROPERTY FOR CATEGORY. *Black America* stands for the African-American population, and *white America* represents the population of white people. The same expression, however, also contains the metonymy THE PLACE FOR PEOPLE, and therefore, the expression may be viewed as a chain of metonymies.
The classic metonymy that represents the relation THE PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION can be found in expression (16), in which the word *Washington* does not refer to the name of the city as such in this context, it predominantly refers to the institution which is located in the city – the federal government of the country.

Another metonymic expression can be found in example (17), where the city name *Chicago* is used in reference to Chicago politicians, however, this context and connection may also indicate the local authorities in this city, or a place where a political event related to ‘sending the message’ may have taken place. Thus, the above metonymy may reflect the concept of THE PLACE FOR THE EVENT (Lakoff and Johnson, Metaphors 39).

In expression (18), another conceptual metonymy is present, this one is a special case of the metonymy THE FACE FOR THE PERSON. The word *face* stands for the whole person and showing one’s face means appearing in public. *The face* represents Barack Obama, who, for some time after the convention in Boston in 2004, was trying to keep a low profile and avoid the avalanche of publicity that greeted him everywhere he appeared. Lakoff and Johnson claim that “we function in terms of metonymy when we perceive the person in terms of his face and act on those perceptions” (Lakoff and Johnson, Metaphors 37).

In quotation (19), the expression *a Congressional seat* demonstrates yet another metonymy at work. Since there is a particular number of seats in Congress, and each of them is ascribed to a particular person, *a Congressional seat* may literally refer to the concept PLACE/POSITION FOR POWER and stands for the place in the American Senate won by a senator. *The congressional seat* also shows the reference to the particular person who occupies ‘the seat’ and it embodies the idea of holding the position and performing certain activities which are associated with it.

### 6.5. Similes

Several similes also occur in the documentary, their expressiveness is found in the following expressions:

(20) *This is like watching Tiger Woods*

(21) *Before his speech, behind the scenes, they watched Obama prepare... he was like an athlete gearing up for the big game*

The first expression is very much American culture-oriented, thus should be analyzed through American cultural assumptions and values. Tiger Woods is a very famous American golfer, therefore, comparing Barack Obama to him may translate to the speaker’s perception of Obama as a flawless professional...
in action, who is as successful as the sportsman. Since ‘watching Barack Obama deliver his speech is like watching Tiger Woods deliver his swing’, the simile can be formulated as BARACK OBAMA IS LIKE TIGER WOODS.

A form of comparison which expresses the concept that POLITICS IS LIKE SPORTS (a sports activity involving knowledge, skill and a fixed number of rules that one has to follow to win against an opponent) can be found in simile (21), which is a comment describing Barack Obama’s preparations for his speech. Comparing the politician to an athlete that is preparing for a game/match can also be culturally motivated. Although being a sportsman has little to do with performing any political profession, the concepts share certain properties, such as performing in public and possessing particular skills and talents. Being a sportsman means being physically fit and strong, and gearing up for the game refers to physical preparations and exercises before a sports event, whereas, the more abstract sense of this conceptualization could be a thorough mental and psychological preparation of the politician before his speech in public.

7. Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to analyze a small number of metaphors and other conceptual mechanisms found in the video Dreams of Obama. The selected expressions were collected from interviews and comments made by various people who decided to participate in the process of creating the documentary and agreed to voice their opinions on Barack Obama’s rise to presidency. Several of the expressions presented in the article seem to have ‘the individual dimension’ (Kövecses, Metaphor in 106), as they are inextricably interwoven in various aspects of American culture, and related to famous people, places or events. The direct reference to the famous American sportsman Tiger Woods is a clear example of this.

In general, Obama’s speech is like many other political speeches based on conventional conceptual metaphors, however, in the political context, the metaphors utilize elements of source domains which are not frequently used in everyday discourse. Their purpose is clearly to present political views and ideas in a novel perspective. Their pragmatic function is to win the audiences’ approval and lead them to accept a given worldview.

Statements and quotations employed in the documentary represent three basic types of conceptual metaphors. The expressions are thought-provoking and charged with the metaphorical meaning, and they serve as a vehicle for demonstrating various facets of political life in America.
Metaphors, metonymies and similes in “Dreams of Obama”

Bibliography


Internet sources


The Devil Is In The Details: Contemporary British Fiction
Translated by Polish Students

Introduction

The following article is a study of error types based on translations produced over several years during the courses of literary translation at the University of Łódź. Translation workshops involved fourth-year students of English Philology (either “Year 4” in five-year uniform MA studies, or “Year 1” in two-year graduate MA studies). All students participating had been theoretically prepared for the workshops, their general level of English was comparable to Cambridge Proficiency in English. During the workshops, several groups of students were assigned a similar task: to translate into Polish (their mother tongue) fragments of prose chosen from contemporary British novels and short stories by popular authors. They were given realistic deadlines and they individually translated texts at home; this was followed by in-class group discussion. The material for translation, the excerpts from which are discussed below, has been taken from the following works: Graham Swift’s *Waterland* (abbreviated as W) and *Last Orders* (LO), Ian McEwan’s *The Cement Garden* (CG), John Lanchester’s *The Debt to Pleasure* (DP), Angela Carter’s *The Bloody Chamber* (BC), Jeanette Winterson’s *Sexing the Cherry* (SC), Martin Amis’s *Money* (M) and *London Fields* (LF), Alasdair Gray’s *Poor Things* (PT), Julian Barnes’s *A History of the World in 10 ᵔ Chapters* (HW) and William Golding’s *Rites of Passage* (RP).

The workshops were preceded by discussions of theoretical approaches to translation and various translation strategies available; the debates reached a certain consensus which functioned as a starting point for the task. The students agreed with Lawrence Venuti that the translator should not be entirely invisible and that their translations should not fully domesticate the source texts into the Polish context (cf. Venuti 1-42). On the other hand, it was also established that the presence of the foreign should not be exaggerated so as not to estrange the reader: the stance of Antoine Berman from “Translation and the Trials of the Foreign” was considered too strict (cf. Berman 284-297). Consequently, most trainee translators sought “the golden mean”: a target text...
which generally would be “reader-friendly”, but which at the same time would retain some foreign taste.

As a result, the translations produced broadly followed main stylistic idiosyncrasies of original texts – most features of style and tone were appropriately rendered, texts retained their individual character. Translators did not have serious problems with identifying and rendering the register, tone and character of the prose; the Polish language version also read very well. It has to be admitted that the overall impression was more than satisfactory: most students proved to be genuinely skilled and seriously devoted to the task, they dealt with the assignment truly competently.

Obviously, though the translations were generally adequate, most works displayed several errors, usually rather trivial, but occasionally quite serious, too. As such deficiencies often spoil the overall impression of the target text, it is worthwhile to investigate their nature. The reasons for committing errors are varied and the analysis performed in this article attempts to locate the main fields of problems. It might perhaps serve as a suggestion indicating the areas that need further attention when educating future translators of (not only) literature. For the sake of efficiency, the analysis rejected several extreme cases: errors found in very poor work were not included in this research. Additionally, the students’ translations were during later classes compared with the published translations of the books selected for the task. Curiously, both published and workshop translations had their advantages, but, as it was revealed, the errors of professional translators were usually more trivial, although sometimes they significantly distorted the original meaning.

1. Errors in target language

This is the most common category of errors committed by students during workshops; incidentally, errors of this type are virtually non-existent in published translations – this appears to be the major difference between trainees and professional translators. Obviously, translators commissioned by publishing houses were at an advantage here: their texts were checked and, if necessary, revised by professional editors. Still, it seems that the competence in Polish remains an important advantage of professional translators. Students’ translations revealed a relatively large number of problems with their native tongue. The errors were of varied nature: grammatical, lexical, stylistic etc.¹

During later discussions most students pointed out a significant source of such difficulties: having studied English at the university for four years, they have not been reading extensively in Polish for quite a time. Obviously, the Polish university system, unlike some other European ones, entails that the

¹ As the article is written in English, exemplifying this category be quite pointless for this discussion.
English studies are based on reading all literary (and other) source texts in English. While it develops our students’ English skills, it does not give them the opportunity to stay in contact with their mother tongue, for instance through reading Polish translations of English literature. At the same time, it seems indisputable that any student seriously aspiring for a translator’s career (especially in the literary field) should cultivate his/her Polish: translation will always be a bilingual profession.

2. “Engpolish” – calques

Despite the fact that calques can be, to a certain extent, treated as errors in target language, they are considered a different category of mistakes by some sources (cf. Hejwowski 129-131). The translations studied here contained a number of calques that can be regarded as typical for English-Polish translation and are therefore worth discussing.

That night my parents argued…(CG)  Tej nocy moi rodzice kłócili się...

It seems certainly the Polish norm to render the word “night” in the above context as “wieczór” (evening), as the argument between the narrator’s parents took place most likely between 8 and 10 o’clock. The semantic scope of the English “night” is far broader than its direct Polish equivalent “noc” and covers this time.

during his incarceration in various gulags (DP)  podczas jego uwięzienia w różnorakich gułagach

In this example, the problem with the Polish syntax is twofold. For once, possessive adjectives are rarely used in comparison with English. Moreover, the sentence in question requires the change of grammatical category in Polish and should read “kiedy był więziony...” (when he was incarcerated in...).

My sisters and I talked about him (CG)  Moje siostry i ja rozmawialiśmy o nim

The Polish norm requires the form “Rozmawialiśmy o nim z siostrami” (Together with my sisters, we...).

Mary, with blue, curious eyes (W)  Mary, z niebieskimi, ciekawymi świata oczami
In this example the problem lies in the use of a wrong preposition (and consequently a wrong noun case). The phrase should read: „Mary o niebieskich … oczach”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The <strong>patron saint</strong> of our local town (W)</th>
<th>święta patronka naszego miasteczka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The Polish equivalent of “patron saint” is “patronka”; “święta” (saint) is redundant and unnecessarily suggests some additional “holiness”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Henry Crick, being no <strong>letter-writer</strong>… (W)</th>
<th>Henry Crick, nie będąc pisarzem listów</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

In Polish the word “pisarz” (writer) refers only to the artistic activity, not to the act of writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A <strong>member</strong> of His Majesty’s Army (W)</th>
<th>członek Armii Jego Królewskiej Mości</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The dictionary equivalent of “member” is indeed “członek”, but the Polish does not use this word in reference to army members, “żołnierz Armii…” (a soldier of…) should be used.

The last two errors listed here are clearly rooted in blind reliance on dictionary equivalents. Translation instructors should strongly emphasise that this is a common source of problems. The remaining problems could mostly be eliminated if translators re-read their target texts some time after producing them: all Polish structures shown here sound overly artificial.

3. **Unrecognized culture specific elements**

Despite the fact that the students had participated in a two-semester course in British civilisation, art and culture, some of their translation choices reveal serious problems with this field.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Catholicism</strong> just might restore his sanity (PT)</th>
<th>Wiara mogłaby przywrócić mu rozum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Despite a Scottish context, Catholicism is rendered as “wiara” (faith), which is certainly a wrong interpretation of the source text: the original suggestion is that
the specific features of the Catholic faith, not just any religious belief, would be beneficial for one of the characters. The error is certainly the consequence of the translator’s automatic assumption, given his/her Polish cultural background, that Catholicism is synonymous with Christianity or even religion.

| to the high table (DP) | w kierunku … wysokiego stołu |

Word-for-word translation of “high table” overlooks the meaning of this compound noun. It should be rendered as “stół nauczycielski” (teachers’ table). Another error from the similar area is:

| in England’s public schools (DP) | w angielskich szkołach publicznych |

where the translator does not seem familiar with the British system of education and renders “public schools” as if they were “schools for the public”; these are, certainly, called “state schools” in Britain. Similarly,

| school art award (DP) | nagroda w szkolnym konkursie o sztuce |

The Polish rendition would translate back into English as “award in a school competition on knowledge about arts” which widely misses the target, as the award was most likely granted for a painted or drawn picture.

| by the loading bay at the plant off the M4 (LF) | przy strefie załadunku w fabryce M4 |

M4, referring to a British motorway, is wrongly recognised by the translator as the name of the plant (which actually does not follow the syntax of the phrase).

| it being daylight and a crowd promised such as we see only for a dog and a bear (SC) | był dzień i tłum, któremu obiecano, tak jak i nam, zobaczyć to, choć przez chwilę. za dnia i przy tłumie, w którym trzeba być psem lub niedźwiedziem, żeby cokolwiek zobaczyć. |

Here both Polish versions quoted are utterly incomprehensible and prove that the translators were not familiar with bear-baiting and did not do enough research, despite the fact that the book was set in a historical context.
4. Idioms, expressions, non-standard vocabulary unknown to the translator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What with the Fetnabs and Fatimas … (LF)</th>
<th>Co ze wszystkimi Fetnabami i Fatimami … And what about all those Fetnabs and Fatimas…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>no breakfast, no bowel movement (LF)</td>
<td>bez śniadania, bez żadnej rozgrzewki no breakfast, no warm-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He has but one defect. (PT)</td>
<td>Ma jednak jedną wadę. He has, however, one defect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so I won’t get beri-beri and co. (HW)</td>
<td>żebym nie złapał jakieś beri-beri albo nie zapadł w śpiączkę. so I won’t get beri-beri or fall into a coma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Got stinko paralytico together on our last night in town (HW)</td>
<td>Ostatniej nocy w mieście obaj czuliśmy się do bani last night … we felt unwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuckin A. (M)</td>
<td>Pieprzeni niewiadomoco. (Fucking hell-knows-what.) Pieprzeni murzyni. (Fucking blacks.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Coke reps have been there before you and shat on the landscape (HW)</td>
<td>symbole coli były tam przed tobą i spieprzyły krajobraz. the Coke logos …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take out all the niggers and PRs (M)</td>
<td>sprzątnąć wszystkich czarnuchów i urzędasów niggers and office clerks (public relations specialists)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all above examples the translators did not understand some words or phrases and tried, unsuccessfully, to “guess” the meaning of the source text. In most cases a good dictionary would solve the problem.

5. Misunderstanding the situation, assuming wrong perspective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>the leering lens-faced Japanese (LF)</th>
<th>nieufni Japończycy w okularkach … Japanese wearing glasses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[at the railway station] I crouched in the corner of a stationary carriage with Bella on the platform outside (PT)</td>
<td>przykucnąłem w rogu stojącego powozu, a Bella stała na podeście na zewnątrz … a horse carriage … the step …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Polish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looking … along the bar, like at <strong>unoccupied space</strong> (LO)</td>
<td>patrząc wzdłuż baru, jakby nikogo tam nie było … <em>as if there was no-one there.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mouths <strong>on</strong> these worst guys – the eyes <strong>on</strong> them. (LF) [these are <em>their</em> mouths and <em>their</em> eyes]</td>
<td>Rozmowy o tych kolesiach, spojrzenia zwrócone w ich kierunku. <em>The talks about these guys, the looks directed at them.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[an actor working into a part] You know what Dirk says, how he <strong>starts with the shoes</strong> once he gets the shoes right he knows what the rest of the character’s like (HW)</td>
<td>Wiesz jak mawia Dick: pokaż mi jego buty, a ja ci powiem jakim jest człowiekiem … <em>show me his shoes, I’ll tell you about his character</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[in the fog] The bulrushes were buried first, then the trunks of the trees, then the forks and the junctions. (SC) [parts of trees]</td>
<td>[mgła] Najpierw pochowała sitowie, potem konary drzew, a następnie rozwidlenia i rozdroża. … <em>forking paths and road junctions.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He <strong>replaced the pipe between</strong> his teeth like a missing section of his own anatomy. (CG)</td>
<td>Brakujące zęby zastąpił fajką, jako uzupełnienie swej anatomii <em>He replaced his missing teeth with the pipe …</em> (!!!)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The errors from this category lead to spectacular changes in the meaning of the text. In all cases the translators’ associations evoked by the text lead them astray: the results may utterly change the scene of events (forking paths and road junctions instead of junctions in tree branches), the description of characters (a metaphor describing the Japanese is abandoned and the translator makes them wear glasses instead), the scene might become illogical (a horse carriage departing from the railway station), or simply hilarious (replacing your teeth with a pipe). Some translators seemed to forget to use their common sense; they should, in fact, always check whether the scenes they reproduce in the target text are, most of all, logical.
6. Misinterpreting grammatical structure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Polish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>he is ... entrusting his life to a machine, the work of human hands, fallible and subject to decay. (CP) [the last phrase refers to “a machine” not “hands”]</td>
<td>zawiera swe życie maszynie, wytworowi rąk ludzkich, omyłnych i poddanych zębowi czasu. ... hands, which are fallible and ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘a moment for my smelling salts, dear lady.’ But I would have none of it (SC) [But I couldn’t accept such behaviour]</td>
<td>„dajże mi sole trzeźwiące, droga pani.” Ale ja nie miałam żadnych ... But I didn’t have any [smelling salts]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The darkness of some deck or other (RP)</td>
<td>ciemność jakiegoś pokładu, lub czegoś innego ... of some deck, or something else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I’m sure I want to marry him,’ I said. And would say no more. She sighed (BC) [I would say no more]</td>
<td>- Jestem pewna, że chcę za niego wyjść – odparłam. Nie powiedziała już nic więcej. Westchnęła tylko ... And she would say no more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[about cremated remains in the urn] Whether it’s all Jack in there or Jack mixed up with bits of others (LO) [only Jack’s remains]</td>
<td>Czy to cały Jack jest w środku, czy Jack zmieszany z resztkami innych Whether all of Jack is in there...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The general level of students’ English would suggest that they should not have committed such errors, as they were not doubt familiar with grammatical structures used. In most cases mistakes must have been caused by negligence; adequate care and more habit-forming practice should eliminate those problems.

7. The devil is in the details.

This additional category provides examples illustrating that the translation process requires keen attention to even smallest details, as they can be of utmost importance for both understanding the source text adequately and rendering it in the target language. Even ostensibly trivial minutiae can appear of high significance and should never be overlooked.
In the first example, the narrator shares with the reader his regret that the imminent journey through the jungle will keep him far from whisky supplies:

[we] had our last night on the Johnny Walker now it’s local firewater or nothing (HW)  
ostatnią noc spędziliśmy przy Johnnym Walkerze, teraz to już lokalna woda ognista albo nic

The Polish rendition does not suggest parting with the beverage, as it means simply “we spent the previous night drinking Johnny Walker”; it thus ignores the word order of the source text. Indeed, “last night” can mean “the previous night”, but clearly not in this context. Incidentally, changing word order in the Polish version would eradicate the problem completely: it is enough to say “spędziliśmy ostatnią noc” instead of “ostatnią noc spędziliśmy” to adequately render the original meaning.

[she carried a revolver] in case – how I teased her – she was surprised by footpads (BC)  
[nosiła rewolwer] na wypadek gdyby – jakże się z niej naśmiewałam - … miała ją zaskoczyć banda rzezimieszków.

In this example the translator seems to have misunderstood a simple phrase “how I teased her”, which means here “this is how I teased her”, reading it as “oh, how I teased her!”. Despite apparent similarity, the modality of the text has been altered entirely by this mistake.

The following example concerns the use of a preposition, a part of speech which ostensibly cannot be meaningful:

visit to my brother at St Botholp’s (DP)  
wizyta u mojego brata w Saint Botolph

Quite many students involved in the task understood “St Botholp” – clearly not a familiar name – as referring to a town where the narrator’s brother’s boarding school was situated. Such an interpretation, however, neglects the fact that if St Botholp were indeed the name of the town, the phrase should read “in St Botholp”. The preposition “at”, along with the Saxon genitive used with the name, clearly indicates that it is the name of the boarding school.

Lastly, the Polish translators of English text have sometimes a tendency to overlook the full significance of articles, as this part of speech does not exist in the Polish language.
Our wedding – a simple affair, at the Mairie (BC)  

Again, a significant number of trainee translators misjudged the reference of the name. Since „Mairie” is capitalised in the sentence, it was interpreted as the name of the town where the narrator gets married. This patently neglects the obvious grammatical rule with which the translators must have been familiar: “the” is not used before the names of towns or cities. Realising that, a careful translator should exclude this possibility and, seeing that the story is set in France, understand that “Mairie” functions as a loan word in the source text; indeed it is French for „Town Hall”, exactly the place for a wedding.

Conclusions

Despite the fact that certain theorists suggest focusing translation studies on a variously defined impeccable figure of “the ideal translator” (cf. Wojtasiewicz), the practical approach advises to treat this discipline as prone to human errors. Accordingly, analysing error types may prove to be a useful tool, both to translation apprentices and to those who train them. The foregoing analysis reveals a number of areas especially predisposed to inaccuracies in the context of English to Polish literary translation. Mistaken solutions quoted above should serve as exemplification of hazardous tendencies. For students, they might be a warning, for translation instructors, a suggestion of areas requiring more emphasis in training. Even though it might be impossible to generalise the results of this survey, it certainly demonstrates one principle: translation is a discipline demanding utmost care to particulars, because, as many above-quoted examples indicate, the mistranslation devil is truly in the details.

Bibliography


The Beatles’ Lyrics: Spontaneous Songwriting, Conventional Metaphors, and Open Readings from a Cognitive Linguistic Perspective

1. Introduction

Spontaneous songwriting underlies so many well-known lyrics by the Beatles. Many texts, such as *A Day in the Life* (1967), originated in current newspaper articles or situational contexts (Marchbank, 1978, 92). In this way, Lennon and McCartney have written many songs which not only involve a lot of musical novelty, but are also open to various interpretations. These interpretations often go well beyond the ideas that actually shaped the lyrics.

Some of the songs were considered poetry by the Beatles themselves. Lennon, for example, thought so about *Across the Universe* (1970), which appeared on the *Let It Be* album (Marchbank, 1978, 80). Whether one regards them as such or not, the lyrics frequently employ metaphors which make various readings possible. As in all poetic or artistic texts, the metaphors in the Beatles’ lyrics are like those used by people in everyday interaction.

In what follows, lyrics of four songs will be discussed. Each of them contains conventional metaphors. In the case of *Maxwell’s Silver Hammer* (1969), the metaphor is deeply entrenched in everyday discourse. In *Happiness Is A Warm Gun* (1968), the conventional metaphors spring from a non-conventional piece of advertisement. *You’ve Got To Hide Your Love Away* (1965) and *Nowhere Man* (1965) both contain probably the most common of all metaphors, yet they take the possible interpretations much further than the original intentions of the authors. It is especially evident in the case of *Nowhere Man*, which will be given most attention below.

2. Metaphor and cognitive linguistics

Cognitive linguistics assumes that a large part of human concepts are non-literal and frequently structured by metaphor. In a typical case, metaphor consists of
two domains: a target and a source. The target domain is abstract while the source domain is concrete and often derived directly from human experience. The structure of the source is mentally mapped onto the target, which can be illustrated by the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980, 44-45; Evans, Green, 2006, 293-296):

Look how far we’ve come. We’re at a crossroads. We’ll just have to go our separate ways. We can’t turn back now. I don’t think this relationship is going anywhere. Where are we? We’re stuck. It’s been a long, bumpy road. This relationship is a dead-end street. We’re just spinning our wheels. Our marriage is on the rocks. This relationship is foundering.

As a result, the target concept is given a new, non-literal understanding and definition.

3. Metaphor: poetic and conventional

Lakoff and Turner (1989) provide a pioneering cognitive linguistic analysis of poetic metaphors. They convincingly argue that, irrespective of the individual elaboration and complexities, the metaphors employed by poets are like those used in everyday discourse. It is this that makes it possible for an average reader to make sense of poetry. Such assumptions have formed the foundation of Cognitive Poetics.¹

To support their claim, Lakoff and Turner (1989, 5) analyze Emily Dickinson’s poem 712, written in 1863 (Johnson, 1955, cit. in Baym et al., 1986, 1070):

Because I could not stop for Death—
He kindly stopped for me—
The Carriage held but just Ourselves—
And Immortality…

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess—in the Ring—
We passed the fields of Gazing Grain—
We passed the Setting Sun—

They argue that Death takes the speaker on a journey which “reviews the stages of life that one traverses during life’s journey” (Lakoff, Turner, 1989, 5). The poem clearly involves the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. The children at school are a reminiscence of childhood. The fields of ripe grain refer to maturity, which is an elaboration of the metaphor PEOPLE ARE PLANTS.

¹ See Stockwell (2002).
Finally, the setting sun corresponds to old age, which is a mapping within the metaphor *A LIFETIME IS A DAY* (Lakoff, Turner, 1989, 5).

Dickinson has created novel uses of metaphors which are deeply embedded in human conceptual system and are used to reason about life and death in everyday discourse as well. The metaphor *LIFE IS A JOURNEY* (Lakoff, Turner, 1989, 3) or *A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY* (Lakoff, Johnson, 1999, 61) underlies the following everyday expressions:

The children are *getting off to a good start* in life. Grandmother is already *at the end of the trail*. Both my sisters are *making their way* in life. Tom worries that he is *not getting anywhere*. She wants to give her life some *direction*. They know where they are *going* in life. I don’t know which *path to take*. Jeremy has *lost direction* in life. She is without any *direction* in life. They have many *goals to reach* in life.

The metaphor *PEOPLE ARE PLANTS*, which helps to make sense of stages of human life in the poem, can be illustrated by the following everyday expressions (Lakoff, Turner, 1989, 5-6):

He is a young *sprout*. She is in full *bloom*. He is *withering away*.

The third metaphor present in the poem, that is, *A LIFETIME IS A DAY*, is also used to conceptualize the stages of human life, and is also common in everyday discourse:

She is in the *evening* of life. It is *sunset* for him.

Metaphors *A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY* and *PEOPLE ARE PLANTS* have been a part of the conceptual system of the speakers of English for a very long time. They had, for example, already been employed by Shakespeare in Macbeth’s well-known monologue, when the hero reflects upon his insofar conduct (*Macbeth* 5.3, qtd. in Lakoff, Turner, 1989, 13):

I have lived long enough. My *way of life* is *fallen* into the *sere*, the *yellow leaf*. And that which should accompany old age, As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends, I must not look to have.

Macbeth is at the end of his life’s journey and he is presented as a withering plant that will soon die.

It should be noted that another metaphor, namely, *A LIFETIME IS A YEAR*, is at least implied in the text. In everyday discourse, it is common to think of old people as being in the *autumn* of their lives; a *sere* and *yellow leaf* is a sign of this season of the year (Lakoff, Turner, 1989, 18, 27-28).

Maxwell’s Silver Hammer appeared in 1969 on the Abbey Road album. The lyrics are about a boy called Maxwell, who, by means of a silver hammer, kills his student friend Joan, a teacher at school, and a judge. The last two persons have some authority over him.

The refrain of the song, with none or few modifications after each stanza, runs as follows:

Bang! Bang! Maxwell’s silver hammer
Came down upon her head.
Clang! Clang! Maxwell’s silver hammer
Made sure that she was dead.²

Marchbank (1978, 102) quotes Paul McCartney, who explains the sense of the text in the following words: “This epitomises the downfalls [my italics] in life. Just when everything is going smoothly “bang bang” down comes [my italics] Maxwell’s silver hammer and ruins [my italics] everything.”

Though the song is a light, vaudeville-like³ piece, the metaphor in the refrain makes it possible to give it a serious interpretation. It is an elaboration of a conventional metaphor BEING SUBJECT TO CONTROL OR FORCE IS DOWN, which in everyday discourse is used to conceptualize sudden changes for worse (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980, 15):

He fell from power. He came down in the world. She had a sudden downfall.
They experienced an unpleasant let-down.

In other words, if the life situation is good, we control it and are on top of⁴ it; if it turns for worse, we lose control, come down in the world, even sink. The ruin in McCartney’s explanation is also linked to the lower end of the UP-DOWN vector, which is a structuring element of the metaphor.

The literal downward movement of the hammer can thus be mapped onto a more abstract idea of life. Just as the teacher and the judge lose control over Maxwell, so do we lose control over our lives. It is in this way that a simple song becomes open to a reading that goes beyond its original and largely literal meaning.

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⁴ The complementary metaphor that is used to conceptualize the positive situation in life is called HAVING CONTROL OR FORCE IS UP (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980, 15).
5. *Happiness Is a Warm Gun* (1968)

This song appeared on *The Beatles* (1968) album, also known as the White Album. Like in so many other cases, the writing of its lyrics was largely influenced by a text accidentally read by its author, John Lennon (Marchbank, 1978, 98):

> –George Martin had a book on guns which he had told me about–
> I can’t remember–or I think he showed me a cover of a magazine
> that said “Happiness Is A Warm Gun”. It was a gun magazine,
> that’s it: I read it, thought it was a fantastic, insane thing to say.
> A warm gun means that you just shot something.

The words that Lennon quotes subsequently became the title of the song. They also appear in its refrain, which runs as follows:

> Happiness is a warm gun
> Happiness is a warm gun, momma
> When I hold you in my arms
> And when I feel my finger on your trigger
> I know nobody can do me no harm
> Because happiness is a warm gun, momma…

The lines express a clear association between happiness, safety, love, and sex. It can be explained in terms of an interplay of several very common metaphors.

The first metaphor, located in the line “When I hold you in my arms”, is LOVE IS UNITY (OF TWO COMPLEMENTARY PARTS). Kövecses (1986, 61-105) claims that the metaphor is central to the concept of romantic love. He gives the following examples of everyday expressions which involve it (Kövecses, 1986, 62):

> We were made for each other. We are one. She is my better half.
> Theirs is a perfect match. We function as a unit. They are inseparable.

He explains that an important part of the concept of love understood as unity is physical closeness. Arguing that people regard it as the most characteristic aspect of love, he illustrates the concept by a number of expressions (Kövecses, 1986, 64-65):

> I want to be with you all my life. We’re always together. He follows her everywhere. They walked along the Danube holding hands.
> Please don’t ever let me go. I want to hold you in my arms forever.
> You are so far away, I wish you were here.

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Kövecses (1986, 64) also mentions the expression “I wanna hold your hand”, which happens to be the title of a popular 1963 Beatles song, almost entirely built around the LOVE IS UNITY metaphor.⁶ Though these examples themselves do not involve metaphor⁷, “...reference to the physical closeness of the two people may serve to indicate for us that the two people are in love” (Kövecses, 1986, 65). The presence of physical closeness is thus the experiential basis of the LOVE IS UNITY metaphor (Kövecses, 1986, 65). After all, cognitive linguistics sees human concepts as grounded in physical and cultural experience.⁸

The next metaphor is located in the line “...when I feel my finger on your trigger”. Trigger is a part of a gun pulled while firing, which also makes a gun warm. People often conceptualize love in terms of warmth or heat, especially fire. It is clearly reflected in the following everyday expressions, all of which are examples of the conventional metaphor LOVE IS FIRE (Kövecses, 1986, 84):

My heart’s on fire. He was burning with love. The old-time fire is gone. She set my heart on fire. There were sparks. She is his latest flame. The fire slowly went out. That kindled love in his heart. I don’t want to get burned again. He was consumed by love. I just melted when she looked at me. She carries a torch for him.

These expressions represent various levels of the intensity of love, which is conceptualized as the intensity of fire (Kövecses, 1986, 85). In the lyrics, the intensity of love is at its highest point—in all likelihood, the trigger has just been pulled, and the gun is at its warmest.

The line in question can also be interpreted in the context of sexual experience. It is common knowledge that such experience is linked to the physiological effect of heat, which can be illustrated by the following expressions (Lakoff, 1987, 410):

If I fell in love with you/Would you promise to be true/And help me understand/’cause I’ve been in love before/And I found that love was more/Than just holding hands./If I gave my heart to you ...


⁶ Compare this interpretation of physical closeness with the one that is implied in the song If I Fell (1964):
If I fell in love with you/Would you promise to be true/And help me understand/’cause I’ve been in love before/And I found that love was more/Than just holding hands./If I gave my heart to you ...


⁷ Kövecses (1986, 65) describes them as instances of metonymy—another very common conceptual relationship (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980, 35-41), one of whose forms is PART OF A THING FOR THE WHOLE THING (Kövecses, Radden, 1998, 50). The metonymy underlying all the above-mentioned expressions can be called BEHAVIORAL REACTION FOR EMOTION (Kövecses, 1986, 65, 70-71). Since they can be understood as examples of the LOVE IS UNITY metaphor, the underlying conceptual mechanism can be regarded as ‘metaphor from metonymy’—one of the forms of metaphoronymy (Goossens, 1990, 322-323).

⁸ See also Section 1 above.
I’ve got the hots for her. She’s hot stuff. She’s a red hot mama.

I’m warm for your form. She’s got hot pants for you. Hey, baby, light my fire. I’m burning with desire. She’s in heat. He was consumed by desire.

Lakoff (1987, 410) claims that the underlying metaphor is LUST IS HEAT. The metaphor itself, however, may be based on the metonymy BEHAVIORAL REACTION FOR SEXUAL FEELING—sexual arousal results in increased body temperature.

If we take the sex-based interpretation a little further, the expression “your trigger” can lead to an even richer reading. Irrespective of what “your trigger” refers to (a female sexual organ?), pulling the real trigger causes the gun to shoot, and the verb to shoot is also “a colloquial term meaning to ejaculate” (Goldenson, Anderson, 1994, 242). In such context, the gun may be a metaphorical representation of the male sexual organ, and the whole stanza a description of a sexual act at its peak.

The absence of harm mentioned in the next line is certainly more than safety that can be guaranteed by the possession of a gun. In all likelihood, it is safety grounded in the feelings of love and sex.

Further associations and readings are still possible. “Happiness” could be associated with drugs, for instance with heroine. However, this interpretation, just as in the case of the Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds (1967) lyrics, was rejected by Lennon himself: “It wasn’t about ‘H’ at all” (Marchbank, 1978, 98).

Such reading, however, also originates in metaphor, this time located in the lines

I need a fix’ cause I’m going down
Down to the bits that I left uptown
I need a fix ’cause I’m going down.¹¹

The metaphor is very conventional—HAPPY IS UP/UNHAPPY IS DOWN (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980, 15):

I’m feeling up. My spirits rose. You’re in high spirits. I’m depressed.
He’s really low these days. My spirits sank.

A person under the influence of drugs is also said to be high! What is more, they will usually regard it as some sort of happiness. A fix¹², that is another

¹⁹ See also footnote 6 above.
²⁰ Cf. also German schießen and Polish wystrzelić—both these verbs can have the same meaning.
¹² Taking a dose of a drug is often called a “shot in the arm”—it may be regarded as implicit in the text by virtue of the relation between the concepts of ‘gun’ and ‘pulling the trigger’, that is, shooting.
dose of a drug, is needed to prevent them from going down, that is, falling into a depression. The bits that they are going down to may be the source domain of another metaphor, namely, THE MIND IS A BRITTLE OBJECT (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980, 28). There is also a clear implication that wholeness of mind is better than the experience of it falling into parts.

All these interpretations of the lyrics of the song prove that the text is very much alive. They are there in spite of the fact that they may not have been intended by the author. Lennon says: “Like ‘God’, I had put together some three sections of different songs, it was meant to be—it seemed to run through all the different kinds of rock music” (Marchbank, 1978, 98).

6. You’ve Got to Hide Your Love Away (1965)

Lennon describes writing the lyrics of this song in the following words (Marchbank, 1978, 80):

This was written in my Dylan days for the film Help. When I was a teenager I used to write poetry, but was always trying to hide my real feelings. I was in Kenwood and I would just be songwriting and so everyday I would attempt to write a song and it’s one of those that you sort of sing a bit sadly to yourself, “Here I stand, head in hand ...” I started thinking about my own emotions—I don’t know when exactly it started like ‘I’m a Loser’ or ‘Hide Your Love Away’ or those kind of things—instead of projecting myself into a situation I would just try to express what I felt about myself which I’d done in me books.... I’d have a separate song-writing John Lennon who wrote songs for the sort of meat market, and I didn’t consider them—the lyrics or anything to have any depth at all. They were just a joke. Then I started being me about the songs, not writing them objectively, but subjectively.

The lyrics thus seem to be very personal, but even in spite of that it is possible to read them in more than one way.

The part of the text which is crucial for any interpretation runs as follows:

Hear I stand head in hand
Turn my face to the wall
If she’s gone I can’t go on
Feelin’ two-foot small ...
Hey, you’ve got to hide your love away
Hey, you’ve got to hide your love away ...

13 Other examples of expressions structured by this metaphor, all from Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 28), are: Her ego is very fragile. You have to handle him with care since his wife’s death. He broke under cross-examination. She is easily crushed. The experience shattered him. I’m going to pieces. His mind snapped.

14 See Krzeszowski (1993, 10; 1997, 109) on the axiological parameters of whole and parts.
How could she say to me
Love will find a way …\textsuperscript{15}

The most obvious reading is that it is a love song about an unrequited love. As a result, the author has found himself in a place where emotional progress is impossible.

Almost the whole of the first stanza is thus structured by the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY, which is a very conventional way of conceptualizing love. The metaphor was first described systematically and later elaborated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 44-45; 1999, 63-69, 125-126).\textsuperscript{16} In addition to those in Section 2 above, it can be illustrated by the following everyday expressions:

The marriage is \textit{out of gas}. Our relationship is \textit{off the track}. We may have to \textit{bail out} of this relationship.

Many of the examples reflect the difficulties in a relationship or even the impossibility of continuing it. That is also the case in the first three lines of the lyrics—they clearly refer to obstacles that have arisen in a relationship. Standing “head in hand” with face turning “to the wall” and being unable to “go on” is very much like Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980, 44) celebrated example “We hit a dead-end street”. The two lines of the second stanza offer some hope for the future, and they do so by means of the same metaphor: “Love will find a way” just because LOVE IS A JOURNEY!\textsuperscript{17}

The refrain, which mentions “hiding love away”, employs the metaphor LOVE IS AN OBJECT.\textsuperscript{18} That is because a love that has few prospects of success should not be given much attention and made known to the public.

The above-mentioned metaphor has, however, prompted some to believe that Lennon was a homosexual, and the song was about hiding his relationship with George Martin.\textsuperscript{19} It may seem convincing because some other verses refer to people gathering round and laughing at the author, possibly at his queerness. Also, when the song was written, “homosexuality was a criminal offence in Britain”.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{16} See also Section 2 above.
\textsuperscript{17} Lakoff and Johnson (1999, 125) write that the metaphor in question “is so alive that it keeps producing examples of new metaphorical expressions in song lyrics, poems, self-help books, and marriage ceremonies.”
\textsuperscript{18} See Kövecses (1986, 96-97) on a similar metaphor of love.
\textsuperscript{19} Such interpretation, expressed by an anonymous person commenting on the lyrics of the song, was present on the web page from which the lyrics were quoted on September 12\textsuperscript{th} 2008.
There is still another reading of the song possible. The JOURNEY metaphor may this time be related to one of the activities undertaken in life, namely, songwriting. The second paragraph of Lennon’s commentary on the song gives some space for such interpretation. Having spent a lot of time in one place (Kenwood) and attempting to write songs continuously, Lennon may have simply found himself unable to progress or, in other words, may have reached a creative deadlock. This produced the feeling of helplessness, which is expressed in the lines “Here I stand head in hand/Turn my face to the wall”. Having one’s “head in hand” is a behavioral reaction of people who for some reason are helpless. It involves the metonymy BEHAVIORAL REACTION FOR EMOTIONAL STATE. The metonymy, in turn, ties in with the metaphor PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS (Lakoff, Johnson, 1999, 52-53, 61-62) present in the next line. In both the metonymy and the metaphor, the conveyed sense is one of negation.

Last but not least, the love and the songwriting interpretations can be paired. Lennon may have meant a creative deadlock being a result of an unsuccessful love affair. After all, both writing songs and being in a relationship are purposeful activities that people undertake in life, and they are both conceptualized by means of the same metaphor of a journey. In fact, LOVE IS A JOURNEY is “a metaphor that builds on A Purposeful Life Is A Journey” (Lakoff, Johnson, 1999, 64).

7. Nowhere Man (1965)

The songwriting interpretation of “You’ve Got To Hide Your Love Away” (1965) is a good point of transition to the discussion of “Nowhere Man” (1965)—one of the best known Beatles songs. That is because the former may be and the latter is about the problems accompanying songwriting. However, the “Nowhere Man” lyrics deserve most attention because of all the texts discussed so far, they are most open to various readings. That is thanks to two metaphors at work in them, but especially the well-known metaphor A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY.

The part of the lyrics important for the present analysis runs as follows:

He’s a real Nowhere Man,
Sitting in his Nowhere Land,
Making all his nowhere plans
for nobody.

Doesn’t have a point of view,
Knows not where he’s going to,
Isn’t he a bit like you and me?

See also footnote 6 above.
Nowhere Man, please listen,
You don’t know what you’re missin’,
Nowhere Man, the world is at your command.

He’s as blind as he can be,
Just sees what he wants to see,
Nowhere Man can you see me at all?22

The song is clearly about a crisis, an impossibility of going beyond some vaguely defined point.

ennon describes the origins of the text in the following words (Marchbank, 1978, 82):

I was just sitting, trying to think of a song, and I thought of myself sitting there, doing nothing and getting nowhere. Once I’d thought of that, it was easy. It all came out. No, I remember now, I’d actually stopped trying to think of something. Nothing would come. I was cheesed off and went for a lie down, having given up. Then I thought of myself as “Nowhere Man”—sitting in his nowhere land.

It is clear that the original motivation for the lyrics was being unable to compose a song at some specific time. Both the lyrics and Lennon’s explanation are structured by the same metaphor—PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS, which is one of the primary components of the complex metaphor A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY.23 The author cannot write a song, which is conceptualized as him being unable to move forward.

However, the metaphor A PURPOSEFUL LIFE IS A JOURNEY is a powerful conceptual tool. Lakoff and Johnson (1999, 61) argue that “in our culture, there is a profoundly influential folk model according to which people are supposed to have a purpose in life, and there is something wrong if you don’t.” A Nowhere Man is just such a person—he doesn’t have a purpose in life, or having had it, he lost it: “Isn’t he a bit like you and me?” He is like everyone at some stage of their life. That is what makes the song so universal.

Another fundamental metaphor that shapes many concepts, and is also present in the lyrics, is UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980, 48) or KNOWING IS SEEING (Lakoff, Johnson, 1999, 48, 53-54). It is motivated by human everyday experience, in which most knowledge comes from vision. That is why seeing is frequently mapped onto concepts which involve understanding or knowing not based on vision:

23 See also Sections 3 and 6 above.
I see what you’re saying. What’s your outlook on that? Now I’ve got the whole picture. That’s an insightful idea. The argument is clear. It was a murky discussion. Could you elucidate your remark? I see what you mean. I see your point.

Since Nowhere Man “doesn’t have a point of view … is as blind as he can be … just sees what he wants to see”, he can’t choose the right path, and any progress is impossible.

If both these metaphors are taken to refer to the concept of life as a whole, it is like saying to oneself, “I can’t see a clear path before me”. The expression may be used to emphasize a crisis of understanding of the meaning of life, perhaps a turning point in it. It is the interplay of the two metaphors that gives the lyrics so much of their universality.

Some of the anonymous Net comments on the lyrics should also be quoted. They all make it clear why the message that “Nowhere Man” conveys has such permanence:

This is such a great song, especially for all the youth to hear … it’s a life changing song— if we just think it more seriously, we can all relate to this song, and if we don’t do something better in our lives, then we will really be a nowhere man. Great song by the greatest band. I love the Beatles.

I like the song but I can’t love it because it’s a sad song of depression. I guess there’s lots of ways to perceive this song and I see it in me and I can see it in everyone. That’s what makes this a hit because they can see it in themselves as well.

That’s what made the Beatles who they were: lyrics that went beyond anything in pop music.

We all know someone who is a Nowhere Man. He is a security guard, or shop worker, or labourer. He doesn’t know who the Prime Minister of Canada or Britain is, he thinks Clinton is still President of the US and he takes his opinions from The Sun newspaper. His idea of entertainment is Big Brother, or Britney Spears, and he likes admiring halfwits with limited talent. He believes what TV advertisements tell him.

When Lennon and McCartney wrote this song, apart from the fact that it is a beautifully constructed number with subtle chord changes, harmonies and twangy guitar sounds, they were taking a dig at the people of their home town.

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24 In the first three comments, the abbreviated forms have been eliminated; in all, original spelling and punctuation have been altered to meet the standards of the paper; in the last one, three separate paragraphs have been blocked into one body of text and indented.
26 On the same web site. The comment was added by margie on 10/20/2008.
27 One the same web site. This is a part of the comment added by Terry on 5/28/2007.
and the background they came from—the typical scouse who is only interested
in who wins the Liverpool-Everton match, which brand of trainers to nick from
the local Woolworth’s, and thinks of job status as becoming a supervisor at
MacDonalds.

If you think that YOUR life is going nowhere fast, listen carefully to this song
and start changing before YOU become the Nowhere Man.28

The last of the comments most neatly summarizes the message for each of us
that the song seems to express.

8. Conclusions

What is it that makes the Beatles great and allows them to have a lasting impact
on us and the whole of contemporary culture? Apart from the simple, but
innovative melody lines of their songs, it is certainly the song lyrics.

Those lyrics were often written spontaneously—as a response to or a comment
on a current situation, a piece of news, or a heading in a newspaper. In spite
of that, or perhaps because of that, the texts employ very common conceptual
metaphors. In many cases, the metaphors are fundamental for expressing
important ideas in everyday discourse.

That is largely why we find the lyrics so convincing and why they still
appeal to us. Lennon and McCartney were simply able to put a lot of ideas
into language that contains common metaphors, but does not elaborate them
to a point that would make understanding difficult or even impossible. In
short, apart from looks, personalities, and music, language makes the Beatles
unforgettable. It is also in this sense that they, like other poets or writers, are us
and still have impact on us.

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28 On the same web site. The comment was added by Gordon on 1/9/2008.


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