**DISEASE, DECAY, DEATH**

**in Literatures, Cultures, and Languages**

University of Opole**, 26-28 September 2016**



**‘ Death the Bride, Thomas Cooper Gotch, 1895**

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Edited by Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska



**Organizing Committee**:

Dr Katarzyna Buczek

Aleksandra Krajewska, MA

Dr Tadeusz Lewandowski

Dr Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska

Dr Stankomir Nicieja

Prof. Ryszard W. Wolny (Head)

**Contact**:

Institute of English, University of Opole

pl. Kopernika 11, 45-040 OPOLE

phone: +48 77-541-59-23

fax: +48 77-541-59-23

http://culture.uni.opole.pl

deathdecaydiseaseconference@gmail.com



Carlos Schwabe, “Death of the Gravedigger” [La mort du fossoyeur], ca. 1890

Carlos Schwabe’s “The Death of the Gravedigger” presents us with what is inevitable for all: the end. Schwabe’s vision of finality, however, is neither pessimistic nor particularly intimidating. As the gravedigger looks up toward the Angel of Death’s winged embrace, we discern the sense of majesty she inspires. Her placid face offers respite from a lifetime of physical labor, allowing the gravedigger to release his well-worn shovel. The gravedigger’s work is done, his soul departs, but life around him is renewed. Flowers begin to dot the receding winter snow. It is, ultimately, a comforting image. But, one might ask, are death, dying, and its first cousin disease and decay really so easy to accept? Let us confront such issues.

From: Call for Papers by Tadeusz Lewandowski

**The conference provides a platform to reflect upon such themes as:**

* Representations of disease, death and decay in literature and the media
* Cultural and religious perspectives on terminal disease, death and the afterlife
* Narratives of apocalypse and demise
* Narratives of death and resurrection
* Disease as narrative
* Travel and disease
* Dystopian visions of humanity’s breakup and destruction
* Rituals of cleansing, passage and mourning
* Rhetoric of commemoration
* Atonement as a cultural motif
* Pandemic and Armageddon in literature, film, and the news
* Philosophical and ethical approaches to death disease and decay
* Communicating about disease and death in private and institutional settings
* Metaphors mitigating taboos related to disease, degeneration and death
* Coping with pain, aging and illness
* The medicalization of popular culture
* Panaceas, self-help and therapies
* Conceptions of honorable deaths
* The significance of ghosts, haunting and spirits in literature
* Zombies and the undead

Because disease, death and decay can also be associated with language change, we offera separate linguistic panel. Languages influence one another, and such interaction can be perceived as both a blessing and a curse –  a disease which threatens language’s purity. Some may even talk about language decay: “Tongues, like governments, have a natural tendency to degeneration” (Samuel Johnson, 1755). Thus, we would also like to address the topic from the linguistic perspective and discuss the notion of:

* Language death
* Language attrition
* Language endangerment and revitalization

to provide a platform for the discussion of current research within semantics, metaphor and metonymy, discourse analysis, historical and anthropological linguistics.

# Keynote Lectures

## Tadeusz Sławek

## University of Silesia in Katowice

## "*Death is more than*...". On Death and Nudity

Following the lead of Blaise Pascal and Sir Thomas Browne, two powerful figures of early modern Europe, we try to demonstrate how the 17th century sensibility prepares us to understand the (post)modern concerns and anxieties. One of the most significant of them was what Hannah Arendt declared in *The Human Condition* as a characteristic symptom of the crisis of the public sphere of the late modernity: the almost total neglect of the sense of immortality and the abandonment of the interest in eternity. These dehiscences are directly connected with the troubled relationship which human thinking has always had with death trying to reduce it to the questions of scientific formulae or aesthetic representations. This however does not bring us in the vicinity of what Sir Thomas Browne refers to as the absence of “the true Theory of death”. As he famously writes in *Religio Medici*: “... nor can I think I have the true Theory of death, when I contemplate a skull, or behold a skeleton, with those vulgar imaginations it casts upon us”. To initiate a thinking on „the true Theory of death” (which would also avoid the trap of what Derrida calls Descartes' potential “cadaverization of life”) would then be a calling which humanities have to answer. We will make a humble attempt in this direction referring to the dark knot of desire and loss, presence and absence, day and night, which seems to constitute the very heart of the *animot*, Jacques Derrida's word (a “nude” word, as he says) which describes “neither a species nor a gender nor an individual, it is an irreducible multiplicity of mortals (…), a sort of monstrous hybrid, a chimera waiting to be put to death by its Bellereophon”. The “true Theory of death” will then inevitably try to rescue life (as we will see it reading fragments of e.e.cumming's poems) from the shadow of death, and thus do justice to the seriousness of death liberated from the “vulgar imaginations”.

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## Elżbieta Chrzanowska-Kluczewska

## Jagiellonian University in Krakow

## *The Taming of Death in Western and Eastern Tradition (Christianity vs. Tibetan Buddhism) as Reflected in Arts, Crafts and Sacred Texts*

The presentation intends to explore similarities and differences in coping with the difficult metaphysical theme of death and a repulsive subject of human corpse/skeleton in a range of artistic “texts”, understood broadly from the perspective of semiotics of culture. The first part will focus on the Western European fear of death and on the techniques of taming and accepting it as an unavoidable phenomenon of the human condition. This will be illustrated by *pictorial texts* (engravings and paintings) on the *Tempus fugit* motif that came into being in the period of late Renaissance, flourished throughout Baroque, and have continued to crop up, often as intertextual allusions, in the ages to follow, up to the contemporary times (R. and J. Sadeler, C. Galle, H. Hondius, G. Ehringer, F. Goya’s *“Tres de Mayo”* and its travesty by T. Kantor, A. Böcklin’s “Isle of the Dead” and its travesty by F. Clerici, R. Opałka). St. Dróżdż in his conceptual paintings, which take linguistic units as their content, refers to the subject of oblivion, apparently worse than death itself. On the other hand, the Tibetan Tantric Buddhism boasts a rich tradition of overcoming the terror of death, most notably by means of the sacred instruction contained in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which is the major kind of ritual text read to the dying and those just departed, with the aim of helping them in the confusing post-mortal and pre-rebirth experience of the *Bardo* (the in-between state). In the Christian tradition, the prayers of the Last Rites (Anointment of the Sick) are also directed to the dying individuals, though their function is slightly different. I will also refer to a gamut of Tibetan practices carried out on burial grounds or charnel houses, or near corpses (a shocking and potentially repulsive practice of *Chöd*, with roots in *Bön* shamanistic rituals and spiritual practices of tantric yogis), as well as the ways of disposing of dead bodies. The ritual objects (*kapala* – a skullcup, *kangling* – a trumpet made of human thigh-bone and a *damaru* drum, sometimes made of skull-tops) all illustrate the ways in which artistic and artisanal production has always been essentially involved in an attempt to overcome a natural angst felt in the face of the final demise.

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## Jacek Fabiszak

## Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

## *Death and Decay in Three Screen Versions of Shakespeare’s* King Lear

*King Lear* is arguably the most pessimistic tragedy in the Shakespearean canon. It shows not only the ‘disintegration of human soul’, as Marco Mincoff defined Shakespearean tragedy, but also the degeneration of families and larger social aggregates. The prevalent atmosphere of deterioration, degeneration and decay is shown by Shakespeare in the characters’ treatment of each other, scheming, challenging and violating fundamental values, empty spaces and the abnormal, corrupted, language. The tragedy in *King Lear* is ultimate, irrevocable and conclusive. It presents the annihilation and extinction of the fictional world. *King Lear* can also be treated as extreme in its tragic dimension – it is difficult to imagine (before Beckett) a sadder, yet not wiser play. Henryk Zbierski once remarked about Joyce’s fiction, especially his *Finnegans Wake*, that it constitutes a cul-de-sac in the development of the novel. In *King Lear* Shakespeare appears to have reached such a cul-de-sac in his tragic vision. In my talk I would like to discuss ways in which the utmost tragedy is rendered in screen adaptations of Shakespeare’s play. Two films under scrutiny – Peter Brook’s and Grigori Kozintsev’s – were produced almost at the same time, in two politically opposite universes. Yet, both directors, when working on their films, exchanged remarks about their approaches to Shakespearean tragedy. The third film – directed by Jean Luc Godard – was produced in 1987 in a different political and cultural milieu. The films are of course very different from each other, and the differences (as well as similarities), in the rendering the atmosphere of disintegration and death, will be one aspect of my scrutiny. The other will be the directors’ approach to the film as a form of art, its limits and constraints, via Shakespearean tragedy.

# Conference Presentations

## Željka Babić

## University of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina

## The Presence of the Professed Imminence in Borislav Pekić’s *Rabies*

The appearance of Borislav Pekić’s novel *Rabies* (1983) left the door ajar for the researchers of his oeuvre for a new examination of his works, for the freshness of the topic and issues developed in this book enable multifaceted aspectual considerations of his line of thought. The depth of reading possibilities and approaches to the text calls for a languacultural (Agar, 1995) consideration of the different layers which can be found within the linguistic matrix of the novel. The presentation aims at providing an account of the author’s depiction of the clash between a human and his/her Other in the presence of the imminent danger, epitomised in the mutated rhabdovirus. The bullet-shaped virus, spreading through the Heathrow Airport, links people from different backgrounds and brings destruction to them all. Originally created in the doctor Liebermann’s laboratory in the Middle East in the town of Megiddo, better known under its Greek name of Armageddon, the virus travels to the British Isles, namely to the world’s busiest airport, and leaves in the end only two people alive - a man and a woman in the airport’s roof garden, making the story both universal and personal. This presentation will focus on the investigation of various linguistic tools used by the author to show us the imminence of humanism as well as the presence of the “virus” of destruction, whose life amongst us has already begun. At the same time, the presentation will try to extract possible cultural layers with regards to specific linguistic and cultural features which particular characters researched display, for rabies itself is not seen just as a mere Biblical or literary plague, but also as the author’s criticism of the state of modern society in general.

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## Marek Błaszak

## University of Opole

## Decay, Disease and Death in Doris Lessing’s *The Grass Is Singing*

The article analyses the first and highly acclaimed novel by the 2007 Nobel prize winner for literature, Doris Lessing. The action of the book, published in 1950, is set in the former British colony of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in the 1940s, that is about the time when the second wave of feminism began. The novel’s heroine, Mary, is a strong and financially independent young female who leads the comfortable life of a single woman until the age of thirty. At this point she rather quickly and unexpectedly marries, basically because she overhears her friends gossiping about her spinsterhood, which she understands is meant to suggest a weakness. Her husband appears to be a bashful and submissive man named Dick Turner, who arouses Mary’s caring and protective instincts rather than the feeling of love, not to mention any intense passion. Once she settles on his farm, she shows great diligence not only in housework (so far done by black servants), but gradually also in running the farm, which further undermines his self-confidence. Mary comes to eventually despise Dick’s meekness as a husband and incompetence as a farmer. When he falls ill, she takes control of the farm, finding particular satisfaction in punishing and firing black laborers, who were treated in a more humane way by her husband. This state of things only quickens economic decay of the farm and alienates the spouses from each other. Not before too long Mary herself falls ill and is attended in her infirmity by the very black man (Moses) whom she once humiliated by lashing him in public. The crisis comes when she betrays him by dismissing him from the service, and he stabs her to death in revenge for his wounded human affection. Interpretation of the novel from the feminist and gender perspectives appears to be closely related to the theme of decay, disease and death. In the first place, the heroine’s identity is shaped in her childhood by her imperious mother and the father who “was a cipher in the house, and [he] knew it” (Lessing 30). In her own matrimony, this process of identity formation – a clear case of social constructionism – is completed on Dick’s farm where Mary comes to live with the man who proves to be inadequate both as a husband and farmer. The causes of the gradual collapse and tragic end of the two protagonists as well as of their farm can be seen as lying, on the one hand, in the kind of masculine gender identity that Mary assumes, and on the other, in the disintegration of Dick Turner as a subject, that is in his failure as an autonomous, independent, and self-determining individual. The plot of the novel documents enervation, damage, and ultimate destruction of the subject, for in the end Dick loses everything and becomes insane. *The Grass Is Singing* shows how complex Lessing’s attitude to feminist and gender issues was, practically from the very beginning of her long career as a writer. Readers of the novel are sure to share the narrator’s resentment at the patriarchal society typified by families, like Mary’s, in which the father “drank himself every evening into a state of cheerful fuddled good humor”, leaving maintenance of the family and upbringing of the children to his wife – “a woman whose life had been so unhappy because of economic pressure that she had literally pined to death” (Lessing 32). Nonetheless, the kind of feminism that the heroine inherits from her mother, and the masculinised demeanor that she adopts as a mature woman and a wife, have disastrous consequences for the man she marries and for herself. This equivocal attitude towards women and feminism finds its reflection in Doris Lessing’s later works, such as *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and *The Cleft* (2007), as well as in her public addresses.

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## Daniel Broudy

## Okinawa Christian University

## Ideology as a Disease of the Mind Infecting a Dying Commons

John Stuart Mill observed of the human race that what makes the human being “a noble and beautiful object of contemplation” (2001, 58-59) is individuality, creativity, “fullness of life” and, above all, the yearning to cultivate a “higher nature.” If these qualities function to fortify the ties that bind each individual to the race and make the race worth belonging to, the neoliberal interpretation of the race itself has diseased the minds of men in power who construe humans as mere objects to be exploited in the name of progress and development. As neoliberal ideology has spread across the globe, this paper explicates the extent to which discourses of progress and development signify the decayed mind in a dying public commons. Among the questions explored in this presentation are: (a) What precisely is that ideological disease? (b) To what extent can it be classified as such? (c) What symptoms (or semiotic signs) are present in the public discourse that indicate disease? and (d) Is death necessarily the outcome? Enlisted in my aim to assess the declining health of the commons is Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies*.

Mill, John Stuart. [2001]1859.*On Liberty*. Kitchener, ON: Batoche Books .

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## Małgorzata Brożyna

## Pedagogical University of Cracow

## Disease Metaphors in English and Polish Political Discourse

The paper provides several examples of disease metaphors used in political discourse in Poland and in the UK in 2006-2015. The result of the analysis shows in what degree these particular metaphors are universal or typological for the cultures. In other words, do the journalists or politicians choose the same items from the disease domain while they talk about political situations in their countries? What political issues are depicted in terms of bad condition, illness or disorder in Poland and in the UK? This investigation proceeds an analysis of functions of the disease metaphors in political discourse. Do they depend on the type of discourse in which they are used? The article will address the questions illustrated by the selection of metaphorical expressions that occurred in the contemporary Polish and English political discourse. A deep analysis of the examples will lead to a conclusion on the structure and functions of disease metaphors in Polish and English political discourse.

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## Katarzyna Buczek

## University of Opole

## Levelling of i-umlaut in classical and post-classical Old Frisian

I-mutation belongs to the group of vowel harmony processes and is considered as one of the most important vowel changes in West Germanic languages. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that its “development is not reflected to the same extent in the various dialects” (Nielsen 1981: 89). There are many word categories which, despite favourable i-umlaut conditions, did not follow the pattern and adopted, due to analogy, more regular, dominant flexion paradigms: “(…) the action of umlaut is often obscured by analogical levelling of the alternations introduced by it [or] by loss or modification of the conditioning environment (…)” (Trask 2000: 352). Thus, the tendency of languages to regularise their morphological patterns leads to elimination of i-umlaut in later stages of the languages’ development. This paper aims to discuss levelling of i-umlaut in classical (ca. 1300-1400) and post-classical (ca.1400-1550) Old Frisian. When we look at Old Frisian nominal declension patterns, we can notice that i-umlaut often undergoes paradigmatic levelling e.g., *i-*stem nouns often adopt the declension patterns of *a*-stem and ō-stem nouns for masculine and feminine respectively. Similarly, plural forms of *root*-stem nouns do not always have their root vowels mutated and often follow strong *a*-declension (*mon* / *man* ‘man’ vs. *men* or *mon* /*man* ‘men’). Levelling of i-umlaut can also be observed in Old Frisian comparative and superlative forms of adjectives as well as in third person singular present forms of strong verbs. The paper will try to evaluate the extent of i-umlaut levelling and compare the situation in classical and post-classical Old Frisian.

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## Dorisa D. Costello

## Vilnius University

## Undead Corpse/Corpus: Textual Transmission and Butler’s Ek-static Subject in Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*

Sheridan Le Fanu’s Victorian Gothic novella, *Carmilla*, problematizes sexual and social identity through the use of an illicit homosocial relationship between the titular vampiress and her human victim and complicit lover, Laura. Through Judith Butler’s theory of the ek-static subject, where a second, public self is necessary for recognition, I claim that Laura is pathologized by the patriarchal representatives of her father (family), Baron Vordenburg (society) and Doctor Hesselius (science) until she denounces her relationship with Carmilla and confesses the affair, ultimately leading to Carmilla’s brutally misogynistic destruction. At the same time, however, Laura is able to reclaim both the homosocial relationship and her own selfhood through the device of an epistolary frame used in the text which subverts the hegemonic structure, transmits and reanimates her (un)dead self. Through this device, another kind of confession, Laura reconstructs her own selfhood, validates her homosocial relationship and appropriates her means of oppression, empowering herself through the very linguistic means that pathologize her. In this way, Le Fanu presents a radical text that questions relations of power and the formation of identity.

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## Maciej H. Dąbrowski

## University of Wroclaw

## Literary Descriptions of Death Pertaining to Blood Sacrifice in Augustan Poetry

Under the rule of emperor Augustus a set of reforms have been carried out. One of the crucial elements of the planned changes was the restitution of traditional Roman religion. According to G. Wissowa and his famous work *Religion und Kultus der Römer* the best way to know a religion is through analyzing its cultic practices. In the literature of Augustan period we may find many representations of Roman religious life, mostly in historiography of that time, but particularly interesting are poetical depictions. Blood sacrifices can surely be seen as one of the most important elements of the Roman religion. It is curious in what way the Roman authors of that time describe death in relation to sacrifice. While non-poetic texts most frequently simply refer to the case of killing sacrificial animals only, in poetry we may face scenes much more complicated as well as elaborated. It should be noted that sacrificial metaphorics is being evoked even while death occurs in a non-sacrificial context and that it is not limited to writing about animals only while also human deaths are sometimes described this way. The aim of my paper is to present a short review of the sacrificial problematic found in the descriptions of death. Basing on an analysis of several chosen examples from the Augustan poetry I wish to show how the topic of death is presented by Latin authors while they make some references to blood sacrifice.

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## Stephen Dewsbury

## University of Opole

## Tramping the Dirt Down: The Real and Imagined Death of Margaret Thatcher

*The Death of Margaret Thatcher* (2008) is a play written by British playwright, Tom Green. The play debuted at The Courtyard Theatre, London and received unsurprising criticism mainly due to its controversial prophetic subject matter. Notably the main grievance being that at the time Margaret Thatcher was not dead. June Abbot, the producer of the play defended the criticism claiming that the work puts Thatcher’s death “…on a par with events such as the death of Kennedy and Princess Diana”. Green’s prophetic but imagined version of events surrounding the death of Margaret Thatcher touched the nerves of those who supported her and derided her. In the main it raised questions and provoked thought as to how British culture copes and manages with the passing of public figures of authority, fame and celebration, and in this case a public figure of notable derision. The intention of the paper is to examine how the British prepared for, and anticipated the passing of their former Prime Minister. The paper utilizes Green’s play to explore concepts such as public grief and provides accounts of how the British evidently mourn differently than they once did. Once considered the culture of ‘the stiff upper lip’, the collective mourning and celebratory tones displayed during the deaths of famous British public figures seems to signify a markedly different form of grieving, one which is evidently more carnivalesque. The paper takes into account the pre-occupation with celebrating Thatcher’s death, rather than grieving, and the events which took place surrounding the actual death of Margaret Thatcher.

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## Łukasz Fabia

## Jagiellonian University in Cracow

## Diseases in the Little Poland’s (Małopolska) Vitae (the Lives) and Miracula (the List of miracles) of the Saints in the 13th and 14th Centuries

The *vitae* (the Lives) and *miracula* (the list of miracles) are the part of the wider literary genre hagiography and as such have been used by historians from many years. This study treats these as sources non only for traditionally understood historical facts or as a source for religious life but also as a source for social life for example conditions and diseases of medieval society in view of the Lives of the saint. The main purpose of these texts is to analyze the vitae (the Lives) and miracula (the List of miracles) of Little Poland’s hagiography which was created in 13th and 14th centuries. In this group may be mentioned sources as shorter and longer life (*Vita Maior* and *Vita Minor*) of Saint Stanislaus of Szczepanów, Bishop of Cracow and the Martyr, the Lives of Saint Kinga of Poland (*Vita sanctae Kyngae ducissae Cracoviensis*), the Lives of Salomea the queen of Halych (*Vita Salomeae reginae Haliciensis*) and finally, the Lives and list of miracles of Saint Hyacinth, O.P (*De vita miraculis sancti Jacchonis*). In my paper a try to present the list of conditions and diseases of medieval society in view of Little Poland’s Lives and List of miracles of the saints which was created in 13th and 14th centuries. After presentation I try to analyze the condition of medieval society, their illness and, at least, try to answer, who of the these saints cured specific affections

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## Jerzy Maciej Fatyga

## John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

## Death and Legacy: Burials of Pharaohs of the First Phase of the 18th Dynasty

History of Theban necropolis is generally well known. The time of first phase of XVIIIth dynasty is astonishing because we know who was buried but we haven’t suspense where which pharaoh buried. I will present burials of pharaoh Ahmose I, Amenhotep I, Thutmose I and Thutmose II. The base of text was papyrus Abotta (now is in British Museum) and archeological sites. Archaeologists find artefacts in tombs. We must assign them to the owner of the tomb. Medicine, art history, archeology and history are helpful in this work. Each grave of pharaohs is mystery of history Theban necropolis. I think we can add some graves belonged to queens and princes of XVIIth and XVIIIth because basically successors until the reign of Thutmose III have not developed necropolis for women. Tomb of Thutmose III is, however, probably the first properly identified tomb in the Valley of Kings. Studies at the Valley of the Kings should be referred to researches at the cemetery at Dra Abu el-Naga, wadi Sikkat-Taqa Zeid and Deir el-Bahari. I suppose that ANB grave should be attributed to the tomb of Amenhotep I located in the cemetery Dra Abu el-Naga. Thutmose I was originally buried in tomb KV 20 extended later by his daughter Hatshepsut. Re-buried in tomb KV 38 moved there from the tomb KV 20 by his grandson Thutmose III. My argument is that it is not updated the tomb of Tuthmosis II. I propose to place him in the Valley of the Kings or in the Dra Abu el-Naga, or in the Deir el-Bahari.

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## Tomasz Fisiak

## University of Łódź

## “I’ve Made you Ugly”: Decay, Disease and Death in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*

In his seminal book on Grande Dame Guignol, Peter Shelley describes the aforementioned cinematic phenomenon as “a subgenre of the larger film genres of crime, drama, film noir, horror, mystery, and thriller, often appearing with elements of melodrama, comedy, fantasy, and musicals” (2). He also quotes John Baxter, who viewed this type of films as “exercises in sado-gerontophilia” celebrating “decrepitude” (2). Indeed, for Grande Dame Guignol is concerned with widely understood process of fading and dying. Robert Aldrich’s *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962) serves here as a pertinent illustration, the film narrating a story of a strained relationship between two sisters-actresses, a crippled Blanche and a psychotic Jane, played by Joan Crawford and Bette Davis respectively. The two women live in a dilapidated house, nearly forgotten by the society, surrounded by a multitude of things reminding them of a once glamourous past. Disease and disorder inevitably permeate their hopeless existence and, finally, death creeps in, as well. Literal and symbolic decay manifests itself in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*in manifold ways – its multidimensionality will be thus the main concern of my presentation.

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## Joanna Gacka

## University of Opole

## Illness and Decay in Capitalist Classed Societies: Blomkamp’s and Romanek’s Dystopian Visions

The issue of the future of health care has been widely debated among futurologists. The main focus, however, has been put on the possible ways medicine could advance, changing the lives of individuals. Yet, what seems a reasonable question to ask is – how might the advancement of medicine influence social and economic systems. This paper is going to look at the reciprocal relations between illness and the classed capitalist system as portrayed in two recent dystopian pictures: Mark Romanek’s *Never Let Me Go* (2010) and Neill Blomkamp’s *Elysium* (2013). The realities depicted in these movies as well as their stories vary considerably, yet, what seems to be common to both of them is their pessimistic vision of disease and decay as means of – and reason for – maintaining or creating social classes. The two dystopias show some possible dangers posed by the incompatibility of capitalist mindset with morality and ethicality, presenting social classes as a result of the conflict and implying that such power relations are doomed to result in corruption in the way health care is organized.

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## Fatma Gamze Erkan

## Ege University, Turkey

## The Question of Death and Life in Edgar Allan Poe’s ‘Morella’

Death is one of the biggest worries of human being and the main characteristic that distinguishes him/her from Gods. For centuries, human being has sought a way to defeat death. One of the transcultural ways of defeating death is provided by the belief in the resurrection of the dead. From the beginning of the humanity to our day, reincarnation stories hold a significant part both in culture and literature. Since literature is a medium in portraying human being’s anxieties, worries, and fears, in literary texts, it is inevitable for the authors to delve into the themes of death and rebirth. Edgar Allan Poe, one of the worldly authors has a morbid interest in the theme of death and reincarnation, as well. Raising the questions of why Poe’s tales and poems are mostly about the death of women and why he portrays resurrected heroines, my paper aims to find a correlation between Poe’s life and his works especially focusing on the short story “Morella”.

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## Tomasz Gornat

## University of Opole

## 'Once a year the dead live for one day': Disease, Decay and Death in Malcolm Lowry'sUnder the Volcano.

Fittingly for the major preoccupations of Malcolm Lowry’s *Under the Volcano*, its action takes place on the Day of the Dead. Yet the carnivalesque, affirmative aspects of the Mexican holiday are hardly depicted in the text. Instead, it is obsessed with the shadow of imminent death emanating from Geoffrey Firmin, the alcoholic protagonist, who, on the macrocosmic scale, represents the apocalypse of the world on the brink of war. References to physical and mental disease, decay and death abound: the Consul’s deteriorating health, paranoid delusions and mental breakdown due to his dipsomania; his and Yvonne’s eventual deaths; Firmin’s alleged involvement in the burning alive of the German officers in the furnaces of S. S. Samaritan; the central figure of the Indian dying by the roadside; the repeated rule regarding the transportation of a corpse by train; Yvonne’s child who died of meningitis and an anonymous child’s funeral. Additionally, the wasteland of *Under the Volcano* reflecting the Consul’s dying soul and his fate includes plants withering in decayed gardens, ruined churches and castles, cemeteries, the *barranca*, the ravine splitting Quauhnahuac, the *cantina* called *La Sepultura*, or vultures, scorpions, snakes and pariah dogs prominent in the animal world. Intertextual connections, allusions and references reinforce the central themes of the novel: the Bible, particularly the apocalyptic Book of Revelation, Greek mythology, Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, Dante’s *Inferno*, or the ubiquitous advertisements for *Las Manos de Orlac*, to name just a few. Explaining the novel’s indebtedness to the Jewish Cabbala, Lowry states: “The Consul’s spiritual domain (…) is probably Qliphoth, the world of shells and demons, represented by the Tree of Life upside down.”

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## Mika Hallila

## University of Warsaw

## Literature, Tobacco, and the Metaphors of Illness

In my paper, I will analyze the representations of tobacco use in two contemporary Finnish novels in terms of disease and death. More specifically, the analysis will focus on the representations of cigarette smoking in Kari Hotakainen’s novels *Juoksuhaudantie* (2002, “Trench Street”) and *Ihmisen osa* (2009, “The Human’s Part”). The aim is to discuss how the novels present the metaphorical parallelism between tobacco and diseases. First of all, I will consider the question of illness as metaphor as it was originally introduced by Susan Sontag in her works *Illness as Metaphor* (1978) and *AIDS and Its Metaphors* (1989). Secondly, I will apply the ideas of Sontag in the analysis of the representations of smoking in the novels of Hotakainen. Within the context and discourse provided by Sontag, I will point out how and why the novels of Hotakainen represent cigarette smoking and cigarette smokers. The starting point is the remark that in each of the novels, the smoking and smokers are ironically compared to disablement, diseases, and death. Eventually, by interpreting *Juoksuhaudantie* and *Ihmisen osa* in the Sontagian context of metaphorical discourses of illness, I will argue that the novels are representing how in the contemporary culture tobacco functions as one of the main metaphors of illness and death.

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## Agata G. Handley

## University of Łódź

## Disease, Demise and Dominance in the Poetry of Tony Harrison

The public, politically-involved voice of Tony Harrison’s poetry evolves around the issue of the dominance of authoritarian culture over the culture of the suppressed. The collection that develops this theme extensively is *The Loiners* in which the backdrop for the interplay of private and public affairs, the intimate and the political, is Colonialism and consequently Imperialism, presented as powerful forces that shape the western consciousness and British identity. For Harrison, who is for many above all a class poet, the relations between the privileged culture of the higher classes and the working-class culture of the English North in Commonwealth Britain, based on the dichotomy between the “dominant” and “subject,” bare resemblance to the relations between the colonizers and the colonizedin the times of the British Empire. Referring to the work of among others Susan Sontag and Zygmunt Bauman, the paper focuses on representations of disease and demise (syphilis, mental illness, destruction of the body, occupational disease, death) which organize the theme of colonial experience and authoritarian concern with power transferred in Harrison’s later work (*The School of Eloquence*) to the national context. The investigation of the metaphorical character of these representations is a prerequisite to understand the way Harrison delves in *The Loiners* into the concept of tyrannical hierarchies which construct personal and political relationships and into the problem of identity of the suppressors and thesuppressed, revealing different continuities between private and public experience which in the imperial context assume the form of the continuity between the interior suppression of human psyche and exterior, political violence.

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## Manel Herat

## Liverpool Hope University

## Child Epitaphs: A Diachronic Study from the Nineteenth Century to the Present

Graveyard epitaphs from the nineteenth century to the present are a rich linguistic resource for investigating attitudes towards death, ritual and identity from a diachronic perspective. Grave inscriptions regardless of whether they are 'magnificent' or 'mundane' serve as remembrances of the deceased and can be used to study processes of change. In this study, a corpus of 957 epitaphs from the nineteenth century to the present day were examined for evidence of diachronic changes in ritual, identity construction, use of euphemistic metaphors and sacred language. The corpus was categorised according to age and temporality. Corpus methodology was used to analyse data using AntConc and normalised frequency scores per 1000 words. In addition, Log likelihood (LL) scores were used to test results for significance. Findings from the analyses suggest that changes have occurred in linguistic style and attitudes towards death, especially in relation to child death. Coping with the death of a child, appears to pose bigger challenges for modern parents than it did in the nineteenth century. Religion still appears to be the source from which people draw comfort and solace although the influence of religion is now much less than in the past. These findings are discussed in light of the evolution of gravestone inscriptions over time and are indicative of the differing values of the day.

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## Kamila Kalista

## University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw

## Love and Death or Laugh at Death? Presentation Based on ‘Love and Death’ (1975) by Woody Allen

“I am not afraid of death. I just don’t want to be there when it happens.”

*Woody Allen*

Death is one of the core features in many Woody Allen comedies. However, the director treats the humor not only as a means of entertainment, fun, and enjoyment but also as part of his philosophical commentaries which have an underlying dignified and intellectual tone. The purpose of the presentation is to attempt to present the subject of death in funny and humorous ways as Allen did in the film ‘Love and Death’, where he created a hilarious parody of Tolstoy’s ‘War and Peace’. Allen plays Boris, a schlemiel in the beginning scenes, who later, fuelled by his love for Sonia, becomes a hero. While the film is funny, sometimes even reminiscent of early slapstick, there are references to philosophical issues and concerns. Throughout the movie he tries to resolve the questions of life after death, the existence of God and love. He also includes imagery such as the figure of Death from Ingmar Bergman’s film ‘The Seventh Seal’ (1956), who periodically accompanies Boris and with whom he is seen dancing with in the last scene. Thus the presentation will mainly focus on the one of motifs– Death, which the director mocks with ridicule.

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## Marzena Keating

## University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw

## Eat, Drink, and Be Merry, for Tomorrow We Die: A Recipe for a Joyous Irish Wake

Although saying our farewells to the recently deceased loved ones encompasses sorrow and bereavement, the custom of waking the dead in Irish culture is not only an occasion for sadness, but also for merriment evoked by eating, drinking, storytelling, playing games, and dancing. The practice of keeping a vigil or watch over a dead body from the time of death until burial was a common custom in most Celtic countries. Various rituals accompanying the wake had their pagan origins and, therefore, were frowned upon by the church, who regarded them as sinful or even scandalous events. Although the tradition started to diminish, the send-off of the departed ones is still a very prominent feature in Irish culture, especially in the rural areas where it remains as an integral part of the grieving process. Still to this day, the wake is a celebration of mixed joy and sadness and a chance to reminisce about the person in a lively manner. Since the ceremonial farewell is regarded as a sign of the strength of community in Ireland, in this paper I attempt to disclose various wake customs that have been practised among the Irish and illustrate how those traditions have reflected the Irish view of death. The paper focusing on the Irish death rituals from an anthropological perspective provides an account of earlier traditions followed with the description of mortuary practices in more recent context.

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## Aneta Kliszcz

## Ignatianum Academy in Cracow

## Death of the Immortal

Today popculture offers innumerable examples of immortal characters: modern fascination with these figures appears to illustrate death anxieties of liquid modernity (so acutedly and pointedly observed and discussed by Zygmunt Bauman). Yet, the same popculture forces its audiences to rethink the true meaning of immortality. What I would like to discuss in my paper is the somewhat self-contradictory phenomenon of death of immortal being (while speaking of immortals I have in mind the supernatural creatures such as gods, demons, angels, but also the undead, i.e. vampires, ghosts, etc.). It seems that while broaching the subject one should consider at least two following and mutually interwoven issues: first, the definition of life (and living), second, the image of an immortal actively seeking the end of its existence (which could be seen as a consequence an acquired understanding of immortality). Possibly the least complex example of discussion on what it really means to be immortal (or rather to conquer death) is provided in J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series, especially *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* with the strongly drawn opposition between Hallows and Horcruxes. Yet, there are other examples as Swift’s Guliver’s dissapointement in immortals seems to find its echo in at least few popucultural works. Thus, Anne Rice in her *The Vampire Chronicles* contemplates the idea of undead suicide – she suggest that living forever could be as dull and as exhausting as normal existence. Some undead, aware of the deterioration of their rationality (and incumbent loss of its identity) decide to end their existence, the concept present in Karen Harbaugh’s *The Vampire Viscount* or *izombie* (both comic book and tv series). In some texts one can also observe a deeply felt need (or temptation) to end a manifestly endless life affected by loneliness (e.g. *Highlander*, *Daybreakers,Forever*).

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## Marzena Kraszewska

## University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw

## Escape from Decay. The Cult of Youth in Academic Novels

The changes of cultural and social conventions in the 20th century were connected among others with the popularisation of the cult of youth, already discernible in the ancient Greek tradition and associated with the belief that man reached the ideal when he achieved the balance between the soul and the body. Nowadays, people spend their fortunes on cosmetics, suitable diets, beauty treatments, plastic surgeries to keep their young appearance. More and more of them spend long hours at gyms, tennis or squash courts, in swimming pools and so on to keep vigour and their bodies fit. Being fit means to be successful and it is believed that if they do so, diseases and old age will not reach them or will be postponed forever. Generally, Western culture is not hospitable to agedness associated with loneliness, suffering and diseases and they very often are subject to taboos. As far as academic novels are concerned their subject matter changed during the decades and after the years of describing the Academia as the ivory tower concentrated on its own internal problems, it started to describe problems outside it. The 1960s and the 1970s being the age of youth, free love, drugs, depravity, terrible crimes against innocence, called by older people frightened by this development the ‘permissive society’ and also the beginning of the university crisis founded its reflection and commentary in academic novels of that time in the form of academic affair and middle-life crisis plots, which are continued up to present times. The main task of the paper is to illustrate how the issues of decay, diseases and death are presented in academic novels on the basis works by David Lodge, Philip Roth and J. M. Coetzee.

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## Katarzyna Kubaszczyk

## Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

## Definitions of Death among Poles in the Context of the Discourse on Brain Death

The article aims to analyze the results of surveys on a representative sample and to formulate conclusions for manners of conceiving of the death among Poles in comparison with the way it is defined in the medical discourse related to organ transplantation issues. Subject to the analysis and preliminary categorization will be the quantitative and qualitative elements of statements collected from interviews. The study assumes that the collected linguistic material will both be the subject of analysis of the language content and form, as well as the image of the distribution of knowledge.

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## Sławomir Kuźnicki

## University of Opole

## Rotting Melancholy: The False Utopia of Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Buried Giant*

The ancient physicians, such as Hippocrates, Galen and their followers, believed it was the black bile, one of the substances produced by human body, that was responsible for the disease of melancholy. When oozed in excess, this heavy sediment was supposed to contaminate an individual’s blood, and, consequently, his or her body and spirit. An interesting contemporary reworking of the motif of the black bile can be observed in Kazuo Ishiguro’s latest novel, *The Buried Giant* (2015). In the world created in the book – a combination of Arthurian setting with the elements of fantasy – people experience the peculiar state of oblivion brought upon them by the mysterious fog. Although this fog enables a peaceful coexistence of previous enemies, it also causes the feelings of overwhelming uneasiness and unidentified menace. In this context, Ishiguro’s vision appears to be the representation of the false utopia where memory is sacrificed to achieve ostensible perfection. Furthermore, the way Ishiguro creates the novel’s world resembles the ancient views on a human organism and the methods according to which it is organized. It is especially visible in the aforementioned fog of oblivion, as it mirrors the black bile, simultaneously triggering the state of melancholy. In my paper I would like to discuss the approaches to melancholy, both ancient and more contemporary (Freud and Kristeva), as present in Ishiguro’s *The Buried Giant*. I would also like to demonstrate the dependencies between melancholy and utopia that enable the perception of the novel as a deliberately failed utopian project.

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## Łucja Lange

## University of Łódź

## An Attempt to Restore the Ordinary Death to the Visual Realm — Artistic, Therapeutic and Ethical Aspects of the Post-mortem Photography in the Twenty-first Century.

The aim of the speech is to present the use of post-mortem photography in the twenty-first century, as a part of therapy in coping with the grief. The analysis covered the most characteristic example, developed by the American organization "Now I Lay Me Down To Sleep", the purpose of which is to support the parents of terminally ill children, born with a genetic defect or stillborn. The theoretical basis for the deliberations are taken from the anthropology of death and anthropology of the senses. The issue of the analysis concerns at the change in the image of an ordinary death in public discourse and inspiration driven from Victorian Era Post-mortem Photography. At aesthetic, therapeutic and ethical levels are considered actions of photographers taking pictures of stillborn and sick children. This interpretation is justified by thanatological reflections of Louis-Vincent Thomas and Alfonso di Nola as well as psychological and sociological theories about the impact of visual culture on people (Belting, Mitchell, Smith, Tomasello).

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## Tadeusz Lewandowski

## University of Opole

## Dying to Save Lives: Zell Kravinsky and Lethal Organ Donation

In 2003, after disbursing the bulk of his accumulated fortune of forty-five million dollars to various charities, Zell Kravinsky (1956-) made the even greater altruistic decision to donate one of his kidneys to an impoverished African-American woman he had met only once. In doing so he courageously saved a life, but also incurred the wrath of his family, friends, and many observers in the media who questioned his sanity. To Kravinsky, however, refusal to donate would have been tantamount to murder, and as well constitute a violation of his belief in “maximum human utility” – a philosophical concept that conflates the value of others with both one’s family and oneself. Kravinsky has since stated that he would gladly undergo a lethal organ donation in order to save a greater number of people from death, or to save people who might better serve humanity. He has even gone so far as to suggest he would give up the lives of his children to save a greater number of others. This paper offers an examination of Kravinsky’s belief in lethal organ donation, exploring the issue of utilitarian valuations of the common good and the arguably flawed principles that underpin “maximum human utility.”

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## Agnieszka Łowczanin

## University of Łódź

## Death and Early Gothic Fiction

Gothic fiction's fascination with distress, decay and morbidity unmistakably points to one source of imaginative potential for all its tropes: death. Written at a period which was wedged between the domesticated and accepted representations of death, as in exemplary deaths in Richardson, or, didactic in tone, terrifying deaths of Smollett's characters on the one hand, and melodramatic, violent, and grotesque deaths of Victorian novels on the other, Gothic fiction grapples with the inherited Christian meaning of death, plays with its subversive physicality, and draws on its great narrative aesthetic and psychological potential. This paper will examine the Female Gothic way of death with the aim of comparing the fiction of Ann Radcliffe and Anna Mostowska.

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## Janusz Malak

## University of Opole

## From Where did the Death of the English Inflection Come?

Inflection in Modern English appears to have been the result of far reaching atrophy and nowadays plays a marginal role. This observation is a bit surprising if one takes into account the fact that the dialects which started to be used on the British soil in the 5th century and gave rise to Old English were characterized by a fairly rich inflectional system. Inflection plays a very important role not only in the production but also in the interpretation of spoken/written linguistic products. Granting this, it is hard to find any convincing explanation to the question why the subsequent generations of Middle and Modern English chose to kill their inflection through sending it into disuse. Assuming that there has never been any communicationalbreach between the subsequent generations of speakers of English, thefairly rapid evaporation of the inflectional material, attested in texts composed in England between 1150 and 1450, appears to be a linguistic phenomenon whose sources and nature is still poorly understood. The aim of this presentation is contrasting two approaches to this phenomenon, namely intrasystemic and extrasystemic, and gauging the degree of plausibility offered by the two approaches in explaining the sources of the death of the English inflection. In other words, this presentation is an attempt to find out to what extent the disappearance of the English inflection was the result of linguistic changes operating at different linguistic levels (intrasystemic approach) and to what extent it may have been brought about by such a sociolinguistic phenomenon as, for instance, language contact (extrasystemic approach).

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## Katarzyna Małecka

## University of Social Sciences, Łódź

## “Is Grief a Disease?”: Perspectives on Bereavement in Modern Grief Memoirs

In his 1960 paper “Is Grief a Disease?” George L. Engel advances the idea that grief can be classified as a disease. To skeptics, Engel replies, “[Grief] is ‘natural’ or ‘normal’ in the same sense that a wound or a burn are the natural or normal responses to physical trauma. The designation ‘pathological’ refers to the changed state and not the fact of the response.” Even if one does not agree with Engel’s concept, grief is conditioned by too many factors and variables to dismiss it altogether. Based on 15 memoirs of spousal loss written by American, English, and Canadian women, this paper looks at the aspects of grief that indeed could classify it as a malady of the spirit, mind, and body.

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## Paweł Marcinkiewicz

## University of Opole

## Kenneth Goldsmith and *The Body of Michael Brown*

According to Marjorie Perloff, Kenneth Goldsmith is one of the most important contemporary American poets. Goldsmith belongs to the school of “conceptual literature,” which resigns from the traditionally understood notion of the author, perceived as an expression of *inventio*. Instead, conceptual writers use appropriation, elaborate constraint, visual and sound composition, and they rely on intertextuality. In fact, Goldsmith’s poems lack verbal originality altogether, being examples of rewritten texts: *Soliloquy* (2001) records chronologically all words that the poet spoke out during one week in 2000; *Day* (2003) is a full transcription of *The New York Times* from September 1, 2000; *Weather* (2005) collects weather reports from 2002 and 2003, and orders them from the winter to the fall. Goldsmith’s most recent book – *The Body of Michael Brown* (2014) – is a far more controversial composition: the poet uses the autopsy report issued by the St. Louis County Coroner's Office on the shooting of Michael Brown, an African-American teenager who was shot and killed by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, on August 9, 2014, setting off local protests that spread to many cities nationwide. According Goldsmith’s book-length poem, in contemporary America, murder is clearly motivated by racial issues.

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## Magdalena Mączyńska

## University of Opole

## “[R]elease from the weariness of time” – on Death and Immortality in J. R. R. Tolkien’s Mythopoeia

In J. R. R. Tolkien’s mythopoeia death (or to be more precise its acceptance or rejection) appears to be one of the central themes. It inadvertently moulds the way various beings perceive the world, as each of the races projects on to their own beliefs the limitations imposed by the allotted lifespan. Death forestalls understanding, especially that the final destiny of the Children of Ilúvatar differs depending on their ancestry – being either bound to the confines of the world, or forced to move forever beyond its borders, the inhabitants of Middle-earth are completely separated by either death or immortality. For this very reason Elves and Men in Tolkien’s works although existing side by side are unable to truly comprehend the complexity of the fate of the other race. Seen as a punishment, mortality is the major cause of rebellions against either Ilúvatar or the Valar. Moreover, it seems to be the reason for Men’s strong dislike towards the Elves who are regarded as the privileged race. The Elves in their turn disregard Men for their lack of knowledge of the beginning of things. The conflict brings one’s attention to the fact that the escalation of the fight against one’s nature has not only individual consequences but also shapes the physical boundaries of Arda itself. The paper focuses on attitudes towards death and dying in Tolkien’s legendarium. It examines the discrepancies between human and elven perception of the ultimate matters. What is more, the paper discusses the eschatological issues pertaining to Arda and its inhabitants.

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## Przemysław Michalski

## Pedagogical University of Cracow

## Death, Disintegration and Decay in the Poetry of Roland Stuart Thomas

The word “death” appears no fewer than sixty-two times in the combined *Collected Poems*, *Collected Later Poems*, and *Uncollected Poems* of the Welsh priest-poet Roland Stuart Thomas (1913-2000). In my paper, I would like to discuss three different approaches to the mystery of death which can be seen in his work. The first group contains poems which show a helpless priest witnessing a slow disintegration and eventual death of his parishioners. These are usually morose meditations on the inevitability of death and the ineffectuality of rituals which the priest may, or may not, choose to administer. The second group depict Thomas as a staunch Welsh patriot, sometimes dangerously flirting with the vagaries of nationalism. They are an account of what he deems to be a gradual cultural and linguistic demise of his country, which has been colonized and subjugated by the English. Finally, the last cluster of poems demonstrate Thomas’s profound knowledge of modern science and its findings. The pries-poet often ponders the fact of the ineluctable disintegration of the expanding universe, which is slowly petering out of existence.

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## Paulina Mirowska

## University of Łódź

## Unburying the Dead: Sam Shepard’s Mature Work for the Stage

Sam Shepard had his New York debut as a playwright in 1964 at Theatre Genesis, where his playfully disruptive one-act pieces *Cowboys* and *The Rock Garden* were first performed. Since then, the Illinois-born artist, who has evolved from the countercultural underground of the 1960s to mainstream recognition and Hollywood, has continued to challenge his audiences with decades of subversive works which preclude an easy classification. Tapping into and boldly conflating a wide range of sources, genres and styles, he has offered provocative pastiches of myth and actuality consistently eluding totalizing interpretations. Intriguingly, in the course of a career that spans half a century, from the Vietnam era to the America of Barack Obama, Sam Shepard has often been labeled a “quintessentially American” playwright. According to Leslie Wade (1997), “[d]rawing from the disparate image banks of rock and roll, detective fiction, B-movies, and Wild West adventure shows,” Shepard’s texts “function as a storehouse of images, icons, and idioms that denote American culture and an American sensibility.” The present paper reflects upon Shepard’s playwrighting in the 2000s and beyond. The discussion centers primarily on his mature full-length play, *The Late Henry Moss*, first produced by the Magic Theatre, San Francisco, in November 2000, and portraying the eponymous protagonist – ironically present as a corpse in the opening act and later literally haunting the stage – and his two estranged sons, Earl and Ray, striving to come to terms with their loss.The paper seeks to provide an insight into this uncanny text that blends the real with the surreal, offering a meditation on death, mortality, the spectral, culpability, the importance of remembering and the possibility of redemption. It demonstrates how the veteran American playwright, struggling with the painful legacy of his own father, revisits the familiar emotional territory, resurrecting the core concerns of his artistic career, such as heredity, disintegrating families, domestic violence and crippling male rivalries among brothers, sons and fathers. It looks at how the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Buried Child* extends here his interrogation of American culture and American identity, especially American masculinity, addressing the inexorable weight of the past upon the present world. Special emphasis will be placed on the growing importance of a contemplative, even ethical, element to Shepard’s mature dramatic vision, on the writer’s apparent readiness to re-examine economies of domination derived from the Western codes of manhood and his increasing concern for interconnectedness, mutuality and empathetic bonding.

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## Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska

## University of Opole

## Framing Disease, Ageing and Death in Popular Science Journalism

Science journalism is a discursive domain where science-related content is expressed in ways that are accessible to the broader public. This paper aims to characterize some dominant frames in reports devoted to disease, ageing and death by identifying some devices used to engage readers, despite the alienating nature of such themes. The analytic perspective used here is an adaptation of the newsworthiness framework that has been applied in news discourse studies. The material is a collection of most read articles (according to online traffic) sampled from the website of the popular international science magazine *New Scientist* between late 2013 and late 2014. The sampled texts are analyzed to identify some framing devices that highlight the scientific credibility and newsworthiness of the coverage while mixing it with elements of drama, negativity and speculation. The analysis reveals that some frames for disease, ageing and death in popular science work as vehicles for sensationalization and celebration of (medical) science as a domain of reporting, and thus forward media outlets market-driven agendas rather than enhance the public understanding of medicine.

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## Jacek Mydla

## University of Silesia, Katowice

## Death and Oblivion: the “Oedipal” Narrative in *Psycho*,*Angel Heart*and *Shutter Island*

The paper will examine three narratives: Robert Bloch’s and Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho*, William Hjortsberg’s and Alan Parker’s *Falling Angel/Angel Heart (Harry Angel)* and Dennis Lehane’s and Martin Scorsese’s *ShutterIsland*, for their treatment of death as function and theme. The analysis will focus first on the ways in which these narratives (in both textual and film versions) sustain the presence of the dead and how this uncanny presence is used to generate narrative tension (anxious anticipation, suspense). Due to its ancient provenance (the self-centred “detective” plot of *Oedipus Tyrannus*) and because of its preoccupation with procreation, transgression, and persistent taboos, this past-oriented type of suspense is referred to a “oedipal.” Even though both in Sophocles and the contemporary narratives the awareness of mortality is acute (“death is everywhere”, a statement repeated in *Harry Angel* after *Oedipus*), the paper will discuss the different ways this awareness is tied to personal and communal responsibility. The role of lapses of memory (amnesia) will be addressed in both their suspense-building function and thematic relevance.

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## Małgorzata Nitka

## University of Silesia, Katowice

## Death and the Railway

David Newsome concludes his brief list of obvious technological, economic, and social reverberations of the railway with a literary, and *less* obvious, consequence, as he states that the railway “provided a handy way for novelists to dispose of their characters.” The history of the railway is, of course, from the very beginning closely entwined with death, to which testifies the fatal accident of William Huskisson during the first official train journey. As the railway travel became a regular practice, its routine operations were occasionally disrupted by derailments, collisions, mutilations or deaths of hapless trespassers who made a false step and found themselves on the track at a wrong moment. Having become reality, these “novel forms of imminent death,” to use Ralph Harrington’s phrase, could not but make their way into Victorian fiction, e.g. works of Elizabeth Gaskell or Mary Elizabeth Braddon. One of the more comprehensive and complex fictional accounts of death delivered by the train is provided in *Dombey and Son*, and this paper will examine Carker’s destruction under the “great wheels” as a case of sudden but expected, and rehearsed, death in which Dickens turns the railway into a carrier of fate.

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## Wit Pietrzak

## University of Łódź

## “I cannot thole the thought of Seamus Heaney dead”: Muldoon and the Endurance of Life

The presentation will explore Paul Muldoon’s elegy for Seamus Heaney “Cuthbert and the Otters” from *One Thousand Things Worth Knowing* (2015). Famous for his allusive elegiac style, Muldoon has written some of the most moving elegies of the past thirty years, coming into his strength in “Incantata” in memory of Mary Farl Power (1994). Indeed, elegy seems to play a crucial part in Muldoon’s work, for it is a ruse as much against the end of life as the end of the poem. In his lectures as Oxford Professor of Poetry, Muldoon spoke of writing (poetic as well as critical) as an attempt to prolong life so that it endures from poem to poem; as words lead to other words and images to other images, making one “think / of something else, then something else again,” the poet discovers an unbroken line of continuity between people who are sometimes separated by centuries but seem to co-exist in the words written by or of them. This perception of poetry as a life-sustaining force is checked in the elegy for Heaney, where the speaker, unusually for Muldoon’s garrulous personas, seems to falter at the attempt to elegise recently-deceased Heaney. The death of the older poet threatens to stifle the younger one unless the latter can discover a broader perspective, elusive in Muldoon’s earlier work, wherein the life that is now expired can be transported beyond the fleshly presence, into the sphere of purely intellectual and emotional being. Read against Muldoon’s earlier work, “Cuthbert and the Otters” succeeds in summoning life amid the silence-imposing fact by tracing a meandering path across the tradition of mourning verse from Shelley to Yeats and Auden, all the way to Heaney himself.

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## Agnieszka Powierska

## Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

## Animated Images of Mental Decay and Disorders

How to show emotions connected with death and loss in moving images? How to express experiences of mental illness and irregularities on a screen in a suggestive as well as sophisticated and gentle way? A very interesting (more and more popular) solution is to use factual animation. Its freedom of creation on the one hand and aspiration for a closeness to the real world – on the other – give it great possibilities to reveal an individual perspective. Factual animation is a convenient and flexible tool to display moods and unusual, distorted ways of perceiving. It discloses those aspect of the reality which are not visible. Authentic testimony and real voices in cooperation with various poetics of animation evokes emotional states and releases the viewers’ empathy. Symbols, metaphors and concepts, such as Chris Landreth’s psychorealism, help to show disintegrations of personality, breakdowns, trauma, agoraphobia, paranoia, autism, depression and passing. What is common and what is unique in such films as: A is for Autism (dir. Tom Webb, 1992), Snack and Drink (dir. Bob Sabiston, 1999), Animated Mind series (dir. Andy Glynne, 2003), Ryan (dir. Chris Landreth, 2004), Crulic. The Path To Beyond (dir. Anca Damian, 2011), Waltz with Bashir (dir. Ari Folman, 2008)? What are their strategies and techniques? What image of disease or death is shown in them? Do those films have therapeutic qualities?

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## Kamil Rusiłowicz

## The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

## Absent Fathers, Postindustrial Landscapes, and American Cars: Ruin and Allegory in Philip Meyer’s *American Rust*

The purpose of the presentation is to apply Walter Benjamin’s theory of the *Trauerspiel* to Philip Meyer’s *American Rust* in order to analyze the ruined landscape of post-Fordist America. According to Benjamin, the German tragic drama exemplified a Baroque worldview of reality devoid of transcendental foundations and juxtaposed the melancholy, indecisive sovereign-martyr with the allegorist engaged in the process of re-negotiating his relationship to language and the material world. Situated within the chronotope of materialized history represented as the accumulation of debris, the Baroque subject had to relinquish any attempts at recreating the lost order of the world, instead entering a dialogue with the material testimonies to the world devoid of divine guarantees. Similarly, Meyer’s novel depicts a postindustrial America where the ruined landscape becomes a testimony to Benjamin’s view of history as catastrophe, yet in this contemporary incarnation the myth of monarchy is replaced by the myth of Fordist economy. However, while the *Trauerspiel* depicted a sovereign unable to stop the ruination of the world, *American Rust* presents a world where the sovereign is absent altogether, its former subjects trapped within the ruined kingdom that offers no solace. The presentation will discuss how the characters of Meyer’s novel (exemplifications of Benjamin’s allegorists) interact with the Baroque landscape, looking in vain for a way out of the Fordist, desolate kingdom.

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## Yogitha Shetty

## University of Hyderabad, India

## Death and Life-after in Kōṭi-Chennaya Tradition

In a predominantly oral-performative community of *Tuḷuvas* (an ethnolinguistic minority community in west coast India), a symbiotic interaction between death and life-after; between *kāyo* (body) and *māyoka* (‘spirit’ual),or in extension, between past and present, is integral to its cosmic imaginary. While life-death-life schema guides the ontology of beings of yesteryear, they also percolate into every ‘present’ after that. This outside-the-closure, beyond-the-spatiotemporal, essence of deified beings is a fundamental constituent of the Tuluva religious cosmos. This paper would reflect on the symbolic significance of death and life-after-death as played out in the Koti-Chennaya tradition in *Tuḷu* region, and contrast it with the women’s mass ‘possession’ tradition of *Siri*. The purported twin warriors of a ‘lower’ caste, Koti and Chennaya fought against feudal-caste discrimination in 16th century *Tuḷunadu*, and attained deified status after death. Taking Koti-Chennaya oral narrative and the embodying practices during ritual as a referential text, this paper reflects on the many significations of death and life-after of these masculine deities. It demonstrates how death by killing becomes an epiphanic moment of ‘recognition’ by the hitherto oppressing groups, and how scripting Koti-Chennaya on caste bodies signifies as subaltern resistance. These and other semiotic codes maintained by the memory-public will be analyzed as symbols of cultural resistant imaginary for present day caste politics. And, investigate how by ritually negating death as a closure, and by continually evoking the capital of masculine ancestral memory, democratic politics is vernacularized. Finally, a comparative reflection of Koti-Chennaya with Siri tradition, an all-women mass mediumship tradition in Tulunadu – both centred on the memorialization of death, but distinguished by their spatial significance – will open up possibilities for South Asian feminist epistemological concerns.

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## Gregory S. Szarycz

## University of Wroclaw

## Dis-Ease, Dis-Ability and Rehabilitation in Art and Culture: A Context for Understanding Health Tourism on the French Riviera through the Late Works of Pierre Auguste Renoir

This paper investigates issues of tourism, degeneration and health in France during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It argues that French concerns for health grew out of social anxieties about a perceived threat of the nation's physical and cultural degeneration. Anxieties about disease, industrialization, infant mortality, and cultural decline were some of the prominent concerns characterising the fin-de- siècle attitude between the Franco-Prussian War and the First World War (1870-1914). Such anxieties were placated by Health Tourism, which, through popular travel literature and medical discourse, encouraged salubrious places as antidotes to the degenerate, industrialised metropolis. Forming part of a larger popular phenomenon that privileged the region as a salubrious and rejuvenating environment, this paper presents Pierre Auguste Renoir's late works of c. 1895-1919 (his death) as consolatory images of healthiness and youthfulness, paradoxically portrayed by an elderly, ailing and rheumatic man, in the context of a wider cultural phenomenon which privileged the South of France, particularly the Côte d'Azur as an escapist site of classical cultural heritage and physical rejuvenation. Renoir's late works, portraying healthy, robust, female nudes not only act as contemporary travel posters, advertising aspects of Health Tourism in the Côte d'Azur, including the contemporary therapeutic activities of climatotherapy, heliotherapy and hydrotherapy, but are also anti-modernist in their nostalgic longings for the classical past. Renoir's touristic perception of the Côte d'Azur, as represented in his late works exists in a network of social, artistic and medical histories as well as reflects specific cultural associations to an alternative modernity which offered rejuvenation, consolation and pleasure to an ailing artist and nation.

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## Marcin Tereszewski

## University of Wrocław

## Towards Inner Space: New Wave Science Fiction’s Debt to Gothic fiction

New Wave science fiction distinguished itself from popular science fiction of the 1960s with narratives that were more apocalyptic in theme and darker in tone as opposed to the optimistic and reactionary pulp magazines of the Golden Age. With moral ambiguity rather than simplistic conservatism characterizing their work, New Wave writers provided a more detailed exploration of psychological decay and entropy, and, in effect, brought science fiction closer to established literary standards. It will be argued on the basis of J.G. Ballard’s fiction that New Wave’s ambitions to create a more literate science fiction were partially satiated by appropriating elements from Surrealism and Gothic traditions in creating narratives focused on a *bricolage* of themes: death (apocalyptic and psychological), decay (urban and psychological) and psychopathological characters blurring the distinction between dream and reality. Stereotypical gothic landscape and architecture are correlated with a psychological atmosphere of perversion, violence and dread, but this is accomplished with the help of a new catalogue of architectural trappings which take into account modern anxieties. In this paper, therefore, I would like to trace New Wave’s fascination with death and decay not only to the works of William S. Burroughs and the Surrealist tradition, both of which had an immense influence on the imagery and techniques employed in this revamped mode of science fiction writing, but also to the Gothic tradition which constituted an already established set of motifs and techniques informing New Wave fiction.

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## Jamie A. Thomas

## Swarthmore College

## Talking About Zombies and Violent Death in the Time of Mexico’s Drug War

Rows of tabloid newspapers adorn kiosks lining Mexico City’s busy morning streets. Their front pages vividly proclaim the latest victims of the drug war in graphic, bloody, full-color images. Every once and a while, heavily armed masked police patrol the city’s main arteries. Perhaps this is why the majority of drug trafficking deaths occur outside the city, in the country’s northern states. Meanwhile, at one of the city’s universities, students discuss this daily media coverage: ‘La sociedad [está] viendo tanta violencia.’ *Society is viewing so much violence.* However, there is a difference of opinion: ‘A mí no me parece excesivo.’ *To me it doesn’t seem excessive.* In this paper, I explore how violent death is discursively framed within a classroom community acutely aware of the drug war and also increasingly desensitized to it: ‘Diario un niño vea cincuenta descabezados, tres colgados, dos quemados.’ *Daily a child may see fifty decapitated [bodies], three hanged, two burnt.* Using a mixture of interactional sociolinguistics and critical discourse analysis, I examine the disempowerment they voice about the skewed international coverage of drug violence in Mexico. In particular, I pay attention to how the discussion shifts as the students’ professor weighs in, linking flawed and hyper-violent media coverage of Mexico to similarly motivated media depictions of African countries, and the appeal of violence and tragic chaos as entertainment. Though the students ultimately concede that our desensitization to violence is complex, they also celebrate zombie videogames, including *Resident Evil* and others, for their mimetic visuals: ‘Muy reales...salen chorros de sangre.’ *Very real...jets of blood come out.* Together, these students’ discourse and their professor’s differing perspective, crucially index intergenerational shifts in the featuring of violence within our lived experiences, and ways of talking about and interacting with violent death.

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## Andrzej Widota

## State Higher Vocational School in Raciborz

## Resurrecting a Dead Star. An Attempt at a Semantic Analysis of *Lazarus* by David Bowie

Denying its finality has been a method of sanitizing death since ancient times, be it in the form of the Christian belief in the immortality of the human soul or the Hellenic cult of heroes surviving death through fame. Are modern heroes of popular culture granted immortality in the same manner as the Greek ones were? We live in a culture of excess information on the receiver end of mass media communication. According to Zygmut Bauman, ours is a culture of disengagement, discontinuity and forgetting, with each cultural product calculated for maximal impact in order to catch the receiver’s attention and to dispose of the products of yesterday. We live in a world where everybody has already been famous for fifteen minutes but do the fifteen minutes of fame grant us immortality? With newspaper headlines like “Famous Actor Dies” or “Famous Singer Murdered” not impressing anyone anymore, what does it take for a pop star of today to surpass the confining boundaries of the Famous Annonymous category?The main goal of this paper will be the semantic analysis of the lyrics for *Lazarus*, a song by David Bowie included on his final album *Blackstar*, published just two days before the artist’s death, starting with the words: *Look up here, I'm in heaven/I've got scars that can't be seen/I’ve got drama, can't be stolen/Everybody knows me now.* It is hoped that the analysis will help answer most of the questions above with others providing a starting point for the discussion of extra-linguistic context involved.

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## Ewa Wiśniewska

## University of Social Sciences, Warsaw

## “Can a Dragon Cross the Wall of Stones?” The Perception of Afterlife in Ursula K. Le Guin’s *Earthsea* Cycle

An atheist herself, in her fantasy cycle entitled *Earthsea*, and especially in its second volume, *The Tombs of Atuan*, Ursula K. Le Guin devotes surprisingly much space to a multifaceted depiction of metaphysical models. Visibly fascinated with the concept of reincarnation, the author makes it the pivotal aspect of religious beliefs of the inhabitants of the realm. It is inextricably linked with the idea of Equilibrium, the inevitable balance that exists in the world, incorporated into the stories from Taoism. The doctrine acknowledging the beginning of a life in yet another physical body, drawn from Eastern philosophies, is contrasted with the visualization of a “dry land”, an intermediate state to which one’s consciousness is exiled, which governs the lives of the other group of Earthsea citizens. The pair of concepts gives a universal debate on the issue of death. It reaches its peak in *The Other Wind*, the last novel of the cycle, which provides the readers with multiple voices raising their opinions on the problem of mixing the realms of the living and the dead, when the ultimate law of Equilibrium, modeled on interconnected yin and yang forces, is threatened.

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## Ryszard W. Wolny

## University of Opole

## Disease, Death and Decay as Exemplified by Daniel Defoe’s *A Journal if the Plague Year* (1722)

The plague of 1665 that struck London, annihilating a hundred thousand lives, is a remarkable instance of a fatal and contagious disease which brought death and destruction in one place on a massive scale causing, as a result, a colossal decay of human bodies and animal corpses to spread the disease further away. Though Daniel Defoe’s account of these terrible events which happened – in his words in the subtitle, “during the last great visitation” – is by all means a fictitious one, there is undoubtedly no more vivid description of this historical occurrence in the language. Reading his artistic interpretation of the event he did not experience personally, one has got an impression of being in the very middle of it, actually hearing the silence of death and feeling the fear and horror of the yet-alive. The aim of this paper is, therefore, to bring together the impressions of the disease – the plague – which brought death to a hundred thousand of Londoners and decay to their bodies and to reconstruct the eye-witnesses’ striking memories of the events, alongside the emotions they stirred in them.

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## Selin Yılmaz

## Ege University

## Afterlife as Postmodern Time-space: Flann O’Brien’s *The Third Policeman* and Philip K. Dick’s *Ubik*

The phenomenon of life after death has always fascinated fiction writers. Earlier depictions of it in literary texts such as Dante’s *Divine Comedy* consisted of religious meditations on humankind’s fate in the realms of hell, heaven, and purgatory, and they provided concrete representations of mankind’s afterlife-journey which follows a cause-effect relationship. Despite taking place in a dimension different than the world of the living, they still represented a time-space that is graspable by human mind. As centuries passed, representations of afterlife in literature have incorporated new characteristics depending on the concerns of their age. As fictions of mid-twentieth century, Flann O’Brien’s *The Third Policeman* (1940, published in 1967) and Philip K. Dick’s *Ubik* (1969) – which include a great number of similarities despite the fact that Dick had never heard of O’Brien’s works – are the products of an era that is marked by a phenomenon called “the postmodern turn in science,” which is initiated mainly by the theory of relativity and quantum physics. Hence, they present a wholly different picture of death and afterlife than the classical religious depictions of them. Instead of having totalitarian claims about life, death, and life after death, the novels make use of afterlife as a literary trope to imagine the concepts of after-reality, after-time, and after-space. They problematize the certainty of the spatiotemporal distinctions between life and death, heaven and hell, and they foreground the impossibility to situate reality and truth in a world which is governed by relativity and uncertainty. In the light of all these, this paper argues that the treatment of death and afterlife in both *The Third Policeman* and *Ubik* is predominantly postmodern, and the texts, willingly or unwillingly, feature traces of the philosophical and scientific debates on time-space and reality, which have an important role in paving the way for the emergence of postmodernism.