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The linguistic image of the soul in Polish early modernist ekphrases inspired by Arnold Böcklin's paintings

This study aims to present the results of a reconstruction of the image of the 'soul' – with a particular emphasis on the axiological aspect of the term – found in the following ekphrases: Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer's "Isle of the Dead (An Illustration for Böcklin's *Die Toteninsel*)" ("Wyspa umarłych (Ilustracja do „Die Toteninsel” Böcklina)”), Maria Poraska's "The Sacred Grove" ("Gaj święty") and "Odysseus and Calypso" ("Odyszeusz i Kalipso"), Lucjan Rydel's "The Harbour" ("Przystań"), and Leopold Staff's "The Sacred Grove" ("Gaj święty").¹ Alongside the "axiosphere of the soul" (evaluation of the phenomenon), I also seek to examine "soul in the axiosphere", or, in other words, evaluate the space to which it is ascribed by drawing on two ekphrases penned by two authors (Przerwa-Tetmajer and Rydel) inspired by the same painting (*The Isle of the Dead*). The decision to pare the body of texts selected for interpretation was motivated by both the limited space of this essay and the type of scholarly task that they were supposed to inform, namely spatial analysis.

¹ The body of texts analysed for the purpose of this study also included other ekphrases: Zuzanna Rabska's "Vita somnium breve" and Karol Łepkowski's "Wygnaniec" (The Exile). Neither of the two, however, carried any lexical items that referred to the concept of the soul. Another author known for her ekphrases about Böcklin's paintings was Zofia Gordziałkowska, who penned fifty of them in total (cf. Bagińska, 2016, pp. 102–120).

The study was conducted at the author's own expense.

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The origins of all the examined poems can be traced back to their authors' fascination with the work of painter Arnold Böcklin (1827–1901).

The painter, a Swiss national by birth, studied at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in 1845–1847, and then enrolled the following year at the Atelier Suisse, a private studio in Paris specializing in nude studies. Böcklin was first noticed in Germany when the Bavarian king Ludwig I (1786–1868), considered the most generous patron of the arts at the time, purchased his painting *Pan in the Reeds* (1859), and Adolf Schack, German aristocrat and owner of a major arts gallery in Munich, began buying up the painter's works, ultimately making his sixteenth purchase in 1874. Böcklin spent much of his life in Italy, which prompted his intense interest in Greek and Roman mythologies. Consequently, Mediterranean landscapes and mythological motifs dominated the better part of his artistic output (evinced by paintings such as *Charon*, *The Birth of Venus* and *Elysian Fields*). Böcklin also often explored Biblical themes (e.g. *Pietà*, *The Hermit*, *St. Anthony Preaching to the Fish*) and contemporary problems (examples include *The Plague* and *War*). All in all, Böcklin ended up creating over 300 paintings.

Although most of his work could essentially be classified as neoclassicist, Böcklin's contemporary audiences and critics, including Hans H. Hostätter and Michał Mutermilch, ostensibly to address the specific needs that prevailed at the turn of the twentieth century, instead saw them as symbolist in character, merely suggesting a meaning (Nowakowski, 1994, p. 121). In the 1870s and 1880s, Böcklin was widely recognized as the father of German symbolism and many of his contemporaries saw themselves as under the influence of his work, effectively prompting the emergence of what came to be known as the "Böcklin school". Thus began his spectacular, yet relatively brief artistic career.

Given his specific use of mythology – evident in his predilection for arranging widely known mythological motifs into new and unexpected configurations in a manner similar to a lyricist putting together letters to create words and meanings – Böcklin was seen as a "poet of myth". He was also a master at creating specific moods (what the Germans called *Stimmung*). Toward the end of Böcklin's career, his work veered toward surrealism, and the artist himself was later recognized as a forerunner of the movement (cf. Nowakowski, 1994, p. 271). Böcklin-inspired poems were being published by the aforementioned writers well into the twentieth century.

Herein, different approaches to conceptualizing the "soul" and its specific value judgments will be examined against the interpretations of the lexeme *dusza* 'soul' present

in general language and included in dictionaries contemporary to the time of the poems' publication: Linde's Dictionary (Linde, 1854) and the Vilnius Dictionary (Zdanowicz et al., 1861). Such an approach will allow us to identify specific literary devices employed by the authors of the ekphrases in the use of that particular term in artistic language. I will begin my inquiry by offering a cursory explanation of concepts that will be essential to this inquiry, such as "ekphrasis", "painting" and "textual image of the world". The opening sections of the essay will also feature some background information on the aesthetic and philosophical contexts prevalent at the turn of the twentieth century, as they will constitute a backdrop for the inquiry into the axiological aspect of the phenomenon in question.

How poets see paintings or on ekphrases and works of art

An ekphrasis is the product of its author's fascination with a visual work of art – whether a sculpture, a piece of architecture, or a painting.² As far as this essay is concerned, the term will apply to poetic descriptions of paintings. In Greek, the word "ekphrasis" means "description". The verb *phrazein* implies demonstration, while its amplified form *ekphrazein* implies demonstration in all vividness and detail. The Latin translations of the phrase, *perspicuitas*, *illustratio*, *evidentia*, all reference types of demonstration. "To demonstrate" means "to make clear", "to illuminate", "to visualize" (Boehm, 2014, p. 163).

In the act of picturing, Gottfried Boehm argues, the pictorial capacity of language (the ability of language to describe, represent images) converges with the primary capacity of images (the most basic attribute of pictorial works – the ability to depict and represent); thus, we can implicitly trust in the ability of those attempting to rhetorically describe a visual work of art to accurately represent the message underlying the image (Boehm, 2014, p. 163). The act of picturing is an act of representation, it opens up new perspectives and conjures specific visions, implying that it is intuition that lies at the heart of these poems. This is why verbal and visual means of communication were often considered equal even in ancient times,³ as both were based on the phenomenon of pictorialism. That particular approach held true up to the moment when Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781), a Ger-

² Ekphrasis (from Greek) – a rhetorical description of a painting, a sculpture or a building (Głowiński, Kostkiewiczowa, Okopień-Sławińska, & Sławiński, 1989, p. 113).

³ "Painting is mute poetry, and poetry speaking painting", said Greek poet Simonides of Ceos. Similar proclamations were made by Horace in *Ars Poetica* (as cited in Schweizer, 1972, p. 10).

man aesthetician and art critic, identified the fundamental difference between the specific categories which organized the said cultural texts – space and time for visuals and rhetoric, respectively (Lessing, 1887, p. 91).

Because basically any literary work related to a specific image, e.g. a hymn or a sonnet, can be considered an ekphrasis, literary theorist Seweryna Wysłouch does not consider poems about them to be a separate genre to, in her words, avoid unnecessarily multiplying entities, and instead suggests treating this particular form of expression as a strain of literature (Wysłouch, 1999, p. 21). Bożena Witosz, a genre studies scholar, argues, on the other hand, that ekphrasis can be considered a separate literary genre, because it revolves around a specific theme – a reference to a particular work of art: “The thematic criterion (...) should be considered the key genre determinant, therefore an ekphrasis brings up, describes and interprets a work of art, usually visual in nature (painting, sculpture, architecture). The theme informs the genre-forming roles of both the object of reference, as well as the method of its description” (Witosz, 2009, p. 108). Witosz then elaborates on the definition of genre as follows:

The thematic criterion also decides the shape of the remaining elements of the ekphrasis genre: style (for example, the presence of properly “tailored” language of art, excluding the lower registers of colloquial Polish, usually marked with undue expressiveness) and structure (cf. the important and usually prominent role of the metatextual layer pertaining to a character specific to the ekphrasis); first and foremost, however, it shapes the pragmatic plane. Taking on art as a theme implies the type of communication situation wherein interlocutors necessarily exhibit high cultural competencies. An ekphrasis, therefore, forces its audience to assume the role of connoisseurs capable of deciphering the numerous references carried by the text. (Witosz, 2009, p. 113)

Drawing on notions developed by Sophie Bertho, literary critic Michał Paweł Markowski argues that the structure of an ekphrasis consists of two components – one responsible for visualization, the other for narrativization (Markowski, 1999, p. 232). Thus, he provides a more detailed look at the structure underpinning the ekphrasis, the genre-forming role of which was already emphasized by Witosz. The first of the two components describes individual elements of the picture, whereas the second breathes life into the scene depicted in the painting and/or introduces a story that either preceded (*Vorgeschichte*) or followed (*Nachgeschichte*) the scene. Alongside the apostrophe, Bertho calls this particular device an “ekphrastic catch”, but notes that the appearance of either in a poem may infuse the ekphrasis with something that the picture it refers to does not actually hold (Bertho, 1998, p. 55).

Thus, the narrativizing plane of a text inspired by a visual work of art is essentially an outlet for the poet's imagination, itself stimulated by the sight of the painting.

Boehm, a proponent of hermeneutics, argues that the creative faculties of the beholder realize themselves best within what he calls "empty spaces" of the artwork – not the specific elements of the canvas, such as the characters, the objects, the vegetation, etc., but the relationships between its components, for example the connection between a figure and the colour of the background, or a figure and some object, etc. (Boehm, 2014, p. 20). Consequently, a work of art can be read in a multitude of different ways, as every onlooker will draft their own subjective order of inspecting individual elements of the canvas and their own interpretations of the relationships between them. We should also be aware of the fact that a painting already is an interpretation of reality, one devised by its author. It draws attention to what the average person would never notice without the picture itself, and also involves a particular "increase in being" (*Zuwachs an Sein*), facilitating an exchange between matter created by the artist and reality, thus enriching the said reality with what it explicitly lacks, becoming, in a way, a new entity itself (Boehm, 2014, pp. 103–106).

Linguistic and textual image of the world: selected instruments of cognitivist methodologies

In the light of the most recent findings of cognitive linguistics experts, who specialize in the incessantly evolving theory of linguistics, it seems that in attempts to reconstruct the linguistic image of selected elements of the world portrayed within a literary text, the term "textual image of the world" is much more apt than the older "linguistic image of the world". Having analysed numerous inquiries into the linguistic image of the world, Ryszard Tokarski comes to the conclusion that "rather than a single linguistic image of the world, there exist many complementary, competing, or sometimes even mutually exclusive methods of conceptualizing the world" (Tokarski, 2016, p. 29). He also argues that as a result of the methodology applied so far, description of the linguistic image of the world is too static, internally undifferentiated and lacks a hierarchy; it does not always reflect the actual language competence of its users (Tokarski, 2016, p. 29).

The scholar stresses that investigating the linguistic image of the world falls within the scope of specific types of rationality: common, scientific and creative. This particular

argument also supports differentiating between the linguistic and the textual images of the world. The creative capacity is widely known and has been in use, Tokarski argues, “for ages” (Tokarski, 2016, p. 32). Thus, a world is created when linguistic efforts end up revealing new forms of thinking about the world, which elude current standards and principles. And these forms either appear or may appear in poetry in its ekphrastic form. In that particular instance, the meaning of linguistic expression is open in nature, capable of transforming experience into highly subjective, even singular judgments about the world. Tokarski also claims that investigation of the textual image of the world could be grounded in the definition devised by Cracow-based linguist Wojciech Kajtoch:⁴

The textual image of the world (operating at the *parole* level) is a specific actualization – within a certain text or a collection of texts – of the linguistic image of the world (operating at the *langue* level), and, as such, is a collection of principles deriving from the prevalence of specific choices in terms of inflection, word formation, syntax and, first and foremost, vocabulary within the given text or collection thereof. The textual image of the world reveals the specific, dominant perception of individual elements of the world portrayed within a text (or a collection thereof), their function, their relationships and their position relative to one another – in other words, such an understanding of the particular configuration of the world, its hierarchies and values which is preferred by the sender of the text and accepted by its audience. (Kajtoch, 2008, pp. 14–15, as cited in Tokarski, 2016)

Drawing on Kajtoch’s definition, I will be treating the concept ‘soul’ and the space assigned to it (analysed using the above examples), with a particular emphasis on the evaluation of both phenomena, as elements of the textual image of the world, contained within the ekphrases of the abovementioned authors. Using key indicators of textuality developed by Jerzy Bartmiński, a prominent cognitivist hailing from the Lublin School, will facilitate the examination of texts that I have selected for this study. According to Bartmiński, these criteria include the existence of a specific sender, an intended recipient, a unity of universe and language that would bridge the two instances, and declarations bearing specific stylistic and genre qualifiers (Bartmiński, 1998, p. 17). The senders of the ekphrases in question (authors) are simultaneously very unique recipients of pictures, as, in their capacity of artists “painting with words”, they are capable of consuming the paintings in an innovative manner

⁴ Wojciech Kajtoch’s definition of the textual image of the world was derived from a sweeping inquiry into the language used in texts published in teen magazines (Tokarski, 2016, p. 33).

and creatively employing the principles governing this particular form of artistic expression. They share with the implicit recipients of their texts an interest in painting, a keen insight into this particular domain of the realm of art.

Instruments of cognitive linguistics which I will use to examine the concept 'soul' in the textual image of the world in the ekphrases penned by the abovementioned poets include: profiling, conceptual metaphors and amalgams. We should also keep in mind that the cognitive (ideative) function of language remains the focus of cognitive linguistics. In the course of investigating the said function, language is usually treated as a medium that intrinsically enables the discovery of different avenues of conceptualization, i.e. the capability to understand and imagine the meanings behind elements of extra-lingual reality by language users. The mental space of language speakers, on the other hand, can be accessed by way of analysing the meanings behind linguistic units (cf. Langacker, 2008, p. 43). The investigative instruments developed by scholars who laid the groundwork for cognitive theory will now help us reconstruct the specific conceptualizations behind certain notions.

Two valuation perspectives

The definition of the linguistic image of the world stresses that it is a derivative of the value system adopted by the community (Krzyszowski, 1999, p. 21), which implies that axiology is, by its very nature, inscribed into the essence of a concept and is revealed in the course of reconstructing its meaning. The same principle applies to inquiries into the textual image of the world. In their capacity to express specific values, linguistic means can be divided into systemic (conventionalized) and rhetorical (facultative, contextual) (Puzynina, 2003, p. 31). Facultative uses of specific words may carry connotations conceived as semantic elements, and in certain contexts a word can be imbued with different axiological attributes. When language is used in service to its poetic function, evaluation is based on specific rhetorical tropes and figures (e.g. metaphor, symbol). In the axiological paradigm, values comprise that which we consider good or evil, which means that the paradigm itself can hold both values and anti-values.

While investigating value judgments from a universal perspective, we ought to take note of the findings developed by Jadwiga Puzynina, a linguist and literary scholar focused chiefly on axiological theory. Basing on categorizations devised by philosopher Max Scheler, Puzynina demonstrates a number of different ways we can group values – in one classifica-

tion, she identifies, among others, values that are experienced, recognized, declared, final (essential, absolute) and instrumental (usual, pragmatic), meaning those that can be used to arrive at other values. Another classification groups values into positive and negative. The former includes instrumental and final (transcendental) values, as well as metaphysical (good, sanctity), cognitive (truth), aesthetic (beauty), moral (good, the good of our fellow man), cultural (in line with widespread customs), vital (our own life) and experiential values (including hedonistic ones, like happiness and pleasure) (Puzynina, 2003, p. 29). The concept 'soul' falls here within the purview, so to speak, of transcendental values – which sit at the very top of the hierarchy in linguistics.

The meanings of lexical units and the conceptualization of the 'soul'

Dictionaries of Polish, contemporary to the poems I selected for this analysis and reflecting the state of the language at the time, include multiple meanings of the lexical units that designate the concept examined herein.⁵ In Linde's Dictionary, the first definition equates *dusza* 'soul' with *życie* 'life', with something that brings life, designates it, linking the meaning with that of *oddech* 'breath' ("Lying there, soulless", "Soul gives us life", "Give one's soul for someone"; *Leży bez duszy, Dusza daje nam życie, Oddać duszę za kogoś*). The next definition describes it as the 'immaterial aspect of man' ("soul is different from spirit, here understood as the higher power, reason"). Then, the entry puts together two lexemes: *uczucie* 'sensation' and *serce* 'heart', indicating that they are equivalent to the concept in question ("The first Christians shared a single heart, a single soul"; *Pierwszych chrześcijan było serce jedno i dusza jedna*).⁶ Later on, the entry discusses 'souls of the dead, spirits' ("The passage of human souls into other people's bodies", "My late father, God rest his soul"; *Dusz ludzkich przechodzenie w ciała drugich ludzi, Nieboszczyk, mój ojciec, panie świeć nad jego duszą*). Broadly defined, man becomes a synonym for soul, as well ("We were 276 souls on the ship, all told"; *Było nas wszystkich dusz w okręcie dwieście siedemdziesiąt i sześć*).

The dictionary also puts down a handful of derivatives and phrasemes for soul, including *falszywa dusza* 'false soul' and *prawa dusza* 'righteous soul'. Finally, soul can also mean 'set of

⁵ I relied on these same dictionaries in my analysis of Zofia Gordziałkowska's poems about paintings (Bagińska, 2016, pp. 102–120).

⁶ The same meaning was included in the entry for *dusza* 'soul' in the Vilnius Dictionary.

man's mental characteristics' ("The entity holding our thoughts, acting through our bodies, with its own reason and will"). Conceived as an 'animating element', a soul can be found in plants, pens, even mechanical objects – like cannons and irons. This particular meaning sits at the root of a handful of metaphors ("Mr Doświadczyński was the soul of every party", "An entertaining soul"; *Pan Doświadczyński był duszą każdego posiedzenia, On duszą rozrywki*) (Linde, 1854, pp. 560–563). In the nineteenth century, dictionaries, including the Vilnius Dictionary (Zdanowicz et al., 1861, p. 263), also carried a more philosophical interpretation of the soul as the living essence of man, *psyche*, while the Warsaw Dictionary (Karłowicz, Kryński, & Niedźwiedzki, 1900, pp. 587–588) considered psychology, or the psyche in general, to be another meaning of the word *dusza* 'soul'.

The conceptual metaphor

As one avenue of conceptualizing a specific notion, a conceptual metaphor is created in the process of projecting the source domain onto the target domain or, in other words, projecting a more specific space, closer to human experience, onto something much more abstract. American linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson packaged the above concept into the following formulation: "We have found that metaphors allow us to understand one domain of experience in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 117). According to philosopher Charles Taylor, a conceptual metaphor can be understood as "a means whereby more abstract and intangible areas of experience can be conceptualized in terms of the familiar and concrete" (Taylor, 2003, p. 134). The source domains in the attempt to define the abstract concept of the soul (target domain) include phenomena we consider close to human experience, simple, usually more concrete. The interacting elements of both domains, however, have to meet the conditions of coherence.

Marian Stala, an expert in Polish early modernist literature (the period called Young Poland, *Młoda Polska*), argued that throughout modernism, the concept 'soul' (as well as 'life' and 'death') mostly eluded a strict definition and remained vague, ambiguous (Stala, 1988, pp. 246–249). In the light of that, it would be particularly interesting to determine the methods of conceptualizing the meaning of a given lexical unit, i.e. the way it is understood and conceived by the speaking subjects of the ekphrases in question. These units, in turn, provide access to the mental space of language speakers, the stage on which cognitive processes unfold and conceptualizations are constituted.

In my analyses of the extracted linguistic source material (expressions and phrases featuring the lexeme *dusza* 'soul'), I focus on finding answers to a number of questions: what a given lexical unit communicates (the semantic aspect is crucial), how it is used in a particular case (context), how it connects with other elements of the language, and what specific conventional and individual connotations it brings up (bisociation in creative linguistic source material) and why. The procedure leads to the re-enactment of processes taking place within the mental space of language speakers and enables the reading (facilitated by the usage of appropriate methodologies of cognitive linguistics) of new meanings of the juxtaposed domains, which are, at their core, the products of those configurations, considering both the included and excluded elements of the core structure of the concept. The results of the applied procedure (the reconstructed conceptualizations of the notion 'soul') have been included below, and are backed with passages from the ekphrases in question.

THE SOUL IS A HUMAN FIGURE: souls "Sit with their faces looking down", "They sit like stones, and dream", "They gaze out over the glasslike, boundless waves", "They gaze into the misty, eternal infinite" (Przerwa-Tetmajer),⁷ "As the souls of mankind make their confession, the black trees look on" (Poraska, "The Sacred Grove");

THE SOUL IS AN OBJECT: "We bring you our souls lost in prayer" (Poraska, "The Sacred Grove");

THE SOUL IS A CONTAINER: "Oh, sacred flame (...) / Flourish within them [the souls] with your everlasting spark!" (Poraska, "The Sacred Grove");

THE SOUL IS A BRITTLE OBJECT: "and now his soul is broken and suffering" (Poraska, "Odysseus and Calypso");

THE SOUL IS A PLIANT OBJECT: "The souls still unborn will be like wax / Yielding to their will, like hands to valiant swords" (Staff);

THE SOUL IS A CONTAINER WITHIN A CONTAINER: "Within their loins, swaying with their lithe steps, there is nestled / The seed of long generations, a tribe of rich spirits" (Staff).

The reconstruction of the conceptualization of the 'soul' by the speaking subjects of the ekphrases in question, conducted using the conceptual metaphor as the primary instrument of analysis, reveals that the target domain SOUL is explained by a handful of

⁷ For the sake of clarity, passages from ekphrases are only referenced with the name of the author, or the name and the title for authors whose more than one poem was selected for the present analysis. Full citations (including all bibliographic details) are provided in the bibliography. This particular method of referencing is used throughout the essay.

source domains, each one exploiting a different breadth of human experience. These include HUMAN FIGURE, CONTAINER, PLIANT OBJECT and BRITTLE OBJECT; the latter two are subcategories of the more general OBJECT metaphor. Conceiving the soul as a CONTAINER lends substance to the abstract concept by invoking the experience of physicality and three-dimensionality, and the existence of an interior where something can be placed. The OBJECT source domain directs the connotations of 'soul' toward something that can be held and handed over. The PLIANT and BRITTLE OBJECT subcategories, on the other hand, emphasize specific attributes of the examined concept and suggest ways to handle it: BRITTLE objects can be easily destroyed, whereas PLIANCY brings up images of elastic objects being formed, shaped, bent. The HUMAN FIGURE source domain conceives of the concept by assigning specific human attributes to an abstract phenomenon. When the human body is conceived as a CONTAINER, the notion of a soul present inside a human being can then be expressed using the conceptual metaphor SOUL IS A CONTAINER WITHIN A CONTAINER.

Profiling

A different method of conceptualizing specific notions is profiling. According to Ronald Langacker, a prominent American scholar and a founding father of cognitive linguistics, the method involves foregrounding a particular aspect of the conceptual content selected via a mental process from a matrix of potential meanings: when formulating expressions, man never uses all of the content available in the matrix (Langacker, 2008, p. 66). Drawing on the work of prominent linguist Anna Wierzbicka, Jerzy Bartmiński came to use the term "facet" to describe that selected, foregrounded aspect of a given concept (Bartmiński & Żuk, 2009, pp. 47–67).

Because the examined source material was extracted from literary texts rooted in paintings, the concept 'soul' is necessarily profiled within them from the perspective of the speaking subject construed here as a person gazing at a canvas, interested in the visual arts, knowledgeable about painting – an art connoisseur-meets-master wordsmith, in other words. This gazing subject is driven by creative rationality which is dually motivated – the literary work in question deals with fictional, often fantastical (meaning: unreal)⁸ worlds conjured up by the painter, and is creatively processed by the poet-artist.

⁸ The canvases are populated by centaurs, nereids, mermaids, all of which are half-human and half-animal (Grimal, 1990, pp. 59, 249, 330).

The speaking subject is aware that the world created by the painter must be read along symbolist lines and considered mired in the philosophical notions espoused by early modernists in Poland, themselves dominated by the ideas of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) and Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844–1900). We also ought to mention that a different perspective adopted here for the purpose of investigating the concept in question derives from the analysis of dictionary contents, that is, commonly used language (*langue*), and is motivated by scientific, universal rationality (Tokarski, 2016, p. 32). The poets discussed herein often picture the concept 'soul' from many perspectives, highlighting its different aspects. Below, I will be outlining the individual profiles of the concept, reconstructed from the source material extracted from ekphrases penned by the poets in question. The examples (passages) taken from the analysed literary texts will serve as grounds for the reconstruction.

PSYCHOLOGICAL QUALITIES AND DISPOSITIONS, ATTITUDES: "silent souls", "meandering", "looking", "gazing", "sitting down", "sitting", "despondent", "dreaming" (about past lives) (Przerwa-Tetmajer) – marking them as capable of reflection; "Souls raging with the fire engulfing their hearts / Those which felt too much and suffered / Which asked, burdened by an excess of feeling: / From which metal hath God wrought / The human heart to be immune to fire" (Przerwa-Tetmajer) – marking them as capable of experiencing grand emotions, suffering, capable of standing strong through all adversity and asking questions about the meaning of suffering; "our souls lost in prayer" (Poraska, "The Sacred Grove"), "souls of mankind make their confession" (Poraska, "The Sacred Grove") – portraying them as expressing their love of God and aware of their own sinful nature; "dejected spirits saunter" (Rydel); "The souls still unborn will be like wax" (Staff); "The seed of long generations, a tribe of rich spirits" (Staff) – holding the promise of greatness, to be realized in the coming generations; "Bent over the black expanse / With their arms piously crossed on their chests / Bands of ghosts keep flowing in / The mute pilgrims' arrival [at the harbour]" (Rydel) – silent and meek, exhausted with existence, they arrive at a place which marks the end of their life, unsure of what comes next.

ONTOLOGICAL STATUS: "souls akin to shadows" (Przerwa-Tetmajer); "Dejected spirits saunter on board, / The whites of their dead [*trupie*, lit. 'corpse' (adj.)] eyes gazing out at the shore" (Rydel); "pale angels" (Rydel).

LOCUS IN THE BODY: "From which metal hath God wrought / The human heart to be immune to fire" (Przerwa-Tetmajer) – they inhabit the human chest, hardened and impenetrable.

TIME OF ARRIVAL IN THE WORLD OF THE LIVING: "like the ghosts of the witching hour" – they come at midnight.

COLOUR AND ITS SYMBOLISM: "Charon's boat is heavy with white souls" (Przerwa-Tetmajer); "white souls roam the greenish dark" (Przerwa-Tetmajer); "white figures" (Przerwa-Tetmajer).

The PSYCHOLOGICAL QUALITIES AND DISPOSITIONS, ATTITUDES profile features positive valuation of the concept 'soul' ("a tribe of rich spirits"), although it also includes phrases that carry meanings that may seem slightly less upbeat ("dejected spirits") from a universal perspective, but nevertheless typical of the prevailing mood of the era, with its particular emphasis on melancholy and its experience. In this case, values are carried by primarily evaluative lexemes. The COLOUR profile assigns the colour white to the concept in question. Prototypically, the colour white derives from colours associated with snow and daylight (Tokarski, 1995, p. 72) and carries primarily positive connotations. It is a symbol of purity and innocence. Because the analysed poems contain visions of souls both prior to their arrival in the material world ("The Sacred Grove") and following their exit therefrom ("The Isle of the Dead"), the colour might also bring up associations with *carte blanche* or a "clean slate", a clear reference to the ideas espoused by John Locke. With respect to souls still unborn, the colour seems particularly appropriate, as it seems to faithfully reflect the Enlightenment thinker's notion that humans are born into the world a blank slate (*tabula rasa*); with respect to souls already departed, meanwhile, the colour white might imply their passage across the Lethe, the River of Forgetfulness, after drinking from its waters and thus cleaving themselves from past earthly experiences.⁹ Washed of any memory of their prior lives, they entered a state of purity and grace and were remade anew, like souls reborn, blank slates.

The ONTOLOGICAL STATUS profile features the primarily evaluative lexemes *anioł* 'angel' and *trupci* 'corpse' (adj.), which respectively carry a positive and a negative valuation, and the axiologically neutral *cień* 'shadow'. Their dwelling inside the chest (the LOCUS

⁹ "Drinking from the waters of the Lethe, they grow oblivious to all joy and suffering they went through and continue onward, for the Elysian Fields" (Markowska, 1979, p. 117).

IN THE BODY profile) grants souls a measure of positive valuation. Stereotypically (in the cognitive understanding of the term, i.e. in terms of a common view of the world), the chest is where the heart is located – the essential organ which may determine life and death. Thus, installing the soul in that particular locus lends it a measure of nobility. The TIME OF ARRIVAL IN THE WORLD OF THE LIVING profile, meanwhile, puts particular emphasis on the fact that the souls arrive at midnight. In Western cultures, midnight is traditionally seen as the domain of the supernatural, the intersection of two days, a time of mystery, the witching hour (Kupisiński, 2016, p. 157). That aura of mystery extends to the souls, thus making the said phenomena essentially unknowable.

Amalgam

Yet another method of conceptualizing individual notions can be found in the amalgam (also known as a blend). An amalgam integrates two separate source domains plus a generic space, whereby composition, completion and elaboration give rise to a separate entity – the amalgam proper (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002, p. 148; Libera, 2007, pp. 11–66). A closer look at the phrase in the passage from one of the poems: “Souls like shadows, silent / Meander; Gaze out, sit with their faces looking down” (Przerwa-Tetmajer) reveals that it functions as an amalgam within the mental space of the speaking subject, a blend necessary to conceptualize entities lacking specific referents in the real world, absent from real human experience, entities that are different and new. That blend arises from the integration of the domains of human being and shadow. The amalgam’s generic space includes a number of shared points of reference for both source domains, including: appearance, ontological status, that is the fabric, the raw material of existence (flesh and shadow) and the actions performed by the acting subjects.

Selection of specific elements of these source domains, their recomposition and elaboration, rooted in the experience of the conceptualizer (here: the speaking subject in the ekphrasis), produce a structure that yields a new conceptualization of the notion – the immaterial, human-shaped entity, a shadow in the form of a human being and behaving like one. Thus, an entity emerges which is a hybrid of both the immaterial and the concrete. In physics, a shadow is the dark area cast by an opaque object on one side when illuminated from another (Szymczak, 1988, p. 298). As such, it is valued as neutral, but the shadow conceived as an interpretation of emotional states and behaviours of human

beings evokes melancholy, a contemplative mood (“silent”, “meandering”, “sitting with their faces looking down”) with a distinct axiological stamp, a mood which, in the particular context of early modernist existential experiences, may resemble what we know today as a depressive state.

The axiosphere, or profiling Arnold Böcklin’s *Isle of the Dead* in the ekphrases of Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer and Lucjan Rydel

Böcklin’s *Isle of the Dead* (early title: *A Place of Repose*) is one of the Swiss painter’s best known works in the West, particularly in Germany, and it nearly brought him universal acclaim. The picture was so popular that a copy hung on the wall in nearly every German middle-class home; it also inspired Sergei Rachmaninoff to compose an opera under the same title (which premiered in 1908). Between 1880 and 1886 Böcklin painted five versions of the picture, each one slightly different than the rest. The origins of the painting can be traced back to two specific sources. One is a commission placed by Madame Berne, a widow from Frankfurt grieving the passing of her late husband. The other is the painter’s autobiography, rife with final goodbyes with loved ones: a twenty-year-old fiancée, then eight sons, and finally his precious beloved daughter (Nowakowski, 1994, pp. 8–80).

In the centre of the open composition sits an island surrounded by a sprawl of sky and water that seems to extend beyond the painting itself. The picture is organized along horizontal and vertical axes – the vertical aspect is reflected in the soaring cypress trees, whereas the rock walls circling the island build out the horizontal plane. In terms of perspective, the entirety of the painting plays out in the foreground and background. In the former, we see a small boat piloted by a ferryman, carrying a figure clad all in white and standing with its back to the viewer.

In the background sits the titular island, majestic against the flat background made up of more or less uniform swaths of blue, its uniformity further augmented by its central placing. Although pictured in the foreground, the boat and its passengers are small in comparison to the hulking isle or the seemingly endless expanse of water and sky. The appearance of the island, meanwhile, is underpinned by the contrast of its constituent elements: pale rock walls surrounding a dark thicket of cypress trees, which itself seems to harbour some grand mystery.



Arnold Böcklin, *The Isle of the Dead* (third version, 1883)

The painting seems to emanate a hypnotically suggestive mood, seemingly other-worldly, mystical even, streaked through with a barely perceptible sense of dread, which, paradoxically, is in no way discouraging. On the contrary – it seems appealing by way of promising an uplifting experience. The aura of the painting seems to express acceptance of death, echoing the Dionysian streak of Nietzsche’s ideas, which, by way of embracing an acceptance and even affirmation of the end of existence, may ultimately lead to a sort of hedonism. The imperturbable placidity of the scene was achieved by Böcklin portraying the water surrounding the isle as nearly still; the air is similarly calm, as only the very tops of the cypress trees seem to be swaying gently in the wind (Nowakowski, 1994, p. 279).

In Przerwa-Tetmajer’s ekphrasis, the isle is envisioned as situated in the centre of its own peculiar cosmos, spherical in shape, defined by the reflection of the sky and objects dotting the island in the surface of the water surrounding the small stretch of land:¹⁰ “The nimble cypresses stand tall above the sea / Gazing at their own desolate reflection in its expanse”. The reflections include the naked rock, patches of moss, the dark thicket of the grove,

¹⁰ Similar imaging of space – as a sphere traced by the reflection of the sea in the surface of the water with the narrator located in its centre – is the case also in Adam Mickiewicz’s ballad “Lake Świtez” (“Świtez”): “With stars both above and below, / you will come to see two moons. / On unsteady ground, see the glass plain rising up to meet the sky / And then the sky / Arc back down beneath your feet” (Mickiewicz, 1962, p. 94).

two pillars with the likenesses of lions facing each other. The “glasslike and bottomless” waves open up the space inside, creating what looks like a chasm, drawing the contours of the cosmos downward. The sun and the moon travel along their orbits drawn across the spherical space, or its mirage more precisely (with both real-world elements and their reflections): “The sun and the moon keep running their circles / Measured and tranquil / Over the granite-like slab of the sea and the ashen sky / Rising from the void and back down again / Into the abyss (...)”. The steady rhythm of their travels and its repetitiveness reinforce the sense of placid tranquillity, bordering on boredom. The space is thus filled with silence, unbroken, stripped of any semblance of movement. It is profoundly static, seemingly solid, uniform, unchanging. Thus, its profile paints it as an oasis of peace, a description further reinforced by words making up the semantic field of silence:¹¹ “stone silence”, “the eternal peace of the waters”, “the vacated redoubt”, “raptly listening to silence”, “immobile, pale plumes of mist pass by”, “peaceful rocks jutting from the sea”.

Significantly, no god of death awaits on the isle (“The sombre god of death has vacated this redoubt / Leaving for the wilderness without a look back”), as, stripped of a reason to stay, he finally chose to leave the desolate place. Here, eternity reigns. Pale and dark blues dominate the colour palette: pale banks of mist against the deep, dark blues of the sea. Blues are considered a cold colour, and as such further reinforce the sense of placid tranquillity that seems to envelop the island. For people living in the late nineteenth century, this overwhelming tranquillity of a space seen as the place of final repose for departed souls carried an undoubtedly positive valuation. Here, they could finally find peace after years of fear and tribulation, years of anxiety and frenetic tension, so typical of *fin de siècle* periods.

In modernism, many adherents of the Decadent movement felt stripped of all purpose in life and either sought solace and consolation in some sort of nirvana or longingly awaited the coming of death. The notion of nirvana, which Arthur Schopenhauer borrowed from ancient Hindu philosophers, involved the renouncement of all desires (and, consequently, the suffering they brought on) that were impossible to satisfy. Such an approach

¹¹ The semantic field is an internally structured set of words sharing a common semantic category (words making up the web of semantic associations around a primary source word). The semantic field theory has roots in structural linguistics, an approach originating from the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913). The concept itself goes back to the 1930s and is attributed to Jost Trier and Walter Porzig. As applied here, the theory is used in the analysis of the poem to isolate significant semantic categories and examine their roles within the verse. In the section above, it serves to verify (here: corroborate) the findings produced through the application of analytical tools developed by cognitive linguistics.

was supposed to produce a state that resembled a state of non-existence, which all but guaranteed to purge human existence of all negativity. Thus, the experience of nirvana brought the vision of death much closer and stripped it of the utter dread which usually accompanied it. As such, Schopenhauer's notions seemed to provide answers to the needs of many of those living in early modernist times.

Lucjan Rydel called the island from Böcklin's painting a "harbour" already in the title of his poem. This particular label conjures up associations with the phrase "safe harbour", which, literally, is the place sailors seek shelter in after the hardships of seafaring. In the poem in question, however, the island is a harbour where the departed souls seek sanctuary to rest after the trials and tribulations of life (and the conceptualization of life as a journey lends much credibility to the interpretation). Undoubtedly, the peace and quiet of the island confirm it as a place where one could find repose after the rough journey, often marred by considerable apprehension: "There is a harbour, tranquil and serene / Where no winds blow in the dark / Where the shiftless waters grow broad / Unwilling to smash against the rocky outcrops". Other lines emphasize the remoteness of the island from any mainland: "Where neither the peal of funeral bells / Nor the wailing of mourners can reach", forcing those who reach to forget all earthly life, all of its suffering and fear.

Where in Tetmajer's poem the island is profiled as a place dominated by peace, quiet and repose, Rydel's ekphrasis puts a much bigger emphasis on its mysteriousness rather than its placid nature. This inclination is evident in its focus on the mists shrouding the isle and the darkness enveloping it: "veiled in fog, cloaked in twilight", as well as the blackness of the sea: "Bent over the black expanse". The dark tones of the water imply inscrutability, an impossibility of plumbing the depths, and an impenetrability that precludes sensory experience. Read symbolically, the colour black also implies ignorance (Kopaliński, 1990, p. 53). Such a profile is also corroborated by the expression "unknown world", which further emphasizes how strange and incomprehensible the island must seem to new arrivals: "And so they pull into / A cove nestled in this unknown world". First and foremost, however, this specific "highlighting" is confirmed by the accentuated role played in the poem by the Sphinx, who serves not just as guardian of the isle, but its ruler: "There up high sits the Sphinx – motionless / Keeping watch over the dead harbour". The symbolism of the Sphinx is that of power and mystery (Kopaliński, 1985, p. 1060). The speaking subject explicitly mentions these particular attributes: "The water reflects his bluish face / And vast, unblinking eyes, / Where some secret lies".

Conclusions

The axiology of the 'soul' and the space assigned to it (the axiosphere) is immanently connected to the textual image of the world presented by the analysed ekphrases, not only due to the presence of primarily evaluative lexemes, but also the specific context in which they are embedded as well as the tropes and figures organizing the poems in question. Out of the methodologies of cognitive linguistics used in this essay, profiling was best suited to examining this particular aspect of the concept 'soul' – but primarily due to the specific nature of the extracted source material, which often has a decisive impact on the selection of research methodologies and their results.

The number of profiles reconstructed for the concept 'soul' implies its complexity (QUALITIES AND ATTITUDES, ONTOLOGICAL STATUS, LOCUS IN THE BODY, COLOUR, TIME OF ARRIVAL ON EARTH), but the linguistic means assigned to them and conceived as carriers of value judgments have tipped the scales toward overwhelmingly positive valuations and descriptions. And thus, the QUALITIES AND ATTITUDES profile implies that souls are characterized by their magnanimity, the COLOUR profile assigns them the colour white (positive valuation), the LOCUS IN THE BODY profile places them inside the chest, next to the heart, which also carries positive connotations, a measure of nobility even, while the ONTOLOGICAL STATUS profile assigns them the figure of the angel, alongside the more neutral "shadow" and the negative "corpse". However, souls can, at times, be struck by a yearning for their past, earthly lives and the emotions they involved, which, in turn, can make them "dejected" (a descriptor from the QUALITIES AND ATTITUDES profile).

Paradoxically, the overwhelmingly positive valuation of the concept 'soul' falls within the prevailing pessimistic philosophy of early modernism. With their earthly existence losing all sense of purpose, adherents of the Decadent movement sought to escape into other dimensions of existence. Contrary to what Schopenhauer suggested, creative pursuits, the contemplation of nature, or a more hedonistic approach to life were not enough to break the impasse. On the other hand, nirvana, as a state purged of all earthly desires and the attendant suffering, situated itself alongside the yearning for passage into a metaphysical dimension, for eternal life. Thus, the positively valuated projection of the soul featured in the ekphrases in question seemed to answer the needs of many of those living at the turn of the twentieth century.

In the two analysed works inspired by Böcklin's *Isle of the Dead*, the axiosphere, that is, the valuation of the place where souls travel, is profiled in different ways (but still in line with Boehm's theory of reading artworks), even though the authors draw on the same piece of art. Böcklin's painting offered an enticing vision of life after death, of peaceful repose alongside beautiful nature, silence: in short, perfect serenity following the suffering and pain of earthly life, a bout of hedonist pleasure veering close to the more Dionysian philosophies espoused by Nietzsche. However, the early modernist poets whose works I focused on in this essay, drew a much less appealing picture. In Przerwa-Tetmajer's reading, the painting promises peace, quiet and solace after life's hardships, but also reveals a monotony and immutability that may eventually lead to boredom. Alongside similar notions of placid tranquillity, on the other hand, the profiling of Rydel's ekphrasis also conjures up images of mysteriousness (manifested in the figure of the Sphinx and its symbolic readings) and inscrutability (the blackness of the sea), and implies that the destination of the departed souls remains unknown to them. The latter, in turn, evokes in them a measure of anxiety, a natural fear of the unknown. This particular valuation of the axiosphere by the modernist poets in question is, at least in my opinion, probably rooted in the fact that although both were clearly under the influence of the canvas, itself offering a serene, somewhat optimistic vision of death, their approach was ultimately driven by their beliefs and the specific judgments that were part and parcel of Central European value frameworks.

Applying tools of cognitive linguistics other than profiling – namely the conceptual metaphor and the amalgam – to investigate the abstract concept 'soul' in the ekphrases of two early modernist poets allowed the reconstruction of its conceptualizations, that is, the discovery of specific understandings and impressions of a given concept emerging within the mental sphere of the poems' speaking subjects. The reconstruction process was facilitated by employing references to simple sensory and bodily experiences. The source domains within the structure of the conceptual metaphor included: HUMAN FIGURE, CONTAINER, OBJECT, BRITTLE OBJECT, PLIABLE OBJECT. In this case, the terms "brittleness" and "pliancy" serve to value the source domains of the particular conceptual metaphor. Pliancy evokes a given object's susceptibility to being shaped, formed, whereas brittleness suggests its vulnerability, thus compelling careful handling. Souls, therefore, should be treated with similar care. Within the amalgam, the shadow, one of its source domains, carries a neutral valuation, but the emotional states and behaviours of humans, themselves

additional elements of the alloy, impose upon the resulting concept a valuation typical for *fin de siècle* periods – a proclivity for melancholy and contemplation.

In conclusion, the application of the tools offered by cognitive linguistics enriched the interpretation of the ekphrases with the reconstructed conceptualization of the notion of the soul, that is, its specific representation produced within the mental space of the speaking subjects of those ekphrases, a key theme in poems inspired by visual works of art, and thus one of the key philosophical and existential themes of the era. Thanks to the reconstruction of its representation, the valuation of the concept became much clearer than when it was based on its abstract form. Additionally, using profiling to interpret the valuation of space as a place of the souls' final repose effectively revealed some key characteristics and yielded a tool that is based on more than just pure intuition and could be used to compare the representations of these spaces.

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Językowy obraz duszy w młodopolskich ekfrazach inspirowanych dziełami malarskimi Arnolda Böcklina

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie rezultatów rekonstrukcji językowego obrazu duszy jako motywu świata przedstawionego ekfraz takich autorów i autorek, jak: Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer, Maria Poraska, Zuzanna Rabska, Wanda Aleksandra Stanisławska, Lucjan Rydel, Leopold Staff i Karol Łepkowski, których geneza wynika z fascynacji wymienionych twórców malarstwem Arnolda Böcklina, jednego z najpopularniejszych artystów tworzących na Zachodzie Europy na przełomie XIX i XX wieku. W odtwarzaniu językowego obrazu duszy szczególnie eksponuję aspekt aksjologiczny pojęcia. Sposoby jego konceptualizacji i wartościowania w wierszach zestawiam z objaśnieniami leksemu dusza w języku ogólnym również z przełomu XIX i XX wieku, czyli z czasu, w którym powstawały badane ekfrazy. Rozważania zaczynam od zdefiniowania terminów „ekfrazja” oraz „dzieło malarskie”. W artykule pojawiają się też niezbędne informacje na temat kontekstu estetyczno-filozoficznego przełomu XIX i XX wieku jako tła dla wątku aksjologicznego przedstawianego zagadnienia. W analizie wyekscerpowanego z wierszy wymienionych autorów materiału językowego (nie we wszystkich utworach wystąpiły jednostki językowe przyporządkowane analizowanemu pojęciu) wykorzystuję przede wszystkim narzędzia językoznawstwa kognitywnego: profilowanie, metaforę pojęciową i amalgamat. Stosując je, opiszę nie tylko konceptualizację i aksjologię pojęcia ‘dusza’ w badanych wierszach wymienionych poetów, ale też ukażę takie przestrzenie poezji w interpretacji utworów literackich, które przy zastosowaniu tradycyjnej poetyki umknęłyby uwadze badacza.

Słowa kluczowe:

dusza; aksjologia; ekfrazja; malarstwo; konceptualizacja; Młoda Polska

The linguistic image of the soul in Polish early modernist ekphrases inspired by Arnold Böcklin's paintings

This article presents the results of a reconstruction of the linguistic image of the soul as an element of the represented world in the ekphrases by Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer, Maria Poraska, Zuzanna Rabska, Wanda Aleksandra Stanisławska, Lucjan Rydel and Karol Łepkowski. Their genesis lies in the fascination with works by Arnold Böcklin, one of the most famous painters of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The article focuses on the axiological aspect and opens with a definition of the terms ekphrase and work of art. The analyses of the poems mainly rely on the tools of cognitive linguistics: profiling, conceptual metaphor and amalgamate.

Keywords:

soul; axiology; ekphrasis; painting; conceptualisation; Young Poland; early modernism in Poland

Note:

This is a translation of the original article entitled "Językowy obraz duszy w młodopolskich ekfrazach inspirowanych dziełami malarskimi Arnolda Böcklina", which was published in *Adeptus*, issue 13, 2019.

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