The Linguistic Space of Cemeteries as a Reflection of Culture – Research Suggestion

Marta Muzioł, *PhD*
Kazimierz Wielki University, Poland
marta.muziol@op.pl

Abstract. Cemeteries as delimited areas, arranged according to certain rules, equipped with the set of selected elements, are like a mirror, which reflects the various aspects of the activity of the society that creates them. The aim of the article is to present the suggested way of describing cemetery space, as well as to decipher the information included in gravestone inscriptions (perceived as a linguistic statement). The analysis concerns the following types of necropolises: local, religious, as well as – treated as a new phenomenon in the Polish sepulchral customs – animal and virtual ones.
Keywords: cemetery, headstone inscription, epitaph, semiotics, the linguistic picture of the world, thanatology.

1. Introduction

Cemetery space may be perceived as a linguistic landscape, or more broadly – as a semiotic landscape that reflects the cultural attainment of a given society. The space of a necropolis is a culture text, a collective work created by the participants of a given community, as a result of a long-term process. Considering cemetery spaces as a culture text is based on the three features that a semiotician Jurij Łotman has distinguished: it is a delimited space that is unambiguously separated from the context, the space that is organised according to given rules; and lastly – the space that communicates the information regarding some external reality (Łotman, 1972, pp. 207-215).

The semiotic space of the cemetery includes a set of objects of multi-level message of selected meanings. A gravestone is an entity, which comprises of harmoniously co-existing, permanent elements – linguistic, architectural or graphic ones, as well as temporary ones – floristic or ornaments which are the sign of emotional attachment. In such a way, the sepulchral object combines various codes. The element, which is the most capacious semantics-wise, and at the same time communicates the selected meanings in the clearest way, is the text of the gravestone inscription; the text which has been intentionally written on the headstone, which signalises the place of burial and which is also shaped both formally and semantically, according to the subjective criteria established by the author.

The meaningful contents of headstones comprise the information regarding firstly the central object of the description, that is the deceased person; secondly, the feelings

and experiences of the author (or authors) of the gravestone message (Rodenkówna, 1980, pp. 22-23). The messages of the former category are focused on the basic personal data of the deceased person, dates of birth and death, temper, achievements, professional and social statuses, and the function one fulfilled in one's family. The latter category comprises positive memories brought back by the relatives, declarations of undying memory and the linguistic expression of emotions. This two-level concentration is joined in the headstone inscription into an integral entity, as it stems from the common origin and is conditioned on the set of uniform circumstances.

2. Main Assumptions

The main assumption, which opens the research gate, is the presenting of a cemetery as a mirror that reflects the specific ways of interpreting certain elements of reality (both the material and spiritual one) by the participants of the society, who collectively create the necropolis' landscape over the years.

Methodological pluralism lets one analyse gravestone inscriptions using various research tools. It is possible to carry out the structural analysis, cognitive analysis; description made from the communicative grammar's point of view, normative analysis…

In this paper, the gravestone inscriptions were analysed according to the assumptions made by the Polish researchers of the concept of the *linguistic picture of the world*, that is Jerzy Bartmiński (1999, pp. 103-118), Ryszard Tokarski (1997/1998, pp. 7-24), Renata Grzegorczykowa (1999, pp. 39-46) and Jolanta Maćkiewicz (1999, pp. 7-24). This methodology, shaped according to ethnolinguistics, became the foundation for reconstructing the pictures of particular elements of the extra-linguistic reality. When using the method, an attempt was made to recreate the linguistic pictures of the deceased people, the respected values, interpersonal and interspecies relations, collective historical experiences, as well as the linguistic interpretation of death and expressing the emotions that are aroused after the loss.

In the description of the semiotic spaces of local cemeteries, one should also take the description of the necropolis' structure into consideration, which is seen as an intentional arrangement of symbols within a delimited space. At this stage, the methods presented by Western researchers, such as Philippe Ariès (1992, p. 492), Louis-Vincent Thomas (1991, p. 209), Michel Vovelle (2004, p. 605) and Polish ones - Jacek Kolbuszewski (1994, p. 293) and Sławomir Sikora (1986, pp. 59-60) become the theoretical basis.

The cemetery areas present the cultural attainment of greater communities, which are diverse in many aspects (material, social, age-wise) and smaller, cameral and local ones in an analogical way. Moreover, the necropolises' spaces reflect the attainment of the societies joint with different kinds of relations. In Poland, there is a collection of diverse, unique necropolises that are organised according to characteristic determinants.

One may distinguish three types of cemeteries that gather the deceased participants of a community that are integrated by various factors, buried in that particular place due to various reasons. Firstly, there are local cemeteries; secondly – religious ones; thirdly – animal cemeteries and virtual necropolises.

3. The Description of Local Cemeteries

Local cemeteries are small burial areas that gather the deceased inhabitants of a particular place. Local necropolises let one assess to what extent the local burial area preserves local culture. The description should comprise two stages: the first one being the description of the linguistic space of the cemetery (expressed by the gravestone inscriptions), the second one being the description of the well-thought, intentional structure of the necropolis which was organised according to fixed rules (the layout of graves, sectors, pathways and alleys, both main and side ones).

One such example may be the description of the parish cemetery in Śliwice (Kujawsko-Pomorskie voievodeship, Tucholski district):

The cemetery in a town surrounded by woodlands is a collection of unique monuments of the sepulchral art – specific headstones, richly ornamented inscription stones, as well as the inscriptions made according to the characteristic, local epigraphic convention.

Although, in the structure of gravestone inscriptions that has been developed for centuries one may notice a specific hierarchization of data concerning the particular deceased person, the inscriptions in Śliwice sometimes present the reversal of the standard order, the reversal of the "permanent model" (Kupiszewski, 1986, p. 28), which has been done in order to emphasize the selected data. In the epitaphs from Śliwice, the hierarchization of data has been made in many diverse ways, resulting from strictly individual valuing of the selected biographical data. In the inscriptions dedicated to young people, the duration of one's life is sometimes indicated before one's name and surname, for example:

HERE LIES / A YOUNG MAN OF 21 YEARS OLD / LATE / JAN O. / FROM ZAZDROŚĆ, / †20.4.1913. / ASKS FOR A WORSHIPFUL AVE / MARIA!

HERE LIES IN GOD / MY DEAR SON AND OUR BELOVED BROTHER / A 20 YEAR OLD YOUNG MAN / LATE/ MARYAN S. / FROM ZDROJE / †16.5.1914.

When applying this exceptional inversion, the passer-by's attention is focused firstly on the tragic scope of the situation, on the premature, violent death that is contradictory to the natural order.

Indicating the role one played in one's family (together with their positive assessment) may be the opening element of the inscription:

HERE LIES IN GOD / OUR <u>DEAR</u> / <u>DAUGHTER AND BELOVED SISTER</u> / (…)

HERE / LIES IN GOD / MY <u>DEAR WIFE</u> / (…)

It may also appear after revealing the onomastic data:

LATE ANTONINA RZ. / <u>DEAR MOTHER GRANDMOTHER</u> / *2.2.1875 †6.6.1935 / (…)

A characteristic tendency according to which the Śliwice inscriptions were subordinated (mostly the ones from the first two decades of the 20th Century) is showing the place of residence of the deceased person, directly after their surname, but before the date of death and the duration of their lives:

HERE LIES / IN GOD / OUR DEAR FATHER / LATE / PAWEŁ/ G. / <u>FROM ŚLIWICE</u> / †11.5.1913 / BEING 79 YEARS OLD.

HERE / LIES IN GOD / LATE / JAN CH. / <u>FROM DUŻE KRÓWNY</u> / †30.9.1911 / BEING 17 YEARS OLD.

Defining the origin of the deceased person is equivalent to perceiving it as one of the elements of the identity of the deceased person. It is mostly being aware of belonging to the aforementioned space (Długosz, 1994, p. 100), which manifests itself by giving this place a significant position within the biographical facts. The basis for the local epigraphic convention is, of course, the local mentality. The placement of this information in the systematized text of the inscription is what does matter here. (Długosz, 1994, p. 100).

The element of the epitaph, which is exposed in an intentional way (indicated before the onomastic data or right after it), is the information concerning the profession or the function of the deceased person, undoubtedly appreciated among the members of the local community:

HERE / <u>LIES THE PARSON</u> / MARCIN / K. / B. 4TH NOVEMBER 1833 / D. 6TH APRIL 1885. / R.I.P.

LATE / PRIEST WOJCIECH / K. / <u>ŚLIWICEAN PARSON</u> / B. 19. SEPTEMBER 1853 / D. 22. NOVEMB. 1918. / ETERNAL REST GRANT TO HIM / O LORD!

The last of the aforementioned epitaphs points out the function of the deceased person along with the adjective created from the name of the place; the following ones announce the profession of the deceased person and indicate that the person worked in

that particular place:

HERE LIES IN GOD / LATE/ JAN / Ż. / <u>CHEMIST FROM ŚLIWICE</u> / *18.1.1881 / †12.4.1914 / REST IN PEACE

These data are the ways of appraising the deceased person, they let one recreate the local social structure, and are the interpretation of the achievements of the selected members of the community professionally- and socially-wise.

Defining the identities of the deceased people, indicating the dates of their life (or only the date of death and the duration of their lives) is sometimes connected with the information on the circumstances of their death. These messages are a part of the inscriptions of the people who died in an unnatural way, whilst performing their duties, as a result of an unfortunate coincidence or were killed by someone. This kind of information, although it is sporadically present in the Śliwice necropolis, apart from serving its basic function, refers to the local reality as well. One can find brief messages of general nature:

DIED A TRAGIC DEATH [1951]

DIED TRAGICALLY [2005]

as well as a much more detailed description:

KILLED IN THE WOODS BY A PINE TREE [1914]

The verb *to kill* implies the presence of the hangman and the victim, the killer and the killed. The executioner is the *pine tree*, the element of the nature, which does not kill a human intentionally, but as a result of unfortunate events. Śliwice is a town surrounded by forests, which on the one hand are perceived as beautiful, close, familiar and due to this they are the inspiration for the architectural aspect of the local sepulchral art (Kołyszko, 2012, pp. 37-38); on the other hand – including the message about one's death in the woods brings the associations with the dangerous, uneasy area.

The verb *to murder* used in inscriptions – analogous to *to kill* – implies the hangman and the victim, but is more emotionally charged, thus exposing the harm of one of the sides and underlines the negative attitude towards the outcome of the actions of the other. Here is an example:

MURDERED BY / A POACHER WHEN PERFORMING / PROFESSIONAL DUTIES [1923]

The aforementioned inscription bases on a contrasting contradiction – the author assesses the attitude of the deceased person in a positive way (died when performing their work), and the killer is described as *poacher*, that is someone whose actions are

negatively assessed from the society's point of view. The gravestone dedicated to a young woman presents the description of the tragic event, in the form of a rhyming poem:

THE MOMENT OF PARTING CAME SOONER THAN PLANNED, / AS HER LIFE WAS SHORTENED BY MURDEROUS HAND [1973]

When in the epitaph one indicates the people who were responsible for the death, it leads, firstly, to public reprobation, and secondly, to emphasizing the fact that the life of that woman could have lasted longer. In the presented example, it is expressed by the words *sooner* and *shortened*, which indicate that the death was violent (Muzioł, 2016, pp. 331-332).

At the Śliwice cemetery, one can find epitaphs, which describe the circumstances of the death and at the same time relate to the collective historical experiences (Bronchard & Kołyszko, 2014, pp. 42-43):

MURDERED BY / THE NAZIS [?]

DIED A TRAGIC DEATH / IN THE ACT OF WAR [1945]

The martyrological aspect is also present in individual and collective inscriptions:

THE VICTIM OF WAR [?]

WAR VICTIMS [1945]

The ways of interpreting war experiences - as noticed by Długosz (1991, pp. 89-90 & 1997/1998, p. 170) – are diverse; at the sepulchral objects, one can find both the martyr and heroic aspects. At the Śliwice cemetery they are to be found – the first one in the aforementioned epitaphs, the other in the following one:

DIED A HEROIC DEATH / TO THE GLORY OF THE FATHERLAND [1942]

In the linguistic space of the cemetery, the reflection of the axiological system is being preserved, the system that is accepted – and foremost – respected by the participants of the local community. One ought not to disregard the power of the Polish national epigraphic convention, however the values declared on the gravestones should have a real relationship with the subjective way of perceiving the world.

The Śliwice necropolis preserves a specific linguistic picture of diverse values. Firstly, it is the local affinity; in the category of valuable elements there is the place, along with the whole network of connotations.

In the inscriptions in Śliwice, one may very often come across references to the religious values. It results from the sacred scope of the Polish cemeteries, the

conventional shape of many inscriptions and the actual religious engagement of the local community. The common inscription opening HERE LIES IN GOD does not only reflect one's devotion, but serves the consoling function as well (Wysoczański, 2012, p. 257). Other, often repeated phrases of distinct religious undertone are:

I TRUST YOU JESUS, THE CROSS IS THE SALVATION, OH MY MERCIFUL JESUS, JESUS, I HAVE TRUSTED YOU

Some more individualised ones are, for example:

„LIVE IN THE LORD" [1979], LIVE IN THE LORD AND PLEAD FOR US [1978], MAY GOD GIVE YOU HEAVEN [1910], IN OUR PAIN AND SORROW, THE WORDS OF / JESUS ARE OUR CONSOLATION "THE ONE WHO BELIEVES IN ME / WILL LIVE, EVEN THOUGH THEY DIE" JOHN 11,25 [1973], I AM/ THE RESURRECTION/ AND THE LIFE. THE ONE WHO / BELIEVES IN ME WILL LIVE, / EVEN THOUGH THEY DIE! [1980]

Moreover, as far as the declared values are concerned, one should also include those connected with family life. It is the unavoidable result of treating cemeteries as the places of private cult. It has become almost common, at many Polish necropolises, to initiate the gravestone inscription by using a brief characteristic of the deceased person, from the strictly individualised point of view:

HERE LIES IN GOD / OUR MOST BELOVED SON [1910]

HERE LIES IN GOD / MY DEAR WIFE / AND OUR GOOD MOTHER [1912]

In this way, at the very beginning of the inscription, there is a specific introduction of the deceased person, connected with both the positive assessment and emphasizing the emotional scope of the relations. Exposing family values is closely related to emphasizing the importance of the memory:

HERE LIES / MY DEAR HUSBAND / OUR ALWAYS UNFORGETTABLE FATHER [1931]

THE MEMORY OF YOURS / WILL NEVER DIE AMONGST US [1982]

The authors of the gravestone messages suggest that death does not interrupt interpersonal relations:

YOU ARE IN OUR HEARTS…[1976]

(…) IN OUR HEARTS YOU WILL NOT CEASE TO BE [A FAMILY GRAVE]

Another issue, related to the exposing of the family values, is the linguistic expression of the emotions that emerge after the death of a close, beloved person (Ariès, 1979, p. 21). Cemetery is a space of memory, but also emotions that reach their climax at the moment of making the epitaph, but gradually become neutralised after some time. Expressing the emotions is on the one hand of a very individual character; on the other hand, it often takes the form that has been fixed within the epigraphic tradition. Undoubtedly, most attempts to express emotions on gravestones fall into the group of typical, repetitive inscriptions; however, it does not change the fact, that the basis of all this kind of activity are despair and yearning caused by the loss. Within the Śliwice cemetery, one may find texts that reflect the inner states of the mourning people:

IN OUR PAIN AND SADNESS THE WORDS OF JESUS ARE OUR / CONSOLATION (…) [1973]

Presenting emotions that arouse after the death of a close relative dominates in the epitaphs dedicated to children (Steczko, 2010, p. 228):

YOUNG CHILD / YOU / PERISHED / TOO / EARLY / AND BROUGHT YOUR HOME / MOURNING [1935]

WE FEEL GREAT / DESPAIR PAIN YEARNING / SLEEP AND WAIT FOR US LITTLE CHILD [1945]

YOU VANISHED LIKE THE RAY / OF SUN / AND WE PARENTS CAN DO NOTHING BUT MOURN [1959]

In Śliwice epitaphs, the linguistic picture of death is not uniform. On the one hand, one may find the *expressis verbis* expressions (Steczko, 2011, p. 93) (dominating but not exclusively, in the inscriptions dedicated to adults); on the other hand – mostly– in children's epitaphs – one resigns from calling the phenomenon directly and thus uses euphemisms that are culturally motivated.

At the aforementioned cemetery, there are the inscriptions that directly relate to the issues of Vanitas:

HERE / LIES / THE CORPSE OF THE LATE PRIEST [1867]

ON THE ASHES OF THE MOTHER / THERE LIES HER DAUGHTER [1988]

An opposing tendency to describe death and dying by using the means of language substitutes is a consequence of classifying those phenomena as a taboo sphere

(for cultural or emotional reasons). The end of one's life is euphemistically presented as departing:

WE HAVE DEPARTED… / BUT WE EXIST. / AVE MARIA [2006]

The euphemisms used in children's epitaphs base on the associations fixed among the members of the language-cultural community. Death is identified with expiring (Burzyńska & Kamieniecki, 1997/1998, p. 84; Marciniak, 2008, p. 191):

YOU EXPIRED / TOO SOON / OUR LITTLE ANGEL [1950]

With a disappearing ray of sunlight:

YOU DISAPPEARED LIKE A RAY / OF SUNLIGHT / AND WE PARENTS ARE LEFT / WITH ETERNAL SADNESS [1950]

With a little bird which stopped singing:

 (…) YOU SING NO MORE OUR SWEET / LITTLE BIRD / (…) [1945]

In the linguistic space of the Śliwice cemetery, there function the messages taken from the spoken language, the role of which is to finish the conversation and at the same time, suggest meeting each other again (it is also related to the belief in the existence of afterlife, after one's death):

GOOD BYE! [1908]

SEE YOU IN HEAVEN! [1910]

The aforementioned examples are of a two-way character, which means that their authors may be both the remaining members of the family and the deceased people themselves. In such cases, it is difficult to accredit the roles of the author and the receiver, due to the versatility, and because of it, unequivocality of the direction of the gravestone communication.

The linguistic level of sepulchral art is closely correlated with the arrangement of the burial area. The structure of the Śliwice necropolis may be presented as following:
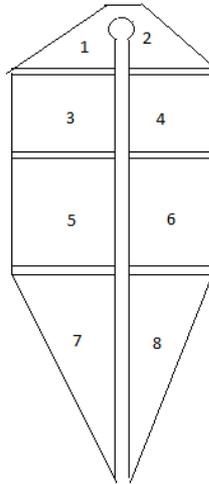
Fig. 1. The structure of the parish cemetery in Śliwice. From top to bottom: place of honour, children's graves, main gate.
Source: Author's

The area of the aforedescribed cemetery has been divided into eight sectors of different sizes. The place of honour, distinctly separated, has not been situated in the middle of the cemetery, but in its rearmost part. In that place, the main pathway leading from the main gate closes a circle. In the circle, there are images of the scene at the Golgotha mountain, the graves of the priests related to the parish (but not of all of them), as well as the graves of the laymen (most probably they were the people of a high material status, which is indicated by both the size and the architecture of the gravestones dedicated to them).

In the middle part of the cemetery, along the main alley (on its both sides) there are two rows of graves from the second decade of the 20th century, the inscriptions on which being of a uniform character and of a characteristic style of ornaments around the text. These sepulchral objects face the main pathway, which may be perceived as a kind of specific ennoblement to the deceased people. (Sikora, 1986, p. 61). Besides the date of their death, it is difficult to find the common features of the people buried in the aforedescribed part - it is a group which varied in gender and age, moreover the deceased people buried in this area were the inhabitants of separate towns.

The graves of the priests working at the Śliwice parish are situated not only in the place of honour, but also along the main pathway. It is the practice that is well-known in the folk burial culture (Sikora, 1986, p. 61).

Within the area of Śliwice cemetery, the part devoted to children's burial has

been separated in a clear way (the fragments of sectors four and six) – however, one may find numerous children's graves in all the other sectors.

The area of this necropolis resembles „the coffin lid" (Kołyszko, 2012, p. 23), as it comprises the main area (adjacent to the main pathway) and the lower area (comprising, among others, the children's graves). Those areas have been connected with stairs. This undoubtedly unique gradation has been conditioned only by the shape of the terrain, so one should not try to find any intentional selection of the deceased in such a division. Moreover, the sepulchral objects located in the upper and lower parts of the cemetery do not differ enough for one to be able to attribute a higher material or social position to the members of either of the groups.

4. The Description of Religious Cemeteries

Religious cemeteries are used to bury the deceased people who believed in Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Islam… A high diversification of the people living in Poland as far as their religion is concerned does not allow to set a quantitative boundary in an unambiguous way. Researching the religious cemeteries should base on reconstructing the linguistics pictures of the world that emerge from the inscriptions that are to be found at the cemeteries dedicated to the believers of diverse religious groups. When comparing the gravestone inscriptions, one may distinguish both the common elements, that are the epigraphic tendencies of the religious scope, and typical elements, of a limited religious range, conditioned by the religious-cultural autonomy. Surely, one must take into consideration the uniformed components, which are the result of a long-lasting proximity to the members of different religious communities, as well as the original elements, which show the continuity and autonomy of the co-existing traditions. The multi-levelness of the message the semiotic space of necropolises does not allow one to forget about the extralinguistic components, including the common elements and typical, unique ones. It concerns both the architectural and graphic aspect of the sepulchral object (for example, the symbols related to a particular faith, the way of ornamenting the gravestones), as well as the customs related to death, mourning and taking care of the individual burial place afterwards, that function within the particular religious-cultural circle (such phenomena as decorating gravestones with flowers – present in the Christian culture, or leaving little stones when coming to the grave – characteristic for the Jewish culture).

An exemplary comparison of a selected aspect (appealing to a passer-by) of the linguistic space of religious necropolises (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish) is as follows:

The tendency to put the inscription text containing a form of an appeal to a passer-by, which is characteristic of the Western culture, (Ariès, 1992, pp. 217-218) is seldom to be found at a Jewish cemetery. In the Jewish culture, saying prayers for the deceased should be finished before the first anniversary of their death (Levine, 2001, p. 186). After the year-long mourning – one is allowed to say them only on certain days

(Tyloch, 1987, p. 323). Thus, praying for the deceased person at different times is interpreted in a negative way, as it suggests that the deceased person committed many sins when still alive and needs „additional pleading" now (Levine, 2001, p. 169). Any kinds of request for prayers, addressed to the prospective passers-by, are contradictory to the Jewish sepulchral tradition.

There is a significant discrepancy between the Jewish and Catholic customs as far as the aforementioned matter is concerned. Among Catholics, the prayers for the dead are treated as the sign of concern for their afterlife. Taking care of the souls of one's deceased relatives is the basis of devoting individual prayers to them, saying Holy Masses and other services, as well as placing on the gravestones the requests for praying to God, thanks to which the deceased ones will get a chance to avoid afterlife suffering.

The authors ask the passers-by not only for prayers but also for some reflection. Those messages concern the emotional sphere; they encourage quiet reflection on, and at the same time, empathising with the emotional state of the dead person's family. One may also see requests for addressing the God, for a moment of engaging in prayers and not for emotional identification with anyone.

The interacting feature of the gravestone leads to opening a dialogue on many levels: *relatives: a passer-by*, *the deceased person: a passer-by.*

As far as the communication with the passer-by is concerned, the authors of the message often reveal their identity by characterizing their relationship with the deceased: LEFT INCONSOLABLE / THE MATHER RAI / SES THIS STONE AND ASKS PASSERS-BY / FOR A MOMENT'S OF THOUGHT TO GOD [CPS, 1850]

PASSER-BY, GIVE A MOMENT'S OF THOUGHT / TO THE SOUL OF THIS NOBLE / WIFE AND MOTHER [CPS, 1877]

Mentioning the virtues of the deceased one is specific form of persuasion – the author tries to convince the prospective receivers of the message, that their deceased relatives deserved to be recalled, as they acted and behaved according to the widely-acclaimed norms and values.

In the other case, the authors address the passer-by on behalf of the deceased person:

ASKS PASSERS-BY / FOR AN AVE MARIA / FOR HIS SOUL [CPS, 1891]

It is also a persuasion technique, as the requests coming from – indirectly – the deceased person themselves, probably have a bigger influence on the passers-by walking past the sepulchral object.

In the Protestant tradition, there is no place for prayers for the deceased (Markiewicz, 1982, p. 61), as a result of disallowing the belief in purgatory. In spite of the ceremonial shaped in such a way, one may notice the following appeals to passers-by on the gravestones dedicated to Lutherans:

GRATEFUL DAUGTHERS LAY THIS MEMENTO / AND ASK FOR A MOMENT'S OF THOUGHT / TO GOD [CE-AW, 1881]

WIFE AND CHILDREN ASK / FOR A REFLECTION. [CE-AW, 1899]

THE LEFTBEHIND WIFE WHO LOSES YOU TODAY / ASKS PASSERS-BY FOR A QUIET REFLECTION [CE-AW, 1913]

The aforementioned examples confirm the prevalence of the epigraph convention of the extra-religious scope over the faith-related practice.

Appealing to the passer-by is mostly the element of older inscriptions, the ones that appeared until the second half of the 20th century. They are hard to find (although it is not impossible) in the epitaphs created at the turn of the 20th century or at the beginning of the 21st century, in which the authors more often interact with God than with passers-by. This is true for both the Catholic and Lutheran epigraphy. However, although the presence of the request for prayers is fully understandable in the former, in the latter – it may be the result of subordinating the gravestone inscription to the power of epigraphic convention.

Undoubtedly, the messages addressed to a random passer-by are motivated by the collective religiousness – the authors ask for prayers, not for the memory of the features or achievements of the deceased. Death and all the ritualised behaviours after it belong to the broadly-understood religious customs. However, one may not disregard the relation-making aspect of the appeal to a passer-by. The basis for the great frequency of those texts must be the faith in the actual granting of those requests, the tendency to reflect upon the afterlife destiny of a stranger, as well as the ability to identify with the family experiencing negative emotions.

5. New Practices in Sepulchral Customs

New practices that emerged within the field of cemetery cult at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, are the animal cemeteries and virtual necropolises. The former gathers individual burial places of the animals defined as, based on the posthumanistic philosophy, as companions (Barcz, 2013, p. 111); the latter gives the chance to take care of the memories of the deceased person on the Internet, as well as let one access the grave in an ever-open way, as it has no time and space barriers, and to interact with interlocutors, both familiar and strangers. These phenomena are not only a specific and seemingly unavoidable continuation of the epigraphic customs, but also their reinterpretation. The analysis of the gravestone messages, which base on the – more and more common – tendency to reduce any interspecies barriers, as well as the language rites functioning at the virtual necropolis, may lead to very interesting results, which will become the source of information concerning contemporary culture (Muzioł, 2014). What plays a dominant role is the selective approach of both the

authors of the inscriptions dedicated to pets and the authors of virtual epitaphs to the resources of the traditional epigraph convention and the rules of it - that is copying certain elements and modifying other ones. In this paper, the linguistic space of an animal necropolis will be analysed to a greater extent.

The expansiveness of the animal cemeteries is a very interesting phenomenon. Animal necropolis is not only a new era in the history of cemeteries, but foremost the evidence of the change of mentality, which is happening gradually, not revolutionarily. Setting a new paradigm of behaviours and rites comprising mourning, opening thanatological borders for the non-human beings, must leave visible marks in the development of the burial culture. Cemetery art, for centuries, has reflected all the mental and aesthetic changes, as well as the transformations connected to the intersubjective understanding of relations. Moreover, it reveals all the signs of the constant evolution of the collective imagination. It is true for the animal burial areas as well, which reflect positive valuation of interspecies relations, motivated by a certain outlook on life.

The following is a description of the linguistic space of an animal cemetery, concentrated on expressing emotions:

The linguistic expression of emotions in the epitaphs dedicated to animal companions is one of the most distinct signs of positive valuating of the interspecies relations; treating animals as members of households, as family members, after the death of which one usually enters the state of ritualised, culturally-conditioned mourning and inner despair, strong yearning, bereavement. This posthumanistic mourning – or rather the subjective feeling of the need to go into it – is the condition for the tendency to commemorate animals after their death. The source of the today's cult of cemeteries (for the burial of people) is the concept of „the death of the other one" (Ariès, 1979, p. 121), which causes a greater fear than one's own death; this way of perceiving death determines the functioning of the mourning rituals. Focusing on the death of a close person one feels affection for has become the foundation for the development of cemeteries seen as a place of private cult; however, the posthumanistic reflection upon death has caused this thanatological concept to broaden and include the beings previously excluded from it, that is animal companions.

In the light of the human-animal relations, which are determined by emotions, this kind of broadening is a necessary consequence – if there is engagement in a interspecies relationship, breaking it causes the other party to suffer. Due to this, one mourns not only after the death of a beloved person, but also an animal; both at the internal (mourning, yearning, sorrow) and the external (socially accepted rituals – including raising a gravestone) level.

Gravestone epigraphy, created in order to care for the memories of an animal, is a very distinct, and at the same time, hard to negate, sign of including the death of an animal into the set of the elements of – as Jacek Kolbuszewski calls it – „anthropologic and humanistic perspective" (2004, 576). The humanistic perspective shows a certain direction, it organises the issues concerning interspecies thanatology, mostly within the sphere of collective imagination; however including animal death in the humanistic perspective narrows the scope of the phenomenon down. When researching this matter, it is necessary to take the assumptions of postmodern ethics, and the posthumanism that has been based on it, into

consideration.

Exposing the emotional engagement in human relations is one of the fundamental determinants of graveyard epigraphy, which has been shaped in the Western Culture for centuries. The character of the place and situation determines both the semantic content of the gravestone inscriptions (personal, almost intimate confessions, declarations of lifelong memory, expressing negative emotions), as well as their formal shaping (carefully thought-of hierarchization, the contents, laments, exclamations). The specificity of the gravestone text disables it from appearing in any place – it is the text of unambiguously specified purpose. The conditioning of the meaningful-formal construction favours its narrow usage and at the same time, its determinants being highly recognisable.

Seeing the cemetery area as a place of meeting, a place of interaction, is one of the bases of the broadly-spread tendency to share private experiences, feelings and reflections publicly. This motivation influences the linguistic picture of emotional states, which are common for the authors of gravestone inscriptions, dedicated to animal companions.

The descriptions of emotional states in the inscriptions dedicated to animals are usually analogous to the ones found at the epitaph gravestones dedicated to people. Thus, they are of universal character – isolating them would make it impossible to tell whether they were written for parents, spouses, friends or maybe dogs or cats. Here are the examples:

THE WORLS WITHOUT YOU IS <u>SAD</u> [ZM, 2004]

MY <u>GRIEF</u> FOR YOU / IS IMMENSE! [ZKN, 2003]

<u>I MISS</u> YOU SO MUCH / MY HEART <u>ACHES</u> [ZKN, 2009]

An inscription, by using an exclamation mark, may be given a very expressive character, which can be associated with the plaintive epitaphs, which are mostly to be found in folk culture:

YOU ARE GONE! IT IS SO HARD TO COME TO TERMS / WITH ITS! I WILL NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN, NEITHER AT NIGHT NOR DURING THE DAY – NEVER!!! / HOW CRUEL THESE WORDS / SOUND !!! [ZKN, 2012]

All the lamentations, which are the linguistic evidence of grief, experienced tragedy and helplessness one feels when facing the Four Last Things in a direct way, come from the common source. This source is the need to show the receivers, readers, passers-by one's inner state, the state which is far from stability, caused by a sudden interruption of a positively-valuated relationship with a close being.

Moreover, the animal inscriptions indicate – which is a common practice in the Polish epigraphic convention – the external signs of inner emotions:

SLEEP TIGHT DOGGY, DREAM / TIME WILL DRY <u>TEARS</u> AWAY. [ZKN, ?]

The authors of the gravestone inscriptions dedicated to animals also emphasize the emptiness (Antas, 2014, pp. 253-254), caused by the feeling of loss of the beloved being:

NOW I AM ONLY LEFT WITH SILENCE, / WHICH HURTS AND GREAT EMPTINESS [ZM, 2004]

WE MISS SO MUCH THOSE / EYES FULL OF LOVE… [ZM, ?]

THE HOUSE WITHOUT YOU / IS EMPTY [ZM, 2002]

I CANNOT LEAVE THE CIRCLE OUTSIDE YOUR VELVET, / WHEN THE YEARNING LIKE CLENCHING TEETH / CRUSHES THE TOGETHERNESS, WHICH IS NO MORE [ZKN, 2008]

Within the space of the animal cemetery – seen as a place of private cult – the manifesting of emotions connected with the interrupting of the interspecies relationship, sharing one's experiences and remembering publicly fall into the set of permitted behaviours and commonly (among the members of a given community) accepted, owing to which they contribute to the norms present in this, clearly separated, place. Expressing one's emotions openly, which is a consequence of experiencing posthumanistinc mourning, manifests itself in both stereotypical texts, often duplicated within burial areas, and in the inscriptions which often are very personal, or even intimate memories or reflections of the owners of the buried animals.

6. Conclusions

Necropolises, regardless of their scope or the type of relationships between their authors, gather information concerning the deceased ones in a direct way, and the living ones, that is the authors of the headstone messages, indirectly.

Local cemeteries, seen as collective works of inhabitants, are a reflection of their memories, experiences, beliefs, hopes, aesthetic awareness, everyday reality, the axiological system they respect and the internal social gradation. Deciphering the cemetery area – the inscriptions and the purposeful organisation of its permanent elements – leads to a multi-level perception of the community.

Among the linguistic spaces of the religious necropolises, there are both the elements that differentiate them, as well as those that join them. It is equally true for both the structure of the gravestone inscriptions and their semantic contents.

Animal cemeteries are the evidence of the boundaries between interpersonal and interspecies emotional relations having become very vague. The ennoblement of the human-animal bonds is supported by the posthumanistic ethics, as well as by the social

perception, according to which interpersonal relations ceased to be the only ones allowed in the contemporary world.

Undoubtedly, the cemetery space is a place, in which the research interests of the scientists of diverse scientific fields meet, for example of historians, architects, urbanists, monument conservators, culture experts, psychologists, literature experts, and of course linguistic scientists. The matters described in this paper are a mere fragment of the whole research field, only one of the multiple possibilities, one of the many points of view.

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Sources:
CPS – Old Powązki Cemetery in Warszawa
CE-AW – Evangelical Lutheran Cemetery in Warszawa
ZKN – animal cemetery in Konik Nowy (near Warszawa)
ZM – animal cemetery in Mochle (near Bydgoszcz)