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## **MEDICINE AS AN INSPIRATION FOR THE LITERATURE. SELECTED EXAMPLES**

### **Medycyna jako inspiracja dla literatury. Wybrane przykłady**

**Key words:** literature, medicine, social consciousness, art, poetry

**Słowa kluczowe:** literatura, medycyna, świadomość społeczna, sztuka, poezja

#### **Abstract**

The literature plays underestimated role in creating the definition of medicine as it serves us with variety of images that make metaphorical references to our existence. The fact that the medicine remains the section of an art in the expanse of which the envoy of poetry and prose finds its expression emphasizes that those two, apparently unrelated worlds, interpermeate and breathe sense into each other's existence. Literature that cannot refer to the medical reality is unable to achieve the reader's soul and affect his inner hierarchy of values, whereas

#### **Streszczenie**

Literatura odgrywa niekwestionowaną rolę w tworzeniu definicji medycyny, oferując różnorodność obrazów, które w swym metaforycznym wymiarze odnoszą się do ludzkiego życia. Fakt, iż medycyna stanowi gałąź sztuki, w bezmiarze której przesłanie wynikające z bogactwa prozy i poezji znajduje swój wyraz, podkreśla, iż owe dwa, pozornie niezwiązane ze sobą światy przenikają się wzajemnie, nadając sens własnej egzystencji. Literatura, która nie może odwołać się do medycznej rzeczywistości, nie może bowiem dotrzeć do duszy czytelnika

the medicine deprived of multidimensionality that is hidden underneath the literary words deteriorates into the field devoid of spirituality.

i wpłynąć na jego wewnętrzną hierarchię wartości, podczas gdy medycyna, obdarta z wielowymiarowości literackich symboli, staje się przestrzenią pozbawioną duchowości.

## Introduction

The definition and the role of medicine in social consciousness have been and incessantly are shaped by the development of science, the diversity of philosophical currents and the ambiguity of literature that forms an expanse within which all the prevailing psychosocial factors find their own expression, *ipso facto* creating comprehensive visualization of human's sensitivity, emotionality and spirituality in a particular point of the spacetime. Since the words are believed to outperform human beings in the pursuit of immortality, the process of sequencing the letters in inimitable constellations of meanings seems to embody the foretaste of almightiness that is widely known as the art. The foretaste that can also be found in the metaphoricity of medicine. As the polish physician and scientist, Andrzej Szczeklik, wrote in one of his books: *The medicine and the art descend from one trunk. Both of them rise from magic – the system that is founded upon omnipotence of word* (Szczeklik 2002). Common origin and intrinsical polysemy make the complexity of dependences that couple literature with medicine create multidimensional web inside of which their close relationship becomes a factor that has a power to shape social consciousness. The world composed of words significantly influences general perception of the roles that the doctor and the patient play on the stage of life by forming the physical and psychical conception of the human being and therefore determining the value of healthcare. What is more, foundations of philosophy let the artistry of ordering letters constitute a subconscious area within which each person creates individual galaxies of definitions and interpretations of their own versions of reality. In proposed chain of reasoning, not only does the literature express the attitude of particular literary period towards medicine, but also it creates a distant dimension which houses the variety of metaphors connected with the elusiveness of physicality that are continually being brought to life by the mankind and therefore becomes an expanse of contemplation that lets humanity find a proper

way to comprehend the figurativeness of an illness and the inevitability of death (Rousseau 1986; Furst 1991; Harlow 2020).

Literariness of medicine expresses itself in the fact that the study which concentrates on shielding the flame of eternity hidden inside pathetically physical formation of tissues and liquids creates the variation of reality in which the omnipotence of a single word wields human's emotionality. Apparently accidental compound of letters that unite to form innocent syllables which in the end become sentences that are able to unexpectedly burn past ideals with the flame of innominate grief and impudently establish new hierarchy of values on their ashes constitute the portrayal of the potential of words that is shyly hiding underneath the universality of conversation. Literature and medicine represent therefore the fields of human's activity that, relying upon contemporary state of knowledge and dominant philosophical currents, determine the actual designata of a human being and, what is more, subconsciously integrate in the depth of their substances, thus creating comprehensive image of the role that a life of an individual plays depending on the reliability of advances in the medicine development (Greaves 1979). As it can be noticed, those two worlds descending from the same trunk interpermeate in the process of shaping prevailing model of perceiving the place of the human in the order of universe. Continuous evolution of science and, as a result, perfection of the healthcare, through the mediation of the most powerful medium, which naturally is the literature, consequences in meaningful changes in the portrayal of the worth of health and life that exists in social consciousness. Increase in the quality of medical services translates into the improvement of living conditions as well as elongation of life expectancy, which in turn results in affirmation of existence that is expressed in all the forms of art. In described way the development of medicine imposes the direction of literature's evolution and therefore the written word can be defined as the most verifiable witness of the history of healthcare. The potency of the world composed of letters lets us travel through time and observe the way of perceiving reality that significantly deviates from ours as the images created with the usage of sentences form a unique, in terms of the form and content, story, each element of which delights the senses with its complete devotion to the stylization of a given period (Charon 2000; 2012).

The medicine can be defined as the domain of art, since the art finds its expression in boggling with its limitless interpretative potential as well as in developing sensitivity, which is essential in relationship that is gradually established and shaped between patient and his doctor. Moreover, its artistry can also be found in the phenomenon of understanding the pain, uncertainty and disorientation of the sick, of finding sense in the signals that each organism sends in an individual way, of creating constellations of symptoms that in the end unite to form the proper diagnosis. However, juxtaposition of the substances of healthcare and literature exhibits a superficial difference between their durability. Indifference towards the passage of time, which is an attribute of literature, remains seemingly unreachable from the viewpoint of medicine. Since the art of protecting health and life is in its essence so closely related to the world of paper and ink, its artistic envoy might not be an expression of short-sighted striving for the immortality of an individual, but hopeful questing for the perspective of the timelessness of the whole species (Cawthorne 1961). Deathlessness of art constitutes, in this line of thinking, the expression of spiritual longing for a dimension that is not restricted by callousness of time, the answer to the poetics of instability and mortality as well as the image of a subconscious absurd of the mankind which, striving for insubstantial eternity, gets lost in desiring a medicament for imperfectness of corporality. Furthermore, the assumption that the medicine aims for the immortality of humanity instead of undisturbed longevity of a human individual is an expression of the will to maintain the deathlessness of literature, since indifference of the written word towards time is not unconditional and in an obvious way relies upon the continuity of the mankind's existence. The world composed of letters remains an important element of the process in which each human searches for individual sense of life and death. In this way, discussed form of art permeates the world of medicine as it defines the philosophical worth of the miracle of existence, designates the inner space of shaping metaphors with its immeasurable interpretative potential and protects the ethos of the noble profession of a doctor, constantly shaping the portrayals of the physician and the patient in social consciousness. The literature is therefore nothing else but the commemorating of the process of searching for answers to questions that regard the sense of life – the ques-

tions which constitute the driving force in the development of medicine (Brown 1959; Karkabi et al. 2008).

## The definition of an individual

The literature creates the model of perceiving the human being, thus determines the worth of medicine. Intimacy of the relationship that couples noble care of health and life with the philosophy that enforces biased judgement about their value with the armament of the written word makes the portrayal of an individual that emerges from literary compositions directly condition general attitude of people towards their own being. Diversification of the ways in which different periods and currents present an individual as well as the whole humanity emphasizes the limitlessness of the mankind's interpretative potential, simultaneously making us realize the complexity of our nature. Physicality and spirituality constitute two opposite compounds of each human that are perpetually juxtaposed by art in order to define the exact proportion between the *sacrum* and the *profanum* that forms the perfection of being. Literature changeably focuses either on the uniqueness or the everydayness of life, serving us with variety of perspectives the interpretation of which results in finding individual image of humaneness that can be expressed in metaphorically exaggerated fleetingness, affirmation of the functioning of incomprehensible miracle known as the body, comparison of contradictory ethical attitudes that creates awareness of multidimensionality of the conscience as well as the collision of human's elusiveness and the deafness of eternity. Each subject of literary composition is the foundation of creating and modifying individual concepts of reality, as each metaphor can be interpreted in infinitely many ways. For this reason, the process of shaping the visage of a human being is a result of cooperation between the writer, who creates the expanse for emotional as well as spiritual development and the reader who infuses it with noble worthiness. Nevertheless, the wide range of perspectives from which the humanity is presented by the written matter determines diversity that can be seen when it comes to public attitude towards medicine over time. The study that concentrates on protecting health of each individual as well as improving the quality of life is inseparably connected with prevailing

model of comprehending the balance between the beauty and the misery of existence. Immersing into variety of literary currents lets us perceive the human being from all the viewpoints that have been brought to life since the birth of handwriting and therefore witness the consequences of espousing particular model of understanding the sense of living. The world of literature is filled with different descriptions of the phenomenon of corporality, some of which marvel at its beauty, whereas the others lament its imperfectness. For instance, Walt Whitman, one of the most influential poets in American canon, wrote the following words: “of physiology from top to toe I sing, not physiognomy alone nor brain alone is worthy for the Muse, I say the Form complete is worthier far” (Whitman 1867). Words of the artist express deep, proud affirmation of the physicality. The persona of the poem draws attention to the fact that each component of the body does not represent any value until it unites with all the organs to create the miracle of the living organism. The metaphoricity of entirety that is inscribed in the essence of substantiality makes us consider the completeness of the form in the context of a fusion between spirituality and corporality. The fusion that represents interminable battle between endeavors of the body and the soul which, in the depths of inner inconsistency, is emanating with the beauty of limitless potential. As the body constitutes, inside of the interpretative expanse designated by the world of the poem, the subsistent part of the humaneness’s nobility, the medicine, which aims to maintain or restore the conditions under which a human being is able to enthuse the beauty of living, is gaining importance. The literary definition of an individual is therefore determining the role that healthcare plays on the stage of each epoch. Similar idea of the value of substantiality has been proposed by Polish poet, Stanisław Grochowiak, who used to teach: “This human being [...] will politely serve you with his inner shining [...] Messieurs, nothing more” (Grochowiak 1978). Describing the circumstances of the anatomy lesson, the lyrical persona portrays the remains of the human body as a priceless treasure, simultaneously comparing utility of physical visage to the elusiveness of emotionality, sensitivity and spirituality of an individual. The emptiness of superficiality that characterizes the existence stricken with the requirement of usefulness is optimistically filled with relief and hope thanks to the statement that there are miracles

hidden inside of our being that cannot and should not be discovered. Poetical “nothing more” is therefore an expression of the consciousness that the body of knowledge which a human is able to possess is significantly limited and cannot comprise the piece of eternity that is casted in spirituality. The perspective of dividing the cognizance into a part that is located within range of perception and a part that remains unreachable even for the greatest minds, presents the world of medicine as the universe marked by insatiability. Metaphoricity of the fact that a human, the form of creation composed of substantial superficiality and immaterial spirituality, is internally torn between cognizability of the physicality and inquisitiveness about immaterial side of existence, seems to emphasize the inconceivably logical beauty of the world’s incomprehensibility. Nevertheless, the completeness of the form that describes each human being, in the chain of reasoning that arises from the interpretation of proposed literary compositions, can be perceived as a miracle of the fusion between mortality and deathlessness, simplicity and figurativeness, tangibility and inconceivability, which places the medicine in a light of the protagonist that completes the mission to protect that miracle and its ephemeral existence from the weakness of imposed form. The world composed of paper and ink offers more than only one image of the value of the human being’s existence. Variety of definitions of life that can be found in literature makes us search for apparently contrary viewpoints and look for our own definition of meaningfulness in each of them. An example that is worth further reflexion can be found in the interpretation of *A carcass*, which constitutes an important part of *The flowers of evil* written by a French poet, Charles Baudelaire. Decomposing body that is the subject of that literary embodiment of turpism does not emanate with beauty and nobility as the physicality presented in the previously described poems. The lyrical world that arises from observation of the title carcass does not seem to offer any absolutes, on the contrary, it plunges into the putrescent landscape of “giving back to great Nature the elements she had combined” (Baudelaire 1955). Even though the artistry of description is in some inconsistent with the deformity and inevitability of decomposition, abandoning prejudices towards the raunchiness of the processes that take control over the body after death enables us to see the beauty that is hidden inside the consciousness, that the corporality of each

matter of creation is connected with this world in the same way. The medicine perceived from the viewpoint of turpism philosophy might therefore seem to be a field of human's activity that is steeped in meaninglessness. If every cell that forms each of the bodies that exist on our planet is in advance sentenced to the same vision of an end, any procedures that respite the enforcement of the judgement is senseless in the view of the spacetime. Nonetheless, interpretation of the short period of time in which one life finds its beginning and end, might result in finding the most valuable subject of creation in elusiveness of existence. In that line of reasoning, the healthcare does not procrastinate unavoidable sentence of death, on the contrary, it provides inimitable formation of life with conditions that let it undisturbedly enthuse the intangible phenomenon of living. The border that separates literature and medicine seems to be fading when the attempt to estimate the value of a human's life becomes the subject of reflexion. The existence, which constitutes the source and the direct *raison d'être* of both discussed branches of art, at that point becomes the object of either desperate, debilitating struggle for independence or ruthless philosophy of sacrificing an individual in the name of reaching greater purposes. Both phenomena are closely associated with a war, which puts the mankind to the proof in order to verify if there is any humanity left inside of human beings. In described way the literature constitutes a record of the fight for saving the ashes of sensitivity and takes over the function of witnessing inhumanity of gaining knowledge at the cost of human lives. Described web of dependences that is brought to life from the atrocity of war can be presented by the usage of two literary compositions, the short story entitled *Doctor Spanner*, which forms a part of *Medallions* written by Zofia Nałkowska and the book *Shielding the flame – intimate conversation with doctor Marek Edelman, the last surviving leader of the Warsaw ghetto uprising* by Hanna Krall. Not without a reason are both propositions explicitly connected with the world of medicine by the characters of the doctors, as the people who are particularly conscious of the imperfectness of corporality are psychically influenced by the experience of a war in the most harmful way. Consequences of described impact refer to one of two extremities, that are personified by two eponymous figures. The first of them, doctor Spanner, represents the visage of medicine that denies nobility of its



mission. The story concentrates on describing the décor of the institute of anatomy, which turns out to be unwontedly crowded in the chapter of the history that is stricken with nameless grief and illegitimate anger. Creating the model of perceiving a human being only as a physical subject of research is one of the worst crimes committed by war. Piles of bodies that were fawningly deprived of life and robbed of dignity, that were classified on the basis of their utility and exploited until the last gram of fat remain the portrayal of dehumanization that seized minds of the scientists (Nałkowska 1946). The beauty of protecting the flame of hope that incandesces in hearts of the sick, which constitutes the envoy of healthcare, loses its chastity in the light of research conducted in dark chapters of our history. Notwithstanding, in the reality composed of brutality, death and desperate fight in the name of one more breath there still is a place for shielding the nobility of medicine, as the character of doctor Marek Edelman represents the spark of good that illuminates even the most obscure of times. The interview with the cardiologist, which constitutes the framework of the book, provides information about the role of a physician in the world overcome with a murderous rage. As the physician said: “God is trying to blow out the candle and I’m quickly trying to shield the flame, taking advantage of his brief inattention” (Krall, Edelman 1986), which perfectly describes the meaning and the envoy of doctor’s profession. Unflinching loyalty towards worthy ideals as well as invincible moral compass are the qualities of medics which let the art of helping ailing people survive the brutality of war and bring the brightness of shielding human’s health and life into new eras. What is more, when the dust settles, the smoke clears and the embers die, the medicine is the most substantial category of art that wields the power to rebuild the temple of meaningfulness that marks multidimensionality of the human being’s nature. The way in which the existence of a human being is perceived depending on the psychosocial conditions determines the role that the medicine plays in the social consciousness, as the value of healthcare is intrinsically connected with the worth of life itself. The process of searching for the proper definition of the chain of days filled with loneliness that results from facing the perspective of eternity that cannot even be grasped by the human mind requires proper reference to the world made up of the letters. A proposal that is definitely noteworthy is the constellation of

words created by polish poet, Stanisław Barańczak, who described existence as “unreasonable crime fiction of blood and terror, roman-fleuve, which will not let me discover its vague final until I will anyway not be able to lift cold eyelids closed by a warm hand” (Barańczak 1988). Despite wide array of unknowns, discovering the content of poetical roman is gripping and addictive, as the philosophy of sustainable anthropocentrism, that does not reject the saliency of an absolute in human’s life but lets the physical and spiritual element coalesce into the beauty of humaneness, allows us to perceive the medicine in the light of limitless expanse of searching for better quality of enthusing each breath.

## **The ethos of being a doctor**

Responsibility for shaping the image of medicine in social consciousness that lies upon the literature consequences in the fact that the world composed of paper and ink determines the way in which the profession of a doctor is perceived in the eyes of particular epoch. Nowadays, the physician is generally regarded as the man of admirable knowledge, who wields the ability to bring help when the corporality exhibits its imperfectness, who can temporarily reject his own being in order to understand the suffering of patients, who simultaneously plays difficult roles of the teacher, the guide, the advisor, the confidant and the friend. Even though described profession represents undeniable value, the history of medicine provides many evidences that the art of helping ailing people has not always been appreciated by society and a few hundred years ago the worth of being a doctor did not differ significantly from choosing the career of the butcher. Evolution of science which allowed the medicine to prevent and overcome increasing quantity of health problems over time has been gradually changing the model of perceiving people who devote their lives in order to bring help to the people that fallen victim to their own physicality. The process of modifying the portrayal of the doctor in social consciousness was continuously being recorded by the means of literature and for this reason delving into the prose and the poetry originating from particular age lets us travel through time and understand the situation of the physicians under specific psychosocial conditions. In spite of all appearances, aside from visible differences in the range of therapeutic prospects

which are strictly limited by the degree of study development, the moral visage of problems that the doctors have to face has not changed in a meaningful way since the birth of the medicine. An excellent example of the thesis's validity can be found in the interpretations of books *The strongwoman* and *Homeless people* written by Polish proseur, Stefan Żeromski. The first mentioned literary composition tells the story of the teacher, Stanisława Bozowska and the doctor, Paweł Obarecki, two young enthusiasts who, in accordance with the concept of positivism, decide to sacrifice their lives in the name of the basic work in order to provide society with high level of civilizational and cultural development in the future. Idealistic assumptions of their attitude is put to the test when the imagination faces reality, which results in bitter disappointment and debilitating sense of helplessness. Fidelity of the characters towards their inner hierarchy of values is called into question when the world's pursuit of profit forces them to choose between opposing the functioning system and submitting to its principles (Żeromski 1985). The book illustrates, by the means of the main characters, consequences of both choices and therefore lets us see the emptiness that pervades the mind of a person who resigns from noble ideals in the name of superficial selfishness as well as the loneliness that overwhelms the microcosmos of the ones who decide to change the world by themselves. The disagreement between sincere will to understand the needs of the patients, devoting one's own being in order to bring them help and the desire to cherish the miracle of one's own life in described chain of reasoning represents another dimension of persistent ethical dilemmas. Doctor Judym, the main character of *Homeless people*, personifies described inner conflict in the most comprehensive way, as he perceives the fact of being a doctor as an obligation to repay a debt that arised from being given a life. Decision to renunciate selfish happiness in the name of changing social perception of medicine results in inner predicament that is be visualized as the torn trunk of the pine that is distressingly dripping with resin (Żeromski 1900). Profound commitment to performed profession makes each physician stand at the crossroad that separates empathy and indifference, which breathes life into melancholic longing for *aurea mediocritas*, the specific point of inner spacetime that allows the doctor to find proper balance between personal and professional life. The way of reaching described equilibrium

seems to express itself in the duty to remember undertaken aims and ambitions and therefore derive real satisfaction from being a part of the mission to brighten the darkness of this world by the flame of hope. The satisfaction, which disables indifference to ruin the idealistic creatures of awareness with the commanding beauty of its nature. The phenomenon of understanding another human being constitutes incomparably multifaceted venture that assumes readiness to perceive the world not from individual perspective but from the viewpoint of the ancient art of *epoché*, which requires temporal rejection of one's experiences, emotionality and spirituality in the name of discovering impartial image of reality. Thus, the judgement of the role that the doctor plays in social consciousness is not as unequivocal as it might seem. Multidimensionality that is inscribed in the deepest being of literature creates therefore an expanse inside of which the ethos of the doctor's profession is being shielded from detrimental superficiality of opinions that arise from dismissive miscomprehension. Even though each person creates inimitably individual dimension of reality that cannot be compared to any other formation of being, noble intentions that aim to bring help and hope into microcosmoses covered with the sense of helplessness connects medics in common mission. The worth that is represented by the branch of art that focuses on protecting the most mysterious masterpiece of matter, the human being, does not reject the fact, that not every representant of the world of medicine finds his own definition of bringing help and therefore is able to fulfill professional and moral duties without the perspective of occupational burnout. For instance, juxtaposition of the main characters of discussed books, doctor Judym and doctor Obarecki consequences in the perspective of two extremities, both of which result from improper comprehension of the medical vocation and result in general sense of impuissance. The barrier of apathy and the border of workaholism that deny the value of doctors' profession by depriving the beauty of helping suffering people being defined as a purely spiritual need, against all appearances, often turn out to be almost invisible lines, crossing of which is connected with being deprived of the perspective which allows to understand the invisible beauty of being a part of the mission to protect health and life. The act of rejecting one's existence and emotionality in order to achieve objectivity that allows to put noble ideals into practice, which is embod-

ied by the first literary figure, visibly contrasts with the submission to the unsatisfactory model of reality that guarantees prosperous, undisturbed life, which is personized by the second character. None of those paths, however, turns out to be the proper one as the fact that the doctor is a human being makes representatives of that influential profession possess emotionality and spirituality which cannot be abandoned either in the name of unselfish help or the superficial profit. The literature, as it can be seen, provides us with numerous personifications of extremities that impoverish minds of the physicians, thus creating an interpretative area inside of which each subconscious explorer of the conceptuality of participating the mission designated by the utility of medicine finds his own definition of medicine as well as the doctor's profession. Nevertheless, the multitude of ways in which the characters of medics are presented in an interpretative dimension of the literature's metaphoricity in the end lets the reader understand the complexity of the most palpable consciousness of the elusiveness that marks human's corporality that characterized each emissary of the medicine's envoy and therefore shields the ethos of that noble profession by shaping the portrayal of the physician in social consciousness.

### **The contemplation of an end**

Cognition of the terms that are associated with illness and death is one of the most complex defiance that a human mind is obliged to confront. The medicine and the literature constitute the branches of art, the combination of which lets us become reconciled with faultiness of the body as well as the inevitability of poetical act of taking the last, grasping breath and filling the lungs with the most nostalgic crumb of worldliness. Diversification of the models of presenting and describing the contemplation of hominine ephemerality, that can be found in treasury of the world composed of letters, translates to the uniqueness that characterizes the ways in which people perceive their own mortality. On the one hand phenomena of the illness and the death are widely presented as the result and the source of negative emotions, whereas, on the other hand, equally often are they depicted as the subjects of understanding unexplored *modi* of reality. Difficult situations, especially the ones that concern the most valuable treasure of the mankind, which

is the existence of a human being, are known to sensitize people to the instability of being. For this reason, the medicine, which gives people hope for postponement of the inner sentence of death or life, which, in their squishy essence, do not differ in significant way, constitutes the ideological temple of awareness that wields the power of judging whether or not does the corporality exhibit its damage vulnerability. Becoming conscious of the imperfectness of the very own, apparently familiar body, suffering from symptoms linked with the development of an illness as well as undergoing certain therapies are potentially traumatic experiences, the sense of which can be defined only by means of literature and faith. From the perspective of metaphoricity and multidimensionality of human suffering, the situation of an illness can be perceived as the subject of spiritual and emotional development as well as the intangible foundation of understanding the beauty that in non-obvious way fills the semantical dimension of mortality. The beauty, which is exhibited in the poem entitled *Nothing twice*, written by one of the greatest modern-day poets, Wisława Szymborska. The lyrical subject, describing the life as the scenery in which “we arrive improvised and leave without the chance to practice” (Szymborska 2006), expresses the poetical charm of evanescence, as the fact of existence would lack sense without the perspective of an end and for this reason human sensibility to the passage of time can be perceived as the privilege which marks the mankind with the nobility of metaphoricity. What is more, the literature suggests that the death does not wield the power to turn the human being into oblivion as it can affect only the corporeal dimension of humaneness and thus can be comprehended not in the role of executioner who wills to deprive each subject of creation of its life, but as the metaphorical act of abandoning the most physical form of being. As we can read in the poem “on death, without exaggeration”, “there’s no life that couldn’t be immortal in only for a moment. Death always arrives by that very moment too late” (Szymborska 1997), which lets us state the conclusion that each individual is endowed with a scrap of eternity that expresses itself in the content with which one decides to fill the given days with. In described way, literature lets each human being, both the sick and the medics, who, as physical subjects of matter, can change the character of played role and become one of the patients, face and understand the vision of their own elusiveness. The

worth of interpretative area created by words that build the literary compositions, in the situation of an illness and agony, appears to be priceless as it constitutes the foundation of comprehending the ambiguous semantics of existence. Discovering abnormalities and pathologies inside of one's own body is an indisputably afflictive experience, however witnessing illness and agony of the people that are the objects of the most worthy and beautiful feelings appears to be incomparably more difficult experience from the perspective of psychology. The literature, which prides itself in the mastery of sequencing words in the constellations of meanings, finds an appropriate range of metaphors that breathes the sense and meaning into the poignancy of becoming acquainted with the foretaste of mortality. *The waistcoat*, a novel written by Bolesław Prus, presents the story of a husband and wife, whose reality turns into ashes due to diagnosis that states fatal condition of the main male character. Facing unavoidable perspective of the future in captivity of an illness forces the marriage to search for any hope and consolation that in the end finds its expression in the concern for the waistcoat which constitutes inseparable part of the husband's outfit and, which becomes the priceless record of the immortality that marks the symbolism of love, as the belt and the buckle of that special piece of clothing remain secretly, meticulously shortened and relocated by husband and wife (Prus 1882). Juxtaposition of the elusiveness of the body and the durability of feelings results in the reflexion that poetical *non omnis moriar* finds its justification not only in the poetical dimension of literary compositions but also in inconspicuous symbols that arise from the depth of human sensibilities. The role that the literature plays in the inner process of confronting imperfectness of physicality and inevitability of death enraptures with the range of its significance. Reflexion that involves contemplating the sense of existence and its ephemerality challenges our minds and breathes life into the darkest concerns and most difficult questions. The world composed of paper and ink seems therefore to present an inimitably important value in the life of medics who have to face described moral dilemmas every day, whilst people who are not associated with the world of medicine in such tangible way experience them only in case of health problems occurrence. Standing in front of the fragility of the structure of the miracle that is trimmed with milliards of imperfect physical creations that in the depth of their

metaphoricity complete the sublimity of spirituality can be perceived as the most demanding duty of the doctor. For this reason, the relationship between literature and medicine gains another definition, due to which the world composed of letters provides medical practitioners with wisdom that is essential to overcome inner anxiety about the very own evanescence with the armament of individual interpretation of the meaning that described designates of life and death (Cameron, Pimlott 2015).

## The metaphor of life

The literature appears to be the foundation of creating the model of defining an individual, perceiving the medicine, understanding the role of the doctor in a noble mission that aims to enlighten the darkness of suffering with hope, as well as comprehending the metaphorical beauty that is hidden underneath disquieting inevitability of death. However, enumerated roles are not the only ones that are performed by the world composed of paper and ink on the stage of life as the prose and the poetry create an expanse that incorporates the image of human cognition of life, which finds numerous embodiments and interpretations in the wealth and diversity of literature. *The plague* written by Albert Camus suggests itself as an ideal example of giving the miracle of existence novel metaphorical dimension, as the epidemic of title disease constitutes an inimitable trope that can be perceived as the incarnation of the most inhuman part of our being. “Everyone carries the plague within him, because no one is free from it. And you have to watch over yourself constantly so that you do not breathe the plague into the face of another person in a moment of distraction” (Camus 1947). Cited words express the multidimensionality that is born when an illness becomes the metaphor of human existence. Negative attitude towards other people, lack of empathy, the ease with which we are used to making judgements, the belief that all the world should be at our command and other sins towards the human conscience that result from inner sense of incomprehension of the world present themselves as noteworthy candidates for the designata of the plague. As it can be seen, the term that is incorporated in the conceptual dimension of the medicine constitutes the most accurate metaphor of life that can be found in literature. Wisdom of the envoy that results from cautious



interpretation of the literary masterpiece exhibits that the subsistence of all the contagious negativity that is proliferating beneath the beauty of humaneness as the consequence of experiencing sorrow and distress that cannot find their release in the sublimity of the idea which assumes that human suffering constitutes the foundation of spiritual and emotional development does not invalidate nobility and innocence of the mankind. The fact, that after all “there are more things in people that deserve admiration than contempt” (Camus 1947) fills us with pride and hope that one day the plague will not be able to shamelessly masquerade among humanity and come out in order to turn the temples of our ideals into ashes. In described way, the literature refers to the most corporal dimension of humanity, thereby serendipitously relating to the essence of human spirituality. The medicine seems therefore to constitute the superficial metaphor of the deepest and the most significant part of being that, by the means of literature, becomes the foundation of perceiving ambiguity inscribed in the essence of humaneness (Dumas 1946).

## Summary

The literature and the medicine, in the light of presented considerations, constitute two dimensions of the same reality, which in their intimate, inseparable connection create and shape the way in which an individual is perceived. That phenomenon finds its reflexion in the ambiguity of the human being, the creature that consists of indissociable relationship between its spirituality and corporality. Literature takes root in social consciousness and blossoms with wide range of interpretations that shape general perception of the world. The assumption that in fact prose and poetry are nothing more than incarnation of Shakespeare’s “words, words, words” seems to be extraordinarily deceptive in suggested context, as the inconspicuous formations of letters wield the power to change the way in which people perceive the world and their own selves, thereby creating the role of the study which concentrates on shielding the flame of life that incandesces in each, inimitable, ephemeral temple composed of inconceivable mixture of tissues and liquids that form imperfect embodiment of perfection.

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