The metaphors for death and the death of conceptual metaphors in poetry. An analysis based on Emily Dickinson's poem "Because I Could Not Stop For Death"

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Abstract. One of the well-known tenets of the cognitive semanticists is the idea (already argued in Lakoff and Turner 1989) that poetic language makes a special use of the same underlying conceptual metaphors as the ordinary ones. In contradistinction to this view, I propose that poetic metaphors are not *derived from* our conventionalized conceptual metaphors. My argumentation will focus on the study of metaphors for Death from a single poem, namely from Emily Dickinson's poem *Because I Could Not Stop For Death*. The analysis will prove that the supposed basic "operations" - of "extending", "elaborating", "composing", "questioning" of conventionalized conceptual metaphors – are in fact *poetic semantic strategies* oriented towards "contradicting" the "parameters of generic-level structure" of metaphors and, consequently, our ordinary experience in the world.

Keywords. Conceptual metaphor, poetic metaphor, metaphorical worlds, poetic semantic strategies, cognitive poetics, anthropological poetics.

The basic idea that grounds the cognitive poetics Program, initiated by Lakoff and Turner (1989), starts from the assumption that the process of meaning creation in poetic texts is derived from and guided by the same principle as the one illustrated by the "metaphors we live by", i.e. the conceptual metaphors which are the very core of our ordinary language. Thus, in their pioneering work in the field of cognitive poetics, Lakoff and Turner (1989) observe that we understand such poetic occurrences as "In the middle of life's road / I found myself in a dark wood" (Dante) on the strength of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY conceptual metaphor. In turn, this is perhaps one of the most pervasive underlying conceptual metaphors in ordinary language. Moreover, the authors claim that the power of poetic metaphor consists in the poet's "talent" and "skills" to master the conventionalized metaphors in such ways as to consciously "extend", "elaborate", "compose" or "question" the conventionalized metaphors from our ordinary language[2].

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[2] More precisely, Lakoff and Turner refer to four „transformations", which would distinguish the poetic metaphor from the conventionalized metaphors from our ordinary language: (1) the "*extension*" of the conventionalized metaphors by the mapping of "additional slots"; (2) the "*questioning*" of these metaphors beyond "the boundaries of our everyday metaphorical understanding of important concepts" (69); (3) their "*elaboration*" in "unusual" ways; (4) the "*composition*" of at least two conventional metaphors in order "to

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Perhaps the most controversial ingredient of this theory is represented by the claim that the four mentioned "transformations" are "unessential" and thus, they do not "invalidate" neither "the generic structure of the target domain" of the metaphor (or of the "target image") nor our commonly shared model of the world.

In contradistinction to cognitive poetics view, I propose that poetic metaphors are not *derived from* our conventionalized conceptual metaphors. My argumentation will focus on a succinct examination of the metaphors for death from a single poem, namely from Emily Dickinson's poem *Because I Could Not Stop for Death*[3]. The analysis will be pursued from the perspective of an "anthropological" approach to poetics, as illustrated in Borcilă (1997a, 2002)[4].

In a few, but decisive studies, Borcilă argues that in spite of all disagreements with cognitive poetics, a possible area of agreement between these two directions in poetics can also be circumscribed (see, for example Borcilă 1997a, 1997b, 2001). The major general coordinates that allow such rapprochement are: (1) the common objective of both directions of exploring "the meaning creation in poetics texts *proceeding from a semantic process*" (Borcilă 1997a: 97) and (2) cognitive poetics' acknowledgement of the conventionalized structures as "subliminally present and semantically active in our language and thinking" (1997a: 98). However, the author agrees that this rapprochement cannot be elaborated while preserving the conceptual and theoretical framework that grounds cognitive poetics[5]. Over the past years much work has been done for integrating cognitive poetics within "the integralist studies" Program in Cluj-Napoca. Within these studies, many findings of the cognitive project have already been reinterpreted from a coherent perspective, whose core principles presuppose: (a) the dissociation of poetic metaphor as a *functionally distinct type of metaphor* (from the metaphor in language); (b) the correlation between *the poetic function* and *the proper finality of poetic texts*, and the projection of the poetic function in *its distinctiveness* (as function of worlds creation); (c) the conceiving of the process of meaning creation in poetic texts ("the discursive poesis") as a *dynamic-constructive process*, able to account for both "*the surplus of meaning*" and the emergence of an *"imagined world"* in poetic texts.

Since today the current approaches to literary texts are "dramatically" divided into two branches, one emphasizing "*the discontinuity*", the other "the *continuity* between metaphor in literature and metaphor in non-literary language" - as recently summarized by Semino and Steen's (2008: 233)[6] -, I think the viewpoint of the anthropological

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produce a richer and more complex set of metaphorical connections" (71). However, these "transformations" are not supposed to involve a different functional principle from the one governing the metaphoric process within language.

[3] The poem is enclosed in *Appendix*.

[4] For more than two decades, Borcilă is involved in a far-reaching, interdisciplinary project of developing an *anthropological* poetics. More specifically, his original project aims at „reconstructing" the theory of culture proposed by L. Blaga (1937) on the *semantic* basis provided by E. Coseriu's integral semantics, where the central category of *metaphor* plays the cross-domenial unifying role. This kind of "cultural anthropological" approach should not be confused with the so-called "Anthropological Poetics" promoted in the American context, for ex., by Brady et al. (see Brady 1991).

[5] Borcilă (1997a, 1997b, 2001) argues that core concepts such as Invariance Principle or Hypothesis and The Great Chain of Being are mainly responsible for cognitive poetics' failure to account for the distinctiveness of metaphorical creativity in poetic texts.

[6] The authors however consider that both trends are correct and that any attempt to explain the poetic creativity should take into account the metaphorical creativity both in literary texts and in non-literary

approach in poetics seems to be the most appropriate attempt toward explaining the metaphorical creativity in poetic texts. This approach integrates in the first moment both language and poetry in the *genus proximum* of creative activities on the strength of the Coserian thesis of the „essentially common nature" of "linguaggio e le altre forme della creazione spirituale" [7] (1997/2008: 255), allowing at the same time to account for their specific "functional autonomy". From this perspective, there is certainly both "continuity" and "discontinuity" between metaphor in language and metaphor in poetic texts, as Semino and Steen (2008) have also pleaded for, but only in the very precise sense of understanding poetic metaphor as "virtually *distinct*" from metaphor in language and "*only grounded* in the semantic «possibilities» of language as such" (Borcilă, 1997/2010).

Moreover, the "functional dichotomy" between the two kinds of metaphors – the linguistic metaphor with its *expressive function* (I), respectively the poetic metaphor with its *poetic* function (II) – has been proposed in a strong correlation with the specific *functional principle* – linguistic vs. trans-linguistic or poetic - , governing each of these types of metaphor. In this view, the metaphoric process in language is oriented towards the semantic specification of some concrete aspects of our experience, and thus the functional principle within language does not contradict our "routine experience". Rather it functions in analogy with our ordinary "model of the world", which has been extensively theorized in cognitive poetics under the name of The Great Chain of Being[8]. In contrast to linguistic metaphor, the poetic metaphor goes beyond the boundaries of the first semantic level of language, and thus it brings a newly created "metaphorical world"[9] This new world (1) either is an "image" of the "reality" (the poetic world is *analogous*, although autonomous in relation to, the "real" world) (2) or "trans-substantiates" it (in this case, the metaphoric world is conceived as being essentially *dis-analogous* in relation to the "real" one). In both situations, however, the "vision" created in the "making" process of the "metaphorical worlds" is *qualitatively* different and *ontologically* distinct from the one within language. The "surplus of meaning brought about by the poetic metaphoric "jump"" (Borcilă 1997a: 102)" calls for the "suspension" of our "ordinary meaning of facts" (and, implicitly, of our "model of the world") as well as for the replacement of the latter with the newly created "pattern" in or through such metaphorical "jump". Therefore, it can be assumed that the two functional principles are distinguishable, as also argued by Boc (2007: 57), by means of the "fundamental criterion of *the preservation* vs. *the avoidance or the suspension* of the "ordinary meaning of facts" or, in Coserian terms, in relation to the knowledge of the world and to the general

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discourses. Thus, referring to Lakoff and Turner approach (1989), Semino and Steen (2008) also agree that "metaphorical creativity" in poetic texts cannot be reduced to their "four types of creativity", because these types prove to be insufficient for explaining "the variety and complexity of metaphorical phenomena" in literature.

[7] This thesis ranges the language as "the basic form of culture" and thus, as "the primordial [form of culture] with respect to the other cultural activities" (Boc 2007: 57).

[8] "The Great Chain of Being" is defined as the fundamental cognitive model of our thinking which functions as an intuitive and unconscious "background" against which "we make sense of and impose order in the universe" (Lakoff &Turner 1989: 166-181). Lakoff & Turner claim that this "model of the world" is meant to ground not only our ordinary way of speaking, but also our "understanding of the worldviews" from poetry, science, mythology, etc. For a possible rapprochement between cognitive poetics' concept of the Great Chain of Being and Coseriu's "intuitive background of speaking" see Borcilă (1997b).

[9] See the similarity of this approach with S.R. Levin's theory of „metaphorical worlds" (1988).

principles of thought"[10]. It is in this sense that Borcilă's critique against the "constraining" role assigned to the Great Chain of Being within cognitive poetics has to be understood. The author emphasises that this "constraining" role "can be accepted (with important amendments) only with respect to the creative processes within language" (1997b:16). On the contrary, the creative process within poetic texts can neither be "described" appealing to the same underlying model that grounds our ordinary language, nor can be "explained" as a sort of "extension" from the constitutive function of language.

In spite of all the differences, I will try to argue hereafter that the four "transformations" of cognitive poetics are still of real help in understanding the process of meaning creation (and, implicitly, of "metaphorical worlds") in literary texts. According to the strategy proposed by Borcilă, in a similar vein with previous advances in "Integrationist Semantics and Poetics" (see Hrushovsky 1984), one can distinguish different semantic units, situated at different semantic layers of the poetic texts, which contribute to the "progressive" constitution of the metaphorical world. The minimal semantic units of the poetic texts are *the referential quanta* which open the process of organizing the poetic images in coherent imagistic wholes. On a superior level of the constitution of meaning, these referential quanta are organized in *referential fields*, created in and by the imagistic connectedness of different referential quanta[11]. The interaction between the referential fields generates the metaphorical "dynamics", which progressively articulates the "textual world". Thus, at the macro-textual level, this dynamics or "motion" can be studied using a set of three semantic strategies[12]: (1) the **diaphoric** strategy – two heterogeneous, incompatible *referential fields* (the two fields are usually *Anthropos* and *Cosmos*) are brought together, and thus an "irreducible tension" with our "model of the world" is being created; (2) the **endophoric** strategy – there is an attempt to "mediate" the emergent semantic tension by the retreat within one of the referential fields (either within the referential field of the *Anthropos*, or within the one of the *Cosmos*); (3) the **epiphoric** strategy – the initial semantic tension is re-assumed and solved through the "imaginative jump" within a newly created referential field (it can be said that the initial "semantic incompatibility is overcame (*aufgehoben*) through the creation of another "internal referential field" with the aim of reconciliation between essentially irreconcilable facts from the viewpoint of our background knowledge"[13]).

Bearing in mind the conceptual apparatus and the theoretical background of the proposed approach in anthropological poetics, my analysis will prove that the supposed basic "transformations" of cognitive poetics are in fact *poetic semantic strategies* oriented towards "contradicting" the "parameters of generic-level structure" of metaphors and, consequently, our ordinary experience in the world. The idea, however, has been anticipated by Borcilă (1997b, 2001). The author argues that if the poetic imagination (in a broad sense) really uses the same schematic-imagistic structures or "Image Schemas" as

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[10] See some recent comments on this concept in Zlatev (2011).

[11] Boc (2007: 61) emphasizes that the referential fields are semantic units created „exclusively" by and within the internal metaphorical dynamics of the poetic texts and, therefore, they cannot be understood as „designational" entities, i.e. they are not „ recuperated from, or related to the extra-linguistic reality".

[12] These strategies are considered by Borcilă (1987: 186) as defining the constitutive „deep semantic dynamics" of the metaphorical "world creation" in poetic texts.

[13] Boc (2007: 60). See also Zagaevski (2005: 53).

the conventionalized metaphors from our ordinary language, then these structures constitutes only the "*raw material*" (Borcilă 2001: 100, emphasis in original) for "changing" "*the structural type and the semantic function*" (Borcilă 1997b: 102, emphasis in original) of those conventionalized metaphors. However, the best example of the way in which the metaphorical process "constrains" the conventionalized metaphor to "contradict" the "parameters of generic level-structure" of metaphors and subordinates them to a different "semantic function" is the poetic text itself. Before proceeding to the analysis of the selected poetic text, I should confess that my choice for it is not at all arbitrary: E. Dickinson's poem was used as a canonical text by Lakoff and Turner (1989) to introduce their main ideas about the way poetic thought works.

From the perspective of anthropological poetics, the images in the first stanza of the poem articulate two heterogeneous referential fields: the referential field of the Anthropos (hence, RF A) and the referential field of the Cosmos (hence, RF C). The minimal semantic-imagistic units, i.e. the referential quanta (hence, rq), which articulate the two referential fields, can be clustered as follows:

RF A	**RF C**
rq 1: Because I could not stop (line 1)	rq 1: for Death (line 1)
rq 2: for me (line 2)	rq 2: He kindly stopped (line 2)
rq 3: The Carriage held but just Ourselves (line 3)	rq 3: and Immortality (line 4)

On a first inspection, it seems that there is no semantic tension between the RF A and RF C. However, many scholars were "surprised" by Dickinson's view of death. It has been argued that the personification of Death as "a *gentlemen* caller or suitor"[14], suggests that Death is conceived as a necessary end, that follows the natural course of things (this seems to explain why Dickinson would refer to death's imagined action as "kindly"). Although the observation is not completely accurate, since the poem does not intend to speak about the empirical person of the poet, the notice brings deep insights for the interpretation of the poem. The ineluctable tension created in Dickinson poem becomes obvious already from its incipit. Once one correlates Dickinson's image of Death as a "pleasant" and "benevolent" suitor (RF C) with the image usually associated to the involvement of the self in everyday life (RF A) - which would explain her impossibility to "stop for Death" - the semantic tension becomes perceptible. The occurrence of "couldn't" instead of "wouldn't" stop for Death[15] brings forth therefore the drama of one's death, because to die means first of all "to stop living". For this reason, as Engel (2002: 74) pertinently noticed, the lyric self „realizes that she cannot recognize Death's power over her". Once she would recognize Death's power over her, Death would become an end. This image however should be connected with another one of this stanza, which amplifies the tension between the RF A and RF C. Anderson, for example, considers this second image „ambiguous", but particularly meaningful for the metaphorical world created by this poem: it creates a unitary, although heterogeneous image of one's life end as holding together Death and Immortality. Thus, it should be observed that the images that articulate the RF C present Death as a Janus-faced entity. On the one hand, Death is presented as a stopping point, an end to the "busy" life of

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[14] Anderson (1960: 242), for example, emphasizes that "Death, usually rude, sudden, and impersonal, has been transformed into a kindly and leisurely gentleman".

[15] Anderson interprets Dickinson's choice for "couldn't" as a suggestion for the fact that the lyrical self is „too occupied with life herself to stop, like all busy mortals".

mortals (first line). In this case the emphasized aspects are the mortality of human beings and the understanding of Death as the endpoint of human existence. On the other hand Death is a "bold adventure into the blankness" (Anderson 1960: 227) of Immortality (as shown in the fourth line of the poem). This second image is thus meant to open the understanding that death is not an end, since the human existence will continue throughout "the eternity".

This imagistic complexity already introduced by Dickinson in the first stanza cannot be explained by cognitive poetics theory of poetic metaphor. From the cognitive poetics' viewpoint, Dickinson's famous poem of Death is structured by a set of conventionalized metaphors which reflect our "general and ordinary conception of death as departure" (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 2)[16]. Lakoff and Turner (1989) assume that ever since the first stanza, the poem introduces the idea of death-as-departure with no return. According to this reading, the first stanza is a poetic *elaboration* of the DEATH IS DEPARTURE metaphor. The personification of Death in the first stanza, second line, as "a coachman coming to take away someone who is dying" (2) and "the details" of the Death's journey, i.e. in a carriage (first stanza, third line), are not supposed to "contradict" our ordinary metaphorical conception of Death. This is supposed to be the case because the conventionalized metaphors are not very specific with respect to "the details" of the metaphorical mappings. Moreover, when one uses the journey schema, there is a certain freedom in "fixing" the details such as "the means of transportation" and "the driver" or "the guide". The problem with this interpretation arises however when we consider the third companion to the journey of Death: the Immortality. As one can easily notice, the way in which Dickinson puts together the two incompatible images of Death in order to construct her poetic metaphor demonstrates already a turn. Although Dickinson makes use of the same image-schema as the conventionalized metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE, her metaphor is different from the metaphor of our ordinary language. More specifically, if Dickinson's metaphor for Death really originates in the DEATH IS DEPARTURE metaphor of our ordinary language, she uses this metaphor only as a "departure" point in building up her poetic vision. In this way, the DEATH IS DEPARTURE conventionalized metaphor is used by the poetic thought as a semantic strategy that brings in collision incompatible "facts" or images in order to trigger the semantic process of the poetic vision's construction. Furthermore, in the emergence of Dickinson's "metaphoric world" it is obvious that the generic-level parameters of Death[17] are not preserved at all, as claimed by Lakoff and Turner (1989). Rather, these parameters for Death are "completely changed" to the extent that they are subordinated to the specific poetic function. Confronting this difficulty in interpreting Dickinson's metaphor for Death, cognitive poeticians make appeal to the religious tradition in order to

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[16] According to cognitive poetics theory, what makes the poetic meaning of this poem would be the "novel" way in which Dickinson "*elaborates*" the metaphorical mappings of DEATH IS DEPARTURE metaphor, on the one hand, and her singular manner of "*composing*" the basic metaphors of the poem in ways that go beyond our ordinary "expectations", on the other hand.

[17] According to cognitive poetics' theory, the parameters of generic-level that applies to death are: **(a) basic ontological category**: event; **(b) event shape**: "over time" the entity "*reaches a final state, after which it no longer exists*" (82; emphasis in original); **(c) causal relations**: "the final state being reached", the entity is destroyed (82); **(d) modality**: necessity (if the entity "no longer exists", it is necessary that the entity to be destroyed).

maintain the role of "constraining"[18] the image-schematic structure in mapping. Thus, Lakoff and Turner (1989: 7) argue that Dickinson's metaphor face us with a case of "extension" from death-as-departure metaphor, where "the departure is seen as the beginning of a journey to a final destination". The final destination „can be, for example, God the Father's house, punishment in hell, an assigned spot in the underworld, final rest, or the place of one's origin, which can be one's home" (7). Yet, neither the explanation of Dickinson's metaphor as a sort of "extension" from death-as-departure metaphor within the religious tradition, nor the reductive view of interpreting it in terms of "a journey toward a final destination, namely the grave" (7) is supported by Dickinson's poem. Freeman (1995), for example, demonstrates that Dickinson's poetic universe neglects the cultural model of Calvinist theology, underlying the usual understanding of the world in the 19th century and creates rather a "*scientific*" model, uncommon to the Calvinist based society in which she has lived. Thus, the author demonstrates that Dickinson's metaphors for Death avoid any possible interpretation of life as "a path that has a specific, predetermined destination", namely "the heaven", on the one side. On the other side, as Freeman argues, "Dickinson found it difficult, if not impossible, to accept the notion that «death» was at the «end» of a linear progression of a «lifetime» and that «Eternity» somehow came after. For Dickinson, Eternity was «in time»"[19] (648). The heterogeneous image of Death seems to support such an interpretation and to validate Freeman's argument, as we will see below.

The next two stanzas of the poem avoid the assumed tension between RF A and RF C as seen in the first stanza and attempt to "mediate" it through the retreat within RF A. An attempt to attenuate the tension of the encounter with Death is already noticeable from the second stanza: the departure is not seen any longer as a dramatic one, because the image of Death that comes into play is the one of Death as perpetual existence throughout eternity (in the sense which opposes it to the mortality of human being). The departure is now conceived as a pleasant journey (see Death's "civility") and not as something that will result in the dramatic separation between two irreconcilable modes of being: life and death. Thus, the "face" of Death which forces one to imagine the departure from this life as being one with no return and consequently Death as that end that stops the human existence forever is bracketed. Death seems to be this time rather a break within the everyday activities of life: "I had put away // My labor and my leisure too". The "labor" can be now interrupted, since Death is only a momentary lapse from the everyday activities. The journey starts "slowly", and its scenery recalls the various stages of human life: the childhood (the "recess in the ring" scene), the adulthood (the

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[18] The „constraining" role is assigned by the Invariance Principle, which is supposed to be an empirically derived principle. In a brief formulation, this Invariance Hypothesis asserts that the "metaphorical mappings [should] preserve the cognitive topology (this is, the image schema structure) of the source domain" (Lakoff 1990:54) or that "when we map one image metaphorically onto another, we are constrained not to violate the schematic structure of the target image" (Turner 1992:728). However, a number of studies demonstrate that this principle is "empirically falsifiable" (see, for example, Jäkel 2002) and that it raises ineluctable "theoretical difficulties" for both "a general theory of metaphoric meanings" and for the "functional discrimination of *poetic* metaphor" (Borcilă 1997a).

[19] However, Freeman's (1995) way of interpreting Dickinson's poems seems rather to be in overall consensus with Lakoff and Turner's view of poetic metaphor, since she agrees with cognitive scholars that the four established modes of poetic creativity may "illuminate our experience, explore the consequences of our beliefs, challenge the way we think, and criticize our ideologies" (Lakoff and Turner 1989: xi).

ripe "Gazing Grain" image), and the old age ("the Setting Sun" image). In their analysis of the third stanza, Lakoff and Turner (1989) emphasize that it is structured by two conceptual metaphors, namely PEOPLE ARE PLANTS and LIFETIME IS A DAY. They argue, for example, that it is the PEOPLE ARE PLANT metaphor that allows us "to understand that the «Fields of Gazing Grain» suggest maturity" (5) and that the one who helps us "to understand both that the setting sun refers to old age and that the dew and chill and near darkness refer to the onset of death" (6) is the LIFETIME IS A DAY metaphor. It is true that these metaphors play an important role in understanding the sequence of events from the third stanza. Anyway, it is not a matter of "reviewing" the life stages that one "traverses during the life's journey" (7) toward Death. The sequence of events does not refer to past events closed in one's memory which are just remembered before Death. In other words, the image is not about the ordinary belief which states that when the soul leaves the body, one's life is passing before one's eyes. Rather, the imagistic sequence of the stages of life is an *imaginative fact*, created by the poetic thought in order to progressively prepare the articulation of the third referential field. In turn, this referential field created by the dynamics of the poem (see below) could not be configured by preserving the same referential context or the "model of the world" which we use in order to make sense of our experience in the world[20]. For this reason, the two mentioned conceptual metaphors do not relate the textual events to the events of the past "recalled in a flash of memory" (Anderson 1960: 245), re-describing thus previous life experiences of the lyric self. The first argument supporting this idea is the gradual transition from the more concrete aspects (for example, the "recess in the ring" scene) toward the bold abstractness achieved at the moment of articulating of the third referential field. Since there is an imaginative world projected in the third referential field, a world where the incompatible facts can be brought together on the strength of the acquirement of a sort of knowledge that goes beyond "the limits" of our ordinary judgement, this field has usually a more abstract character. On the other hand, the fact that the conceptual metaphors play a *semantic function* in the constitution of the metaphorical world of the poem, changing the "*structural type*" of the conceptual metaphors, as argued by Borcilă (1997b: 102, emphasis in original), can be also noticed if one pay attention to the symmetry in the appearance of the verb "passed" in the third and fourth stanza. The repetition of the verb in the third stanza ("We passed the School, where Children strove // At Recess—in the Ring— // We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain— // We passed the Setting Sun—") leads to the construction of a converging image, meant to show afterward the conflict with the one introduced by the same verb in the fourth stanza (Or rather—He passed Us—). Anyway, the metaphorical segment suggesting the stages of life is relaxing and calm, being in tune with the whole endophoric sequence.

In the third stanza, the dynamics of the metaphors is still helping in shaping the endophoric strategy, through which the poet intends to "mediate" the tension brought forward by the lyric self's encounter with Death. It should be noticed that here the viewpoint from which the lyric self is looking at her journey of Death is still *life*. Thus,

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[20] However, this departure from our "model of the world" is in fact required when the Immortality makes her appearance in the first stanza. The incompatibility between the two images of Death -Death as departure with no return and Death as perpetual existence within eternity -, as well as the poet's option for the latter constitute the primary moment when our model of the world is questioned.

for one who is speaking from within life, Death starts when one *is passing* "the setting sun". In the fourth stanza, the perspective is reversed: it is no longer the lyric self (accompanied by Death and Immortality) who is passing the setting sun, but rather the setting sun is the one who is passing the travellers. The viewpoint from which the lyric self is now looking back at her journey of Death is no longer the life itself, but a certain temporal point from within the Eternity[21]. This does not mean that life is not a temporal point within the time of the Eternity; life is, of course, also *in* time. This means only that the way in which the fourth stanza begins changes the perspective and that the lyric self is living from the beginning or forever in Eternity. In this interpretation, life is only a momentary point detached from the Eternity's temporality and, as such, an insignificant one when related to the time of the Eternity. However, my interpretation goes a bit further than the first line of the fourth stanza is intended to mean at this point. At the same time, my analysis also anticipates the "imaginative jump" from the last three stanzas of the poem. The intention, however, was to demonstrate, that the poem cannot be properly understood if one reduces the poetic images to the same background that underlies our experience in the world. Instead, the poem creates its own textual background which is in radical dis-analogy with our ordinary "model of the world". Without this new created background, the projection of the imaginative world from the last stanzas cannot be understood[22].

I believe that such misunderstanding is at stake in the case of cognitive poetics theory. The theory assumes that the first line of the fourth stanza is a poetic occurrence of LIFETIME IS A DAY metaphor. As such, the image "Or rather – He passed Us" refers to the "onset of death" and it is the natural consequence of the completion of the stages of life described in the previous stanza. In fact, according to the theory, the previous stanzas are instances of a particular type of poetic creativity, namely the poetic "composition" of the basic metaphors of the poem. However, the way in which the poet chose to combine the basic metaphors of the poem is also supposed to preserve the parameters of generic-level of death. At any rate, this is not the case here. If the line "Or rather – He passed Us" refers to the "onset of death", then the generic-level parameters of Death would constrain us to make use of the following argumentative pattern in reading the poem. The end of the journey of life is Death. Since the entity is dead, it means that it does no longer exist. Since the entity does no longer exist, it should be destroyed. None of these parameters of Death are maintained in Dickinson's poem. The first line of the fourth stanza activates the tension created through the collision between RF A and RF C in the first stanza and open the path for solving it by shaping a third referential field. As it frames an imagined world where the incompatible facts can be brought together, this third referential field "brings [also] about" a "surplus of meaning" Borcilă (1997a). Thus, while the tension between RF A and RF B is reassumed, Dickinson solves this tension in a particular way. The journey does not seem to stop once Death begins. It seems that the travellers are forever in the journey. At the grave, which according to cognitive poetics should be the

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[21] As mentioned above, it should be beared in mind that Eternity should be understood in Dickinson's poems as Eternity "in time" (and not somehow "outside" of the linear temporality of life) (cf Freeman 1995).

[22] It may have been this sort of misinterpretation that constrained the editors for a long time to drop the fourth stanza of E. Dickinson's poem. It is well known that the assumed reason of dropping this stanza is the supposition that it breaks down the whole coherence of the poem.

final destination of life's journey, the travellers only "paused" (fifth stanza, first line). Although one may still reply that the assertion does not yet completely invalidate cognitive poetics claim that the end of the journey of life is Death, it should be noticed that the verbal form "paused" suggest "futurity" and the continuity of the journey (cf. Engle 2002: 17). This is noticed also by Anderson (1960: 244) who rightly highlights that although the travellers "paused before a house", "the house of Death so lightly sketched is not her destination." Anderson indicates that the destination should be „Eternity": „That is clearly stated as «Eternity»" (1960: 244). For a particular reason that will be clarified below, I would rather say that the destination is not properly "Eternity", but "Immortality". In my opinion, there is a sharp distinction between the two of them in Dickinson's poem. Besides, as far as the two above mentioned parameters concern, the poem shows that the existence of the entity is preserved after Death and thus, the entity is not destroyed. Moreover, "the dew and chill", reported by cognitive poeticians as serving for the understanding of the "onset of death" - which would lead to the complete destruction of the entity, and which are supposed to illustrate the LIFETIME IS A DAY metaphor -, play a different role in the economy of the poetic text. Although the images of the air that turns cold and of the dews that start to be formed undoubtedly play the role of suggesting Death, the images are used with the function to envisage a *certain way* of the understanding of Death. The next two lines of the fourth stanza ("For only Gossamer, my Gown- // My Tippet—only Tulle—") clarify that she was cold not because Death starts, but rather because she was as lightly dressed as for the marriage[23]. The metaphorics of death-as-wedding vehemently invalidates cognitive poetic theory[24]. While usually conceived as the final point of one's existence, Death ceases to be an end in this poem and becomes a fresh, new start. Death is not seen any longer as a tragic event which comes with the inexorable destruction of being; rather it becomes a happy one, which aims at expanding and fulfilling the being. Starting with the fourth stanza, the journey also ceases to be a journey towards Death and becomes a journey of the replenishment of being. For this very reason, the superimposition of the image of a house on the one of a grave becomes also possible. Lakoff and Turner (1989:8) interpret this image metaphor as being activated by the DEATH IS GOING TO A FINAL DESTINATION metaphor. According to this metaphor, one's life final destination is the grave. The image of the grave as final destination of one's life is supposed to be connected afterwards with the image of "our going toward our own houses as a final destination" (8). However, this interpretation is reductive. It can be observed that in fact, their conceptual metaphor is used as a semantic strategy in order to contradict the ordinary understanding of "the grave" as the place where human body rests after Death. Dickinson's description of the grave as "a house" suggests how comfortable, pleasant and safely the lyric self feels there, in her new life together with her courteous suitor. On the other hand, what is attended by this marriage with Death is Immortality. At this point, the importance of the presence of the third suitor in the carriage can be now properly

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[23] Some author suggests that her dressing is more appropriate for a wedding than for a funeral ceremony. Moreover, Anderson (2006: 245) argues that „love-death symbolism" is one of the preferred motifs of the romanticism and that love has frequently been „linked with death for the romantic poets". See also Dressman (1977).

[24] For the confrontation of the cognitive theory with such a „fundamental metaphor" in poetic folkloric texts, see Borcilă (1997a).

grasped. The death-as-wedding metaphor couldn't fully make sense without this extension of the image of Death as Immortality.

As the images are gathering and articulate the epiphoric dynamics of the poem, the sharp distinctions between Immortality and Eternity in the poem become also very clear. If there would be an overlapping between Immortality and Eternity, the Immortality would not be a passenger in the carriage, and thus the journey of Death could have had either Immortality or Eternity[25] as the final destination of the journey of Death. But it is clear that Immortality has primordially the role of detaching Death from its common understanding as an end. On the other hand, due to Immortality's openness toward Eternity, their rapprochement is possible. The last stanza of the poem clarifies the relation between Eternity and Immortality. Remember how the poem starts. The Death is seen as a dramatic detaching from life. The only fact that can reconcile the tension is the issue that there could be Immortality. Thus, the image of Death as Immortality is at stake in the second and third stanza, through the attempt to "mediate" the tension. The "concluding" fourth and fifth stanzas show that the tension is solved through an understanding of death-as-wedding, namely as a new beginning. The coda of the poem, the sixth stanza, introduces a new element: the Eternity. In this stanza, it is told that there are centuries since the moment when she "first surmised the Horses' Heads // Were toward Eternity—". These lines of the last stanza demonstrate that the journey of Death was "toward" Eternity. The preposition "toward" indicate the direction intended, i.e. Eternity, but yet not reached in the moment of Death and maybe, "never reached" as Anderson (1960) suggests[26]. At this point, it seems that "Dickinson formulates a vision of the world in which the dead have no place", as Freeman (1995: 658) observed. On the other hand, the first line of the sixth stanza indicate that she is already there, within Eternity, already for a very long time ("Since then—'tis Centuries—") or rather already from the very beginning of Eternity. This idea is suggested by the text twice: in the fourth stanza ("Or rather – He [the Sun] passed Us") (see the discussion above) and in the last stanza of the poem, second line. In the last stanza, the idea is meant by the use of the present simple form of the verb *feel* ("Since then—'tis Centuries—and yet // Feels shorter than the Day") which demonstrates the continuity of her existence within Eternity. From this perspective of Eternity, the human life is invested with a different value. The qualification of each passed century as "shorter" than the day of her Death means that from the viewpoint she looks at human life and at the mortality of humans, i.e. from the viewpoint of Eternity, life is something that one does not need to regret, or to feel any sorrow about.

The vision which emerges in the process of the metaphoric world's construction in the poem is very different from the one projected by cognitive poetics' interpretation. However, as I tried to argue in this paper, one may take advantage also of Lakoff and Turner's view of poetic metaphor, through the understanding of their four types of "creativity" as semantic strategies oriented towards "contradicting" the "parameters of generic-level structure" of metaphors and, consequently, instituting the "visionary" experience of a different ("possible") world.

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[25] In fact, Lakoff and Turner's reading of the poem through the insertion of religious tradition would have been also possible.

[26] The poetic text permits however Anderson's interpretation, since Immortality and Eternity are not regarded as overlapping each other.

Appendix

BECAUSE I COULD NOT STOP FOR DEATH
by Emily Dickinson

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

We slowly drove—He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility—

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

Or rather—He passed Us—
The Dews drew quivering and chill—
For only Gossamer, my Gown—
My Tippet—only Tulle—

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground—
The Roof was scarcely visible—
The Cornice—in the Ground—

Since then—'tis Centuries—and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity—

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