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The Morning Has Broken: The Poetry of Sophie Hannah.

(Diplomová práce)

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**The Morning Has Broken: The Poetry of Sophie Hannah.
(Diplomová práce)**

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Table of Contents

| | | |
|--------|--|----|
| 1. | Introduction to Sophie Hannah..... | 8 |
| 1.1. | Sophie Hannah’s Life | 8 |
| 1.2. | Sophie Hannah’s Work..... | 8 |
| 1.3. | Sophie Hannah’s Style..... | 10 |
| 2. | Aspects of Sophie Hannah’s Poetry | 12 |
| 3. | Anti-love poetry | 14 |
| 3.1. | <i>The Hero and the Girl Next Door</i> | 14 |
| 3.1.1. | “One-track Mind” | 14 |
| 3.1.2. | “The End of Love“ | 16 |
| 3.1.3. | “Second Helping of Your Heart“ | 17 |
| 3.1.4. | “The Hero and the Girl Next Door“ | 20 |
| 3.1.5. | “Morning Has Broken“ | 22 |
| 3.1.6. | “When Will You Come and Identify My Body?“ | 24 |
| 3.2. | <i>Hotels Like Houses</i> | 28 |
| 3.2.1. | “Person Specification“ | 29 |
| 3.2.2. | “Darling Sweatheart“ | 31 |
| 3.2.3. | “Hotels Like Houses“ | 32 |
| 3.2.4. | “Soft-handed Man“ | 33 |
| 3.3. | <i>Leaving and Leaving You</i> | 36 |
| 3.3.1. | “Occupational Hazard” | 36 |
| 3.3.2. | “None of the Blood” | 37 |
| 3.3.3. | “Marrying the Ugly Millionaire“ | 39 |
| 3.3.4. | “Rondeau Redoublé“ | 41 |
| 3.3.5. | “Leaving and Leaving You“ | 43 |
| 3.4. | <i>First of the Last Chances</i> | 44 |
| 3.4.1. | “Ante-natal” | 46 |
| 3.4.2. | “View” | 48 |
| 4. | Everyday and miscellaneous poetry | 51 |
| 4.1. | <i>Hotels Like Houses</i> | 53 |
| 4.1.1. | “The Sight of Mares” | 53 |
| 4.2. | <i>Leaving and Leaving You</i> | 54 |
| 4.2.1. | “Your Dad Did What?“ | 55 |
| 4.2.2. | “If People Disapprove of You... “ | 56 |
| 4.2.3. | “Nobody Said You Had to Come” | 58 |
| 4.3. | <i>Pessimism for Beginners</i> | 60 |
| 4.3.1. | “Pessimism for Beginners” | 60 |
| 4.4. | Hannah’s Recent Work..... | 62 |
| 4.4.1. | “The Dalai Lama on Twitter” | 62 |
| 4.4.2. | “The Little Cushion and the Empty Chair” | 64 |
| 5. | Conclusion | 69 |
| | Abstract..... | 77 |
| | Bibliography | 78 |

Introduction

As a topic of my thesis I have chosen the poetry of Sophie Hannah, a British contemporary poet. The thesis aims to present a selected work of the author and provide an analysis of said poems with special focus on symbols that appear through the poems. The excerpts come from Sophie Hannah's collections, namely *The Hero and the Girl Next Door* (1995), *Hotels like Houses* (1996), *Leaving and Leaving You* (1999), *First of the Last Chances* (2003), *Selected Poems* (2006) and *Pessimism for Beginners* (2007). After a brief introduction to Sophie Hannah, her life, work and style, the thesis can be divided into two main parts according to the type of poetry; the first part of the thesis discusses poetry in which Hannah focuses on the anti-love theme and the second part focuses on the everyday and miscellaneous poetry. In her anti-love poetry Hannah offers a wide spectrum of points of views, even though the feminine voice prevails. Furthermore, Hannah develops the theme of the end of love and relationship and also the dependence and independence of the heroines regarding their partners. All of the above is masterly handled with a sharp wit and irony, the characteristics that are typical for Hannah's poetry. While analyzing the anti-love poetry, I have consulted secondary sources, namely *Nový biblický slovník* (1996) by J.D. Douglas et al. and *A Dictionary of Symbols* (2001) by J. E. Cirlot. While the biblical dictionary provides a historical and religious insight into the world of symbols, the Cirlot's publication provides more general view regarding the symbols and their interpretations. When possible, I have decided to compare the interpretations of both dictionaries; in some cases only one of the publications is consulted. The first part of the thesis, as I have mentioned, focuses on the anti-love poetry, which is the dominant theme of Hannah's whole work, therefore the part of the thesis is more extensive regarding the content and length. However, I wanted to include the other type of Hannah's poetry as well, to provide an overall introduction to the author, therefore the second part of the thesis is briefer when it comes to the length as I have decided to provide the analysis of fewer poems than in the previous section. Nevertheless, I have chosen enough poems to illustrate the variety and diversity that accompanies the work of Sophie Hannah. The same secondary sources were used to consult the symbolism in the poems, even though the symbols do not appear as frequently as in the anti-love poetry. Predominantly, Hannah employs the situations from everyday life, be it love struggles or random happenings, and handles them with unmistakable skill, while filling her

verses with irony, often self-irony, wit and sarcasm, mocking the paradoxes and twists that life brings. As I mention in one of the chapters focusing on her love themed poetry, some of the author's writings show a strong feminist tendencies, when provoking the heroines to emancipate and liberate themselves from the dependence; this type of poems is later on contrasted with poems that discuss the compromises one has to make in order to sustain a relationship.

The final part of my thesis therefore discusses the theme of everyday life and the wide range of topics that Hannah manages to capture in her verses including verses that assure the reader to keep their appearances and not change because of the opinions of the others or discussing a family tragedy in an unexpected way with the help of a typo. In conclusion, the thesis attempts to lead the reader through the work of Sophie Hannah, while analyzing the selected poems with special focus on symbolism and formal aspects. Furthermore, it focuses on the themes Hannah decides to employ and proves that Hannah is one of the most attractive, humorous poets that occupy the scene of the contemporary poetry.

1. Introduction to Sophie Hannah

1.1. Sophie Hannah's Life

Before I proceed to the part of my thesis that is focused on Sophie Hannah's poetry, I would like to introduce the author herself. Sophie Hannah was born in 1971 in Manchester, England. She was born into a family of Norman Geras, a political theorist and academic, and Adèle Geras, a writer for young children. Sophie Hannah is a British poet and novelist who published her first poetry pamphlet *Early Bird Blues* (1993) when she was 22 years old.

When asked about her goals and motivation as a novelist and poet, she responded:

I write in order to communicate with and entertain others, to process experience and make something lasting out of it, and in order to exercise some kind of control over life. But mainly I write because I can't imagine not writing - it's the main way in which I express myself and deal with both the good and bad aspects of life.¹

Between the years 1997 and 1999 she served as a Fellow Comonner in Creative Arts at Trinity College and later on during the period between years 1999 and 2001 she devoted herself to the position of a junior research fellow of Wolfson College in Oxford. As for now, she serves as a Fellow Comonner at Lucy Cavendish College in Cambridge that she also supports. Sophie lives with her husband and two kids in West Yorkshire and she is currently working on a new challenge of reviving the tradiiton of Hercule Poirot, Agatha Christie's famous detective.

1.2. Sophie Hannah's Work

As I have already mentioned, Sophie Hannah is both prose and poetry writer. Regarding her prose, she focuses on psychological crime novels mostly, even though she also published books for children. In 2004 Sophie Hannah won first prize in Daphne de Maurier Festival Short Story Competition for her story "The Octopus Nest" that was later published in her collection of short stories *The Fantastic Book of Everybody's*

¹ "Word About Town," last modified November 10, 2006, <http://www.bexhillobserver.net/news/local/word-about-town-1-1393623>.

Secrets (2008). Her first novel that was published in 2006 is called *Little Face* (2006) and its storyline revolves around Alice who is convinced that the baby that waits for her at home is not her baby and tries to prove it to her husband and other authorities. After that she succeeded in publishing novels such as *The Other Half Lives* (2009), *Hurting Distance* (2007) or *A Room Swept White* (2010), all of which belong to The Waterhouse and Zailer series; all of which can be labeled as a psychological crime fiction. Mystery occupies a major part of Sophie's personal and work life, she admitted a few times to be obsessed with mystery in order to be able to solve a real-life mystery. As she mentions on her blog:

Since this is a real-life mystery, I have to be practical and accept that there's a strong chance I'll never find out. It's more likely that I will stop caring as much as I do now, and that will, in the end, feel like a satisfactory resolution. This prospect fills me with horror. I can't imagine ever not being obsessed with this. I don't want to acquire a sense of proportion about it. I have said, all my life, that I would love to solve a real mystery.²

In this short extract from Sophie's prose, the pragmatism and wit can be already pinpointed. The pragmatic attitude and sharp wit are just two of several characteristics that form Sophie Hannah's work, all of which shall be mentioned later in the thesis. Ultimately, her latest novel *The Carrier* (2013) won the Crime Thriller of the Year Award at the Specsavers National Book Awards.

In spite of her extensive novel collection, Sophie Hannah began her carrier first as a poet. Her first official published book of poems is called *Hero and the Girl Next Door* (1995) and was published when Hannah was 24 years old. Since in my thesis I am going to discuss only her poetry, I am going to list her poetic work: *Early Bird Blues* (1993), *Second Helping of Your Heart* (1994), *The Hero and the Girl Next Door* (1995), *Hotels like Houses* (1996), *Leaving and Leaving You* (1999), *Love Me Slender: Poems About Love* (2000), *First of the Last Chances* (2003), *Selected Poems* (2006) and *Pessimism for Beginners* (2007). The last collection mentioned, *Pessimism for Beginners*, was shortlisted for the 2007 T. S. Eliot Award and Sophie Hannah was named one of the Poetry Book Society's Next Generation poets. She is frequently asked about her

² "About" section, last modified April 25, 2014. <http://www.sophiehannah.com/about>

transition from poetry to prose and mastering both of the fields without hesitation to which she responds that she has always written stories and poems and then when she became a secretary, she was writing instead of her secretary work. When she had enough poems for a collection, she decided to publish it and she was lucky to find a good publisher.³ Later on she was offered a writer-in-residence job at Trinity College, which gave her time to work on her first novel.

1.3. Sophie Hannah's Style

To conclude the introductory part of the thesis, I would like to discuss Sophie Hannah's style and influences that can be observed in her work. Her style is often compared to the light verse of Wendy Cope as well as the surrealism of Lewis Carroll. When thinking of other influences, one might find similar structures in poetry of Fleur Adcock and her anti-love poems such as "Against Coupling" that is one of the influences that can be observed through Hannah's work. Adcock develops a theme of solitude praise in which she assures the reader that there is nothing ignoble about single life and not looking for a soul mate or a partner. She even advises the reader to embrace his or her way of life without any hesitation or shame. This kind of encouraging speech and advice structure can be found in some of Hannah's poems as well and it will be discussed later on.

As to the style itself, regarding the form, Hannah's verses are mostly of an alternate rhyme ABAB and of a varying number of syllables. Hannah proves herself to be a practitioner of a clever light verse. In this author's case, the content is of a bigger importance than the form and her work can be divided into several thematic categories. For my thesis, I have decided to subcategorize her work into two major groups: the anti-love poems and the miscellaneous, everyday life poems. By anti-love poems that are going to be mentioned periodically throughout the thesis, I mean the poetry that takes love as its main focus yet approaches it with skepticism and often with irony; the poetry that draws heavily on personal experience and crashes the established stereotypes and clichés.

The poems that focus on love life can be generally classified as anti-love poems often accompanied by sarcasm and realistic point of view of the author. The element that makes the verses clever and easily read is predominantly her play with cliché or swear

³ "Interview with author Sophie Hannah about Kind of Cruel," last modified August 8, 2013. <http://thereadingfrenzy.blogspot.cz/2013/08/giveaway-interview-with-author-sophie.html>

words in combination with the clash of man and woman's point of view and way of life that are generally not compatible. The collision of male and female side of argument is one of the prevalent theme in Hannah's love and anti-love poems and the way she handles that theme results in verses such as the final part of her poem "Hotels like Houses":

If their affair has awkward spells,
what's bound to cause the rows is
that he treats houses like hotels
and she, hotels like houses.⁴

Just from that passage the emotional and sexual gap between men and women can be easily understood and it can be found repeatedly in other of Hannah's poems. Specifically, this poem offers the reader an insight into woman's understanding of a commitment compared to man's perception and how considerably they differ. When it comes to the other group of her work that focuses on various themes associated with everyday life and disputes, the poems adopt various tones and goals. Similarly to the love focused poems, these poems are inspired by Hannah's life and draw heavily from on her experience. Hannah incorporates into her collection motivational and supportive pieces as well as pieces of poetry that are overflowing with either denial or self-irony. The reader can, therefore, come across such poems as "Your Dad Did What?" from her collection *From Leaving and Leaving You* that immediately attracts attention with its clever and unusually tragic twist. Nevertheless, despite the tragedy that is present in the poem, Hannah manages to sustain the light, almost comical tone. In "The Little Cushion and the Empty Chair", for example, Hannah performs a kind of self-therapy. At this point I am not going to go into more details of the individual poems as that is the goal of this thesis and I am going to approach the analysis later in the thesis.

As I have mentioned earlier in the introduction to Hannah's style, one of the most outstanding overall aspects of her poetry is the attractiveness and ease that her poetry carries. One of the causes why her poetry is so easily read is also the presence of allusions to modern world, literature and other popular culture elements. In "Dark

⁴ Sophie Hannah, *Hotels Like Houses* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 1996), 13.

Mechanic Mills“, a poem from her collection *First of the last Chances*, she mentions Magnus Mills, a contemporary British author of several novels and short stories, in connection with a car mechanic who resembles this Man Booker Prize candidate as one can see in the following extract:

You shrug and say my engine sounds `right rough'.
Shouldn't you, then, proceed with an inspection?
Looking like Magnus Mills is not enough.
Resemblance to a Booker Prize contender
Has a quaint charm but only goes so far.⁵

Another example of an allusion can be found in “Morning Has Broken“ and that is the allusion to a classics movie *Casablanca*. Last but not least, in one of her most recent poems she addresses the younger readership with, without any doubt, the most powerful weapon of this time and that is the social network, in this case it is Twitter. In her poem “The Dalai Lama on Twitter“ she jokingly suggests that the following should be mutual and that she expects Dalai Lama the reciprocity. What is more, within the three stanzas Hannah manages to further mention House MD, the popular tv show, and publicly known personalities like for example Russell Brand.

2. Aspects of Sophie Hannah’s Poetry

To proceed with my thesis, I would like to commence the analysis of Hannah’s poems by introducing the approach I have decided to take. As I have mentioned earlier in the thesis, the poems can be divided and subcategorized into various thematic groups and I have decided to divide them into two major groups for purposes of this thesis. The two groups are so called anti-love poems and everyday life poems that are mostly of miscellaneous themes. Furthermore, the collections that are going to appear in this part of the thesis are *The Hero and the Girl Next Door*, *Hotels Like Houses*, *Leaving and Leaving You*, *First of the Last Chances* and *Pessimism for Beginners*. The collections are characteristic for their bittersweet tone and a mixture of traditional metre and rhyme and contemporary life themes that attract the reader and leave him surprised with the realization how accessible can poetry be. As for *The Hero and the Girl Next Door*,

⁵ Sophie Hannah, *First of the Last Chances* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 2003), 17.

Hannah handles rhymed forms with unhesitating skills and a surreal impulse distorts even the most precise and clean of her stanzas with a kind of imaginative aspect. Her experimenting with subject produces something that is beyond satisfying and surpasses the contemporary verse. Furthermore, the collection offers Hannah's always present sharp wit. The poems of *Hotels Like Houses* are lively and might remind the reader of the new feminist poetry of the 80s and 90s represented for example by Alice Walker, American novelist, short story writer, poet, political activist and Pulitzer prize winner. The collection is focused on relationships in a thoughtful, yet light manner rather than aggressive and persuasive. Through the poems, Hannah provides a spectrum of romantic ironies and moves beyond satire to the core of modern issues: loves, lusts, losses of contemporary life. In *Leaving and Leaving You* the author combines traditional forms and the forms that are associated with modernism. Furthermore it focuses on love, loss, and the different ways in which people can be important to each other. Hannah's collection that was published 2003 under the title *First of the Last Chances* explores and celebrates feelings such as love, hate, anger, hope. Hannah uncovers the pretence and hypocrisy from the moments and aspects of everyday life. The scale of themes ranges from relationships to the job, motherhood and marriage and the author manages to depict it with her specific, incomparable style. The verses are both comical and moving and again combine traditional form and rhyme with a contemporary view on modern life issues. The last collection I have chosen for discussion in this thesis is *Pessimism for Beginners*. As the title itself suggests, the tone of this collection is predominantly more serious than in the other collections. Nevertheless, it preserves the bittersweet mood and does not descend into pure pessimism. *Pessimism for Beginners* is a bittersweet collection with a hint of dark humor that is guiding the reader through it. Hannah provides the reader with both amazing humor and intimacy. Rhymed metrical forms are again skillfully handled to later on produce impressive outcome and as it has been mentioned before, the traditional prose is modified in order to discuss contemporary subjects.

Having briefly discussed the collections individually, I would now like to proceed to the goal of this thesis which is the analysis of Sophie Hannah's poetry. To cover all the collections mentioned, more than twenty poems have been chosen to illustrate the range that Hannah produces in her work. The poems will be discussed in terms of their theme, love or everyday life, and also chronologically, starting then with theme of love in collection *The Hero and the Girl Next Door*. As for the approach used in the thesis, I am

going to focus on formal aspects of Hannah's poetry as well as the content of the individual poems; regarding the formal aspects the focus will be upon the usage of metaphors and symbols. Concerning the symbols, the secondary literature is going to be consulted, more specifically *Nový biblický slovník* by J. D. Douglas and collective consulted in translated version by the Czech collective of translators, respectively Mgr. Alena Koželuhová, PhDr. Hana Nezbedová, ThMgr. Bohuslav Procházka, Jiří Štifter and ThMgr. Rostislav Matulík. Furthermore I have decided to seek advice in *A Dictionary of Symbols* by J. E. Cirlot.

3. Anti-love poetry

3.1. *The Hero and the Girl Next Door*

3.1.1. "One-track Mind"

The first collection I am going to discuss in terms of love poetry is *The Hero and the Girl Next Door* and a poem called "One-track Mind". The first thing that can be noticed is its regular rhyme scheme ababbabccdcdee, so called alternate rhyme with a couplet. This allows the poem to be read smoothly and very easily. Next thing, regarding form, is the unusual usage of the form of sonnet, since the poem has 14 verses divided into 3 quatrains and one couplet which suggest English or Shakespearean sonnet. The English sonnet has the simplest and most flexible pattern of all sonnets, consisting of 3 quatrains of alternating rhyme and a couplet. Not only is the English sonnet the easiest in terms of its rhyme scheme, using only pairs of rhyming words rather than groups of four, but it is also the most flexible in terms of the placement of the turn. Shakespeare often places the twist in the ninth line yet the usage can be modified that is why the twist in the poem "One-track Mind" comes in the final couplet. As to the formal aspects of the poem, the most noticeable characteristic is anaphora in form of the pronoun *she* that is being repeated at the beginning of the majority of lines. Not only can anaphora create a driving rhythm by the repetition of the same sound, it can also intensify the emotion of the poem which is clearly the case of this poem. Through the personal pronoun the reader gets to know that

She has no time for aeroplanes or boats.

She cannot get enough of British Rail.
She went to Liverpool for Quaker Oats
Then Halifax to buy the *Daily Mail*.⁶

The repetition that can be observed in the presented extract serves also as an instrument for expressing the monotonous and day-to-day string of actions that are carried out by the female protagonist who might or might not be the author herself.

Moving on to the symbols in the poem, the poem consists of a description of various journeys and trips made by the protagonist with an imprecise goal. Looking at the interpretation of a journey, *Biblický slovník* suggests that a road can bear different meaning depending on the level of letter by letter interpretation. Aside from the literal meaning, it can be used metaphorically and generally the road designs a person's or even animal's behavior, therefore it can be perceived as a bad or a good element.⁷ To compare the possible interpretation, A Dictionary of Symbols says that "from the spiritual point of view, the journey is never merely a passage through space, but rather an expression of the urgent desire for discovery and change that underlies the actual movement and experience of travelling."⁸ Therefore to study, to be curious, to seek or to live through new experiences are all different ways that can be interpreted as travelling or, to put it another way, symbolic equivalents of the journey. The protagonists are always travelers, in the sense that they are restless. Travelling is thus an image of an expectation, of an unsatisfied yearning that never finds its goal. As the protagonist does not hesitate to travel to a dozen of different cities just to purchase one item and in some cases she does not find what she is looking for, one of the goals of the poems is definitely to express the yearning and the aspiration that are seemingly unsatisfied. Nevertheless, the quest is not about the goods, the quest of the protagonist is about love that occurs in the couplet that concludes the poem. The appearance of the love comes, however, through anti-climax. Anti-climax is perceived here as a disappointing situation or a sudden transition from an important idea to a trivial one. Throughout the first stanzas the reader's expectations are raised and everything is built-up when suddenly something either boring or disappointing happens; in this case it is the encounter of the

⁶ Sophie Hannah, *Selected Poems* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), 17.

⁷ J.D. Douglas et al., *New Bible Dictionary*, trans. Mgr. Alena Koželuhová et al. (Praha: Návrat domů, 1996), 118.

⁸ J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (Taylor & Francis, 2001), 164.

protagonist with the desired love that goes in a following way: “Once, on her way to Hull for cottage cheese/ She saw him. All he said was *Tickets, please.*”⁹

As I have mentioned earlier, one of the general aspects of Hannah’s poetry is de-idealization of love and crashing the established stereotypes; the quest for love does not end with a majestic and glorious encounter of the two lovers, it can and often does end as a mundane confrontation of two people, which is the overall message of the poem “One-track Mind”.

3.1.2. “The End of Love”

Following poem in the first of Hannah’s collection is in some ways greatly comparable to the previous one. Similarly, the first thing that strikes one’s attention is the structure of the poem; the poem can be divided into one octave and one sestet in which the octave can be broken down into two quatrains; likewise the sestet is made up of two tercets. The above mentioned is characteristic for Petrarchan sonnet so Hannah decided to use the sonnet form anew. Even though there are some differences when it comes to the rhyme scheme, the general characteristics that are attributed to Petrarchan sonnet are present in this Hannah’s poem. The Petrarchan octave presents an idea that is later to be contrasted by the final sestet. Hannah presents the idea throughout the whole poem, the idea of celebrating the end of love, making it a big event. In the first few lines she introduces the idea and the procedures that should be involved in said celebration.

Suits should be dry-cleaned, invitations sent.
Whatever form it takes – a tiff, a brawl –
The end of love should be a big event.
It should involve the hiring of a hall.¹⁰

The last line of the above mentioned quatrain is repeated throughout the whole poem and appears in three stanzas. The image of a hall and hiring a hall serves as a symbol for celebration or, in more general terms, something ceremonious and majestic like for example a wedding or on the other hand a funeral.

⁹ *Selected Poems*, 17.

¹⁰ *Selected Poems*, 21.

The used quatrains and tercets are usually distinguished by change in rhyme. Petrarch typically used an abba abba pattern for the octave which was then followed by either cde cde or cdc dcd rhymes in the sestet. The rhyme scheme and structure are used to work as a stress of the idea of the poem. Hannah's rhyme pattern in the poem is rather shattered and results in abba abab, therefore an alternation of the enclosed and alternate rhyme and in the two tercets she inclines to the abb aab pattern. What makes the poem characteristically Petrarchan, then, is the distribution of the ideas, the introductory ideas being located in first two stanzas and the conclusion and contrasted idea in the last two stanzas.

As for the presence of symbols in "The End of Love", in the third stanza

Better than unquestioning descent
Into the trap of silence, than the crawl
From visible to hidden, door to wall,¹¹

there is a sequence of transitions, namely the visible versus the hidden and then door and wall; wall carries an unusual significance when it comes to symbolism. Having consulted A Dictionary of Symbols, like the house, wall is a mystic symbol that represents the feminine element present in society which enables the reader to understand for example its present in the Song of Songs. Yet at the same time, this image has another level of comparison and that is the matter as opposed to spirit. In general, matter corresponds to the passive or feminine principle, and spirit to the active or masculine.¹² The transition from the door to wall therefore suggests, based on the symbolic interpretation, becoming more passive, which is something Hannah condemns and instead of lounging she advises to celebrate the end of a relationship. What is more, the tone of the poem is encouraging which is a phenomena that reoccurs in Hannah's poetry and shall be discussed more in other poems.

3.1.3. "Second Helping of Your Heart"

To move onto next piece in the collection in relation to love, I would like to discuss a poem called "Second Helping of Your Heart". Divided into two parts, it represents one of the more extensive poems with its ten stanzas all of which quatrains of the alternate

¹¹ *Selected Poems*, 21.

¹² *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 363.

rhyme abab. In the introductory stanza the speaker and the author in one person introduces herself metaphorically as “a midnight scrap”¹³ of the lover that she is talking to. While addressing the lover in an argument, she also addresses the reader; through the lines in brackets she gives instructions for further research or just to add information that did not fit into the rest of the poem such as

I can't remember mixing the ingredients.
Did I or did I not play any part in this?
(Enter a childhood training in obedience.)
Is there a second helping of your heart in this?¹⁴

The last line of the above mentioned stanza announces the title of the poem itself that implies engaging in more than one relationship and therefore satisfying the heart twice. That leads to the marriage and the symbol of the marriage in the poem. Marriage was in alchemy, a symbol of conjunction and was also represented symbolically by the union of sulphur and mercury. What is more, there is a parallel between this alchemic significance and the intimate union, of the unconscious, feminine side of man with his spirit.¹⁵ As the author herself says, the lover is not sure about the meaning of the marriage; it is suggested that his marriage is over. The love issue is, however, just a superficial level of the poem, since the overall attitude of the author in the poem is clearly feminist and dealing with more profound topics than a love triangle. To support this proposition, one only has to look at the first part when she begins to discuss the approval and asks herself why she should seek man's approval; a thought that is developed even further in the second part of the poem when she expands the thought by analyzing the position of a woman in a sexual relationship, even comparing herself to a sheep:

Do I have any choice but to give way to you,
Here, in this echo-box? The Shadows creep outside.
The sober cynic in me wants to say to you,

¹³ *Selected Poems*, 24.

¹⁴ *Selected Poems*, 24.

¹⁵ *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 204.

‘Why bother with me, dear, when there are sheep outside?’¹⁶

With the last line of the stanza she suggests that if the women are good only for satisfying the masculine needs, then men can as well turn to barnyard animals, since they would serve in the same way. This radical statement is later on diminished by addressing the lover and calling him genuine, yet on the whole, the poem strikes the reader’s attention with its bitter subtone. Once again, Hannah uncovers the idealistic mask of love life and shines some light on its true form. Regarding the symbolism, the major images that are projected in the verses are light and shadows. As for the light, light is the manifestation of morality, of the intellect and the seven virtues.¹⁷ Light is mentioned in a stanza dealing with the parting of the lovers in which the protagonist says:

Here, under chilly light and wooden beams,
My thumbnail is too long. It’s like a talon.
Here is your parting gift: disruptive dreams
From four till seven. (Enter Woody Allen).¹⁸

Light modifies and reshapes the real form of objects such as the thumbnail of the speaker that now appears too long and is through a simile compared to a talon. The light can modify things, but it can also bring out the truth which is the case of this poem when the chilly light shines on the relationship and its issues. The same stanza also includes an allusion, in this case to Woody Allen, an American actor, director, screenwriter, comedian, musician and playwright that is referring to the disruptive dreams and insomnia.

As for the representation of shadows, shadows are associated with creeping and the outside. Shadows are constantly changing and disappearing completely later on; the fact that our lives run without shapes supports the symbolism of the shadows. In Hebrew shadow means “deep darkness“ and since our lives tend to fade, the darkness that is outside evokes death, of course. Nevertheless, in darkness one can find the relief from

¹⁶ *Selected Poems*, 24.

¹⁷ *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 187.

¹⁸ *Selected Poems*, 24.

the heat and most metaphorically the burden and anxiety, since the shadow is a mixture of light and darkness; light appears again.¹⁹

To sum up the main strategy used in this particular poem, Hannah serves the reader the problem of the position of woman in society through a raw, direct imagery to be confronted. The inefficiency of men and the necessary strength of women is another topic that Hannah discusses.

3.1.4. “The Hero and the Girl Next Door“

The poem that gave a name to the collection presents in its three octaves a love story that is again handled in anti-love, even anti-heroic manner. The simple alternate rhyme scheme is combined with a modern subject concerning love and the end of love as it usually is in Hannah’s work. Directly in the first stanza that goes as follows:

This story has at least one side
The source is quite reliable
The hero did his best. He tried,
But it was not a viable
Prospect, and so he burned his boats,
He cut his losses, changed his mind,
Dry-cleaned his most attractive coats
And left the girl next door behind.²⁰

one can observe enjambment with a word “prospect“ that surpasses into following verse. Furthermore, there are certain collocations that are considered to be cliché phrases and by using this kind of phrases, Hannah accomplishes to make the poem seem impersonal, stripped of emotions, even though the story might be tragic. The mentioned phrases are “burned his boats“ and “cut his losses“ both suggesting leaving somebody behind and moving on to the different life. This kind of progress suggests a strong anti-heroism which is what Hannah decided to go with in the poem and the label *hero* is used throughout the poem ironically. As the dictionary defines,

¹⁹ *Biblický*, 969.

²⁰ *Selected Poems*, 31.

the cult of the hero has been found necessary not only because of the exigencies of war, but because of the virtues inherent in heroism—virtues which have surely been apparent to Man from prehistoric times and which he has felt the need to exalt, emphasize and record. The magic, the apparatus and the splendour of the very appurtenances of the ancient warrior proclaim the truth of this, as does the custom of according an acclamation worthy of kings to the conquering hero. Every heroic characteristic finds its analogy among the virtues necessary to vanquish chaos and overcome the temptations offered by the forces of darkness. This explains why, in many myths, the sun was identified with the hero par excellence.²¹

According to traditional definition of a heroic figure, the protagonist of the poem should act in a different manner than he does when leaving a girl and his past behind. Yet again, Hannah realistically suggests that a girl should not expect too much when in relationship to prevent her from the pain and sorrow that follows. Another anti-heroic element comes at the immediate beginning of the poem when it says that the hero tried to do his best. On the other hand, the last stanza suggests the reason for leaving being a war, yet the poem puts in the centre the love line instead of the war and makes the protagonist less heroic and according to the last two lines, there is nothing you can do to change the fate, nothing reasonable about the chain of events, all that being just a risk, coincidence and a chance taken.

So this is a provocation, then,
And this is what they call just cause
And this is how you see it when
The hero is a friend of yours.
Another soldier saves his skin.
Another wrinkle ironed out.
You bet. You roll the dice. You win.
There is no reasonable doubt.²²

²¹ *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 148.

²² *Selected Poems*, 31.

Despite the impersonal tone that accompanies the verses of “The Hero and the Girl Next Door“, Hannah offers encouragement and assuring conclusion that nothing can be changed and that when you roll the metaphorical dice, the possibility is that you will win. When compared to other poems depicting the end of love such as “The End of Love“, this particular poem does not offer a celebratory overtone and instead treats the topic of the ending relationship in more realistic way. What is more, such technique can be observed throughout whole Hannah’s work; the poem will differ in their overtones and moods, even though they share the formal aspects or the most prominent themes. In the following poem, the theme of a dysfunctional relationship is discussed anew with a new perspective and approach.

3.1.5. “Morning Has Broken“

As I have mentioned in the introduction to Hannah’s work, one of the elements that comes into sight through all her poems is irony; very often a heavy dose of irony is used in order to express the incoherence of love or everyday life. “Morning Has Broken“ is a clear example of the above mentioned, since the whole structure of the poem is based on the usage of irony. In seven stanzas and twenty verses of the alternate rhyme Hannah skillfully to combine a large number of popular culture allusions with a verbal irony and classical structure. Nevertheless, a certain level of knowledge of the popular culture is required; otherwise the reader will not be able to perceive the irony from the first few stanzas, since the introductory part of the poem is based heavily on the modern cinematography trivia.

The shark in Jaws was a lovable household pet.
Butch Cassidy and Sundance didn’t die.
Scarlett and Rhett
did not split up. They gave it another try.²³

One of the excellent cases of Hannah’s genius play with the individual words can be observed in the second part of the stanza, where she decides to split the verse in order to match the form with the content, which results in an impressive effect of relating the form to the content in an unexpected manner.

²³ *Selected Poems*, 37.

To proceed with the usage of irony and its analysis, in ironic situations actions often have an effect exactly opposite from what is intended. Descriptions of situational ironies, be it in fiction or in non-fiction, are used as a communicative tool for sharpening or emphasizing certain decayed features of reality. Hannah pursues the irony in order to express the state of relationships in general and their flaws; the pursuit of the irony is done in two different ways: through negation of the well-known facts as for example in the first stanza, in which the popular culture allusion is negated in order to create ironic effect, or through negating a fact from the personal life, as for example in the following stanza

I'm not at the end of my tether
and you're not a wanker.²⁴

By negating both statements, Hannah manages to inform the reader about the true state of the situation without explicitly stating it. Furthermore, the presumption of the presence of irony is based on the introductory part of the poem that establishes the ironical tone of the poem. The repetitive occurrence of the negation creates not only the ironical effect, but also the effect of denial which is suggested as one of the solutions for the state in which the protagonist can be found. Negation is, therefore, one of the methods to accomplish the ironical effect. Another way of devaluing the humorlessness of the poem is the usage of clichés and established phrases, which is a method that can be seen frequently in Hannah's work. In case of this particular poem, the second stanza is essentially made of such phrases when she compares him to a good egg or a safe bet. The ironical impact is triggered by not only by the metaphors, but also by their repetition; to be more specific, by the repetition of the phrases that carry the identical meaning. As a result of such redundancy, the statement made by the author is purposely made to seem unreliable. The same applies in other stanzas where the protagonist says, for example, that she is not at the end of her tether, another established, almost a cliché expression. To complete the discussion of the poem, as in other preceding poems, the last stanza comes with a symbol of light that serves as a tool for uncovering the truth: "and it looks the same in the light. /Morning is fixed."²⁵ Light has been traditionally associated with the spirit. Furthermore, light is the manifestation of morality, of the

²⁴ *Selected Poems*, 37.

²⁵ *Selected Poems*, 37.

intellect and the seven virtues. Psychologically speaking, to become illuminated is to become aware of a source of light.²⁶ The morning shines light on problems of the previous night and as the protagonist says, not everything is lost.

To sum up Hannah's approach in this poem, I would like to mention that verbal and situational ironies are often used for emphasis in the assertion of a truth. As I have mentioned before, Hannah uses the irony to provide a comical, yet realistic overview of a true nature of relationships, generally speaking. The poem's climax comes with the last stanza where the protagonist confesses that the last night was not a mistake, yet the morning and a new day brings a new start. Once more, Hannah decides to conclude her poem with a rather positive vision despite the irony that precedes it.

3.1.6. "When Will You Come and Identify My Body?"

Where the previous poem brought hope and resolution, the following poem leaves the reader with unresolved yearning; the protagonist's constant asking and calling that corresponds with the anticlimactic conclusion of the poem. The series of inquiries is presented in six stanzas written in alternate rhyme in which the identical rhyme occurs in the first and third line in every stanza starting with:

When will you come and identify my body?
It had better be soon or I might just take it amiss.
When will you come and identify my body?
Men basically do what they want, and I've only just
realized this.²⁷

Even though, the identical rhyme is frowned upon and considered as unartful the technique can, however, add emphasis to a poetic passage, which it does in this case; what is more, the words that conclude each line with identical rhyme form an outline of the story that the poem tells. Not only Hannah favors the identical rhyme, she also repeats the lines that contain identical rhymes as in: "It was silly of me to drown in a shallow river,/ Too small a gesture to impress the boys./ It was silly of me to drown in

²⁶ *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 188.

²⁷ *Selected Poems*, 42.

shallow river.²⁸ This kind of repetition of a complete line within a poem may be related to the envelope stanza pattern and may be used regularly at the end of each stanza as a refrain, or in other ways; in this case in the first and the third line of the stanza. The multiple recurrence of a line illustrates the effect of a repetition of a specific line which is separated from a defined place formed by stanzaic structure.

Having mentioned the formal aspects of the discussed poem, I would like to proceed to the deeper analysis which is, however, mostly defined by the formal condition of the poem. For as I have mentioned earlier, the repetition provides the reader with an outline of the progress of the story, each of the words standing for a symbol carrying a particular meaning, relevant to the stanza. First of the symbols, presented in the poem, is body. Body occurs in the title itself and is repeatedly emphasized throughout the verses, concluding the final stanza. As for the symbolic of body, *Biblický slovník* offers an interesting insight when enouncing that “body“ is used mainly in connection with a corpse.²⁹ The shallow reading of the poem suggests that the protagonist committed suicide out of grief and she actually is waiting for someone to identify her corpse. Nevertheless, another interpretation mentioned in the above mentioned dictionary is perceiving the body as an expression of a spirit and personality,³⁰ which is an insight relatable to the goal of the discussed poem. A Dictionary of Symbols talks about body in relation with the seat of insatiable appetite, of illness and death and mentions the fact that the soul, in order to free itself from the body, must cross seven spheres.³¹ The freedom of the body is interlaced with drowning in the river as mentioned in the second stanza. Concerning the symbol of a river, it is

an ambivalent symbol since it corresponds to the creative power both of nature and of time. On the one hand it signifies fertility and the progressive irrigation of the soil; and on the other hand it stands for the irreversible passage of time and, in consequence, for a sense of loss and oblivion.³²

The relevant part of the dictionary definition is the loss and oblivion generally associated with a river. The protagonist is left by her partner and keeps asking about his

²⁸ *Selected Poems*, 42.

²⁹ *Biblický*, 1023.

³⁰ *Biblický*, 1024.

³¹ *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 30.

³² *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 274.

return in a repetitive circle of when's and why's. Drowning in the river suggest the oblivious state of mind, the shallowness of the river on the other hand implies the spontaneity of the act. The oblivion is, however, contrasted with the protagonist's awareness of the fact that "the cricket highlights start at eleven fifteen,"³³ as well as the specific instructions regarding her metaphorical burial. In this part of the analysis, I would like to mention that the whole poem gives an impression of a ritual; the repetitions of lines suggest a repetitive action and more obviously, the progress of the burial comes out as ceremonial practice including purification. Before I proceed to the major symbol reoccurring in the poem, one of the interesting elements that Hannah decided to employ is the symbol of a box in the following line: "I have been deacidified and boxed."³⁴ The straightforward interpretation of above mentioned line is of course the placement of a body into a coffin within the framework of a burial. Nevertheless, the interpretation of a box provided by *A Dictionary of Symbols* offers an interesting addition to the development of the understanding of the poem:

Like all receptacles whose basic use is keeping or containing, the box is a feminine symbol which can refer both to the unconscious and to the maternal body itself. We do not here refer to spherical objects, which are symbols of Oneness and of the spiritual principle. The myth of 'Pandora's box' appears to allude to the significance of the unconscious, particularly in the special sense of its unexpected, excessive, destructive potentialities. Diel relates this symbol to 'imaginative exaltation'. In addition, we would like to point out the analogy—the family resemblance—between Pandora's box and the 'third casket' which figures in so many legends. The first and second contain goods and riches; the third discharges storms, devastation, death. This is clearly an example of a symbol of human life (of the cycle of the year), which is divided into three stages, consisting of two favourable thirds and one adverse.³⁵

Taking into account the already mentioned, the box symbolizes the presence of the femininity in the poem and is further mentioned in connection with both dead and rebirth that is hinted in the protagonist's promise of finding her everywhere the man

³³ *Selected Poems*, 42.

³⁴ *Selected Poems*, 42.

³⁵ *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 32.

looks. Furthermore, the box is mentioned along with the deacidification, that is to say with removing of the acid; the acid as a corrosive substance destroying other substances illustrates the destructive relationship from which the protagonist is now released. Hannah masterfully combines the feminine element and a harsh, grave theme of a burial, be it a literal or a metaphorical one. The protagonist suspects her partner of not being faithful which is reflected in the use of a torch as a symbol of truth. She asks if he is a torch which leads the reader to the conclusion that there is a certain symbolism behind the torch. Torch “is the symbol of purification through illumination. It was the weapon wielded by Hercules against the hydra of Lerna; its fire cauterizes wounds. It occurs in many allegories as the emblem of truth.”³⁶ First of all, a torch can represent a purification which I am going to discuss later on in this chapter; as the emblem of truth it serves as an opposite to the garlic crusher. While torch is something that leads a person forward and illuminates the path, garlic crusher destroys and smashes. Nevertheless, the most prominent symbol linking all the other images in the poem together into a complex work of poetry is a reoccurring imagery of the purification and the need for cleanliness. Initially the cleanliness is a request made by the protagonist; she requests to be buried with a conditioner and shampoo. The cleanliness is further represented by a river as a representation of water; even though she admits the silliness of drowning, the river serves as purifying element with the possibility of death being purifying. The crucial statement is enclosed in the following line: “Once I was self-obsessed and even clean.”³⁷ As for the self-obsession, that confession suggests something being taken from her life due to the relationship; sacrifice has to be made in order for a relationship to work. Once, she was whole and focused on herself and she felt clean. The symbol of cleanliness is one of the most widely used in literature and appears in all forms and genres. Having consulted the biblical dictionary, that logically discusses the clean along with the unclean, the cleanliness is inevitably associated with the spiritualism. The cleanliness includes the biological, ritual and also moral perspective and besides the obvious ritual purification through the faith, one can clean himself when giving up certain things in life; the cleanliness starts on the inside and later one starts to show on the outside.³⁸ As the protagonist mentions, she used to be clean and she yearns to be clean once again, while buried. Having mentioned the

³⁶ *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 344.

³⁷ *Selected Poems*, 42.

³⁸ *Biblický*, 139.

symbolism of cleanliness, it can be achieved through giving up certain life burden and through the purification one can be freed. What Hannah is implying is that one can feel free again when he lets things flow. Despite the desire to be free, however, the protagonist is not capable of letting go without difficulty and keeps asking for her lover. In the case of this poem one could even consider the presence of a catharsis, since it is the purification and purgation of emotions through some kind of art or any extreme change in emotion that results in restoration.

With “When Will You Come and Identify My Body?” I would like to conclude the first part focused on the anti-love poems that has been discussing the collection called *The Hero and The Girl Next Door*; the preceding analysis has shown that the anti-love poems of this collection are often sonnet-like, bittersweet confessions that offer an insight into a real world of relationships and its flaws. Hannah skillfully combines traditional poetic forms such as sonnet with modern issues and trivia, using for example popular culture allusions to make the poetry more accessible for its readership. Despite its bitterness, the poems are often soaked with irony and sharp wit which has always been Hannah’s signature, and often provides the reader with an encouraging conclusion and hope.

3.2. *Hotels Like Houses*

To proceed with the thesis, the following chapter and its subchapters contain the discussion of another of Hannah’s collection which is *Hotels Like Houses*. Just from the title itself the reader is able to deduce the dominant theme of the collection which is the clash of the male and female view of the world; house symbolizing a domestic, secure, female side and hotel then standing for something that is usually fleeting, fading, constantly changing. “Hotels Like Houses” is also a title of one of fifty-three poems included in said collection; a collection that provides a more feminist view of the relationship in the modern environment. As for the feminism, the appearance of feminist elements will be discussed together with the individual poems. Having introduced the collection, I would like to proceed to the poems and the discussion of them.

3.2.1. “Person Specification“

In following four-quatrain poem of alternate rhyme scheme, Hannah displays anew her brilliant skills in applying the verbal irony to the classical structure of the poem. Furthermore, she establishes an unusual form which is a form of a newspaper advertisement that settles the distant and impersonal tone of the poem. The poem serves as a list of requirements that are involved in a quest for a perfect woman; it can be considered a checklist transformed into verses. The usage of irony can be observed in the first stanza, where it says:

The ideal candidate for the position
of soulmate to the all-important you
should say she loves you, of her own volition,
every five minutes, and it should be true.³⁹

It is obvious for various reasons that Hannah manages to mock the modern perception of an ideal partner right from the beginning when she decides to label the man as an “all-important you“⁴⁰ and through the hyperbole of the frequency of mentioning the three required words she continues the trend. Later on Hannah incorporates an oxymoron, which is again a result of the irony as the next requirement is that “She must be motivated and ambitious,/ but feminine.“⁴¹ Not only is the statement originally not contradictory and is made so just in order to create a sarcastic impact, but also through this poem the reader gets to identify the presence of feminism, since Hannah suggests that a femininity is not allowed to include ambition or motivation. That is the case of the rest of the poem in which one of the proposed questions is what exactly the set of features that define the femininity is. The most important fact that should be mentioned is that femininity is socially constructed and is not assigned just to women, but is made up of both socially-defined and biologically-created factors. It makes it distinct from the definition of the biological female sex then as both men and women can possess feminine traits. One cannot define all the characteristics of the femininity since they are not universally identical, however, some patterns can be found such as gentleness, sensitivity and empathy, caring, compassion, tolerance; those are characteristics that

³⁹ *Hotels*, 32.

⁴⁰ *Hotels*, 32.

⁴¹ *Hotels*, 32.

have been traditionally mentioned as feminine and still are. This can be linked with the ambition and aspiration that are presented in Hannah's poem. Furthermore, femininity is sometimes connected with sexual objectification and appeal. Sexual receptivity is often considered feminine while sexual assertiveness and desire is sometimes considered masculine. That again can be discussed in terms of "Person Specification", more specifically in stanza that presents demands on the woman's look; what is required is that "she will look stunning/ in public, turn at least ten heads per day./ She should do most of (if not all) running/ and be prepared for marriage straight away."⁴² Hannah juxtaposes the necessity of female attractiveness and the presupposition of the fact that women are ready to settle down and start a family any time required. Through the irony and contradictions, the progress of the poem implies the fact that the ideal partner does not exist if you follows the demands; as usually Hannah uncovers the mask of the true state of the modern life and relationships. The last stanza adds to the list of the impossible, when requiring an exciting occupation, stable mind and general abstinence. As always the climax of the poem comes with the last lines, the same applies to this poem.

Points will be lost for boring occupations,
excessive mood swings, drugs and other men.
To those who will fail, your deep commiserations.
This post will not be advertised again.⁴³

A few observations can be made while reading the last stanza; even though the majority of the poems by Sophie Hannah give the impression of being told by women, this particular one gives away a strong masculine attitude which is most readable right in the last two lines that express the pity of the women who will not be able to fit the boxes of demands. Despite the masculine voice, Hannah manages to mock the idea of an ideal human being through other than a feminine point of view which is something not frequently observed.

Hannah proves that an ideal partner is not something that can be constructed and put together from a list of characteristics, even though it is a social construct, and giving or losing points is not something that should be applied in a quest for a soul mate.

⁴² *Hotels*, 32.

⁴³ *Hotels*, 32.

3.2.2. “Darling Sweatheart“

The decision of placing this particular poem next to “Person Specification“ is not accidental; while the previous poem criticizes the socially constructed models, “Darling Sweatheart“ takes the idea of the inevitable imperfection of every individual human being and turns it into a kind of glorifying ode culminating in a more positive way than the previous poem. As in the previous collection, Hannah chooses to work with a sonnet form, more specifically the Shakespearean sonnet in this case.

He couldn't spell. The letters were addressed
to Darling Sweatheart, though he acted mean
when I was with him. Probably the best
present he gave me was some margarine.⁴⁴

The form is often named after Shakespeare, not for the reason of being the first to write in this form but because he became its most famous practitioner. The sonnet consists of fourteen lines structured as three quatrains and a couplet. The third quatrain generally comes with an unexpected thematic turn that is called volta. In Shakespeare's sonnets, nevertheless, the volta usually comes in the couplet, and revises the theme of the poem or introduces a fresh new look at the theme. The usual rhyme scheme is abab cdcd efef gg. While with the previous poems of Hannah that are inspired by the sonnet form yet lack the accuracy of the rhyme scheme, here the rhyme scheme is identical with Shakespearean one. The first three stanzas introduce the relationship of a man and a woman under comical conditions regarding a typo in a letter. The description of the man gets progressively more and more eccentric, even though the speaker, in this case the woman, does not by any means complain; it is merely stating the obvious facts. Regarding the volta, the twist comes with the couplet as it is in English sonnet and concludes the poem in an unexpected way: “Let's have a kid. If we get skint, we'll sell it./ He wasn't bad. It's just the way I tell it.“⁴⁵ By using a hyperbole, the author accomplishes to conclude the poem in a radical way, keeping the reader's attention that is with the last line moved off the unusual characteristics of the man to the actual

⁴⁴ *Hotels*, 19.

⁴⁵ *Hotels*, 19.

message of the poem: “He wasn’t bad. It’s just the way I tell it.”⁴⁶ Having introduced the hyperbole, Hannah confesses through the last line that not only poets tend to exaggerate, but so do also people in their everyday lives, and by pointing out the curious stuff about other people we do not change their true personality. The sonnet form therefore serves its purpose, in the end, since it is admitted that the person is worth the love; the curious aspect of the poem is that sonnets are usually written by men toward the women, which is a construct reversed by Hannah.

3.2.3. “Hotels Like Houses“

Whilst the discussion in the preceding chapter rotated around light, comical verses, following poem returns back to the bitter realism that is close to Hannah’s work. The reader is presented with three quatrains of alternate rhyme scheme that are joined together to form a poem that gave a title to the collection that is discussed. As I have mentioned before, the title “Hotels Like Houses“ itself gives away the message and the theme of the poem, and also the collection. The obvious difference between a house as a home and a hotel sets the topic of a gap between men and women that is present in financial, sexual, sentimental and many other matters. As the entry in *Biblický slovník* defines, the house was always perceived not only as a building, but also as a symbol of home and family; the place of support and truth.⁴⁷ To develop the discussion of the symbol of the house, I have consulted *A Dictionary of Symbols*, regarding the interpretation of the particular word:

Mystics have always traditionally considered the feminine aspect of the universe as a chest, a house or a wall, as well as an enclosed garden. Another symbolic association is that which equates the house (and the above, related forms) with the repository of all wisdom, that is, tradition itself. In architectural symbolism, on the other hand, the house carries not only an overall symbolism but also particular associations attached to each of its component parts. Nevertheless, the house as a home arouses strong, spontaneous associations with the human body and human thought (or life, in other words), as has been confirmed empirically by psychoanalysts. Ania Teillard explains this

⁴⁶ *Hotels*, 19.

⁴⁷ *Biblický*, 186.

by pointing out that, in dreams, we employ the image of the house as a representation of the different layers of the psyche. The outside of the house signifies the outward appearance of Man: his personality or his mask.⁴⁸

The quotation above supports the argument of a woman being an equivalent of home and stability, as the house is usually associated with wisdom and tradition. This argumentation can be found in the poem in the second stanza, where it says: “She thinks in terms of thick red rope/ around the bed.”⁴⁹ Rope is essentially a symbol of a connection the same way chain would be; the binding and inseparability in connection with bedroom implies the woman’s concern with a commitment and seriousness regarding sexual relations in opposite to the man’s view and actions, which are expressed though man’s departure after packing. As a result, the relationship is problematic exactly because of the different view of the sexual and love principles and the main conflict is introduced in the last stanza where it is stated that

if their affair has awkward spells,
what’s bound to cause the rows is
that he treats houses like hotels
and she, hotels like houses.⁵⁰

In spite of the partial agreement that is installed in the relationship, the different treatment of the space they find themselves in is the cause of the struggle. While the woman treats a hotel like a home and tries to make it look like it, the man tends to treat the affair without any commitment. If the previous poem expressed the compromise that can happen between man and woman, despite the differences, “Hotels Like Houses“ carries an almost opposite message.

3.2.4. “Soft-handed Man“

Surprisingly, the title of the next poem does not foresee the conclusion or argument of the poem itself. Once again, the poem flows fluently allowing the reader to comprehend without any particular struggle the three sestets with the rhyme scheme abbaab. From

⁴⁸ *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 154.

⁴⁹ *Hotels*, 19.

⁵⁰ *Hotels*, 19.

the first lines it might seem that Hannah argues against gentle and therefore weak men, which proves not to be valid after a next few following lines:

but if she met one that she loved, she could.
She's right to say we all make strange demands
and right to think that no one understands.
Hard hands are not indicative of good
character, don't infallibly belong
to rugged, silent types who rarely shave,
who are, in equal measures, kind and brave.⁵¹

With this in mind I would like to point out the similarity between "Soft-handed Man" and "Person Specification", which lies in the discussion of the presence of the socially constructed models and also presumptions we make in connection with a specific type of person. What Hannah implements in this poem is an anti-machist oration that is based on the contrast of the hard and soft, more specifically in relation with hands. The same way she suggested that society expects women to be gentle and emphatic, ready to settle down, the same way she proposes that a gentle man equals a weak pathetic man, and in the poem she dedicates herself to the pursuit of disproving such assumption. As she says in the stanza mentioned above, the harsh nature often does not designate a kind and brave man, and even though the author in the beginning confesses that she is not able of loving such a gentle man, if she meets one, she can change her views; and as she says later on:

Just over the horizon there's a strong
soft-handed man waiting to prove her wrong,
and when a person proves you wrong, they save
acres of mind you were about to close
and turn into habitable land.⁵²

Apart from the ingenious metaphor of closing acres of one's mind and refusing to open one's mind to other options, Hannah suggests that there is always a possibility that

⁵¹ *Hotels*, 43.

⁵² *Hotels*, 43.

someone will change your mind with a valid argument and might therefore save your life by doing so.

To get back to the concept of a weakness, the poem is largely focused on a symbol of hand, which is where the notion of debility comes from. Therefore, the concept of hand was always

related to that for the pillar (or a support, or strength) and for the palm. In esoteric doctrine, the position of the hand in relation to the body, and the arrangement of the fingers, convey certain precise symbolic notions. According to the Egyptian system of hieroglyphs, the hand signifies manifestation, action, donating and husbandry. An eye in association with a hand—as for example in some oriental mythic beings—symbolize ‘clairvoyant action’. Schneider concedes a major rôle to the hand ‘because it is the corporeal manifestation of the inner state of the human being’ and because ‘it expresses an attitude of mind in terms other than the acoustic’—or, in other words, a gesture.⁵³

The selected fragment from *A Dictionary of Symbols* provides us with a number of possible, applicable and interchangeable interpretations. In the Egyptian symbolism, the hand stands for a domination and husbandry which points the reader towards the masculinity; what is more, the hand is related to the support of pillar, which leads one to the conclusion that a soft-handed man is not capable of support or strength.

Furthermore, the hands express a gesture or an attitude. If, then, a man is soft-handed, it is assumed that his actions will be as well. All those assumptions are present in the poem, yet on the other hand they are contradicted and disproved as well. While in “Person Specification“ the conclusion is that if the woman does not fit the requirements expressed by the man, she will not have a chance now, or later, in “Soft-handed Man“, the thesis is the exact opposite. While the author admits to the tendency of dating strong handed man, she also admits that there is nothing particularly undesirable about the gentle men. She does so through either metaphor such as assigning the habitable land to the mind, or through the symbolism, more specifically the symbol of hand.

With its particular poem I am going to conclude the part of this thesis discussing the collection *Hotels Like Houses*. It differs from the previous collection in an attitude

⁵³ *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 138.

towards the love and relationship issues in a way that is far more feminist than in the previous one. By mentioning the feminism, I do not mean the radical branch of it, nevertheless, the ideas and beliefs presented in the collection are fresh and not so frequently presented in poetry. Hannah does not fight for simply the position and treating of a woman, but rather attempts to throw some light on the perception of the qualities that are considered acceptable and desirable; characteristics that are, however, enforced by society that constructs such models that are not based on the actual state.

3.3. Leaving and Leaving You

To begin with this particular collection, I am going to mention the fact that in this case Hannah's poetry, so far so precise in use of traditional form, anew manages to bring into play the elements we associate with modernism. The collection, as I have mentioned before, focuses mainly on love, loss and the different ways in which people can be significant to each other. Hannah attempts to clarify and discuss the various miseries of everyday life with internal arguments. Furthermore, she moves among the love problems with a distinguishable wit and grace, which is the case of the first poem from the collection that I am going to examine.

3.3.1. "Occupational Hazard"

Firstly, some of the poems that have been previously discussed have showed autobiographical tendencies, yet they cannot be proclaimed truly autobiographical for the lack of knowledge of Hannah's personal life. In the following poem that is at the same time the first poem included in the collection there is no doubt that at least the basis for this poem is taken from Hannah's life since it depicts a specific side, or better downside, of her profession. The four quatrains are radiating the irony as it has happened with previous poems; the subject of the irony is a random male character who is said to be rather promiscuous. His hobby seems to be collecting different professions as his trophies.

He has slept with book-keepers, book-binders,
Slept with auditors, florists, Pas,
Child psychologists, even child minders,

With directors of firms and of plays.⁵⁴

The poem is based on juxtaposing the occupations and characteristics of people to express the range of lovers. One of the figures that can be observed in the poem is zeugma that is incorporated into the last line of the above mentioned stanza, where the director applies to both firms and plays. The built-up of the poem that consists of enumeration of lovers is concluded with the last stanza:

Real poets are rare, he confesses,
While it's easy to find a cashier.
So I give him some poets' addresses
And consider a change of career.⁵⁵

Firstly, the male protagonist obviously degrades the importance of the profession of the poet. Secondly, Hannah through the use of irony manages to express the resignation that occurs in a conflict with a simple person and decides to make the female character resistant, while proving to the man that there are actually female poets among people, even though she is clearly discontented with his attitude towards the community; Hannah also illustrated the possibility of a compliment backfiring.

3.3.2. "None of the Blood"

From the comical, ironical atmosphere the pendulum of Hannah's poetry swings to the opposite side with the following poem, that strikes the reader's attention with its vivid imagery related to human body as well as the urgency of the discourse. The poem can be divided into two parts, both by the structure and content. While the first two stanzas with its identical rhyming and a refrain-like repetition of the lines present a strong, desperate statement, almost lament directed at certain man, the rest of the poem provides the background information and develops the theme; through the second part of the poem the reader gets to learn the cause of the woman's disenchantment. Two major symbols reoccurring throughout the poem are blood and body.

⁵⁴ Sophie Hannah, *Leaving and Leaving You* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 1999), 11.

⁵⁵ *Leaving*, 11.

None of the blood that is in your body
is in my body. None of the blood
that is in my body is in your body.
Whatever you are, you are not my blood.⁵⁶

The first thing that should be considered is whether blood stands for life or for death; *Biblický slovník* discusses the matter mainly in terms of Bible related examples, yet it provides a general insight as well. The tendency is to think of blood as a symbol of life and resurrection and freeing the body for other purposes, yet there is not enough evidence to support the argument and therefore blood is, based on the appearance in Bible, connected mostly with death.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, when reading the poem by Hannah, one inclines to the theory of blood being the element that frees the body and keeps it alive; blood would therefore be considered as something vital and positive. The woman keeps repeating that the blood in her body is not the blood of that man, by which she expresses the refusal to credit the man for the good that is in her. A Dictionary of Symbols treats the matter in more general way. The liquid substances such as milk, honey and wine, which were offered up in antiquity were images of blood, the most precious offering of all.⁵⁸ With that information we get to the concept of scarification, which is a part of every relationship between two people, in that case the protagonist of the poem is claiming not to sacrifice herself for him, but for someone else, or for herself.

Another symbol that occurs in the second part of the poem "None of the Blood" is garden. The garden is the place where Nature is ordered, selected and enclosed. Therefore, garden is perceived as a symbol of consciousness in opposition to the forest, which is the unconscious, in the same way as the island is opposed to the ocean. At the same time, however, it is a feminine attribute because of its character as a precinct.⁵⁹ Therefore, if the garden is perceived as a femininity, the protagonist is refusing to credit her femininity or her consciousness to the man. What is more, in line: "None of your garden is in my garden."⁶⁰ she proceeds to break any connection she has left with him;

⁵⁶ *Leaving*, 18.

⁵⁷ *Biblický*, 534.

⁵⁸ *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 31.

⁵⁹ *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 115.

⁶⁰ *Leaving*, 18.

despite that, some common ground stands still such as furniture or car, which suggests the protagonist might be married to said man or at least they share a property.

Hannah, once again, encourages the female readers to stand for themselves and only credit themselves for what they have built and leaves the reader with a question of how much does the woman have left for herself while in committed relationship.

3.3.3. “Marrying the Ugly Millionaire“

Once again, the election of the poems in the given order is not random; similarly, as the previously discussed poems, “Millionaire“ and “Blood“ share a mutual theme which is in this case sacrifice. The theme is, however, handled differently in each case; Hannah decides to empower the female character in “None of the Blood“ and makes her declare her emancipation and liberation, her resistance to give all she owns to her partner. The moral strength of the central character in “Marrying the Ugly Millionaire“ is emphasized as well despite the sacrifice that is actually carried out by the protagonist, yet for specific reasons. In five quatrains of the alternate rhyme scheme abab the history of an indebted family is told through the description of a wedding ceremony; the ceremonial atmosphere is set by the first introductory lines:

Here comes my mother carrying
Dried flowers for my hair.
This afternoon I’m marrying
The ugly millionaire.⁶¹

Hannah masterfully finds a use of the generally known lyrics of the “Bridal Chorus“ by Richard Wagner which in English-speaking countries commences with a line “Here comes a bride.“ Hannah on the other hand modifies the line to her likeness and to the form that can be seen above in the mentioned stanza. The poem then gives impression of an almost parody to the classical version of the bridal song. The gloomy and uncelebratory atmosphere, that is achieved for example through the epithet “dried“ in connection with flowers, merged with an unholy image of grail embodied in the ugly husband-to-be come together in order to create an untraditional image of a wedding; a

⁶¹ *Leaving*, 19.

wedding with a couple that has to get along without the presents or joy. As the fourth stanza delivers:

No Dior, no St Laurent, no frills,
No full Le Creuset set.
Only my father's unpaid bills,
My brother's gambling debt.⁶²

As I have mentioned in the introductory part of this chapter, "Marrying the Ugly Millionaire" and "None of the Blood" possess similar characteristics that are, however, handled in a distinct way by the author. While in the latter poem, the heroine chooses to keep the true self just to herself and not sacrifice her whole nature just in spite to get along with her partner, the heroine of the former poem in order to save her family from an inevitable consequences of her father and brother's debts decides to marry a man despite her lack of affection for him. Nevertheless, even with the gloomy subtone, the poem does not conclude bitterly, when the heroine herself claims:

Demands beyond and way above
What would be right or fair.
I hate the grasping lot. I love
The ugly millionaire.⁶³

Therefore, the thing that aggravates the bride the most is not the unsatisfactory situation that she has been put into, but the judgment of the guests who do not know the original story. The concluding line is an unexpected twist and comes with a harmony and peace of the bride with her fate.

Hannah manages to discuss a similar theme in terms of two different poems from the identical collection in two very distinct ways, both of which brings the reader a satisfactory sensation, while reading a new, unusual form in combination with a modern topic.

⁶² *Leaving*, 19.

⁶³ *Leaving*, 19.

3.3.4. “Rondeau Redoublé“

Within the verses of the following lines, Hannah continues in the examination of the standards involved in a relationship and the demands we make upon the partner and how unnecessary they are.

The six-stanza poem of an alternate rhyme scheme alternating between abab and baba is primarily based on the presence of juxtaposition. What is juxtaposed is mainly the characteristics of both the female and male character and results in a swell and captivating light poem. Once again, Hannah engages in the dialogue with a reader when giving an implicit advice about the love life. One of the juxtapositions appears in the fifth stanza when the author says

The earth won't sprout a ladder to the moon
Though we make compromises and amends.
It would be like December next to June
If we shared more than chinese food and friends.⁶⁴

By juxtaposing a month of winter and a month of summer, Hannah creates a contrast that applies to the couple dominating the poem. Even though they share only some of their interests, sharing more of them would make them even more disunited.

The metaphor that is repeated most frequently throughout the poem is, however, the metaphor of spoon and soup.

He likes the soup but doesn't like the spoon.
We hold opposing views on means and ends.
It's funny now, but it would matter soon
If we shared more than chinese food and friends.⁶⁵

This kind of metaphor brings back the characteristic of Hannah's poem which is the intellectual and sentimental gap that is broached between men and women since there were men and women. The soup could be considered a substance therefore a basis; the spoon, then, is a tool how to handle the mentioned substance. In conclusion, the two people share the basic common ground and differ mainly in the way they handle life

⁶⁴ *Leaving*, 15.

⁶⁵ *Leaving*, 15.

matters and even though they dispute, they still find a way to each other through the mutual interest. Before the conclusion, I would like to dedicate a few lines to the symbol of moon that is mentioned in one of the stanzas, more specifically in the line: “The earth won’t sprout a ladder to the moon.”⁶⁶ Even though the mentioned line could be interpreted as a confirmation of the lack of idealism and the presence of rationalism, the moon can be interpreted through the symbolism as well. As *A Dictionary of Symbols* mentions:

When patriarchy superseded matriarchy, a feminine character came to be attributed to the moon and a masculine to the sun. The regulating function of the moon can also be seen in the distribution of the waters and the rains, and hence it made an early appearance as the mediator between earth and heaven. The moon not only measures and determines terrestrial phases but also unifies them through its activity: it unifies, that is, the waters and rain, the fecundity of women and of animals, and the fertility of vegetation. But above all it is the being which does not keep its identity but suffers ‘painful’ modifications to its shape as a clear and entirely visible circle.

What is more, the moon is associated with the imagination and the fancy as the intermediary realm between the self-denial of the spiritual life and the blazing sun of intuition.⁶⁷

The first thing that contributes to the notion of difference between men and women is the fact that moon is considered to represent a feminine character; further in the dictionary one can learn that it also is associated with imagination and even fancy. The earth won’t lead us to the perfection is what it says in the line, then; the fancy cannot be accomplished easily and without struggle, yet two people can still be happy together despite the differences.

As Hannah concludes in the last stanza,

Sometimes we clash, sometimes our difference blends
And the cold air turns hot in the balloon.

⁶⁶ *Leaving*, 15.

⁶⁷ *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 214.

I tell myself (in case success depends
On attitude) that though he hates the spoon,
He likes the soup.⁶⁸

The depiction of everyday life and struggles comes out remarkably natural and sincere, when confessing to the presence of the clashes that are, however, a part of their lives. Despite the arguments, the heroine admits to remind herself of the fact, that even though their ways might vary, they still share the common ground.

3.3.5. “Leaving and Leaving You“

With the following poem I would like to conclude the part of this thesis dedicated to the collection of Sophie Hannah that was published under the same title as the poem, which is “Leaving and Leaving You“ and in a way sets the mood of the whole collection with the juxtaposition of leaving and leaving somebody that presents a certain difference and can be observed in many poems included in the collection. The difference is presented through difficult situations that come into the lives of different couples, even though a majority of poems makes an autobiographical impression, and the way of dealing with those situations. The observable difference between leaving and leaving somebody is present in a poem called “None of the Blood“, where the main protagonist refuses to sacrifice everything in order to sustain the relationship, as well as in “Rondeau Redoublé“ in which the heroine accepts the difference between her and her partner and decides not to leave, since the differences are manageable. The poem that is about to be discussed concludes this kind of tendency of the collection and basically explains the concept of leaving and leaving somebody.

And when I have gone, remember that in weighing
Everything up, from love to a cheaper rent,
You were all the reasons I thought of staying
And you were none of the reasons why I went.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ *Leaving*, 15.

⁶⁹ *Leaving*, 26.

I have decided to focus on Hannah's so called anti-love poetry and while all the poems mentioned qualified for such categorization, this particular poem might seem mainly a love poem; nevertheless, after further reading the reader realizes that the reason for the heroine's departure is not the incompatibility of the partners yet some other, unknown reason. She keeps reassuring the male protagonist that the reason was not him and that there is the difference between leaving the town and her old life behind and leaving him.

And although I leave your sight and I leave your setting
And our separation is soon to be a fact,
Though you stand beside what I'm leaving and forgetting,
I'm not leaving you, not if motive makes the act.⁷⁰

Furthermore, she admits that many things leading to her decision are in his immediate proximity, yet the reason is still not him. The profound reading of the poem results in the thought that Hannah tries to prove that the men do not have to be self absorbed and try to blame everything on the dysfunctional relationship and that the reasons might be completely different, such as the need for a change and many others.

With this poem I would like to conclude the discussion of Hannah's collection *Leaving and Leaving You* and move on to the next two collections discussed in terms of the anti-love theme.

3.4. First of the Last Chances

In the following collection Hannah once again strips away the mask of hypocrisy and falsehood from the everyday life. As for the themes, Hannah deals with the range from relationships to the work, motherhood and also marriage; anew Sophie Hannah handles the themes in her own unmistakable way. The poems of the following collection are emotional, yet comical and once again the author combines the traditional form with a modern life. In contrast with the previous collection, the tone of *First of the Last Chances* is undoubtedly lighter and jollier, since unlike the previous collections, this one approaches the theme of love in a different way. As Jeremy Noel Tod shares in his review:

⁷⁰ *Leaving*, 26.

This change in domestic circumstances means there is less about unrequited love in Hannah's latest collection than in her previous three. But falling for men was always only one of her hobbies. She is equally inspired by people who fall foul of her.⁷¹

The major change from the previous collections therefore is the treatment of love and relationships; Hannah still includes the stories of bad choices and dissatisfaction, but the comical tone prevails over the lament, which can be observed in poems such as "Ante-natal" that shall be discussed later on.

What is more, this collection of Sophie Hannah also includes a set of eight poems called "A Woman's Life and Loves" that is inspired by Gabriel Jackson, a composer, and serves as a contemporary feminist feedback. To quote from the cycle, I chose to present a few lines from a poem called "View" which is a piece of poetry providing an insight into the atmosphere of the whole cycle:

However hard you try
to substitute your view for mine,
I see the things I see
and am no longer here with you
though you are here with me.⁷²

Manifestly, Hannah engages in a feminine empowerment repeatedly and does so in the following collection as well; the author claims that despite the lingering bits of the past relationship, one can get over the past struggles and liberate themselves. To compare, the similar theme could be found in "None of the Blood" and many other Hannah's poems.

To illustrate the aspects of Hannah's work in this particular collection, I would like to proceed to the analysis of the individual poems. Regarding the anti-love theme, I have decided to include two poems into my thesis, one of them is "Ante-natal" that is a representative of a comical work of Hannah, and the previously mentioned "View".

⁷¹ Jeremy Noel Tod, "No small contractions," last modified May 3, 2003, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/may/03/featuresreviews.guardianreview29>.

⁷² *Chances*, 57.

3.4.1. “Ante-natal”

As in the majority of her previous poems, Hannah sticks to the alternate rhyme scheme and the form of quatrain with the anaphor introducing each line, the anaphor being “my husband”. In six stanzas Hannah develops the theme of marriage and pregnancy through the juxtaposition of the male and female view of the situation. The poem in its way deals with two major issues that appear in everyday life: the male incomprehension of female processes and the need to keep up appearances. The latter characteristic is rather apparent in the following sample:

My husband doesn't want to hold the plastic pelvis model.
He tells the other husbands that it's bound to be a doddle.
He thinks the role of classes is to teach, not mollycoddle.
He'll go so far, but not an inch beyond.⁷³

By the refusal to hold a plastic model the husband shows the desire to demonstrate his masculine characteristics without reducing himself to the common habits of women and being part of the pregnancy cycle. Even though the poem seems to have a rather feminist view, the husband is not criticized, the poem is simply a collection of facts that the author is stating. The reason why the feminist insight is not the main focus of this poem is the culmination that comes with the ending of the poem which I will discuss later in this subchapter.

One of the most visible aspects of the poem, except for the anaphora that introduces each stanza, is the amount of allusions to the popular culture, not unlike the poem “Morning Has Broken”. The reader gets to read for example about Davos Economic Summit. Davos is a municipality in the district of Davos in the canton of Graubünden, Switzerland. Davos is host to the World Economic Forum (WEF), an annual meeting of global political and business elites. By way of mentioning this trivia Hannah points out the male interest in business and world politics in comparison to the apathy when it comes to maternity affairs. In following stanza:

My husband mocks the books with their advice about nutrition,

⁷³ *Chances*, 46.

He shocks the other couples in the coffee intermission
By saying Ziggy Marley seems in pretty good condition
Despite the smoking habits of his dad.⁷⁴

Ziggy is a Jamaican musician and leader of the band, Ziggy Marley and the Melody Makers and he is, obviously, the oldest son of reggae legend Bob Marley. The husband talks cynically about the child development in the presence of another couple to ensure them that the children will be doing fine despite the bad habits. On one hand the husband seems to be a radical, confident person who presents his opinions to the others, yet in another stanza he proves to be rather conservative and skeptical, since the protagonist says:

My husband is afraid of meeting women called Magenta,
Of sharing wholesome snacks outside the Early Learning Centre,
Of any exercise that's an incontinence preventer.
He's friendly but determined to bond.⁷⁵

Magenta as a purple color stands for a unconventional, eccentric personality which is not, apparently, a favorite type of personality when it comes to the husband. What is more, he does not like to try new kinds of food, especially the healthy one and become a part of the maternity collective which is understandable and common factor within the society divided into the male and female community. The reason, as I have mentioned before, for this poem not being a feminist lament is the last line of the previous stanza. The protagonist admits that her husband is not perfect, but he is friendly and does not want to change his principles just in spite to blend in.

The main point therefore is that despite the situation of the protagonist which the pregnancy, she understands the behavior of her husband and does not try to complain or lament; instead Hannah turns the poem into an enumeration of the husband's habits and actions, that result in a comical, yet not mocking effect. This conclusion is settled in the last stanza:

On Father's Day my husband gets a card he's not expecting.

⁷⁴ *Chances*, 46.

⁷⁵ *Chances*, 46.

I say it's from the baby, with a little redirecting.
He doesn't blame my hormones or insist that I'm projecting.
He tells me he's the father of a star.⁷⁶

By the last stanza a state of harmony is established when the husband proves to be a support and not only a critic of the circumstances that accompany the pregnancy. Before the child is born he already confirms that the baby is going to be amazing which has the effect of negating the previously said.

Hannah comically illustrates the everyday reality of the marriage while keeping the reader aware of the intellectual and practical gap between men and women, as she has already done many times before. She manages to present the reader with a plot twist that comes with the final stanza in which the accumulation of the facts about the bad habits of the husband results in a reconciliation and expression of mutual love which is something the reader does not expect since the progress of the poem leads to the lament or a criticism.

3.4.2. "View"

As I have mentioned in the introduction to the collection, this poem is a part of a modern feminist oriented cycle of poetry. With this particular poem I would like to conclude the part of my thesis that has been focusing on the anti-love theme; the reason I have chosen this poem to terminate that section with this poem is its character. The poem seems to portray the whole nature of Hannah's anti-love poetry in just three stanzas of simple 4-line abcb rhyme scheme. It embodies the strength and independence of the women that Hannah implicitly tries to induce in the female readers and the strength and independence that she tries bring back in the minds of the male readers. Furthermore, Hannah once more emphasizes that getting over the end of love does not have to be a tragedy and can make a person stronger.

Right from the beginning of the poem the message of the author is obvious.

I am not lonely.
I pretend that I am here alone.
I do not see your shuttered face

⁷⁶ *Chances*, 46.

or hear your monotone
but stare instead at roads and fields
and bridges and the sky
and feel the sun's rays on my face.⁷⁷

As one can see, Hannah juxtaposes the concept of loneliness and being alone which is commonly misunderstood and in following lines turns to the images of nature to contrast them with the image of her previous partner. Being alone is a personal choice and does not have to do anything with being lonely. One of the symbols Hannah decides to use is a symbol of sun and its rays. The Sun represents the moment when the heroic principle shines at its brightest. With his youthful characteristic, the Sun is associated with the hero, as opposed to the father, who connotes the heavens, although the two (sun and sky) are sometimes equated. Therefore, the weapon of heaven is the net (the pattern of the stars) or the power of binding; while the hero is armed with the sword (symbolically associated with fire).⁷⁸ Correspondingly to other poems mentioned in this thesis, Hannah employs a symbol that represents both a state of mind and a type of person. *A Dictionary of Symbols* speaks of a moment in which the hero is in its brightest; furthermore the Sun stands for a hero himself. The protagonist whose face is bathed in sun's rays is in conclusion the hero of the story, which is the case of some of the previous Hannah's poems as well. The presence of the Sun suggests that she does not need the man anymore and that being lonely is sufficient for her for now, since she finds herself in such a state of mind where she does not need anyone else. She concludes with the following line: "I see things I see/ and am no longer here with you/though you are here with me."⁷⁹ By the above mentioned conclusion the protagonist confesses that the only thing that matters is what she sees and perceives and even though she cannot and will not erase the memories or the lingering presence of her past lover, or partner, she is not dependent on the relationship anymore and she is liberated as she watches roads and fields; roads that can lead her anywhere now. The reason I have chosen to include this poem in the end of this part of my thesis is, as I have mentioned before, rather obvious and becomes even more obvious after the discussion of the poem. Hannah manages to express in just three stanzas the attitude that

⁷⁷ *Chances*, 57.

⁷⁸ *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 317.

⁷⁹ *Chances*, 57.

she has built towards the relationship and ending them. She proves what has been said in the introduction to this chapter; the collection *First of the Last Chances*, along with the rest of Hannah's work, does not offer the reader unrequited love that is in literature usually represented through the eyes of a heroine, yet provides a different insight into a love life in a modern time in which people need to either find the compromise and live in a harmony as it was presented in "Ante-natal", or end the relationship and proceed with their lives which might make them stronger which is the case of the last discussed poem.

With "View" I would like to conclude the part of my thesis that has been focusing on the anti-love theme in Hannah's poetry. To summarize the nature of the author's style, Hannah observes love from different angles, taking into consideration different life scenarios that often make an autobiographical impression. Despite the frequent seriousness of the topic, the majority of the poems is full of sharp wit and irony that are typical of the author's poetry. Furthermore, Hannah lets the feminine voice speak through her verses, making her heroines either strongly ironic or emancipated and resisting the masculine dominance and influence. In some cases Hannah invites the female readers not to mourn over the end of a relationship and in some cases even challenges them to celebrate it. Her poems can be basically divided into two categories; one of them is represented by poems such as "Darling Sweatheart", which through irony and humor depicts everyday struggles with finding the perfect partner, which of course does not exist. The poems usually result in the conclusion that despite the differences, that can be drastic, the relationship can still work really well. The second category is then the more serious, feminist oriented poetry, that includes empowered heroines defying the masculine element in the relationship and usually dealing with either a love triangle or the end of a relationship. Such process can be found for example in the poem called "None of the Blood" and many others.

Furthermore, regarding the formal aspects of her poetry, the majority of the poetry is written in the alternate rhyme in a form of a quatrain. In few of her poems Hannah uses a form of an English sonnet to emphasize the love theme, but on the other hand the usage of the form of a sonnet serves as a mockery of the traditionally established love scheme with its courting and idealization. In contrast with the raw reality of love life, the sonnet form then makes an ironic impression. As for the symbolism, the frequent use of the symbol of blood and light suggests the need for the truth being revealed; blood as a primary liquid and carrier of all the essential information serves as a

denotation of one's true nature. Therefore, in "None of the Blood" when the heroine claims that she refuses to share any of her blood with her partner, what she means is that she intends to keep her true nature just to herself and refuses to change or adapt.

Another of the symbols Hannah makes use of is sacrifice; it appears in many forms yet it is the most prominent in "Marrying the Ugly Millionaire" in which a girl marries a man in order to get her family out of debt. The point of the poem is not so much emphasizing the young girl's suffering as it is challenging the others not to judge a situation they do not know. This poem and many others prove the depth of Hannah's poems that might not be clear to some readers after the first reading; nevertheless Hannah proves to be a master of her craft when it comes to anti-love poems and the others as well.

Having mentioned mastering the craft, I would like to move on to the second part of my thesis, which is going to be more brief than the previous one, since the anti-love poetry prevails in Hannah's work. Despite that I would like to present some of her miscellaneous poetry as well to illustrate the aspects of the other half of her poetry. I am going to work with the same collections as I have before and I am going to discuss a few selected poems.

4. Everyday and miscellaneous poetry

While Hannah's love oriented poetry can be fairly easily divided into two major subcategories, her miscellaneous poetry does not allow me to do that. Therefore, in a few following subchapters I am going to discuss her poetry without any categorization, since the themes vary significantly from poem to poem. Nevertheless, neither of them lacks originality or formal perfection as it was with the previous type of poetry. I have chosen poems that come from the same collections as the love poems and I am going to discuss some of her latest poems as well.

Even though the love themed poetry of Hannah was written mostly in an alternate verse, the same cannot be said about this poetry since the style varies as much as the theme. Therefore we can find poems in an alternate rhyme scheme as well as poems in a form of a couplet. As for the symbolism, Hannah applies symbols particularly in poems that are nature oriented such "In the Chill" from the *Pessimism for Beginners* collection. In that particular poem Hannah works with several images; all of them have a certain connection to the coldness.

Hope for the heat and light to start.
You were my longest day.
Your ice preserves my summer heart
Now winter's on the way.⁸⁰

This poem could be almost considered an anti-love poem regarding its overall atmosphere; nevertheless I have decided to mention it in this section because of the prevalence of the natural symbolism. Regarding ice, *A Dictionary of Symbols* comments on it in a following way:

Given that water is the symbol of communication between the formal and the informal, the element of transition between different cycles, yielding by nature, and also related to the ideas of material, earthly fecundity and the Heraclitean 'death of the soul', it follows that ice represents principally two things: first, the change induced in water by the cold—that is, the 'congelation' of its symbolic significance; and, secondly, the stultification of the potentialities of water. Hence ice has been defined as the rigid dividing-line between consciousness and the unconscious (or between any other dynamic levels) Although the negative sense is predominant, it is not lacking in a positive sense in so far as the solidification is tantamount to toughness, and the coldness implies resistance to all that is inferior; in this latter sense it corresponds to Nietzsche's freezing and 'hostile' air of mountain-peaks.⁸¹

The ice is juxtaposed with the heat, winter opposed to summer. The coldness of the man preserves the warm heart of the protagonist, the ice standing for a congelation of the man's nature in this poem. Ice also stands for a line between the consciousness and unconsciousness, which applies to a relationship as well; the distant nature of the man not corresponding with the temperament of the heroine. As she mentions in the previous stanza, she was wearing shorts and shades and tried to ignore the fact that summer will be over soon. Summer is usually associated with heat which can be interpreted as

⁸⁰ Sophie Hannah, *Pessimism for Beginners* (Manchester: Carcanet Print Limited, 2007) , 46.

⁸¹ *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 156.

an image of the libido. Any representation—or even the mere mention—of heat always bears a symbolic relation to maturation, whether biological or spiritual. In emblems of the sun, it is portrayed as wavy lines alternating with the straight lines representing light.⁸²

From the two possible interpretation, I incline to the option of the symbol of libido, which can be applied to the poem in a sense of the female desire that is to be enjoyed while it lasts. Hannah contrasts the seasons of the year, creating thus a contrast of human emotions ranging from coldness and distance to a desire and love. To proceed with the analysis of Hannah's poetry, I would like to move onto the individual poems I have selected for this part of the thesis.

4.1. *Hotels Like Houses*

4.1.1. "The Sight of Mares"

The first poem I have chosen to discuss from the miscellaneous section of Hannah's work is "The Sight of Mares". In six stanzas of an alternate rhyme Hannah develops a theme of stables and horses. The protagonist presents herself as a horse lover and enthusiast, while on the other hand her companion is not so fond of horses. It does not become clear who her companion in reality is, however, Hannah suggests it might be another horse he is talking to. That can be deduced from the following lines:

though given all the medals he could wing
being a horse, it's odd that he would choose
not to be one. You ought to see him grin
when he pulls off his semi-circle shoes.⁸³

The essential information comes from the second line of the stanza where the reader gets to know that the horse decides not to be what he is supposed to be. Hannah skillfully employs the paradox when creating a situation in which a horse does not feel like a horse, bringing the poem into a more general level. The poem then can be interpreted as a criticism of a society that forces people to be something they do not

⁸² *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 142.

⁸³ *Hotels*, 33.

think they want to be. The whole poem is then presented as a personalization when discussing the contemporary issues applied on an animal rather than on a person. As for the symbolism, the most prominent symbol appearing in the poem is, of course, a horse. Horse is one of the most complex symbols that exist in a world of symbolism, and can be interpreted from many various angles. *A Dictionary of Symbols* comments on this particular element in a following way:

The symbolism of the horse is extremely complex, and beyond a certain point not very clearly defined. Diel concludes that the horse stands for intense desires and instincts, in accordance with the general symbolism of the steed-and the vehicle. In fable and legend, horses, being clairvoyant, are often assigned the task of giving a timely warning to their masters, as in the Grimms' fable, for example. Jung came to wonder if the horse might not be a symbol for the mother, and he does not hesitate to assert that it expresses the magic side of Man, 'the mother within us', that is, intuitive understanding. On the other hand, he recognizes that the horse is a symbol pertaining to Man's baser forces, and also to water, which explains why the horse is associated with Pluto and Neptune.⁸⁴

As it can be observed, horse provides many interpretations and can be understood as basically anything that comes to the reader's mind. In case of this poem I incline to the option that interprets the symbol as desire and instinct, which would then result in a conclusion that one's desires and instincts are more important than the social pressure. The poem can be therefore interpreted as an image of contemporary society and its demands, as well as it can be interpreted in its literal sense; as a poem about a horse who does not feel like a horse.

4.2. *Leaving and Leaving You*

With the previous poem I would like to return to Hannah's collection *Leaving and Leaving You* and look more closely at the poems, that appear in said collection and do not focus mainly on love and relationships. The selected poems I am going to discuss vary profoundly in their themes that only prove the wide range that Hannah occupies in her work.

⁸⁴ *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 152.

4.2.1. “Your Dad Did What?”

The following poem introduces a plot twist that has been seen in previous poems of Hannah’s, nevertheless, this particular poem is far more tragic. The story revolves around a typo, that leads to a confusion; while “Dear Sweatheart” presents the typo as a comical element and emphasizes the insignificance of one’s imperfection, “Your Dad Did What?” is the exact opposite of what has been previously said. In the introductory stanza

Where they have been, if they have been away,
or what they’ve done at home, if they have not –
you make them write about the holiday.
One writes *My Dad did*. What? Your Dad did what?⁸⁵

the reader gets to know the protagonist, who is a teacher that is assigning a project. Anew Hannah uses the traditional form of quatrain and alternate rhyme scheme abab. The poem introduces a theme of confusion that is a result of an unfinished sentence; the confusion is blamed on the child’s incompetence, suspecting him of an accidental typo. The initial confusion is resolved with the final stanza in which the reader comes across and unexpected twist.

You find the ‘E’ you gave him as you sort
through reams of what this girl did, what that lad did,
and read the line again, just one ‘e’ short:
*This holiday was horrible. My Dad did.*⁸⁶

Despite the repetition of the confusion, the author provides additional information about the missing letter so that reader can come to the conclusion of the presence of the death in family. Death has been a central theme of a poem before, as in for example “When Will You Come and Identify My Body?”; in those verses, however, death served as a process of purification and liberation. In this case we cannot talk about liberation, since the central figure of the poem is only a child coping with a loss of a father. Hannah juxtaposes the childish innocence that is reflected in the inability of spelling the word

⁸⁵ *Leaving*, 13.

⁸⁶ *Leaving*, 13.

right and the harsh reality of everyday life that is represented by death of a loved one. Nevertheless, Hannah concludes the poem in a playful way, while employing a word play as she does in many of her other poems: “You find the ‘E’ you gave him”.⁸⁷ The author combines the fact of losing a loved one with a grading system and combines the two E’s that play an important role in the poem.

Furthermore, Hannah again seems to be supportive of humankind, since the protagonist does not consider the typo a typo and treats it like an unfinished sentence and even mentions that the boy is pretty smart, and so she waits for him to finish the sentence. This kind of confidence regarding the characters is repeatedly demonstrated through the poems and creates a rather optimistic tone; the same applies to this particular poem. Despite the initially tragic argument, the poem does not give an impression of a lament or cry.

4.2.2. “If People Disapprove of You... “

Speaking of a confidence embedded in the reader by Hannah, I would like to proceed to a poem that is purely motivational and provokes the readership to keep their true nature, whatever the cause. The supportive tone starts with the form of the poem itself; Hannah decides to write the poem in eight heroic stanzas with a rhyme scheme abcb in which lines one and three are iambic tetrameter and. This kind of scheme is found widely in both nature and art, and also seems to be in a kind of harmony with an inner rhythm. The pattern is called ballad meter because it is the most common form for folk ballads; it is a traditional poem that tells a story. In the past, it was used, in fact, probably because it was easy, it could be written with some skill by ear without any real understanding of the metrics.

The decision of using a form of a folk ballad is not a random choice and Hannah addresses the reader through the most natural way possible. Using the second person narrative in a counseling style, Hannah recommends the reader to stop worrying about the disapproval that inevitably comes with public appearance and embrace it and make it their advantage. This kind of advice could be seen in love poetry of the author as well, as for example in “The End of Love”, in which Hannah encourages the protagonist to celebrate the end of relationship instead of mourning.

Count the emotions you provoke:

⁸⁷ *Leaving*, 13.

Anger, suspicion, shock.
One point for each of these and two
For every boat you rock.⁸⁸

What Hannah suggests is that the disapproval of the others makes you a stronger and better person and so does the resistance. As for the boat mentioned in the last line of the previous stanza, I have consulted *A Dictionary of Symbols* for an interpretation regarding a boat:

In the most general sense, a ‘vehicle’. Bachelard notes that there are a great many references in literature testifying that the boat is the cradle rediscovered (and the mother’s womb). There is also a connexion between the boat and the human body.⁸⁹

Therefore, a boat can stand for a person meaning that every person you manage to disconcert should make you proud, since the individualism is something that should be supported. On the other hand, Hannah does not intend to provoke an extreme individualism and in one point of the poem reminds the reader not to act superficial and arrogant, as that makes the reader one of the people that disapproves of the others. The flow and progress of the poem brings to mind the previously discussed “The End of Love” and in a sense “Marrying the Ugly Millionaire” as well. Both poems prompted the, mainly, female heroines to strengthen themselves and resist, the disapproval is mostly visible in “Marrying the Ugly Millionaire”, where people decide to judge the bride before considering her situation and the circumstances. A similar approach will be seen in “Pessimism for Beginners”, a poem discussed later on in the thesis.

Hannah therefore manages to create a motivational poem while sustaining the classical form and metrics, inclining to a form of a ballad. The aim of the poem is to assure the readership that what matters is the enjoyment and pleasure one gets from living the truth without minding the judgment of the others. It cannot be brought to extremes, since then one would become one of the judgmental and arrogant ones. Nevertheless, the poem concludes in a following closure:

⁸⁸ *Leaving*, 44.

⁸⁹ *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 30.

Meanwhile, all those who disapprove
While you are having fun
Won't even know your game exists
So tell yourself you've won.⁹⁰

Hannah proposes you commence a game of your own, playing against the judgmental folk and enjoy the life in a way you desire. People will not notice the game, since they will be too busy disapproving of the others.

4.2.3. “Nobody Said You Had to Come”

Having discussed a motivational piece from Hannah's range of poems, I would like to focus now on a completely different poem, coming from the same collection; a poem that draws heavily on the autobiographical experience of the author herself. Throughout the collections, the reader comes across the autobiographical elements quite often, in some poems the experience is rather explicit, and in other then the validity is more implicit, as in the case of the anti-love poetry. Nevertheless, in this case of this poem, there is no doubt the source of inspiration is the author's life. With “Nobody Said You Had to Come” Hannah brings us into the world of workshops and writing poetry and one misunderstanding through eight quatrains that can be divided into sixteen couplets. The envelope stanza pattern is achieved by the repetition of the phrase: “Why did you come to this workshop if you didn't want to write?”⁹¹ This line also introduces the problem that is being presented in the poem, which is a person attending a poetry course refusing to write poetry. Just from the one line it can be deduced that the whole poem is based on a paradox. Furthermore, Hannah heavily employs sarcasm.

As we know, in sarcasm, mockery is used harshly, often crudely and contemptuously, for destructive purposes. It may also be used in an indirect manner, and have the form of irony, which is the case of this particular poem. It can also be used in the form of a direct statement. The assertion that is presented is used as an insincere form of politeness which is often meant to offend the hearer. In the case of this poem, Hannah does not mean to offend the participant, more likely she uses sarcasm as a defense mechanism against the absurdity that occurs. The sarcasm is visible for example in following stanza:

⁹⁰ *Leaving*, 44.

⁹¹ *Leaving*, 43.

Most of you spell quite well, so it's unlikely you've misread
Poetry and concluded it was *Pottery* instead.

Would you become a pilot, then refuse to board the flight?

Why did you come to this workshop if you didn't want to write?⁹²

In the previously mentioned lines Hannah employs a comparison which is equally ridiculous as the situation in which they find themselves. The sarcasm is produced through the suggestion of being unable to read properly.

Another aspect of the poems is honesty, that can be considered harsh; Hannah tends to depict life as it is without any whitewash. That kind of honesty shows in the sixth stanza, in which Hannah mentions:

Let me point out I'm doing this for money not for fun.

I don't care if you write or not. You're not the only one

Who will greet nine o'clock with unequivocal delight

But why did you come to the workshop if you didn't want to write?⁹³

The statement Hannah makes is that the authors need to engage in extra activities to make a living; these activities, however, might not be the most enjoyable ones. As Hannah bitterly utters, she does not do this kind of business out of joy, so it would be understandable if she did not care about the indifference of the person. Nevertheless, she is curious about the reason which led the person to the behavior; the reason the reader never gets to know.

Besides the obvious bitterness and sarcastic tone of the poem, Hannah also makes use of allusion, when she mentions: "Did a vindictive spouse propel you here against your will/ When all you wanted was to stay at home and watch *The Bill*?"⁹⁴ The Bill is a British police television series that was on the ITV network from 1984 until 2010. The Bill was broadcast once a week, usually on Tuesdays or Thursdays, in a one-hour format. The show focused on the lives and work of one shift of police officers, rather than on any particular aspect of police work. By mentioning the show, Hannah creates

⁹² *Leaving*, 43.

⁹³ *Leaving*, 43.

⁹⁴ *Leaving*, 43.

an impression of the mundane, unexcited day of a British person with its settled habits and customs, and contrasts it with the poetry workshop which is something different and unusual. Another paradox comes with the third stanza in which the participant claims that nothing the author says or does could make his or her poetry better. The poem then suggests that the participant comes to the workshop because it seems like something other people do and he or she wants to be a part of the collective; or the reason might be completely different. What Hannah does is that she suggests a solution that is as paradoxical as the rest of the poem and that is: “Write a short piece of prose explaining why you’re here.”⁹⁵ Writing prose during a poetry workshop is nonsensical, but then coming to a workshop with no intention to showing the poetry does not make sense either, therefore Hannah creates a curious state of harmony with the last stanza. It can be easily observed, that Hannah was inspired by her real life experience, as her occupation is a poet and she does workshops frequently; the poem can therefore serve as a manual for future participants of her lectures.

4.3. *Pessimism for Beginners*

4.3.1. “Pessimism for Beginners”

Before I proceed to the discussion of some of Hannah’s most recent poems, I would like to focus on a poem that gave title to the collection *Pessimism for Beginners*. I have chosen this particular poem not only because of its importance as to the collection, but also because of personal reasons, since out of all Hannah’s poems, this one seems to speak to me on the most personal level. The poem can be easily compared to “When People Disapprove of You...”, because the message is on some level similar; what is more important, in both poems Hannah gives the reader some kind of advice or instruction as how to improve your life situation. “Pessimism for Beginners” describes an attitude towards life that, in my opinion, can be found among people more frequently than one would have thought.

In its eight quatrains of a simple alternate rhyme, Hannah enumerates possible situations that can occur in one’s life and also provides possible solutions. The key element of the poem is the usage of hyperbole; hyperbole is used in order to express the pessimist’s way of thinking, since a pessimist always predicts the worst. Hyperbole, in general, is the use of exaggeration as a rhetorical device or as a figure of speech. It can be used to

⁹⁵ *Leaving*, 43.

evoke strong feelings or to make a strong impression, but is never meant to be taken literally. Hyperboles are exaggerations to create emphasis or effect. Hyperbole is often used in poetry, but it is also used in everyday conversation. In connection to hyperbole, one can then find advice such as:

Don't conclude that their letter went missing
Or they must be away for a while;
Think instead that they're cursing and hissing –
They've decided you're venal and vile,
that your eyes should be pecked by an eagle.⁹⁶

Hannah's advice for the reader therefore is to always think the worst, as later on you cannot be shocked or upset, you can only be pleasantly surprised. The hyperbole is expressed through the eagle pecking one's eyes. The hyperbole gets even stronger as the poem proceeds. In fifth stanza, for example, the reader gets to read:

You'll only discover
That your once-irresistible quirk
Is no longer appealing. Far from it.
Everything that you are and you do
Makes them spatter their basin with vomit.
They loathe Hitler and herpes and you.⁹⁷

Through the harsh, even naturalistic, comparison Hannah achieves the effect of an absolute extreme; nevertheless the hyperbole is juxtaposed by the reality of the situation. The hyperbole is therefore used to emphasize the number of possibilities that the pessimist has when it comes to predictions and assumptions, yet the conclusion is rather optimistic and not hyperbolic. What Hannah concludes is that

This approach I'm endorsing will net you
A small portion of boundless delight.
Keep believing the world's out to get you.

⁹⁶ *Pessimism*, 24.

⁹⁷ *Pessimism*, 24.

Now and then you might not be proved right.⁹⁸

With this Hannah sends a message that I have already mentioned: if you expect the worst, some day you might be surprised, when it does not happen; and when it does happen, you are not upset, because you expected it. This kind of procedure might seem ridiculous at first, but Hannah provides enough proof to make the theory work. Once again she provides a kind of manual for surviving in real life, as it has happened in some of the previously discussed poems.

4.4. Hannah's Recent Work

Having discussed a poem from the collection *Pessimism for Beginners*, I would like to conclude my thesis with a few poems that have been published recently and are not included in any of the previously mentioned collections.

More specifically I am going to look at poems "The Little Cushion and the Empty Chair" (2011) and "The Dalai Lama on Twitter" (2011); both poems discuss contemporary issues, even though the issues are very distant from each other, and both poems were published in 2011. "The Little Cushion and the Empty Chair" was first published within *The Rialto Magazine*, issue 73 and "The Dalai Lama on Twitter" was presented personally by Hannah on her blog. The poems were later included in the collection *Selected Poems*.

4.4.1. "The Dalai Lama on Twitter"

Through the following poem Hannah comments on the news from 2010, the year Dalai Lama decided to join the social network. Right from the beginning of the poem the reader can sense the typical humorous touch of Hannah's that is recognizable from the motto introduced below the title: "We do as much harm to ourselves and to others when we take offence as when we give offence."⁹⁹ The motto is, in fact, one of Hannah's favorite quotes as she has mentioned in a tweet directed to Ricky Gervais on November 15, 2012: "Yes! My favourite motto: 'We do as much harm to ourselves and to others when we take offence as when we give offence.'"¹⁰⁰ The motto nicely introduces the world of social networks and the rules that are installed in the world of permanently offended users.

⁹⁸ *Pessimism*, 24.

⁹⁹ *Selected Poems*, 4.

¹⁰⁰ Sophie Hannah, Twitter post, November 15, 2012, 2:40 a.m., <https://twitter.com/sophiehannahCB1>.

The poem is written in an alternate simple rhyme scheme and can be divided into three octets. The form reminds the reader of an oral tradition, the rhythm implies a rhythm of slam poetry. Furthermore, the poem is another piece that is inspired by the author's personal life and experience.

Firstly, the concept of following is presented as an ambiguous notion, since Dalai Lama can be followed in real life, regarding his ideology and life philosophy; on the other hand, since he joined several social networks, he can be followed there as well.

Dalai Lama joined Twitter in 2010 and was asked about social networks in several interviews. In one of them he mentions:

It depends on how you use them. If the person, himself or herself, has a certain inner strength, a certain confidence, then it is no problem. But if an individual's mind is weak, then there is more confusion. You can't blame technology. It depends on the user of the technology.¹⁰¹

This kind of idea accompanies the poem by Hannah, as she tries to enumerate the reasons that should convince Dalai Lama to follow her. She assures him that she would not send him messages or that she does not feel bitter or offended. The poem is full of bitter irony as it frequently is in Hannah's poetry; in this particular poem she jokingly offends Dalai Lama with phrases like: "You'd think a sage of his rank would know about karma,/ About courtesy, and the decent thing to do./ Oh follow me, follow me, follow me, Dalai Lama!"¹⁰² With such attack Hannah manages to criticize the current state of social networks, where people expect the reciprocity, never mind the opposite side.

In the final stanza Hannah mentions Eckhart Tolle, suggesting that she is expecting his follow as well: "(PS: Eckhart Tolle, this also applies to you.)"¹⁰³ Regarding Tolle, he is a German-born resident of Canada and is best known as the author of *The Power of Now and A New Earth*. Furthermore, was pronounced as the most spiritually influential person in the world in 2011.

Another issue that Hannah criticizes with humor is the necessity of sharing everything with everyone; a trend that managed to dominate the social media. This kind of

¹⁰¹ Elizabeth Dias, "Exclusive: The Dalai Lama Talks Pot, Facebook and the Pope With TIME," last modified February 19, 2014. <http://time.com/8648/dalai-lama-tibet-facebook-pot-pope/>.

¹⁰² *Selected Poems*, 4.

¹⁰³ *Selected Poems*, 5.

mockery is visible in the line that says: “He doesn’t know how often I pick up litter,/ How many signed books I have given away for free.”¹⁰⁴ The light mockery of the social media is emphasized by the fact that the poem is directed at Dalai Lama, a spiritual leader, whose concerns probably do not include social media problems.

What Hannah manages to prove with the discussed poem is that even with the most contemporary theme she is capable of creating valuable poetry that attracts the reader not only because of the familiar topic, but also because of its pure, neat form that again combines traditional rhyme scheme and modern world themes.

4.4.2. “The Little Cushion and the Empty Chair”

To proceed with the miscellaneous poetry of Hannah’s, I would like to mention another recent poem that has been published in 2011 as well. Unlike “The Dalai Lama on Twitter”, it presents more serious theme: a theme of therapy. Despite the heavy matter the poem discusses, Hannah anew manages to bring a humorous tone and self-criticism into the lines. Nevertheless, through the self-criticism Hannah actually doubts the therapy and the effect it has or does not have.

The poem can be divided into four quintains written in monorhyme. A monorhyme is a rhyme scheme in which each line has an identical rhyme. This kind of scheme is mostly used in Latin, Arabic and Welsh. For example, *The book of one thousand and one nights* contains numerous of these rhyme schemes.

The monorhyme can be observed in a following introductory stanza:

I’m paying you to listen and I’m paying you to care.
I don’t have many problems. Well, let’s say I have my share.
Before we start this therapy, I think it would be fair
To warn you of my limits. You will need to be aware:
I cannot beat a cushion or accuse an empty chair.¹⁰⁵

The introductory stanza presents the problem that is about to be discussed throughout the poem. The protagonist, which is with all probability Hannah herself, is too skeptical to be practicing a self-therapy on inanimate objects. She refuses to pretend that there is somebody sitting on the chair or that the pillow represents a person.

¹⁰⁴ *Selected Poems*, 4.

¹⁰⁵ *Selected Poems*, 3.

The form of the poem is monologue even though it is directed at the therapist, who, however, does not respond or react directly, and her or his replies can only be deduced from Hannah's following reactions.

Regarding the pretense, Hannah even juxtaposes lying and pretending in relation to her occupation; the poem creates a paradoxical situation in which a writer and a poet cannot pretend, even though their occupation is mostly based on lying and imagining. As she says: "Lies I do well, but I cannot cathartically pretend."¹⁰⁶ I have discussed catharsis in terms of purification in the poem "When Will You Come and Identify My Body?" where catharsis meant pure liberation and transformation. In modern therapy and psychology, the term catharsis has also been used to describe the act of expressing, or more accurately, the act of experiencing the deep emotions that are often associated with events in the individual's past; events that had been repressed or ignored, and had never been properly experienced. It is believed by some that this so called "blowing off steam" may help with the stress, but it does not work as a long time solution. Therefore, through beating the cushion or talking to an empty chair, the patient is supposed to recreate events from past and deal with them properly; what is needed, of course, is patient's full cooperation and willingness. Hannah confesses right from the beginning that this kind of therapy is not her favorite, as she is unable to pretend and role play as needed. Hannah is unable to separate the pretense from the reality, and through personalization gives the cushion animate qualities, when saying: "The cushion's looking innocent. It's recently been plumped./ I'm having plaguing visions of it battered, torn and slumped./ Yes, it's inanimate and therefore happy to be thumped."¹⁰⁷ Cushion would normally not look innocent and would not raise concern in others; since Hannah is asked to beat the cushion, she starts to think of the cushion as of a person and is then unable to perform the act.

Another confession the author makes is that she cannot write letters if she knows she will not send any of them. Basically, through the poem she refuses the majority of methods used in modern psychology because of her pragmatism that she cannot forget just for the sake of therapy. Nevertheless, as in many other poems of Hannah's, the concluding stanza brings an unexpected twist:

¹⁰⁶ *Selected Poems*, 3.

¹⁰⁷ *Selected Poems*, 3.

I also can't write letters that I'm never going to send.
(Might as well tell you now – you're going to find out in the end.)
Lies I do well, but I cannot cathartically pretend,
Which has a happy side effect that I did not intend:
The chair thinks I'm all right. The little cushion is my friend.¹⁰⁸

Despite the scepticism that is shown through the major part of the poem, Hannah again concludes in a hopeful, optimistic tone when she mentions that despite her refusal to proceed with the methods suggested by the therapist, she still gets results. The important part is that someone thinks she is doing fine, even though it might not be the therapist she is actually paying.

With this poem I would like to conclude the part of my thesis that has been focused on the miscellaneous section of Hannah's poetry; actually with this poem I would also like to conclude my thesis and I am going to dedicate the following paragraphs to a brief comparison of the two types of poetry of Sophie Hannah.

Regarding the everyday poetry, just from the few poems I have decided to present here, it can be easily observed that the range of topics Hannah decides to discuss is wide and cannot be predicted. On one hand, in one poem Hannah might decide to discuss a doubtful like of a horse and the expectation the society has regarding it, on the other hand the author focuses on Twitter generation and the drama revolving around the social networks. The form varies as much as the theme; the reader gets to come across couplets and quatrains, alternate rhyme schemes or identical rhymes.

Furthermore, the majority of the miscellaneous poetry is inspired by the author's personal life and in this case it cannot be doubted; in the previous parts of the thesis, in which I have discussed the anti-love poetry, the autobiographical element was rather implicit and the reader cannot be sure whether the relationships described are based on real life or not. The everyday poetry, however, presents mostly situations that occur in the poet's life; situations in which the poet has to deal with either unwilling workshop participants or their own unwillingness during a therapy.

As it has been mentioned in connection to almost all Hannah's poems, the essential element of her poetry is sharp wit and frequent irony. The wit can be accompanied by sarcasm which serves as a defense mechanism in situations similar to the one in

¹⁰⁸ *Selected Poems*, 3.

“Nobody Said You Had to Come” in which the author tries to make some sense of a paradoxical situation through the use of sarcasm. The presence of sarcasm is heavier than it was in anti-love poetry, since the anti-love poetry’s aim was mostly to support the feminine characters and provoke them to emancipate themselves and resist the male dominance that is socially constructed and often illogical. Furthermore, certain love themed poems carry a strong feminist message as form example “View”, which is a poem from a cycle of feminist poems. The main point of such poems is to reassure the reader and the author herself that being independent and being alone is nothing to be concerned about; contrarily, it is something to be proud of and something that should be celebrated. This kind of celebratory mood is expressed mainly in the poem called “The End of Love” in which Hannah suggests a solution for the end of relationship other than crying and heartbreak. What the author proposes is hiring a big hall and celebrating the change in a positive way; this kind of encouragement accompanies many Hannah’s poems, which can be later considered a manual for surviving.

Even though the encouragement might not be that visible in her miscellaneous poetry, Hannah manages to include it in there as well. I would like to mention poems like “If People Disapprove of You...” and “Pessimism for Beginners” which deal with rather distant issues, yet the conclusions can be summarized similarly: do not feel obliged to act according to what people expect of you. In “If People Disapprove of You...” the message is even stronger thanks to Hannah’s repeated invitation to enjoy the disapproval and make it an advantage:

Make being disapproved of your hobby.
Make being disapproved of your aim.
Devise new ways of scoring points
In the Being Disapproved Of Game.¹⁰⁹

Despite the initial sarcastic impression that the poem gives out, the final impact is surprisingly reassuring. Let people disapprove, because while people are busy judging and criticizing, you can live your life to the fullest. In this type of poems Hannah prefers the usage of a second person narrative in an imperative mood. The imperative mood ensures the urgency and emphasis that the author puts into her words.

¹⁰⁹ *Leaving*, 44.

On the other hand, “Pessimism for Beginners” provides the reader with a different set of tips to make everyday life easier. Through an extensive use of hyperbole, Hannah claims that if one always thinks the worst, he or she can never be upset or disappointed. You can either be pleasantly surprised, because things work out better than you have expected, or your expectation is confirmed. A proposal that sounds rather ridiculous at the beginning, yet it becomes more and more valid with the progress of the poem, since Hannah provides many proves that support her thesis.

As she says:

Once you take this on board, life gets better.
You give no one your hopes to destroy.
The most cursory phone call or letter
Makes you pickle your heart in pure joy.¹¹⁰

Hannah therefore tries to make the reader’s life easier by providing tips that have been tested in her private life and assures the reader that his or her life will get better. This kind of supportive overtone is typical for a large number of Hannah’s poems and creates a category on its own, when enrolling the reader into a supportive group of the 21st century.

In this aspect, the miscellaneous poetry and the anti-love poetry come together and create a new, fresh space that is not so frequently seen on the scene of poetry; a space which offers a different insight into the problems of love, relationships and everyday life struggles. A space in which Hannah does not trivialize the issues she comes across, on the other hand she treats them with the same importance as she would treat any other problem. Nevertheless, to avoid getting unnecessarily serious, she employs her emblematic sense of humor, irony and even sarcasm.

Even though I have dedicated the major part of my thesis to the anti-love poetry and spent only a minor part discussing the everyday poetry of the author, I can say without any doubts that both sections of Hannah’s poetry are equally constructive and handled with a master skill, which is verified by the wide sphere of themes that Hannah manages to incorporate into her collections; a sphere that does not exclude any possible problem that could occur in a life of a 21st century individual.

¹¹⁰ *Pessimism*, 24.

5. Conclusion

In my thesis I aimed to focus on the work of Sophie Hannah, the British poet and novelist. I have chosen this particular author, because in our country her name is not widely recognized when it comes to the general knowledge of contemporary poetry; Hannah also represents an interesting and fresh style that should not be overlooked. Therefore, in the thesis I have decided to first introduce the author, her background, prosaic work and achievements. After the introduction, I have focused on the style of the author and the characterization of the individual collections. I have worked with the following collections: *The Hero and the Girl Next Door*, *Hotels like Houses*, *Leaving and Leaving You*, *First of the Last Chances*, *Selected Poems* and *Pessimism for Beginners*. Each collection has different atmosphere and concentrates on a different set of themes, yet all can be characterized as a mixture of classical rhyme schemes and modern, contemporary themes.

Having mentioned the collections, I have then decided to divide Hannah's poetry into two major groups according to the prevailing theme. The groups I have opted for are the anti-love poetry and miscellaneous poetry; throughout the analysis applies in both sections of the author's work I have been working with two publications that helped me with the interpretation of symbols: *Nový biblický slovník* by J. D. Douglas and *A Dictionary of Symbols* by J. E. Cirlot.

Regarding the chapters dealing with the anti-love poetry, I have focused on the form as well as the content, in which the poems do not vary as much as they do in the miscellaneous poetry. To summarize the author's style, Hannah looks at love from different angles and discusses various life scenarios which seem to be inspired by the author's life. In spite of the gravity of topics, most of the poems radiate sharp wit and irony, the elements essential in Hannah's poetry. What is more, the author lets the feminine voice speak through her protagonists that are either heavily ironic or emancipated and resist the masculine dominance. Hannah also invites the female readers to celebrate the end of love and relationship instead of mourning it. Many poems usually end with the conclusion that despite the differences, that can be drastic, the relationship can still work really well. Another category within the anti-love poetry, that I have discussed, is the more serious, feminist oriented poetry. It includes heroines that resist masculine influence and often deal with love triangles. Such empowerment can be found in for "None of the Blood" and many others.

I have also observed the formal aspect of Hannah's poetry. The majority of the poetry is written in the alternate rhyme in a form of a quatrain. In few of her poems the author opts for a different form, for example the usage of an English sonnet serves in one poem to emphasize the love theme, while at the same time it serves as a mockery of the traditionally established love image.

As for the symbolism, anti-love poetry employs frequently the symbol of blood and light, in contrast with darkness, that suggests the desire for the truth being revealed. Another of the symbols Hannah makes use in this type of poetry is sacrifice; it appears in many forms yet it is the most visible in "Marrying the Ugly Millionaire" in which a girl marries a man in order to get her family out of debt. This particular poem and many others have proved the depth of Hannah's; through her anti-love poetry the author proves to be a master of her craft.

In the fourth chapter I have introduced the second type of poetry that I have decided to work with and that is Hannah's miscellaneous poetry. From the few poems I have decided to present here, the reader can easily see the width of the range of topics that Hannah decides to discuss. The form varies and the reader gets to come across couplets and quatrains, alternate rhyme schemes or identical rhymes.

I have also mentioned that the majority of the everyday poetry is inspired by the author's personal life, which is often unclear in the anti-love poetry. The everyday poetry presents a set of situations that occur in everyone's life and Hannah provides advice in order to make one's life easier.

The presence of sarcasm proved to be more frequent in the everyday poetry than it had been in the anti-love poetry. The anti love poetry, as I have discussed, focused more on the feminine characters and their empowerment, while the everyday poetry deals with paradoxes and ironies presented by life

After the analysis of both types of poetry I have compared them and tried to reach a conclusion as to the comparison. It can be said that both love themed and everyday life themed poetry share a few characteristics such as the presence of encouragement and support that comes from the author while providing a personal experience. Another shared element between the two sides is the presence of sharp wit and often bitterness. In conclusion, I would like to disclose that Sophie Hannah is certainly one of the most interesting and accomplished personalities when it comes to the contemporary scene of poetry and manages to amusingly comment on every sphere of the ordinary life.

Závěr

Ve své diplomové práci jsem se zaměřila na básnickou tvorbu Sophie Hannah, britské básnířky a autorky detektivních románů. Vzhledem k tomu, že Sophie Hannah není na české literární scéně známa a žádná z jejích sbírek nebyla doposud přeložena, chtěla bych ji nejprve krátce představit. Autorka se narodila roku 1971 v Manchesteru do rodiny akademika Normana Gerasa a spisovatelky Adèle Geras, předpoklady ke spisovatelské dráze měla tedy již od svého dětství. Co se její akademické dráhy týče, Hannah navštěvovala školu v Didsbury a Manchesterskou univerzitu. V letech 1997-99 působila na Trinity College v Cambridgi a období 1999-2001 strávila na Wolfson College v Oxfordu. Sophie Hannah nyní žije se svým manželem a dvěma dětmi v Cambridgi.

Ačkoliv jsem se ve své práci zaměřila pouze na poetickou tvorbu této autorky, je třeba se zmínit také o její prozaické tvorbě, která ji uvedla do literárního světa a přinesla mnohá ocenění. Sophie Hannah je autorkou psychologických detektivních románů a také jedné sbírky povídek. Právě tato sbírka s názvem *Fantastická kniha lidských tajemství* (*The Fantastic Book of Everybody's Secrets*) přinesla Hannah vítězství v soutěži festivalu Daphne Du Maurier a byla také, jako jedná z mála knih Hannah, přeložena do češtiny. Druhou knihou, která se objevila i v našich knihkupectvích, je román *Ztráty a lži* (*Hurting Distance*), jehož děj se točí kolem Noemi, ženy nacházející se v milostném trojúhelníku, jehož jeden vrchol je nezvěstný. Naomi je přesvědčená, že její milenec je v nebezpečí a v touze po nalezení ztraceného Roberta se uchýlí k extrémním krokům. Próza Sophie Hannah je stejně jako její poezie neotřelá a nepodřizuje se žádným pravidlům. Její román z roku 2013 s názvem *The Carrier* (*Posel*) vyhrál cenu za nejlepší kriminální thriller roku a dva její romány byly zfilmovány. V současné době Hannah pracuje na novém úkolu, kterým je pokračování v příbězích Hercula Poirota, slavného detektiva z pera Agathy Christie.

I přes rozsáhlou sbírku románů, Sophie Hannah začala svou kariéru jako básnířka. Její první oficiální sbírka byla publikována pod názvem *Hrdina a dívka od vedle* (*Hero and the Girl Next Door*) a vyšla v roce 1995, kdy bylo autorce pouhých 24 let. Další z jejích sbírek *Pesimismus pro začátečníky* (*Pessimism for Beginners*) byla v roce 2007 nominována na cenu T. S. Eliota a je jednou ze sbírek rozebíraných v této diplomové práci. V mnoha rozhovorech s autorkou vyvstává otázka obtížnosti propojení prózy a poezie, na což Hannah odpovídá, že psala povídky i básně od mládeži a když nasbírala dostatek básní na sbírku, měla to štěstí, že našla dobrého vydavatele, který její básně

publikoval. Později jí bylo nabídnuto místo na Trinity College, kde získala prostor a čas na práci na prvním románu.

Co se autorčiny poezie týče, jak jsem již zmínila, nebyla doposud přeložena, proto při uvádění názvů sbírek používám vlastního překladu zároveň s původním názvem.

Ve své práci jsem se rozhodla pracovat s následujícími sbírkami: *Hrdina a holka od vedle* (*The Hero and the Girl Next Door*), *Hotely jako domácnosti* (*Hotels Like Houses*), *Odejít a opustit* (*Leaving and Leaving You*), *První z posledních šancí* (*The First of Last Chances*), *Vybrané básně* (*Selected Poems*) and *Pesimismus pro začátečníky* (*Pessimism for Beginners*). Na základě těchto sbírek je možné charakterizovat autorčinu tvorbu jako celek, ale také lze popsat sbírky individuálně, neboť každá představuje jiný směr tvorby Sophie Hannah.

Nejdříve bych chtěla popsat autorčin styl jako celek, který provází její tvorbu. Její styl je často srovnáván s lehkou poezií Wendy Cope, ale také se surrealismem Lewis Carrolla. Dalším vlivem, který se v její tvorbě objevuje, je například Fleur Adcock a její anti-milostná poezie. Adcock pracuje s oslavou samoty, kdy ujišťuje čtenáře, že na samotě není nic odsouzeníhodného, a že je zcela v pořádku nemít touhu po hledání partnera. Dále radí čtenáři, aby si užil života bez studu a zábran. Tento druh podpory a motivace je velmi častý v poezii Sophie Hannah a je jedním z klíčových bodů této práce.

Co se formy týče, verše jsou psány především střídavým veršem a počet slabik se liší s každou básní. V případě této autorky je obsah důležitější než forma, ačkoliv v pár případech je forma velmi úzce propojena s obsahem. Tato situace nastává tehdy, když se Hannah rozhodne použít formu sonetu v anti-milostné básni a téma lásky tím téměř paroduje.

Pro účely mé práce jsem se rozhodla rozdělit autorčinu poezii do dvou hlavních skupin na základě tematiky. Tyto skupiny jsou: anti-milostná poezie a každodenní verše. Anti-milostnou poezií míním poezii, jejíž hlavním tématem je láska, na kterou je ale pohlíženo se skepticismem a často s ironií; tato poezie je často inspirována osobními zkušenostmi a bortí zavedené stereotypy a klišé. Poezie, zabývající se láskou, je často doprovázena sarkasmem, který je velmi blízký autorce; dalším z prvků, které činí poezii inteligentní, ale také snadno čitelnou, je autorčina hra se slovy a frázemi, které jsou nezaměnitelné a jsou také pravděpodobně důvodem, proč nebyla autorka doposud přeložena. Převládajícím tématem její anti-milostné poezie je střet mužského a ženského pohledu na svět, který ve výsledku může působit tragickým, či komickým

dojmem. V básni „Hotely jako domácnosti“ (“Hotels like Houses“) se například uvádí: “To co působí rozepře je/ že on zachází s domácností jako s hotelem/ a ona s hotely jako s domácností.“¹¹¹ Jen z této malé ukázky je zřejmé, co je nejčastějším konfliktem mezi dvěma stranami vztahu, a Hannah velmi zručně ilustruje emocionální propast mezi muži a ženami.

Co se týče každodenní poezie, básně si kladou různé cíle a nesou různá poselství. Stejně jako anti-milostná poezie jsou inspirovány autorčíným životem a v tomto případě je přítomnost autobiografických prvků viditelnější. Hannah zahrnuje do své sbírky motivační a povzbuzující básně, stejně jako básně plné sebeironie, sebeklamu a lehké zatrpklosti. V básni s názvem „Polštářek a prázdná židle“ (“The Little Cushion and the Empty Chair“) například autorka provádí sebeterapii prostřednictvím jednostranného dialogu, kdy odmítá předstírat, že polštářek je nenáviděná osoba, či že na židli někdo ve skutečnosti sedí. V této básni je přítomen skepticismus, který je znatelný v mnoha dalších básních a je autorčíným nezaměnitelným rysem.

Než se dostanu k postupu a cíli mé práce, ráda bych věnovala prostor charakteristice jednotlivých sbírek. Všechny sbírky jsou charakteristické svým hořkosladkým nádechem a kombinací klasické metriky a moderních témat. Co se sbírky *Hrdina a dívka od vedle* týče, Hannah pracuje s verši s obdivuhodnou jistotou a její experimenty s předmětem básní vytvářejí poezii, která překračuje současný verš. Básně sbírky *Domácnosti jako hotely* představuje odlišný druh poezie, ve které je Hannah ovlivněna feministickou vlnou osmdesátých a devadesátých let, jež je reprezentována například Alicí Walker, americkou spisovatelkou, básnířkou a držitelkou Pulitzerovy ceny. Sbíрка se soustředí na problematiku vztahů duchaplným, ale zároveň odlehčeným způsobem. Skrze své básně Hannah provádí čtenáře nesrovnalostmi současného světa jako například problematikou lásky, vášně a ztráty. Ve sbírce *Odejít a opustit* autorka opět kombinuje tradiční verš s formami modernismu a dále se soustředí na tematiku lásky a ztráty a na podoby závislosti jednoho člověka na druhém.

Autorčina sbírka, která byla původně publikována v roce 2003, *První z posledních šancí* se zabývá tématy jako například láska, nenávisť, zlost a naděje. Hannah poodkrývá masku přetvářky a pokrytectví, za kterou jsou schovány momenty každodenního života. Škála námětů se pohybuje od vztahů, práce po mateřství a manželství; všechna témata jsou autorkou vypodobněna jejím specifickým, nezaměnitelným stylem. Verše jsou jak

¹¹¹ *Hotels*, 13.

komické, tak dojemné, a opět kombinují tradiční formu s moderními náměty. Poslední sbírkou, kterou jsem si pro svou práci vybrala, je *Pesimismus pro začátečníky*. Jak již název sbírky naznačuje, tón této sbírky je vážnější, než tomu bylo u zbývajících sbírek. I přes vážnost sbírka ovšem zachovává hořkosladkou atmosféru a neupadá do pouhého pesimismu. Hannah v této sbírce nabízí čtenáři jedinečný humor, ale také intimitu, a provází čtenáře světem za pomoci černého humoru.

Po stručné charakteristice jednotlivých sbírek bych se ráda přesunula k samotné diplomové práci a jejímu postupu. Ve své práci jsem se původně zamýšlela nad uměleckými prvky autorčiny poetické tvorby, nad užitím symbolů a metafor; vzhledem k současnosti poezie tato metoda ovšem občas představovala problém, neboť Hannah pracuje s moderními tématy jako je Twitter a dalšími, proto jsem se nakonec rozhodla představit autorčinu tvorbu skrze rozbor tvorby jako celku. Ve většině případů je kladen důraz na symbolismus, ale zabývám se také obsahem a tématy. Z tvorby jsem vybrala dvacet básní, na kterých ilustruji charakteristiky autorčiny poezie, z hlediska formálního i obsahového. Básně jsou analyzovány chronologicky a také na základě dvou skupin, do kterých byly rozděleny; to znamená, že první část mé práce se zabývá anti-milostnou poezií, která tvoří větší část mé analýzy, a později se věnuji každodenní poezii.

Co se symbolismu týče, zvolila jsem dvě publikace ke konzultaci; těmito publikacemi jsou *Nový biblický slovník* od J. D. Douglase a *Slovník symbolů* od J. E. Cirlota.

Po představení autorčina života v kapitole první a jejího stylu v kapitole druhé, třetí kapitola mé diplomové práce je věnována anti-milostné poezii, kdy se nejdříve zabývám sbírkou *Hrdina a dívka od vedle*. V této sbírce jsem si zvolila šest básní, na kterých jsem se rozhodla ilustrovat autorčin styl v této konkrétní publikaci. Z vybraných básní vynikají především dvě konkrétní: „Konec lásky“ (“The End of Love“) a „Kdy přijdeš identifikovat mé tělo?“ (“When Will You Come and Identify My Body?“).

„Konec lásky“ tedy navrhuje, že konec vztahu by neměl být oplakáván, ale slaven a k účelům jeho oslavy by se měl pronajmout obrovský sál. Co stojí za zmínku je použití formy Petrarcova sonetu, skládajícího se ze 14 veršů, které se dělí do sextetu a oktetu. Skrze formu sonetu Hannah představuje téma, které nemá s oslavou lásky téměř nic společného, neboť oslavuje přesný opak. Tato ironie je velmi častým jevem v autorčině poezii, kdy za použití formy sonetu diskutuje téma velmi vzdálené milostné poezii. V básni „Kdy přijdeš identifikovat mé tělo?“ je obraz lásky vypořádán surověji a realističtěji, než tomu bylo v předešlé básni. Zatímco v předchozí básni nehrál symbolismus příliš velkou roli, v těchto verších symboly představují stěžejní prvek.

Objevuje se především symbol čistoty, na který lze nahlížet z biblického pohledu, ale také z pohledu čistě pragmatického. V básni se odráží touha hrdinky očistit se, odpoutat se od partnera, který do vztahu nepřináší tolik co ona. Hrdinka zde zmiňuje, že kdysi bývala čistá, což naznačuje škodlivost jejího současného vztahu. Dále se objevuje symbol smrti jakožto extrémní formy osvobození se a tato báseň vystihuje povahu autorčiny anti-milostné tvorby. Až na několik výjimek jsou tyto básně protkány emancipací a touhou po nezávislosti.

Dále se třetí kapitola mé práce zabývá sbírkou *Hotely jako domácnosti*, ve které Hannah zručně kombinuje tradiční formu s moderním obsahem a v této sbírce bych ráda zdůraznila báseň „Pohledávka osoby“ (“Person Specification“), která odráží lidskou touhu po dokonalosti, v tomto případě po dokonalém partnerovi. V básni složené ze čtyř čtyřverší tak Hannah zručně aplikuje ironii na klasickou metriku. Báseň také nabývá formy novinového inzerátu, což v básni nastoluje neosobní atmosféru. Báseň je tedy listem požadavků, které slouží k nalezení dokonalé partnerky. Hannah touto básní zesměšňuje všeobecný trend v moderní společnosti, kdy honba za ideálním partnerem je shrnuta do seznamu kritérií. Dále Hannah také využívá oxymoronu, kdy vedle sebe staví požadavek motivace a ambice a ženskosti. Tímto je naznačeno, že ženskost a ambice se vylučují a s touto básní se dostáváme k feministickému prvku poezie Sophie Hannah. Autorka zde naznačuje, že ženám není obvykle připisována ambice či motivace, ale spíše vlastnosti jako něžnost, starostlivost a empatie. Na druhou stranu je potřeba brát v úvahu fakt, že ženskost je společností vytvořený fenomen a nemá se skutečným životem moc společného.

Dále v mé práci následuje sbírka *Odejít a opustit*, která s sebou opět přináší prvek ženské emancipace a síly, která je v individuálních básních vystihnuta skrze různé scénáře a postavy. V básni „Ani trochu mé krve“ (“None of the Blood“) hrdinka odmítá sdílet svou krev s partnerem, ačkoliv je ochotna sdílet nábytek, auto či další materiální věci. Krev v této básni je symbolem základní tělesné tekutiny, která přenáší důležité informace, tudíž lidské povahy a pravého lidského já. Hrdinka tedy vyjadřuje, že i přes vztah je možné, a nezbytné, zachovat si svou tvář a povahu; hrdinka není obětovat vztahu vše, co má. Tato teze je vyvrácena v následující básni ze stejné sbírky s názvem „Vdávám se za ošklivého milionáře“ (“Marrying the Ugly Millionaire“), ve které je ústředním motivem oběť ze strany hlavní hrdinky. Dívka se vdává za neatraktivního muže, aby zachránila rodinu před bankrotem. V této básni jsou čtenáři představena dvě různá poselství. Jedním z nich je ženská síla, která zachraňuje rodinu v nezáviděníhodné

pozici. Co ovšem Hannah především touto básní sděluje je zbytečnost odsuzování; pokud neznáme situaci dotyčné osob, není na místě osobu soudit. Poslední sbírkou z anti-milostné tvorby je *První z posledních šancí*, ve které jsem si zvolila básně „Předporodní“ a „Pohled“. Tyto dvě básně jsem si vybrala z důvodu absolutní odlišnosti jejich témat v rámci jedné sbírky. Zatímco „Předporodní“ popisuje humorně nesrovnalosti mezi ženským a mužským pohledem v období těhotenství, „Pohled“ je báseň z feministického cyklu, jež je součástí sbírky. Tato báseň skrze čtyřverší abcb staví do opozice koncept samoty a osamělosti. Autorka touto básní vysvětluje, že člověk, který je sám nemusí být zákonitě osamělý a také že na samotě není nic špatného; tímto se Hannah odkazuje na tvorbu Fleur Adcock. Téma této básně je jedním ze stěžejních témat autorčiny tvorby, kdy hrdinka dokazuje, že žena může žít sama bez mužské kontroly a být spokojená a není důvod, aby ji za tento životní postoj kdokoliv kritizoval.

Touto básní ve své práci uzavírám část věnující se anti-milostné poezii a čtvrtá kapitola se tedy krátce zabývá poezií každodenní. Pro tuto část jsem zvolila šest básní s různými náměty, abych dokázala univerzalitu a pestrost autorčiny tvorby. V těchto básních vynikají básně dvě a těmi jsou „Pokud s Tebou lidé nesouhlasí...“ (“If People Disapprove of You...”) a „Pesimismus pro začátečníky“ (“Pessimism for Beginners”). Ačkoliv mají básně rozdílné náměty, v mnohém se podobají. První báseň představuje sadu instrukcí, které Hannah předává čtenáři pro případ, že lidé odsuzují či kritizují jeho počínání si. Hlavním bodem básně je užívat si toto pohrdání, neboť lidé, kteří kritizují, nemají na rozdíl od kritizovaného čas si život užít. Hannah dále vybízí čtenáře, aby si z této kritiky udělal svou soukromou soutěž a za každou kritiku si připisoval pomyslné body.

Následující báseň disponuje velmi podobnou strukturou, kdy čtenářovi autorka radí, jak nakládat s nervozitou či očekáváním. Nejlepším přístupem, jak autorka uvádí, je pesimismus, neboť člověk pak nebude nikdy zklamaný, jen příjemně překvapený. V této básni autorka využívá hyperboly, aby zdůraznila, jak výhodný pesimismus opravdu je. Každodenní poezií ukončuji svou práci a dostávám se k závěru, ve kterém zmiňuji, že Sophie Hannah je jednou z nejzajímavějších autorek na současné poetické scéně. Autorka dokáže zkombinovat tradiční verš s nejmodernějšími tématy bez zaváhání a škála námětů je pestrá a neotřelá. Ve své poezii využívá hojně ironie, sarkasmu, ale také symbolismu, především v anti-milostné poezii. V mnoha básních pak Hannah také nabádá čtenáře, především čtenářky, k nezávislosti a emancipaci.

Abstract

This thesis focuses on the introduction and analysis of the work of Sophie Hannah. It introduces her background and prosaic work and later on discusses her poetry, which is, for the purpose of the thesis, divided into two major groups: the anti-love and everyday poetry. With the help of secondary sources the thesis discusses collections *The Hero and the Girl Next Door*, *Hotels like Houses*, *Leaving and Leaving You*, *First of the Last Chances*, *Selected Poems*, *Pessimism for Beginners* and later on attempts to find similarities between the two mentioned groups. Based on the comparison of the anti-love and everyday poetry, it can be concluded that despite the obvious thematic differences, one can find similar aspects that accompany Hannah's poetry throughout the collections.

Anotace

Tato diplomová práce se zaměřuje na představení a analýzu tvorby britské autorky Sophie Hannah. Úvodní část této práce představuje její zázemí a prozaickou práci a později rozebírá její poezii, která je pro účely této práce rozdělena do dvou hlavních skupin: anti-milostná poezie a každodenní poezie. Za pomoci sekundární literatury se práce zabývá sbírkami *The Hero and the Girl Next Door*, *Hotels like Houses*, *Leaving and Leaving You*, *First of the Last Chances*, *Selected Poems*, *Pessimism for Beginners* a později se zabývá podobnostmi, které je možné nalézt v rámci těchto dvou skupin. Co se srovnání anti-milostné a každodenní poezie týče, lze dospět k závěru, že navzdory zjevným tematickým rozdílům, je možné najít prvky, které doprovázejí verše Sophie Hannah ve všech sbírkách.

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