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PROVERBS IN AN AMERICAN MUSICAL: A COGNITIVE-DISCURSIVE STUDY OF “THE FULL MONTY”

Abstract: In this article I present the results of the cognitive-discursive study into the way Anglo-American proverbs function in an American musical. “The Full Monty” was selected as the material for my analysis. First, I look at some characteristic features of the American musical discourse relevant to the study. Next, I distinguish the functions proverbs fulfill in “The Full Monty” discourse. Last, I compare how proverbs are used both in the musical and the eponymous British movie.

Keywords: Anglo-American proverbs, paremia, precedent texts, musical, movie, discourse, cognitive-discursive function, “the Full Monty”.

The present study deals with the way Anglo-American proverbs function in the musical discourse. This drama and music genre was formed in the USA at the turn of the 20th century, its development reaching its peak by the 1950s. At present the musical enjoys popularity all over the world. What makes this genre unique is the combination of dramatic, choreographic, vocal and music arts elements with the expressive means of modern popular/rock music being effectively exploited. Another salient feature is commercialization of the genre which makes its creators immediately respond to the changes in tastes and preferences of the audience.

My own findings have confirmed M. Bauch’s conclusion that the musical is “almost neglected in research and studies on American Literature”; however, “it is certainly the most interesting and the most popular genre of American theatre and drama” (Bauch, 2003: v). There exists a plethora of works studying the history of its formation and development (Lewis, 2002; Knapp, 2005; Jones, 2003). It is most regretful that there are no studies into how proverbs are employed in musicals considering the fact that already in 1986 W. Mieder spoke about their abundance in popular music and called for paremiological studies (Mieder, 1989: 195; see also Bryan 1999).

Thus, the musical is a rather young, complex and manifold genre, that is why, probably, its peculiarities have not been properly studied yet. Before looking at how proverbs function in the modern American musical let us consider some unquestionable features of this drama and music genre. Structurally it is made up of the following:

- drama element;
- music element;
- vocal element;
- text element (librettos, lyrics, and in some cases characters' dialogues/monologues, which are optional);
- dance/choreographic element;
- technical element (staging, costumes, setting etc.)

The musical is intended to entertain the audience which constitutes its other distinctive and most important characteristic. Musicals are to give pleasure to spectators, which can supposedly attract an audience willing to pay for the entertainment offered, and, eventually, bring big profits.

As the recognized American theatre and cinema scholar J. Kenrick points out, the basic constituents of a successful musical are:

- **Brains** – intelligence and style,
- **Heart** – genuine and believable emotion,
- **Courage** – the guts to do something creative and exciting (Kenrick).

It should be noted that ancient Greeks, who are known to implement song elements in their plays, employed social and political satire as well as sexual humor on stage. As has been said above, musical creators largely rely on pop music trying to tell a present day story through lyrics and dialogues (usually of humorous nature).

As for the themes and topics of the American musical, scholars argue that:

- they depend on commerce, fashion, and the taste of the audience;

- they resemble the change in mentality determined by social aspects, so there is a relation between reality and the themes and topics of the American musical;
- the American musical is intertextual. By referencing a number of authors (James Bean, Siegfried Schmidt Joos) M. Bauch states that “adaptations of literary sources are also a characteristic feature” of the genre (Bauch, 2003: 3-10).

Cinematographic communication is often described as having a “plurimedial nature”, which, in my opinion, *partly* applies to theatrical communication as well. This reservation is necessary as theatrical communication means are limited compared to those of cinema (special effects, computer graphics, camera movements, 3-D format, etc.). Nevertheless, the musical, being a drama and music genre at the same time, possesses a number of communication channels (spoken scenes, vocals, music, dance, actors’ play, etc.) The aesthetics of the genre is, therefore, predetermined by the synthesis of arts. Thus, music, speech, mimics, dance, and plastics are indispensable from the main plot line of the play, and help fill a musical with action, the depicted events being essential to the characters’ fate. This task is especially acute in connection with the existing time limits. A musical lasts 2-4 hours, so its creators have to keep the attention of the audience throughout the performance. It should also be stressed that the main object of the musical, however “light” and entertaining its nature can be, is not the external action, but rather the character with his/her inner world filled with emotions and sensations.

The musical “The Full Monty” chosen for this case study possesses all the characteristics of a modern successful musical. It is based on the overwhelmingly popular British movie of the same name (1997) nominated for four Oscars. Having adapted the plot of the hit movie, D. Yazbeck (score and lyrics), J. O’Brien (director), and T. McNally (libretto) produced their own theatrical version which was both criticized and acclaimed.

“The Full Monty” premiered on Broadway in 2000 starting a row of new successful performances. Carolyn Albert, a theatre critic, argues that success of a musical greatly depends on the story (Albert). In the musical under discussion the main narrative

conflicts were preserved despite of some slight changes required by the genre and the technical process.

The movie is set in industrial Sheffield once known for its steel production. The six friends Gaz, Dave, Guy, Lomper, Gerald, and Horse become unemployed after their steel mill is shut down. They quickly run out of money and feel desperate trying to find a job, their financial problems bringing great psychological discomfort and stress. Gaz, unexpectedly inspired by the success of the Chippendale male strip tease show, convinces his friends to form their own strip tease act for a single performance, which, as he believes, could provide them with a round sum of money. While rehearsing, the characters have to fight their psychological complexes, especially when they face the perspective of going full Monty on stage.

The theme of unemployment chosen by the screenwriters and librettist serves as a background for exploring human psychological limitations, people's ability to overcome dire straits in life and makes the movie and the musical ever up-to-date for virtually any person. That is why, perhaps, after its Broadway performances stopped, musical theatres abroad and in some USA states still offer their versions of the musical to local audiences.

The action in the "The Full Monty" musical is relocated to Buffalo, New York, where (like in Sheffield) a steel mill is shut down leaving many male workers unemployed. The main character Jerry Lukowski is short of money and is no longer able to make child support payments, so he is facing the frightening possibility of losing the custody of his teenage son Nathan. The urge to find cash in order to continue seeing his kid brings him to a bold idea of giving a one-night strip tease performance in a Buffalo night club. While trying to make the musical highly entertaining and attractive to large audiences, the authors, nonetheless, highlight the characters' trials and tribulations which take place at the time of unemployment. Thus, all the dialogues and lyrics are humorous (and the melodies are catching) which does not prevent personal dramas from developing and being solved on stage.

The Broadway musical under discussion has an idiomatic expression "The Full Monty" as its title referring to the main story conflict – will the characters risk it? Proverbs are used both in the lyrics and spoken scenes. It is worth mentioning, that although

dialogues/monologues are considered optional elements of the musical, in “The Full Monty” they make an essential discursive component explaining the characters’ actions and, therefore, serve as internal discursive interpretation clues and help smoothly introduce the music numbers.

The study of the way proverbs function in “The Full Monty” musical narrative discourse showed that they play an important role on the level of structure and content. They help create a certain frame whose elements mark the key narrative conflicts, themes and stages in the plot line. I should stress, however, that some of these frame elements are not proverbs but popular aphorisms, quotations, jokes that can be called “precedent” texts¹. These phrases accompany proverbs supporting their meanings and, thereby, the most important ideas in the whole text/discourse.

Thus, many Buffalo male citizens are going through hard times. In some families women have taken the place of their husbands by becoming the sole breadwinners. In the quest for entertainment the ladies head to Tony Giordano’s night club to watch a professional male strip tease show. Opening the first act, Georgie Bukatinski – the wife of Jerry’s best friend Dave, appears onstage. Mrs. Bukatinski organized the whole event and that is what she says:

Georgie

Welcome to Girls’ Night Out. Who says Buffalo doesn’t rock? (*Big cheers*)

Hi, I’m Georgie Bukatinsky from the Florsheim Outlet at the Miracle Mall over on Route 11. Let’s hear it for the gals who work! (*Big cheers*) I told my husband, Davie (he’s home doing the dishes) I said, “Big man, **gals who work like to play!**” Was I right? (*Big cheers*) All right, let’s play!

In her monologue Georgie uses the traditional proverbial juxtaposition “work” vs. “play” found in such Anglo-American parremias, as, e. g. “Work before play”, “Work while you work and play while you play”, “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy”. In my opinion, her phrase ‘I said, “Big man, **gals who work like to play!**”’ alludes to the latter proverb as it stresses the necessity of alternating hard labor with entertainment to keep one’s spirits high – the thing the ladies are intent on doing after having

been burdened with the responsibility of supplying their families' livelihood. It is remarkable that the folklore name "Jack" is substituted by the noun "gals". This change is especially meaningful as it enables the speaker to concisely present the essence of the situation in which women found themselves superior to their men who (as it is the case with Dave Bukatinski) started performing women's work about the house. So, in the given context the allusion to the proverb fulfills the function of semantic highlighting of important information.

While women are having a great time in the night club, their angry husbands gather for a meeting with the union leader and express their dissatisfaction with the situation. Tired of futile promises, the unemployed are anxious to hear answers to burning questions. Here is an extract from their discussion:

(Lights come up on Reg Willoughby, a union leader. He is facing an angry group of unemployed mill workers)

Reg

All right, all right! Quiet down! One at a time!

Gary Bonasorte

When they closed the plant it's like they threw us out with the garbage.

Marty

I've been out of a job eighteen months. I got a mortgage and four kids.

Reg

Your union hears you, gentlemen!

Jerry

What is our union *doing* (sic!) about us?

<...>

Reg

Instead of grouching about what your union is gonna do for you, think about what you can do for yourself. That goes for all of you. What do *you* (sic!) want? <...>

In the extract cited the union leader resorts to a well-known phrase taken from J. F. Kennedy's inauguration speech (1961) "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country", which has already acquired the status of a prov-

erb. Reg Willoughby modifies this modern paremia in his reply. The correlation “country ↔ individual” (the country for an individual vs. an individual for the country) in the traditional phrase is replaced by a different opposition (the union for an individual vs. an individual for himself/herself). This lexical substitution transforms the proverb in such a way that it now marks a turn in the characters’ lives: the union disclaims responsibility and shifts it to the shoulders of the unemployed workers, supporting their act by the powerful call of the 35th USA president. It becomes evident that the men have to depend solely on themselves from now on, which further complicates their condition. Thus, the proverb fulfills the function of semantic highlighting.

Feeling upset, Jerry and Dave find themselves in Tony Giordano’s night club, and watch excited girls lining up outside and willing to pay quite a lot to see the strip tease show. Here is their discussion:

Dave

I told Georgie I’d finish the dishes before she got back.

Jerry

Last week I caught you vacuuming. This is not a good trend, Davie.

Dave

You do housework.

Jerry

That’s different. I’m divorced, I have to. Where is Georgie anyway?

Dave

In there.

Jerry

With those male strippers! You let her go?

Dave

Jer, she organized it.

Jerry

This is not good at all. All right, this is what you’re gonna do! We’re gonna walk in that club and you’re gonna haul Georgie out of there. Show her **who wears pants in your family**.

As we see, Jerry is quite worried about the fact that his best friend obediently does all the housework asked by his wife while

she is enjoying herself in the club. The situation seems to be insulting to Jerry, even threatening to his sense of manhood. That is why he appeals to Dave to take Georgie home, and, thus, restore his lost authority. In order to persuade his friend he employs metaphorical language: the popular saying “wear pants in the family” used in the imperative sentence “Show her who wears pants in your family” makes his speech sound emotional and inspirational. In the given context the proverbial saying fulfills the function of emotional highlighting as it helps render the character’s negative attitude to the present situation.

In the meantime the party is in full swing; the ladies are celebrating their superiority over the men. They perform a song claiming it’s a woman’s world:

Song (“**It’s a Woman’s World**”)

Georgie
Who's got power?
Who's got juice?
Who's got the money?
All

It's a woman's world <...>

The anti-proverb “It’s a woman’s world” denying the traditional idea embedded in the modern paremia “It’s a man’s world” is used in the title and the chorus. Thereby, the hard times for Buffalo and some of the social changes once again come to the fore, the anti-proverb fulfilling the function of semantic highlighting.

Having made up their mind to sneak into the night club, Jerry and Dave hide themselves in the ladies’ bathroom, and accidentally overhear Georgie, Pam (Jerry’s ex-wife), and their girl-friends talking. The ladies compare their hubbies to the male strippers on the stage, whom they really admire. When the ladies leave, there appears the leading male dancer Keno who mistakes Jerry for a new stripper in his show and the stout Dave for his producer. Indignant at this awkward situation, Jerry starts arguing with Keno. Nevertheless, this skirmish makes the main character conceive the idea of forming his own strip tease act featuring *real* men (Jerry believes real men to look nothing like the perfectly shaped Keno!). Jerry asks Keno the following question:

Jerry

How do you get to be sexy?

Keno

The same way **you get to Carnegie Hall: practice, lots of practice.**

Trying to sound sarcastic, Keno uses the phrase alluding to the widely known precedent text – a popular joke about show business². This dialogue is significant for the plot line as it indicates Jerry's determinedness and gives a hint about the long and uneasy way to success the characters will have to take.

Another topic introduced with the help of proverbs in the musical is the topic of Buffalo's economic decay. Closed plants and absence of work places make many locals leave their homes and move to other more attractive places. It is discussed in the conversation of two minor characters, Reg and Marty, who used to work at the steel mill as well:

Marty

Woke up to another "for sale" sign this morning. This one was right next door.

Reg

The Carlucci's? Dan and Louise? They're third generation Buffalo.

Marty

Moving to Raleigh, as soon as they sell.

Reg

They should make a bumper sticker. Buffalo: **Love it and leave it.**

Marty

What happened? This used to be a great town.

Reg

It will be again. You know the saying: **The grass is always greener.**

The quoted conversation presents two possible attitudes to the problem. On the one hand, what Marty says indicates people's low spirits and lack of enthusiasm. On the other hand, Reg expresses optimism and strong belief in his town's bright future. His speech is marked by the use of two popular proverbs that add emotions and support his point of view. His suggestion to put the proverb

“Love’em and leave’em” on the bumper stickers of those who decided to leave Buffalo is a means to condemn the weak ones, who easily gave in to the situation. This modern American proverb reveals the consumer attitude to life some people have, and their inability to maintain long lasting relationships. Thus, the paremia serves to show the character’s negative attitude, fulfilling the function of emotional highlighting.

The other widespread proverb found in Reg’s speech is “The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence”. In my opinion, this paremia demonstrates his enthusiasm which is not at all groundless, but in this case is well supported by the popular observation.

Another topic treated in “The Full Monty” musical is the one of friendship and mutual help. As has been shown, financial problems make many people break down and leave their homes. Some Buffalonians are in the state of distress and utter desperation. The psychological state of Malcolm MacGregor (one of the main characters) is so grave that he even attempts suicide. A former mill worker, he has been left at the plant as the night security guard, which cannot bring him moral satisfaction. His feeling of solitude (Malcolm lives with his sick mother and has no friends at all) worsens his state. That is why he decides to lock himself up in the car filled with exhaust fumes. In the meantime Jerry and Dave happen to be jogging by (trying to get fit for the show). So, the friends save the “unlucky” suicide and inspire him with the idea of them being friends from now on. Moreover, having learnt that Malcolm has got the position of the night guard at the closed plant, Jerry unexpectedly gets a wonderful rehearsal site:

Jerry

Much better, Malcolm! <...> Now don’t ask too many questions. Remember, tomorrow night, eight o’clock sharp, practice at the plant.

Malcolm

I’m not supposed to let anyone in there.

Jerry

Malcolm, we’re friends. **Friends don’t say no to friends.**

It now becomes clear that Jerry is seriously intent upon bringing his bold project into life. That is why in order to persuade

Malcolm to let the men rehearse at the plant he resorts to the phrase “Friends don’t say no to friends”, which can be treated as a pseudo-proverb. It is based on the paremiological pattern, as in the modern proverb originated from a social campaign slogan “Friends don’t let friends drive drunk”, parodied in a number of anti-proverbs “Friends don’t let friends vote Republican/Democrat”, “Friends don’t let friends die”, “Friends don’t let friends forget where they come from”, “Friends don’t let friends drink and tweet”. Moreover, this dictum contains the traditional proverbial concept of mutual help existing between real friends (*Cf.* e.g., “A friend in need is a friend indeed”, “To have a friend, be one”).

This is how the group of unemployed Buffalonians begins to be formed. Now that the men have a rehearsal site Jerry realizes the importance of professional guidance – they need a person who could teach them how to move to music in the shortest time possible. Jerry, his teenage son Nathan and Dave make their way to the dance school looking for a teacher, and they spot their former boss Harold Nichols there. Jerry makes up his mind to share his idea with Harold who has recently lost a well-paid job at the mill. His wife Vicki got accustomed to designer clothes, jewelry and travels for once they could afford it. Harold is afraid to tell Vicki the truth about his job, so he has been hiding the fact from her for half a year. Every morning he “goes to work” as before, spending the days searching for a decent new place to work. The following conversation happens between the characters in the ball room:

Harold

<...> She doesn’t know. She doesn’t know.

Jerry

What do you mean she doesn’t know?

Harold

That I was let go, too. You gotta cover for me, please

Jerry

It’s not about the plant, Mrs. Nichols. This is more of a social visit.

Vicki

That's a relief. You caught us brushing up our Latin dancing before Harold takes me to Puerto Rico next month. Have you been? Daiquiris to die for? Of course, Bali is our dream destination. **See Bali and die, n'est-ce pas?**

Dave

That's what I always say.

Feeling relieved at hearing the good news about her husband's job, Vicki informs the young men about their prospective holiday in Puerto Rico, mentioning, though, that her dream is to go to Bali. For this purpose she modifies the proverbial saying "See Paris and die" by substituting the name of the destination. The paremia in this case expresses the quintessence of the character's dreams, her deep emotional involvement. But the whole situation is ironic, for the people she is talking to and the audience know that these plans are not to be realized in the nearest future. Thus, the proverbial saying employed by Vicki means the crashing of the dream (without her knowing that!)

Persisting with the conversation, Jerry turns to Harold for help and gets his negative response marked by the use of two proverbs:

Jerry

We need your help, Mr. Nichols.

Harold

I'm sorry but at this point in my life I'm trying to help myself. It's **sink or swim** time and I'm drowning. **It's every man for himself.**

Mr. Nichols's reply, consisting of only three sentences, contains two traditional proverbs, which creates a phraseologically saturated context. The first paremia "Sink or swim" is lexicalized (used as an adjective) and helps give the character's perspective on the situation. Thus, it fulfills the function of semantic highlighting of important information.

The same function is fulfilled by the second paremia "Every man for himself" used as a weighty folk support for this take on life. Thus, the two proverbs help highlight the seriousness of the situation and formulate the character's individualistic position,

which, as is shown later, is useless and even destructive in the time of hardships.

The feeling of desperation and Jerry's blackmailing hints make Harold succumb. Now the group of four has a daunting task of finding two more "brave hearted" men who would dare take part in the striptease act. The men prepare flyers inviting candidates to auditions, and Nathan goes outside to distribute them. One of the shortest scenes in the musical features the following conversation between the boy and two passers-by:

(Two men are reading Nathan's flyers)

Other Man

Does your father know what you're doing, kid?

Nathan

Yeah, he organized it. You coming to tryouts?

Other Man

Get outta here!

Other Man

What is Buffalo coming to?

Man

Desperate times take desperate measures.

Regardless of its shortness, this scene has much significance for the plot line because Jerry's plan is made public and gets the first response from outside. Having learnt about the "project" and flabbergasted at the involvement of a teenage boy, one gentleman in the street is upset about the moral decay in Buffalo ("What is Buffalo coming to?"). The second man, however, evaluates the situation employing the traditional proverb "Desperate times take desperate measures / Desperate diseases must have desperate remedies", which, as I believe, although not used for its approval, expresses understanding on the part of the passer-by. The proverb, being the closing phrase of the scene, serves as its resume and highlights the idea that there is always a solution to the problem at hand, however unbelievable or unlikely it may seem.

One significant change made in the musical adaptation of "The Full Monty" movie is the introduction of Jeanette Burmeister's flamboyant character. This piano player of indeterminate years, who knows show business from inside out, is a lively and enthusiastic lady serving as a source of inspiration and optimistic

take on life for some from the adventurous four. After a series of failed tryouts, Jerry feels desperate as the show is due in two weeks, and they still have not found the right men. This is what Jeannette says to raise his low spirits:

Jeanette

<...> you're offering these guys more than a job. You're offering them hope. I'll tell you this: *my* (sic!) heart beat a little faster when I heard about this gig. I said to my husband, Lou <...>, I said, "Lou, wake up! I'm tired of sitting and rocking, aren't you? We may be retired and living in Buffalo (which is probably an oxymoron) but **I haven't milked my last cow yet**. Some boys from the old mill are putting on a show. Send me my mail there."

Without using a proverb in its usual wording, Jeannette expresses the traditional proverbial idea about the positive impact of hope on an individual, contained in such paremias, as e.g. "Hope inspires action, the true way to success", "Hope is grief's best music", "Hope is the blossom of happiness", "Hope keeps the heart from breaking". Besides, in order to articulate her active life position, the woman employs the elements of the proverbial image "The world is your cow, but you have to do the milking". Thus, the phrase "I haven't milked my last cow yet" refers to the proverb teaching that one must try hard to succeed and formulates the *right* approach to life advocated in the musical.

Eventually, the men choose two more dancers for the show and start rehearsing, which turns out to be an uneasy process. After having failed to keep the rhythm and synchronize their movements, the men feel quite discouraged. The cheerful Jeannette gives her evaluation of the situation in her song number:

"Jeanette's number"

Jeanette

Let's face it. We suck!

Men

We're deep down in the ditch, man.

Jeanette

This showbiz is a bitch, man.

Things could be better.

Men

We could be better.

Jeanette

*Things could be better 'round –
..here.*

Being selective in her speech (“*Things could be better*” she admits), Jeannette explains their failure by the peculiarities of show business. She creates the anti-proverb “Showbiz is a bitch” on the basis of the traditional proverbial pattern “Payback is a bitch/ Life is a bitch”. Thus, it serves to mark the first difficulty the men came across on their way to success. Treated in a broader context, it can be said to mean that this path is not at all easy, and sometimes failures can discourage people or make them abandon their plans and aspirations.

The next step, a far more frightening one for the six friends, is to take their clothes off in front of one another. Harold ventures on gathering the group at his home for that purpose. Feeling greatly ashamed, the men took off their shirts:

(They all have their shirts off now)

Jerry

That wasn't so hard, was it?

Harold

Speak for yourself.

Jerry

One small step for a man; one enormous step for *Hot Metal*.

Ethan

What's *Hot Metal*?

Jerry

We are. Nathan came up with it. And now your pants. Gentlemen, the day of reckoning has come.

The allusion to Neil Armstrong's famous words after his having landed on the moon in this context sounds ironic, but at the same time it conveys the significance of the moment. The nonce modification of the phrase signals that the characters make their first successful attempt at getting free from their psychological limitations. The occurrence of the group's new name *Hot Metal*,

created by Nathan, is of great importance as well, for the characters are presented as a team for the first time in the musical.

Their physical nakedness reveals the men's secret complexes and fears. They all are ordinary men, who cannot boast of perfect looks. In this connection special attention is paid to Dave who takes his overweight problem to heart:

Horse

My Aunt Claudia has a weight problem. She wraps herself in Saran Wrap, Dave.

Dave

Saran Wrap? I'm not a drumstick. Saran Wrap yourself.

Harold

Fat, David, is a feminist issue.

Dave

What is that supposed to mean if you're a man?

Harold

It's supposed to mean that fat or thin, you're beautiful.

Dave

Do you believe that?

Harold

No, and I don't know anyone who does. **You are what you look like.** Ask Vicki.

On seeing how upset Dave is, his friends try to encourage him. Harold, for example, resorts to the widespread statement "Fat is a feminist issue" that gained popularity with the publication of the book "Fat is a feminist issue" by Susie Orbach. Trying to tell Dave that his issue is only a women's problem, Harold admits that he himself does not believe in his own words, concluding his lines with the anti-proverb "You are what you look like" (from "You are what you eat"). This paremia, synonymous with such traditional proverbs, as "Clothes make the man", "Appearances go a great ways" expresses a well established social stereotype that people are judged by their appearances. Thus, this anti-proverb marks a significant event – the characters realize that while on stage they are going to be critically assessed by hundreds of female spectators. This discovery may seem so frightening that the show is at risk of being canceled.

This, however, does not happen. This fact is also heralded by a proverb in the scene that follows. During the rehearsal two repo men enter Mr. Nichols's house as he is no longer capable of paying his bills. The six friends, led by Dave, feeling determined not to let them take away his things, rush into the room half naked, which fills the repo men with awe:

(The Gang appears in their underwear. Dave leads them, terribly impressive in all his big-bellied splendor. The Repo Men look terrified.)

Repo Man #2

What the hell?

Dave

Put it down and fuck off. That's telling 'em! **A man's home is his castle**, am I right?

(They congratulate themselves. This stripping is gonna be all right!)

It is rather symbolic that it is Dave who utters the proverb "A man's home is his castle", for the loss of men's dignity and self-esteem issue is investigated in the musical by way of his example. At this crucial moment Dave rediscovers self-confidence which is passed on to the rest of the group.

It is also noteworthy that this proverb finishes a kind of proverbial gradation which schematically represents the way this topic unfolds in the musical (**Gals** who work like to play! → It's a **woman's** world → **A man's home is his castle**). The fact that the proverb is used in its original form (the element "man" is preserved) while the other two proverbs in the gradation undergo nonce substitution of this lexeme ("man" → "gals" and "man" → "woman") is also suggestive. Such spontaneous self-expression by the characters heralds a successful outcome of their enterprise, and, in case with Dave, marks the first step on the way to self-respect restoration. The proverb here fulfills the function of semantic highlighting.

Another character having a tough time because of his looks is Noah (Horse) Simmons. In the scene where he first makes his appearance he is introduced as "the big black man", therefore, he is afraid not to live up to his nickname and the expectations of the female audience. The wise Jeannette lends him a hand:

Jeanette

<...> Now quit worrying. Come the moment of truth, nobody's gonna be thinking of anybody's size but his own. Besides, they didn't hire you because you were big. They hired you because you were good.

Horse

Thank you, Jeanette. Sometimes you need to hear something like that. It's not easy being a big black man.

Jeanette

You're gonna show these **boys it's not a man's size but what he does with it that matters.**

Horse

Woman, where have you been all my life?

In this frank conversation Jeannette teaches Horse a lesson which in her speech is embodied in the anti-proverb "It's not a man's size but what he does with it that matters" built on the basis of the traditional paremia "It's not what you have but how you use it". This anti-proverb is used in the function of semantic highlighting of important information in the discourse. These words greatly encourage Horse. Despite of its significance for the scene, it is possible to determine the role the anti-proverb plays in the whole musical. Regardless of the comic and extravagant content of the play, the authors investigate the serious problems of human will, hope and ability to face up to challenges, and try to dispel the "the way you look is important" myth created by showbiz. In my opinion, the anti-proverb "It's not a man's size but what he does with it that matters" encapsulates one of the messages of the musical.

Another remarkable psychological test awaiting the six friends is the dress (or rather undress!) rehearsal, which Dave decided to miss for he is overwhelmed with fear. In this scene they have to perform before the real audience – a group of senior ladies. Here is an extract from the conversation between Jeannette and Jerry right before the men go on stage:

Jerry

<...> Let's get going. Jeanette!

Jeanette

I don't know why I'm nervous. Who's gonna be looking at me?

Jerry

We who are about to die salute you!

(Jerry comes out to meet their audience)

Jerry marks his appearance on stage with a well-known Latin phrase "Hail Caesar! We who are about to die salute you!" / Lat. "Avē Imperātor (Cæsar), moritūri tē salūtant". This precedent text is usually used before a significant or stressful event or a challenge, and in this context it fulfills the function of emotional highlighting, as it conveys the characters' emotional state of anxiety.

The theme of love and family relationships is also scrutinized in the musical. Fear nurtured by inner complexes induces Dave and Harold to lie to their wives, which, eventually, comes out and they have to make their confessions. Georgie and Vicki, who truly love their husbands, understand their turmoil, and having appreciated their efforts they perform the emotional ballad "You Rule My World":

Song Reprise: You Rule My World

Georgie

You're like the morning sun to me
But twice as bright

Vicki

I'll never let you go

Georgie

And **what I see is what I get**

Georgie&Vicki

And it's everything I want
You rule my world
You rule my world

Georgie

You're everything I need

It is Georgie who expresses a very important truth which, in her opinion, is the essence of love. For that purpose she employs the modern proverb "What you see is what you get". The paremia serves to highlight important information in this context. This kind

of support on the part of their beloved sets Dave and Harold free from their fears and finally restores their self-confidence.

On their big day the six friends (quite expectedly) are feeling nervous before going on stage. Ethan, who always seems reserved, is now overwhelmed with anxiety, too:

Ethan

Guys, when I get nervous there's a lot less glimmer.

Horse

(Fatherly advice)

Happens to the best of us, Ethan.

Malcolm

You'll be fine, Eth. Let's go!

Horse

Lord, thank you for taking this burden from me and giving it to that poor white boy!

The now experienced Horse resorts to proverbial language to support his friend ("It happens to the best of us"). At such a crucial moment this powerful folk observation can serve as a source of consolation and encouragement. The spectators, however, recalling the recent conversation between Horse and Jeannette, realize the comic effect from this proverb use.

The most unexpected event of the musical is, probably, Jerry's refusal to perform with the group. Harold presents the frightened man with an ultimatum, using a modern proverb for this purpose:

Jerry

Let a thousand strangers look at me without my clothes on?

Dave

I believe that's the general idea in a strip club.

Harold

Guys, it's places! **You're either in or you're out**, Lukowski.

Jerry

I'm out.

The use of the paremia "You're either in or you're out" makes Harold sound rather categorical as he offers tough terms to Jerry, and helps demonstrate his determinedness.

As has been stated above, Dave and Harold's spouses (for whom the men actually took this risk) become the source of confidence in their right actions. For Jerry it is obviously his son Nathan who keeps his faith in himself, especially, when he touchingly supports him, saying how much he loves and believes in his dad. Jerry, the author of the project, eventually goes on stage, and at the turning point, when his friends are waiting for his signal, he appeals to them:

Let It Go

Jerry

Gentlemen - **we only live once.**

Men

Let it go, let it go
Loosen up, yeah, let it go
Let it go, let it go
It's all right
Let it go, let it go
Shake it up now, let it go.

One more proverb – “We only live once” – appears in the closing scene of the musical. At the point of the highest dramatic tension the use of folk wisdom is quite natural and reasonable. When spectators hear excited female voices and applause, everyone understands that the men have overcome their inner limitations and did what they promised – they went full Monty.

As a part of my cognitive-discursive study of how paremias function in “The Full Monty” musical, I would now like to look at the original movie script in order to reveal any similarities or differences in the proverb use in both works. The quantitative analysis showed that far more proverbs are used in the musical (18:7). While sticking to the main plot line, its authors completely rewrote the text with one exception; the key proverbs (or proverbial ideas) significant for the content and themes of the movie/musical were preserved:

The musical

The movie

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy

Gals who work like to play!

↔ But it's not all hard work for
the people of Steel City.

It's not what you have but how you use it.

It's not a man's size but what he does with it that matters. ↔ <I>'s not their bodies. It's what they do with them that counts.

You're either in or you're out

You're either in or you're out. ↔ Now, are you in or are you out?

We only live once | It's now or never

We only live once ↔ It's now or never.

The first and the last proverbs appear in strong positions of the text, i.e. at the beginning and the end of the works. The promotional movie “The City on the Move” (1971), documenting the Steel City in its “boom and bust” era, appears at the start of “The Full Monty” film. That is what the voice-over is telling the viewers:

The city's rolling mills, forges, and workshops employ some men and state-of-the-art machinery to make the world's finest steel – from high-tensile girders to the stainless cutlery that ends up on your dining table. But **it's not all hard work** for the people of Steel City. They can spend the day lounging by the pool, watching one of our top soccer teams or browsing in the shops. But when the sun goes down, **the fun really starts** in the city's numerous nightclubs and discotheques. Yes, **Yorkshire folk know how to have a good time** <...>

Like in the opening scene in the musical, the background theme of human desire to alternate work and play is introduced in the movie with the help of the easily recognized proverb element “all (hard) work”. I believe this theme to be the main one because it serves as a background for the development of the story itself and other topics.

The final parts of the movie and musical feature two synonymous proverbs “It's now or never” and “We only live once” that serve as a powerful support and a call to accomplish what has been planned at the moments of the highest tension. Unlike in the

musical, where the proverb “We only live once” is the final line of the text, in the movie the proverb “It's now or never” is used by the owner of the night club right before the men must go on stage, when they are still having doubts about that:

The bar owner: Lads, I can't hold them <women> any longer. **It's now or never.**

Dave: Here we go. We're bloody on.

Thus, both in the musical and the movie these synonymous paremias contain a powerful message about the importance of pulling oneself together, being smart and brave, becoming aware of one's complexes and accepting oneself the way he/she is in the face of a challenge or a hardship.

One more proverb undergoing nonce transformations in the movie and the musical is “It's not what you have but how you use it”. In the film it appears in a talk between some women discussing the Chippendale strippers:

Bee: Poor them, bloody muscles.

Jean: No, no, **it's not their bodies, Bee. It's what they do with them that counts.**

In the conversation quoted the literal meaning of the proverb comes to the fore, thereby it characterizing one concrete situation without conveying any additional nuances of the meaning. As has been mentioned above, this proverb plays a far more significant role in the musical.

The proverb “You're either in or you're out” in the form of a question is employed in different scenes of the movie and the musical. However, these scenes are united by the fact that the characters have to discover determination and be prepared to take risks and support their friends. In the movie this paremia is employed by Gaz (Jerry's prototype) when he is trying hard to encourage the men to go full Monty during the performance:

Horse: Excuse me? No one said anything to me about the full monty.

Gaz: But you heard 'em. We got to give 'em something your average stripper don't.

<...>

Gaz: And by closing time, every bugger in Sheffield is going to know it's us whether we do it or don't. We can either forget it, go back to fucking Jobclub or do it and just maybe get rich. And I tell you folks don't laugh so loud when you've a grand in your back pocket. Now, **are you in or are you out?**

In conclusion, it should be stated that “The Full Monty” musical discourse is marked by frequent proverb use. The present study shows that proverbs serve as plot-building elements in it, as they introduce and support the major and minor themes and conflicts (in some cases it is done with the help of precedent texts). Some proverbs appear in the eponymous movie as well, but their number is considerably smaller (7::18). Such proverb density in the musical can be accounted for by its orientation to entertainment and spectacularity necessary for attracting large audiences and holding their attention throughout the performance.

Proverbs appear in the strong positions of the movie discourse – its opening and closing parts. The authors of the musical preserved these proverbial ideas in the same positions of the text. One more proverb loaned from the movie, but fulfilling a more significant role in the musical, is the paremia “It’s not what you have but how you use”, which, to my mind, encapsulates the message of the play: it is always possible to find a solution to the problem, and sometimes extraordinary measures can be more efficient.

In “The Full Monty” musical discourse proverbs make the meaningful spots in songs and dialogues for they fulfill the function of semantic highlighting (indicate the most important pieces of information in the discourse) and the function of emotional highlighting (convey the characters’ psychological states). Thus, the authors of the musical skillfully focus the spectators’ attention on the most important ideas and attitudes/states.

Due to these distinguished functions, I can form the following proverb/precedent texts frame of “The Full Monty” musical:

Gals who work like to play! (The theme of unemployment, the conflict “ladies wanting entertainment”)



Instead of grouching about what your union is gonna do for you, think about what you can do for yourself. (The theme

of unemployment, the conflict “absence of social support”)



Show her who wears pants in your family. (The theme of unemployment, the conflict “interchange of family roles (Dave ↔ Georgie)”)



It's a woman's world <...>. (The theme of unemployment, the conflict “interchange of family roles, women’s superiority over men”)



How do you get to be sexy?
The same way you get to Carnegie Hall: practice, lots of practice. (The theme of perseverance and hope)



Buffalo: Love it and leave it. (The theme of unemployment, the conflict “admittance of defeat and refusal to try again”)



The grass is always greener. (The theme of unemployment, the conflict “admittance of defeat and refusal to try again”)



Friends don’t say no to friends. (The theme of friendship)



See Bali and die, *n’est-ce pas*? (The theme of unemployment, the conflict “crashing of a dream”, Harold↔Vickie)



It’s sink or swim time <...>. It’s every man for himself. (The theme of unemployment, a possible approach to the solution of the problem)



Desperate times take desperate measures. (The theme of unemployment, a possible approach to the solution of the problem)



I haven’t milked my last cow yet. (The theme of unemployment, a possible approach to the solution of the problem)



This showbiz is a bitch, man. (The theme of perseverance and hope)



One small step for a man; one enormous step for *Hot Metal*. (The theme of perseverance and hope)



Fat, David, is a feminist issue. (The theme of perseverance and hope, the conflict “worries about one’s looks”)



You are what you look like. (The theme of perseverance and hope, the conflict “worries about one’s looks”)



A man’s home is his castle. (The conflict “interchange of family roles (Dave ↔ Georgie)”)



It’s not a man’s size but what he does with it that matters. (The theme of perseverance and hope, the conflict “worries about one’s looks”)



We who are about to die salute you! (The theme of perseverance and hope)



What I see is what I get. (The theme of perseverance and hope, the conflict “worries about one’s looks”)



Happens to the best of us. (The theme of perseverance and hope, the conflict “worries about one’s looks”)



You’re either in or you’re out, Lukowski. (The theme of perseverance and hope, the conflict “worries about one’s looks”)



We only live once (The theme of perseverance and hope)

Notes

¹ Precedent texts are the texts that an average member of a given linguo-cultural community will easily recognize.

² According to some sources, Arthur Rubenstein, a prominent pianist, when approached by a stranger in the street who inquired about the way to Carnegie Hall, gave this outstanding recommendation:

- "Pardon me sir, how do I get to Carnegie Hall?"

- "Practice, practice, practice!"

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