

Conceptualization of ‘the South’ in Southern Gothic Literature: Changing Perception through Metaphor and Image Schemas *

Dušan Stamenković (University of Niš, Serbia)

Abstract

In different literary traditions, we can see that there are countries where *the South*, being the poorer part of the country, tends to develop certain traits specific to that piece of the land only. These countries include the USA, Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Argentina, Serbia, etc. The ‘souths’ of these countries seem to share a number of social, cultural and historical features, and in them we can identify a cultural “climate” that could be labelled *the southern cultural space*. This space seems to create a specific kind of atmosphere and a social and psychological framework for the development of issues encompassed by the term provincialism. When talking about the South in any of these countries, we usually refer to economically under-developed regions. This economic depravity, lack of financial stability and distance from the cultural centres affect all spheres of life and block the arrival of new knowledge, people and ideas and lead the region towards developing a specific kind of collective (social) psyche. The kind of southern cultural space present in literature related to the Southern part of the USA (predominantly *the Deep South*), usually named *Southern Gothic*, seems to be highly representative of what this social, historical, cultural and political space stands for. This paper explores some of the human cognitive mechanisms that help us conceptualize the South through its literature. The paper concentrates on *metaphor* and *image schemas*, all of which come from the field of *cognitive approaches* to our thought and language. The goal of the paper is to prove that what lies beneath our reading(s) of this kind of literature is highly universal. We all share the same cognitive

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apparatus, which allows anyone to grasp the notions presented in the literature of the Deep South, no matter where they live.

Key words: Deep South, Southern Gothic, Cognitive Semantics, Image Schemas, Metaphor.

1. Introduction

In 1905, Jules Verne decided to place his *Lighthouse at the End of the World* twenty-nine kilometres off the eastern extremity of the Argentine portion of Tierra del Fuego. The name of the lighthouse is San Juan del Salvamento and the place is called Isla de los Estados; the capital of Tierra del Fuego, Ushuaia, is considered to be the southernmost in the world. Perhaps everyone will find Verne's choice perfectly natural and would never ask themselves why his choice had not been placed somewhere in the north, east or west. SOUTH is easily associated with the end, which consequently makes NORTH associated with the beginning and yet we never ask ourselves why this happens to be so. The whole world is by far divided into the rich NORTH and the poor SOUTH¹. Furthermore, SOUTH is linked with many other equally puzzling, but perfectly logical concepts and one of the main tasks of this article will be to contribute to our understanding of how these links have emerged. The prominence of the south as opposed to north was so strong throughout the history that in many countries it created sub-cultures with specific identities. These identities have influenced the appearance of literary genres that have dealt and keep dealing with what we can *southern issues*. Meanings we tend to attach to various social and cultural issues vastly influence the manner in which we approach these issues in various spheres of life and the consequences of our moves are essential to the social modes of function – the way that we think contributes to the way that our society “thinks” (Stamenković, 2010/I: 2). The key goal of this article will be to explore social, cultural and political issues connected to the south and present in these genres from the point of

¹ The North-South Divide (or Rich-Poor Divide) is the social, economic and political division that exists between the wealthy developed countries, known collectively as "the North", and the poorer developing countries (least developed countries), or "the South."

view of cognitive semantics and to use cognitive semantic constructs to improve our overall understanding of these issues.

South is defined as “towards, or in the direction of, that part of the earth or heavens which is directly opposite to the north; With reference to place or location; spec. (U.S.), in or into the southern states” (OED, 2002). When used with the definite article and a capital S, *the South* usually refers to the region of the United States lying to the south of the Mason-Dixon line, i.e. the Southern United States and mainly the Deep South, in a general historical context. *The South* is also used for “the developing nations of the world”, i.e. The Third World. When comparing ‘the souths’ of various countries, or at least comparing literature and other arts coming from those regions, another meaning of these terms might emerge. There are quite a few countries where *the South*, being the poorer part of the country, tends to develop certain traits specific to that piece of the land only. These countries include the USA, Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Argentina, Serbia and many others. The ‘souths’ of these countries seem to share a number of features. In these countries, we can identify a cultural “climate” that could be labelled *the southern cultural space*. This space seems to create a specific kind of atmosphere and a social and psychological framework for the development of issues encompassed by the term provincialism. The cultural “climate” is pretty much independent of the geographical features of these regions – while Italian, American and Serbian south is associated with unbearably hot weather and high humidity, Argentine south provinces of Chubut, Santa Cruz and Tierra del Fuego, for instance, seem to be much colder, but still share cultural similarities with other ‘souths’. When talking about the South in any of these countries, we usually refer to economically under-developed regions. This economic depravity, lack of financial stability and distance from the cultural centres affect all spheres of life and block the arrival of new knowledge, people and ideas. The presence of provincialism and other social and cultural issues caused by poverty and lack of education seems to have created fertile grounds for a number of literary genres and sub-genres. The authors belonging to these genres managed to draw inspiration from southern communities and, in the process, a large number of similarities between these authors have emerged (Stamenković, 2010/I: 128–129). This article will be limited to the South

of the United States, being the most known one of all and having an extremely prolific literary genre blooming in it. The genre, named Southern Gothic, will be analyzed in the second section of the article, while the third section will be dedicated to the conceptualization of the issues present in Southern Gothic.

2. Southern Gothic and Social Issues

2.1 Gothic

Basically, “Gothic” or “gothic” means pertaining to, or concerned with the Goths or their language (Kaliff, 2001). More frequently this term is used in architecture, painting, music and literature. The reference most important for this introduction is the one connecting the term “Gothic” with literature. *The Oxford English Dictionary* and *Dictionary.com* define literary Gothic as noting or pertaining to a style of literature characterized by a gloomy setting, grotesque, mysterious, or violent events, and an atmosphere of degeneration and decay: 19th-century Gothic novels or being of a genre of contemporary fiction typically relating the experiences of an often ingenuous heroine imperilled, as at an old mansion, where she typically becomes involved with a stern or mysterious but attractive man. Encyclopaedia Britannica views it as “European Romantic, pseudo-medieval fiction having a prevailing atmosphere of mystery and terror. Its heyday was the 1790s, but it underwent frequent revivals in subsequent centuries. Called Gothic because its imaginative impulse was drawn from medieval buildings and ruins, such novels commonly used such settings as castles or monasteries equipped with subterranean passages, dark battlements, hidden panels, and trapdoors.” Of course, behind these three definitions is a genre study that would need much space to be presented and discussed in detail. That is why this introduction will only include basic data on the genre of Gothic and its sub-genres – American Gothic, Southern Gothic and Southern Ontario Gothic, all of which are very important for this text. The analysis of the two novels will be preoccupied with a thematic exploration of the gothic found in both of them and what represents the essence of the Gothic can be found in a brief exploration of the genre and its sub-genres (Stamenković, 2008: 10–13).

Gothic fiction is a genre of literature that merges the elements of both horror and romance. It is frequently assumed that Gothic fiction began as a lurid offshoot from a dominant tradition of largely realist and morally respectable fiction. Gothic's representations of extreme circumstances of terror, oppression and persecution, darkness and obscurity of setting, and innocence betrayed are considered to begin with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), and to reach a crescendo in Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and Matthew G. Lewis's *The Monk* (1796). But genre-defining works such as these also retrospectively redefine their precursors, making it apparent that Gothic elements can also be seen even in the earlier works that began the English novel tradition: Samuel Richardson's epistolary tales of seduction and betrayal, *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747-1748), Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722); and even long before them in the romance tradition, or in Thomas Nash's picaresque *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594); along with parts of Shakespeare's plays and much Jacobean tragedy.

Prominent features of Gothic fiction include terror (psychological and physical), mystery, the supernatural, ghosts, haunted houses and Gothic architecture, castles, darkness, death, decay, doubles, madness, secrets and hereditary curses. The stock characters of Gothic fiction include tyrants, villains, bandits, maniacs, Byronic heroes, persecuted maidens, vampires, werewolves, monsters, demons, femmes fatales, madmen, madwomen, magicians, revenants, ghosts, skeletons, the Wandering Jew and the Devil himself. Important ideas concerning and regarding the Gothic include: Anti-Catholicism, especially criticism of Roman Catholic excesses such as the Inquisition (in southern European countries such as Italy and Spain); romanticism of an ancient Medieval past; melodrama; and parody (including self-parody) (Sullivan, 1986/1989; Wikipedia (en)). In answering the question 'what is a Gothic novel?', critics and readers have long been struck by the tension between these two key terms 'Gothic' and 'novel'. Markman Ellis, a scholar on the history of Gothic fiction, says "While 'Gothic' invokes an historical enquiry, 'novel' implicitly refers to a literary form; while 'Gothic' implies the very old, the novel claims allegiance with 'the new'. As Ian Watt jokes, 'It is hardly too much to say that etymologically the term "Gothic Novel" is an oxymoron for "Old New"'. [...] the Gothic novel encodes debates about history" (Ellis, 2000: 17).

In his introduction to the book *American Gothic Fiction*, Alan Lloyd-Smith claims that the hallmarks of the Gothic include a pushing toward extremes and excess, and that, of course, implies an investigation of limits. In exploring extremes, whether of cruelty and fear, or passion and sexual degradation, the Gothic tends to reinforce, if only in a novel's final pages, culturally prescribed doctrines of morality and decorum. The Gothic deals in misdemeanour and negativity, perhaps in reaction against the optimistic rationalism of its era, which allowed a rethinking of the prohibitions and sanctions that had formerly seemed almost divinely ordained. Then, they appeared to be simply social agreements in the interest of progress and civic stability. Free-thinking characters appear frequently in the Gothic. They usually disbelieve the significance of the established social norms and proclaim their own superiority and inherent freedom as rational. Thus, they become the only ones above the conventions and religious faith (Lloyd-Smith, 2004).

Among the extremes and taboos that the Gothic explores are religious profanities, demonism, occultism, necromancy, and incest. This can be interpreted as a dark side of Enlightenment free-thinking or the persistence of an increasingly excluded occultist tradition in western culture, one which paradoxically insisted on an recognition of the continuing existence of magic, religious, and demonic forces within a more and more secular society (Senior, 1959). Much of the apparent supernaturalism in the Gothic is ultimately explained away, as in the "explained supernaturalism" of Radcliffe's romances, but on the other hand, much is not. Gothic interest in extreme states and actions can also be seen to correlate with widespread social anxieties and fears. Significant among these are fears having to do with the suppressions of past traumas and guilt, anxieties concerning class and gender, fear of revolution, worries about the developing powers of science; an increasing suspicion that empire and colonial experience might bring home an unwanted legacy (a suspicion related to xenophobia but also involving a fear of colonial otherness and practices such as Voodoo).

Among the most striking features of the Gothic genre is the style of its architectural settings. In early Gothic these were often medievalist, involving ancient stone buildings with elaborate, "Gothic" arches, walls, passageways, and crypts. This was to become the *mise en scene* of Gothicism, abounding in trappings of hidden doorways, gloomy,

oppressive rooms and secret chambers, incomprehensible labyrinths, speaking portraits, and trapdoors. Landscapes in the Gothic similarly dwelt on the exposed, inhuman and ruthless nature of mountains, crags, and wastelands. In time these tropes of atmosphere, architecture, and landscape became as much metaphorical as actual, so that a simple house, a room or cellar, could become a Gothic setting, and the mere use of darkness or emptiness could call up the Gothic mood (Lloyd-Smith, 2004).

We could dismiss these trappings as trivial stage machinery, as many critics have in preferring the deeper psychological implications of Gothic novels and stories, or we might, with recent critic Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, refocus attention on the nature of Gothic *surfaces*, to see what can be read from them (Kosofsky Sedgwick, 1986). But from an early stage such features can be read as a kind of proto-expressionism, articulating in settings the emotional states within the narrative, as we see in the writing of Edgar Allan Poe (Lloyd-Smith, 2004). According to Kosofsky Sedgwick, a woman murdered and walled-up in a cellar, her body discovered through the howling of a buried cat, might be read as a voicing of silenced domestic atrocity, and also as implicitly connected with slavery motifs, whether or not that was in fact Poe's explicit "intention" in his story *The Black Cat* (Ginsberg, 1998). In the British novels of the early Gothic the feudal antagonists arguably embody in some respects an emergent middle class anxiety about the previously dominant and still powerful aristocracy, while the religious tyrants of monastery, convent, and inquisition suggest a Protestant distrust and fear of Catholicism. Scenes of disruption, mob action, and even possibly such creatures as Frankenstein's creation may be representative of a fear of the growing working class and a risk of class revolution.

2.2 American Gothic, Southern Gothic and Southern Ontario Gothic

Central to the issues discussed in this article are the sub-genres of Gothic Fiction that have developed in Northern American literary traditions – Southern Gothic and Southern Ontario Gothic. These two sub-genres have a precursor, a genre usually labelled as *American Gothic*. Lloyd-Smith claims that in American Gothic, while this remained a

major theme, the trauma and guilt of race and slavery, or fear of what was then called miscegenation², also emerges, along with the settlers' fear of the Native Americans and the wilderness, and later perhaps some suppressed recognition of Native American genocide. It is possible to trace certain other social, political, and class fears, such as the fear and aversion generated against specific immigrant groups: the Irish in the mid-nineteenth century, southern and eastern Europeans and Asians later in the century, or against homosexuality in the twentieth century (Lloyd-Smith, 2004). As David Punter puts it in *The Literature of Terror*, “the middle class displaces the violence of present social structures, conjures them up again as past, and promptly falls under their spell” (Punter, 1996: 28). But the relationship of Gothic to cultural and historical realities is like that of dreams, clearly somehow “about” certain fantasies and anxieties, less than coherent in its expression of them. Widely loathed as infantile, depraved, and potentially corrupting, American Gothic appealed to the popular audience in a rapidly growing readership. This is a consequence of private circulating libraries, the development of cheap printing methods, and an explosive growth in magazine production and consumption at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Ringe 1982: 14–16). The severe and sensational events and descriptions appealed to a relatively unsophisticated new audience, while amusing many of the better educated both as a leisure material and as a field in which previously unexamined aspects of society might be explored. In opening such subjects to literature the role of the newspapers was important: accounts of crime or other unusual doings in the popular press, along with a concern for the behaviour of the people, the dominant political force in the new democracy, increased general interest in what had been dismissed as impolite. Political anxieties about the spread of radical ideas and the predicted instability of the new republican and democratic experiment also lie beneath this early American Gothic, while later, a growing popular interest in psychology and deviance became a further element to intrigue a wide readership (Stamenković, 2008: 13–15).

² The mixing of different racial groups, that is, marrying, cohabiting, having sexual relations and having children with a partner from outside of one's racially or ethnically defined group.

Some aspects of the American experience can be understood as inherently Gothic: religious intensities, frontier immensities, isolation, and violence; above all, perhaps, the shadows cast by slavery and racial attitudes. Romanticism, in aesthetics and to an extent also in philosophy, increasingly replaced the Scottish “Common Sense” philosophy that shaped American thought up to about 1830; this new philosophy tended to privilege the Gothic mode in its concentration on subjectivity, the inner life and the imagination, and the aesthetics of the sublime. The psychoanalytical potential of Gothic in providing a metaphorical representation of trauma and anxiety in American Gothic might be seen as capable of offering a “voice” for the culturally silenced, and the repressed events of the history of the USA. These are complex and fascinating aspects of the reading experience offered by this strikingly persistent form of fiction (Lloyd-Smith, 2004). In *Love and Death in the American Novel*, Leslie Fiedler claims that American fiction has been “bewilderingly and embarrassingly, a Gothic fiction, non-realistic and negative, sadist and melodramatic— a literature of darkness and the grotesque in a land of light and affirmation” (Fiedler, 1966: 29).

Southern Gothic is a macabre writing style native to the South of the USA. Since the middle of the 20th century, Southern writers have interpreted and illuminated the history and culture of the region through the conventions of the Gothic narrative (or Gothic novel), which at its best provides insight into the horrors institutionalized in societies and social conventions. Southern Gothic is actually a sub-genre of the Gothic writing style, unique to USA literature. It brings the atmosphere and sensibilities of the Gothic, a genre originating in late 18th century England, to Southern USA states. Like its parent genre, it relies on supernatural, ironic, or unusual events to guide the plot. It uses these tools not for the sake of suspense, but to explore social issues and reveal the cultural character of the South. It often deals with the troubles of those who are not accepted or oppressed by traditional Southern culture – African Americans, Native Americans, women, homosexuals, disabled, etc. Southern Gothic authors usually avoid perpetuating pre-war stereotypes like the contented slave, the shy Southern belle, the chivalrous gentleman, or the righteous Christian preacher. Instead, the writer takes classic Gothic archetypes, such as the damsel in distress or the heroic knight, and portrays them in a more modern and realistic

manner — transforming them into, for example, a spiteful and reclusive spinster, or a white-suited, fan-brandishing lawyer with concealed motives. Southern Gothic frequently includes characters with “broken” bodies, minds or souls; they are used to symbolize problems created by the established rules and to question the patterns of morality and justification. The “innocent” is a common character, who may or may not be “broken,” but who often acts as a redeemer for others. In most Southern Gothic stories, we can usually find a character set apart from the world in a negative way by a disability or a difference. Southern novels are filled with characters who are set apart from the established cultural patterns, but who end up being heroes because their difference allows them to see new ways of doing things that ultimately help to bring people out of the “dark.” Many Southern Gothic plots include an incident where a character is sent to jail or locked up. Racial, social and class difference often create underlying tension in Southern Gothic novels that threatens and usually turns into violence. As we can see, Southern Gothic literature builds on the traditions of the larger Gothic genre, typically including supernatural elements and mental and physical diseases. One of the most notable features of the Southern Gothic is “the grotesque” — this includes situations, places, or stock characters that often possess some cringe-inducing qualities, typically racial prejudice and egotistical self-righteousness — but enough good traits for the readers to find themselves interested in them. While often disturbing, Southern Gothic authors commonly use deeply flawed, grotesque characters for greater narrative range and more opportunities to highlight unpleasant aspects of Southern culture, without being too literal or appearing to be excessively moralistic. The grotesque will be discussed separately in the introduction, as one of the disambiguated terms. This genre of writing is seen in the work of such famous Southern writers as William Faulkner, Erskine Caldwell, Flannery O’Connor, Carson McCullers, Eudora Welty, Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote, Harry Crews, Lee Smith, John Kennedy Toole, Cormac McCarthy, Davis Grubb, Barry Hannah, Katherine Ann Porter, Lewis Nordan, and William Gay among others (Stamenković, 2008: 15–16).

Southern Ontario Gothic is also a sub-genre of the Gothic novel genre and a feature of Canadian literature that comes from Southern Ontario. Like the Southern Gothic of the USA writers, Southern Ontario

Gothic analyzes and critiques social conditions such as race, gender, religion and politics, but in a Southern Ontario context. Southern Ontario Gothic is generally characterized by the stern realism set against the austere small-town Protestant morality stereotypical of the region, and often has underlying themes of moral hypocrisy. Actions and people that act against humanity, logic, and morality are all portrayed unfavourably, and one or more characters may be suffering from some form of mental illness. Some (but not all) writers of Southern Ontario Gothic use supernatural or magic realist elements; a few deviate from realism entirely, in the manner of the fantastical gothic novel. Virtually all dwell to a certain extent upon the grotesque. Writers of this sub-genre include Alice Munro, Timothy Findley, Douglas A. Cooper, Margaret Atwood, Robertson Davies, Jane Urquhart, Marian Engel, James Reaney, Susan Swan, George Elliott, Graeme Gibson and Barbara Gowdy. Notable novels of the genre include Davies's *Deptford Trilogy*, Findley's *The Last of the Crazy People*, *The Wars* and *Headhunter*, Cooper's *Amnesia and Delirium*, Swan's *The Wives of Bath* and Atwood's *Cat's Eye*, *Alias Grace* and *The Blind Assassin*. In the book *Gothic Canada: Reading the Spectre of a National Literature*, Justin D. Edwards attempts to answer the questions "Does the Canadian gothic differ from its American or European counterparts?" and "Does the 'northern' gothic [including Southern Ontario Gothic] differ from its 'southern' neighbour [Southern Gothic]?" In addressing these questions, it is interesting to note that the American playwright Tennessee Williams identifies gothic production with regional spaces. In his introduction to Carson McCullers's *Reflections in a Golden Eye*, for instance, Williams writes that there is "something in the blood and culture of the Southern state that has somehow made them the centre of this Gothic school" (Williams, 1950/1994: ix). Writers of "Southern origin," according to Williams, have drawn on the early work of William Faulkner in order to develop "morbid," "unwholesome," "sickening," "crazy," "diseased," "perverted" and "fantastic creatures" who are representative of southern life (Williams, 1950/1994: viii–xii). At the heart of this regional form, he continues, is a "sense of dread" that does not arise from anything "sensible or visible or even, strictly, materially, *knowable*" (Williams, 1950/1994: xii). Edwards claims that Williams locates the source of the southern gothic in a non-physical realm, a place too incredible or shocking to utter, a place that

harbours a sense of dreadfulness and unspoken mystery. While Williams's comments are apt, the reader is left to wonder about the 'southernness' of the southern gothic. That is, the qualities that Williams attributes to the southern gothic can in fact be found in numerous gothic texts, from Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764) to Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) (Edwards, 2005: xxvi; Wikipedia (en); Stamenković, 2008: 17–18).

3. Conceptualization of the South

3.1 CMT and the South

Many of the unfavourable issues linked to the South (and more intensely to the Deep South) that have been mentioned so far have its grounding in our basic conceptualization of the world around us. One of the ways to explore these issues embodied in the term SOUTH would be to view it from the perspective of *cognitive semantics* (Stamenković, 2010/I: 128–129). In order to reach the point where we could start viewing SOUTH in a cognitive semantic manner, we should concentrate on *Conceptual Metaphor Theory* (CMT), which is one of the main vehicles of cognitive semantics. According to Joseph Grady, the most fundamental notion of Conceptual Metaphor Theory is ontological *mapping*. This term refers to systematic metaphorical correspondences between closely related ideas. In the CMT system, the features of the *term A* are said to “map” onto the ontological (but, in our case, also cultural, political, historical) features of the *term B*. Other elements of the conceptual domain of the *term A* (*the source domain*) are likewise “mapped” onto elements of the conceptual domain of the *term B* (*the target domain*) (Lakoff, 1993; Grady, 2007: 190–191). The constancy with which different languages employ the same metaphors, which often appear to be perceptually based, has led to the idea that the mapping between conceptual domains corresponds to neural mappings in the human brain (Feldman and Narayanan, 2004: 385–392). According to CMT, metaphors provide rich evidence about the ways in which some aspects of our lived experience are associated with others, for reasons that reflect basic aspects of perception, thought and neurological organization. Within cognitive linguistics, the term metaphor is understood to refer to a pattern of conceptual associations, rather than to an individual

metaphorical use or a linguistic convention (Grady, 2007: 188–189). Lakoff and Johnson describe the essence of metaphor as “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 5). The first step in the cognitive analysis of the concept SOUTH will be to connect it to one of what most authors call the *primary metaphors* (Grady, Taub and Morgan, 1996; Grady, 1997; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999; Grady, 2007). These metaphors are simple patterns which map fundamental perceptual concepts onto equally fundamental but not perceptual ones. According to Jerome A. Feldman, “these primary metaphors allow one to express a private internal (subjective) experience in terms of a publicly available event; this is one crucial feature of metaphorical language” (Feldman, 2006). Source concepts for primary metaphors include UP, DOWN, HEAVY, BRIGHT, DARK, BACKWARD, FORWARD and other simple concepts labelled as “force-dynamic” (Talmy, 1988). These simple source concepts have corresponding target concepts such as DOMINANT, SAD, HAPPY, EASY, DIFFICULT, ILL, HEALTHY, GOOD, BAD, SUCCESS, etc. (Grady, 2007). There is an obvious connection between the target concept of SOUTH and a source concept for primary metaphors – DOWN. According to Western conventions, the bottom side of a map is south and the southern direction has the azimuth or bearing of 180°. True south is the direction towards the southern end of the axis about which the earth rotates. However, in terms of Western conventions, SOUTH is inevitably considered DOWN, not only in the domains of geography, cartography and compass usage, where the arrow pointing to South is always turned towards the bottom, but also in the domain of our language (Stamenković, 2010/I: 129–130). In many Indo-European we can find a phrase corresponding to the English phrase “down in the South”. Another example connected to the link between these two concepts is the one that can be found in economic discourse – if one says that, for instance, “US dollar demand pushes Argentine peso further south,” this means that the demand for the dollar has pushed the value of the peso further down, i.e. has lowered it (Stamenković, 2010/I: 129–130). Moreover, this phenomenon exists in many non-Indo-European as well. In the region called Mesoamerica, we find a number of languages in which “south” actually means “down” (the same word is used for both concepts). All these facts tell us that humans tend to conceptualize

SOUTH in a spatial arrangement that links it to a direction pointing downwards, at the same time making NORTH directed upwards and connected to the concept of UP (Stamenković, 2010/I: 129–130). This spatial set-up brings about a number of consequences which all emerge from the fact that being linked to the concept of DOWN seems to be quite adverse when we come to analyzing cultural issues, because very many of the target domains that are linked to down, as a spatial source domain, carry extremely unfavourable connotational meaning. The list of these target domains is provided below:

Table 1: Target domains linked with “Up” and “Down”

Target domains linked with UP (and consequently with NORTH)	Target domains linked with DOWN (and consequently with SOUTH)
HEALTH AS IN “He’s at the <i>peak</i> of health..”	SICKNESS AS IN “ <i>He fell</i> ill.”
LIFE AS IN “Lazarus <i>rose</i> from the dead.”	DEATH AS IN “ <i>He dropped</i> dead.”
HAPPY AS IN “That <i>boosted</i> my spirits.”	SAD AS IN “My spirits <i>sank</i> .”
GOOD AS IN “Things are looking <i>up</i> .”	BAD AS IN “We hit a <i>peak</i> last year, but it’s been <i>downhill</i> ever since.”
VIRTUE AS IN “She has <i>high</i> standards.”	DEPRAVITY AS IN “Don’t be <i>underhanded</i> .”
HIGH STATUS AS IN “She’ll <i>rise</i> to the <i>top</i> .”	LOW STATUS AS IN “She <i>fell</i> in status.”
HAVING CONTROL or FORCE AS IN “He’s in a <i>superior</i> position.”	BEING SUBJECT TO CONTROL or FORCE AS IN “His power is on the <i>decline</i> .”
CONSCIOUS AS IN “He <i>ris</i> es early in the morning.”	UNCONSCIOUS AS IN “He’s <i>under</i> hypnosis.”
MORE AS IN “My income <i>rose</i> last year.”	LESS AS IN “Turn <i>down</i> the radio.”

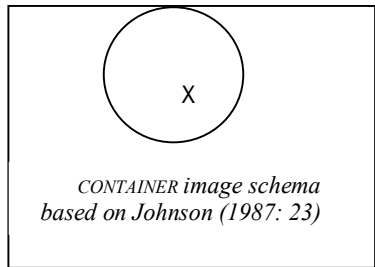
Source: based on Lakoff and Johnson, 1980:14–21

It is obvious that all the concepts on the right of the table are the ones carrying highly negative connotations. As we can see, all of them are linked with DOWN and SOUTH and opposed to UP and NORTH on the right. This could serve as one step toward understanding why people

living in the countries flavoured with *the southern cultural space* tend to label that part of their countries with adverse names quite easily – so easily that it simply feels natural. This obviously happens because the way in which our mind conceptualizes SOUTH is partially innate and partially culture-based and acquired in the early stages of our lives.

3.2 CONTAINMENT image schema and the South

So far, we could see that metaphor, viewed in a cognitive semantic manner, can help us understand the conceptual status of the South. Image schemas, being another cognitive construct, can give their own contribution to a better understanding of why we conceptualize the South the way we do. CONTAINMENT image schema is crucial in human conceptualization of Southern small-towns as presented in Southern Gothic. CONTAINMENT enables our cognition of enclosed spaces and makes us understand the principles they are based on. According to Johnson, CONTAINMENT schema is an image schema that involves a physical or metaphorical boundary, an enclosed area or volume, or an excluded area or volume. A



A CONTAINMENT schema may have some additional optional properties, such as transitivity of enclosure, objects inside or outside the boundary, ‘protectedness’ of an enclosed object, the restriction of forces inside the enclosure, and a relatively fixed position of an enclosed object (the restriction of movement). This image schema seems to derive from our experience of the human body itself as a CONTAINER, from the experience of being ourselves physically located within boundaries and also of putting objects into containers (Johnson, 1987: 21–23). Saeed notes that CONTAINERS can be considered a kind of disjunction: elements are either inside or outside the CONTAINER and that CONTAINMENT is typically transitive: if the CONTAINER is placed in another CONTAINER the entity is within both (Saeed, 2003: 352). In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson present CONTAINER as one of the ontological metaphors, where our experience of non-physical

phenomena is described in terms of simple physical objects like substances and containers (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 30–33). Human society can be viewed as a partially non-physical phenomenon, as it is based on what we can call a social contract that people have agreed upon. In this view, we can consider the idea of perceiving communities as typical CONTAINERS: they can have firm or loose boundaries, the movement within them can be restricted to a certain degree, people can be included or excluded from them and a sort of ‘protectedness’ of the people inside can be present as well.

Small-towns, present in the works of Tennessee Williams, William Faulkner, Carson McCullers, Eudora Welty and many others belonging to Southern Gothic, are portrayed as isolated, hermetic and self-centred spaces, with no of very little change going on inside of them. In this kind of environment, the inhabitants are almost sure to feel the presence of CONTAINMENT, and the price of being ‘contained’ within a small-town community is to behave in accordance with the established rules. Southern towns resemble CONTAINERS in many respects: a) they are relatively isolated, i.e. there is a boundary between the community and the rest of the world; b) objects within them have movement restriction, especially in terms of behaving according to the established social contact; c) the overall capacity or the volume of Southern small-towns viewed as CONTAINERS is relatively small; d) it is very hard to either enter or exit these communities – the influx of people and information coming in and out of it is negligible. For this sake, we can compare the community to a bottle that has a filter placed onto its neck. The opening of such a CONTAINER seems to be minute. (Stamenković 2010/II: 168–173). These four features are more than enough to make southern small-towns an undesirable ‘habitat’.

4. Conclusion

On the whole, this article is only a brief introduction into the cognitive study of the South and literary genres linked to it. The cognitive processes and constructs that are involved in the conceptualization of the issues explored in Southern Gothic literature are derived from our basic spatial experience and that is one of the reasons why the South is easily associated with all the negative properties that we

could see in the description of the genre. Of course, not all of the possible cognitive constructs have been touched upon in the course of this paper – one could expect good results from tracing other image schemas in Southern Gothic literature, as well as from introducing mental spaces, metonymy and cognitive blends into the study of the South. Furthermore, there is yet another, cultural side of the problem and it would demand much deeper analyses in order to make this study complete. However, this paper should serve as a proof that cognitive investigations can be used in literary semantics and might encourage studies that could be performed along these lines (instead of being traditionally divided from one another). Not only can literary semantics profit from letting cognitive constructs become a part of it, but it could also offer a tremendous amount of material to cognitive semantics that can further be used for cognitive explorations of the creative capabilities of the human mind.

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