

Finding Metaphors in Susan Sontag

Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (1978)

Our goal for class today is for everyone to come away confident about being able to find and write about a metaphor from Sontag.

1. Read the assigned paragraph(s) on your own (5 minutes)
2. With your group, see how many metaphors you found
 - a. Take notes on the metaphor that the author is analyzing in your passage
 - b. Explain what two things are being compared and which properties get transferred from one to the other
 - c. Take notes on what the metaphor does: how does it frame someone's understanding of illness? What are the consequences of this framing?
3. Be ready to read from the passage to the rest of the class and share the metaphors that you found

Passage from the Sontag <i>Illness as Metaphor</i> excerpts	Describe as many metaphors from the section as possible. What are the two things being compared? What qualities get transferred between the things being compared?	What does the metaphor do? How does it frame how someone understands illness? What are the consequences of this framing?
The “demonic pregnancy” paragraph: part 1, bottom of page 13 and top of page 14	-comparing cancer cells to a fetus growing inside you -comparing cancer to a parasite in the body -having cancer is basically like a death sentence (cancer cells are like pregnancy) -“TB is a person consumed/burned up...”// “...invaded by alien cells...” - cancer cells are foreign invaders *cancer cells grow rapidly just like a fetus can grow rapidly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- showing how cancer grows inside the body- some people see pregnancy as a negative, some as positive, so that changes the perception of cancer from person to person.- makes cancer and tb seem foreign to the body and something violating them.

<p>A disease for dropouts, wanderers, and artists: Sontag, page 33 to the top of page 34</p>	<p>"the TB sufferer was a dropout, a wanderer in endless search of the healthy place" the patient with TB is being compared to a wanderer. TB patients are exiled from their homes, looking for new home or otherwise just traveling, being nomadic, similar to a wanderer, someone who doesn't have a stable place to live.</p> <p>"to live only for one's art" The want to live is being compared with a strong passion for art. This can be viewed as an exaggeration but i think also a metaphor because it shows the deeper meaning of what the patients were viewed as.</p> <p>"the Romantics invented invalidism as a pretext for leisure." This is a metaphor meaning people of the time believed people who were sick with TB could finally enjoy some free time and enjoy things like the arts. Saying they invented it is a metaphor for them coining the idea.</p>	<p>Romanticizes TB, people feel that illness is somewhat superficial since to "cure" yourself, all you had to do was find yourself This belief infiltrated real medical reasons as to why people got TB and their treatment plans</p>
<p>The disease becomes a metaphor: part 2, first two paragraphs on page 58</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The disease itself becomes a metaphor" Disease as a Metaphor itself that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The fears within the people of a society are compared to serious diseases that

	<p>represents more societal fears of the people like decay and corruption.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “First, the subjects of deepest dread (corruption, decay, pollution, anomie, weakness) are identified with the disease.” • “Nothing is more punitive than to give a disease a meaning—that meaning being invariably a moralistic one.” • “Epidemic diseases were a common figure for social disorder” • The bubonic plague was described as “pestilent” which means injurious to religions, morals, or public peace • Anti-democrats used syphilis to evoke the desecrations of an egalitarian age. • Syphilis, tuberculosis, and cancer all used as metaphors for evil 	<p>a person can have because it shows how hard it is to deal with the situation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turns disease into a symbol of social disorder, moral decay, or corruption. • For example, the bubonic plague was described as “pestilent,” meaning harmful to religion, morals, or public peace. • Illness is seen as more than just a physical condition. It becomes a sign of personal or societal failure. • Diseases like syphilis, tuberculosis, and cancer are used to represent evil or moral corruption. • Leads to stigma and blame towards those who are sick. • Patients are seen as morally weak or responsible for their illness. • Results in isolation and judgment rather than support.
<p>The language of warfare: Sontag, part 2, paragraph at the bottom of 64 and the top of 65</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comparing warfare to cancer - “Cancer cells... are invasive” - “Cancer cells 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enlist fear in the patient - Frames the illness as a lose lose situation and there’s no getting

	<p>'colonize'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The body's "defenses" aren't vigorous enough to defeat cancer - "Rogue cells" are getting compared to cancer cells and it gives off qualities that cancer has a mind of its own and will get enraged to destroy... - Radiotherapy "bombards" patient with toxic rays - Chemotherapy is compared to chemical therapy in warfare 	<p>better because the chemotherapy is killing both the cancer and you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Words it as if the only way to save the patient is to destroy its body.
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