

Signergy

Edited by

Jac Conradie, Ronél Johl, Marthinus Beukes,

Olga Fischer and Christina Ljungberg

Signergy

Iconicity in Language and Literature

A multidisciplinary book series which aims to provide evidence for the pervasive presence of iconicity as a cognitive process in all forms of verbal communication. Iconicity, i.e. form miming meaning and/or form miming form, is an inherently interdisciplinary phenomenon, involving linguistic and textual aspects and linking them to visual and acoustic features. The focus of the series is on the discovery of iconicity in all circumstances in which language is created, ranging from language acquisition, the development of Pidgins and Creoles, processes of language change, to translation and the more literary uses of language.

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Volume 9

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Preface and acknowledgements

The Sixth Symposium on Iconicity in Language and Literature took place at the University of Johannesburg from 1 to 4 April 2007. Though not as large a symposium as its predecessors, it was characterised by a stimulating synergy between the small number of South African researchers who had been working in the field in relative isolation for several years and a group of iconicity stalwarts from all over the globe. It is hoped that the volume will, to a certain extent, prove the truth of the old adage “*ex Africa semper aliquid novi*”, but most importantly local scholars were inspired by being drawn into the ongoing international discourse on iconicity in language, literature and other fields.

All essays in this volume were carefully selected and edited by the panel of five editors, in particular cases also in consultation with other researchers working in the field of iconicity.

The organisers of the symposium gratefully acknowledge financial support from the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Johannesburg, the National Research Foundation (NRF) for two scientific events grants, the *Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen*, University of Amsterdam, and The Swiss Academy for the Humanities (SAGW), and the editors wish to thank Kees Vaes and Martine van Marsbergen at John Benjamins for their support in producing yet another volume in the series.

Finally but importantly we wish to thank the contributors to this volume for grappling with the old and new challenges presented by the prolific field of iconicity studies.

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Introduction: Signergy

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The Amsterdam based Iconicity Research Project has entered its second decade of research. In the Introduction to *Insistent Images* (2007), which marked the end of the first decade, Ljungberg and Tabakowska gave an overview of the contributions to this project over the previous ten years. In the present introduction the editors of *Signergy* have decided to consolidate what we consider to be theoretical advances in research on iconicity that may point the way to future research.

Early theoretical reflections on iconicity within the framework of the Iconicity Research Project were conducted mainly with reference to Roman Jakobson, C. S. Peirce and, of course, Ferdinand de Saussure. According to Fischer and Nänny (2001: 1), the first conferences on iconicity were aimed at challenging “what Roman Jakobson has called ‘Saussure’s dogma of arbitrariness,’” and aligned with the Peircean distinction between symbols and icons (Fischer and Nänny, 1999: xix and xxxiii; Fischer, 1999: 346), linking Peirce’s ‘symbol’ at language level with De Saussure’s *arbitrary* linguistic sign and Peirce’s ‘icon’ with De Saussure’s *motivated* linguistic sign. Fischer and Nanny’s argument (1999: xviii–xx) for a distinction between symbols and icons was as follows: “...in view of the fact that the ontogenetic development of organisms...to some extent may be said to re-enact their phylogenetic development...quite a number of linguists believe that language, both spoken and written, may have started off iconically... Many linguistic signs (or structures) may once have started off as icons, but in the course of time they have tended to become worn down to mere symbols... In language...there is a constant opposition between economy, which causes linguistic items and structures to be eroded, thus becoming conventional, that is, more and more ‘symbolic’ (arbitrary), and the need for expressivity to counterbalance the erosion... Hence, we discover iconicity in circumstances in which language is created...” Winifred Nöth (2001: 17), too, used the dichotomy arbitrariness of the language sign versus iconicity as point of departure: “For generations of scholars, this principle of arbitrariness had been a dogma of linguistics. However...recent research testifies to a new research paradigm. More and more iconic features are being discovered in

language and literature at the levels of phonology, morphology, word formation, syntax, the text, and in the domain of language change...”

However, Fischer (1999: 346) from the beginning cautioned against using the distinction between ‘symbolic’ and ‘iconic’ in any absolutist manner, because, as she argued, the symbolic is always also partly iconic although a more ‘abstract’ or ‘derived’ iconicity. Both Fischer and Nänny (1999: xxxiii, footnote 9) also drew attention to Jakobson’s view that icons, in turn, are partially symbolic, “thus showing that there is no simple contrast between icons and symbols”. Despite this caution, however, the ‘abstract iconicity’ that appeared to be present in the symbolic mode, proved to be very productive in research in the field, and the Peirce-Jakobson distinction between *imagic* and *diagrammatic* iconicity was employed in many iconicity studies within the framework of the Iconicity Research Project. This differentiation also resulted in Nänny and Fischer’s well-known diagrammatic outline of the different types of iconicity:

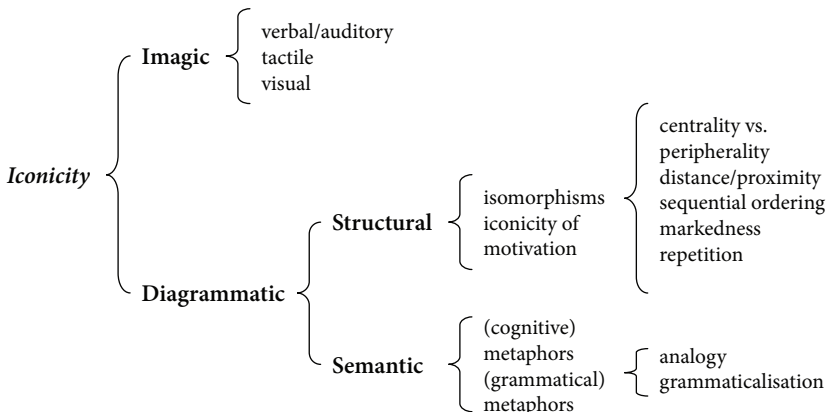


Figure 1. Types of iconicity according to Fischer and Nänny (1999: xxii)

According to Fischer and Nänny (1999: xxi, in agreement with Bolinger and Sears), although *imagic iconicity* (in diachronic terms?) no longer plays a major role in ‘practical language’, it remains important in ‘literary language’, whereas the more abstract *diagrammatic iconicity* occurs extensively mainly at the higher levels of language. In both cases, according to Fischer (1999: 346), the mechanism is the same, but whereas in imagic iconicity, as, for instance, in the case of onomatopoeia, the link between sign (‘signans’) and image or object (‘signatum’) is ‘direct’, in diagrammatic iconicity it is more ‘abstract’/relational, as evidenced by the following explanation by Fischer (1999: 346): “Diagrammatic iconicity is more like a topographic map, where the relation between objects or concepts in the real world (as we see it) can be deduced from the relations indicated on the map. Thus, the idea of space in the real world is proportionally reflected in the map.”

Furthermore, *diagrammatic* iconicity is described as an *observed* meaning relation between two ‘concepts’, leading to the use of the same ‘form’, ‘word’ or ‘structure’ (Fischer and Nänny, 1999:xxiii), generally described as ‘the iconicity of *mapping*’. As can be seen from Figure 1, two types of diagrammatic iconicity are identified: *structural* and *semantic iconicity*. The metaphor is classified under *semantic iconicity* and, according to Fischer and Nänny (1999: xxiii–xxiv), plays an important role in language change, specifically in the form of grammaticalisation (which they describe as one-directional change) where expressions in the content domain begin to express relations in the metalinguistic or speech-action domain and from there in the epistemic/reasoning domain: “Thus, there seems to be an equation between our physical self and our inner self, which makes us borrow concepts from the socio-physical world, and transfer them metaphorically to our conversational and reasoning world.”

As far as *structural* iconicity is concerned, Fischer and Nänny (1999, xxiv–xxv) were especially interested in Haiman’s distinction between *isomorphism* and *iconicity of motivation*. *Isomorphism* presupposes a one-to-one relation between a signifier and the object/concept referred to. This, according to them, implies that lexically, synonyms and homonyms are not a ‘normal state’ and are likely to be eliminated by language change: ‘syntactically, there can be no real optional differences in the surface structure’.

The ‘not-so-abstract’ *motivated structural iconicity*, according to Fischer and Nänny (1999:xxv), can be observed mainly in the ‘more concrete language of literature’. This ‘motivated’ structural iconicity forms the topic of many essays in the conference series. Examples of this form of iconicity, mentioned by Fischer and Nänny (1999:xxv), include *linear sequences of signs* which can be used as iconic diagrams to signify succession in time, continuity, change (as in growth and decay), duration, rank and motion, and *syntactic juxtaposition* and *typographic arrangement* which function as iconic diagrams to express, among other things, symmetry, balance, relative position and fragmentation. In fact, Fischer and Nänny (1999:xxv) conclude that:

[a]lmost all poetic devices, from typography ..., sounds ..., meter, lineation, stanza-breaks, to rhetorical figures (e.g. chiasmus), as well as a large number of narrative techniques may be fruitfully interpreted in terms of their iconic function with the all-important proviso, however, that the act of interpretation must always proceed from meaning to form ... and not the other way round.

Fischer and Nänny’s view of iconicity, specifically as it emerges from the two quotations above, ties in with Tabakowska’s in the first conference proceedings, in pointing away from the treatment of iconicity as a set of objective data derived from pre-defined (‘motivated’) relations between signifier/form and meaning, as

is often assumed under the definition “form miming meaning” (suggested by the Saussurean distinction between *signifiant* and *signifié*). Tabakowska’s (1999: 410) essay, a discussion of the linguistic expression of perceptual relationships, centred on a reinterpretation and broadening of Enkvist’s (1989, 1990) approach to experiential iconicity, originally viewed as “a more or less direct relation between linguistic expression and perceptual relationships”. Her essay starts with a reference to Jakobson’s (1968) differentiation between “signs that were in some ‘geometrical’ sense similar to the entities they represented or referred to”, relying on a direct isomorphism of form and content that is dependent on linguistic substance and “another type of isomorphism where similarity as the constitutive principle of iconic structures was defined as parallelism between syntax and semantics”, based on the observation that “the order of elements within syntactic structures reflects the order of perception (physical experience) or conceptualization (knowledge). Linking iconicity in language to both the interplay of isomorphism and motivation (perception), via John Haiman’s (1980, 1985) findings, and isomorphism and conceptualisation, via the work done within the framework of cognitive theory, Tabakowska (1999: 410) arrives at a definition of iconicity as “the conceived similarity between conceptual structure and linguistic form”. This definition, then, rests on the assumption that the relationship between form and meaning can also be “motivated by the order of gaining (or conveying) knowledge of things”; according to Tabakowska (1999: 410) the “interrelation between form and content has become one of the central issues in modern semantics, notably within the framework of the cognitive theory of language” with its basic assumption that “linguistic structures are the reflection of the world not as it is, but as it is perceived by a cognizant human being”. Therefore, “iconic construals do not relate to perceptual processes per se, but directly reflect conceptual structures”. This has important consequences for the way iconicity is to be approached:

Such a view, basically anthropocentric, means bringing back into the picture, Peirce’s ‘interpretant’, or, to use a more popular term, the context, which accounts for its understandability... In this view, Peirce’s ‘icon’ becomes a ‘symbol’. The distinction between the two has never seemed lucid to Peirce’s interpreters...; however, the assumption that the underlying principle of the meaning-form similarity is invariably of a ‘natural’ kind seems untenable to most. The actual recognition of the similarity between linguistic structure and the underlying concept often requires from a language user an appeal to some interpretational convention. As such conventions are clearly culture- and language-specific, iconicity can no longer be considered ‘natural’ or ‘universal’, and ‘icon’ and ‘symbol’ become two opposite poles of a single continuum...” (Tabakowska, 1999: 410–411).

Without explicitly pointing to the fact, Tabakowska’s take on iconicity (referring to Givón) is oriented towards the speaker of an iconic utterance, as the title of her

essay also testifies: “Linguistic Expression of Perceptual Relationships”. In another early contribution to the Iconicity Research Project, Wolfgang G. Müller (2001), continuing a tradition of discussions of Caesar’s famous words, *Veni, vidi, vici*, as an instance of (diagrammatic) iconicity, starting with Jakobson’s (1960:350) use of the example, also focuses attention on the speaker or sender side of the communication of iconically used utterances. More than merely showing that “its iconic force goes beyond chronological iconicity” (Fischer and Nänny 2001:3; Müller, 2001:305), Müller (2001:307) actually demonstrates that taking into account its rhetorical force, an utterance should be taken not as an imitation of “objective or historical reality ... (but of) a subjective reality, reality as seen from a subjective point of view”, as all utterances indeed represent such subjective viewpoints: “What the linguistic structure imitates is not external reality, but a subjective perception, or rather conception of reality, a mental structure which is related to external reality but does not merely imitate or copy it.” He goes on to generalise:

Rhetorical features, for instance, schemes like asyndeton and climax or different forms of word-order, are structuring and ordering devices, which point to the structure and activity of the mind and to cognitive and epistemological processes. The categories, which Earl Anderson relates to syntactic ‘iconisms’, — “chronology, hierarchy, preference, distinction, length or duration, and complexity versus simplicity” (Anderson, 1998:265) — belong to the sphere of the mind or consciousness and not to that of external reality. Thus rhetorical iconicity does not really consist in a mirroring of objective reality, but in an interpretation or structuring of reality or experience from a personal point of view.

The quote above may, for all practical purposes, be extended to include all those structuring or ordering mechanisms of language used in text that are collectively captured under the heading of *literary* and *rhetorical figures* — following Müller’s line of argument, these figures are not naturally iconic, but they may well be used with iconic *function* or *effect* in utterances, including literary texts.

Whereas the contributions of Tabakowska and Wolfgang Müller approach the issue of iconicity in communication from the sender side, Jørgen Dines Johansen, in an essay in the third conference proceedings described by Fischer and Müller (2003:16) as “rather exceptional ... in iconicity research in general”, addresses the subject from the side of the reader. As Fischer and Müller (2003:16) explain: “It shifts attention from iconic signs as constituents of the text to the reader’s iconization of the text in the process of reception. The study in effect views the literary text as a set of instructions for different ways of iconization.”

Johansen (2003:379) starts his essay by making the point that “(s)igns in use... are never exclusively iconic, indexical, or symbolic; on the contrary, they unite features of all the three classes”. Signs, then, are recognised as predominantly iconic when they represent their objects mainly by virtue of their similarity, and although

the concept of similarity has been a contested one, Johansen (2003: 380) maintains that, in terms of the Peircean triadic division of the categories into firstness, secondness and thirdness, with iconic signs belonging to the category of firstness owing their signhood to their own properties, we are still justified in talking about similarity between sign and object. However, Johansen qualifies (2003: 380), we have to understand that “firstness (also) signifies *possibility*, and thus iconic signs are *possible* signs of whatever possesses the same properties as they do”, a view that once more links iconicity to the use of signs (our italics). Although languages may then be considered as predominantly symbolic sign systems, they need iconic and indexical dimensions to function, and although texts “contain iconic and indexical indications ... these have to be reconstructed by the interpreter who must use both memory and imagination to fill in the conceptual content and relationships” (Johansen, 2003: 384). In this sense (literary) texts, according to Johansen (2003: 384), serve as *scripts*, turning the process of reading into a process of translation and iconisation, linking the symbolic and iconic dimensions. Through the process of translation symbolic signs are turned into iconic signs, a very necessary act in the understanding of especially creative (literary) texts.

Dealing, then, with images, diagrams and metaphors from the point of view of reading, Johansen differentiates three ways of iconising the text: imaginisation, diagrammatisation and allegorisation, and although the three processes are interdependently related during the reading process (“...the efficiency and value of literature is to a large extent dependent on its simultaneous cultivation of all three modes of iconization”, Johansen, 2003: 404), they may also be viewed as three levels of abstraction in the process of understanding: “If nothing in the text’s representation of settings, props, and actions can be recognized to correspond to what can be retrieved as memory or fantasy images [through the process of imaginisation], if elements and parts cannot be related to each other [diagrammatisation], and if the issues of the text cannot be typified and mapped onto situations, dilemmas, and conflicts in the life-world [iconisation] then the text will remain black marks on the paper” (Johansen 2003: 403).

Adding to or qualifying previous contributions to a theoretical understanding of iconicity, the fourth conference proceedings (*Outside-In — Inside-out*, 2005) produced an interesting array of essays.

First, Paul Bouissac (2005: 19, 24, 28) took up Johansen’s notion of iconisation from a *memetic* point-of-view in an effort to bring more clarity to basic unresolved issues in theories of iconicity premised on the notion of mimetic relationships between sign and referent or ‘object’, and in the process brought the issue of iconicity into the domain of the cultural context of communication events.

Bouissac (2005: 21) set out by challenging the assumptions of phenomenological transparency (relying “either on a feeling of grammaticality of the native

speaker or on the uncritical trust in immediate perceptual evidence”) and a-temporal rationality (linguistic research “conceived as a quest for uncovering the elusive rationality which links all language phenomena together... (be it) a set of consistent rules or a logic of perception and communication”) guiding theorising in the major linguistic paradigms. Arguing from the position that “the use of minimally reduced or arbitrarily produced sound patterns is more functional and adaptive for selectively sharing information than iconically transparent referential phonetic or gestural structures”, and also capable of revealing or creating new perceptual patterns, Bouissac (2005: 27) extrapolates his argument to literary texts, drawing the conclusion that if texts were pure mimesis, their redundancy with regard to experience could hardly explain their informative value, belying the experience that readers have of literature as ‘creating information’ or providing new insight: “Iconization,¹ de-iconization, re-iconization seem to be processes which can be achieved by systematic or random manipulation of the linguistic calculus on a level on which they can interact or interfere with the processes through which percepts are constructed by the brain.”

In an endnote, Bouissac (2005: 33) argues that iconisation in art and literature “could be conceived as a cultural process through which stereotypes are sustained and, at times, renewed or modified”. This stereotyping is achieved through the selection of culturally relevant features that members of given cultural or linguistic communities may experience as ‘natural’, but are nevertheless constrained by cultural categorisations. “Thus iconization can be understood as the redundant selection of culturally relevant features, often with the artificial addition of features which cause the representations to appear more vividly realistic, that is, more conform to the stereotypes. Thus, it would seem that literary iconicity is more akin to a trope than to a natural process.”

Bouissac’s essay, along with specific contributions on musical iconicity in the proceedings highlighting the cultural contextual dimension of the use of signs to iconic effect in communication, led Herlofsky, Maeder and Fischer (2005: 4) to observe in their introduction that:

iconicity is a cultural phenomenon, which relies on how people judge the relation between signifier and signified. The study of iconicity will therefore be directly linked with cultural studies because it allows us to understand how different

1. Bouissac (2005: 28, 29) defines *iconization* as “the artifactual modeling of referential (or virtual) ‘objects’ by the resources offered by a language”, and explains that in “literary language the free play of metaphors imposes on a diversity of percepts isomorphic and isochronic properties”: language “normalizes perception through iconization by reducing variety to prototypes and stereotypes”.

cultures mentally represent their worlds and values. Because iconicity has cultural implications, it also constitutes a rhetorical means for justifying values and therefore one's own culture. By seeing (or presenting) such signs as iconic, we imply that those values are not conventional but natural. We can thus believe in an iconic dimension or manipulate others by presenting certain things as iconic.

With this standpoint, research into iconicity has departed from earlier views that iconic status can somehow be attributed to signs without actively engaging with the context in which these are produced and received. At the same time it has turned the concept of iconicity (or rather, iconisation) into a critical tool by means of which ideological manipulation may be detected in the various arts.

Second, following on from the idea of the manipulation of signs to iconic effect in order to make the values associated with them appear natural or unmotivated, Alwin Fill (2005) further complicates the issue of iconicity by arguing, in the words of Herlofsky, Maeder and Fischer (2005: 4), that "the conventionalization of certain iconic devices may have become so culturally ingrained that the essential or intuitive iconicity may be more effectively foregrounded by breaking the iconic conventions that gave rise to it in the first place". Although Fill (2005: 97) starts out from the viewpoint that "it is usually tacitly assumed that iconicity is something that reinforces the meaning of a unit, for instance, a word, sentence or text", leading to an intensification of the overall effect, and goes on to link his stance on "mimesis-lost-meaning-regained" to a postmodernist questioning of "harmony, symmetry and lack of tension" allowing literature to gain in meaning through the thwarting of expectations regarding patterns, similarities and symmetries, the telling examples he uses to demonstrate his principle at work in metaphors, rhyme and rhythm, and text-picture combinations, conspicuously predates postmodernism. However, what Fill has succeeded in doing, as has Werner Wolf's (2005) essay on literal 'blanks' or 'absences' in literary texts as instances of 'negative' iconicity and Bouissac (2005, see above), is unwittingly making a strong case for iconisation as trope, as a series of rhetorical and literary figures, which, when employed in a text, contribute along with other structural elements (including 'absences' and deviations), and, importantly, in conjunction with these, to the overall meaning or effect of that text. The case Fill tries to make was in fact most famously formulated in Russian Formalist theorising on concepts like *foregrounding*, *defamiliarisation*, and *deviation*. Although Russian Formalism started out by viewing the literary work as a more or less loose aggregation of *devices*, its proponents later came to realise that these devices are in fact interconnected elements or *functions* within a total textual system made up of a whole inventory of formal literary elements, all of which work to *deform* habituated language use in various ways, with a resultant *estranging* or *defamiliarising* (heightened) effect. As Terry Eagleton (1983/2005: 3) formulated it:

Under the pressure of literary devices, ordinary language was intensified, condensed, twisted, telescoped, drawn out, and turned on its head. It was language ‘made strange’; and because of this estrangement, the everyday world was also suddenly made unfamiliar. In the routines of everyday speech, our perceptions of and responses to reality become stale, blunted, or, as the Formalists would say, ‘automatized’. Literature, by forcing us into a dramatic awareness of language, refreshes these habitual responses and renders objects more ‘perceptible’. By having to grapple with language in a more strenuous, self-conscious way than usual, the world which that language contains is vividly renewed. ... Literary discourse estranges or alienates ordinary speech, but in doing so, paradoxically, brings us into a fuller, more intimate possession of experience.

Although Russian Formalists argued that *defamiliarisation* is achieved through deviations from an identifiable norm, through a kind of *linguistic violence* as it were, they also understood that “(a)ny actual language consists of a highly complex range of discourses, differentiated according to class, region, gender, status and so on, which can by no means be neatly unified into a single homogeneous linguistic community”, that norms and deviations, therefore, shifted from one social or historical context to another, so that what would count as ‘poetry’ at some point depends on “where you happen to be standing at the time” — ‘literariness’, in other words, became “a function of the differential relations between one sort of discourse and another; it was not an eternally given property” (Eagleton, 1983/2005: 4,5).

The same would apply to the use of mechanisms of iconisation, either through the deliberate or more spontaneous set-up, over shorter or longer time spans, of different kinds of patterns, similarities and symmetries, from which deviations may be effected, in specific texts, genres or literary periods.

Johansen’s (2005) essay comes in handy again on this score. With reference to the three ways of reading (imaginisation, diagrammatisation, and allegorisation, see above), Johansen (2005: 404) maintains that in all three cases there are alternative ways of patterning, and partial mismatches:

With regard to imaginative iconization, the translation of symbolic into iconic signs, only something, but certainly not everything, is prescribed... Diagrammatization clearly offers alternatives on different levels... (D)igrams are based on interpretations, and thus alternative interpretations, i.e., alternative linkings of elements, will produce different diagrams. Allegorization, metaphoric iconization, is, by the very nature of its process, bound to reveal mismatches, differences, incompatibilities... Ricœur’s definition of a metaphor as a calculated category mistake...points to the interplay between similarity and difference in any species of metaphor... There is an inherent split in metaphors, an imperfect match between the domains they align that simultaneously creates a surplus and a deficit of meaning...

Third, Tabakowska's (2005) contribution to the fourth proceedings theoretically centres on the marrying of the sender- and reader-oriented approaches to iconicity by introducing the concept of 'iconic competence', which allows writers to impose a point-of-view on readers through the use of specific rhetorical 'devices'. As Herlofsky, Maeder and Fischer (2005:10–11) explain Tabakowska's contribution apropos Ian McEwan's *Atonement*: "Her study provides evidence that authors of novels use certain linguistic forms to organize the physical, mental and temporal spaces within the world of the narrative and that this is accomplished by mimicking certain relationships within that narrative space."

Against this backdrop Ronél Johl's discussion in the current volume of a not well-known contribution to the theory of iconicity, dating back to the 1980s, by the Afrikaans literary theorist, H. C. T. Müller (1987), proves significant in that Müller's proposed model strives to enable the discussion of iconicity from an encompassing communication-oriented perspective.

Starting from the assumption that no discussion of literature can deny the existence of extra-linguistic reality, because that would fly in the face of the basic facts of language and language use, Müller (1987:ix) nevertheless maintains that this does not mean that extra-textual reality enters the space of the text with a load of ready-made meaning. Following from this qualified referential view of language, Müller makes the case that literary theories (therefore, also theories of iconicity) need to be firmly anchored in knowledge of all aspects of language, from knowledge of the language system and language acquisition by individuals, on the one hand, and extending to, on the other hand, knowledge of the power of language to be used for statements of reality that may be shared by language users in a mutual understanding and interpretation of the language used in communication (Müller 1987:1, 9).

Thus, there are two sides to literary communication, and with reference to Geoffrey Leech's *Principles of Pragmatics*, Müller (1987:14–15) explains that semantic representation and pragmatic interpretation supplement each other: semantics, on the one hand, is grammatical ("rule-governed") while pragmatics, on the other, is rhetorical (principle-governed); grammatical rules are conventional, while pragmatic principles are guided by discursive objectives (including rhetorical, therefore also artistic, objectives), and what is linking the grammatical "sense" of an utterance with its illocutionary force is pragmatics.

The *language system* makes available to language users all potential elements to be used in communication, i.e. lexical items belonging to different grammatical categories and having semantic properties that contain the possibilities for their application in language use. Consequently, the meaning of a word is not merely a concept or idea, but a practically directed experiential, observational and thinking act (Müller 1987:3–4). In *language use*, then, the tools provided by the language

system are put in action through the application of the distinguishing semantic properties of words in thinking and communicating about objects in reality, including about language itself (Müller 1987: 5ff).

All aspects of a text are, therefore, simultaneously units of both the language system and language use. Nevertheless, language utterances are not merely extensions of the language system. From the use of a single phonemic exclamation as a sentence, a single word as sentence, through all multiple word constructs to long texts, language utterances constitute something new (Müller 1987: 16): By means of the use of language a reality is stated during a process directed at reconciling the semantic and pragmatic aspects, both during and after the act of communication through a mutual understanding of the communication by speaker and listener (Müller 1987: 16–17).

From the point of view of language *use* (the language system in action) two points are important for an understanding of iconicity: the *sender-receiver* situation and the *frame of reference*. The latter aspect encompasses all the relevant knowledge that senders and receivers must share, starting with their knowledge of the language and stretching to their knowledge of each other, the situation in and about which they communicate, as well as what has already been discussed — in other words, everything that is part of the field of pragmatic or encyclopaedic knowledge, any aspect of which may be made relevant through the language utterance (Müller 1987: 18). However, knowledge of a frame of reference, including all the relevant frames of understanding, alone is not sufficient to understand a language utterance. As Müller (1987: 19) points out, not even a single word can be determined and explained entirely independent of knowledge of the text's situation and frame of reference. In the process of forming 'new knowledge', he notes, both during the communication process and in its finished product, the text with its positing of reality remains the *determining* and *decisive* factor that changes (or at least attempts to change) preceding relevancies of knowledge in some respect.

Regarding the *reality* to which words are used to refer, Müller develops two important points. Firstly, the language utterance states or posits a (possible) world/reality which, once stated, lies outside language, in whatever ordinary, extraordinary or absurd manner this world has been given in our experience (Müller, 1987: 13). Secondly, because matters such as truth, fantasy and fiction, according to Müller (1987: 13–14), relate to this extra-linguistic reality, they are strictly speaking no longer a matter of language and should therefore not be dragged into formal linguistics — although the issue of the relations between frames of reference is, of course, important in linguistics.

It seems, then, that when trying to localise iconicity (finding correspondences and similarities between the linguistic and compositional aspects of the text and a reality outside the text), we should focus our efforts on establishing iconicity as

a function of the reading process and interpretation, and this brings us back to Johansen's (2003) view on the iconisation of literary texts, that is effected through the reading and interpretation processes. Müller's linguistically informed literary theory offers a broad basis for this view of iconicity. *Interpretation*, he says, is accomplished in terms of a continual interaction between the stipulations of the linguistic features of the text and the extra-linguistic knowledge that help render these stipulations specific or concrete, which ultimately results in an understanding — a more, or less, successful synthesis of the linguistic and extra-linguistic moments of a particular text (Müller 1987: 20). One should, therefore, differentiate between the process and the product of interpretation.

Müller, who agrees with Paul Ricoeur, believes that to understand a text requires following the movement of sense to reference, from what the text says to what it talks about. What the text talks about is a possible world and a possible way in which individuals may orient themselves in it. The dimensions of this possible world, says Ricoeur, are revealed and disclosed by the text itself: "The sense of a text is not behind the text, but in front of it. It is not something hidden, but something disclosed. What has to be understood is not the initial situation of discourse, but what point towards a possible world. ... Understanding...seeks to grasp the world-propositions opened up by the reference of the text" (in Müller 1987: 28).

This brings us to Dylan Glynn's (2007) essay on iconicity and the grammar-lexis interface, picking up on a number of the points Müller made, but from the perspective of Cognitive Linguistics. Drawing on work done by Lakoff (1987), Johnson (1987) and Langacker (1987), Glynn (2007: 269) highlights the same problematic issues Müller and others grappled with, namely the bridging of the 'empiricist-mentalist divide' in locating iconicity, a process which proves problematic precisely because experiential "(r)real world motivation, or isomorphic iconicity, and culturally determined structures interact in a complex, often competing way". Cognitive Linguistics proposes that we understand our world through our conceptual system, by ascribing our worldview (*Weltansicht*) to events and things, since semiotic value does not exist in the world (*Lebenswelt*). However, its analyses are based on referential information obtained from the perception of the world ('universal *Lebenswelt*'). Drawing attention to differences between Lakoff's (1987) view that different conceptualisations are a natural part of human cognition, and Langacker (1987) and Givón's (1987) assumptions that languages (and grammatical forms) construe the world differently, Glynn (2007: 271), nevertheless, reminds us that in all instances their descriptive apparatuses are informed by "universals of perception and cognition". Trying to overcome the theoretical ambiguity, Johnson (1987, in Glynn 2007: 271) argues that "we ought to reject the false dichotomy according to which there are two opposite and incompatible options", namely that either there must be absolute and fixed value-neutral standards of knowledge or

else a collapse into absolute relativism denying any possibility of standards. As Glynn (2007:272) points out, Lakoff argues “that just as some neural structures are tied to perception and others to abstract reasoning, thus functions language, some concepts being tied iconically to perception while others are free to construe the world in whatever way”. And according to Johnson “language is both *motivated* by our perception of the *Lebenswelt* and our perceptions of our *Lebenswelt* is *construed* by our language”. Although Glynn (2007:272) agrees that such a middle way perhaps describes reality best, his article demonstrates that the application of “such a theoretically awkward assumption as the foundation of complex theory of language structure is far from self-evident”.

From this overview of the theoretical advances regarding iconicity/iconisation during the first decade of the Iconicity Research Project emerges a picture of persistent attempts at a continued expansion of the theoretical base from which the issue may be approached and delineated. It is clear that, capitalising on the efforts of the first, the second decade may usefully be focussed on the development of a comprehensive theory of iconicity/iconisation. Lars Elleström’s essay in this volume importantly points in this direction: working with the notion of ‘spatial thinking’ he argues that there is no form without meaning, and that all meaning has some sort of form. Elleström then presents a model based on the assumption that iconicity, to a certain extent, is gradable, showing that the field of iconicity includes many phenomena that are not generally seen as related, but that nevertheless can be systematically compared. It also shows, among other things, that the ‘metaphor’ and the ‘weak diagram’ are singled out by the capacity of miming across the borders both between the visual and the auditory, and between the material and the mental. As he puts it: “The main argument of the article is that iconicity should be understood not only as ‘form miming meaning and form miming form’, but also as ‘meaning miming meaning and meaning miming form.’

* * *

The contributions to this volume are divided into five categories: theoretical approaches, visual iconicity, iconicity and historical change, iconicity and positionality, and iconicity and translation.

1. Theoretical approaches

The four papers in this section all seek to broaden our understanding of iconicity as such. Thus **Vincent Colapietro** opens up various perspectives on iconic relationships texts may partake of, such as the iconic and specifically diagrammatical relationship between literary texts and the possibilities they project, the actualities they

confront and the meanings they elaborate. The focal or selective nature of human awareness or consciousness, the novel's ability to disclose what remained unsaid, and its penetration to the actuality of the world through the curtain of patterns and images veiling it, all present challenges to iconic matching. The fact that literary works excel in highlighting the power and importance of the insignificant, and the seemingly pointless, presents an interesting perspective on the iconic relationship between text and world. Attention is paid to the interchange between writing and interpreting, as author and readers join in projecting forms of possibility on various levels of the text. Another complex iconic relationship hinted at is that between a literary text and the pragmatics of its reading, the latter seen as not only a performance of the text but simultaneously an observation of its performance.

Taking the use of different iconicities in poetry as a point of departure, **Christina Ljungberg** concentrates on diagrammatic figurations as textual performances in a number of contemporary novels. She argues that diagrammatic figurations in narrative texts involve not only performance and performativity but that they also enhance the complex interaction between narrativity and visuality since they transform the text into a stage on which textual activity is performed — both as a dramatic dialogue between writer, text and reader, and in the dramatic and visual positionings of agents within the text itself. In this way Ljungberg illustrates how the practices and processes by which various forms of signs are generated in themselves become performances.

Lars Elleström first of all argues that our perception is always an interpretation of the external world, that meaning is created by the attainment of form. Our thinking in images does not represent a duality between thinking and images, because concepts are themselves spatial in nature. To the extent that meaning *is* form, the resemblance between them — iconicity — is at the core of our thinking, reasoning and interpreting. The ontological proximity of form and meaning has implications for a unidirectional view of miming according to which meaning is traditionally viewed as the *result* of miming. On the basis of a wide range of examples not only from literature and language but also referring to music and other sign-systems and iconic relations between these, the author sets up a classification between 'image' and 'strong diagram', on the one hand, and 'weak diagram' and 'metaphor', on the other, and concludes that when the signs in question are of a complex cognitive nature — and therefore themselves meaning in the first place rather than form — meaning is indeed able to mime visual or auditory form, and is in fact able to mime meaning.

The focus in **Ronél Johl's** essay is on some problems with the location of iconicity dating back to some of the early contributions (1999) to the Iconicity Research Project (specifically the issue of the so-called 'conventional'/mimetic and 'creative' iconicity). The essay draws attention to the little-known theory of

language-based iconicity put forward by H. C. T. Müller (1975, 1987, 1989), believing that these insights could be useful, both in shedding light on the problems that critical readers of those early essays have with aspects of the research being conducted within the framework of the (New) Iconicity Research Project and in pointing a way to consolidating compatible theoretical viewpoints through a more integrated descriptive model.

2. Visual iconicity

This section comprises six papers which together study a variety of iconic types across a broad range of literary and other texts in which visual materials or arrangements play a part. In the first paper **John White** highlights the interrelationship between verbal and visual elements in a number of iconic war-poems by the Italian Futurist poet F.T. Marinetti, written against the background of his nationalist aspirations, personal involvement in battles and glorification of war, and serving the purposes of war-reportage and anti-neutralist propaganda.

Heilna du Plooy uses Yuri Lotman's distinction between the semantic, the poetical and the cultural aspects of semantic value in order to analyse and interpret three poems by the Afrikaans writer T.T. Cloete. Through a detailed analysis of the ways in which the poet uses words and images to transfer attention from the referential objects to the poetic interpretation of the objects in the poems and then to the poems themselves, Du Plooy illustrates how Cloete's use of iconic features (on the linguistic, poetical and cultural levels) in these poems add to their ability to generate multilayered meanings.

The ways in which poets use iconicity to enhance the meaning of their texts are further studied by **Etienne Terblanche** in his article on iconicity and naming in the poetry of E. E. Cummings. This study explores the use of what Brent Berlin calls 'size-sound symbolism' through focusing on the sound-symbolising element of the i-o dance in Cummings's poetry. Terblanche shows how Cummings uses these sounds to intimate a movement from isolation, individuality and lightness to integration, deeper selfhood, and greater resonance and reverberation in the natural world. The author also illustrates just how inseparable imagic and diagrammatic forms of iconicity can be.

In his analysis of Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, **Matthias Bauer** shows that what had been seen as a conflict or duality between Biblical fact or reality, on the one hand, and Bunyan's fictionalising and figurative rendering, on the other, are reconciled by appreciating Bunyan's insight into and manipulation of iconic relationships and the realisation that real understanding is promoted by the use of metaphor — of which the Bible itself sets the example.

When a fish is caught off the coast of Poland in the 15th century with the appearance of a bishop ready to perform the functions of a bishop, the king and the church have the problem of deciding whether this is really a bishop or whether appearances deceive. **Jac Conradie** argues that in this process of testing leading to a final rejection in which the ability to use human language is crucial, the semiotic status of the fish as a possible “sign” from the Creator changes from iconic — the fish is exactly what it seems — to indexical — the fish is only the outward appearance of what is a real bishop in its being — and back to iconic. This may be taken as evidence of a dynamic relationship between signifier and signified.

The final paper in this section, by **Marthinus Beukes**, deals with the poetic iconicity in the work of the painter Johannes Vermeer and the Afrikaans poet Tom Gouws. Following the classical adage that ‘the poem is a speaking painting, the painting is a silent poem,’ Beukes shows how the iconic meaning-making processes which occur in Tom Gouws’s poems on Vermeer paintings function as a meta-language of the paintings in which the poet not only explores the painting’s visual text but also investigates and confronts language iconically in several of the poems.

3. Iconicity and historical change

The three papers in this section all involve a dimension of change over time, be it the history of words, the phenomenon of grammaticalisation or a comparison of literary works several centuries apart.

In what is indisputably a grey area in etymology, namely the status of onomatopoeia and sound symbolism as legitimate sources of word origins, **Anatoly Liberman** attempts to bring methodological clarity by discussing a considerable number of possible instances, ranging from Indo-European roots to modern slang, mainly using Germanic dialects as his field of reference but against a general Indo-European background. Various phonological types occurring over various dialects and languages, with in some cases an almost “romantic” appeal to seemingly related — or iconic — complexes of objects or activities, have been extensively discussed in the literature. When these cannot be related to a common historical origin and perhaps not even to borrowing, spontaneous development in dialects that are not in contact renders the iconic factor more feasible. When doubtful cases are discarded, some instances remain where an etymon may indeed be based on sound imitation. In such instances Liberman, looking at each case on its own merit, endeavours to draw a line between the feasible and the “fanciful”, and ultimately to define the relationship between iconicity and historical principles, stating that “(t)here is no etymology without strict adherence to

sound correspondences, and there is no history of language without realizing that correspondences may be disrupted”. Though not denying that “first words” could have had a sound symbolic origin, he points out that the iconic origin of even contemporary slang defies description. Even if we could prove that certain *words* have an iconic origin, we are far from proving that iconicity was the driving force behind the origin of *language* as such.

Olga Fischer, by employing a usage based analogical grammar in order to deepen our understanding of grammaticalisation, shows that iconicity plays a major part in language formation and change. While grammaticalisation in its various aspects is usually characterised by scope decrease, the development of epistemic meaning in English has been seen as an instance of scope increase as it involves the whole proposition rather than merely the verb phrase. Fischer is able to show how the compound sentence type originally underlying epistemic meaning was conflated into the simplex sentence type of root modals through a process of analogy. As analogy, in its turn, should be viewed as a process of pattern finding dependent on shared similarities both of form and meaning, iconicity may be seen to play an important part in its development towards greater abstraction.

A dimension of change — but also similarity — is in evidence in **Strother Purdy’s** comparison between the 18th century Prussian writer Johan Georg Hamann’s “new Apology for the Letter H” and Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* from the 20th century — two works almost defying interpretation. When the Rationalist Tobias Damm substitutes the removal of the “redundant” letter *h* from the German alphabet for a theological argument in favour of a rational Christianity, Hamann endeavours to refute him by arguing in favour of the *h*. On another occasion he would find a similarity between the *h* and the soul: just as a voiceless vowel (as the *h* has been defined) is only breathing and therefore nothing, the soul denied by reason is also nothing. In what Purdy refers to as *typological iconicity*, Hamann — against the background of St Paul’s assertion, “for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” — contends that the letter *h* is the spirit. With reference to St Paul’s “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard ... the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” and an association between silence and the letter *h*, Hamann is able to forge a link between silence and spirituality. Finally, similarities in the use of diagrammatic iconicity between Hamann and James Joyce are pointed out, with reference to Shakespeare and Hopkins.

4. Iconicity and positionality

Positionality, which is an important element in both imagic and diagrammatic iconicity, is pivotal in the three contributions in this section. The theme of **William**

Herlofsky's article is the graphic or spatial aspects of Japan Sign Language, which tie in well with imagic iconicity. It seems clear that sign language is a highly iconic form of communication, though what is less clear is exactly what is represented by the signs and how this representation takes place. Herlofski, taking a cognitive linguistic approach to the problem, illustrates that hypothetical imagic proto-scenes — a concept developed by Tyler and Evans — relating to the polysemic English preposition *over* are highly compatible with signs from Japan Sign Language. This finding in turn supports the existence of proto-scenes as such.

Syntagmatic positionality and its role in language change is the theme of **Victorina González-Días's** contribution. This is another paper providing an example of the explanatory power of iconicity. It is argued that language is iconic, inter alia, to the extent that elements of cultural salience receive special encoding, lexically or inflectionally. The Eng. adjective *little* — in contrast to *small* — does *not* follow the general tendency in the prenominal stacking of adjectives (demonstrated with reference to several corpora of English from various periods), viz. for greater distance from the head noun to signal greater subjectivity on the part of the speaker rather than characterising (inherent) qualities of the noun as in the case of adjectives in greater proximity to the noun. *Little* — which retains its diminutive sense even when acquiring emotive overtones — is seen to attach itself *immediately* to the noun when it has an interpersonally subjective sense, thus forming a new syntactic unit to express a culturally salient function not expressed in English, a language in which diminutive inflection is largely undeveloped.

With **Wolfgang Müller's** contribution, we move on to the role of iconicity, and syntagmatic and metrical positionality in particular, in poetics. This paper focuses on the poetic functions of positionality, particularly the contrasting structures brought about by metrical inversion and enjambment. The discrepancies brought about by infringing on the expected syntactic and metrical parallelisms and even morphological disintegration often enhance the iconicity between verse-form and verse-meaning.

5. Iconicity and translation

The last two papers in the volume deal with the role and place of iconicity in the theory and practice of translation. On the basis of the fact that any text, looked at from a semiotic point of view — which in itself implies sign material versus interpretation — is already a translation, **Susan Petrilli** claims that translation between languages is only a special case of translation between sign systems. In literary translation, however, where creativity and interpretation are requirements additional to mere imitation, reproduction and repetition, iconic matching is put

to the further test of creating a distance, an otherness, between the source and translated texts, resulting in a text which is paradoxically both similar and dissimilar to the original.

From the perspective of translation studies and with reference to examples from the Koran and the Bible, **Jacobus Naudé** argues that the relationship between source and target text is no longer understood to be merely one of resemblance and therefore not as strongly iconic as is generally believed, but may even be predominantly indexical or symbolic. This insight in general leads to a greater understanding of the superordinate categories of translation.

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PART I

Theoretical approaches

Literary practices and imaginative possibilities

Toward a pragmatic understanding of iconicity

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Adopting a pragmatic approach to iconicity, this paper focuses on literary practices as imaginative undertakings, thus practices bound up with the projection of possibilities. Literary texts need not claim as their *raison d'être* anything more than the projection and exploration of diverse *forms of possibility*. The exhibition of such forms is intimately linked to the iconic features of literary texts. At the same time, in exhibiting the barely imaginable, they frequently embody traces of brute actuality and intimations of elusive significance. Thus, the work of iconic signs is, in literary texts, characteristically conjoined to that of indices and symbols. Moving from this level of generality to the way such texts *work*, in particular, to some of the iconic functions in literature, I will consider, above all else, the *diagrammatic* function of literary texts. Here, the sentences inscribed across a page are at once verbal diagrams and, in however attenuated a form, spatial diagrams. As diagrams of such a hybrid character, they are capable of presenting spatial, temporal, and other relationships, though the spatial features of such verbal diagrams often bear anything but a straightforward relationship to their imaginable objects. Such inscribed diagrams are spatial figurations in which the most salient features of spatiality are in certain respects exploited and, in other respects, effaced or, at least, suspended. A number of examples from literature (including texts by Henry James, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, among others) are used to substantiate these claims.

1. Introduction

Our literary practices have been subjected to sustained, systematic inquiry. The fruits of such inquiry have been multiple, not least a penetrating understanding of the distinctive functions of literature. It is virtually a commonplace that the projection of imaginative possibilities is central to the function of many distinctively literary texts. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly appreciated that the projec-

tion of such possibilities is bound up with the iconic features in literature (see, e.g. Johansen 1996a, 1996b, 2002; Ljungberg 2004, 2007; Nänny 1986, 2001; White 1999, 2007). A pragmatic understanding of literary iconicity — of the iconic function of literary texts — especially one drawing upon the writings of C. S. Peirce, promises to enhance our understanding of such texts.¹

A word of warning is, however, needed at the outset. No attempt will be made here to distill the essence of such texts. Our literary practices are simply too heterogeneous, too variably conjoined to one another and also too variously related to other human practices to capture in a single formula or to subsume under a simple rubric.² Even so, the attempts to do so have almost always been illuminating, often even invaluable. These practices however assume too many forms and fulfill too many functions for these attempts ever to be successful on their own terms. This does not preclude us from making *use* of these attempts, in good pragmatic³ fashion, on our terms (Eco 1992; Rorty in Eco 1992). Insofar as literary scholars adopt one or another *reductive* paradigm, they do violence to the object of their inquiry. But since most literary theorists and scholars adopt their paradigms in only a provisional and often playful manner, such violence is, for the most part, avoided. They are, in effect (if not also in name), *pragmatists* in their approach to literature: at their best, their claims are contextual, historical, and attentive to the details of how texts *work*, how they specifically fulfill their purported or imputed functions. For such inquirers, purpose goes a great distance in defining context and, in turn, any given context makes up but one universe of discourse among countless other ones. Indeed, the literary ‘arts’ make up a vastly extended family in which the name of *art* itself is not infrequently disavowed.

The case of Virginia Woolf is instructive in bringing out another important facet of literary practice, namely, the *self-understanding* of the practitioner. She is self-consciously caught up in an intergenerational struggle. The struggle is not animated solely by an anxiety of influence driving younger authors to strong misreadings of their immediate predecessors, though such anxiety is far from negligible

1. For a pragmatist approach to art in general, see Shusterman 1992; and for such an approach to literature, see Poirier 1992. For a distinctively Peircean approach to literary texts, see Sheriff 1989.

2. I take one of the defining features of a pragmatist approach to literary texts to be that of starting with our actual historical practices in all of their heterogeneity and complexity (cf. Johansen 2002). Since I am attempting to exemplify in this paper such an approach, I begin by explicitly stressing our literary *practices*.

3. ‘Pragmatic’ is here used in its philosophical sense as the doctrine of pragmatism taught by C.S. Peirce, William James, John Dewey, George Santayana and Richard Rorty.

(Bloom 1973: 5; cf. Rorty 1982). There is at the center of this struggle an intensely felt need to create an imaginative space for hitherto unanticipated possibilities, unarticulated experiences, and what a psychoanalytic theorist calls the unthought known (cf. Bollas 1987: 9).⁴ This is, in Woolf's case, a self-consciously acknowledged struggle. In response to Arnold Bennett's ultimately dismissive critique of her novel *Jacob's Room*, she takes the dismissal for what it is — "a symptom of the respectful hostility which is the only healthy relation between old and young" (1988: 384; cf. Bennett 1923).⁵ The self-understanding of an author provides invaluable clues for that of human agents caught up in other human practices. For example, the way Woolf understands her own literary practices, including her somewhat inchoate aspirations and deliberate experiments, offers insights into how we as agents comprehend our engagement in the diverse practices of everyday life. This is so not merely in terms of Woolf as an essayist (a novelist reflecting somewhat theoretically in her essays on her craft) but also in terms of Woolf as the author of fiction. The relation of this agent to her practice provides, in effect, a diagram of relations of yet other agents to their practices, since the way artists stand to their practices provides us with nothing less than models for how we might stand to our experience. Such diagrams, such mappings of complex relationships, are invaluable for deepening or transforming self-understanding.

Without literature, then, we would be even more opaque to ourselves than we are. We would also likely be less accepting and forgiving, also (paradoxically) less exacting and challenging. To speak in the somewhat quaint terms by which Woolf identifies the intergenerational conflicts in British literature, the *Victorian* creation of character, the *Edwardian* elaboration of this figure, and the *Georgian* deconstruction of character in its traditional senses (especially Victorian and Edwardian) (Woolf 1988: 386–87), along with the de-theatricalization of the novel (Kundera 2006: 19–21), reconfigure fictive space and literary genres. Though deeply suspicious of the literary modes of portraying character, Woolf is not in doubt regarding the centrality of character in our experience:

In real life there is nothing that interests us more than character, that stirs us to the same extremes of love and anger, or that leads to such incessant and laborious speculations about the values, the reasons, and the meaning of existence itself. To

4. Bollas explicitly relates this to our experience of art: "the aesthetic moment constitutes part of the unthought known" (1992: 32).

5. This can be seen in countless cases, most perspicuously in the most prominent ones (e.g., the hostility of their predecessors to Italo Calvino, Milan Kundera, Carlos Fuentes, Octavio Paz, Toni Morrison, J. M. Coetzee, and William Gass as well as that of these authors themselves to their successors).

disagree about character is to differ in the depths of the being. It is to take different sides, to drift apart, to accept a purely formal intercourse for ever. (1988:387)⁶

Our experience of Mrs Brown (a character whom Woolf conjures for polemical purposes in this literary manifesto) calls into question the portrayal of character exemplified by Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, and H. G. Wells (Woolf's representative Edwardians, see, e.g., "Modern Novels", 1988:31). The actuality of such a personage calls for possibilities of portrayal nowhere yet found in literature or, indeed, in the other arts: "the essential thing has moved off, or on, and refuses to be contained any longer in such ill-fitting vestments as we provide" (1988:32–33). *Jacob's Room* is, for example, an experiment in which the pivotal absence of the titular character is that around which everything turns (he himself being in effect the room in which others come and go, the space through which they move and intersect). Jacob's room is, at once, a physical space and an integrative metaphor: the emptiness of this space — the absence of this character — both structures this narrative and defines its mood. The weighty solidity and unmistakable presence of character as portrayed by the Edwardians is here replaced by Woolf with fluidity, elusiveness, and absence. Even more radically, *The Waves* is also an experiment, one in which the solidity of separate, palpable characters evaporates into the mist of distinct, overlapping voices. The weighty absence of an individual who is being summoned by his older brother near the outset of the novel ("Ja—cob! Ja—cob! Archer shouted")⁷ is arguably not matched by the ethereal presence of voices playing off one another at various phases of their singular histories, but both experiments exhibit an artist striving to imagine lives otherwise than the conventions and traditions of literature have thus far sanctioned.

To *imagine* carrying on, not necessarily carrying forward, an inherited task,⁸ a historically configured practice (or set of practices), as often as not entails

6. "For what, after all is character — the way that Mrs Brown, for instance, reacts to her surroundings — when we cease to believe what we are told about her, and begin to search out her real meaning for ourselves? In the first place, her solidity disappears. ... She becomes a will-o'-the-wisp, a dancing light, an illumination gliding up the wall and out of the window ..." (1988:387).

7. E. M. Forster wrote of *Jacob's Room*: "In what sense Jacob is alive — in what sense any of Virginia Woolf's characters live — we have yet to determine. But that he exists, that he stands as does a monument is certain, and wherever he stands we recognize him for the same and are touched by his outline. ... The break with *Night and Day* and even with *The Voyage Out* is complete. A new type of fiction has swum into view ..." A new literary possibility has been realized.

8. In "Modern Novels", Woolf is quite explicit about this: "We do not come to write better [than our predecessors or elders]; all that we can be said to do is to keep moving, now a little in this

imagining how to adapt this task to changed circumstances, to reconfigure this practice in potentially disruptive ways. At any rate, literary practice is an *imaginative* undertaking in which, again, the very values animating the endeavor are, time and again, called into question.⁹ This interrogation does not stop short of the value of imagination itself: I know of no more illuminating treatments of *imagination as value* than Wallace Stevens's (1951) essay from which I have taken this expression. Imaginative literature has at critical junctures enacted a radical skepticism regarding the literary imagination. But, as Jeannette Winterson (1996; see, however, Kearney 1988) shows in her essay on imagination and reality, the most experimental and postmodern of contemporary authors are often among those who unabashedly reclaim imagination. Literature abstains from the assertoric and indulges in the hypothetical. In the work of literary artists, nonetheless, a thick sense of actuality is often deftly conjoined to an ambiguous evocation of possibility. Its meta-claim (its ordinarily implicit claim about the sentences woven into literary texts) is not "This has been" but "This *might* have been", not "This is the case" but "This *might be* the case". Whereas the indexical functions of even literary texts are bound up with pointing things out, the iconic and symbolic functions are typically disclosive of possibilities, not designative of actualities.¹⁰

2. Consciousness and pre-interpretation

The linguistic artifacts resulting from our literary practices admit various descriptions and, in response to the solidification and sedimentation of such descriptions, call forth critical (or polemical) redescrptions. Diaries and letters become seen as more than private documents; they are redescrbed as the unacknowledged products of literary engagement, though by individuals denied in their own time and

direction, now in that, but with a circular tendency should the whole course of the track be viewed from a sufficiently lofty pinnacle" (1988: 31).

9. The "history of literature is not", Kundera suggests, "a history of events but the *history of values*" (2007: 16). Of course, "the values of works of art are constantly being challenged, defended, judged, and judged again. But how to judge them? In the realm of art there are no precise measures for that. Each aesthetic judgment is a personal wager; but a wager that does not close off into its own subjectivity; that faces up to other judgments, seeks to be acknowledged, aspires to objectivity" (*ibid.*).

10. For C. S. Peirce's distinction between reagents and designatives as two types of index (or indexical signs), see *Collected Papers* (volume 8, paragraph 368, note 23); also Dines Johansen (2002: 35–38).

still often even in our own the status of author. So, too, comic books and graphic novels come to be read in a different light, assessed in uncustomary ways. On the other side, works of 'high' art are reinterpreted and redescribed in reference to the material and social conditions of both the artists who produced them and the audiences receptive of these works.

From a pragmatist perspective, the most illuminating *redescriptions* are almost always *functional* characterizations. The mapping of these distinct aspects is one way of identifying the task of literary scholars as literary texts fulfill, among other functions,¹¹ those of projecting possibilities, confronting actualities, and elaborating meanings.¹² These are, at any rate, the three functions on which I want to focus in the first part of this essay. But, even before doing so I want to make explicit two other significant features of literary texts. The first is that texts embody the selective character of human consciousness, the second that distinctively modern writings, especially novels, are designed to tear through what Milan Kundera (2006:92) calls "the curtain of pre-interpretation".

(1) 'Selective attention' is often used as a pejorative expression, but in truth it is an almost exact synonym for human consciousness (see, e.g., James 1981, 273–78; also Chapter XI).¹³ In reading or writing, as in life, we cannot help but be selective in being attentive, that is, in being aware or conscious.¹⁴ To look at anything

11. The functions of such texts are historically determined. They have more to do with how they are taken up in a history of reception than their time of inception. In *The Curtain*, Kundera insightfully recalls: "Rabelais hardly worried about whether he was a novelist or not, and Cervantes believed he was writing a sarcastic epilogue to the fantastical literature of the previous period; neither saw himself as a founder. It was only in retrospect, over time, that the practice of the art of the novel assigned them the role. Near the end of this reflection on the values constitutive of the novel, he asserts: "Torn away from the history of their various arts, there is not much left to works of art" 2006:167). At the very end of this work, we are told: "For the history of art is perishable. The babble of art is eternal" (2006: 168).

12. C. S. Peirce's categories of firstness, secondness, and thirdness provide, above all, a heuristic framework. My own investigation of literature makes use of this framework, evident here in identifying the firstness of possibility, the secondness of actuality, and the thirdness of meaning.

13. In *The Principles of Psychology*, William James writes: "The phenomena of selective attention and of deliberate will are of course patent examples of this choosing activity [characteristic of human consciousness]. But few of us are aware how incessantly it is at work in operations not ordinarily called by these names. Accentuation and Emphasis are present in every perception we have" (p.273).

14. In "Life and the Novelist", Woolf highlights the processes in the novelist's work of promiscuously receiving impressions and severely selecting among them. "The novelist — it is his distinction and his dander — is terribly exposed to life." This exposure takes the form of being

we must overlook much else. It becomes necessary to distinguish between ‘focal’ and ‘peripheral’ awareness (Polanyi 1962: 55–65), even more fully, to distinguish what is at the center, what is near or on the very edge of the periphery, and what is altogether outside the periphery of consciousness. In order to discern any object or event distinctly, we must — at least provisionally — monomaniacally focus our attention on just this object or event. In doing so, we miss virtually everything else. What is missing — what goes missing — is accordingly a *constitutive* feature of human consciousness. Among other forces and factors, art serves as a corrective to the disadvantageous consequences of this defining trait of human awareness.

In direct and indirect, also in intended and unwitting, ways, what is missing — what is unsaid or unremarked, untold or evaded — is what literary texts characteristically disclose. Referring to but one form of art (indeed, only one genre of literature), Kundera goes so far as to assert: “The novelist’s ambition is not to do something better than his predecessors but to see what they did not see, say what they did not say” (2006: 15). For instance, consider Edward Said’s reading in *Culture and Imperialism* of Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park*. In the background of this reading, there is the general realization that colonial schemes “tend to devalue other worlds and, perhaps more significantly from a retrospective point of view, they do not prevent or inhibit or give resistance to horrendously unattractive imperialist practices” (Said 1993: 81). In the foreground, we encounter Said’s observation that much of the action in the novel takes place while Sir Thomas is away tending to his estate in Antigua. Like so many other novels, this one “is very precisely about a series of small and large [or local and global] dislocations and relocations in space ...” (ibid.: 84). The threatened fortune of the family estate in a distant land is likely to be eclipsed for most readers by the arresting intrigues of a familial drama at Mansfield Park itself. But, once an interpreter such as Said underscores this, it is virtually impossible not to reflect upon the spheres being

ever susceptible to the multitudinous impressions of everyday life: “Taste, sound, movement, a few words here, a gesture there, a man coming in, a woman going out, even the motor car that passes in the street or the beggar who shuffles along the pavement, and all the reds and blues and lights and shades of the scene claim his attention and rouse his curiosity. He can no more cease to receive impressions than a fish in mid-ocean can cease to let water rush through his gills.” Such receptivity is however only half of the story. For “with toil and pause, in agony (like Flaubert), with struggle and rush, tumultuously (like Dostoevsky) they have mastered their perceptions, hardened them, and changed them into the fabrics of their art.” This is a severe and extreme process; indeed, “[s]o drastic is the process of selection that in the final state we can often find no trace of the actual scene upon which the chapter was based. For in that solitary room ... processes of the strangest kind are gone through. Life is subjected to a thousand disciplines and exercises” (1988: 131). As a result of being subjected to these, life is transmuted into art.

blocked out by the radiant orb in the more immediate foreground. What we at one time habitually overlooked — or what is not foregrounded by the narrator — is now something about which we are focally aware.

Or consider Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*: at the conclusion of this novel two characters recall their first visit to a brothel. At the end of the second chapter of Part One, the two characters have spent a delightful day with one another and, just as they are to part company, they chance to see "the left bank [where] a light is shining in the attic window of a low-built-house" (Kundera 2006: 151). The narrator does not at this juncture tell us where the two youths go. But it is difficult, if not impossible, to read the final pages without inferring that what is recalled so many years later is what the narrator left out of the earlier account. The power of art and, hence, of literature to disclose what is missing, what has been missed, what is systemically or habitually overlooked or denied, erased or effaced is linked to the three functions on which I am focusing.

(2) Failing to register the importance of an event or a gesture, even the salient features of readily observable affairs, is another trait synonymous of human consciousness. T. S. Eliot is not only instructive on this point but also helpful in providing a transition to another critical feature of literary texts calling for attention here. In "Dry Savages", II, he writes:

We had the experience but missed the meaning;
And approach to the meaning restores the experience
In a different form (1979: 34)

The other side of this is, however, possibly of equal or even greater significance: We have the meaning — more fully, we have in our possession, mostly as a result of inheritance, a scheme of intelligibility, a framework of interpretation — and, as a result of this inheritance or possession, we miss nothing less than the experience (cf. Cavell 2005). The very title of Milan Kundera's *The Curtain* alludes to this fatality, in particular in the section entitled "The Torn Curtain" (arguably a better title for the work as a whole than *The Curtain*). Here, he notes: "A magic curtain, woven of legends, hung before the world. Cervantes sent Don Quixote journeying and tore through the curtain. The world opened before the knight errant in all the comical nakedness of its prose" (2006: 92).¹⁵

15. "Poor Alonzo Quijada meant to elevate himself into the legendary figure of a knight-errant. Instead, for all of literary history, Cervantes succeeded in doing the opposite: he cast a legendary figure down: into the world of prose" (2006: 8). Kundera's explication of how he is using the word *prose* in this context is also worth recalling here: For him, "the word signifies not only a nonversified language; it also signifies the concrete, everyday, corporeal nature of life. So to say that the

Kundera (2006: 92) offers a helpful gloss on his organizing metaphor by adding that “the world, when it rushes toward us at the moment of our birth [and ever afterwards], is already made-up, masked, *reinterpreted* [preinterpreted?]”. Despite copying (rather than tearing through) “the curtain of pre-interpretation”, Eugène Delacroix’s famous painting *Liberty Leading the People* cannot be excluded from “what we call great painting”, but “a novel that glorifies such conventional poses as these, such hackneyed symbols, does exclude itself from the history of the novel”. For in the judgment of this novelist and theorist of the novel, this genre is defined by its refusal to copy the patterns and images, symbols and legends, woven into this curtain; stated positively, the novel is defined by its desire to tear through this curtain and to encounter the *actuality* of the world from which these schemes of pre-interpretation, these frameworks of antecedently articulated meanings, separate us. “For it is”, to quote Kundera (2006: 92), “by tearing through the curtain of pre-interpretation that Cervantes set the new art [of the novel] going; his destructive act echoes and extends to every novel worthy of the name; it is *the identifying sign of the art of the novel*”. The despotism of “story” is, from this perspective, tied to the insistence upon meaning. The insurgency of novelists against such despotism, undertaken in no small measure because of their captivation with “microscopic, laughably pointless actions”, is itself comprehensible only if we appreciate, at once, (i) the novelistic value of quotidian insignificance as so wonderfully demonstrated in Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* — which, as Kundera (2006: 11) argues, is “just one big manifold digression, one long festival of episodes ... stitched together by only a few eccentric characters” — *and* (ii) the novelistic suspicion of classically heroic figures and their frequently *tragic* fates.¹⁶ The value of suspending our drive to make sense out of the scenes and events in our lives or the lives of characters in novels is, given Kundera’s emphasis on the pointlessness so integral to everydayness, far from a widely appreciated novelistic or indeed existential value. Even so, the value of doing so can be seen as an integral part of the ongoing task of

novel is the art of prose is not to state the obvious; the word defines the deep sense of that art” (2006: 8).

16. “Don Quixote tells Sancho”, Kundera (2006: 9–10) reminds us, “that Homer and Virgil were describing characters not ‘as they were but rather as they must be, to stand as examples of virtue to future generations.’ Now Don Quixote himself is far from an example to follow. Characters in novels do not need to be admired for their virtues. They need to be understood, and that is a completely different matter. ... All we can do in the face of the ineluctable defeat called life is to try to understand it. That — that is the *raison d’être* of the art of the novel”.

reconciling us to the actual conditions of our finite existence. If this is so, then the secularity of the novel is, arguably, not incidental.¹⁷

Art and, in particular, literature does not so much provide us with a substitute for experience as with a distinctive mode of human experience in which the insistence upon meaning is, as often as not, frustrated as it is satisfied (cf. Runia 2006; Scott 2002). To encounter a work of art is to *experience* what it discloses, to confront what it problematizes, (as often as not) to be rendered a problem unto oneself. The transient, the ephemeral, the improvisational, the negligible, the pointless, the happenstance are memorably registered on their own account (simply for themselves). But, in being registered or recorded, they inevitably stand out against the recollection of the sublime patterns woven into the untornd curtain. They ironically acquire a degree of significance by being recollected against the never too distant background of the curtain of pre-interpretation. What is actually behind this curtain is always in some measure recalled against the background of this curtain, so the point of stressing pointlessness becomes immediately obvious when we recall, for example, *Matthew* 10:29, “And are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And [yet] one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father / But the very hairs on your head are numbered” (10: 29–30). Or, more problematically, Hamlet echoes in an exchange with Horatio, “there is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow” (*Hamlet* 5.2: 217). The everyday is not utterly devoid of significance: it is indeed a site in which the possibilities of novel, improvisational interpretation are realized in the teeth of entrenched and sanctified pre-interpretation.

The implosion of the interpretive frameworks so effectively protecting the done thing, the conventional patterns, is often at the center of our experience. Our inherited schemes of intelligibility and our traditional frameworks of meaning have themselves been rendered by events and experience, secular upheavals and existential crises, meaningless. Deliberate, painstaking attention to the manifestly ephemeral and the apparently insignificant can provide a counterweight here. In an example from Henry James on which William and Mary Gass focus (Gass and Gass 1999: 104), the array of objects displayed by the shopkeeper in *The Golden Bowl* (James 1981) — an array laid out by James himself in his detailed description of these seemingly random items — provides an occasion where fugitive meanings take shape and subtle ones exert themselves (even if they mostly escape explicit

17. Of course, religiously inclined and motivated authors (e.g., Graham Greene and Iris Murdoch) might also take themselves to be in their writings to be engaged in the task of encouraging their readers to come to an ever more candid acknowledgment of the actual conditions of human life. But, insofar as transcendent consolation for, and meaning in, human suffering is advocated by such authors, it is hard for many contemporary theorists to suppose that an unblinking acknowledgment is truly being fostered.

identification). The quotidian sites of even the most casual encounters and unremarkable exchanges can be those where human significance not only takes root but also bursts forth. Hence, Virginia Woolf (1988: 34) advises: “Let us not take for granted that life exists more in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small”. Or, as Kundera (2006: 167) stresses, Joyce’s *Ulysses* “can only be understood by someone familiar with the novel’s old passion for the mystery of the present moment, for the richness contained in a single second of life, for the existential scandal of insignificance”.

But, as this passage implies, earlier novels exhibit just such a passion. As Kundera (2006: 20–21) notes, “[o]ne of the most famous erotic scenes in literature [that involving Emma and Léon in *Madame Bovary*] is set off by an utter banality: a silly bore and his dogged chatter [the guide in the cathedral going on foolishly about the tombs and statues in the place where Emma has decided to break off her relationship with Léon]. In the theatre a great action could only be born of some other great action. The novel alone could reveal the immense, mysterious power of the pointless”. The significance — that is, the importance — of the chance encounter or observation, the unanticipated coalescence or interruption cannot, from the perspective of everyday life, thus from that of novelistic presentation, be gainsaid. The means by which such details are depicted in literary works include (as we will see) sentences in effect functioning as diagrams. Such sentences either connect the dots or, more likely, gently suggest *how* to do so; and they thereby fulfil their diagrammatic function.

Literature helps us to identify and, then, explore what we have missed, as often as not, what we have ourselves erased in our impatience to make sense of things. The novel in particular brings to our attention meanings in the making but also the makeshift strategies by which improvisational actors in unfamiliar circumstances (including all too familiar circumstances in which habitual responses or conventional proprieties inexplicably fail such agents) make sense of, as well as suspend their impulse to find meaning in, their lives and actions.

3. Iconic projections and actual traces

The formal properties of literary texts need to be connected to the experiential and literary values that animate readers and writers alike. The formal properties are never purely formal properties; they are always the identifiable properties of formed material (words, sentences, paragraphs, works). The shape and sound of words is far from inconsequential (cf. Gass 1996). For the most part, I have been up to now focusing on these experiential and literary values, in particular, that of coming to terms with what has been missed by the reader or has been withheld

by the narrator and also that of coming to comprehend the import of such matters as events and actions, characters and relationships. It is however time to turn our attention to the formal properties of literary texts as the indispensable means by which experiential values are realized, and, specifically, their iconic, indexical, and symbolic properties. One or another of these is likely to be predominant in a work of literature, but all three are almost certainly present, in however attenuated a form, in the writings to which we are drawn as readers and devoted as scholars (on this, see, e.g. Sheriff 1989, Schusterman 1992 or T.L. Short 2007). That is, each one of these functions is characteristically conjoined to the other two, so that (for example) the projection of possibility invites confrontations with actuality, just as such confrontation intimates what might have been and what might yet be (in a word, the possible). Iconic signs make possibilities available to us by their inherent forms, whereas indexical signs forcefully present actualities to us by their brute insistence. Symbols are the means by which meanings are elaborated, intelligibility is intimated, unfolded, and indeed contested. The functions of projecting possibility, confronting actuality, and weaving (but also unweaving) tapestries of meaning are realized in and through the iconic features of literary texts, at every level. The interplay of these functions exemplifies as well as anything else the interwoven processes so central to our *experience* of reading literary texts.

For our purposes, however, I will consider only three functions realized by means of the iconic properties of literary texts (the projection of possibility, the designation of actuality, and the intimation of intelligibility). Literary texts need not have as their *raison d'être* anything more than projection and exploration of possibilities as they are either designed to be or can be used as instruments of interrogation, means of investigation. The interrogative or heuristic function of literary texts encompasses exhibiting the *forms of possibility*, while the exhibition of such forms is intimately linked to the iconic features of literary texts. The most fantastic of such texts are often the most evocative of them. In exhibiting the barely imaginable, they frequently evoke the brutally actual. In any event, the *traces of actuality*, not just its evocations, are ineluctably present in literary texts. Quite apart from authorial intention or hermeneutic acknowledgment, a literary text is willy-nilly a confrontation with actuality; and, as such, it is shot through with traces of actuality: the *materiality* of texts, authors, and readers makes this inescapable.¹⁸ The bullet holes in the wall, the unmarked graves of the murdered, the

18. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf (1929 [1927], 43–44) asserts that “fiction is like a spider’s web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners. Often the attachment is scarcely perceptible; Shakespeare’s plays, for instance, seem to hang there complete by themselves. But when the web is pulled askew, hooked up at the edge, torn in the middle, one

telling scars of the beaten, and every other imaginable instance of indexical signs have their analogues in literary texts. The traces of actuality, no less than the forms of possibility, are intimately connected to the iconic features of literary texts. On virtually every page of every literary work, the indexical signs function not simply to evoke actualities but also (in their conjunction with iconic signs) to intimate possibilities. Book One of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1996: 7) opens by observing: "Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress". The sentence evokes the presence of countless young women whose natural beauty is far from diminished by humble attire. The traces of actuality are here legible (such women cast into such circumstances have always actually existed). The mere evocation of such a figure, however, conveys in the context of such a genre of literature a sense of possibility.

Even the literature of the absurd presupposes a background of meaning, if only to show how futile our inheritances and improvisations are as means of making sense out of selves and situations, actions and desires, hesitations and enthusiasms. The elaboration of significance is a salient feature, often even a defining trait, of many literary texts. Such elaboration underscores the struggle in which agents are fatefully caught up (the struggle to discern the meaning of their own actions and, ultimately, of their lives). Kundera (2006: 19) implies that, as children of Flaubert, novelists are typically engaged in 'de-theatricalizing' their genre, in 'de-dramatizing' ('de-balzacizing') it; put positively, they are endeavoring to dissolve an action, a gesture, or a response "into the running water of the everyday". It is precisely the iconic facets of such texts which enable them to exhibit the forms of possibility, to register the force of actuality, and to re-enact, even to reconfigure, the work of understanding, especially self-understanding. These functions of literary texts are, in the most exemplary cases, *integrated* ones. However distorted or unreliable, memory is a trace of actuality. *Something* has occurred and occurred in such a way as to leave tell-tale signs of its having taken place. Thus, however illogical or incoherent, memory is also (at least) an incipient sign by which past and present are connected in a potentially intelligible manner; put in another way, it is always an intimation of intelligibility. However accurate and buttressed by the corroboration of others, it is an exemplification of the imagination and, as such, a foretaste of what might be as much as an aftertaste of what has been.

remembers that these webs are not spun in midair by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of suffering human beings, and are attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in". Cf. Edward Said on "worldliness" of the text (e.g., in "The Politics of Knowledge").

4. The diagrammatic features of literary texts

It is, however, necessary to descend from this level of generality and to look at the way such texts *work*, in particular, to some of the iconic functions of literary texts. I would like to consider, above all else, the *diagrammatic* function of literary texts. In doing so, I will draw heavily upon the work of not only Charles S. Peirce but also several essays by William H. Gass.

Presupposing Peirce's most famous trichotomy of icon, index, and symbol as well as that of image, diagram, and metaphor, let us consider sentences and the larger units of literary texts as fulfilling a diagrammatic function. The basis for the distinction between image, diagram, and metaphor is the mode of firstness by which each one of them functions as an iconic sign.

A possibility alone is an Icon purely by virtue of its quality; and its object can only be a Firstness. But a sign may be *iconic*, that is, may represent its object mainly by its similarity, no matter what its mode of being. If a substantive be wanted, an iconic Representamen [or Sign] may be termed a *hypoicon*. Any material image, [such] as a painting, is largely conventional in its mode of representation; but in itself, without legend or label, it may be called a hypoicon. Hypoicons may roughly [be] divided according to the mode of Firstness which they partake. Those which partake the simple qualities, or First Firstnesses, are *images*; those which represent the relations, mainly dyadic, or so regarded, of the parts of one thing by analogous relations in their own parts, are *diagrams*; those which represent the representative character of a representamen by representing a parallelism in something else, are *metaphors*. (Peirce 1998:273–74)

This is unquestionably an exceedingly dense and convoluted passage. For our purpose, however, the main points are clear enough and the categorical distinctions are arguably suggestive and intriguing to curious readers. The distinction between icon and hypoicon is not especially relevant to our purpose; indeed, the only reason to bring it into play here is because it provides the context in which a tripartite distinction (image, diagram, and metaphor), quite pertinent to my pragmatic approach to literary texts, is articulated. Whether we call images, diagrams, and metaphors 'icons' or, more precisely from Peirce's perspective, 'hypoicons' is for us of little consequence; but what is crucial is the threefold distinction itself (Johansen 1996a). This distinction is drawn in terms of the degree of complexity constitutive of the species of icon (or hypoicon) in question, ranging from the least structurally complex (images) to the most complex (metaphors), with diagrams occupying an intermediate position. The paint sample is an 'image' of the paint in the can because it simply partakes of the visual quality of the substance in the container. The map is a 'diagram' of a terrain because the arrangement of the relationships in it are presented as analogous to that arrangement in the terrain itself.

Metaphors are structurally even more complex than diagrams (cf. Haley 1988; Hausman 1988).

Since our concern is with the sentence as conceivably a diagram, we can limit our attention to this species of icon (or hypoicon). The arrangement of the parts of the sentence are presented as providing clues for the arrangement of the parts of what the sentence purports to depict. In the foreground of such a species of sign is how one thing stands to another, in a more or less complex nexus of other relationships. Insofar as this is the case, the relationships presented in a diagram are predominantly dyadic or two-term (this house is next to this one and, in turn, this other house is next to the field). If the predominantly dyadic relations inherent in a sign allow it to signify the relations inherent in something else, then this is, in Peirce's terminology, a diagram. Sentences fit this definition of diagram.

In a literary text, the sentences inscribed across a page are at once verbal diagrams and, in however attenuated a form, spatial diagrams. As diagrams of such a hybrid character, they are capable of presenting spatial, temporal, and other relationships — but need not necessarily do so — though the spatial features of such verbal diagrams often bear anything but a straightforward relationship to the objects they suggest. Such inscribed diagrams are spatial figurations in which the most salient features of spatiality are in certain respects exploited and in other respects effaced or, at least, suspended. To take a simple example, the sentence 'The bowl was to the right of the scarf' verbally inverts the spatial relationship diagrammed in the sentence (the *bowl* in the linear sentence order standing to the left of the *scarf*). Ordinarily, sentences are but a detail or portion of such a diagram. They are analogous to various other types of diagrammatic (re)presentation, though as diagrams they almost certainly possess their own unique features. The narrative and, more broadly, literary imagination of the reader no less than the author is able to perceive (in a sense, to experience) what the literary text signifies. In the context of literary texts, sentences are somewhat peculiar diagrams in that their iconic force is on countless occasions strong enough to evoke in imaginable, thus perceptible (not just visible), form the object being diagrammed. It is as though by simply reading a map we are transported to the terrain mapped (cf. Ljungberg 2004).

Another analogy is illuminating here. The mathematical imagination essentially involves the construction of, and experimentation on, diagrams (cf. CP 3.560; Kant 1965:577), for the purpose of comprehending nothing other than the utterly abstract possibilities of purely formal relationships (relational forms). In turn, the literary imagination possessed by the competent reader as well as the skillful author involves the construction of, and experimentation, on verbal diagrams, for normally diverse and frequently obscure purposes. The relations of the words in a sentence to one another in effect diagram the relations of other things,

including as often as not those of how this object stands to that, how this event follows on that action, how this character is acting toward that one. But (contra Gass 1996) the focus on the sentence seems too microscopic, at least, too abridged. To make the central point about verbal diagrams concrete (especially as sentences in their conjunction with one another), consider this utterly remarkable sentence from *The Golden Bowl*, one of Henry James' most famous novels:

Of decent old gold, old silver, old bronze, of old chased and jewelry artistry, were the objects that, successively produced, that had ended by numerously dotting the counter, where the shopkeeper's fingers, with neat nails, touched them at moments, briefly, nervously, tenderly, as those of a chess player rest, a few seconds, over the board, on a figure he thinks he may move and then may not: small ancients, ornaments, pendants, locketts, brooches, buckles, pretexts for dim brilliants, bloodless rubies, pearls either too large or too opaque for value; miniatures mounted with diamonds that had ceased to dazzle; snuffboxes presented to — or by — the too-questionable great; cups, trays, taper-stands, suggestive of pawn-tickets, archaic and brown, that would themselves, if preserved, have been prized curiosities.¹⁹ (James 1984: 115).

This sentence functions not only diagrammatically but also metaphorically in the strictly Peircean sense.²⁰ That is, it offers unmistakable hints of its own representative office, providing nothing less than the inducement to attend to the parallelism defining the function of metaphor, at least for Peirce. This is to be expected. In literature, diagrammatization is, as Johansen (1996b: 52; 2002: 332–34, 339) notes, very often metaphorical. For it is frequently the process by which a thing is transposed from one domain to another (e.g., from three-dimensional space to a two-dimensional surface or from a perceptual field to a verbal description), also

19. In the poem by Adrienne Rich (“Mourning Picture”, 2002: 72) on which I will eventually focus, there is an analogous presentation of objects, in apparently random juxtaposition. It is the stanza in which the “narrator” of the poem identifies herself (the child for whom the parents, “under the lilac bush,” are mourning):

Out of my head, half-bursting,
still filling, the dream condenses –
shadows, crystals, ceilings, meadows, globes of dew.
Under the dull green of the lilacs, out in the light
carving each spoke of the pram, the turned porch-pillars,
under high early-summer clouds,
I am Effie, visible and invisible,
remembering and remembered.

20. *Diagrams*, as defined by Peirce, are signs representing “the relations, mainly dyadic, or so regarded, of the parts of one thing by analogous relations in their own parts”(CP 2.277).

one in which the transposition intimates a transfiguration (the need or simply the possibility of seeing one thing in the light of another).

To return to James' *The Golden Bowl*: the proprietor in the antique shop who lays before his customers now this object, now that (eventually the titular object itself — the golden bowl) provides an image of the author of the unfolding narrative who displays before his reader now this object, now that (better: now this scene, now that). And the author does so not so much by stringing words into sentences as by conjoining sentences to one another in such a way that these sentences and their parts, in their complex relationships to one another and to other texts, fulfill the functions of imagistic, diagrammatic, and metaphorical signs. At the semantic level, the minimal unit of literary composition is arguably the paragraph (though sentences of the length and complexity of the one just quoted are in effect paragraphs), for the paragraph alone offers a sufficiently detailed verbal diagram of some imaginable setting or sequence. The force and vitality of literary texts are in no small measure the result of the interplay among the imagistic, diagrammatic, and metaphorical functions of the verbal signs out of which literary texts are woven.

At the conclusion of their essay "The Architecture of the Sentence", William H. Gass and Mary Gass suggest:

At one end of the scale of the management of relations, there stands the mathematician ... On the other end is the architect, who [in contrast to the mathematician] works with relations realized in some material, in the connections of objects, in the concretions necessary to sense. (Gass and Gass 1999: 108)

But, just as their overriding attention to the sentence tends to foreshorten the theoretical imagination, so their exclusive concern with the built environment offers only a partial picture of represented space. Verbal diagrams are as often cartographical as they are architectural; moreover, they are as much wild spaces in which we are thrust as constructed surroundings in which we are contained. That is what Gass and Gass themselves (1999: 105) propose in reference to the passage from *The Golden Bowl* quoted above: "As we *enter* the sentence, we observe ..." (emphasis added). They fully intend the metaphor: we enter this sentence not unlike the manner in which we might enter the shop in which the golden bowl is seductively presented or some other space in which some other action *takes place* — indeed, in entering this sentence we are drawn more fully and intimately into the space of that shop. In contrast, some sentences throw us out of doors, others toss us off a deck into shockingly frigid water, still others open a secret passage to a hidden passageway, while yet other ones gently usher us into the vestibule of a cathedral; whereas some may constitute the massive walls and the vaulting ceiling of the cathedral itself.

5. The performative dimension of literary diagrams

The participatory understanding obtained from constructing geometric diagrams is, if anything, even stronger for the reader who is playing the score of the text by, as Roland Barthes (1977: 162) suggests, “gather[ing] it up as play, activity, production, practice”. The reasoner (the reader as reasoner) must take part in a process. Ironically, the seemingly abstract mode of geometrical reasoning (the kind of thinking involved in the construction of a proof) provides a model for such participation. The absolutely sharp distinction all too often drawn between knowing *that* and knowing *how* is rendered suspect when we consider that our knowledge *that* the interior angles of a triangle equal 180 degrees is derived from our knowing *how* to construct certain diagrams. It is rendered further suspect when we appreciate that, on the basis of the relationships made manifest in this species of icons, the geometer is able to deduce certain conclusions (i.e., to discover certain truths). The geometer has a hand (if only an imaginative one) in the construction of the diagrams in and through which the necessary properties of this type of geometrical figure are demonstrably established: the knower *qua* knower participates in a process of semiosis — moreover, a process in which distinct species of iconic signs play important roles. By virtue of this participation, the process acquires a depth of involvement, one ordinarily eliciting identification with the role being enacted (the task being undertaken), so that rational compulsion is taken to be a voluntary affair and even a personal achievement. Brute compulsion involves being moved by a purely external force, whereas rational compulsion (the kind of force experienced by the geometer in constructing a proof) operates primarily by means of rational agents identifying with certified or efficacious procedures. Accordingly, rational compulsion does not destroy human agency but is what rational agents as such acknowledge must be accepted or inferred.

What is true of geometric diagrams is hardly less true of the sentential ones making up literary texts. This becomes evident if we attend to the experience of reading, especially when reading itself takes the form of experiencing a text. “In order to have this experience ... one must”, Gass (1985: 227) notes, “learn to perform the text, say, sing, shout the words to oneself, give them, with *our minds, their body ...*”. In a manner recalling Peirce’s dialogical conception of human semiosis (the flow of signs always assuming, in however an attenuated form, the structure of a give-and-take between self and other), Gass suggests, “as we read we divide into a theatre” — that is, into the performer of and listener to the text: “there is the performer who shapes these silent sounds ... and there is the listener who hears them said, and who responds to their passion or their wisdom” (ibid.: 227).

Gass' characterization of reading as the performance of a text parallels Barthes' depiction of reading as playing a text mentioned above. Barthes sharply distinguishes *reading* as consumption from reading as *playing* with the text:

In fact, *reading*, in the sense of consuming, is far from *playing* with the text. 'Playing' must be understood here in all its polysemy: the text itself *plays* (like a door, like a machine with 'play') and the reader plays twice over, playing the Text as one plays a game, looking for a practice which re-produces it ... also playing the Text in the musical sense of the term. (1977: 162)

What Barthes means by *playing the text* seems close to what Gass intends by *performing* it. What both Barthes and Gass desire to highlight here might be even more sharply focused by considering a paradigm of diagrammatization as identified and analyzed by Peirce. When he introduced his existential graphs (an intricate system of logical symbols designed for the purpose of facilitating not mechanical inferences but minute analyses of logical processes),²¹ Peirce (CP 4.395; 431; 552) underscores the dialogical character of the process of inscribing and modifying this logical notation identifying (in some contexts) the graphist and the interpreter as the agents whose cooperation is requisite for the graphing (or diagramming) of the relations being analyzed. The logician who employs these graphs must play now the role of the graphist, now that of the interpreter. Analogously, the reader who encounters the interwoven inscriptions of a literary text must perform the text *and* observe at least aspects of the performance: reading requires nothing less than the enactment of these two roles. The reader as performer does not replace but rather joins the author in experimenting on possibilities inscribed in the relationship among the phonemes, words, phrases, and sentences themselves. Contra Barthes, the birth of the reader does not spell the death of the author (cf. Gass 1985: 265–88). Rather this birth inaugurates an even more intimate conspiracy in which (as the etymology of the word *conspiracy* implies) the rhythmic patterns of breathing of the one become more or less coordinated to those of the other.

21. That is, the Existential Graphs are a diagrammatic system enabling logicians to break inferential processes into their essential steps. As conceived and developed by Peirce, however, these steps are the acts by which either the graphist or the interpreter makes an inscription (an addition or erasure) on a diagram. In other words, they are formally dialogical, involving a give-and-take between graphist and interpreter (see Don Roberts 1973 and also Kenneth Laine Ketner 1981).

6. Conclusion

When verbal signs become arrestingly musical or visual, they have the power to evoke immediately felt qualities. When they are transferred from one semantic space to another, they have the capacity to alter our modes of comprehension and interpretation, to transform nothing less than our forms of consciousness and experience. Anytime such signs fulfill such functions they are either metaphorical or allied to metaphors. When the relations of verbal units and their myriad features provide the resources for signifying the relations of others things, their inscriptions (to be made meaningful) demand our re-inscription of them and, in turn, our re-inscriptions almost always entail transcriptions — transpositions, transmutations. At the conclusion of *Jacob's Room*, Woolf has one of the characters (Betty Flanders) ask another:

‘What am I to do with these, Mr. Bonamy?’
She held out a pair of Jacob's old shoes. (1978: 176)

The shoes are thickly metaphorical, possibly intimating a room or a coffin, the shell of the crab from a very early scene in the novel and the envelopes in which a variety of missives have arrived. But the two short sentences, set side by side, with which the novel concludes intimate two mirror-image objects, enclosed with a question. The most commonplace of objects, in their residual presence and uncertain future, are held before the reader, as assuredly as Flanders holds them up for Bonamy to consider. The shoes of the young man lost in war are held up to Bonamy and, thereby, to us the readers, the room missing its occupant now forever is reconfigured as Flanders holds them up for Bonamy to consider.

One way of understanding how this process of re-inscription and transcription goes on is to map it onto what Peirce says of such logical symbolization as that of his existential graphs. The “moving-picture of thought” (CP 4.11) in its strictly logical sense provides us with a way of imagining — of imaging — the moving picture of thought in its more sensuous, immediate, and experiential sense. The interwoven actions *performed* by the readers of literary texts are, in simplified form, made manifest in the interchange between graphist and interpreter. But, on Peirce's (CP 4.431) account, interpreters are themselves graphists: they can intelligently observe, thoughtfully consider, only what they have themselves re-inscribed and, in doing so, have transcribed.

The reader no less than the author figures things out²² — simply figures them in the first place and reconfigures them thereafter. In “making arrangements out of arrangements” (Gass 1985:227), in other words, in constructing diagrams out of words and other features of language (from the sonorous to the syntactical, from the shapes of letters to figures of speech) — readers conspiring with authors assist in projecting forms of possibility, discerning traces of actuality, and elaborating intimations of intelligibility woven into the design of sentences and other textual units. In *performing* texts (in reading as performance), including experimenting on the diagrams made manifest and pivotal by our own performances, the feel of qualitative immediacies, the intricacies of especially complex patterns, and the disclosure of significant connections are realized. The qualities, relations, and parallels serving to ground the significance of images, diagrams, and metaphors are mobilized to exhibit the qualities, relations, and conjunctions of unimaginably diverse and myriad things and events, actors and dramas, scenes and sequences. The semantic spaces hollowed out by the work of words are, by virtue above all of verbs, performative sites. More fully, they are performative spaces (or agential arenas) in which imaginative possibilities are continually being realized and experiential actualities are fatefully being inscribed, in which immediate qualities are felt and indeed savored as well as distant affinities rendered intimate and suggestive. That is, they are spaces not only hollowed out but also filled up with the work of words, the work to which their performance in the act of reading them commits us. The enactment of the verbs is, in sum, the diagramming of an action or sequence of actions. To render this concrete, consider the opening lines of Adrienne Rich’s “Mourning Picture” in which Effie, the dead daughter of a couple speaks:

They have carried the mahogany chair and the cane rocker
Out under the lilac bush,
And my father and my mother sit there, in dark clothes. (Rich 2002:72)

To read these opening lines properly is to carry these words — to bear their meaning and indeed their weight — in a manner similar to those of the figures in the poem itself. Moreover, it is to sit under these lines — to inhabit the space of these sentences — as the father and mother of the narrator sit under the lilac bush. This might strike some of you as without adequate warrant in the words themselves. But, insofar as these words are variously iconic, I imagine such habitation of them

22. “What we’ve done [in reading closely but also imaginatively a text] ... is to reenact the idealized method of its composition. We have made explicit the nature of its verbal choices by examining some of those which might have been made instead, as if we were translating English into English” (Gass 1985:225).

as they afford is truly warranted, by the qualities, relations, and parallels *inherent in* the words themselves. The power and significance of literature would be hard, if not impossible, to explain without literary works being able to provide nothing less than imaginative habitations. Such imaginative habitations are dependent on the iconic features of literary texts, performatively projected and enacted.

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The bell jar, the maze and the mural

Diagrammatic figurations as textual performance

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The practices and processes by which various forms of signs are generated, for example, the cartographical procedure by which maps are drawn, more generally, the diagrammatic ones by which networks of relationships are iconically represented, are themselves *performances* (maps are always both the result of mappings and the impetus for re-mappings). Literary texts provide us with unique resources for exploring, among other matters, the performative dimensions of these complex procedures, turning them into stages on which subjectivity is played out. Looking at texts by John Banville (*The Sea*), Carole Shields (*Larry's Party*) and Michael Ondaatje (*In the Skin of a Lion*), I will argue that diagrammatic figurations in narrative texts involve not only performance and performativity but also strongly enhance the complex interaction between narrativity and visuality as they transform the text into a stage on which textual activity is performed, (1) as a dramatic dialogue between writer, text and reader and (2) in the dramatic and visual positionings of agents within the text itself. Three kinds of textual performance of subjectivity can be discerned in the diagrammatic figurations in these three novels: on the diegetic level, as the subjectivity performed by the characters and, especially, the narrators as instances of performativity that is established and maintained in relation to both author and reader; on the level of the author, whose subjectivity is textually performed as self-expression; finally, on the level of reception, as the subjectivity of the reader is itself established performatively in the act of reading.

1. Introduction

What is it that the insertion of figurative elements, whether rhetorical, thematic or structural, does to literary texts, and how do such verbal and visual diagrams relate to one another? What does the confrontation of verbal and visual signs bring to a

text and how does such a text *work*? By work I mean here its performative power to create what Robert Stam (2007: 10) in a different context has called “a new state of affairs”: although literary texts always create new “states of affairs”, the introduction of visual elements radicalizes this process as it opens up the text for the new sign activity that such interaction between different signs necessarily produces.¹ Moreover, it involves a crossover between the boundaries among different semiotic systems, as a kind of cross-space mapping of different domains (cf. Fauconier 1997). Such cross-space mapping not only accentuates the specificity of each medium as the “new state of affairs” is generated but it also brings to the fore the complex relationship between narrativity and visuality. How does the visual write itself, and how can writers deploy visuality in their narratives? This is an important field of study since visual — and therefore spatial — elements arguably open up the text to visual metaphors enhancing the narrative’s polyphony. But what is it in the processes and practices of such mappings that gives narrative texts their iconic force, that is, that facilitates ‘viewing’ texts, as well as ‘reading’ images? How do these visual aspects of texts allow us to ‘see’, in the sense of uncovering underlying textual meaning? How can we gauge such a crossover? And what, if anything, do narrativity and visuality have in common?

Suggesting that what brings them together is the visual act, Mieke Bal traces her interest in the visuality of texts and the narrativity of images to the moment when she realized that

[s]ubjectivity is formed by a perpetual adjustment of images passing before the subject, who, as focalizer, makes them into a whole that is comprehensible because it is continuous. Having a certain continuity in one’s thought depends, at a level more subliminal than conscious, on having a certain continuity in one’s images. (Bal 2004: 1289)

Creating continuity in one’s thoughts means charting or diagramming space, mapping one’s images into a context. But continuity is not the same as coherence: as Bal goes on to point out, it is precisely what *eludes* coherence that triggers our curiosity and our fascination because it opens up never-ending chains of possibilities for interpretation. This is, I would suggest, what constitutes the performative power of diagrams such as maps and other diagrammatic figurations in literary texts: by causing disruptions in the continuity, they not only force us, as subjects, to visually position ourselves vis-à-vis such disruptions but, in so doing, also create

1. Erika Fischer-Lichte (2004) differentiates three different kinds of performativity, namely performativity in the weak sense, that something is one by someone saying it; in the strong sense, whereby language creates a new reality against a backdrop of stable conventions; and in the radical sense, by which all these processes create a new social reality.

new realities beyond and outside the presupposition of linearity (e.g. of linguistic texts, of series of events). This is where the concept of focalization² — the relation between the subject and object of perception — affects narrative as a discourse genre. Moreover, it produces valuable insights into how discourse functions as a semiotic system and therefore provides a key to a pictorial narratology that keeps the dynamic gap between literary and visual imagery alive (cf. Bal 2004: 1290).

Although Bal is referring to how to ‘read’ images, I would argue that this also applies to how we read, or rather: how we ‘view’ texts as it encourages us to go beyond the linearity of texts to get to the spatial structure outside linear plot, that is, to its staging and its figuration of the issues at stake. Such a staging involves not only the way a skilled author constructs and deploys his or her literary universe by positioning the work’s various characters. It also concerns how the skillful reader is able to perceive and often experience the possibilities for understanding, or the emotional responses that are opened up by the text, what the text is trying to evoke, which is why experimenting with the text’s various properties is closely related to subjectivity.

The foremost function of literature is arguably what Dines Johansen calls “imaginary experiments with experience” (2002: 431). So viewed, a literary text articulates a diagram outlining a version of the human condition, because

literary texts are analogues, that is, iconic signs, of whatever states of affairs in the world they are. They are however also diagrams of subjectivity, of the infinite vicissitudes of human desire. And even if, at least, in principle every utterance (but not every sentence or proposition) is unique, is produced as an individual action at a given time and place, utterances, and specifically literary texts, are recognizable diagrams and orchestrations of a limited number of fears, anxieties, and desires. (Johansen 2002: 249)

That is why diagrams and diagrammatic figurations are such useful instruments for interpreting the dynamism in literary and other texts. They allow the reader, by following the hints and instructions that lie buried in its textual structure, to see what is at stake in a particular text (cf. Ljungberg 2003). They help us to explore, to realize subjectively textual potentialities and even to project seemingly ungrounded possibilities. The diagrammatic character of the literary work is even inscribed already in the way sentences are structured on the page as spatial

2. I use focalization in the sense of Mieke Bal, in which a narrative must have a “subject of focalization” (2002: 42) and which contrasts with Genette’s ‘zéro focalization’ as Bal argues that a narrative can never be unfocalized and thus ‘neutral’ as suggested by Genette (1980: 189). This is, as she points out, “contingent upon the endorsement of the performative notion of meaning production in and through subjectivity”.

diagrams or as projected possibilities. As Fredrik Stjernfelt (2007: 349) points out, diagrammatization — or schematization — is not a reduction; rather, it creates the gain, since “the schematic character of the literary work lies already in its basic linguistic schematization of meaning. Schematization of a literary text permits thought economy, plasticity of reference as well as makes experimentation possible”. Such condensation of structure³ permits new and unexpected meanings to be generated through novel juxtapositions and combinations. The use of diagrams and diagrammatic figurations in texts therefore exceeds representation as it implies an ongoing process of dialogic performance and processuality.

That is also why the diagrammatic feature of literary texts defines performative sites.⁴ As the meaningful and dialogic interaction between reader and text and, in turn, reader and world, literary interpretation is *performative*. I am using performative here, following J. L. Austin and others, to designate that dimension of human utterance or discourse which generates new ‘realities’ or, new “states of affairs”, as Stam (2007: 10) calls it. This something that texts do as they project new narrated spaces as commonly contested areas of exploration, cognition and interpretation. Moreover, performance and representation are inseparably intertwined. Peircean semiotics is particularly relevant in this context, especially since semiosis is therein conceived as an open-ended series of interpretants. Signs that do not represent are a contradiction in terms and cognition is never unmediated but is always a dynamic process by which one sign generates another in dialogue, moving from one interpretant to the next (Santaella 2003: 68). The focus is on the second-person situated in a performative context, the addressee who defines the speech-act as directed both to an implicit and explicit addressee.

Literary texts consist not only of scenes concerning class- and culture-specific subjects but are themselves the very stages on which subjectivity is played out, discursively and dramatically interacting with others (cf. Colapietro 1999: 21). The subject position is therefore in itself a place which is defined by the role-playing of a socially and historically situated subject in a particular context — but whose positioning can be diagrammatically manipulated and experimented on. Given that the subject is enmeshed in the various contexts in which s/he is perform-

3. Such condensation of structure could in fact be compared to what Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (2002: 312) call ‘compression’ and which they describe as “the imaginative transformation of elements and structure in an integration network as they are projected to the blend”. Many thanks to Margaret Freeman for suggesting this possibility to me.

4. As Vincent Colapietro (in this volume) argues, both Roland Barthes’ concept of “playing the text” and William Gass’ of performing it highlights the performative process of diagrammatization in reading.

ing according to previously scripted roles and rituals, the ‘objective’ element in subjectivity — as culturally embedded and as performed in constant interchange with and requiring the participation of its environment — opens yet larger contextual spaces to consider. Subjectivity is coterminous with intersubjectivity and therefore implies constant negotiation of position, place, and boundaries, which emphasizes its fluid and transitory character (Bakhtin 1993). One could go even further, beyond the subject-object framework, and look at the space within which these negotiations and strategic dances are being performed by responsive agents as dynamic fields of meaning production in which the agency of any identifiable presence is intertwined with that of other agencies — an “agential space”.⁵

Let us look at how these strategic dances are enacted as textual performance, and how the subject-object framework is being explicitly thematized in very different ways in three contemporary novels — John Banville’s *The Sea*, Carol Shields’ *Larry’s Party* and Michael Ondaatje’s *In the Skin of a Lion* — which all foreground the visual aspects of the formation of subjectivity. Three kinds of textual performance of subjectivity will be explored:

- on the diegetic level, as the subjectivity performed by the characters and especially the narrators as instances of performativity that is established and maintained in relation to both author and reader;
- on the level of the author, whose subjectivity is textually performed as self-expression; finally,
- on the level of reception, as the subjectivity of the reader is itself established performatively in the act of reading.

Though very disparate as to both their general focus and structure, these novels all concern human beings who are predominantly watchers and onlookers to the world. Their acts of looking become speech acts, performatively willing the world into being but doing this to various degrees and with various outcomes. Whereas John Banville’s scopic protagonist — who sees the world as through a looking glass — objectifies it, diagrammatically performing his predicament of being isolated in his virtual bell jar, Carol Shields has the fifteen mazes which adorn each chapter of *Larry’s Party* function not only as metaphors but also to diagram certain aspects of her protagonist’s subjectivity. Michael Ondaatje’s dazzling gallery of characters, finally, offers a kaleidoscopic mural of how migrants enter language and society by increasingly transgressing the boundaries of a seemingly rigid subject-object framework to assume responsibility as implicated agents who make things happen and have things happen to them.

5. I owe this suggestion to Vincent Colapietro.

2. Banville's scopic subject

When John Banville has Max Morden, the protagonist and I-narrator of his novel *The Sea* (2005), revisit Ballyless, the seaside village where he grew up as a child, this seems at first to provide Morden with a place to escape from his wife Anna's recent death. But as it turns out, Morden's visit is not a nostalgic return to a blissful past. Instead, he is returning to the scene of a distant trauma, the death of Chloe, his first love who — seemingly inexplicably — walked straight out into the sea and drowned herself together with her twin brother. The narrative interweaves this traumatic event with the recent death of Morden's wife: intermingling memories of distant and very immediate losses are often leading and even cutting into one another, erasing the boundaries between 'actual' and fictive memories. Max is haunted by the uneasy memories of his own role in these events, especially since the twins' tragic death hinges on a huge misunderstanding. At that time a boy living under less prosperous circumstances, he had been very impressed by the attention he received from the Graces, the twins' much admired upper-class family. Observing what he interpreted as indications of a heterosexual affair between the governess and the twins' father, Max spread the rumour of the affair, thereby wishing to make himself important. This triggered a disastrous course of events, leading to the twins' death by drowning and the parents' separation. Fifty years after the event — fifty years too late — Max meets the governess again only to learn that he had misinterpreted the scene he had been a witness to: the affair had been between the governess and the mother.

Returning to Ballyless has Morden spiral down into a problematic childhood and an adult past in which things have not worked out the way he wished, resulting in a mediocre career and a middle age which, after the loss of Anna, does not seem to offer him much to hope for. In ways often reminiscent of W. G. Sebald — whose writing he greatly admires, as he admits in an interview (Barry 2005)⁶ — Banville maps Morden's life with a Sebaldian elegiac stance, moving his narrative through time in ways suggesting those of the sea. Surging in "smooth rolling swells" and pulling back, the narration iconically enacts its underlying impulses of resistance and surrender to a largely indifferent world. What Banville's text seems to act out here is the extent to which the incidents we subjectively experience as the most dramatic — and traumatic — ones in our lives mean little to the world.

6. In the Barry (2005) interview, Banville says that "the early death of W.G. Sebald was a disaster for literature" as Sebald was doing "something entirely new, forging a novel synthesis — all puns intended — and I believe would have done wonders, had he lived. His death is the most significant event in contemporary letters".

Our interior turmoil has no equivalent in the world around us: our subjective and personal world may have been torn apart but the exterior world remains largely unimpressed. Instead, it is rather as if one is “lifted briefly and carried a little way toward the shore and then was set down on [one’s] feet as before, as if nothing had happened. And indeed nothing had happened, a momentous nothing, just another of the great world’s shrugs of indifference” (2005: 263).

This relationship, between subjective experience and the surrounding “indifferent” world, is what is staged by the novel’s narrative structure and textual rhythm. Stephen Narain suggests (2006) that Banville shapes the text’s rhythm to “train[...] people to read differently, pacing his readers to the meter of his language” which he considers a partly stylistic issue. I would instead argue that this is not only a stylistic feature addressing readers but one that turns the text into performance. So viewed, what Narain calls the narrator’s “sometimes-excessive attention to detail” is precisely the textual enactment of Max’s desire for a return to an unproblematic and idyllic past that is no longer possible. One such instance is, e.g., when Max, talking about his childhood and the experiences that influenced the formation of his subjectivity, observes that it was “different” in character:

It was so much then a matter simply of accumulation, of taking things — new experiences, new emotions — and applying them like so many polished tiles to what would someday be the marvelously finished pavilion of the self. (Banville 2005: 144)

Yet, this “pavilion of the self” resonating in Morden’s preoccupation with rites of passage is performed ironically in the text, reflecting precisely on what fissured and fractured constructs our identities are and how little the self is what Freud called “master in its own house” (1966: 353). As Banville shows, Max’s subjectivity is formed as a result of close attention to the Grace family and through his own limited vision of what they represent: the father’s masculinity, the mother’s ambiguous femininity, to Chloë’s precocious sexuality and her brother Myles’ autistic personality. Not only do the presences of these people strangely reverberate in Max’s efforts to deal with his own wife’s death as events tangle into one another, they also enhance the impression of Max as a conglomerate of disparate parts, made up of bits and pieces chosen by him from environments which he felt attracted to but never felt entirely comfortable with.

By giving Morden the position of an eminently visual viewer, Banville seems to emphasize Bal’s (2004: 1290) observation that the viewer’s position can “shift back and forth in variable degrees from textual focalizer to erotic voyeur”. Max’s subjectivity is formed predominantly by looking. His stance is partly motivated by his profession as an art historian and critic who needs to bring visuality and narrativity together. But Banville also plays on Morden’s use of the visual clichés

of his profession,⁷ describing something as being “the vanishing point upon which everything converges”, comparing women to Duccio madonnas or Bonnard portraits, scenes from the past reminiscent of paintings by de la Tour or Vermeer. This seems to qualify him as ‘gazer’, indeed an “erotic voyeur” watching the *tableaux* of his memory without being able to decipher their true meaning:

Memory dislikes motion, preferring to hold things still, and as with so many of these remembered scenes I see this one as a tableau. Rose stands bent forward from the waist with her hands on her knees, her hair hanging down from her face in a long black shining wedge dripping with soap suds. She is barefoot, I see her toes in the long grass... Mrs. Grace wears a blue satin dressing gown and delicate blue slippers, bringing an incongruous breath of the boudoir into the out-of-doors. Her hair is pinned back at the ear with two tortoise-shell clasps, or slides, I think they were called. It is apparent she is not long out of bed, and in the morning light her face has a raw, roughly sculpted look. She stands in the very pose of Vermeer’s maid with the milk jug, her head and her left shoulder inclined, one hand cupped under the heavy fall of Rose’s hair... (Banville 2005: 222)

To what extent did he, as a boy, understand the erotic scene between Rose, the governess, and the twins’ mother he was watching? How does he read this scene as an adult, retrospectively, since it obviously lingers in his memory? Morden’s attempt to make this *tableau* comparable to a Vermeer painting is characteristic of his problems of interpreting reality, which are at the root of his problems as a subject. His refusal to engage with the world is also at the root of his professional failure as an art critic, which seems to derive from his inability to deduce. In *deducing* what are the observable consequences of some hypothesis (this hypothesis being itself derived by a process of abduction), one is brought to the place where indexical signs can exert a truly critical function. This comes to the fore in the scene he calls up from his past to “will it” by an act of looking into a fictional mould he finds suitable but without deducing the significance of the scene (as opposed to the informed reader’s response).

The failure to deduce in order to add to his conceptual understanding of reality is what causes Morden’s incapacity to comprehend the actual world and which stands in stark contrast to the talent of his wife. Anna does not turn away from reality: she possesses what her husband jealously calls “a special gift, the

7. For the danger of confusing discussion of visuality and visual perception, which is I would argue is what Morden does, see Mieke Bal’s (2002: 17) essay “Visual essentialism and the object of visual culture” in which she argues that, contrary to the clichés employed in art historian descriptions, visuality must “question modes of looking and the privileging of looking itself, as well as the idea that looking is based on one sense only (vision is not visual perception)”.

disenchanted — or disenchanting eye” (Banville 2005: 174). It is significant that she is a photographer, dealing precisely with photography’s indelibly indexical relationship to the actual world — which Morden mentions in passing, with a dismissive “she was trying to be a photographer”. Instead, her gifted “disenchanted — and disenchanting — eye” magically cuts through surfaces, finding in the photos she takes of the sick, misshaped and wounded in the hospital where she is being treated for terminal cancer, her “indictment” of “everything” (Banville 2005: 182–83).

In this textual performance, the diagrammatic figuration stages the I-narrator vs other characters to demonstrate the dysfunctionality of a traumatized subject-object relationship. As we saw above, subjectivity always entails objectivity, since nothing takes place in isolation but in a social and interactive context. Indeed, as Colapietro (1999: 21) argues, subjectivity only functions in relation to objectivity, since “subject positions are always objective affairs even if they are the results of what subjects do, feel and imagine”. This subject-object interaction is what Morden refuses: both literally and figuratively retreating to an isolated perspective from which the world can be viewed without involvement, he looks backwards at a mute past which can be reconstructed at will. He does not even seem to want to actively participate in his own tale: he remains an onlooker and a gazer, the minor indistinct character he has always considered himself to be. He is unable to act responsibly and therefore refuses to take responsibility for his actions, just as he does not intervene when the twins walk out into the sea to drown themselves but remains motionless on the beach, watching. To him, life seems as if held in instances of non-motion — in contrast to the sea’s ever changing, ever shifting character which frames the novel, part of an evolving world which he instantly cloaks in clichés or professional jargon.⁸

In semiotic terms Max Morden is, as a subject, incarcerated in his self-referential iconic bubble as an antecedently and absolutely fixed structure vs an evolving structure which is constantly revised. The iconic sign needs the index as a sign of otherness, of second-personhood but also as a sign of confirmation, of reference. Banville’s novel can therefore be seen as diagrammatically performing Morden’s predicament of being isolated in his virtual bell jar, and thus pointing to the dangers and problematics inherent in the traditional paradigm of the subject-object framework. When the interchange between subject and object is lacking, the

8. In an interview, Banville expressed surprised at the liking many readers seem to have for Morden as he himself does not find him particularly sympathetic, remarking that “It is, I suppose, my failure that the sadness and desperate self-protectiveness of these characters is not more apparent. For my, shamefaced, part, I regard my novels as overly emotional and far too hot. But who am I to pass judgment? The books are in the public domain, and I can no longer claim, nor would I wish to claim, proprietorship over them”(Barry 2005).

subject can only enact the “fears, anxieties, and desires” (cf. Johansen 2002:249) enclosed in his (or her) panoptic cocoon.

Morden represents the modern concept of subjectivity gone awry in an uneven and deadlocked subject–object relation. The classical Cartesian split between body and mind is even literally enacted in the text, when Morden associates Magritte’s well-known painting of feet with his own feet, which appear to him “like specimen displayed under glass” (Banville 2005: 222–223). The latter image is indeed highly iconic as it reflects Morden’s alienated sense of self, of being partitioned off from reality despite his earlier attempts to engage with it. It also depicts his scopic relationship with the world in which he prefers to turn people into objects — to stop them from changing, disappearing and dying: “What are living beings, compared to the enduring intensity of mere things?” he asks himself. The deaths of Chloe and her twin brother seem to have put an end to the “immanence of all things” and turned the world “into an objective entity”. Banville thus fashions Max Morden’s scopic subjectivity as an escape to avoid such misunderstandings.

But *The Sea* is predominantly a novel self-reflexively exploring the potential of writing in general and Banville’s own undertaking in particular. By placing his character virtually behind glass, behind a “pane” as it were — which, as William Gass (1996:33) points out, is “the idea of ‘glass’, of separated seeing, of the distortions of the medium, its breakage, its discoloration, its framing, that dominates and determines the eye” — Banville comments on the writing process. He also reflects on the subjectivity of the writer who, more than anyone, knows “the fragility of knowledge that gets stressed, the importance and limitations of point of view”. The “pane” acts to separate the writer from the world “by a transparent sheet of cruelty, as though its plane were a piece of paper” (Gass 1996: 33): it enacts the writer’s subjectivity as self-expression in the diagrammatical figurations of his or her textual performance. That is how I suggest that Morden, who is desperately trying to finish a book on art history, could be read, namely as Banville’s ironic and critical reflection on his own *métier* (and on creative activity in general). As Gass has observed, in order to deal with the world, creative humans tend to reduce it to a more maneuverable size: to a stage to act on, to a canvas to paint it onto, to a screen full of images or, for him, as a writer, to a page on which he can “contemplate the world through words”. In *The Sea*, Banville seems to be doing precisely that: by having the text diagrammatically perform Morden’s grasping for meaning as he is “engaging in a constant babble against the encroaching dark” (Banville interview), he ironically comments both on the human predicament and on his own literary enterprise.

3. A/Mazing Spaces

Whereas Banville's narrator Max Morden predominantly remembers his life as a series of *tableaux*, the fifteen chapters in Carol Shields' *Larry's Party* about the twenty years leading up to the novel's actual party present themselves as fifteen segments out of Larry Weller's life. Adorned with a maze and a laconic title such as "Larry's Love, 1978", "Larry's Folks, 1980", "Larry's Words, 1981" — not unlike the titles in Shields' *The Stone Diaries* (1994) — these segments allow us to scrutinize the protagonist chronologically and thematically. Larry himself is a rather non-descript average Canadian, who muddles through the maze of his life, metaphorically and literally, as his profession is that of a landscape designer and a builder of garden mazes. This is actually his one great passion, triggered by once having lost himself in the famous Hampton Court hedge maze during his honeymoon and one which he now indulges in professionally through his company A/Mazing Space Inc.

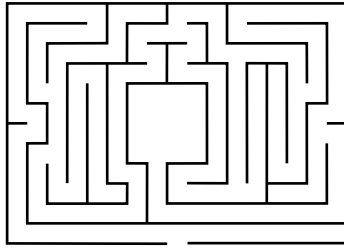


Figure 1. Diagram of the Hampton Court hedge maze

The maze theme is announced already by the epigraph at the outset of the novel which asks: "What is this mighty labyrinth — the earth / But a wild maze the moment of our birth?" With these self-reflexive "Reflections on Walking in the Maze at Hampton Court" from *British Magazine* in 1747, Shields invites us to think of life as a maze in the shape of a delimited spatio-temporal diagram through which we must negotiate our passages and positions. In her novel, these maze diagrams are pointedly self-reflexive and iconically reflect the structure of the narrative on (at least) four levels:

- on the level of story as the mazes reflect the various stages in Larry's life at particular points in time and space. They chart his development from a young man in Winnipeg coming from a narrow-minded lower middle-class background and his first marriage through his first divorce, a second marriage and its breakdown. By that time, Larry has become a socially adapted and outgoing Torontonion — who finds his way back to his first wife again, which has him, in a sense, exit the story finding himself with the same relationship

with which the story began though both matured and transformed. That is, similarly to completing the passage through the Hampton Court maze (which started his 'maze-craze' in the first place), the mazes suggest one of the story's major underlying themes, that of losing and finding love.

- on the level of form, as the mazes change from their initial squarish, more clearcut shapes into more organic, open and brain-like structures to match the protagonist's development from a young non-descript Canadian man to the more fully developed Larry we meet at the party he organizes twenty years later.
- on the level of production, as they self-consciously reflect Shields' writing strategy: firstly, since the maze theme allows her to double back on events and comment on them in voices that are different in each of the novel's fifteen mazes; secondly, maze-making, which is traditionally found in public places, has their creators make their inner ideas a public act, as do writers.
- on the level of reception, as a game played between the reader and the author, who invites the reader to search for additional and more profound meaning in the mazes than is offered by the text.

When, at the end of the novel, Larry Weller sits at his dinner table, surrounded by his two ex-wives, a girlfriend, a Spanish horticulturist, his older sister and her partner, a rich client and his wife, waiting for something to happen, he realizes that he is still "a man with a few loose parts: a brain, for instance, with a hinge he can flip open" (Shields 1997:330). Even though Larry only sometimes has the feeling that he is able to "flip open" the hinge and peer inside the mazelike structure which is his brain (which is also the maze image in this last chapter), we as readers are given more readily access to his inner life. As Shields has admitted in an interview, in order to get 'inside' Larry, she submitted him to the literary equivalent of a CAT scan (Martin 1998). Daunted by the task of writing about a man, she was inspired by the CAT scan photographs she was shown in a hospital. Finding them beautiful and a very viable way to "get inside the male body", she called up the image of a CAT scan machine when she started writing, which she then "sliced in horizontally and vertically with [her] machine" (Martin 1998).

These various mazes could therefore be interpreted as Shields' structuring her novel to form a series of slices of Larry's life at a particular point in time and space — in the same way as the CAT scan uses special x-ray equipment to obtain image data from different angles around the body at a specific point in time and then computer process the information to show a cross-section of body tissues and organs. Shields' use of mazes in the novel is not always self-evident, and I would claim that precisely here lies their value. These mazes do not attempt "to suggest a link between the real world and the text which then is showed not to exist" (cf.

Goertz 2003:236)⁹ but instead function to both complicate and reflect Shields' narrative structure and thematic concern: to write about a man at certain points of his life, and to do this in a plausible way as a woman. Introducing a new maze as a novel "vertical and horizontal" slice of aspects of Larry's life, every chapter thus starts off on a new topic without any obvious link to the previous or succeeding one — each like a separate CAT scan photograph taken to document a certain stage at a particular point in time. This "compartmentaliz[ing]" method which shapes and orders the chapters of the novel forms what Shields calls "boxcars" and, in her view, indicates one of the major differences between how men and women function. To most men, unlike women, "work is separate from home, is separate from love. You can see this in the way Larry loves his son Ryan deeply, but from a distance, and is perfectly content to let his former wife Dorrie raise the boy" (Martin 1998).¹⁰ Shields' narrative technique here could therefore be described as filling up these "boxcars" and structuring them.

Although the mazes in *Larry's Party* clearly mirror the basic structure of the novel's plot so carefully mapping the life of Larry Weller, they do this in more oblique ways than first perceived. Larry's life — that of an Everyman born in Winnipeg in 1950 who falls in love with Dorrie in Chapter One, marries and divorces her, marries Beth, gets divorced again and comes together with Dorrie anew in the final chapter, truly enacting the novel's last line which, quoting a maze poem, says, "'Tis not unlike the life we spend / And where you start from, there you end" (339) — is itself presented as a maze here. It maps the turns and takes as well as the distractions on the road to self-knowledge that must be negotiated by Everyman or Everywoman but which we cannot foresee. Despite one of the dinner party guests' opinion that the maze is so popular because it "speaks to the contemporary human torment of being alternately lost and found", it is both "an arch formality and a plotted chaos" (313), responding to the subject's eternal need to locate itself. Seen from above, it provides — similar to a map — a bird's eye view of the "plotted chaos" which is human life, and therefore, when thus abstracted, an illusory feeling of control, whereas the novel's characters are indeed "alternately lost and found". This is why the 'maze' trope is so effective. As Shields (Martin 1998) remarks, "anybody can see the pattern if you look from above. But of course when you are in the thicket of your own life, you can't understand your own patterns".

9. Looking at the intertextual relationship between the symbolic meaning of the actual mazes and Shields' use of them, Goertz (2003) points out that the function of the mazes has been suggested to be that of the photographs in *The Stone Diaries* (1994), but is more complex. The only actual garden maze is the Hampton Court maze.

10. In Shields' view, "this ability to throw the on/off switch has to be Darwinian" (1998).

Moreover, as Ur-Bilder of human culture from the Daedalus-Icarus myth to their intricate use in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, mazes and labyrinths imply chance and contingency. They show the extent to which accident and design steer human lives and how we so often, being convinced that we understand something, instead get lost — or found:

A mistake that led to another mistake that led to another. People made mistakes all the time, so many mistakes that they aren't mistakes anymore, they're just positive and negative charges shooting back and forth and moving you along. Like good luck and bad luck. Like a tunnel you're walking through, with all your pores wide open. When it turns, you turn too. (Shields 1997: 12)

The interplay between accident and design enacted in the text and radicalized by the insertion of the mazes at the head of each new chapter suggests that players must accept that they might be imposing meaning on things that are meaningless. They are therefore at once caught up transcending their immediate control and implicated in the effective exercise of their somatic and social agency. So viewed, the mazes in *Larry's Party* are diagrammatic figurations of a tension oscillating between the visionary and the mundane. They function both as maps for the question hovering over the concluding dinner party of the novel's title, 'What is it like to be a man in 1997?' and as visual clues to the text, since the mazes not only provide Larry with his own place and creative solutions of space but are also deeply invested in his sexual life, in his finding and losing love.

The diagrammatic positioning within this textual performance involves the development of Larry's subjectivity towards himself, i.e. his own getting lost and found, as he transforms intellectually from an average Everyman into a talented creative landscape designer who creates meaning through his work. It also involves his relationship towards his women as he eventually comes to recognize that he still loves Dorrie, his first wife; and finally, his realization of the way he has travelled, transforming from a tragically isolated lower middle-class family who never entertained anyone into a responsive participant in the dynamic labyrinth which is the world. Suddenly, Larry sees that

[i]t is impossible to live a whole life sealed inside the constraints of a complex body. Sooner or later, and sometimes by accident, someone is going to reach out a hand or a tongue or a morsel of genital flesh and enter that valved darkness. This act can be thought of as a precious misfortune or the ripest of pleasures. The skin will break open, or the cell wall, and all the warm fluids of life will be released — whether we wish it or not — to pour freely into the mixed matter of the world, that surging, accompanying ocean. (Shields 1997: 283–284)

In contrast to Banville's melancholic sea with its "shrug of indifference", this "surging, accompanying ocean" is what Larry feels is awaiting him — only now has he

begun “to breathe in the vital foreknowledge of what will become of the sovereign self inside him, that luxurious ornament” (1997: 284). As dramatically enacted by the text’s takes and turns, Larry, having lost those he loved through his obsession with mazes and their significance, finally sees that meaning mainly lies in human relationships.

But Shields also addresses *our* subjectivity as readers on the level of reception. First, by encouraging us to forge relationships between the maze and the text, as well as between the various mazes. Second, deftly implicating us in the dinner party by providing us with a map of how to get there, a menu, and a seating plan for the arrangement around Larry’s rectangular table. Shields invites us to play the game between reader and author by designing the party as a maze not only on the diegetic level, for the characters, but also for the readers who are forced to navigate through the verbal maze of the table conversation. This strategy offers the author an excellent opportunity for a truly polyphonic ending, since the lines of conversation remain unattributed. We must guess who is talking to whom, and, like in the maze, many times take the wrong turn — which, in turn, will necessitate consulting our “map”, the seating arrangement, in order to guess who is talking to whom, like in a stage play. Not only is this an enactment of a dinner party but it also is one that forces us to get involved and to take part in it and in the negotiations between its various subjects — in other words, to have us act according to the stage directions given by the author, to adjust our diagrams as we are subjectively searching ‘between the lines’ to visualize the meandering turns and twists of their textual performance.

4. From scopic and labyrinthine to kaleidoscopic: Ondaatje’s migrant mural

While Banville’s narrator performs his isolated, scopic subjectivity in binges on memory, grief, booze and writing, and Shields’ text enacts Larry’s muddling through life, Michael Ondaatje has his text about Patrick Lewis, the main protagonist of his novel *In the Skin of a Lion*, adopt a more dramatic and dazzlingly multiperspectival performance. Patrick moves from a marginal and isolated position to enter language and society together with the nameless immigrants pouring into Canada in the early twentieth century, e.g. Italians, Poles, Finns, Macedonians and Bulgarians. Ondaatje is one of the few North American writers to address the silent histories of the large immigrant working-class by offering the forgotten or neglected perspectives of those “ex-centrics” (Hutcheon 1988: 94) that never entered official records or official history. In the novel, these are, besides that of Patrick — who, though Canadian, is working-class, from the countryside and thus

“an immigrant to the city” (Ondaatje 1987:53) — those of ethnic minority immigrants, and those of women.

It is out of these destinies and desires that Ondaatje creates a captivatingly poetic mural of the outsiders populating Toronto in the early decades of the twentieth century. Framed as orally told to Hana, a young girl, during a night drive to Marmora, Ontario, Patrick’s more realist story is interlaced with the fantastic (his) stories of the workers who built the Prince Edward Viaduct (commonly known as the Bloor Street Viaduct) and the R.C. Harris Filtration Plant, two Toronto landmarks that were both the brainchildren of Rowland Caldwell Harris, the Commissioner of Public Works at that time. Ondaatje describes Harris as a man of vision, for whom “the night allow[s] scope” as it “remove[s] the limitations of detail and concentrate[s] on the form” (Ondaatje 1987:29) but who little cares that those executing his visions had to engage in dangerous and difficult labour. Among these are the dazzling characters that Ondaatje draws on his mural, characters such as the bridgebuilder Temelcoff, rescuer of the anonymous nun who is blown off the Bloor Viaduct to become Patrick’s great love, the actress and activist Alice Gull, and then killed accidentally by a time bomb; the thief Caravaggio who paints himself out of prison by adopting the same blue colour as the prison ceiling he is working on and thus making himself invisible; and Patrick, who migrates from rural Ontario to this vibrant community, gathering, with his growing knowledge of other cultures, a knowledge of himself and of his relationship to others. Composed from myth, literature, official history and popular culture, this novel is what Paul Carter would call a “post-colonial collage” (1992: 187), an arrangement that is “mapping the gaps, the interzones where discontinuities are suppressed”.

The main narrative, about Patrick’s entrance into language and society, would appear to be a perfect example of how a narrative representation of subjectivity functions “similarly as a signifier with which a reader or viewer identifies” (Cohen and Shires 1988: 149). Ondaatje’s story of how identity is inextricably bound up with the acquisition of language and entrance into the symbolic could therefore be given a Lacanian interpretation, as it attempts to draw the reader into the protagonist’s desires and join him in his quest for subjectivity (cf. Schumacher 1996:3). However, Patrick’s development could also be seen as that from a passive and mute “ex-centric” outside language and society into a responsive agent as he acquires the linguistic and cultural practices of the large migrant and multivocal community of Toronto. Given a pragmatic¹¹ approach, this text could be seen as shaped like a diagram of agential space in which agents are inescapably implicated in the exercise of their somatic, social agency performing the interplay of various exterior

11. ‘pragmatic’ refers here to philosophical pragmatism.

forces such as power, language and culture with which these responsive agents must negotiate and contend in the new society they enter.

Such a pragmatic approach would also seem to be warranted by the novel's structure as a frame story preceded by two epigraphs which allow a helpful insight into its intricate texture. The first one, from *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, "The joyful will stoop with sorrow, and when you have gone to the earth I will let my hair grow long for your sake, I will wander through the wilderness in the skin of a lion", maps the story onto one of the world's oldest known narratives. The second, from John Berger's *G*, "Never again will a story be told as if it were the only one", evokes the novel's pervasive polyphony and multiperspectivity. They also both link up with Dines Johansen's suggestion that one of literature's roles is "to make diagrams of human fears and desires that are only mediately related to our actions" (2002: 249). What the myth addresses — among other things — is precisely those deeply "human fears and desires" closely connected with the wish to enter into language and society, to become human, as well as the human wish for immortality, or fear of death.

In *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, king Gilgamesh, one third mortal and two thirds divine and the despotic ruler of the city of Uruk (a Sumerian city in ancient Mesopotamia), becomes more 'human' through his friendship with Enkidu whereas the latter, once a wild man outside culture and language, turns 'human' as he becomes socialized and enters society and language through a woman's love.¹² Already this sketchy 'diagram of subjectivity' matches C.S. Peirce's well-known definition of the fundamental function of the iconic sign as an imaginary diagram structuring even our most banal choices. As Peirce points out, every time someone wants to make a decision, he draws "a skeleton diagram, or outline sketch of himself, considers what modification the hypothetical state of things would require to be made in that picture, and then examines it, that is, observes what he has imagined, to see whether the same ardent desire is there to be discerned" (CP. 2.227). In *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Gilgamesh ardently desires fame, and so embarks on a series of adventures together with Enkidu who, now made a member of society, has turned out to be the more sensible of the two. But Enkidu does not always succeed in preventing Gilgamesh from wreaking havoc and offending the gods — so much even that these want to set a statutory example by punishing the two adventurers.

12. This woman is a harlot, a prostitute, but as Gardner and Muir (1984: 25) argue, the harlots of Mesopotamia were sacred priestesses who were attached to the temples of the female goddesses such as Ishtar and Ninsun. This harlot is "the instrument of bring [sic] Enkidu from the wild to the civilized state. Through her he gains consciousness, language, identity. Through her he learns what it is to be human".

Since Gilgamesh is two thirds divine, this disposes the gods towards wanting to spare him, whereas Enkidu's humble origins make him a perfect scapegoat for the gods to kill.¹³ After Enkidu's death, Gilgamesh wanders off into the wilderness as a wild hunter, dressed in animal skins, grieving not only for the loss of his friend but also filled with fear for his own death. Crossing the waters of death, he then tries to obtain the secrets of life and death from a sacred man who had been given immortality by the gods. But Gilgamesh fails to fulfill the demands put on him to become immortal, first by falling asleep when he is told to remain awake, and then by losing the magic plant he receives from the sacred man that, if not making him immortal could at least have restored his youth. Yet, his travels have matured him and, returning to Uruk, he looks at the city's mighty walls, which he now sees as the manifestation of the proper work of and for a human being, in contrast to the vain search for eternal life.

Despite his use of the great myth as what Mark Turner calls a "source tale" (1996:10), Ondaatje does not do a one to one mapping. Instead he ties it to a pivotal passage in the novel, when Patrick reflects on his being a watcher and onlooker, living as an outsider through others and clinging "like moss to strangers, to the nooks and fissures of their situations" (1987: 156), without being able to take control of his narrative:

Alice had once described a play to him in which several actresses shared the role of the heroine. After half an hour the powerful matriarch removed her large coat from which animal pelts dangled and she passed it, along with her strength, to one of the minor characters. In this way even a silent daughter could put on the cloak and be able to break through her chrysalis into language. Each person had their moment when they assumed the skins of wild animals, when they took responsibility for the story. (Ondaatje 1987: 157)

This passage not only evokes the title of the novel and its first epigraph from the *Gilgamesh Epic*. It also reflects how Patrick develops as an agent in the novel. Moreover, however implicitly, it suggests that the process performed in the ritual encountered in the epic, and also invoked at the center of the novel, is one of grief-work, of working through irrevocable loss. Like Gilgamesh who wanders off to mourn for his friend Enkidu, Patrick leaves the city after Alice's violent death, becomes an anarchist and burns down a resort hotel for the rich and so transgresses the limits of his former "moss-like" existence (Ondaatje 1987: 156) to become an actor/agent and "take responsibility for the story". After serving a prison sentence, he then enters the Harris Filtration plant he had earlier, under

13. For a discussion of the phenomenon of the scapegoat, see Girard 1979:271; also Ljungberg 2007:255–256 on the scapegoat in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*.

highly perilous working conditions, helped to blast out from the rocks in Lake Ontario, intending to blow it up at night. To his surprise, he finds himself facing Commissioner Harris himself, who spends his nights in this new brainchild of his and tells Harris why he has come, which is to revenge those workers killed during the construction of the plant by destroying it. But as a dialogue develops, Harris has Patrick see that blowing up the plant — and with that also obliterating himself — will neither help nor revenge the cause of the workers exposed and killed in the Plant construction. It might just have the opposite effect by creating more political suppression and paranoia in a prewar Canada with frequent union crackdowns and increasing political suppression. Instead of rejecting power, Harris suggests, Patrick should indeed “take responsibility for the story” not to let “the bland fools — the politicians and press and mayors and their advisors — become the spokesmen for the age” (1987:238).

That Patrick surprisingly falls asleep in this highly dramatic situation can indeed be seen as an anti-climatic turn of events, which would seem to confirm Ondaatje’s close modeling of this character on Gilgamesh (cf. Siemerling 2004:6). However, I would suggest that Ondaatje employs the mythical epic characters even more intricately, while at the same time wonderfully weaving together the strands of the two epigraphs, that of the ritual performance of cloaking oneself in the skins of wild animals and that of assembling a multiplicity of voices as alone adequate for telling a story. Berger’s “Never again will a single story be told as though it were the only one” recalls yet another Berger quotation which Ondaatje uses to describe the magic scene on the Bloor Street Viaduct as “[t]he moment of cubism”. This is the moment when Nicholas Temelcoff, the bridgebuilder, is floating in the air “as an exclamation mark, somewhere between heaven and earth, at the three hinges of the crescent-shaped steel arches” (1987: 34). “The moment of cubism” therefore refers to the bridge diagram that these arches “knit together” from Temelcoff’s split second of perception.

But why the moment of cubism and what is its function in the story? A closer look at Berger’s essay “Moments of cubism” (1985) gives a glimpse into Ondaatje’s artistic undertaking to become the “spokesm[a]n for the age” by in fact breaking up his narrative — and the myth “source tale” — diagrammatically as a Cubist painting in a textual performance similar to Temelcoff’s *virtuoso* breakneck one. As Berger (1986: 176) points out,

Cubism broke the illusionist three-dimensional space. ... It did not destroy it. ... It broke its continuity. There is space in a Cubist painting in that one form can be inferred to be behind another. But the relation between any two forms does not, as it does in illusionist space, establish the rule for all the spatial relationships.

This very strategy is the one Ondaatje adopts for his novel.¹⁴ Taking one of literature's grand narratives, as a literary counterpart to the "illusionist three-dimensional space" of classic figurative painting, he breaks up its continuity into a Cubist mosaic, fragmenting events, characterization and space. Picking up on the *Epic* as "the story of a double" (Gardner and Muir 1984:15), Ondaatje splits the various mythical figures into fragments, mapping them onto those of his various characters as functions: Patrick is Gilgamesh who leaves civilization grieving his friend Enkidu, whose death he has helped provoke by annoying the gods, just as we find out that Patrick was responsible for the bomb that killed Alice. And like Gilgamesh who cannot keep himself awake when he is just at the point of obtaining immortality, Patrick falls asleep in the R. C. Harris Water Filtration Plant instead of fulfilling his intentions of setting off the bomb to blow up this "Palace of Purification".¹⁵ Yet at the same time, Patrick's function in the story is also that of Enkidu, as a man entering culture and society from an isolated rural area: like Enkidu whose socialization is initiated by the love of the temple harlot, Patrick is initiated into language and culture by Clara, his first love and mistress of a historical yet semi-mythical millionaire. Ondaatje here clearly invites the reader to make these identity mappings as the story unfolds. For, does not Harris, in his "expensive tweed coat that cost more than the combined week's salaries of five bridge workers" (1987:43), assume the role of Gilgamesh, a despotic and ignorant monarch, too, in *his* ignorance of the dangers and deaths his visionary projects expose the poor immigrant workers to? Is this not why he, too, gains insight and, instead of denouncing Patrick to the guards, has mercy on him? Is there not a whole set of 'Enkidus' from Alice, the nun who redefines her identity from scratch, by "turn[ing] from her image" to become an actress (1987:38), whose death is indirectly caused by Patrick, just as Gilgamesh's hubris and disdain for the gods kill Enkidu, to Temelcoff, the daredevil who is invisible even to himself, since "[h]e never realizes how often he is watched by others. He has no clue that his gestures are extreme. He has no portrait of himself" (42)?

14. That Ondaatje chooses Cubism as the model for his narrative organization is of course no coincidence since he situates his story precisely during the time when Picasso and Braque reorganized time and space in their Cubist paintings.

15. The chapter title that Ondaatje gives the Water Filtration Plant, the "Palace of Purification" (1987: 103) has in fact turned into its often used popular nickname, also because of its stunning Art Deco architecture and its opulent interior with marble entries and vast halls filled with pool water and filtration equipment — at the same time as the Plant is still fully functioning sixty years after its construction.

Ondaatje's multifaceted composition of characters, events, time and spaces reads like the metaphorical model of Cubism, which is the diagram — the diagram being, as Berger (1986: 176) points out, "a visible, symbolic representation of invisible processes, forces, structures" that invites the observer's imagination to search and to test possibilities (cf. also Peirce 1998: 212). But, as Berger emphasizes, this does not imply that the Cubists wanted to "simplify — for the sake of simplification" but much rather that "before finding their new vision, they had to jettison traditional complexities. But their aim was to arrive at a far more complex image of reality than had ever been attempted in painting before" (Berger 1986: 178).

This is the kind of complexity that Ondaatje seems to be aspiring to, as he splits up and orchestrates the "limited number of fears, anxieties, and desires" into "diagrams of subjectivity, of the infinite vicissitudes of human desire" that Johansen (2002: 249) suggests constitute the underlying structure of literature. Like the Cubists, Ondaatje is interested in the interaction between objects, and in breaking up the linear narrative in order to force the viewer/reader to "abandon a habit of centuries: the habit of looking at every object or body as though it were complete in itself, its completeness making it separate" (Berger 1986: 178). It is instead this agential space within which these agents/objects move and interact which acquires vital importance, which Patrick suddenly realizes when he sees that his life

was no longer a single story but part of a mural, which was a falling together of accomplices. Patrick saw a wondrous night web — all of these fragments of a human order, something ungoverned by the family he was born into or the headlines of the day. A nun on a bridge, a daredevil who was unable to sleep without drink, a boy watching a fire from his bed at night, an actress who ran away with a millionaire — the detritus and the chaos of the age was realigned. (Ondaatje 1987: 144–45)

Ondaatje's novel can thus be said to both enact iconically — and perform textually — the painting of a mural: not by realistically 'mirroring' the actual life-world but by first sketching the vague outlines of the relations between objects and then successively working through the position of each character and his or her relationship to other agents and to the agential space they share. What Patrick — and with him the reader — starts to discern is a spatial history which is partly an archeological excavation, i.e. the histories that all these people bring with them, and partly a web consisting of the interactions and interplay between these various agents, similar to when Patrick encounters and realizes that "he could add music by simply providing the thread of a hum". This is when he "saw the interactions, saw how each one of them was carried by the strength of something more than themselves" (1987: 145).

These interactions also place the materiality and mediality of the work in the foreground, as necessary for the dynamic web of connections to function. Whereas a grand narrative, or a painting in the Renaissance tradition, presents a verbal or visual picture to the viewer, “in a Cubist picture, the conclusion and the connections are given. They are what the picture is made of. They are its content” (Berger 1986: 178). This is what brings into sharp focus the very process of painting, or the art of telling as performance, such as Patrick’s and Hana’s drive in the dark to retrieve Clara which forms the novel’s frame and during which Patrick “picks up and brings together corners of the story, attempting to carry it all in his arms” (Ondaatje 1987: 1). Whereas archival photos and official history only give one view, “true” history lies in the multiple perspectives brought in by oral transmission, gossip, poetry and people’s personal memories found in a multitude of places, which does not give a singular perspective. They are also reminiscent of the multiple views offered by Cubism, in which “a view of a table from below is combined with a view of the table from above and from the side” (Berger 1986: 177). The resulting picture is thus truly a diagram of the relationship between parts, in which the spectator has to “find his place *within* this content whilst the complexity of the forms and the ‘discontinuity’ of the space remind him that his view from that place is bound to be only partial” (Berger 1986: 180).

That cognizance also structures Ondaatje’s poetic use of the rituals of human and social initiation embodied in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, which brings us back to the social and cultural role and function of literature. As Gardner and Muir (1984: 15) point out, the *Epic* describes the “step-by-step initiation into the life of a civilized man” which is “the story of an Everyman. It is also the story of the emergence of mankind from the wild, a parable of culture, the best worked-out Mesopotamian speculation about the lullu-amelu, the First Man”. And it is also the story of taking responsibility for one’s actions as well as learning to respect others, which is what Gilgamesh, Patrick and Harris learn to do. In the *Epic*, the sight of Uruk’s massive city walls provokes Gilgamesh, who has had these mighty walls built,¹⁶ to praise such enduring work of mortal men as more worthy to strive for than running after eternal life; Patrick, more humbly, sees his part in the “wondrous web” and understands the futility of his intended anarchist bombing. Harris, finally, becomes conscious of the power and importance of the work done by workers like Patrick whose names will not survive, since they belong, as he admits,

16. As Andrew George (1999: lvii) points out, “like new irrigation projects and other grand municipal building works, city walls in ancient Mesopotamia were constructed by public labour. The workforce was conscripted from the citizenry”, which explains existing references to mutinies as an answer to the brutality with which these labourers were treated.

“among the dwarfs of enterprise who never get accepted or acknowledged” (238). Like Gilgamesh — and in a sense also Patrick — Harris matures to see himself not as being superior to other men but as part of a larger whole, ruled by forces he cannot control. That is what I suggest that Ondaatje has in mind by having Harris quote the passage from Gilgamesh when Patrick cannot stay awake: although he associates Patrick with Gilgamesh, Harris’ reaction to this event shows that the two men are also each other’s doubles.

The theatricality in this textual performance also underlines the performative dimension of the rituals of initiation, maturation and grief resonating throughout the novel. These processes, so crucial to the formation of subjectivity, are therefore performed in the text as “a continuous adjustment to the images passing before the subject” (Bal 2004: 1289). This is supported both on the thematic and the formal level as the text itself performs the narrative’s diagrammatic figurations in the rituals of naming, of making visible and of giving an identity to what geography and history leave nameless — such as geographical places deemed insignificant and what Harris calls “the dwarfs of enterprise”, anonymous workers, and rich men’s mistresses.¹⁷ That is what is at stake in the theatrical performances in the pivotal scene quoted earlier, when each character comes forward to “assume the skin of wild animals” and acquire a voice among other agents, which is precisely what the novel enacts by emphasizing the text as a performance in itself. The theatrical quality of these processes is further enhanced by the chapter’s name, “Maritime Theatre”, for the anti-climactic scene in the Filtration plant when Patrick and Harris both dance for power. And finally, the performative dimension is crucial for the reader who, like Hana, must gather and map the various parts of the story picked up from Patrick’s fragmented narrative told in the car — much like its multitude of narrators gradually acquire identity — in order to perform the text in the act of reading.¹⁸

5. Conclusion

As I have been trying to show, diagrammatic figurations in texts, whether verbal or visual, bring together narrativity and visuality by transforming texts into visual acts. This is what enables us to map the formation of subjectivity and the various

17. Ambrose Small is a historical person who disappeared mysteriously (cf. Hutcheon 1988: 96).

18. Hana’s initiation is in fact twofold — not only is she initiated into the story but she also is allowed for the first time to drive a car, another rite of maturity (thanks to Johnny Riquet who pointed this out).

ways this is performed in narrative texts that relate the two aspects, the narrative represented and its representation, by acting as the perspective that directs the representation verbalized by the narrator. Though disparate in character, the performances of subjectivity by the three narrators in the three novels by Banville, Shields and Ondaatje enact the various developments from a non-descript Everyman into different forms of subject positions. Whereas Banville's subject is caught in his scopic bell jar and is therefore unable to transgress his subject position, Shields stages her arena as a sequence of various mazes within which agents negotiate strategically to eventually open up to the world. At the same time, she invites the reader to navigate the novel's textual labyrinth, each time departing from one of its various mazes with their particular topics and foci, a feature which enhances the text's polyphony. Moreover, it forces readers to play an active part in the negotiations taking place in the novel, subjectively searching 'between the lines', to perform the text in reading. This, as we have just seen, is vital also for readers of Ondaatje's fragmented narrative, whose magic mural transcends the problematics of the subject-object framework by emphasizing the need for moving from the private to the public and from the individual to the general, to become responsible social agents. As an implicated agent actively participating in and responding to other agents and forces, Ondaatje's narrator becomes both responsible and responsive as his presence is inextricably intertwined with that of others. Thus, three kinds of textual performance of subjectivity can be discerned in the diagrammatic figurations in these three novels: on the diegetic level, as the subjectivity performed by the characters and especially the narrators as instances of performativity that is established and maintained in relation to both author and reader; on the level of the author, whose subjectivity is textually performed as self-expression; finally, on the level of reception, as the subjectivity of the reader is itself established performatively in the act of reading.

The creative and effective use of diagrams either to structure a text rhetorically, to insert visual elements such as mazes, maps, menus and seating plans or make them inherent in the text's narrative structure thus seems to enhance my claim that visuality is essential to the act of reading as this requires constant visualization. Acts of looking are, however, also closely tied to speech acts, and this performative dimension is what literary texts provide us with as unique resources for mapping. Iconically representing these networks of relationships, the use of diagrams in narrative is a strategy involving both performance and performativity, as act and effect, of such diagrammatic figurations pull both the mediality *and* the materiality of the text into focus, transforming it into a stage on which textual activity is performed not only as a dialogue among writer, text and reader/spectator but also in the dramatic positionings as negotiations and strategic moves of agents within the text itself.

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Iconicity as meaning miming meaning and meaning miming form

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Iconicity consists of mimetic relations between form and meaning. This article is based on the notion of ‘spatial thinking’ and it is argued that there is no form without meaning, and that all meaning has some sort of form. Two fundamental distinctions are used. The first is Charles Sanders Peirce’s well-known division into three types of iconicity: image, diagram, and metaphor, which is extended to include ‘weak’ and ‘strong diagrams’. The second is a distinction between ontologically different appearances of signs: visual material signs, auditory material signs, and complex cognitive signs. A two-dimensional model illustrating the relations between these two distinctions is presented. The model is based on the assumption that iconicity, to a certain extent, is gradable, and it shows that the field of iconicity includes many phenomena that are not generally seen as related, but that nevertheless can be systematically compared. It also shows, among other things, that the ‘metaphor’ and the ‘weak diagram’ are singled out by the capacity of miming across the borders both between the visual and the auditory, and between the material and the mental. The main argument of the article is that iconicity should be understood not only as “form miming meaning and form miming form”, but also as “meaning miming meaning and meaning miming form”.

1. Form and meaning

It is not very controversial to say that there is a close connection between form and meaning, although the nature of the relation is far from self-evident. For some time now, the issue has been highlighted in a rewarding way. The title of the first volume in the series *Iconicity in Language and Literature* is *Form Miming Meaning*. In one of the articles in this volume, Simon J. Alderson discusses some definitions of iconicity that lean on the idea that it is the form of the sign that resembles or imitates the meaning or the represented (Alderson 1999: 109–110). In the second

volume of the series, Winfried Nöth argued that in addition to “form miming meaning”, one must also consider “an essentially different kind of iconicity in language which is based on the principle of ‘form miming form’” (Nöth 2001: 18). From then on, Nöth’s definition of iconicity in language as “form miming meaning and form miming form” (Nöth 2001: 22) has been established and used as a frame for the conferences and publications on iconicity in language and literature.

Nöth’s definition is no doubt well-grounded both in theory and in our intuitive conception of what iconicity is all about. It appears to be commonly accepted that form may mime, stand for, or refer to both form and meaning. The reverse condition, however, meaning miming or referring to form, does not seem to be fully acknowledged in studies of iconicity. To my knowledge it has not been explicitly rejected, but rather disregarded. The idea that meaning is not always the signified, but that meaning can also signify, seems to be a blind spot.¹

What would it mean to say that meaning may actually mime form? The aim of this article is to give an answer to that question. Also the extended definition of iconicity as “form miming meaning and form miming form”, in language or elsewhere, is too narrow, I will argue. Iconicity includes “meaning miming meaning and meaning miming form”, although this aspect of iconicity is seldom, if ever, explored and discussed. I also believe that the understanding of iconicity in language and literature profits from a discussion that also includes other sign-systems, such as music and images — areas that have already been semiotically scrutinized, of course. Comparisons between various media, art forms and communication forms will therefore be a substantial part of my argumentation. As this argumentation is based on the assumption that the distinction between form and meaning must be deconstructed, the two notions can be defined only preliminarily and in a crude way. *Form* is primarily understood as structural traits of a physical nature, that is: traits that can be apprehended by our outer senses. *Meaning* is primarily understood as cognitive import, that is: import that is created when the brain interprets new sense data or retrieves already stored cognitive import in the form of memories and mental structures.

The definition “form miming meaning and form miming form” is based on the schema “X miming Y”, but X and Y are not reciprocal, since X is identified as “form”, whereas Y can be both “form” and “meaning”. According to the definition, meaning cannot mime (at least not in an iconic way), it can only be mimed. But why? Evidently there must be some sort of “resemblance”, in the widest sense

1. The influential linguist Louis Hjelmslev is not at all concerned with iconicity but he nevertheless emphasizes that both “expression” (*udtryk*) and “content” (*indhold*) have aspects of both “form” (*form*) and “meaning” (*mening*) (Hjelmslev 1943: 44–55; 1969: 47–60).

of the notion, between X and Y. The iconic sign is motivated by similarity. If this iconic motivation did not exist, it would be meaningless to talk about relations between form and meaning. But if X resembles Y, must one not conclude that Y also resembles X?

To put it bluntly, I claim that there is no form without meaning, and that all meaning has some sort of form. That is why form may *mime* or *refer to* meaning. If meaning were formless, how could there be even the faintest resemblance between form and meaning? Of course, that is also why it is impossible to separate form from meaning (or form from content) in practice, but both possible and illuminating in theory.

I certainly do not wish to state that if in a specific case X refers to Y, then Y necessarily refers to X. For most people in most situations, a portrait of the queen refers to the queen, but the queen refers to the portrait of herself only in very particular circumstances. My point is of a more general character: if form may refer to meaning by way of iconic resemblance, one must assume that the same sort of iconic glue may be used in connecting meaning to form. If one accepts that, for instance, high-paced, dissonant music may iconically be related to anger, and if one finds it reasonable to say that this is a case of form standing for meaning, one should also find it meaningful to acknowledge that anger iconically resembles high-paced, dissonant music, that is: that meaning may sometimes stand for form.

Having come this far, we are perhaps already in serious trouble. Many of the notions involved in the discussion are known to be problematic and notoriously slippery: form, meaning, and miming. But these notions are also very prolific and it would be foolish to avoid them altogether. In fact, it would be impossible to discuss the issue of iconicity on a deeper level without their resource. I will deal with them in what I hope to be a pragmatic way. *Form* and *meaning* have already been defined in a preliminary way in order to demonstrate that the implied dualism between the notions must be rejected. By *miming* I mean everything that goes on when a relationship between two phenomena is interpreted in terms of resemblance that produces meaning in one way or another. I cannot avoid using notions such as *reference*, *depiction*, and *representation*, but it is always the aspect of resemblance that is most relevant for the argumentation.

2. Spatial thinking

Before discussing the claim that meaning may mime or refer to both meaning and form, the fundamental idea that meaning has form must be scrutinized. First of all, one must ask what actually goes on in our heads and bodies when relations between experience, meaning, and form are established. The issue of the

relationships that can be said to hold between body, imagination, and meaning has attracted increased attention in the last few decades, but it is not altogether new. Exactly how and to what extent human thinking has visual or spatial form is an old bone of contention within logic, linguistic theory, and psychology (amongst other disciplines). Terminology varies, but the main principle is to distinguish between propositional and pictorial representations (Wande 2000). In mathematical terms, this difference corresponds to the difference between algebra and geometry: algebra deals with relations between primarily abstract symbols, whilst geometry deals with relations between concrete spatial extensions. The distinction can also be compared to the difference between digital and analog transfer of information, based on abstract digits and on physical entities respectively. It is important to note that propositional and pictorial representation rarely, if ever, can be separated in practice; on the contrary, thinking must be understood as a process involving both propositional and pictorial aspects, but sometimes one of the aspects is more predominant. If, when trying to understand the nature of concepts and the basis of meaning, we place a one-sided emphasis on the pictorial character of thinking, many conceptual specifications and nuances become difficult to explain. The propositional aspect of thinking is always present in one way or another. Conversely, it is not possible to neglect the pictorial character of thinking, although perhaps some would say that the pictorial aspect of concept formation is simply an epiphenomenon.

It is thus difficult to imagine thinking without pictorial characteristics in some sense, that is: without form. Our inclination to illustrate the basic structure of thoughts in diagrams and other more complex two- and three-dimensional figures is a well-known and obvious indication of the pictorial nature of the world of thoughts. This was clearly recognized by Ludwig Wittgenstein, who early in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922) introduces the central notion of *logical space* and states that “[t]he facts in logical space are the world” (Wittgenstein 1974: 1.13). It is remarkable that in this very abstract philosophical work, which deals mainly with issues that are remote from the empirical world, Wittgenstein bases his arguments on spatiality. In addition, he connects logical space with the activity of seeing. Although he does not discuss the distinction itself, he definitely sees the activity of logical thinking as pictorial and not, as one might have expected, propositional: “We picture facts to ourselves. A picture presents a situation in logical space, the existence and non-existence of states of affairs” (Wittgenstein 1974: 2.1, 2.11). It is “likeness” and “depiction” that tie a proposition to the world (Wittgenstein 1974: 4.012, 4.016).

Two influential scholars who have developed the issue in new directions are Rudolf Arnheim and Mark Johnson. Arnheim has convincingly argued that the distinction between perception and reasoning, between seeing and thinking, is

misleading, and even false. In *Visual Thinking* (1969) he outlines a theory of the inseparability of these mental activities, involving concepts from philosophy, psychology, and art history: “What we need to acknowledge is that perceptual and pictorial shapes are not only translations of thought products but the very flesh and blood of thinking itself” (Arnheim 1969: 134). In *The Body in the Mind* (1987), Johnson vigorously argues that bodily experience and “imagination” form the basis of meaning. However, imagination must not be understood as merely creative fancy; rather, it is “our capacity to organize mental representations (especially percepts, images, and image schemata) into meaningful, coherent unities” (Johnson 1987: 140). The notion of *spatiality* is not central for Johnson, but it is clear that his main concepts for explaining how bodily experience forms the mind’s framework — *nonpropositional schematic structures*; ‘*image-schematic*’ structures of meaning — to a large extent deal with the body’s experience of space (Johnson 1987: 5, 19).

Visual thinking is a cogent formulation, but since perception includes not only vision I find it more apt to employ the notion of *spatial thinking*, which is more open to the input of other senses (Elleström 2002: 184–193, 219–224). Yet, the difference between *visual* and *spatial* is not crystal-clear. Very many phenomena, such as “depth” and “motion”, are both visually and spatially perceptible. The eye is capable of perceiving both depth and motion, but the spatial dimensions of these visual phenomena are also perceptible without the visual sense. “Whiteness”, on the other hand, has only visual, not spatial character. Often, there is no reason to uphold a strict distinction between the visual and the spatial, but there is a point in distinguishing between the two notions to emphasize the specifically spatial character of the world of concepts. By *visual phenomena*, I mean, first and foremost, phenomena that have a distinctly perceptible character of an image in two dimensions, but that by means of the effects of perspective may also be perceived as three-dimensional. By *spatial phenomena*, I mean mainly three-dimensional relations of a concrete, material nature, or an abstract or stylized nature, which in principle are independent of the faculty of vision. I thus understand the visual and the spatial to be overlapping categories that cover the field from what is *seen* in two dimensions by inner or outer vision, to what is *perceived* and *conceived* in three dimensions.

The conclusions concerning the nature of the mind within philosophy, psychology, and cognitive research are clearly connected to neurological findings indicating that the visual perception of spatiality is processed by means of the brain’s physical extension in space. In *Image and Brain* (1994), Stephen M. Kosslyn examines both mental imagination and external vision, and concludes that “the cortex itself is spatially organized” and that there is “good evidence that imagery is not purely propositional, but rather relies on pictorial representations” (Koss-

lyn 1994: 13, 20). Antonio R. Damasio also emphasizes the neurological evidence that “both words and arbitrary symbols are based on topographically organized representations and can become images” (Damasio 1994: 106). The dissolution of distinct borders between the world, experience, and description is thus not only a feverish dream of the humanities. There is a clear connection between aesthetics and aesthesis.

Modern cognitive and neurological research also confirms what many philosophers in the past have suspected: that our perception is always an interpretation of the external world. The pieces of information that reach our senses are not in themselves systematically arranged patterns mirroring actual reality, but rather are a collection of more or less separate signals that the brain, on the basis of inherited skills and acquired experience, puts together into a comprehensible unity; they become meaningful by way of receiving form. Some information is selected, and some is neglected. Perception actually “may have evolved exclusively for *extracting statistical* regularities from the natural world” (Ramachandran and Hirstein 1997: 453). However, it benefits our survival to believe that our sensations are immediate effects of perceived external objects, and it is indeed the external world that causes our sensations, but it is not the *perceived* external world, the world we see and feel, that causes our sensations. The perceived object (not the object in itself, of course) is actually caused by our perception of that object. The object is thus a projection of our sensations, Norman N. Holland concludes, in an enlightening article on neurological research from the point of view of literary reader-response criticism (Holland 2002: 29). The idea that separate pieces of information are given meaning when perceived as coherent form, forcefully demonstrated by Gestalt psychology, has now also been demonstrated by neurological research.

As I understand, what happens in the brain and in the rest of the body when sensory data are unconsciously processed seems to have so much in common with the conscious activity called *interpretation* that it is reasonable to talk of perception *as* interpretation. It is definitely safe to say that perception is strongly linked to unconscious interpretation of sensory data. Also the distinction between perception and imagination is much more blurred than is normally assumed, and it is certainly rather risky to distinguish between physical and mental imagination. According to Kosslyn, “numerous researchers have demonstrated that parts of the brain used in visual perception are also involved in mental imagery” (Kosslyn 1994: 17). It thus seems as if the self-evident fact that we often think in images can be related to the less apparent assumption that concepts in themselves have a spatial character. I agree with Arnheim who states that “[i]n the perception of shape lie the beginnings of concept formation” (Arnheim 1969: 27). This has very much to do with the relation between form and meaning in iconicity. Metaphors, John-

son states, “are not merely convenient economies for expressing our knowledge; rather, they *are* our knowledge” (Johnson 1987: 112). The notion of *spatial thinking* is thus not in itself to be understood as either more or less metaphoric or literal than any other way of explaining the nature of thinking and concepts. Certainly, most linguistic descriptions are metaphoric to some degree. This may very well be asserted without denying the logic of propositional representation.

As a consequence of these insights, one might argue that the phenomena of spatiality and form are actually primarily inner categories. I do not wish to deny the spatial form of the external world — far from it — but if one considers that most sensory experiences (primarily vision and hearing, but also to a certain extent the senses of smell, taste, and touch) have spatial dimensions and can be structured in categories such as *distance*, *relation*, *motion*, and *proportion*, and that all perception is an interpretation of the outer world, then it is reasonable to assume, following Kant, that spatiality is simply a fundamental category of perception and conception. There is good reason to remain with the notion that spatiality is an essential characteristic of the outer world itself, so essential that spatial extension must, as long as the human brain evolves, set its mark on the development of most of the interpretive strategies of perception, either inherited or acquired. Furthermore, if one sees thinking and the formation of meaning as advancements of perception, one may also assume that the fundamental elements of thinking — concepts — have come into existence in close association with the brain’s interpretation of the external world in spatial categories. Hence, it seems to be a feasible hypothesis that the basic character of a large number of concepts is of a spatial nature, or, to put it differently: that (non-propositional) meaning has form. Iconicity, the connection between form and meaning by way of resemblance, is at the very heart of thinking, reasoning and interpreting.

3. Peirce’s concept of iconicity revisited

In order to expand the argument and explain in more detail what it would mean to say that meaning may mime or refer to both meaning and form, we must return to the basic schema “X miming Y”. How can X and Y be pinned down in semi-otic terms? I choose to follow Charles Sanders Peirce in this inquiry. Peirce’s most general term for denoting a sign is to call it a ‘representamen’. The representamen “addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign” (Peirce 1960: 135). The ‘interpretant’ is thus always “in the mind” of some person, while the ‘representamen’ can be anything that comes to the mind’s attention. In that way, the two notions ‘representamen’ and ‘interpretant’

are closely connected and almost impossible to distinguish in practice, since one simply cannot conceive of phenomena without interpreting them. Everything that we think of is always already interpreted, and certainly all signs are signs because we interpret them as signs.

The 'representamen' is seen by Peirce as something that is "connected with" not only the 'interpretant', but also "its *object*", which is always more or less complex. The representamen "stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea". This idea Peirce calls the 'ground' of the representamen (Peirce 1960: 135). However, these relations are not static. Peirce also states that "A *Representamen* is the First Correlate of a triadic relation, the Second Correlate being termed its *Object*, and the possible Third Correlate being termed its *Interpretant*, by which triadic relation the possible Interpretant is determined to be the First Correlate of the same triadic relation to the same Object, and for some possible Interpretant" (Peirce 1960: 141–142). Every sign is thus necessarily involved in an eternal chain of semiosis.

In the schema "X miming Y", Y can be equated with the 'object'. X must be said to include both the notion of 'representamen' and the notion of 'interpretant'. When one thinks of something as a sign in a narrow sense — the "something" that stands for "something else" — this "something" has no doubt *often*, but not necessarily, some sort of physical quality, but it is *always* also something that one has in one's mind, since the operation of reference is a mental, interpretive act. Peirce states that a sign can be "an Object perceptible, or only imaginable, or even unimaginable in one sense" (Peirce 1960: 136). But no matter what the 'representamen' is, the 'interpretant' always exists in the mind of someone.

The distinction between the notions of 'representamen' and 'interpretant' is important. Two things must be stressed. The first is that even though one constantly speaks of signs as objects and phenomena existing in the outer world (and as long as we are interested in communicating, that is what one must do), signs are signs only because we interpret them as such. Signs are the products of semiosis, not the other way round. The 'representamen' receives the quality of a 'representamen' because of the 'interpretant', not the other way round, I would argue. The second thing that must be stressed, and which is of particular importance for the present discussion, is that also the 'representamen' can be a mental rather than a material phenomenon. The 'interpretant' (the sign in the head, the interpretive act) is *always* mental, but in addition the 'representamen' (the "material" given the function of a sign) can be mental ("only imaginable"). This is what I propose: both the 'representamen' (which is a part of X) and the 'object' (Y) can have the nature of "form" (palpable visual or auditory phenomena that have relative materiality) and of "meaning" (the existence of which is more evasive, created by complex cog-

nitive, hermeneutical processes). The relation between form and meaning is thus, I suggest, reciprocal rather than hierarchical.

As we know, this is not alien to Peirce's ideas, although it is an aspect of his semiotics that is rather often neglected. His notion of 'qualisign' takes account of qualities that work as signs (which I understand as 'representamens'). A quality "cannot actually act as a sign until it is embodied; but the embodiment has nothing to do with its character as a sign" (Peirce 1960: 142). Of course, "quality" and "meaning" are not identical, but the notion of "embodied quality" is no doubt closely related to the notion of "formed meaning". A quality must be "embodied" in order to act as a sign, and meaning must be "formed" to become a sign, but nevertheless one must say that meaning, as quality, can signify. Actually, Peirce states that "*thought* is the chief, if not the only, mode of representation", and even that iconic signs, "strictly speaking, can only be an idea" (Peirce 1960: 157). Umberto Eco, who briefly mentions this aspect of Peirce's semiotics, puts it in relation to an ancient philosophical tradition including Ockham, Hobbes, and Locke (Eco 1976: 166).

In order to understand more precisely what it implies to say that meaning can signify — that it can mime both meaning and form — a few more distinctions are necessary to bear in mind. Peirce's distinction between 'icon', 'index', and 'symbol' is widely accepted, and an iconic sign is a sign "by virtue of characters of its own"; it is a sign "in so far as it is like" the object it stands for (Peirce 1960: 143). Peirce also suggests that the "iconic representamen may be termed a *hypoicon*", and he proposes that hypoicons may be "roughly divided" into 'images', based on "simple qualities, or First Firstnesses", 'diagrams', based on "relations, mainly dyadic, or so regarded, of the parts of one thing by analogous relations in their own parts", and 'metaphors', based on "parallelism" (Peirce 1960: 157). As I comprehend this division, an 'image' is a *substantial* icon; a model: the sign strongly resembles the object. A 'diagram' is a *relational* icon; a set of signs with internal relations that mirror the internal relations of the object. A 'metaphor' is a *parallel* icon; the sign and the object are related by means of single common traits.

This is, we must remember, a "rough" division. It is not explained in detail by Peirce, but aspects of it are developed in various parts of his not always consistent system of thoughts. The division has in consequence been understood and applied in different ways by various scholars, but it is nevertheless very useful. Max Nänny has explored much of the potential of the notion of 'diagram' in several studies of iconicity in poetry (see, for instance, Nänny 1986). Linguistic studies of iconicity often make use of the distinction between 'image' and 'diagram' in a way that is not entirely compatible with my attempts in this article, but generally the category 'metaphor' is avoided, perhaps because of the term's connection to rather

delimiting rhetorical definitions of what a metaphor is. Literary studies of iconicity that include the notion of ‘metaphor’ tend to uphold a distinction between ‘diagram’ and ‘image’ on the one hand and ‘metaphor’ on the other hand (cf. Hiraga 2003: 317; Johansen 2003: 383–384).² My ambition is rather to treat ‘image’, ‘diagram’, and ‘metaphor’ as a continuum. Although one can probably show that it is sometimes possible to distinguish quite clearly between “simple qualities”, “relations” and “parallelism”, I propose that the three categories primarily differ in grade rather than in definite quality, and I also propose that the division, in spite of its roughness, and in a very non-Peircean way, can actually be extended into four categories. The ‘diagram’, as it has been used by various scholars, has turned out to be a wide and inclusive category, and I think some clarity might be gained by distinguishing between what I propose to call “strong” and “weak” diagrams. The ‘strong diagram’ is thus a set of signs with internal relations that *in a tangible form and in detail* mirror the internal relations of the object; a ‘weak diagram’ is a set of signs with internal relations that *in a more abstract form and schematically* mirror the internal relations of the object.

4. Visual material signs, auditory material signs, and complex cognitive signs

I also assert that a division between ontologically different appearances of ‘representamens’ might be helpful in order to understand the idea that meaning may mime or refer to both meaning and form. As we have noted, Peirce states that ‘representamens’ may be objects, but also only imaginable, or not even properly imaginable. The distinction I propose is between ‘visual material signs’ (the ‘representamen’ is a perceptible, visual object or occurrence), ‘auditory material signs’ (the ‘representamen’ is a perceptible, auditory phenomenon), and ‘complex cognitive signs’ (the ‘representamen’ is only imaginable). Sight and hearing are the two most complex senses from a cognitive point of view, and “it is evident that the most socialized, abundant, and pertinent sign systems in human society are based on sight and hearing”, as Roman Jakobson states (Jakobson 1971b: 701; cf. Morris 1971: 272); that is why I find it proper for the moment to delimit the range of senses to these two, but in principle it would be possible to include the other

2. Masako K. Hiraga emphasizes the importance of treating metaphor and iconicity “in the same framework” but does not really discuss metaphor *as* iconicity. Jørgen Dines Johansen clearly treats metaphor as an aspect of iconicity but nevertheless emphasizes that it differs from the diagram-image couple.

senses as well. The brain's conceptualization is no doubt based on how the whole body and all of the senses relate to space and time. The other senses certainly do not lack the capacity of iconic reference. For instance, there is often intersubjective agreement that certain tastes and smells have qualities that are best described as sharp, smooth, or round.

Certainly, it is also a simplification to settle for the three categories 'visual material signs', 'auditory material signs', and 'complex cognitive signs', as if it were always possible to separate, for instance, visual signs and cognitive signs. In reality, of course, 'representamens' often have mixed ontology, but simplification is needed in order to make it all comprehensible. It is not the distinctions in themselves that are important, but what they allow us to describe: the very many various iconic interrelations between the sensual and the mental. In a similar way, it is obvious that the category of signs that I call 'complex cognitive signs' is not identical to 'meaning', but I find it more accurate to base the following argumentation upon this wide and admittedly vague category, rather than upon the more specific and problematic concept of 'meaning'. However, 'meaning' can no doubt be seen as an important aspect of the 'complex cognitive'. The main point is to shed light upon the circumstance that a 'representamen' often has a mental, non-material character.

Since the scheme "X miming Y" should be seen as reciprocal, also the 'object' can be divided in a similar way. If one takes a closer look at Earl R. Anderson's list, in *A Grammar of Iconism*, of the "external (real world)" bases for linguistic iconicity, namely "the sound, motion, size, brightness or darkness, proximity or distance, affective experience, or other physical or psychological stimuli that are imitated or represented by means of partial resemblance" (Anderson 1998:99), one finds that they can rather neatly be reduced to 'objects' that are either 'visual material' (motion, size, brightness or darkness, proximity or distance), 'auditory material' (sound), or 'complex cognitive' (affective experience, other psychological stimuli). But of course many 'objects' also fall between or outside the three categories.

What happens if one combines these sets of distinctions? Let me try to render it all into visual form and give a few examples of iconicity based on various relations between form and meaning.

TYPE OF HYPOICON' →	Metaphor	Weak diagram	Strong diagram	Image
ONTOLOGY OF THE SIGN ↓	A <i>parallel</i> icon; the sign and the object are related by means of single common traits.	A <i>relational</i> icon; a set of signs with internal relations that mirror <i>in a stylized form</i> the internal relations of the object.	A <i>relational</i> icon; a set of signs with internal relations that mirror <i>in detail</i> (but with, for instance, reduced spatiality) the internal relations of the object.	A <i>substantial</i> icon; a model; the sign powerfully and with full spatiality resembles the object.
<i>Visual material signs</i> The 'representamen' is a perceptible, visual object or occurrence; it is basically <i>visual form</i> .	Visual form miming visual form Details in both figurative and non-figurative visual art and literature that resemble other objects Visual form miming auditory form Details in both figurative and non-figurative visual art and literature having latent similarities with auditory phenomena Visual form miming meaning Simple pictographic ideograms; punctuation marks indicating conceptual meaning; visual details miming emotions	Visual form miming visual form Poetry with overarching visual qualities; highly stylized drawings; much abstract visual art Visual form miming auditory form Sound level meters; poems with shifting letter size; musical scores Visual form miming meaning Curve charts; computer-generated visualizations of number data; visual proportions signifying varying social status	Visual form miming visual form Photographs of three-dimensional objects; realistic, figurative visual art Visual form miming auditory form Visual form miming meaning	Visual form miming visual form Realistic, figurative sculptures; detailed, three-dimensional scale models Visual form miming auditory form Visual form miming meaning

<p><i>Auditory material signs</i> The 'representamen' is a perceptible, auditory phenomenon; it is basically <i>auditory form</i>.</p>	<p>Auditory form miming auditory form Tones miming voice qualities</p> <p>Auditory form miming visual form Certain vowel sounds standing for proximity/distance or small/large size; low notes miming obscurity</p> <p>Auditory form miming meaning Tone qualities miming emotions; phonaesthesia</p>	<p>Auditory form miming auditory form Onomatopoeic words; instruments imitating bird song; poetic or musical rhythm resembling other rhythmical sounds</p> <p>Auditory form miming visual form Tone scales miming visual objects; melodies miming the movements of animals; linguistic synaesthesia</p> <p>Auditory form miming meaning Music miming emotional states; musical ekphrasis</p>	<p>Auditory form miming auditory form Recordings of music performances played in mono; very accurate but not exact sound imitations with imperfect, spatial characteristics</p> <p>Auditory form miming visual form —</p> <p>Auditory form miming meaning —</p>	<p>Auditory form miming auditory form Recordings of music performances reproduced in full surround stereo; exact sound imitations with complete, spatial characteristics</p> <p>Auditory form miming visual form —</p> <p>Auditory form miming meaning —</p>
<p><i>Complex cognitive signs</i> The 'representamen' is only imaginable; it is basically <i>meaning</i>.</p>	<p>Meaning miming meaning Metaphors in language and literature</p> <p>Meaning miming visual form Metaphors with visual 'objects'</p> <p>Meaning miming auditory form Metaphors with auditory 'objects'</p>	<p>Meaning miming meaning Allegory in literature; some morphological and syntactic iconicity</p> <p>Meaning miming visual form Some literary ekphrases</p> <p>Meaning miming auditory form Literary form imitating musical form</p>	<p>Meaning miming meaning —</p> <p>Meaning miming visual form —</p> <p>Meaning miming auditory form —</p>	<p>Meaning miming meaning —</p> <p>Meaning miming visual form —</p> <p>Meaning miming auditory form —</p>

Needless to say, this figure is a theoretical construct with limited compass. As one can see from the very narrow range of examples inscribed into the figure, the “practice” of iconicity is much more complex than the theoretical range of the model. As Umberto Eco has emphasized, iconicity “is not a homogenous phenomenon” (Eco 1972: 5; cf. Eco 1976: 216), and it is far from always based on objective relationships; rather, it is often the case that “similarity is the result of an operation to establish isomorphism” (Eco 1972: 10).³ Iconicity cannot be understood without considering perception, and the reality that we try to pin down when talking about iconicity is of necessity subject to interpretation. Iconicity is part of the socio-material world; constantly changing and always filtered through and created by the human mind. The figure must thus be understood as a hermeneutical model.

An important aspect of these problems is that one always has selective attention. The iconic interpretation involves the selection of certain parts or aspects of ‘representamens’ and ‘objects.’ Such a selection may of course be deliberate. It may also be performed beyond our control, by the interpretive perception of our brain. This selectiveness might be seen as a problem for iconicity, as different individuals often focus on widely differing aspects, but on the other hand it is difficult, to say the least, to imagine what “complete” attention would actually be like. Anderson thus pragmatically states that “A primary characteristic of iconism is the partial resemblance of an icon to its referent ... iconism is based upon the human capacity to generalize from incidental details” (Anderson 1998: 28). One might perhaps even say that iconicity rather exists as potential semiosis in fragments of the world that is only rarely realized without learned skills or conventional coding of some sort — but on the other hand it is also true that few conventions are truly arbitrary, and what artists and poets do is, not least, to create works that make it possible for us to see iconic relationships that are apprehended as new.

Nevertheless, it makes sense to say that resemblance and similarity can be weaker or stronger, more or less present. “Partial resemblance underlies the gradability of iconism”, Anderson justly concludes (Anderson 1998: 27). Surely, since iconicity in itself is a multifaceted phenomenon, iconicity can never be graded in a

3. I refer to Eco because I find some of his observations highly relevant, even if his general “Critique of iconism” is rather odd. Although discussing Peirce extensively, Eco does not mention or otherwise refer to the trichotomy image-diagram-metaphor. For Eco, true “iconism” seems to exist only in visual *images* (in Peirce’s sense) and he criticizes the naivety of scholars “speaking of iconism *à propos* of phenomena that can only metaphorically be defined as such!” (Eco 1976: 194; cf. 197, 199) As I understand it, Eco misses the whole point of the wide and dynamic category of iconicity as circumscribed by Peirce. If one does not recognize the metaphorical and diagrammatical aspects of iconicity, it certainly becomes a very narrow and problematic concept.

simple way, using one universal scale, but the idea that it nevertheless can be graded is supported by scholars such as Charles Morris, Winfried Nöth, and Elżbieta Tabakowska (Morris 1971:273; Nöth 2001: 19; Tabakowska 2003:362, 372). Even Eco, who tries to resist the notion of iconicity, makes it clear that similarity, although governed by cultural conventions, can be graded (Eco 1976:256–258).

Starting from the bottom, so to speak, Eco rightly states that “on the level of very elementary formal phenomena such as high-low, right-left, or long-wide — everything resembles everything else” (Eco 1972: 2; 1976:212). A dog resembles a refrigerator since they are both very much larger than a grain of sand, but nevertheless most people would say that the degree of iconicity is exceptionally low. In most (but not all) cases, it would be rather pointless to say that a dog is a sign of a refrigerator because of similarity. On the other extreme, we find more or less exact resemblance: two brand new refrigerators of the same model are certainly very similar, and two new-born puppies are often similar enough to make it hard to tell the difference between them. It is often claimed that identity does not allow for iconicity, but if that is true it is probably so simply because the notion of identity is meaningless in the context of hermeneutics and semiosis. Two identical things always differ since they necessarily exist in different contexts, and since semiosis is a mental act rather than an effect caused by pre-existing signs it is quite clear that, for instance, a refrigerator in my neighbor’s kitchen can be conceived as an iconic sign of an “identical” refrigerator in my own kitchen. However, both these extremes are of less interest simply because they are not very stimulating. They do not help us to see, think, and understand. It is in the middle of the scale that substance and inspiration are found for all forms of science, communication, and art. There we find, for instance, the relation between a dog and a cat: the cat has four legs, a head and a tail, and it moves, just like the dog but unlike the refrigerator, so the cat certainly resembles the dog more than the refrigerator does. Thus, the cat, or a representation of a cat, can easily acquire the function of an iconic sign representing, for instance, four-legged, furry mammals.

In a similar way, the difference between ‘metaphor’, ‘diagram’, and ‘image’ is also a question of grade, I will argue, but the gradability is complex since it involves so many factors — and it is far beyond the scope of this article to deal with this problem in a systematic way. In particular, one must always bear in mind that there is probably no such thing as “pure” iconicity. All iconic signs are to some degree also indexical and symbolic, as Peirce himself clearly recognized. Additionally, it would be more correct to talk about iconic “sign-functions” or “modes of sign production” rather than iconic signs (Eco 1976: 157, 217), and that is one of the circumstances that prevent us from measuring the degree of iconicity in a clear-cut way. There is simply no easy way to tell the exact difference between diverse kinds of iconicity, and between various degrees of iconicity — since iconicity is very much

a result of mental perception and conception — but one cannot deny that differences do exist, and that they may to a certain extent be graded.

5. Visual material signs

Visual form miming visual form is perhaps the aspect of iconicity that is most easily grasped. Details in both figurative and non-figurative visual art and literature that resemble other objects on the basis of a single common trait such as roundness are examples of metaphoric relations between visual objects. In certain contexts the letter “O” can develop into a sign of, say, the moon or an open mouth. When the resemblance becomes more complex, that is: when the iconic relation is perceived as moderately relational rather than parallel, the iconicity might be described as a weak diagram. Some poetry with overarching visual qualities (for instance *carmina figurata*), highly stylized drawings, and much abstract visual art would count as weak diagrams, as I see it. By ‘abstract art’ I mean art that does not follow the conventions of realism, but that nevertheless, however vaguely, can be seen as relating to the visual, internal formal relations of the external world. Examples of strong diagrams are photographs of three-dimensional objects, and realistic and figurative visual art.

‘Realism’ is certainly a problematic notion, and the sometimes vexed discussions on realism are a fine example of how difficult it can be to say for sure which qualities signify because of conventions, and which qualities signify because of genuine resemblance. It is worth noting, though, that Ernst H. Gombrich, who in *Art and Illusion* (1960) famously argued for the predominance of conventions in pictorial representation, later came to the conclusion that although the notion of resemblance is problematic, it is rather “the meaning which leads us to the convention and not the convention which leads us to the meaning”; naturalism in Western art is a result of artists having “to do with fewer and fewer conventions” (Gombrich 1981:24, 41). In other words: iconicity is stronger in naturalism than in many other pictorial styles. Most people, like Gombrich, find that there is a fundamental difference between the strong diagrammatic character of a Caravaggio and the much weaker mirroring of internal visual relations in a cubist Picasso simply because the image in the mirror when we comb our hair has no cubist characteristics. The cubist painting may be interpreted as having a visual form that is strongly related to meaning, and that stimulates a translation of static, visual form to dynamic form perceived in changing time and space, but nevertheless its diagrammatic character is rather weak from a strictly visual point of view.

A painting by Caravaggio can thus be said to consist of a set of signs with internal relations that mirror *in detail* the internal relations of the object. One huge

difference between the ‘representamen’ and the ‘object’, however, is that the canvas is two-dimensional. The apprehended space in a realistic painting is an interpretation of the beholder, based on both conventions and certain facts about the faculty of sight. To mention only one example: in the real world, objects that are far away are seen as smaller, and hence differing size between depicted human bodies may sometimes be interpreted as a two-dimensional representation of distance and space. However, realistic, figurative sculptures and detailed, three-dimensional scale models are spatial in themselves: their ‘representamens’ powerfully resemble their ‘objects’ in very many respects and they should therefore be classified as substantial icons — they are images.

Visual form may be similar not only to other visual form, but also, for instance, to auditory phenomena. Visual form miming auditory form often demands, I would guess, more active interpretation of the beholder, a suggestive context, or rather pronounced conventional sign-functions that support the iconic aspects. That, however, does not rule out that the miming relation between the visual and auditory may be distinct and intuitively felt. On the metaphoric level, it is obvious that some visual details in both figurative and non-figurative visual art and literature have latent similarities to auditory phenomena that may easily be activated. Sharp, red objects do not automatically signify trumpet blasts, but once the similarity has been found and experienced, and if it makes sense in the overall context, the metaphoric interpretation is a fact. Likewise, there is no automatic and constant connection between round letterforms and smooth sounds. On the contrary, the letter “M”, for instance, is definitely angular, but its conventionally coded sound is generally apprehended as soft. However, the latent iconic parallel between the roundness of visual and auditory forms of “O” can easily be activated.

The relation between visual and auditory form can also be more complex. The similarities between sight and sound are solid enough to form what I call weak diagrams. A set of visual signs can no doubt mirror in a stylized form the internal relations of a set of auditory signs. A sound level meter with visual display has the capacity of representing changing sound qualities in a visual form. When reading a poem and finding that the letter size is constantly decreasing, it is not far-fetched to see it as an iconic sign of diminishing sound volume. Of course, many other visual aspects of a text such as capital letters and bold type can be seen as diagrammatically related to the latent auditory aspect of reading. A written poem is both a visual structure and a potential auditory structure with intimate connections of both symbolic and iconic nature. Once a poem is read aloud the ‘representamen’ and the ‘object’ can be said to change places: the shifting voice qualities now become signs of possible visual characteristics in a written version of the sounding text.

Also musical scores are best described as weak diagrams, I suggest. The visual form of a score is in many aspects related to the sound of the music. The iconic

relation between visual space and musical time is obvious (the conventionally coded movement from the left to the right triggers an iconic signification of time passing), and the iconic relation between the visual and auditory aspects of “high” and “low” notes is a textbook example of basic iconic relations between sensory perceptions. It can thus be stated that in a musical score sets of visual signs mirror the internal relations of potential auditory signs. One might argue that it is sometimes more correct to say that it is not the score that mimes the music but the music that mimes the score, but nevertheless, the relation between the visual and the auditory must be seen as largely diagrammatic. Perhaps one could suggest that a musical score is in fact a ‘strong diagram’, but although a score no doubt represents music in great detail, the iconic representation is indeed heavily backed up by symbolic signs. Without the many conventional signs the score loses greatly in accuracy. The information received from the iconic aspects of medieval scores is far from enough to reconstruct what the music actually sounded like when it was first written down.

As far as I can see, the categories ‘strong diagram’ and ‘image’ only allow for “visual form miming visual form”, and “auditory form miming auditory form”. The resemblance (the iconic motivation) between ‘representamen’ and ‘object’ becomes weaker as soon as the miming crosses the borders between the visual, the auditory, and the complex cognitive. The very detailed resemblance required by the ‘strong diagram’ and the ‘image’ makes it essential for ‘representamens’ and ‘objects’ to be perceptible and of the same kind. It is certainly hard to conceive of what an ‘image’ with a visual ‘representamen’ and an audible ‘object’ would be.

The ‘weak diagram’ and the ‘metaphor’, on the other hand, are singled out by the capacity of miming across the borders — both between the visual and the auditory, and between the material and the mental. On the metaphoric level one finds visual form miming meaning in both figurative and non-figurative visual art and literature, and in simple pictographic ideograms. Some of Emily Dickinson’s very many dashes may be said to mime hesitation: the letters in the words are visually “active” but the dashes are “passive” or “empty” and leave space for consideration. A visual detail in a painting such as a sharp, red object may mime pain, for instance (a sign-function combining traits of iconicity and indexicality, I would say), and that may certainly be the case also if the visual form dominates the image. The metaphoric interpretation cannot be delimited to details. In an image that consists of many details and that is dominated by the black color, both a single detail and the overall obscurity may acquire metaphoric meaning — blackness may be seen as miming death, for instance.

“Blackness” and the sign “—” are separate signs. “A sharp, red object” is also a separate sign, I believe. A curve chart of economic trends, however, is definitely a weak diagram with a visual ‘representamen’ and a cognitive ‘object’. Also the

growing field of computer-generated visualizations of large amounts of number data is an example of the great force of diagrammatic relations between the visual and the complex cognitive.

Earlier it was stated that differing size between depicted human bodies may be interpreted as a two-dimensional representation of distance and space. That would be an instance of visual form diagrammatically miming visual form. Yet, depictions of figures that vary in size may also receive meaning outside the code of visual realism. The relation between larger and smaller figures may also signify varying social status, which would be an instance of visual form diagrammatically miming meaning.

6. Auditory material signs

Auditory form miming auditory form can be found as metaphors, diagrams, and images. A shrill tone miming a piercing voice should be seen as metaphoric iconicity. Many onomatopoeic words, such as “bow-wow”, are a little more complex and may be seen as sets of signs with internal relations that mirror in a stylized form the internal relations of the object. The barking of dogs is not represented in exactly the same way in different languages — as always, the iconic sign-function is combined with a conventional sign-function — but the iconic motivation between the sound sequence in “bow-wow” and the internal relations of the barking sound is strong enough for establishing weak diagrammatic iconicity. Other weak diagrams connecting auditory form to auditory form may be a flute imitating a bird, poetic or musical rhythm resembling the sound of marching people, and so forth.

Diagrams that connect auditory form to other auditory form can also be more detailed. Recordings of music performances played in mono are strong diagrams, I would say. The internal relations in the ‘representamen’ and the internal relations in the (vanished) ‘object’ do not completely mirror each other, but the iconic motivation is substantially more complex and stronger than in the case of a flute sounding like a bird. Generally one can say, I think, that very accurate but not exact sound imitations with imperfect spatial characteristics should be seen as strong diagrams. If the music recording is reproduced in full surround stereo of very high quality, however, the *spatial* quality of live music is added, and hence it is warranted to say that the recording is a *substantial* icon: an image. The difference between a two-dimensional picture only suggesting three-dimensional depth and a truly spatial sculpture is, I believe, not identical but comparable to the difference between mono and surround stereo.

In the case of auditory form miming visual form, we again have to settle with metaphors and weak diagrams. Certain linguistic features can adequately be

described as auditory metaphors for visual phenomena. Anderson discusses the well-documented iconic relations on the one hand between high or front vowels, proximity and small size, on the other hand between lower or back vowels, distance and large size (Anderson 1998:212). Low notes miming obscurity is also a case of metaphoric relation between an auditory phenomenon and a visual condition.

If this kind of iconicity is expanded to a set of related signs one gets weak diagrams. In a specific context, an ascending tone scale may mime, for instance, a mountain, and a melody may mime the movements of an animal. Anderson's description of 'linguistic synaesthesia', that is "the correlation of certain phonological patterns with sensations relating to motion, curved versus angular shapes, large versus small size, proximity versus distance, and so on" (Anderson 1998: 191), fits very well into the category of the weak diagram. One of Anderson's illustrations of this kind of iconicity is multiple consonant clusters which are "universally peripheral in language" and may iconize "difficult movement". In a poem by Hart Crane one reads about "the world's closed door" and Anderson argues that the consonantal sequence [rldzkl] and the consonantal gemination (*closed* door) iconically represent "the idea of closure" (Anderson 1998:204). Of course, notions such as motion, distance, and closure are not only visual phenomena. Closure can also be felt, and, certainly, mentally experienced. When scrutinizing iconicity of this kind, one clearly sees how artificial it sometimes is to distinguish between form and meaning, and how the data of the senses are intertwined with concept formation from the very beginning.

Smooth harp tones miming rest is an example of how auditory form may mime meaning on a parallel basis. I believe it is fair to say that smoothness and rest are single traits, and the iconic motivation seems to be strong in all metaphoric relations connecting rest to auditory and visual as well as tactile smoothness. Obviously, the iconic sign-function is here mixed with substantial indexicality: phenomena that make us feel tranquil are perceived as being restful in themselves, in general because they lack (auditory, visual, or tactile) sharp contrasts and irregularities. 'Phonaesthesia', defined by Anderson as "synaesthesia extended to the affective domain: certain phonological patterns are correlated with emotions or subjective feelings" (Anderson 1998: 191), is perhaps somewhat more complex (at least if the phonological patterns are composite), but there is certainly no point in quarreling about whether it generally should be seen as metaphoric or weakly diagrammatic.

The most obvious and also by far the most important example of auditory form miming meaning on a relational basis, is music miming emotional states. Both meaning and emotions are firmly rooted in the bodily experience of the world. The way we feel corresponds to the way the body behaves, simply because emotions are felt by and produced by the body, and the brain is part of the body. Rhythm, speed, rest, dynamics, movement, tension *et cetera* are meaningful bodily

experiences that music may mime. The theoretical area of ‘musical meaning’ is a mine field, no doubt, but a few things are clear: that musical meaning is partly something other than, for instance, verbal meaning; that musical form for all listeners in all times has been connected to emotional states of various sorts; and that these connections often are subjective and changing, which makes it impossible to construct a true grammar of musical meaning (although there is often strong intersubjectivity in the emotional response to individual pieces of music). From a semiotic point of view, however, it is of less importance exactly how the relations between form and emotional meaning are established; what matters is that musical sound for individual listeners is constantly established as sets of signs with internal relations that mirror in a stylized form the internal relations of emotions and states of mind. Be it the calm pace of a Beethoven adagio, the pronounced rhythm and melancholy tune of a folk song, or the aggressive sound of a piece of rock music: musical meaning is basically created through weak diagrammatic iconicity. Most of the time the ‘object’ of music is no doubt emotions, but the meaning may also be of different kinds. To a certain extent, music may narrate, and it may also mime the general structure of, for instance, poetry, as Siglind Bruhn has demonstrated in her analyses of what she calls ‘musical ekphrasis’ in pieces of music including Arnold Schoenberg’s *Verklärte Nacht* (Bruhn 2000: 149–172).

7. Complex cognitive signs

It is a little bit curious that the growing exploration of iconicity in language and literature seems to be largely disconnected from the vast field of research on literary metaphor. It is true that the diagram deserves much attention since it substantially expands the ground for studies of iconicity, but the nature of iconicity can be properly understood only if one considers the whole spectrum of iconic signification and tries to see how the different aspects are connected. The idea that meaning can signify is in a way self-evident if one considers the way meaning is produced in routine metaphoric interpretations of language. If I write or talk about “the basis of my argument”, the visual or auditory ‘representamens’, the words, are first of all decoded as symbolic signs with conventional meaning. But the conventional meaning of “basis” cannot be isolated in an abstract way; it can only be understood (indeed, it can only *come into existence*) by way of comparison and resemblance. We know that without the surface of the earth as the base of our bodies we would fall down; we know that buildings without solid bases collapse rather quickly; we also know that if we do not eat we have no base for the bodily processes that keep us alive — and we know that without a solid basis no argumentation will last very long. The conventionality of much language is thus only to be found on

the surface. The understanding of the word “basis” in its context involves both a decoding of a conventional form so that it receives “preliminary” meaning and a further and deeper iconic interpretation where both ‘representamen’ and ‘object’ have the nature of meaning. Also the strange notion of ‘literal meaning’ is hence very much dependent on iconicity on the metaphoric level.

In the case of “the basis of my argument”, the ‘representamen’ and the ‘object’ cannot be clearly separated. Rather, there is a complex set of interdependent ‘objects’ (the surface of the earth, the bases of buildings, all kinds of proper preparations and so forth) that also constantly, in ordinary language use, have the character of ‘representamens’. Perhaps one might say that the metaphoricity is circular; it is a loop of meaning signifying meaning. I cannot see how it would be possible to replace “basis” in “the basis of my argument” with a verbal sign that does not have the same character of fundamental metaphoricity; something that would stop the spinning of the circle. One might say “the ground of my argument” or “the foundation of my argument”, and it would mean approximately the same thing, but these expressions are neither more nor less metaphorical than “the basis of my argument”.

As I stated early in this article, the fundamental condition for many forms of iconicity is that form has meaning and that meaning has form. Hence, it is obvious that this circle of metaphoric interpretation, where meaning mimes meaning *ad finitum*, necessarily also includes aspects of form. The notion of basis is of course based not least on visual and tactile sensory experiences. But in the expression “the basis of my argument” it is the more abstract aspect of basis that is foregrounded.

In some linguistic constructions that are apprehended as metaphors, the ‘representamen’ and the ‘object’ can be more clearly separated and also found in the text itself (I guess that is why they are generally seen as “proper” metaphors). Shakespeare’s description “Life’s but a walking shadow” can easily be seen as consisting of a comparison between two phenomena that resemble each other in certain respects. I think it is as fair to say that “life” mimes “a walking shadow” as it is to say the reverse, but perhaps the most prolific way of interpreting the word constellation is to see “a walking shadow” as the ‘representamen’ and “life” as the ‘object’; or, in more traditional vocabulary: “a walking shadow” is the image of “life”. Certainly, the phenomenon of “a walking shadow” has visual qualities, but my point is that these visual qualities are not really primary; rather, it is our knowledge of what a shadow is — it has no life or real existence in itself, it is passing and feeble — that forms the ground for the metaphoric interpretation. A walking shadow has *meaning* and this meaning resembles the *meaning* that can be attributed to life.

However, this metaphoric relation is much more elaborated in Shakespeare’s drama. If one continues to read in *Macbeth*, the metaphoric character becomes increasingly diagrammatic as the resemblance between “life” and “a walking

shadow” is expanded to include also “a player” and “a tale”: “Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more: it is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing”. In the end, we are almost left with a small allegory, and I certainly do propose that a literary allegory is basically a relational icon. I find it very appealing that the old notion of allegory can be neatly described as a ‘weak diagram’ where both the ‘representamen’ and the ‘object’ are only imaginable.⁴ Like most notions, allegory has a complex history, but the idea that a narrative represents another narrative is a very central aspect of it. Of course, narratives have form, but it is primarily the *meaning* of a narrative that has form, so a literary allegory might justly be described as a ‘weak diagram’ based on meaning miming meaning; the explicitly told narrative consists of a set of signs (the meaning of the succeeding word constellations) with internal relations that mirror in a stylized form the internal relations of the implicit narrative (in our example: the pointless hardships of a life story). It can be noted that some of the ancient theoreticians considered the allegory to be an extended metaphor, which is in line with my idea that the difference between metaphor and diagram is primarily a question of degree.

What Anderson calls “morphological iconism, based upon word structure” and “syntactic iconism, based upon word order” (Anderson 1998:42), are two kinds of linguistic iconicity that also have the character of weak diagrams: sets of signs with internal relations (word structure and word order) mirror in a stylized form the internal relations of the object. I would like to briefly discuss one of these variants of iconicity since it illustrates how difficult and perhaps delimitating it sometimes is to try to definitely decide whether the ‘representamen’ and the ‘object’ mainly have visual or auditory form, or the character of meaning. At least sometimes, however, I think it is proper to say that morphological and syntactic iconicity are based on meaning miming meaning.

The best known example of syntactic iconicity is “veni, vidi, vici”, first discussed by Roman Jakobson in an influential article on linguistic iconicity (Jakobson 1971a: 350; cf. Nänny and Fischer 2001). If one simply looks at these words the iconic result is not very impressive: the letters “v” and “i” are repeated, but the purely visual effect of this repetition is, to my mind, negligible. However, if one decodes the symbolic aspect of the words; that is, if one reads them or listens to them according to the Latin language conventions, one soon realizes that the order of the words mimes the order of the described events: “I came, I saw, I conquered”.

4. Johansen aptly defines allegory as “a more or less extended and a more or less consistent network of metaphors”, but for some reason that I do not understand he does not put it in the category of “Diagrammatization” (Johansen 2003: 401).

We are thus dealing with a simple form of syntactic iconicity that, at the most, is indirectly visual or auditory: when one reads or listens to the words one also sees or hears that the order of the words (but not their shapes or sounds) reflects the order of the events (which no doubt have both visual, auditory, and cognitive aspects). Yet, I would hesitate to say that the ‘representamen’ in this example is a complex cognitive sign. At the most, it is a quite simple cognitive sign: the notion of order is in the heart of the matter since all mimetic relations in all parts of the iconic sign constellation are based on visual, auditory, or cognitive order. Caesar’s dictum perhaps can be characterized as a weak diagram based on rudimentary meaning miming rudimentary meaning. The schema proposed in this article certainly cannot efficiently cover the complexity of all sorts of iconic relations, only some basic variants.

Nevertheless, I cannot see what an ‘image’ or a ‘strong diagram’ building on meaning miming meaning, or on meaning miming visual or auditory form, would consist of. On that point the schema is reliable, I think: the stronger forms of iconicity can only be realized when visual form mimes visual form and when auditory form mimes auditory form. When it comes to meaning miming form in a weaker sense, however, one finds a whole range of intermedial relations that have been much disputed. Comparisons between different art forms can indeed be rather vague and empty, but often analogues between, for instance, literature and musical form have been criticized in a misguided way for not being exact enough. The point is that *all* iconic relations between visual form, auditory form, and complex cognitive form, are either metaphoric or weakly diagrammatic — but they do exist and are of importance.

An example of meaning miming visual form on the metaphoric level would be John Donne’s poem “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning”, where the described movement of the two lovers is compared to the circle drawn by a pair of compasses. This circle can also be seen as a depiction of the sun. Although the ‘representamen’, the decoded content of Donne’s verbal illustration of the lovers, is rather complex in its entirety, the ‘object’, the visual circle, is very simple. We thus have a parallel icon, a ‘metaphor’, based on single common traits. If both the ‘representamen’ and the ‘object’ are more complex, and related to each other so that the internal relations can be said to be mirrored, it is proper to say that it is a ‘weak diagram’. Many ekphrases, such as W. H. Auden’s “Musée des Beaux Arts”, no doubt display such resemblance between the internal relations of the complex cognitive signs of the decoded verbal description, and the internal relations of the painting’s visual form. One central aspect of the meaning of Auden’s poem is that ordinary life goes on also when allegedly more important events occur, such as the fall of Icarus. This conceptual relation mimes the different sizes of a farmer in the foreground and the small Icarus in the background in a famous painting by Brueghel. If one accepts

this interpretation, the meaning of the poem indeed mimes the visual form of the painting.

In a similar way, a classical metaphor (in the linguistic form of a simile) such as Robert Burns's "O, my luve's like the melodie, / That's sweetly play'd in tune", establishes an iconic relation between the single phenomena "love" and "melody". If one admits that love is a meaningful notion, and if one finds the comparison between love and melody significant, this is a case of meaning miming auditory form — and perhaps also, as a consequence of the relations established between love and music in the poem, auditory form miming meaning. One of the vital characteristics of metaphoric interpretations of literature is that it is often pointless to try to decide which parts of the metaphoric complex belong to the 'representamen' and which to the 'object'. A creative metaphoric construal is characterized by a mutual exchange of qualities between different parts of the iconic sign.

The exact form of the sweetly played melody in Burns's poem is not outlined, but if the auditory 'object' becomes more delineated, and if the 'representamen' succeeds in miming some of its internal relations, we get a 'weak diagram'. This is the case in, for instance, Paul Celan's "Todesfuge". In this poem we find literary narration that approximately, but of course very far from completely, mimes musical form. Through systematic repetitions and variations the structure of the poem comes fairly close to some of the essential characteristics of the fugue (Elleström 1989; cf. Wolf 2003: 339–60).

8. Final remarks

As far as I can see, there is no point in trying to make definite distinctions between metaphor, diagram, and image. The difference between the diverse forms of iconicity is to a great extent, it seems, quantitative rather than qualitative. Very many different aspects must be considered when "measuring" the grade of iconicity, however, and it is certainly impossible to construct a definite gray scale of iconicity, starting with zero iconicity, proceeding through vague metaphoric relations, more wide-ranging metaphors, weak diagrams, strong diagrams, and icons, ending with complete identity. Iconicity is too much a contextual and perceptual phenomenon to allow for that. As demonstrated by the scheme in this article, however, it is fully possible to build an approximate model of these nevertheless gradable relations. The proposed model suggests that it is possible to systematically compare diverging variants of iconicity, and it shows, I think, that iconicity includes many phenomena that are not normally considered particularly related. Iconicity involves so many different factors, however, that it is perhaps not very meaningful to push the comparisons between degrees of iconicity too far.

Yet, the distinction between ‘weak’ and ‘strong diagrams’ is justified, I think, since there is a substantial difference between, for example, abstract and figurative visual art, and between simple sound imitations and detailed renderings of music. Indeed, the difference between ‘weak’ and ‘strong diagrams’ must be understood as basically quantitative rather than qualitative, but it also includes a qualitative aspect: iconicity that is not limited to material ‘representamens’ and ‘objects’ of the same sense category (visual form mining visual form, or auditory form miming auditory form), can never, according to my proposed categorization, become stronger than a ‘weak diagram’. The gap between the visual, the auditory, and the complex cognitive can easily and preferably be bridged on the level of ‘metaphor’ and ‘weak diagram’ — obviously, we have the cognitive ability and the interpretive drive to do so all the time — but at some point the resemblance, the iconic ‘ground’ formed by our brain’s perceptions and conceptions, fades out when trying to establish really strong iconic relations between, for instance, the visual and the auditory. Probably, it would also be much easier to find measurable characteristics that define grades of iconic relations between ‘representamens’ and ‘objects’ that are both auditory or both visual.

One of the all too obvious weaknesses of the schema is that the notions of form and meaning are exceedingly broad, but the very point of the model is to include a wide area of cognitive operations that can be related to the many associated aspects of material form. I consider the loss of precision to be compensated by the gain of a general view. Another weakness in the design of the preceding argumentation is that, for the sake of clarity, it has been necessary mainly to discuss form and meaning as separate entities — but hopefully it has been made perfectly clear that a major concern is, on the contrary, to show how difficult it is to separate form from meaning. Certainly, that is the very reason why form may mime meaning and meaning may mime form.

Realizing this, one might nevertheless state that the aspect of perceptible form dominates the ‘image’ and the ‘strong diagram’. The ‘weak diagram’ and the ‘metaphor’ are instead characterized by a complex blend of form and meaning. Many of the genres and phenomena discussed within interartial and intermedial studies can be described as various aspects of weak diagrammatic and metaphoric relations between ‘representamens’ and ‘objects’ that are visual material, auditory material, or complex cognitive. One can also conclude that from one point of view the ‘metaphor’ is the most complex form of iconicity, from another point of view the ‘image’ is the most intricate. The complexity of metaphoric relations consists of a potential fusion of the material, the various forms of sensory perception, and the mental. Metaphoric interpretations can fuse, as is often claimed for poetry, seemingly widely differing phenomena — and in a meaningful way. This kind of complexity is guaranteed by the relative vagueness of the metaphoric relationship.

The complexity of images, on the other hand, consists of detailed and multifaceted iconic relations between objects, occurrences, and phenomena of the same physical kind. This sort of complexity is based on what Peirce called “simple qualities” (Peirce 1960: 157) and generated by the relative exactness and completeness of images.

I have discussed iconicity in literature and language together with iconicity in images, music, and other sign-systems because that is the only available method if one wants to gain a more general knowledge of iconicity. My angle of approach has nevertheless been fairly restricted. Many usable distinctions made in linguistic studies of iconicity have not been incorporated in the scheme because I find it complex enough as it is. For the same reason I have resisted the temptation to include systematic consideration of, for instance, the difference between signs primarily manifested in space and in time, respectively, and the difference between static form and changing or dynamic form. I have also largely avoided discussing composite ‘representamens’ consisting of combinations of visual, auditory, and complex cognitive aspects. Nevertheless, I hope to have demonstrated that it is not entirely awkward to say that thinking is spatial, that meaning has form, and that thought, ideas, and notions have the capacity of miming.

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A view from the margins

Theoretical contributions to an understanding of iconicity from the Afrikaans-speaking research community

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The focus of this essay is the little known contribution to the field of literary iconicity by Afrikaans literary theorists in the seventies and eighties in South Africa, especially the research done by H.C.T. Müller. The rationale for this is my contention that the theory of literary iconicity put forward by Müller might be used both to shed light on some of the problems that contemporary iconicity theorists, like Paul Bouissac and others, experience with aspects of the current research conducted within the framework of the (New) Iconicity Research Project and to perhaps point the way to a consolidation of current views in a comprehensive theory of iconicity.

1. Background

Contemporary research on iconicity the past ten years has been significantly brought into focus by the activities of the Iconicity Research Project (IRP). This project, originally launched in 1997 by Olga Fischer and Max Nännny, has continued since 2006 under the leadership of Olga Fischer at the University of Amsterdam and Christina Ljungberg at the University of Zürich, and it has been accepted as a research project at the Amsterdam Center for Language and Communication (ACLC). In 2007 the sixth symposium of this Project was held in South Africa. What is probably less known within the context of international co-operation in the Project is the globally aware, theoretical contribution in Afrikaans to the field of research on iconicity dating back as far as the 1970s, which seems to have anticipated some of the recent criticisms emanating from research within the sphere of the Project, offering a different perspective and theoretical grounding for research on iconicity.

A contextualisation of early Afrikaans-based research on iconicity may start out by drawing attention to views concerning the comparative contributions from linguistics and literary studies, respectively, to a better understanding of the phenomenon, and the role of research emanating from the Project in promoting cooperation between these two disciplines. The first statement is a claim by Nänny and Fischer (2006: 462–463) in the *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, under the entry “Iconicity: Literary Texts”, that it is contemporary linguistic insights into iconicity that help expand the previously limited field of literary investigation into the phenomenon:

Whereas the study of iconicity in everyday language has become an accepted part of modern linguistics, this is less the case with the literary uses of it. ... (T)raditionally, the main objects of iconic investigations by literary scholars have been the literary use of onomatopoeia and sound symbolism, on the one hand, and of typography in pattern poetry and modern visual poetry, on the other. The presence of iconic diagrams has been largely ignored. These mainly occur on the level of morpho-syntax and discourse, although they also may be present on the phonemic and typographic level. Once we have recognized the diagram as an iconic sign, too, the presence of iconicity in literature becomes pervasive.

The second is a statement on the role of contemporary research on iconicity in bridging the gap between linguistics and literature that should be read together with the previous one:

Iconicity is one of the few fields of research in which the disciplines of linguistics and literary studies — both of which have regrettably drifted apart as a consequence of specialization — can fruitfully co-operate (see Maeder, Fischer and Herlofsky 2005: 1).

The third is a viewpoint that historically traces the collaboration of linguistics and literary studies in research on iconicity back to stylist Roman Jakobson and to Peircean semiotics. On this point attention is drawn to Jakobson’s 1965 article, “Quest for the essence of language” (included in Jakobson 1971: 352), in which he introduced C. S. Peirce’s distinction between imagic and diagrammatic icons to a wider audience, which because of its contribution to a better understanding of *diagrammatic iconicity* proved very productive in the foundational theorising of the Project. Max Nänny played an important role in this regard, making a statement in a 1986 article on iconicity in literary texts (based on the views of John Haiman, 1980: 537) suggesting that researchers had to wait for Peircean semiotics before noticing the phenomenon whereby the reality presented in texts may be mirrored by the syntactic and discursive structure of such a text:

While conceding the arbitrary or 'symbolic' nature of the individual sign in isolation, a number of linguists in Jakobson's wake have emphatically drawn attention to the near universality of diagrammatic iconicity in the grammars of various languages, an iconicity which mirrors 'the structure of reality to an extent greater than is now fashionable to recognize' (in Nänny 1986: 199).

However, an investigation of a collection of essays from the context of Afrikaans linguistics and literary studies, *Die Kunswerk as Taal*, edited by F.I.J. van Rensburg (1975a), and research by H.C.T. Müller for his doctoral dissertation, published as *Teks en Taalmimesis (Text and Iconicity)*, 1989), seems to allow for a different perspective on the developing field of research on iconicity. The picture emerging from this investigation makes it clear that, since the inception of the Department of Afrikaans-Nederlands at the former Rand Afrikaans University in the 1970s, a body of research conducted in Afrikaans was (1) explicitly aimed at drawing the disciplines of linguistics and literary studies closer together, (2) initiated by literary experts, (3) based on a carefully fostered co-operation between the two disciplines, and (4) taking into account insights not only from semiotics but also other literature-oriented theoretical approaches.

This collected research was the result of a colloquium programme organised by the language departments of the then Rand Afrikaans University in 1972/73, the rationale for which was formulated by the editor in the 'Foreword' as arising from the conviction that any discussion on literary art without considering its utilisation of the language medium must for the most part remain incomplete. Importantly, the colloquium was an effort to give effect to theoretical insights and research instruments drawn together and refined in the 1950s in a language based drive for a Literary Stylistics as evidenced in a number of doctoral studies completed by South African students in the Netherlands.

Two essays in the colloquium collection are especially relevant in the light of the claims above: firstly Van Rensburg's introductory essay, "Die literêre kunswerk as taalkunswerk" ("The literary artwork as language art", and secondly H.C.T. Müller's essay "Klankekspressie: 'n voorstudie" (a pilot study on sound expression).

Van Rensburg's essay (1975b: 1) was cautiously optimistic that at that point in time the disciplines of linguistics and literary studies were increasingly engaging in dialogue with one another: the increasing availability in the 1970s of an extensive corpus of literary studies that focussed on language use in literary texts in languages like English, German, Dutch and Afrikaans had convinced him that gradual moves from both sides of the dividing line were starting to heal a break in tradition. The essay starts with a brief explanation of the break during the 19th and early 20th century in modern classical philological tradition (which traditionally dealt with both literary and linguistic aspects of a text), which led to linguistics and literary studies moving away from philology and developing into two separate

disciplines (Van Rensburg 1975b: 1). The focus then shifts to ways in which knowledge of linguistics can be used in literary studies to uncover the rich possibilities of the “literêre teks-as-taalkunswerk” (‘literary text as language of art’) (at the levels of sound, metre and rhythm, semantics and syntax, as well as the coherence of these factors: the order and relations in which they determine and/or qualify one another in a particular instance of use (Van Rensburg 1975b: 6).

However, the essay not only asks what contribution linguistics can make to the methodology of literary studies, but also what linguists might have to say about a phenomenon that by then was already very well known in literature, namely that in the proper artwork language not only *says* something, but *is* at the same time also what it says; in other words, that the artwork becomes what it communicates semantically (Van Rensburg 1975b: 9). This means that non-semantic aspects of the ‘linguistic sign’ are used with symbolic function. The essay goes on to explain that sometimes the *sound of a word* dramatises what the word semantically conveys through its meaning; it *symbolises* (however partially and incomplete) the object that the word names. Some words, as single words, have a certain degree of symbolising ability (this refers to sound-symbolising words, not sound-imitating words...), but what is truly amazing is that a word that does not have this ability as a single word sometimes acquires it when it is used together with other words in a symbolising pattern. The words taken together then symbolises what they together name, but none of them in themselves have this symbolising property or else it is not evident. Continuing with a list of examples, the essay then demonstrates that the factors enabling words to act in a symbolising way (thus mimetically or iconically) in literary texts include not only metre and sound organisation, but also accent, syntax, word length, word group length and sentence length.

The term (imagic and diagrammatic) *icon* does not occur in Van Rensburg’s essay; following the German linguist Karl Bühler, he prefers to distinguish between “klanknabootsing” (*sound imitation*) and “klanksimboliek” (*sound symbolism*, a term he understands to mean the representation of the non-auditory in terms of sound, while the term *symbolising* for him denotes a relationally apt reflection of object by sign (Van Rensburg 1975b: 9 footnote). However, the term *icon* does appear in E.B. van Wyk’s essay, “Die taalkundige grondslae van versvorm in die Bantoetale” (“The linguistic basis of the verse form in Bantu languages”; 1975: 15–33), in which he lauds the poet who succeeds in reinforcing the semantic content of his verses through sound symbolism, or rather *iconic* sound use, by ingeniously manipulating alliteration and assonance (Van Wyk 1975: 29; my italics).

Müller (1975: 69–96) in his colloquium contribution on sound expressivity, expands on Van Rensburg’s views and at the same time contextualises Van Wyk’s use of the term *iconic* by relating it in an explanatory footnote (1975: 70 fn) to its

use by C.W. Morris (“A characterizing sign characterizes that which it can denote. Such a sign may do this by exhibiting in itself the properties an object must have to be denoted by it, and in this case the characterizing sign is an icon ...”) and W.K. Wimsatt (“The term *icon* is used today by semeiotic writers to refer to a verbal sign which *somehow* shares the properties of, or resembles, the object which it denotes ...”). Furthermore, in his doctoral dissertation for which this essay was adapted, Müller (1987: 158ff.; see also Müller 1989: 114) refers specifically to Peirce’s oft-revised classifications of semiotics (with a footnote reference to Jakobson’s discussion of its application to language), and also to Wimsatt’s 1967 use of the term *icon* in *The Verbal Icon* as a synonym for terms such as *concretising*, *imaging* and *dramatising*, as well as his repeated reference to the “iconicity” of poetry: according to Wimsatt (1967: 217), a successful poem is a constructed sign or symbol that may display iconic relations at different levels with the reality complex at which it is directed: both the semantic and non-semantic elements of language — the *logical* and *counterlogical* elements — can act iconically in a poem, and can ‘portray’ reality mimetically.

The purpose of the above, then, by way of establishing a point of departure, is to draw attention to the existence of a neglected body of research on iconicity which may merit a more concerted investigation of its contribution to knowledge in the field. But, above I also hinted that this research may contribute to offering a different perspective and theoretical grounding for research on iconicity. For a clearer understanding of the perspective that the Afrikaans-based research offers, one could start by looking at the differences in the premises underlying the research in the two contexts.

2. Founding views of language and sign

The initial premise of the Iconicity Research Project, as embodied in the first two symposia, is explained by Nänny and Fischer (2001: 1) in the introduction to the second collection of symposium papers as follows:

In a manner of speaking, the symposia and the papers were meant to challenge what Roman Jakobson has called “Saussure’s dogma of arbitrariness”...

2.1 Triadic views of the sign

Winfried Nöth (2001: 17–28) was the one who orientated the project on Peirce’s sign typology in the first orientational essay of the second symposium collection, entitled “Semiotic foundations of iconicity in language and literature”, but, despite this stated objective (Nöth 2001: 17), Nöth’s essay, like many others in the

subsequent symposium collections, did not start with Peirce's grounding views of the sign, but with his triadic typology of signs as *icons*, *indices* and *symbols*, based on the type of relation that holds between sign vehicle and referential object. However, Nöth's contribution proved very influential. In the next collection, *From sign to signing* (Müller and Fischer 2003), seven of the nineteen essays referred to Peirce's insights, and particularly to his concept of *diagrammatic iconicity* which was applied productively in several contributions.

What seems to be lacking in iconicity research oriented solely or mainly on Peirce's views is a critical review of his insights into the sign nature of natural language from which consistent applications of the sign typologies to iconicity in language and literature could be derived. This kind of theoretical grounding seems to me even more necessary in view of the fact that there appears to be no real consensus on Peirce's tripartite sign. This lack of certainty about the sign starts with Peirce himself, who seems to have wrestled with the problem during his whole career and revised his views many times, according to Bernard (2006: 370), who also mentions that Peirce ultimately left behind dozens of definitions and analytical descriptions of the sign.

The fluidity of the Peircean concept of the sign is propagated in linguistic and philosophical encyclopaedic entries, as is evident from the different interpretations under the following entries, "Sign Theories" and "Peirce, Charles Sanders", in the *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* and the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, respectively. In the *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, for example, Bernard (2006: 369) describes the following, to some 'strange', triangular diagram to compare the 'pragmatist' sign approaches of Peirce, Charles W Morris and Max Bense:

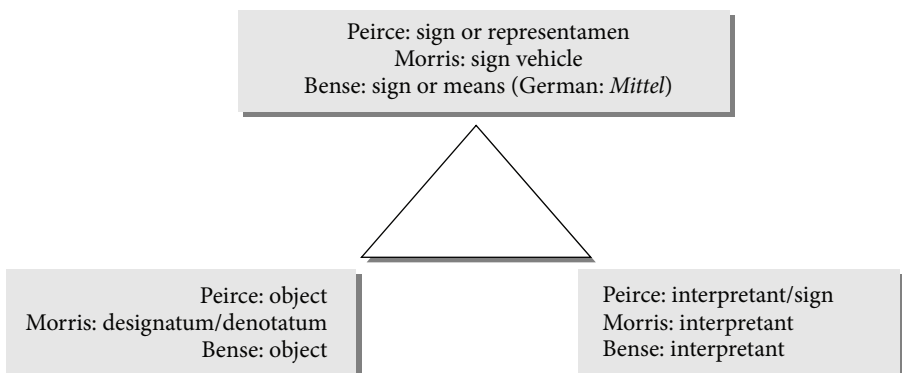


Figure 1. Triadic sign approaches of Peirce, Morris and Bense

Along with the diagram, the following definition of a sign by Peirce is given:

A sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign [...] That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object [...] not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea (CP 2.228).

From this definition it appears Peirce is arguing that signs are concepts that have always already been mediated because they are ideal/mental representations or interpretations of the object in the mind of the person being addressed, in Peircean terms an *interpretant*. *Representamen* and *object* are kept together in interpreting thought as *sign*, something which in language would be possible only if the representamen represented the unit of sound form-plus-meaning, as in Müller's (1987) view of language which will be discussed in more detail below. According to Müller (1987: 3–4), words in a language are not true reflections of “objects perfectly known in advance”, but perspectival views; yet each meaning, together with the associated grammatical category, is a (perspectival or aspectual) view of something *outside* the language sign which can be identified apart from the language sign itself. This means that Saussure's view of the sign should actually have been formulated as follows: *signifiant* is the unit of meaning and sound form and *signifié* the object or objects outside the language sign to which the sign as a whole necessarily relates.

It seems from Thomas Hookway's explanation (1998) of the indivisible relationship nature of the sign in the online *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* that he understands the important role of the interpretant in Peirce's view of the sign, which he understands as *interpretation*:

A name (that) denotes an object or a sentence stands for a state of affairs by virtue of being interpreted in subsequent thought, speech or action as doing so. The interpretant, which is itself a sign with the same object, thus mediates between the original sign and its object. ... Unless the sign has the capacity to produce such interpretant thoughts (the meaning of which in turn depends upon how they are interpreted) it would have no significance.

According to Hookway, it is the *interpretant* which relates signs with the objects in a process of abduction. In his understanding of Peirce's tripartite sign, meaning emerges from the *interpreting/mediating role* of the interpretant: the interpretant (which itself is also a sign with the same object) mediates between the original sign and the object; and the significance that a sign can assume depends on the ability of the sign to produce interpretant thoughts. Because thought in the Peircean scheme acts as another sign, the content/meaning of a thought or another mind event is specified or filled out by the interpretation and development of the content in subsequent thoughts. This has the possibility of ongoing semiotics, a tempting

and creative concept, particularly as it appears in poststructuralist and postmodernist contexts, but one which does not always relate to the reality of communication in the way that it is often manipulated in those contexts.

However, the above interpretations are not how Bernard (2006:370) understands the sign; for him the aspectual representation of the representamen in thought is unequivocally equal to *meaning*, as is evident from his explanation that the *representamen* is the transferable material substrata, the *object* is what the sign represents and the *interpretant* is the *meaning* of the sign which at the same time is another sign to be understood.

In a comparison of the two explanations above with Müller's view of language, which I will discuss below, it appears that Peirce's view of the sign, which provides for different types of signs, not only human language, cannot easily be made to do justice to a description of the complex signifying and semantic processes that can be and are carried out in and through human language. It also appears that those who interpret and apply Peirce's insights to language phenomena often forget that the basic purpose of language use, and also (particularly) language use in reflexive and/or creative contexts, is to communicate — an act involving semantic and pragmatic processes of both senders and receivers in particular contexts.

In a realistic view of language or sign, set to challenge the Saussurean sign approach in order to do justice to the phenomenon of iconicity, the orientating premise is the *interpretative use* in communication of a *sign* by an *interpretant* (a language user in a particular context) in order to form or convey an understanding of a *stated reality* outside the language sign, against the background of the *object* within the relevant frame(s) of reference. This, briefly, is the view of H.C.T. Müller.

2.2 A communication-oriented view of language

Müller's realistic language view was explicitly formulated as a basis for his research into "taalmimesis" or linguistic iconicity, specifically two forms, namely phonetic mimesis and metaphors. I believe that Müller's approach provides a clearer viewpoint on the relationship between language/text and reality than some semiotic interpretations of this relationship.

The theoretical pivot of research on iconicity is in the problematic nature of the relationship between language/text and reality as it emerges in the concept of mimesis, for example. In this regard, Müller's thesis (1987:vi–xi) (as in the published version, *Teks en Taalmimesis*, 1989) starts out as a response to two papers on the stylistic study of literature (published in 1986 as *Linguistics and the Study of Literature*, edited by Theo d'Haen). The first point of contact is Verdonk's approach to the mimetic question: *does linguistic form imitate or enact content*; the second Carter's (1986) approach to the problematic relationship between language and

reality as well as that between linguistic art and the extra-textual world. Important basic problems raised by way of a discussion of these investigations are (1) the methodology on which the scientific investigation into the phenomenon of linguistic iconicity is based and (2) the specific language view that has to support the methodology.

Methodologically Müller (1987:vii) bases his study on the assumption that there is an ontological domain of the intersubjective where confirmation of a subjective appeal of a text factor by another individual makes the appeal objective in an inter-subjective respect.

With regard to the problematic relationship between language, text and extralinguistic reality, his view concerning iconicity is explicitly realistically or referentially oriented. In contrast to the Saussurean-inspired approach, Müller is of opinion that literature can never deny the existence of an extra-linguistic reality because this would be in conflict with the basic facts of language and language use (see Müller, 1987:ix). However, if language is not an inherently closed space, extra-textual reality, on the other hand, does not enter this space willy-nilly with a whole baggage load of ready-made meaning. Van Rensburg (1975b: 14) states in his essay on *Die Kunswerk as Taal* that the contrast often made between textual and contextual is fundamentally a false one, and that literary researchers should rather in the reading process continuously ask “what does the text (i.e. the language) say about the world?” It was Müller (1987:x), though, who tackled the problem systematically in his thesis in answer to issues such as (1) the ontological status of language as a signifying medium, (2) the relationship between language and an extralinguistic reality, (3) the so-called arbitrariness of the sign and (4) language and language use as symbolic ‘representation’.

But, even before his thesis, in research papers (adapted for inclusion in the first chapter of his thesis) submitted to the South African Association of General Literary Studies in the early 1980s, Müller decisively criticised the language views of, among others, Saussure and Jacques Derrida, but in a way that addressed the validity of the above contrast between arbitrary and non-arbitrary.¹ Müller’s

1. That Müller’s insights did not immediately have a broader impact in the South African context may be partly attributed to the spell cast by literary theorists and scholars under the hegemonic influence of poststructuralism and deconstruction. That his insights did not reach the international audience they should have is probably also due to the marginalisation of Afrikaans literature researchers before 1994, but also to his early death. Hopefully a translation of the published version of Müller’s thesis, *Teks en Taalmimesis*, among others, will appear so that his arguments against the language and text approaches of De Saussure, Derrida and Stanley Fish, as well as his insights into linguistic iconicity can be introduced to a larger/new research community.

explanation of the realistic language view is mainly an argument against a radical relativistic language view like that of Saussure, Derrida and others. This type of radical relativism or conceptualism explains that all observations and conceptualisations are determined by language entirely, that we cannot identify any extralinguistic reality and that every language represents a completely unique organisation of human experience. In contrast, Müller (1987:9) is explicitly in favour of a non-radical relativism which, on the one hand, recognises that how we think and experience can be influenced by our language categories, but which, on the other, also accepts that our thought processes and experience, which exist relatively independently of language, can in turn influence language (Müller 1987: 10).

Against this background, his viewpoint is that literary theory should be based on a comprehensive understanding of language in all its stages of existence: from (1) language systematics, (2) the acquisition of language by the individual to (3) the inherent ability of language to construct a reality shared by language users in mutual understanding and (4) the interpretation of the used language in communication (Müller 1987:1) — thus a language model explicitly based on a referential approach to language. For Müller (1987:9) the linguistic sign is necessarily referential.

From a *language system* perspective, the system of every language user makes available the potential elements of language use, in other words, lexical items belonging to different grammatical categories, with semantic properties (semantic differentiations or knowledge facets) that allow them certain possibilities for application. Consequently, the meaning of a word is not merely a concept or idea, but a “pragmatiese handelingsmiddel” (a *pragmatic force*) or “gebruiksgedagte” (*thinking act*) (see Müller 1987:3–4).

In *language use*, the system tools are put in action, meaning that the semantic properties or differentiations of words are applied in thinking (and communicating), both objectively (“saaklik”) and functionally, about objects in reality, including about language itself (Müller 1987:5ff.). “Saaklik”/*objective* is used here in the sense of *referential*, in other words the application of meaning in language use to refer or denote, and ‘meaning’, as being meaningful or having connotation (Müller 1987:6–7). *Functional* is used by Müller in Reichling’s sense of the use of words as structuring moments of experience which, because those moments are dependent on words-in-use, are always contextually defined phenomena (in Müller 1987:7). All aspects of a text are simultaneously units of both the language system and language use. Nevertheless, language utterances are not merely extensions of the language system. As Müller (1987:16) puts it, from the use of a single phonemic exclamation as a sentence, from a single-word sentence, through all multiple word constructs to long texts, language utterances constitute something new. Owing to the referentiality of linguistic signs, in language use, reality is stated in a process

directed at reconciling semantic and pragmatic aspects both during and after the act of communication through the mutual understanding of the speaker and listener (Müller 1987: 16–17).

Taking into account both the distinction between and the coalescing of (1) the systematic aspects and the usage of language, between (2) the objective and functional, or the referential and pragmatic aspects when stating or reflecting about a reality, along with the implications this has for locating iconicity, may help eliminate certain disciplinary conflicts apparent from some descriptions of the phenomenon from linguistic and literary angles, respectively, which Paul Bouissac ultimately raised (2005 and 2007). Müller (1987: 14–15) refers to Geoffrey Leech's insights in *Principles of Pragmatics* to explain how the above two aspects supplement each other: semantic representation must be distinguished from pragmatic interpretation. According to Leech, and also Müller, while semantics is grammatical (“rule-governed”), the pragmatic is rhetorical (principle-governed); while grammatical rules are conventional, pragmatic principles are guided by the objectives of discussion (in which Müller includes rhetoric, including artistic objectives). Pragmatics links the grammatical meaning (“sense”) of an utterance with its illocutionary/pragmatic force.

Müller makes two important points about the *reality* to which words refer. Firstly, the language utterance states a (possible) world/reality which, once stated, lies outside language, in whatever ordinary, extraordinary or absurd manner this world has been given in our experience (Müller 1987: 13). Secondly, because matters such as truth, fantasy and fiction, according to Müller (1987: 13–14), relate to this extra-linguistic reality, they are strictly speaking no longer a language matter and should therefore not be taken into formal linguistics — although the issue of the relations between frames of reference is, of course, important to language use. Müller explains that the stated reality can ontologically assume many different forms of being. Language use as such makes no distinction between the possible worlds in which the objects referred to exist. It is therefore not accurate, he notes, to claim that, for example, vampires, dragons and unicorns exist only in words. Actual existence is not the premise of language and language use: through its statement of reality, a text creates objects in some ‘possible world’ and the meaningful integration or lack thereof of this reality into the sphere of our normal world view is a particular aspect of our interpretation of the utterance.

In language *use* two aspects are important: the *sender-receiver* situation and the *frame of reference*. The latter entails all the relevant knowledge that sender and receiver must share, starting with a knowledge of the language to their knowledge of each other and of the situation in which they find themselves, and what has already been discussed — in other words, everything that is part of the field of pragmatic or encyclopaedic knowledge, any aspect of which may be made relevant

through a language utterance (Müller 1987: 18). However, knowledge of a frame of reference with all the relevant frames of understanding alone is not sufficient to understand a language utterance: as Müller (1987: 19) says, not even a single word can be determined and explained entirely independent of knowledge of the text's situation and frame of reference. In the creation of 'new knowledge', he notes, both during the communication process and in its finished product, the text with its statement of reality is the *determining* and *decisive* factor that changes (or at least tries to change) preceding relevances of knowledge in some respect.

In an essay in the third Iconicity symposium collection, Jørgen Dines Johansen (2003) introduced a potentially valuable concept, differentiating three ways of '*iconising*' a literary text: through imaginisation, diagrammatisation and allegorisation. He concludes that the reading process is equal to *iconising*. What is not explicitly stated in the essay, but is clearly implied, is that iconicity is realised in the interpretation of a text. Müller's language view offers the broad theoretical basis for this. *Interpretation*, he says, takes place on the basis of a continual interaction between the stipulations of the language moments and the extra-linguistic knowledge specifying these stipulations, which ultimately leads to an understanding — a more or less successful synthesis — of the linguistic and extra-linguistic (Müller 1987: 20). A distinction is therefore made between the process and the product of interpretation.

Furthermore, a reader may also draw further conclusions from his or her understanding by realising implications arising from this understanding (Müller 1987: 21). Müller (1987: 21) therefore argues, as indicated above, that a reader's or listener's understanding which arises from the interpretation process is no longer a linguistic event. He found it necessary to make the above distinctions because he felt that in many linguistic and literary studies circles the content of words and sentences, the statement of reality, the interpretation process, understanding of the thematic coherences, and often also other inferences and applications which may lead to an understanding, are all brought together under the umbrella term 'meaning' and 'meanings'. Many 'meanings' from so-called indirect language acts are not, for instance, part of the statement of reality and direct interpretation of language use, but inferences from the very fact that a statement of reality has already been 'situated' for a certain frame of understanding. In other words, as Müller explains, they are inferences from an already interpreted utterance and as such are no longer a meaning or linguistic phenomenon.

Although Müller originally formulated his theory of language in response to Verdonk's (1986) mimetic question ("does linguistic form imitate or enact content?") and Carter's treatment of the problematic relationship between language and reality as well as that between language art and the extratextual world, his encompassing view of language-in-context set out above may prove more useful in locating iconicity than the more general formulations of the sign concept found in many

more recent discussions of iconicity. It is also clear that different views of language and/or sign may lead on to different views of iconicity as the next section will show.

3. Locating iconicity

3.1 Dualist approaches to locating iconicity

A survey of the research on iconicity forming part of the Amsterdam Project leads to the question of whether iconicity should be considered a property of language as such and therefore as deriving from the grammar or semantics of a language, or whether it should be viewed as an effect of language use. It appears it is sometimes viewed as one, sometimes as the other and sometimes both.

In their overview of the essays included in the very first symposium collection, Nänny and Fischer (1999:xxi) point out that contributors to the collection approach iconicity from two different angles, one as a primary code and the other as a secondary code:

A first group of scholars is especially interested in how the primary code, the code of grammar, is influenced by iconic motivation ... and how originally iconic models have become conventionalised ... A second group of contributors is more interested in the presence of iconicity as part of the secondary code, i.e. in how speakers and writers remotivate or play with the primary code, how they concretise what has become conventional or how they use form to add to meaning ...

This standpoint, showing influence of the traditional demarcation of the fields of linguistics and literary studies, for some critical readers of the inaugurating essay, like Paul Bouissac (2005) and myself, points to two incompatible views of iconicity, leading Bouissac (2005: 16) to use the introduction to his essay on “Iconicity or iconization” to explicate the position of “two linguistic cultures (that) are rooted in two opposing philosophical traditions: one which asserts that the source of all human knowledge comes from experience; the other which claims that humans are born with a ready-made knowledge endowment”. In the case of ‘linguistic iconicity’, it appears Nänny and Fischer argue that because iconicity is partly *conventionalised* (what they call ‘primary’) it becomes part of the linguistic system of a language, and as such separate from the context of language use. I, on the contrary, want to argue to the opposite effect. For a concept like *iconicity* to be truly useful and significant, it has to be located at the level of language use, where its operation is strictly non-conventional. Iconicity, from a language usage perspective, is fundamentally *non-conventional*, precisely to the extent that the correspondences that become foregrounded and attract attention in instances of language use allow

creativity to become perceptible, and in so-doing enable recipients (readers, listeners, viewers) to experience communication as new, fresh and significant.

That some aspect of the language system may at some point have been considered creative (new, fresh) in the past, does not explain its current status in language use. Iconicity, in order to be perceptible, needs a context, even if it is the revitalized/reconstructed context of some past event at which a particular linguistic item was used creatively. The moment when a linguistic item becomes conventionalized, it can no longer be considered iconic in the sense of the Bouissacian term, “*iconization*”: “It seems, therefore, that it would be useful to distinguish the process of *literary iconization* as the artifactual modelling of referential (or virtual) ‘objects’ by the resources offered by a language, from the theoretical issue of *linguistic iconicity*,² which pertains to the origin of language itself. The former is an observable phenomenon; the latter remains a speculative hypothesis even if computer simulation gives it a degree of operability” (Bouissac 2005: 28–29, my italics). In a 2004 rebuttal of Bouissac (2005) in *Logos and Language*, Fischer (2004: 3, 7) offers the following explanation of the relationship between *conventionalisation* (*grammaticalisation*) and *renewal* of “expressions” that in the first two sentences still seems to capture the same duality (iconicity arising in language use versus the icon as force residing in the language system):

Language in the course of its evolution develops conventions (replicated by language users) and loses in iconicity. This is not to say, however, that the icon is no longer present as a force (pace Bouissac forthcoming), as is clear from the linguistic inventions of children and speakers of pidgins, and from new lexical “exploratory expressions” (Harris and Campbell 1995: 72) replacing totally grammaticalized function words. Indeed, the process of grammaticalization shows how ‘gray’, conventional function words get replaced again and again by new, more transparent, colourful (exploratory) expressions, which in turn fade to gray. This often takes place via metaphorical or paradigmatic mechanisms — e.g. analogy — and via metonymic or syntagmatic ones — e.g. pragmatic inferencing —, that is via ‘icon’ and ‘index’.

...

It is a different question whether the iconic/indexical reference system is still part of language processing and the system of language nowadays.

This explanation, it seems to me, still does also not offer a clear standpoint on the issue of conventionalised (‘mimetic’, see Fischer 2004: 7), primary iconicity, which

2. This differentiation seems to me not much more than a generous, but empty concession on Bouissac’s part, the latter aspect of which should be ignored because its assumed existence presumably rests on speculation.

Fischer considers part of the language system, versus ‘creative’ iconicity, operating on the level of language usage. As a matter of fact, the viewpoint formulated in this later essay seems to naturally follow on from earlier arguments. In their inaugurating essay, for example, Fischer and Nänny (1999: xix and xx) linguistically locate iconicity in terms of the dynamic workings of two sets of related language forces. The dynamics of the first force results from the tension between conventionalising/eroding economising forces which causes language forms and structures to become increasingly symbolic or arbitrary,³ and linguistic expressivity,⁴ which counterbalances language erosion. In her article on iconicity and grammaticalisation in the same collection, Fischer (1999: 346) refers to John Haiman’s use of the terms *economic* and *iconic motivation*, maintaining that language ‘moves’ on a scale between two extremes formed by symbolic (‘arbitrary’/‘conventional’) or ‘mechanistic language’ on the one side and concrete, iconic or ‘creative’/‘original language’ on the other (Fischer 1999: 346). At the same time she also believes that the iconic and symbolic go hand in hand and are always present at the same time in everyday language use (Fischer 1999: 348). To explain the “simultaneity” of the iconic and symbolic “codes”, she refers to Ivan Fónagy’s “dual encoding procedure”. This procedure, according to Fónagy, entails a “primary message” or “code”⁵ formed by arbitrary, symbolic “structures” (i.e. structuring according to the grammatical rules) and a secondary message built on the primary message by the superimposition of the iconic mode (i.e. structuring through a creative, playful, yet regular, breaking of these rules) (Fischer 1999: 348). To the critical reader, Fischer and Nänny’s introductory essay (1999: xx), seems to suggest that this dual process of (“primary”) linguistic and (“secondary”) paralinguistic encoding forms a second force, even though a force may be more important than the ‘conventional iconicity’ that Fischer sees as also present in language (the language system? — RJ).

The perception of a duality in their approach to iconicity seems to be confirmed when Nänny and Fischer (1999: xxvi), motivating the placement of linguistic and literary contributions in the same sections, make two remarks which, when considered together, call for further elucidation: On the one hand, according to them, literary critics may benefit from a linguistic understanding of “how iconicity works in *ordinary language* (my italics)”; on the other they say that linguists

3. That is, abstracted from the referential context of language use and therefore part of the language system.

4. Operating on the level of language use.

5. From a structuralist perspective a *code* should be taken as an underlying informing, rule making and meaning enabling structure behind every expression.

may benefit from literary explanations of “the *literary use* (my italics) of the iconic potential intrinsic to language”. The duality that critical readers of Nänny and Fischer seem to notice is between “*conventional iconicity*” and *creative/literary iconicity*. Bouissac (2005: 28) later responds to this perceived duality as follows: “... the term ‘iconicity’ is polysemous. On the one hand, it can apply to morphemes, syntactic structures or texts and, on the other hand, it can be understood in each of these categories either as a property of language or as an artifact of literary creativity”. Bouissac (2005: 16, 18) traces the dualism to the Saussurean-inspired opposition between arbitrary and motivated language signs and structures, as well as the related Peircean opposition between symbolic and iconic/indexical signs to two linguistic cultures rooted in two essentially conflicting philosophical traditions: “one which asserts that the source of all human knowledge comes from experience; the other which claims that humans are born with a ready-made knowledge endowment” — the classical empiricist and Platonic binarity. Linguists in the first tradition consider the development of language more or less as a gradual evolution in terms of a cumulative series of adjustments; it is also in this tradition that ‘sympathy’ for the idea of linguistic iconicity occurs, according to Bouissac. Linguists in the second tradition usually accept that language ability is the result of a sudden genetic mutation; linguistic iconicity, says Bouissac, is therefore coincidental and insignificant.

That a rigid application of the semiotic views of the sign to an understanding of iconicity may run into practical problems soon became apparent. Much of the early theoretical reflections on the problem conducted with reference to Jakobson and Peirce, was intended, as Nänny and Fischer (2001: 1) also explained, to “to challenge ... ‘Saussure’s dogma of arbitrariness’”. This explains the early preoccupation by Fischer and Nänny (1999: xix and xxxiii) and Fischer (1999: 346) with the Peircean distinction between *symbols* and *icons*: linguistically, Peirce’s *symbols* are equated with Saussure’s *arbitrary linguistic signs* and *icons* with *motivated linguistic signs*.⁶ In the second symposium collection Winfried Nöth (2001: 17)

6. Fischer and Nanny’s argument (1999: xviii–xx) for a distinction between symbols and icons is as follows: “...in view of the fact that the ontogenetic development of organisms ... to some extent may be said to re-enact their phylogenetic development ... quite a number of linguists believe that language, both spoken and written, may have started off iconically... Many linguistic signs (or structures) may once have started off as icons, but in the course of time they have tended to become worn down to mere symbols... In language... there is a constant opposition between economy, which causes linguistic items and structures to be eroded, thus becoming conventional, that is, more and more ‘symbolic’ (arbitrary), and the need for expressivity to counterbalance the erosion... Hence, we discover iconicity in circumstances in which language is created...”

returned to the dichotomy of arbitrariness of the linguistic sign versus iconicity: “For generations of scholars, this principle of arbitrariness had been a dogma of linguistics. However ... recent research testifies to a new research paradigm. More and more iconic features are being discovered in language and literature at the levels of phonology, morphology, word formation, syntax, the text, and in the domain of language change...”

However, a radical distinction between symbols and icons in linguistic context caused serious problems in explaining iconicity right from the outset. This soon became evident when Fischer (1999: 346) warned against the absoluteness of the distinction between *symbolic* and *iconic* because, as she explained, the symbolic is always also partly iconic although a more *abstract*⁷ because ‘derived iconicity’. Furthermore, Fischer and Nänny (1999: xxxiii, fn 9) quote Jakobson’s viewpoint that icons, in turn, are partially symbolic, “thus showing that there is no simple contrast between icons and symbols”.

Although it may be tempting to regard Peirce’s three *manifestations* of the sign as three distinct *types*, Peirce probably never intended for his distinction between iconic, indexical and symbolic to be dealt with as mutually exclusive categories, as Nöth (2001: 19) also notes in the second symposium collection: “Every language sign, even an iconic or an indexical word is a symbol. In this respect, deictic words are indexical symbols, and iconicity in language is iconicity in symbolic signs.”

However, what is not clear from all these qualifications, but what semioticians such as Daniel Chandler emphasise elsewhere, is that whether signs are considered symbolic, iconic or indexical depends on how they are *used*: they cannot be classified without reference to their users’ objectives in particular contexts; the three modes are present together in usage and context of usage determines which function dominates.

In summary, what seems to me to be missing from early accounts of iconicity, despite references to the work of Peirce, Jakobson and De Saussure, is an encompassing theoretical model, which will allow for a more integrated approach to specifically language-based iconicity. Even Fischer’s (2004) rebuttal of Bouissac (2005), in which she addresses the issue of iconicity from a number of perspectives (*language acquisition, language change and literary language*), does not offer an overarching model for an *integrative* description of iconicity from these viewpoints. And although several contributors to the books in the Iconicity series have already suggested other ways of approaching iconicity (spanning a number

7. On the use of the term pair *concrete/abstract* in explaining iconicity and grammaticalisation, Bouissac (2007) in the second of his critical articles tackles certain assumptions of the Iconicity Research Project, asking how ‘concrete’ a word can be and how ‘abstract’ grammar.

of different theoretical frameworks, from pragmatics to cognitive linguistics and memetics, etc.), fully developed descriptive models of language-based iconicity from these perspectives are still to be published. My own inclination is towards a discursive approach (a topic for another essay), but here I only want to draw attention to the communication-based approach worked out by Müller (1975, 1987, 1989), precisely because this model seems to me to offer at least a starting point for the integration of a number of the views already put forward.

3.2 Locating iconicity in creative communication

Regarding the above, there appears in Nänny and Fischer's (1999:xxvi) early orientational essay a quotation of Geoffrey Leech — to whom Müller (1989: 11) also refers in his explanation of the relation between *language* and *language use* or, phrased differently, between grammar or semantics and pragmatics — that may help point the debate on the location of iconicity in a different direction: "Whereas iconicity has only a minor role in everyday *language use*, in literature it comes into its own as an important *communicative device*" (my italics). Leech's distinction, to which I already referred above, is especially relevant because it enables the linguist and literary researcher to conceptualise the way that every language utterance or text based communication is aimed at reconciling semantic and pragmatic aspects. Leech explains that in the utterance the linguistic units of the system are put into play by realising the applicative potential of these elements. All the elements of an utterance (text) are therefore simultaneously *system* units and *pragmatic* units. Quoting Müller (1989: 12) at this point may be useful:

From the speaker's or writer's viewpoint: pragmatic objectives determine which words must be actuated and combined with which application of semantic properties and in which type of syntactic structure in the utterance. ... But: pragmatic objectives can be realised only through ... units and regularities that already exist *in advance* as potential means and are ready for use ... and that, as such, will enter with decisive force into the language utterance (my translation — RJ).

The linguistic deviations and language play in creative texts/language use to which I will return below, therefore, do not apply in the first place to the opposition of 'literary language' and 'everyday language', but to the way in which the possibilities given in the grammar or semantics (language system) are dealt with in the creative use of language.

In her rebuttal of Bouissac (2005) Fischer (2004) too takes a clear stance on the 'everyday' and 'literary' language issue (different from the already mentioned initial, ill-defined position in Nänny and Fischer 1999):

If it is correct that the iconicity used by poets makes use of existing language patterns, which are also partly a product of iconic forces as I have argued ..., then it would be difficult to maintain that the ways of processing in literature and natural language are separate. I would suggest they are similar, both involving iconic and analogical thinking, but with the poets making use of this in a more idiosyncratic way, just as children, when they learn language, may 'play around' with the patterns they learn at each stage

...

Linguists and literary critics have often suggested that the poets' use of language is "hypersemanticized" (Cureton 1980, 319), that it is used "at full stretch" (Nowotny 1962, 85, 123), that the "poetic function [...] promot[es] the palpability of signs" (Jakobson 1960, 356). This certainly suggests a difference in degree. (Fischer 2004: 15).

...

I have argued that the type and the source of the iconic forms found in natural and poetic language are similar and that the difference which has been attested is one of degree rather than kind. This is also the impression that one gets from the articles in the series on *Iconicity in Language and Literature* (edited by Nänny and Fischer 1999, Fischer and Nänny 2001, Müller and Fischer 2003), which discuss iconic means, both of an imagic and a diagrammatic kind (such as onomatopoeia, sound symbolism, metaphor, repetition, sequential ordering, centrality/ peripherality, and distance/proximity) and show that these are found in both natural language and literary texts. (Fischer 2004: 160)

Leech, however, operationalises iconicity in a broader framework, differentiating between the semantic representation and the pragmatic interpretation of a sentence or a text. While the text is guided pragmatically by communicative/rhetorical objectives, in the act of communication grammatical meaning is linked to pragmatic force. Müller (1989: 11) adds to Leech's idea of *grammatical sense*. According to him sense does not include only the semantic content of sentences, but everything embedded in the utterance as a result of the selection of codified units; hence also personal aspects, like the state of mind and attitude of the speaker, his or her intentions regarding possible reactions from the listener, as these manifest in, for example, intonation and other modulations. Furthermore, Fónagy's idea of a dual encoding procedure, to which Fischer and Nänny (1999: xx; see also Fónagy 1999: 3ff.) refer, can be aligned with this view, with certain qualifications. According to Fónagy (1999: 3), all linguistic units generated by grammar move through a modifier or distorter in an utterance, by which supplementary messages are incorporated in the original message: "The dialectic play between Grammar and Distorter has the capacity of generating an infinite variety of complex messages." Below I will return to the idea of *deviation* from or distortion of grammatical conventions as a source of iconicity.

With a view to understanding the dynamics of language-based iconicity, an important point arising from the above relates to the emphasis on the *utterance (language/text in use)* in which elements from the linguistic system and pragmatic objectives are unified. Wolfgang Müller (2001) and Bouissac (already mentioned, 2005 and 2007), both put forward arguments that support this viewpoint. In yet another visit to the beloved Julius Caesar quote (“veni, vidi, vici”) W. Müller (2001: 305), for example, criticises the use of these words as proof of the iconic principle that consecutive phrases in a discourse echo the temporal order of the events in reality: “It is indeed curious that with this saying linguists adduce a quotation that is as rhetorical and as far removed from ordinary language as may be. Nobody would in an ordinary real-life context use such language, except when citing it as a quotation”. W. Müller (2001: 306–307) makes another point, to which I will return below, namely that the mimetic aspect or iconicity does not lie in the simplistic similarity between language and reality structure, but in the similarity between linguistic structure and cognitive and epistemological processes. What is relevant here is the realisation that iconicity must be considered in the *rhetorical context* of the language-in-use (“the verbal utterance”). In concurrence with H. C. T. Müller’s remarks about the codifying of personal aspects in the utterance already mentioned, W. Müller (2001: 307) argues that structuring and ordering rhetorical devices, like asyndeton, climax and different forms of word order, together with categories sometimes regarded as ‘syntactic iconisms’, such as chronology, hierarchy, preference, direction, length and duration, complexity and simplicity, do not refer directly to an objective reality, but to thought structures and thought activities. Bouissac (2005: 21) further maintains that “patterns are in the eye (or the ear) of the beholders” (see also Nänny 1999: 174). H.C.T. Müller (1989: 13), in his turn, mentions the *perspective* in which the things spoken about and the relations between them appear as a result of the way in which words have been applied and the syntactic structure of the utterance.

Seen within a broader context, perspective is part of any language use or communication that also includes a sender and receiver and a frame of reference. As noted above, pragmatic considerations from the sender side determine which words, with which application of semantic properties and which type of syntactic structure are used. In the same vein, Elżbieta Tabakowska (1999: 409–410), following Nils Enkvist (with recognition to Nowakowska-Kempna), speaks of *experiential iconicity*, which she describes as a text strategy that creates a more or less direct relation between linguistic expression and perceptual relations:

The basic cognitive assumption that linguistic structures are the reflection of the world not as it is, but as it is perceived by a cognizant human being, underlies a definition of iconicity as the **conceived** similarity between conceptual structure

and linguistic form. The relation between reality, cognition and language conditions the process of concept formation, where the consecutive stages of **perception** (reality), **conceptualization** (cognition) and **symbolization** (language) represent consecutive phases of abstraction.

Tabakowska (1999: 410–411) argues that this view of iconicity brings Peirce's *interpretant* into the picture once more (here seen as the *context* enabling the comprehensibility of iconicity) in that the recognition of similarity between language structure and underlying concept often appeals to an interpretative convention. This idea of a *context* is in line with Müller's view of a *frame of reference* consisting of all the relevant knowledge a sender and receiver must share, including knowledge of the language, the whole field of pragmatic or 'encyclopaedic' knowledge, knowledge of one another (which obviously may vary) and knowledge of the situation, and what was/is being discussed. The concept of encyclopaedic knowledge, according to Müller (1989: 13–14), is a vast framework compiled of a large number of stratified and often overlapping frames of understanding (big and small, from the most elementary and everyday to the most specialised and esoteric). Knowledge of all these frames of understanding constituting the frame of reference, along with their contents and 'codes', is essential for the interpretative use of a language utterance. Tabakowska (1999: 411) makes a further insightful comment which, in line with Müller's view on the aspects involved in a linguistic utterance, paves the way for dealing with iconicity in a communication oriented approach to language and language use:

Traditionally, it has been generally assumed that iconic relations are oneway processes: from expression to concept. However, if we agree that the ability to recognize a given similarity results from the language user's knowledge of a given culture and language, then we can reasonably assume that the process may be reversed: via the (linguistic) convention, the user of language might associate (by recognizing relevant similarities) certain expressions with certain concepts, and in consequence arrive at a certain view, or interpretation, of reality.

With regard to the reader's activity in interpreting the utterance or text, Müller (1989: 15) maintains that the reader or listener is not handed an immediately complete language utterance: the text has to be interpreted in a new activity of 'recording,' involving a constant movement between the stipulations of the linguistic moments in the text and the extralinguistic knowledge specified by these moments, resulting in a more or less successful synthesis of the linguistic and extralinguistic in an understanding of the text or utterance.

Treating the utterance (including the literary text) as communication rests on the understanding that something *outside* the language is always being communicated with the aid of the utterance. Müller (1989: 10, 12) calls this the

“werklikheidstelling” (*statement of reality*) that results from the referentiality of the linguistic signs utilised in the utterance. Here ‘reality’ refers exclusively to what is outside of language, be it true or false, sense or nonsense, fact or fiction. Müller (1989: 12) believes that the text as a whole is constituted to form a connection with a reality outside the text.

In his research on language-based iconicity, Müller (1989) focuses on poetry as the area of application. However, it is possible to extrapolate from his insights a general framework for the description of language-based iconicity. This may be effected by regarding the creative text as a *Gestalt* in which language is used in such a way that through the multifaceted interaction of the structural elements an experience and/or insight about something is articulated (Müller 1989: 64). Moreover, in particular instances language is used in such a way that a more ‘direct’ or ‘immediate’ or ‘concrete’ connection is established between the linguistic construction and the extralinguistic sphere or reality so that this ‘reality’ becomes, as it were, encapsulated in its articulation (Müller 1989: 64, 68). Following Ernst Cassirer’s formulation (in Müller 1989: 65), it is possible to speak of symbolic forms in and through which reality is approached and which co-constitutes that reality: as a consequence art is *not* an *imitation* of reality, but an intensifying discovery of it, a *representation*. Müller (1989: 77) explains this ‘concreteness’ of the representation as the *being an experience through language* by means of a *dramatised portrayal* of an experience of reality. He cautions, though, that this pointing to an objective reality, whether it is done more concretely or more abstractly, is not the ultimate purpose of the utterance, but itself also a means. The linguistic act in this context is therefore a kind of ‘pure enunciation’ (“absolute sê”) viewed as a concrete act of signification from a particular human point of view rather than a transfer of information.⁸

For this type of dramatised representation that gives the text a dramatic character in the sense that Cleanth Brooks intended, where the linguistic units, through their organisation, imitate or reflect or demonstrate the aspects of reality they are used to communicate about, Müller (1989: 78) reserves the term “taalmimesis” (*linguistic iconicity*).

Following I.A. Richards and F.I.J. van Rensburg in this respect, Müller (1989: 87, 90–91) draws attention to both the demonstrative and the symbolic character of language-based iconicity. He explains the fine distinction between them as one between the concrete ‘intelligibility’ of something in reality (“n saak”) which results in a ‘visualisation’ (“veraanskouliking”), and the awareness of that

8. Müller differs from Bouissac (2005: 28) in this respect, who sees the purpose of literature precisely as the transfer of information.

‘intelligibility’. Van Rensburg (in Müller 1989: 91) refers in this regard to *actualisation*, which intensifies the appearance (“aansyn”) of things, and symbolisation, which intensifies their being (“syn”) by changing their modality. According to Müller (1989: 92) what is at stake in a dramatised representation (*dramatising*) or linguistic iconicity is always the same phenomenon, although the nature of iconicity utilising the semantic aspect of the utterance differs from, for example, phonetic or sound-based mimesis or dramatising through the utilisation of syntactic structures. Fundamentally, all language-based iconicity concerns an *analogous relationship* between the language used and reality (I would prefer ‘experienced reality’ — RJ). Various linguistic elements are utilised in different ways for a dramatised *as if*-character of a thing or thing complex. The result is that a verbal or conceptual representation *at the same time* succeeds in completing itself by also *being* something of that “representation in the medium of sensuous forms” (Müller 1989: 92).

In order to demonstrate how, precisely, this linguistic objectification (“mederversaakliking”) is effected, Müller employs the concepts *deviation* and *actualisation*. Regarding *deviation*, he maintains that this dramatised objectification (“beelding”) is not a characteristic of so-called normal utterances. Whenever linguistic objectification is involved, the structure of the language utterance draws attention to itself, alongside the things referred to. The symbolic nature of the objectification requires an awareness (however slight) of the structural qualities of the utterance. The slightest deviation from the normal or conventional draws attention to *how* things are worded. *Objectification* of language forms takes place when they deviate from the essential and traditional rules of the language system or from the traditional conventions of language use (Müller 1989: 93–95). With regard to *actualisation*, Müller (1989: 98) relies on Jan Mukařovský’s views on poetry striving for the maximum actualisation of the language utterance. However, what is generally important for an understanding of the role of *actualisation* in iconicity is that in addition to the deviations that may occur at one or more levels of the language and compositional structure, other components are normally used. However, the deviations that do occur have the ability to transform the interrelations of the structural elements, and consequently also their internal coherences (Müller 1989: 99). Although this view of actualisation shows certain similarities with the Russian formalist use of terms such as “de-automatisation”, “deformation”, “differentiation” and “defamiliarisation”, it emphasises the act through which the language used in the creative text becomes independent, drawing attention to itself, while at the same time changing or expanding the observer’s view of reality (Müller 1989: 100).

On this last point, Müller is in agreement with Bouissac (2005: 33, n. 6), who, with reference to surrealism and the poetry of Francis Ponge, notes that extreme cases of textual fabrication are usually experienced as “revealing equivalents of the

objects themselves in spite of the fact that it is the very descriptions that creatively foreground features, such as moral endowments, which thus become perceptible. ... If literature was iconic (mimetic? — RJ) in essence, no text ever could change our perception of the world”.

It seems therefore that iconicity surfaces in the spaces opened up by deviations from normal or conventional uses within particular culturally bound communication situations, precisely at those moments when the linguistic and compositional structure of texts awakens readers (once more) to what is considered ‘normal’ or ‘customary’ in particular historical epochs.

Conclusion

To reiterate then, despite references to the work of Peirce, Jakobson, Saussure, and others, what appears to be missing from the accounts of iconicity by a number of the contributors to the Iconicity Research Project, is an encompassing descriptive model of iconicity permitting an integrated approach to language-based iconicity. In this essay I focussed on some of the perceived problems with the location of iconicity in the early contributions (1999) of the founders of the project (specifically the issue of the so-called ‘conventional’/ mimetic and ‘creative’ iconicity), and drew attention to the little-known theory of language-based iconicity put forward by H.C.T. Müller (1975, 1987, 1989). I believe that these insights could be useful, both in shedding light on some of the problems that critical readers of those early essays have with aspects of the research being conducted within the framework of the (New) Iconicity Research Project and in pointing a way to consolidating compatible theoretical viewpoints through a more integrated descriptive model. The South African Conference on Iconicity marked the tenth anniversary of the Iconicity Research Project. This may be the perfect time to reconsider Nänny and Fischer’s (1999, 2001) declared practical approach to iconicity and focus concerted research efforts on the development of dedicated models of language-based iconicity that will also allow researchers to explain the relationship between the mimetic and creative views of iconicity without falling into the dualism trap.

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PART II

Visual iconicity

Iconic and indexical elements in Italian Futurist poetry

F. T. Marinetti's "words-in-freedom"

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This paper offers close readings of canonical works of Italian Futurist visual poetry, focussing on the fusion, for propaganda purposes, of radical forms of visual and acoustic iconicity with politicized modes of indexicality. A detailed contextual interpretation of a milestone iconic-cum-indexical device in F. T. Marinetti's war epic *Zang tumb tumb* (1914) serves as an introduction to Futurism's preoccupation with the advantages of exploiting ingenious new forms of semiosis for their nationalist impact. Subsequent commentaries on four shaped war-poems by Marinetti bring out the variety of ways in which iconic representations of battle experience are harnessed to Italy's Irredentist and Interventionist causes. The poems' impressive arsenal of iconic effects is shown to reinforce their indexical function as war-reportage, while Marinetti's dual authority as renowned modernist poet and eyewitness to a number of historically prestigious battles underwrites Italian Futurism's patriotic campaign to persuade fellow countrymen to abandon their neutralist stance.

1. Introduction: Iconicity in historical context

A decade ago, a cogent case was made at the founding Symposium on Iconicity in Language and Literature (1997) to the effect that those of us in the field of literary iconicity would do well to historicize our findings more. The argument concluded with a reminder of the advantages of greater historical contextualization, some of them already persuasively illustrated in the paper in question:

rather than iconicity appearing as a decorative item, one or other form of which might be selected at random by writers over the centuries on no obvious principle of selection, a historical approach will enable us to chart motivation, ideas

and impossibilities from writer to writer, and to recognize not only when genuine innovation is taking place, but also why. (Alderson 1999: 119)

Some participants must have felt that the speaker uncannily had their forthcoming papers in mind as he set out the grounds for a more rigorous contextual approach, for what had been offered on that auspicious occasion in Zürich was — and still remains — salutary advice.

Although the subject of the present paper is far removed from the lofty canon of classics of English literature that gave rise to such a statement of first principles, I was reminded of the advice, as I set out to explore forms of iconic and indexical semiosis in the poetry of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the leader of an influential group of early twentieth-century Italian poets. As far as cultural-historical context is concerned, Marinetti and his fellow Futurists had no demonstrable contact with Peirce's semiotics or Saussurean semiology; their — on the face of it — ostensibly innocuous goal was simply to make the language of contemporary avant-garde poetry in Italy more "*freely expressive*" (Marinetti 2006: 131), a deliberately elastic policy designed to embrace a variety of experimental techniques. Unfortunately, Marinetti's underlying pro-war agenda in many cases meant that Futurism's literary experiments would be harnessed to far more questionable ends than had hitherto been the case in the history of the avant-garde (cf. Cork 1994 on the European avant-garde and the First World War). To complicate matters, the Futurists' aesthetic tended to comprise principles that were, on their leader's own admission, "arrived at intuitively and difficult to demonstrate" (Marinetti 2006: 138). Not surprisingly, therefore, their manifestos were liable to make points via provocatively extreme, and often inadequately theorized, examples. Seldom can an analytical approach combining the advantages of, above all, Peirce's second trichotomy of signs with an historical-political reading of the works' underlying rhetoric have seemed more called for. This would entail not just anchoring "iconicity in history", as Simon Alderson advocated, but also trying to do justice to the politics behind the semiotics and the contemporary pro-war agitational function of a series of often subsequently sanitized forms of iconicity and indexicality in Italian Futurist *parole in libertà*. *Parole in libertà* (words-in-freedom) was the movement's term for a ruthlessly experimental form of poetry, freed from the constraints of traditional grammar, punctuation and orthography in order to create a visually, acoustically and typographically dynamic new "telegraphic lyricism" (Marinetti 2006: 127) able to communicate the new Futurist sensibility.

Having already attempted elsewhere (White 1976 and 1990) to set out the case for a Peircean approach to the Italian Futurists' work, I shall confine myself at this stage to identifying the need for one or two modifications to Peirce's thinking that have a direct bearing on the putative indexicality of the works examined

below. While this may be necessary in the case of the elusive concept of “indexicality”, there has been a general consensus about the overriding importance of iconic effects in the Futurists’ “words-in-freedom” and their verbal collages.

Charles Sanders Peirce defines the index as a sign characterized by “a physical relation” (often one of causality) with its object (CP 1:196). The index, according to him, “denotes by virtue of being really affected [or influenced] by its object” (CP 2:248); and it invariably refers to a single object, not a class of objects (CP 1:558 and CP 2:315). The index’s role is to point, sometimes relying on iconic support, sometimes deictically, to things known to us from prior experience (CP 8:368). However, some of the basic characterizing features proposed by Peirce need re-visiting, rather than discounting, in order to make them fit for purpose in the present context. For example, while the indexical signs that Peirce lists as familiar examples (CP 2:285–286) tend to relate either to the past (e.g. footprints (CP 4:531)) or to “present experience” (e.g. smoke (CP 4:447)), one needs to allow for the possibility that a forward-projecting movement like Italian Futurism will also resort to *predictive* forms of literary indexicality. Peirce’s famous declaration that “nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign” (CP 2:308) also holds good at the level of specific sign-properties like iconicity, indexicality and symbolicity. According to Peirce, “it would be difficult, if not impossible, to instance an absolutely pure index, or to find any sign absolutely devoid of indexical quality” (CP 2:306). As he goes on to admit (CP 2:312), the terms ‘icon’, ‘index’ and ‘symbol’ are convenient shorthand abstractions which inevitably fail to do justice to the hybrid nature of all signs in his second trichotomy. As a consequence, we often find ourselves in situations where one of the trichotomy’s three “sign-aspects” (Sebeok 1994: 68; Liszka 1996: 44) is allowed to represent the entire sign. As we shall see, Thomas A. Sebeok’s important emphasis on the complementary relationship between iconicity and indexicality (Sebeok 1985: 77) is highly relevant to the present context.

But another literature-specific factor also needs to be taken into account: i.e. the interpretive decisions we make as we establish which sign-aspect to privilege in the reading of a particular work or device. Experience teaches us that semioticians exploring instances of iconicity in literature have a habit of downplaying indexical and conventionalized (“symbolic”, in Peirce’s sense) elements in their material, while those concerned with literary indexicality often try to cut the Gordian knot by hiving off this one sign-aspect from the other two. As this implies, semiosis in the field of literary semiotics can often be less a matter of a super-sign’s polyvalence than a measure of our individual interpretive strategies. However, in the case of Marinetti’s propagandistic war-poetry, such interpretive liberty is likely to be drastically curtailed. Not only do the Futurists’ manifestos habitually present their recommendations in dictatorial terms, their “words-in-freedom” are themselves

often predicated on more rigid conceptions of the sign-object relation than we are nowadays accustomed to expect and accept. Thus, rather than focusing on the fact that a writer with a political agenda will want to control patterns of semiosis more rigorously than a Dadaist or a modern concrete poet would, it will be more fruitful, in the present context, to consider the specific ways in which Marinetti's "words-in-freedom" negotiate the difficult path between a narrow sign-meaning paradigm (one closer to an information theory-based, intentionalist conception of "sender" and "message") and the free play of signs already allowed for in the writings of Peirce and his followers.

2. Iconicity and indexicality in Futurism's new "expressive" onomatopoeia

Marinetti's literary manifesto "Geometric and Mechanical Splendor and Sensitivity toward Numbers" (1914),¹ draws attention to a simple acoustic device in his war poem *Zang tumb tumb* (1914b). The following remarks occur in the section of the manifesto headed "Onomatopoeia that is direct, imitative, elementary, and realistic". This Futurist sub-type of onomatopoeia (Marinetti outlines four in all) is presented as a useful way "to enrich poetry with a brutal reality and stop it becoming too abstract and arty" (Marinetti 2006: 140). The point is illustrated with the example to which I am referring:

In my "Contrabbando di guerra" (War Contraband) in *Zang tumb tumb*, the screeching onomatopoeia *ssiiiiii* reproduces the whistle of a tugboat on the River Meuse [i.e. Maas] and is followed by the muted *ffiiiiiffiiiiii*, [the] echo from the farther bank. The two instances of onomatopoeia meant I didn't have to describe the width of the river, for that is, in fact, defined by the contrast between the two consonants *s* and *f*. (Marinetti 2006: 140)

In an earlier discussion of this device (White 1990: 31–32), I treated the contrast between the sounds *ssiiiiii* and *ffiiiiiffiiiiii* within the framework of literary Futurism's "exploration of the iconic" (White 1990: 8–72), arguing that the Italian Futurist poets' interest in the "expressive" potential of iconic representations of the acoustic experience of battle was a key factor in the "typographic revolution" heralded in the "Destruction of Syntax" manifesto of 1913 (Marinetti 2006: 128).

1. The original Italian version of this manifesto was published in two instalments: Marinetti 1914 and Marinetti 1914a. Its Maas tugboat illustration (Marinetti 1914a: 99) differs in serious respects from the *Zang tumb tumb* source Marinetti claims to use. This is not the place to go into detail. Suffice it to note that the manifesto fails to do justice to the subtle typographical advances made in *Zang tumb tumb*.

I now want to turn to the device's indexical component, which is arguably as significant as its rather simplistic deployment of onomatopoeic iconicity. At the same time, I shall try to show that Marinetti's account of the *Zang tumb tumb* sequence can be read as *prima facie* evidence of an intuitive awareness of just how important indexical signification could become within the rhetoric of Futurist war-poetry.

These two "accordi onomatopoeici" (onomatopoeic arrangements, Marinetti 2006: 127) are neologisms. Their *sui generis* strings of repeated letters of the alphabet ("ssiiiiii" and "ffiiiiiffiiiiii") do not belong to the repertoire of Italian words used to represent a whistling sound, or for that matter its echo, for which the quasi-onomatopoeic noun 'eco' exists, but would have been insufficiently "expressive" to suit Marinetti's purpose. But just as there are graveyards of "dead" metaphors in every language, so our conventional array of onomatopoeic words shows symptoms of "moribund" iconicity, whereas even a crude neologism can sometimes revitalize onomatopoeia's impact. However, more is at stake than this. The programmatic self-reflexivity of Marinetti's illustration is confirmed by the way in which the "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature" (Marinetti 2006: 117) describes Futurism's arsenal of onomatopoeic devices as designed to "echo" — i.e. represent *iconically* — the sounds of the modern world. Even the provocative suggestion that "meters, control panels and shining levers" should become Futurism's "sole models for poetry" ("Geometrical and Mechanical Splendor", Marinetti 2006: 136) was calculated to open the door to a whole range of iconic and indexical sign-object relationships constructed on an analogy between Futurism's experimental literary techniques and various fetishized phenomena in the contemporary world.

Unfortunately for the mechanics of Marinetti's illustration, if not for his underlying point, the sequence in *Zang tumb tumb* is inaccurately reproduced in the "Geometric and Mechanical Splendor" manifesto (first published in the Florentine magazine *Lacerba*). The whistle-sound, allegedly from *Zang tumb tumb*, has been misquoted. For a start, both it and its echo are in italics. Moreover, as the following extract (Figure 1) from "Contrabbando di guerra (Rotterdam)", the section's title in *Zang tumb tumb*, shows, the initial "siiiiii" is here printed in roman bold, then immediately repeated (in each case using only a *single* lower-case 's' in first position), while *Zang tumb tumb* also inserts an indexical hyphen between the two identical components in order to suggest the gap between first and second tugboat whistle. Even the number of vowels repeated in each case is different between the manifesto and *Zang tumb tumb* versions. The depiction of the whistle-sound in "Contrabbando di Guerra (Amsterdam)" reads: "siiiiii-siiiiii", and not "ssiiiiii", as given in the *Lacerba* manifesto where Marinetti seems to be inadvertently quoting, also inaccurately, from an earlier, typographically less sophisticated pre-published version (Marinetti 1913a). In *Zang tumb tumb*, the two-part whistle-sequence is matched by a two-part echo, the ensuing diminished volume of sound

2° rimorchiatore il suo
 buco di scappamento di vapore a fior di
 acqua lavarsi rumooooooooosamente la bocca
 forza boooooorborigmi rutti mentre l'onda
 soffocarlo soffocarlo **siiii-siiii**
 risposta dell'eco dall'altra riva *fiiii-fiiii*

Figure 1. Extract from “Contrabbando di guerra (Rotterdam)” (*Zang tumb tumb*)

being reflected in the non-bold italicized form “*fiiii-fiiii*”, subsequently identified (Marinetti 1968: 678) as the “risposta dell’eco dall’altra riva” (the echo’s reply from the opposite bank).² Although the typography in *Zang tumb tumb* tends to be conventionally horizontal and consistently left-to-right linear in layout, it nevertheless displays significant variations in the size and boldness of typeface, as well as in the spacing between words in a given line (Gahl 2005: 82–83). The typographical codes peculiar to *Zang tumb tumb* involve:

- i. the deployment of **bold** to stand for a loud noise,
- ii. *italics* to suggest the diminished decibels of its echo, and
- iii. roman to signify the work’s general narrative.

In the “Multilinear lyricism” section of the “Destruction of Syntax” manifesto, in contrast, bold “large characters” are presented as a way of highlighting “dominant” ideas (Marinetti 2006: 128–129), while it is elsewhere recommended that liberated “orthography and typography serve the function of rendering the facial expressions and other gestures of the narrator” (“Geometrical and Mechanical Splendor”, Marinetti 2006: 139)). The conclusion to be drawn from all this, at times pedantic, detail is that Italian Futurism’s “typographical revolution” had the overall effect of moving “expressive” works like *Zang tumb tumb* gradually in various innovative indexico- iconic directions. Rather surprisingly in the light of this achievement, Marinetti’s account of his one-off whistle device concentrates on the *acoustically iconic* differentiation brought about by a simple change in initial phoneme. Because he fails to replicate his declared source, he can say nothing about the significance of *Zang*

2. None of this is reflected in recent English translations of *Zang tumb tumb* (Pioli 1987: 55–79 and Marinetti 2002: 55–82) for the simple reason that they omit the “Contraband of War (Rotterdam)” section.

tumb tumb's striking contrast between the first onomatopoeic sequence printed in bold and the second one in italics, or between these and the code operating in the rest of *Zang tumb tumb*. Instead, he confines his attentions to the economy of this unique literary example of what later linguists will call a "minimal pair".³

Of course, Marinetti had his reasons for wanting readers to believe that the width of the River Maas is accurately "defined" by the contrast between two initial consonants. According to his thinking, if the differences between a loud sound and its distant echo could be meaningfully represented by a minimal shift from "s" to "f", coupled (in *Zang tumb tumb*) with a shift in typographical code,⁴ then the effect in question delivered the "precision and concentrated brevity" that was meant to become the hallmark of Futurist "words-in-freedom", while simultaneously integrating "rough, raw elements of reality" into poetry (Marinetti 2006: 127). The example is sufficient to underpin Marinetti's claim that Futurist literature could achieve a new "essential conciseness and compactness", as well as avoiding abstraction, through the deployment of various forms of onomatopoeia, and that these would also blaze the trail for further ways of presenting information economically. Notwithstanding Marinetti's claims, it seems unlikely that anyone encountering the "Contrabbando di guerra" sequence would arrive at a reliable estimate of the width of the River Maas, or, for that matter, the difference in decibels between whistle-sound and echo purely on the basis of the iconic and indexical information contained in this sequence. Interpreting the time-lag between source-sound (tugboat whistle) and echo (from river-bank) will only give approximate information, for we do not know whether the boat is in mid-river (if so we can multiply the evidence by two) or sailing closer to one bank or the other, which would require further indexical information. In other words, Marinetti's example is only a *model*, an illustration of a principle that is more important than the conclusions explicitly drawn from it suggest. Such local contrasts may still conceivably create a semblance of quantification-by-analogy, but the overall effect remains rhetorical rather than empirically reliable.

Standing back from all this detail, we can appreciate that the proto-semiotic elements in play here not only have serious implications for our understanding

3. On the usefulness of minimal pairs for isolating phonemes, see Nida 1962 and Wagner 1982.

4. The "Destruction of Syntax" manifesto advocates an alternative typographical code: "italic for a series of like or swift sensations, *bold Roman characters* for violent onomatopoeia, and so on" (Marinetti 2006: 128). This code differs from that in *Zang tumb tumb*: it favours a method of signification that is less icono-indexical and based more on an unmotivated, "symbolic" typography.

of the Futurist aesthetic of brevity.⁵ They also serve as an index of the account's integrity, by which I mean the Futurist war-poet's status as *dependable observer*. The need for such an authenticating function may account for the prominence of this idiosyncratic illustration in "Geometrical and Mechanical Splendor" and explain why, despite his emphasis on "numerical" discourse, Marinetti was unwilling to specify the width of the River Maas simply by availing himself of the "precision and concentrated brevity [of] numbers". After all, he does so elsewhere in "Contrabbando di guerra (Rotterdam)", e.g. with the detail "[70 M. LUNGHEZZA]" in the case of a cargo-boat and "200 m. a destra steam-boat [2000 TONNELLATE 12000 HP 2 ELICHE]" when referring to another craft (Marinetti 1968: 679–680). Arguably Marinetti refuses to use numbers to register the width of the River Maas because the primitive onomatopoeic option is more able to appear "realistic", i.e. based on observed "elementary", concrete factors rather than the relative abstraction of pure numbers. This is one of the connotations of the intended "expressivity" which we shall encounter in the various examples of Marinetti's poems and literary collages "from the front" that follow. Before we can pursue such a combination of iconicity and indexicality for propaganda purposes further, however, it is necessary to consider the historical context of Marinetti's war-poetry. Only then are we able to appreciate the extent to which the movement was not merely creating a new aesthetic, but was also harnessing literature to specific nationalistic and political goals. To do this involves recognizing the importance of Marinetti's war-reporting activities for his intuitive conception of the indexical role to be played by his authorial persona and by the new "words-in-freedom".

3. Italian Futurist poetry and war-reporting

The strong injection of iconicity and indexicality in Marinetti's poetry from the time of his involvement in the Libyan War (1911–1912), the First Balkan War (1912–1913) and subsequently the First World War, was very much indebted to his experiences as war-correspondent for the Paris newspaper *L'Intransigeant*. When the "Destruction of Syntax" manifesto declared in 1913 that Futurist "words-in-freedom" require "the same economical rapidity that the telegraph imposes

5. When "Destruction of Syntax" was included in *Noi futuristi*, a 4-line example of "words-in-freedom" from "Battle weight + odors" was followed by an illustration (Marinetti 1917: 10) of how wordy it would be, if translated into traditional "passéist" poetic language. The contrast-passage is reproduced in Marinetti 1968: lxxxix. For the bigger picture, see my discussion of European Futurism's "Telegraphic Lyricism and the Cult of the Minimal" (White 1990: 143–214).

on reporters and war correspondents in their summary reports” (Marinetti 2006: 123), this was not mere rhetoric. As Roman Jakobson was one of the first to observe, Futurism’s new “words-in-freedom” and “telegraphic lyricism” were intimately bound up with Marinetti’s need to boldly communicate his war experience (Jakobson 1921: 3). The resultant poems owe much of their authority to the iconic devices used in them to convey a positive impression of the exhilaration of battle. Their onomatopoeias, dynamism and explosive typography were intended to offer a vivid, albeit vicarious, experience of war at the cutting edge. This was also the purpose of the indexical component, in as much as a war-poem by Marinetti was an index of its creator’s having participated in frontline military operations, while local indexical features of the kind we shall shortly be examining were meant to serve as proof of the reliability of his meticulously observed accounts. These, by extension, gave legitimacy to the Futurist leader’s extensive pro-war propaganda and his nationalistic and political propaganda programme.

Each of the campaigns in which Marinetti participated in his dual capacity as war-correspondent and enthusiastic combatant gave rise to important quasi-documentary “free-word” poems. For example, “Battle weight + smell” (“Battaglia peso + odore”: Marinetti 1968: 52–54, dated 11 August 1912, English translation: Marinetti 2002: 81–82) is a firsthand account of the Battle of Tripoli; *Zang tumb tumb* (Marinetti 1968: 561–699, dated Adrianopolis October 1912, English translation: Marinetti 2002: 54–80) is based on his experiences while fighting the Turks in the First Balkan War; and the majority of poems and literary collages reproduced in *Les mots in liberté futuristes* (Marinetti 1919; English translations: Marinetti 2002: 119–121) relate to identified events of the First World War. As was once suggested (Lista 1980: 31), it would be no exaggeration to claim that the greater part of Marinetti’s best-known Futurist poems and collages thematize war and their most “expressive” experiments mark attempts to capture the spirit of battle as a liberating, invigorating experience.

Inevitably, given the dehumanized nature of much mechanical combat from the First World War onwards, Marinetti’s battle-experience was intimately bound up with impressions of inanimate sounds (the noise of bombs, mortars, grenades, machine-guns, aeroplanes, etc.), although, revealingly, seldom the sounds of men dying. One important feature of the noises’ indexical function concerns the extent to which they are explicitly tied to key places and events. One early work (“Battle noise + smell”) is presented as having been written while embedded with Italian troops in positions just outside Tripoli. The sub-title of *Zang tumb tumb* identifies the location as Adrianopolis (modern Edirne) during the Bulgarian-Serbian siege of October 1912 — March 1913. An inscription on “Le soir...” (“That night, lying in bed...”) records that the work was composed during the bombardment of Mount Kuk (during the tenth Battle of the Isonzo, 12 May–8 June 1917), while

“Bataille à 9 étages du Mont Altissimo” (“9-storied Battle of Monte Altissimo”) thematizes the bombardment of Dosso Casina (1915) in the Lake Garda region, the last two settings also functioning indexically for Italian victories over the Austrians. “From Dosso Casina”, Marinetti records, “I released [the] *Manifesto of Italian Pride* [main title: “The Futurists, the First Interventionists”] to the press” (Marinetti 2006:228). Such poems are reports from the front, their message is: “I have been there. I have seen war with my own eyes, experienced its sounds and smells with my own five senses, and now I come back to you to bear witness through my writings to its redemptive value”. (The image of Marinetti as “itinerant ambassador” and living propaganda for the war effort viewing his Futurist activities as “a form of combat, too, albeit on the home front rather than in the trenches” is nicely captured in Berghaus 1996:83.) The darker side of all this, the underlying extremism of Marinetti’s conception of war (on which see Hewitt 1992:44–46), is perhaps best conveyed by a recollection of the fighting at Tripoli that appears in the “Geometrical and Mechanical Splendor” manifesto just before the discussion of types of onomatopoeia:

WE ARE ABOLISHING THE AGE-OLD VALUES (romantic, sentimental and Christian) OF NARRATIVE, by virtue of which the importance of a wound, sustained in battle, was greatly exaggerated in comparison with the weapons of destruction, strategic positions and atmospheric conditions. [...] I observed in the De Suni battery at Sidi-Messri, in October 1911, how the bright, insistent volley of a cannon, made red-hot by the sun and by an increased rate of firing, made the spectacle of mangled, dying human flesh [seem] almost negligible. (Marinetti 2006:136–137)

The “expressive” element in such works often involved delivering convincing acoustic iconicity in the form of declaimed — or otherwise performed — onomatopoeic effects. The English Vorticist Wyndham Lewis expressed his astonishment at “what Marinetti could do with his unaided voice” when reciting his war-poetry:

He certainly made an extraordinary amount of noise. A day of attack upon the Western Front, with all the “heavies” hammering together right back to the horizon, was nothing to it. My equanimity when first subjected to the sounds of mass-bombardment in Flanders was possibly due to my marinettian preparation — it seemed “all quiet” to me, in fact, by comparison. (Lewis 1937:37)

As a comment like this indicates, such iconicity was most effective in performance, not when confined to the printed page.

Although Lewis talks of Marinetti’s “unaided voice”, Futurist performance not infrequently involved an arsenal of stage-props and various forms of ensemble-work. Marinetti’s writings have much to say about the “new, dynamic [...] warlike

form of recitation”, in which with characteristic aplomb he claimed “indisputable world leadership” (Marinetti 2006: 193–194), but contrary to the impression given by some anecdotes, such performance was not always simply a matter of delivering onomatopoeic effects and evoking war-related noises, the Futurists had more at their disposal than this. Not only did elements of onomatopoeia in the text for recitation indexicalize pitch of intonation, appropriate body-language and points where stage-props were required to augment the iconic acoustic impression, they could also indicate when help from assistants was called for. Here is Marinetti recalling one such bravura performance at the Doré Galleries in London on 28 April 1914:

I recited several passages from my *Zang tumb tumb* [...] in a dynamic and multi-channeled fashion. On the table, arranged in front of me, I had a telephone, some boards, and the right sort of hammers, so that I could act out the orders of the Turkish general and the sounds of rifle and machine-gun fire. [...] My audience, continually turning to follow all of my movements, was utterly enthralled, their bodies alight with emotion at the violent effects of the battle described by my Words-in-Freedom. In a room some distance away, two great drums were set up, and with these the painter [C. R. W.] Nevinson, who was assisting me, produced the thunder of canon, when I telephoned him to do so. (“Dynamic, Multi-channeled Recitation” (1916), in Marinetti 2006: 198)

The performance was ‘multi-channeled’ not just in the sense that more than Marinetti’s bellowing voice was involved, but because the end-effect was intended to be more than just acoustically iconic. Marinetti may not have had the words with which to formulate his purpose in semiotic terms, but all such performances — and the printed “free-word” poems that served as prompts for them — were also in complex ways indexically linked to his pro-war agenda. Even such a simple extract as Figure 2 risks giving an over-simplified picture of the various elements of iconicity and indexicality that would have been present during performance. It is clear from the above account of Marinetti’s performance at the Doré Galleries that some of the staccato effects, as printed in large-size letters, bold print and using elastic “free expressive orthography”, were not restricted to a single voice. They required a battlefield-appropriate clash of human and inanimate mechanical sounds; hence, the array of boards and hammers, as well as the drums that could be called on to reverberate from an adjoining room at appropriate moments. Such performances extended the bounds of acoustic iconicity beyond the human voice, and did so, if Lewis is to be believed, to an alarming degree. But it is not in the use of props and the power of declamation that the main indexical innovations in literary Futurism’s war poetry lay. Onomatopoeia did not simply mime the real “heavies” hammering together on the Western Front, its effect was also, as we shall see, indexical in a variety of other ways. Up until 1915, battle “in the round” was offered as

[CONTRACCOLPO VISCERALE DELLE
ONOMATOPEE LIRICHE DEL TRENO]
tlactlae ii ii guiii
trrrrrrrrrrrrrrr
tatatatôo-tatatatôo
 (RUOTE)
cuhrrrrrr
cuhrrrrrr
guhrrrrrr
 [LOCOMOTIVA]
fufufufufufu
fafafafafafa
zazazazaza
tzatzatzatza

Figure 2. Extract from “Treno di soldati ammalati” (*Zang tumb tumb*)

indexical evidence of neutral Italy’s duty to enter the First World War and engage in hostilities, above all with the old enemy: Austria. The “words-in-freedom” that were Marinetti’s contribution to Italian war-poetry did not simply report, they exhorted.

4. Iconicity and indexicality in the Irredentist cause

During the years 1914–1915, with Italy reneging on its Triple Alliance obligations in an attempt to remain neutral during the First World War, Marinetti produced one of his first unequivocally political collage-poems (Figure 3). Its title, “Parole in libertà (Irredentismo)”, combines an affirmation of the new Futurist genre (“free-word” collage) with an explicit reference to the historical impetus behind this particular piece of pro-war propaganda. The main title’s reference to “words-in-freedom” (in the sense of “emancipated” language) may also be intended to imply that territories also needed to be liberated by the Futurists, just as the Italian language had been. These are both patriotic causes. Whether Marinetti’s primary concern was with the Irredentist cause or simply with war *per se*, as manifestos like “War, the Sole Cleanser of the World” and “The Necessity and Beauty of Violence” (Marinetti 2006: 53–54. and 60–72) might suggest, is another matter. Marinetti’s position was summed up in a contemporary secret political report on him as that of “an irredentist with-



Figure 3. *Parole in libertà (Irredentismo)*

out pronounced political tendency, but sometimes driven to extremes” (quoted in Berghaus 1996:61–62). Perhaps appealing to Irredentist sentiments was at the time an effective way of pleading the Interventionist case: Irredentism was generally accepted as a noble patriotic cause, whereas Interventionism, i.e. forcing Italy to abandon its newfound neutrality, risked being a more contentious matter.

Dating back to the second half of the nineteenth century, the “Irredentist” movement, deriving its name from the phrase “Italia irredenta” (unredeemed Italy), had been a force to be reckoned with in Italian politics. The movement was originally established to campaign for the “redemption” (i.e. annexation) of territories, mainly in the Alps and on the Adriatic, claimed by Italy, but at the time still belonging to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Although Irredentist activities had to be restrained after the ratification of the Triple Alliance between Italy, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Imperial Germany in 1882, they resurfaced with renewed vigour during the Interventionist campaign to persuade Italy to abandon its opportunistic neutrality and join forces with the Entente powers (with Britain, France and Russia). This Italy did in 1915. “The “Third Futurist Political Programme” (Marinetti et al. 1913b:221–222), published as part of the 1913 national election campaign, urged those Futurists on the electoral roll to use their votes to

“realize” a nationalist “patriotic” agenda which included supporting “Irredentism — Pan-Italianism — the supremacy of Italy”, as well as voting in favour of “a bigger fleet and a bigger army, a people proud to be Italian, [and] war, the sole cleanser of the world” (Marinetti 2006:75). Irredentists played a major role in the Italian Interventionist campaign of 1914 and 1915, using the crusade on behalf of the country’s “unredeemed” territories as a stick with which to beat Austro-Hungary and, by implication, its ally Wilhelmine Germany. As a matter of geo-politics, Irredentism was an ideal subject for Marinetti’s map-dominated poem.

The iconic-cum-indexical function of maps in fiction has already been the subject of an illuminating paper published in this series (Ljungberg 2003: 183–199, esp. 192–197). The maps considered in that context tended to be insertions juxtaposed with narrative text. In the case of Marinetti’s Irredentist collage, however, the map is not *juxtaposed* with written words or even *superimposed* on them. It becomes an indexical sign for the territory over which the poem’s dramatic historical events are played out in a battle of words and shapes; in this respect, it serves as a kind of underlay or substratum. Hence, in a more literal — and technical — sense than is usually the case with Futurist shaped poetry, the rudimentary hand-drawn map of Italy supplies the indexical “ground” (Sonesson 1998:309) for Marinetti’s shaped poem. The fact that the outline of Italy is incomplete at its southernmost end might conceivably allude to the country’s budding expansionist aspirations in respect of North Africa. (Even in such an undeniably political work as this, the semiosis is still not totally unambiguous.) As all this suggests, the map has an important political part to play in this literary collage. If it were not there, Marinetti’s work would be impoverished, and a detailed political reading of it would be well-nigh impossible. With Italy iconically and indexically in place, laid out as on a real campaign-map, the general concept of “Irredentismo” contained in the bracketed sub-title acquires an appropriate historical and geographical specificity, and the poem is consequently able to issue its propaganda directive. This it does with greater inventiveness than was to be found in Marinetti’s earlier war-poems. The map-paradigm also possesses a far clearer political message than the maps used in the equally indexical war-collages of Paolo Buzzi’s posthumous collection *Conflagrazione (1915–18)* (Buzzi: 1963). The reason for this is the former layout’s effective combination of iconicity with indexicality.

The three converging hand-written or collaged versions of the word “IRREDENTISMO” (two of them, because of foreshortening, resembling English) form a wedge pointing North Eastwards specifically in the direction of Vienna, capital and hub of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and menacingly towards Austria, Italy’s longstanding enemy, in general. In this upper-segment of the collage, repeated versions of the word “IRREDENTISMO” (an acknowledged post-Risorgimento geo-political ideal) position themselves threateningly by all pointing in one direction.

But contained within this wedge, almost like a shaft supporting a spearhead, is the one word “Mazzini”, printed in bold to contrast with the less pronounced variations on the word “IRREDENTISMO”. Giuseppe Mazzini, the great Italian patriot, republican and one of the guiding forces of the Risorgimento, is here invoked to lend historical legitimacy to the twentieth-century revival of the Irredentist cause. (The Pro Italia Irredenta Society, for example, regarded its aims as being essentially the completion of the Risorgimento project.) By the time of Marinetti’s verbal collage, Italian Irredentists, among them many Futurists, were vociferously calling for the restitution of Trieste, along with Fiume, both still suffering the ignominy of serving as ports for landlocked Austro-Hungary. With “Parole in libertà (Irredentismo)”, Marinetti is clearly attempting to galvanize his fellow Irredentists into action at the same time as giving them a more specifically war-oriented programme. This in part accounts for the fact that Trieste and Fiume (now Rijeka) are the only towns named on the collage’s map and why the region of Trento is encircled with a dotted line, suggesting — again via a combination of iconicity and indexicality — that its present status is temporary. This is where the collage’s dynamism becomes important. In the top right-hand quarter of the collage, the italicized lower-case word “ripigliare” (to retake or begin again) leads logically on to the bold, larger-case word “avanzata” (advance), which in turn gives way to a whole flight of bold thick hand-drawn arrows of the kind one might expect to find on a military plan of action. Political slogans now appear to have been replaced by military deeds. The word “avanzata” identifies the disputed territory over which the Italian armies must advance; only the words “austria” (all letters in lower-case) and “Vienna” (in very small, spidery print!) appear static by contrast with the flurries of military activity signified as going on around them. What is being iconically and indexically represented in this part of the map is less a report from the front (there was as yet no such front) than what Marinetti wishes to see happen — a poetic statement no doubt intended as an Interventionist’s prophecy. What we have here is the first of my two examples of war-propaganda’s skilful use of *predictive indexicality*. In fact, the numerous arrows in “Parole in libertà (Irredentismo)” do more than signify the direction of attack, although, tellingly, there are no defensive Austrian arrows coming back in the other direction. The precise positioning of the dark threatening arrows also indicates a strike reaching deep into Austria, not just liberating the named disputed territories. Furthermore, the arrow-shapes give an impression of being so swift and unstoppable that the propaganda message contained in this part of the collage is that a dynamic *Blitzkrieg* will be decisive and not overly costly in Italian lives. The dead, the wounded and those sacrificed to a grand strategy rarely find an adequate place in Marinetti’s war-poetry.

But what are we meant to make of the work’s perspective? It has been argued that the use of maps in Italian “words-in-freedom” had a tendency to present the

battlefield from an aerial vantage point, on an analogy to the way in which the aeroplane “reduced the battle-field to a two-dimensional ‘map’” (Landis 1983: 60). This would suggest a bird’s-eye perspective akin to the “aerial sketches of the landscape, its battles between typographical characters, and its onomatopoeic fusillades” described by Marinetti in “In this Futurist Year” (Marinetti 2006: 235), a reference to his various schematic depictions of battle giving a virtually immediate overview, a simulated omniscience *in the present*. However, if, instead of opting for an “aerial” reading, we interpret the collage indexically as analogous to a marked-up map charting the direction hostilities will take — a map as used by an authoritative figure such as a general — then the collage does not involve an omniscient report of battles fought *in the past* or events taking place *in the present* (hardly a logical function in a pre-war Irredentist context). Instead, what we are offered is a challenge to the viewer to make sure that this is the course Italy’s Irredentist campaign of re-annexation *will* take. An Irredentist work of this kind hangs suspended in time, rather than prefiguring specific historical engagements. Italian Irredentist thinking and European history did not coincide in any such convenient way. Thanks to the influence of Italy’s eventual Entente allies, it was the conditions of Versailles that eventually satisfied most of the country’s Irredentist claims, not military intervention on Italy’s part.

5. Three “free-word” collage-poems from the First World War

Although the Interventionist phase of Italian Futurism brought with it a sizeable crop of pro-war “free-word” poems and collages (on the latter, see White 1990: 73–142), it was the First World War that in Marinetti’s case gave rise to his most important achievements in the field of iconically organized indexically construed poetry. I now wish to consider the interplay between iconicity and political indexicality in his three best-known works — *Après la Marne, Joffre visita le front en auto* (1914), *Bataille à 9 étages* (1915) and *Le soir, couchée dans son lit, elle relisait la lettre de son artilleur au front* (1917). English translations of all three can be found in Marinetti 2002; and extremely helpful non-semiotic readings in Drucker 1994. All composed during the war years and in some cases at the front, this trio of “free-word” collages was to enjoy pride of place in Marinetti’s retrospective collection *Les mots en liberté futuristes* (Marinetti 1919).

Après la Marne, Joffre visita le front en auto

Italy entered the First World War on the Entente side on 24 May 1915. *Après la Marne, Joffre visita le front en auto* (henceforth cited as *Après la Marne*) (Figure 4),

originally entitled *montagne + vallate + strade X joffre*, is dated 1915, although it is not known precisely when it was composed. What we do know is that it was not published until after the war (Marinetti 1919:99–100), and then in French. Whether it is, strictly speaking, an Interventionist work or postdates Italy’s neutralist period will obviously influence our reading, so we need to consider the probabilities. The one word common to the original, seemingly apolitical “telegraphic” title, with its emphasis on mountains, valleys and landscape, and the historically marked one linking the central figure with the Marne is the name Joffre. Only Joffre’s success at the First Battle of the Marne justifies his mention in the title of a pro-war collage. This suggests that Marinetti’s work must have been created



Figure 4. *Après la Marne, Joffre visita le front en auto*

some time between mid-September 1914, i.e. in the wake of the First Battle of the Marne (5 to 11 September 1914), and the first half of 1915. It seems unlikely that Marinetti would have created an Interventionist work *after* the demands of the Italian Interventionists had been satisfied (in May 1915); the work thus in all likelihood pre-dates Italy's entry into the War and is best read as a piece of Interventionist propaganda dating from the first half of the year 1915. Just as Joffre visits his troops "après la Marne" in 1914, so Marinetti's collage makes its pro-involvement case in the wake of the Marne victory.

Because Marinetti did not and could not have seen action during the First Battle of the Marne, *Après la Marne* is not a work of authentic war-reportage in the same indexical way as many of his other war-poems were. He therefore cannot have shared *firsthand* in the celebrations of the French forces greeting victorious General Joseph Joffre, Commander-in-Chief of French forces (1914–16), on his triumphal tour of frontline positions in mid-September 1914.

In theory, the successful French counter-offensive designed to shield Paris ought to have been a source of grief to someone living, as Marinetti was, under the umbrella of the Triple Alliance and the war-cries "VIVE LA FRANCE" and "MORT AUX BOCHES" a cause for shame, but as an Interventionist Marinetti is still able in early 1914 to use the event to suggest that the real humiliation lies in the fact that his country remains neutral. His collage-poem is nevertheless at the same time able to exploit the sense of patriotic elation and to give his fellow Italians a vicarious foretaste of what the entire nation could experience, if only it joined the Entente and took up arms against Italy's longstanding enemies. "In this Futurist Year" had declared that "[the] present war is the finest Futurist poem that has materialized up to now" and that the movement's continued Interventionist stance is an example of the Futurists' "wonderful flexibility in passing from art to political action" (Marinetti 2006:33). Looking back to this time in his 1919 "Address to the Fascist Congress of Florence", i.e. with Italy now enjoying the fruits of being on the winning side, Marinetti seems to say: "we told you so". He makes a point of reminding listeners that "in September 1914, while the Battle of the Marne was raging and Italy remained completely neutral, we Futurists organized the first two demonstrations against Austria and in favor of Intervention" (Marinetti 2006: 226). *Après la Marne* is another form of pro-war demonstration.

Après la Marne is a further example of a sub-genre of "words-in-freedom" that makes its Interventionist point via an amalgam of iconicity and indexicality and involves readers in its political agenda by allowing them to empathize by sharing in the elation of a battle won, albeit vicariously. That combination of mediated experience and engineered empathy is largely the result of the way the collage is constructed on the paradigm of journey across another map-like poem. Compared with that in "Parole in libertà (Irredentismo)", the cartographic dimension

here — the work is in essence a “road map” to victory — is admittedly minimally iconic and relatively under-determined. France is specifically located in the top-right corner (i.e. where Paris stands in relation to the shielding Marne front to the West of the poem’s centre of attention). The Prussians and “WAR” are situated to the South, and Joffre’s journey “en auto” is indicated by the snaking line that runs from the various mountainous Ms near the top down through to the war-zone where his *tour d’honneur* terminates in the bottom left-hand corner of the work. The journey motif is a crucial factor in ensuring that readers empathize with the proud general as he reviews his troops. There is a cluster of letter Ms surrounding “FRANCE” in the top-left corner of the work, from which the anti-German war-cries appear to be coming. Perhaps the Ms stand for “Maas” or “Marne” (Lista 1977: 46) or iconically represent the peaks of the mountains mentioned in the collage’s original title. Whatever the case, the feature seems to be protecting France from the “Prussians”. But M could well stand for another presence in the work: Marinetti himself. The poet could, by projecting himself onto the persona of General Joffre, just as well be himself vicariously greeting the country’s inhabitants as “Mon Amiiiiii” and “MaAAaaaaa petite”. Such an act of projection *vis-à-vis* the main participant in a victory scenario is very similar to the act the reader of this work is also being invited to engage in. The meandering journey’s shaping of the overall configuration influences our direction of reading and encourages us to become part of the scene and hence empathize with the Entente victors, indexically personified in the person of their leader. Empathy contrived in this way is understandable in a work of Interventionism.

Given the importance of the victory-journey along the front line for any interpretation of *Après la Marne*, I should like to look at how it is treated in the only illuminating close reading of it to date, one which approaches it as an “adventurous synthesis of the schematically pictorial and the onomatopoeically graphic”:

The swirling path of the autoroute winds among the mountains and valleys of France, in and out of the scenes of battle between French and Prussian forces. At the bottom right, a small square of type contains the “dynamic verbalisation of the route” with the usual onomatopoeic syllables. [...] The map bears no relation to either topographical schemes or pictorial landscapes: there is no horizon, no fixed coordinates, and no single orientation by which to navigate [...]. The eye is drawn through the mass of activity by the dominant curves of the route, only to be distracted by the fields of crosses, tight passes between the high peaks of the large, hand-drawn “M” forms, and then plunged into the fracas of sounds again. The compelling aspect of this work is that it refuses either pictoriality or literary form, sitting precisely between the two, requiring that one shift between the activities of reading for sense and looking for sensations. (Drucker 1994: 134–135)

No doubt, the most “compelling aspect” for Marinetti was his work’s dynamic Interventionist message, a picture of war as celebrated victory, where crosses represent lives heroically sacrificed rather than intolerable losses, and where a triumphant general’s visit to his troops on the front line is more refreshing than the tired romantic seductions of nature’s mountains, valleys and river-banks.

As has been pointed out (Lista 1980:46), the “Dynamic verbalisation of the road” block of text in the bottom right-hand corner of *Après la Marne* is an example of the “Geometric and Mechanical Splendor” manifesto’s third category: “Abstract onomatopoeia”. Marinetti explains its use to “express through sound the most complex and mysterious of our sensibilities, even though we are not conscious of them. [The device] corresponds to no sound in nature or machinery, but expresses, rather, a state of mind” (Marinetti 2006: 140–141). In this respect, its function is more indexical than iconic, despite the fact that *Après la Marne* exploits iconicity in a rich variety of ways, including the map paradigm, variegated expressive typography to evoke the noises of the journey, the combination of immediate Joffre-perspective with an “aerial” overview. Working analogically, and sometimes synaesthetically (cf. Gahl 2005 on Futurist synaesthesia), this dense cluster of “Abstract onomatopoeia” attempts something comparable to Umberto Boccioni’s *States of mind* triptych. However, what the “Dynamic verbalisation of the road” actually represents — Joffre’s state of mind as he visited the front? Marinetti’s as he sees his way to exploiting a major early Entente victory for his own Interventionist purpose? the impressions conjured up in the mind’s eye of the reader? — remains a matter of conjecture (the interpretive possibilities are by no means mutually exclusive). Whatever one concludes, in a poem which makes its propaganda point about the First Battle of the Marne by creating a scenario which encourages readers to empathize, or even identify, either with Joffre and his troops or with the Italian Interventionists on the “home front”, “Abstract onomatopoeia” seems an appropriate innovation with which to make propaganda by projecting readers into an empathic state of mind. Nevertheless, we should not forget (as Marinetti clearly chose to) that the outcome of the First Battle of the Marne victory was, viewed with the advantage of hindsight, at best merely “a psychological, rather than a physical victory” (Liddell Hart 1973: 111).

Bataille à 9 étages du Mont Altissimo

Unlike my previous two examples, which stood in a rather complex relationship of indirect indexicality to war (via Irredentism and Interventionism), *Bataille à 9 étages du Mont Altissimo* (henceforth cited as *Bataille à 9 étages*) (Figure 5) shows Marinetti returning Futurist war-poetry to its original experiencing and reporting functions.

The title *Bataille à 9 étages* has been translated as “9-storied battle” (Marinetti 2002:217), which may suggest an analogy with the storeys of a building (Lake Garda is at one point referred to as the valley’s “cellar” and the surrounding mountains as “skyscrapers”). Nevertheless, the main metaphor here is closer to that of staging-posts on a mountain-climb or elevation levels, as experienced by a gun-battery’s range-finder. The emphasis is on precision; the enemy is distant and

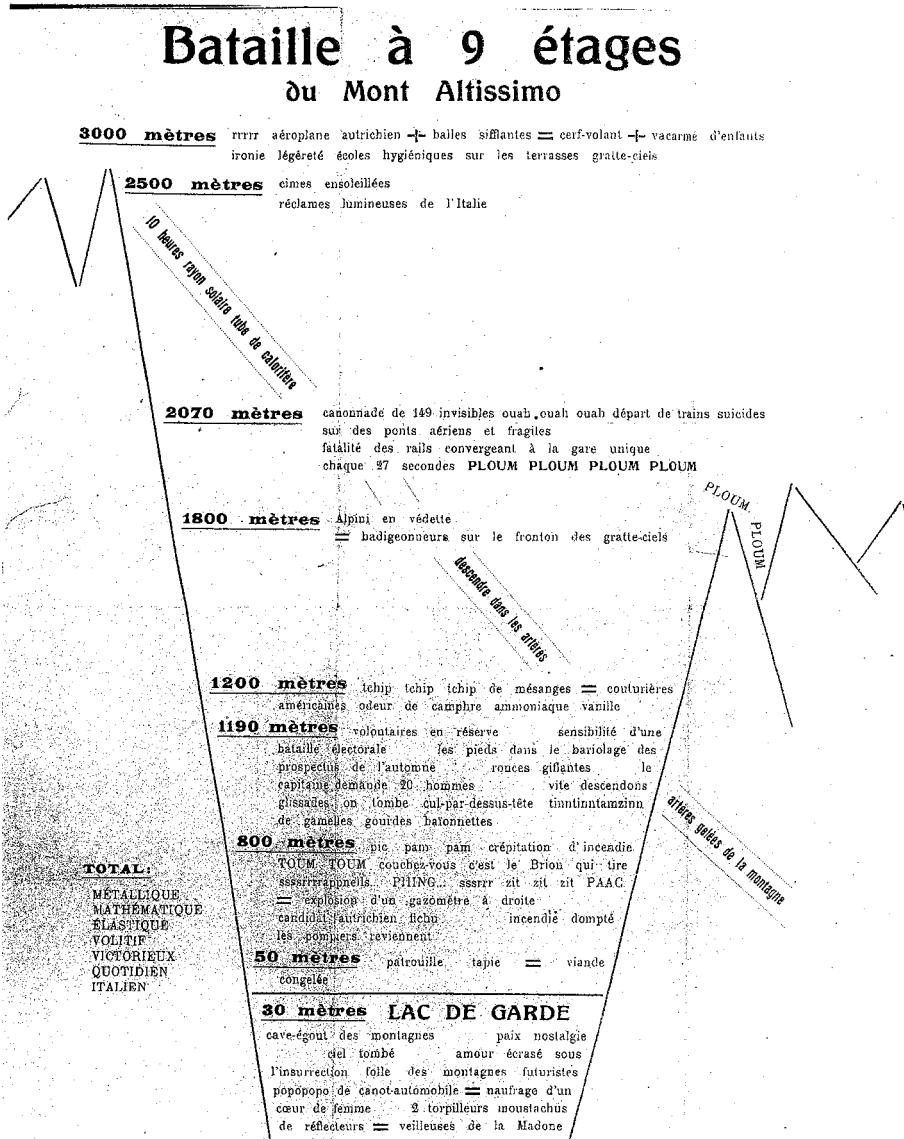


Figure 5. *Bataille à 9 étages du Mont Altissimo*

warfare has become more mechanized and systematic than it was in Marinetti's early combat poems. This feature has not gone unnoticed. Marinetti has even been charged with using *Bataille à 9 Etages*, "without apparently seeing any paradox in this whatsoever", to make "one of his most orderly typographic arrangements in order to depict the chaos of battle" (Drucker 1994: 131). This is in a sense true, for both Marinetti and modern warfare have moved on since the days of the Battle of Tripoli, something that is vividly reflected in *Bataille à 9 Etages* through the new structure's strikingly ordered elements of diagrammatic iconicity and systematically layered indexicality.

One of the pronounced diagrammatically iconic aspects of *Bataille à 9 Etages* is its semblance of offering a cross-section: of mountains on either side and Lake Garda in the middle, presented not from above as a lake-*surface*, but via the semblance of an underwater cross-section, with the dark cluster of words in the lowest part of the configuration representing a vertical cross-cut of the lake in much the same way as white space is used elsewhere in the work to suggest the surrounding snow-covered mountains. Superimposed on this cross-section and contrasting lake area with steeply rising surrounding mountains is a series of numerical indications of height specifying the military activities going on at particular elevations, both in the sky and on land. Bearing in mind that one of the few locations identified in the collage (at 800 metres) is Brion, at the time a fortified mountain NE of Riva on the Austrian side of the Italian-Austrian border, we can conclude that the cross-cut's function is to make a political statement. Marinetti has taken the horizontal map paradigm of a stretch of water lying on a SW-NE axis and transposed it into a vertical position, so that we have a schematic image of two banks, one Austrian and the other Italian, with Lake Garda in between, literally and metaphorically guarding the Italian frontier against the Austrian enemy. The collage gives noticeably more information about what is going on at various levels in the Italian defensive positions, as well it must, for this is a work of specifically anti-Austrian propaganda, not an impartially presented battleground.

Viewed topographically, this work possesses a greater number of iconic features than either "Parole in libertà (Irredentismo)" or *Le soir*. We are shown the Austrian planes reconnoitring high above Italian terrain, the sun's rays shining over the tops of the highest peaks, we have a sense of the steepness of the mountain slopes rising up from the shore-line and we know where in the setting the enemy lies in wait. However, because this is a combat setting, all such iconic details also have local indexical implications, as they also would for anyone in a look-out post threatened by enemy attack. If the work still has a macro-indexical function, this is no longer merely to indicate that its creator is bearing witness to the scene at a geographically important combat zone at which he was physically present (as Marinetti was at the time) or to reassure the folks back home that the Italian

Army was successfully protecting the nation's borders against the Austrians. It also emphasizes the precision, the layers and spheres of responsibility and combat-readiness of all echelons, and, exceptionally for Marinetti's writings, it focuses on the combat-preparedness of those at the front rather than focusing on an encounter proper. Numerical indications of elevation give the poem the same Olympian overview that can be found in Marinetti's "synoptic tables" of battle-situations, but now the fetishizing of statistics and inventorized battle-formations is less a matter of brevity, the new aesthetic of "Geometric and Mechanical Splendor and Sensitivity towards Numbers", it is an index of a new technological conception of war.

Le soir, couchée dans son lit, elle relisait la lettre de son artilleur au front

Le soir, couchée dans son lit, elle relisait la lettre de son artilleur au front (Figure 6) (henceforth cited as *Le soir*) takes the form of a letter rather than a correspondent's report from the front. The letter bears the initials "F. T. M." (top-right), followed by a message to the addressee ("I received your book while bombarding Mount Kuk"), features which reinforce the authenticating indexicality of a personal letter from the (Izonso) front giving an impression of just what modern warfare is like. The greeting and acknowledgement in longhand at the top is matched by a return acknowledgement at the bottom of the work ("Thanks and best wishes to you and your bold comrades"), written in a different hand and ostensibly revealing what the letter's female recipient, lying in bed, thinks of writing in reply. The sender is identified as Marinetti himself, while the addressee remains anonymous, simply being represented by the kind of silhouette often nowadays used in pictures to conceal identity.⁶ While Marinetti frequently exploits his persona and "author function" (Foucault 2000–2002, ii:205–22) as war-reporter and reliable eye-witness to strengthen the indexical status of his war writings, in the case of *Le soir* his identity is reduced to a set of barely readable initials right at the top of the collage. This is essentially a private communication, or at least it started out as one, indeed its authenticity even depends on its not being part of some collective Interventionist political programme. Futurist letters from the front, and, in Marinetti's case,

6. When first published in *L'Italia futurista*, 2 1917:28, *Le soir* was entitled "morbidezza in agguato + bombarde italiane", an allusion to *Morbidezza in agguato* (Softness in ambush) a novel by the Italian writer Irma Valeria, published in 1917. Moreover, it was signed "Marinetti" and contained handwritten proof-corrections by him. There are no significant thematic connections between Valeria's novel and Marinetti's collage, and, perhaps for that reason, all allusions to her were downplayed when the work re-appeared in Marinetti 1919: 103.



Figure 6. Le soir, couchée dans son lit, elle relisait la lettre de son artilleur au front

also telegrams and postcards,⁷ entailed genre-signals which rhetorically framed the propaganda messages that were being sent. But what message can be read from the collaged material that makes up the letter in *Le soir*?

As was often the case in Marinetti's belligerent "words-in-freedom", the machinery and sounds of war tend to displace any focus on the human element. The only human being iconically depicted in the entire collage is the woman (the "elle" of the work's title) and her function is to lie down and submissively re-read her artillery man's stirring account of his experiences on the Isonzo front (referred to left-middle of the collage), the scene of a successful Italian offensive against the Austrians in 1917, the year *Le soir* was composed. As a woman, she is not able to join in the fighting, but can only read about the momentous battle taking place and, with her acknowledgement, respond admiringly to the feats of bravery performed. But she can still empathize with those present, just as readers of *Après la Marne* were meant to. Although neither the woman nor the letter-writer's "bold comrades" on the Isonzo front are the principal subjects of Marinetti's picture-poem (for an iconic reading of which, see White 1999: 99–102), their victory gives the letter its rationale and historical context. The only indexical tokens in Marinetti's entire collage of a human presence in the battle are the explosions which have been caused by enemy artillery and the strange shout of "War to the Germanophiles!", a rather clumsy battle-cry with which to be accompanying an onslaught on the enemy or the bombardment of Mount Kuk! The enemy is thereby identified, *not as the Austrians or the Germans*, but as the "Germanophiles", a pejorative term reserved in Futurist circles for another, equally important target. During the Interventionist period, Marinetti was particularly critical of what, in a letter to Francesco Cangiullo (quoted in Berghaus 1996: 49), he referred to as "the austrophile government" of Italy. In other words, the slogan in *Le soir* is in part aimed at Interventionism's detractors within Italy, rather than the country's foes abroad. Hence the need for a "free-word" letter from the Isonzo front to someone sympathetic to the cause and able to assist those in the field to snipe at the enemy back home within Italy's borders.

7. Landis 1983:7 and 73–74 discusses, with illustrations, a number of the free-word war telegrams (catalogue nos. 84, 85) which Marinetti sent from the front to his friends and allies in neutral Italy.

6. Observations and conclusions

The politicization of shaped poetry was one of Marinetti's principal literary achievements. Unlike such Futurist painter-poets as Francesco Cangiullo, Carlo Carrà and Fortunato Depero, he single-mindedly harnessed his war-poems to contemporary political causes, notably Irredentism and Interventionism. The resultant dynamic shaped poems within "words-in-freedom" have tended to be treated exclusively as examples of literary iconicity, while their indexical component has unfortunately been ignored. The reactionary politics underlying Italian Futurism's pro-war "words-in-freedom" has often been conveniently air-brushed out of the picture so that they can be put on a par with the ethically more acceptable typographical experiments of Dadaists, Surrealists and the innovative poets of Russian Futurism. The present analysis has demonstrated the propaganda value of indexicality for Marinetti as he was seeking to defend the virtues and attractions of modern warfare. While indexicality is of vital importance to everyone, frontline soldiers included, in all conceivable situations, its main value for Marinetti related to his "author function" as war correspondent and nationally famous combatant returning from various fronts to communicate the political lessons of his experience. His poems work with a complex combination of innovative iconic modes of portrayal coupled with strong indexical indications of the contemporary political significance of his particular brand of *littérature engagée*. For all the poems' importance within the history of iconicity in literature, it is above all their *indexicalized* iconicity that is the key to Marinetti's authority as the authentic voice of experience speaking to an Italy first undecided whether to leave the Triple Alliance in favour of neutrality or subsequently join the War on the Entente side.

Semioticians not specializing in literary semiotics have tended to award the index pride of place within Peirce's second trichotomy. Despite having edited a monumental volume on iconicity, Thomas A. Sebeok, for example (Sebeok 1994: 62–63), once strongly endorsed the claim that it is above all "with his notion of index that Peirce is at once novel and fruitful" (Wells 1967: 104). Here is not the place to challenge the received wisdom concerning the index's implied subordinate function in literature, but our evidence demonstrates the political role played by indexicality in one important context. Without a conceptual framework allowing for a function resembling that of Peirce's index, Saussure-influenced "semiological" readings of the material looked at above cannot do justice to the poems' political rhetoric, their impressive range of "expressive" devices or, ultimately, their historical significance.

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Taking a line for a walk

Poetic contour drawings and contoured poems

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In this article various aspects of iconicity in three poems by the Afrikaans poet T.T. Cloete are analysed and discussed. In the poems the poet uses words to describe a line which “draws” the outline of an object. This technique is interpreted as a referred form of referentiality which transfers attention from the (referential) object to the poetic interpretation of the object in the poem and to the poem itself. Apart from the diagrammatic iconicity in the use of a “represented” diagram, the technical complexity of the poems also suggest the use of imagic and metaphoric iconicity on account of the use of typographical features as well as literary and cultural allusions. Using Lotman’s distinction between the semantic, the poetical and the cultural aspects of semantic value, the poems are analysed and interpreted. The main aim of the article is to indicate the ways in which iconic features, on the linguistic, poetical and cultural level, add to the ability of poems to generate multi-layered meaning.

1. Introduction

According to Raffaele Simone (1994:ix) “two opposite patterns have faced each other in the history of linguistics since its beginning”, the Platonic Paradigm which is based on the resemblance between language and reality and the Aristotelian-Saussurean Paradigm which emphasizes the arbitrariness of the relation between linguistic signs and referents. Although literary theory and interpretative practice have for the past four decades been dominated by the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, linguists and literary scholars alike are basically concerned with the complicated processes by means of which objects and actions as well as ideas, thoughts and emotions in “the outside world ... [are] ‘imported’ into language” (Simone 1994:ix).

Literary techniques and devices and other manipulations of language have always been important for literary scholars, even though they may have used a

variety of literary theories or philosophical and ideological approaches in their readings and interpretations of literary texts. Language becomes literature by means of the processes of representation, by transforming the “referential” material into compounded, multilayered and polyphonic meaning. Referential meaning — the logical or “real” information — is a necessary but relatively small component of the potential meanings of aesthetic texts because in these texts linguistic components do not signify independently or separately, but become part of the *signifiance*¹ (Barthes 1977: 10) of the text as a whole. Despite differences in the theoretical and philosophical approaches to literature, scholars generally regard literary or aesthetic texts as compounded and complex semiotic constructs which carry a surplus of meaning and in which structure and form and meaning cannot be separated (Van Gorp et al. 1991: 187).

I present the argument in this paper against the background of C.S. Peirce’s well-known categories of iconic, indexical and symbolic signs (icons, indices and symbols) and the distinction between two types of iconicity made by Max Nänny in an article on the poetry of E.E. Cummings (Nänny 2001: 209–234). Based on the work of Peirce and Roman Jakobson, Nänny speaks about imagic iconicity which may manifest acoustically or visually (where the visual iconicity includes the iconic use of letters, outlines within texts, outlines of whole texts and shaped poems), and diagrammatic iconicity (which relies on iconic relations between signs and their referents and not on resemblance as such). The texts with which I concern myself in this article display forms of imagic as well as diagrammatic iconicity, but I am less concerned with the specific type of iconicity (which can also be seen as metaphoric in some instances) than with the layering of meaning which is achieved through the ingenious use of a variety of poetic, iconic and metaphoric techniques. The point can be made that the iconic potential of language and of texts provides poets with unlimited possibilities for improvisation,

1. *Signifiance*, a term introduced by Julia Kristeva, is used and explained by Roland Barthes as follows: “*Signifiance* is a *process* in the course of which the ‘subject’ of the text, escaping the logic of the *ego-cogito* and engaging in other logics (of the signifier, of contradiction), struggles with meaning and is deconstructed ...; *signifiance* ...[is]...not the work by which the (intact and exterior) subject might try to master the language ..., but that radical work (leaving nothing intact) through which the subject explores — entering not observing — how the language works and undoes him or her” (Barthes 1977: 10). I use the term here because I consider iconicity in literary texts to belong to the domain of the more radical possibilities of generating meaning and because the interpretation of the iconic aspects of texts requires a more creative mindset from readers. Barthes’s *signifiance* therefore seems to be an appropriate term to use where iconicity in poetry is concerned.

creative adaptation and variation, and analysing these possibilities will probably never cease to fascinate the literary scholar.

2. Literary iconicity

W.J.M. Bronzwaer (1993: 25,27) describes literary iconicity by using concepts and ideas of Jurij Lotman (1972), Hjelmslev, and Vestdijk. According to Bronzwaer poetic language is a secondary modelling system which is integrated with the primary language code to such an extent that it is not terminable and not arbitrary. The text generates meaning by both the primary code and the secondary modelling system and by means of the interaction between the two codes. The secondary modelling system is not merely slid over the primary code but becomes an integral part of the meaning of the text and as such it must be regarded as iconic.

One has to admit that this description of iconicity in poetic texts is quite general and can include almost any poetic device or structure or form. Bronzwaer (1993: 30) even speaks about “dormant iconicity” (“*sluimerende icone*”) to indicate subtle forms of iconicity. In this essay I want to use a more specific explanation of the relation between communication and aesthetic texts. In his book *Universe of the mind* (2000[1990]: 21), Yuri Lotman speaks about *auto-communication* in literary texts as opposed to communication which is directed outwards towards another person and which is primarily concerned with communicating referential information as effectively as possible. In auto-communication, which can be described as self-“conscious” communication and in which “the bearer of the information remains the same but the message is reformulated and acquires new meaning during the communication process” (Lotman 2000: 22), the text functions in a cultural system “which is far more significant than is commonly supposed” (Lotman 2000: 21). According to Lotman (2000: 29–30) tension develops between the original message and the secondary codes (poetic as well as cultural codes) so that the “more the syntagmatic organization is stressed the freer and more associative will be our semantic connections” and eventually the personalities that engage in autocommunication are reorganised.² Lotman stresses the role of wider cultural frameworks in textual communication in general, but the interaction with cultural contexts which are deliberately activated by the poetic text complicates the communication even more. He concludes that there are three aspects to semantic value: there is the primary semantic value of words, the

2. Lotman’s explanation of the functioning of the artistic text is very similar to Barthes’s explanation of *signifiance*.

re-organisation of semantic elements metaphorically, syntactically, acoustically and rhythmically and in the third instance there are the extra-textual associations which are activated by the text and which constitute intertextuality (Lotman 2000: 29). The text consequently functions holistically and becomes more than its content: "... a text is used as a code and not as a message when it does not add to the information we already have, but when it transforms the self-understanding of the person who has engendered the text and when it transfers already existing messages into a new system of meanings" (Lotman 2000: 30).

Poets from different poetical traditions endorse the importance of poetic form and emphasize that content and form cannot function separately. In his lectures on Shakespeare Coleridge wrote in 1817: "The organic form ... is innate; it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form" (Lake 1998: 278). In an article, "The Shape of Poetry" (1998), Paul Lake writes extensively about Gerard Manley Hopkins's poetic beliefs and practices. Hopkins used the term "inscape" for the inner design or pattern that determines an object's distinctive shape and the term "instress" for the force that upholds an object's inscape (Lake 1998: 301). In a way similar to nature where underlying patterns determine the surface structure, appearance and function of objects, a poem's inscape determines its shape and meaning. Hopkins believed that poetry was "speech only employed to carry the inscape of speech for the inscape's sake" (Lake 1998: 301). To me this seems to be a poetic way of describing iconicity.

Lake (1998: 278) also refers to Ezra Pound who explained his preference for the flexible and organic poetic structure used by Modernist poets (in his essay "A Retrospect", 1918) as follows: "I think there is a 'fluid' as well as a 'solid' content, that some poems may have form as a tree has form, some as water poured into a vase ... a vast number of subjects cannot be precisely, and therefore nor properly rendered in symmetrical form". In an article on Modernist poetry, the Dutch poet Martinus Nijhoff (1961: 338) describes how form can add to and transform meaning in a poem because poets strive to achieve "een onmiddellijk samenvallen van de vorm met hetgeen ik de tweede inhoud zou willen noemen" ("an instantaneous merging of form with what I would call the second meaning") and in his study on sound patterns in Yeats's poetry Brian Devine (2006: 3) writes extensively about non-semantic meanings in poetic texts. All these poets do not hesitate to state that form not only adds to meaning but becomes an inseparable aspect of the processes which generate meaning in poetic texts.

In this article I want to analyse three poems by the Afrikaans poet T.T. Cloete, whose poetry is characterised by a wide thematic scope as well as a high level of technical complexity and ingenuity. I hope to show that these two characteristics

are indeed interrelated in an iconic sense and that Cloete's poetic techniques seem to invite the literary scholar to look for various forms of iconicity.

3. Taking a line for a walk

In the poems I intend to discuss, the poet uses the idea of "line" in an inventive manner by employing language to create line drawings. Words are used to "activate" line in a graphic sense.

The title of my article refers to the Swiss painter Paul Klee (1879–1940), who used the phrase "taking a line for a walk" to describe the technique he employed in his later works, paintings distinguished by spidery hieroglyph-like symbols (Klee 2007). In a lecture presented in the Bauhaus in Weimar in 1923, Klee discussed the idea of movement in his use of line and his endeavour to take an active line for a walk. He wanted to explore the possibilities of a line moving freely without a goal, as if taking a walk for a walk's sake. In actual fact Klee's exploitation of the immanent characteristics of material and technique, including line, is not completely free as the "accidental is anticipated and thereby becomes a concrete and consciously deployed building block in the overall result" (Klee 2000: 195). The line does take the painter for a walk, but the movement is not completely random as a measure of control and manipulation is still employed.

What is clear, is that line is regarded as an extremely important artistic device by Klee. In the selected poems of T.T. Cloete the concept of line is also central to the meaning of the poems, even though poems are language texts. In Cloete's poems the referential description of line becomes metaphor for the shape of a figure, but also for movement and the nature of the line itself. Also, as in the case of Klee's paintings, the process Cloete uses is not at all free or without purpose, but intricately designed to generate subtle layers of meaning.

4. *Spectacular I*

In the poem "Skouspel I" which could be translated as *Spectacle, Show, Supershow* or *Spectacular*, the killing of a springbok by a lion is described and the fragile beauty of the antelope is contrasted with the majestic beauty and power of the lion.

The first part of the poem describes the outline of the springbok's body in the act of "pronking" so that the delicate shape of the springbok is suggested by the use of line. The poem, so to speak, creates a line drawing or contour drawing of the springbok.³

T.T. Cloete

Skouspel I

vanaf die glansende dun horings en die gesig
puntig verfynd uit oor die lig geboë rug
tot in die stertkwassie spigtig

gelig af in die glasbreekbaar
dun bene pronk waaiërhaar

die springbok nael met die speer
se vaart wip met die haarveer

se spanning hoepel
soepel

onder die leeu majesteitlik veilig
en gevrees pragtig
onder sy gewig

vouknakval
die springbok met 'n klapknal

3. To understand the poem specific physical characteristics and traits of the springbok must be taken into account, such as the following: "The springbok (Afrikaans and Dutch: *spring* = jump; *bok* = antelope, deer or goat (*Antidorcas marsupialis*) is a small brown and white gazelle that stands about 75 cm high... The Latin name *marsupialis* derives from a pocket-like skin flap which extends along the middle of the back on to the tail. The springbok can lift this flap, which makes the white hairs underneath stand up in a conspicuous 'fan' and emit with a sweet floral odour" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Springbok_Antelope). Also relevant to the poem is the practice of "pronking" which can be described as follows:

Springbok often go into bouts of repeated high leaps (up to 2.5m — 8 feet) into the air in a practice known as 'pronking' (Afrikaans: *pronk* = to show off) or 'stotting'. This is particularly dangerous as a result of their comically big horns. While pronking, the Springbok leaps back into the air as soon as it comes down, with its back bowed and the white fan lifted. While the exact cause of this behaviour is unknown, springboks exhibit this activity when they are nervous or otherwise excited. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Springbok_Antelope#Pronking).

The word *pronk* in the original poem is translated with *prances* to capture the idea of showing off, but also because *pronks* does not seem to fit in aesthetically and neither does *stotts*.

breek hy die bene en rug en maak prooi
 van elegansie wat argeloos mooi
 is lê en spartel
 voor die gewelddadige mooi wat aanskoulik martel

(From: *Jukstaposisie*, 1982: 12)

T.T. Cloete

Spectacular I

from the glittering thin horns and the face
 pointed and refined out over the lightly arched back
 to the tufty tail tapered drawn

up down the cristalline fragility
 of the legs prances switch-alight

the springbok sprints with the speed
 of a spear bounces with the whip

of a hairspring hoop-
 supple

beneath the lion majestically safe
 and fearsomely beautiful
 under its weight

crackscollapses
 the springbok with a clapsnap

legs and back are broken and elegance is turned
 into prey guileless grace

is down and sprawls
 before the violent beauty of a torture spectacular

(From: *Jukstaposisie*, 1982: 12)

In the first two stanzas of the poem the outline of the form of the prancing springbok is described. The words refer to the outline of the animal's body, from the tip of the face, following the line of the horns, the back, the tail and the legs, so that a diagram of the animal can be drawn by reading the words as an instruction. One can also say that a line drawing of the animal comes into existence before the mind's eye.

Though it is evident that there is some form of iconicity in the poem, it is not that easy to determine which forms of iconicity are used. The fact that the poem describes a drawing which can referentially be seen as a diagram, seems to suggest diagrammatic iconicity as a logical possibility but the question is whether diagrammatic iconicity is an adequate description of this rather unique technique. As there is no iconic resemblance between the typographic form of the poem and

the antelope or the lion, and the line drawing does not merely present a relational or metaphoric resemblance either, the poem does not display imagic iconicity in the usual sense of the term. In the first two stanzas of the poem, the words refer to a line and the line drawing refers to the antelope but at the same time the words chosen to describe the line evoke the speed and strength and delicate beauty of the antelope. The question is whether the images which are conjured up by the words can, in addition to the diagrammatic aspect, also be seen as an indirect form of imagic iconicity or even as metaphorical iconicity.

The poet “takes a line for a walk” but it is a controlled and intentional use of a graphic line transcribed into language: the object is described in words which follow the line of a drawing. The words do not refer to an object but to a line that draws the object in a type of deferred referentiality or double reference. Representation of the object is effected not merely through imagery or semantically known words, but by introducing an intermediate process, namely that of a drawing so that the poem itself calls forth a sign or icon of the object. The sign or icon, however, also and at the same time becomes a metaphor on the thematic level of the poem, which is concerned with two contrasting types of beauty found in nature, namely the fragile beauty of the antelope and the beauty of the majestic power of the lion.

The poem has more iconic features in that it is structured in two movements. In the first part of the poem the antelope’s appearance is described and in the second part the lion’s powerful attack. The description of the lion is, moreover, done not through the use of line, but in terms of weight, which is iconic of the idea of volume and power. The contrast and relation between the two animals structurally hinges on the drama of the attack: the springbok is ironically described as “safe” under the mighty lion, but it is also a frightening position. When the springbok is killed, it literally “breaks” with a snapping sound, and here the poem uses words which are onomatopoeic so that one can speak of acoustic imagic iconicity. The word “vouknakval” which I translated with “crackscollapses” imitates the sounds of breaking in the repetitive [k]- and [a]-sounds (in the English translation the [k]- and [æ]-sounds also fit into the sound pattern), but it is also an innovative compound consisting of three verbs literally meaning “fold” and “bend” (in the sense of break) and “fall”, evoking the consecutive and intensifying stages of the springbok’s fall when the lion jumps on its back. If the action were to be replayed in slow motion what one would see, is that the antelope first seems to fold, then it breaks and then it sinks down. The fact that the process of falling and breaking is described in one word suggests and is iconic of the fact that the kill is executed within a split second.

“Vouknakval” or “crackscollapses” not only imitates the sound of the kill and not only evokes the visual picture of the death of the antelope, but is also

used on its own in a line. Thus the drama of the violent death is foregrounded by typographically isolating “the event”. Moreover the fact that the word “vouknakval”/“crackscollapses” stands on its own in a short line, creates a visual dent in the typographic structure of the poem and this “bending inwards” of the concrete structure of the poem iconically imitates the collapsing movement of the antelope.

It should furthermore be kept in mind that the poem is from the volume *Jukstaposisie (Juxtaposition)* in which the theme of opposing elements or juxtaposed forces recurs constantly. In the concluding lines of the poem two types of beauty are indeed juxtaposed: the fragile beauty of the antelope whose strength lies in speed and agility, and the majestic beauty of the lion’s impressive power and strength. The implication is that violent natural processes possess a unique form of beauty and that, ironically, violence and beauty are linked and are experienced simultaneously.

To me it seems that one can see these techniques as devices of utmost defamiliarisation, of foregrounding the poetic technique so that the poem metatextually draws attention to itself as an aesthetic object. In the poem there is not only a suggestion of layers of meaning but also of layers of aesthetic processes which defer the attention from the object of reference to the text and redirect the reader to the realisation that the interpretation of the animals and the interpretation of the act of killing is more important than the animals as objects or the killing as such. Moreover, the poem enacts its meaning by becoming in itself a generator and an object of beauty. It is abundantly clear that the iconicity of the poem, the use of techniques which employ or create various forms of iconicity, draws attention to the aesthetic structure of the poem itself and cannot be separated from the semantic aspects of the poem. A reading of the poem will probably create a picture of the beautiful prancing antelope and the majestic beauty of the powerful lion in the mind of the reader, but he will probably also share the poet’s fascination with the magnificence of the cruelty of natural processes as well as with the possibilities of language because the broader thematic context and the poetical specificity of the text are merged into a unified experience. A variety of primary and secondary codes function simultaneously to complicate and extend the meaning of the poem.

Lotman (2000:28) explains the interaction between the primary semantic code of a text and secondary poetic codes as follows:

Tension arises between the original message and the secondary code, and the effect of the tension is the tendency to interpret the semantic elements of the text as if they were included in the supplementary syntagmatic construction and have thereby acquired new relationary meanings from this interaction. However, although the secondary code aims to liberate the primary signifying elements from their normal semantic values, this does not happen. The normal semantic values remain but secondary meanings are imposed on them.

This is indeed what happens in Cloete's poem: the various iconic techniques and codes adds layers of meaning without obliterating the meanings generated by the primary linguistic code.

5. Transcriptions of Dante

In discussing the next two poems the focus will be on the third aspect of meaning which is described by Lotman (2000:29) as the "values that arise from the introduction into the message of extra-textual associations, ranging from the most general to the extremely personal". The techniques employed in these poems are partly similar to that of *Skouspel I*, but the extratextual associations are more fully developed as the texts are embedded within broader cultural and intertextual domains. These two poems form part of a series titled "Transcriptions of Dante".

5.1 *Silhouette of Beatrice*

In the first poem the female figure is "drawn" by describing the front and back outline which define the silhouette of her body.

Silhoeët van Beatrice

Dante Par. I: 112–114

Frontaal gaan vanaf die voorkop
die ronding oor in die verfynde wip
van die neuspunt, buig dan trug en weer op
sag in die welwende bolip.

Soos 'n klein watergolf puil
die onderlip wat diep duik
trug na die ken met die klein kuil
en oorgaan in 'n volronde kaaklyn. 'n Kruik

is die hals. Daarvandaan langsaam
gaan die bors fyn uittas na die tuit
en golf na die buikstootjie trug geskaam.
Die lyn loop in die lang bobeen uit

in 'n effe boog wat stadig gestrek plooi
tot die sagte knieronding, terug
buig en oorgaan in die effense skeenboog, afglooi
af aarde toe tot in die ronde voetbrug.

Dit is soos die frontlyn golwend afstrek.

Agter van bo na onder
loop die ronde skedel af na die dun nek
en is daar 'n soepel wonder

van konvekse skouers, die rug se konkawe krul
af deur die vlesige boude, die dye en kuite se swel.
... Tussen die baie dwalinge só vervul
bewaar sy die getroetelde model

van die kurwe, die diep ingebore istinto
wat neig in die ronding van die appel
of die haai en die leeu of die koedoe
se grasie en in haar entelegiese sublieme lynwil.

(From: *Idiolek*, 1986: 51)

Silhouette of Beatrice

Dante Par. I: 112-114

Frontally from the forehead
the curve slips into the refined tilt
of the tip of the nose, turns back and up again
softly into the arching upper lip.

With a wavelet's swell
the lower lip dives deeply
back to the dimpled chin
and the rounded jaw. An urn

is the throat. Languidly from there
the chest reaches out to the delicate tip
and turns inward over the belly, alluring and shy.
The line sweeps down the long thigh

in a gentle curve that slowly stretches and folds
into the soft orb of the knee, moves
back and becomes the elongated shin, sloping
earthwards in the arched bridge of the foot.

That is how the front line curves downwards.
From above the rounded skull behind
the line runs into the slender neck
and becomes a supple miracle

of convex shoulders and concave back, curling
down over fleshy buttocks, swelling thighs and calves.
... In these straying lines, in this fulfillment,
is preserved the treasured mould

of the curve, the deep inherent *istinto*
of the rounded inclination in the grace
of the apple or the shark and the lion or the kudu
and in her sublimely entelechic line.

(From: *Idiolek*, 1986:51)

Once again the words of the poem describe the line that draws the figure so that the poem refers to both the drawing and to the female form as such. The words act in more than one capacity and establish a doubled referentiality irrespective of whether the process is perceived as simultaneous or consecutive. The poem accentuates the beauty of the female form and it becomes clear that beauty as such is the theme of the poem semantically as well as technically or structurally. What is encountered here is referentiality at second or third remove or even an echoing referentiality, which becomes a multilayered metaphor. The technique draws attention to the text itself and is an indication that the text is concerned with creating beauty or even with the aesthetic as a category: the text enacts the creation of beauty, it unfolds as a process of creating and becoming an aesthetic object in itself. Therefore the thematic, the structural and the textual processes of signification and communication are all images of the same object or idea, namely the aesthetic rendering of beauty. As form and meaning coincide the poem is clearly iconic, but the meaning is complicated further by intertextual references.

The most striking feature of the female figure in the poem, is the rounded form or the curved appearance of all the body parts. The words chosen to describe the line that traces the silhouette of the female figure emphasise curves and rounded shapes. In the last few lines the poem then concludes that the curve is indeed the basic shape or modelling principle, the innate characteristic of a variety of unlikely figures such as the female body, an apple or a shark, a lion or a kudu. The poem also suggests that there is an archetypal wisdom or innate inclination in the fact that things seem to tend towards roundness because it uses the word “entelegic” which refers to an intuitive ability of living things to develop into a specific form or type, to become what they potentially are.

The meaning of the poem becomes more complex and gives an indication of its surplus meanings if the reference to Dante’s *Paradiso* is taken into account. The title of the series refers to Dante and the title of the poem contains the name of Beatrice, the idealised woman of Dante’s poetry. It is known that in mediaeval literature women had a very specific and prominent position (Ferrante 1975: 1). Women were not depicted as ordinary people of flesh and blood but rather as symbols or aspects of the philosophical and psychological issues which men had to contend with (Ward 1998: 6). By resisting temptations and surmounting problems man could become united with his idealised beloved and this would eventually enable him to be in touch with himself and his world. In some late mediaeval texts

the personal and social aspirations of the male hero were replaced by a religious quest, but in lyrical and mystical texts the woman would remain to be a symbol of goodness, acting as mediator between God and man. The ultimate ideal was not to become united with the beloved woman, but to be united with God through the mediation of the woman (Ward 1998: 7–8).

In the first Canto of Dante's *Paradiso* Dante's journey to heaven is described. He is accompanied by Beatrice and she is the one who indicates to him what to do. She looks into the sun and the spheres of heaven and when he follows her example his soul is transformed and they soar upwards. When Dante asks Beatrice how it is possible for him to ascend despite his heavy body, she explains that all things in creation are linked and that this orderliness is actually the likeness to God. All things furthermore incline towards their source: they repeat the shape and form of their source but the movement of their inclination is also curved. The implication is that Dante can do everything she does and can become part of the totality of creation, sharing the characteristics of all creation.

Although the poem refers to Canto I, lines 112–114 from Dante's *Paradiso*, I quote the preceding stanzas as well to indicate the recurrence of the idea of the instinctual inclination of all things to reflect the shape of their source (Alighieri 1933: 9).⁴

- 103 ...“All things whatsoever observe
a mutual order; and this form
that maketh the universe like unto God.
- 106 Herein the exalted creatures trace
the impress of their Eternal Worth; which is the goal
whereto was made the norm now spoken of.
- 109 In the order of which I speak
all things incline, by diverse lots,
more near and less unto their principle;
- 112 wherefore they move to diverse ports
o'er the great sea of being, and each
one with instinct given it to bear it on.

Cloete uses two exceptional words in the poem, *istinto* and *entelechic*. *Istinto* is simply the Italian word for instinct which refers to the inborn and innate inclination of all things, but the fact that the Italian word is used strengthens the association with Dante's *Paradiso*. Read in the context of Dante's poem, the word in Cloete's poem activates the association that all created things have the ability and

4. For the quotations the translation of P.H. Wicksteed in Alighieri(1933) is used.

inclination to strive towards their source and to reflect the most basic principle of its creator. *Entelechic*⁵ is derived from a Greek word which is used to indicate the natural knowledge of natural things. The word can be used with reference to the ability of plants and animals to become what they are intended to be, i.e. a sunflower knows that it has to be a sunflower and that it has to follow the sun, and an insect “knows” that it has to have so many spots on its little wings. Entelechy is the instinctual inborn knowledge of a physical nature and can be regarded as the equivalent of human intelligence or psychological inclination in the world of natural things.

In this poem thematic content and poetic technique once again merge to underscore the same set of meanings. Not only is the female form as such a thing of beauty that can be rendered and represented lovingly and with admiration in a drawing, but the idealised female beauty, the woman as the eternal Beatrice, is also a mediating force between man and God. The flowing line which describes the profile of the woman from head to toe, suggests movement and curvature, but to the poet it also becomes iconic of the link between heaven and earth. The ideas of Dante are adapted for use in Cloete’s poem in the suggestion that the natural inclination of all things, beautiful women as well as animals and plants, is to resemble their Maker and the basic principles of roundness and movement in his creation. The first lines of the *Paradiso* of Dante refers to God as the force that effects movement and in the passage from which the quotation is taken, there are many references to the spheres of the heavens and wheels, to the endless variety of rounded forms which seem to be so prominent in all earthly and heavenly things. The curving line described by the poem, is thus not only a line drawing of something else, but an exceptionally effective representation of the mystical principle of the curve and the moving line itself.

In the poem the multivalence of the iconic and metaphoric structure creates a chain of consecutive meanings (which are of course functioning simultaneously when the poem is read): the words in the poem refer to a line, the line describes a female figure, the figure becomes Beatrice, the eternal idealised woman, who can be seen as the link between heaven and earth but who, in her rounded forms, also represents an eternal principle of creation. The physical attraction of the female figure which can arouse desire is furthermore subtly suggested by the use of phrases like “trug geskaam”, translated with “alluring and shy” and “dwalings”, translated with “straying lines”. The connection of the earthly aspects of humans

5. The Oxford Dictionary defines entelechy as follows: “In Aristotle’s use: The realization or complete expression of some function; the condition in which a potentiality has become an actuality” (<http://dictionary.oed.com/>).

such as physical and erotic attraction and the aspiration to be pure and heavenly suggests that there is an inseparable connection between beauty and (physical) love as well as between earthly and heavenly love. Though Beatrice as the unattainable and almost holy woman, associated with purity and feminine shyness, is the model for the woman in Cloete's poem and though these characteristics enhance her attraction, there is an undeniable suggestion of an underlying potential of abandon in the figure Cloete describes. Once again the division between heaven and earth is relativised. The holistic view of human experience suggests that there is an element of divinity in earthly and bodily attraction and love just as there is a human aspect in the perfection of idealised divine, spiritual or heavenly love.

Roundedness or the curve, however, apart from Dante's use and representation thereof as the principle of the God of Creation according to Christian principles, furthermore has many other associations and meanings, which allow the poem to resonate in an ever widening cultural context.

The circle, or any rounded shape or form, is regarded as a very strong visual force. In art training students are taught that a circle will always catch the eye and will probably dominate a painting or drawing. In a broader cultural sense roundness is also very prominent and carries multiple meanings. Gaston Bachelard concludes his book *The Poetics of Space* (1969) with a chapter "The Phenomenology of Roundness" in which he argues that roundness is a basic principle of life. He quotes from the theologian Karl Jaspers who wrote in *Von der Wahrheit* "Jedes Dasein scheint in sich rund", but he also refers to the painter Vincent van Gogh who wrote "Life is probably round" and to the poet Joë Bousquet's statement: "He had been told that life was beautiful. No! Life is round". Bachelard then argues that these images cannot be justified by perception nor are they mere metaphors. He describes the rounded shape as metapsychological, as "an instrument that will allow us to recognize the primitivity of certain images of being" (Bachelard 1969: 233–234).

Bachelard (1969: 240) concludes his argument by saying that "the imagination of round being follows its own law: ... The world is round around the round being". The rounded form is to Bachelard an image that "illustrates the permanence of being", it is part of what he calls "concrete metaphysics" (Bachelard 1969: 241). Cloete appropriates the universal idea of roundness and improvises on the different meanings and associations which it calls forth so that the general knowledge and understanding of the importance of roundness form a broad context for the notion that he puts forward in the poem.

The red photograph of Marilyn Monroe

The next poem in the series “Transcriptions of Dante” is an ekphrastic poem about Marilyn Monroe in one of the red photographs taken by Tom Kelley in 1949.⁶

T.T. Cloete

II mooi marilyn monroe foto in rooi

(Foto van Tom Kelly, Los Angeles, 1949)

Dante

Par. 118–120

Ne le sue braccia mi pareva vedere una
persona dormire nuda, salvo che
involta mi pareva in uno drappo san
guigno leggermente ...

Vita nuova

sy lê diagonaal
op 'n plooi
op plooi fluweelrooi
kleed somaties geniaal

haar huid kyk
het van rosig tot sag
blosend gesproet soos die vag
van 'n abessynse kat diep tyk

sy is gemoduleerde lug
wynrooi sag golwend asof
van diep binne uitgepof
holrug asof sy elasties dans of ekstasies vlug

die lewende omtrek
tref die nofret
met haar silhoeët
fundamenteel perfek

'n fenomeen
liefderyk
deur 'n lenige volmaakte vinger gestryk
skrandel van skedel tot skeen

(From: *Idiolek*, 1986:53)

6. Though Cloete uses the spelling Kelly, other sources use Kelley.

red photo lovely marilyn monroe

(Photograph by Tom Kelly, Los Angeles, 1949)

*Dante**Par. I: 118–120*

Ne le sue braccia pareva vedere una
 persona dormire nuda, slavo che
 involta mi pareva in uno drappo san
 guigno leggermente ...

Vita nuova

she lies diagonally
 on a crease
 on creased velvet red
 somatically clothed in genius

her skin shaded
 in tints of rose to a soft
 blush to freckles delicately deep teak
 like the fur of an abyssinian cat

she is modelled air
 wine red gently curved as if
 puffed up from deep inside
 arched back as if in elastic dance or in ecstatic flight

the living circumference
 touches this nofret
 with her silhouette
 fundamentally perfect

a phenomenon
 tenderly
 carressed by a perfect lissome finger
 into genius from skull to shin

(From: *Idiolek*, 1986: 53)

This poem does not describe a line or drawing like the previous ones but nevertheless employs the same terminology of shape and form. Marilyn Monroe is pictured as she is positioned diagonally on the creased velvet, a description which can be read in terms of line. The rounded body is described as modelled air, of which the circumference is perfect. The poem suggests that this young woman has been “stroked” or “caressed” into beauty by a finger or hand which can create perfection or which is capable of creating sublime beauty. Beauty is depicted as a form of physical intelligence and this bodily form is so perfect that it can be likened to

the geniality of a wonderful mind. In the poem as a whole form and structure and beauty and their interrelatedness are emphasised.

The poem also refers the reader to Dante's *Paradiso*, in this case to Canto I, lines 118–120 (Alighieri 1933, 9):

Nor only the creatures that lack intelligence
doth this bow shoot, but those
that have both intellect and love.

From the context of this quotation it becomes clear that the bow refers to providence, to the force that creates and directs its creation. This force is the source of all movement and life and directs things to their destinations. Dante suggests that people though they are intelligent creatures are also driven by instinct in the sense that they obey the rules of innate and inborn inclination. The movement with which things are directed or “launched into life” is compared by Dante to the flight of arrows from a bow which perform a curved movement.

The second motto of the poem comes from Dante's *Vita Nuova* 4.45. In this scene of the *Vita Nuova* Dante has a vision of a terrible lordlike figure which appears in his room in a flame-coloured cloud: “In his arms I saw a woman sleeping, naked apart from a blood-coloured cloth lightly wrapped around her” (Alighieri 1964:4.45). This woman is recognised as the lady of the salutation whom Dante has greeted the day before.

It seems paradoxical that Marilyn Monroe is likened to Dante's Beatrice in Cloete's poem. Monroe became famous as a sex symbol and the story of the red photographs can be found on numerous websites and other books on Monroe. The photograph, one of a series of 5, had been taken by Tom Kelley before Monroe became famous. Kelley took pity on her and used her as model because he knew she needed money. He only used the photographs a few years later when he was asked to contribute photographs for the calendars which were to be displayed in garages all over America (Monroe 2007).

The incongruity of the comparison of Monroe and Beatrice in Cloete's poem begs closer consideration. It is clear that the poet presents the reader with his interpretation of the red photo which *he* links to Beatrice in Dante's vision. There are some similarities between the two women in the two texts but the resemblances are at the same time used and deconstructed. Both women are associated with a red cloth. Monroe lies on a creased red velvet cloth of which the erotic connotation is evident and Beatrice is wrapped in a bloodred cloth. If the passage from which the quotation comes, is read in its entirety it becomes clear Beatrice is carried

by a heavenly figure who identifies himself to Dante by saying “I am thy Lord”.⁷ Beatrice also has to eat a burning heart from the heavenly figure’s hand which is reminiscent of a sacrifice. Dante writes within the iconography of mediaeval Christianity and as such this woman can be seen as a symbol of Christ, the more so because she acts as a mediator and a saviour.

In Cloete’s poem Monroe is described as possessing perfect beauty, she seems to be “modelled air” and the poem emphasises that she has been created by a God of perfection who has lovingly endowed her with a sublime physique. Although an initial interpretation of the photograph would most certainly go in the direction of the erotic and even mildly pornographic, Cloete’s poem deconstructs such a reading of the photo. He replaces this superficial interpretation with his own by suggesting and emphasising that such a perfect specimen must have been created by a loving hand and this loving creator is associated with the lordlike figure in the *Vita Nuova*. In this way Monroe’s body is spiritualised and the poem undermines the almost cultlike adoration and consequent reduction of Monroe and her body as sex symbols. Her beauty was created as perfection and as such it manifests geniality as the poet regards physical perfection as a form of bodily or somatic intelligence. In earthly things, such as the beauty of the female body, God reveals himself as an omnipotent Creator of perfection, and earthly things not only attest to his greatness but also contain a divine aspect in themselves. Also, heavenly revelations are available to be experienced by man and the implication is that heaven and earth do not exist as separate entities or places but form part of one creation or cosmos.

7. A recent translation of the passage from the *Vita Nuova* in modern English can be found on the internet: *...And betaking me to the loneliness of mine own room, I fell to thinking of this most courteous lady, thinking of whom I was overtaken by a pleasant slumber, wherein a marvelous vision was presented to me: for there appeared to be in my room a mist of the colour of fire, within the which I discerned the figure of a Lord of terrible aspect to such as should gaze upon him, but who seemed there-withal to rejoice inwardly that it was a marvel to see. Speaking he said many things, among the which I could understand but few; and of these, this: “I am thy Lord”. In his arms it seemed to me that a person was sleeping, covered only with a crimson cloth; upon whom looking very attentively, I knew that it was the Lady of the Salutation, who had deigned the day before to salute me. And he who held her held also in his hand a thing that was burning in flames, and he said to me “Behold thy heart”. But when he had remained with me a little while, I thought that he set himself to awaken her that slept; after the which he made her to eat that thing which flamed in his hand; and she ate as one fearing* (Anon. 2008). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Vita_Nuova.

6. Form and function as beauty

When a reader considers these three poems it becomes clear that they are not only highly structured but are also thematically concerned with structure and form and the meaning of form. There is the underlying idea that form is beauty. The poems are not only about beauty as such but also about the relation between form and beauty. This idea is enforced by the concluding poem in the series “Transcriptions of Dante” [Idiolek:33] in which Cloete writes about ugly and funny looking pigeons. This poem, “columbae”, describes a variety of pigeons, but none of them are beautiful or good-looking. Some are heavy-chested and some have warts around their eyes. Some have funny long necks and others have crests which make it impossible for them to fly. At first sight the poem differs greatly from the two preceding poems (“Silhouette of Beatrice” and “red photo lovely marilyn monroe”) with which it is grouped. But a closer look shows how closely the arguments in the poems are linked.

The poem concludes with the idea that all forms have been created equal and it becomes clear that in this poem, like in the previous two poems the poet is investigating the shape, form, and structure of things as well as the meaning of form and structure. He uses the word Form repeatedly in “columbae” and it is often written with capital F, suggesting that creation is actually the process of formation in the sense that God endows form to things and people. The suggestion is that even the misshapen and odd-looking birds are pleasing to their c/Creator. Form as such is important, it is inevitable and essential to life even though it is not necessarily functional. The odd pigeons possess form and their forms were created intentionally.

It almost seems as if the poet is obsessed with form, whether it has to do with the curve or the circle as the ultimate form, or with perfection of human form or with the meaning of odd shapes and forms. The question can be asked why this poet is so intensely interested in form and beauty. It is true that in Cloete’s oeuvre as a whole form and poetic technique are exploited as integral and organic aspects of poetic significance and meaning, but apart from the poetical explanation, the fact that the poet is physically handicapped might also add to his concern with form and structure.⁸

8. The poet T.T. Cloete is handicapped. He contracted polio as a young man and suffers from a curvature of the spine which makes movement difficult and even painful. In his oeuvre as a whole he often concerns himself with questions about the functionality and beauty of things and of people. The acute awareness of beauty and physical strength can be interpreted in relation to the perceived lack thereof for the poet. Cloete explores this theme in poems about the physical and mental attributes of other poets and artists who were not attractive and who were handicapped, like Saint-Saens, Beethoven, Toulouse-Lautrec, and even Vivaldi who was an unsuccessful priest but a wonderful composer.

The poem, “columbae”, about ugly pigeons, is therefore an inevitable conclusion to the argument developed in the other poems discussed in this article. For the poet all shapes and sizes, all forms reflect the ultimate Form of their Creator and are therefore good and pleasing. The poet puts forward the idea that living creatures are intended to be the way they are and from the most humble to the most perfect are all regarded with a loving eye.

7. Conclusion

The poems discussed here not only explore the issue of form thematically but by experimenting with various structural techniques, the poems become iconic in various ways. In the end the idea is put forward that form and meaning and beauty cannot be separated and that beauty is much more complex than that which is pleasing to the eye. Form and beauty have to do with the omnipotence of the creator, whether this is a metaphysical c/Creator or the poet as creator. Odd pigeons please their c/Creator and in a similar way all poems are not perfect, but they are still regarded with fondness by the poet, who is their creator. In reflecting upon form and structure, these poems iconically experiment with form by foregrounding the structuring and formal aspects of poetic language. The iconicity of the poems investigate and test the possibilities and even the limits of form in language while adding surplus meanings to the semantic content. The iconicity in these poems becomes a form of self-similarity which transcends the distinctive beauty of the objects described in the poems and becomes an enactment of beauty in a philosophic sense.

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Iconicity and naming in E. E. Cummings's poetry

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Moving on from a visual-iconic emphasis in the study of the i-o dance in E. E. Cummings's poetry (Terblanche and Webster 2007), this chapter shifts the focus to a sound-symbolizing element of that dance, in tandem with its iconic features. Reading Cummings's poems "anyone lived in a pretty how town" and "my father moved through dooms of love" among others, the chapter shows how Cummings uses sounds such as [ʌɪ] and [əʊ] to intimate a movement from isolation, individuality, and "lightness" into a movement of integration, deeper selfhood, and greater resonance and reverberation in the natural world. This is a complex poetic example of what Brent Berlin terms size-sound symbolism. Based on this finding, the chapter finds further that arbitrariness in Cummings (such as isolating the lower case "i") serves to enhance motivation (such as miming dynamic integration within a larger "o"-world of being). Evidently, this further involves a certain inseparability of what Max Nänny terms imagic and diagrammatic forms of iconicity: "i" mimes smallness, uprightness, and the joy of a dot jumping out imagically, while this goes on to indicate entrance into a sense of movement, growth, and being (as embodied not only in "O" but also in the semiotic movement "into" it) — a movement which is in the nature of diagrammatic iconicity. The chapter concludes that arbitrariness and motivation end up in loops of enhancement in the case of Cummings, contrary to the current stock response that language is only or nearly only arbitrary.

1. Introduction

The American modernist poet E. E. Cummings (1894–1962) strategically distributes lower case "i"s and lower- or upper case "o"s throughout his poetic project. He uses this i-o dance mainly to depict active wholeness of the relationship between lover and beloved on the one hand, and dynamic integrity of natural being on the other.

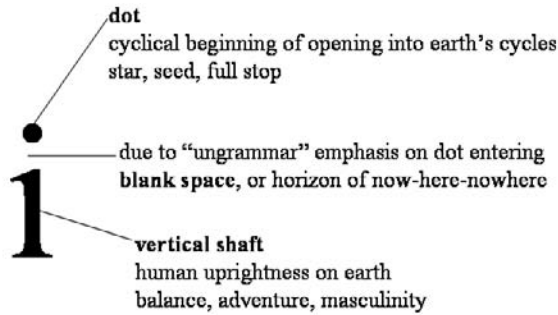
A working definition of the i-o dance is that it involves a complex set of semi-otic tensions and interactions that centre on lower case “i” and its companion, “o”/ “O,” on various levels of Cummings’s poetry. This dance carries meaning and context in Cummings not only on the visual level, but also on the acoustic level (Terblanche and Webster 2007: 158).

The chapter to follow here shows that the acoustic element is worthy of further examination in tandem with iconic elements. To this end, it focuses mainly on apparently “weaker” poems of iconicity in Cummings such as “anyone lived in a pretty how town” and “my father moved through dooms of love,” as found in his 1940 volume *50 Poems*. Isolating the sound patterns somewhat at least for a moment, the chapter hopes to offer a more detailed look at how these patterns work with iconicity.

Recent studies in naming and size-sound symbolism such as those found in *Nature Knowledge: Ethnoscience, Cognition, and Utility* edited by Glauco Sanga and Gherardo Ortalli (2004) to my mind suggest ways in which one could come to grips on a fruitful basis with the acoustics of the highly iconic i-o pair in Cummings. In general, studies in iconicity as well as these studies in naming focus respectably on motivated language in the face of the currently predominant premises that language is mainly or even only arbitrary. Of course, one has a deep-seated intuition that one’s use of language entwines itself thoroughly with one’s world and surroundings, including concrete things and natural changes in that world, and studies of motivation in language allow continued responsiveness to this important intuition. As a part of this broader concern, this chapter will ask whether iconicity and naming can be cross-stitched advantageously in some way or another. The chapter aims to demonstrate that and how they work together in Cummings’s poetry. It further aims to find against this background that iconicity and naming inform each other in a suggestive, fresh, and creative manner in Cummings. In conclusion it considers the startling possibility, based on these findings, that arbitrariness and motivation do not merely co-exist as rival categories of language, but that they serve to enhance each other interactively.

2. Annotations of Cummings’s i-o Dance

Figure 1 is a diagram that presents some of the contexts that the sign “i” gathers and distributes in Cummings’s poems, and its isolation as a diagram here helps to clarify things only to the extent that one sees it as part of its contexts. The same is true of the other figures to follow in this argument. In this way, Figure 1 offers an annotated depiction of the lower case persona in Cummings’s poetry: it illustrates the various dynamic connotations of context that this little figure or ideogram



lower case "ungrammar"
transgression or overcoming of boundaries, humility or "smallness,"
active participation and creative seeing of being

Figure 1. Annotated "i" — the dynamic contexts of Cummings's poetic persona

generates in reading Cummings carefully over time. With a dot jumping out from its vertical shaft it is an economical illustration of masculinity. On a larger scale the uprightness of the figure embodies the uprightness and balance of the human adventure of being on earth: it is in this sense a micro-ideogram. On a larger scale still it depicts unity and singularity within the now-here-nowhere of which blank space is iconic in Cummings. The cyclical, seed-like nature of the dot enacts the beginning of entering larger natural cycles as well as dynamism, inclusion, openness, and completeness. On occasion, it mimes visually a brightening star against the increasing twilight with which the selfhood of the speaker merges utterly and crisply, as found in the air poem in particular (Terblanche and Webster 2007: 162). A brief, additional example may serve to illustrate the same point from a fresh angle — consider the poem "i!blac," as found at the onset of the same volume, *50 Poems* (1940):

i!blac
k
agains
t

(whi)

te sky
?t
rees which
h fr

om droppe

d

,
 le
 af

 a::go

 e
 s wh
 lrl
 n

 .g

(Cummings, 1994:487)

Cummings breaks down (and breaks open) these English words to convey the gravitational event of the leaf falling, as in the case of his similar, later, much-read leaf poem (see Terblanche and Webster 2007: 167). Throughout his oeuvre, Cummings's "i-o dance" creates the expectation for his reader that "i" will centre predominantly on human awareness, while "o" will centre on the earthy process which completes that awareness. Given this, it is informative to see that "o" signs in lines 10 and 15 of this "l!blac" poem associate themselves in particular with the cyclical process of earth's changing seasons, and the resultant fall of a leaf: the sign "om" suggests the eternal bliss that goes along with a deep recognition of earth's cycles — it is suggestive of the sounds "aum" (as found in Zen meditation) and "omega" (as found in Christian belief). The two "p"s next to the "o" of the sign "droppe" neatly, visually, imagically suggest the downwardness of this deeper, fuller, o-like process by means of their long feet that dip below the reader's literal horizon of reading. The sign "droppe" further suggests, in line with the sense of its gravity and direction, the notion of rain drops. The third, final "o" in the poem — a third or "threeness" which shows a familiarly careful Cummingsian arrangement of twos that dissolve into a third position of one — again has to do with the process of earth's cycles and its falling leaf, as found in the verb "goes" which describes the energy of the event, especially when one considers that the signs "e/ s" spell an original form of the verb "is". And the ungrammatical abundance of punctuation marks which precedes the sign "go" — a colon and then a semicolon — does not only underscore a movement from relative stasis (colon) to greater flexibility and less finality (semicolon). It also attracts attention to an equivalent event at the "end" of the poem when another "g" is preceded by another punctuation mark, namely a full stop of the sign ".g" — which signifies that the process continues beyond all static finalities of what one can say about it. So that the "g" at the "end" may well signify the notion of soil or ground, *under* which the leaf will continue its participation in nature's cycles of decay and new life, beautifully indicated by the second, lower little circle of the sign "g" *after* the full stop.

One would further expect in terms of the i-o dance that the aesthetically pleasing "i"s of the third last line should be meaningful as icons of human participation in the earth-process. The sign "IrlI" which is part of the decodable word "whirling," in this manner marks the recognition that the poetic voice has been moved to whirl along, so to speak, while two separate "I"s within his self are united as a result of the movement into the single, visually-central, homo-iconic sign "I" which is at once a flexible consonant and the very number "1". Homo-iconic: that is, similar in appearance to "I" on several levels such as verticality. Acceptance of earth's cycles, and the poet's participation in those cycles to the point of decay and renewal is thus indicated in this striking poem, and the i-o dance plays a visual role in order to establish the recognition.

It is the desire of this chapter to show in addition that acoustic aspects also play a vital role in this i-o dance, as has been mentioned. The "!blac" poem already illustrates this with its distribution of higher-frequenced sounds that centre on "i" and human participation, while lower-frequency sounds mark depth and fullness reached when the human aspect connects with nature's change — which centres on "o," as has been mentioned. Indeed, Figure 2 (see below) annotates "o" in similar vein to the annotation of "i" in the preceding paragraphs.

Evidently, this figure has been a long-standing icon in literature that has presented various things ranging from the Globe-theatre to natural cycles, as Max Nänny illustrates comprehensively in his 1999 chapter entitled "Alphabetic Letters as Icons in Literary Texts" (178–195), as found in the first volume of this series entitled *Form Miming Meaning*. In Cummings it serves as an icon of the full moon, entrance, expansion, growth, dynamic completeness, the integrating power of femaleness, the clarity of earth's processes, and especially the now-here-nowhere from which everything continues to emerge and to which it returns.

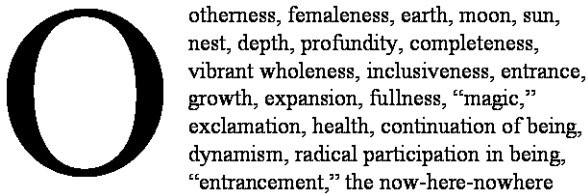


Figure 2. Annotated "O" of Cummings's poetry

Perhaps the most important of the three figures here, Figure 3 (below) depicts the dynamic relation between self and other, or subject and being, as embodied in the i-o dance.

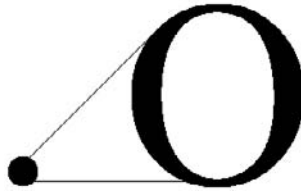


Figure 3. Diagram of dynamic relation between self and other in Cummings's i-o dance

This figure involves a vitally humble relation according to which the subject stays ungrammatically, transgressively close to *humus* in order to be “small” or agile enough to enter profound awareness of inclusive natural being. Either the dot of the “i” or the occasional full stop may grow like a seed or open like an eye into a more “entranced” seeing of what it means to be on earth. Put technically, smallness continues to give over into the enormousness of change in natural being — one feels part of the seasons and rhythms of one’s natural being — and the essence of the matter is the very process or change itself. Thus Cummings is about a precision of movement, resonance, and participation in the natural world. How should “tasting touching hearing seeing/ breathing any — lifted from the no/ of all nothing — human merely being/ doubt unimaginable You?” (Cummings, 1994: 663), as one of his sonnets asks: and this You with a capital to which the ungrammatical lower case “i” relates itself with graphic awareness, uprightness, aliveness, joy, and awe is God as embodied in natural movement.

On the level of sound [AI] turns up (Terblanche and Webster 2007: 158). It somehow also sounds more “quick” and “light” than the lower-sounding [əʊ] which curves downward in terms of its acoustic frequencies. It follows that when [AI] gives over to [əʊ] in a poem it could underscore the sense of subjecthood fusing into larger, inclusive being where it finds its innermost, fuller, reverberating, most resonant self. One could say that it is a movement from lightness into awe, in which the two merge maximally to effect a full sense of being, so that awe gives rise paradoxically to upliftment.

That various poems involve a swelling into an “o/ O” from an “i,” its dot, or its full stop, already suggests that this should be the case. For instance, the growth of Jimmy Savo’s dance from a most potent smallness is embodied in Cummings’s Savo poem by a sign such as the following: “!O” (Cummings, 1994: 471) — this juxtaposition of “seed” and “opening” in cyclical forms is a graphic miming of growth, one of Cummings’s special motifs. Throughout his oeuvre, variations can be found on this essential motif and its iconic expression.

Against this background, consider Cummings’s poem entitled “anyone lived in a pretty how town/ with up so floating many bells down” (1994: 515). It tells the story of two unimportant persons who fall in love in a town somewhere. The lover’s name is “anyone” and his beloved is “noone”. At first glance, this simply indicates

that they are not important “somebodies” in the eyes of the town. But a Cummingsian “logic” with Taoist-American underpinnings is at work here. This entails positively that it takes a condition of utter humility to enjoy the now-here-nowhere of love: the humility means full acceptance of being on earth which allows one to lose one’s ego in the unity of a relationship — one thus turns truly into a “noone” or an “anyone” who can see the world precisely for what it is. One sees it in this precise way in the manner in which one has been built by nature or love to see, so to speak: without interference of all those standing-on-tiptoe exercises that centre on wanting to be “someone”, something of which every human is probably all too aware.

Even in this less charged visual-verbal poem (as compared to other Cummings poems) the poet remains true to his i-o rhythms. In fact, one has to turn to the acoustic level to “see” this. The male sign, “anyone”, carries the higher-frequency [ɪ] sound, and the female sign, “noone,” carries not only a double “o” visually, but also the lower-frequency [əʊ] sound. What combines them aptly in this instance is the stem “one.” In typical Cummingsian semiotic arithmetic, they are therefore two-into-one, and in the case of his poetry this vibrant unity is what makes the difference.

Thus the poet economically suggests a wealth of potentials: for instance, the male is only slightly more specific, he is “any”, while the female is more powerful and non-specific, she is “no” — she is the kind of “one” who is able to combine other ones, and in this positive sense she is more than “anyone”. In the final stanzas their story comes to an open-ended conclusion.

one day anyone died i guess
 (and noone stooped to kiss his face)
 busy folk buried them side by side
 little by little and was by was
 all by all and deep by deep
 and more by more they dream their sleep
 noone and anyone earth by april
 wish by spirit and if by yes.

Women and **men**(both **don**g and **dī**ng)
 summer autumn winter spring
 reaped their sowing and went their came
 sun moon stars rain

(Cummings 1994: 515)

And so the story comes to an apparent closure when “anyone” dies one day and “noone” stoops to kiss his face. In these stanzas, sounds develop suggestively from higher to lower frequencies, and back to higher frequencies again: “little by little and was by was/ all by all and deep by deep/ and more by more they dream their sleep/ noone and anyone earth by april.” This mimes, on the level of sound, the

loving give-and-take between two dynamic principles, male and female, as embodied concretely and vitally in the relationship between the lovers. In this instance, one could say that the iconic presentation of the i-male and o-female resonates in a wave-like sound pattern that reads as follows: [I-I] [D-D] [O:-O:] [i:-i:] [O:-O:] [əu] [ɪ] [ə][eɪ] [ɪ]. The wave of give and return involves rhythmic fluctuation between higher and lower frequencies of which the lower ones carry female contexts and the higher ones male contexts, suggesting union in a to-and-fro, sexually mystical way. That the unity is paradoxical, complex, and in these senses “alive” with meaning is underscored by the further recognition that high-pitched sounds on occasion switch the order to denote deep resonances, for instance in the case of the phrase “deep by deep” ([di:p] by [di:p]).

In some contrast to this, the last stanza must be read as a somewhat satirical conclusion that returns to the rest of the townspersons. Dong-women and ding-men still embody the two principles at work in the world, one masculine and the other female, but they somehow fail to enliven it actively like “anyone” and “noone” do, probably since they are more important “somebodies” who grow up to forget the many bells that are up so floating down. Cummings appears to move perilously close to a split of his own between those who can and those who cannot at this edge of the poem — however, even in this context Cummings ensures that he indicates the more inclusive, integrating powers of femaleness to which one returns as seasons come to pass: the sign “Women” carries a capital to indicate this restoration of balance between the two potentials, and this is a consistent characteristic in Cummings. That capitalized “W” collaborates with the “o” in the word “both” to confirm the restoration. Ultimately, the female principle with its greater integrative powers remains more dynamic and inclusive than anything: the difference at the heart of the poem is not “us” (in love) versus “them” (striving for names), but rather between a stronger form of inclusion and dynamism experienced by the lovers in degree of difference to a weaker form that continues inclusion and dynamism on a more latent, dormant level — to be activated precisely by the lovers.

In the long, dualism-dissolving appraisal of his father entitled “my father moved through dooms of love” a couple of poems onward in the volume, a phrase occurs that seems simple enough at first glance: it says that the father figure “lived his soul” (Cummings, 1994: 521):

— i say though hate were why men breathe —
 because my father lived his soul
love is the whole and more than all

Sharp fluctuation from [ɪ] to [əu] in this phrase suggests, in the Cummings-context discussed here — namely that of the volume with its insistent sound patterns, that of Cummings’s iconic isolations and integrating play of “i” and “o,” and that

of a deep nature-awareness suggested by these signs — that the father gives the definition and warmth of selfhood, presented by the sound [ɪ], to the large, interactive and even “doomful” world of natural being as presented by the sound [əʊ]. Or: the father acts as a magnificent particular outcrop of and participant in the enormous life force, and this is what enables the son to discover and live his soul, too, thus giving rise to Cummings’s direct praise to a father, something that has become rare in modern time (Hollis, 1994:99). The poem subsequently collapses or eases into a dissolving of the final line which states that “love is the whole and more than all” — his father had showed him how inclusiveness and participation work from a masculine perspective. Every specific thing, individual, or element — that is, all — continues to come from and return to the vibrant more-than-all or now-here-nowhere, that is, that which remains elusively more than everything to which it gives rise. Repetition of [əʊ] and [ɔ:] in this line combines with three iconic “o”s to indicate changing completeness through and beyond the dualism of self versus the world of natural being. A couple of poems further still into the volume, one is therefore not surprised to find that an “i” rises “which am/ the sun of whom” (Cummings, 1994: 527). The father’s living soul enables the son’s entering into the larger and paradoxically more self-affirming realms of being, denoted in this instance by the iconic and sound-symbolic word “whom” which, in the context of the volume, rings true with words such as “doom” in its most positive sense, of a life and natural world much larger and more lasting than one’s persona. Still within the same volume, consider the following poem:

one(Floatingly)arrive
 (silent)one by(alive)
 from(into disappear
 and perfectly)nowhere
 vivid anonymous
 mythical guest of Is
 unslowly more who(and
 here who there who)descend
 -ing(mercifully)touch
 deathful earth’s any which
 Weavingly now one by
 wonder(on twilight)they
 come until(over dull
 all nouns)begins a whole
 verbal adventure to
 illimitably Grow

(Cummings, 1994:557)

As is the norm in Cummings, this poem subtly emphasizes the now-here-nowhere that blank space symbolizes, among other things by means of a lack of punctuation or closure as well as a lines-per-stanza pattern that begins with 1, swells out to 4, and returns again into 1. The next “logical number” in this kind of arithmetic is of course 0. The upper case words — “Floatingly” (line 1), “Is” (stanza 3 final line), “Weavingly” (stanza 5 line 1) and “Grow” (final line) — involve two verbal adjectives (so to speak) and a vast verb, “Is,” and their combination create a certain tension of expectations that lapses precisely in the final but lively and open verb “Grow.” Play of homophonic co-incidences involves the fact that the word “wonder” sounds like an extension of the word “one:” that is, the miraculous has to do with the unifying, the integrating, or the singular, and integrity is a kind of fluidly clear unity of seeing and being. The word “anonymous” contains an “us” of being together as another Cummings poem makes clear (1994: 449) by means of fragmentation and recombination: again it is the suggestiveness of increasing unity between speaker and snowflakes falling that matters. Similarly, in Cummings “nowhere” means now and here, since nowhere is where now and here come from and return to, and since it is here and now that nowhere is most apparent — of which snowflakes disappearing in the twilight is here a presenting process.

In virtually every line, moreover, an arrangement of contrasting and combining “i”s and “o”s occur. For instance, the poem intersperses the word “one” with its laden “o” on three occasions (stanzas 1, 2, and 5), just as three “o”s — a threesome that is iconic of wholeness as has been mentioned — come up once more in the end-words “whole,” “to,” and “Grow.” Intriguing in the last line is the arrangement of “i”s and letters “l” or Figures 1: in the fortunate word “illimitably” there are three “i”s that centre visually on two letters “l” or Figures 1 — these two adjacent Figures 1 probably present the two conditions, processes, or participants in being, namely the increasingly aware self on the one hand, and snow falling increasingly in twilight on the other. In other words: three “i”s gravitate towards the two Figures 1, and in the verb “Grow” the centring is complete. Of this the iconic giving over into the cycle of an “o” is as effective as the sound-symbolic giving over from the penultimate syllable [ɪ] into the opening-out, more expansive, and weighty, earthy frequencies of [əʊ].

This kind of linguistic event has been termed size-sound symbolism in various recent and past outputs of the ethno-biologist Brent Berlin. In all instances of naming of which sound-symbolism is part — and as far as I can see, also in iconicity — the sign acts as a much-reduced intuitive reflection of being in the world, thus to paraphrase Berlin for the purpose here (Sanga and Ortalli, 2003: 120). In 22 South American languages, Berlin finds that names “of small birds and fish commonly show high frequency vowel [ɪ] stems, while larger birds and fish are referred to by names made up of low frequency vowels [a] and [u]” (Sanga and

Ortalli 2003: 120). An implication seems to be that intuition interweaves one's language with one's surroundings within a linguistic context that has to do with being on earth, probably from childhood onwards, and it is this intuition that Cummings revitalizes intensely with his poetic i-o manoeuvres in which a smaller-sounding [AI] continues to be revitalized by entering a larger-sounding world of [əʊ], concomitant on the visual level with interactive patterns of the visual "i" and its "o"-companion.

In the process Cummings offers a poetic example of how arbitrariness and motivation work together. To begin with, he heightens the arbitrariness of signs consistently. This includes the ungrammaticality of the lower case "i", fragmentation of familiar words into unfamiliar meanings and relations, and transgressing rules of punctuation. The result is heightened arbitrariness of the signs, since they attract attention to themselves as signifiers. They act as if they are signs with lives of their own in a purely linguistic context. However, this is precisely how they heighten their motivational function. For instance, the lower case "i" makes itself smaller, and it emphasizes its two components of a shaft and a dot, in order to signify a certain humility and readiness to enter a renewed sense of being. Its relation with its companion, "o", also involves foregrounding and hence enhanced arbitrariness, while it has the motivational function of showing that the signs have to do radically with concrete being on a changing earth.

The linguist Mario Alinei has argued in 2003 that motivation plays a vital role in the generation of new words, after which those once-motivational words turn virtually instantly arbitrary with use (Sanga and Ortalli 2003: 114–117). For instance, Alinei says that we use the words "deputy", "compute" and "dispute", without knowing that they used to mean "to think" and, more originally, that they used to mean "to trim (a tree)" (Sanga and Ortalli 2003: 111). Given the findings of this chapter, one may add that it seems that the arbitrary signs nonetheless continue to carry various potential motivational values under the surfaces of their arbitrary wear and tear, and that poets in general, and Cummings in particular, have the ability to regenerate those motivational values.

If, as Alinei says, genesis "is indeed the 'magic' moment, when things reveal their secrets" (Sanga and Ortalli 2003: 116), then in the case of Cummings signs that appear to have turned completely arbitrary re-reveal genesis and secrets. This is where Cummings comes in: he turns one's gaze from stale, hum-drum judgments to an original mode of being that has not ceased to continue. In this "strong" sense, Cummings radically continues to demonstrate with poetry that arbitrariness and motivation may enter cycles of enhancement: the more arbitrary, the more motivated — this is a central and marvellous paradox of his work.

One or two obvious implications of this study in iconicity and naming in Cummings's case should therefore be mentioned, since they are so obvious perhaps that

they may be easy to overlook. First, iconicity and naming work together in language. Second, arbitrary and motivated elements can be dynamically complementary forces in language practice in which a heightening of one leads to a heightening of the other in a kind of re-inforcing loop. Third, language continues its natural purpose: it entwines itself with natural being on earth.

What may appear at first glance as “weaker” forms of the necessary acknowledgement that arbitrariness and motivation do not exclude each other have existed in literary thought all along, of course. Consider that Umberto Eco says in his 1990 book entitled *The Limits of Interpretation* that certain perceptions of “infinite semiosis” amount to a misappropriation of C. S. Peirce’s theory. Given that “infinite semiosis” is a strong form of arbitrariness in which the sign always already continues to slip from signifier to signifier, Eco’s words are particularly compelling here. He quotes Peirce who says that “the idea of meaning is such as to involve some referent to a purpose” (1990: 38), and he continues by saying that a

purpose is, without any shadow of a doubt, and at least in the Peircean framework, connected with something which lies outside language. Maybe it has nothing to do with a transcendental subject, but it has to do with referents, with the external world, and links the idea of interpretation to the idea of interpreting according to a given meaning (1990: 38).

Eco seems to say that “infinite semiosis” never entailed a strong sense of non-referentiality or non-motivation in the first place. Admittedly, his phrase of linkage between sign and external world at first glance appears to be vague and distant: it says the sign “has to do” with given meanings and external things. But there is something deeply playful about Eco’s use of this phrase which allows a second reading of it, with emphasis on the verb “do”: reading it as such brings to mind another potential meaning, a “strong” one in this case, which entails that in doing or acting (in their peculiar manner) signs do indeed establish connections with given meanings and external worlds. That Eco emphasizes the word “do” a couple of paragraphs on within this text (1990: 38), probably underscores this second reading of this important phrase. Consider this: if instructions on a pack can tell one how to cook a meal, then on a deeper or higher level, Cummings’s poems can steer one into a renewed experience of being in nature.

Technically, one could therefore say that Cummings’s poetry has to *do* with the interaction between males and females as well as humans and nature, on both levels of Nanny’s iconicity. Cummings’s sign-doing merges with nature’s motion to which its imagic miming is the essential clue: the poem “grows” to dissolve like snow falling increasingly within increasing twilight — it is an economical miming of natural movement. Consider that one of Cummings’s sonnets would, for example, turn the very word “coin” into a newly motivational sign that denotes

combination of male and female worlds in the diphthong [ɔɪ] (Terblanche and Webster 2007: 158). This kind of poetic action — that is, Cummings's energetic overcoming of the difference between arbitrary linguistic potential on the one hand, and renewed iconic and sound-symbolic linguistic potential on the other — is a large part of what makes his poetry original.

Evidently, this further involves a certain inseparability of what Max Nänny terms imagic and diagrammatic forms of iconicity (2001: 209–210): “i” mimes smallness, uprightness, and the joy of a dot jumping out imagically to enter a sense of movement, growth, and being in nature diagrammatically in tandem with “O”, while this diagrammatically dynamic nature of its iconicity continues to involve further diagrammatic elements such as the notion of a seed or an eye opening, that is, the economical linguistic miming of process. Loops of imagic-diagrammatic iconicity are inseparable from iconic-sound-symbolic loops in Cummings's context of nature-being, and this has to do with a loop in which arbitrariness and motivation serve to enhance each other.

One has to conclude that at least occasionally, but perhaps also on a more generic basis in every sense of the word, arbitrariness is not higher than, more important than, or totally separate from motivation — instead, arbitrariness may exalt our very awareness of motivation, as in the case of Cummings's i-o celebration of being. Since iconicity and naming combine in Cummings to open out into this vital recognition, it seems fair to suggest that further analyses and syntheses at the intersection of the two should be productive, perhaps with a view to other artists or other aspects of linguistic activity, and certainly in continuation and celebration of examining Cummings's poetic legacy.

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Bunyan and the physiognomy of the Wor(l)d

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In the “Apology” that prefaces *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, Bunyan defended himself against those who criticized him, on religious grounds, for the use of lively fictions by pointing out that the Bible itself is full of figurative elements. This is more than just a defence, however, for the Bible, to Bunyan, is actually a manual for reading the world figuratively. There is an iconic relationship between the Book of Books and the Book of Nature; an object found in the world becomes a sign when it is used figuratively in the Bible. Bunyan’s own allegorical fiction serves to point up this relationship and is an example of such a combinatory reading. Christian has to read the faces, names and utterances of the people he meets on his road in order to discover their meaning. In this process, indexical signs, such as a person’s blushing, are discovered to be part of an iconic concept; a case in point is Mercy, whose face, regarded in the mirror of Scripture, makes manifest its divine likeness.

1. Poetry versus piety?

Considering *The Pilgrim’s Progress* in the light of ‘iconicity’ is not simply one of those recipes that are to advance literary scholarship by applying a set of abstract terms to a text. On the contrary, I am quite convinced that the principles on which the semiotic concept of iconicity is based, i.e. similarity and analogy, are to be found in Bunyan’s work itself and actually form the basis of his attitude to language and the representation of speech. In particular, it will be seen that it provides a key to his representation of fictional characters.

This is not a matter of course. Since Coleridge’s frequently quoted remarks on *The Pilgrim’s Progress*¹ it has become quite common to regard its author as a self-divided artist, for

1. See e.g. Sharrock (1965:12–13), Swaim (1993:199), Luxon (1995:159), Davis (2000:217), Davies (2002:4).

in spite of all the writer's attempts to force the allegoric purpose on the Reader's mind by his strange names [...] his piety was baffled by his genius, and the Bunyan of Parnassus had the better of Bunyan of the Conventicle — and with the same illusion as we read any tale known to be fictitious, as a novel, we go on with his characters as real persons who had been nicknamed by their neighbours (Coleridge 1976:53).

Even though Coleridge esteemed Bunyan highly as a theologian and a master of style,² in these remarks he seems to be unable to reconcile “the allegoric purpose” with the “illusion” of “real persons”. The former is associated with “piety” and the latter with “genius”, and somehow they do not come together. Such a view does not encourage any emphasis on the likeness between concept and word, meaning and sign, which has come to be called iconic.

Influential as it has been, however, this reading of *The Pilgrim's Progress* does not quite do justice to Bunyan's text.³ For in *The Pilgrim's Progress* poetry requires piety and vice versa, if poetry is to include the energetic representation of human speech and conversation and, accordingly, of ‘character’, and if piety is to include what Bunyan, in *Grace Abounding*, describes as “trembling under the fear of this, that no word of God could help me” (Bunyan 1998:58, no. 159). For piety, in this sense, is marked by the concern for the meaning and effect of God's message. In order to answer the question which lies at the heart of Bunyan's theology, namely “How can you tell that you are Elected? and what if you should not? how then?” (Bunyan 1998:20, no. 47), it is necessary, in the first place, to be able to “tell” — i.e., to read and interpret the word of God and feel and give evidence to its effect. But if communication and the reading of signs are quintessential for Bunyan's religion,

2. “I know of no book, the Bible excepted, as above all comparison, which I, according to my judgment and experience, could so safely recommend as teaching and enforcing the whole saving truth according to the mind that was in Christ Jesus, as in the *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is, in my conviction, incomparably the best *Summa Theologiae Evangelicae* ever produced by a writer not miraculously inspired. [...] I can find nothing homely in it but a few phrases and single words. The conversation between Faithful and Talkative is a model of unaffected dignity and rhythmical flow” (Coleridge 1976:53).

3. Attempts at reconciling the two have been made, e.g. by Davies (2002). He argues against the critical tradition represented by F. R. Leavis, who did not understand how Bunyan's “damnation-dispensing theology” could be “conducive to a generous creative power”, and suggested setting aside his “allegorical intentions” (Leavis 1967:37, 48; Davies 2002:225). Davies argues against this by pointing out that Bunyan's work need not be saved from theology as it does not advocate a strict predestinarian creed but rather strives to lead its reader into “spiritual comfort” (224; see e.g. the convincing discussion of Ignorance, 239). Davies does not, however, address the question of allegory in relation to Bunyan's representation of the real world.

his poetry is surely not to be separated from it. Coleridge himself, in fact, suggests the perspective in which the connection may be made, as he refers to the “strange names” of Bunyan’s characters which indicate his “allegoric purpose”. But at the same time, seen in the light of “Parnassus”, these very names indicate real people who have been “nicknamed by their neighbours”. Signs and names therefore deserve some closer inspection.

2. God’s Word and human verbal images

Coleridge’s division actually takes up what Bunyan himself, in “The Author’s Apology for his Book” which serves as a preface to the first part of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, addresses as a possible objection to his work. Bunyan, using the device of *prosopopoeia*, has, as it were, members of the Conventicle respond to the inhabitant of Parnassus:

*Well, when I had thus put mine ends together,
I shew’d them others, that I might see whether
They would condemn them, or them justifie:
And some said, let them live; some, let them die:
Some said, John, print it; others said, Not so:
Some said, It might do good; others said, No.* (Bunyan 2003: 4)

It is obvious that the objections raised were concerned with the “style” and “method” of the book, and Bunyan defends himself by pointing out that he who wants to be a fisher of men (Mt 19:1) must engage “*all his Wits*”: “*They must be grop’d for, and be tickled too, / Or they will not be catcht, what e’er you do*” (Bunyan 2003: 5). Poetry must be alluring and attractive if it is to do a service to piety. This argument, pursued along the lines of Horace’s *prodesse et delectare* or rather Sidney’s “delightful teaching” and “teaching delightfulness” — expressions to be found in another “Apology” written in defence of poetry against Puritan objections (Sidney 2002: 87, 113), is countered by objections to “feigning words”. Bunyan, more learned than he may have appeared to his critics, knows that *factio figura veritatis* (Kantorowicz 1957: 306)⁴ and points out that those feigning words may “*Make truth to spangle, and its rayes to shine*”. The critics, however, do not give up and keep harping on those feigned words. “But they want solidness: *Speak man thy mind: / They drown’d the weak; Metaphors make us blind*” (Bunyan 2003: 5).

4. Kantorowicz (1957) quotes Augustine, *De quaestionibus Evangelistarum* II, c. 51, who emphasizes that fiction need not be a lie but may speak truthfully; for otherwise the Lord himself must be called a liar.

Bunyan's wit sparkles quite brightly here as those who object most vehemently to the use of metaphor are made to use three metaphors in the twelve words they speak. To the reader of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the image of weak people being drowned by feigned words or metaphors is particularly ironic, for it points ahead to Christian's nearly being drowned in the Slough of Despond, which, by contrast, does not consist of words but is quite 'real'.

Bunyan, quite tolerantly and patiently, does not leave the objection to answer itself by its own absurdity but responds to it by pointing out that the Book of Books itself is full of "*Types, Shadows and Metaphors*" as well as "*parables*" and "*Dark Figures, Allegories*" (Bunyan 2003: 5–6). To him, this argument clinches the debate, for no right-minded Jew or Christian can object to those devices:

Yet loth
 Will any sober man be to find fault
 With them, lest he be found for to assault
 The highest Wisdom. No, he rather stoops,
 And seeks to find out what by pins and loops,
 By Calves, and Sheep; by Heifers, and by Rams;
 By Birds and Herbs, and by the blood of Lambs;
 God speaketh to him: And happy is he
 That finds the light, and grace that in them be. (Bunyan 2003: 5–6)

In the present context, Bunyan's argument is interesting not just because it serves to defend figurative speech but because it implicitly says something about the nature of metaphor. For in the passage just quoted, a curious fusion of tenor and vehicle or represented and representing sign takes place, as Bunyan describes the sober man's reaction to Biblical metaphor by means of a metaphor: "*No, he rather stoops, / And seeks to find out what by pins and loops, / [...] God speaketh to him.*" The pins and loops "refer to details of the furnishing of the tabernacle" and were interpreted typologically (e.g. as the "ministry of Gods Word fastening" the Church).⁵ But

5. Owens' note in Bunyan 2003: 292, quoting Ainsworth (1639); the reference is to Exod. 26: 4–5 and 27:19; the quotation is to be found in Ainsworth's *Annotations vpon the second booke of Moses, called Exodus* 108–109 (on Exod. 27:19). Johnson (1989) points out that to Bunyan "tenor and vehicle are intrinsically connected, because God has made the world in such a way that these connections exist. In the Bible, word and meaning meet" (p. 123). For the Puritan emphasis on the predominance of words over things in Biblical hermeneutics, see Kaufmann (1966). In fact, the Puritan insistence on the literal meaning of the Bible, as exemplified by John Owen, encourages reading real things allegorically rather than inventing allegories. Referring to Gal. 4:21–26, Owen points out that "[Paul] doth not call the things themselves an allegory, for they had a reality, the story of them was true; but the exposition and application which he makes of the Scripture in that place is allegorical, — that is, what was spoken of one thing he expounds

as Bunyan represents these items, they are not just words (signs referring, in the Peircean definition of metaphor, to other signs; Johansen 2003:383)⁶ but things: the sober (and indeed thrifty) man stoops and picks them up from the ground; he neither ignores them nor throws them away but considers their use and meaning. Thus the iconic relationship is a special one here since there is a congruence or similarity between the Book of Books and the Book of Nature, both giving evidence to the same divine author.⁷ The object has a meaning (becomes emblematic, as it were) when it is found in the world because it is used metaphorically in the Bible. The objection to fiction is that it is not confined to solid reality, and since only such a reality is to be equated with truth, it is dangerous. Bunyan's answer is that fiction and metaphor are not to be separated from reality, for they may show, on the basis of the Bible, that reality is meaningful. Or to put it differently: he defends the kind of fiction which represents a reality that is a sign of truth.

In fact, life itself presents lines which are less easy to read than the lines in Bunyan's fictional "*Dark Figures, Allegories*". This is pointed out in the author's response to his critic: "*Come, let my Carper, to his Life now look, / And find There darker Lines, then in my Book / He findeth any*" (Bunyan 2003:6). The Book of Nature, here considered as the book of human life, is much more difficult to decipher (and more sombre) than the fictional representation of it. Perhaps we are to regard the lines marking the life of the carper as the indexical signs of a sadly querulous temper which he may discover when he looks at himself, but as he only belongs to the prefatory "Apology" and not to the allegory itself, we do not really learn their meaning. Nevertheless, these "darker Lines" already suggest that Bunyan will be very much concerned with the meaning of people's lives, reading them (and this is where Parnassus and Conventicle meet) as signs of the divine will. If Bunyan takes up the tradition of reading the world as a book, the text he reads is

of another, because of their proportion one to another, or the similitude between them" (*An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, quoted by Kaufmann 1966:37). Allegorical interpretation thus amounts to establishing iconic relationships.

6. Johansen refers to Peirce's "rather convoluted" definition of metaphors: "those signs which represent the representative character of a representamen by representing a parallelism in something else, are *metaphors*" (Peirce 1932:227).

7. On the analogy between the Book of Nature and the Bible, see Leimberg (1996:54–86) who, referring to Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*, points out that reading the Book of Nature means discovering the signature of its author and thus approaching the truth which is more directly expressed in the Book of Books (55). Beierwaltes provides insight into the tradition of this concept; in particular the notion of the world as *divina metaphora* which can already be found in Johannes Scotus Eriugena (Beierwaltes 1976:243; for the function of Scripture in this respect see 255).

primarily a book of human intercourse and conversation. There are quite a few objects to be interpreted, such as the burden upon Christian's back, and there are all those meaningful places such as the Slough of Despond or the House Beautiful, but in most cases meaning is to be discovered in persons, and in what these persons say.

This meaning of persons is just as real as the meaning of places and objects. Bunyan's famous account, at the beginning of his "Apology", of how he, when "*writing of the Way / And Race of Saints in this our Gospel-Day, / Fell suddenly into an Allegory / About their Journey*" (Bunyan 2003: 3) does not oppose the real and the allegorical. He does not speak about his representing allegorically the search for (and the knowledge of) God as a "*Way / And Race of Saints*"; he speaks about the "*Way / And Race of Saints*" which are then represented allegorically. The way and race are not an allegory, they are real. The saints are actually on the move, walking through the wilderness of this world, and this actual journey is simultaneously an antitype of Exodus and a spiritual journey to God. The relationship between these levels is an iconic one; in the Peircean sense an iconic image or diagram (Peirce 1955: 104); a metaphor only in so far as there is nothing that is not a sign. In a world in which everything has a figurative, typological, and anagogical meaning, falling into an allegory is the most natural event.

Bunyan's technique has been described as a way of making inner, psychological forces appear as external agents. Thus Dorothy van Ghent maintained with regard to one of the most attractively dangerous characters Christian meets on his road: "Clearly, Mr Worldly Wiseman is inside Christian himself, a counsel of softness in the soul" (30). But I am not sure that such a psychological approach to Bunyan's allegory is the most appropriate one. Whereas, in *Grace Abounding*, the speaker reflects on the process of conversion that is going on in his soul, or whereas, in *The Holy War*, the central location, Mansoul, clearly indicates that the battle is a *psychomachia*, it is the point of *The Pilgrim's Progress* that the natural and in particular the human and social world are to be read and understood by the protagonist. Places such as the Valley of Humiliation or the Valley of the Shadow of Death indeed represent the protagonist's inner state of affliction but they simultaneously indicate external scenes and situations in which he is put to the test of his faith. Mr Worldly Wiseman is not "inside Christian himself" but Christian, a reader, is to learn what he means when he meets him, and to learn by experience what it means to believe him.

Occasionally, there is actually a quite obvious and readable sign, as in the case of the old man met by Faithful, who calls himself Adam the first.

Faith. Why, at first I found my self somewhat inclinable to go with the Man, for I thought he spake very fair; but looking in his forehead as I talked with him, I saw there written, *Put off the old Man with his deeds.*

Chr. And how then?

Faith. Then it came burning hot into my mind, whatever he said, and however he flattered, when he got me home to his House, he would sell me for a Slave. (Bunyan 2003:70)

Faithful might have been more sceptical at once, since Adam the first comes from the Town of Deceit, but even such obvious signals may at times be overlooked. There is also the case of a man whom Hopeful and Christian see carried away by seven devils. Christian does “not perfectly see his face” and therefore does not know for sure whether he is “one *Turn-away* that dwelt in the *Town of Apostacy*”, but then Hopeful sees a piece of writing on his back “with this Inscription, *Wanton Professor, and damnable Apostate*” (Bunyan 2003: 121). This is just a glimpse, a very brief scene, an extreme case: the man exists, as it were, only with regard to this piece of writing, but it is nevertheless an effective one. The very frightfulness of this scene, which makes Christian and Hopeful tremble, prevents us from regarding it ‘merely’ as a metaphor or allegory. If we accept the reality of Christian, even though he is part of a dream, this is a moment of real fear. He has not just been instructed by an invented case; he has read, so to speak, an inscription in the Book of Nature.

This effect is enhanced by Bunyan’s strategy of inserting allegories into the allegory, for example the scenes Christian witnesses in the house of the Interpreter, where he is shown a man “a rising out of bed” who trembles because of the dream he has had, a vision of the day of judgement. By this dream-within-the-dream or allegory-within-the-allegory technique Bunyan furthers his readers’ insight into the allegorical or sign-like quality of life itself and at the same time ensures that Christian and his journey are not just regarded as allegorical constructs but as images of life. Bunyan may have learned this method from Shakespeare, who, by presenting, in the Forest of Arden, the “woeful pageant” of Orlando bearing a character named “Adam” in his arms (2.7), makes us realize, with Jacques, that “all the world’s a stage” while at the same time he ensures that we firmly believe the characters and actions of the play to be part of this very world. In *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, a similar effect is achieved, for example, when Great-heart, in Part II, speaks metaphorically about Mr Fearing: he is asked by Honest why “*such a good Man should be all his days so much in the dark?*” and answers that in God’s orchestra “Some must *Pipe*, and some Must *Weep*: [...] He and his fellows sound the *Sackbut*, whose Notes are more doleful than the Notes of other Musick are” (Bunyan 2003:237). A little later, he adds: “I make thus bold to talk thus Metaphorically, for the ripening of the Wits of young Readers, and because in the Book of the Revelations, the

Saved are compared to a company of Musicians”. I just wrote “he adds”, but who does actually speak here? Does Great-heart, within the story, suddenly address the “young Readers” of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*? Or is it the narrator, the Dreamer, who suddenly takes over the part of Great-heart within his own story? Whatever may be the answer, the momentary fusion of different narrative levels shows their similarity: metaphor is as much a part of reality as reality is part of the allegory.

3. Names and faces

Coleridge, we remember, emphasizes that “we go on with [Bunyan’s] characters as real persons who had been nicknamed by their neighbours”. This is an important observation, as it points to the fact that Bunyan was concerned with the representation of human beings and social intercourse, and not just with personifications of abstract religious, moral, or psychological notions. At the same time it points to a particular function of language in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*: the name is to represent the thing or person not just in a coincidental or conventional but in a telling way; Coleridge’s term “nickname” puts this in a nutshell. Mr Worldly-Wiseman, as many critics have observed, characterizes himself by the way he speaks, beginning with his jovial opening remark to Christian, “How now, good fellow, whither away after this burdened manner?” Bunyan has Mr Worldly-Wiseman deviate from the established use of language by changing the participle into an adjective, for of course it is Christian and not the manner by whom a burden has to be carried.⁸ The grammatical and rhetorical operation can be seen as a case of (diagrammatic) iconicity since it corresponds to a subtle shift of perception or evaluation on Mr Worldly-Wiseman’s part. By turning Christian’s heavy burden into a mere mood or attitude Bunyan lets us know that existential grievances do not have a place in this man’s life. But we also know that such an attitude may be most welcome in a situation when we feel the weight of a burden all too severely. And it must be said in defence of Christian that Mr Worldly-Wiseman does not introduce himself by name; the reader has the advantage over him in this respect. Even though Bunyan shows that he knows all about the morality play and about the realism of comedy in which *sermocinatio* is practised, i.e. “The attribution to an individual of

8. In the *OED*, “burdened, burthened, *ppl. a.*” is, in the 16th and 17th centuries, only documented for the meaning “†a. Imposed as a burden (*obs.*)” The first examples of Bunyan’s use of the word, i.e. “b. Heavily loaded, encumbered, oppressed”, are “1725 POPE *Odyss.* XVII. 413 Constrained to wield..the scythe along the burthened field. 1818 *Parl. Deb.* 1409 The present burdened state of the country”.

language in harmony with his age, birth, country, life, spirit, and behaviour”⁹ Mr Worldly-Wiseman is neither a personification nor a comic stereotype but rather a person who presents a complete image of himself as an individual by the way he speaks.¹⁰

In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, knowing and reflecting on a person's name means knowing about a person. Thus Christian and Hopeful are invited by the “Gentleman-like” Demas to turn out of their way and provide for themselves in his silver-mine. But he blushes when he is asked whether this is a dangerous place and Christian suddenly knows his name, “saying, *Demas*, Thou art an enemy to the right ways of the Lord of this way” (Bunyan 2003: 104). Demas admits that this is his name, whereupon Christian identifies him, probably because of the silver, as the son of Judas. Demas is a biblical name but he is only briefly mentioned in the second epistle to Timothy.¹¹ This is an example of Bunyan making the biblical ground shine through the transparent surface of reality. Moreover, it is one of the aspects of his work which are defended in the “Apology”, for even though Judas and Demas are biblical, Demas as the son of Judas is not. While the Book of Books makes it possible to interpret the Book of Nature, including human life, the two books are by no means identical. Reality can and must be read metaphorically and allegorically because it is used figuratively in the Bible. But once this principle has been established, our reading of the world may even provide us with meanings not expressly mentioned in the Bible. Bunyan uses the Bible quite creatively,¹² for Demas is a person who may be identified by a name which imagi-

9. Sonnino (1968: 168), quoting Erasmus (1963: 33).

10. Cf. van Ghent (1953: 29) and Seed (1980: 81) on characterization through speech in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Davis (2000: 220) develops their approach, considering passages in which “style of speech and theology are at one”. In particular, he tries to identify the “Language of *Canaan*” spoken by those on their way to God (221). An example is the use of the personal pronoun: “Charity comes to recognise that Christian is a true pilgrim, who forsakes the things of this world for those of the world to come [...]. Her change from addressing him in the worldly plural, ‘you’, to calling him ‘thee’ in the pure and plain singular, is the linguistic sign of that recognition” (223). Matters are not quite so easy, however. Mr Wordly-Wiseman, for example, jovially addresses Christian as “thou”, whereas Christian calls him “you”. In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, language is shown to be indicative of the right meaning only if it is used in the right spirit. On the “language of *Canaan*”, so also Swaim (1993: 72).

11. 4:10: “For Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world”; just the name is mentioned in Col. 4:14 and Philem. 24.

12. Sharrock (1965: 25) points out that Bunyan sometimes “develops a very slight metaphorical hint in Scripture into a fully-realized allegorical episode” and cites the Valley of the Shadow of Death as an example.

natively unfolds a biblical point of reference. If, in the Bible, being God's Word, there is the same agreement between names and things (and persons) as in the Book of the World through which he wanders, Christian can discover "Demas" to be the mine-owner's name once he has realized that he is the person St. Paul refers to as the one who loves "this present world". The word of the Bible thus makes Christian know his face when he meets him even though St Paul does not insert a (verbal) picture into his epistle.

The world in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is definitely a fallen one, but its course is determined by God, and this is why language, at least potentially, still has the power it had when God brought every creature to Adam "to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof" (Gen 2:19). Bunyan, in his *Exposition of the First Ten Chapters of Genesis*, comments on this verse by emphasizing that the way someone is called (by Adam and his antitype, Christ) is identical with what God appoints him or her to be: "So Christ nameth the world; whom he will he calleth saints; and whom he will he calleth the world, 'ungodly,' 'serpents,' 'vipers,' and the like" (Bunyan 1875:427). In the biblical past, it may have been easier than in the present to recognize a person's nature (or calling) in their names, "for names of old were oftentimes given according to the nature and destiny of the persons concerned. 'Is he not rightly called Jacob?' Gen. xxvii.36. And again, 'As his name is, so is he.' 1 Sa. xxv.25" (Bunyan 1875:495). But to Bunyan the principle still holds in the present. Accordingly, when he shows us, in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, "real persons who had been nicknamed by their neighbours" he is by no means at odds with his allegorical teaching. To Christian and his companions, who want to find out how someone is truly called by Christ, Scripture gives instructions. In a post-lapsarian world, it is not nature (i.e. reality itself) that may inspire the wanderer with the true names of the people he meets but God's Word, which he has read in the Bible.

This does not mean, however, that errors are impossible when reading a face. The case of Mr Honest or "Father Honest" (Bunyan 2003:231) in Part II of *The Pilgrim's Progress* deserves a closer look in this respect. When he first meets Great-heart and the women and children he guides, Mr Honest mistakes him for one "of those that some time ago did rob *Little-faith* of his money";¹³ the marginal gloss to this passage reads "*One Saint sometimes takes another for his Enemy*". When Great-heart tells him his name, he immediately begs his pardon; he obviously does not even consider it possible that the name is inappropriate or a lie. Both his error and his immediate trust may have to do with the fact that Mr Honest, as we learn a little later, comes from the "Town of *Stupidity* [which] lieth about four Degrees beyond

13. I.e. Faint-heart, Mistrust and Guilt, in Part I.

the City of *Destruction*” (Bunyan 2003: 231–232). We should hasten to add, however, that the place of origin in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* does not necessarily determine a person’s character, as is made evident by Christian and his family, who were born in the City of Destruction. If the “Town of *Stupidity*” is to indicate Mr Honest’s character at all, it makes us see that he is one of the poor in spirit who are blessed (Mt 5:3). Mr Honest’s own name is, in the fashion of epic poetry, not revealed for some time. The reason is, paradoxically and appropriately, that Mr Honest, being such a good man, is an example of modesty and does not even know (or admit to know) his name. When Great-heart asks him about his name and place of origin, he only says where he comes from but maintains “My name I cannot”. According to the *OED*, the last example of transitive “can” in the sense of “know” is from 1649.¹⁴ The archaism is iconic of Mr Honest’s nature, even though — and this is where the paradox comes in — one might say that this is the one point he is *not* quite honest about. For when Great-heart, with the acumen of the elect, says “Oh! [...] *I deem I have half a guess of you, your Name is old Honesty, is it not?*”, the “old Gentleman” blushes and replies “Not Honesty in the *Abstract*, but *Honest* is my Name, and I wish that my *Nature* shall agree to what I am called”. Bunyan here ingeniously includes a metapoetical statement in his dialogue. For he has one of the characters point out that he is not a personification; he is not “Honesty in the *Abstract*” but he is a human being who hopes that his life will be true to his name.¹⁵ This ‘inverted iconicity’, as one may call it, as life here imitates the name, meets with the Puritan practice of nomenclature, where such names as “Sin-deny” occur quite frequently (Bardsley 1880: 162).¹⁶ There are other examples of this kind of naming in 17th century religious practice even outside Puritanism, such as the community at Little Gidding, whose members gave themselves names like “Patient” or “Obedient”, i.e. adjectives like Bunyan’s “Honest”; they expressly did so in order to indicate a quality they lacked and strove to attain rather than a quality they were proud of possessing.¹⁷

14. †1.a. and b.; c. “can skill of” was used a little longer.

15. Kaufmann (1966) points out that Bunyan’s characters “are real individuals who do not incarnate but exemplify a particular quality”. Their names, “like that of Honest, are more often than not adjectival in nature rather than substantival, and hence hit at attribute rather than essence” (90).

16. Bardsley (1880: 199) points out with regard to the names in *PP*: “But, in a large proportion of cases, these names already existed.”

17. See Nicholas Ferrar’s account, reprinted in Williams (1970: xxix), of the names adopted by the members of the Little Gidding community: “their intents were not [...] when they took theses specious titles of virtues and abilities with which they were first styled, to procure honour

The blushing of Mr Honest shows that he is true to his name; the sign of his face is in keeping with the verbal sign. Honesty here even overrules modesty. Bunyan, however, was not so naïve as to deny the possibility of ambiguity. The language of the face is an example, for we have seen that Demas blushes, too — in his case, this is not a sign of honesty, for he never admits his true project, but of lying and shame. The very word “honest” may be misused and therefore mistrusted. Mr Worldly-Wiseman, for instance, promises Christian and his family a good life “by honest neighbours” in the village of Morality, and Christian, blinded for the moment, calls Mr Civility, who lives there, an “honest man”. In *Grace Abounding*, Bunyan uses the word in an even more openly ironical way, when he says of himself, “now I was become a right honest man” and soon comes to equate this with “a poor painted Hypocrite” (Bunyan 1998: 13, no. 27). Now we know why Mr Honest hesitates to tell Great-heart who he is. “Who is the honest man?” asks George Herbert in his poem “Constancie” and makes clear that only the absolute standard, the “Mark-man” on the Cross, i.e. Christ himself, deserves this name. Mr Honest is aware of the dangers of false honesty when he reports Mr Selfwil’s opinion that it “seems abundance more honest” to be convinced it is right “to have to do with other mens Wives” than “to do it, and yet hold contrary to it in Opinion” (Bunyan 2003: 239–240). The rejection of double standards may be just the mask of dishonesty.

Names and persons are never linked coincidentally, but sometimes names are misleading, as when Faithful remarks to Christian: “I met with *Shame*, But of all the Men that I met with in my Pilgrimage, he, I think, bears the wrong name” for he quite shamelessly, as Faithful points out, “objected against Religion it self” (Bunyan 2003: 72). Sometimes the names of two persons are very similar but the persons’ fates quite dissimilar. Timorous, for example, apparently does not make it to the Celestial City for he wants Christian, whom he meets on the Hill Difficulty, to go back for fear of the lions (Bunyan 2003: 42). Similarly, Mrs Timorous, his daughter, whom we meet in Part II, regards Christiana’s desire to follow her husband as “*madness*” (Bunyan 2003: 173) and actually reviles her when Christiana asks her to be gone. There is a very similar name, Fearing, which belongs to a man who, in the words of Mr Honest, “was one of the most troublesome Pilgrims that ever [he] met with in all [his] days” (Bunyan 2003: 233). But he nevertheless “had the root of the matter in him,” as Mr Honest points out. Subtle semantic distinctions are to be taken into account. Fearing points to the fear of God and turns out, though troublesome to the other pilgrims, to be an important member of the

in others’ esteem, but rather to animate themselves in the pursuit and practice of those things which were most necessary and proper for them; [...].”

divine orchestra. “Fearful” would have been another matter.¹⁸ Furthermore, we are probably justified in noticing the distinction between the “English” (or Germanic) word “Fearing” and the French (or Latin) word “Timorous”, the latter being obviously closer to Pope and Pagan than the former. The point should not be overstated, however, for both Despondency and his daughter Much-afraid will arrive at the Celestial City in Part II — which shows that the motivation of the names is never based on schematic rules.

The examples furthermore show that with all the implicit trust in the ability of words and names to designate people correctly, it still needs the right faculty and spirit in the reader if one is to arrive at the correspondence of name and person. Sir Thomas Browne, who had studied della Porta’s *De humana physiognomia* (1586),¹⁹ was congenial to Bunyan in stressing that this is not an academic qualification. It may even be a gift owned by a beggar in the street:

there is surely a Physiognomy, which those experienced and Master Mendicants observe, whereby they instantly discover a mercifull aspect, and will single out a face, wherein they spy the signatures and markes of mercy. For there are mystically in our faces certain characters which carry in them the motto of our souls, wherein he that cannot read A. B. C. may read our natures. [...] The finger of God hath left an inscription upon all his workes [...]. (Browne 1964: 57; section II.2)

Bunyan’s Mercy, the young neighbour of Christiana who accompanies her on her way in Part II of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, confirms Browne’s perception, as she, too, combines what is common and what is mystical.²⁰ Apart from the fact that Mercy is another of those ‘real’ Christian names that can be found in Puritan circles before and after Bunyan (Bardsley 1880: 142), the character in Bunyan’s book is probably not exactly what every member of the Conventicle would have expected from a representation of mercy as a quality. She is derived from the King James Bible in a quite unconventional way, namely by literalizing a metaphor. When Mrs. Timorous reviles Christiana and tells “neighbour Mercy” to “leave her in her own hands, since she scorns our Counsel and Company” (Bunyan 2003: 174), Mercy does not follow her because “her bowels yearned over Christiana”; she has, as we might say, a gut feeling that Christiana is right and Timorous wrong. We know that

18. “Fearful” is the adjective applied to the man in the iron cage in the Interpreter’s house, who despairs of his salvation.

19. See Martin’s notes (Browne 1964: 310 and 372). On the theory and tradition of physiognomy relevant to the Early Modern period, see ch. 1 in Baumbach (2007).

20. Cf. Browne’s famous collocation, “common Hieroglyphics” (Browne 1964: 15; I.16); see Leimberg (1996: 70–71) and Bauer (1999: 227).

Bunyan adopts a familiar biblical expression but there is nevertheless some element of surprise in the way in which Colossians 3:12, for example (“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, [...] bowels of mercies”) is shown to be part of emotional reality. In the Authorized Version, the expression “bowels” mostly goes together with “mercies”, in the plural, as a synonym of “kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering” (Col. 3:12). Mercy in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* is all this but she is more; she is perhaps more expressly human (in the sense of not being always and completely rational) than any other virtuous character, and her emotion is generally praised by Christiana when she says that “Bowels becometh Pilgrims” (Bunyan 2003: 177). We, the readers, must become like Sir Thomas Browne’s mendicants and spot Mercy’s divine quality in her very humanity.²¹ For the young girl is more divine than most others (even among Bunyan’s many saints), as she not only shows “mercies” but “Mercy”, a quality that “droppeth like the gentle dew from heaven” (*The Merchant of Venice* 4.1.180). Young Mercy, the girl in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, laughs in her sleep because she dreams (Bunyan 2003: 210) of silver, gold, and ear-rings — surely a questionable occupation in the eyes of a Puritan but here a sign of divine favour.²² She is “of a fair Countenance, and therefore the more alluring” to Mr Brisk (213) but she also undergoes a singular change towards the end of the book: she is not summoned like Christiana, Mr Honest and others to cross the river of death and enter the gate of the Celestial City but disappears as a human character altogether. The change is a verbal one: whereas “Mercy”, for much of the second part of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, refers to the human character, in the end it exclusively refers to the divine quality (as when the dying Christiana says to Mr Despondency and his daughter, “The effect of that Mercy is, that you are brought with Safety hither”).

The last scene in which we see her strongly underlines this fusion and transformation of the human and the divine, as well as of person and word. It also shows once more that poetry and piety cannot be separated in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Mercy, who is pregnant (she has preferred to marry Christiana’s son Matthew rather than Mr Brisk), is reported to have a strong craving. What she longs for is a looking-glass in the dining-room of the shepherds’ palace on the Delectable Mountains. Her crudely natural desire turns out to be a spiritual one, for the mirror, which she obtains, is “one of a thousand. It would present a man, one way, with

21. Cf. Bunyan (1875: 422): “And as there is passions of pity, compassion, affections, and bowels in man; so there are these in a far more infinite way in God”.

22. The marginal gloss serves to identify Mercy here with Jerusalem, as it refers to Ezek. 16:8, 9, 10, 11. Luxon (1995), by contrast, thinks that Bunyan denies this spiritual transformation to Mercy, and to women altogether (204–205).

his own Feature exactly, and turn it but an other way, and it would shew one the very Face and Similitude of the Prince of Pilgrims himself” (Bunyan 2003:268). The passage describes an important element in Bunyan’s concept of iconic representation, for it joins together the human face in the mirror and the face of God, who appears, in correspondence with the “mind” of the human onlooker, either “with the very Crown of Thorns upon his Head”, or “in his Exaltation, [...] coming to Reign” (Bunyan 2003:268). The trust in God’s having created man in his image (Gen. 1:26) is here linked with the conviction expressed in 1 Cor. 13:12, “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face”. Bunyan echoes Herbert’s “The Elixer” in which the speaker prays, “Teach me, my God and King / In all things thee to see” and goes on “A man that looks on glasse / On it may stay his eye; / Or if he pleaseth through it passe, / And then the heav’n espie”. Bunyan’s magic mirror, like Herbert’s,²³ is a riddle reflecting on language, to which the marginal gloss provides the clue: “*It was the Word of God*”. The divine physiognomy which is discovered when one looks at the image of oneself and then slightly shifts the mirror is presented by the “Word of God”. Again Scripture provides the basis for Bunyan’s scene, even though the emphasis in one of the passages he indicates, James 1:23, is a somewhat different one: in James’s epistle, looking at oneself in a mirror is compared to just hearing the word of God but not minding it.²⁴ Bunyan apparently ignores the negative implications of this verse and solely focuses on the connection between mirror and word. By linking this connection to 2 Cor. 3:12 (“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory”) he succeeds in establishing the Book of Books as the text which enables us to read faces, including our own, as divine likenesses. As Calvin put it, “we recognize him in his image, that is, in his word” (Calvin 1989:86; I.ix.3).²⁵

This is exactly what is going on throughout *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. The images of the human beings, presented iconically by their names and the words they speak, are to be recognized as images of God, for their reality is discovered to be a

23. See Leimberg (1996:88).

24. “For if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was” (James 1:23–24).

25. Forrest (1963) considers Mercy’s wish in the context of the iconography of the mirror, especially its connections with the Virgin Mary, the representation of truth, and Puritan introspection. He cites a marriage sermon by Thomas Gataker (1637) in which the passage from James is evoked to link, in a positive way, the motif of looking at oneself in a mirror with reading Scripture (124).

metaphorical transformation of Scripture. I think this includes, perhaps paradoxically, even those persons like Demas who do not arrive at the Celestial City. Even they, being part of the physiognomic text to be read, bear witness to the divine author to be seen in the mirror, who is either in a state of misery or a state of glory. But thus we are made aware of the fact that Bunyan's book itself is meant to be such a magic mirror, in which his readers discover themselves, or as he puts it at the end of his "Apology":

*Would'st read thy self, and read thou know'st not what
And yet know whether thou art blest or not,
By reading the same lines? O then come hither,
And lay my Book, thy Head and Heart together.* (Bunyan 2003:9)

In this passage, Bunyan evokes the Calvinist notion of searching for signs of divine election in the world. But how is such a discovery to be brought about by "reading the same lines"? The notion of the text as a mirror in which "lines" are to be read provides a clue to the answer. The "lines" of the human face are indexical signs which are not merely indicative of certain inner attitudes but also give evidence to the fact that the world as a whole is a set of signs. As John White has pointed out, the question of whether a sign is an index or an icon is largely a matter of interpretation or reading (White 1999: 84); in both cases the reader must have an idea of what makes them signify anything. This idea is what Bunyan wants to establish. *The Pilgrim's Progress* imitates the Bible in showing a world that is to be read figuratively. Bunyan's work thus becomes an icon of a relationship between God and human beings that is based on likeness. The human text must be made in the likeness of the divine text if the author of the one is made in the likeness of the other. Accordingly, the reading process itself is the reason for hope. Using the word of the Bible in order to discover meaning in the world, the reader is to see an iconic relationship between the two. In the end, there is the hope that "the sign vehicle evinces an existential connection with its object" (Nöth 2001: 18), i.e. that the signs we read as icons will turn out to have been (divine) indices all along.

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From icon to index and back

A 16th century description of a “sea-bishop”

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A fish caught off the coast of Poland in the 15th century with the appearance and mannerisms of a bishop and therefore a possible “sign” given to man by the Creator is interrogated by the bishops and king of Poland and almost incarcerated because of its inability to speak, but finally set free in the sea. Looked upon as a sign, the resemblance as such of the fish to a bishop may be described as an iconic image, while the endeavour to determine whether it also has the other attributes of a true bishop, is implicitly aimed at determining whether the fish is not indexically related to what may be a bishop in creed and character. In view of the patently non-human exterior of the creature, the search has to focus on the intrinsic characteristics of a bishop, and the superficial iconic relationship between signifier and signified is deepened to the question whether a causal or indexical relationship can be found. As this cannot be shown, the fish is released on the understanding that its resemblance to a bishop is iconic and no more.

1. Introduction

For the purposes of this paper, the familiar tripartite distinction between (i) iconic signs, which resemble their referents by way of image or diagram, (ii) indexical signs, which are related to their referents causally, through contiguity, etc., and (iii) symbolic signs, which are only arbitrarily related to their referents, i.e. through association, is upheld. The main area of interest will be the relationship between the iconic and indexical types, and the possibility of a sign’s status fluctuating between the one and the other.

Daniel Chandler (2002:37), who prefers to refer to these as “modes” rather than “types”, defines the iconic mode as one in which “the signifier is perceived as *resembling* or imitating the signified (recognisably looking, sounding, feeling, tasting or smelling like it) — being similar in possessing some of its qualities” —

inter alia as far as “imitative gestures” are concerned. The indexical mode is one in which “the signifier is *not arbitrary* but is *directly connected* (italics in the original) in some way (physically or causally) to the signified”.

The “purity” of this distinction is jeopardised in at least two ways: (a) Signs, as has often been stated, may be characterised by several of these elements simultaneously — in the words of Johansen (2003: 379): “Signs in use ... are never exclusively iconic, indexical, or symbolic; on the contrary, they unite features of all the three classes.” (b) Signs, though most often regarded as static objects, may on occasion also be objects moving through time and in the process undergo changes in their semiotic make-up.

The latter two situations will be demonstrated below with reference to an incident retold by a 16th century Dutch expert on creatures and monsters of the sea, Adriaan Coenen,¹ viz. the case of the “sea-bishop” — a tale about the reception in 15th century Poland of a living fish with the outward appearance of a bishop. In the context of Coenen’s appreciation for the wonders of God’s creation, this “sea monster” may well be a challenge to man’s powers of discrimination, and as such a complex sign requiring interpretation. Though the symbolism serving to identify a bishop plays a major part in constituting the fish as a complex image of a bishop, the main identification problem of the humans having to deal with it, is whether its “bishopness” is restricted to its appearance, or is in fact indicative of the behaviour, beliefs, capabilities and even morality usually ascribed to a bishop — in which case the status of the sign would shift from iconic to indexical.

The basis of the tale of the sea-bishop is clearly metaphorical. Iconicity has a special relationship to metaphor; Chandler (2002: 127) takes the view that the essential role of resemblance in metaphor already suggests that the iconic mode is involved. In what may be looked upon as an extended metaphor, the narrator succeeds in turning what must have been a dead metaphor with a naming function

1. Adriaen Coenez van Schilperoort (1514–1587) hailed from Scheveningen off the coast of the province of South Holland and lived in the general area all his life. He worked in the fishing trade, functioning variously as auctioneer, inspector of strange fish and wholesaler, and later on performed various public functions. He wrote and illustrated his books on fish, whales and other marine creatures from his own observation and what he could find in the literature (even Classical sources) — to the glory of God and nature, his creation. The Fish Book (*Visboeck*), produced between 1577 and 1581, is described by Florike Egmond (2005) as “an album filled with pictures and text in which he portrayed and recorded his knowledge about the sea and everything living in it” (my translation, CJC). The Whale Book (*Walvisboeck*) was produced in the period 1584 tot 1585, and consists of two parts (see Egmond and Mason 2003: viiii–xiv).

(a species of fish identified with reference to its bishoplke appearance²) into the story of an anthropomorphic creature, with the possible aim of exposing man's credulity. The original metaphor is inverted; the source or vehicle rather than the tenor becomes the focus. David Punter (2007: 12) quotes Aristotele's definition of a metaphor as "giving the thing a name that belongs to something else"; in this sense the tale of the sea-bishop is a case of the name being "taken back" by or re-transferred to the source. The relationship between naming and metaphor as instantiated by the sea-bishop, could also be viewed as a development from 'the fish is *like* as bishop' to 'the fish *is* a bishop', i.e. from simile to metaphor, implying a status change from epistemic to ontological. Ontological metaphors, moreover, typically involve personification (Chandler 2002: 129).

The narrator is able to sustain the balance between a fake and real bishop, in other words between the iconic and indexical status of the sign, to the very end — thereby leaving the question unresolved. What is achieved by the narrative has, however, nothing to do with its conclusion, but everything with the question of what constitutes a 'real' bishop and the minimal desiderata for being one. In the course of this mini-inquisition the nature and validity of communicative, cultural and religious norms come under scrutiny. In setting up the contradiction between fish, on the one hand, and bishop, on the other, the author of this tale was able to formulate a thought provoking challenge in the spirit of Abelard's *Sic et Non* of the 11th century. To quote Punter's (2007: 12) interpretation of Aristotle: a metaphor 'can serve to deepen the reader's experience, to bring a suddenly enriched apprehension of the world' — this, at any rate, is exactly what the author of the sea-bishop's tale has achieved.

The ability to produce articulated speech is one of the norms that are tested. Apart from crucial information — about its origins and beliefs, for instance — the use of language could also serve as proof of an ability to reason; the narrator in fact stresses time and again that the fish "seemed" to be a reasonable creature. The entire future of the fish — freedom or bondage, perhaps life or death — hinged on its ability to speak.

The narrator furthermore problematises the very relationship between language and communication — by creating a sea bishop that has the ability to communicate moods and attitudes, and is able to detect them in humans, and perhaps even understand speech, but not to use it. Communication and language are seen to be partially overlapping concepts: a lot can be communicated better by way of

2. The actual fish, as described by Coenen in a verse, was characterised as a "biter", perhaps because of its formidable mouth — which has the potential of being an index for speech if transferred to humans.

body language than through mere words and sentences, but language is superior in its ability to communicate content and detail. In the final instance the communication problem attains a moral dimension: if a choice has to be made between the transfer of moods, attitudes, etc., on the one hand, and information detail, on the other, which should take preference? The narrator implies that it should be the former: a communicative act can only be authentic if the entire pragmatic context is taken into consideration.

2. Contextualisation of the sea-bishop

The sea-bishop is one of many “strange sea monsters” described by Coenen³ — mostly by way of quotation from earlier sources — alongside a multitude of fish species known by him from first-hand experience. “Monsters” should be understood in the Latin sense of *monstra*, i.e. as phenomena perceived to be ‘unnatural’ or ‘contrary to nature’ and of ‘unnatural appearances and actions’ in general. The line of demarcation between monsters and well known aquatic creatures is obviously vague and dependent on the information available at the time. Neither could Coenen exclude any monster in his descriptions, however improbable it might seem, as man could not fathom the wonders of creation.

Many of these creatures seem to present themselves as concretised signs, symbols, metaphors or challenges in general to a greater understanding of the relationship between man and nature — and as such amenable to semiotic analysis. Of particular interest are those monsters combining human and animal characteristics. Hybridity is a typical characteristic of many of them, i.e. being part human, part fish or other animal. This may have been a way for man to express his identification with nature, consonant with a world view of one Creator, one creation. Understanding nature may also be the motivation for the belief, common in earlier times, that most creatures living on the land (including human beings) had correlates living in the sea. Thus a large number of “pairs” were identified — or invented — giving rise to creatures such as sea-men, -dragons, -eagles, -horses, -hares, -swine, -devils, -wolves, -apes, -calves, -mice, and -lice.⁴ After all, a creature identifiable as a sea-horse will be immediately comprehensible; one would only have to determine how it differs from the “real” horse. The basis of the comparison

3. Coenen quotes from the *Divisiiekroniek* of Cornelius Aurelius, first impression 1517, which is in turn based on a Latin cronicle by Johannis à Leydis.

4. Burger (1989: 175) refers to an ancient conception of corresponding forms of life occurring on land and in the sea.

could be extremely slight, as in the case of the sea-eagle, i.e. the sea-turtle, which only shares the form of its beak with the bird of prey. The importance attached to what would seem to be superficial similarities, is further demonstrated by the beaver: the mere fact that it has a tail resembling that of a fish made it suitable to Catholics for consumption on Fridays. Ironically, the sea-bishop's tale is more successful in furthering our understanding of human than of (marine) nature.

Hybrids constitute an even more complex type of creature, and seem to be the embodiment of a contradiction in nature and an even greater challenge to man's powers of explanation.⁵ A conspicuous aspect of the human-marine hybrids described by Coenen, is that the upper part, the part above water or the head is human, and the lower part, that below the water, the torso, is non-human, animal, fish — in contradistinction, for example, to ancient Egyptian deities. This implies the parallel hierarchies of high > low, visible > invisible, human > non-human and finally, mind > animal nature — iconically superimposed on each other as a schematic image, or a parallel between *high* and *low* in physical orientation, and *higher* and *lower nature*. Models could have been the double (divine and human) nature of Christ, and the Virgin Mary being the mother *and* child of God. This would constitute a confusing sign from the Creator, a mystery challenging man to interpret it.

Coenen describes several of these hybrids, for instance the wild sea-woman, mermaids and –men in general, the sea-monk, the sea-knight or sytiron and the waterman (*daemon marinus*), adding, however, that he had never seen mermaids and –men himself, and did not know of anyone who had actually seen them. In some cases, such as that of the sea-knight, which Coenen used as his coat-of-arms, the outward appearance is given as a *fait accompli* and no interpretation attempted.⁶ The tale of the wild sea-woman, trapped in 1403 in an inland lake in North Holland, i.e. not too far from where Coenen lived, is notable in that she was treated like a human being on the suspicion that she possessed speech and showed religious sentiments. The sea-bishop owes its significance to the fact that the incarnated contradiction is exploited to the full, and owes its impact to the fact that it

5. Hybrid: in the biological sense “the offspring of two plants or animals of different species or varieties”, “heterogeneous,” generally: “a thing composed of incongruous elements”, COD.

6. A remarkable example of a hybrid between fish and human culture, is the “wonderful tunny fish” found in 1556 at Ceuta off the coast of North Africa with “a great number of galleys, masts, oars and oarsmen, and artillery and seaworthy ships and a galliot equipped with weapons, that seemed ready to attack each other” embossed in skin and flesh on its flanks. Though seemingly significant as a living metaphor, no interpretation is ventured. This may be an example of an ‘empty’ or ‘floating’ signifier (Chandler 2002:74) — clearly a sign but offering no hint of an explanatory context or suitable interpretation. Its default interpretation would be iconic, because a picture of a naval battle would in the first place refer to a naval battle.

is presented *in concreto* as a living creature, rather than, for instance, an abstract metaphor — in the context of exact descriptions of real fish, whales and other well known marine creatures.

3. “Fish and bishop”: The sea-bishop

In the year 1431 a fish the size of a living bishop⁷ and fully fitted out with mitre, staff, chasuble, maniple, shoes, gloves, etc., seemingly ready to perform the functions of a bishop, is caught off the coast of Poland. The narrator only subsequently states that it also has a head, arms, hands, feet, etc. like a man, but is a cold, living fish to the touch. It is inspected by bishops of the country, presented to the king of Poland and is interrogated in many languages about its identity and provenance, but refuses to answer, apart from opening its mouth in a reverential manner. When the king in anger threatens to incarcerate it, it closes its eyes until the king, after supplications by the bishops, consents that it be released in the sea. After a wagon trip to the coast, it walks the rest of the way to the sea with its hands on the shoulders of the bishops on either side of it, to all intents and purposes a well-mannered and rational creature, full of goodwill towards bystanders. Taking leave from the bishops by bowing and shaking their hands, it enters the water alone, and once it is up to its navel in the water, it bows low and blesses the crowd by making the sign of the Cross with its right hand like a real bishop, then swims away never to be seen again.

The tale reads as follows, preceded in one version by a verse and notes on the theme and origin of the tale:

The Sea Bishop

The bishops, who are held in high esteem here,
Are not alone on earth;
In the sea there was also such a bishop, a crude biter,
Who does not speak even though it⁸ wears a mitre.

7. Two kinds of *Sparidae* occurring in South African waters are referred to by the Afrikaans names of *swartbiskop* or *bloubiskop* (black or blue bishop) and *witbiskop* (white bishop). The first kind, said to be greyish with irregular stains, having a protruding snout or “nose” and strong crushing teeth (*sterk vergruistande*) (*Woordeboek van die Afrikaanse Taal*), resembles the prototype of the Polish bishop fish — described as being a fierce ‘biter’.

8. In the Dutch, the 3rd person, singular, masculine personal pronoun *hi* ‘he’ is used throughout to refer to the fish; as this pronoun may also have non-personal and even inanimate reference, *it* was considered more appropriate in the English rendering. The status of the fish, however, remains unresolved.

About a marvellous monster that was caught about this time in the year 1531 [sic], in the realm of Poland

This description is truthful, as the great Cronicle of Holland describes; God is almighty, wonderful in his works — may He be praised. Amen.

In the year of our Lord 1431 a fish was caught in the Kingdom of Poland, that had the size — length and breadth — of a living bishop, fitted out⁹ with a mitre, staff, white chasuble, stole, maniple, shoes, hems and gloves, and the rest of the attire appropriate to a bishop's dignity, as would be fitting for a bishop to have if he wished to perform his function. Furthermore, this fish had a head, eyes, ears, forehead, nose, mouth, cheeks, shoulders, arms, hands, feet, as well as all other limbs, as if it were a complete and perfect man and bishop, and its chasuble was drawn up to the knees in front and at the back, but not higher up. Nevertheless, it was a cold, live fish to the touch. And it allowed everybody, and in particular the bishops of the land to touch and handle it.

When this bishop fish was presented to the King of Poland and was asked in many languages and tongues who it was and of what nature, and whence it came, it did not answer but opened its mouth all the same, humbly showing honour and reverence to the other bishops who were present there. The King became angry because it did not want to speak, and was of a mind to throw it into a dungeon, upon which the bishop fish became deeply distressed and closed its eyes and refused point blank to open them again, until the bishops of the land fell on their knees in front of the King and in the presence of this fish, and beseeched the King, and obtained [permission] that it could be returned to the seashore where it had been caught, and [prayed] that the Lord God, whose works are incomprehensible, would show and reveal his nature and works, so that no plague or grief would come to the King or his subjects because of this. And when the King consented to this and allowed it, the fish immediately opened its eyes again, showing great gratitude to the King and to the bishops in particular.

A wagon was therefore made ready in the presence of a large number of people. The bishops mounted the wagon with this fish and bishop, who sat amongst them in a well-mannered way and as if endowed with reason as though it were a rational creature that availed itself of reason, and when they were still quite a distance from the sea they got off the wagon as they wished to approach the sea on foot. And the fish got off the wagon all by itself and stood upright on its feet and walked between two bishops, resting one hand on the shoulder of one of the bishops and the other on that of the other, precisely as if it were a living creature endowed with reason. Neither was it disturbed or discomposed by the multitude of people, but made its way politely and modestly¹⁰ as the other bishops did.

9. *ghesiert*, lit. 'adorned'

10. *zeedelyc* in the Walvisboeck; the Visboeck has *reedelyc* 'rational'.



Figure 1. Coenen's drawing of the sea-bishop

And when it reached the seashore it looked at the bishops and people in a friendly and kind way. And it took its leave from the bishops, bowing its body with great reverence and humility while it asked leave, and then it entered the water alone while shaking the hands of the bishops. And when it had entered the water up to its navel and began feeling the depth, it rejoiced and turned around to the bishops and the people. Expecting the end, it bowed its head very low to the people and gave them the benediction, making the sign of the Holy Cross with its right hand as though it were a rational and true bishop, and it started swimming in the water straight away and was never seen by anyone again.

The wonder recounted above was seen by a famous master who told it thus in the firm belief that it was true. And if this is true, one may witness the wondrous works of God almighty, which are incomprehensible; may they be praised now and in all times to come.¹¹

The purpose of this narrative seems to be to show how the omnipotence of God is demonstrated by this “miraculous monster”. This is, however, no innocent monster, but one that requires interpretation. The author may have had a hidden agenda, for example to put church and state to the test.

11. I would like to thank Florike Egmond for permission to make use of her transcription of this text.

The tale begins with “God is almighty ... About a strange (Du. wonderlijken) monster ... God is wonderful (Du. wonderlyc) in his works”, and ends by referring to God’s omnipotence and miraculous but incomprehensible works. In order to maximise the miracle, the author needs to build up the incongruity or contradiction stated at the outset as a creature which is at the same time fish and bishop. Recall Chandler’s (2002: 37) view of the signifier as *inter alia* “resembling”, “recognizably looking” and “feeling” like the signified. The narrator, however, lets the creature resemble a “living bishop” but, as for feeling, emphasizes that it was “a cold, live fish to the touch”. In what seems to be a simple tale, he proves to be a past master in the ways in which he manipulates signs and symbols of various kinds — iconic signs not least of all.

The problem not only the fishermen, but in the end the church and state are confronted with, is not only one of *identity* but also of *being*, i.e. not only whether this is a real bishop, but what would constitute a real bishop? Being a bishop, as the superficial adornments would suggest, would imply a certain learning, which would imply the use of language, which would imply a human body, etc. The narrator takes us through all these steps, delving deeper and deeper into the character of this creature. What do we have here — a bishop or an actor? The real thing, or only signs? A decision is therefore called for. Chandler (2002: 37) refers to Hodge and Kress’ suggestion that “indexicality is based on an act of judgement or inference whereas iconicity is closer to ‘direct perception’”. Judgement and inference are clearly called for; noting a similarity is not sufficient.

The outward appearance — the first thing to strike the fishermen — is that of a bishop, a precise iconic image, drawn even on a one-to-one scale with the referent. This complex sign, based as it is on Christian ecclesiastical symbolism, is also diagrammatic in that a certain configuration is required in order to depict a “bishop ready to execute his offices”. This symbolic structure is, of course, only activated in a felicitous context — precisely what is in question here.

The question is whether what appears to be a bishop *is* in fact a bishop and, ultimately, what is the essence of a true bishop. If it is only the image of a bishop, it would already be a wonder, though in the sense of a freak of nature, but if it were a true bishop with some “fishy” attributes, it would be a wonder of divine proportions. An intermediate position would be that it is a kind of (devilish?) imposter.

In as far as the bishoplike appearance of a fish would, at the time, have been looked upon as a kind of divine intimation (e.g. to the church, or mankind in general), we may read it as a (complex) sign. The fish first of all presents itself to the beholder as a bishop. If the creature is found to be a bishop only in appearance, the sign would be fully iconic: an image, pure and simple, of a bishop. If, however, it is found to be a “true” or “real” bishop, the outward appearance would only be indicative of another, “inner” or intellectual, reality, and the outer configuration would

have an indexical function. As the tale in its narrative structure consistently delves deeper into the bishoplike nature of this fish, from its superficial interpretation to questions of its attitude to people, its communicative abilities and, by implication, its Christian beliefs, the complex sign becomes less and less of an image only and is reduced more and more to a sign of something “deeper”. In other words, on a scale of similarity to difference, the distance between signifier and signified increases. The fact that towards the end of the tale, where the fish is released into the sea, this sequence is inverted, only serves to confirm this consistently more penetrating enquiry into personality, with the referent deepening from ‘appearance’ to ‘being’. The story is, in essence, an enquiry into the status of the sign as being either an iconic image or an indexical pointer; the outcome remains unresolved.

What would probably have interested the king and the bishops most in their little “inquisition”, was the beliefs of this creature, the dogmas it subscribed to, its ecclesiastical legitimacy, etc. This information, however, hinged on its ability to communicate understandably in a human language, in other words to speak. Relations with the king of Poland break down precisely because of the fish’s inability to speak.¹²

The build-up to this crisis and the threat of incarceration may be looked upon as the equivalent of a by no means unsophisticated enquiry into the nature of human communication as being so much more than phonemes, morphemes, words and sentences — speech is in fact viewed in its full pragmatic context of locution, illocution and perlocution and encapsulated in fully interpretable body language. The fish is able to make its intentions clear not only to the bishops but also to the curious crowds; all that is lacking is locution: the spoken word.

This raises questions as to the status of the various aspects of communication. Words as such are generally symbols with external reference, but if bodily indicators — whether they be actions of the limbs or facial muscles — may be indicative of a creature’s attitude or effect a certain universal uptake with onlookers in a very direct manner, the question may be asked to what extent the physical configurations or actions refer to a “mind inside” or are directly associated with, for instance, a friendly attitude. In the first — dualistic — instance, the body language would be a complex of indexical signs, in the second more directly an image, or the thing itself. One may ask: Is a smile possible without a certain contraction of facial muscles?

12. One cannot help wondering whether a contrast is implied between the rational, legalistic approach of the state (as represented by the king), and the more emotive, credulous approach of the church (as represented by the bishops) — in the final instance a contrast between the spirit of the Middle Ages and that of the New Age.

The tale is carefully constructed to hint at — without assuming — an “inner nature”, but in fact avoids the body-mind dualism to an admirable extent. Through several repetitions the narrator emphasises the fact that the sea-bishop seems to be a rational and well-mannered creature — a reference to intellectual capabilities and social graces, i.e. adaptability to human society. But the “inner bishop” may still be missing. The “mitre, staff, white chasuble, stole, maniple, shoes, hems, gloves, and all other requisites pertaining to a bishop’s dignity” are what first arouse the fishermen’s curiosity. Even this is not a loosely constructed, merely enumerative image of a bishop; note that the more typical attributes of a bishop, such as the mitre, staff and chasuble, are mentioned before more general items of human clothing, such as shoes and gloves, thereby receiving the emphasis of first mention. Focus is diagrammatically built into this image. The structured nature of this sign is corroborated by the further qualification in the text, viz. that these attributes behave a bishop ready to exercise his duties as a bishop.

After the first statement of the diagrammatic contrast fish/bishop, natural curiosity would turn towards the “missing link”: the humanity of the sea-bishop. Anthropomorphism increases.

The accoutrements of a bishop, however, presume the basic shape of a human being — if only to hold the staff or wear the shoes. We are therefore presented next with the image of a human *body* through the mention of eleven limbs or body parts, viz. head, eyes, ears, forehead, nose, mouth, cheeks, shoulders, arms, hands and feet, in this order. Note that this in spite of its enumerative form is once again a structured, focused image. It is first of all top-to-bottom, in the way one would take in another human being, or a landscape, for that matter. Secondly we may note that the narrator devotes *six* out of the ten — 60% — of the parts mentioned after head to parts of the head, viz. eyes, ears, forehead, nose, mouth and cheeks, clearly suggesting the primacy of the head in a hierarchy and hinting at intellectual capacity. Completeness of the human image is suggested by starting the sequence with head and ending with feet: “from top to toe”. Most of these body parts, moreover, are potential indicators of human attitudes and expressions; eyes, mouth, shoulders, arms and hands, specifically, play an explicit part in the tale in reinforcing intentions ascribed to the fish through body language. What at first sight seems merely to be an enumeration of physical attributes of the human body, is in fact a focused and eclectic image suggesting intellectual and communicative capabilities.

After being physically examined by bishops and lay persons alike, who established that it was “a cold, live fish to the touch” after all, it was presented to the king of Poland and interrogated in a variety of languages. Though it opens its mouth “humbly showing honour and reverence” (*dede hi zyn mont op[en] eere ende reverentie ootmoedelijck bewysende*) towards those present, it refrains from replying through

speech. This is perhaps the most subtle touch of all, in that onlookers are able to discern illocutionary content merely from the shape of a mouth intending to speak.

The narrator displays a very advanced understanding of the communicative act for his time. To signal a “complete” act of communication, one would have to paint a picture consisting of locution (words, propositions), illocution (intentions of speaker) and perlocution (results of utterance, uptake). In as far as these three elements may be looked upon as an inventory of the main elements of the communicative act, the writer signals “incomplete speech/communicative faculty” by clearly contrasting the presence of illocution and perlocution with the absence of locution. The intention is made clear by the opening of the mouth; the uptake is indicated by its attitude being perceived or understood as one showing deference, humility and reverence (*ere ende reverentie ootmoedelijc bewysende*). While the opening of the mouth as intention to speak — rather than as a symptom of, for instance, astonishment — is a visible image of speech, the fish is also able to communicate sophisticated emotions or attitudes by means of body language. Thus the narrator is able to signify ‘imperfect communicative faculty’ (the signified) by means of the structured image (signifier) of an incomplete communicative act, suggesting that it might be the king rather than the fish who is missing the whole point of what communication is really about.

The entire concept of a communicative and sympathetic mouth may be seen as a conscious inversion by the narrator of the conventional view of the sea-bishop with its wide mouth as a “biter”. Coenen, not without a sense of humour, prefaced his tale with a verse in which *grof byter* (‘crude biter’) rhymes with *myter* (‘mitre’).

We have now reached the stage where the fish has proved or has managed to create or actively communicate an impression of goodwill, though its ability to handle the propositional aspect of language has still not been demonstrated. When the king, in anger, threatens to have the fish incarcerated, it closes its eyes as a sign of passive protest, only to open them again “in gratitude” after the king, at the behest of the bishops, consents to release it. The closing of the eyes is a symbolic sign (cf. the Christian convention of closing the eyes in prayer) of passive resistance (in itself a metaphor of breaking contact with the outside world) — by which the fish demonstrates its understanding of propositional speech (“To the dungeon with you!”), not to mention its understanding of a cultural concept such as incarceration. What will remain lacking till the end, though, is its ability to produce propositional speech — with the added risk (for the narrative) of undermining the divine mystery.

The fish’s behaviour and deportment when being taken back to the sea, supported on a wagon by two (human) bishops, is that of being “rational and humbly mannered, precisely as if it were a rational creature that was able to avail itself of reason” (*redelyc ende manierlyc gelyck oft een redelycke creature hadden geweest die*

reden gebruickende is). Similar formulations, always with *redelijc* as key term, are repeated several times in the text, stressing this human characteristic par excellence and deepening the mystery.

The aim of the narrator seems to be to show that a bishop is not a bishop by virtue of outward characteristics but rather by virtue of character and moral qualities.

In introducing the sea-bishop to the reader, the narrator had first presented the superficial outward ecclesiastical accoutrements (mitre, staff, chasuble, etc.) to us and only afterwards the physical human attributes of (typically human) limbs and human-like communicative abilities. In its return to the sea, the fish is stripped of these in the converse order: it rests its (human) hands on the shoulders of two accompanying bishops in what may be interpreted as a gesture of solidarity and mutual support; it takes leave from the bishops by bowing with its body, and shakes hands with the “real” bishops as it enters the water (recall Chandler’s [2002: 37]) reference to “imitative gestures” as characteristic of the signifier) — all the signs of abiding by the normal conventions of human intercourse in the leave taking situation. The bishops, in their turn, identified with it as one of theirs, a colleague, right to the point of leave taking.

However, as soon as it is immersed in the water up to its navel (a metaphor but also a diagrammatic indication of its dual nature) and begins to “feel the depth” — perhaps metaphorical for the real locus of its identity/being/essence and for moral depth — ecclesiastical symbols come into play as it addresses the expectations of the crowd by bowing down low, blessing them with its right hand and making the sign of the Holy Cross (“as if it were a rational and true bishop”), after which it swims away and is never seen again by anyone. Once it had discarded its human characteristics, it lapsed mechanically into the outward mannerisms of a bishop when already “half fish” again, and it — and the mystery — disappears (or is to remain) forever.

In the narrative as a whole, the referent moves from the superficial (ecclesiastical garments) to human-like limbs, followed by human-like actions, and finally back to ecclesiastical gestures — charting the search of a creature from the depth of nature, for the depth of human — and even divine — nature. The tale thus traces a quest from the external to the internal, successively: bishop’s clothes, human limbs, body language, attitude, reason, and reinforces it by means of a mirror image: shaking hands with the bishops and bowing to the people (partaking in social intercourse) and, having entered the water, blessing the crowd (an ecclesiastical gesture). It becomes an exposure of superficiality (in the church, in human society and conduct) — outwardly a bishop, but in the final instance a sign without a referent, an “empty signifier” (Chandler 2002: 74–78), “full of sound and fury — signifying nothing”.

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The poem as icon of the painting

Poetic iconicity in Johannes Vermeer and Tom Gouws

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The focus of this paper is to investigate the poetic expression of a painting as it is transposed into a poem. Such an interaction between the verbal and the visual text results in what Simonides of Ceos describes as “*poema pictura loquens, pictura poema silens*” — the poem is a speaking painting, the painting is a silent poem. How does the poem become such a depiction or representation of the painting? Assuming that the poem contributes to the significance of the painting by adding additional layers of meaning to it, the iconic aspects in the poem text therefore suggest the painting’s content as its visual embodiment. In the following discussion, I will argue that the iconic meaning-making processes taking place in Tom Gouws’s (2010) Vermeer poems function as a meta-language of the paintings. I will suggest a descriptive framework for delineating the iconic processes that are present in and around Gouws’s poetic texts in order to try to show that the poet not only explores the painting’s visual text but also investigates and confronts language iconically in several of his poems based on Vermeer’s paintings, e.g. “The Astronomer”, “The Geographer”, “Woman in Blue Reading a Letter”, “Lady Weighing Pearls” and “The Men of Vermeer”. This comes however particularly to the fore in his poem “The lacemaker” which will be read in conjunction with another of Gouws’s poems, “*ars poetica*”. These two poems will be read as verbal figurations of visual writing through which a particular kind of iconic narrative is established.

1. Introduction

*maar eers in delft vind ek my geneties.
uit die skilderye gloei ineens 'n dieper lig, so verskriklik teer
my oë brand van die vleesgeworde vergesigte van vermeer¹*

Tom Gouws: "oorsprong"

According to Jonckheere (1989:270), J. H. Hagstrum uses the term *iconic poetry* to describe the ekphrastic poem. For the purpose of this paper, Hagstrum's definition is important since he aptly summarizes the poem as an icon of the painting. The embodiment in words of the contents of the painting gains iconic or image value. As the title of this paper announces, my analysis emphasizes the concreting nature of the icon, here the poem. In the words of Mihálik (1997:68–69), one can speak of a "referential representative signifying process". The poem's text becomes a vehicle for enlarging and enhancing the contents of the painting (as text). The comparison between the poem's form and contents with the painting is very important. When Tom Gouws writes a poem as the corresponding text to a Vermeer painting, what becomes decisive is how the intercommunication between the two products of art functions. This interaction between the poem and the art of painting is as Simonides of Ceos described it, "poema pictura loquens, pictura poema silens" — the poem is a speaking painting, the painting is a silent poem".

A point of departure for this paper is therefore to see the use of iconicity in image poems as a strategy to *paint* paintings in words. The words in this portrayal — like the pencil and paint in a painting's portrayal — become the instruments for capturing meaning. One of the most basic ways in which iconicity is embodied in the texts under discussion is by means of their layout, that is, the poem's diagrammatic aspect on the written page, which gives the poet's specific composition of the text its iconic value. This method adds significant meaning to the poem "The lacemaker", which is a tapestry in words, verse, and lengths of stanzas, syllables, and rhyming and sound patterns. The written page of the poem is therefore a way of "iconographic look-reading of the icons" (Mihálik 1997: 110). The combination (symbiosis) or coherence between the visual and the verbal concepts of poem and painting will influence the interpreter's reading. The iconographic communication is vested in the reader's interpretation of the poem as well as that of the painting.

According to the etymology of the word 'poetry' we can draw significant parallels between the activity of writing and painting. Adopted from Greek, *po(i)ein*

1. *but only in delft did I discover my genetics.
from the paintings suddenly a deeper light began to glow, so terribly tender
my eyes were burning from vermeer's vistas turned to flesh*

‘(to) make, create’, makes the poem’s association with the act of lace-making significant. This metaphorical link suggests that it can serve as a mirror or self-portrait. This becomes clear when we read through Gouws’s poem “ars poetica”, which suggests itself as an intimate guide of how to read his writing.

2. The Source of Poetry

2. “ars poetica”

John 1:1–14; Col.1:15–17

*“Here is the source of poetry,
here are all our poems, even the ones that are to be.”*

- Murilo Monteiro Mendes

in whorls of yarn a bible lies hidden.
entrenched in contours of parables
the mysteries of this futile trade are spun
unseen from this generative spindle.
thus He weaves his inscribed Likenesses.

2. “ars poetica”

Joh. 1: 1–14; Kol. 1:15–17

*“Hier is die bron van die poësie,
hier is al ons gedigte, selfs die toekomstiges.”*

- Murilo Monteiro Mendes

verskuild in windings gare lê 'n bybel.
verskans in kontoere van gelykenisse
spin die nuttelose bedryf se geheimenisse
ongesiens uit hierdie generatiewe spil.
geïnskribeerd weef Hy só sy Beeltenisse.

In this poem the speaker argues that the poetic process is linked to a ‘generative’ or productive form. In the case of Gouws’s poem, this productive form is the Bible, the holy word that must be read as generative essence (cf. Gouws 2003). The written page thus produced consists therefore of workmanship interwoven with the image of Christ. The poet / lacemaker has thus been inspired to create a piece of art that becomes a mirror of his or her maker/Maker, transforming Gouws’s poetic portrayal into a mirroring of Christ. Picking up on the Russian Orthodox and Byzantine tradition of ‘icon’ as the image of Christ, Gouws’s poem becomes an icon in this sense (Cloete and Wybenga 1992: 178–182). From this perspective,

what the poem “ars poetica” suggests is that Christ is this ‘generative spindle’ weaving his inscribed images.

Hence, “ars poetica” clearly emphasizes the iconic aspect of this textual interlacing. The original meaning of the word ‘text’ from the Latin word *texere* ‘to weave’ is metaphorically marked. The text becomes a metaphorical tapestry, an icon both of the content and of the typographical form. The poet weaves text (Lat. *textus* ‘tissue, style of literary work’, in med. Lat. ‘the Gospel’s written character’, from *text* — pa. ppl stem of *texere*) in the same way as the content is textually embodied. The semantic-iconic markedness of the poem’s title as “ars poetica” seems to suggest that the poet intends the composition of the text’s various components to ‘make’ the texture to evoke the spindle around which the text is woven for the speaker.

The poet’s use of the word ‘spindle’ has a further connection with weaving, since the word derives from the same Germanic origin, the verb ‘to spin’. The intertwining of the speaker with the ‘generative spindle’ acquires prominence through its anchoring in the source of origin, which also points to the poet as the text creator. The phonetic iconicity between “bybel” (‘bible’), “spin” (‘spin’) and “spil” (‘spindle’) interwoven in the poet’s vision of his art emphasizes the threefold alliance at the same time as it suggests its religious associations to the Holy Trinity. A further iconic trait is suggested by the placement of the three words in the stanza mirroring the way the text tapestry, in which the three words form a triangular relation, can be read. The placement of “spin” at the beginning in the third verse is typographically and syntactically marked not only as a result of the position in the verse, but also in terms of the semantic content of the word, which highlights the meaning spectrum linked to the activity associated with the ‘generative’ core, namely to ‘spin’/write poetry.

Fusing imagery is also what lies at the core of Vermeer’s paintings (Gouws 2003). By positioning image characters in his painting in a certain way, Vermeer has his characters pull the whole cosmos together, so to speak. The open window and the light that shines into the room symbolize this fusion, also the world maps and the paintings, which are all elements that obviously inspired Gouws (2003) to write poems such as “The Astronomer”, “The Geographer”, “Woman in Blue reading a Letter” and “Lady Weighing Pearls”. In these poems, Gouws achieves an iconic portrayal both by his particular placing of the text on the page and by fusing text building concepts into the poem contents. This has the effect that the reader expects a correspondence between Vermeer’s painting and the poem, especially since “The lacemaker” appeared in a numbered section together with “ars poetica”, the section ‘Delft canvas.’² Not only is the cohesion between the two

2. A section in the volume of poetry, *Ligloop*, by Gouws (2010).

poems emphasized by placing them together in this section but also because their phonetic (including the use of rhyme) semantic, syntactic and morphological similarities make them iconically reflect one another. This is what I would like to show in my analysis of “The lacemaker” as an exemplary text in Tom Gouws’s oeuvre exploring the iconic relationships between the textual elements mentioned above.

3. *Texere, verse and lacemaker*

die kantklosser

'n kanto as selfportret

tot ek daar myself raakloop in 'n onverwagse spieël:
vooroorgebuig intens toegespits op inslag en skering
van my vingers, wat ritmies lig woorde klos tot kant
die gare word haspelend melodies naatloos gekantel

tot tapytjies teks. strooi uit 'n verbeelde spinnewiel
word liggende nuttelose goudspinsels vol huiwering
onsigbare herinneringe van die vergete stad brabant
intiem ingeweef tot fibreuse grein. als word bladstil

tot dit 'n eie ligte loop kry, die sag asempies fragiel
ineengeknoop. verf loop soos lewe uit die stuwings
van 'n kussing, word 'n lewende keper in my hand,
voel hoe met verrukking die gedig kant en klaar tril

The lacemaker

a canto as self-portrait

until I encounter myself there in an unexpected mirror
inclined intensely concentrated on woof and warp
of my fingers which rhythmically, lightly entwine words in lace,
the yarn reels in melody seamlessly slanted

and becomes tiny carpets of text. straw from an imagined spinning-wheel
turns into useless gold spinning, lighting up in trepidation
invisible memories of the forgotten city of brabant
intimately woven into a fibrous grain. everything falls silent as a leaf

until it gains its own light momentum, soft pockets of breath
fragilely interwoven. paint flows like life from the surges
of a cushion, becomes a living twill in my hand,
feels the ecstatic quiver of a poem's completion

The title of the poem emphasizes a number of iconic aspects. For instance, the word ‘lacemaker’ is an example of morphological iconicity. By focusing on the ‘*maker* of lace’ the poem evokes in the reader the image of this very act and has him or her read the determinant (‘lace’) in conjunction with the stem of the verb (‘make’), which brings out the poem’s thematic essence. Further associations that are evoked by ‘lace making’ is that of intertwinement in reference to textile and lace: lace is described as “a delicate fabric made by weaving cotton, silk, or a synthetic yarn in a pattern that leaves small holes between the threads” (*Encarta Dictionary*).

The poem’s subtitle, “a canto as self-portrait”, creates a metaphoric link between the canto as a poetic form and the figure in the self-portrait. The intertwinement of the speaker with the canto is therefore iconic — the poem becomes the mirror of the figure being mirrored in it. The acting figure in the poem also speaks in the first person and, through the poem’s form on the page as well as through the mentioning of the mirror, the reader can deduce that the speaker is the lacemaker herself or himself. In this way, Vermeer’s woman lacemaker is transformed into the speaker verse-maker in this text. The ensuing metaphoric iconic aspects thus created is that the speaker forms poems into word-lace in the same way as the woman, the acting figure in Vermeer’s painting, is busy weaving the lace. Metaphoric iconicity is created by the poet’s and lacemaker’s weaving/writing act being related semantically.

Earlier I argued that the poem is a tapestry of words, verses, stanza lengths, syllables, rhyme and sound patterns like the product the woman is busy making. The poem’s placement and structure on the page is the most marked iconic aspect in this text because the reader’s observation and interpretation of the text are conditioned by the visual typographical presentation of the text. The fact that the poem formally looks like a text tapestry makes the reader expect and search for other iconic aspects, of which the linguistic elements are the most marked features.

4. Phonological iconicity

The poem’s most striking iconic feature is no doubt its title. It introduces a number of sound cohesion patterns of which the [k] sound is the most dominant. As a voiceless plosive sound it has a marking or deceleration effect on the rhyme. Since these sounds are foregrounded in the poem, they acquire meaning. A significant sound cohesion pattern of words has thus been compiled, in which the [k] sound keeps appearing. This can be seen in the following words:

Table 1.

kanto (canto)	[motto]
raakloop (encounter)	[1]
skering (warp)	[2]
klos tot kant (entwine words into lace)	[3]
gekantel (slanted)	[4]
tapytjies teks (tiny carpets of text)	[5]
ineengeknoop (interwoven)	[10]
kussing; keper (cushion; twill)	[11]
verrukking; kant en klaar (ecstatic; completion)	[12]

The sound paradigm with the strongest iconic potential lies in the words that possess semantic links with the theme of text, textile and lace. The most important words among them are:

Table 2.

kantklosser (lace maker)	kanto (canto)	(inslag) en skering (woof and warp)	woorde klos tot kant (entwine words in lace)	tapytjies teks (tiny carpets of text)	keper (twill)	kant en klaar (completion)
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The metaphoric link between the ‘lace maker’ and the poet can be found in the second and the third verses: “vooroorgebuig intens toegespits op inslag en skering / van my vingers, wat ritmies lig woorde klos tot kant” (‘inclined intensely concentrated on woof and warp / of my fingers which rhythmically, lightly entwine words in lace’). The iconization lies in the semantic relations created between the words indicating weaving lace and writing text. A significant iconic relationship is established between the movement in the text and the weaving/writing act. This movement is marked by the plosive sound in “klos tot kant” (‘entwine words in lace’) and again in “gekantel / tot tapytjies teks” (‘slanted and becomes tiny carpets

of text'). This movement is further enacted iconically in the morphological build-up of words, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3.

4	gekantel (slanted)	3	+
8	bladstil (silent as a leaf)	2	++
12	tril (quiver)	1	+++

These three words are all in the same syntactic position in the verses and stanzas, and all three are semantically concerned with movement (of its absence). Its iconic aspect lies in the change in activity through the morphological structure with the effect that the number of syllables is reduced from 4 (3) to 8 (2) to 12 (1), at the same time as there is an increase in activity (+ / ++ / +++). The number of syllables per word therefore creates increased morphological movement but there is no semantic forward 'movement'. The shortest word "tril" ('quiver') has only one syllable, but it has a *lasting* action on the semantic level. It is iconically marked because the weaving act suggests continuity and the poem has been woven typographically in a "bladstil" ('silent as a leaf') *tapestry*. The semantic correspondence between the musical cohesion that is introduced by the subtitle's main noun, "kanto", is being continued in the concluding word. With "tril" in its specific final position and through the meaning of the word, the speaker creates the suggestion that the poem as a metaphoric shipshape product has continuity: "voel hoe met verrukking die gedig kant en klaar tril" ('feels the ecstatic quiver of a poem's completion').³

In the poem's metaphoric title, activity is the obtrusive aspect, namely a **kant** + **klosser** (**lace** + **maker**), which primarily refers to the act of weaving. By placing "kant" ('lace') at the end of the line, Gouws marks its importance as the product of an activity involving interchange and separation:

...my vingers wat ritmies lig woorde klos tot kant
 (...my fingers which rhythmically, lightly entwine words in lace)

3. It is however important that the phonetic and morphological cohesion between the words "tot" ('until') (verses 1, 5 and 8) and "tril" (verse 12) indicates the process of movement and generative power. In Afrikaans the word "tril" means not only 'quiver', but is a slang word for the male sexual organ. In the context of the poem, it metaphorically indicates the live [life-] giving source which is implicit in the framework of the poem with the poet as the generator of words and which corresponds with the lacemaker as the woman in Vermeer's painting. As the lacemaker is weaving tapestry the poet weaves text with words as yarn reels on the page like a "silent leaf" of generative possibility.

This placement, which is part of a coherent chiasmic structure, not only suggests morphological but also syntactic iconicity since it both creates a cross-stitch while also reflecting the weaving-writing act:

kant (*lace*) \times klosser (*maker*)
klos (*entwine*) \times *kant* (*lace*)

At the phonological level, the word “verrukking” (‘ecstatic quiver’) is emphasized since the plosive [k] sound of the dominant “kantklosser” also appears in it. The word is therefore not only phonologically iconic but also marked syntactically since the word’s end position in the verse gives it particular emphasis. The poet’s main aim seems to be to weave a text with words in order to give the poem a life of its own that will “voorttril” (‘continue to quiver’) in the same way as the lacemaker weaves her lace with her tools:

voel hoe met verrukking die gedig kant en klaar tril
 (feels the ecstatic quiver of a poem’s completion)

Another prominent sound is contained in the title of the poem, “kantklosser”. As a plosive sound the [t] sound, as was the case with the [k] sound, has lasting status. Because of the value attributed to the sound, phonological iconicity suggests itself since the meaning of the word “tril” (‘quiver’) not only echoes the semantic content but also the sound.

The following paradigm in Table 4 points out the occurrence of [t] sounds that possess phonological and semantic iconic value:

Table 4.

titel/title	kantklosser/(lacemaker)	1
3	ritmies klos tot kant (rhythmically entwine words in lace)	4
4	naatloos gekantel (seamlessly slanted)	2
5	tot tapytjies teks. strooi (becomes tiny carpets of text, straw)	5
6	ligtende (lighting up)	1
7	vergete stad brabant (forgotten city of brabant)	4
8	intiem ingeweef tot fibreuse grein. als word bladstil (intimately interwoven into a fibrous grain, everything fall silent as a leaf)	6
9	tot dit ’n ligte loop kry (until it gains its own light momentum)	4
10	stuwings (surges)	1
11	word ’n lewende keper in my hand (becomes a living twill in my hand)	2
12	die gedig kant en klaar (a poem’s completion)	2

Obviously, not only the typographical and semantic designs of the poem collaborate to turn the poem into a metaphor of a text tapestry. Nänny (2000: 159) rightly explains:

A long verse may serve as an imagic icon of length, distance, duration or, more metaphorically, of vastness, great height, swelling, spreading, stretching and width. Its projection beyond the surrounding verse-ends may serve as an icon of protrusion, excess, surplus and surpassing.

In this discussion, the aspects of phonological and semantic iconicity of the long verse are situated in the emphasis of the word “bladstil” (‘silent as a leaf’). In addition to its placement in the verse, i.e. its syntactic foregrounding, it is also the only word that has two [t] sounds in the [t] paradigm. The rhythmic marking of the sounds and the emphasis on the word endows it with iconic features of sound, syntax and meaning. In addition, it is a reference to the Bible, which is also prominent in Vermeer’s painting: its particular placement in the painting as well as its position in the verse of Gouws’s poem suggests its significance for the view of life and the world shared by both painter and poet.

Seen against this background it becomes clear why the “selfportret” (‘selfportrait’) in the poem’s subtitle corresponds with this reading of the text. Not only does “selfportret” share definite sound-like similarities with “bladstil” (‘silent as a leaf’) as a result of the double [t] sound, but it is also the only other word in the poem that has two [t] sounds, weaving the poet’s philosophy as canto in and by language. This relation is positionally emphasized by placing the Bible in the foreground and forms a reference to Gouws’s being “ingeweef” (‘woven into’) (verse 8) into the “generatieve spil” (‘generative spindle’, cf. “ars poetica”), the manner in which he has constructed his text to “show” the tapestry through the poem’s form. In this way, the Bible reflects the poet’s calling, parallel to Vermeer’s use of explicit Christian symbols, which indicates “the seriousness of Vermeer’s commitment to his new faith and its implications for his art”, as Wheelock and Broos (1996: 86) argue. “Within Dutch literary and pictorial traditions, the lacemaker’s industriousness would have indicated domestic virtue, a theme Vermeer reinforced through the small book with parchment cover ... Although the book has no identifying features, it almost certainly represents a ... small Bible” (ibid.: 178). The nature of the book has been argued in detail also by Blankert and Grijp (1995), Stone-Ferrier (1985) and Franits (1993), who all reach the same conclusion.

The metaphoric correspondence that is formed between lace/text and painting would seem to refer to the poet’s own commitment to his craft. Schneider (1994: 52) says in this regard:

Vermeer’s *Lacemaker* is ... completely absorbed in the concentration and effort required to carry out her work. [...] In the Book of Proverbs, the perfect wife is

described as being ‘far above rubies’, always being busy with wool and with flax, setting her hands to the distaff⁴ and the spindle, and making her own quilts and linen sheets.

It is especially this commitment that is transferred to the poet who performs his task as text maker. Through the weaving process the spaces become filled except for the space of departure which stays open. “Leë latwerk”, as the Dutch poet J. H. Leopoldt states, corresponds with the word “bladstil” (‘silent as a leaf’). Hence, the creative process will become a vibrant “fibrous” act through the life giving potential it possesses. It is also significant that the movement process finds its configuration in the syntactic process of the *apo koinou*, a noun-phrase that serves as both the object of one verb and the subject of the next. The syntactic pauses in the eighth and the ninth verses transform into a figure of the weaving movement that flows from one verse into another. Thus, the syntactic structure of two clauses having an unrepeated word or phrase in common signifies the inherent potential of finding completion. In Gouws’s poetry, it is the relatedness to his own ‘generative source’ that suggests the potential of finding completion. Thus, the paint that flows like life from the surges of the cushion of Vermeer’s painting acquires an iconic function in the profusion of Gouws’s writing process. What is important is that the foregrounded position of the cushion and the Bible in the painting indicates that life flows from the “stuwings/van ’n kussing” (‘surges of a cushion’) as words flow for the poet out of the implied ‘source of life’, Christ.

The last form of emphasized phonological iconicity that is dominant is the [f] sound in the following paradigm:

Table 5.

motto	selfportret (self-portrait)	1
1	myself ... onverwags (myself ... unexpected)	2
2	vooroorgebuig (inclined)	1
3	van my vingers (of my fingers)	2
5	verbeelde spinnewiel (imagined spinning-wheel)	1
7	vergete (forgotten)	1
8	ingeweef tot fibreuse grein (woven into fibrous grain)	2
9	fragiel (fragilely)	1
10	verf (paint)	2
12	voel hoe met verrukking (feels the ecstatic quiver)	2

4. Women’s concerns: women’s work or any other matters traditionally considered to be the concern of women (literary).

The sound cohesion between these words not only refers to weaving and painting but also links up metaphorically to the writing of the text. What is the ultimate product of the lace maker, painter and poet that could be summarized in the above-mentioned paradigm? The semantically dominant word(s) that appear with the [f] sound can be found in the eighth verse in “ingeweef tot fibreuse grein” (‘woven into fibrous grain’). In the context of the poem, the uncommonness of the word “fibreus” that clearly refers to ‘fibrous’ acquires the meaning of being tissue-like and composed of connective tissue. The conclusion the reader draws is that the poem text displays the same features and that the words are like the gold spinnings “ingeweef tot fibreuse grein”. The morphological iconicity between “ingeweef” and “inengeknoop” correspond with the semantic cohesion of verses 8–10 to emphasize the grain of the woven lace.

die sag asempies fragiel
ineengeknoop. verf loop soos lewe uit die stuwings
van ’n kussing

(the soft pockets of breath fragilely
interwoven. paint flows like life from the surges
of a cushion)

The increase in tissue, read metaphorically as the growth of life, gradually acquires life in the “sag asempies fragiel / ineengeknoop” (‘soft pockets of breath fragilely interwoven’). The syntactic axis position of the word “asempies” through the attributive adjective “sag” clearly refers to the diminutive “asempies”, which suggests life. The plural form of the word “asempies” is also significant in this context because, as the text increases and weaving tissue growth expands, life grows from the ‘life-giving spindle’. At the morphological level, the poem communicates the same semantic contents. Hence, the gradual increase of the word, by means of morphological complexity, iconically reflects the generative aspect of this process.

In addition, the morphological and semantic cohesion between the words in the table below is marked by the **syntactic** foregrounding of the word “ineengeknoop” (‘interwoven’) (verse 10). It is as if the meaning of interwoven is emphasized through the word’s form morphologically as well as the repetition of the [-in]-sound in the words mentioned in Table 6. The correspondence found between the words:

Table 6.⁵

2	inslag en skering ⁵ (woof and warp)
8	ingeweef (woven into)
10	ineengeknoop (interwoven)

is especially established as a result of the prefix “in-” that these words have in common. With this morphological iconicity as the point of departure the reader notices other forms of iconicity between sound and meaning. The position of the verse in the poem functions as a diagram of the (inter-)woven textual tapestry. Furthermore, it is from the cohesion with other woven words that the reader can deduce that the text metaphorically gets its own life like a person who consists of: “sag asempies fragile / ineengeknoop” (‘soft pockets of breath fragilely interwoven’). This suggests an intertextual association with the Bible section from Psalm 139: “for you created my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother’s womb”. The iconic aspect here is that the poet sees his text-producing task as interwoven with the generative core that is God.

The growth metaphor is further embedded in the morphological iconicity of words such as:

Table 7.

2	in-slag (woof)	2
8	in-ge-weef (woven in)	3
10	in-eeen-ge-knoop (interwoven)	4

The gradual (mathematical) increase in syllables indicates not only text(ure) growth but also growth of life as a possibility for the poet since his poetry is created from its interwovenness with the “generatieve spil” (‘generative spindle’). The semantic content of the word “ineengeknoop” (‘interwoven’) iconically suggests that the concurrence of the “asempies” (‘pockets of breath’) presupposes a life-giving condition and thus possesses vitality. Read together with the last verse, the poem has an intertwining of words and rhythm (verse 3), text (verse 5) and eventually the poem as completed woven product through the word’s syntactical, morphological and semantical use (verse 12), a definite generative continuity that “kant en klaar tril” (‘quivers in completion’). The life-giving or continuity aspect

5. Here in the sense of the phrase ‘woof and warp’ as selvaige thread of fabric.

is thrust forward in the concluding word of the poem. Without a full stop at the end of the verse the poet creates the suggestion that the “eie ligte loop” (‘own light momentum’) (verse 9) of text formation and intertwinement with its ‘generative essence’ is a lasting alliance and “ineengeknoopt[heid]” (‘interwovenness’) that will continue forever.

5. Rhyming iconicity

There is yet another iconic aspect to be found in the rhyming pattern and the specific sounds, which creates a tapestry interwoven of aaa // bbb // ccc // ddd as Table 8 shows:

Table 8.

1	spieël (mirror)	a
5	spinnewiel (spinning wheel)	a
9	fragiel (fragilely)	a
2	skering (warp)	b
6	huiwering (trepidation)	b
10	stuwings (surges)	b
3	kant (lace)	c
7	brabant	c
11	hand	c
4	gekantel (slanted)	d
8	bladstil (silent as a leaf)	d
12	tril (quiver)	d

It is clear from the above table that the rhyming pattern is intertwined with the semantic content of the poem. Since every fourth verse in each stanza rhymes across stanzas, an iconic structure of interwoven text(ure) is formed. The rhyming interlacing of the words in each fourth verse therefore looks like a text tapestry. This method has clearly an iconic function since the rhyming pattern, like the morphological forming of words and the syntactic structure (enjambment, chiasm), looks like a woven product. The lacemaker in the poem is therefore not only the woman of Johannes Vermeer in the painting *The lacemaker* but also the poet.

6. Summary

As in the tale of Rapunzel, in which the weaving of golden tapestry is performed from a living person's hair, the poet has to weave text as from a life-giving source (according to lines 5–6). The poet creates his work from the imaginative power of the spindle, a domain which also inevitably evokes associations with the Greek myth of Arachne,⁶ who created the thread to weave captivating narratives from the spindle and, in so doing, challenged the gods. In Mendes's words, "Here is the source of poetry, here are all our poems, even the ones that are to be" — which I quoted at the outset and which Gouws uses as the subtitle for his "ars poetica" Gouws describes the iconic genesis of his own writing activity. This gives the reader, in turn, the opportunity to detect open spaces which become visible through the morphological, syntactic, semantic and phonological iconicity at work, making the poem an icon of this very process and thus allowing the reader to discover the genetic process of its coming into being.

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6. Arachne was a young girl who was so skilled in the art of weaving that she dared to challenge the goddess Athena, a patron of the arts and crafts, to a contest. While Athena wove a tapestry depicting the gods and goddesses in all their splendour, Arachne wove one illustrating their romances. Furious over the perfection of the girl's work, Athena tore it to shreds, and Arachne hanged herself in grief. Out of pity, however, Athena loosened the rope, turning it into a cobweb, and transformed Arachne into a spider (Microsoft® Encarta® 2003).

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PART III

Iconicity and historical change

Iconicity and etymology

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Etymologists constantly deal with iconicity, for sound symbolic and sound imitative words are numerous in all languages. However, reference to sound symbolism becomes a usable tool of reconstruction only when the nature of the symbol has been revealed and as long as the origin of attested words is not confused with the origin of language. Onomatopoeia is based on direct observation; yet it is sometimes indistinguishable from sound symbolism. While coining words, people strive for iconicity, but the ways to achieve it are many, and chance rather than necessity determines the results. As a general rule, sound symbolism is indirect, being an almost indefinable, semi-instinctive phonetic response to a word's meaning. Recognition of iconicity does not abolish the idea of an arbitrary (conventional) linguistic sign. Every new coinage is motivated, but time tends to make the initial impulse opaque. To the extent that we avoid sweeping generalizations and shortcuts, the Neo-Grammarians' algebra and a semiotic approach to language history are an etymologist's allies and are complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

Articles on iconicity in language appear by the hundreds. Nor are books on this subject rare. What only half a century ago seemed a revolutionary inroad on the "arbitrary sign" (signifier, signified, *valeur*, and the rest) is now being recycled in student papers. References to Peirce and Jakobson are routine, the evocative properties of sounds have been measured in numerous experiments, and everybody remembers the meaning of the term *ideophone* and admires the comparative degree of adjectives and the form of the plural for their extra length. Progress is obvious. However, the role of iconicity in language history has been investigated insufficiently. Even Malkiel, a scholar keenly aware of language play, did not go beyond a few exotic cases of irregular sound change (see Malkiel 1990). Etymologists do not know to what extent they can rely on the achievements of "iconic studies." In dictionaries, one occasionally comes across statements that a certain word is onomatopoeic or sound symbolic. A chance reference to the "thinning" of vowels can also be expected (as in *bilk* versus *balk*), and this is about all. It is true

that Engl.¹ *slut* begins with *sl-*, which does not augur well for its meaning; that *hillbilly* is made up of rhyming elements, and that *heebie-jeebies* (allegedly coined by the American cartoonist Billy de Beck in his comic strip *Barney Google*) is an expressive reduplication like *hugger-mugger*. But none of those statements is yet an etymology. For many years I have been working on a new etymological dictionary of English, and as a practicing lexicographer I am more interested in method than in theory (though I understand that there can be no method without theory), and it is for the sake of a few methodological approaches that I have written this paper. Most of my examples are deliberately trivial, and my bibliographical references are few. Both their complexity and number could have been increased infinitely.

1. Sound symbolism

According to a well-known hypothesis, the phonetic shape of numerous words reflects the shape of the material objects those words designate and our attitude toward them, including their distance from the observer (Tanz 1971). Additionally, certain sounds appear to be associated in our mind with size, temperature, and texture. The most often-cited examples have long since made their way into textbooks: [i] is bound up with small things; Engl. *gl-* evokes the idea of glaring and glistening, while *sl-* suggests slime and sleaziness. Words, it has been suggested, may even become obsolete if their makeup does not conform to their meaning. For instance, Russ. *iunosha* means ‘young man’, but it mainly occurs in the phrase *iunoshi i devushki* ‘young men and girls’ (*devushka* ‘unmarried woman’). A young man will hardly ever refer to himself as *iunosha*. According to an ingenious conjecture (Zhuravlev 1974: 135), the word *iunosha* sounds soft and effeminate, and this is why it is not popular among males proud of their masculinity.

I will begin with the type of sound symbolism that allegedly connects the phonetic shape of words with the shape of objects and, in order not to complicate matters, will stay with anthologized examples. In numerous unrelated languages, the names of concave and round vessels have the structure *k-p/k-b*. Marcel Cohen (1926) devoted a detailed study to them. The list is long and includes Engl. *cup* and *cube*, Arabic *kūb* ‘jug’, as well as the generic term *gibbus* ‘hump; hunchbacked’

1. The following abbreviations are used in the text: dial. – dialectal, Du. – Dutch, Engl. – English, Ger. – German, Gk – Classical Greek, Gmc – Germanic, Goth. – Gothic, Icel. – Icelandic, It. – Italian, Lat. – Latin, MDu. – Middle Dutch, ME – Middle English, MHG – Middle High German, mod. – modern, Norw. – Norwegian, OE – Old English, OIcel. – Old Icelandic, Russ. – Russian, Skr. – Sanskrit, Sw. – Swedish.

(Latin) and its Hebrew synonym (*gibbēn*). In V. I. Abaev's opinion (1984: 18), Max Vasmer (1950–56) wasted his time on explaining the origin of the Russian word *kub* 'cube' (see *kub* in vol. 2, p. 394 of the Russian edition), for *kub* is a typical ideophone, as follows from Engl. *cob*, Ossetic *gopp* 'top', etc.

Abaev's across the board comparison is fraught with danger. Russ. *kub* 'big vat' may be an old native word, but *kub* 'cube' is a borrowing from Latin (possibly via German). Lat. *cubus* is from Greek, whereas Engl. *cup* is from Latin. Engl. *cob* is especially troublesome. These are its meanings (adapted from the *OED*, with the dates of the earliest occurrence in texts): 'great (big, leading) man' (1430), 'male swan' (1570), 'a kind of fish' (1611), 'a short-legged horse' (1818); 'round body' (1589), 'round heap' (1616), 'roundish piece' (1616); 'head' (1512). Most of those meanings are limited to dialectal use (but cf. *corncob*). Since Russ. *kub* 'cube' and Engl. *cup* are borrowed culture words, rather than ideophones, they cannot be of much interest in the present context, though their existence proves that some words migrate for a good reason. However, the motley multitude united by the sound shape /kob/ in English does not point to a foreign source. As noted, on English soil *cob* 'big man' did not surface in texts before 1430, whereas other senses are more recent. Even if we assume that the attestation at our disposal lags considerably behind the time of coinage, it will be rash to project *cob* to Old English or prehistory, and, given Abaev's approach, we will be left with the hypothesis of a phonosemantic explosion in Middle and Early Modern English, an explosion whose results replicated those known from hoary antiquity: cf. Skr. *kapālam* 'cup, skull' and Gk κύβος 'cube'.

Alongside *cob*, English has or at one time had *cop* 'cup', 'top, summit' (1000), 'heap' (1512), and 'spider' (Old English). In *cobweb*, the first element is, contrary to expectation, *cob-*, not *cop*. Calling all the *k-p/k-b* words listed above sound symbolic explains nothing, for the nature of symbolism remains undisclosed. A broad "iconic" view of things is convenient in that it allows us not to dwell on the difference between *-p* and *-b* (both are labial stops), but for a traditional language historian that difference is of crucial importance, as evidenced by the scholarship on the spread of various consonant shifts. Even in a description of Middle English phonetics, the *p ~ b* alternation cannot be dismissed lightly as a feature regularly occurring in dialects. Only in an undifferentiated sphere of expressive words, *cob* is equal to *cop* (just as *bob* is equal to *bop*), but few (if any) of the meanings of *cob* and *cop* listed above are expressive.

It is fair to say that Indo-Europeanists, when facing such examples, are also at a loss. Skr. *kapālam* is a tolerably good cognate of Gk κύβος, but again we have *p ~ b*. To account for the lack of uniformity, the concept of the enlargement (Ger. *Determinant, Erweiterung*) has been introduced. As a result, the root **keu-* 'bend' (whence 'round or hollow object') emerged in all grades of ablaut and with different

enlargements, **-p* and **-b* among them. This procedure has little to recommend it (despite its nearly universal acceptance), since enlargements, unlike suffixes, carry no meaning. They are elements, amputated from the root for the purpose of obtaining a mechanism by which it becomes possible to unite seemingly or actually related words despite the incompatibility of postradical consonants. Attention to the root ruins the integrity of a word's image, and all enlargements, including correlates like *p ~ b*, emerge as equal and independent. Once they have been disposed of, we are left with a root like **keu-* to which a vague general meaning can be attributed, and it even begins to seem that **keu-* existed before **keup*, **keub* and so forth. Early Indo-Europeanists believed in a period of "pure roots," but today no one does. The alternation of final *p ~ b* in *cop ~ cob* is superficially similar to the one in *kapálam ~ κύβος*; yet the hypothesis that looks respectable in an Indo-European context makes no sense when applied to Middle and Modern English. Clearly, English in the days of Chaucer and Shakespeare did not have the root **ko-* 'round' to which *p* and *b* were added as enlargements. The only important advantage of the Indo-Europeanist view is that it recognizes the problem (though it does not offer a persuasive solution), whereas the naively straightforward iconic view refuses to see it.

Despite its late attestation, Engl. *cob* is not isolated. It is part of a sizable group of Germanic words designating round, lumpy or perhaps soft and cuddly objects. Animal names predominate in it: Engl. *cub* (1530), OIcel. *kobbi* 'young seal' (which resembles *kubbi* 'block of wood'), Du. *kabbe* 'little pig', Du. dial. *kibbe* 'pig', Engl. dial. *keb* 'ewe that has lost her lamb or whose lamb is stillborn' (ca. 1470), Sw. dial. *kibb*, *kubbe* 'calf', and the like. Almost identical words appear in earlier and later recordings. Some of them mean '(young) animal'; others, 'block of wood' or 'fat person'. All bear some resemblance to Lat. *gibbus* and some names of cups and caps, but, with regard to their structure, they are also reminiscent of Ger. dial. *Mocke* 'calf' and the sound complexes *lopp ~ lobb*, *rib ~ rabb ~ robb* (designating insects, birds, and mammals), as well as *mots populaires* and baby words (cf. Engl. *puppy*, Engl. *puffin*, and Icel. *hvuti ~ hvutti ~ hvitti* 'little dog'). Their age is hard to determine (cf. OIcel. *kobbi*, as opposed to Engl. *cub* recorded only in 1530), and projecting them to Proto-Indo-European or a pre-Indo-European substrate is not necessary.

Such words testify to the inexhaustible forces of language creativity. Their expressive and iconic character is in some cases evident, but their etymology cannot begin and end with reference to the *k/g - p/b* "sound gesture." According to the most realistic point of view, Skr. *kapálam* is an old word, whereas Engl. *cub* was coined approximately when it turned up in texts. A margin of a century or even two is of no consequence here: suffice it to admit that not all words have existed forever.

The historical linguists who focus on iconicity sometimes equate the origin of language with the origin of individual words as we know them. Language emerged at an epoch closed for observation. Every now and then phrases like “millions of years” appear in the scholarly literature, sometimes with the implication that words may survive indefinitely long in the form in which they sprang up. The state of the art has been summarized by Sverker Johansson (2005), from whose book I will quote two excerpts:

The uniform language capacities of all human populations today prove that all adaptations for language, biological or otherwise, must have been in place in the last common ancestor of all living people, who most likely lived more than 100,000 years ago, or at the very latest by the time different populations of modern humans parted company on their way to different continents. This happened 60,000 years ago or more ..., so modern human language capacity, to whatever extent it is biologically based, cannot possibly be younger than that. (Johansson 2005: 74)

Did our language capacity evolve long ago, in the early stages of hominid evolution, or was language evolution a late development, taking place in anatomically modern *Homo sapiens*? ‘Early’ would mean at least several hundred thousands years ago, and possibly one or two million years ago..., even longer ..., whereas ‘late’ would be within the past 100,000 years or so.... Neither ‘early’ nor ‘late’ hypotheses can be firmly excluded on paleontological grounds alone, though ‘late’ hypotheses with biologically based language faculties are severely constrained. Hypotheses in which language emerges through cultural evolution are less constrained. The constraints get quite a bit firmer when the evolution of our speech organs and hearing is taken into account. ...there are signs of speech adaptations in Neanderthals, implying that the last common ancestor of us and the Neanderthals had some form of speech, pushing back the lower limit on the origin of speech to half a million years or so, effectively ruling out ‘late’ hypotheses. It should be noted, however, that this does not mean that full human syntactical language has to be that old — some simpler form of spoken proto-language may be enough to drive the evolution of speech adaptations. (Johansson 2005: 174)

Not only “millions” but even sixty thousand years are numbers meaningless to a modern linguist. The oldest extant monuments of Indo-European are less than 4,000 years old, and during that relatively short time all the forms have changed beyond recognition. Pots and heads have always been “roundish” and *Homo sapiens* has presumably always been able to produce the sounds [k g p b]. But Engl. *cob*, *cup*, and their likes did not arise in the speech of the Neanderthals. Some of them may be a paltry few centuries old. Two possibilities are open for resolving this paradox. *Either* there was an epoch of stormy language creativity, and, despite all doubts, *cob*, *cup*, and so forth were coined in that proto-epoch but appeared in writing late *or* the iconic impulse is an inalienable, ever-present part of language

creativity, and people, driven by it, keep producing the same words again and again, that is, cobs will be cobs.

No one will support the “Neanderthal” variant in the form suggested above, but the reasoning that inspires it is not my invention. For example, Beekes (1996:225) believes that Engl. *cub* is Proto-Indo-European. In theory, this is possible. A dialectal word may have been around for centuries before it made its way into a book, but the likelihood of such a scenario is vanishingly small; besides, from a chronological point of view “Proto-Indo-European” is a vague term. More revealing in the present context is the position of those who deal with systems less subject to change than those known to Indo-Europeanists. The Semitic languages are not impervious to change but remarkably stable. A. M. Gazov-Ginzberg wrote a book (in Russian) titled “Was Language Expressive in Its Origins?” (1965). His answer was predictably yes. He lists about 160 Common Semitic roots, nearly all of which turned out to be iconic (“expressive”). A special chapter (110–20) is devoted to the stability of Semitic roots. His second book, also in Russian, aimed at showing that the Semitic inflexion should be analyzed along the same lines, though there he is more cautious in dealing with chronology: “As follows from the title of this work [‘The Symbolism of the Proto-Semitic Inflexion (On the Indubitable Motivation of the Sign)’], we will be especially interested in the time between the emergence of language as found in the Hamito-Semitic family and the splitting of the Semitic languages into groups” (Gazov-Ginzberg 1974:5). He quotes Abaev’s Ossetic etymological dictionary and concludes the section on Hebrew and Arabic *k-p*, *k-b* words so (Gazov-Ginzberg 1965:77, my translation):

Neither Abaev nor Gesenius [who was the first to point to the affinity of Hebrew words with the root *gb* and Lat. *gibbus*] accounts in more concrete terms for the emergence of this international sound-expressive group. This group seems to have originated in the sound gesture of the mouth attempting to represent an object’s round shape. It was, most probably, the gesture of puffing up the cheeks, with an occlusion in front (the lips) and then behind. The main (labial) occlusion is root final, where it is easier to render vividly a pure plosive (without an explosion).

Gazov-Ginzberg treated Semitic roots as primordial and assumed that what is true of Semitic must be true of other languages and of language in general. He was aware of Richard Paget’s and Alexander Jóhannesson’s works, but most of them were inaccessible in Moscow. However, he read Jóhannesson (1954) and enlisted both him and Paget among his allies. This, I think, was an imprudent step. The two scholars he cited did not consider the shape of objects a factor in the coining of words, though Jóhannesson was less consistent than Paget. They believed that before people made use of sound language, they communicated with gestures, and the organs of speech imitated the movements of the hand. Discussion of their and other similar theories can be found in my book *Word Origins... and How We Know*

Them: Etymology for Everyone (Lieberman 2005:217–23). Yet it may be useful to reproduce two quotations here.

Originally man expressed his ideas by gesture, but as he gesticulated with his hands, his tongue, lips and jaw unconsciously followed suit in a ridiculous fashion, “understanding”... the action of the hands. The consequence was that when, owing to pressure of other business, the principal actors (the hands) retired from the stage as much as principal actors do... their understudies — the tongue, lips and jaw — were already proficient in the pantomimic art... If, while pantomiming with tongue, lips and jaw, our ancestors sang, roared or grunted — in order to draw attention to what they were doing — a still louder and remarkable effect was produced, namely, what we call voiced speech.... In this way there was developed a new system of conventional gesture of the organs of articulation from which, as I suggest, nearly all human speech took its origin (Paget 1930: 133–34).

Whoever studies expressivity in language cannot miss the sound complex *k/g/kh – p,b* designating the act of seizing, catching, grabbing. Jóhannesson (1954: 4–5; this is the book Gazov-Ginzberg read) says the following:

The movements of the speaking organs, in a forward direction, as spontaneous imitations of the shape or form of things in nature and of movement show a conformity between form and meaning in a vast number of comparisons in the six “unrelated” family groups of languages. Thus the type *kap-* with all variations of the velars and the labials (*geb-*, *gheb-*, *gem-*, (*kem-*), etc.) shows that the meaning of most of the roots belonging hereto has either been “to eat, hold in the mouth, to grasp, to contain, to close, to press together, to complete, to finish” or “curved, vaulted, round,” etc.

The types *gel-* and *ger-* (with all variations of the velars) show either a similar meaning as for *kap* “curved, vaulted, round,” etc. (in such cases the *l* and *r* have been velar sounds) or they imitate nature sounds (in these cases the *l* and *r* have been palatal or dental sounds). The type *gen-* (with all variations of the velar) shows in the same way a double origin of the *n-* sound, that of a velar (mostly in combination with a following velar: *ang-*, *gengh-*, etc. with the meaning “round, vaulted, curved”) and that of a palatal, imitating nature sounds.

Gazov-Ginzberg (1965:11) objects to Jóhannesson’s dismemberment of the Semitic root but finds himself in complete agreement with his conclusion regarding the *kap* ‘seize, catch’ complex:

To produce the sound of a blow by the hand, extra air is made to leave the cavity before the moment of grabbing, after which this cavity is closed by the palm’s edges. The organs of speech, to produce a similar sound, go through the same mechanical process. The emission of air is brought about by quick expiration (however, an intake of air will result in a sound of the same type) and broken off by the occlusion of the lips, the organs situated at the end of the oral cavity. The

use of voice, and, consequently, a vowel, was not needed at the stage of imitation. (Gazov-Ginzberg 1965:56)

It turns out that the result will be the same, irrespective of whether phonetics follows the action of the hand or the shape of an observed object. I am not sure that the two theories are compatible despite their reliance on primitive symbolism and find the identity of their conclusions embarrassing. Regrettably, Sverker Johansson, who paid some attention to the gestural theory of language origins (and who, judging by his vast bibliography, can read Russian), mentions neither Paget/Jóhannesson nor Gazov-Ginzberg.

Paget and others assumed that the words of modern languages carry enough information about the earliest prehistoric stages of human speech: Icelandic and Turkish, English and Hebrew turned out to be direct descendants of the form of communication that evolved 60,000 years ago at the latest. (Cf. the title of Jóhannesson's book: "How Did Homo Sapiens Express the Idea of Flat?", 1958.) The hypothesis does not seem realistic. To accept it, we must agree that even Indo-European, which contrary to its conservative neighbors, has never been at a standstill, has retained intact the words (or at least their roots) coined tens of millennia before the emergence of Hittite. One must possess a good deal of blind faith to believe in such a miracle. Yet Jóhannesson (1954: 5) says: "I regard it as proved that the overwhelming majority of all words ... [came] into existence as spontaneous imitations by the speaking organs of the shape or form of things in nature and of movement." Perhaps they did (we will not cavil at the "epithet" *proved*). The question is whether we still have palpable traces of those ancient processes.

The only way to salvage some version of Paget and Jóhannesson's reconstruction is to follow Wilhelm Oehl, a Swiss scholar, who was among the first to tap various languages for similar-sounding words endowed with nearly the same meaning. He collected hundreds of them, and even after we subtract numerous unconvincing examples, we will be left with impressive lists and will have to admit that so many coincidences cannot be due to chance. (Unconvincing examples depend too heavily on the transposition and substitution of sounds and on figurative or remote meanings.)

Oehl, not unexpectedly, is at his best when he deals with words of catching (a favorite group in all studies of sound symbolism) and words that lend themselves naturally to sound symbolic analysis, for instance, those with reduplication (another object of intensive research; cf., among others, Bouman 1939, André 1978, and Skoda 1982). His etude on the names of the butterfly (1922) is a masterpiece (Russ. *babochka*, It. *farfalla*, and so forth). In it he made a bold attempt to show that even the English word has nothing to do with *butter*. Since his works, although not forgotten, are rarely consulted today, I will list them here: Oehl 1917–

18, 1919–20, 1922, 1923–24, 1926, 1928, 1929, 1933a and b, 1940. But Oehl never contended that he was dealing with the oldest layer of human vocabulary. His term *elementare Wortschöpfung* should be understood as “spontaneous creation”. According to him, people recreate the same or similar forms again and again: a fluttering butterfly will make speakers call it **ba-ba* and **far-far* in any place at any time.

Things go well as long as we stay with *hop – kop – gop* (semi-instinctive cries that accompany catching an object, whatever their origin), *ba-ba/far-far*, and even some semantic changes (*sleazy* may have acquired its present day meaning under the influence of *sl-*, whereas *glaiive* may have come to mean ‘sword’ rather than ‘spear’ because *gl-* suggests glistening: see Liberman 2005: 36–38). But the contours of the picture become blurred once we approach *k – b* as a near universal “sound gesture” of roundness. Let us again remember that *cob* hardly existed before the Middle English period and that it is most probably neither a borrowing nor a migratory word, despite the presence of *Kopf*, *cup*, and their ilk. Was the force that gave rise to it the same as in the Proto-Semitic epoch?

Another factor that complicates matters is the wealth of sound symbolic synonyms. Walde and Pokorny (WP, IEW) have been often ridiculed for the number of Proto-Indo-European roots to which they assigned the meaning *‘swell’. But their conclusion is unavoidable. Engl. *pot*, *pit*, *pout*, and *bot(tle)* designate roundness as clearly as do *cop*, *coop*, *cob*, and *gob(let)*, though in them the labial is root initial. One needs no reference to the movement of the hand or the tongue to sense the idea of a circle in words beginning and ending with the same consonant: cf. *boob*, *goog(le)*, *dood(le)*, and their likes. Their structure is symbolic.

This brings us to the problem implied by the title of my paper. Even if we accept as “proved” the strongest version of the theories discussed above and conclude that words like Engl. *cob* and *cub* arose following the movement of the hand or the organs of the mouth, or some other impulse, what should we say in the entries devoted to such words? The answer is: very little. It is useful to refer to the scholarship on the semantics of the *k-b* group and cite analogues from other languages, but all the questions will remain. In what dialect did *cob* and *cub* originate? Can we assume that they arose approximately when they turned up in books? Are *cub* and *cob* related, and, if so, what is the nature of their relatedness? (Their vowels do not alternate by the rules of “classical” ablaut.) If they are sound symbolic, what “symbol” is hidden in them? In sum, etymologists should not ignore sound symbolism, but reference to it does not help them too much unless they are ready to make a gigantic shortcut and leap from fairly recent forms (and in comparison to the beginning of creation Egyptian, Proto-Semitic, and even Nostratic are recent!) to the emergence of *Homo Sapiens* or take refuge in psychology disguised as linguistics.

2. Onomatopoeia

The literature on sound-imitative words is vaster than even the authors of surveys make it appear (for example, Nuckolls [1999] missed all the works written in Russian; see Liberman 2005:259, note 3), probably because the material seems relatively easy to detect and systematize. But in this area of language iconicity everything is clear only at the level of words reproducing animal cries and words designating rustling, whistling, crackling, and the rest, though the names of natural sounds are sufficiently diverse to call for additional investigation. Doors creak, frogs croak, ice cracks, crows “crake” (an obsolete verb) and caw. Each verb has its history.

Sound symbolism is a vague, often intangible subject, whereas sound imitation is an observable phenomenon. But here, too, shortcuts pose danger. The English noun *flirt* first meant ‘smart tap, rap, fillip, sudden jerk’; the earliest citation in the *OED* is dated 1577. Its etymon is the verb *flirt* ‘throw with a jerk’. According to the *OED*, the verb is onomatopoeic, like *flick*, *flip*, *flerk* (obsolete), and (with regard to *-rt*) *spurt* and *squirt*. But, unlike /kr xr gr/ in bird names (cf. *crow*, ‘rook’ < *hrōc*, *raven* < *hræfn*; *grach*, the Russian for “rook”), /kl – k/, /xl – x/, r – r/ (as in *clock*, *cluck*, *click*; *laugh* < **hlahhjan*; *roar* < *rāran*), whose meanings can be partly guessed without recourse to a dictionary, *flick* – *flip* – *flap* – *flop* – *flerk* are sound symbolic rather than sound-imitative. The consonant cluster /fl/ is associated with unsteady or fitful movement (*flutter*, *flicker*), with quick, jerky movements (as above), and also with flowing and flying. Do those verbs attempt to reproduce any natural sound?

Whatever their function, *flip* – *flap* – *flop* are “primitive roots,” like those listed in Walde-Pokorny and its successor (*IEW*), but devoid of the glamour inseparable from asterisked forms. If Semitic roots were expressive, the same must hold for the roots of Indo-European and the *flip-flop* group. It is only the nature of expressivity that needs clarification: sound imitative, sound-symbolic, or something else? In solving such riddles, the researcher should not be carried away by preconceived notions. *ESSI* (X:170) offers a trenchant defense of the onomatopoeic origin of Slavic *komar*- ‘mosquito’; /kom/ is credited with rendering the plaintive, squeaking sound made by that insect. Do mosquitoes go *komm*? *Mumble*, *mutter*, and *mur-mur* are almost certainly sound-imitative, but, when the Indo-European words for ‘fly’ (Lat. *musca*, Russ. *mukha*, Ger. *Mücke*) are added to this series, doubts arise, because the sonorous complex /mu/ hardly does justice to buzzing as we hear it.

Below I will give a few examples of successful etymologizing inspired by the idea of sound imitation. Buzzing will again occupy us for a while. English dictionaries state that the origin of the adjective *busy* is unknown. In fact, it has been known to lexicographers outside the English speaking world for more than a cen-

tury (see Kissling 1899:309 and Braune 1912:711, among many others). Words having the structure *b-s* ~ *b-z* tend to designate hectic or chaotic activity: cf. OIcel. *bysja* ‘rush forward’, MDu. *busen* ‘drink to excess’, MHG *bisen* ‘behave like cattle running away in frenzy from horseflies’, Germ. *Bise* ‘northeastern wind’, and many others, including Germ. *böse* ‘evil wicked; angry’, Engl. *booze*, *boisterous*, *boast*, and possibly *boost*, along with Russ. *bystryi* ‘quick’ and *buzit’* ‘behave in a disorderly way’. In the beginning, there was the word **/baz/*; it spawned verbs and adjectives describing animals’ and people’s flight from insects. The rest followed automatically (‘quick’, ‘noisy’, ‘rowdiness’, etc.). Close by is the group of words describing wasteful and frivolous actions like Du. *bazelen* ‘talk nonsense, twaddle’.

Another onomatopoeic word belonging to the same semantic field was **/bo/* ~ **/bu/* (a demonic cry?), whence Engl. *boo*, Ger. *Bö(e)* ‘gust of wind, squall’, Du. *boeman* ‘bogy’, and ME *boy* ‘devil’, a homonym of ME *boy* ‘servant’. Engl. *bogy* and *boggle* show that still another terrifying word was *bog*, to which Engl. *bug* is related, a counterpart of Russ. *buka*. Some such words mean ‘swell’, for horrible creatures can strike awe by inflating themselves (*bug* is one of them), but it is not necessary to reconstruct the Indo-European root **bus* (let alone **bu-s*) ‘swell’: the idea of swelling is secondary.

Vowels and consonants alternate freely in onomatopoeic complexes: *bud* and *bug* become synonyms (both can swell), *big* (a member of the same group) emerges with /i/ alongside Norw. *bugge* ‘big man’, /bak/ and /bag/ compete with /big/, and so forth. Quite obviously, the root **bu* with enlargements **s*, **g*, **k*, **d* never existed. The onomatopoeic *b-* words form a loose group of spurious cognates, but their affinity, suspicious from the point of view of traditional methods, is no less real than the affinity between bona fide related forms. It is like comparing membership in a club with membership in a family.

OE *būgan* meant ‘bow, bend’ and ‘flee’. Apparently, its earliest meaning was ‘cower in fear (and try to save oneself)’. *Būgan* contains the same sound complex /bug/ that made people afraid. If *būgan* is related to Lat. *fugere* ‘flee’ and Skr. *bhuj* ‘bow, bend’, we are dealing with one of the most ancient Indo-European verbs of onomatopoeic origin. Whether it was coined 60,000 or “millions” of years ago will remain unknown, for it could have been recreated any number of times: echo always says “boo”.

A less clear but somewhat similar case is *troll*. This word is part of the following nest: MHG *trol* ~ *trolle* ‘ghostly creature; unwieldy person; blockhead’, MHG *trollen* ‘toddle, move in short steps’, and Engl. *troll* ‘revolve, wag; roll; fish for pike; wander’. Its neighbor is the nest with *dr-* words: Norw. *Drolen* ‘devil’, MDu. *drolle* ‘little fellow; elf, goblin’ (Engl. *droll* is a borrowing from French, but its source is Middle Dutch), and Engl. *drill*, with cognates elsewhere in Germanic. The

etymology of *drill* and its relation to *thrill* has been a matter of protracted debate. Engl. *troll* ‘roll’ is reminiscent of *trendle* and *trundle*.

Especially memorable are Scandinavian trolls, but the word *troll* seems to have originated more to the south. In all likelihood, the sound complex *drall* ~ *drull*, alternating with *trall* ~ *trull*, was associated with a loud noise (peals of thunder?) and invisible danger. The “primitive” mind made trolls, like many supernatural creatures, soar in the air and send people diseases; Swed. *trollskot* (‘trollshot’) still means ‘lumbago’. The anthropomorphization of trolls produced various results: some were pictured as miniscule (hence MDu. *drolle* ‘little fellow’), others as huge. The tiniest of them moved in small steps (cf. MHG *trollen* ‘toddle’), the big ones trod heavily (hence ‘unwieldy person’). Pejorative meanings developed early and naturally (cf. Ger. *Trolle* ~ *Trulle* ‘slut, whore’ and Engl. *trull* ~ *trollop*). The picture is complicated, and here I have confined myself to the briefest sketch possible (see a detailed discussion in Liberman, 2009), but its message is obvious: *troll* is an onomatopoeia, a word reproducing a loud, frightening noise, perhaps a thunderclap.

My final example is Engl. *gawk* ‘awkward person; fool, simpleton’. Its history (despite the *OED*’s admonition) is inextricably connected with the history of *gowk* ‘cuckoo’ (from Scandinavian), even though the details of the connection are hidden. *Gawk*, like *busy* and *troll*, resembles quite a few words: Early Mod. Engl. *geck* ‘fool, simpleton, dupe’, Ger. *gecken* ‘croak’ (with the synonyms *gacken*, *gicken*, *geckzen*, and *kecken*), *Gecken-Jecken* ‘carnival fool in the Lower Rhenish area’ (its southern dialectal synonyms are *gacks*, *gagg*, *gagglen*, *gagger*, etc.), *Gaukel* ‘trickery’, MHG *giege* ‘fool’, Du. *guich* ‘grimace’ (*iemand de guich nasteken* ‘poke fun’ and other obsolete expressions), and perhaps even Engl. *giggle*. The modern slang word *geek* ‘socially inept or eccentric person; someone engrossed in a single subject’ belongs here too. However obscure their origin may be, they seem to be onomatopoeic, heavily influenced by **gawk-* ‘cuckoo’ or derived from it. Even if *gowk* was coined side by side with *gawk*, we are dealing with two variants of the same process. Cuckoo birds have been called foolish from time immemorial; hence the attested meanings of all ‘gecks’. A word beginning and ending with a velar may also have imitated the inarticulate speech of a half-wit (for more details see the entry *gawk* in Liberman 2008).

3. A few concluding remarks

At this stage in the development of historical linguistics, a spirited defense of iconicity in language is no longer needed. But general pronouncements will take us nowhere. As pointed out, for an etymologist sound symbolism is a vague concept. The hand-to-mouth and object-to-mouth theories are shaky, to say the

least, though a connection between “sound gestures” and certain processes can hardly be denied. A linguist faced by the proliferation of near identical forms of human creativity all over the world faces problems familiar to anthropologists, ethnographers, historians, and folklorists. Some techniques, customs, and motifs are practically universal and raise the question: polygenesis or monogenesis? Time and again the one secure clue to the origin of folklore plots has been offered and adopted as reasonable: the movement of the sun (or the moon) in the sky, historical conditions (primogeniture/ultimogeniture, survivals, class struggle, etc.), initiation, sex life, or the composition of dreams. Influential schools grew on the basis of each proposal (some of them continue into the present), but experience has taught us to be wary of sweeping generalizations.

Similar-sounding words with matching meaning, to the extent that they occur in various languages, belong with similar customs and motifs. We wonder whether such words are remnants of the protolanguage, the debris miraculously preserved in spite of all changes (monogenesis), or reflexes of semantic units again and again taking the same form (polygenesis), whatever the invisible hand guiding their rise and reemergence may be. Oehl (spontaneous creation; polygenesis) may have been close to the truth, even if we call into question his reconstruction of the invisible hand. The notion that the words of modern languages, however conservative, have survived unimpaired through incalculable millennia seems fanciful. An etymologist should treat sound symbolism seriously, but hardly a single convincing derivation can be based on it. Shortcuts of the type discussed earlier in connection with *cub* and *cob* are inadmissible.

We are better off with onomatopoeia. A few paragraphs devoted above to the origin of *boy*, *bug*, *bud*, *bow*; *troll*, *droll*, *drill*, *trill*, *thrill*, and *geek*, *gawk*, *geck* give no idea of how complex the history of each word is. Only *boo*, *moo*, *pooh* are easy. The most dangerous temptation consists in referring hastily a word's etymology to sound symbolism or onomatopoeia and deciding that such a reference will exhaust the problem. Historical linguists studying iconicity and those who remain true to their Neo-Grammarians textbooks represent complementary rather than opposite points of view. There is no etymology without strict adherence to sound correspondences, and there is no history of language without realizing that correspondences may be disrupted.

In etymology, onomatopoeia becomes a perilous tool every time it runs afoul of regular sound correspondences. Here is a typical example. The English adjective *big* seems to belong with other *b-g* words (all the competing etymologies of *big* are demonstrably worse). Problems arise when we discover that Du. *big* means ‘pig’. Is Du. *big* related to Engl. *big* and *pig*, and, by the same token, are Engl. *big* and *pig* related? Sound laws are against this conclusion, and common sense, which is

always on the side of folk etymology and unites look-alikes, should not be allowed to guide us. Yet Du. *big* and Engl. *big/pig* are probably of one blood.

To admit this, we need not abolish “laws” or the prophets. Instead, we should offer a well-argued analysis of the *b-g/b-k* “club” in the languages of the world, mainly Indo-European, and point to other pairs like Russ. *buka* and Norw. *Drolen*, the twin brothers of Engl. *bogy* and OIcel. *troll*. The hypothesis should be that *big/pig*, *buk-/bug* (for completeness’ sake, *Puck* can be added to them), and *drol-/trol(l)* are onomatopoeic groups in which vowels and consonants alternate in a more or less unpredictable way, without affecting the words’ meaning, or, to put it differently, they are variants of the same word, pairwise. Dictionaries state unanimously that the origin of *pig* is unknown and that the connection between *pig* and Du. *big* “cannot be made out.” I think that those who risk ignoring the *b/p* barrier have a serious advantage over “agnostics,” and I find an ally in Pfister (1969).

The alternative — either iconicity or de Saussure’s structural approach to language — does not exist. Phonemes are sufficiently devoid of meaning to guarantee the validity of the substitution test (*bet* ≠ *pet*, *gap* ≠ *cap*, *den* ≠ *ten*) and to change mechanically across language borders, except when their role in a word’s semantics comes to the foreground. Nuckolls (1999:246) cites, with evident approval, “a paradigm shift in which iconicity would be the norm for human language and arbitrariness would be seen as an evolutionary adaptation arising from the need for deception and obfuscation”. I would disregard paradigms (the term has been trodden to death to such an extent that even a copy shop near the university where I teach is called “Paradigm”) and argue for a much simpler “evolutionary model.”

Apparently, every word was at one time motivated. Slang is nearly impenetrable from an etymological point of view. *Bamboozle* ‘deceive’, *bonkum* ‘crazy’, *flivver* ‘cheap car’, *tizzy* ‘excitement’, and *nerd* ‘social moron’ are perhaps expressive, but only insofar as they do not resemble other words and are therefore “funny.” If for the sake of argument we assume that a few such coinages are recent and native, their creation must have been the result of some impulse. But that impulse cannot be reduced to straightforward sound symbolism and onomatopoeia. Nor do the phonemes that make up *nerd* and *tizzy* follow the movement of the hand or imitate the shape of the “objects” they designate. Many “first words” must have been such, that is, neither sound symbolic in the strict sense of the term nor sound-imitative. In some way, *flirt* seemed good as a verbal image of a rap, tap, jerk. At its birth, it was “indirectly motivated”.

As time goes on, even unquestionable onomatopoeias become mainstream words and change. For example, Gmc. **gauk-* ‘cuckoo’ became OE *gēac* (pronounced *yeh-ak* /’je:ak/) and has come down to us as dial. *yeke*. The bond between the bird’s cry and its name disappeared, and *cuckoo* was borrowed. Sound symbolism produces a momentum of its own. Engl. /dʒ/ in both the onset and the coda

lends words a slangy character (cf. *jig, jog, jazz, budge, nudge, dodge*), /gl/ begins to suggest brightness, and /sl/ ends up in slime (which did not prevent *glide* from becoming a synonym of *slide* or *gloom* and *slam* meaning what they do). Finally, the period of “first words” is an uninspiring construct. There have always been many words that influenced one another, people have always had neighbors from whom they borrowed words, and conflicting impulses have always been at cross-purposes. There never was a beginning. After all, we are not characters in Kipling’s *Just So Stories*.

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Iconicity typological and theological

J. G. Hamann and James Joyce

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The extensive writings on language of the Prussian “pansemiotician” Johan Georg Hamann (1730–1788) provide a rich field for inquiry. The icon of breathing in his “New Apology for the Letter H” is satirical yet finally theological in a richly allusive manner. Only 150 years later, in the form of James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, its iconicity equally unexplored, would appear a work of genius as abstruse, its author as myriadminded and delighted with bawdy as Hamann. Within it lies another iconical “H”, the first initial of its omnifarious hero, equally concerned with breathing and the soul. Nothing in literary history formed the link we can see here; it is a matter of iconicity pure and simple.

raffiniert ist der Herr Gott, aber boshaft ist Er nicht

Albert Einstein

1. Hamann

My starting point is the German philosopher, essayist, and Christian apologist Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788), the “Magus of the North,” friend of Kant, hailed by Goethe as “der hellste Kopf in Deutschland”,¹ whose massive learning, striking arguments against the reign of Enlightened Reason, enormous literary influence, most dramatically on the development of German Romanticism, make him a figure of great interest in cultural history. He is also, for those who see German Romanticism, despite Goethe, Schiller, Eichendorff, Novalis, Heine, Kleist,

1. “Goethe nannte den Publizisten und Schriftsteller Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788) den hellsten Kopf seiner Zeit; anderen freilich galt er als dunkel, gar als Irrationalist. Doch nicht nur Goethe verdankte ihm entscheidende Impulse — auch Herder, die Dichter des Sturm und Drang und der Romantik, später vor allem Kierkegaard” (Bayer 1998:7). Indeed, Goethe mentioned numerous times his desire to edit a collected edition of Hamann’s works.

et al., as a seedbed of National Socialism, easily blackened, along with Nietzsche, as a celebrant of the irrational. Be that as it may,² a most relevant opinion for the present context is that of Winfried Nöth, who calls Hamann a “theological pansemiotician” (Nöth 1990: 29). Of that intriguing pansemiosis I propose to analyze one aspect, along with a few of its sources and parallels.

Of Hamann’s work his 1773 *Neue Apologie des Buchstabens h* (New Apology for [better, “Defense of”] the Letter h.)³ stands out as an iconic transformation of orthography. It is in the form of a response to a book of *Reflections on Religion* (*Betrachtungen über die Religion*, 1773) published by one Christian Tobias Damm, in which the unfortunate man⁴ set out to apply reason, a “rational order”, to religion and, while he was at it, to orthography as well.⁵ The very word “reason” (Vernunft) was like a red flag to a bull for Hamann when used, as here, in the Enlightened spirit of the age, as an abstraction of unique merit. How justified he would have felt had he lived a few more years, to witness the 1793 enthronement in bloodsoaked Paris of an actress seated on the high altar of Notre Dame cathedral as the Goddess of Reason!⁶ Of the two matters, the undermining of revealed religion and the suggestion of a more efficient way to write German, one would think

2. And despite redemptive efforts (in English, the source I suspect of the proto-Nazi charge) of a tentative Isaiah Berlin (1993), and a wholehearted James C. O’Flaherty (1962). David Hart (2005) notes approvingly elements in Hamann’s style linking him to Sterne and Joyce.

3. Further ref. to “the Apology”. Except when otherwise noted, all translations German to English are mine.

4. Not only in going down in history as Hamann’s victim, but in his application of his rational reflections to a translation of the New Testament, in which he swept aside miracles and such metaphysical rubbish in order to, as Carl Justi put it “der heilsamen Wahrheit die äußere Hülle abzuziehen”. So, continues Justi, “wurde sein Lebensabend durch Sorgen und Anfeindungen verdüstert” (Justi 1923: I.42). He was spat upon in the street, and given other unpleasant indications of the unpreparedness of his contemporaries for the March of Mind.

5. To Hamann, such simplifying and economizing tendencies had always existed to be fought: he described the world of 5th c. Athens in the same style, with “healthy reason” as a term of abuse...” jede neue Secte der Sophisten versprach eine Encyclopedie der gesunden Vernunft und Erfahrung. Diese Projecte waren die Näschereyen, welche Sokrates seinen Mitbürgern zu vereckeln suchte” (Hamann 1759: abschn.3, par. 4).

6. Carlyle (1837: sec. IV) “Carmagnole Complete”. Hamann’s position, with its still powerful applicability, is put succinctly and accurately by Kawanago (1999: 5): “Für Hamann ist der aufklärerische Optimismus wie im Programm der Orthographiereform ebenso harmlos sowie gefährlich, weil er über seine eigenen Voraussetzungen selbst unaufgeklärt ist. Er ist gebannt vom Glauben an die immanente Vervollkommnungs-fähigkeit der Welt und erkennt nicht, wie tief die Vernunft selbst in die Sünde verstickt, dem ‘Dienst der Eitelkeit’ unterworfen ist.”

Hamann, as a devout Christian, would surely attack the former. That would be to misjudge entirely Hamann's peculiar talent! Naturally, he went after the orthography, as the camel's nose under the tent, for who could object to Damm's suggestion that the letter *h*, when unsounded, be removed from German spelling? As indeed, in some cases it subsequently has been. German now spells *Tat* 'deed' t-a-t, not, as before *That*; *Tau* 'dew' t-a-u, rather than t-h-a-u, *Teil* 'part' for *Theil*, *Flut* 'flood' for *Fluth*, there being felt no need to express by a letter the extra air expelled in the formation of this voiceless stop ⟨t⟩.

Hamann lived in a world of signs; as he put it, "the Book of Nature and of history is nothing but ciphers, hidden signs"; signs iconological and onomatopoeic, while history is embodied in hieroglyphic, or better typological symbols.⁷ His hatred of inflated abstractions in general (one might compare the "I fear those big words" of Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *Ulysses*), was based on their interrupting the natural flow of signs from nature to man, via his language. A language infected with abstractions sets not so much the "general" vs. the "specific," or the "abstract" vs the "concrete," but the "unreal" vs the "real". The "Reason" of the Enlightenment is thereby trapped inside language; in his *Metakritik* Hamann states "language is the center of reason's misunderstanding with itself".⁸ While language to the Enlightenment was considered a human invention, to Hamann it was built into the natural world. A philosophy of language like Hamann's, with its claim of immediate connection to nature (for which we may read "Creation") through

7. "Wir sind alle fähig, Propheten zu seyn. Alle Erscheinungen der Natur sind Träume, Gesichter, Räthsel, die ihre Bedeutung, ihren geheimen Sinn haben. Das Buch der Natur und der Geschichte sind nichts als Chyffern, verborgene Zeichen, die eben den Schlüssel nöthig haben, der die heilige Schrift auslegt und die Absicht ihrer Eingebung ist"(Hamann 1957: I.308). In the words of a commentator, "Die Welt ist dem Menschen gegenüber nicht bloß als Ding, als sprachlose Sprache vorhanden. Sondern Natur sowie Geschichte sind 'Bücher'. Sie sind als 'Text' zu lesen, und als Text haben sie Absicht und Bedeutung. ...Die ursprünglichste, poetische Stufe ist die der figurativen, *ikonologischen* Zeichen. Die historische ist die der hieroglyphischen, oder richtiger, *typologischen* Symbole...[Hamann]...betont vielmehr die prinzipielle Verwandtschaft des "kyriologischen", d.h. des figurativen bzw. *onomatopoetischen* (Kawanago 1999: 115–116, emphasis mine).

8. "sondern Sprache ist auch der *Mittelpunct des Misverständes der Vernunft mit ihr selbst*" (Hamann 1780: par.6); cf. on the lack of an iconic bond from an abstraction to the world, "Die aufklärerische Kritik hat 'den Text der Natur, gleich einer Sündfluth, überschwemmt' (NII207) indem sie den naturwüchsigen Zusammenhang der Sprachbildung für kindisch und albern hält und diese mit der Abstraktion und der begrifflichen Sprache zu ersetzen versucht" (Kawanago 1999.sec 3 ll. 6–9).

signs, has of necessity, whatever its terminology, a basis in the Peircean icon.⁹ And with its assumption of writing as the corporeality of language, and the element of writing the letter (*Buchstabe*, letter of the alphabet), the connection icon to letter is inescapable.

In the first part of the *Apology* Hamann gives the nub of what he finds offensive, Damm's "oracular pronouncement" that "Whoever is not true in the correct writing of the little letter *h*, he is also readily untrue and unrighteous in the great revelations and secrets of the common, healthy and practical religion of mankind".¹⁰ Words like "healthy", or "practical", were anathema to Hamann in such a context, for he read through them to the intent of the Enlighteners to root out superstition, myth, and, finally, though not openly, revealed religion, to make man the measure of all things.¹¹ What is Damm up to? In Hamann's eyes he is a rational modernizer, determined to rid Germany of the medieval darkness so brilliantly banished in France, and seeing medieval darkness in the irrational Gothicism of German writing, he takes the use of unsounded ⟨h⟩ as a diagrammatic iconicity of a kind of *mauvaise foi*, moving from one "untrue" act after another as the individual shirks responsibility for writing in those grotesque *h*'s, they in turn existing in an ideational landscape where appear the great revelations and secrets of the rationalized practical form of Christianity he espouses. Hamann chooses to conceive that landscape as writing, none other being possible for letters. Once Hamann has forged

9. I say icon, rather than index or symbol, on the basis of there being nothing but firstness, or resemblance. ⟨h⟩ as a sound that can be nothing in the sound system of language is an icon of nothing in that context, though not an index, which indicates process, as does diagram in diagrammatic iconicity, nor symbol, which requires convention.

10. "Wer in der Orthographie des kleinen Buchstabens *h* nicht treu ist, der ist auch in den großen Offenbarungen und Geheimnissen der allgemeinen, gesunden und praktischen Menschenreligion gerne untreu und ungerecht" (Hamann 1773: 118). Can we really trust this absurd pronouncement as being from Damm's book? The evidence offered by the citations of Damm's text in Wiener 1842: 218 would indicate we cannot, and that Hamann is here the untrustworthy one (but in a good cause!). To wit: Damm there writes only "unnützes *h* mitten in den Sylliben oder am Ende derselben...wie wolten wir solchen einen ungegründeten Glaubens-Artikel nemen können?... (in such a state of slothful inaction) was werden sie thun [sic!], wenn wieder die Gewonheit ihrer von Jugend auf gelerneten Vorstellungen in Religions-Sachen geredet wird? S[k]laven ihrer Gewonheiten, sind schwer frei zu machen!... Wer im kleinen nicht treu ist (wie unser Herr im Lukas, kap. 16, 10...saget) der ist auch im großen gerne untreu und ungerecht."

11. A project most successfully carried forward under Stalin, at least in the opinion of those convinced either by inanity or terror, "le plus grand philosophe de tous les temps...Celui qui éduque les hommes et transforme la nature; celui qui a proclamé que l'homme est la plus grand valeur sur terre...Louis Aragon, 1953" (*L'Express*, 20/9/2007, p. 26).

that link — handed to him on a plate by Damm's foolish attempt to give his orthographical argument theological weight —, he can proceed to a defence of the letter *h* — which in orthography means no more than a preference for the old way of spelling — on a metaphysical level, of theological semiosis. Damm's repeated invocation of a religion *allgemein, gesund, and praktisch*, along with his good Encyclopedist's emphasis on Reason, is absurd, like calling for an assurance of good dental care in Heaven, for religion is a matter of belief, *Glaube*, Latin *credere* — *credo*, 'I believe', as Tertullian put it, *quia absurdum est*, "because it is absurd". If it weren't, it would be open to human analysis and deconstruction. If there is no disproof of belief, there is no disproof of the letter *h* when unsounded. (Eureka!)

2. Alberich

At this point in the argument of the *Apology* Hamann, like Alberich with the Tarnhelm, disappears. His affinity for appearing masked in his own works has led him first to assume the role of a certain Heinrich, the old village schoolmaster, grumbling over the Encyclopedists, then rising to a furious jeremiad.¹² Now, invisible and iconic, he shape-changes into the letter *h* itself. Of all letters, *h* was best suited to Hamann's purpose. To speak as if you were actually any other letter but *h* would have something irresistibly ridiculous about it. *H*, however, is unlike the other letters, and as such can be maneuvered into an icon of life. Its phonetic nature in Indo-European languages is located somewhere between "rough breathing" — so called in textbooks of ancient Greek — or a "voiceless vowel" in modern English. An oxymoron but linguistically valid nevertheless. German, like English, depends upon it to make meaningful distinctions... "hand" is quite different from "and" in English; "haber" from "aber", "Hauch" vs "auch" in German. Nevertheless, vowels proper, *a e i o u*, etc. are made up both of air (which is essentially meaningless, being indistinguishable from breathing),¹³ and "voice"; by which is meant vibration of the vocal cords, of great importance in many languages. Our consonants

12. Hamann seems to have taken great pleasure in stretching the limits of the literary convention of an assumed identity, appearing on the title pages of various works as *ein Liebhaber der langen Weile, ein Prediger in der Wüsten, Aristobulus, Handlanger des Hierophanten* (The Hod Carrier of the Hierophants), *der Ritter von Rosenkreuz, Magus im Norden, ein Geistliche in Schwaben, un Sauvage du Nord*, the Sibyl, or Adelgunde, to give a partial list.

13. This has the usual weakness of generalities, not here relevant, so ignored. Indrawn breath of itself can have meaning in Swedish, e.g., used for emotional coloring of speech, while in Japanese surprise, in and of itself, or polite inattention, as *Ah so deska...*

p t k are only differentiated from their widely distinctive fellows *b d g* by voicing. To have no way of distinguishing kill from gill, or Ted from dead, would seriously compromise our vocabulary. So a vowel without vocal cord vibration is the same as breathing or, linguistically speaking, nothing.¹⁴ Soul denied by reason is also nothing, or just what the imagination of the Magus of the North could seize upon. How could you complain when the Encyclopedia police arrive to take away nothing? Only if nothing equals breathing. Hamann, by merging himself with *h*, makes himself an icon of it. Its existence *is* breath; his existence *depends upon* breath; in breathing they are icons of each other even before the shape-shift. Furthermore, since popular belief, noting that life ends when breathing stops, and assuming the existence of a soul, concludes this must be the time the soul deserts the now decaying body, and ascends to heaven, so takes that last breath, rising as warm air does, as its icon.

3. Typology

A matter oddly neglected in iconicity studies, along with graphology, and of considerable importance in the study of literature, is *typology*, by which I mean not typology of signs, or any ordering of kinds, but Biblical typology, also called Biblical typological interpretation. Nor do I mean its classic form, the matching of the events in the Old Testament to those in the New Testament, especially popular in Protestant tracts of the 17th and 18th centuries, but also used by Catholic scholars. There a “type” is a foreshadowing, an event or series of events that is going to reoccur *as a form*, called the antitype, in the life of Christ, a formal analogy, in Peircean terms a diagrammatic iconicity. Samson tearing off the doors of the gates of Gaza is the type, Christ descending to hell and there shattering the doors of its gates to announce redemption is the antitype; Jonah’s three days in the belly of the whale the type, Christ’s three days spent in death before resurrection the antitype; Adam the first man the type, Christ coming down to assume the form of man the antitype, and so forth. Rather I wish to employ what had become by the 19th century an extended form of typology, allowing the inclusion of a wide variety of non-Biblical literature in which echoes of the Bible occur.¹⁵ Using Hamann as a model, I wish to consider the possibility of there being what might be called *typological icons*. For

14. ‘linguistically speaking’ once taken out of its phonemic role (Hauch vs auch). A practical proof: Imagine someone listening to sounds you are making. You produce a bird call, then an “a”, a “b”, an “e”, then air, at which your auditor, having identified the others, says “that’s nothing!”

15. See, e. g. Landow 1980, Bercovitch 1972, Haines 1982, Dickson 1987.

him, it has been said, “The clue to the hieroglyphic, iconological structure of reality is thus rather that of biblical typology, in outstanding sense historically ordered.”¹⁶ This Hamannian typology sheds any necessity to find antitypes only in the New Testament: as Hamann saw it, “The story of Abraham, the Story of Ruth, may be the story of an oriental patriarch or a Moabite woman, but they are also the stories of every man and every woman.”¹⁷ There is nothing so large scale in the *Apology*, with its story of the letter *h*, but that story plays out on the same Biblical background. It must first, however, deal with the challenge to any letter set by St Paul, and it does so tacitly. St Paul famously set the letter against the spirit (“for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life”, II. Chron. 3); Hamann shows that the letter *h* is the spirit — not to contradict, but to enlarge, for letter and spirit are indistinguishable.¹⁸ St Paul also says, ye (my brothers in Christ) are epistles (Greek *επιστολη* /epistolay/ which means letter, and is «letter» in English, but not in German and not in a sense Hamann emphasized, but germane to the link between Hamann and Joyce I hope to establish. Luther has *Ihr seid unser Brief*,¹⁹ which letter is to be written not with ink but with spirit (*πνευμα* /pneuma/, *Geist*), and teach not the letter (*γραμμα* /gramma/), which killeth, while the spirit gives life...Greek like German distinguishes *Brief* from *Buchstabe*, so the iconic link for Hamann is spirit, *pneuma*, united in *Hauch*, the domain of *h*, breath, for the spirit can write letters on “the fleshy tables of the heart”, as distinguished from those of stone on the tables of the law — i.e., the Old Testament to Paul. The spirit letters are the letters that make a man into an epistle of Christ. As a brother in Christ, Hamann is a letter (epistle, or

16. “Der Hinweis auf die hieroglyphisch, ikonologische Struktur der Wirklichkeit ist also vielmehr biblisch-typologisch, also im eminenten Sinne geschichtlich geordnet” (Kawanago 1999:117).

17. So Berlin (1993:50) states as a generality, without specifying source.

18. Berlin (1993:90); to the same point Kawanago (1999:3., par.4), “Der Geist ist für Hamann mit dem Buchstaben, d.h. mit seinem sprachlichen Leib fest verbunden und von diesem untrennbar” (The spirit is for Hamann strongly attached to the letter, i.e. to its linguistic body, and is indivisible from it).

19. *Der zweite Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* [3.2] Ihr seid unser Brief, in unser Herz geschrieben, erkannt und gelesen von allen Menschen! [3.3] Ist doch offenbar geworden, daß ihr ein Brief Christi seid, durch unsern Dienst zubereitet, geschrieben nicht mit Tinte, sondern mit dem Geist des lebendigen Gottes, nicht auf steinerne Tafeln, sondern auf fleischerne Tafeln, nämlich eure Herzen. [3.4] Solches Vertrauen aber haben wir durch Christus zu Gott. [3.5] Nicht daß wir tüchtig sind von uns selber, uns etwas zuzurechnen als von uns selber; sondern daß wir tüchtig sind, ist von Gott, [3.6] der uns auch tüchtig gemacht hat zu Dienern des neuen Bundes, nicht des Buchstabens, sondern des Geistes. Denn der Buchstabe tötet, aber der Geist macht lebendig (emphasis mine).

Brief in Luther's translation), which letter — here he seizes upon the Buchstabe *h*, but it doesn't matter, since an epistle needs words and words need letters — is the good news of the spirit, *pneuma*, the soul and its promise of immortality. And the upstart Damm and the Encyclopedists thought to trifle with that! The breath and the soul are living, while the Reason — a word of Damm — is dead-ening.

4. Luther

So armed, the letter *h* can tell its enemies they need not be surprised that it can speak, for “Your life is that which I am — a breath” (*Euer Leben is das, was ich bin — ein Hauch*). An image that allows more than one interpretation, as not just “You are alive as I am alive, by breathing”, with the words of Genesis a background: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul”, but also “Your life hangs upon something as insubstantial as you imagine me to be — a breath.” As the book of Job has it “The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him.” But the letter *h* is not subject to human frailty, his is no candle flame a breath can extinguish, for, as he warns, “Mein Dasein und meine Erhaltung ist die Sache desjenigen, der alle Dinge trägt mit seinem kräftigen Worte, und der geschworen und gesagt: ‘Bis daß Himmel und Erde zergehen, wird nicht zergehen der kleinste Buchstab noch ein Tüttel ...’” (Hamann 1773: 141–2). (My existence and my preservation is the concern of Him who all things sustains with his mighty word, and who (has) sworn and said: “Until Heaven and Earth perish, there will not perish the smallest letter (or) even a tittle...”) What an astonishing passage! Here is the original, Matthew 5:18, as translated in the King James Bible: “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” And here is Luther's Matthäus 5.18: “Denn wahrlich, ich sage euch: Bis Himmel und Erde vergehen, wird nicht vergehen der kleinste Buchstabe noch ein Tüpfelchen vom Gesetz, bis es alles geschieht.” This is Christ himself, giving the Sermon on the Mount, the antitype of Moses bringing down the tablets from Mount Sinai, and on that antitype Hamann, in the adopted person of the icon of the breath, audaciously claims an iconistic-typological foreshadowing! Whatever word Christ actually used, the Greek New Testament has in its place *keraiā* /κεραία/, a stroke used in forming a letter, a little horn, the tip of which distinguishes one Hebrew letter from another, as *dalit* דָּלִית from *res* רֶסֶס. The King James Bible uses the word “jot” while Luther, fortunately for Hamann's purpose, writes *Buchstabe*, and lo and behold, the little letter the rationalizers wanted to do away with proves to have a life span reaching the end of days. Are the Encyclopedistes ready to do away with the Sermon on the Mount?

5. Grimmiana

With the change of schoolmaster into speaking letter, Hamann provides an equally startling shape-shift of his adversary. Tobias Damm is forgotten, his place taken without explanation by a group the letter *h* refers to as “You little prophets of Bohemian Broda” assumably from the anonymously published 1753 book(let) *Le petit prophète de Boehmischbroda*, soon known by *le tout Paris* to be the work of Friedrich Melchior, later Baron von Grimm, the friend of Rousseau and Diderot. Being mostly a puff for Italian music and singers in Paris, not a word in it about orthography, it seems an odd target for Hamann to select. But it was a *succès de scandale*,²⁰ and part of the growing repute of this fellow German turned French courtier known for his *habileté* and *souplesse d’esprit*, his capacities in the bedroom as well as the salon, altogether a smooth character who had risen from humble origins to be the familiar of *les plus grands seigneurs de l’Europe* from Catherine the Great on down.. In his connection to the *Encyclopedistes* and enthusiasm for the Enlightenment, along with being an intellectual lightweight, not to mention a mocker of religion, even daring in *Le petit prophète* to jokingly assume the voice of God,²¹ he must have seemed to Hamann a blown up bubble in need of a pin prick. A “petit” prophet, he calls himself ever so disarmingly, living in a Bohemian garret with fatuous plans to astonish Europe with his music, and puts on his title page a trifling little exercise in iconicity, a sort of *carmen figuratum* possibly imitating the movement of his violin bow as he composes. It might not even have been his, rather an inspired moment in the life of the page compositor, but it ties in nicely with the arch playfulness of his assumed identity — and Hamann may have considered that an invasion of one of his own specialities! This is guesswork, the critical matter of interpretation is the necessity that the provincial German Damm should fall away and be replaced by the glittering Parisian German, a European celebrity, so that by contesting him the metaphysical icon of nothing can take the world stage. The battle for the soul of man enters its climactic phase: on one side the little letter *h*, on the other the massed ranks of the puffed up prophets of the

20. Such is the account of Avalon 1813: passim. An added irony lies in the fact that Grimm’s theatrical and musical opinions in his book, are, like Damm’s orthographical observations, very much in agreement with modern taste. Grimm rebukes, for instance, the Parisians for preferring the *Phèdre* of Pradon to that of Racine.

21. Avalon 1813:40, “Il parodie souvent les formes du langage religieux; il appelle les économistes, qu’il haïssait, les Capucins de l’Encyclopédie.” For an engrossing recreation of the fatuity of the era of *le bon mot* and *la plaisanterie*, Grimm’s stock in trade, I recommend the 1996 Patrice Leconte film, *Ridicule*.

Enlightenment, as frivolous as their namesake, Un-Grimm the polished pleaser, the Carpet Knight, determined to blow away such antique remnants of the Age of Faith. *Flavit, et dissipati sunt* — but Hamann arranges it to go the other way.

To this purpose he has the to-be-eliminated *h* reveal itself as an icon of the ultimate mystery, the iconic link being the fact that it is *unheard* — by which is meant, of course, unheard in those occurrences that the Enlightened wish to eliminate. The letter *h* now quotes directly, then continues, in the words of St Paul as if shifting into his — the saint's — own identity: “Das kein Auge gesehen hat, das kein Ohr gehört hat und in keines Menschen Herz gekommen ist ... hierin besteht die einzige Religion, die eines höchsten Wesens würdig und ihm anständig ist, und die Gott für diejenigen bereitet hat, welche Ihn lieben.”²² In King James this is, “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” The Hamannian text has little iconicity as regards the eye, but everything, as we fully realize only at this point, as regards the ear. “Nor ear heard...”: the things that God has prepared for those who love Him. And what is the icon of that silence? The letter *h*. This is as well a kind of reverse onomatopoeia, by which a written form imitates a referent by silence — an imprecise indication, to be sure — unless the referent is boundless. Ernst Jünger in his *Sgraffiti* (1960), has put it best: “The letter *h*, for Hamann, becomes by its inaudibility the representative of things kept hidden and silent, a symbol of the spiritual dimension perceived in words.”²³

6. James Joyce

Finnegans Wake (1939), James Joyce's forbidding masterpiece, the history of the world in a dream, has been called the only rival produced by the 20th century to Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* (Bloom 1994: 39). Like Hamann's its style is teasingly abstruse and at times overwhelmingly complex; it fits eerily well, once “English” is put for “German,” the following description of Hamann's as “blending into mimicry and parody as a rhetorical and argumentative device... an

22. Hamann (1773:142). I. Corinthians 2.09. I assume Hamann's direct source is, as usual, Luther *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* 2.9: “Sondern wie geschrieben stehet: Das kein Auge gesehen hat, und kein Ohr gehöret hat, und in keines Menschen Herz gekommen ist, das Gott bereitet hat denen, die ihn lieben.”

23. quoted in Häggman 2003: par. 3 “[For Hamann] Der Buchstabe *H* wird in seiner Unhoerbarkeit als der Vertreter der verborgenen, verschwiegenen Dinge, als Symbol der geistigen Anteils an den Worten aufgefasst.”

extraordinary breadth and quantity of citations and allusions; and by no means are these all clear and obvious... a tapestry of multicolored threads of the ideas, language, and imagery of thinkers, be they ancient, biblical, or contemporary. These are woven across a woof of a love of irony, which as ever adds a layer of interpretative complexity" (Griffith-Dickson 2002:2, par. 1); "His humor is not, it must be said, immediately accessible, and is full of eccentric, apparently perverse, and somewhat demented textual games; his prose is intentionally obscure, overflowing with classical references, cryptic metaphors, and convoluted pranks. It is not hyperbole to say that Hamann's writings constitute probably the most difficult body of literature within the German language" (Hart 2005:33). With "more than one reader" for "Goethe" and "Joyce" for "Hamann", the same truth appears in "Goethe observed that when reading Hamann, 'one must completely rule out what one normally means by understanding.'" (Griffith-Dickson: *ibid.*). More renowned than Hamann, Joyce claimed his work would leave his future interpreters a lifetime of explication. As well, Joyce the celebrated nonbeliever filled his work with as much theological reference as Hamann the arch-believer. Both insisted that sexuality be included with it, Hamann declaring he could not imagine a God without genitals. Life in the Prussia of Frederick the Great, and under British rule in Ireland c. 1900, left both with a dislike of imperial power and a disdain for politics. A disdain as well for the *bürgerlich* conventions: both lived with a woman, and fathered her children, without marrying her. Mere accidents of history, but they include the possibility that it is in *Finnegans Wake* that the Hamannian program of typological iconicity is achieved in imaginative literature.²⁴

7. Shakespeare

The clearest link lies in Joyce's use of those words of St Paul, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard..." The words themselves are alive throughout English literature, and English literature takes, always and ever, its lead from Shakespeare. In Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bottom, magically turned into an ass, now back in human form, struggling to express the wonder of what he thinks was a dream, cries "The eye of man hath not heard, the eare of man hath not seen... what my dreame was". This is synaesthesia, identified as a mode of iconicity by Charles Morris (Morris 1946:273, cited by Nöth 1990:124), here used as complex typology of confusion. Bottom has heard the words of St Paul, but there is but small chance

24. A previous approach to iconicity in *Finnegans Wake* was made by Jean-Michel Rabaté (Rabaté 1986).

he has seen them. He can read, but is hardly literate, as the constant errors in his speech indicate. So for him the ear must see — he speaks better than he knows. As Father Robert Boyle (1978) suggested,²⁵ Shakespeare was not only representing the inarticulate confusion of a poor man here, but “the wonder...in human love and folly”. As he does in Sonnet 23,

Oh learn to read what silent love has writ
To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.

The paradox of breath linked to spirit, so skilfully developed by Hamann, lay as well in Shakespeare's grasp. His Cleopatra was such

that she did make defect perfection, And, breathless, power breathe forth
Anthony and Cleopatra II.ii. 237

Hamann knew Shakespeare as well as St Paul as he developed his theory of language as a translation by man (“Reden ist Übersetzung”), a translation of what no ear has seen before, being the iconological structure of the world: “Rede, daß ich Dich sehe!” (Speak, so I can see you, using ear to see) cries Hamann, “this wish was fulfilled by the Creation, which is speaking to the Created through the Created”.²⁶ In *Finnegans Wake* this becomes

That's the point of eschatology our book of kills reaches for ... What can't be coded
can be decoded if an ear aye sieze what no eye ere grieved for.²⁷

It is the somewhat tendentious statement of an old man in a dream, one of the four evangelists, probably Matthew, who is questioning Yawn, here an iconic form of Shakespeare's Bottom, resting after his dream of being an ass. Yawn is in turn an iconic form of Shaun, the goahead public man, and certainly an *Aufklärer* in Hamannian terms, the brother and alterego of Shem, the private man, scurrilous writer and artist, the two being sons of the lead character of the book, Porter-Earwicker, who like them is in an outer dream, for all the characters of the book either

25. for the link St Paul to Shakespeare and thence to Joyce, as well as for the inclusion of Hopkins, see Boyle (1978: ix-58 & passim).

26. “Dieser Wunsch wurde durch die Schöpfung erfüllt, die eine Rede an die Kreatur durch die Kreatur ist” (Hamann 1957: II.198); “Reden ist übersetzen — aus einer Engelsprache in eine Menschensprache, das heist, Gedanken in Worte, — Sachen in Namen, — Bilder in Zeichen; die poetisch oder kyriologisch, historisch, oder symbolisch oder hieroglyphisch — und philosophisch oder charakteristisch seyn können. Diese Art der Übersetzung (verstehe Reden) kommt mehr, als irgend eine andere, mit der verkehrten Seite von Tapeten überein, And shews the stuff, but not the workman's skill” (Hamann 1957: II.199).

27. Joyce (1939: 482: 33ff.). Further refs. will be by page and line number in the text.

sleep through it or exist in a dream of one of the sleepers. Here Matthew is seen — or heard — describing the way of writing that has enabled *Finnegans Wake* to exist, “That’s the point of eschatology our book of kills reaches for...” The “book of kills” is an iconic echo in dream speech of *The Book of Kells*, a manuscript of the four Gospels, so “our book” because a writer of one of those Gospels is speaking. As the main body of the New Testament, it incorporates the *logos* of the *eschatos*, knowledge of the farthest, last things. Or an indication that they are what no eye has seen, nor ear heard. How can it be at the same time *Finnegans Wake*? By Hamannian typology: *Finnegans Wake* is, among other things the mortal antitype of the Bible.

8. Hopkins

To read this book is to write it, or to dream it, by following the lead of what can perhaps best be called branching icons, using the ear to seize the clue. In “what no eye ere grieved for” I see — no, hear — Gerard Manley Hopkins’s *Spring and Fall*, or Margaret poem (Hopkins 1948:94), a typical example of the method of the text through iconicity of sound. Would another reader hear that sound? As Grimm the experienced courtier would put it, “Ah, cher monsieur, cela dépend...” The text can only support one such *sound-of-discovery* by others, that dream logic may or may not place in the same page or chapter. Hopkins is in the text of *Finnegans Wake*, as those more skilled than I have found; whether his Margaret is, or only Maggies and Margareens, is another matter. If this iconic tie works, it does so by “grieve” and “for”, the meaning basis, the necessity of which was so well established by Max Näanny (Näanny 1986: 199) lying in “decord” which I read as “decoding” with heart (Lat. *cor, cordis*) attached, as a *sursum corda*... clear from the heart to lift the weight of grief:

Margaret, are you **grieving**
 Over Goldengrove unleaving
 Leaves, like the things of man, you
 With your fresh thoughts, care **for**, can you?

Ah, as the **heart** grows older
 It will come to such **sights** colder
 By and by, nor spare a sigh,
 Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie
 And yet you will weep, and know why.
 Now, no matter, child, the name:
 Sorrow’s springs are the same.
 Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed,
 What heart heard of, ghost guessed: It is the blight man was born for,
 It is Margaret you mourn for.

The child stands amid a grove of trees whose leaves carpet the ground. This is the Book of Nature she is too young to read, to see its *Rede*, to convert eye (the sight of the wanwood) to ear (the translation into language and thereby understanding) of the fallen leaves as the index of man's life, something the child senses but lacks the words for and is thereby confused — she hasn't reached the Hamannian *Übersetzung* — she has no language for this experience. Language and thought are inextricable, Nature is, but can't be, coded; it was coded once for all at the Creation. There is no meaning in form because there is no meaning without language.

Yet the Margaret poem still has more to tell us in this Hamann and Joyce context:

Margaret, are you grieving
Over Goldengrove unleaving
Leaves, like the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts, care for, can you?

Ah, as the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh,
Though **worlds** of wanwood leafmeal lie
And yet you will weep, and know why.
Now, no matter, child, the name:
Sorrow's springs are the same.
Nor **mouth** had, no nor mind, expressed,
What heart heard of, **ghost** guessed: It is the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.

The world lies in “worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie”, in itself a miracle of sound and sense iconically married, the word in a negation, “Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed”. Yet I have just claimed the child weeps because she lacks words, just as an infant cries in an effort to communicate hunger, for which it has no words. That's what the poem means, or should we say, aware of the shadow of Lewis Carroll lying over our language, what the poem is called, isn't it? But see how we've been tricked, and why this poem will always be ranked among the greatest in the language: Hopkins has just put into words what he said no mouth ever said, nor mind ever thought! That is (Lewis Carroll again), what the poem *is*, the immense and eternal sadness of mortality. *Ghost*, that is *Geist*, the same word, guessed, came upon this truth, moved to *Word* (*Wort*) by the poet, to encompass worlds.

It is a rare page of *Finnegans Wake* that does not extend such iconic invitations into literature and history; in this case one that shows, behind a reference behind another reference, the unity of language, thought and imagination that Hamann preached and Joyce achieved. Language is not invented by man once man is in the world, it is language that is the world, there to serve man — the Book of Nature intensified. “Jede Erscheinung der Natur war ein Wort, — das Zeichen, Sinnbild

und Unterpfand einer neuen, geheimen, unaussprechlichen, aber desto innigern Vereinigung, Mittheilung und Gemeinschaft göttlicher Energien und Ideen. Alles, was der Mensch am Anfange hörte, mit Augen sah, beschaute und seine Hände betasteten, war ein lebendiges Wort..." (Hamann 1772: par.1) As it was for for St Paul, God reveals the mystery of the world to us in words of the spirit, written upon flesh — they are in our bodies (I.Cor, 2.10, e.g.). And while Hamann was no facile idealist in philosophy, he took Word and World to be inseparable. As he put it in a letter to his friend Jacobi, "Ohne Wort, keine Vernunft — keine Welt. Hier ist die Quelle der Schöpfung und Regierung." (Hamann 1965: V. 95.21–2 letter 721, 2 nov. 1783). In economical English, "No word, no World."

I think that that Joyce initiated this linkage for himself in *Ulysses*, the sensation-causing novel that preceded *Finnegans Wake*. There a letter (*Brief*) sent to Mr Bloom, the main character, contains a mistake in spelling (*Buchstabe*) that confuses "word" with "world".²⁸ That the mistaken word contained a sexual element seems clear, though we are never to learn its precise identity, as we are never to learn the answer to a question repeated in the thoughts of Stephen Dedalus, the second main character, "What is that word known to all men?" Mr Bloom's letter is an answer to one of his, written under a pseudonym, in which we assume he has attempted the virtue of a lady typist named Martha Clifford. She writes, "I called you naughty boy because I do not like that other world. Please tell me what is the meaning of that word." Now in fact I believe Miss Clifford typed, not hand-wrote, the letter, for handwriting an extra letter into a "word" is far less likely than hitting an extra key. There was a period, of course, in which a typewritten *billet doux* would have been considered hardly suitable — something forgotten in our day of torrid emails and text messages — but in 1904 typewriting was new, perhaps exciting, and would suit a woman's caution in replying to a "masher".

If she did type, it would be an incidental strengthening of the hint we already have in her profession, of the place of "type" in Joyce's expansion of the iconicity of "letter". With it or without, it is clear that *Finnegans Wake* employs a typology such as that we have seen in Hamann. "Type" is from Greek *typos*, a blow, as in

28. There is a possibility, in a style of such extraordinary originality as Joyce's, and so given to word play, and subjected to such accidents of publication, that we are looking at a simple misprint. Evidence for that could be taken from Gilbert (1930:151), in which the letter is reprinted with "word...word", for Gilbert knew Joyce and wrote his book, it has been suggested, practically under dictation. Yet "world" has survived generations of textual examination and correction, culminating in the giant three volume edition with variants of Hans Walter Gabler with Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior (1986). Nor is it known whether semi-blind Joyce ever proofread Gilbert's text. To my mind the clincher is that later in the book, when Bloom muses over the letter, he repeats the "world".

striking, then an outline, so a foreshadowing...this is iconic in itself, a light blow leaving an outline, a stamp on a yielding surface the same, an icon of the blow... τυπω λεγειν (*tupo legain*), literally “by (such a) blow to speak” is freely “to describe in outline”. To describe in outline is derived from describe in outlines, which is neighbor to “foreshadow”, and equivalent of “adumbrate”, Lat. *adumbrare*, “to (put into) shade, to sketch, to sketch in words.” English has movable “type”, and a typesetter, secretaries who can “type a letter”. This has nothing to do with German, which developed *machineschreiben* long after Hamann’s time, and keeps type as “kind”. *Finnegans Wake* has in “letter” both the *Buchstabe* of Hamann and the dual or tryadic letter-litter-latter and postal missive of Joyce, to be iconic examples of τυπω λεγειν /*tupo legain*/ and thus a shared typological and iconic concept. If word = world, letters = life (breath), for man without language does not exist.

9. The Letter in *Finnegans Wake*

Most remarkable is the extent to which the book sets the reader to what might be called a game of the letter *h*, in turn a reasonable description of Hamann’s *Apology*, for each *h* in the flowing omniform of the language of the text can be a clue to the presence of the central character, whose initials are HCE, for Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker. The reader, always to some extent confused and trying to follow what is going on, seizes these clues. Two examples:

A *hand* from the cloud emerges, holding a chart expanded (593.19)

...amid the seminary of Somnionia. Even unto *Heliopolis*, the castellated, the enchanting (594.9)

The context is that of appearance of the gods as the last great (Viconian) stage of history comes to a close and preparations are made for rebirth and cyclical recommencement. The hand from the cloud must be that of omniform Humphrey our hero, emphasized by H-C-E twice. When not lying drunk on the floor of his tavern, he is capable of godliness. The second example shows that in the landscape of dream, containing the dead but also seeds of resurrection (seminary), as befitting the god Atum, lord of Heliopolis, who created his children by masturbation, there lies beneath the iconic symbol of our hero, guilty of sexual impropriety.

The letter *h* need not introduce the hero; it is also woven into the text as a subject in its own right, and even appearing to duplicate parts of Hamann’s *Apology*:

to Aran man the hat through the whispering his ho (here keen again and begin again to make soundsense and sensesound kin again); those *haughtypitched disdotted aiches* easily of the rariest

inasdroll as most of the jaywalking eyes we do plough into halve, unconnected, principal, medial or final, always jims in the jam, sahib, as pipless as threadworms: the innocent exhibitionism of those frank yet capricious underlinings: that strange exotic serpentine, *since so properly banished from our scripture*, about as freak-wing a wetterhand now as to see a righthheaded ladywhite don a corksore, which, in its invincible insolence ever longer more and of more morosity, seems to uncoil spirally and swell lacertinelazily before our eyes under pressure of the writer's hand; the ungainly musicianlessness so painted in sculpting *selsfounder ah ha* as blackartful as a *podatus* and dumbfoumnder oh ho oaproariose (121. mid, my emphasis)

Here the text of the letter written by Mrs Earwicker (ALP) in defence of her husband, containing the bulk of the book's themes but only teasingly part-revealed throughout, is treated to an examination of the letters (of the alphabet) used to write it. The examiner is probably Shem, the more literate of her two sons. He traces the letters, themselves endowed with life, while in so or as so doing masturbates, his penis swelling under his hand as he thinks of a naked white woman putting on her corset — or using a dildo, or “riding a cock horse”, taking the upper part in sexual intercourse. For such fornication the letters may be in need of reform, perhaps mostly the hat ..ho..haughty...(h) aiche, whose presence, upon the lips of the socially favored, indicates their superiority over the *h*-dropping Cockney; but whose absence “unconnected, principal, medial or final” (so irking to Herr Damm) as in British Indian “sahib”, pronounced as “sob”, seems insolent.

A *tour de force* of multiple suggestiveness by branching icons comes in the section called the Children's Hour, where Shem's sister Isobel teases him, recapitulating Hamann's identification of *h* with breath:

In the *house of breathings* lies that word, all fairness. The walls are of rubinen and the glittergates of elfinbone. The roof herof is of massicious jasper and a canopy of Tyrian awning rises and still descends to it. A grape cluster of lights hangs therebeneath and all the house is filled with the *breathings* of her fairness, the fairness of fondance and the fairness of milk and rhubarb and the fairness of roasted meats and uniomargrits and the fairness of promise with *consonantia and avowals*. There lies her word, you reder! (249.6 ff, my emphasis)

This is, in effect, Isobel's tauntingly held wide open mouth, within it the word her brother is supposed to guess, but can't. That “margrits” is a pronunciation within normal limits of “Margaret's”, whose word *nor mouth had*, means Hopkins is iconically here as well, but overshadowed by the giant form of Isobel. She hasn't

pronounced the word, of course, but there are all the makings. What breathing, nothing in itself, joins consonants and vowels, being neither? Why, h of course. This is the body of a woman, all warm and welcoming and instructive — that breath is language is life is ... back to — body! So is *h* critical to the transmission of this important letter (*Brief*), presently floating to shore in a bottle

Every letter is a hard but yours sure is the hardest
 crux ever. Hack an axe, hook an oxe, hath an an, *heth hith ence*
 But once done, dealt and delivered, tattat, you're on the map.
 Rased on traumscraft from Maston, Boss. After rounding his
 world of ancient days. (623.33 ff, my emphasis)

Boston, Mass. (its reversal an index of cyclical history) is its present postmark, and its dream source and tattered composition makes it “traumscraft”. Clearly words beginning in *h* predominate, threatened by forgery: hesitence/cy being the *h*-word that tripped up the traitor to Irish independence Piggot, for he regularly misspelled the word “hesitancy” and was thereby caught, fled, and committed suicide. “Delta and” = delta, we may assume, the sign of the feminine genitalia and where the river, mother-earth quality of ALP, runs out and dissolves into the ocean, which end of man with woman puts the end of history “on the map” or record of ancient days. For a final suggestion of Joyce’s use of diagrammatic iconicity in parallel to Hamann’s, I take this passage on Shaun, acting as the Post, or postman, and carrying the letter, or letters:

How all too *unwordy* am I, a mere mailman of peace, a poor loust
 hastehater of the first degree, the principot of Candia, no legs and
 a title, for such eminence, or unpro promenade rather, to be much
 more exact, as to be the bearer extraordinary of these postoomany
 missive on his majesty’s service ... (408.10 ff, my emphasis)

A postman is hardly *unwordy*, being loaded down with letters. Rather, by being mere mail carrier, looked down upon as well for his personal characteristics, lousy as well as loutish, he is unfitted to make an appearance in the world as well as the written word. He is *unworldly*, and a skewed index or antitype of poor Martha Clifford the typist, another mute evidence to the coincidence of the word with the world.

10. Conclusion

In their coincidence of opposites Hamann and Joyce leave us with an amusing and instructive demonstration of chance-linked unbridled semiosis and iconicity, part of a style so dense and demanding of erudition on the part of the reader, along

with a keen ear, that many have turned away. For those who come, and remain, there are rewards. They range from the minor — the satisfaction of puzzle solving — to the major — a privileged view into final matters.

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An iconic, analogical approach to grammaticalization

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This paper addresses a number of problems connected with the ‘apparatus’ used in grammaticalization theory. It will be argued that we get a better grip on what happens in processes of grammaticalization (and its ‘opposite’, lexicalization) if the process is viewed in terms of analogical processes, which are part of our general cognitive abilities. These analogical processes are connected with the modes of iconic and indexical thinking, which are prior to and underlie the mode of symbolic thinking (cf. Deacon 1997). I will make use of a simple analogical or usage-based grammar model, in which a distinction is made between processes taking place on a *token* level and those taking place on a *type* level. The model also involves taking more notice of the *form* of linguistic signs and of the *synchronic* grammar system at each stage of the grammaticalization process. This model will then be used on a classic example of grammaticalization (or subjectification), involving the modal verbs in the history of English. It will show that analogy lies at the basis of this grammaticalization process, and it will illustrate at the same time that the problems with scope, noted by Tabor and Traugott (1998), can also be dealt with if the process is seen as being steered by analogy.

1. Introduction

The number of phenomena which are gathered together under the term ‘grammaticalization’ is quite large and in some ways quite diverse. It includes such processes as:

- (1) i. the development of syntax out of discourse
- ii. the grammaticalization of lexical items into function words
- iii. clause combining and clause fusion
- iv. subjectification

For all these different types similar motivating factors have been suggested, similar principles (e.g. unidirectionality), and similar clines and hierarchies. It is evident that not all of these factors work out neatly in practice for each particular type of grammaticalization. Thus, Tabor and Traugott (1998) have suggested that one of Lehmann's parameters, the parameter of scope reduction, does not work in (iv) subjectification, where we see scope increase rather than reduction, and they suggest that it may also not be valid in some other cases of grammaticalization involving type (ii).¹

Other problem areas in grammaticalization studies concern the distinction between lexicalization and grammaticalization (cf. especially Himmelmann 2004, Brinton and Traugott 2005), and the issue of unidirectional reduction in clause combining. In this paper, I will concentrate on (iv) and the issue of scope, but the approach taken here, making use of a usage-based analogical grammar, may also provide a solution to some of the other issues connected with (i)–(iv) (see for more details, Fischer 2007).

Let us first take a brief look at Lehmann's parameters. The parameters given in Table 1 illustrate the degree to which a particular linguistic item has grammaticalized (grammaticalization is a process in which a lexical item becomes more grammatical, e.g. as in the change of a verb of motion like *go* becoming a future auxiliary *gonna* when followed by an infinitive, see below).

Table 1. Diachronic stages in the process of grammaticalization

<i>Parameters</i>	<i>Paradigmatic processes</i>	<i>Syntagmatic processes</i>
Weight	(loss of) integrity	(reduction of) scope
Cohesion	(increase in) paradigmaticity	(increase in) bondedness
Variability	(loss of) paradigmatic variability: increase in obligatoriness	(decrease in) syntagmatic variability

The main features of grammaticalization characterized in this Table are given in (2):

- (2) i. phonetic and semantic reduction
- ii. formal fusion of elements/clauses
- iii. scope decrease
- iv. reduction of choice within a paradigm (e.g. the French negative construction: *ne ... pas/goutte/point* etc. > reduced to *ne ...pas*)
- v. reduction of choice within a clause (elements become obligatory and fixed in position).

1. There is no space to discuss that here but more details concerning scope problems and type (1)ii can be found in Fischer (2007: Chapter 6).

It is quite clear from the way the Table is set up that the issue of scope decrease (row 1, column 2) is closely tied up with the other parameters because all parameters, both on the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic plain, involve reduction. The *increase* in ‘cohesion’ (row 2), is in fact also a loss: a loss of choice on the paradigmatic level (only one construction remains out of a whole paradigm) and a loss of independence on the syntagmatic level, i.e. the construction gets fixed in position. A change in the parameter of scope *decrease* thus brings the whole scheme out of balance, and is therefore a more serious matter to the model of grammaticalization than it may look at first sight.

Before turning to Lehmann’s parameter of scope decrease and its applicability in cases of grammaticalization, especially in the case of (iv) above, I will first consider the relation between form and function in linguistic signs (Section 2) because I believe that this relation has been neglected in studies on grammaticalization, and it will be crucial to our discussion here. In connection with this, it will be suggested that a usage-based analogical grammar model is most suited, for a number of reasons, to observe this relation and to explain change (Section 3). Next, in Section 4, I will show how subjectification fares within such a model, using a well-known case of subjectification as illustration, and I will discuss how the Lehmannian parameter of scope applies there, and how analogy may be involved. The discussion will be rounded off by a brief conclusion (Section 5).

2. Form and function

Some of the problems with the grammaticalization types given in (1) are connected with the ‘apparatus’ used in grammaticalization. To understand and move towards a solution, I will suggest that more notice should be taken of formal matters and more attention should be paid to the role of the ‘speaker/hearer’. As a combination of these two factors — i.e. the role played by ‘form’ and by ‘speaker’, I would like to emphasize, in particular, that we should not neglect the overall system of grammar (or more precisely, the conventional grammar acquired by each speaker of a particular language community in the course of language acquisition), which underlies the communicative situation in which each particular process of grammaticalization takes place.

Grammaticalization linguists look at form as well as function (or meaning) but mainly from the point of view of the language as a historical object that floats through time, as it were divorced from speakers and from their system of grammar. In other words, as Janda (2001) and Joseph (2001, 2004) have emphasized, in these diachronic studies the speaker has receded into the background. In the more synchronic semantic-pragmatic approach to grammaticalization, as found

in the work of Traugott (1982, 1989 etc.), and others, the speaker and the communicative situation *are* considered, but here it is the matter of form that gets rather short shrift. This approach is mainly concerned with pragmatic-semantic motivation, with functional and communicative needs. Analogical extension and formal re-analysis are seen as mere mechanisms, as instruments, not causes; what motivates language change are “speaker-hearer interactions and communicative strategies” (Hopper and Traugott 2003:73). In other words, the emphasis is on pragmatic inferencing leading to semantic re-analysis, while a possible primary role played by form or the system is reduced or ignored: “[t]hese modifications [i.e. re-analysis and analogy at work in grammaticalization] comprise changes in interpretation [...] *but not at first change in form*” (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 39, emphasis added).

This neglect of form is even more explicit in Heine et al. (1991), where grammaticalization is described as “the product of conceptual manipulation” (p. 150); it is a process “metaphorical in nature” (p. 151) and “context induced” (p. 165), in which “cognitive restructuring [...] *precedes* linguistic change” (p. 174, emphasis added).

I believe that form and function are intimately related and that both need to be taken into account when explaining what a speaker does in terms of language use; and hence also when explaining what happens in terms of language change and language acquisition.

In analogy, form and function (or meaning) are equally important. Similarities between constructions, which may cause one construction to be used instead of another, are based on what they share in form as well as meaning. Because form and meaning form a whole, a meaning change may affect the form, but change may also be driven by formal requirements of the system. This is nicely illustrated on a lexical level by Coates (1987), who shows that folk-etymological changes are the product of ‘analogical reformation’; they may be caused by similarities in form as well as by similarities in meaning: “analogy is the bridge between the entirely idiosyncratic, especially the accidentally similar, and the various degrees of regularity” (Coates 1987: 320). He further emphasizes that “the influence of meaning is never a necessary condition for A[nalogical]R[eformation] to take place” and that in fact “formal similarity is a precondition for such changes” (*ibid.* p. 324). In other words, Coates considers form even more important than meaning. Thus, for instance in the history of English, the form of *femele* changed to *female* under the influence of *male*, *covert* is now often pronounced [kəʊvə:rt] under the influence of *overt*, while Middle English *pas(se)nep* became *parsnip* presumably because of *parsley* (cf. Coates 1987: 325).

Analogies can be very concrete or quite abstract, as we will see later; that is, the analogy may be based on surface tokens as well as on schemas or types. Furthermore, in analogical thinking, language in *use* plays a very crucial role during

the acquisition period. Linguistic models that make use of analogy, are always usage-based, cf. the work of Slobin (e.g. 1985a, b) and Tomasello (2003), and also Itkonen (2005), Wanner (2006). It is also important to note that analogy is a very fluid concept and therefore works quite differently from the type of global rules favoured by generative or formal linguists. Hofstadter (1995: 201) gives an example of analogical thinking and the fluidity of it on the very concrete level of language use. He describes analogy as “conceptual slippage” and argues that this slippage is important (it is not a weakness but a strength!) in order to keep language workable and flexible. It is to be preferred to a rigid system,

And one last example from this genre, perhaps my favourite ... A grocery-store checkout clerk asked me, “Plastic bag all right?”, to which I replied, “Prefer a wood one ... uh, a ... a *paper* one, please.” Contributing towards this slip might have been the following factors: paper is made from wood pulp, grocery bags are brownish, somewhat like wood and unlike standard paper, they are also considerably “woodier” in texture than ordinary paper is, and plastic and wood are both common materials out of which many household items are made, whereas paper is not.

Substitution errors like these reveal aspects of the subterranean landscape — the hidden network of overlapping, blurred together concepts. They show us that under many circumstances, we confuse one concept with another, and this helps give a picture of what is going on when we make an analogy between different situations. The same properties of our conceptual networks as are responsible for our proneness to these conceptual-halo slips make us willing to tolerate or “forgive” a certain degree of conceptual mismatch between situations, depending on the context; we are congenitally constructed to do so — it is good for us, evolutionary speaking. My term “conceptual slippage” is in fact no more and no less than a shorthand for this notion of “context-dependent tolerance of conceptual mismatch”.

I will argue that this conceptual mismatch also takes place on a more abstract level, that of the system, and that in fact this also helps to keep the system simple and transparent.

3. A sketch for an analogy-based learning mechanism for language

In order to understand what happens in grammaticalization processes, I will refer to a usage-based type of grammar, such as recently proposed by Tomasello (2003). One of the most basic and important forces according to Tomasello in the building up of a grammar system is ‘pattern-finding’: this is the ability by means of analogy to create abstract syntactic constructions and categories out of the concrete pieces of language children hear around them.

Pattern-finding begins in animals and humans with an awareness of iconic relations (similarities and differences) between one object and another, and with learning the indexical relation between an object and its function/use (cf. Deacon 1997). In a next stage, the *repeated correlation* between an object and its use leads to a higher-order level of iconicity and indexicality. It is a higher, more abstract level, because children learn by an *analogical generalization* that any object that looks like object *x*, is also bound to have function *y*. The comparison is now no longer based only on the immediate context but also on a collection of past experiences, on an abstraction. They begin to learn to recognize what I will call *types* from past *tokens*. Symbolic representation is one step further still in that at this level the combined iconic/indexical relation (which Anttila 2003 calls the “analogical grid”) begins to be used *separately* from the individual context, object or occasion in which it was first learned. Symbolic reference happens when we can transfer the referential functions from one set to another set. Holyoak and Thagard (1995) call this ‘system-mapping’ (a more abstract form of pattern-finding), an ability which only develops in children from the age of three onwards, and which represents a stage not reached by other mammals (*ibid.* pp. 46ff.). System-mapping happens, for instance, when we use syntactic constructions.

Analogical rules are typically not across the board but work in local areas. Analogical learning starts with concrete situations and is based on experience, both linguistic and situational, just like the kind of analogical reasoning that we saw in Hofstadter’s example above, which also depends on a situation and on previous experience. In learning, the analogies may become more and more abstract by means of what Slobin (1985a) has called ‘bootstrapping’. That means that abstract patterns deduced from concrete tokens begin to form a system, provided these tokens occur frequently enough, and each abstract pattern may lead to further deeper abstract patterns. The most frequent concrete and abstract patterns (i.e. idiomatic phrases, and grammatical categories and rules respectively), as shown in (3),

- (3) *automation of (a) token- and (b) type-schemas:*
- a. idiomatic phrases such as ‘(s)he kicked the bucket’, ‘it drives me mad’
 - b. grammatical schemas such as NP → Det Adj Noun; S → NP_{subject} V
NP_{object}

become automated and will become part of our lexical and grammatical knowledge; they will, in due course, form our language system or grammar.

On the basis of a frequency increase in particular tokens forming particular patterns, a shift on a higher, more abstract type level may take place during the process of language acquisition and beyond, leading to further changes in token frequency and a speeding up of the change in question on the level of language use.

This happened for instance when a token like *I am going to the market to buy some fish* (see 4i) occurred frequently without the indication of place in the form: *I am going to buy some fish*, so that a re-analysis from ‘actual going to a place’ to ‘future reference’ (*gonna*) could take place, helped to a great extent by the way the system of English was already formed (i.e. the presence of many periphrastic constructions and the fixed word order of finite verbs and infinitives — a fixed order which had become the norm in early Modern English, in contrast to e.g. German or Dutch — making an interpretation as auxiliary possible and likely). Such a new interpretation was presumably also easier for the learner since two verbs placed together were a *pattern* in English and mostly seen as a unit; pattern recognition is an analogical process. In this way one structural variant (main verb + *to*-infinitive) may come to be replaced by another (auxiliary + bare infinitive). Thus, in this process a similarity in form greatly contributed to a meaning change (from concrete *going to* to future *gonna*), which was also made possible because the two constructions already shared something in meaning in the context (i.e. in (4i) future reference is implied in the purposive *to*-infinitive).

An analogical replacement on a more abstract type level from [main verb [*to*-V_{inf}]] to [Aux-*to* V_{inf}] is probably local at first, but when more subtypes of the construction become affected, which together form part of a more abstract schema or type, the change in these subtypes may in the same way strengthen the emerging, more abstract construction type. For instance, again concerning *going to*, this change spread from infinitives that could be collocated with concrete movement as in 4(i) and (ii), to more mental infinitives (as in 4(iii)), and next also to subjects that were inanimate or empty rather than animate and agentive, as in (iv), with the result that (iv) is now a very different construction from (i). Further developments, like the tokens given in (v) and (vi), show that the two patterns have clearly become different types, each having their own characteristic features, e.g. a mix like (vii) is not possible, and a combination of two verbs ‘go’ as in (v): *I am going to go* is only possible if the first ‘go’ is an auxiliary:

- (4) i. *I am going (to the market) to buy some fish*
- ii. *I am going to marry (tomorrow)*
- iii. *I am going to like it*
- iv. *It is going to rain*
- v. *I am going to go there for sure*
- vi. *I'm gonna go there for sure*
- vii.**I'm gonna Haarlem to visit my aunt*

This change or extension in the ‘going construction’ is both steered indexically (via the linking of *to* to *go* instead of to the infinitive) and iconically or analogically (via the fact that other clausal patterns of this type (i.e. auxiliary-verb patterns such as

the other future pattern *I will go*) also allow both animate and inanimate subjects, and also allow both concrete and mental verbs.

In order to make the idea of such an analogical learning system a little more concrete, I will show the kinds of iconic and indexical connections that may be learned together with the learning of one lexical item in concrete situations. At first in the learning process, the connections will all be mostly concrete; at a later stage of learning more abstract connections will be formed too, leading to the formation of categories and schemas. Figure 1 shows how one token, *apple*, is iconically related to a lexical set containing tokens of other kinds of fruit (*pear* etc.) and at the same time indexically related to other kinds of iconic sets containing tokens with which it collocates functionally and formally (*eat* etc., *red* etc.). The relations between the tokens in Figure 1 below are still on the concrete token-level, but the formation of a paradigmatic set of tokens *in itself* is already on a type-level (a set is indicated by its inclusion in square brackets). The token-sets are based on analogies in meaning or function (fruit, things to eat), as well as form (e.g. use of affixes, position in the sentence etc.) Apart from that, the token *apple* is also indexically (via its function) related to a set of lexical features, which will in turn, and eventually, help to define the formal type of the category ‘Noun’ (this is done via subsets of Noun, such as ‘Count Noun’, ‘Inanimate Noun’, ‘Abstract Noun’ etc.). This set of lexical features itself is built upon the learner’s experience of lots of other tokens with their contiguous tokens, and all these tokens together are in turn related to more abstract types. These abstract types give information about what categories

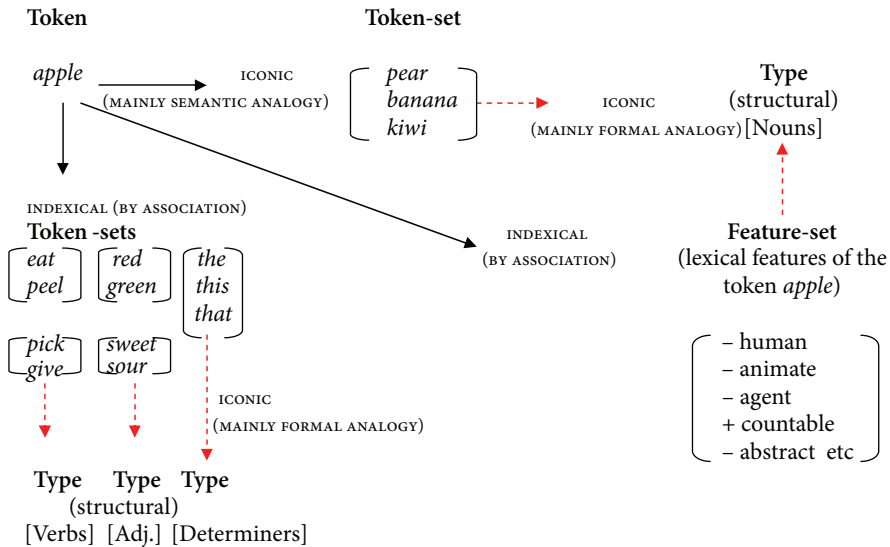


Figure 1. Possible paradigmatic (iconic) and syntagmatic (indexical) relations between the sign *apple* and other linguistic signs forming token-sets and types

typically follow or precede a Noun (or a Verb), or, at a higher level, what phrases typically follow or precede a Noun Phrase. All this has not been shown in Figure 1, which just indicates a first stage of connections (iconic and indexical) between one word token and other token-sets (represented by unbroken arrows), and between these and other types (represented by dotted arrows).

In a frame like the above, analogy should be seen as both a mechanism *and* a cause. By means of analogy we may change structures and the contents of paradigmatic sets (this is usually called ‘analogical extension’), but it is also (the cognitive principle of) analogy that causes the learner to build up more abstract ‘types’ or schemas.² In other words, in this learning model analogy is the primary force (and not re-analysis as argued in Hopper and Traugott 2003:39). I believe that the looseness of analogy, which was seen as such a problem by many linguists in the recent past and therefore deemed unworkable (cf. Kiparsky 1974, Lightfoot 1979:360–365, Harris and Campbell 1995:51), will be much constrained if one thinks of analogy as taking place on different levels and of tokens and types being ordered into sets. More precisely, the analogical possibilities are tightly constrained by both the token-sets, the types on lower levels (categories) and on higher levels (syntactic constituents and constructions), and by the iconic and indexical connections between sets. In addition, the possibilities are also constrained by the fact that the sets are organized both semantically and structurally since each sign or token (because of its binary nature) is part of a formal (structural) as well as a semantic(-pragmatic) set.

An additional advantage of this analogical learning system is that there is only one system to begin with, i.e. a lexical one. There are no separate systems for the lexicon and the syntactic rule module, as in generative linguistics. It is therefore more parsimonious from an evolutionary point of view, and it better fits present neurological findings (e.g. neural network models).

There is a similar advantage as far as language change is concerned: the same mechanisms are now available for both morphosyntactic and lexical change. This links up with the views expressed by grammaticalization theorists, namely that grammaticalization and semantic change are intimately linked. If there are pathways of change to be found in grammaticalization, then one would expect similar ones to be found in semantic change. This is indeed the theme of Traugott and Dasher’s (2002) study on semantic change, namely that semantic change

2. As Deacon (1997) makes clear, the ability to see similarities and differences on the one hand, and cause and effect relations on the other between objects (also known as iconic and indexical relations respectively) is evolutionarily very old, and is a cognitive ability shared by all mammals and even lower animals.

shows regularities and direction, which in many ways are similar to grammaticalization.

For the same reason, it is difficult to make a clear distinction between lexicalization and grammaticalization, as for instance Brinton and Traugott (2005) have tried to do, but not to my mind convincingly (cf. Himmelmann 2004, Fischer 2007: 227–229). Both phenomena, in fact, involve the same processes; the difference is that lexicalization involves only tokens, and the combination of these tokens leads to new lexical items, while grammaticalization involves tokens in combination with types, leading to new abstract constructions (for more information see Fischer 2007).

4. Grammaticalization and analogy-based learning

I now return to the more narrow concern of this paper: how will analogy further our understanding of the role played by scope in grammaticalization processes and the unexpected reversal of Lehmann's parameter of scope in cases of subjectification?

I will take a closer look at a well-known case of subjectification, i.e. the development of deontic/dynamic modals into epistemic ones. What I would like to investigate is, in how far does this case present scope increase, as argued by Tabor and Traugott (1998), thus going against Lehmann's second parameter in Table 1 and against the general principle of unidirectionality (also clear from Table 1) concerning the reductions in weight and cohesion on both the paradigmatic and syntagmatic planes. Another question is, of course, is analogy also involved here as it was in the case of *going to* illustrated in (4)?

From a purely semantic-pragmatic point of view, it is clear that there is indeed a difference in scope between present-day English epistemic modal constructions such as *He must be home by now*, where the epistemic modal has scope over the whole of the proposition and can be paraphrased as 'It is necessarily the case that *he is home by now*', and dynamic/deontic modal constructions such as *He must go to school* where the scope of *must* is restricted to the Verb Phrase (cf. Bybee et al. 1994: 198–199, Tabor and Traugott 1998: 234).³ The question I want to raise is:

3. Purely deontic modals are more difficult to classify because the interpretation depends on the subject selected. Thus 'must' in *I must go home now*, has narrow scope (the VP only) because the speaker is also the agent (i.e. the modal is more dynamic), while in *He must go home*, expressing the speaker's will, it has scope over the whole of the proposition, and could therefore be called subjectively deontic.

how did this change take place formally? Is it simply a matter of the lexical item *must* changing in meaning/function, or is more involved? To put it differently, is there only a token involved, i.e. *must*, or also a type, e.g. the formal category to which *must* belongs, or a larger syntactic construction-type in which *must* functions as a token?

Must belongs to the category of modal auxiliaries in present-day English, and it seems clear that the epistemic development is typical for all the (core) modals. The change obviously involves a category and therefore a more abstract type. In other words, this grammaticalization is a true case of grammaticalization and cannot be interpreted as lexicalization, as for instance in the case of the development of the conjunction *while* (from Old English *þa hwile*[ACCUS] *þe* ‘[during] the time that’ > Middle English *while* ‘while’), where I would argue that *only* a token is involved, pace Hopper and Traugott (2003), who argue that it involves grammaticalization because the net result is a grammatical category — a conjunction. The other concern, whether the modal that becomes epistemic forms part of a larger construction, is a trickier one. On the surface, there doesn’t seem to be much formal difference between epistemic and dynamic/deontic modal usage, after all *He must be at home* can have either meaning in the appropriate context. We will therefore have to look more closely at the historical development of the epistemic modal.

As Denison (1990) and Warner (1990, 1993) have shown, the only more or less clear epistemic examples in Old English from a formal point of view involve ‘subjectless’ types, i.e. instances where the modal verb appears without a subject of its own, which makes a dynamic/deontic reading difficult. First, we frequently find modals combined with an impersonal verb, which seem to have a ‘raised subject’ (i.e. the dative/accusative argument of the impersonal verb also functions as an argument for the modal) as in (5). The second type, (6), is also fairly frequent and concerns a construction in which the modal is combined with an intransitive infinitive, which does not assign a thematic role to its subject (which makes them like impersonals), such as copula verbs: *beon* ‘be’, *gewurþan* ‘become, get, happen’ etc. Often an empty subject *hit* ‘it’ is present. These verbs are close to impersonal verbs like *scamian* in (5a), which may also occur with expletive *hit*. In the constructions of (6), the copula verb is followed by a complement which is usually a *þæt*-clause.

- (5) a. *þonne mæg hine*[ACC] *scamigan* *þære brædinge his hlisan*
 then can him shame of-the spreading-of-his fame
 ‘then he may be ashamed of the extent of his fame’ (Bo 19.46.5)
- b. *Hwy ne sceolde me*[DAT] *swa þyncan?*
 why not should me so seem
 ‘Why should it not seem so to me?’ (Bo 38.119.9)

- (6) a. *Ðeah þe hit swa beon mihte þæt he þas blisse begitan mihte*
 though it so be could that he those favours beget could
 ‘though it could be the case that he would receive those favours’ (ÆLS
 (Ash Wed)106)
- b. *Eaðe mæg gewurðan þæt þu wite[SUBJ] þæt ic nat*
 easily may happen that you may-know that I not-know
 ‘it may easily be the case that you may know what I don’t know’ (ApT
 21.10)
- c. *Gif hit swa sceal gewurðan þæt mann us her finde[SUBJ] and mann*
 if it so must happen that ‘man’ us here find and ‘man’
us for Godes naman to ðam casere læde[SUBJ]
 us for God’s name to the emperor lead
 ‘If it must so happen that they find us here and lead us to the emperor
 because of God’s name’ (LS 34 (SevenSleepers)415)

We can draw a number of conclusions from these examples. First of all, Old English modal verbs seem to be similar to impersonal verbs (cf. Denison 1990). Like some other impersonal verbs in Old English they occur both ‘personally’, i.e. with animate and inanimate agentive subjects (when they are dynamic/deontic), and ‘impersonally’, i.e. without a subject when they are epistemic, as in (6b) (cf. Fischer and van der Leek 1983).⁴ When the modal verb is used impersonally, without a

4. For instance the impersonal verb *ofhreowan*, occurs in three different construction types:

- a. without any nominative subject:
him[DAT] ofhreow þæs mannes[GEN] (ÆCHom I 13 281.12)
 to-him pity-existed because-of-the man
- b. with the source/cause argument as nominative subject:
þa ofhreow þam munece[DAT] þæs hreoflian mægenleas[GEN]
 then brought-pity to-the monk the leper’s feebleness (ÆCHom I 23 369 139)
- c. with the experiencer argument as subject:
se mæssepreost[GEN] þæs mannes[GEN] ofhreow (ÆLS(Oswald) 262)
 the priest because-of-the man felt-pity

Not all impersonal verbs are found with all three types. This is also true for the modal verbs. They may be used without a nominative NP in both Old and Middle English (cf. type [a], see Warner 1993: 102). They occur both with an inanimate subject (type [b]) and an animate subject (type [c]), when they are used dynamically. Concerning type (a), this only occurs with a complement clause as ‘object’, the status of which is difficult to determine since it is case-less (cf. Denison 1990: 140–143). The similarity with impersonals is also not entirely straightforward, but this is because the modal verbs are already semantically idiosyncratic in some respects. Denison (1990: 143) suggests a similar classification for the modals as impersonals but hesitates to accept it fully because of the uncertainty about the existence of a truly subjectless (a) type.

nominative, that is without an agentive-like Noun Phrase,⁵ the meaning of the verb becomes more general. Thus, *mæg* would then mean ‘power exists’, *seal* ‘obligation exists’, *mot* ‘opportunity exists’ etc., which would make the meaning of these verbs more dependent on the context and on general experience, i.e. their meaning is established by pragmatic or logical inference: they thus convey general possibility, necessity etc.

Secondly, it is not surprising to find these impersonal, non-agentive modals in combination with impersonal infinitives (as in (5)), which likewise can occur without a nominative or agent-like subject. Thus, we have two different constructions in Old English: deontic modals that take a nominative subject and a personal infinitive, and epistemic modals that occur without a personal subject and take an impersonal infinitive.

Thirdly, the examples in (5) show that verbs which do take an agentive subject role, like *come*, could not be combined with an *impersonally used* (i.e. epistemic) modal verb that did not have an agentive subject role. In other words, epistemic modals with personal subjects, of the type *He must come soon (no doubt about it)*, could not yet occur in Old English because in this case the modal and the infinitive had different thematic ‘subject’ roles, expressed by different inflexions. Again it is not surprising to find that clear evidence for an epistemic modal with a personal subject only becomes available in Middle English, at the same time as ‘Subject-raising’ structures with verbs like *seem* begin to occur, i.e. in Old English only *Him seemed that ...* was possible, *He seemed to* only became current in the late Middle English period.

Fourth, what I find most interesting about the examples in (6) is that the impersonal modal verb, followed by an agent-less infinitive, occurs with a *þæt*-clause which depends on the infinitive. Here we have explicit evidence for a *biclausal* structure, which cannot be attested for deontic/dynamic modals. I checked all the modal verbs in Old English (in The York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose, and more cursorily in the Dictionary of Old English Corpus) but found no examples of a modal verb immediately followed by a *þæt*-clause except with the marginal modal *willan* ‘want’. So I found no examples of *I can, I may, I shall* etc. + *þæt*-clause. Biclausal constructions of the type illustrated in (6), however, are relatively frequent in Old English, especially with *magan* ‘may’. They

5. I use ‘agentive’ with some hesitation because the animate and inanimate nominative subject also carry the thematic role of ‘experiencer’ and ‘cause’ respectively. The point I wish to make is that they are both seen as the source of the action expressed by the verb, the means by which an action comes about. In terms of Hopper and Thompson (1980), they are more transitive than the subjectless type, which is intransitive and stative.

suggest that this was the only way to express epistemicity if the infinitival object/complement of the epistemic modal was not itself an agent-less or impersonal verb. One could say that the structure shown in (6) performed a kind of ‘bridge’ function. The modal (including the impersonally used modal) could not be combined with a *þæt*-clause. The solution, therefore, was to combine the modal with an *impersonal* infinitive or a copula like *be*, which *could* take a *þæt*-clause.

Returning now to the problem of scope increase in the subjectification of the modals, I propose, on the strength of the considerations I have enumerated above, that epistemic usage in combination with personal, agentive verbs arose in Old English via an earlier biclausal structure consisting of an impersonal modal verb followed by an agentless infinitive/copula + *þæt*-clause, i.e. the type illustrated in (6). The reason that the epistemic modals become difficult to distinguish in late Middle English from the other deontic/dynamic uses, is because they begin to occur in the same type of clauses. This was due to a number of related factors, having to do with changes in the grammatical system of Middle English. These factors are: (a) the rise of structural subjects, so that any semantic argument could now become a subject;⁶ (b) the loss of impersonal verb constructions, which means that constructions like *Him likes* changed into *He likes*, and *Him may like* became *He may like*; (c) the emergence of ‘subject-raising’ constructions with verbs like *seem*, *happen*. Due to these three changes, the construction of (6), which was similar to the ‘non-raised’ *seem*-construction, *by analogy* also began to appear in ‘raised’ constructions, so that *It may be that he comes* began to be replaced by *He may come*, no doubt strengthened by the fact that in dynamic/deontic use this construction already was very frequent.

In other words, the occurrence of agentive-like epistemic modal constructions in later English is not a *direct* development concerned solely with the behaviour of the modal verb; it is not a gradual grammaticalization process, rather it is a *replacement of a construction* due to a formal analogy with the personal construction containing dynamic/deontic modals (the type ‘*He can [is able to] swim*’), and due to analogy with ‘Subject-raising’ structures with verbs like *seem*.

In Middle English these replacements thus became possible because of the rise of the structural subject. This analogy must have been greatly helped by the fact that the personal deontic/dynamic modal constructions must have been far more

6. In Old English only agent roles could appear as a subject (taking nominative case), and also patient roles could appear in the nominative in passive constructions, presumably because the passive participle was still more of an adjectival phrase. The role of theme, source/cause, or experiencer was not found in the nominative, but was given as a dative, accusative or genitive case.

frequent in the linguistic data available to the language learner. This replacement is largely a question of economy. As Plank (1985) has argued, it is natural for marked constructions to be structured as much as possible analogous to unmarked ones. Since epistemic and deontic/dynamic modality are expressed by means of the same verbs, and since deontic modals themselves can be *subjectively* deontic (cf. note 3), it is not surprising for the epistemically used modals to conform to the structure used for the deontic/dynamic ones, especially when taking into account the system developments sketched above. The development also falls in with the 'Minimize Form' principle of Hawkins (2004: 38).

Minimize Forms (MiF)

The human processor prefers to minimize the formal complexity of each linguistic form F (its phoneme, morpheme, word, or phrasal units) and the number of forms with unique conventionalized property assignments, thereby assigning more properties to fewer forms. These minimizations apply in proportion to the ease with which a given property P can be assigned in processing to a given F.

If we accept this development for the epistemic modals, we also have an explanation for the problem of scope because the scenario I have sketched here brings the epistemic development in line with the generally accepted behaviour of scope in grammaticalization processes. The development as I have described it here shows that the epistemic modal was at first in a higher clause than the proposition which depended on it (i.e. the *þæt*-clause), unlike the dynamic/deontic modal which was in the same clause as its infinitival object/complement. This naturally entailed that the epistemic modal had a larger scope since it was placed outside the actual proposition. In other words the scope possibilities of the modal verb were formally the same, whether it had epistemic or dynamic/deontic sense. They both governed an infinitive, but it was only in structures like (6) that the infinitival object of the modal verb included a *þæt*-clause, which contained the actual proposition. So the scope concerns in both cases the immediate constituent of the modal verb. In Middle English, the epistemic structure of (6) begins to be replaced by the 'raised' construction which had the same form as the already existing dynamic/deontic structure. In this 'raised' construction, the modal has now become a part of the proposition that it first had scope over in the form of the *þæt*-clause. In other words, this formal replacement takes place with the semantics and the scope of the full biclausal *þæt*-clause structure preserved. Because there was a biclausal intermediate stage that made this development possible, one cannot maintain that this change from deontic/dynamic to epistemic involves scope increase. It does, ultimately, but *not by a direct route*. The unidirectional parameter of scope can therefore be maintained in this particular case in the sense that there was neither increase nor decrease. Instead, we have scope stability.

It remains to be seen whether this solution is also possible for other cases of scope increase involving the development of epistemic modals elsewhere and other cases involving subjectification, such as the development of pragmatic markers. This question will have to be answered by future research (but for some answers see Fischer 2007).

An interesting piece of evidence, however, concerning the subjectification of modals is the different forms used in some English-based creoles for deontic and epistemic *may* and *must*. Edhard (2004) and Winford (2000) show this for the Suriname creole Sranan Tongo. Edhard has found unequivocal epistemic uses of both *can* and *must* only in twentieth-century documents, but in both cases the forms used are part of a larger construction,

- (7) a. *a kan de fanowdu fu tan wakti* (Waktitoren, Edhard 2004: 45)
 it can be necessary to stay wait
 ‘it may be necessary to keep waiting’
- b. *a musu de taki a sondu nanga a sari di den ben kon de na ini...*
 (Waktitoren, Edhard 2004: 50)
 it must be that the sin and the sad that they been come be at in
 ‘it must be that the sin and sorrow that they had gotten into ...’

Winford (2000; 72–75, 83ff.) has looked in more detail at contemporary uses of epistemic *kan* and *musu* in Sranan Tongo and has found only a rare use of some counterfactual past tenses (*kan ben/musu ben*, *ben kan/ben musu*), which may border on epistemic usage (note the use of perfective *ben* < ‘been’ here). He writes: “neither *kan* nor *musu* ... seems to have developed clear epistemic senses when used in combination with *ben*, though it is possible that they are moving in this direction” (p. 84). He continues (p. 92): “their [i.e. the modals *kan*, *musu*] use as auxiliaries in this [epistemic] sense appears to be possible primarily with stative verbs, though even this use is rare in my data ... However, they appear freely in constructions such as *a kan/musu de taki S*: ‘it may/must be the case that S’”, that is, with a *that*-clause.

- (8) *a kan (de) taki Jan ben sribi kba* (Winford 2000: 94)
 it can (be) the-case-that John PAST sleep already
 ‘it may be that John was already asleep/John may already have been asleep’

In other words, it looks as if Sranan is still at a very early, biclausal, stage of the epistemic use of English-based core modals, similar to what we have seen in Old English in the examples in (6).

Finally, the occurrence of epistemic adverbs which are a contraction of ‘may’ + ‘be’, such as English *maybe*, French *peut-être*, Macedonian *možebi*, Polish *może* (< *może być*), Sranan *kande* lit. ‘can be’, or of ‘may’ + impersonal ‘happen’ as in English archaic *mayhap*, Dutch *misschien* and Swedish *kanske*, or a contraction

from ‘may’+‘that’ as in Serbian *možda* < *može da*,⁷ shows that the route to these adverbs must also have been similar to the route taken in Old English, i.e. a modal in combination with ‘be, happen’ or with a complementizer like ‘that’.

6. Concluding remarks

I have shown that an analogical approach explains the awkward behaviour of scope in the modals case. In addition, it takes into account other problems noted in connection with grammaticalization. An increasing number of formal and/or historical linguists believe that grammaticalization should be considered an *epi-phenomenon* rather than a mechanism of change in and by itself. What we have seen in the case of the modals is that there was not a slow gradual, independent process at work in which the modal verbs grammaticalized; rather what we witnessed is a replacement of one construction by another due to semantic and formal similarities between them, i.e. a replacement which is based on analogical thinking. Thus, the process is not independent and strictly unidirectional, rather it is caused by changes taking place elsewhere in the grammatical system which enabled analogical restructuring to take place.

Briefly summarizing, I would stress that the whole notion of grammaticalization as an independent mechanism of change has been called into question. It has been suggested here that the shifts or stages in a grammaticalization process may perhaps more easily be explained by the workings of analogy (i.e. the ‘analogical grid’, which contains indexical as well as iconic relations)⁸ and frequency (in relation to economy). Analogy is seen as a cause as well as a mechanism. The process of analogy involves form as well as meaning, which are seen as indivisible in any linguistic sign, and it plays a role both in language *use* (as analogical extension) and as a cognitive principle in the mind of the language *user*.⁹ I see the analogical process as a very basic cognitive ability, and a very old one from an evolutionary

7. The Slavonic data are taken from van der Auwera *et al.* (2005). Of interest here is the fact that Dutch *misschien* is still often followed by ‘that’ especially in the spoken language.

8. Note that these iconic and indexical relations include metaphorical and metonymic mechanisms, i.e. the mechanisms which are generally seen as most important in grammaticalization. Pragmatic inferencing, also considered a primary factor, is likewise essentially a metonymic process.

9. In this connection, it is interesting to note that Kirby (1999: 12–13) draws attention, referring to Hyman (1984) to a distinction between language use and the language user as far as ‘function’ is concerned. For functional linguists function usually refers to the fit between language

point of view, cf. Deacon (1997). Finally, it has been shown that the analogical process can only be explained from the forms and the meanings that analogous structures have for speakers within their synchronic system of grammar and within their communicative situation. It has been argued here that analogy itself together with frequency helps build up this system.

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Corpora

The York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose <http://www-users.york.ac.uk/~lang22/YcoeHome1.htm>.

The Dictionary of Old English Corpus <http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/o/oec/>.
ICE-GB: the International Corpus of English: The British component.

PART IV

Iconicity and positionality

Iconic signs, motivated semantic networks, and the nature of conceptualization

What iconic signing spaces can tell us
about mental spaces

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This chapter attempts to demonstrate how certain mental space images are structurally reflected in their corresponding iconic signs in Japan Sign Language (JSL). Section one provides a general introduction, and section two offers a brief summary of the framework developed by Tyler and Evans (2001, 2003) for explaining the relationship among imagic proto-scenes, spatial scenes, and polysemy, used throughout the chapter. In section three, detailed illustrations of the polysemy network formed by such proto-scenes for the English preposition ‘over’ are provided and then compared with numerous related JSL signs. In section four, it is concluded that the proto-scenes proposed by Tyler and Evans appear to be reflected rather directly in the related iconic signs of JSL, providing indirect support for the existence of such imagic proto-scenes.

1. Introduction

As stated in the introduction (Herlofsky, Maeder and Fischer 2005:1) of *Iconicity in Language and Literature 4*, the title of the volume, *Outside-In — Inside-Out*, is intended to indicate directions of iconicity, where “the cognitive processes involved in iconicity” can be seen as projecting iconic images “from ‘inside’ the brain to the ‘outside’”, and influencing “the external expression of concepts and ideas”. It is in this sense that much of my recent research on iconicity in Japan Sign Language (Herlofsky 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2006) can be loosely categorized within a cognitive linguistic framework, in that it is concerned with investigating the relationship between concepts and images inside the brain and

their external expression in iconic signs, and is grounded in the following three basic premises:

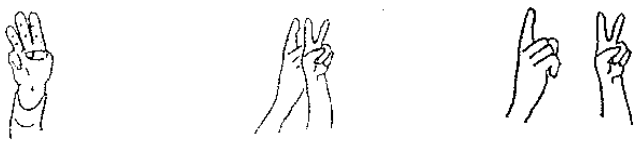
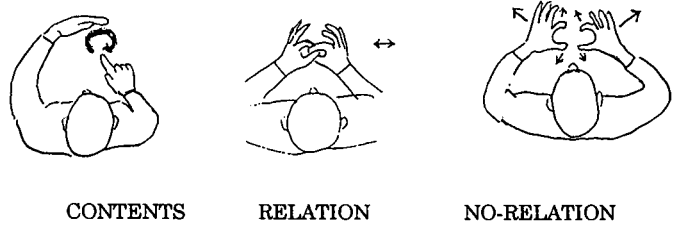
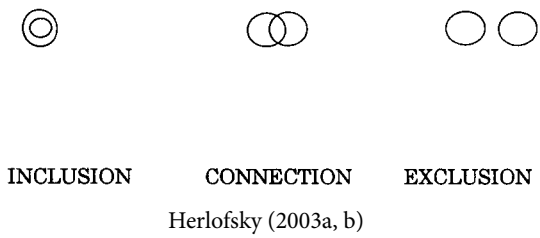
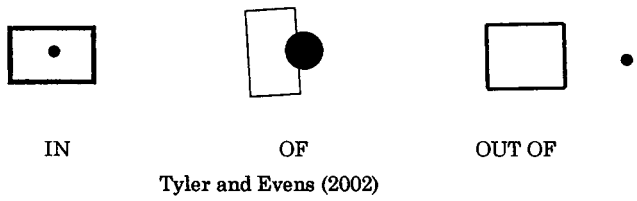
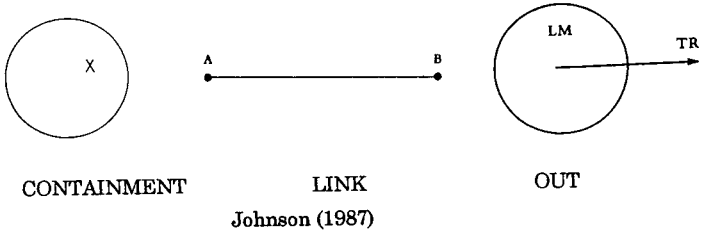
- The ultimate objective of cognitive science is to understand how the brain functions.
- The ultimate objective of cognitive linguistics is to understand how language phenomena are related to brain functions.
- Some iconic expressions may be particularly valuable for providing clues for understanding how language phenomena are related to brain functions.

While the first two premises are uncontroversial, the third is a bit more speculative, in that it assumes, as Reisberg and Heuer (2005: 35) also claim, based on numerous research findings, that some conceptual structures and mental images may be picture-like representations in that they “depict rather than describe the represented content”. Related to this is a further assumption, namely, that the structure of some linguistic expressions, especially the shapes and movements of certain iconic signs in sign languages, may, to some extent, mirror these conceptual structures and mental images, and can therefore serve as effective probes for investigating how language phenomena are related to brain functions (For a different kind of ‘outside-in’ approach, see Wilson’s (1998) book-length discussion of what studying the hands can reveal about the brain.).

To illustrate, consider the examples below from Herlofsky (2003b, 2005a,b), where Euler diagrams (third row (Herlofsky 2003a,b) in Chart 1) used to express *inclusion*, *connection*, and *exclusion* are shown to be able to also serve as appropriate representations of mental images for these same concepts, and in turn may be directly reflected in the signs of Japan Sign Language (JSL) that express the same or similar meanings. The following chart compares these Euler diagrams with image schemas proposed by Johnson (1987) for *containment*, *link*, and *out*, and with the redescriptions (see Section 2 for a discussion of this term) of the English prepositions for *in*, *of*, and *out of* proposed by Tyler and Evans (2003).

In the chart, just below the Euler diagrams, there appear the corresponding JSL signs for *contents*, *relation*, and *no-relation*, and finally, at the bottom of the chart, there are three JSL signs, of three animate entities (people) moving together, then a partial separation, where one is physically distanced, but still in some way connected to the other two, and finally, on the bottom right, one person is more completely separated from the other two.

It is clear from this chart that the abstract JSL signs for *contents*, *relation*, and *no-relation*, are more structurally similar to the corresponding Euler diagrams (and to a lesser extent to the image schemas and redescriptions), than are the JSL signs for people and separation. What the two different types of signs illustrate is that, although both types are iconic, the first row of signs (which refer to more



Herlofsky (2005)

Chart 1.

abstract concepts) for *contents-relation-no-relation* mirror to a greater extent the proposed (by Johnson 1987, Tyler and Evans 2003, and Herlofsky 2003a,b) mental images (mind-internal concepts), while the bottom row of signs (with more concrete referents) is more iconic of a real-world group-of-people situation (mind-external reality), due to the use of the animate-entity classifier-like handshapes (see Herlofsky (2005a) for a discussion of these forms) in these expressions.

There is not space here to get into the philosophical debate about whether linguistic signs represent mind-external reality or mind-internal concepts, but for our purposes, it will be sufficient to assume that both extremes are possible, and that linguistic iconicity can reflect a range of phenomena (from external reality to internal concepts), and that in a study that intends to investigate how iconic signs mirror mental concepts and images, as suggested in Herlofsky (2003b: 156), it is useful to consider signs which have abstract referents and “are not based on real-world objects, but are rather iconic reflections of metaphorically motivated conceptual structures” because this type of data is more important in research “that attempts to discover relationships between conceptual structures and their corresponding lexemes”. This will also be a consideration in the following discussion.

In this type of investigation, however, one difficulty that arises is how to determine the possible mental images that can generate the iconic signs. To solve this initial problem, in the following discussion, instead of proposing my own mental images for JSL signs, I will proceed in the opposite direction, and attempt to demonstrate how certain diagrammatic schematizations, which have been proposed by Tyler and Evans (2001, 2003) to be representations of abstract mental images of frequently occurring spatial scenes, appear to be structurally reflected in the iconic signs of JSL. This progression, from the mental representations to linguistic signs, is also the sequence followed in the language acquisition process, where, as Mandler (2004: 118) states, mental images (like the Tyler/Evans schematizations) provide “the representational base onto which language can be mapped”. The final section of this paper will offer a possible scenario for how this mapping process takes place.

The next section, section two, will begin with a brief summary of the framework developed by Tyler and Evans for explaining the relationship between the imagistic proto-scenes, their different but related senses and polysemy, and close with an illustration of a polysemy network formed by such proto-scenes and their related senses, in this case the semantic network proposed for the English preposition *over*. And then, in section three, the different diagrammatic schematizations in this network will be compared to numerous JSL signs. It will be shown that the structures of the diagrammatic schematizations of the ‘proto-scene’ and the related senses in the motivated semantic network proposed by Tyler and Evans appear to be mirrored rather directly in the shapes and movements of some semantically related JSL signs,

providing indirect support for the existence of these iconic mental representations in the conceptualization and word-formation processes of JSL signs.

2. Prepositions, protoscenes and semantic networks

Some linguists, like Deutscher (2006: 26), still take the position that words that perform only grammatical functions, like prepositions, have no independent meaning of their own:

In dictionaries and grammar books, such unassuming words appear under a variety of titles: conjunctions, prepositions, articles and so on. But there is one basic property that is common to them all: they cannot boast their own independent meaning. They don't refer to objects, actions or properties, or to any other concepts that can be imagined in their own right.

There is a growing body of research within cognitive and applied linguistics, however, that suggests that prepositions that are used in the description of spatial scenes may, in fact, have their own abstract meaning components and conceptual images. Tyler and Evans's (2001, 2003) research, for example, proposes just such conceptual images for prepositions, and their research project is an attempt to provide a cognitive model for a principled polysemy approach to mental lexicons and semantic networks. They begin their volume on the semantics of prepositions by stating that their research project is also based on certain assumptions, three of which it will be worthwhile to quote at length:

Language (lexical items and the syntactic arrangements in which they occur) radically underdetermines the rich interpretations regularly assigned to naturally occurring utterances. A consequence of this is the assumption that lexical entries, albeit crucial, act merely as prompts for meaning construction, and that meaning construction is largely a conceptual process, involving elaboration and integration of linguistic and non-linguistic information in a highly creative way.

(Tyler and Evans 2003: 3)

Since linguistic expressions leave much unsaid, we are sometimes forced to enlist non-linguistic information to construct meaning. In this way, linguistic expressions can act as prompts that allow access to appropriate meaning constructions, which are not only related to real world phenomena and perception of these phenomena, but also to internally constructed linguistic and non-linguistic mental concepts.

The representation of meaning is fundamentally conceptual in nature. Language does not refer directly to the 'real world'. Rather, language refers to what

is represented in the human conceptual system. The conceptual system contains conceptual structure (i.e., concepts, schemas, scripts, etc.) which indirectly reflects and interprets the world as mediated by human experience and perception. (Tyler and Evans 2003: 3)

Language, therefore, referring to both linguistic and non-linguistic mental concepts, provides the prompts that trigger on-line interpretations in the listener/viewer, and these mental concepts are based on physical experience, and therefore embodied.

Conceptual structure is a product of how we as human beings experience and interact with the spatio-physical world we inhabit. The world 'out there' provides much of the raw sense-perceptual substrate for the conceptual system. However, how and what we experience is crucially mediated by the precise nature of our bodies and our unique neuro-anatomical architecture. In other words, experience is embodied. (Tyler and Evans 2003: 3)

After beginning with these basic assumptions, Tyler and Evans proceed to construct a model of the lexicon that is an attempt to account for certain kinds of polysemy in a principled, systematic way. More specifically, and more crucially for the following analysis, they provide numerous diagrammatic schematizations to represent the complex conceptualizations related to the different senses of the English preposition *over*, illustrating how the different senses of this preposition constitute a semantic network which is organized around an abstract, primary meaning component expressing the relationship between objects in a certain spatial scene.

Tyler and Evans's research focus is consistent with other similar language/space research projects, such as a recent collection of cross-linguistic papers edited by Carlson and van der Zee (2005) which is concerned with the description of how spatial scenes are expressed linguistically in various languages, but the Tyler and Evans research project centers on English prepositions and is grounded more firmly in the cognitive linguistic framework established by Langacker (1987, 1991a, 1991b, Lakoff 1987, Johnson 1987 and others) in that they utilize the concepts and the terminology of the figure-ground relations utilized by those researchers. For example, the cognitive point of departure for Tyler and Evans (2001: 735) and their analysis of *over* can be summarized by the following:

English prepositions form polysemy networks organized around a primary sense. At the conceptual level, the primary sense is represented in terms of abstracting away from specific spatial scenes, that is, real-world scenarios... We call this abstracted mental representation of the primary sense the PROTOSCENE. It consists of a schematic trajectory (TR), which is the locand (the element located and in focus), and is typically smaller and moveable; a schematic landmark (LM), which is the locator (the element with respect to which the TR is located and in

background), and is typically larger and immovable, and a conceptual configurational-functional relation which mediates the TR and LM. In the case of *over*, the TR is conceptualized as being proximate to the LM, so that under certain circumstances, the TR could come into contact with the LM.

For Tyler and Evans, then, real-world spatial scenes are repeatedly perceived, analyzed and reanalyzed, and the essences of these spatio-physical experiences are mentally stored (the source of this stored information therefore can be both external (from the perceived experiences) or internal (from the mental analyses and reanalyses of these experiences) in nature) in what they called (based on Mandler 1988, 1992) ‘redescriptions.’ A redescription is defined by Mandler (1992: 589) as “a piece of perceptual information which is recoded into a non-perceptual form that represents meaning”. For Tyler and Evans and Mandler, then, redescriptions are perceived and recoded experiences that become the proto-scenes and building blocks of more complex conceptualization.¹

From the perspective of research on iconicity, this same process of recognizing the similarities of, and mentally storing the essences of these repeatedly perceived spatial scenes with their resulting redescriptions, can be seen as a product of what Fischer (2007: 80), referring to Deacon (1997), describes as “iconic modes of thinking”. This kind of iconic thinking for events in the real world is described by Deacon (1997: 48–49) as follows:

Old associations provide a sort of repository of hypotheses. In many circumstances in the real world, events with similar features will produce similar outcomes. Generalizing from resemblances of present to past associations can often provide useful shortcuts that avoid wasting long periods of trial-and-error learning.

This shortcut-producing recognition of associations and similarities (iconic thinking) provides a repository of hypotheses that result in the mental summaries that Tyler and Evans refer to as redescriptions and proto-scenes.

These iconic redescriptions and proto-scenes thus serve as the bases for the development of elaborate form-meaning associations in motivated semantic networks.

1. Mandler (2004: 72) describes this process in young children as one in which certain “pieces of perceptual data need to be redescribed via perceptual meaning analysis into an accessible format in order to qualify as concepts”, and it is this formatted information for certain spatial relationships that Tyler and Evans attempt to capture in their figures for the preposition *over*, and that I refer to in the following as ‘diagrammatic schematizations’. It should be noted that Mandler (2004) also uses the more common cognitive linguistic term *image-schema* (see Lakoff 1987 and Johnson 1987 for early discussions of this term, and Hampe and Grady 2005 for the most up-to-date analyses) for these mental images, but in the following discussion, I will also continue to use the Tyler/Evans terminology and my own.

The central focus of Tyler and Evans’s (2001:724) research on these polysemy networks is concisely summarized by their description of the polysemy network for the preposition *over*, and in their diagram of such a network in Chart 2 below.²

We focus here on the issue of semantic polysemy, the phenomenon whereby a single linguistic form is associated with a number of related but distinct meaning SENSES. In particular, we consider how the notorious polysemy of the English preposition *over* might be accounted for in a principled, systematic manner within a cognitive linguistic framework. At base, we argue that the many senses of *over* constitute a motivated semantic network organized around an abstract, primary meaning component, termed a PROTOSCENE. The many distinct senses associated with *over* are accounted for by interaction of the protoscene with a constrained set of cognitive principles.

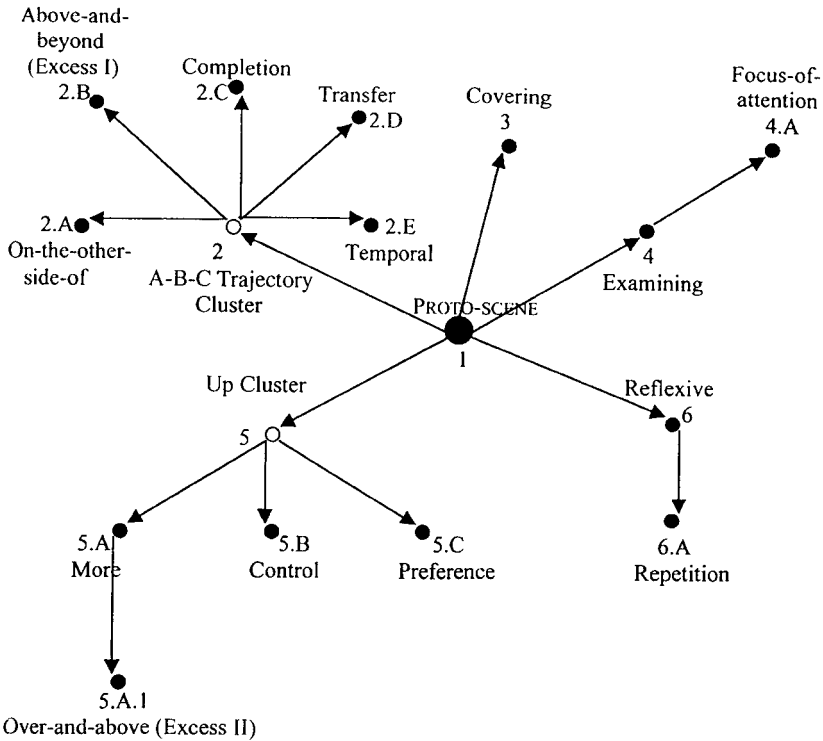


Chart 2.

2. Tyler and Evans (2001:736) are careful to point out that such a diagram is not intended to make “any serious claims about the neurological nature of imagistic representation” (see Grueter 2006 and Shah and Miyake 2005 for discussions of research on the neurological nature of mental images), but that these types of diagrams are instead intended to aid in the discussion of mental imagery and prepositions.

Figure 1 below is the Tyler/Evans proto-scene (1 in Chart 2) for the English preposition *over*, where the thick horizontal line is the landmark (LM), and the black circle is the trajectory (TR). To the right of their diagram there appears the Japan Sign Language (JSL) sign that has approximately the same meaning.

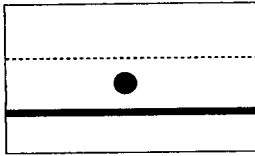


Figure 1. The Proto-scene for *over*
1) The picture is over the mantel.

Corresponding JSL Sign 1

Notice that in this sign (and the others that follow) the left (L, non-dominant) hand corresponds to the LM (in the example sentence, the flat surface (classifier-like) handshape of the mantel), and the right (R, dominant) hand to the TR (the forefinger-tip of which may be seen as pointing to the picture). It should also be noted that there is no exact match between word boundaries in English and JSL, and so many of the location-related signs that follow may be preposition-like, but may also include verb-like and noun-like information (See Matthews (2007) for a recent survey of the problems with trying to determine parts of speech and/or grammatical categories.). Other diagrammatic schematizations proposed by Tyler and Evans for the conceptualizations of the different senses of *over* will be discussed and illustrated with the relevant JSL signs in the following section.

3. The different senses of *over* and iconic JSL signs

This section will be concerned with discussing the Tyler/Evans diagrammatic schematizations for the different senses of *over* along side the corresponding JSL signs in order illustrate their similarities. Consider the first figure in the trajectory cluster (2.A in Chart 2, which includes many abstract senses) and its related JSL sign.



Figure 2a. On-the-other-side of
2a) John lives over the hill.

Corresponding JSL Sign 2a

For this figure and sign, again the left, non-dominant, hand is the LM, representing some kind of barrier (again, the flat handshape), and the right hand and the

TR arrow represent the direction over the barrier object, and the point-of-view in the figure is represented by the point-of-view of the signer.

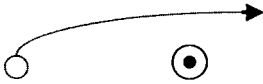


Figure 2b. Above-and-beyond (excess)
2b) The students wrote over the word limit.



Corresponding JSL sign 2b.

For this somewhat abstract meaning, again, the flat left hand is the LM that is some kind of limit, and the right hand is the TR that goes over the limit, but this time, in contrast to sign 2b, there is an actual excess rather than just looking into the distance. In addition, in JSL, this sign is also used with the meaning of *over-doing* something, and so is used in phrases like *over-work* and *even over-time*.

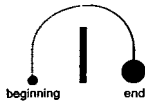


Figure 2c. Completion
2c) The class is over.



Corresponding JSL sign 2c.

This abstract sense of completion can be represented by a one-handed sign (a sign which can also function as a past-tense bound-morpheme suffix), or for emphasis or symmetry, both hands could perform the same motion, and appears to just represent the last half of the diagram (expressed by the solid line and bigger sphere in the figure), after the TR arrow in the diagram has passed over the LM barrier. This sign, where the hand(s) starts with a palms-up orientation, with fingers slightly bent and spread, and the hands are then brought down with fingers coming together, as in sign 2c, appears to represent an abstract notion of completion rather than imitating an actual real-world occurrence.

Real-world phenomena, however, can be imitated with similar motions (i.e., fingers slightly bent and spread) with opposite orientation (palms-down) and movement (up), and can mean the 'rain is over', or a similar upward motion by a single hand can mean the 'light is over', or 'off'. In these two signs, the fingers appear to represent extensions of the raindrops and light rays, respectively, and the movement is the termination (a kind of retraction or return-to-origin) of these extensions. Both the closing of the hands, then, combined with the movement (either upwards or downwards), appear to be the important semantic aspects of these signs.



Figure 2d. Transfer
2d) They handed power over to the new government.

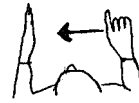


Corresponding JSL Sign 2d

This one handed sign appears to be a simple imitation of handing something to someone else (although this concrete meaning can be extended to more abstract senses, as in the example sentence), where the hand (right or left, or both) is the TR, while the real-world signing space in front of the signer is the LM.



Figure 2e. Temporal
2e) The festival took place over the weekend.



Corresponding JSL Sign 2e

This sign illustrates the typical location of signs that indicate a temporal period, that is, the signing space in front of the signer, where again, the signing space is the LM, and the moving hand is the TR of time. Different handshapes in the same area could indicate one day (an upright extended forefinger moved from one side of the chest to the other), or one week (the handshape for seven (thumb, forefinger and middle finger extended) moved from left to right in front of the body). Signs indicating past, present and future involve signing spaces behind the signer, the signer's position, and in front of the signer, respectively. (In addition, if the right hand is flat, with the palm oriented toward the signer, and moved as in sign 2e to the left hand, this can also mean 'over' in a way similar to the meaning in sign 2c.)



Figure 3. Covering
3) The tablecloth is over the table.



Corresponding JSL Sign 3

This sign also appears to be a simple imitation of a basic form of a real-world situation where something covers something else, with the point-of-view represented by the signer's point-of-view.



Figure 4. Examining
4) Mary looked over the manuscript.

Corresponding JSL Sign 4

This sign imitates looking at something very closely. For the simple sign for *looking*, two straight fingers (to represent the lines of vision) pointing away from the eyes is used. For the *examining* sign, the two fingers bent and brought toward the eyes seem to represent the thing that is being examined, and the eyes seem to be emphasized in the examination process.



Figure 4a. Focus-of-attention
4a) She thought over the problem.

Corresponding JSL Sign 4a

For this sign the forefinger of the right hand points at the left hand (flat LM hand-shape), which represents the thing being focused on (This, then, is the difference between 4 and 4.A. In 4.A, the blackened bar indicates focus on the thing being examined, while in 4 the focus is more on the examiner, or the examiner's point of view.), and therefore, as opposed to sign 4, the emphasis seems to be on the thing examined.



Figure 5a. More
5a) John found over forty kinds of shells on the beach.

Corresponding JSL Sign 5a

In this sign, the left hand appears to indicate the amount of something that is then surpassed by the amount in the right hand.



Figure 5a.1. Over-and-above (excess II) Corresponding JSL Sign 5a.1.
5a1) The lake waters spilled over the dam and into the city.

This figure is conceptually similar to 2.B (although in 2.B there is more control involved), and so the JSL sign is the same as 2b. The idea of *overflowing* could be expressed by using the same sign, but adding a bit of pantomime or gesture to indicate the idea of something increasing and increasing, and then overflowing, is also possible.

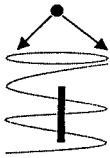


Figure 5b. Control
5b) She has a strange power over me.



Corresponding JSL Sign 5b

Both the figure and the sign have a basic downward motion to indicate the concept of control. As in 2.B and 5.A.1, then, lack of control or exceeding a limit is expressed by upward motion, but control is in contrast downward motion. In this sign the right hand represents the controlling force, while the thumb of the left hand is a classifier-like entity marker discussed in Herlofsky (2007).



Figure 5c. Preference
5c) I favor sumo over baseball.



Corresponding JSL Sign 5c

A preference, which is often a choice, is also expressed by an upward motion in both the figure and the sign.



Figure 6. Reflexive
6) The fence fell over.



Corresponding JSL Sign 6

The figure and the sign both seem to be a simple imitation of a real-world falling *over*, and the two-fingered inverted V-sign is an iconic imitation of a standing person's two legs. (see Herlofsky 2003a,b for a discussion of this type of sign).

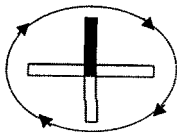


Figure 6a. Repetition
6a) He played the same tune over and over.

Corresponding JSL Sign 6a

Repetition in both the figure and signs is expressed by circular motion. Repetition is a cycle both metaphorically and iconically.

4. Summary and conclusion

What we have seen in the previous section is that although the surface forms for oral-aural languages and manual/corporal-visual languages may differ, the underlying conceptualizations may be the same. This becomes clear when the diagrammatic schematizations for *over* and the corresponding JSL signs are added to the polysemy network, as in the chart below.

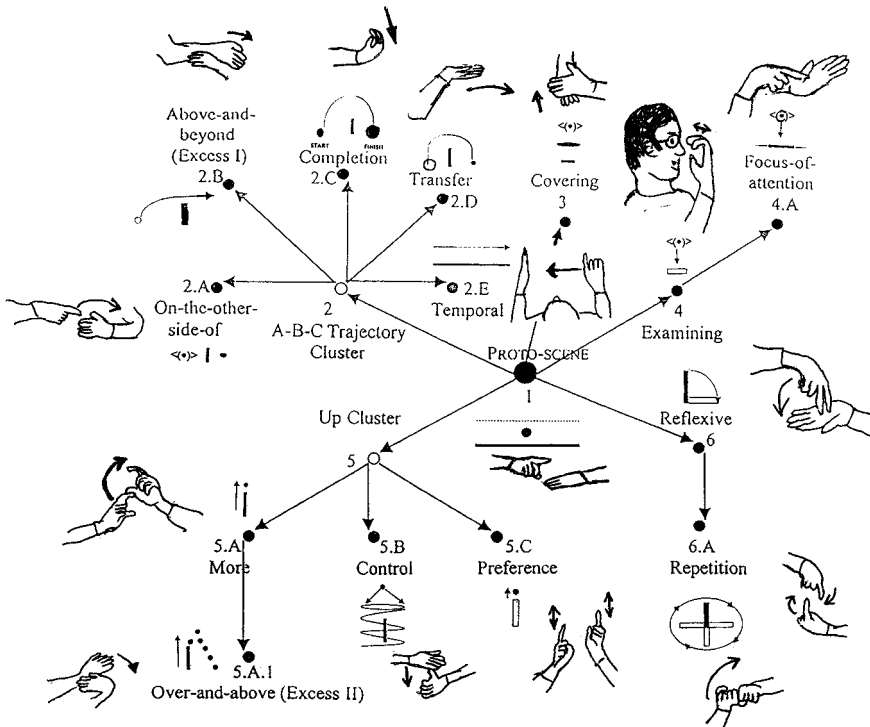


Chart 3.

The similarity in the structures seen in the diagrammatic schematizations and the network of corresponding JSL signs discussed throughout this paper, and illustrated in the above chart, give indirect support to the possibility of the cross-linguistic existence of such diagrammatic conceptual structures and networks. These correspondences, in fact, seem to be related to what Matsumoto (1998:43), in his study of grammaticalization, refers to as “image schema preservation”, by which he means that similar image schemas (or what we have termed diagrammatic schematizations) “tend to be preserved across metaphorical mappings” crosslinguistically. And so, it may not be so surprising that a network of diagrammatic schematizations for an English preposition is reflected in JSL data as well. This network of schematizations may represent underlying conceptualizations that occur crosslinguistically, and are preserved crosslinguistically, across metaphorical mappings, to form similar semantic networks.

Another generalization that can be made is that, in the schematizations, the LM seems to be consistently represented by the non-dominant hand, the actual signing space, or sometimes, not be represented at all. The TR is almost always represented by the dominant hand, and the position of the signer or the signer’s eyes represent point-of-view in the scene. What is also of particular interest, as mentioned in the beginning of this paper, are those signs that refer to abstract concepts rather than concrete objects or actions. The trajectory cluster, represented by Figures 2 (A-E), are generally abstract in nature. Although 2.A is a rather concrete example of location, the others, *excess*, *completion*, *temporal*, and to some extent, *transfer*, can represent abstract concepts, and therefore can be particularly important for providing clues for the images we may have for these abstract concepts. *Transfer* and *temporal* ideas seem to be represented by lateral movement, which has been suggested by Lakoff (1987) and others. *Excess* and *completion* seem to be represented by downward movement (perhaps preceded by upward movement). The *completion* sign appears to also have been partially grammaticalized into a past-tense suffix at the end of verbs (There is another past-tense suffix with a different orientation that may be in complementary distribution with the *completion* suffix depending on the palm orientation of the base verb.). These verbs and suffixes should be a fruitful area for further studies.

We can now propose, based on suggestions from Tyler and Evans (2001, 2003), Mandler (1988, 1992, 2004) and (slightly changing the process for acquiring categories provided by) Barsalou (1992:26), a possible scenario for what happens when a signer perceives some real-world (spatial) event and wants to express it in JSL by matching the external reality with internal concepts:

Perception, conceptualization, and selection process

1. Perceive some (spatial) event.

2. Form a structural description of that event.
3. Search semantic networks for redescrptions similar to the structural description.
4. Select the most similar redescription.
5. Select the most appropriate sign mapped on to that redescription.
6. If there is no appropriate sign, construct signs or use gestures (with the non-dominant hand as the LM, and the dominant hand as the TR) that approximate the structure of the most appropriate redescription.

In this scenario, the signer perceives some external event (which may or may not actually be a spatial event), and in some way the perceived information is converted into conceptual information (see again note 1), where it can become a structural description. This description then triggers³ a search through the semantic networks for a similar structural redescription, and once the most appropriate redescription is found, the most appropriate related sign/word is selected. If no appropriate sign is found, an original sign can be created (perhaps adding gestures), and mapped on to the redescription.

This, then, is a very simplified illustration of the perception, conceptualization, and selection processes involved in the matching of perceived (spatial) event structures with concepts and lexical items, a process that may illustrate what Armstrong and Wilcox (2007) refer to as “cognitive iconicity”, or what Fischer (2007) refers to as “iconic thinking”. In the future, further investigations of cognitive iconicity or iconic thinking and the relationships between other structural descriptions, redescrptions and schematizations of conceptual structures proposed by Tyler and Evans and others, and the iconic signs of JSL and other sign languages should prove a fruitful area of research for those intent on understanding how language phenomena are related to conceptualization and related brain functions. In addition, frameworks like Text World Theory (Werth 1999, Gavins 2007) should aid in illustrating how this type of analysis can be extended from the lexical and syntactic levels to the discourse level.

These aspects, as well as the notion, discussed throughout this paper, that the iconicity of sign language signs may provide valuable clues for understanding how language phenomena are related to brain functions, illustrate how sign language data can be important for the study of human languages. The importance of

3. This ‘trigger’ metaphor in production can be seen as the mirror image of the perception process described by Bouissac (2007: 31) as an ‘index’, where he suggests that words are “indices of abstract cognitive structures that actualize semantic properties determined by the co-textual and contextual situations”. In production, then, the concepts may trigger word/sign searches, while hearing a word or seeing a sign points to relevant concepts.

iconic aspects of sign language signs for linguistic research is also mentioned in a recent publication on the universals of sign languages by Sandler and Lillo-Martin (2006: 508), where they state their perspective a bit differently:

The cross-sign-language characteristics that are due to modality are largely attributable to the fact that sign languages are capable of encoding experience in a way that is iconically motivated and that they are constrained by a variety of factors to use simultaneous structuring. This results in certain universals of structure across sign languages. The relative transparency in the way that some types of objects or events in the world are linguistically encoded — in languages that are too new to have acquired a great deal of purely arbitrary and opaque apparatus — may provide a unique window into the way in which the mind categorizes, represents, and transmits information.

I hope that the present paper has helped in some small way to open the curtains of that window a little bit more.

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Iconicity and subjectivisation in the English NP

The case of *little*

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For Sylvia Adamson

Through a corpus-based study of the behaviour of *little* (ME-PDE), the paper explores (a) the effects of processes of subjectivisation (vid. De Smet and Verstraete 2006) on the syntactic configuration of the English NP and (b) how these latter relate to key iconicity postulates. More specifically, it suggests that, at least from the 19th century onwards, *little* has been developing ‘affix-like’ affective functions (e.g. *a little minute*) that appear to challenge the much-cited association between subjectivisation and leftward movement (cf. Adamson 2000) and that assert the role of cultural salience in iconically-driven processes of change.

1. Introduction

Research on the nature and distribution of adjectives¹ in English has traditionally focused on synchronic considerations. Two topics seem to have attracted a great deal of scholarly attention, namely, the order of adjectives in complex N(oun) P(hrase) strings (e.g. *long hot bath* vs *hot long bath*; cf. Goyvaerts 1968, Bache 1978, Hetzron 1978, Fries 1986, Vandelanotte 2002) and the semantic differences between attributive and predicative adjectives (cf. Bolinger 1967, Markus 1997).

It is only recently that the diachronic implications of the above-mentioned synchronic issues have started to be explored. Adamson (2000), Breban (2006),

1. Here I am referring to adjectives in the so-called ‘positive degree’ only. Abundant research on comparative and superlative adjectives has appeared from the second half of the twentieth century onwards (cf., among others, Rusiecki 1985, Kytö 1996, Kytö and Romaine 1997, Linqvist 2000, Mondorf 2003, Graziano-King 2003).

and Davidse, Breban and Van Linden (2008) investigate the collocational shifts of attributive adjectives undergoing processes of grammaticalisation and subjectification, whereas Fischer (2000, 2001, 2006) focuses on the position of the adjective in Old and Middle English and the extent to which it is motivated by iconicity. At any rate, diachronic change within the English NP is still an under-investigated area.

This paper aims at contributing to a better understanding of the processes of change affecting the English NP. More specifically, it brings together two of the research areas mentioned above (subjectivity and iconicity) in order to explore the behaviour of the adjective *little* in NP strings and its implications for the morpho-syntactic organisation of the language.

Four multi-genre corpora were used for the analysis: PPCME2 (for Middle English; henceforth ME), the *Helsinki Corpus* (for Early Modern English; henceforth EModE), ARCHER (for Late Modern English; henceforth LModE) and part of the written section of the BNC (for Present-day English; henceforth PDE. See the Appendix below for a brief description of each of these corpora). In addition, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) database was used for selected semantic comparisons (see Section 4 below).

The paper is organised as follows: Section 2 provides an overview of the structure of the English NP (Section 2.1) and summarises some of the diachronic work that has appeared on the topic to date (Section 2.2). A corpus-based analysis of *little* in simple and complex strings is the focus of Section 3, whereas Section 4 is devoted to a contrastive analysis of the behaviour of *little* and *small*. The outcome of the analyses is then examined in the light of recent work on the syntax of attributive adjectives (Section 5) and previous cross-linguistic research (Section 6). Finally, a summary of the results and their relevance in connection to key iconicity postulates (proximity principle, the importance of cultural salience in diagrammatic iconicity) and the morpho-syntax of present-day English is provided in Section 7.

2. Previous literature on the topic

2.1 The structure of the English NP

Although there is some terminological variation,² the following functional pre-nominal slots are normally distinguished in the English NP:

2. See, among others, Quirk et al 1985:1238, 1321ff, Biber et al. 1999:240–241, 510ff, 558ff, 574ff; Dixon 1982:24; Halliday 1994[1985]:180ff, Adamson 2000:24.

Deictic		Numerative	Epithet	Classifier	Thing
Deictic 1	Deictic 2				
Determiner	Adjective	Numeral	Adjective	Adjective or noun	Noun
<i>(all, my, John's, same)</i>		<i>(one, second)</i>	<i>(old, great)</i>	<i>(wooden, glass)</i>	<i>(car, happiness)</i>

Figure 1. Functional slots in the NP premodifying string (Halliday (2004[1985])³)

Focusing now on the Epithet slot, Dixon (1982) distinguishes seven different adjective types and observes that, cross-linguistically, they tend to occur in a specific order within the NP string (see Figure 2 below):

Type:	value	dimension	physical property	speed	human propensity	age	colour
Example:	<i>good</i>	<i>big</i>	<i>hard</i>	<i>fast</i>	<i>kind</i>	<i>old</i>	<i>red</i>

Figure 2. Dixon's (1982) adjective types and their order in the NP string

Take for instance a string where the noun *car* is premodified by the adjectives *red* and *fast*. To a native speaker, the sequence *fast red car* will sound more natural than *red fast car*. This, according to Dixon, is because SPEED adjectives tend to occur earlier than COLOUR adjectives in complex NP strings.

Dixon (1982: 25, 30) also notes that VALUE adjectives are different from the other adjective types in that they “cannot directly qualify” the head noun of the string in which they appear but rather they have “manner function with respect to an implicit non-value adjective”. As Adamson (2000: 44) perceptively observes, Dixon's comment suggests a division between subjective/speaker-oriented adjectives (VALUE) and objective/descriptive ones (the other adjective types in Figure 2 above) within the NP string.⁴ Furthermore, Adamson (2000) also points to the diachronic implications of Dixon's (1982) claims, suggesting that if his adjectival ordering is to be maintained diachronically, then “a change of meaning in an adjective can be expected to correlate with a change in its unmarked position in a string” (Adamson 2000: 47). Her research on the development of *lovely* in English sets out to investigate the hypothesis.

3. Here I have adopted Halliday's (1994[1985]: 185) model; see the references provided in fn. 2 above for other classifications.

4. See De Smet and Verstraete (2006) for a good discussion of the notion of subjectivity and its typology.

2.2 Diachronic change in the English NP: Previous literature

As noted above, Adamson (2000) focuses on the semantic development of *lovely* in the history of English. Her results reflect the grammaticalisation of the adjective (HUMAN PROPENSITY > PHYSICAL PROPERTY > VALUE adjective; see (1) below), which in the present-day is shading into an intensifier (e.g. *lovely* ('very') *long legs*; Adamson 2000: 47–48, 54).

(1)	HUMAN PROPENSITY >	PHYSICAL PROPERTY >	VALUE
	('amiable')	('beautiful')	('approve')
	for she to him so <i>lovely</i>	her <i>lovely</i> face	Dear Fred wrote
	was and trewe		...such a <i>lovely</i> note

The change from HUMAN PROPENSITY/PHYSICAL PROPERTY to VALUE denotations in *lovely* also features a process of subjectivisation,⁵ i.e. from objective (reference-oriented) to subjective (speaker-oriented) meanings. These synsemantic changes have an iconic positional correlate as well: the more grammaticalised an adjective and the more subjective its meaning over time, the greater its tendency for appearing in the leftmost position of a NP (Adamson 2000: 53).⁶

Given the existence of abundant literature on iconicity, here I will only mention the iconic notions most relevant to my argument.⁷ Two main types of iconicity are generally distinguished in the literature, i.e. imagic iconicity (where “there is a direct, one to one relation between the sign or signifier... and the signified”; cf. the case of onomatopoeic words, Nänny and Fischer 1999: xxi) and diagrammatic iconicity (where “the relation between two or more signs resembles the relation between the signata”; Fischer and Nänny 2001: 2).⁸ As may be obvious from the

5. As De Smet and Verstraete (2006: 368, 369) point out, although the concept of subjectivisation has been widely used in the literature, “there are quite a number of problems” with the notion because “the two most prominent authors on subjectivity and subjectification define the concepts in a slightly different way”. Here I shall be using subjectivisation in the Traugottian sense; i.e. the process whereby meanings became increasingly based on the speaker’s personal perception of events (cf. Finegan 1995, Traugott 1989, 1995, Traugott and Dasher 2002: 89ff). The reader should consult De Smet and Verstraete ((2006: 369ff) for an insightful discussion of the different approaches to the study of subjectivity and subjectivisation.

6. See also Fischer (2007: 259), González-Díaz (2009) and the references provided there for recent work on the close connection between grammaticalisation, subjectivisation and word order.

7. For more information on different aspects on iconicity, I refer the reader to Nänny and Fischer (1999), Fischer and Nänny (2001) and Maeder et al. (2005).

8. The linear organisation of *veni, vidi, vici* mirrors the temporal organisation of the real-world events (i.e. ‘first, he arrived, then he saw and finally he conquered’).

examples above, the iconicity displayed in the case of *lovely* is of the diagrammatic type, as the spatial movement towards the left of the premodifying string reflects its increasing semantic detachment from the head noun (see Figure 3 below).

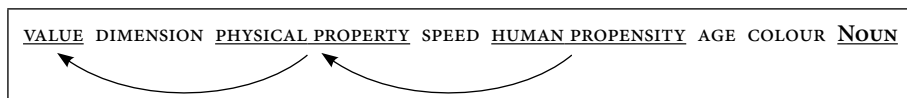


Figure 3. Semantic development of *lovely* (based on Adamson 2000)

Further connections between diagrammatic iconicity and syntactic position are made explicit in Fischer (2001). Following Bolinger's (1952[1972], 1967) remarks, Fischer (2001:254) observes that issues of sentence linearity are important when considering the semantics of adjective modification; the idea behind it being that "whatever comes first in a linear sequence determines to some extent how the next element is to be interpreted".

Thus, an attributive adjective (i.e. ADJ.–N combinations) endows the following noun with a characteristic that is inherent to its referent (e.g. *the responsible man*, 'a man who is responsible in all situations') whereas when the adjective occurs post-nominally (i.e. N-ADJ. or N-V(erb)- ADJ.), the qualification of the noun is only partial, i.e. the adjective contrasts the noun with other nouns that do not possess the same quality (e.g. *the man responsible* 'the man who is responsible for something on a particular occasion'). Fischer (2001) notes that this generalisation does not fully apply to Modern English, because Modern English adjectives are "on the whole fixed to prenominal position". Nevertheless, she (Fischer 2001:257) also observes that the O(ld) E(nglish) situation was different. OE weak adjectives were normally placed in attributive positions and tended to be "thematic", associated with "given" information — i.e. information that appears to be intrinsic to the nature of the noun that they modify (Fischer 2001:257). By contrast, strong adjectives were "very close to the Verb category" and, as such, they conveyed new, "rhematic" or less predictable information (cf. also Croft 1991:52, Wierzbicka 1988:484). In other words, information that is not inherent to the referent of the noun. OE strong adjectives often occurred in postnominal positions, although they could also appear pronominally. In the latter position, however, they still retained their verbal nature.

Adamson's (2000) and Fischer's (2001, 2006) work provide diachronic evidence of the validity of previous synchronic claims on the semantics and syntactic distribution of English adjectives. Yet there is room for further investigation, especially as regards the connection between semantic shifts and syntactic order within the NP. As Adamson (2000:59) observes, "the question of how ... word order options relate to pathways of syntactic or semantic change...has been very little studied as yet, either in terms of the history of particular items or of the categories of premodifiers that they represent." This is where my research comes in.

3. *Little*: A case study

Observe the *OED* entry for *little* (adj.):

1. Of people: 'short in stature' (c1000); 'inferior in rank' (1220)
2. Of things: 'Opposed to *great*. Often synonymous with *small*...not large or big' (c1000); 'not of great importance, trivial' (from 1175); 'slight amount or degree'; 'of immaterial things, considered in respect of their quantity, length in series, etc' (from 1275)
3. conveying 'an implication of endearment or depreciation, or of tender feeling on the part of the speaker. Also coupled with an epithet expressing such feelings, e.g. *pretty, sweet, little*' (1567 onwards)

Little was in origin a physical DIMENSION adjective. Around the 12th century it started to convey metaphorical DIMENSION and HUMAN PROPENSITY attributes (see sense 2 above) and, from the second half of the 16th century onwards, it appears to have developed an affective (VALUE) meaning (cf. sense 3 above)).

All in all, the semantic history of *little* seems to follow the pathway of change noted by Adamson (2000) for *lovely*: a gradual development from more to less concrete denotations (i.e. physical dimension / abstract dimension / social dimension (importance)), paired with an increase in subjectivity (dimension > affection). In this connection, note how size or quantity is more objectively measurable than either degree or importance (which is always subject to the speaker's judgement). In addition, endearment or depreciation is clearly the result of the development of an affective meaning in the adjective. One should nevertheless observe that there is an important difference between *lovely* and *little*, namely, that whereas *lovely* appears to have lost its early meaning (i.e. HUMAN PROPENSITY), *little* preserves its original dimensional sense in the present-day language (see example (2i) below):

- (2) i. A keen breeze had sprung up and they watched as it chased fallen leaves along the pavement, blowing them into **little** [DIMENSION] heaps against the red brick wall (BNC, JXY 1265)
- ii. That questions and recriminations would creep in later she had **little** [DEGREE/AMOUNT] doubt (BNC, JXY 2171)
- iii. "Soon, because I want to show you off, my **little** [AFFECTION] leprechaun"⁹ (BNC, JY0 6194)

9. The affective meaning of *little* in this example does not completely cancel out its original dimensional sense; note that the term *leprechaun* inherently implies 'small size'.

A close look at the diachronic distribution of *little* in simple NP strings (*little* + N) provides us with a better picture of its semantic development (see Table 1 and Table 2 below):

Table 1. Distribution of *little* in simple strings (i.e. [*little* + N])

<i>Little</i> + N	Abstract ¹⁰	Concrete inanimate	Concrete animate	Personal	Total
ME	149 (44%)	164 (48%)	25 (7%)	1 (1%)	339 (100%)
EModE	135 (59%)	81 (36%)	10 (4%)	2 (1%)	228 (100%)
LModE	188 (42%)	153 (33%)	80 (18%)	32 (7%)	453 (100%)
PDE	577 (42%)	481 (35%)	256 (19%)	44 (4%)	1358(100%)

Table 2. Most frequent noun types in [*little* + N] collocations across time

	ME	EMODE	LMODE	PDE
Abstract nouns	tyme, worde, while, witt, peyne, pris	while, time, distance, grace, business	time, while, wind	time, help, while, money, smile, way, laugh, game, doubt, chance, nod, evidence, interest, joke, sigh, exercise, point, voice, shiver, party, business, difference, attention, wonder, choice, weight
Concrete inanimate nouns	cercle, village, cross, schip, cytee, hole, town, tretys, good, charge, flesch, fur, mete, hede	market, vil-lage, page, money, things	bell, silver, flock	boat, house, room, cottage, group, village, café, table, ante-room, restaurant, theatre, world, milk, water
Concrete animate	kyng, children, child,	boy, girl, beare	boy, girl, children, man, rogue	girl, boy, hedgehog, children, dog, brother, daughter, son, creature, people, fool, man, birds
Personal nouns	–	–	–	Kirsty, Jimmy, Hareton, Jack

10. My noun classification is based on that of Quirk et al. (1985: 247).

11. The Table does not reflect *all* noun types collocating with *little*, but only those nouns that Wordsmith retrieved as significant collocates of *little* (i.e. more than 3 occurrences). The selective display of data may detract from an exhaustive account of the semantic shades of *little*, yet it has the advantage of providing us with pattern consistencies through time.

Table 1 suggests a decrease in collocations of *little* with common concrete inanimate nouns between ME and EModE (from 48% to 36%). The change appears to run parallel to an increase in combinations of *little* with abstract nouns (from 44% to 59%). In this respect, there seems to be a consistent association between *little* and abstract quantitative notions across periods (i.e. *time*, *distance*, *while*; see Table 2). In addition, in LModE and PDE one observes a rise in the use of *little* in metaphorical, subjective collocations (cf. *little talk*, *a little business*, *little affair*). The corpus data matches the information provided in the *OED* entry above. The decrease of *little* in collocations with concrete inanimate nouns could well be linked to the parallel establishment of metaphorical and affective denotations (as opposed to purely physical dimension) as frequent meanings of the adjective (see, in this connection, Tables 6–9 below). A good example of this semantic shift is given in the following quote from Hardy's (1874) *Far from the Madding Crowd*. The collocate of *little* in the passage denotes an exact time measure (60 seconds), which is unsuitable for any kind of dimensional/degree qualification. Thus, what the string *one little minute* conveys here is an affective request for information on the part of the speaker:

- (3) More fevered now by a reaction from the first feelings which Oak's example had raised in her, she paused in the hall, looking at the door of the room wherein Fanny lay. She locked her fingers, threw back her head, and strained her hot hands rigidly across her forehead, saying, with a hysterical sob, "Would to God you would speak and tell me your secret, Fanny! ... Oh, I hope, hope it is not true! ... If I could only look in upon you for one **little minute**, I should know all!" (Thomas Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*)

So far I have restricted my analysis of *little* to simple NP strings. A more accurate description of the semantic development of the adjective may be obtained by considering its distribution in complex NP strings (see Section 3.1 below).

3.1 Analysis

Two main patterns were considered in my analysis: two-adjective and three-adjective strings (see examples (4) and (5) below, respectively).

- (4) these were ...opened and shut just after the same manner; with these Instruments does this **little busie** Creature bite and pierce the skin (HEL, CESCIE3A)
- (5) there is a good photo opportunity with a glimpse of the *cheeky little pink* cantilever stand (BNC, FR9 1542)

3.1.1 *Two-adjective strings*

Fischer (2001:258, 2006:261, fn9) observes that complex NP strings were not widely available in earlier stages of the language.¹² This is probably the reason for the (relatively) low number of complex strings in the ME and EModE periods (see Table 3 below):

Table 3. *Little* in complex premodifying strings

	Two-adjective strings			Two-adjective-string totals vs / total no. of little tokens in corpus
	Little + adj + N	Adj + little + N	Total	
ME	6 (66.6%)	3 (33.4%)	9 (2.6%)	9 (2.6%) / 348(100%)
EMODE	4 (40%)	6 (60%)	10 (4.2%)	10 (4.2%) / 236 (100%)
LMODE	23 (39%)	36 (61%)	59 (11.3%)	59 (11.3%) / 518 (100%)
PDE	74 (20%)	275 (80%)	349 (20.2%)	349 (20.2%) / 1723 (100%)

In general terms, however, the data shows a diachronic decline in two-adjective strings where *little* appears in leftmost positions (from 66% in ME to 20% in PDE), with the corresponding increase of the pattern in which *little* appears right before the noun.

It is worth paying attention to the adjective types that combine with *little* in two-adjective strings. PHYSICAL PROPERTY, HUMAN PROPENSITY and COLOUR seem to be the most frequent classes in [*little* + adj. + N] combinations (see (6)–(7) below):

Table 4. Adjective types in [*little* + adj. + N] strings

Little + adj. + N	ME	EMODE	LMODE	PDE
VALUE	–	–	1 (5%)	–
DIMENSION	1 (17%)	–	1 (5%)	–
PHYSICAL PROP.	3 (50%)	2 (50%)	9 (39%)	15 (20%)
SPEED	–	–	–	–
HUMAN PROP.	2 (33%)	1 (25%)	4 (17%)	11 (15%)
AGE	–	–	–	5 (7%)
COLOUR	–	1 (25%)	4 (17%)	26 (35%)
OTHER	–	–	4 (17%)	17 (23%)
TOTAL	6 (100%)	4 (100%)	23 (100%)	74 (100%)

12. As Fischer (2001:258) puts it, “the strongly nominal and verbal (predicative) nature of weak and strong adjectives respectively also accounts for the fact that in Old English adjectives cannot really occur in a row as they do in Present-day English.”

- (6) ... asked him what sort of a man he was: he answered, he was a tall lean man: now Don John was a **little fat** [PHYS. PROP.] man (HEL, CEHIST3A)
- (7) These **little playful** [HUM. PROP] studies may do well enough with persons who do not want to. (ARCHER, FICT1753R)

By contrast, VALUE adjectives are the preferred category in [Adj. + *little* + N] patterns across periods (see (8)–(9) below).

Table 5. Adjective types in [Adj. + *little* + N] strings

Adj. + little + N	ME	EMODE	LMODE	PDE
VALUE	2 (67%)	–	31 (86%)	201 (73.3%)
DIMENSION	–	1 (17%)	–	16 (6%)
PHYSICAL PROP.	–	3 (50%)	1 (3%)	38 (14%)
SPEED	–	–	–	–
HUMAN PROP.	–	2 (33%)	4 (11%)	16 (6%)
AGE	–	–	–	2 (0.7%)
COLOUR	–	–	–	–
OTHER	1 (33%)	–	–	2 (0.7%)
TOTAL	3 (100%)	6 (100%)	36 (100%)	275 (100%)

- (8) & proferyd hym a portose, a *good* [VALUE] *lytyl boke* (PPCME2, CMKEMPI)
- (9) So what are you suggesting: that I make up some *nice* [VALUE] **little** story? (BNC, JXV3261)

These diachronic preferences match Dixon's (1982) suggestions regarding the default NP adjective ordering — note that the ADJ. slot in either of the two string options is occupied by adjective types that either follow (for [*little* + adj. + N] patterns) or immediately precede (in the case of [Adj. + *little* + N] strings) the DIMENSION slot. There are, however, some exceptions.

Following Dixon's (1982) classification (see Figure 2 above), one would expect the ADJ. slot in [Adj. + *little* + N] strings to be filled by either DIMENSION or VALUE adjectives. VALUE adjectives are indeed the adjectives occurring most frequently in the latter position; however, adjective types which normally appear to the right of DIMENSION adjectives are also attested (see Table 5 above and examples (10)–(11) below).

- (10) She bit her lip, feeling the tension curling in *hot little* spirals in her stomach (BNC, JXV 2002)

- (11) “Because for the time being you’re apparently enjoying your *new little* game of manageress” (BNC JY5 1850)

Especially interesting are those cases in which *little* is premodified by adjectives that seem to fit best the classifier category (see the examples under (12)–(13) below):

- (12) Candy gave a *philosophical little* shrug (BNC, JY5 497)
 (13) He made a *mocking little* bow (BNC, JY7 3208)

Consider now Tables 6–9 below, which record the semantic distribution of *little* in dimensional and value (i.e. affective) meanings across periods. It should be noted here that the label ‘dimension’ stands for both physical (e.g. *a little plant*) and metaphorical dimension (e.g. *a little smile* = a smile ‘small in size’).

Table 6. *Little* in ME

ME	<i>Little</i> + Adj. + N	Adj. + <i>little</i> + N
VALUE	4 (66.8%)	1 (33.4%)
VALUE/DIMENSION	1 (16.6%)	2 (66.6%)
DIMENSION	1 (16.6%)	–
TOTAL	6 (100%)	3 (100%)

Table 7. *Little* in EModE

EMODE	<i>Little</i> + Adj. + N	Adj. + <i>little</i> + N
VALUE	1 (25%)	4 (66.6%)
VALUE/DIMENSION	1 (25%)	2 (33.4%)
DIMENSION	2 (50%)	–
TOTAL	4 (100%)	6 (100%)

Table 8. *Little* in LModE

LMODE	<i>Little</i> + Adj. + N	Adj. + <i>little</i> + N
VALUE	3 (14%)	17 (47%)
VALUE/DIMENSION	12 (52%)	18 (50%)
DIMENSION	8 (34%)	1 (3%)
TOTAL	23 (100%)	36 (100%)

Table 9. *Little* in PDE

PDE	<i>Little</i> + Adj. + N	Adj. + <i>little</i> + N
VALUE	13 (17%)	114 (42%)
VALUE/DIMENSION	29 (40%)	154 (56%)
DIMENSION	32 (43%)	7 (2%)
TOTAL	74 (100%)	275 (100%)

One common trend across periods is the high frequency of examples where it is difficult to tease apart DIMENSION and VALUE meanings — note, in this connection, the fact that VALUE and DIMENSION adjectives occupy contiguous slots in the premodifying string. For instance, in (14) the tenderness of the speaker towards the woman that he admires does not cancel out the implication that she may be physically small. A more explicit example of the ambiguous nature of *little* in my data is given in (15). Leonora initially conjures up the value meaning of *little* ('nice'/'cute', in *little black dress*) while its descriptive (dimensional) sense in the context is made evident through the ironic comment of her companion.

- (14) And it was really a pleasure — from the first opening of the bandbox, where everything smelled of lavender and rose leaves, to the clasping of the small coral necklace that fitted closely round her **little** white neck. Everything belonging to Miss Nancy was of delicate purity and nattiness (ARCHER, FICT1861E)
- (15) “Is this all right?” asked Leonora anxiously. “Elise said I couldn’t go wrong with a **little** black dress.” “**Little**’s the word,” he said gruffly, looking her up and down. “I don’t know that I approve of quite so much black silk leg on view, but otherwise you look wonderful.” (BNC, JYC 3658)

As noted in Section 2.2 above, leftmost positions in NP-adjective modifier slots are normally associated with speaker-oriented, VALUE meanings that iconically reflect the conceptual distance between adjective and noun. One would thus expect some kind of correlation between *little* and affective meanings when *little* appears in the leftmost positions of a string — and, conversely, a stronger association between dimensional meanings and *little* when *little* appears on the right of the string. Tables 6–9 above reveal, however, (a) that, over time, [*little* + adj. + N] is the pattern in which the descriptive meanings of *little* are most frequently recorded and (b) that, contrary to the hypothesis, [Adj. + *little* + N] patterns appear to disfavour dimension meanings more strongly.

3.1.2 Three-adjective strings

Three-adjective strings are not very frequent in my data. Only 22 examples were recorded in the LModE and the PDE periods.

The quantitative limitations of the data do not allow us to reach any definitive conclusions. One can nevertheless observe how *little* across the modern periods becomes more strongly associated with rightmost positions.

Table 10. *Little* in 3-adjective strings

	Leftmost	Middle	Rightmost	Total
ME	–	–	–	–
EModE	–	–	–	–
LModE	1 (20%)	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	5 (100%)
PDE	2 (12%)	6 (38%)	8 (50%)	16 (100%)

As the Table above indicates, 60% of the LModE examples (3 tokens) are instances of *little* in middle positions, with a balanced distribution between rightmost and leftmost slots (see examples (16)–(20) below). In one of those middle-position examples, however, *little* is preceded by *poor* (see (16) below), thus conforming to one of the patterns that the *OED* notes as an established collocation for *little* in affective uses (cf. in this connection, my comments in Section 5 below).

- (16) Esther And now I'm one of the aristocracy, ain't I?
 George Yes, dear; I suppose that we may consider ourselves
 Esther Tell me, George, are you quite sure that you are proud of your poor
little humble wife? (ARCHER, D1867R)
- (17) & it saves the circuit of Letters, & it would have been gross to have had
 the money sent to her immediately from Mr Wedgewood — My Wife &
 Children are well — Derwent is a fine fat *little* fellow, that very often looks
 just like your dear Mother (ARCHER, X1801C)
- (18) Brierly Now be off, like a good little chap
 Sam Come, cheeky! Don't you use bad language. I'm rising fifteen, stand
 five feet five in my blutchers, and I'm sprouting agin' against the
 summer if I ain't six foot of greens already like you
 May Hold your tongue! Your's a naughty, impudent *little* boy!
 (ARCHER, D1863T)

In terms of semantics, affection and dimension are found in the middle and rightmost examples of *little*. In (16) and (17) above Esther and Derwent are members of the speakers' respective families. This endows their speech with an emotional load — which of course does not cancel out the possible implication of smallness.

The same reasoning applies to (18). May Edwards has in Sam (Willoughby) a good, devoted friend (hence her affection for him). The size dimension is still present, manifested in Sam's explicit comment about his height.

By contrast, *little* in leftmost slots may perhaps be better understood in its dimensional sense only. In (19) below *spurs* are inherently small devices. Observe also that the narrator of the passage is emotionally detached from the scene he is describing (note the use of *the man* and *the stranger*, as opposed to e.g. *he* or the man's proper name).

- (19) "You've a fine roomy saddle," observed the stranger ... You can't put a round of beef on a plate," replied Mr. Jorrocks.. as he eyed he little old flap-flapped jockey-looking thing he had got in exchange, and began to fumble at the stirrups. Ere he got them adjusted, the man had stuck his little sharp-rowelled wiry-looking spurs into Dickey Cobden's sides
(ARCHER, FIC1845SURT)

The PDE data show a slightly different syntactic picture from that of the previous periods, where *little* is preferred in rightmost slots (see (20)–(22) below):

- (20) I learned to love what Diana and Mary loved — the little *old grey* house, the wild open moors around it, and the lonely hills and valleys where we walked for hours (BNC, FR6 2155)
- (21) But not with Kathleen. Oh, no, not with that *aggravating, hot-tempered, sensuous little* leprechaun (BNC, JYB 2834)
- (22) By taking this lift and jamming it (remove blue circuit from behind panel) just after the third floor, there is a good photo opportunity with a glimpse of the *cheeky little pink* cantilever stand (BNC, FR9 1542)

Once again, in (20)–(22) above it is difficult to determine accurately the semantic import of the adjective, as both dimension and affection seem to play a role in the examples. Take for instance examples (20)–(21), where the combination of *little* to *house* and *leprechaun* not only makes the dimension meaning more explicit but also adds affection to the utterance.

3.2 Conclusion

The sections above show that the development of *little* shares a number of characteristics with that of *lovely*; i.e. the gradual development of abstract, value-based denotations in line with subjectification parameters as well as a corresponding increase in the range of collocations in complex premodifying strings. There are, however, a number of important differences between the two processes of change.

First, unlike *lovely*, the distribution of *little* in complex strings does not fully conform to Dixon's model, as it can be premodified by adjective types towards the right of the DIMENSION slot on the NP string. Especially remarkable are those cases where *little* appears after adjectival postmodifiers (see (12)–(13) above) — which, as noted in Figure 1 above, lie outside of the adjective modifier functional slot. Second, in line with the iconicity postulates mentioned above, one would assume that the objective (dimension) > subjective (affective) meaning shift in *little* would correlate with a greater tendency for *little* to occupy leftmost positions (i.e. further away from the noun). The data analysis, however, seems to point towards the opposite trend, i.e. a diachronic preference for affective *little* for occupying the rightmost slot in complex strings.

Furthermore, in connection to the ordering of *little* in complex strings, Denison (1998: 126) observes the following:

Adjectives have mutual ordering relations which are tendencies rather than rigid rules: *big brown bag* is a more likely order than [?]*brown big bag* (...) [I]n our period, [1776–1997] we find examples as

- (93)a. but indeed *that little foolish Woman* has made me very uneasy (1789 [...])
 b. you *little ungrateful puss* (1848 [...])
 c. Mrs Lee is *a little timid woman* (1850 [...]) [...]

In (93) we might expect *little* to come one place further to the right in PDE [...] Of course, isolated oddities do not in themselves show a difference in language systems, since at any period there has been freedom to violate the norms of adjectival order.

Interestingly, Denison does not make any comments about the meaning that *little* is supposed to convey in the examples. One may nevertheless observe that the position of *little* in Denison's (original) examples fits in with Adamson's (2000) and Dixon's (1982) predictions; i.e. a VALUE/DIMENSION adjective occurring before HUMAN PROPENSITY ones. Why then doesn't *little* sound 'right' in the examples? Could DIMENSION adjectives follow a different semantic pathway from that of e.g. HUMAN PROPENSITY ones like *lovely*? Or is it that *little* is, in some way, an exception? In order to answer these questions, a contrastive analysis of the behaviour of *little* and another dimension adjective (*small*) was carried out.

4. *Little vs small*

No relation of synonymy is perfect (Hoey 2001): linguistic forms diverge semantically from one another, thus maintaining the one form-one meaning correlation (isomorphism principle; Haiman 1985). This is indeed the case of *little* and *small*. As the *OED* suggests, “[o]ne difference between the two synonyms is that *little* is capable of emotional implications, which *small* is not” (*OED*, *little*, a., adv. and n.)”.

The analyses in previous sections showed that, whereas the DIMENSION meaning of *little* is clearly an independent sense, the VALUE (affection) one seems to be, if not completely dependent on, difficult to tease apart from the dimensional one. A comparison between *little* and *small* in complex strings will thus allow me to determine the extent to which affection has established itself as a core sense in *little* and the ways in which it may have influenced its syntactic behaviour.

The *OED* database was used for this analysis. In order to keep the data to a manageable size, I limited my investigation to the nineteenth century, as this is the period in which Denison’s (1998) examples were attested (see Section 3.2 above).

4.1 Analysis

The Tables below record the distribution of *little* and *small* across two-adjective NPs (X stands for *little/small* in the Table):

Table 11. *Little* and *small* across patterns

Pattern	<i>Little</i>	<i>Small</i>
X + Adj. + N	350 (30%)	553 (99%)
Adj. + X + N	800 (70%)	7 (1%)
TOTAL	1150 (100%)	560 (100%)

No major semantic differences could be observed in [X + Adj. + N] patterns; PHYSICAL PROPERTY, HUMAN PROPENSITY and COLOUR being the most frequent adjectival types combining with both *little* and *small*:

- (23) **small** brown spots
little dumpy coachman

The picture changes when one considers [Adj. + X + N] patterns. Virtually no examples of *small* are attested in the corpus (see Table 11 above and Table 12 below).

- (24) A nice **small** pattern
 The sweet **small** olive-shoot
 An erect **small** tree

- (25) ugly **little** devil
 a very neat **little** nest
 dark-skinned **little** girl

Table 12. *Little* and *small* in Adj.+ *little* + N collocations

Types	<i>Little</i> No. of tokens	<i>Small</i> No. of tokens
OTHER (CLASSIFIERS) ¹³	7 (0.9%)	2 (29%)
DIMENSION	2 (0.2%)	1 (14%)
COLOUR	7 (0.9%)	0
VALUE	737 (92%)	3 (43%)
PHYSICAL PROPERTY	29 (4%)	1 (14%)
HUMAN PROPENSITY	18 (2%)	0
TOTAL	800 (100%)	7 (100%)

As regards syntactic position, Table 11 above reflects the preference for *small* to be placed on the leftward slot of the string — which contrasts with the tendency of *little* to occur in rightmost positions. Similar syntactic differences are attested in three-adjective NPs.

Table 13. *Little* and *small* in three-adjective NP strings

	Leftmost	Middle	Rightmost	Total
LITTLE	42 (79%)	1 (2%) ¹⁴	10 (19%)	53 (100%)
SMALL	49 (98%)	0	1 (2%)	50 (100%)

In these contexts, *small* is always the first (i.e. leftmost) adjective on the string (see the exception in (26) below), whereas *little* shifts between leftmost (79%) and rightmost (19%) positions.

- (26) Red enveloping **small** cypress roots

- (27) The .. **small**, wiry, active frame
small, firm, roundish tumours

13. Note that classifiers are not considered in Dixon's (1982) model because they have a different function (i.e. a classifying one) from that of the 'descriptive' or adjectival modifier type.

14. The token is exemplified in (28) *black little naked urchin*. One could perhaps consider *naked* a classifier rather than a descriptive adjective — which would, in turn, make the string a two-adjective (as opposed to a three-adjective) modifier string.

- (28) A slovenly, muffled-up, snail-paced **little** man
 Black **little** naked urchin
Little, modest, queer-looking brown girl

4.2 Conclusion

Little and *small* feature different trends of usage. In general, the distribution of *small* conforms to Dixon's (1982) and Adamson's (2000) hypotheses, whereas *little* diverges from them both semantically and syntactically (i.e. it combines with a wider range of adjectival classes and appears in more varied syntactic patterns). From this one can conclude not only that VALUE (affective) meanings are sufficiently established as an independent sense of *little* (at least from the 19th century onwards) but also that it is the development of a VALUE meaning that has made *little* diverge from the behavioural trends of strictly dimensional adjectives.

5. *Little*: Towards an explanation of its behaviour

The view that if a noun has two or more premodifiers, they are routinely seen as stacked (e.g. [a [big [red [box]]]]) is, according to Matthews (2009:362), very common amongst contemporary linguists. Indeed, as the previous analyses show, adjective stacking was the view that I have implicitly adopted in my investigation of *little*.

However, Matthews (2009) suggests that such view is only partially accurate, as there exist examples where adjective stacking may not properly describe the ordering and relation of the NP-elements. Interestingly, for Matthews, two of the examples where stacking does not seem to work involve the adjective *little*; i.e. *tiny little bird* and *pretty little bird* (Matthews 2009:368). Following Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 561), he suggests that in these strings *little* forms a sequence with its preceding adjective which monolithically modifies the noun *bird* (i.e. [[tiny little] bird]; [[pretty little] bird]) in order to convey 'very small size' (*tiny little*) and 'affection' (*pretty little*). Furthermore, in these cases, Matthews suggests that *little* is linked to a strictly dimensional meaning. In Matthews' words, in *tiny little* "the meanings of both members is 'descriptive' rather than 'affective'", whereas the sequence *pretty little* "is as a whole subjective or affective."

Matthews' (2009) observations regarding the sequence *tiny little/pretty little* are highly relevant for the present investigation as they shed new light on the relations established within the adjectival modifier slot. However, in the particular case of *little*, further investigation is needed because Matthews' claims are, due to the broad scope of the paper, too general to apply but to a selected number of the collocations of the adjective.

First, Matthews considers (and discards) the possibility for *little* in *tiny little bird* to create a syntactic unit with the noun (i.e. [tiny [little bird]]), suggesting that the resulting structure would be no different from a ‘stacked’ one, where *bird* is recursively modified by *little* and then by *tiny* to mean ‘how very small indeed the bird is’ (Matthews 2009:363ff). To him, this flouts Grice’s quantity maxim and goes against the normal stress pattern of the sequence, as both *tiny* and *little* would be stressed (as would the noun). His alternative explanation (*tiny little* as an intensifying unit) works well for those cases in which *little* combines with concrete animate nouns like *bird*, *boy*, etc., and/or selected adjectives i.e. *pretty*, *sweet*, *silly*, *poor*. My data, nevertheless, records other examples where *little* and the preceding adjective cannot be considered a unit — but where, in fact, *little* seems to pair up with the following noun. See for instance how in (29) below the speaker ironically dismisses her addressee’s new position of power, qualifying it as game (or, more specifically, an ‘unimportant’, ‘trivial’ game). The same idea applies to the string *a convoluted little story*, where *convoluted* and *little* create, to a certain extent, a contradiction in terms. *Convoluted* implies some kind of complication or difficulty which is at odds with the metaphorical nuances of *little* (i.e. ‘metaphorically small’, i.e. ‘trivial’).

- (29) “Because for the time being you’re apparently enjoying your new **little** game of manageress” (BNC, JY5 1850)
- (30) Damian slammed the door, breathing hard. “All right! Let’s get the truth!” He strode to her. “You say Bernstein called! Is that the beginning of your convoluted **little** story?” “It’s not convoluted!” she spat. “You’re convoluted!” (BNC, JYD 3871)

Finally, consider the following example from Shakespeare:

- (31) King Richard II What must the king do now? must he submit?
 The king shall do it: must he be deposed?
 The king shall be contented: must he lose
 The name of king? O’God’s name, let it go:
 I’ll give my jewels for a set of beads,
 My gorgeous palace for a hermitage,
 My gay apparel for an almsman’s gown,
 My figured goblets for a dish of wood,
 My sceptre for a palmer’s walking staff,
 My subjects for a pair of carved saints
 And my large kingdom for a **little** grave,
 A **little little** grave, an obscure grave;
 Or I’ll be buried in the king’s highway,
 Some way of common trade, where subjects’ feet
 May hourly trample on their sovereign’s head;
 (SHK., *Richard II*, III, iii)

In (31) the first token of *little* conveys a dimensional meaning, as it compares the extension of the kingdom that he is about to lose to the size of the grave (i.e. *large* vs *small*). However, in the second string (*little little grave*), the two tokens of *little* do not seem to create an intensifying construction (i.e. [*little little*] *grave*; cf. [*tiny little*] *bird*). Instead, in this second example *little* already belongs to the denotation of the noun [*little grave*], on which the second (leftmost) token of *little* operates (i.e. [*little* [*little grave*]]).

It is to the semantics of *little* that I would like to turn to now; more specifically, to the idea that ‘affection’ is part of the core semantic repertoire of *little*. Recall for instance example (30) above or observe (32) below. Without cancelling out its dimensional meaning (i.e. jeeps are comparatively small 4x4 vehicles), in example (32) the context seems to enhance an affective interpretation of *little*, as the speaker is (menacingly) showing off the power of her car.

- (32) “Walk!” she blazed. “On my own two feet *if* I have to, but I don’t think that will be necessary. This sturdy **little** jeep could knock six bells out of your fancy gates.” She revved the engine threateningly (BNC, JY4 1294)

What should one conclude from this? First, that Matthews is right in pointing to the need to reconsider the structure of, and the syntactic relations within, the English NP. Second, that further study is needed, as NP-clustering may not apply to adjective-with-adjective combinations only. In fact, Section 3.2 and examples (29)–(32) above suggest that the conveyance of an affective meaning in *little* leads to its close association to the head noun of the string (e.g. [your [convoluted [little story]]]). From an iconic perspective, the spatial proximity between *little* and the noun suggests some kind of functional/conceptual association between the two words (cf. Haiman’s 1983: 782 proximity principle; cf. also Givón 1985: 202 or Fischer 1999: 346). This possibility is explored in Section 6 below.

6. *Little* in a cross-linguistic perspective

The investigation carried out above suggests that affection is one of the core senses of *little* (at least from the 19th century onwards). In its turn, affection is cross-linguistically associated with diminutive suffixes (Jurafsky 1996: 551; Sifianou 1992: 157): note, for instance, that most of the examples of affective *little* in the

complex strings provided above would in other Germanic languages (e.g. Dutch) be rendered by a diminutive suffix attached the head noun:¹⁵

- (33) So what are you suggesting: that I make up some *nice little story*?
 dat ik een of ander *leuk verhaaltje* verzin?
- (34) This *sturdy little jeep* could knock six bells out of your ... gates
 Dit *stevige jeepje* kan zomaar zes klokken uit rammen
- (35) Because for the time being you're apparently enjoying your *new little game*
 of manageress
 je geniet blijkbaar wel van je *nieuwe spelletje* van
 manageress

Conversely, when *little* only conveys a dimensional meaning, the adjective *klein(e)* is used (and appears in leftmost positions):

- (36) he answered, he was a tall lean man: now Don John was a *little fat man*
 Don John was een *kleine dikke man*

Focusing now on English, Katamba (1993: 210) observes that "diminutive formation is not part of any general, syntactically-driven paradigm" of the language. A similar view is expressed in Bauer (2006: 183, 193), who claims that most English diminutive suffixes (e.g. *-ette*, *-kin*, *-let*, *ling*) are "rare and/or unproductive".¹⁶

The relevance of these remarks for the present investigation is obvious: could the spatial proximity between *little* and the head noun reflect the development of 'diminutive-like' functions in *little*? Jurafsky's and Sifianou's research point towards this direction. Sifianou (1992: 168) states that, "a[nother] way of expressing diminution, in both Greek and English, is by means of syntactic modification... for example, by using the words 'little' or 'small' to modify a noun". In addition, Jurafsky (1996: 534) observes that the rise of affective meanings in diminutive affixes takes place through the conventionalisation of metaphors relating to the notions of 'small' or 'children' (cf. also Sifianou 1992: 157). As Table 2 above demonstrates, the words *boy*, *girl* and *children* in my corpus seem to be statistically significant collocates of *little* in simple strings throughout the different periods of the language.

15. The examples have been typographically coded in order to make the formal correlations between the English examples and the Dutch translations clearer. I am indebted to Anita Auer and Michiel de Vaan for their help with the Dutch translations of my examples.

16. See, also Sifianou (1992: 157): "there appears to be less flexibility in expressing emotions in English through the use of diminutives, because English words accepting diminutives are limited."

I have noted above Bauer’s claim about the “unproductive” nature of English diminutives. Productivity is a gradient, continuous concept (cf. Katamba 1993, Brinton and Traugott 2005) that describes “the [a]bility of word-forming elements to be used to form new linguistic expressions” (Brussmann 1966, in Brinton and Traugott 2005:92). At the unproductive and productive ends of the continuum stand, respectively, independent lexical items (e.g. *house*, *car*) and inflections or “items that combine with others essentially by default, typically in a morpho-syntactic construction.” In between these two poles, there are a number of semi-productive elements ranging from lexical phrases to affixes (see Figure 4 below, adapted from Brinton and Traugott 2005:94).

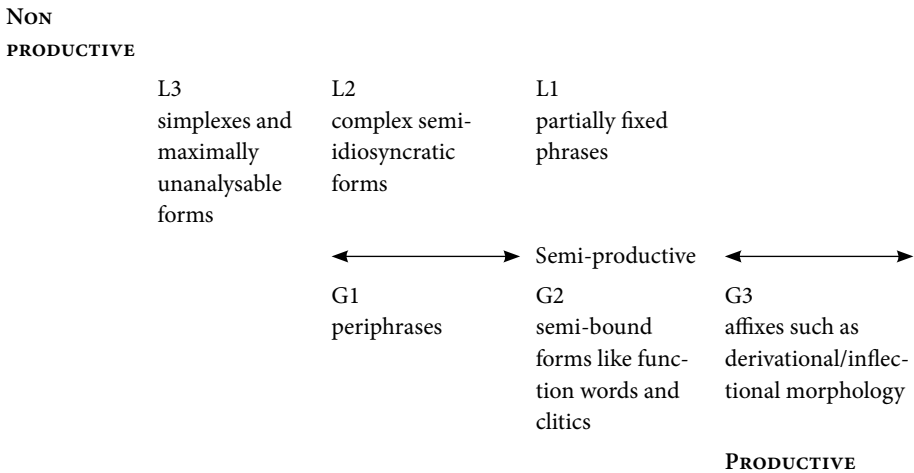


Figure 4. Lexical and grammatical productivity (from Brinton and Traugott 2005: 94)

Combinations of the type [*little* + N] would belong to the semi-productive category, standing somewhere in between L1 and G1-G2. Like L1 constructions, [*little* + N] is itself a partially fixed lexical expression. At the same time, *little* in these combinations behaves like a semi-bound form within a periphrasis (G1-G2). It partially conveys a grammatical meaning relevant to the N (diminution > affection) that suggests some kind of internal fusion between the two lexemes.¹⁷ Cross-linguistically, this does not seem to be an unusual development for adjectives, for, as Heine and Kuteva (2007:82) observe, “[a]djectives may develop into all kinds of functional markers, into clitics and affixes”.

17. Note, in this connection, Ungerer’s (1999: 311ff) remarks as regards fusion of concepts in processes of word formation as a way of restoring the principle of isomorphism.

This productive-oriented view of the development of *little* also seems to tie in with recent approaches to subjectivity and subjectification. De Smet and Verstraete (2006) distinguish two types of semantic subjectivity, i.e. ideational and interpersonal. Ideational subjectivity depicts “a rhetorical, speaker-imposed perspective on reality that is part and parcel of the content of the message”. By contrast, interpersonal subjectivity guides “the interlocutor in his or her processing of the unfolding discourse” (2006: 388). The appearance of VALUE (i.e. affective) meanings by the side of dimensional ones is a clear case of ideational subjectivity. Furthermore, the use of *little* as a diminutive-like element may be reflecting its development towards the interpersonal subjective end. As De Smet and Verstraete’s (2006: 386ff) examples show, interpersonal subjectivity may manifest itself though the loss of core synsemantic features of the word-class that the subjectivising element originally belonged to. This allows for a pragmatically, socially-based use of the element. Although still in an early phase, one may observe some kind of ‘un-dimensional’ type of adjective behaviour in (diminutive-like) *little*: it does not allow for gradability, comparison or predicative uses (*?your very little game of manageress*), it shows clear preference for rightmost syntactic positions in complex premodifying strings and, although infrequently, it collocates with nouns that semantically do not allow dimensional readings (e.g. *little minute*). In other words, it is its gradual pathway towards the end of the subjective cline that favours the ‘productive’ pragmatic use of *little*.

7. Concluding remarks: Iconicity and the development of *little*

One could argue that the reason behind the rise of semi-productive morpho-syntactic constructions in English is a way to compensate for the limitations of its morphological system from late OE onwards (when the loss of inflections began to take place) and the subsequent development of a more syntactic, word-order-based grammatical system. As Biber et al. put it, “the role of inflections is limited in English as compared with many other languages ... relationships are more commonly expressed by function words or by word order” (1999: 57). However, the morpho-syntactic limitations of English can, in line with the topic of this volume, be traced back to iconic explanations.

One of the basic tenets of iconicity is the view that “the fundamental function of language is to represent the environment and the self, or at least to communicate about the environment and the self, and therefore to represent at least those aspects which are of interest to the interactants” (Bouissac 2005: 17). Put differently, relevance in language is dependent on perceptual-cognitive and cultural salience (Bybee 1985: 13). An observable consequence of this general iconic trend is the

form–meaning distribution in morpho-syntactic coding. If in a given language two meanings are highly relevant to one another, they will probably be lexically and/or inflectionally coded — and vice-versa: if they are “irrelevant to one another, then their combination will be restricted to syntactic expression” (Bybee 1985: 13).

I have commented above on Katamba’s (1993) and Bauer’s (2006: 183) claims about the fact that diminution is not a paradigm that English speakers feel the need to fill — which explains the (iconic) choice of a syntactic unit like [*little* + N] as its preferred mode of expression. Furthermore, according to Wierzbicka (1985 cf. also Sifianou 1992: 176), cultures where emotions are expected to be manifested overtly often possess a rich system of diminutives. Conversely, the existence of diminutives in those cultures which do not “encourage unrestrained display of emotions” tend to be rather limited. Bearing in mind the analyses carried out in previous sections, it will not come as a surprise that Wierzbicka (1985: 168) places the Anglo-Saxon culture within the latter category.

I would like to draw the paper to a close by noting Heine and Kuteva’s (2007: 83) remark on the fact that “no cross-linguistically regular grammaticalization patterns leading from adjectives to minor functional categories have been identified, as their potential for grammaticalization is limited”. The history of *little* may perhaps constitute a suitable starting point for this kind of investigation, as it not only conforms to expected cross-linguistic lexicalisation of cognitive patterns but also reasserts the role of cultural salience in iconically-driven processes of change — which are intrinsic to any language.

Abbreviations

ARCHER:	A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers (see Appendix)
BNC:	British National Corpus (see Appendix)
EModE:	Early Modern English
LModE:	Late Modern English
ME:	Middle English
OED:	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
PDE:	Present-day English

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Appendix

1. A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers (ARCHER)

ARCHER is a 1.7 million-word corpus of American and British texts ranging from Early Modern English (henceforth EModE) to the present day (1650–1990, henceforth P(resent)D(ay)E(nglish)). The texts have been classified according to register. For more information, see Biber, Finegan and Atkinson (1994).

2. British National Corpus (BNC)

The BNC is a 100 million-word corpus of present-day British English, both spoken (10 million words; 863 transcribed texts) and written (90 million words; 3,261 texts). See Aston and Bournaud (1998) or <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/> (last accessed 20-01-2008) for further information.

2. Helsinki Corpus of English Texts (diachronic part)

The diachronic part of the *Helsinki Corpus* contains a 1.5 million-word corpus of historical English texts which are subdivided in three main chronological periods, OE (850–1150; 413,250 words), Middle English (henceforth ME; 1150–1500; 608,570 words) and EModE (1500–1710; 551,000 words). For further information, see <http://khnt.hit.uib.no/icame/manuals/HCI/INDEX.HTM> (last accessed 20-01-2008).

3. Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English 2

The PPCME2 is a compilation based on the ME texts of the Helsinki Corpus (see 10. above). For more information on this corpus, see <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/hist-corpora/PPCME2-RELEASE-2/index.htm> (last accessed 20-01-2008).

Metrical inversion and enjambment in the context of syntactic and morphological structures

Towards a poetics of verse

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This paper looks at the interdependence of metrical and linguistic units, focussing on metrical inversion and enjambment. While metrical texts favour (diagrammatic) iconicity as a result of equivalence (repetition) on the level of stress, foot, verse, stanza, etc., another source for iconicity is to be found in non-equivalent phenomena such as metrical inversion and enjambment. An example for inversion is the beginning of the first line of one of Keats' sonnets — "*Much have I travelled in the realms of gold*" — where metrical inversion coincides with syntactic inversion. The basis for enjambment is a discrepancy between metrical and syntactic structures, a discrepancy which may even affect morphology, as is the case at the beginning of Hopkins' *The Windhover*, where the change of the lines results in cutting asunder a word: "*king- / dom*". Having demonstrated, at the level of meter, the interaction of the principles of equivalence and non-equivalence — according to Jakobson a fundamental quality of poetic texts in general — the paper points the way towards a poetics of verse.

1. Structural equivalence vs structural difference and the problem of iconicity

In poetry — as well as in the entire field of literature — peculiarities of linguistic form are generally relevant to the meaning of a text. There would be no need for poetry, if the meaning it conveys could also be expressed in a non-poetic way. Poetical and in general literary language is by definition iconic. In this respect metrical language is of special interest, because in verse a principle is effective which has for long been considered essential to poeticity, i.e. repetition, which

here emerges in the form of structural repetition. Basically, repetition — of whatever form — has an emphasizing or intensifying and thus an iconic function. A plus in expression entails a plus in meaning.

Jakobson's term *equivalence* — related terms would be *symmetry* or *parallelism* (Lang 1987, Küper 1988: 50ff.) — is of special relevance to verse texts. This is because a verse or metrical line does not, as a structural unit, stand alone for itself, but always in relation to preceding and following verses. An inherent feature of verse is thus recursiveness, the turning from the end of a verse to the beginning of the next one. This is already indicated by the etymology of the word "verse", which stems from Latin *vertere*, "to turn". Frequently, an analogy between verse and ploughing has been drawn. Just as ploughing signifies a constant turning from one furrow to the next one, metrical language involves a constant turning from one verse to the next one. The result is in both cases a pattern constituted by parallels. Analogous to the parallelism of acre furrows, there is a parallelism of metrical lines to be noticed, if the text is seen on the page. (Küper 1988: 70).

The arrangement of words in verses contributes to creating poeticity and iconicity. The principle of equivalence given with meter can, however, not be seen as the only source of the poeticity of metrical composition. It is too well known that verses without deviations from the strict metrical norm are practically non-existent in German and English literature. Indeed, verses that are constructed in such a way that there are no discrepancies between the stress system of meter and the accent system of language, seem to be monotonous, lacking vividness and poetic intensity. Conversely, what is usually considered as irregularity in metrical composition is to be appreciated as a positive quality. Absolute regularity, that is, a kind of metrical composition in which the sequence of stressed and unstressed syllables coincides with the natural accent of the language, cannot be considered to represent an ideal realisation of verse. Usually verse does not only contain equivalence, but also non-equivalence as a structural principle. Equivalence and difference operate within verse side by side and interact with each other. Küper (1988: 28) characterises "the simultaneous presence of equivalence and non-equivalence" in the poetic text as "a fundamental principle of the discipline of poetics and metrics" (my translation). Referring to the use of iambic pentameter in English literature he argues that non-deviance would lead to a metrical and rhythmical monotony, which would be in blatant opposition to the aesthetic norms of all periods in the history of the English iambic pentameter. (Küper 1988: 161)

In view of his understanding of the importance of deviations in metrical composition, Küper objects to Tsur's concept of metricality (1977), according to which verses are only metrical if their underlying metrical scheme and the accent pattern of the words filling the verse are absolutely identical. It is the thesis of the following discussion that variations in the metrical scheme of poetry may have — in

addition to the principle of regularity or equivalence — a special iconic function. Attention will mainly be given to metrical inversion and enjambment.

Before entering into analysis, some basic remarks concerning metrics and the concept of iconicity used here are due. According to Christoph Küper (1988:7, 109; 2003:18) a strict line should be drawn between linguistic units and metrical units, which both belong to different systems. Metrical units consist of stresses, unstressed positions, metrical feet, verses and stanzas. Linguistic units are accents, syllables, sound groups, phrases, sentences and paragraphs. Above all a strict distinction should be made between stress in the metrical system and accent in the linguistic system. That metrical stress and linguistic accent are different is already shown by the fact that there are multiple gradations of accent within language for which there are no counterparts within metrics.

Now, it is decisive that the systems of metrical units and linguistic units interact in metrical composition. The metrical units which in the first place exist only on an abstract level are in a poem realised by means of linguistic units. This realisation follows specific rules, which determine in which way metrical units correspond to linguistic units. This set of rules forms the heart of metrics. Their analysis is shared by two philological disciplines, linguistics and literary studies. Metrics is of particular interest in that it represents a field in which linguistics and literary studies can profitably cooperate. This is especially relevant for an exploration of the iconic potential of verse, since to metrical units as such, for instance to stresses, feet, verses or stanzas, no iconic function can be attributed. It is only through the linguistic realisation of the metrical units within a text that the iconic potential of meter is actuated.

The attempt to assign different characters or moods to the various verse types is problematic. The trochee for example was often described as striding or ardently rushing forward, the dactyl as of a dancing, waltz-like character, the anapaest as energetically pushing on. The need to proceed with circumspection in metrical analysis and to consider the semantic context of a particular poem is shown by the fact that the nonsense poem “Dunkel war’s, die Nacht war helle” and Schiller’s ode to joy, “Freude schöner Götterfunken”, are very different in mood, although they are written in the same type of meter, trochaic tetrameter.

The attribution of qualities of mood and movement to the verse types, as presented in Coleridge’s “Metrical Feet” (Coleridge 1967:401),¹

Trochee trips from long to short;
From long to long in solemn sort
Slow spondee stalks; strong foot! yet ill able

1. Emphases mine in this and all the following quotations from poems.

Ever to come up with the **Dactyl** trisyllable.
Iambics march from short to long; —
 With a leap and a bound the swift **Anapaests** throng;

cannot be, however beautiful and impressive Coleridge's poem may be, the basis for an elucidation of the iconic qualities of meter. Such qualities can only be revealed in the interaction of the metrical and linguistic properties of a poem.

A question which necessarily arises in a discussion of the iconic potential of meter concerns the form of iconicity which emerges in the verse as metrical phenomenon. As is generally known, there are two basic forms of iconization in language, imagic and diagrammatic iconicity (Fischer/Nänny 1999: xxi–xxiii, Nänny 2005). Imagic iconicity consists of one sign that is similar to or matches its referent in one or several ways. Therefore, onomatopoeic words such as “miaow”, “growl”, “chatter” or “clatter”, resemble in their physical quality the sound they refer to. Diagrammatic iconicity is a more abstract concept. It does not consist of a direct resemblance between the signs and their referents. An often cited example is *veni, vidi, vici*, which Caesar uttered after one of his military triumphs. The order of the verb forms, which actually are clauses, reflects or reproduces the temporal sequence of the actions which the verbs refer to. In other words, there is a correspondence between the order of the syntactic units and the succession of the events referred to. (Müller 2001: 305–307)

In relation to meter, iconicity primarily occurs as diagrammatic iconicity. This is because metrics deals with the patterned succession of stressed and unstressed syllables, a succession that stands in relation to other linguistic levels of the text such as syntax, lexis, morphology, phonology, imagery, etc. An ideal aim would be an analysis which examines the interdependence of all formal and structural levels in verse texts. Here we have to restrict ourselves to specific aspects which are, it is our contention, relevant to an as yet unwritten poetics of verse which is based on the relation of equivalence and deviation.

The textual basis of the following analysis is mainly formed by poems written in iambic pentameters which belong to the alternating, or as Hans Jürgen Diller (1978) and Christoph Küper (1988) put it, the syllabo-tonic type of versification. This is a verse type in which syllables function as linguistic units, but which does, as distinct from verse in Romance literatures, measure accents.

Before discussing the intricacies of metrical deviance, let us look at an arbitrarily chosen line from Shakespeare (1997: 1929) which seems to be unproblematic with a regular alternation of weak and strong syllables and an ending which coincides with a syntactic conclusion:

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, (Sonnet 18, 5)

Looked at each other with a wild surmise -
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

This poem offers in five of its fourteen verses metrical inversions at the beginning of a line, of which the first three inversions coincide with syntactic inversions. These three instances evince a homology or isomorphism of metrical and syntactical structures, which has an iconic function. In the first case (line 1) the adverb “much” at the beginning of the verse is exposed to give it special emphasis: “Much have I travelled in the realms of gold”. The adverb “much” is the causer and at the same time a component of the inversion structure. Without the inversion, the sentence might look the following way: “I have travelled much in the realms of gold”. The iconic function of the inversion can be interpreted in combination with the semantic context of the line, the speaker’s considerable travel experiences, which metaphorically expresses journeys through the world of literature. It seems, as if by the exposed adverb “much” and the two following unstressed syllables, rooms are opened that have been traversed. The inversion structure has a considerable gestural impact. When reciting the poem before an audience, the reader may open his or her arms.

In the second case (verse 5) the coincidence of metrical and syntactical inversion occurs in a spatial context as well and accordingly has an iconic function: “Of of one wide expanse had I been told”. Here, too, it is an adverb (“of”) which is exposed and causes the inversion while being part of it. Similarly, in the third case (verse 9) — “Then felt I like some watcher of the skies” — again an adverb, “then”, is marked by its initial position. The beginning of this line could, of course, also be interpreted as a regular iamb with a stressed second syllable, but the syntactic inversion may be seen to force a metrical inversion. Furthermore it is to be noticed that the structurally decisive moments of the sonnet — the beginning of the first quatrain, the beginning of the second quatrain and the beginning of the sestet — are marked by metrical and syntactic inversion, so that an overarching structure is established.

Such analogies within a text’s structure are called auto-iconic (Brinton 1988) or endophoric iconicity (Nöth 2001). Analogous metrical and syntactic inversion phenomena occur repeatedly within the text. The result is an equivalence on the level of the deviant lines. Thus a co-existence of deviation and equivalence can be observed, which above was called constitutive with regard to the poeticity of a text.

The two last metrical inversions of the poem to be discussed do not occur in the context of syntactic inversions, but here, syntax is of importance, too. In the first example the predicate, the verbal part of a sentence, is emphasised within the verse by its front position — “Looked at each other with a wild surmise” (line 13) —, in the second example it is the adjective “silent” which occurs at the beginning

of a line: “Silent, upon a peak in Darien.” (line 14) Metrical inversion influences the reader’s perception of the sentence. Those parts of the sentence that are semantically linked to the wordless, astonished gaze of the discoverers of a new ocean are emphasised by the exposed position at the beginning of the verse. It can be generalised that the iconic functions of metrical inversions are only recognisable and describable in relation to syntactic structures.

In order to expand documentation, at least two other verses in which metrical and syntactic inversion coincide should be given:

Happy is England, sweet her artless daughters;
(Keats 1970: 41 — “Happy is England”, 9)

Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
(Wordsworth 1968: 38, “Composed Upon Westminster Bridge”, 2)

Here again the effect of emphasis achieved by syntactic inversion is reinforced through the shift of the metrical accent.

We will now look at a line whose special emphasis results from the front positioning of a word in a verse which within the sentence stands in the middle. Thus meter can give a word a weight which it would not have as a mere constituent of a sentence:

Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
(Wordsworth 1968: 38, “Composed Upon Westminster Bridge”, 6–7)

An even bolder example can be found in Hopkins’s sonnet “I wake and feel the fell of dark” (Hopkins 1967: 101)

I am gall, I am heartburn. God’s most deep decree
Bitter would have me taste [...] (9–10)

Here the metrical inversion is the outcome of a syntactic dislocation: the word “bitter”, the object of the sentence, which grammatically ought to be at the end of the sentence, is put before the predicate, which makes for an expressive description of the ‘bitter’ self-awareness, which the poem articulates.

In the last examples iconicity results from metrical and syntactic emphases, which in turn lead to an intensification of the statement. In the lines from Wordsworth the spatial idea is stressed, and in the Hopkins passage the emotional component of the statement is emphasized.

3. Accumulation of stressed syllables

Another departure from the metrical norm occurs when a verse contains more stressed syllables/words than the iambic pentameter allows for, as shown in the following case:

Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
(Wordsworth 1968: 38, “Composed Upon Westminster Bridge”, 6)

In this verse there are six words of roughly equal semantic weight, but only five metrical stress positions. This means that one of the semantically important words has to take an unstressed metrical position. A candidate for this position is the first word. (Küper 2003: 26) Now if “towers” is read as a monosyllabic word, a second stressed monosyllabic word — “domes” — moves to an unstressed position. There is no room for a complete analysis of this line, but I hope it has become clear that such a line is characterised by a tension between the metrical system and the natural accent of the words in the sentence, which produces a kind of rubato effect.

A reading of such a line has to do justice both to the requirements of meter and of the natural accent of the words. The over-saturation of this verse with word accents, particularly in the juxtaposition of four nouns — “ships, towers, domes, theatres” —, iconically evokes the abundance of objects captured by the panoramic view over the city with its variety of buildings.

Another interesting example would be one of the verses in which Ophelia in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* speaks in an elegiac way of the disintegration of the prince’s personality, who once embodied the Renaissance ideal of the unity of courtier, soldier and scholar (Shakespeare 1997: 1707):

The courtier’s, soldier’s, scholar’s eye, tongue, sword,
(*Hamlet*, III.1.150)

This verse contains six nouns: the first three are genitives and the second three the corresponding nominatives. “Courtier” refers to “eye” (the outer appearance), “soldier” to “sword” (military expertise) and “scholar” to “tongue” (eloquence). Here again there is an over-saturation of nouns in the verse with one of the nouns — “tongue” — occupying a metrically unstressed position. This verse with its accumulation of nominal elements has, semantically and syntactically, a tight six-part structure which is superimposed on the metrical five-part structure. The whole verse design iconically emphasises the Renaissance ideal of a unification of three cultural character types.

The following example (Shakespeare 1997: 617, Küper 1988: 251), in which the weak position between the last two stresses in the verse is filled by a stressed adverb, illustrates that the additional stressed syllables do not necessarily have to be nouns:

Melodious discord, heavenly tune **harsh** sounding,

(*Venus and Adonis*, 431)

The stressed word “harsh” leads to an accumulation of accents, which brings a hardness into the verse that reflects the content, the expression of musical dissonance. If instead of the word “harsh” the grammatically marked adverb “harshly” would have been used, this iconic effect would have been prevented.

4. Enjambment

Enjambment shall henceforth be understood as a deviation from the metrical norm, as problematic as this may be. For the principle of parallelism which is characteristic of the structure of metrical composition is especially obvious, when the end of the verse and the end of the clause coincide. Now, if the sentence, as is the case with enjambment, runs from one verse to the next one, the principle of parallelism or equivalence which is inherent to metrical composition is disturbed or restricted on another structural level. Thus the interdependence of the principles of equivalence and difference which we have defined as a source for the poeticity of verse is strongly evident in enjambment.

The definition of verse as a metrical pattern, which represents equivalence, does not include enjambment. Only when the metrical pattern is realised linguistically in a poem, the possibility of the enjambment comes into play. If critics deny enjambment the character of a deviation from a norm on grounds of its relatively high frequency in English poetry, it can nevertheless be said that in a poem which is predominantly written in end-stopped lines, the enjambment may, at least on the level of the individual text, count as a phenomenon of deviation.

Different forms of enjambment can be classified according to the place in which a sentence is cut through by the turning of the verse. In the two examples below, predicate and object, respectively subject and predicate, are separated by the turning of the verse:

Dull would he be of soul who could **pass by**

A **sight** so touching in its majesty:

(Wordsworth 1968: 38, “Composed Upon Westminster Bridge”, 2–5)

And the hapless Soldier’s **sigh**

Runs in blood down the Palace walls.

(Blake 1961: 75, “London”, 11–12)

In the first example the enjambment represents an aesthetic analogue to the notion of passing by. The enjambment in the second example is even more effective, since it supports the metaphorical (synaesthetic) notion of the soldier’s sigh running in

blood down the palace walls. The iconicity given with enjambment is here intensified by metaphor. In the next example an enjambment separates subject and predicate with the effect being heightened by metrical inversion:

[...] Two vast and trunkless **legs of stone**
Stand in the desert [...] (“Ozymandias”, 2–3, Shelley 1970: 550)

Here subject and predicate are on the one hand separated by the enjambment on the level of meter, and on the other hand the metrical inversion causes a clash of stresses within the enjambment (“stone/stand”). The alliteration further intensifies the effect of the enjambment. Iconically this complex structure evokes the image of mass, weight and persistence.

Now, the fascinating phenomenon shall be examined, in which the enjambment affects not the sentence, but the singular word in its morphological structure. A characteristic case can be found in the beginning of the following sonnet about a kestrel (“The Windhover”, Hopkins 1967: 36):

I caught this morning morning’s minion, **king-**
dom of daylight’s dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
 Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
 High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling **wing**
 (“The Windhover. To Christ our Lord”, Hopkins 1967: 69)

Here the word “kingdom” is split into its two parts by the enjambment, which makes the rhyme “king”/“wing” possible. A marker of the separation is the hyphen in the word “king-dom” which violates the English word-formation rules. Through this audacious dissociative handling of the enjambment the first constituent of the word — “king” — acquires a certain autonomy. The isolation and dislocation of the free morpheme “king” thus strengthens the notion of kingship, which is implied in words like “minion” — favourite of a king — and “dauphin” — oldest son of a king.

Two more cases of morphological dissociation in the enjambment, which Küper (1973) relates to a Welsh tradition in poetry, are to be quoted from another sonnet by Hopkins (“No worst, there is none“, 5–8):

My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a **chief-**
woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing –
 Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked ‘No **ling-**
ering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief.’ (Hopkins 1967: 100)

In the first enjambment the compound “chiefwoe” is split into its two parts, which again provides the basis for rhyme — “chief”/“brief” —, and again has a semantic import, intensifying the image of “chiefwoe”. Further semantic intensification is produced by the juxtaposition of the two synonyms “main” and “chief”. The reader initially perceives “chief” as an adjective with the same meaning as “main”. An

intriguing fact is that the compound “chiefwoe” is a neologism or nonce word which seems to have been created by Hopkins only to be disintegrated again within the enjambment. The methods of composition and decomposition go together in this structure.

The second enjambment is morphologically even bolder. Here the gerund “lingering” is cut asunder, which makes the rhyme on “sing” possible. The idea of lingering — which the voice of “Fury” categorically denies: “No ling-/ering!” — is intensely expressed by the enjambment. This is linguistic evidence for the immense collision of contradictory energies which occurs in this poem.

Two more examples for the innovative linguistic use of enjambment by Hopkins are taken from the poem “The Loss of the Eurydice”, which deals with a ship wreckage during a storm. Here the enjambment interferes with the word structures in a way that is morphologically no longer explicable.

But what black Boreas wrecked her? **He**
Came equipped, deadly-**electric**,

(lines 23–24, Hopkins 1967:72)

The rhyme is accomplished by adding the initial letter of the first word of the second of the quoted lines to the rhyme word, the initial consonant of the following word thus being agglutinated onto the preceding one. As a result, the rhyme looks like: “**He/C**” — “**electric**”. The destructive power of the lightning is mirrored in the linguistic violence of the enjambment, which overrides the rules of morphology. The destruction of a structure through lightning and storm is reflected in the linguistic dislocation within the rhyme word and the verse line. Hopkins breaks the integrity of a lexeme (rhyme word) and the integrity of the verse line by a forceful dissociative act, by means of a “poetic lightning”, as it were.

This technique of a dissociative use of rhyme and enjambment is no singular case with Hopkins, which a further example from the same poem shows:²

But his eye no cliff, no **coast or**
Mark makes in the rivelling **snowstorm**.

(67–68, Hopkins 1967:74)

Here the disorientation of a ship-wrecked sailor, whose eye cannot apprehend a fixed point, is expressed by a complex combination of rhyme and enjambment. The two words “coast” and “or” are amalgamated, and the initial consonant of the first word in the second line is added to the last word of the first line to complete the rhyme. Thus the outcome is the following rhyme: “**coast/or/M** — **snowstorm**”.

2. I am grateful to Max Nännny, who in one of his last e-mails sent to me, drew my attention to this example.

5. Enjambment in free-verse poetry

Techniques of disintegration and dislocation, which Hopkins used in his enjambments for the first time in the history of English poetry,³ prepare the way for formal experiments in twentieth-century free-verse poetry, as will be demonstrated by a few examples. The first one is a poem by e.e. cummings (1991: 383):

mOOn Over tOwns mOOn
 whisper
 less creature huge grO
 pingness
 whO perfectly
 fLOat
 newly alOne is
 dreamest
 oNLY THE MooNo
 VER ToWNS
 SLoWLY SPRoUTING SPIR
 IT

In an instructive analysis of the typographical features of this poem Nänny (2001:227–228) has described its iconic structure which combines imagic and diagrammatic iconicity. Imagic iconicity is, for instance, to be found in the use of the letter “O/o” as an iconic image of the moon, while diagrammatic iconicity is realized in those formal aspects of the poem which mirror the perception of the changing size of the moon. Here a less obvious formal, but nonetheless important feature of the poem will be focussed on, namely the pervasive use of enjambment, which is an equivalent of the idea of movement and change, but also has a profound significance in relation to the poem’s theme. A more detailed analysis is here required, since the role of the enjambments can only be discussed in connection with the whole poem. In our context the second halves of the stanzas demand special attention. The most conspicuous enjambments are those which affect even morphemes as such — “grOp/ingness” in stanza 1 and “SPIR/IT” in stanza 3. It is interesting that these words are related to a dimension different from the moon. “Groping” here refers to the attempt to intellectually come to grips with something, an effort which is stressed by the enjambment within the word and by its abstractness which is the result of unusual word-formation — “grO/pingness”. Together

3. Christoph Küper (1973) points out that in his use of split rhymes Hopkins was influenced by Welsh poetry. For the phenomenon of split rhymes see also Greber (2002).

with the other enjambment in the stanza, which splits up a suffix from an adjective — “whisper/less” — the idea is suggested of a dumb creature trying to make sense of something, which is in a way related to the moon, as the use of the capital letter “O” in “grO/pingness” suggests. The second stanza evinces a less spectacular enjambment — “newly alOne is / dreamest” — but here the idea of a subjective entity that is active — “dreaming” (“dreamist” may be an archaic form of the verb or an ungrammatical superlative) — in the presence of the moon emerges more clearly: “alOne” is an ambiguous word which can simultaneously be understood as “alone” and “all one”, thus evoking the idea of a subject with an identity. The relation of the subject to the moon is again to be noticed in the capitalization of the letter “O”. In the third stanza the enjambment cuts asunder the noun “SPIR/IT”. Here the presence of the moon is reduced, as the lower-case round letter “o” indicates, which almost gets lost in the neighbourhood of mainly angular capital letters:

SLOWLY SPROUTING SPIR
IT

The end position in the text and the enjambment give “SPIR/IT” special weight. The idea that something has grown concomitant with the diminution of the moon is thus iconically expressed at the poem’s end. The separation of “it” within the noun “spirit” — a result of the enjambment — gives this newly grown spiritual entity a pronominal representation. Both words “spirit” and “it” are present at the poem’s end within one noun. Thus it can be shown that the formal device of enjambment contributes essentially to creating the poem’s meaning.

In conclusion two examples of iconically significant enjambments shall be analysed, which have an important function in the representation of processes of cognition. In modern poetry iconicity often lies not so much in the account of objects, but in the account of the perception of objects. (Müller 1999) At first the famous imagist poem “The Red Wheelbarrow” by William Carlos Williams (1951:277) will be examined:

The Red Wheelbarrow
so much depends
upon
a red wheel
barrow
glazed with rain
water
beside the white
chickens.

Williams uses metrical effects and the visual quality of the order of the words on the page, to make the perceived object, the red wheelbarrow, shine in a new light. The poem consists of one sentence, which is split into stanzas, that each consists of a two- and one one-stress line. Within this metrical structure the enjambment has the function of mirroring a movement in perception that glides from detail to detail. This is especially evident in the two compounds “wheel barrow” and “rain water”, which are split by enjambment. The determinant stands in each case at the end of the line, and the determinatum fills the whole following line. That “wheelbarrow” is written as one word in the poem’s title is a telling fact. Within the poem the splitting of the compound into its two components indicates a new kind of perception. The process of perception, in which the eye virtually scans the object mentioned in the title, moving from one graphical detail to the next, lets the reader experience reality in a new way, which to some extent transcends mimetic representation of reality. This is because here iconicity lies not in the mimetic account of the object, but in the mimetic account of the perception of the object.

As an example of the interdependence of syntax and meter in Williams a representation of an old woman eating plums (Williams 1951:99) will be examined:

They taste good to her
 They taste good
 to her. They taste
 good to her

The clause “They taste good to her” is repeated three times, and each time the end of the line is shifted within the clause, “variations in the lineation of the same phrase” causing “a constant shifting of emphasis” (Halter 1994:146). This counterpointing of meter and syntax has an iconic effect in that it poetically imitates the fullness of the act of tasting and savouring the fruit.

In order to give yet another illustration of the wide range of the formal and expressive possibilities of enjambment, we will quote yet another text, a poem in which the process of perception is not slowed down as in the Williams poems, but speeded up. It is a poem by the German poet Rolf Dieter Brinkmann (1980:156), which was influenced by the aesthetics of the film, as Röhnert (2007:317) has demonstrated:

Auto
 Der Wagen
 setzte
 noch
 einmal zu-
 rück, und

die Hin-
 terreifen
 zerquetsch-

 ten endgültig
 ihm die
 Brust
 du lieber Him-

 mel, sagten
 sie
 das
 muß schmerz-

 haft sein, so
 dazu-
 liegen
 im eigenen Dreck.

Initially the focus is here on a car running over a man, an event which is presented in a way reminiscent of a gangster film.⁴ Abruptly the poem then turns to the witnesses of the crime and their reaction. In a way similar to Williams' treatment of meter, this poem varies between one stress- and two-stress lines with the former preponderating. The text consists of two sentences, which by the pervasive use of enjambment are split into smaller units. The enjambments cause a radical and almost violent isolation of the individual parts of the sentences. Simultaneously the quick change of the lines increases the poem's speed. The principle of dissociation is shown in the separation of morphological constituents of words ("zu-/rück", "schmerz-/haft", "dazu-/liegen", "zerquetsch-/ten") and in more radical splittings regardless of morphology ("Hin-/terreifen", "Him-/mel"). The text leaves it open whether it represents a scene from a film or a scene imagined as real. The question is, however, irrelevant, since the presentation is filmic. The high frequency in the turning of the lines and the concomitant metrical principle of running on, in which the word as a unit is slurred over, evinces a new aesthetic, the aesthetic of the film.

6. Conclusion

The iconic potential of phenomena like metrical inversion und enjambment is realised primarily in the interaction of equivalent and non-equivalent structures.

4. It is tragic irony that the poet himself was killed by being run over by a car.

While owing to its repetitive structure equivalence or parallelism emerges in metrical composition in a higher degree than in non-metrical language, non-equivalence comes into play through the presence of other structural levels such as the stress system of the language and syntax and morphology. As deviant elements in metrical composition such as metrical inversion, accumulation of stressed syllables, and enjambment have shown, the poeticity of the metrical text is the result of the co-presence of different structural levels. The exploration of the iconic effects of this interplay could provide a starting-point for a poetics of meter. As was referred to in passing several times in this article, such a poetics could also include the interaction of meter with further structural levels of the text such as style (tropes and figures) and phonology.

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PART V

Iconicity and translation

Translation, iconicity, and dialogism

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Translation across languages is a specific case of translation across sign systems, internally and externally to the same historical-natural language. But translation across languages is possible on the basis of *language* understood as a *modeling device*, an a priori and condition for *verbal language* which came into being for the sake of *communication* thanks to the predominance of iconicity in the relation among signs. If we understand by a literary translation that it should be faithful to the original in terms of *creativity* and *interpretation* and not just be an imitation or repetition, the translantant text — the text that is the target of the translation — must establish a relation of *alterity* with the source text. The greater the distancing in terms of *dialogic alterity* between two texts, the greater is the possibility of creating an artistic reinterpretation through another sign interpretant in the potentially infinite semiotic chain of deferrals from one sign to the next. If we approach translation from Charles S. Peirce's general theory of signs, in particular his triad of icon, index and symbol, the relation between the source and the target text must be dominated by iconicity if a translation is to be successful in terms of creativity and interpretation. A translation must be at once similar and dissimilar, the “same other” (see Petrilli 2001). This is the paradox of translation. Therefore a text is at once translatable and untranslatable. This is the paradox of language.

1. Iconicity, translation-interpretation

The paradox of translation is the paradox of the text and of the sign. If the question of similarity is central to translation,¹ it is not less important in relation to the text, since this is itself an interpretant sign before becoming an interpreted sign of

1. An international conference on “Similarity and Difference in Translation” was organized in New York, in 2001, see Arduini and Hodgson 2004.

other interpretants in open-ended reading and translating processes. The relation between the text and that to which it refers also presents itself in terms of similarity. This is even more so in the case of literary texts, which are characterized by the relation of similarity among signs in terms of ‘picturing’ or ‘depiction’, and not as a mere copy or imitation (see Petrilli and Ponzio 1999). As Paul Klee has repeatedly pointed out, the text — literary, pictorial, artistic in general — does not picture or depict the visible (which is what theatrical texts in theatre performances or representations do), but renders the invisible visible.

Charles Sanders Peirce clearly demonstrated that meaning is not in the sign but in the relation among signs, whether these are the signs of a defined system, like those forming a code, a *langue*, or the signs of dynamic interpretive processes, passing from one type of sign to another or from one sign system to another. Interpretation is not mere repetition, literal translation or substitution by synonyms, but rather re-elaboration, and creative reformulation in order to arrive at an interpretation-translation that takes a risk given that it does not appeal to a pre-established code. In other words, the higher the degree of iconicity, of firstness and originality regulating interpretive-translative processes, the more these are capable of fully rendering the meaning of a sign. Moreover, the identity of the sign calls for continuous displacement; each time the sign is interpreted-translated it becomes “other”, it is in fact another sign, which acts as an interpretant of the preceding sign.

Translation — whether between unrelated languages or different languages within the same language family, or among different idioms within the same language (endolingual translation as described by Jakobson 1959) — involves enhancing the iconic dimension of the relation among signs. What this means is that we must enhance the relation of absolute otherness and creativity between the interpreted sign and the interpretant sign and between the source text and the target text as we search for and invent new interpretants to develop the meaning of the preceding sign and of the preceding text in terms suited to a new signifying context. The meaning of a sign cannot be defined in terms of a certain type of sign or sign system, such as a given historical-natural language. Meaning coincides with the interpretive trajectory, which knows no boundaries of a typological or systemic order. This is particularly obvious when translation processes involve interpretants, whether verbal or non-verbal, belonging to another language or another linguistic-cultural modeling system.

Literary texts escape the bounds of deductive logic, which is replaced by *associative* logic. This is the logic of translation understood as reading-writing, which involves active participation and answering comprehension. The relation between the interpreted sign and the interpretant sign (see Petrilli 1998; Ponzio 1990) proceeds by hypothesis. It calls for reader initiative and inventiveness, and requires

inferences mainly of the abductive type, which demands high degrees of creativity and inventiveness. As Roland Barthes observed (1982, see also 1993–5:5), to read literary writing means to rewrite it. This process can only be enhanced in the transition among different historical-natural languages. Literary writing is characterized by dialogism and intertextuality and by the capacity to move the signifier in semiotic directions which enhance signification. All this escapes literary criticism when it directs reader attention to what the author says and to his or her autobiographical, psychological, ideological or historical-social reasons for saying it.

Translation across languages further enhances the associative and dialogic character of the reading/writing (rewriting) process, and contributes to freeing the text from a single type or system of signs. This is the task of translation. Processes of translation between languages demonstrate the dialogic intertextuality inherent in texts, with the result that textual practice itself in a single language is already an exercise in translation.

2. Metaphor and translation

Iconicity and firstness involve the capacity to evade the total and the identical, thanks to the potential for absolute otherness and for singular, irreducible uniqueness. This is what makes the metaphor an inexhaustible source for the generation and renewal of sense, an interpretive-translative device for the enhancement of sense across signs and sign systems. The capacity for signifying innovation, ‘linguistic creativity’, is the capacity to form new metaphorical associations and to invent new cognitive combinations, the capacity to figure, picture, portray and present, as against the capacity for mere representation. Such a capacity is programmed by our primary modeling device, specifically by what Thomas A. Sebeok (1986) calls language understood as modeling, the preliminary basis of human symbolic behavior, and a constitutive element of the primary, secondary and tertiary systems inherent in human beings.² This modeling device, an interpretive-translative device, is regulated by the iconic relation and constitutes the very condition for all types of translative processes. The propensity for creativity,

2. As Sebeok (1986) and Sebeok and Danesi (2000) explain, concepts in the human brain are the products of activities of three different modeling systems largely corresponding to Peirce’s firstness, secondness and thirdness. The primary system is rooted in sensory experience, the secondary in referential and indexical forms and the third in highly abstract, symbolic forms of modeling: “This ‘flow’ from iconicity to connotativity and symbolicity, i.e. from concrete, sensory modes of representation (and knowing) to complex, abstract models, characterizes most of human modeling (2000: 171).

inventiveness and innovation is not a prerogative of poets, scientists and writers, but is in fact available to each and every one of us. But only in so far as we are capable of metaphorical associations, that is, of attempting to form associations among terms seemingly unrelated to each other, and of extending our gaze beyond the sphere of human culture, in the great semio(bio)sphere at large. Translation processes further enhance the capacity for innovation and linguistic creativity, with the result that interlingual translative processes, in particular, are dominated by iconicity. Similarity is inherent in semiosis and underlies perceptual and logical-cognitive processes involved in categorization, which makes the question, “What is similarity?” (Tabakowska 2003: 362), a crucial one.

The importance of metaphor has mostly been underestimated by traditional linguistics. But in line with more recent developments in cognitive linguistics, Sebeok and Danesi (2000) invest the metaphor with a major role in human modeling, which also implies recognizing the major role of translative processes. Translation is an aspect of the ‘connective form’ theorized by Sebeok and Danesi, a special type of modeling strategy traditionally described as metaphorical. Metaphor is a central device in human reasoning which does not merely consist in representing objects but in picturing them. To Peirce, the metaphor is an icon; he classifies it as a hypoicon together with diagrams and images (*CP* 2.276–277) — what Sebeok and Danesi describe as an ‘iconic metasign’. The use of metaphor and imagery in verbal language presupposes the human modeling device and its syntactic articulation, that is, ‘language’ understood as primary modeling. Language as a modeling device relates iconically to the universe it models, which clearly emerges in the semiotic tradition delineated by Peirce, Jakobson and Sebeok.

3. The translant text, or the same other

Now let us return to the paradox of translation. Just as we tend to believe that in a sequence which repeats itself what comes first causes what comes later, and that these two terms are connected by a relationship of necessity, we tend to believe that the order of a text is necessary and unchangeable, especially when we are familiar with the text. This line of thought may lead one to the conclusion that any change in a text is a sacrilege. The text can only be that particular text, therefore its translation — any form of translation — will always be true to the original.

Let us take the case of a reader in the habit of reading Dante’s *Divine Comedy* in Italian. *Inferno* can only begin with the line ‘Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita’ (“Halfway on the path of our life”) and variants are not appreciated — not only in the sense of transposition and transferral into another language, but even in the form of paraphrase in the same language. In contrast, for a reader

unfamiliar with ancient Greek, the *Odyssey* is available in numerous different variants, none of which is considered to be the criterion for evaluating its faithfulness to the original — and yet we are discussing translations. Nor does it make any difference whether these variants are in prose or in verse. In Italy, Vincenzo Monti's translation of Homer's *Iliad* performs the role of original, especially for those who encountered this translation for the first time during their early school days and have continued reading it, to the point of refusing to recognize any other version that is not Monti's. And yet, as Monti's contemporary Ugo Foscolo, a famous Italian writer, claims, Monti was not considered a prominent scholar of ancient Greek! His translation, in fact, seems to be derived from other translations, rather than from the Greek original, causing Foscolo to nickname Monti the "translator of the translators of Homer".

The question of how to produce a 'relevant' translation can be compared to Zeno of Elea's riddle about Achilles and the tortoise (Achilles can never overtake the tortoise because the tortoise has always advanced beyond the point where it first was when Achilles reaches that point). The 'relevant translation', like Achilles, needs to match the original which, like the tortoise, will always have the advantage of having started first. However, precisely because of this advantage and just as in the case of Achilles and the tortoise, the translation can never reach the original text. In any case, we need to remember that the *logoi* or argumentation used by Zeno to deny movement and change (like the riddle about Achilles and the tortoise or his other riddle about the arrow), were ultimately intended to support Parmenides' thesis about unchangeable unity versus the existence of plurality. Parmenides disproved the idea of plurality and favoured the idea of unity (cf. Colli 1998). In a certain respect the thesis that asserts that only one is possible, only unity, can be connected to the question of translation. A confutation of plurality and multiplicity can be applied to common views about the relation between that which is considered the unique original text and its many translations. From our point of view, it is important to underline that Zeno's disproving of plurality, as reported by Plato in *Parmenides*, is based on the notion of similarity, that is, on the same notion generally invoked to explain the relation between the text and its translations.

Even if a translation is simply a text 'rewritten' in the same language, it is obviously not identical to the original (not even Pierre Menard's *Quijote* in comparison to Miguel de Cervantes's *Quixote*; cf. also Borges' (1964) "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*"). If a translation were totally similar to its original, it would be identical, simply another copy of the same text. But a translation must be at the same time similar and dissimilar, the "same other". This is the paradox of translation, which is also the paradox of multiplicity. Expressed in terms of the paradox of Achilles and the tortoise, the 'paradox of translation' lies in the fact that in order

to reach the source text, the translantant text must somehow recover the former's advantage of being first from the very start. The argument about Achilles and the tortoise, as Aristotle states in *Physics* (1983:239b, 14–20), is that, in a race, the quickest runner can never overtake the slowest, since the pursuer must first reach the point from where the pursued started, so that the slower runner must always take the lead. This argument is in principle the same as the paradox about the flying arrow: the arrow will never reach its goal because it must move across the infinite halves of the segment in a trajectory, where the segments are divisible ad infinitum. But in Achilles' case, the distance which remains to be covered each time he attempts to reach the tortoise is not successively divided into halves.

Borges (1964) formulates this argument in slightly different terms (cf. "The perpetual race between Achilles and the tortoise" and "Avatars of the tortoise"): Achilles is ten times faster than the tortoise, therefore in the race he gives it a ten metre advantage. But if Achilles runs ten times faster than the tortoise, it follows that while Achilles runs a metre, the tortoise runs a decimetre; while Achilles runs a decimetre, the tortoise runs a centimetre; while Achilles runs a centimetre, the tortoise runs a millimetre, and so forth ad infinitum. Therefore, swift-footed Achilles will never reach the slow tortoise. Borges reports and examines various attempts at confuting Zeno of Elea's paradox, for example those by Thomas Hobbes, Stuart Mill (*System of logic*), Henri Bergson ("Essay upon the immediate data of consciousness"), William James (*Some Problems of Philosophy*) — who maintained that Zeno's paradox is an attack not only on the reality of space, but also on the more invulnerable and subtle reality of time — and lastly Bertrand Russell (*Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy, Our Knowledge of the External World*). Russell's attempt is the only one that Borges considers worthy of the 'original' in terms of argumentative force. Of the 'original' in inverted commas because all these successive argumentations are variants or translations of the primary text, in so far as they compete with Zeno's paradox and attempt to equal it in argumentative ability.

Pierre Menard, author of *Quijote*, also turns his attention to the riddle of Achilles and the tortoise. Borges dedicates a short story, just as paradoxical, to Menard. In the story, Menard's *Quijote* is listed among his works as *Les problèmes d'un problème*, dated Paris 1917. Menard discusses different solutions to the 'Achilles' paradox in chronological order, and in the second edition cites the following advice from Leibniz in the epigraph: "Ne craignez point, monsieur, la tortue" (Do not fear the tortoise, Sir). Why should we fear the slow tortoise? Should we fear it because of its advantage, because of the distancing, the time-lapse separating it, like a gulf, from swift-footed Achilles? To fear the tortoise is to fear translation because of the original, which has the advantage of coming first. The text which translates the original inevitably comes second. In order not to fear the original

and faithfully respect it, Menard decided not only to write another *Quijote*, but the *Quijote* — the unique, the original *Quijote*. This was of course not just a question of imitating or copying the original but would have meant taking advantage of the original, making *Quijote*, as composed by Menard, a second text. Though Menard had an immense respect for the original, he did not hesitate to produce pages that coincided word by word with the words of Cervantes. How did he go about this? Having set aside the idea of competing with Cervantes by identifying with his life, times, and biographical context, and eventually reaching *Quijote*, by, as it were, becoming Cervantes (who was decidedly at an advantage simply because he had undertaken to write the same artwork much earlier), Menard decided that the greater challenge was to reach *Quijote* while remaining Menard, through his own experience as Menard.

Menard's *Quijote* is only "verbally identical" to Cervantes's *Quijote*. To prove the difference, Borges cites a passage from *Quijote* by Cervantes (Part I, Chapter IX) and the corresponding passage from *Quijote* by Menard. Even though these two passages correspond to the letter, the version by Menard, a contemporary of Williams James, clearly resounds with pragmatic overtones, because to Menard, unlike Cervantes, historical truth, which is discussed in exactly the same terms in both passages, is not what happened but what we *judge* to have happened. Achilles can make up for the tortoise's advantage and overtake it simply because it was he who had given the tortoise an advantage: even if it started first, it was he who let the tortoise be first. All things considered, it is the tortoise that depends on Achilles, and Achilles who, thanks to his generosity for giving the tortoise an advantage, in fact beats it. Time also plays its part: the style of Menard's *Quijote* is inevitably archaic and affected, while Cervantes's *Quijote* is updated and conforms to the Spanish language as it was spoken in his own day.

4. Translation and metempsychosis of the text

The question itself of translation is a paradox: the text withdraws from the reading text and the translantant text because it is beyond reach. But precisely because of this, it remains a prisoner in an endless transmigration. One of the transmigrations of the paradox of the tortoise is the very question of translation. Borges (1964:202) uses the expression "avatars of the tortoise" for all those arguments which reproduce Zeno's paradox. This paradox and all its reincarnations are connected with that concept which "corrupts and maddens" people, the concept of the infinite. This idea of the infinite is present in the very expression, "the eternal race between Achilles and the tortoise", which we know corresponds to the title of one of the two texts by Borges dedicated to the paradox of Achilles and the tortoise.

Like all texts, the literary text too is originally an interpretant. The literary text creates a new picture before being pictured in turn, that is, before being rendered visible through translation processes into another language, into another verbal or nonverbal sign system. Similarly to the translant text, the literary source text renders the invisible visible; it too relates to the other and not to the identical. As anticipated above, the artistic work as such, as demonstrated by Emmanuel Levinas, renders the invisible, the otherness of identity, its shadow. As Levinas teaches us, all identities, first and foremost the identity of self, cast a shadow — as their otherness — which can never be eliminated however much one tries.

At a certain point in his paper “La réalité et son ombre”, Levinas (1994 [1948]: 142) refers to Zeno’s first paradox, the one about the arrow, but he does not reveal that he is quoting from “Le cimetière marin” by Paul Valéry. In this poem, Valéry also refers to Zeno’s second paradox in which Achilles does not succeed in catching up with the slow tortoise, that is, Achilles does not succeed in confronting his own alterity, in leaving his own shadow. In the thirteenth stanza of Valéry’s poem “Le cimetière marin”, the situation is reversed. Before referring to Zeno (the twenty-first stanza), the only change with respect to the sun hanging motionless in the sky at midday is represented by the self (“Midi là-haut, Midi sans mouvement / [...] Je suis en toi le secret changement”). In spite of the self’s struggles, there is nothing new under the sun but only a shadow of the tortoise cast by itself, an imaginary construct which, though constantly in motion, seems motionless, like Achilles.

Zénon! Cruel Zénon! Zénon d’Élée! / M’as-tu percé de cette flèche ailée / Qui vibre, vole, et qui ne vole pas! / Le son m’enfante et la flèche me tue! / Ah! Le soleil... Quelle ombre de tortue / Pour l’âme, Achille immobile à grands pas! (Valéry 1995)

Zenon! Cruel Zenon from Eléa / You struck me with your winged arrow/ How it vibrates, flies and yet does not fly! The noise debilitates me and the arrow kills me! / Oh, the sun ... what tortoise-like shadow! Because of his soul, Achille remains motionless with great strides!

When we now return to the paradox of the text and its translation, we see that, in so far as it is identical and different, similar and dissimilar, the “same other”, the artwork is a living image of the tortoise’s reincarnations, but not only the artwork. The artwork demonstrates, renders visible how any identity is a living image of the tortoise’s reincarnation; how reality itself is a living image of the tortoise’s metempsychosis. As Levinas maintains, in the artwork similarity appears “not as the result of a comparison between the image and the original, but as the movement itself that creates the image. Reality is not only what it is, what it reveals in truth, but also its double, its shadow, its image” (“non pas comme le résultat

d'une comparaison entre l'image et l'original, mais comme le mouvement même qui engendre l'image. La réalité ne serait pas seulement ce qu'elle est, ce qu'elle se dévoile dans la vérité, mais aussi son double, son ombre, son image", 1994: 133; cf. also Ponzio 1996: 127–142). This corresponds to what Peirce describes as the icon where, as I mentioned above, the relationship between the sign and its object is based on similarity, as distinct from the symbol which is characterized by a relationship of conventionality, and the index which is characterized by a relationship of contiguity and causality.

The literary text which is the object of translation, is endowed with iconicity, that is, it installs a relation of similarity with the invisible other of the identical. Because of the way it is generated as a sign by similarity, the literary text is able to render the irreducible alterity of the invisible visible. The translation may in fact surpass the original in terms of iconicity, as in the case of the Spanish translation of Valéry's poem by Néstor Ibarra. Borges illustrates this by comparing the following line by Ibarra, "La pérdida del rumor de la ribera" with the corresponding line by Valéry, "Le changement des rives en rumeur". The French original seems an "imitation", says Borges, for by comparison with the Spanish translation it does not succeed in wholly 'restoring' the 'Latin savor'. To blindly defend the line by Valéry only because he is the author means to underestimate the recreative capacity of the translator, and to privilege the author only because he came first from a temporal point of view with respect to the translator, in this case Ibarra. The author as creator in fact comes second in terms of iconic depiction — at least in respect of this particular line which has the appearance of a bad copy of Ibarra's Castilian original. Such a claim is possible on the basis of the fact that in a comparison between two texts which are both strongly iconic — one by the author, the other by the translator — the translator's version may indeed surpass the author's in terms of iconicity and depict that which it wishes to depict even better than the original itself.

Being first in terms of temporality does not stop the second text from surpassing the first, transcending it. In fact, the second text and the first text are both interpretant as well as iconic signs. From this point of view, there is no such thing as the first text. Instead, what we have is a succession of interpretants where each time one interpretant surpasses another, the second sign is surpassed by yet another in a third sign and so forth *ad infinitum*: the text is another instance of the tortoise's metempsychoses as it transmigrates from one text to another. This is not only true of texts crossing from one language to another, of texts in interlingual translation, but also of texts in the same language and in the same body of literature. To assume that a new combination of elements — says Borges on the first page of his paper on Valéry's "Le Cimetière marin", which almost reads the same as the first page of his paper on the Homeric translations — is necessarily inferior to the original text means to assume that a subsequent draft is necessarily inferior

to an antecedent draft. We speak of drafts only because, in the last analysis, there is nothing but drafts. In other words, we may claim that nothing else exists but a succession of interpretant texts, in this case all icons.

5. Across verbal and nonverbal sign systems

Let us now relate the above considerations to Jakobson's analysis of translation (see Jakobson 1971) in the light of Peirce's tripartition of signs into symbols, indices and icons. We know that any given sign is the product of the dialectic and dialogic interaction among conventionality, indexicality and iconicity in sign situations where one of these aspects prevails over the others. Jakobson proposes a triad that distinguishes between three different types of translative-interpretive processes: (1) intralingual translation, or rewording; (2) interlingual translation, or translation proper; (3) intersemiotic translation, or transmutation. By relating Jakobson's and Peirce's triads we obtain a more adequate specification of the relation between translation and signs, and a broader, yet more precise characterization of the interpretive-translative processes constituting and proliferating in our semiosphere. Each of the three translative-interpretive modalities identified by Jakobson is dominated by conventionality, indexicality or iconicity. In other words, the relation between the interpreted and the interpretant, the translated sign and its translant sign is dominated by the symbol, index or icon. Furthermore, the three types of translation identified by Jakobson are always interrelated, more or less co-existing with each other to different degrees. For example, in the case of interlingual translation, for a full understanding of the sense of the source text, and its adequate rendition in the 'target' language, it will also be necessary to continually resort to intralingual translation in each of the two languages in question. When conventionality predominates, the relation between a sign and its object (or referent) is established on the basis of a code. Reference to a code is inevitable to translate the linguistic elements of a text, especially in the initial phases of translative-interpretive processes. When reference to the code predominates, the distancing between interpretant signs and interpreted signs is minimal. At this level in translative-interpretive processes, the mere activity of recognition and identification is of prime importance.

Moreover, signs and interpretants are also united by indexical relations of a compulsory order. A bilingual dictionary adds the relation of contiguity between the sign and its interpretant (which together with causality characterizes the index) to mechanical necessity, when it associates the words in the source language to its equivalent(s) in the target language. Therefore, interlingual translative processes involve indexicality in addition to conventionality. This becomes interesting if

we read Wittgenstein's observation on translation from the *Tractatus* from this perspective: "When translating one language into another, we do not proceed by translating each proposition of the one into a proposition of the other, but merely by translating the constituents of propositions" (Wittgenstein 1961: 4.025). Indexicality refers to the compulsory nature of the relation between a sign and its object. This is regulated by cause and effect dynamics, by relations of spatio-temporal contiguity, which are necessarily pre-existent with respect to interpretation. When indexicality predominates, translation-interpretation processes simply evidence correspondences where they already exist. The degree of creative work involved is minimal.

Bakhtin (-Voloshinov) conceptualizes communication and social intercourse in terms of dialectic and dialogic interaction between identity and alterity (see Voloshinov 1973). Bakhtin introduces two other important categories in his analysis of verbal language, which may be extended to other sign systems as well: 'theme' (*smysl*) and 'meaning' (*značenie*), or, if we prefer, 'actual sense' and 'abstract sense' (Voloshinov 1973: 106). The second term in these pairs covers all that is identical, reproducible and immediately recognizable each time the utterance is repeated — it concerns the meaning of linguistic elements, e.g. the phonemes and morphemes constituting the utterance. 'Meaning' thus understood corresponds to 'plain meaning' rather than to plurivocal meaning, to translation processes (and phases) where the degree of dialogism and distance regulating the connection between interpretant sign and interpreted sign is minimal. 'Theme', on the other hand, refers to all that is original and irreproducible in an utterance, to overall sense, signifying import and evaluative orientation as these aspects emerge in a given instance of communicative interaction. 'Theme' accounts for communication and signifying processes in terms of answering comprehension, dialectic-dialogic response, and multi-accentuality. It concerns translation-interpretation processes where iconicity prevails, such as to determine the capacity for qualitative leaps in knowledge and perception, amplifying the semantic polyvalence of discourse, and opening it up to new ideological horizons: "Theme is a complex, dynamic system of signs that attempts to be adequate to a given instance of generative process. There is reaction by the consciousness in its generative process to the generative process of existence. Meaning is the technical apparatus for the implementation of theme" (Voloshinov 1973: 100).

The iconic relation between a sign and its interpretant plays a fundamental role in the rendition of the 'theme' or actual sense of discourse, and this is just as much the case in the question of interlingual translation. If translation processes stop at the level of conventionality and indexicality, translators will fail in their task. When Victoria Welby ([1903] 1983) states, in her discussion of translative-interpretive processes, that the method of language is pictorial, she demonstrates an aspect of

verbal signs that is irreducible to indexicality or to conventionality. The translator must navigate in the iconic dimension of language and move beyond the conventions and obligations of the dictionary to enter the live dialogue among national languages, among languages internal to a given national language, and among verbal signs and nonverbal signs. The interplay among interpreteds and interpretants, among 'translated signs' and 'translatant signs' at high levels of semiotic resonance necessarily involves iconicity, dialogism and alterity to various degrees.

Iconicity implies that the relation between a sign and its object is not totally established by rules and codes, as in the case of symbols, that it does not pre-exist with respect to a code, as in the case of indices, but rather that this relation is invented freely and creatively by the interpretant. In the case of icons, the relation between a sign and its object is neither conventional nor necessary and contiguous, but hypothetical. It corresponds to Bakhtin's 'theme' or 'actual sense' (Voloshinov 1973:73), and the interpreter, who in our case is the translator, must keep account of all this when rendering the original interpretant by the interpretant of another language. When the relation between a sign and its object, and between different types of signs, is regulated by the iconic relation of similarity, the interpretive-translative processes forming the cognitive signifying universe at large, develop according to the logic of dialogism, alterity, polyphony, polylogism and plurilingualism — which are all essential properties of language and form a condition for critical awareness, experimentation, innovation, and creativity. And what we have claimed apropos interlingual translation is also valid for intralingual and intersemiotic translation. We know that interlingual translation implies the other two types of translation. Translative processes, therefore, always involve interaction among the three types of sign-object-interpretant relations, as suggested by Peirce's terminology, which is what we call interpreted-interpretant relations, and the three modalities of translation identified by Roman Jakobson,

In this theoretical framework to which Peirce, Welby, Morris, Rossi-Landi, Bakhtin, Levinas, Jakobson and Sebeok have contributed, communication is confirmed as a primary function of human language, but with an important specification: it is not reductively understood in terms of message exchange. Instead, it converges with other semiotic processes in the biosphere, thereby presupposing the dynamics of dialogism and intercorporeality. But what we wish to demonstrate in the present context is how communication converges with the capacity for the unspoken, the unsaid, the vague, the ambiguous, with inscrutability, concealment, reticence, allusion, illusion, implication, simulation, imitation, pretence, semantic pliancy, polysemy, polylogism, plurilingualism, alterity — all these presuppose the predominance of iconicity in semiosis and determine the very possibility itself of successful communicative interaction as well as of successful translative practice.

A fundamental requisite for the success of communication-translation processes is ‘answering comprehension’. This implies a speaker’s ability to reformulate and adapt language to the language of his/her interlocutors, to reflect metalinguistically on language in the effort to develop and specify meaning through recourse to interpretants from the language of others and to reflect metalinguistically on the language of others in order to specify meaning in terms of interpretants from one’s own language. ‘Active or answering comprehension’ concerns the ‘theme’ or ‘actual sense’ of an utterance. It is achieved thanks to dialogic relations among different languages and codes, which allow for such operations as rewording, transposing, and transmutating in the deferral among interpretants as they substitute each other without ever perfectly converging. Far from being compact, unitary and monolithic, human language is a live signifying process, which constantly renews itself through the generation of different idioms, discourses, logics and viewpoints. This is also possible thanks to a predominant tendency toward decentralization as foreseen by the nature of signs. Plurilingualism and polylogism, both internal and external to a single language, ensue from the potential in human language for distancing but also for expressing viewpoints that are “other”; indeed, human language develops as a function of this very potential. As George Steiner suggests (1975), language thus understood is the main instrument through which the human person can refuse the world as it is, which, in our terminology, is the being of the world, the being of signs. Each single language presents its own interpretation/s of reality, but does this thanks to the semiotic capacity for translation across different orders and systems of signs. Therefore — and this concerns us here specifically — humans are also in a position to discover the pleasure of freedom and evasion with respect to boundaries, including the boundaries of verbal language systems in their diverse forms and across different languages and cultures. Moreover, as Sebeok has pointed out, language understood in terms of modeling determines the human propensity for what Peirce calls “the play of musement” (CP 6.452). Propelled by dialogism, otherness, and iconicity, this “play of musement” not only involves the real world, but also accounts for the possibility of generating an infinite number of possible worlds (cf. Sebeok 1981).

6. Translatability/untranslatability

To ask whether or not historical-natural languages communicate with each other is irrelevant to the question of translatability among them. In any case, our answer would have to be that, as close as two languages may appear in terms of historical formation, they do not communicate with each other directly. That two languages may have many aspects in common, either because they are familiar with each

other or because they share a common past on the level of formation and transformation processes, does not eliminate differences among them. Nor will there necessarily be an overlap between the two distinct universes of discourse and world views that these languages represent. Every language is endowed with its own specificity at all levels of analysis: phonological, intonational, syntactic, semantic, lexical, pragmatic, and semiotic-cultural. Ferdinand de Saussure's observation that in language (*langue*) there are only differences, is commonly neglected in certain trends of linguistics as well as semiotics.

The correct question does not concern communication but expressibility. Therefore, what we should ask about translatability is: can that which is said in one historical-natural language be expressed in another? The answer should not be through induction, requiring to be verified each time, case by case, and in all languages. And given the sphere we are in, that is, the historical-cultural sphere, i.e. the human sciences and not some formal discipline, the answer should neither be deductive, derived from some theoretical premise or axiom. In this case, the answer must be of the abductive or hypothetical-deductive type. In other words, it can be reached on the basis of an inference that allows for a hypothesis that will be verified as the occasion arises.

From this perspective, to translate (this impossible communication among historical-natural languages) is always possible. This conviction is based on the metalinguistic character of verbal signs. Interlingual translation occurs in the territory that is common to all historical-natural languages. It involves endoverbal translation as much as endolingual translation. Therefore, interlingual translatability occurs on common ground and involves common practices that are already familiar to a speaker exercised in a single language. In contrast to nonverbal sign systems, verbal sign systems can speak about themselves, make themselves the object, the interpreted discourse. We know that the presence of multiple special languages in a single historical-natural language enhances speaker capacity for using language at a metalinguistic level. All the same, when it is a case of 'internal plurilingualism', the degree of distancing achieved between metalanguage and object language in a given historical-natural language is inferior to the degree of distancing achieved when translating across different historical-natural languages. Therefore, if we consider the problem of translatability in terms of expressibility, we must inevitably agree that the relation with another historical-natural language favours expressibility, and that translation is not only possible, but even enhances the speaker's metalinguistic capacity.

To the extent that interlingual translation is also endoverbal translation, it is achieved on the basis of what Rossi-Landi called 'parlare comune' (common speech; see Rossi-Landi 1961). This expression was introduced by Rossi-Landi to conceptualize a system of relatively constant human techniques, a system

that is broadly international, that is, not limited to national-cultural boundaries (1961:165). The ‘common speech’ hypothesis is able to show that the relation of resemblance, similarity, or likeness between the original text and the translant text, which translation must keep account of, is neither a relation of isomorphism nor of superficial analogy, but rather of homology. In other words, in spite of any differences, the relation of resemblance bonding historical-natural languages has to do with its structural origin and is determined by the fact that two texts from two historical-natural languages that are different, share what Rossi-Landi identifies as ‘common speech’.

Thanks to the metalinguistic capacity of the verbal mode, it is always possible to reformulate that which has been said, whether in the same historical-natural language, or — even better — a special language or a different historical-natural language. Translatability is inherent in the verbal mode and is also possible thanks to ‘common speech’. This position contrasts with those conceptions that describe historical-natural languages as closed and self-sufficient systems, on the one hand, and with extremes in the description of differences among historical-natural languages in terms of ‘linguistic relativity’, on the other. In terms of metalinguistic usage, translatability is a characteristic common to all historical-natural languages, and as such is part of the ‘common speech’ capacity.

As reported discourse, translation resorts to a practice that all users of historical-natural languages are trained in, that is to say, reporting the discourse of others. This involves of course both *langue* and *parole*. The individual *parole* is always more or less reported discourse in the form of imitation, stylization, parodization or direct or hidden controversy (cf. Bakhtin 1981).³ The presence of the word of the other in one’s own word, the fact that one’s own word must make its way through the intentions and the senses of the word of others, favours the dialogic disposition of the translant word, and enhances the constitutive dialogism of the word, both as translated and translant. The inclination to respond to and report the discourse of others is inherent in historical-natural language and in the utterance. This means that the disposition to respond to and report the word of others across historical-natural languages in the form of interlingual translation is already inscribed in speech, that is, in the linguistic functions and traditions that render speech possible. At the most, one of the major difficulties that the translator can encounter is that the utterance or the text in translation may belong to a special language (sectorial or specialized) that he or she is not necessarily familiar with, or not sufficiently so. But this is not a different problem from that which emerges

3. This according to all the modalities analyzed by Bakhtin in his two different editions of his monograph on Dostoevsky, the first published in 1929, the second in 1963.

when we are dealing with a question of endolingual or intralingual translation. In any case, such difficulties do not justify supporting the principle of interlingual untranslatability, bearing in mind, however, the considerations we offer below.

As regards the translation of a literary text, in particular a poetic text, which is often seen as supporting the claim that translation is impossible, we believe that the distanced and indirect character of the translant word may be used to validate the thesis of translatability. From this point of view the argument may run as follows: the literary word and the translant word relate to each other homologically, that is, on the basis of iconicity, in other words, they are related in terms of similarity not just at a surface level but at the level of formation and structure. Both the literary word and the translant word can be distinguished from the word of primary or direct discourse genres (see Bakhtin 1979), that is, from the word that converges with the subject that produces it. The literary word belongs to secondary or indirect discourse genres. As part of secondary genres, the literary word is no longer a direct word, in the sense of being a word that identifies with the subject of discourse, as normally occurs in ordinary speech — or at least this is the claim. Instead, secondary genres evidence the indirect character of the word, the word with its shadow (cf. Levinas 1948). The author does not identify with the literary word. On the contrary, the literary word, the word of secondary genres, is other, such that whoever uses this word says 'I' without identifying with this pronoun. This occurs, for example, in the novel narrated in first person; in drama where the playwright makes his characters speak directly; even in lyrical poetry and in autobiography where a certain amount of distancing always intervenes between the writer and the I of discourse: 'extralocalization' (a Bakhtinian term) is the condition of literariness, of artistic discourse in general.

Translation is indirect discourse masked as direct discourse, but nevertheless distanced from its author-translator. In fact, even in the case of oral and simultaneous translation, the translator says 'I' and nobody identifies him or her with the I of discourse. The Ambassador says: 'Thank you for receiving me, I am indeed honoured to be here'; and the interpreter translates: 'Grazie per l'accoglienza, sono davvero onorato di essere qui'; and nobody would dream of thinking that it is the interpreter who is grateful or honoured. From this point of view and contrary to common prejudice about the possibility of translating literary texts — especially a poetic text — it is the iconic relation of similarity regulating translation as translation — together with the capacity for exotopy, distancing, or extralocalization — that somehow makes translation a privileged place for the orientation of discourse toward literariness. Such characteristics shared by the literary word and the translant word in fact render them less distant from each other than would be commonly expected.

But ‘translatability’ does not only signify the possibility of translation. It also denotes an open relation between a text in the original and its translation. As the general ‘interpretability’ of a text — with respect to which ‘translatability’ is a special case —, translatability also indicates that the translation of a text remains open and is never definitively resolved; that a translated text may continue to be translated, in fact may be translated over and over again, even in the same language into which it has already been translated, and even by the same translator, producing a potentially infinite number of translant texts. The sign materiality of that which is translated, its otherness and its capacity for resistance with respect to any one interpretive trajectory, as well as its complexity, is evidenced in the texts that translate it. This meaning of the expression ‘translatability’ must also be taken into consideration when reflecting on the limits of translation, as in general of interpretation.

The problem of translatability must be faced in close relation with the problem of the untranslatable, since these are two faces of the same process: translatability, interpretability, being capable of expressing the untranslatable, even the uninterpretable or the inexpressible. By virtue of the capacity of signs to resist all attempts at interpretation-translation made upon them, the concept of translatability relates to the untranslatable, to what evades the limits of comprehensibility. Or to put it differently, language is the place of equivocation and misunderstanding and invents itself anew at every occurrence, but the place where something fails, is left unsaid. The act of speech, assertion or statement necessarily implies leaving something out, something that escapes control of the will, that cannot be exhausted in saying. Something that could be called absolute otherness, but which thereby generates new fluxes of interpretants; these in turn resist control and evade the will, intention, purpose, consciousness, even the authority of the very last word. This makes language the condition of the unconscious. Language is not a nomenclature. If this were the case, translation across languages would be immediate in the sense that each word would have a corresponding concept in its own language and its immediate correlate in another language. But, in language, the relation is not between words and preconceived ideas, between the direct and the unambiguous. To assert, to utter, to perform through words and through speech acts, means at once to repress, to remove, to silence — this is clearly revealed by such phenomena as dreaming, word play, artistic discourse, and symptoms.

If repression, removal, silence, the unsaid, or absolute otherness is the other face of the word, this has consequences for the act of translation, as interlingual translation makes particularly evident. On the one hand, there is common speech, invariability, semiotic fluxes, energy, progress, succession, return, transitive writing, transcription, continuity; on the other, there is uniqueness, otherness, fragmentation, death, loss, intransitive writing, variability, unrepeatability,

discontinuity. All these factors interact and overlap, evoking each other in uncertain, ambiguous relations. The self is not master of his/her 'own' home, the speaker is not at home in his/her 'own' mother-tongue, but is instead spoken by another language. We are always 'strangers to ourselves' (Kristeva 1988): what we share and have in common is the very condition of strangeness, absolute otherness.

Together with the concept of translatability, the concept of bilingualism and of the bilingual speaker also needs to be investigated. We could even go as far as to claim that there is no such thing as a bilingual speaker, as paradoxical as this may seem. Bilingualism presupposes more than the existence of a language that mediates, a translinguistic code that establishes equivalences, convertibility, and correspondences. But the problem is not that of establishing and identifying convergences and correspondences between one language and another. When translating from one language into another, the relation is not one of conversion or of transformation. Instead it is much more one of re-reading, re-writing, re-interpreting, re-creating; of shifting creatively and critically from one language (in)to another, whether across different national languages, or within the same language, where it is above all the iconic dimension of signs that regulates and plays a central role in signifying processes. The dynamics, as described above, is between the similar and the dissimilar, the known and the unknowable: the same other.

The code of translatability may attempt to render translation automatic by canceling the other, by homologating the other to self, by asserting the principle of totalization, authority, of being authorial or by canceling writing. However, the translation process is regulated by the logic, or, better, the dia-logic of otherness;⁴ it emerges from and is oriented towards difference. In so far as this is the case, translation is interpretation, writing, re-creation: neither translation word by word, letter by letter (*verbo verbum reddere*, criticized by Cicero), nor translation on the basis of sense (St Jerome's *non verbum de verbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu*). The experience of translation, like writing, occurs with the material, it is a material process involving letters and the deferral of signifiers. Translation encounters the twists and turns of language, its equivocations, the indirectness, and the obliqueness of its interpretive trajectories. Whether we translate 'by the letter' or 'on the basis of sense', we cannot leave out the letter, since it marks the specificity of the signifier and its very materiality, which makes a difference in terms of that which cannot be approved, leveled, or equalized. We cannot translate the letter, for the materiality of the signifier, the letter itself, that is, signifying material, is not translatable. Decisions play on ambiguities — not to dissipate them but to evidence their importance as a signifier, the signifying import of interpreteds and

4. On the concepts of dialogism and otherness in relation to signs, see Ponzio 2006.

interpretants, which is further enhanced through the deferral among interpreted-interpretants across other languages. A translation is active, non transparent. It is connected with the work of re-reading and re-writing, re-creating. Canonical translation is based on the code, convention, authority, and respect. Contrary to such an orientation, the task of the translator is not to give the impression that it is not a translation, but to convey the uniqueness, the specificity of the interpretant, its unrepeatability, the sense of its untranslatability. Translation is construed from the specificity of the signifier and in this sense is 'by the letter'. As such the translative procedure is dominated by iconicity whose signifying value is an 'effect' of language provoked by the 'original', by virtue of what Peirce would call its quality.

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Iconicity and developments in translation studies*

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A fundamental issue with reference to the translation process concerns the type of relation between the original and the translated text. Peirce indicates three possibilities: icon, index and symbol. For many scholars it is a given that the relation of similarity between the original text and the translated text predominates and that the iconic relation ordinarily describes the character of translation. However, evidence is provided in this paper to show from a theoretical viewpoint (i.e. from that of translation studies) and a practical viewpoint (with examples provided) that a relationship between source text and target text which is characterised as iconic can only be weakly iconic because a target text can never fully resemble its source text in every respect linguistically and culturally. Furthermore in certain cases an indexical or symbolic relationship rather than an iconic one may even predominate. Since the 1980s, discourses about translation have broadened steadily. An outflow of these developments is a greater understanding of the superordinate categories of translation and the fact that the relation between source and target text is no longer only one of resemblance (i.e. iconicity). An example of iconicity from the Koran and its translation is provided as evidence for a predominant, but weak iconic relationship between source text and target text. Examples from the Sesotho Bible translation and *Das neue Testament* illustrate that the predominant relationship can also be indexical or symbolic (rather than iconic), respectively.

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1. Introduction

With reference to the process of translation, a fundamental issue concerns the type of relation established between the original text and the translated text. These texts are similar to each other, but what is the nature of their similarity? According to the semiotically-oriented approach to translation the question of translation must be connected to the typology of signs. As understood by Peirce (1931–1958) there are three kinds of signs: the icon which is based on the resemblance of the sign to the thing signified; the index, which is dominated by the relation of causality, and the symbol, whose relationship to the sign is that of convention. For many scholars it is a given that the relation of similarity between the original text and the translated text predominates and that the iconic relation ordinarily describes the character of translation. However, there is a paradox. The paradox of translation lies in the fact that the text must remain the same while becoming other, simply because it has been reorganized into the expressive modalities of another language: the translated text is simultaneously identical and different with respect to the original text (see volume edited by Arduini 2004). The focus of this study is on the relationship between the source text (the original) and the target text (the translated text) and not on other similarity relations of these texts (see for example Chesterman 2004). In fact, evidence is provided in this paper to show from a theoretical viewpoint (i.e. from that of translation studies) and a practical viewpoint (with examples provided) that a relationship between source text and target text which is characterised as iconic can only be weakly iconic because a target text can never fully resemble its source text in every respect linguistically and culturally. Furthermore in certain cases an indexical or symbolic relationship rather than an iconic one may even predominate.

What most translation scholars would like to believe is that the stage of defining translation is essentially over. However, the task of defining translation is not completed and it will continue to be a central trajectory of translation research. Translation Studies has reached the stage where it is time to examine the conceptualization and the metalanguage of translation itself (Gambier and Van Doorslaer 2008: 189–195). In this regard Tymoczko (2005) describes translation as an open concept. In cognitive science such open concepts are sometimes called *cluster concepts* or *cluster categories*. Gideon Toury's definition of translation as "any target language text which is presented or regarded as such within the target system itself, on whatever grounds" (Toury 1980: 14, 37, 43–45) is congruent with the notion of translation as a cluster concept, and it is important in part because it allows for cultural self-definition and self-representation in the field, elements that are central to the current internationalization of the field of translation studies. Given these developments as well as the deconstruction of the metalanguage

of translation studies, the iconic relation which ordinarily describes the character of translation must be revisited.

The paper is organized as follows: The first section is an elaboration on semio-translation. According to the theory of semiotranslation, translation should be grounded in sign theory, and more precisely, in the semiotics of interpretation. Its starting point can be dated back to the publication of Roman Jakobson's article "On linguistic aspects of translation" in 1959. This section provides a survey of the development of semiotranslation by focusing on the redefinitions of Roman Jakobson's typology of translation by Gideon Toury, Umberto Eco and Susan Petrilli, which implies an extension of similarity relations in semiotranslation.

The second section contextualizes the problem concerning the type of relation established between the original text and the translated text within recent developments of translation studies. Since the 1980s, discourses about translation have broadened steadily. Translation theory is developing perspectives on translation that transcend Eurocentric views and dominant contemporary Western translation practices. An outflow of these developments will be a greater understanding of the superordinate categories of translation. One implication is that the similarity relationship becomes very complex.

In the third section, an example of iconicity from the Koran and its translation is provided as evidence for a predominant, but weak iconic relationship between source text and target text. Examples from the Sesotho Bible translation and *Das neue Testament* illustrate that the predominant relationship can also be indexical or symbolic, respectively.

2. The extension of similarity relations in semiotranslation

The expansion of the object of study, namely the redefining of translation and the relationship between source text and translation (for example the redefining of Roman Jakobson's typology of translation by Gideon Toury, Umberto Eco and Susan Petrilli) will be discussed in this section.

Roman Jakobson (1959) introduced a semiotic reflection on translatability. According to Jakobson (1959: 139) three ways of interpreting a verbal sign may be distinguished. Firstly, intralingual translation or *rewording* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language. Secondly, interlingual translation or *translation proper* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of verbal signs in some other language. Thirdly, intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems.

Jakobson questions empiricist semantics by conceiving of meaning, not as a reference to reality, but in relation to a potentially endless chain of signs. He

describes translation as a process of recording which involves two equivalent messages in two different codes (Jakobson 1959: 139). The term ‘bachelor’ may be converted into a more explicit designation, ‘unmarried man’, whenever higher explicitness is required. Jakobson underestimates the interpretive nature of translation — the fact that recoding is an active rewording that does not simply transmit the foreign message, but transforms it. Still, he is mindful of the differences among cultural discourses, especially poetry in which “grammatical categories carry a high semantic import” and which therefore requires translation that is a “creative transposition” into different systems of signs.

While Jakobson’s typology suggests that translation (or, at least the translational mechanism) is not limited to human natural language, the following modifications of his typology have expanded systematically the possible sphere in which translational phenomena can be detected. The general progression has been from the focus on natural language to the entire human culture and even to the entire biosphere. Translation is an inherent part of semiosis or sign activity, and therefore translation can be said to be present in any sign process in any living system. One question posed by the abovementioned typologies is that of the borders of translation, in which there are implicit questions about the relationship between translation and interpretation, and between translation process and sign process.

According to Toury (1986: 1113) it is obvious that the typology of Jakobson is influenced by the traditional bias for linguistic translating. It is readily applicable only to texts, i.e. to semiotic entities which have surface, overt representations. Verbal texts may have more than one semiotic border to cross when undergoing an act of translating (for example, when an oral story in one language becomes a literary, written one in another; when a religious text is transformed into a secular one, a literary work into a non-literary text, etc.). Toury (1986: 1114) proposes a typology of translating processes based on the relations between underlying codes and systems. It includes an explicit set of mutually exclusive distinctions, namely between intrasemiotic and intersemiotic (from language to non-language) translating. Intrasemiotic translating is divided into intrasystemic (for example intralingual) and intersystemic (for example interlingual) translating.

Eco (2001: 68; 2003: 124–125) identifies the totality of semiosis with a continuous process of translation, that is, he identifies the concept of translation with that of interpretation. Translations do not concern a comparison between two languages but the interpretation of two texts in two different languages (Eco 2001: 14). The principle of interpretance establishes that every more or less elusive “equivalence” between two expressions can only be given by the identity of consequences that they imply or make implicit (Eco 2001: 69). Eco (2001: 99–125) proposed a different classification of the forms of interpretation, in which due importance is attached to the problems posed by variations in both the substance and the

purport of the expression. Firstly, there is interpretation by transcription. This is interpretation by automatic substitution, as happens with Morse code.

Secondly, intrasystemic interpretation, where interpretants belong to the same semiotic system as the interpreted expression (the same form of the expression), has variations in the substance of the expression. One variation is intralinguistic, that is within the same natural language, and includes all the cases of interpretation of a natural language by means of itself: synonymy, definition, paraphrase, inference, comment, etc. Another variation is intrasemiotic, that is within semiotic systems different from natural languages. A musical piece may be transcribed in a different key, changing from major to minor or from the Doric to the Phrygian mode, and a map may be reduced in scale or simplified (or, contrariwise, reproduced in greater detail). Performance is intrasystemic interpretation, where the same form of the expression is rendered through a change in expressive purport, because what usually happens is that it passes from the notation of a written score to its realization in sounds, gestures, or words pronounced.

Thirdly, there is intersystemic interpretation with marked variation in the substance. There are cases in which interpretation implies important variations in the substance of the expression, and the most obvious case is precisely that of translation proper. It includes interlinguistic translation between natural languages, rewriting and intersystemic interpretation with very marked differences in substance among non-linguistic systems. An example is the printed reproduction of a pictorial work, where the continuous texture of the painted surface is translated in terms of a typographical screen. Another variation concerns intersystemic interpretation with mutation of the continuum. In these cases there is a decided step from purport to the purport of the expression, as happens when a poem is interpreted through a charcoal drawing, or when a novel is adapted in comic-strip form.

For Petrilli (2003: 17–37; see also this volume) to translate is not to decodify, nor to decipher, but to interpret. Petrilli developed and extended the typology of translation proposed by Roman Jakobson to semiosis in its entirety, to the living world in general, to the biosemiosphere (endosemiosis — internal to a single sign system) and intersemiosis (across sign systems — translative processes), and not simply limited to the human cultural world (anthroposemiosphere). Language is only related to the last mentioned sphere. Anthroposemiosis translation is intersemiotic (where a language is involved). Translation is interlinguistic when it is solely among languages, including translation from nonverbal signs to the verbal and vice-versa or across nonverbal signs. Endolingual translation refers to translative processes within a single language. Endoverbal translation refers to linguistic translation within verbal sign systems and is specified as interlingual (when transiting across historical-natural languages) or endolingual (when transiting internal to a single historical-natural language). The latter may in turn be

differentiated into diamesic translation (translation from oral verbal signs to written verbal signs and vice versa), diaphasic translation (translation across registers) and diglossic translation (translation between a standard language and a dialect).

From this perspective it should be obvious that translation does not only concern the human world, anthroposemiosis, but rather a constitutive modality of semiosis, or more exactly, of biosemiosis. Therefore, translative processes pervade the entire living world, that is, the great biosphere.

Given that similarity dominates the relation between the original text and the translated text, the type of sign which prevails is the iconic. However, in the next section it will be indicated that the nature of the similarity relationship between source text and target text as viewed within recent developments of Translation Studies is not always iconic.

3. The relation between the source text and the translation within recent developments of Translation Studies

3.1 Normative approaches to translation

The normative approaches to translation (see Fawcett 1997) dominated translation studies until the beginning of the 1980s. At this stage the relationship between source and target text was visualized as iconic. In terms of the normative approaches to translation, equivalence was the prevailing concern and the criterion against which translators were to judge their product. Equivalence in translation must be viewed as a similarity relationship (rather than an identity relationship). In terms of formal equivalence translations, the iconic relationship is between the network of signs making up the text in the source text and the target text. In terms of dynamic equivalence translations, the iconic relationship between the source text and the target texts relates to the signification of the signs. Owing to linguistic and cultural differences between languages, these kinds of translations inevitably fall short of the equivalence ideal (Heylen 1993:2) and problematize the iconic relationship between source text and target text. The principal shortcoming of prescriptive/normative translation theories soon became evident: these theories lacked the necessary sensitivity to the socio-cultural conditions under which translations were produced in order to comply with the requirements of acts of communication in the receiving culture (Bassnett-McGuire 1991 [1980]; Bassnett and Lefevere 1990). Thus, the realization that translations can never be produced in a vacuum, divorced from time and culture, and the desire to explain the time-related and culture-bound criteria involved, resulted in a shift away from a normative and prescriptive methodology (compare Hermans 1985). This trend

was conspicuous from the early eighties on and can be related to the linguistic turn from an ahistorical and apolitical approach to language, towards a more critical and culturally situated approach. It should furthermore be associated with the influence of semiotics, especially as found in the work of Roland Barthes, Mikhail Bakhtin and Valentin Voloshinov. Translation is viewed instead as a one-to-many process in which translators must make choices.

In the process two approaches to translation, the functionalist and the descriptive, developed independently but simultaneously (Naudé 2002: 44–69). Both view translation as a new communicative act that is aimed at serving a purpose for the target culture, even if this results in differences from the source text. Difference is inescapable in translation and the question of similarity is problematized.

3.2 Functionalist approaches to translation

In the case of the functionalist approach, the intended function (*skopos*) of the target text determines the translation methods and strategies (Reiss and Vermeer 1984). The function of the translation in the target culture is decisive as far as those aspects of the source text which should be transferred to the translation (Nord 1991: 6) are concerned.

The *skopos* is contained in the translation brief, which is the set of translating instructions issued by the client when ordering the translation. A translator starts with an analysis of the translation *skopos* as contained in the initiator's brief. Then s/he finds the gist of the source text enabling him/her to determine whether the given translation task is at all feasible. The next step involves a detailed analysis of the source text. It is necessary to 'loop back' continually to the translation *skopos*, which acts as a guide to determine which source text elements may be preserved and which elements require a measure of adaptation. This circular process ensures that the translator takes into account factors relevant to the translation task. The target text should therefore fulfill its intended function in the target culture. In this way, the initiator or person acting the role of initiator actually decides on the translation *skopos*, even though the brief as such may be explicit about the conditions.

Any translation *skopos* may be formulated for a particular original and the translator's licence to move away from the source text is unlimited. However, Nord (1997: 63) modifies the conventional *skopos* theory by adding the concepts of loyalty and convention to it, in this way limiting the variety of possible functions or *skopoi*. In Nord's (1997) view, the concept of loyalty takes account of the fact that the ultimate responsibility rests not with the initiator, but with the translator, who in the final analysis is the only person qualified to judge whether the transfer process has taken place satisfactorily. Loyalty can be defined "as a moral category

which permits the integration of culture-specific conventions into the functionalist model of translation” (Nord 1997). Loyalty implies that the translator is required to take the conventions of the particular translation situation into account which means in effect that the translator may flout existing conventions. The combination of functionality plus loyalty means that the translator may decide to produce a functional target text which conforms to the requirements of the initiator’s brief and which is acceptable in the target culture. This is contrary to equivalence-based translation theories, because the demand for faithfulness or equivalence is subordinate to the *skopos* rule. According to the functionalist approach, a translation is considered to be adequate if the translated text is appropriate for the communicative purpose defined in the translation brief, e.g. accessibility of the translated text. In terms of the functionalist approach the iconic relationship exists between the intentionality of the *skopos* and the target text. The source text is not involved in the iconic relationship; it is only a repository of information which is available for use in executing the *skopos*. Instead, the source text has an indexical relationship to the translation, in that the information in the source text points to the translated text.

3.3 Descriptive approaches to translation

Bassnett and Lefevere (1990:4), working originally from within the systems theory, dismissed the painstaking comparisons that were made between original texts and translations when the text was not being considered in its cultural environment. Instead, they conceptualized translation as rewriting, while also taking the ideological tensions around the text into account. The implications for the so-called iconic relationship between source text and translation will be indicated later in this section.

The move from translation as text, to translation as culture and politics, has been termed by Mary Snell-Hornby (1995:79–86) as *the cultural turn*. Bassnett and Lefevere (1990:11) consider this to be a metaphor for the cultural move beyond language in order to emphasize the interaction between translation and culture, as well as the way in which culture impacts on and constrains translation, and subsequently to stress the much broader issues of context, history and convention. This approach includes studies on changing standards in translation over a certain space of time; the demands made to the publishing industry in pursuit of specific ideologies; feminist writing and translation; translation as appropriation; translation and colonization; and translation as rewriting, including film rewrites (see also Lambert 2004). Similarity between a source text and its translations takes the form of a cluster of resemblances (Tymoczko 2004). Each translator privileges specific parts of a source text in the transfer process. They

vary widely — ranging, for example, from semantic meanings to form to symbolic structures to functional roles.

Arising from cultural anthropology in the late 1980s and early 1990s, post-colonial translation theory is based on the premise that translation has often served as an important imperialist tool in the colonization of peoples, that colonial attitudes survive in the translation marketplace, and that decolonization of the mind is needed (Robinson 1997). Europe was perceived as the *original* with the colonies as copies or *translations* of the original (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 4). Momentous trends in postcolonial studies were initiated by the study of globalization, tribalization and cultural identities. For translation purposes, the implication is that cultural words and concepts are utilized in the target text (i.e., the technique of foreignization is applied) to allow for the clear demarcation of each cultural group. The terms *resistancy* and *resistance*, as used by Venuti (1995), refer to the strategy of translating a literary text in such a way that it retains something of its foreignness (see also Fox 2002 and Nord 2004 concerning strangeness which for the target-language readers is inherent in the semantic message of the original poem). The reader must extend his view beyond the bounds of what is recognized as acceptable in his/her own literary tradition). This is also referred to as a resistive approach to translation. Such an approach challenges the assumption that an acceptable translation is only produced when a translation reads fluently and idiomatically and is so transparent in reflecting the source text author's intention in the target language, that the translation could be mistaken for an original text. In this regard it is important to note Derrida's (2001) questioning of what he referred to as "relevant translation". Derrida calls attention not only to the ethnocentric violence of relevant translation, but also to the simultaneous mystification of that violence through language which creates the impression of being transparent because it is univocal and idiomatic. A resistive approach to translation may use unidiomatic expressions and other linguistically and culturally alienating features in the translated text in order to create an impression of foreignness, thereby providing readers of the translation with an alien reading experience. In other words, there was a shift in the ideology of translation so that instead of an iconic relationship, an indexical relationship (in which elements foreign to the target culture point back to the source culture) came to be viewed as the ideal. One may wonder if this foreignization strategy could also be symbolic in the case where foreign words are simply transliterated into the target language. Since only the selection of words remains foreign there cannot be an iconic relationship between source text and translation. For the same reason, transliteration should not be described as iconic in the sense that the sound shape of the foreign word is precisely represented in the target language. The indexical relationship between source text and translation was underlined when the cultural turn in translation studies became the 'power

turn', according to Tymoczko and Gentzler (2002), with questions of power being brought to the fore in discussions of strategies for translation.

Related to the descriptive approaches to translation studies is corpus-based research in translation studies. Corpus-based research in translation studies focused on similarities and differences between translated and non-translated text in an attempt to demonstrate that translations form a distinctive textual system within any target culture. The impetus for building and investigating corpora of translated text was to identify patterns which are specific to translated text in general (whatever the languages involved). The assumption was that the translation process itself is sufficiently different from regular processes of communication to make it highly likely that the resulting language output would be different from the language produced without the constraint of a fully articulated source text in another language.

These corpus-based translation studies revealed the tendency to simplify the language used in translation, in other words, translation is an attempt to make things easier for the reader (but not necessarily more explicit). If the target text has a lower information load than the source text, it is because ambiguous information in the original has been disambiguated (made simpler) in the translation process (Toury 1995:270). Delabastita (1993:35) talks of the pruning or trimming of the original. Omitting aspects of the original text is the most direct way of simplifying a translation. A tendency towards conservatism/conventionalization or normalization results in a trend towards general textual conventionality as opposed to textual creativity. Conservatism is most evident in the use of typical grammatical structures, punctuation and collocational patterns. It exaggerates features of the target language by conforming to its typical patterns. Sometimes there is an overall tendency to spell things out rather than leave them implicit. The evidence for this tendency is found in the fact that translations are usually longer than their originals. Lexically the tendency to make things explicit in translation may be expressed through the use or overuse of explanatory vocabulary that are added to the target text. According to Delabastita (1993:36) addition as translation strategy (i.e. the insertion of information in the translation that is absent in the original text) can partly be ascribed to translators' understandable concern for clarity and coherence, which prompts them to disentangle or explain complicated passages, provide missing links, lay bare unspoken assumptions i.e. implicit meanings, and generally give the text a fuller wording (i.e. elaborate on the original).

As corpora began to be compiled, it became necessary to set more specific and local agendas without losing sight of the broader initial agenda. For example, it becomes necessary to focus on specific languages and to restrict the claims concerning translation-specific patterns to these languages, while at the same time indicating that the broad picture and tendencies we are looking at may prove typi-

cal of translations in other languages but are likely to be realized through very different linguistic patterns. In this regard, English translations tend to favour the use of the *that* connective in reported speech, compared to non-translated English text (Burnett 1999; Olohan and Baker 2000). The pattern itself is very language-specific and cannot be investigated across languages in order to support a broader claim about the language of translation. Apart from these general and local patterns which involved claims about such features as explicitation or simplification and the way these broad tendencies may be realized in local, language-specific patterns, there is also the question of individual variation within a corpus of translated text. Therefore, more recently, researchers have begun to turn their attention to the question of individual variation within any corpus of translations.

The regularities and recurrent patterns present in certain translations but omitted in others are pointed out, i.e. specifically the stylistic variation of the translators. A recurrent lexical phrase may be a favourite expression or quirk of the translator which is independent of the style of the author. Translators are writers, and like other writers may have their particular favoured expressions. Style is used here in the sense of a translator's characteristic use of language, his or her individual profile of linguistic habits, compared to other translators. In this sense, style is not a question of creativity (or lack thereof), but rather a question of preferred choices (cf. Kenny 2000, who focuses on the issue of creativity). The issue of stylistic variation boils down to linguistically inscribed preference in the choice and construction of discourses in the translated texts, i.e. the translators assessing the norms governing the patterning of translational behaviour within a given socio-cultural milieu.

Corpus-based translation studies provide evidence against a similarity (i.e. an iconic) relationship between source text and target text. Simplification and explicitation implies an indexical relationship between source text and the translation, while normalization and translator's style involves a symbolic relationship between source text and target text.

3.4 The hermeneutical approach to translation

Steiner's approach to language and translation claims that all understanding, whether of spoken or written language, involves interpretation (Steiner 1998). The interpretative process of determining the full semantic reference of the words is, in essence, translation. In the interaction between language and society, hackneyed usage can impoverish language, while creativity can renew a language and reformulate reality. A process of 'original repetition' can take place whereby the interpreter takes possession of and submits to the original meaning through an intense response to the creative impulse of the author/speaker.

Through intralingual as well as interlingual interpretation, language gains life beyond the moment or place of expression. Steiner (1998) here refers to the early linguistic model of communication: a message from a source language is passed to a receptor by means of a process of transformation. In intralingual interpretation the barrier is time, whereas in interlingual translation the barrier is language. History is recorded in language: to formulate the past, to recreate the past, to transmit culture over generations. The transmission of meaning in language takes place not only across time, but also space.

What Steiner calls the centrifugal impulse of language creates further barriers to intralingual and interlingual interpretation: regional differences, social and professional differences, ideological differences, differences due to gender and age. The reception of this message requires interpretation on the part of the receptor. Steiner thus establishes that language necessitates translation.

About translation as an area of inquiry, Steiner concludes that the actual process of translation is not readily available for methodical investigation. Therefore, analysis remains descriptive. The gist of Steiner's critique of theories of translation is that they concentrate on the issue of fidelity and the polarity of word and sense, but do not address the problems of meaning and the relation between words and reality. His model moves away from the traditional dialectic of literal versus free, faithful or free, word versus meaning, in favour of a hermeneutic motion, a process of interpretation, which follows four phases.

Steiner's metaphor of balance aptly characterizes the hermeneutic model. The translator moves towards the alternate text, invades (aggression) and encircles (incorporation) to return, laden with meaning and form. These three motions result in imbalance — the equilibrium between the two texts has been disturbed, because something has been taken away from the original and transferred to the receptor. A fourth motion is necessary: reciprocity. Reciprocity is dialectic — through translation, both the source and receptor are enriched. True translation creates a new synthesis, where the violation of the source is legitimized by the translator's affirmation of what is inherent in the text. Translation is presented as a process in which various aspects and elements are considered by the translator to achieve a goal, which is seldom perfectly realized.

In translation, there tend to be large differences between source text and translation (see also Gutt 2004). Not everything about a source text can be rendered in a translated text. Each translation, the way in which these aspects of form and content are balanced, demands in various ways consideration by the translator. The latter has to decide, either from explicit theoretical grounds or from unconsidered reflex, on the interplay between form and content in the source text with form and content in the translated text. Translators should choose consciously (and then keep to their decision as far as possible) what it is about the source text

they wish to give greater prominence to in the translated text. Because languages match one another poorly, translators' enforced choices push them into roles not unlike that of narrators: they tell the readers something about the source text. In seeking to tell something about the source text, the translator-narrator must at once hide much of it. Because of the dynamics of language, it is impossible ever to relate through translation everything about a source text or language. A *show and tell* selection is imposed: what do I let show through of the source text in my translation; put differently: what of the source text do I tell my readers? Therefore, the relation between source and target text cannot be exclusively iconic, but implies indexical and symbolic relationships.

3.5 Redefining translation

Tymoczko (2005) indicates that the following activities will unseat current pretheoretical assumptions about translation in the next decade. Firstly, exploration of the nature of plurilingual and pluricultural life will unseat the presupposition that translators mediate between two linguistic and cultural groups. Secondly, the integration of knowledge about oral cultures into translation studies will unseat the presupposition that translation involves written texts. Thirdly, openness to a greater diversity of text types will unseat the presupposition that the primary text types that translators work with have been defined and categorized. Fourthly, attention to processes of translation in other cultures will unseat the presupposition that an individual translator decodes a given message to be translated and recodes the same message in a second language.

One can get some hint of this challenging aspect of the internationalization of translation studies by examining various non-Western words for 'translation' and considering the possible realignments that those words, together with their specific translation histories, suggest for theories of translation. In India, for example, two common words for translation are *rupantar*, 'change in form', and *anuvad*, 'speaking after, following'. Neither of these indigenous terms implies fidelity to the original. Instead, the concept of faithful rendering in translation came to India with Christianity. In the Nigerian language Igbo, the words for translation are *tapia* and *kowa*. *Tapia* comes from the roots *ta*, 'tell, narrate', and *pia*, 'destruction, break [it] up', with the overall sense of 'deconstruct it and tell it (in a different form)'. *Kowa* has a similar meaning, deriving from *ko*, 'narrate, talk about' and *wa*, 'break in pieces'. In Igbo, therefore, translation is an activity that stresses the viability of communication as narration, allowing for decomposition and a change in form rather than one-to-one reconstruction.

Finally, because of new technologies, a major growth area will be research about the translation of materials that coordinate text and image. Such materials

have increasingly become the norm in many areas of life: the media (including film, television, and the internet), information and communication technologies, advertising, business, and so forth.

The ongoing process of redefining translation will clearly subvert a predominant iconic relationship between source text and translation. It is possible that an indexical and symbolic relationship may be predominant.

4. Iconicity as applied in translation

As indicated in Section 1, the question of translation may be connected to the typology of signs. Given that the relation of similarity predominates when semiosis is considered in terms of translation, the type of sign which is most pervasive is the iconic as understood by Peirce. With reference to the process of translation, a fundamental issue concerns the type of relation established between the original text and the translated text. These texts are similar to each other, but what is the nature of such similarity? The paradox of translation consists in the fact that the text must remain the same while becoming other, simply because it has been reorganized into the expressive modalities of another language: the translated text is simultaneously identical and different with respect to the original text. In fact, evidence is provided in this section to show that the relationship between source text and target text is not always iconic, but that indexical and symbolic relationships predominate in certain instances. An example of iconicity from the Koran and its translation confirms that it is only possible to translate with a weak iconic relationship between source text and target text. Examples from the usage of orality in Sesotho Bible translation and the insertion of terms in *Das neue Testament* to preserve the appellative character of the text illustrate that the predominant relationship can also be indexical or symbolic, respectively.

4.1 Iconicity in the Koran: A case of reciprocal autonomy and resemblance

The formal aspects of the Koran play an important role in complementing its meaning. Form and content form a visual image of the message (see Naudé 1979).

One is confronted here with antithetic parallelism, i.e. where the second element has the opposite content of the first part. In the Ancient Near Eastern context pragmatic meaning is related to the right hand or what is on the right side. A person eats, handles the Koran and performs pure things with the right hand. The left side is unclean — the unfortunate side. (The Arabic writing is from right to left and a reader will start to read the right hand column.)

Table 1. Introduction of Sûra 92

A. Introduction	
2. <i>wa-'l-nahâri 'idhâ tadjallâ</i> As sure as the day when it shines,	1. <i>wa-'l-laili 'idhâ yagshâ</i> As sure as the night when it veils,
3(b) <i>wa-'l-'unthâ</i> And the female,	3(a) <i>wa-mâ khalaqa 'l-dhakara</i> By Him who created the male,

Sûra 92 begins on the right-hand side in verse 1 with an oath sworn by the night and by Him who created the male (verse 3(a)). This is contrasted on the left-hand side by opposites: the day in verse 2 and the female in verse 3(b). In the descriptive phrases that elaborate 'the night' and 'the day' in more detail, the contrast between them is not only with the semantic opposites of 'when it veils' and 'when it shines', but it is emphasized grammatically in the Arabic by using one verb in the Perfect 'when it veils' (1) and the other in the Imperfect 'when it will shine' (2) respectively. This is not possible to be presented in the English translation without keeping the symmetry. The present tense is used for both translations. These opposites in the oaths introducing Chapter 92 are a word-play in advance on the contrast between the believer and the unbeliever that is the main theme of the chapter. The main theme is introduced by verse 4 forming a transition between the introduction and the main body of the chapter. It acts as a kind of heading.

Table 2. Main body of Sûra 92

B. Heading:	
4. <i>'inna sacyakum la'shattâ</i> Verily your course is diverse.	
Unbelievers	Believers
8. <i>wa-'ammâ man bakhîla wa-'stagnâ</i> But as for him who is stingy, and prides himself in wealth,	5. <i>fa-'ammâ man 'actâ wa-'ttaqâ</i> So as for him who gives and shows piety,
9. <i>wa-kadhhaba bi-'l-husnâ</i> And counts false the best (Paradise),	6. <i>wa-saddaqa bi-'l-husnâ</i> And counts true the best (Paradise),
10. <i>fa-sa-nuyassiruhu lil- � usrâ</i> We (i.e. God) shall assist him to difficulty (Hell),	7. <i>fa-sa-nuyassiruhu lil- � usnâ</i> We (i.e. God) shall assist him to ease (Heaven).

The main contents in verses 5 to 10 clearly consists of two parallel sections. They exhibit the interesting phenomenon that in spite of maintaining the absolute semantic antithesis between the two parallel sections, the parallel verses progressively become more identical in form. Verses 5 and 8 differ with one consonant (*w* vs *f*) and two words (*bakhîla* vs *actâ*; *stagnâ* vs *ttaqâ*); verses 6 and 9 differ in

only three consonants (*ṣ* vs *k*, *d* vs. *dh*; *q* vs. *b*). The similarity reaches a climax in verses 7 and 10, where there is a difference of only one single consonant (*c usrâ* vs *h usnâ*) although the two verses describe the totally opposite end of the believers as compared to the unbelievers. In this way tension is created because of the increasingly formal similarity which focuses even more strongly on the different ultimate destinies and the contrasts between faithful and unfaithful. When comparing the two sections carefully, it seems as if the framework within which both believer and unbeliever operate is the same and that God on his part acts in the same manner towards both parties. This is indicated by using in verses 7 and 10 the same verb *fasanuyassiruhu*, ‘We shall assist him’ towards both parties so that their different ultimate destinations are of their own making as indicated in the previous verses. Being the same root indicating heaven in verse 7 implies that God will make sure that the final destination of the unbeliever is what he deserves, in the same way that God makes sure that the final destination of the believer is what he deserves. In this sense, then, the verb ‘we shall assist him’ reverses its meaning with respect to the unbeliever. In other words, what is iconically identical in phonological shape became its antithesis semantically.

Table 3. Conclusion of Sûra 92

C: Conclusion God rules

11. <i>wa-mâ yugnî canhu mâ lahu</i> ‘ <i>idhâ taraddâ</i> 12. ‘ <i>inna alainâ lal-hudâ</i> Nor will his wealth profit him when he perishes.	Upon Us it rests to give right guidance;
13(b) <i>wal-’ûlâ</i> and the First (i.e. earthly life).	13(a) <i>wa-’inna lanâ lal-’âkhirata</i> And to Us belong the Last (i.e. the Hereafter)

In verse 11 the pattern is broken in a transition to the conclusion, i.e. the transliteration and translation in this part are laid out differently — verse 12 on the righthand side and verse 11 on the lefthand side. This verse is considerably longer and continues the idea of verse 10, while also linking back to verse 8. The antithetic parallel in verse 12 contains no formal identity with verse 11. It emphasizes that God is the one guiding mankind. Verse 13 concludes by contrasting the last things (i.e. the hereafter) with the first things (i.e. life on this earth) as being subject to God. There is no dualism; the beginning and the end belong to God; the right hand side as well as the left hand side are in his power.

We have seen that there is not only an iconic relationship between form and content in both the source text and target text but also *between* the source text and the target text. Within the source text itself, the parallel formatting of verses highlights the antithetical sentiments expressed in them. Furthermore, semantic opposites within the verses are iconically represented by contrastive verbal forms

(Perfect and Imperfect, verses 1–2) and by lexical verbal roots which contrast only by one to three consonants (verses 5 and 8, 6 and 9, 7 and 10). Within the target text itself, as well as *between* the source text and the target text, there are the same kinds of iconic relations, though to a lesser degree because the contrasts and similarities of lexical verbal roots cannot be conveyed in English, for example the perfect and imperfect, without disturbing the symmetry. Therefore, this example demonstrates that the relationship between source text and translation could only be an instance of weak iconicity. In the next section it will be shown that the predominant relation between the source text and target text can also be indexical.

4.2 Orality in Sesotho Bible translation: A case of contiguity or cause and effect

The nature of the translation of the *Contemporary English Version* (CEV) was the impetus for a proposal for the design of a new Sesotho Bible. The CEV clearly positions itself within the mainstream of modern linguistics with its assertion of the primacy of the spoken over the written word (Newman 1996). The ‘welcome’ page of the CEV (1995) “described it as a ‘user-friendly’ and ‘mission-driven’ translation that can be ‘read aloud’ without stumbling, ‘heard’ without misunderstanding, and ‘listened to’ with enjoyment and appreciation, because the style is lucid and lyrical”. Poetic sections were expected not only to sound good, but also to look good. Poetic lines were carefully measured to assist oral reading and to avoid awkwardly divided phrases and words, which clumsily spill over into the next line. The selection of stylistic effects of the target text points to the content of the source text.

“Did you ever tell the sun to rise?
 And did it obey?
 Did it take hold of the earth
 and shake out the wicked
 like dust from a rug?
 Early dawn outlines the hills
 like stitches on clothing
 or sketches on clay.
 But its light is too much
 for those who are evil,
 and their power is broken.” (Job 38:14–15).

The purpose of the proposed Sesotho Bible translation is to suggest a means of translating the Bible to provide for the needs of a community comprised largely of members who are not able to read written texts. The Sesotho community uses either the 1909 translation (with various revisions) or the 1989 translation of the Sesotho Bible. The former is the product of the word for word approach to translation. The

primary concern of the latter was meaning and readability. Both translations lean heavily on the reader's ability to understand a written text. In view of the fact that the Sesotho religious community consists preponderantly of members not able to read written texts, another vehicle for the transfer of religious thought in Bible translation was suggested. The issue of translation strategy as applicable to the particular audiences in question is clearly pivotal. Consequently, a rhythmical and sonorous translation is required, which is clearly understandable aurally.

Communication in the first-century Mediterranean world was predominantly oral. In the twentieth century, scholars acquired a tremendous amount of knowledge about oral societies in both the ancient and contemporary worlds, which has been applied to biblical studies over the last few decades. Ong (1982) mentions nine qualities of oral culture. Ong characterizes orally expressed thought and expression as opposed to literate thought and expression as being:

- a. additive rather than subordinative — A proclivity towards simple additive principal clauses rather than subordinate clauses. For example, the first verses of Genesis: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth. And the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved over the waters. And God said: Be light made. And light was made."
- b. aggregative rather than analytic — A tendency to formulas, clichés and epithets, such as the 'beautiful princess', the 'sturdy oak', 'clever Odysseus', and 'wise Nestor', as aids to oral expression and memory. A more analytic process is only facilitated with writing — and then clichés become odious and epithets melodramatic.
- c. redundant or 'copious' — Without the permanence of writing to allow re-reading or referral when necessary, oral expression repeats and re-states in order to reinforce and ensure that the hearer retains his/her perspective and follows the drift of the argument. This *copia* as the Greek rhetoricians used to call it, also assists the orator by allowing him/her to restate while considering the next stage in the argument.
- d. conservative or traditionalist — As orally expressed, thought requires effort for preservation (memorising and subsequent verbal performance) and it tends to be seen as precious, together with those who are the custodians of wisdom — this discourages intellectual experimentation and speculation. Oral traditions evolve but do not show radical shifts in thinking.
- e. close to the human life experiences — Deprived of the distance from living experience rendered possible by written and printed expression, oral expressions tend to revolve around the living human world. For instance, the *Iliad's* famous catalogue of ships is not a list, but a statement containing the names of

- the Greek leaders involved in the siege. Furthermore, there are no oral instruction manuals — skills are acquired by joining a skilled orator as his apprentice.
- f. agonistically toned — Oral expression tends to situate knowledge in a context of heightened struggle rather than in an abstract, separate realm.
 - g. empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced — For an oral culture, learning or knowledge means achieving close, empathetic, communal identification with the familiar; this contrasts with the disengaged, objective knowledge of literate culture.
 - h. homeostatic — Oral societies live in the present, sloughing off or evolving memories that no longer have immediate relevance, unlike literate cultures with their dictionaries, encyclopaedias and archives.
 - i. situational rather than abstract — Oral cultures tend to use concepts in situationally concrete rather than abstract senses. For example, if oral thinkers are given four concepts such as ‘hammer’, ‘saw’, ‘log’ and ‘hatchet’, they will be inclined to group them together in terms of situations (with the hammer the odd one out), whereas literate thinkers will tend to group them in terms of categories such as tools (with the log the odd one out). Moreover, logical arguments and inferences have scant relevance in oral thinking. For instance, stating that where there is snow the bears are white, and then asking what colour are the bears in a place that always has snow might evoke the answer: “I don’t know. I’ve only seen a black bear.”

All these qualities contribute to saliency, and enhance memorability of an utterance and are useful to those trying to memorize a poem or narrative. Whereas people from a literate society can always hark back to a written text, those from an oral society must be able to process and memorize bits of spoken text. Therefore, utterances, which fit the above description of oral culture, would tend to leave a strong impression on the hearer and facilitate recollection.

In the next section the application of some of the features of orality on Bible translation will be illustrated. Simplification and explicitation will be the main overall translation strategies suggested for such a translation.

Table 4. Existing translations of Job 38:12–15

Sesotho 1909	Sesotho 1989
1(a) <i>Haesale o phela, na o se o kile wa laela meso ho hlaha, kapa o laetse mafube moo a tlang ho hlaha teng?</i>	1(b) <i>Haesale o tswalwa na o kile wa laolela meso dinako, wa laela mafube ho hlaha ka nako ya ona?</i>

Since you lived, did you ever order the morning to be, or where the dawn is supposed to rise?	Since you were born, did you ever order the times in which the morning will come to pass, the time when the dawn will rise?
Sesotho 1909	Sesotho 1989
2(a) <i>Hore a tshware dipheletso tsa lefatshe, a tle a qhalanye ba bolotsana pela ona?</i>	2(b) <i>Hore pheletso tsa lefatshe a di aparele, ba kgopo ba be ba phasapahase?</i>
that it holds the ends of the earth, and shakes the wicked out of it?	that it shines/covers all the ends of the earth, so that the wicked are scattered?
Sesotho 1909	Sesotho 1989
3(a) <i>Ke hona moo lefatshe fetohang sebopelo, jwaloka letsopa ha le bopjwa, mme dintho kaofela di hlahang ho le apesa</i>	3(b) <i>Jwaloka mmopo wa tempe sa tiiso o sala letsopeng, sedi le bonahatsa bophelo ba lefatshe hantle, le di bonahatse sa mokgabiso seaparong.</i>
it is there that the earth will change its shape, like clay under the seal; and its features will stand out like those of a garment.	Like the seal that remains on clay, life of the earth is clearly shown by the light which shines like the decoration on a gar- ment.
Sesotho 1909	Sesotho 1989
4(a) <i>Teng lesedi la ba bolotsanale tla tloswa ho bona, mme letsoho le otlolohileng lea robeha.</i>	4(b) <i>Bakgopo ba ke ke ba bona lesedi, matla a bona a tla fediswa.</i>
there, the wicked will be deprived of their light, then the spreading arm will be broken	The wicked will never see their light, their strength will be terminated.

Table 5. The proposed oral translation of Job 38:12–15 is as follows:

5 <i>Na o se o kile wa laela letsatsi ho tjhaba</i>	Did you ever order the sun to rise
6 <i>Hore kganya e be teng lefatsheng lohle,</i>	that there may be light over the whole earth,
7 <i>Mme ba bolotsana ba be ba bonahale</i>	So that the wicked ones are seen
8 <i>jwaloka mmopo wa tempe sa tiiso o sallang letsopeng le bopilweng,</i>	like the stamp of a seal on pottery,
9 <i>mme e ka mokgabiso o motle seaparong?</i>	like a beautiful decoration on a garment?
10 <i>Bakgopo ba ke ke ba bona lesedi, mme matla a bona a atla fela.</i>	The wicked ones will not see the light, and their strength will end.

The 1909 and 1989 versions translate the prepositional phrase of the Biblical Hebrew source text *mymyk* — ‘from your days’ as embedded sentences either as *haesale o phela* ‘since you lived’ in 1(a) or as *haesale o tswalwa* ‘since you were born’ in 1(b). These translations do not have the appropriate rhythm and sound when

heard, because they are too long to be comprehended or memorized by the prospective audience. It is translated in 5 to form part of the main clause as an adverb: *Na o se o kile wa laela letsatsi ho tjhaba* 'Did you ever order the sun to rise'.

The phrases *meso ho hlahlala* 'morning to be' in 1(a) and *mafube ho hlahlala* 'dawn to become' in 1(b) share the same meaning with their parallel phrases — namely daybreak. In this case deletion of the parallel phrases makes the translation easier to understand in oral communication.

The phrases *tshwara* 'take/hold' and *qhalanya* 'shake' in 2(a) personify dawn and are not specific to Sesotho usage in this context. This usage becomes complex and sounds strange to the prospective audience. Therefore these phrases have been replaced with more culturally specific items in Sesotho usage, namely *kganya e be teng* 'there may be light' in 6 and *ba* 'be seen' in 7.

At the beginning of sentences 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the proposed translation there is a retention or an addition of additives, namely *hore* 'so that' and *mme* 'and' etc. They create cohesion. The 1909 translation *Ke hona moo lefatshe fetohang sebopeho, jwaloka letsopa ha le bopjwa* 'it is there that the earth will change its shape like clay under the seal' in 3(a), suggests a hidden meaning of the effect when the seal is applied, which makes this translation strange and complex for oral communication. Therefore to overcome this problem of misunderstanding, explicitation is suggested in the translation in 8 namely by the addition of *tempe* ('stamp') to the phrase *to tiiso* ('seal') to read *tempe sa tiiso* ('stamp of a seal'). This creates a more understandable translation *Mme ba bolotsana ba be ba bonahale, jwaloka mmopo wa tempe sa tiiso o sallang letsopeng le bopilweng* 'so that the wicked ones are seen like the stamp of a seal on pottery'. The adjective *motle* 'beautiful' in 9 has also been added as more expressive terms. All these additions are in line with the aggregative feature of oral communication.

The sentence *teng sedi la ba bolotsana le tla tloswa ho bona* 'there, the wicked will be deprived of their light' (1909) in 4(a) is not easy to process in oral communication due to the strangeness caused by an introductory word *teng* 'there'. By deleting *teng* 'there' the translation is simplified to read *Bakgopo ba ke ke ba bona lesedi* 'The wicked ones will not see the light' in 10.

The complex and difficult phrase *letsoho le otlohohileng lea robeha* 'then the spreading arm will be broken' in 4(a) has been replaced by a more specific item in Sesotho *matla a bona a atla fela* 'and their strength will end' (10).

The oral features in the target text point to the content of the source text (i.e. the oral text only 'points' and does not try to present similarity of content) and therefore the relationship between source and target texts is indexical. In the next section evidence will be provided of a symbolic relationship between source and target text.

4.3 *Das neue Testament*: Symbolic relation

In *Das neue Testament*, Berger and Nord (1999), present an alien culture in a way that allows readers from a culture remote in time and space to understand and respect its otherness. Nord (2001: 109; 2004) illustrates how the lack of cultural knowledge lessens the appellative function of a passage, as in the following description of the New Jerusalem. The source text readers knew the colours of the precious stones mentioned, whereas this is not the case of the target text readers. For that reason the colours of the stones are added. The *Today's English Version* (TEV) treats the source text like a technical description.

Revelation 21:18–21

TEV

The wall was made of jasper and the city itself was made of pure gold, as clear as glass. The foundation-stones of the city wall were adorned with all kinds of precious stones. The first foundation-stone was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh yellow quartz, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chalcedony, the twelve pearls; each gate was made from a single pearl. The street of the city was of pure gold, transparent as glass.

Das neue Testament (translated into English)

The city wall is made of jasper, and the city itself of gold that is as pure as glass. The foundations of the city wall are of great beauty, for they are built out of precious stones in many different colours. The first foundation-stone is green jasper, the second blue sapphire, the third red agate, the fourth light green emerald, the fifth reddish brown onyx, the sixth yellowish red carnelian, the seventh yellow-gold quartz, the eighth beryl as green as the sea, the ninth shining yellow topaz, the tenth chaledony, shimmering green-golden, the eleventh deep red turquoise, the twelfth purple amethyst. The twelve gates are twelve pearls; each gate is made from a single pearl. The main street of the city is of gold as pure as glass.

Unlike the iconic and indexical relations, where there is a natural relation between source and target text, a symbolic relation involves a conventional or arbitrary pairing of form and meaning. The appellative function of the source text is established by the addition of conventional symbols (words for colour) in the target text.

5. Conclusion

Iconic is the type of dominant but weak relation that best describes the character of translation as evidenced in the Koran translation. It is predominant in the sense that the translation resembles the source text. However, it is only weakly iconic in

that the resemblance does not obstruct the capacity for inventiveness, creativity and autonomy with respect to the source text. A translation may follow the source text word by word, but it may also recreate the source text to the point that the translation has value in and of itself. A literary translation, whether in prose or in poetry, may reach high levels of aesthetic value, but it may lose in adequacy/resemblance to the source text. The translator's interpretation may also be proportional to the indexical character of the translation as in the case of the Sesotho Bible translation. In this case the translation is connected to the content of the source text by a relation of contiguity. The relation between the source text and the translation can be symbolic or conventional as is the case in *Das neue Testament*. The transition from one language to another implies transferral of the same meaning into different signifiers, i.e. a reciprocal responsive understanding/comprehension of the source text. None of the three types of relations exists without the other two, which are also present even if to a minimal degree.

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