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Phonaesthetic Phonological Iconicity in Literary Analysis Illustrated by Angela Carter's "The Bloody Chamber"[1]

The article offers a phonosemantic analysis of Angela Carter's "The Bloody Chamber." The phonosemantic investigation has been based on the corpus of nineteen relevant sound-related descriptions of the sea. Although most excerpts identified contain aural metaphors and are not phonologically iconic *per se*, there seem to exist at least three fragments which are particularly interesting from a phonosemantic point of view. Most notably, phonaesthemes /gl/, /l/, /r/ have been found to carry substantial meaning contributing to the overall interpretation of the story in question. Accounting for the inevitable subjectivity concerning iconicity, and in this case phonological iconicity, a few theories are presented in order to support the author's reading of each phonaestheme's contextual significance. The paper briefly reviews the chronological development of the field of phonosemantics and then combines the aural images theory (proposed by Richard Rhodes) with the "aural semiotic process" theory (the term coined by the author). Each analysis is further supplemented with scholarly views on respective phonaesthemes. On the whole, the paper does not aim to polemicize with the well-established definition of a phoneme and its generally accepted arbitrariness. Nevertheless, it has been observed that a speculative phonosemantic analysis of a literary work may yield noteworthy results.

key words: Angela Carter, iconicity, phonaesthemes, phonosemantics, "The Bloody Chamber"

> *"The sound must seem an echo to the sense."*
> *Alexander Pope (30)*

Introduction

Sound symbolism, henceforth more accurately referred to as phonosemantics, seems to be a controversial, or at least troublesome, approach to studying literary phenomena. More specifically, the analyses of works abundant with references to sounds/music yield ambiguous results since, on the one hand, it is possible to unfold intricate patterns governing the author's deployment of specific phonemes and ascribe intratextual semantics to these units, but on the other, it may appear as a lay reasoning of non-academic value. Surely, treating phonosemantics as a valid tool for any kind of analysis may seem slightly far-fetched since it postulates that phonemes are inherently pregnant with meaning while ignoring their primary function of acting as *meaningless* minimal units capable of forming morphemes/lexemes. This crude definition of a

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[1] I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Grzegorz Szpila for his invaluable help and insightful remarks regarding each version of this paper. Also, I would like to thank Dr Mateusz Urban for his comments concerning the non-rhotic interpretation. Usual disclaimers apply.

phoneme, accepted by most influential linguists, is the opposite of phonosemantics. Namely, the core postulates once proposed by the Prague Linguistic Circle do not present phonemes as meaningful in themselves, therefore the previously hypothesized notion of regarding phonemes as being less arbitrary than commonly agreed upon undoubtedly needs further clarification.

Paradoxically, by striving to strip phonemes of their arbitrariness[2] (cf. Nöth "Semiotic Foundations" 17), phonosemantics seems to be largely arbitrary itself. Nonetheless, it has become a fairly well-established branch of linguistics (see *Sound Symbolism* for interdisciplinary papers or Fischer for a concise theoretical introduction) investigated by such notable scholars as Roman Jakobson (viz. *Six Lectures,* cf. Jakobson's theory of iconicity in De Cuypere 83-91; Nöth "Iconicity") or Leonard Bloomfield (viz. "Semasiological Differentiation").[3] The hugely controversial nature of phonosemantics dates back to Plato's *Cratylus* (esp. De Cuypere 7-30 *et passim*, 85-87 for Jakobson's interpretation of the Cratylus vs. Hermogenes debate, 109-113; cf. Magnus 186-87), an invaluable source of the early linguistic debate on naturalism vs. conventionalism, in which Socrates argues in favour of "pre-phonosemantics":

> [a]ll names, Socrates claims, are ultimately derived from primary, or atomic, names which are composed of phonemes that imitate a certain characteristic or property. These sound-imitations of properties are then combined in various ways into names, which imitate the complex objects that combine the properties so imitated. (Smith 128)

Ostensibly, the scholarly debate has been prevalent throughout the centuries. For instance, in 1653, the mathematician John Wallis published his *Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae* containing a vast compilation of phonaesthemes (Magnus 14). Shortly afterwards, Wallis's hypothesis was refuted by John Locke in his *An Essay on Human Understanding* (1689), the main argument being that

> [w]ords . . . come to be made use of by Men, as the Signs of their Ideas; not by any natural connexion, that there is between particular articulate Sounds and certain Ideas, for then there would be but one language amongst all Men[.] (qtd. in Magnus 14)

As opposed to "the solid empirical base" (ibid. 18) of phonosemantic literature in the 20th century, the iconicity-related works of Wilhelm von Humboldt and Maurice Bloomfield "[gave] a much better intuitive feel for the fundamental phonosemantic concepts" (ibid.). While studies in phonological iconicity are, especially nowadays, subject to many debates, academics exploring this field seem to be more inclined towards supporting their results with heuristic evidence than they used to be, say, a century ago.

This brief theoretical exposition of the field of phonosemantics serves as a basis for presenting how the analysis of phonaesthemes[4] in literary works may contribute to obtaining an enriched interpretation of a given text. However, since phonosemantics is mostly perceived as an

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[2] "True onomatopoeia," defined as: "fairly direct mapping between the acoustic features of the sound itself and the phonological features of the word that labels the sound" (Rhodes 279), is not dealt with in this paper (cf. Elleström 91 for a reason that "the iconic motivation between the sound sequence . . . and the internal relations" of onomatopoeic words may be an instance of weak diagrammatic iconicity).

[3] For a comprehensive list of literature on phonosemantics see Magnus 194-204.

[4] The term was coined by John R. Firth in 1930. Hereby defined as: "form-meaning pairings that crucially are better attested in the lexicon of a language than would be predicted, all other things being equal" (Bergen 293). Cf. De Cuypere's definition: "[a] phonaestheme is a submorphemic sound cluster which is related to a certain meaning based on association with similar sound-meaning clusters in other words" (113). Cf. Sadowski's use of the term "synaesthetic sounds" (72).

impressionistic approach[5] in certain scholarly circles (and rightly so), I will attempt to escape the perils of performing a purely subjective analysis by supporting subsequent phonaesthetic investigations with quotations from various scholarly works, therefore leaving the discussion open to further inquiries and other interpretations. The general stance taken by the author is that phonosemantics *might* shed some light on interesting aspects of sounds described in literary works. Nonetheless, strong statements, such as Dwight L. Bolinger's "[t]he sign is not arbitrary" (52 *et passim*), ought to be backed up by enough empirical evidence in order to make the domain of iconicity (or, in this case its sub-discipline, phonosemantics) a serious contender for undermining linguistic axioms. In the same vein, the semiotic metaphor applied to phonemes (Karl Bühler's comparison of phonemes to postage stamps and seals, qtd. in Jakobson 66) also attempts to subvert the inherent emptiness of the linguistic sign without much scholarly persuasiveness. At this point, it seems appropriate to cite a brief passage from Ludovic De Cuypere which aptly highlights Saussure's view on onomatopoeia and also confirms the subjectivity of iconic investigations:

> according to Saussure similarity may sometimes be something which only the linguist – or, the language user *as* a linguist – observes, without it having any function in language. Of course, all iconicity starts in the eye (or better still, the ear) of the beholder, as iconicity necessarily depends on similarity which is recognised. (42; emphasis original)[6]

The most adamant proponents of phonosemantics would probably refute some of the skeptical remarks but these comments are meant to keep the overall analysis balanced and as scholarly as possible. Still, it is for the reader to decide whether or not the analyses below seem over-interpretative due to the practice of ascribing substantial meaning to minimal textual units. As Piotr Sadowski suggests: "sound symbolism is a kind of 'popular etymology' based on 'expressive' or 'impressive' phonetics, felt and *instinctively recognised* as valid by mass agreement within a given speech community" (70; emphasis added), therefore it does seem commonsensical to question the objectivity of phonosemantic analyses. Nevertheless, one ought not to disregard the intersubjectivity arising in the domain of phonosemantics.

In Angela Carter's "Bluebeard"-inspired story, "The Bloody Chamber," there is an abundance of music-related matters as well as those pertaining to the more general domain of sounds. A close-reading of the work in question, with the focus on form rather than content, has indicated that there are (at least) nineteen instances of metaphors/descriptions pertaining to the aural domain and not directly related to any particular musical compositions or composers.[7] To my mind, conveying mental entities by means of sounds is a linguistic echo of Hector Berlioz's musicological argument presenting music as an art *sui generis* (9). It also conjures up his notion of "des images musicales" (16) introduced while discussing programme music (as opposed to pure music, it is characterized by the aim to communicate extramusical contents, e.g., expressing literary works by using evocative sound patterns).

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[5] Earl R. Anderson defines phonaesthesia as "synaesthesia extended to the affective domain: certain phonological patterns are correlated with *emotions or subjective feelings*" (qtd. in Elleström 92; emphasis added; cf. Hinton, Nichols and Ohala *passim*).

[6] However, De Cuypere changes his view after having revisited Peirce's theory in detail: "[i]n contrast to present-day opponents of iconicity, I do not conclude from this that iconicity is merely in the eye of the beholder. I contend that language users may creatively deploy or *create* an iconic ground to iconically motivate an utterance or text." (78; emphasis original, cf. 79-81; Fischer and Nänny *passim;* White)

[7] For a discussion on Carter's deployment of references or allusions to classical music (viz. Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, Debussy, Bach), see Manley *passim*. The role of classical music in Carter's story is not the focus of the present paper.

In the abovementioned corpus encompassing the nineteen metaphors/descriptions, three most notable aural images have been extracted. The selection was motivated by their significance concerning the descriptions of the sea in "The Bloody Chamber." These three phonosemantic analyses will then serve as a basis for showing the phonological iconicity of the sea in Carter's story. The remaining fragments have been divided into two sub-categories: non-phonaesthetic descriptions of the sea and examples of phonaesthemes for further analyses.[8] First, the aural images are presented and analyzed with an aim to prove/disprove their phonaesthetic potential and this is followed by the scrutiny of obtained results. The latter part of the paper attempts to show that form does not necessarily shape content (as opposed to what a strict phonosemantic hypothesis would have us believe).

The claim put forth in this paper is that there do exist a few sound-related descriptions in "The Bloody Chamber" which display a certain phonaesthetic degree and also, that the depictions of the sea, albeit not always "phonologically meaningful," constitute a relevant element in the overall interpretation of Angela Carter's complex story. This particular work has been chosen due to its potential for aptly illustrating iconic contents: "the tale itself is unexpectedly told by the young bride in a *minutely descriptive, hauntingly visual* and soul-searching way" (Bacchilega 77; emphasis added). Also, Carter summarized her life in Japan as "[a]n involuntary apprenticeship of signs" (qtd. in Bacchilega 84), therefore one may speculate that her embrace of Japanese culture amplified her potential for constructing the plot using iconic concepts.

The theoretical frameworks

Richard Rhodes maintains that "aural images" are image schemata as they represent the mental entities labelled by specific phonaesthemes[9] (Rhodes *passim*; cf. his definition concerning assonance 277). Herein, his theory is applied to classify the instances of phrases pertaining to the aural domain (both the phonaesthetic and non-phonaesthetic) extant in "The Bloody Chamber." For example, "the murmuring of the waves" (27) is categorized as a phonaesthetic aural image (due to the presence of the phonaestheme /r/[10]), but "the sound of the sea" is treated here as the non-phonaesthetic aural image, since it lacks any potential meaning-bearing phonemes, i.e., the lexeme *sound* explicitly refers to the aural domain without conveying any extralinguistic contents.

Furthermore, from the semiotic standpoint, both the phonaesthetic and non-phonaesthetic elements are hereby understood as those constituting "aural semiotic processes," i.e., aural stimuli which become "signs for the objects . . . by means of an interpretant [in a Peircean sense]" (De Cuypere 59). For the purposes of this study, the term "aural semiotic process" has been coined by adapting De Cuypere's nomenclature "visual semiotic process" (58-59). Also, it ought to be mentioned that in the present paper phonaesthemes in literature are regarded as beta mode stimuli (Umberto Eco's distinction), i.e., "mode in which, in order to perceive the expression plane of sign functions, it is necessary first to presume that we are in fact dealing with expressions, and the supposition that they are indeed expressions orients our perception" (Eco qtd. in De Cuypere 73). Another useful theoretical distinction is offered by Lars Elleström. By

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[8] See Appendix for a comprehensive list of excerpts containing all the categories. The two sub-categories are given as potential material for future studies and are not addressed in the paper. Instead, they present the story's dense saturation with music-related images.

[9] Rhodes's disclaimer: these image schemata are not images in the Peircean sense (277).

[10] Highlighting /r/ as a phonaestheme is based on Rhodes's and Magnus's studies.

closely examining the table and taking Peircean postulates into consideration, the formal characteristics of the abovementioned aural images becomes clear:

TYPE OF 'HYPOICON'→	Metaphor
ONTOLOGY OF THE SIGN↓	A *parallel* icon; the sign and the object are related by means of single common traits.
Visual material signs The 'representamen' is a subject perceptible, visual object or occurrence; it is basically *visual form*.	**Visual form miming auditory form** Details in both figurative and non-figurative visual art and literature having latent similarities with auditory phenomena
Auditory material signs The 'representamen' is a perceptible, auditory phenomenon; it is basically *auditory form*.	**Auditory form miming visual form** Certain vowel sounds standing for proximity/distance or small/large size; low notes miming obscurity
	Auditory form miming meaning Tone qualities miming emotions; phonaesthesia

Tab 1. Visual form vs. auditory form (extract from Elleström's table 84 f.; emphasis original).

The analyses in the next section are solely concerned with phonaesthetic phonological iconicity.[11] The discussion will encompass the following phonaesthemes:
- /gl/ (initial position)
- /l/ (initial and medial position)
- /r/ (initial and medial position)[12]

/gl/

The first two phonaesthemes (/gl/ and /l/) have been identified in the following quotation:

> His library seemed the source of his habitual odour of Russian leather. Row upon row of calf-bound volumes, brown and olive, with gilt lettering on their spines, the octavo in brilliant scarlet morocco. A deep-buttoned leather sofa to recline on. A lectern, carved like a spread eagle, that held open upon it an edition of Huysman's *Là-bas*, from some over-exquisite private press; it had been bound like a missal, in brass, with gems of coloured glass. The rugs on the floor, deep, pulsing blues of heaven and red of the heart's dearest blood, came from Isfahan and Bokhara; the dark panelling gleamed; there was the lulling music of the sea and a fire of apple logs. (16; emphasis added)

Curiously, the polyphonemic phonaestheme /gl/ is, to the best of my knowledge, one of the most oft-cited cases in literature with the verb *to gleam* given as an example (see especially Miller 168 and Sadowski; cf. Bergen 290, 308; Bloomfield 262; Magnus 27; 43f.; Rhodes and Lawler 22;

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[11] Keiko Masuda's classification employed by De Cuypere 107 ff. Cf. De Cuypere's remark: "[t]he decision to treat phoaesthemes as a subtype of phonological iconicity is somewhat arbitrary. Phonaesthetic iconicity is in essence related to iconicity in the lexicon. *Accordingly, it could also be analyzed as a subtype of morphological iconicity*" (113; emphasis added).

[12] Cf. Gerard Genette's remark regarding the iconicity of English initial consonant clusters as quoted in De Cuypere 87. In this paper initial, medial, and final positions refer to consonant clusters.

Sadowski *passim*; Waugh 64). Despite being semantically unrelated to the lexeme *sea*, it does offer a valuable insight into the overall atmosphere permeating the scene. Additionally, it seems to strengthen the effect of the sea's tranquility, therefore its inclusion here is quite justifiable. Due to its popularity in various scholarly sources, it seems appropriate to offer a few quotations regarding the phonosemantic view on *to gleam*. Sadowski and Magnus propose that:

> the combination of an abrupt beginning with a light, smooth movement, present in the phonetic features of *gl-* cluster, is ideally suited as a sound-symbolic, or analogical representation of, for example, *immaterial light shining away from its source*. (Sadowski 75; emphasis added)

> [i]n the case of light . . . the sounds in . . . "gleam" do not relate synesthetically to the **referent** associated with the Natural Class "light," but to what the light is **like** – to the various specific inflections of light implied by [this word]. (Magnus 177; emphasis original)

The above remark may be useful in the analysis since they emphasize the visual aspect of light, i.e., it makes the analyst wonder what kind of light is being described. In the story, it might be a dimmed light rendering the setting quite mysterious and opaque. Taking the story's context into consideration, one can easily notice that this seemingly tranquil image is, in fact, the virgin's awaiting her first sexual intercourse with the newly-married husband (who turns out to be a serial wife-killer). The following fragment aptly identifies the particular kind of light accompanying the girl's anxiety: "what should I do now, how shall I pass the long, sea-lit hours until my husband beds me?" (16; emphasis added; cf. esp. Sadowski's comment above). To boot: "it is observed that /gl/ is frequently associated with reflected light" (Magnus 27).

Another phonosemantic postulate concerning *to gleam* (albeit not regarding /gl/) is that "[t]he labials quite generally appear in words concerning beginnings, and the dentals quite generally occur in words concerning linearity and ongoing processes" (Magnus 44, cf. her classification of /g/ and /l/ 60, 64, respectively). Therefore, *to gleam*, containing the bilabial nasal /m/, would somehow signal a beginning. To my mind, the above claim cannot be successfully employed in the analysis, as it would seem too far-fetched a statement to infer that the presence of labials (form) influences the plot (content). The aim of presenting this rather controversial opinion was merely to offer an alternative view and introduce an instance of a "hard" phonosemantic analysis which appears to be strikingly groundless.

A careful reader will observe that the relevant, however brief, fragment (page 5) enumerating the husband's luxury items aims to stress the ostensible peacefulness permeating the scene, while concealing the real, horrific atmosphere behind the mellow-sounding vocabulary. Although phonosemantic analysis is not indispensable to arrive at the above conclusion, it does offer a multi-angled view on the matter and additional arguments backed by textual support.

/l/

The single-phoneme phonaestheme /l/ identified in the present participle *lulling* ("the lulling music of the sea") follows the previously discussed consonant cluster /gl/. As regards the literary analysis, this phonaesthetic description serves more as a complement to the above summary rather than a separate investigation. In order to avoid ascribing any extralinguistic qualities to the phoneme /l/ by the author, a few concise quotations from scholarly works are offered instead. Controversially, Magnus postulates that "[t]he phoneme /l/ conveys elements of linearity, light, laziness and loving" (93). Supposedly, her statement is supported by the classification of lexemes with the phoneme /l/ in the initial position (cf. the list of qualities

expressed by /l/ 64; for her categorization of other consonantal phonaesthemes consult 59-65). According to Magnus, /l/ in the initial position is supposed to evoke "general calming" and "discontinuation" in the final position (118).[13] While the former postulate neatly fits the literary analysis, the latter's significance for the discussion is dubious. Magnus further elaborates on this notion: "[i]f the liquid is /l/, [the word] is passive and conforms to the environment"; "[v]ery informally it can be helpful . . . [to think of] the effect of /l/ as similar to that of water" (119, cf. ibid. for the additional properties of /l/ depending on its position in a word).

In the same vein, Sadowski describes /l/ as "'tame,' 'peaceful.' 'smooth,' 'light-weight,' 'clear', 'weak'" (72) and possessing the "light, smooth, buoyant quality" (75), which confirms the above hypotheses regarding the extralinguistic features of the phonaestheme in question. Employing these ideas in the analysis of "The Bloody Chamber," one arrives at the obvious conclusion that the entire scene seems to have been meticulously "designed" to evoke the impression of serenity which does not correspond to the actual psychological state of the girl.

/r/[14]

The final excerpt analyzed in this paper describes the bride's decision to disobey her husband and enter the forbidden chamber during his absence. Unaware of the dire consequences, she decides to break the only rule imposed on her and explore the mysterious room. Her behaviour is caused not only by sheer curiosity, boredom, lack of fear and "intimation of dread" (27), but also by the profound desire to find out about her husband's real nature. Ultimately, she discovers the horrific truth: "having opened the door to his bloody chamber, she finally realizes that death, more than sex, is the ritual over which he wishes to preside and for which she too apparently is fated" (Bacchilega 77). In the excerpt describing the moments preceding the terrifying discovery of the mutilated bodies of the husband's previous wives, the atmosphere is not as serene as in the fragments cited above. Instead, it is disturbingly uncanny:

> it was imperative that I should find him, should know him; and I was too deluded by his apparent taste for me to think my disobedience might truly offend him. I took the forbidden key from the heap and left the others flying there. It was now very late and the castle was adrift, as far as it could go from the land, in the middle of the silent ocean where, at my orders, it floated, like a garland of light. And all silent, all still, but for the **murmuring**[15] of the waves. (27; emphasis added)

In what follows, several scholarly views on /r/ are offered, which will then be analyzed in the wider context of the story. For instance, Jakobson presents Edgar Allan Poe's reflection on /r/ (and its significance in "The Raven") in the following words: "Poe insists on including the final *r* which is, he says, 'the most producible consonant.' It is able to project us into the future, or even into eternity" (1). While Poe's impression is, undoubtedly, very poetic and highly abstract, it does

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[13] Hans Marchand also assumes that "/l/ at the end of a word symbolizes prolongation, continuation" (qtd. in Magnus 27).

[14] An important note has to be made before proceeding, viz. the analysis of /r/ largely depends on whether one adopts a rhotic or non-rhotic interpretation. In this section, I will include a reading based on rhotic dialect for the sake of following a standard phonosemantic analysis of /r/. However, it is indispensable to mention that a non-rhotic interpretation would yield dramatically different results, i.e., the entire set of features ascribed to the phonaestheme in question would seem completely invalid, therefore undermining the phonosemantic theory in this case. If one takes into account the role of the author, the non-rhotic analysis might prevail since Carter spoke with a non-rhotic British dialect (the inference has been made on the basis of the interviews in "Angela Carter's Curious Room").

[15] Cf. the phonaesthetic role of *murmuring* in Lord Tennyson's "The Princess" (qtd. in De Cuypere 103).

offer an insight into the potentially iconic value of /r/ (here, it would be applicable to the infinitive form, *to murmur*). Magnus suggests that: "/r/ occurs proportionally more frequently than any other consonant in words associated with 'intensity' in every natural semantic domain" (43). While this interpretation of /r/ (if any) may seem rather plausible contextually, her other claim that "[t]he phoneme /r/ quite generally has a 'tearing' or 'ripping' quality. It frequently occurs in words in which the integrity of form is violated" (43) does not, to my mind, fit the cogent interpretation of the story's excerpt. More generally, Magnus argues that /r/ expresses notions contrary to those of /l/ (118-19; cf. above). Similarly, Sadowski writes that "the liquid /r/ [is] described in sound-symbolic experiments as 'rough,' 'strong,' 'heavy,' 'bitter' etc." (72).

In this case, /r/ (found in the initial and medial position in *murmuring*) may subtly mirror the girl's transformation from being a passive participant to an active, disobedient person. Of course, such an analysis is only a speculation, not a definite statement. Interestingly, Richard Rhodes, while discussing the aural image *murmur* in his seminal essay "Aural Images," offers a simple, yet very functional, self-explanatory dichotomy concerning this example, i.e., the image may either be "simple" or "transferred." More importantly, he proposes the following example labelled a "transferred" aural image of *murmur*: "the murmur of the waves" (278). As regards its meaning in the present analysis, the "transferred" aspect of the aural image in question, and Rhodes's example, confirm the stylistic sophistication of this literary unit. Interestingly, the proximity of *murmuring* to the words *orders* and *garland*, both containing /r/, may produce an amplified effect in terms of the alleged qualities conveyed by this phonaestheme. Even though the above quotations seem to support the "active" qualities of the phonaestheme /r/, one ought to be careful not to rely solely on such claims and approach literary investigations from different angles, and take other possibilities into consideration.

Conclusions

This section is primarily concerned with identifying the major limitations of such an approach and speculating about possible solutions, summarizing the obtained results, and finally, suggesting what may be scrutinized in future studies focusing on phonosemantics in literature (cf. esp. Colapietro 41-42. for the role of the reader in "performing" the text). The above interpretations have been intended to demonstrate the experimental application of phonosemantics in literary studies. The problematic issue of subjectivity needs to be addressed again in order to re-examine the validity of the phonaesthetic analyses. For instance, Linda R. Waugh offers a thought-provoking analogy:

> [t]he phonetic elements of a language are like the keys of a piano. They have been played so often and in so many combinations that even a random cord, struck by an object accidentally falling on them, will have some vague semblance of meaning. (56)

Without delving too far into aesthetics – is a scholarly analysis of randomly composed music intellectual or is it simply sophistical reasoning? Perhaps phonosemantic investigations are, indeed, only impressionistic collages depicting random phonemes as deeply meaningful. Undoubtedly, this is one of the strongest arguments against phonological iconicity – a field of study perceived as a rather radical and controversial one. The main limitation of this study was the inevitable inclusion of subjective opinions –literary interpretation is highly individualistic itself but using phonosemantics as an analytical tool doubles the chances of arriving at subjective conclusions.

However, in order to solve this conundrum, an uncomplicated (albeit partial) solution may be offered, viz. investigating phonemes as units which are iconic to a certain degree. Of course, this suggestion requires an additional clarification, i.e., how shall one classify phonemes by using an artificial (and still subjective) measure? A few scholars have already proposed the above method: for instance, Waugh postulates that "[l]exical iconicity is a matter of degrees: a given lexical item (or subparts of that lexical item) may be more or less iconic" (56) and also notes that:

> [f]or a majority of the English lexicon, there are cues for the meaning of a word in the specific sounds used to form that word. But these cues are only partial ones, since the nature of lexical meaning – in particular the tendency toward polysemy within and across lexemes – is a major constraint on diagrammatic/isomorphic iconicity. (67; emphasis added)

Andreas Fischer expresses a strikingly similar view: "[i]conicity, in brief, is a matter of degree, and all cases of phonological iconicity are also conventional to some extent" (125).[16] On the basis of the above quotations, it may be inferred that phonological iconicity *may* be deemed valid to a limited degree.

Finally, it could be carefully stated that the potential significance of phonosemantics in literary analysis ought not to be overlooked as it highlights certain interesting patterns in prose/poetry. Is seems rather logical that phonosemantic techniques would be employed more often in poems than other literary forms (cf. Miller 169-71). Nevertheless, by extracting very brief fragments (as seen in the above analyses), certain minor details may suddenly seem relevant in the overall interpretation. Winfred Nöth's opinion succinctly summarizes the discussed notion:

> [a]s far as literature is concerned, exophoric iconicity has been studied as a feature of literary texts or a characteristic literary device, but the much stronger thesis has also been put forward that iconicity is the very essence of literature. ("Semiotic Foundations" 22)

To summarize the discussion, it seems that a phonosemantic analysis, be it a linguistic or literary investigation, cannot be entirely objective and scholarly enough, viz. no theory, as elaborate as it may be, will ever provide enough incontestable evidence to solve the never-ending Hermogenes vs. Cratylus debate or, the more recent, Saussure's "the sign is arbitrary" vs. Bolinger's "the sign is not arbitrary." Nonetheless, phonological iconicity (and the notion of iconicity in general) does seem an immensely productive subject for further inquiries and challenging debates. Generally, phonological iconicity is stylistically predominant in poetry rather than prose due to the highly expressionistic nature of poetry and the focus on the form (cf. Ivan Fónagy even "correlates phonemes with metaphors" Magnus 26). Studies on iconicity in literature seem to confirm this hypothesis since the vast majority of papers deal with poetry, especially the works of e.e. cummings (see Anderson, Bernhart, Webster, cf. Alderson or Ljungberg for iconicity in prose).

As regards the experimental use of phonosemantic analysis in literary interpretations, herein illustrated by a concise scrutiny restricted to excerpts containing the descriptions of the sea in Carter's "The Bloody Chamber," it is still unclear whether results obtained from such investigations are considerably significant or plainly disappointing. The enigma of iconicity will undoubtedly continue to puzzle scholars but, at least for now, it is quite safe to end with Elleström's remark, thus leaving the final verdict to the reader: "[i]t is not very controversial to

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[16] Cf. Magnus: "When semantic domain S is associated disproportionately frequently with phoneme X, then people will be inclined to associate semantic domain S with phoneme X productively" (34).

say that there is a close connection between form and meaning, although the nature of the relation is far from self-evident" (73).

Appendix

- Excerpts containing the most phonosemantically notable structures (the phonaesthemes in bold):

1) "The rugs on the floor, deep pulsing blues of heaven and red of the heart's dearest blood, came from Isfahan and Bokhara; the dark panelling **gleamed**" (16).
2) "[T]here was the **lulling** music of the sea and a fire of apple logs" (16).[17]
3) "And all silent, all still, but for the **murmuring** of the waves" (27).

- Excerpts containing non-phonaesthemic descriptions/mentions of the sea (these quotations serve as indispensable complements of the phonosemantic analyses; important parts in bold):

1) "No room, no corridor that did not rustle with **the sound of the sea** and all the ceilings, the walls on which his ancestors in the stern regalia of rank lined up with their dark eyes and white faces, were stippled with refracted light from **waves which were always in motion**; that luminous, murmurous castle of which I was the châtelaine, I, the little music student . . ." (13).
2) "And, ah! his castle. The faery solitude of the place; with its turrets of misty blue, its courtyard, its spiked gate, his castle that lay **on the very bosom of the sea** with seabirds mewing about its attics . . . evanescent departures of **the ocean**, cut off by **the tide** from land for half a day...that castle, at home neither on the land nor **on the water**, a mysterious, **amphibious** place, contravening the materiality of both earth and **the waves**, with the melancholy of a **mermaiden** who perches on her rock and waits, endlessly, for a lover who had **drowned** far away, long ago. That lovely, sad, **sea-siren** of a place!" (13).
3) "In the turret suite he had given me for my very own, I could gaze out over **the tumultuous Atlantic** and imagine myself **the Queen of the Sea**" (14).
4) "[He] told me the agent from New York had called with such urgent business that he must leave as soon as **the tide** was low enough" (18).
5) "Outside our firelit privacy, I could hear **the sound of the tide** drawing back from the pebbles of the foreshore; it was nearly time for him to leave me" (21).
6) "[A]s though he wanted to turn his back on **the siren sea**" (25).
7) "I could no longer hear **the sound of the sea**" (27).
8) "My mind was in a tumult; schemes for flight jostled with one another...as soon as **the tide** receded from the causeway, I would make for the mainland" (30).
9) "My reason told me I had nothing to fear; **the tide** that would take him to the New World would let me out of the imprisonment of the castle" (30).
10) "His speech had the rhythms of the countryside, **the rhythms of the tides**" (32).
11) "'Hark!' said my friend suddenly. '**The sea has changed key**; it must be near morning, **the**

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[17] This example may also belong to the next category, however for the sake of clarity it has been omitted. Cf. Miller's remark concerning the examples in this category (and *roar* in the third group): "Apart from borrowed forms, such as Barbara, murmur (from Latin), or monosyllabics (roar [OE], lull [Ch.]), English echoic words generally observe the dissimilatory constraint against identical liquids; cf. grumble (*grumber, *glumble); rattle (*ratter, *lattle)" (156).

tide is going down" (33).

12) "The last little chambermaid had trotted along the causeway long ago and now **the tide**, fated as I, came tumbling in, **the crisp wavelets splashing**[18] on the old stones" (37).

13) "[S]ome internal urgency told her that she must reach me before **the incoming tide** sealed me away from her for ever" (40).

- Excerpts containing phonaesthemes for further analysis with references to sources discussing them at length:

1) "Above the syncopated **roar** of the train, I could hear his even, steady breathing" (8).[19]

2) "Then threw the keys in a **jingling** heap in my lap" (21).

3) "When I came back into the bedroom carrying the bunch of keys that **jangled** at every step like a curious musical instrument" (35).

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[18] A clear example of phonaesthesia and onomatopoeia. However, it is not as contextually relevant as the phonaesthemes selected for the present analysis.

[19] See esp. Rhodes 278: *roar* as a transferred aural image, cf. his example; see above for certain views on /r/.

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