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Fischer, O.C.M.; Nänny, M.

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Introduction

Iconicity as a Creative Force in Language Use

Olga Fischer

University of Amsterdam

Max Nänny

University of Zurich

Adam's one task in the Garden had been to invent language, to give each creature and thing its name. In that state of innocence, his tongue had gone straight to the quick of the world. His words had not been merely appended to the things he saw, they had revealed their essences, had literally brought them to life. A thing and a name were interchangeable. After the fall, this was no longer true. Names became detached from things; words devolved into a collection of arbitrary signs; language had been severed from God. The story of the Garden, therefore, records not only the fall of man, but the fall of language (Paul Auster, *City of Glass*, 70).

There seems to be an innate iconic streak in us that makes us somehow feel or believe that there is a direct link between a word or name (the 'signifier') and the object or concept (the 'signified') it stands for. Following Paul Auster's mythical interpretation in the above excerpt from his *City of Glass*, we may construe this latent streak as a relic of a prelapsarian innocence, a primeval state when the signifier and the signified were still, in Auster's words, "interchangeable". According to this mythical view, the Edenic innocence of iconic signification was destroyed by the Fall, which led to the babelisation or equally fatal Fall of language: for Adam's pristine language fell apart into a plurality of different languages. This had the effect that the same meaning was now expressed by *different* linguistic signs: "words devolved into a collection of arbitrary signs". Auster's fictional myth belongs to the tradition of what Simpson (1978: 662) refers to as the "natural language fantasy", i.e. the fantasy that 'nature' had established a *real* connection between signs and the things they signify.

One late literary reflection of the "natural language fantasy" may be found in Modernist efforts at renewing poetry by going back to the archaic or pictographic roots of human language. Thus Ezra Pound welcomed (and edited) Ernest Fenollosa's epochal essay *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* (1918), asking poets to adopt an iconic way of writing similar to the one described in this treatise. In Fenollosa's and Pound's (largely mistaken) view, the Chinese written character is basically an iconic pictogram,

something much more than arbitrary symbols. It is based upon a vivid short-hand picture of the operations of nature. In the ... spoken word there is no natural connection between thing and sign: all depends on sheer convention. But the Chinese method follows natural suggestion (Pound 1964: 8).

Speaking of a "natural connection between thing and sign" Fenollosa (an Emersonian) took up again the long tradition (going back at least to the Middle Ages) of seeing and evaluating everything primarily in terms of similitude or similarity. Even John Locke, who was the first to use the term 'semiotics' and one of the Moderns to shift the weight away from the ideal of similarity to that of 'difference' (which is at the very centre of all arbitrariness), still spoke of the 'natural' sign when meaning the iconic sign.

Now Fenollosa, opposing the sculpture of Laocoön¹ to a line from Browning, also contrasts poetry in general and Chinese poetry in particular with the western visual arts:

The untruth of a painting or a photograph is that, in spite of its concreteness, it drops the element of natural succession. [...] One superiority of verbal poetry as an art rests in its getting back to the fundamental reality of time. Chinese poetry has the unique advantage of combining both elements. It speaks at once with the vividness of painting, and with the mobility of sounds. It is, in some sense, more objective than either, more dramatic. In reading Chinese we do not seem to be juggling mental counters, but to be watching things work out their own fate (Pound 1964: 9).

Thus, the poetic medium of the Chinese written character has the advantage of being both an iconic *image* (visually concrete, spatial, vivid) and an iconic *diagram* (sounds and ideograms in succession). Today, this semiotic combination is not just found in film but is typical of such twentieth-century literary movements as imagism² and futurism (with its attempt at the combination of typographic space and movement), of the montage poetry (with its non-linear sequences of images and scenes) of such Modernist pioneers as Ezra Pound (*The*

Cantos), T.S. Eliot (*The Waste Land*) and of the later novels of James Joyce (*Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake*).

However, the same combination of iconic image and diagram can also be found in modern literary representations of the world generally. For twentieth-century writers had become aware that the literary expression and reflection of the new metropolitan environment and of a diverse global culture demanded new devices, new methods of composition that went beyond mere diagrammatic narration. So Ezra Pound justified the use of associative juxtaposition or what he called the 'ideogrammatic method' by the writer's urgent iconic need of having to match a radically changed, manifold and complex urban environment – which was no longer amenable to a simple, linear or merely temporal narrative order – by means of non-linear, so to speak, spatialised verbal images and compositional devices:

The life in a small town or village is narrative, in a city the visual impressions succeed each other, overlap, overcross, they are 'cinematographic', but they are not of a simple linear sequence. They are often a flood of nouns without verbal relations ... a species of ideographic representations (Pound 1921: 110).

Similarly, in 1923 Eliot, having Joyce's *Ulysses* and also his own *The Waste Land* in mind, praised the 'mythical method' (which implies a quasi-spatial timelessness, simultaneity) over the 'narrative method' (which follows a temporal sequence of cause and effect) in literary composition. To him, only the 'mythical method' was "a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (Kermode 1975: 177). As the expressions "shape" and "panorama" suggest, Eliot was in favour of a method of iconic writing that combined spatial image with temporal diagram.

Moving from a phylogenesis of language development – from its mythical origins in 'natural language' to some twentieth-century literary revivals of pristine iconicity – to ontogenesis, we discover that a natural language fantasy is also strongly present in children, as many studies have shown (cf. Slobin 1985, Pontecorvo 1994, Fónagy 1980, and this volume). It is well-known that children make much more frequent use of onomatopoeic words than adults, resorting, for instance, to the sounds made by animals as a name for these animals. Additionally, Fónagy (this volume) shows that children from different language backgrounds consistently associate certain sounds with particular characteristics of the objects signified. Children are also spontaneous folk-etymologists and tend to change forms and meanings of signs in such a way that they become in their

eyes more 'natural'.³ For instance, Dutch children may refer to the word *rotonde* 'round-about', as *rontonde*, thereby indicating that they consider the expression to have a relationship with 'round' (Dutch /ront/ means 'round'). Similarly, *opereren* 'to operate upon' often becomes *openreren*, because they associate it with the body that has to be *opened* up. Adults etymologise less in this way because they have discovered the arbitrary value of most signs, i.e. they have come to learn that most signs are 'symbols' (in the Peircean sense).⁴ It is interesting, however, that folk-etymology again may play an active part once a sign has for some reason become opaque, e.g. through infrequency of use, through language change, or because it is a borrowed word and as such less transparent. Thus, the change in the form and/or meaning of words like *hangnail* (from OE *ang nægl*, a nail that gives 'distress') and *bridegroom* (from OE *brydguma*) occurred because the words *ang* and *guma* ('man') had disappeared from the language.

Another way in which children are highly iconic is in how they treat letters as pictures, as iconic images, before they have actually learned to read and write. Thus, an English child once perceived the sign *bed* as a perfect icon for the object 'bed': the upright strokes of the 'b' and 'd' functioning as the bedposts and the circular 'o' attached to the strokes of the b and d functioning as the pillow (or head) on one side, and the elevation of the feet on the other. (Poets are similar to children in this respect, cf. Paul Claudel's pictorial interpretation of *locomotive*, quoted by Nänny, this volume.) Pontecorvo (1994) shows in her study of Italian four- to five-year olds, that there is a distinct tendency in children who have not yet learned how to write but have nevertheless developed a 'sense' of letters to use more (imaginary) letter-signs for the Italian word *case* (a plural form, 'houses') than for *casa* (singular, 'house') in spite of the fact that the plural inflection in Italian does not *add* any sounds/letters but contains the same number of letters as the singular. In other words, the extra letter-signs that these children produce are iconically motivated, motivated by their perception of the objects in the 'real' world. In a similar way some children also use smaller letter-signs to 'write' the word *casetta* (It. 'little house').

In view of the above observations, and in view of the fact that the ontogenetic development of organisms – and perhaps also of such cultural artefacts as language – to some extent may be said to re-enact their phylogenetic development (cf. Stampe 1979, but see also Aitchison 1996: 93–94), it is not surprising that quite a number of linguists believe that language, both spoken and written, may have started off iconically. Bolinger and Sears (1981: 129) write:

Everything points to icons as more primitive than symbols. Children invent them. Two speakers without a common language resort to them for communication. But however vivid the beginnings, the color has long since faded to a uniform gray ... Language has become an almost purely conventional code, with a few exceptions listed as curiosities.

These linguists also suggest that icons do not play a large part in language anymore. Indeed, within Saussurean or structural linguistics, the idea that the linguistic sign is essentially arbitrary has long reigned supreme. Similarly, the advances that were made in historical linguistics by the Neogrammarian school in the late nineteenth century were fully based on the notion of the arbitrariness of the sign. However, even the Neogrammarians had to admit that there were exceptions to their 'sound-laws'. These they listed under the rather vague notion of 'analogy'. Analogy, as will be discussed below, must be seen as a type of change that is motivated, a change against an iconic backcloth. It seems then that in language change, and therefore in language in general, both arbitrary and iconic rules play a role. 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. (This, however, is not only true for language, but for all cultural artefacts, as Haiman 1993, among others, has shown.) In language, however, 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 (cf. Plank 1979, Haiman 1983). This is very nicely expressed by Langacker (1977: 106–107) in his metaphor of language as a "compacting machine":

It would not be entirely inappropriate to regard languages ... as gigantic expression-compacting machines. They require as input a continuous flow of creatively produced expressions formed by lexical innovation, by lexically and grammatically regular periphrasis, and by the figurative use of lexical and periphrastic locutions. The machine does whatever it can to wear down the expressions fed into it. It fades metaphors by standardizing them and using them over and over again. It attacks expressions of all kinds by phonetic erosion. It bleaches lexical items of most of their semantic contents and forces them into service as grammatical markers. It chips away at the boundaries between elements and crushes them together into smaller units. The machine has a voracious appetite. Only the assiduous efforts of speakers — who salvage what they can from its output and recycle it by using their creative

energies to fashion a steady flow of new expressions to feed back in — keep the whole thing going.

Langacker emphasises the speakers' "creative energies". It is here indeed that iconicity comes back in: i.e. iconicity is not just characteristic of an earlier, more primitive stage of language, but it plays a role whenever a speaker's (or a writer's) expressivity is at issue; when, for whatever reason (poetic, practical, humorous, out of sheer necessity), he or she is trying to express himself or herself anew, in a more concrete or less worn-down form of language.

Hence, we discover iconicity in circumstances in which language is created: more consciously, as in literary texts,⁵ but also unconsciously in children's acquisition of language, in the creolisation of pidgins,⁶ and (as we have noted above) in situations in which linguistic structures have become opaque for some reason or other, have become difficult to process because of changes having taken place elsewhere, so that some re-analysis is inevitable.⁷ In all these situations language users unleash their creative energies, which, we think, involve iconicity. And as "our linguistic system is inextricably interwoven with the rest of our physical and cognitive selves" (Sweetser 1990: 6; and see also especially Haiman, Kortmann and Norrman, this volume), with the world we live in, we tend to fall back on our power of imitation, which, according to Lieberman (1991: 140–42), is one of the most primitive means that humans have that allows them to adapt and succeed in the struggle for survival.

Considering, as we have noted above, that there are two competing forces at work in language (that of 'economy' and that of 'expressivity'), it may not come as a surprise that there have been proposals to distinguish also two systems in language formation or language generation. Thus, Ivan Fónagy (1995: 285–86) has suggested that there is a dual structuring of sentences at work, namely a linguistic and a paralinguistic coding, the latter involving an expressive transgression of the regular linguistic rules. In this volume, Fónagy refers to the paralinguistic (or "secondary") code as a "Distorter" or "Modifier", which processes all linguistic units generated by the Grammar (or "primary code") in live speech.⁸ Both Grammar and Distorter, however, are rule governed, but the rules of the Grammar are symbolic, arbitrary or conventionalised, whereas those of the Distorter are motivated or iconic.

In his *The Violence of Language* (1990), Jean-Jacques Lecercle makes a similar distinction between the rules of grammar and the rules of what he calls the "remainder". Both types of rules are "intertwined" (1990: 130) in the

production of language, but the rules of grammar are normative and have a general application, while those of the remainder are idiosyncratic, and are therefore much more difficult to capture in general terms. He sees the remainder as "excess" (p. 60), as "rhizomatic" (p. 128 ff.), as a locus beyond frontiers (p. 52), that forces us to 'play'. So the rules of the remainder are playful, they play with the normative rules.

* * * * *

The studies presented in this volume will explore iconicity from two different angles. A first group of scholars is especially interested in how far the primary code, the code of grammar, is influenced by iconic motivation (see Tabakowska on rules involved in discourse, Ungerer on rules in word formation, and A. Fischer, Fónagy and Meier on phonological rules) and how originally iconic models have become conventionalised (cf. O. Fischer, Haiman, and also Fónagy). Others go one step further in exploring how, for instance, the presence of iconicity can tell us more about the structure of human cognition (Kortmann, Ungerer) or how the "iconicist desire for symmetry" can be related to the symmetry of the human body (Norrmann). 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 (see Bauer, Halter, Müller, Nänny and Webster for this presence in literary texts, A. Fischer and Piller in commercial language, and Wyss in the electronic use of language).

When Bolinger and Sears suggested (cf. above) that icons do not play a large part in language anymore, they were mainly thinking of what we will call here 'imagic iconicity'. However, 'diagrammatic iconicity' (iconicity of a more abstract kind) is pervasively present in language, especially on the higher levels of language, as Bolinger (1980: 18) indeed indicated when he wrote: "Arbitrary and conventional is a fitting description of distinctive sounds, less so of words, even less of sentences, and beyond that scarcely fits at all. The larger the scope, the looser and less arbitrary the system". There is thus a basic difference between 'imagic iconicity' and 'diagrammatic iconicity' (for an overview of the various types of iconicity that will be distinguished here, see Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Types of iconicity*

In *imgic* iconicity there is a 'direct',⁹ one to one relation between the sign or signifier (usually a morphologically unstructured one) and the signified.

In *diagrammatic* iconicity, such a (vertical) direct, concrete relation between signifier and signified is missing, instead there exists an iconic link between the (horizontal) relation(s) on the level of the signifier and the (horizontal) relations on the level of the signified:

Thus, the temporal relation between the events taking place in the real world may be iconically reflected in the way in which the signifiers naming these events are *ordered* on the linguistic level. Such ordering may be temporally sequential, as in the example from Julius Caesar above, or it may be more spatial, concerning notions of distance/proximity and centrality/peripherality. Similarly, in semantic iconicity, e.g. metaphor, it is the *semantic relation* between the signifier *foot* and its signified, and the *semantic* similarity between a body-object such as 'foot' and the lower part of a mountain, that leads to the same signifier being used for both.

However, even on the *imgic* level, iconicity continues to play an important role in language and especially in literary language, as quite a number of studies

presented in this volume show. The imagic relation may be of an oral, aural (acoustic) or tactile type (see the contributions in Part II of this volume, and the general study by Fónagy),¹⁰ or they may be of a visual type (cf. the contributions in Part III). The latter is especially prominent in playful and highly creative language use, such as in poetry and advertising.

As mentioned above and indicated in Figure 1, diagrammatic iconicity consists of two types, structural and semantic. In both the semantic and the structural type, it is the *perceived* relation in meaning between two concepts that leads to the use of the same form or word or the same shape or structure. Sometimes it also works the other way round (i.e. from form to meaning), but this is less usual. An example of this would be *flaunt* and *flout*: for many speakers they have acquired the same meaning through similarity of form. Similarly, *obsequious* developed into a pejorative term through association with other *ob*-signs, which had a negative ring, like *obstreperous*, *obstinate*, *obnoxious*, etc. (the last item was also originally non-pejorative).

Semantic iconicity (metaphor) is an important source for the creation of new words, and a tool constantly resorted to by poets. Again, it plays a very important part in language change, since the principle usually called 'analogy' is in fact an instance of metaphor (see e.g. Anttila 1989: 88, 99). In analogy, too, the speaker sees a relation in meaning (often grammatical rather than cognitive) between two items, which may cause him or her to create a new form. For example, the use of *-ed* in the past tense of originally strong verbs (as in *burned* for earlier *barn*, *helped* for earlier *halp* etc.) developed because of the perceived relationship (in itself arbitrary) between 'pastness' and the 'weak' dental ending *-ed*. Again, the other way around is also possible, i.e. a sameness in form may influence a word's meaning, but this occurs less frequently. An example is the change in meaning in the Dutch word *gijzelaar* 'hostage' (for some speakers even in *martelaar* 'martyr') from a passive to an agentive noun. Thus, 'gijzelaar' for many speakers of Dutch refers to the hostage-taker rather than to the victim, and 'martelaar' to the torturer rather than to the one tortured. This has happened on the analogy of the more frequent and still productive pattern, *wandelaar*, *moordenaar*, *goochelaar*, etc. (i.e. the one who 'walks', 'murders', 'juggles').

More recently, the notion of metaphor has been extended to explain unidirectional changes (a type of grammaticalisation) in which expressions used in the "content domain" (Sweetser 1990: 11), i.e. the real world of objects and activities, come to serve to express relationships in the speech-act or metalinguistic domain, and from there in the epistemic or 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* (cf. also Fónagy, Haiman and Norrman, this volume). This transfer, Sweetser believes (1990: 31), may well be universal. It would explain for instance how root-modals (e.g. OE *mæg* expressing physical ability), develop into deontic modals (*may* expressing social permission, as in *You may go*), and additionally acquire epistemic meaning (as in *This may be true*).

Within structural diagrammatic iconicity two types are usually distinguished: isomorphism and iconicity of motivation (cf. Haiman 1980, 1985, and this volume).¹¹ The first one, Haiman claims, is universal, the second is not. Isomorphism means that there is a one to one relationship between the signifier and the object/concept signified. This can be found on the lexical as well as the grammatical level. It means that Haiman believes that in language the existence of pure synonyms and homonyms is linguistically pathological; it is not a normal state. Thus, the use of French *delit* in Middle English next to its native synonym, *lust*, was occasioned through borrowing. This synonymy, however, was soon 'remedied' through change: *lust* and *delight* are now used in rather different ways. In the case of homonyms, the situation is often remedied by replacing them with other words. E.g. in the homonymous pair *queen* (OE *cwēn*) — *quean* (OE *cwene*), the latter has been replaced. Sometimes, an existent variant pronunciation comes to be used to solve the problem, as for instance with the originally homonymic pair *cheer* and *chair* (cf. the pun in *Macbeth*, Arden ed. V, iii, 21).

Similarly, in syntax, isomorphism entails that one cannot really have *optional* differences in surface structure. In other words, the old generative tenet that several surface structures may have one deep structure, implying that these surface structures all mean the same (because transformations which link deep and surface structures are meaning-preserving), is not really possible. Haiman believes that there is complete isomorphism in language. In other words, exceptions to it are either temporary, or are motivated independently, as Haiman shows convincingly for a number of syntactic cases. It should be added, though, that Haiman is more concerned with syntax than with the lexicon, where such exceptions create less of a problem as long as the non-isomorphous items create no ambiguities in communicative situations. That there is a strong avoidance of homonymy among speakers, however, has been very convincingly shown by Samuels (1972: 144ff.), when he discussed the reason why most early Middle

English [e:] words (e.g. *eat, lean, beast*) became [i:] in standard English and not [e:]. Although [e:] would have been historically more regular, the choice of [e:] would have created a lot more homonyms. Ungerer and O. Fischer (this volume) show the role isomorphism may play in the area of word formation and syntactic change; in the studies by Haiman and Kortmann isomorphism is present as a basic principle in the background too.

The other subtype Haiman distinguishes, 'iconicity of motivation', is somewhat less abstract than isomorphism, and therefore more noticeable in the more concrete language of literature. Haiman's work on this type of iconicity in 'ordinary' language has indeed influenced the study of iconicity in literary language. Nänny (1986; cf. also Cureton 1981) has shown that the same parameters distinguished under 'iconicity of motivation' in Figure 1 also play a significant role in literature, albeit often in a more concrete (more 'imagic') fashion (see O. Fischer 1997: 70–77). Thus the linear sequence of verbal signs may be used as an iconic diagram to signify succession in time or space, continuity, change (growth and decay), duration, rank and motion. But syntactic juxtaposition or typographic arrangement may equally function as iconic diagrams to express, for instance, symmetry, balance, relative position, fragmentation, etc. (Nänny 1985). Almost all poetic devices, from typography (Cureton 1986, Nänny 1992), sounds (Epstein 1975, 1978), 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 (Epstein 1978: 28) and not the other way round. In this volume, Bauer, Halter and Webster look at how typographic space and spacing are used meaningfully in poetry; A. Fischer (in Part III) is interested in its use in advertising; and Müller shows how repetition, sequential ordering and ellipsis is iconically used in prose fiction.

Although the temporal relation illustrated in *veni, vidi, vici*, and the metaphorical one illustrated in *foot* above, can both be called instances of diagrammatic iconicity, they also exemplify two different types of diagrams: the first being strictly semiotic in nature (because the diagram connects the linguistic with the non-linguistic), the second more intra-linguistic. Johansen (1996: 49ff.) refers to this as 'first-' and 'second-degree' iconicity respectively. First-degree iconicity is semiotic because the order of the signs *veni, vidi, vici* mirrors the order of the events they refer to in the real world. Intra-linguistic iconicity involves a lower degree of iconicity because there is no mirroring of any physical or conceptual

structure in the outside world, instead there is a relation of similarity *between linguistic signs* based on the fact that the concepts they refer to show some similarity. To make this difference even clearer, Johansen shows that second-degree iconicity may also play a role in the *veni, vidi, vici* example (following Jakobson's discussion of this). However, this second-degree iconicity has nothing to do with temporal order but with the linguistic similarity of the signs themselves (i.e. all three signs start with the same sound, they have two syllables containing a consonant and vowel each, etc.), which reflects and reinforces the similarity between the three activities of Caesar, i.e. the ease of his triumphant conquest. Meier (in this volume) makes a similar 'degree' distinction in his analysis of different types of sound symbolism, which he terms primary and secondary iconicity.¹²

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When dealing with iconicity, an interdisciplinary approach is almost mandatory. As literature, indeed all verbal art, consists in an elaboration, an intensification and creative exploitation of the inherent qualities of everyday language, a closer look from a linguist's point of view at how iconicity works in ordinary language is highly instructive for the literary critic too. But the linguist will also greatly profit from a critical examination of the literary use of the iconic potential intrinsic to language, because, as Leech (1987: 68) insists, "it assumes in literature an importance far beyond that which it has in everyday language. [...] Whereas iconicity has only a minor role in everyday language use, in literature it comes into its own as an important communicative device". The fact that literary iconicity is based on a linguistic potential is just one example of what is true of literary devices in general, most of which also have their roots in ordinary language. Thus, Kiparsky (1987: 186; cf. also Attridge 1987: 17) has pointed out that

'figures of language' studied by poetics, such as alliteration, rhyme, parallelism, and metrical form ... and the regularities which may govern their distribution in a work or body of literature, *are grounded in the human language faculty*; this is why they always involve linguistic categories of the sort that play a role in the grammars of languages, and why the rules governing them obey principles that also apply to linguistic rules and representations. (Italics added.)

As the quotation makes clear, even metrical form, which Jakobson (quoted in Kiparsky 1987: 193) still thought to be an exclusive device typical of literary texts, has been shown to be an essential part of ordinary language as well. As Kiparsky (1987: 194), referring to recent developments in metrical phonology, writes: "The basic insight to come out of phonology in the study of suprasegmentals is that language itself is metrically organised. By this we mean that language itself has the attributes which we associate with 'metrical' systems". In short, both linguists and literary critics can immensely profit from the research and its results in the neighbouring discipline.

It is for this reason that we have not placed the linguistic and literary studies in this volume in separate sections. We have intermingled the two so as to bring out interdisciplinary similarities, and to show different approaches to a similar topic. In *Part I* we have assembled papers that are of a more fundamental nature. They address basic questions concerning the nature of iconicity, its roots in the human body, its interplay with other semiotic sign categories such as the index, and the relation between iconicity and ritualisation (or conventionalisation). One paper also ventilates the problem of how best to approach the phenomenon of iconicity in literary criticism, pleading for a historical approach.

Ivan Fónagy, whose work on iconicity goes back to the fifties and who was one of the earliest scholars to resurrect an interest in the phenomenon, shows that iconicity is not something that is marginal to language, but is in fact part of the foundation of language (and close to the human body), and a basic principle of live speech, in that all linguistic units used in communication pass, as it were, through an 'iconic filter'. This filter, which has its own externally motivated rules and principles, modifies the internal, conventional rules of grammar. John Haiman approaches the subject of iconicity from a rather different angle, although in his study, too, the human body plays a central role. He looks at how certain conventional forms of linguistic behaviour (in this case the linguistic activity of self-abasement) have developed out of earlier physical activities, which form the basis for this behaviour. Or, in other words, how certain forms of physical activity may become ritualised, and then further stylised and grammaticalised in language. This process he has termed 'sublimation'. He is interested in how iconicity impoverishes during this process, and particularly in how the iconic traces remain visible in the grammaticalised forms still in use. Ralf Norman's study on symmetry and asymmetry is also closely linked to the human body. Using a scene from Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* and the text

of the Peyote hunt of the north-Mexican Huichols, he discusses man's innate symmetricist desire to overcome mortal asymmetry (e.g. of time) by means of inversion or the enantiomorph. To Norrman this desire is deeply iconicist in character as it originates in and reflects the basic symmetry of our bodies. On the level of language this desire is directly expressed in the rhetorical figure of chiasmus and indirectly manifests itself in the five figures of paradox, oxymoron, antithesis, irony and ambiguity. John White discusses various and complex forms of interaction between the two Peircean sign-functions, iconic and indexical, in selected texts of twentieth-century literature. He starts with a semiotic interpretation of literary footprints in Defoe, Eco and Høeg. He then looks at Nabokov, who thematises semiotic interplay, and at Handke's use of dysfunctional semi-osis. Next he analyses a Futurist text by Marinetti and its exploitation of the typographic interplay between iconicity and indexicality. Finally, he scrutinises Hare's film *Paris by Night* for indexical iconic elements. Simon Alderson pleads for a historical frame-working of iconicity in literature. Using a historical approach, he discusses a number of examples of iconicity in some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century prose texts, and the limitations of eighteenth-century literary theorising on iconicity. Starting with Pope's "The Sound must seem an Eccho to the Sense", he discusses the experimental and piece-meal application of this principle to prose, as well as Fielding's and Sterne's interest in the iconic potential of physical book space. He then discusses romantic critics, who began to privilege the relation between language and mind. Alderson argues that we ought to consider contemporary expectations about what counts as reality and the way literary language can be made to match up to that reality.

Part II contains papers that focus on iconic features connected with sound and rhythm. Andreas Fischer addresses a fundamental question: how exactly can speech-sounds be said to be iconic. He distinguishes three different categories of phonological iconicity: auditory, articulatory and associative. The first is clearly imagic, the second is both imagic – it imitates spatial or dimensional meaning – and diagrammatic, because the spatial contrasts expressed may be used to express any kind of contrast by association. The last category is of a purely diagrammatic type, i.e. there is no 'mirroring' of sounds, instead the use of certain sounds depends primarily on how other sounds within the same linguistic system are used. The relations themselves, however, are clearly motivated (above, this was termed 'second-degree' iconicity). Hans Heinrich Meier approaches the same question from a historical angle. He first reviews how linguists in our century

have tried to ignore and/or belittle the iconic dimension in phonology. In great detail, he discusses their quantitative ("iconicity applies to only a very small number of linguistic items") and qualitative objections ("the iconic form is not fixed and therefore cannot be truly iconic"), showing that their conception of iconicity is too restricted. Next he turns to linguists of the iconic persuasion, reviewing the development of their ideas and discussing their use of terminology. Special attention is given to the use of phonaesthemes in a diagrammatic way, on both the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic level. Finally, having provided a thorough classification and analysis of facts, Meier considers the unifying factor behind them, which is contained in the speaker, in the *production* of iconicity. Turning now from the segmental to the suprasegmental level, we have a contribution by Walter Bernhart on the semiotic status of poetic rhythm. Basing his argument on Edith Sitwell's and William Walton's *Façade*, Bernhart analyses the poem's imitative rhythm and sound-effects as iconic but also as non-iconic, experiential features; and taking the effect of sound and rhythm on the recipient into account, he perceives their "emotionally based indexical sign-function".

Part III deals with the visual aspects of language and literary texts. Insisting that all iconicity is semantically motivated and distinguishing between transparent, translucent and subliminal letter-icons, Max Nänny investigates how single alphabetic letters ('I', 'C' and especially 'O'), which have always been seen to be merely conventional or 'symbolic' signs, have sometimes been used by mainstream authors since Shakespeare as imagic icons of objects (pillar; crescent; earth, sun, moon, star, eye, opening) or of concepts such as perfection and circularity. Michael Webster discusses the iconic means used by E.E. Cummings in his picture-poems in order to express the notions of 'being' and 'nothing'. He shows how the poet counterpoints rhythmic patterns to the verbal-visual rhythms of lineation. Matthias Bauer offers a thorough interpretation in iconic terms of George Herbert's "Coloss. 3.3", in which nearly every kind of iconic, especially diagrammatic, representation can be found, pointing out that this pervasive iconicity corresponds to the seventeenth-century world view, which was controlled by concepts of similarity in all spheres. Bauer's study of one poet's iconic tendencies covers so much ground that it cannot really be confined to this section, it belongs to Part II as well. Peter Halter deals with the range and subtlety of iconic devices in W.C. Williams's 'visual texts', with Williams's regard for the poem on the page that parallels his interest in the visual arts and

design. On the basis of a close reading of a selection of lyrics, Halter analyses and interprets iconic renderings of the perception of objects in space (Tabakowska, below, refers to this as 'experiential' iconicity), of the saccadic eye and of the complex interaction of motion and emotion. He also discusses iconic uses of the stanza form and the textual mirroring of moments of hesitation, changes of directions, 'turns'. Andreas Fischer and Eva Lia Wyss show how a special, iconic use of typography has also reached the world of advertising and the internet. Fischer analyses various examples of how space (including absence of space) and typography reinforce the meaning of the text. Wyss concentrates on the playful manner in which ASCII signs may be manipulated in e-mail messages to add to the meaning conveyed by conventional typography. One reason for doing this, she argues, is that e-mail communication is an intermediary type between spoken and written texts, in which there is a need for features of spoken text to be represented visually. It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that quite a few of these new iconic signs have already become conventionalised.

In the *fourth Part*, Friedrich Ungerer turns from the word proper, where iconicity plays a role both imagically and diagrammatically (see Part 2), to word-formation phenomena, where iconicity is always diagrammatic, either of an 'isomorphic' or of a 'motivated' type (see Figure 1). All word-formation, Ungerer argues, begins with a violation of the original signifier/signified (form/concept) correlation, i.e. a disturbance of isomorphism. But, as Ungerer shows, since the aim in word-formation is to produce new *viable* words, the ultimate result is a new isomorphic relation. He shows how this new balance is achieved or near-achieved in entirely different ways in the formation of compounds, blends and acronyms. Derivation is shown to be a different process because here the isomorphism between the lexical base and the concept it stands for remains largely untouched. This is also true for clippings even though the form of the lexical base is affected. Ingrid Piller is interested in a very specific area of word-formation, viz. words that are purposefully created to function as brand names. This may indeed involve entirely new words (in which case phonological iconicity often plays a role), but much more frequently existing words are used with a new signification. The choice of the existing word is always motivated; it is in this sense that iconicity is present in the creation of brand names. Piller distinguishes three main types of diagrammatic iconicity in this area: the product is named by means of (1) foreign or (2) technological words in order to indicate a connotation with a

certain culture or field of action, or (3) the syntax of the brand name is itself modelled as an iconic structure.

In *Part V*, syntax and discourse stand at the centre of a scrutiny from an iconic angle. Olga Fischer looks at the role iconicity plays in syntactic change, particularly in processes of grammaticalisation. She argues that grammaticalisation is not necessarily a unidirectional process, steered semantically, as is usually maintained, but that the process may also be reversed, due to underlying iconic principles. She first discusses a number of general principles that play a role in grammaticalisation, such as analogy, isomorphism, metaphorical shift etc., which are all iconically based. After this she investigates two specific cases of syntactic change in English, the development of the semi-modal verb *have to*, and the reversal in the grammaticalisation of the infinitival marker *to*, in both of which iconic principles play a crucial role. Bernd Kortmann's study goes a step beyond iconicity. He starts from the (iconic) assumption that the structure of language in some way reflects the structure of experience. Based on this idea, he asks himself the question what a typological or cross-linguistic study of language structures can tell us about the structure of human cognition. He restricts himself to one linguistic domain, namely adverbial subordinators. He analyses their morphology and semantics and makes this the basis for formulating hypotheses on the internal structure of the semantic space of adverbial relations. Thus, he finds, for instance, that the simplest morphemic structures correlate with the core relations of this semantic space, 'core' in terms of discourse necessity and frequency. Another claim Kortmann makes is that there is a connection between degrees of morphological complexity and degrees of cognitive complexity. Wolfgang Müller explores the iconic potential of British and American fiction discussing the iconic function of ellipsis (which stands for silence, absence of action), of paratactic and often asyndetic syntax (representing a sequence of events, simultaneity and emotion, changing processes of perception). He finally shows analogical relations between the structure of syntax and a novel's overall structure. Elżbieta Tabakowska notes that much research has been done into the relationship between the way in which linguistic elements are ordered (their syntax) and the order of human perception, especially in terms of temporal sequencing. However, the relation between form and meaning, between text and conceptual structure, can also be motivated by the 'order of knowledge'. In fact, Tabakowska asks the same type of question as Kortmann above, but she wishes to test her hypothesis not by means of a typological comparison, but by looking

at the way elements are ordered in one particular text – a history of Europe, that has the function of a guidebook as well as a chronicle – where one would expect perceptual or experiential iconicity to underlie the text strategy. She shows that the author of the text in question exploits the conventions of experiential iconicity in order to impose his own world-view on the reader; that is, he shifts the experiential principle from the perceptual to the conceptual level.

Notes

1. It is interesting that Fenollosa refers to Laocoön in this context, for also Lessing in his classic *Laokoon* discusses the aptness of the different media, the visual arts and literature for the representation of space and time. By arguing that the visual arts are better suited to represent spatial objects and that literature is best suited to express time (cf. also Jakobson 1971a: 341), Lessing's debate — as has not been generally recognised — was covertly determined by the principles of similarity or, as we now call it, iconicity. However, in the twentieth century we have learnt that a visual work of art may represent temporal processes and a literary text may have spatial dimensions.
2. Pound's definition of the 'image' also contains a temporal dimension: "An 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" (Pound 1954: 4). The briefness of an 'image' is meant to be iconic of the briefness of "an instant of time".
3. Such cases of folk etymology are usually not the result of what we below will call 'first-degree' iconicity, i.e. they are not iconic in a purely semiotic sense, but only in an intra-linguistic sense.
4. The development from an iconic to a symbolic phase in children (and both in turn preceded by an indexical stage) is also recognized in studies in developmental and cognitive psychology (e.g. in the work of Jean Piaget), as pointed out by Johansen (1996: 38–40). However, Johansen notes quite correctly that "even the simplest process of sign interpretation necessarily includes indexical, iconic and symbolic aspects" (p. 38), and that recognition of these three developmental phases does not mean "that the two earlier stages are transitory and lose their importance" (p. 39). In this volume, Bernhart and White reconsider the relation between the three types of sign, especially the interplay between index and icon, in a number of literary texts and in film. They likewise conclude that there are no "fixed types of signs" (Bernhart) or that signs tend to "occur in hybrid rather than pure form" (White).
5. In literature, writers, in order to highlight the 'poetic function' of language in their texts, have had recourse to iconicity to increase "the palpability of signs" (Jakobson 1960: 356) or to "hypersemanticize" poetic language (Cureton 1980: 319). Among others, Leech and Short (1981b) and Bronzwaer (1993) have pointed to the pervasiveness of iconicity in literature. It must be particularly pointed out that the Peirce-Jakobson distinction between iconic image and iconic diagram (see also below) has proved of great use when applied to literary texts.

6. Iconicity in pidgins and creoles is highlighted among others by Romaine (1988) and in examples given in Haiman (1980) and Todd (1984).
7. Plank (1979) and Givón (1985, 1994), among others, have written on iconic principles that play a role in language change, and Fischer (1994) shows, by means of a case study, how Givón's iconic principle of proximity may have functioned in a syntactic change in the history of English.
8. Fónagy's use of "primary" and "secondary" code is similar to the primary and secondary codes distinguished by Lotman (1972) (and see also Bronzwaer 1993: 24ff.). However, for Lotman, the secondary code belongs essentially to the 'poetic function' of language ('poetic' in its Jakobsonian sense) and thus is not always present, whereas Fónagy stresses that *all* live speech is modified by the 'Distorter'. Secondly, Lotman's secondary code involves both first and second degree iconicity (for the terms see below), i.e. similarities motivated both semiotically and purely linguistically, whereas the rules of the Distorter seem to be basically motivated by (our interpretation of) the outside world.
9. This 'direct' relation is not without its problems. The existence of the relation of course always depends on the *interpretation* of the speaker. For this reason, Peirce (and this is quite usual in semiotics, cf. Nöth 1990) uses a so-called triadic system, which distinguishes between the signifier (in Peirce's terms the 'representamen'), the signified (Peirce's 'object') and the sense that is made of the sign by the language user (Peirce's 'interpretant'). Because the iconic relation that is felt to exist is in fact an interpretation on the part of the speaker/listener, it must be clear that the relation between signifier and signified is not fixed or crystal clear. Jakobson (1971c: 700) thus correctly remarks that even icons are partly symbolic, "the full apprehension of pictures and diagrams requires a learning process. No painting is devoid of ideographic, symbolic elements", thus showing that there is no simple contrast between icons and symbols; rather, they are on a cline (for this, see also A. Fischer in Section 2 of this volume).
10. And see also the very interesting, interdisciplinary collection of studies on *Sound Symbolism*, edited by Leanne Hinton, Joanna Nichols and John Ohala (1994), which shows again how pervasive imagic iconicity still is in language.
11. Givón (1985: 188–189) does not follow this distinction. For him, isomorphism is a meta-principle, underlying iconicity, it is not a motivation or explanation of iconicity. O. Fischer (this volume) argues that the motivation behind the two types is basically the same and that therefore there may be no need to distinguish them.
12. It is important to note that Johansen's first- and second-degree iconicity, is not the same as Lyons' 'primary' and 'secondary' iconicity, mentioned by A. Fischer in his study in Part II, and also not the same as Tabakowska's distinction, in this volume. For Lyons and Tabakowska primary iconicity is what we have termed here 'imagic' iconicity. Their secondary iconicity involves all diagrammatic types.

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