

LITERARY TEXT INTERPRETATION IN TERMS OF SYMBOLIC PATTERNS

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Abstract: The genre of literary interpretation has caused many arguments over the best ways literary texts can be interpreted. As a result, many *schools or theories of criticism* have emerged developing sophisticated and even abstract theoretical approaches. The meaning comes out of an interaction between message and its reader (audience). That is why, while handling a text, one must consider not only its components but also the relation between those components, all the impressions it has created and the techniques used for creating such impressions as well. The same way images – visual symbolic patterns – urge us to react and make us aware of the meaning transmitted, the phonemes – sound symbolic patterns – can be assigned the role of iconic, analogical symbols in text interpretation. The euphonic qualities of language, especially of literary language can be looked for in the arguments brought in favour of the natural theory of languages, according to which, in the process of word formation, the choice of proper sounds occupied a central position.

Keywords: sound symbolism, mimologism, expressivity, symbolic patterns.

Résumé: Le genre d'interprétation littéraire a provoqué beaucoup d'arguments sur les meilleures façons d'interprétation des textes littéraires. Par conséquent, beaucoup d'écoles ou des théories de critique ont émergé en développant des approches théoriques sophistiqués et même abstraits. Le sens vient d'une action réciproque entre le message et son lecteur (l'audience). C'est pourquoi, en utilisant un texte, il faut considérer pas seulement ses composantes, mais aussi la relation entre ces composantes, toutes les impressions créées et les techniques utilisées pour créer des telles impressions aussi. De même voie les images – les modèles symboliques visuels – nous force de réagir et nous rendre conscients du sens transmis, les phonèmes – modèles symboliques sonores – peuvent être alloués le rôle de symboles iconiques, analogiques dans l'interprétation de texte. Les qualités euphoniques de la langue, surtout de la langue littéraire, peuvent être cherchées dans les arguments apportés en faveur de la théorie naturelle des langues, selon lesquelles, dans le processus de formation de mots, le choix de sons nécessaires a occupé une position centrale.

Résumé : symbolisme sonore, mimologisme, expressivité, modèles symboliques :

In the attempt to highlight the contribution of sound symbolic patterns in understanding and interpreting the expressive value of literary texts, this article aims at providing two directions of study: the expressive possibilities of individual

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sounds and the focus on such symbolic patterns for determining the expressivity of literary language in itself.

As the informing function of language had preceded the significant function of words, the effects that the component sounds of words are likely to induce on literary texts' readers have been often neglected. Understanding the content itself, we sometimes tend to forget the sound of a language. Without being perceived as an autonomous reality, the sound shape of words develops expressive possibilities highlighted only by an approach directly oriented towards the acoustic representation of the linguistic sign. The starting point for such an attempt should be looked for in the approaches on the two theories on the origin of human language, that is the conventional and the natural theories. The arguments brought in favour of either theory cannot be thoroughly supported with arguments because of lack of evidence. Still, all research undertaken so far can become a useful linguistic base, generating further data on the sound harmony of languages, likely to further support the study of sounds as symbolic patterns in language analysis.

Absolute mimologism and secondary mimologism

In the year 400 BC, the well-known Greek philosopher, Plato was dedicating one of his works to the theory on words' origin and their relation with the designated notions. Ranked with the best of the Platonic philosophical texts, *Cratylus* has become for many structuralism critics a documentation source over the expressive possibilities of words sounds. Going beyond the philosophical meaning of the text, or beyond the valuable principles emerging from the text – language is conventional and also natural, and the true conventional-natural is the rational; some words have had their original meaning so obscured, that they require to be helped out by convention – many readers may see the dialogue between the three characters Hermogenes, Cratylus and Socrates as an obvious contemplation of the language itself.

Cratylus, a supporter of linguistic motivation, claims that between words and things there is a motivated, binding and natural relation underlying the word and the designated reality, words becoming symbols of notions. That is the reason why, for naming a thing, the speaker may choose among a wide variety of words. On the contrary, his dialogue companion, Hermogenes, claims that

any name which you give, in my opinion, is the right one, and if you change that and give another, the new name is as correct as the old--we frequently change the names of our slaves, and the newly-imposed name is as good as the old: for there is no name given to anything by nature; all is convention and habit of the users"¹.

¹ Platon, *Opere*, Volumul II, București, Editura Humanitas, 2002, p. 248, original text in Romanian: „Eu cred că orice nume pe care-l dă cineva unui lucru îi este potrivit. Iar dacă îl schimbă apoi cu un altul și nu-l mai folosește pe cel vechi, următorul nu este mai puțin potrivit decât cel dintâi, tot așa cum noi schimbăm numele sclavilor noștri, fără ca noile nume să fie mai puțin potrivite decât cele vechi. Căci niciun nume nu s-a ivit, pentru niciun lucru în chip firesc, ci toate sunt rodul convențiilor și obișnuințelor celor ce vorbesc”.

Eliminating, thus, the social dimension of language as well as its communication function, Hermogenes reduces the linguistic activity to the simple act of naming objects. Thus, linguistic competence would become a restrictive feature of language, as Plato's character fails to consider that words, once created, have to be actually used in communication.

Between these two extreme viewpoints, both coming out in a sophism manner, based more on rhetoric than virtue, Socrates's considerations are introduced. On a first reading, we may have a difficulty in understanding Socrates's position, or his attitude towards the two other interlocutors in the dialogue. Readers are likely to wonder whether he agrees with Cratylus or with Hermogenes, and moreover, whether he is serious, even partially, in those fanciful etymologies, extending over more than half the dialogue. He enters the dialogue by severely criticising the conventional theory and, thus, comes up with an original comparison between word formation and arts. In much the same way as an artist uses colours to express the gist of his paintings, the *legislator* uses words to express the linguistic content of words, the choice of sounds relying on the idea being communicated. Socrates tries further to explain the reason why different languages make use of different sounds for designating the same things:

And we must remember that different legislators will not use the same syllables. For neither does every smith, although he may be making the same instrument for the same purpose, make them all of the same iron. The form must be the same, but the material may vary, and still the instrument may be equally good of whatever iron made, whether in Hellas or in a foreign country;--there is no difference².

This seems to be the reason why Socrates provides at this point a thorough research of over 100 etymologies of certain Greek words, trying to prove that such words were not chosen arbitrarily, their sound shape reflecting certain characteristics of the notions designated.

Words are works of art which may be equally made in different materials, and are well made when they have a meaning. Of the process which he thus described, Plato probably meant to express generally that language is the product of intelligence, and that languages belong to States and not to individuals. Thus, nature, art and chance, all combine when forming one language, according to his philosophy.

Relating the gesture of the body to the movement of the tongue, words are but an imitation by voice of the thing named by word. In order to prove it, Socrates submits to our attention a detailed analysis of primeval words. Unlike compound words, where concepts such as motivation become obvious, primeval words make

² *Ibidem*, p. 257, original text in Romanian: „Și dacă diferiți legiuitori nu vor folosi aceleași silabe, să nu uităm că nu orice făurar pune în joc același fier, deși făurește aceeași unealtă pentru o aceeași lucrare, căci atâta timp cât el îi dă aceeași formă, chiar dacă este folosit un alt fier, unealta nu e mai puțin drept întocmită, fie ea făcută în Grecia sau la barbari, nu-i așa?”.

the object of a different type of analysis. The following several pages include an enumeration of sounds and their qualities occurring as a result of two considerations: articulation and the relationship between sounds and the meaning of words. This is known as a first attempt to define the concept of what Gérard Genette (*Mimologics Voyage in Cratylusland*) names *primary mimologism*³. The existence of a symbolical and expressive relationship between words and their sound structure, such as supported by this mimologism of a Cratylan tradition is likely to provide further attempts on approaching symbolic patterns in text analysis.

An obvious response to Plato's work seems to be *De l'origine du langage*, where the French writer and philosopher Ernest Renan comes up with one more piece of evidence in support of this theory, that is the way words are perceived by readers:

On objecterait en vain contre cette théorie (de l'onomatopée) la différence des articulations par lesquelles les peuples divers ont exprimé un fait physique identique. En effet, un même objet se présente aux sens sous mille faces, entre lesquelles chaque famille de langues choisit à son gré celle qui lui parut caractéristique, prenons pour exemple le tonnerre. Quelque bien déterminé que soit un pareil phénomène, il frappe diversement l'homme, et peut être également dépeint comme un bruit sourd, ou comme un craquement, ou comme une subite explosion de lumière etc...⁴.

For this time, the process of naming objects does not rely on the nature of the designated object but on the inner feelings of the individual responding to stimuli in nature, and discovering, by means of his sensitivity, numberless expressive values of sounds. Thus, the relationship between sounds and words is not necessarily a natural or arbitrary one; it is always a motivated relationship from the readers' viewpoint.

In his *Book III of New Essays on Human Understanding*, Leibniz considered the analogy between sensible and insensible things a basis for studying speech figures and hence, being worth exploring in terms of articulating oppositions⁵. By originally comparing Leibniz's philosophical ideas with those expressed by Plato in *Cratylus*, Gérard Genette labels the first ones as symmetrically opposed to the latter. More specifically, while trying to materialize the existence of an arbitrary language, Leibniz becomes mimologist in practice (by his acceptance of motivation in natural languages) but still remains conventionalist in principle in his attempt to forge a purely arbitrary language. It is in this context that Genette reduces motivation to three main propositions presented as follows: *A. Language should be mimetic; B. Language can be mimetic and C. Language is mimetic*⁶.

³ Gérard Genette, *Mimologics. Voyage in Cratylusland*, translated by Thais E Morgan, University of Nebraska Press, 1963, p. 265.

⁴ Ernest Renan, *De l'origine du langage*, Paris, Michel Lévy, Frères Librairies-Éditeurs, 1858, p. 71; available at <http://archive.org/stream/deloriginedulan03renagoog#page/n5/mode/2up>.

⁵ G. W. Leibniz, *Noi eseuri asupra intelectului omenesc*, București, Editura All Educational, 2003, p. 196.

⁶ Gerard Genette, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

Considering these three statements we can further try a comparison of approaches submitted by Plato, Leibnitz and later on by Saussure on the concept of motivation:

A	B	C	
+	+	+	Primary mimologism (Cratylus)
+	+	-	Secondary mimologism (Socrates)
?	-	-	Hermogenes
-	-	-	Primary conventionalism (Saussure)
-	+	+	Secondary conventionalism (Leibniz)

This attempt of artificial re-motivation is defined by Genette as *secondary mimologism*⁷, a term representing the basics of the well-known and explored notion of sound symbolism. Understood as such, mimologism is likely to encourage the study of its manifestation in any literary texts.

Similarly concerned with the study of languages origin, **Jacob Grimm** (*De l'origine du langage*, 1859) refers to the particular importance of such natural value which actually can apply to many European languages: "Parmi les voyelles, *a* occupe le milieu de l'échelle tonique, *i* le haut et *u* le bas; *a* est pur et stable, *i* et *u* sont mobiles et aptes à passer à l'état de consonnes; (...) Parmi les consonnes, *l* exprime la douceur, *r* la rudesse"⁸.

Unlike Charles Nodier, the above mentioned German linguist includes in his interpretation the importance of articulation in producing sounds. Thus, consonants could neither be pronounced nor could they form syllables without vowels, and such dependency of consonants on vowels in interpreted by Jacob Grimm as a sign of superiority rendered in terms of an opposition between masculine and feminine: „les voyelles sont évidemment de nature féminine et les consonnes de nature masculine"⁹.

In all these studies dedicated to sounds, every semantically expressive word is likely to become representative in the attempt to prove a certain correspondence

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 50.

⁸ Jacob Grimm, *De l'origine du langage*, Paris, Librairie A. Franck, 1859, p. 38; available at <http://books.google.ro/books?id=LuQTAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=ro#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

between its component sounds and the meaning it conveys. Such a relationship occurring between sound structures and the meaning of words is commonly known as sound symbolism or phono-symbolism. Far from being only an invention of linguists, sound symbolism words represent an individual aspect of the concept of euphony in languages. This natural relation existing between phonemes/sounds and the meaning of words can be continually exemplified in all European languages and not only, as sound symbolism can be also related to Asian languages. Moreover, the expressive value of sounds has become lately a notion of interest even for psychologists who, trying to extend the research undergone by linguists, focus on the comparative study of different languages, from primitive to highly developed ones.

Sound symbolism and the expressive value of individual sounds

The concept of sound symbolism is frequently used for referring to a wide range of phenomena which, although somehow related to each other, nevertheless have distinct characteristics. According to the very nature of the relation underlying the sound shape and the meaning of words designated, starting with examples of onomatopoeias and interjections, where the meaning of the word is entirely dependent upon its sound shape, up to such situations where language becomes conventional and does not imply any relation between sound and meaning, the concept of sound symbolism can be divided into four main categories.

1. *Corporeal sound symbolism*¹⁰ refers to the use of certain sounds or intonations likely to express the internal state of feeling of the speaker himself. This mimetic relation, otherwise a marginal aspect of the concept itself, includes involuntary symptomatic sounds such as coughing or hiccupping and ranges through expressive intonation, voice quality, interjections. Directly relying on the emotional state of the speaker and rarely occurring in writing, this type of sound symbolism has been left aside by linguists and researchers in the field.

2. *Imitative sound symbolism*¹¹ refers to onomatopoeic words and phrases, words whose sounds are expressive due to their phonetic nature and to their resemblance to real sounds in nature. This is also a category of sound symbolism relying on unconventional phonetic patterns, difficult to depict in written form; still the imitative sound symbolism words are much better represented in the linguistic literature. Moreover, imitative sound symbolism plays an important role in referential speech and it can be subject to an objective interpretation.

3. *Synesthetic sound symbolism*, a more commonly accepted concept, is defined as “the process whereby certain vowels, consonants, and suprasegmentals are chosen to consistently represent visual, tactile or proprioceptive properties of objects, such as size or shape”¹². Synesthetic sound symbolism excludes any

¹⁰ Leanne Hinton, J. Nichols, J. Ohala, *Sound Symbolism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 2–3.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 3–4.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 4.

arbitrary relation likely to occur between sounds and meaning and takes into consideration certain acoustic properties of sounds: tone, pitch, place of articulation, acoustic frequency, the opening of the mouth. Somehow continuing what we have called before secondary-mimologism, synesthetic sound symbolism was for the first time studied by Edward Sapir (*The Status of Linguistics as a Science*), at the beginning of the 19th century. Starting with his studies, researchers have developed a real literature in the field trying to support this “expressively symbolic character of sounds quite aside from what the words in which they occur mean in a referential sense”¹³.

The excellence of having illustrated the importance of studying sound symbolism words belongs to the French phonetician, Maurice Grammont (*Traité de phonétique*). The above-mentioned author should be noted primarily for his systematic attempt to establish a relationship between signifier and signified determined on the basis of certain qualities of sounds and the way sounds are articulated, as well as their physical qualities, on the one hand, and the meaning of the word, on the other hand. Here we can mention a certain resemblance between the French phonetician and Plato’s attempts (*Cratylus*) to establish a certain correspondence between articulatory and acoustic qualities of sounds and the meaning of words.

Grammont distinguishes himself from other linguists interested in that aspect, by the explanation he provides for the way such correspondence can occur:

Grâce à une faculté de notre cerveau qui continuellement associe et compare, il classe les idées, les met par groupes et range dans le même groupe des concepts purement intellectuels avec des impressions qui lui sont fournies par la vue, l’ouïe, par le goût, par l’odorat, par le toucher. Il en résulte que les idées les plus abstraites sont constamment associées à des idées de couleur, de son, d’odeur, de sécheresse, de dureté, de mollesse¹⁴.

Thus, our brain seems to have the capacity of „translating” abstract concepts into visual and acoustic images, being highly assisted by language which, on its turn, operates with clear or dark, strong or weak sounds etc.

A conclusion we may reach so far is that when the meaning of one word is built around a dominant sound component we may speak about imitative sound symbolism, hence, when this very dominant sound component is missing, the word itself becomes expressive, no longer imitating but only suggesting, due to the symbolic qualities of its sounds.

4. Sound symbolism can further include *conventional symbolism*¹⁵, explained as an analogical relation between certain phonemes or phoneme clusters and certain meanings. As such analogical relation does not represent a universal trend,

¹³ Edward Sapir, David G. Mandelbaum, *The Status of Linguistics as a Science* (1929) in *The Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture and Personality*, Berkeley, CA University of California Press, 1958, p. 225.

¹⁴ Maurice Grammont, *Traité de phonétique*, Paris, Librairie Delagrave, 1933, p. 403.

¹⁵ Leanne Hinton, et. al., *op. cit.*, pp. 5–6.

conventional sound symbolism has often been associated with the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign.

Following this direction, John Wallis comes up with a list of words illustrating the symbolical values of consonant clusters found either at the beginning of words or in syllables in final position:

- **str** stands for force or effort: *strong, strength, to strike, stroke, to struggle, to stride*;
- **st** appear in words designating the idea of little effort: *to stand, to stop, to stamp, still, stone*;
- **thr** can be associated with violent movements: *to throw, through*;
- **wr** stands for the idea of obliquity or intensity: *wry, wrong, wrist, wreck*;
- **br** can be associated with a violent, noisy break: *to break, brook, breech*;
- **shr** is associated with words designating the feeling of a strong contraction: *to shrink, shrimp, to shroud*;
- the consonant cluster **gr** frequently appears in words rendering the idea of something uncomfortable or even disagreeable: *to grate, to grind, to gripe, greedy, to grasp*;
- **sm** and **sw** are suitable for expressing the idea of movement which still involves little noise or even a slight, lateral movement: *to sway, to swim, to swing, swift*;
- **cl** is suitable for expressing adherence or retention: *to cleave, to climb, close, clay*;
- on the contrary, the consonant cluster **sp** is associated with words expressing dispersion or expansion: *to spread, to spill*;
- due to its occurrence in such words as: *to slide, slow, sly*, **sl** is associated with the idea of gliding;
- the consonant clusters **sq**, **sk** and **scr** are frequently associated with the idea of violent compression: *to squeeze, to screw*.

Equally expressive seem to be the sounds at the end of words. For instance, the group of sounds **umble** appears in words expressing a gloomy, serious action: *to mumble, to stumble*¹⁶.

The sound expressivity of literary language

Literature and more specifically poetry represent one domain where this kind of relations between sounds and meaning can become a landmark for expressivity. Or, otherwise said: “Une accumulation (...) d’une certaine classe de phonèmes ou l’assemblage contrastant de deux classes opposées, dans la texture phonique d’un vers, d’une strophe, d’un poème, joue le rôle d’un «courant sous-jacent de signification»”¹⁷.

¹⁶ Acc. to Gérard Genette, *op. cit.*, pp. 49–52.

¹⁷ Roman Jakobson, *Essais de linguistique générale*, Paris, Les Éditions de minuit, 1963, p. 241.

This intention to look for a correspondence between shape, sound and meaning has been obvious ever since ancient literary writings, when poetry was more of performance than of literature. At that time, the scientific theoreticians of art were mentioning three categories of arts: the art of composing the music, the art of rhythm and the art of poetry. In the Greek culture, the poet was considered to be not only the author of his writings but also the originator of the dance performance accompanying reciting. Under the Romans, following the development of pantomime, rhythmic art and poetry parted. But we can certainly affirm that poetry has always been closely linked with music, succeeding like this art, to convey the emotional intensity directly. The existence of this indivisible relationship between sound and meaning urges for a thorough knowledge of objective uniform patterns, so that the phonetic perception of a text is not just the result of personal interpretation.

The expressive qualities of sounds occupy thus a central role in achieving artistic emotion, besides suprasegmentals, prosodic categories and sound figures, all such particularities being likely to prove the importance of phonetic features in creating the internal harmony or musicality of literary language. A first condition underlying this attempt is the acceptance of the unity between form and content. In literary language, where the linguistic sign gains an autonomous value, such a relation between sound and meaning becomes obvious and creates a genuine expressive accompaniment for the signified. This time, the linguistic sign, such as conceived by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, does no longer fulfil the needs of the artistic language, as this type of communication involves a higher level of subjectivity. That is why we may now assume that the language of arts incorporates substance in such a way that the formal support (the signifier) through its acoustic qualities, otherwise ignored in the approach on the linguistic sign, cooperates on mimetic levels with the content (signified)¹⁸. The meaning of a literary text relies primarily on the succession of its component sounds, with the sound becoming an essential dimension of communication. Moreover, this imitative function of sounds is supported and supplemented by the free musicality of the text itself: rhythm, rhyme, figures of sound, proper names, and puns. Analysis should concentrate on every phono-semantic unit, as each element has an aesthetic function determined by the content.

In his attempt to approach this relation between form and content, the author Carlos Bousoño (*Teoria expresiei poetice*) considers the signifier in terms of visionary images. According to him, this union between signifier (element A) and signified (element B) generates a certain impression in the reader's imagination before the reader is able to know the objective resemblance between the two elements A and B¹⁹.

A similar point of view is shared by the representative of modern literary theory, Oskar Walzel (*Conținut și formă în opera poetică*). Words represent the

¹⁸ Acc. to Ileana Oancea, *Semiostilistica*, Timișoara, Editura Excelsior, 1998, p. 73.

¹⁹ Acc to Carlos Bousoño, *Teoria expresiei poetice*, București, Editura Univers, 1975, p. 200.

relation between form and content, that is why the above mentioned author highlights in his work the importance of considering this union, also insisting on the former because of the need for harmony²⁰.

Considering all such approaches on language and many others alike, we may say that due to their communicative finality, sounds (phonemes) shall be treated as iconic, analogic signs. Considering the sounds' capacity to render the physical features of things or of highlighting certain words on the level of imitative harmony, when speaking about correspondence, they become genuine sound metaphors, due to their capacity of supporting a wide range of feelings. Still, these expressive possibilities of sounds rely on the context, that is why analysis shall focus on the relationship established between the phonetic structure of the word itself and the expressivity of that very structure. Either by repetition or by contrast with other phonemes, one and the same phoneme may participate in rendering various feelings, shrouding other means of expression in a suitable atmosphere.

Modern poetry comes with a further innovation that involves a more subjective interpretation of sounds and assigns sound symbolism chromatic meanings. This division of sounds into musical ones, high and low, pleasant ones (delicate) or unpleasant (harsh) sounds may be extended to other organs of feeling, according to Boris Tomasevski²¹. For example, colours can be divided into light and dark shades, a reason determining the Russian formalist to consider perfectly appropriate the association between light colours and high sounds. "And so it will become clear why a poet who describes a lily, a white flower otherwise, will make full use of the sound *i*, not to mention that this association is further supported by the fact that this sound is used in the word lily"²².

Finding its origins in that kind of correspondence between music and sound, this phenomenon commonly defined as *coloured audition*, becomes obvious in literary language in terms of synesthetic associations motivating the relationship between signified and signifier. Phonetically, synaesthesia is based on the combination of sound and colour. Denigrating the expressive values of consonants, Victor Hugo is among the first writers who attributed chromatic values to vowels: "Ne pourrait-on que les voyelles existent pour le regard presque autant que pour l'oreille et qu'elles peignent des couleurs? On les voit. A et i sont des voyelles blanches et brillantes, O est une voyelle rouge, E et eu sont des voyelles bleues, U est la voyelle noire"²³.

Following his appreciations, authors such as Guy Brandes, René Ghill, Nabokov, Matylya Ghyla have brought individual and collective contributions in this area. Although such models of synaesthesia have been analysed ever since

²⁰ Oskar Walzel, *Conținut și formă în opera poetică*, București, Editura Univers, 1976, p. 83.

²¹ B. Tomașevski, *Teoria literaturii. Poetica*, București, Editura Univers, 1973, p. 123.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 123.

²³ V. Hugo, *Journal de ce que j'apprends chaque jour (1846–1847) apud* Gérard Genette, *Mymologiques Voyage en Cratylie*, Paris, Edition du Seuil, 1976, p. 401.

pre-romanticism and romanticism, the originators of coloured audition are the two French symbolist poets, one of the most eloquent example being the prose poem, *Une saison en Enfer*:

J'inventai la couleur des voyelles ! – **A** noir, **E** blanc, **I** rouge, **O** bleu, **U** vert. – Je réglai la forme et le mouvement de chaque consonne, et, avec des rythmes instinctifs, je me flattai d'inventer un verbe poétique accessible, un jour ou l'autre, à tous les sens. Je réservais la traduction²⁴.

Approaching the way these synesthetic associations between sounds and colours occur, **René Étiemble** draws the attention upon the discontinuity and confusion, as, according to him, every colour has been assigned to every vowel²⁵.

	A	E	I	O	U	OU	EU
SCHLEGEL	red		light blue	purple	violet	dark blue	
GRIMM	white	yellow	red	blue		black	
HUGO	white	blue	white	red	black		blue
BRANDES	red	white	yellow			dark blue	
RIMBAUD	black	white	red	blue	green		
GHIL	black	white	blue	red	yellow		
NABOKOV	brown	yellow	yellow	ivory	yellow-green		
GHYKA	black	yellow	white	red	green		
GRUBER	black blue white	white	yellow red	brown red	black		
CHASTAING	red	orange	yellow	violet red	green		blue

It thus becomes obvious the correspondence between sound and colour does not rely on a fixed set of values or patterns.

Among the Romanian symbolist poets, Mircea Demetriade proved to be interested in this aspect. Unlike Rimbaud in his sonnet *Vowels*, M. Demetriade (*Sonuri si culori*) associates the vowel A with white, E with grey, I with red and O with blue.

Specifically symbolist, the poetry of **George Bacovia** resorts to sound and colour to genuinely render the intensity of feelings and emotions. Fascinated by the phenomenon of coloured audition, George Bacovia says:

²⁴ Victor Hugo, *Une saison en enfer*, available at http://www.poetes.com/textes/rbd_enf.pdf

²⁵ Victor Hugo, *op. cit.*, p. 405.

In poetry, I was always obsessed with the subject of colour. The painting of words or coloured audition, as you like. I love the violin. Songs have had stained influence for me. First, I took music classes and it wrote the lyrics considering violin strings. Either by musical note or by ear soul, this musical instrument has accompanied me to this day ... Every feeling has a corresponding colour. After purple and white, I have evolved to yellow ... the burned soul is yellow²⁶.

Considering such contexts where phonetic features are expressive means by which feelings can get infinite nuances, stylistic phonetics remains an issue that should not be ignored. The consideration that literary language is a motivated one, authentically rendering the complex relationship between words and their sounds, becomes more and more obvious. However, unlike the expressive means that can be easily identified by knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical structure of the language, phonetic stylistic facts become more difficult to analyse by objective criteria. Without being perceived as an autonomous reality, the phonetic structure of the word develops many expressive possibilities when it makes the object of an analysis specifically oriented towards the acoustic representation of the sign. To avoid misinterpretations, the analysis of the sound expressiveness of literary language should be done with great care, eliminating all accidental interpretations and taking into account only the aspects suggested by the text under review.

²⁶ Apud Emil Manu, *Arta poetică la români, Antologie*, București, Editura Tritonic, 2002, p. 226.