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# WHEN PHONETICS MATTERS: CREATION AND PERCEPTION OF FEMALE IMAGES IN SONG FOLKLORE

*Halyna Stashko*

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**Abstract:** This paper presents a stylistic analysis of female images in American song folklore in order to examine how sound symbolic language elements contribute to the construction of verbal images. The results obtained show the link between sound and meaning and how such phonetic means of stylistics as assonance, alliteration, and onomatopoeia function to reinforce the meanings of words or to set the mood typical of the characters. Their synergy helps create and interpret female images and provides relevant atmosphere and background to them in folk song texts.

**Key words:** American song folklore, sound symbolism, onomatopoeia, assonance, alliteration, female images.

*"If you take myth and folklore, and these things that speak  
in symbols, they can be interpreted in so many ways that  
although the actual image is clear enough, the  
interpretation is infinitely blurred, a sort of enormous  
rainbow of every possible colour you could imagine"*

Diana Wynne Jones

## 1. Introduction

Folklore is a space for the creation of symbols and images that reflect identity, society, experience, and historical milestones, particularly those able to rediscover or restore historical and cultural codes from language signs. Klein considers that "folklore denotes oral narration, rituals, crafts, and other forms of vernacular expressive culture" (2001: 5711). Traditionally many types of folklore designate a spectrum of key life

spheres and therefore help trace major and minor changes in a language and probably even mentality (Stashko 2014). Glassie (1989) states as follows:

*"Folklore is traditional. Its center holds. Changes are slow and steady. Folklore is variable. The tradition remains wholly within the control of its practitioners. It is theirs to remember, change, or forget. Answering the needs of the collective for continuity and of the individual for active participation, folklore... is that which is at once traditional and variable".*

Fairy tales and myths, jokes and quotes, songs and riddles have passed down verbally from generation to generation in any written or oral form thus providing remarkable guides both for ancestors and for descendants. As folklore in general (Levitsky 2016; Volkova 2016) and songs in particular, complementary comprise melody signs and specific intonation patterns, they have been of particular interest to linguists (Bauman & Abrahams 1981; Brunvand 1978; Hymes 1981; Panasenko 2013; 2014; Tedlock 1983). Song folklore reveals more and more details regarding images, their presentation, and their further interpretation. It relevantly focuses on our emotional perception, which is extremely individual though considered collective. According to Hufford (1991: 1), "folklife is community life and values, artfully expressed in myriad forms and interactions. Universal, diverse, and enduring, it enriches the nation and makes us a commonwealth of cultures".

Undoubtedly, lexical content is unanimously approved as the fastest way to create and interpret images, though sound meaning is found essential too. Based on a critical analysis of the material collected it is interesting to see how sound clusters reflect the general mood of the song and either support or contradict it. Thus, the present research focuses on female images in American song folklore and their interpretation through sounds, as long as the latter may trace minor and invisible but valuable shades in the smallest details.

## 2. Materials and methods

Though it is always a baffling task to locate exactly the date of birth of any folklore, an important date in the inception of American song folklore is the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when it was recorded in folk song books collected and published in the US. American folklore successfully comprises the European, African, Hispanic, and American-Indian ancestry reflecting a variety of traditions, experiences, and images (Sandburg 1936). To embrace key female images I referred to both old and new songs, mapping the 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century period. Some songs showed pure American roots despite their earlier versions in other cultures and others appeared authentically American.

To cover the key question "Does phonetics really matter in the image creating and understanding processes?" the focus fell on assonance, alliteration, and onomatopoeia in the selected American folk songs with quantitative and qualitative content analyses applied. In total approximately 100 songs from well-known collections (Appleby 1991; Kingman 1990; Malkoç 1994; Raph 1986) have been analyzed and the most prominent have been selected to showcase the study. For clarity and better image comprehension, the material has been arranged following stylistic means description with embedded image descriptions and interpretations. Regarding the issue of the author's personal subjective approach to the abovementioned descriptive method, certain blurred conclusions are thus possible. However, it would be unfair not to mention that fact that multiple perceptions of images in artistic works have been supported since long ago. Compare/see, for example, Vygotsky's speculations in his book "The psychology of art":

*"... the psychological system of philology has shown that the word is divided into three basic elements: the sound, or external form; the image, or inner form; and the meaning, or significance <...> the work itself can never be responsible for the thoughts that may appear as a result of its <...> we have to show that not only do we interpret works of art differently, but we also experience and feel them differently <...> And finally, the most important of all: The subjectivity of understanding, the meaning introduced by us, is definitely not a specific peculiarity of poetry. It is the sign of any understanding" (Vygotsky 1971: 59-62).*

### 3. Sound symbolism in creating female images

#### 3.1 Image

As phonetic symbols contribute to image making, it makes sense to give several key definitions to the point. In its most immediate meaning, the term '**image**' is treated as a mental concept held in common by members of a group and symbolic of a basic attitude and orientation (MWOD, *s.a.*). Furthermore, taking into account folklore's symbolic nature, it is worth mentioning that the Hindu philosopher Coomaraswamy defines symbolism as "the art of thinking in images" (1986: 36). In literature, folklore, and poetry images are triggered by words. An author recollects his/her physical or sensual perception moments and implements them through words. It is evident that words here are considered a bridge, which links the external world we perceive and the internal world represented by the human mind.

To all intents and purposes, American song folklore is rich in images of different kinds: humans, animals, mythical creatures, etc. We focus on female images in the current research with the aim of illustrating how American ethnic female representatives were treated by their peers and what features of their character were typical of women years and years ago. When interpreting images, linguistics is deemed most helpful, as words in a song are eternal, though accompanied by a certain emotional background of the song performers who show their personal attitude to the character. The common and the personal get incorporated to create national identities; and when we examine them, we can understand milestone changes or peculiarities in language and culture.

### 3.2 Sound symbolism

*Some words have such a lovely sound  
It's pleasant to roll them round and round  
And savor their syllables on the tongue, –  
Words like oriole, melody, young.*

*Other words, though, of ungraceful letter,  
Harsh, abrasive, ... sound even better!  
These are words of intrinsic beauty, –  
Service, conscience, kindness, duty.*

Alma Denny, New York

It is clear from the above-stated observations that one should not forget that sounds bear certain meaning, which is subconsciously perceived and accepted by listeners through symbols. Even if sound symbolism is contradictory, many researches demonstrate certain similarities in the way individuals perceive the relationship between language sounds and sensory impressions. One of the first works that illustrated how sound symbolism functions was Plato's "Cratylus" dialogue (Sedley 2013). The issue was discussed in connection with the religious Middle Ages and Renaissance texts with a focus on a 'natural correctness of names'. Three philosophers Hermogenes, Cratylus, and Socrates argue whether the phonemes in a name can themselves convey meaning. Hermogenes considers that the relationship between a word and its meaning is purely arbitrary. Cratylus has an opposite idea. Socrates finally concludes that "there is sometimes a connection between meaning and sound". Different controversial ideas have been developed since then, though recent studies of sound symbolism show considerable dependence of sounds and their meanings:

*Sound symbolism is often the result of a secondary association. The words glow, gleam, glimmer, glare, glisten, glitter, glacier, and glide suggest that in English the combination gl- conveys the idea of sheen and smoothness. Against this background, glory, glee, and glib emanate brightness by their very form, glance and glimpse reinforce our conclusion (because eyesight is inseparable from light), and glib has no other choice than to denote specious luster, and, indeed, in the sixteenth century, when it became known in English, it meant 'smooth and slippery' (Lieberman 2005).*

*Given that we share many of our sound-symbolic aspects of language with other species, it is quite possible that in sound symbolism we are seeing the precursors of fully formed human language. In fact, it seems quite reasonable to say that in all advanced vocalizers (especially humans, many birds,*

and many cetaceans) we can see a basic sound-symbolic communication system overlaid by elaborations, which could be termed arbitrary in their relationship to meaning (ISSP 2006).

Consider the following group: *hump, lump, mumps, plump, rump, stump*. These all have a rhyme *-ump* and they all refer to a rounded, or at least non-pointy, protuberance. Now consider what *bump* means. It can refer to contact involving something weighty whether it be hips, bottoms, or shoulders, or a slow-moving vehicle or vessel, but not the contact of a point with a surface, such as a pencil tapping a window pane. The *crump* of an exploding shell fits in here, as does *thump*. You might also consider *rumble*, and possibly *mumble* and *tumble*, though admittedly this is *-umble* rather than *-ump*. One has to allow that there can be words with *-ump* that do not fit the correlation. *Trump* is an example. However, there are enough examples to suggest there is a connection between sound and meaning in one set of words (Blake 2008).

Here's an experiment. You're in a spaceship approaching a planet. You've been told there are two races on it, one beautiful and friendly to humans, the other unfriendly, ugly and mean-spirited. You also know that one of these groups is called the Lamonians; the other is called the Grataks. Which is which? Most people assume that the Lamonians are the nice guys. It's all a matter of sound symbolism. Words with soft sounds such as 'l', 'm,' and 'n,' and long vowels or diphthongs, reinforced by a gentle polysyllabic rhythm, are interpreted as 'nicer' than words with hard sounds such as 'g' and 'k,' short vowels and an abrupt rhythm (Crystal 2009).

Why is it that *dints* sound smaller than *dents*? There is presumably some sound symbolism going on here. Think of words like *teeny-weeny, itsy-bitsy, mini* and *wee*. They all sound small! A *chip* sounds smaller than a *chop*. So do *slits* compared with *slots*, *chinks* compared to *chunks* and *dints* compared to *dents*. 'Many a mickle makes a muckle' is an old saying that has virtually disappeared. Even if you haven't a clue what a *mickle* is, I am sure you agree it has to be smaller than a *muckle*. In fact, historically *mickles* and *muckles* are the same word. Like *dints* and *dents*, they arose as alternative pronunciations, although I suspect their vowels have always been symbolic of size (Burridge 2011).

The fundamental thesis underlying the field of sound symbolism has always been controversial, because it appears to be so transparently wrong. The Sound Symbolic Hypothesis is that the meaning of a word is partially affected by its sound (or articulation). If the sound of a word affects its meaning, then you should be able to tell what a word means just by hearing it. There should be only one language. In spite of this, there has always been a fairly substantial group of linguists who do not dismiss the possibility that the form of a word somehow affects its meaning (Magnus 2013).

Evidence to support the majority of the stated ideas can also be found in the selected American folk songs, the analysis of which showed dependence of the image characteristics on the phonetic description frames of the image and its background too. Taking into account the tight interrelation of words and feelings, it is worth demonstrating how images may depend on sounds in folk songs. Many examples of assonance, alliteration, and onomatopoeia that make up sound symbolism can be found in folk songs. They are used to reinforce the meanings of words or to set the mood typical of the characters. It is usually subtle and mainly works subconsciously. Not all

the words bear a relevant value associated with the sounds incorporated in them. Sometimes it is possible to face overlaps when interpreting sounds, sometimes different background sets may cause alternative interpretation patterns, and some sounds may fall under several interpretation patterns when combined with other sound clusters. In many cases though, we can find only a certain association with sounds, but never a definite meaning. To solve this problem, many researches have proposed various methods of interpreting sounds. To find a proper meaning, we may refer to lexical or morphological patterns. Research results gained by other scientists on the topic of sound symbolism (Abelin 1999; Agrawal 2009; Crystal 2009; EPDS 2006; Ohala 1997; Rhodes 1994; Sedley 2013; Thompson & Estes 2011; Wescott 1975) may also be found useful.

### 3.2.1 Assonance

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (*s.a.*), **assonance** is treated as a relatively close juxtaposition of similar sounds especially of vowels (as in "*rise high in the bright sky*"). It is used to achieve emphasis and cohesion in a short stretch of text and to produce internal rhyme.

The research has shown that the most frequent vowel sounds repeated in juxtaposition are /i:/ and /ɪ/ while the least used are /ʌ/ and /u:/. To interpret the findings relevant studies results thus appear to the point. In particular, the study performed by Ohala (1997) shows that sounds with high front vowel phonemes like /i:/, /ɪ/, /e/ are often associated with "small" and low back vowel phonemes like /a:/, /ʌ/, /ɔ:/, /ɒ/, and voiced consonants are often associated with "large". Thompson and Estes (2011) conducted a similar research and found out that some sounds (e.g., /ʊ/ as in *took*) suggest bigness whereas others (e.g., /i:/ as in *teeny*) suggest smallness. Moreover, most diminutives are formed with /ɪ/ sound in many different languages. Please, compare *-(t)je* in Dutch, *-ling*, *-ie*, *-y* in English, *-ino* in Italian, *-cik* in Turkish, *-ito/a* in Spanish, *ki-* in Swahili, *-chik* in Russian. The reason for this may be connected with the way this sound is

produced. To utter the phoneme /ɪ/, we raise the tongue and leave a very small space in our mouth; the contrast between this sound and /ɔ:/ or /ɒ/ is evident. That is why /ɪ/ tends to be associated with small things, and /ɒ/ and /ɔ:/ sounds with big things. It is worth noting that Michell (EPDS 2006) states that /ɔ:/ and /ɒ/ have "the power to overawe". Abelin (1999) also claims that /ɪ/ tends to have the meanings of "smallness", "quickness", "high pitch" or connected with "light", while /ɔ:/ seems to have the meanings of "low pitch" and "largeness". /a/ seems neutral. The vowels /ɔ:/ and /ɒ/ are also deemed "pejorative". Agrawal (2009: 177-178) finds /i:/ "continuous" and "visible quantity", just like the sound of a scream.

Considering the interpretation variety, let us take several examples and see how it works with female images and their perception in American folk songs. To illustrate how /i:/ and /ɪ/ tend to be perceived, particular attention must be paid to lullabies (Сташко 2016; Stashko 2016), as they possess plenty of words with these phonemes:

- (1) *Little thing is crying 'Mammy'; sleepy little baby; pretty little horses; little lamby*  
("All the pretty little horses")
  
- (2) *I will bring for you little lovely dream; a little lovely dream; a still little dream;*  
*sweet sweet shut your eyes; sleep, sleep my darling*  
("Cradle song")
  
- (3) *If that horse and cart fall down,*  
*You'll still be the sweetest little boy in town.*  
("Hush, little baby")
  
- (4) *Sweetest little feller; when he's a-sleepin' in his little place; kiss 'im in his sleep*  
("Mighty lak' a rose")



Size-related atmosphere is felt in almost every word, for instance, *little babies* are addressed to through lullabies, little babies are compared to *little lambies*, they see *little horses* in their *little dreams*. Furthermore, all the cases are strongly supported lexically with the words denoting a diminutive size. The phoneme /i:/ in *sweet*, *dream*, *sleep* mirrors a pleasant infinity. Besides, one can easily spot excessive usage of sonorants /m/, /n/, and /l/, which are regarded "tender", "pleasant", and "soft" (СТАШКО 2016; Crystal 2009; Stashko 2016), especially when reinforced by /i:/ and /l/. One of the most striking features of this image interpretation is that the image of the mother has no direct description in the analyzed lullabies, but it is quite tangible from these observations. Mothers sing lullabies to pacify their little babies; they are tender and soft, they have quiet voices and gentle hands. Mother's love resembles an infinity of caress.

"Size" phonemes are surely present in folk songs about love, where boys show their feelings to beloved girls when describing or referring to them:

(5) *She's got eyes of baby blue,*  
*I got a gal, an' she loves me,*  
*She's as sweet as she can be.*  
*Cripple Creek's wide, an' Cripple Creek's deep,*  
*Gonna wade ol' Cripple Creek, fore I sleep.*  
("Cripple Creek")

(6) *Did she bid you to come in, Billy Boy, Billy Boy?*  
*Did she bid you to come in, tell me Billy?*  
*Yes, she bade me to come in,*  
*There's a dimple in her chin.*  
*She's a young thing*  
*And cannot leave her mother.*  
("Billy boy")

The impression of "smallness" can be visualised with the help of specific vocabulary (*baby blue eyes* (5), *she is a young thing* (6)). A typical feature of American folk songs is specific naming, which includes assonants. Bright examples with /i:/ and /ɪ/ involve *Sweet Betsey* ("Sweet Betsey from Pike"); *Sweet Biddy Magee* ("Paddy works on the Erie"), *Sweet Evelina* ("Dear Evelina, sweet Evelina"), *Sweet Lilly* ("Lilly Dale"). The female images created by their names by default add up positive, bright tones to their cuddly characters.

Size contrast is well demonstrated in "Clementine", where clumsy Clementine is compared to her charming little sister. Her feet are so big, that herring boxes fit her perfectly. "Big" and "pejorative" /ɒ/ is matched versus "diminutive" /ɪ/, e.g.:

(7) *How I missed her! How I missed her!*

*How I missed my Clementine,  
Till I kissed her little sister,  
And forgot my Clementine.*

*And her sister with big feet:  
Light she was and like a fairy,  
And her shoes were number nine,  
Herring boxes without topses  
Sandals were for Clementine.  
("Clementine").*

The negative and "pejorative" meaning of triple /ɒ/ represented in the line *Three years have gone by, and I've not got a dollar* from the song "*Dear Evelina, sweet Evelina*". The story tells about one-sided love for a beautiful girl. It remains in dreams only as the man is poor.

To return to an earlier point, it is worth mentioning that the analyzed folk songs contain quite a number of onomatopoeic words with /i:/, where /i:/ clearly serves to elicit "continuity" and "visible quantity". *Weep* is the most commonly used onomatopoeic word to describe either personal feelings or sounds of nature, which can imitate a person's feelings (for more detail see 3.2.3). The length of /i:/ in *weep* elicits the infinite grief and pain of an abandoned man who sits on the riverbank for hours. His feelings are in contrast to his misery and failure to succeed:

(8) *Oh! My poor Nelly Gray,*

*They have taken you away,*

*And I'll never see my darling any more.*

*I'm a sitting by the river*

*And I'm weeping all the day,*

*For you've gone from the Old Kentucky shore.*

("Darling Nelly Gray")

(9) *I'll hang my harp on the weeping willow tree,*

*And may the world go well with thee.*

("There is a tavern in the town")

The latter case (9) has a similar scenario with the abovementioned onomatopoeic word (*weep*), which helps create a torch atmosphere. Infinite grief from losing a man is partly incorporated in the tree naming (*weeping willow tree*) and illustrates a romantic heartbreak with its help. It appears, therefore, that people mostly tend to hide their hard-hitting personal feelings due to hypothetical public disapproval and find it apposite to focus on natural phenomena. Besides, /w/ when initial may bear movement characteristics, such as "back and forth" like in *wag*, *wiggle*, *wobble* (Rhodes 1994) or show emotive content (Wescott 1975). Considering the combination of /w/ with /i:/ and /l/ in the illustrated examples (8) and (9), it can be seen that *weep* embraces "emotion" entailed by "tearing around", which is "endless". Regardless of the indirect

image description, the atmosphere evokes certain positive feelings towards the female images in the analyzed songs.

Interestingly enough, regularly repeated diminutive /ɪ/, which is perceived as the one that can penetrate everything according to Plato (Sedley 2013), may extremely intensify any context. For example, the song, in which a repentant prisoner refers to mothers (a female image) with a homily on how to bring up kids to avoid negative consequences (background), keeps warning in the respective words. Life gets insignificant, pitiable, and shrimpish (mind the quantity of /ɪ/ in synonyms) in its every aspect, when a person is in jail, as illustrated in

(10) *Spend your lives in sin and misery*

*In the house of the Rising Sun.*

("The house of the rising sun")

Diphthongs are supposed to be intrinsically powerful in image creating, as they comprise two sounds. /a/ and /ə/ showed the highest incidence as the "nucleus", whereas /ɪ/ and /ʊ/ are their most frequent glides. Generally speaking, diphthongs in sound symbolism studies are considered as combinations of two sounds with their individual meanings mingled. Having analyzed American song folklore, it is possible to claim that diphthong assonants, regardless of origin, are primarily used to set the mood and rhythm in a couplet. The most obvious reason as to why they contribute to rhythm seems due to similarities with music sounds, e.g.:

(11) *Chickens a-crowin' on Sourwood Mountain,*

*Hey, ho, diddle-um day.*

*So many pretty girls I can't count 'em,*

*Hey, ho, diddle-um day.*

("Sourwood Mountain")

(12) *Near a cavern, across from a canyon,*

*Excavating for a mine,*

*Lived a miner, forty-niner*

*And his daughter Clementine.*

("Clementine")

(13) *The juniper tree, hi-ho, hi-ho!*

*The juniper tree, hi-ho!*

*But a great deal of good, I know, I know!*

*A great deal of good, I know!*

*Now around and around we go, we go!*

*Around and around we go!*

("Old sister Phoebe")

The diphthong /aɪ/ also proved to be productive in lullabies for pacifying conditions, as it resembles the word "bye-bye" and slows down the tempo (Сташко 2016; Stashko 2016), e.g.:

(14) *Hush-a-bye, don't you cry*

*Go to sleepy little baby.*

*Go to sleepy little baby.*

*When you wake, you shall have*

*All the pretty little horses.*

*All the pretty little horses.*

("All the pretty little horses")

Overall, in the author's humble opinion, untrained observers find it impossible to distinguish assonants and immediately interpret the meaning they convey. The first and

foremost reason is that we grasp such cases subconsciously as they are subtle. No matter what, though, the sound should enforce the meaning. As a consequence of this, we receive a mosaic of tones and tints to our mood while listening to a song. The examples above clearly show evidence to how assonance contributes to creation and interpretation of the very female images and relevant background.

### 3.2.2 Alliteration

Turning now to the question of alliteration, it is important to start with its definition. The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (*s.a.*) treats **alliteration** (aka *head rhyme* or *initial rhyme*) as the repetition of usually initial consonant sounds in two or more neighboring words or syllables (such as *wild* and *woolly*, *threatening throngs*). Alliterated lines contribute to a gratifying effect to the ear and can also build up a subliminal bridge to faster connotation decoding.

American song folklore features four essential consonant groups: labio-velar approximant /w/, sonorants (/m/, /n/, /l/), velar stops (/k/, /g/), and sibilants (/s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /θ/, and /ð/).

The phoneme /w/ has several recorded meanings: poorly resolvable onset or back and forth movement (Rhodes 1994), and emotive content (Wescott 1975). Therefore, the effect of alliteration in the example below may produce a high emotional fuss of a man who fell in love with a beautiful girl:

(15) *Weep all you little rains.*

*Wail, winds, wail.*

*All along, along,*

*Along the Colorado trail.*

("Colorado trail")

His mood is depicted with characteristics typical of winds and rains to avoid wordy explanations. The onomatopoeic *weep* in combination with /i:/ shows his feeling of an endless grief (see example (9) above for a detailed explanation). A similar scenario is depicted in other folk songs, where descriptions of natural phenomena substitute for human feelings thus creating even stronger associations.

(16) *Wave willows, murmur waters,*

*Golden sunbeams, smile!*

*Earthly music cannot waken*

*Lovely Annie Lisle.*

("Annie Lisle")

We cannot ignore the way the letter "w" is written, as it resembles the movements trees make when it is windy. So the meaning is supported at a graphical level too. The female image herein evokes a feeling of continuous "sorrow" and "pain".

Particular attention should be paid to sonorants /m/, /n/, /l/, which are considered "soft", "nice" (Crystal 2009), and "gliding" (Sedley 2013). A bright example to illustrate it is the lullaby "All the pretty little horses". It is made up of 122 words in total, 59 of which are soft sonorants /m/, /n/, /l/, viz.: /l/ appears 42 times, /n/ is represented 10 times, and /m/ is used 7 times. To our best knowledge, there is evident affinity between "soft", "nice", and "gliding" /m/, /n/, /l/ sounds and gentle, soft, lingering streaks of female images. The phonemes /m/, /n/, /l/ are defined "nice" not because they are part of "nice" words (*love, lullaby, tenderness, mom, nanny, lamby*), but because they are "soft" and "long" according to the phonetic classification.

Considering the /k/-/g/ group it is interesting to see how these sounds contribute to image creation as they are interpreted as "ugly", "hard", "short", and "abrupt" (Crystal 2009). Moreover, /g/ belongs to the top hated sounds in English. These sounds are

meant to inspire sharp actions, as in the song "Just before the battle, mother" with the images of the mother and her son who is a soldier. The song possesses myriad "war" words with /k/ and /g/ (*forget, cruel, kill, signal, cry*). Thus, the background for the images is dull, rough, and gloomy; the soldier's mood reflects every element (Сташко 2016; Stashko 2016). The image of the mother becomes distinct in the refrain section, where sonorant /m/, /n/, /l/ sounds cushion the external conditions and generate a convincing image on this very opposition:

(17) *Oh, I long to see you, mother,*  
*And the loving ones at home,*  
*But I'll never leave our banner,*  
*Till in honor I can come.*  
("Just before the battle, mother")

Another relevant group is represented by sibilants /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /θ/, and /ð/. It can be seen that the grapheme "s" looks serpentine (EPDS 2006) like in "I'll take you home again, Kathleen" (*where laughs the little silver stream*). The little silver stream looks like "a pleasant little snake" that welcomes everyone to come and relax nearby. So is the female image, – "gliding" and "pleasant to relax with". Similarly, on a phonemic level, making /s/ and /θ/ we produce slurping and sipping sounds, which are successfully incorporated into relevant onomatopoes *slurp* and *sip*. The example below witnesses the onomatopoeic *sip*, reinforced by /s/, and is interpreted as "seductive" and "moist" (EPDS 2006):

(18) *The prettiest girl I ever saw*  
*Was sippin' cider through a straw.*  
*Was sippin' cider through a straw.*  
("Sipping cider through a straw")



As "all sibilants are pronounced with an expulsion of breath", they are most appropriate for imitating "blowing or hard breathing" (Sedley 2013), which is also true for the song "Sipping cider through a straw". The female image herein features "seduction" and "relaxation", exactly like in several other cases:

(19) *Will you come with me, my Phyllis dear*  
*To yon blue mountain free?*  
*Where **the** blossoms smell **the** sweetest,*  
*Come rove along with me.*

*Where the river runs like silver*  
*And **the** birds **they** sing so sweet*  
*I have a cabin, Phyllis,*  
*And something good to eat.*  
("Wait for the wagon")

(20) *You ought to see my **Cindy**,*  
***She** lives away down south.*  
***She's** so sweet **the** honeybees*  
***Swarm** around her mouth.*  
("Cindy")

(21) ***She** sang and **she** shouted*  
*And danced o'er the plain,*  
*And made a great show*  
*For the whole wagon train.*  
("Sweet Betsey from Pike")

(22) *I had a dream the other night*  
*When everything was still.*

*I thought I saw Susanna*  
*A-coming down the hill.*  
("Oh! Susanna")

Furthermore, some studies show that /z/ may express power, feelings and liveliness (Sedley 2013). Thus, the latter examples (22) additionally attribute certain action and liveliness to the female image.

### 3.2.3 Onomatopoeia

To start with, it is essential to point out that **onomatopoeia** is considered "the formation of words through the imitation of sounds from nature", e.g.: *cock-a-doodle-doo*, *meow*, *splash*. It is interesting to know that, in fact, the presence of so many imitative words in a language spawned the linguistic *Bowwow Theory*, which postulates that a language originated in imitation of natural sounds (such as those of birds, dogs, or thunder).

Some dictionaries on linguistics (DES 1999; DLP 2008) appeal to onomatopoeia when describing sound symbolism. Though Crystal refers to onomatopoeia as part of sound symbolism and states that the abovementioned term "is used to refer to a direct association between the form and the meaning of language: the sounds used reflect properties of the external world, as in cases of onomatopoeia (e.g., *cuckoo*, *murmur*, *crash*) and other forms of synaesthesia" (DLP 2008: 443). So, it is evident that onomatopoeic words help create realistic images and their emotions, which is an important aspect in the current research. To illustrate the result, several general assumptions may be made:

To begin with, the selected folk songs showed three key groups of onomatopoeic words typical of American song folklore:

1. Onomatopoeic clusters of chaotic sound and image type, which mirror music sounds (*lolly-too-dum, too-dum, lolly-too-dum-day; hoodle-dang, fol-de-dye do, hoodle-dang, fol-de-day; ri tu di na ri tu di na; tra-la-la-la-la*).

The use of such clusters adds rhythmical cadences to the texts, which is particularly essential in songs and can be illustrated in the folk song "Lolly too dum":

(23) *As I went out one morning to take the pleasant air,*

***Lolly too dum, too dum, lolly too dum day.***

*As I went out one morning to take the pleasant air,*

*I overheard a mother a-scolding her daughter fair,*

***Lolly too dum, too dum, lolly too dum day.***

("Lolly too dum")

Furthermore, onomatopoeia makes the atmosphere description herein livelier, funnier, and interesting, appealing directly to the senses of the listener. Thus, it is noticeable that in the analyzed songs, onomatopoeic clusters of this type are mostly used to contribute to a humorous effect. The song "Sweet Betsy from Pike" brightly demonstrates it:

(24) *Out on the prairie one bright starry night,*

*They broke out the whisky and Betsey got tight;*

*She sang and she shouted and danced o'er the plain,*

*And made a great show for the whole wagon train.*

***Hoodle dang, fol-de-dye do,***

***Hoodle dang, fol-de day.***

("Sweet Betsy from Pike")

Betsy got dizzy and agile in a public place, which is brightly illustrated lexically. Her frisky mood is conveyed by handy means of stylistics, such as anaphora, polysyndeton, and onomatopoeia in particular.

Similarly, it is also true for lengthy ballads with descriptions of life episodes, which are split by musical plunking or/and odd sound clusters, as in "Rattlesnake Mountain", one of America's favourite ballads:

(25) *He took the sarpent in his hand*

*And straightway went to Molly Bland.*

***Ri tu di na ri tu di na***

***Ri tu di na ri tu di na***

*Oh, Molly, Molly, here you see,*

*The pesky sarpent what bit me.*

***Ri tu di na ri tu di na***

***Ri tu di na ri tu di na***

*Now Molly had a ruby lip*

*With which pizen she did sip.*

***Ri tu di na ri tu di na***

***Ri tu di na ri tu di na***

("Rattlesnake Mountain")

Amended song versions have sound variations, quite frequently of extemporaneous character and tuned with whistling or humming. This reveals the on-the-spot mechanism of refrain making that corresponds to the creation of a work of art. By the way, the example from "Grandma grunts" nicely illustrates it too:

(26) *Grandma Grunts said a curious thing,*

*"Boys can **whistle** but the girls must sing."*

*Boys can **whistle**. Girls must sing,*

***Tra-la-la-la-la.***

*I asked my papa the reason why*

*Girls couldn't **whistle** as well as I.*

*He says to me, "It's the natural thing*

*For boys to **whistle** and girls to sing.*

*("Grandma grunts")*

Onomatopoeic *whistle* (real whistling in performing the song included) intensified with *tra-la-la-la-la* highlights lightness and ease in the images. Boys and girls are balanced in their "musts".

Each case presented above demonstrates verse-final or refrain/chorus-final repetitions, which help increase rhythm and the informal atmosphere created by the song. In addition, it may force the listener to hear the sounds the words reflect. Hence, the listener cannot but enter the world created by the singer with the help of these words. Pure sounds appear to be simple but fast and powerful emotional messages.

2. Words of imitative origin, which resemble relevant sounds of nature (*bark; hush; buzz; murmur*).

The most obvious reasons for their excessive use are simplicity and on-the-spot effect in complex. There is no need to use any additional terms to express sound or meaning. Here are excerpted lines from "Annie Lisle":

(27) *Wave willows, **murmur** waters,*

*Golden sunbeams, smile!*

*Earthly music cannot waken*

*Lovely Annie Lisle.*

("Annie Lisle")

Thus, the onomatopoeic verb "to murmur" facilitates complex descriptions of people's feelings on the occasion of Annie's death whereas abundant words might break her eternal peace. The girl is perceived an angel. It is noticeable that the sounds of nature skillfully substitute discontinuous explanations of such complex feelings as mourning, happiness, embarrassment, surprise, etc.

The results show that American folklore has plenty of songs with visualisable though not directly embedded female images or with no clear description of those. As can be seen from "The Colorado trail", which shows a man who feels sad as his beloved passed away, but his feelings are expressed through nature:

(28) *Weep all you little rains.*

*Wail, winds, wail.*

*All along, along,*

*Along the Colorado trail.*

("The Colorado trail")

In an attempt to hide his weakness, the man opts for transferring his emotional status onto winds and rains. He tries different images to create his own and therefore contribute to showing key characteristics of the woman he dotes on. Public demonstration of feelings and emotions among men are considered a priori failing in many cultures and Americans are not an exception. On the other side, it is quite customary for women to describe their feelings from the 1<sup>st</sup> person, which is illustrated in "Careless love":

(29) *Love, oh love, oh careless love*

*Night and day, I weep and moan*

*You brought the wrong man into this life of mine  
For my sins, till judgment I'll atone.  
("Careless love")*

A girl fell in love with the wrong man, which makes her suffer day and night. Her grief is spectacularly intensified, much with the help of repetition, synonyms, inversion, and, of course, onomatopoeia. Thus, her love seems not only careless, but also cruel.

3. Onomatopoeic words made up by means of alliteration or assonance, which mirror relevant sounds of mixed origin (*root-e-toot-toot*).

This group is the least numerous, though such words feature concise sound prototypes. The word "root-e-toot-toot" itself in "Frankie and Johnny" is onomatopoeically used to suggest the full resonant sound a gun makes when its trigger is released:

(30) *Then Frankie pulled back her kimono,  
And she pulled out a small .44  
And **root-e-toot-toot** three times she shot  
Right through that hardwood door.  
("Frankie and Johnny")*

The word *root-e-toot-toot* has harsh consonants /r/ and /t/ for the listener to feel ruthlessness, which is easily read in the girl's character.

It is necessary to point out the fact that the onomatopoeic words observed in the analyzed folk songs are mainly of a monosyllabic nature, e.g., *crack, cry, hush, knock, pip, sigh, wail, weep, whirl, yell, etc.* On the one hand, a possible reason may be the relative simplicity of lexical contents in folk songs. On the other hand, short and abrupt words refer to similar short and abrupt sounds and therefore convey the images faster. Compare, for example, the abovementioned "Rattlesnake Mountain" with abrupt and

harsh sounds in the presented onomatopoeic words *rattle*, *cry*, *howl* and "Annie Lisle" with the onomatopes *murmur* and *chime*. Tintinnabulation and purling may seem abrupt but pleasant while rattling may be found rather annoying, especially in combination with howling and crying. The images created on such backgrounds will therefore possess similar association tints. The women described in the songs are both dead, which is a priori sad, though Molly from "Rattlesnake Mountain" was not cautious and got bitten by a snake, which is reflected in the onomatopes showing despair, while Annie's death is perceived duly and welcomed. Such assumptions are partly confirmed based on personal information about the author. Certain references to the origin unveiled some facts and thus provided a great deal of understanding.

On the whole, "Rattlesnake Mountain" is a traditional American folk song derived from one of the earliest known American ballads, "On Springfield Mountain". It is based on the events surrounding the death by snakebite of Timothy Merrick (or Mirick) on August 7, 1761 (Rattlesnake Mountain (song), *s.a.*).

Previous research has demonstrated little information regarding the storyline trigger to "Annie Lisle" (Fuld 2000). Henry Thompson, the alleged author of the lyrics, has a specific view towards feelings evoked by the death of a loved one. Whiny songs typical of black minstrels brought him great success and became popular in America. He artfully depicted dead angelic young girls and fixed their latest desires using myriads of stylistic devices including onomatopoeia. The image of the dead girl Annie is created by the emotions of sadness and grief, coming from a young man who lost his beloved. She was speculated to have died of tuberculosis, although the lyric does not explicitly mention tuberculosis, or "consumption" as it was called then (author's note: in 1857) (Annie Lisle (song), *s.a.*). Supposedly, her terminal illness had caused much suffering, so her death was her salvation. However, the description of the nature that longs (*waving willows*, *murmuring waters*, *chiming bells*) softens the contrast of life and death.



Certain symbolism is present in the girl's name (*Annie Lisle*), which is translated from French as "lily". Not surprisingly, the girl is compared with the lily (*pure as the forest lily*). At first glance, this metaphorical comparison describes only the girl's beauty and purity. The detailed analysis of the lily as a symbol demonstrates it in the following way: "Lily is an emblem of purity, ... a symbol of the female principle. ... in Byzantium and among the Christianized Franks, was a sign of royalty (DS 1990: 188-189) and a symbol of death" (Heart 1997-2010; Venefica 2005-2010). As the flowers are most often associated with funerals, lilies symbolize that "the soul of the departed has received restored innocence after death" (Lily, *s.a.*).

Death-related symbolism is also confirmed by other lexical details of the song: *earthly music can not waken lovely Annie Lisle; on a bed of pain and anguish lay dear Annie Lisle*. In general, details may both enhance image characteristics, and distract them with the aim of drawing attention to other elements. We visualise the image of the soul, which got into heaven after earthly existence. The text and its figurative embodiment are in contradiction. Despite the powerful and sad storyline, the song melody is lively and fun, which allowed it to become a hymn melody for a number of high schools, universities, and colleges (*Annie Lisle (song), s.a.*).

As it has just been proved, the word choice of onomatopoeia in folk songs can be lyrical or harsh in nature. We cannot ignore the fact that *cry* and *weep* significantly dominate (every 6<sup>th</sup> song with onomatopoeia has either the former or the latter), which proves a considerable emphasis on emotional flurries, feelings, and mood. Words are generated by the content itself and can be of any sort or kind: mourn, sorrow, happiness, anger, love, horror, and so on. Negative emotions *per se* may incidentally be perceived lyrical if the overall image(s) and the background support a lyrical mood.

Finally, it is also important to introduce data concerning the frequency of onomatopoeic words recorded in American folk songs with female images. The figure is quite impressive – it equals 72%, which means seven in 10 analyzed songs had one

or more cases of usage of onomatopoeia. It has been estimated that lullabies most often have words imitating the sounds of animals (*bark*), birds (*crow*), and whispering (*hush*), while words that imitate human sounds (*cry*) occur in the description of men. Words imitating sounds of nature (*bubble*) and inanimate objects (*chime*) have been recorded in the description of the background.

How do onomatopes not connected to female images describe them? The examples below will illustrate it. *Hush-a-bye* ("All the pretty little horses"), *hush* ("Hush, little baby", "Cradle song") produced by the mother help the baby sleep peacefully whereas the mother is perceived as soft, tender, caring. In some cases, lullabies contain onomatopoeic verbs to create natural sounds of silence or noise, which are essential to ensure that the child feels comfortable during sleep, such as *to creep*, *to tiptoe* ("Mighty lak' a rose"), *to crow* ("Cradle song"). These songs do not directly describe the mother, and she may be present or absent, but these instances of onomatopoeia make it possible to focus on the atmosphere around the child, which was apparently created by the mother. She is presented like a patron, a guardian, and an angel in every lullaby.

#### **4. Conclusions and perspectives**

Folk songs are undoubtedly one of the best means to pass on living culture or traditions to future generations. The achievement and certain grandeur of song folklore are not found in the minimum content that it intended to give people. Rather, they are mirrored in the flexibility of the image, in the capacity of the internal form to inspire different contents. One can speculate whether images are accurate enough to show objective matters, though. In any case, there is always room for analysis, creative thinking, and individual perception.

Truly, there exist many researches, considerations and viewpoints in the sphere of sound symbolism. However, the issue arises that there is no integrated approach to interpreting the meaning of sounds, which, in turn, may lead to misunderstanding or

confusion in terms of images created by them. Due to context in a particular story, there is a certain guarantee of accuracy in image characteristics.

The conducted analysis of sound symbolism cases in American folk songs with female images enables us to draw certain conclusions. Doubtless, sound-symbolic language is widely used in folk songs to thoroughly convey relevant images, feelings, and emotions. The reason for that is its frequent usage in everyday language, which is then reflected in folk songs. Moreover, the song tends to mirror auditory sensations, that is why sound perception of images frequently follows situation descriptions. Relevant sound clusters are often used to describe indirect characteristics of the addressant / addressee and their emotional state in a particular situation or to create a particular atmosphere. Thus, in some cases the use of onomatopoes, for instance, allows the avoidance of excessive verbiage to create an image. Most cases of sound symbolism elicit subliminal influences; however, they help intensify their impact on the creation of images or their core background.

To sum up, it is worth noting that phonetic means when applied in complex help create musicality, precision, refinement and enhance image creation processes, allowing a listener to focus not only on the content but also on the form of organization of the song text. Sound symbolism influences a listener's sense of reality in the process of interpreting images and proves the links between a sound and its meaning.

Therefore, phonetics does matter in image creating and understanding processes. The current research illustrates that American women were and are treated with love and caress. They are perceived as soft and tender mothers, loved and loving girlfriends and wives. However, the most evident feature typical of Americans is that a woman is respected and iconized regardless of her position, status or appearance.

Further research in this area may specify mechanisms or methods to interpret male images in English and American folk songs and texts of other genres. Cognitive aspects

of stylistic and musical means of creating images may also be highlighted; a complex interdisciplinary approach to their analysis may appear productive.

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### **List of abbreviations**

DES – Dictionary of English sound

DLP – Dictionary of linguistics and phonetics

DS – Dictionary of symbols

EPDS – Euphonics: a poet's dictionary of sounds

ISSP – Introduction: sound-symbolic processes. Sound symbolism.

MWOD – Merriam-Webster online dictionary

<p><b>Contact data</b>  Halyna Stashko  CSc. (Philology)  Senior Lecturer  Interpreters' / Translators'  Department, Kyiv National  Linguistic University, 73,  Velyka Vasyl'kivs'ka St.,  Kyiv, 03680, Ukraine.  e-mail:  <a href="mailto:galinastashko@gmail.com">galinastashko@gmail.com</a></p>		<p><b>Fields of interest</b></p> <p>Stylistics, phonetics,  text linguistics,  folklore studies,  ethnopoetics.</p>
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### Résumé in English

The present discussion addresses the issue of sound symbolism in American folk songs with female images. A folk song is lexically and morphologically simple, though its connotative capacity is a hundredfold bigger. Each song mirrors the experience of generations, their customs and beliefs, fears and affections, love and sorrow. Folk songs are abundant with sound symbolic combinations that contribute to a certain atmosphere essential for the images and stories described in them. Though the researchers on sound symbolism differ in views, the analysis reveals that the role of phonetic means of stylistics in creating realistic images is highly important. The results obtained prove the link between sound and meaning. Such phonetic means of stylistics as assonance, alliteration, and onomatopoeia perform several functions in the poetic text: they reinforce the meanings of words; set the mood typical of the characters; make the atmosphere description livelier, brighter and comprehensive, appealing directly to the senses of the listener; create internal rhythmicity. Thus, it is noticeable that in the analyzed songs the sounds /i:/ and /ɪ/ repeated in juxtaposition denote diminutive size describing a girl, while sonorants /m/, /n/, and /l/ mirror such characteristics as tenderness, pleasure, and softness. Diphthong assonants, regardless of origin, are primarily used to set the mood and rhythm in a couplet due to their similarities with musical sounds. /k/ and /g/ sounds are meant to inspire sharp actions and mainly incorporated in rough or gloomy background descriptions to contrast soft female images. Sibilants /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /θ/, and /ð/ are heavily spotted in romantic songs about



love where they additionally attribute certain actions and liveliness to the female image. Onomatopoeic clusters of chaotic sound and image types, which mirror musical sounds, add rhythmical cadences to the poetic text whereas words of imitative origin, which resemble relevant sounds of nature, appear to have on-the-spot effects in terms of fast and powerful emotional messages. Thus, usage of sound symbolic clusters in folk songs allows the avoidance of excessive verbiage to create an image. There are grounds to think that the results can be extrapolated to the interpretation of male images in folk songs or other poetic texts.

**Key words:** American song folklore, sound symbolism, onomatopoeia, assonance, alliteration, female images.

### **Résumé in German (translation by Alla Kapusch)**

Im vorliegenden Artikel wird das Thema des Lautsymbolismus in den amerikanischen Volksliedern mit Frauengestalten betrachtet. Ein folkloristisches Lied ist in lexikalischer und morphologischer Hinsicht einfach im Vergleich zu seiner konnotativen Erfülltheit. Jedes Lied spiegelt die Erfahrung der Generationen, ihre Bräuche und Glaubensvorstellungen, Ängste und Verbundenheiten, Liebe und Kummer wider. Die Volkslieder enthalten eine große Anzahl Beispiele für Lautsymbolismus, die zu einer bestimmten Atmosphäre beitragen, die für die Schaffung von in diesen Liedern beschriebenen Gestalten und Geschichten notwendig ist. Obwohl die Meinungen der Wissenschaftler in Bezug auf Lautsymbolismus unterschiedlich sind, zeigt die Analyse, dass die Rolle von phonetischen Mitteln der Stilistik für die Schaffung der realistischen Gestalten sehr bedeutend ist. Die erhaltenen Ergebnisse bestätigen die Verbindung zwischen Laut und Bedeutung. Solche phonetischen Mittel der Stilistik wie Assonanz, Alliteration und Onomatopöie erfüllen in einem poetischen Text mehrere Funktionen: sie verstärken Wortbedeutungen; schaffen eine für die Figuren charakteristische Stimmung; machen die Beschreibung der Atmosphäre lebendiger, farbiger und facettenreicher, indem sie sich unmittelbar an die Gefühle des Hörers wenden; schaffen den inneren Rhythmus. Von diesem

Standpunkt aus kann man feststellen, dass in den analysierten Liedern bei der Beschreibung eines Mädchens die Laute /i:/ und /I/, die im Lied in unmittelbarer Nähe stehen, Miniaturgröße bezeichnen, während die Sonorlaute /m/, /n/ und /l/ solche Eigenschaften wie Zärtlichkeit, Lust und Sanftheit widerspiegeln. Assonierende Diphtonge, unabhängig von dem Typ, werden wegen ihrer Ähnlichkeit mit den musikalischen Tönen hauptsächlich für die Schaffung einer bestimmten Stimmung und des Versrhythmus verwendet. Es wurde festgestellt, dass die Laute /k/ und /g/ zu harten Handlungen inspirieren und hauptsächlich in den Beschreibungen des rauhen oder düsteren Hintergrunds verwendet werden, der als Kontrast zu den zärtlichen Frauengestalten auftritt. Die Sibilanten /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /θ/ und /ð/ sind oft in den romantischen Liebesliedern vorhanden, wo sie zusätzlich die Aufmerksamkeit des Hörers auf spezifische Details des Figurenverhaltens ziehen und der Frauengestalt zusätzliche Dynamik verleihen. Onomatopoetische Cluster unbestimmten Charakters, die an die Töne der Musik erinnern, bringen eine rhythmische Harmonie in den poetischen Text herein, während die lautnachahmenden Wörter, die entsprechende Naturklänge imitieren, Emotionen optimal schnell und lakonisch wiedergeben. Die durchgeführte Analyse zeugt also davon, dass die Verwendung der Cluster mit Lautsymbolik in den folkloristischen Liedern es erlaubt, lexikalische Pleonasmen bei der Schaffung von Gestalten zu vermeiden. Es gibt Grund zur Annahme, dass diese Ergebnisse auf die Interpretation der Männergestalten in den folkloristischen Liedern oder anderen poetischen Texten extrapoliert werden können.

**Stichwörter:** amerikanisches folkloristisches Liedgut, Lautsymbolismus, Onomatopöie, Assonanz, Alliteration, Frauengestalten.

### **Résumé in French (translation by Dmytro Borys)**

L'article actuel traite de la question du symbolisme sonore dans les chansons folkloriques américaines avec des images féminines. Une chanson folklorique est simple léxicale et morphologiquement, bien que sa capacité de connotation soit beaucoup plus complexe. Chaque chanson reflète l'expérience des générations, leurs

coutumes et croyances, leurs peurs et leurs affections, leurs amours et leurs chagrins. Les chansons folkloriques abondent en exemples du symbolisme sonore qui contribuent à former une certaine ambiance essentielle pour créer les images et les histoires qui y sont décrites. Bien que les vues des chercheurs sur le symbolisme sonore diffèrent, l'analyse révèle que le rôle des moyens phonétiques de stylistique est très important dans la création d'images réalistes. Les résultats obtenus confirment le lien entre le son et le sens. Des moyens phonétiques de stylistique, y compris l'assonance, l'allitération et l'onomatopée, exécutent plusieurs fonctions dans le texte poétique: ils intensifient le sens des mots, forment une ambiance typique pour les personnages, créent une rythmique interne, rendent la description de l'atmosphère plus vivante, plus brillante et plus complète, appelant directement aux sens de l'auditeur. Ainsi, il est remarquable que dans les chansons analysées, les sons /i:/ et /ɪ/ répétés en juxtaposition désignent une fille gracile et de petite taille, tandis que les sonorants /m/, /n/ et /l/ reflètent des caractéristiques telles que la tendresse, le plaisir et la douceur. Les diphtongues assonants, quelle que soit leur origine, sont principalement utilisées pour donner au couplet une certaine ambiance et un rythme quelconque en raison de leurs similitudes avec les sons musicaux. Il est connu que les sons /k/ et /g/ servent à inspirer des actions incisives et sont principalement incorporés dans des contextes violents ou lugubres pour contraster les images féminines douces. Les sibilantes /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /θ/ et /ð/ sont souvent employées dans des chansons romantiques d'amour où elles attirent l'attention de l'auditeur en outre aux certaines particularités du comportement des personnages et ajoutent de la vivacité à l'image féminine. Les groupes onomatopéiques de sons au caractère indéterminé, qui rappellent les sons musicaux, ajoutent de l'harmonie rythmique au texte poétique tandis que des mots onomatopéiques, qui ressemblent à des sons de la nature, rendent les émotions de manière rapide et laconique. Ainsi, l'utilisation de groupes onomatopéiques dans des chansons folkloriques permet d'éviter un verbiage excessif dans la création de l'image. Il existe des raisons de penser que les résultats peuvent être applicables à l'interprétation des images masculines dans des chansons folkloriques ou d'autres textes poétiques.

**Mots-clés:** folklore de chansons américain, symbolisme sonore, onomatopée, assonance, allitération, images féminines.

### **Résumé in Russian**

В настоящей статье рассматривается тема звукового символизма в американских народных песнях с женскими образами. Фольклорная песня является лексически и морфологически простой в сравнении с её коннотативной наполненностью. Каждая песня отражает опыт поколений, их обычаи и верования, страхи и привязанности, любовь и печаль. Народные песни имеют множество примеров звукового символизма, которые способствуют определённой атмосфере, необходимой для создания образов и историй, описанных в них. Несмотря на то, что мнения учёных разделились насчёт звукового символизма, анализ показывает, что роль фонетических средств стилистики в создании реалистичных образов очень важна. Полученные результаты подтверждают связь между звуком и значением. Такие фонетические средства стилистики, как ассонанс, аллитерация и ономапопея, выполняют в поэтическом тексте несколько функций: они усиливают значения слов; создают настроение, характерное для персонажей; делают описание атмосферы более живым, ярким и многогранным, обращаясь непосредственно к чувствам слушателя; создают внутреннюю ритмичность. Исходя из этого, можно констатировать, что в анализируемых песнях при описании девушки, звуки /i:/ и /l/, которые находятся в песне в непосредственной близости, обозначают миниатюрный размер, тогда как сонорные /m/, /n/ и /l/ отражают такие характеристики, как нежность, удовольствие и мягкость. Ассонанты-дифтонги, независимо от их типа, в основном используются для создания определённого настроения и ритма в куплете из-за их сходства с музыкальными звуками. Определено, что звуки /k/ и /g/ вдохновляют на резкие действия и в основном используются в описаниях грубого или мрачного фона, который выступает контрастом для нежных женских образов. Сибиллянты /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /θ/ и /ð/ часто присутствуют в романтических песнях о любви, где они дополнительно привлекают внимание слушателя к

специфическим деталям поведения персонажа и добавляют динамичность женскому образу. Ономатопозитические кластеры неопределённого характера, которые напоминают звуки музыки, приносят ритмическую гармонию в поэтический текст, тогда как звукоподражательные слова, которые имитируют соответствующие звуки природы, оптимально быстро и лаконично передают эмоции. Таким образом, проведенный анализ свидетельствует о том, что использование звуко-символических кластеров в фольклорных песнях позволяет избежать чрезмерной многословности при создании образов. Есть основания полагать, что результаты могут быть экстраполированы на интерпретацию мужских образов в фольклорных песнях или в других поэтических текстах.

**Ключевые слова:** американский песенный фольклор, звуковой символизм, ономатопея, ассонанс, аллитерация, женские образы.

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