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DOI: 10.35765/pk.2020.2902.13

Lost Sensoria: Anthropological Research on Sensory Experience in the Context of Multiculturalism

ABSTRACT

Sensory experiences have generated a diverse sociological, anthropological and psychological literature. This paper illustrates an approach to the idea of lost sensoria and their social and cultural manifestations. Images of sensory experience, postulated synchronicity of sensory processes and the concept of ethnopoetics constitute a theoretical basis for the concept of lost sensory experience.

KEYWORDS: sensorium, anthropology, multiculturalism

STRESZCZENIE

Zagubione sensoria: antropologiczne badania nad doświadczeniem sensualnym w kontekście wielokulturowości

Tematem niniejszego studium jest doświadczenie sensoryczne oraz jego społeczne manifestacje. Wychodząc od klasycznego porządku pięciu zmysłów, przedstawione zostaną alternatywne porządki sensoryczne oraz ich społeczne i kulturowe umocowanie. Językowe obrazy doświadczenia zmysłowego, postulowana synchroniczność procesów sensorycznych oraz koncepcja etnopoetyki stanowią podstawę prezentowanej koncepcji zagubionych sensorii.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: sensorium, antropologia, wielokulturowość

Ethnic sensoria provide an example of culturally defined forms of recording and recalling of social memory, expressed through individual bodily topographies, or specific maps of experience along with their embodiments. Analogous to a computer system restore point, which, once established, stores more than just the usual application data, but also collects whatever expresses our emotional relationship to the “memorable,” such

Suggested citation: Grzonka, D. (2020). Lost Sensoria: Anthropological Research on Sensory Experience in the Context of Multiculturalism. *Perspektywy Kultury*, 2(29), s. 173–189. DOI: 10.35765/pk.2020.2902.13.

Submitted: 12.12.2019

Accepted: 05.30.2020

as family photos and music files, so in the case of ethnic sensoria, meaning making includes both what is visible for “all” and what would be obscured to outsiders due to the number of details involved. It is a system of ordering experience and at the same time a filter that lets through only certain data streams. Alternative or lost sensoria are obviously more like metaphors reflecting the complexity of cultural systems based on different sensual orders than specific psychophysical predispositions to process specific sensory experiences. Although we all have the same bodily shell, we use it in various ways, as is the case with ways of seeing, hearing, touch patterns and combining or complementing maps of sensual experiences.

Writing about Western culture and contrasting it with selected non-European cultures, I deliberately use a strongly flattened perspective. It involves an approximation of certain regularities, thinking styles and sensory orders along with some attempts to set them within a broader spectrum of cultural practices, designed to bring out the fairly banal fact that every society is a kind of laboratory of the senses supplying the “local market” with only such models which are desirable. In recent years, many much literature has been devoted to the analysis of the complexity of the strategies of vision and the phenomenon of vision-centrism in Western culture, recognizing that it is the cultural dominant affecting both artistic expressions and the nature of human relationships related to the control of visibility (Bodzioch-Bryła, Dorak-Wojakowska & Smołucha, 2017; MacLaury, Paramei & Dedrick, 2007; Darley, 2000; Manghani, Piper & Simons, 2006). It is somewhat ironic to say that the authors demand a new “look,” “perspective,” “different angle,” or to suggest we use a “different lens” in the context of the postulated polysensoriality of culture.

Even when we try to capture the phenomena of haptic, sonic, or olfactory cultures, it is difficult for us to describe them differently than by making references to the visual sphere. What we define as “fragrance,” “color,” “sound,” or “taste” usually calls for more precise language strategies, in which metaphors or intentional poetry will be reserved for a more artistic activity than the daily usage. In Polish, we can say that something “looks pretty” and something else “smells pretty,” but a “pretty taste” or “pretty touch” go beyond the linguistic usage based on visualization of certain states: sensual and emotional, and therefore on the use of words to describe what we see to name experiences coming from another repertoire of our sensorium. Diane Ackerman in her work on the history of sensory experience in Western culture even calls for new scent maps and corresponding linguistic forms of expression to be re-drawn in the same way that cartographers create names for spatial formations. The author argues that “there should be a word for the way the top of an infant’s head smells” and she proposes a solution to this: both talcumy and fresh, unpolluted by

life and diet.” In another place she writes about the fact that “in a world sayable and lush... smells are often right on the tip of our tongues—but no closer—and it gives them a kind of magical distance, a mystery, a power without a name, a sacredness.”

Writing about sensual experience I focus more on its socio-cultural conditioning, not the neural or cognitive aspects of the processing of sensory stimuli. Thus is stress how we favor certain types of sensations and how the individual senses allow us to create semantic maps describing our experience of the world, on top of our emotional roots in social relationships based on sharing sensations and sharing a particular sensual practice. The sensual practices of interest are those generally seen as absorbing our corporeality (rituals, treatments revolving around the body, performances, and sexual practices) and those which indirectly affect our functioning: memories, mnemonics, culturally defined forms of feeling, and finally, artistic and linguistic aspects of sensory processing into understandable forms of communication. Sensualisms can be expressed through less obvious forms of expression, for example, textiles, or any other tangible manifestations of culture built on sensory participation. The area of what is referred to as the visual also includes vision deficits which are not based on biological dysfunction, but on the cultural conditioning of bypassing certain aspects of immediacy (intentional blindness, “turning the blind eye,” symbolic “invisibility”). Similarly, in the case of sense-related vocabulary, hypersensual cultures based on “overclocked” sensuality are one point of the continuum that extends across average-sensual cultures up to the sensory deficit ones. Michelle Evans and Andrew Whittaker even indicate that a number of organizations of hearing impaired and deaf persons in the UK stress that we are dealing not with deficits, but with alternative sensoria. The Culturally Deaf have their own “natives” whose first language is sign language (Evans & Whittaker, 2010). Touch expresses more than an experience of the material. In European culture it is linked with the concept of intimacy and innocence, and following the principle of opposites, also with visions of sin and suffering. Touch binds us to the “matter” and affects us through it. In medieval visions of paradise bliss, the saved enjoy pleasant smells, sounds and images, while the image of the torments of Hell is dominated by tactile notions, with all their complex machinery of influence through the senses (Classen, 2012, pp. 63–64).

Sensual experience is associated with ethical experience. “Bad touch” is a euphemism commonly signifying prohibited forms of sexuality, while “badmouthing” is a synonym for slander. Senses and sensory impressions are embedded in different ways in relationships and social spaces. One may be “touched” by a word, a gesture, or an idea. Our individual sensoria do not belong only to ourselves, but are partly social projects, comprising

our forms of expression with language. To continue the theme of touch, Constance Classen cites numerous “scientific” theories of the nineteenth century, including the recommendations of John B. Watson, one of the founding fathers of behaviorism, who warned mothers against any physical expression of affection (cuddling, kissing, touching) towards small children. Watson argued that the consequence of receiving affection in childhood would be helplessness in adult life (Classen, 2012, p. 190). Sensualizing child rearing practices is present in multi-sensory spaces, an example of which would be urban spaces in which sounds, smells, and plethora of color bombard our senses. Multisensoriality or polisensoriality are emphasized by the holistic nature of our social activity, but also by the cognitive one that cannot be reduced to the primacy of one sense. First of all, intercultural relations run through numerous perspectives sensual intersections, which emphasize or eliminate images of alienation. Multisensoriality is also a more general metaphor of activity inscribed in the concrete topography of the city. “Out of Sight” is a series of symposia organized by the University of Toronto, whose aim is to explore the possibilities of interpretation of the visual culture and visuality itself through senses remaining in opposition to sight (sound, smell, taste, and touch). In addition to the “classical” senses their syncretic connections appear in such as an audiosphere, a tactile space, or hypothetical “night senses” that facilitate orientation in a city shrouded in darkness. However, the domain of polisensoriality has been artistic activity (Whitehall, 2010, pp. 398–402).

This study follows several threads, and given the extraordinary diversity of existing theories: linguistic, anthropological, sociological, or psychological, associated with the study of the human sensorium. Additionally, it is a shortcut leading from hypothetical sensory identities, through elements of sensual anthropology and language toward ethnopoetics and cultural practices. Lost sensoria include sensual practices in their cultural manifestations that have survived as local forms of knowledge.

Starting from selected anthropological concepts and cognitive research focused on bodily experience, areas of sensory syncretism are identified in which the individual sensations are expressed through alternative sensoria. The empirical basis are ethnographic materials concerning the forms of reality perception (sonic, haptic, visual and other forms of embodiment in the form of rhythm, dance, rituals or other performative behaviors) rooted in cultural systems other than the Western world, whose specific properties are related to selected concepts of sensory anthropology and ethnology.

The search for collective sensory identity

Culturally diverse sensual semiotics produce different forms of expression. As the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis highlighted the relationship between language practices and thinking styles, cultural sensual expressions reveal the relationships between sensory practice and its narrative structure mediated in social relations. Laura Ahearn emphasizes that individual languages can in some way predispose users to think in a certain way, but it would be hard to clearly term this predisposition as deterministic. Language, thought and culture intermingle and are reflected in cultural practices (Ahearn, 2013, p. 79). Social scientists do not see any controversy in the aforementioned, so it would be almost a truism to emphasize the role of language as a medium of knowledge about the world, but a certain implication resulting from the adoption of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis escapes our attention. It is linked to the nature of the “medium” which is our body. Assuming that language provides us with ways to conceptualize, and these are part of our cognitive system, then the question arises whether we can ever understand postulated sensory maps produced in cultures radically different from our own? And if so, on what basis do we incorporate them into our “system” if they are a product of an interplay of meanings embedded in different topographies of memory, emotions and bodily activities?

Alternative sensoria as an element of social interaction are part of cultural practices through which society is constituted. Therefore, they are also a part of what the Finnish cognitive scientist and philosopher of the mind Raimo Tuomela described as a collective intentionality which constitutes the basis for the various forms of social ontology. Tuomela starts with the assumption that in order to understand and rationalize the rules governing the social world we should change our point of view and adopt a community perspective (We-Mode) because social relations are constituted by collective intentionality and not by the dominant role of the individual (I-Mode). The two systems of inquiry are not mutually substitutable, being governed by different laws, which creates specific networks of meanings that entwines participants in social interaction. Individual choices are important from the point of view of the individual in action, but are in fact subject to more basic group mechanisms. Community and the ideas of the common good and social order are created as top-down interpretations to which the individual agrees more or less consciously (Tuomela, 2013, pp. 15–16). In the context of our deliberations, this will be a framework for the interpretation of an individual sensorium, a kind of socialization to specific sensual practices that build a sense of community and, on the contrary, create a boundary for outsiders. Such mechanisms

are easier to see in the case of ethnic cultures, or separate professional or passionate groups united by their love of dancing, tastes or smells, people who make specific practice a keystone of their whole worldview.

Tuomela points to an important element of combining individual aspirations with community values. If we look at the social world as a system of positioning social roles, then the competences of an individual are determined in relation to an external reference point (family, organization, group, institution, corporation) and his or her participation in a given body presupposes acceptance by the group itself. However, groups may have, and often do have, a non-autonomous we-group mode. They are exposed to more complex structures based on the strength or authority of the leader. Acceptance is sometimes confused with assignment to a specific role (Tuomela, 2013, p. 30). Similarly, to the unit coordinating the movements of our body, a group also coordinates the behavior and even thought processes of its members. Collective intentionality building a sense of identity is reflected in cognitive processes. The group supports its members provided that they fully engage in its activities that share a common point of view. Group meaning-making, as a kind of thought and affect positioning, makes it easier to build spaces where individual sensualisms become parts of the “sentient machinery” and individuals become the cogs. Sensualisms may confirm the group bond, the simplest example of which would be the language of lovers, whose semantics usually traces the emotion and is a kind of a shared cognitive grid that facilitates the positioning of their emotions.

The cooperation which will not address a particular problem, but rather leads to the emergence of some kind of mental community built around a collaborative and shared sensory system, may raise a lot of objections from psychologists as an example of sociological reductionism. By no means am I suggesting that the hypothetical community of beliefs evokes a sensory community, but based on ethnographic analyses of ritual practices, we can assume that the space of symbolic relationships encodes individual forms of experiencing our physicality. An example of group redefining of what we call a “shared mood” will be every ritual behavior. The concept of interaction rituals appears in the model by Randal Collins, who wrote: “The center of an interaction ritual is the process in which participants develop a mutual focus of attention and become entrained in each other’s bodily micro-rhythms and emotions... a fine-grained flow of micro-events that build up in patterns of split seconds and ebb away in longer periods of minutes, hours, days. Rituals are constructed from a combination of ingredients that grow to differing levels of intensity, and result in the ritual outcomes of solidarity, symbolism and individual emotional energy” (Collins, 2004, p. 47).

The interaction ritual extends between the ritualistic act itself and a specific effect of this act, which produces a sense of group solidarity, individual emotional energy, and the confirmation of social norms and values. Bodily coexistence, shared mood, mutual focus and demarcating boundaries for the uninitiated (outsiders) is a prerequisite for the flow of micro events, which over time constitute more complex narratives of identity (Collins, 2004, p. 49). Rituals require synchronization of bodily behavior, but the sequence as such may occur in less ritual scenes as well. A gesture would be a form of memorization and a fixed sensory experience as a social practice encoding a specific way of reading reality. Dennis Waskul and Philip Vanini, in the introduction to a study of forms of embodiment, characterized the narrative body as a place where our individual stories become part of the stories that others make about us (Waskul & Vannini, 2006, p. 12).

Cognitive synchronization, or cognitive cooperation, as David Sloan Wilson, John Timmel, and Ralph Miller put it, should form the pinnacle pro-social activity of people. The example of social insects, which integrate their actions as a group, or psychological experiments more adequate to our everyday life reality using the method of brainstorming, allow authors to hypothesize that cognitive cooperation may extend beyond the individual's conscious control and activate instinctive mechanisms, evolutionary targeted towards the creation of stable populations (Wilson, Timmel, Miller, 2005, p. 35). Based on the existing ethnographic material and field notes collected by anthropologists documenting decision-making and problem solving of key issues in hunter-gatherer societies, whose life seems to be the most similar to the living conditions of our distant ancestors, the authors reconstruct a hypothetical environment of evolutionary adaptedness, in which synchronization and collective decision making took place in the past. The authors also argue that today these groups operate similarly, favoring collective selection process at the expense of individual autonomy. The process of parallel information processing by the group makes it easier to find right solutions, and it makes it possible to operate on a larger number of variables fleeing the obviously isolated individual perception (Wilson et al., 2005, p. 47).

Similar conclusions were reached by researchers dealing with how cultural patterns influence the functioning of neural networks and the ability to recognize social relationships related primarily to the susceptibility to risky behaviors. Christopher N. Cascio, a neurologist, and his colleagues, emphasize that cultural background moderates the relationships between brain activity associated with solving tasks concerning cognitive and behavioral activities such as risky behaviors (Cascio, O'Donnell, Simons-Morton, Bingham & Falk, 2017, p. 52). In the studies by Sloan and

Timmel on the ability to cooperate in a group (on the example of hunter-gatherer populations), it was stressed that the individual generally takes action in accordance with the will and interests of the group. In turn, Cascio and colleagues analyzed the factors affecting risk-taking (risky driving behavior). They indicated a correlation between increased sensitivity to social stimuli (ability to mentalize social processes), and the individuals' cultural background (Cascio et al., 2017, pp. 52–53). We shall not refer specifically to Cascio's research. Rather, let us invoke the final thesis, which says: culture is an important factor in the thinking processes. The authors recognize the concept of culture as the socioeconomic status of the individual (further referred to as SES) understood as the family, peer group, moral standards, lifestyles and daily behavior, as a consequence of immersion in a specified culture continuum (Cascio et al., 2017, pp. 50–51).

Cognitive synchronization built on a shared sensory model accompanies ritual activities. Such a possibility is indicated by Richard Schechner, opening a new perspective in the study of the forms of integration at the level of social practices. Analyzing the functions of performance, he points to the seven basic spheres in which it occurs: play, aesthetics, establishing identity, community support, healing, teaching and knowledge transfer, as well as connection to the holy or demonic (Schechner, 2006, pp. 63–64). At the same time, those areas are spheres of the synchronization of corporal, sensual and affective practices included in certain scenarios, the interiorization of which is based on the culture of participation.

Sensory ethno-politics

In the case of our discussion, an equivalent of the SES is shared sensory experience forming the basis for a wider system of cultural practices and affective components of memories as an example of collective narratives about the “inner” world of the individual. Language as a product of the community is also a tool of expression for the individual. John Lucy pointed to three main areas in which linguistic mechanisms are key to understanding the processes taking place in our consciousness. The American linguist indicates the necessity for research on the three levels of relations between language and thinking concerning reflection on the essence of language itself (research focused on exploring the basic mechanisms of language and on how any language affects our thinking); linguistic structure (study of how particular grammatical categories are key to understanding thought processes) and language use (studies on specific language practices) (Ahearn, 2013, p. 81).

For many ethnographers and anthropologists of language heavily influenced by Whorf, language was not only a communication system through which one can understand the rules governing the community, but above all it was a gateway to the inner world of ideas that constitute the human community. New linguistic concepts allowed research into the subjective aspects of language use in the 1970s. Ethnography of speaking developed through the work of Hymes and Basso. It focused on culturally conditioned aspects of communication, not only revealing the cognitive processes of the brain operation but also the ones occurring within the community and associated with the performative aspect of language use (DeBernardi, 1994, pp. 866–867). For example, research conducted by K. Basso among the Apaches has shown that contextual understanding of language requires not only proper language proficiency from researchers, but also knowledge of the local folklore, history, biographies of people, or even the physical topography of the area. Stories are located in a particular space, the physical characteristics of which support the narrative story line and facilitate identification with the protagonists (DeBernardi, 1994, p. 867). Keith Basso writes that when ethnographers look at a landscape or listen to local stories they miss out on their deeper meaning as those are shared only by members of the local community (Basso, 1996, p. 72). Basso analyzes language practices as a kind of spatial topography. The context is not only a complement to a story, but it is also embedded in specific natural or geographical realities. Regarding this, a researcher should be required to have a kind of social sense facilitating the recognition of experiences embedded in different contexts.

Ethnic spaces and local language practices are examples of cultural ethnopoetics; thus, practices present both in artistic activities and in the wider sphere of identity narratives through which the community marks its place in the world and creates its mental and linguistic representations. In this way, we come closer to the concept of ethnopoetics, the living culture of the word and parallel artistic activities embedded in the local reality of the community. The metaphoricality of words present in every language makes it easier to consolidate sensual practices in the network of narratives describing everyday life. However, ethnopoetics is a practice that allows for the expression of both social and individual conceptualizations of the world. Cultural aesthetics and everyday interactions co-create what anthropologists refer to as ethnopoetics, but they also allow building local identity symbolically united in affective empathy. The language of colors, gestures and movements, communities of fragrances and tastes, dance styles and forms of playing instruments, forms of verbal articulation and meanings attributed to them, can therefore include elements of individual sensoria in practices that differentiate the various communities.

Paul Friedrich, analyzing contemporary forms of ethnopoetics, emphasizes that in addition to aesthetic, literary or linguistic values, they also have a political dimension, and in this respect, they are a form of collective identity and strengthen the shared forms of their expression (Friedrich 2006, p. 226).

For Friedrich, the basic medium of ethnopoetics is the word. In my terms, ethnopoetics treats the word as a form of recalling the community of feeling. Thus, it is an element of sensory poetics, in which metaphors approximating sensual experience make certain communities unique and enable them to integrate their actions, analogous to the functioning of the body. I have so far tried to point out a few elements by which a human sensorium may be included in the area of cultural practices. Pointing to the shared affective and cognitive processes I did not intend to suggest that, within a sensory community practice, our individual sensory sensitivity to stimuli fades, nor to prove that these processes may contribute to the creation of a kind of a local “cognitive network.” Rather, both these approximations should be regarded as certain metaphors relating to the type of experiences that have no equivalent in the contemporary culture of the West. Sensory orders are nothing but information networks, in which the keystone is the dominant type of experience in specific cultural realities.

Materializations of color in the Andes

An example of a cultural keystone in which aesthetic categories and language coincide with a model of sensory information processing is the material culture, handicraft and above all, textiles in Andean culture. Here, polysemic experiences co-create a grid of meanings in which poetry is intertwined with a discovery of other, very often meandering metaphors linking different aspects of the experience. Veronica Cereceda, looking at the idea of beauty in Aymara Indians, gives us the following example: “*Ccharmiri ahanoni* means ‘beautiful’... But as part of the expression *ccharmmtatha*... means ‘flutter your eyelashes’... *Ccharmiri* is one who performs an action... of opening and closing their eyes, which suggests beauty, the source of which are not the eyes as such, but the movement the eyelids. Thus, half-closing of the eyelids appears to be graceful, playful, or perhaps signifies subtlety” (Cereceda, 2007, p. 22). Another synonym of beauty builds a grid of associations between the aesthetic category of “beauty,” a local bird species and a specific curved shape of the human nose. Cereceda wonders: “was it the bird that lent a particular gracefulness to the shape of the nose, or was it the nose profile that transposed some of its beauty onto the bird?” (Cereceda, 2007, p. 22). An example of local

crafts are fabrics produced according to a compositional principle of interweaving colors arranged in gradations from the darkest to the lightest ones. A weave in which transitions and connections between matte and glossy bands is called *k'isa* in Aymara, which literally corresponds to the word for a rainbow. Color gradations require from weavers the use of subtle transitions between shades, the arrangement of which resembles an creating optical illusion. "Weaving these scales of vivid colors is actually weaving illusions", Cereceda describes this technique of weaving. "They team with an intense, luminous glow and make such an impression of continuity, as though they were not a scale but a smooth whole of imperceptible transitions" (Cereceda, 2007, p. 25). The structure of selecting colors is to visualize the balance between light and darkness. To bring out the brilliance, weavers point out the lack of light, while dull colors allow for the extraction of light. This principle of composition creates an illusion built on the liquid color-matching. It is a kind of semiotics analogous to combining sounds in speech, the more that individual color combinations have their own names, therefore, ethnographers speak about articulation of colors in this context. Detailed rules explain how patterns are made, when individual connectors can occur, and we are able to follow further metamorphoses, moving from the abstract figures to figurative representations. Weaving is not only a selection of specific colors of yarns and stitches, but it is supposed to express more basic principles governing reality, the combination of opposites through gradual mediation.

The mechanism as such is found in the way of resolving conflicts, where the antagonists usually represent divergent opinions, which should be gradually deprived of mutually destructive power. In the local language this is called *inkuy* ("to meet," "to be in contradiction"), but similar dichotomies will occur at the junction of the individual and the collective, the rational and the instinctive, the natural and the artificial. In all these situations, the model of "color" allows one to find a solution, but the meanings ascribed to transitions between colors, their mutual reinforcing and canceling out provide an example of cultural modification of a sensorium, a recognition process taking into account not only what is in the field of view, but also what of the "negative" of it, absent in the direct perception, but constituting a symbolic closure. Lindsey Crickmay's work discusses the transmission of knowledge through textiles in the Andean region emphasizes that knowledge understood as a process of learning and acquiring knowledge in this cultural area is built on other models than the Western one, or taking into account the historical volatility of the concept of knowledge and those aspects thereof which they are not currently associated with it. Referring to the colonial lexicon, she points to the concept of *yachay*, which is defined in the Quechua language as knowledge acquired through

interaction with matter (organic, social, physical). This knowledge is not theoretical in nature; therefore, one cannot receive it in any other way than through contact with material substance. In the case of textiles, it involves more than just the method of their production. Rather, it is a “communion” with organic matter within a particular space. It is the acquisition of knowledge and skills comparable to the process of biological growth of plants, and finally pure creation analogous to the biblical Creation “from nothing”. This term appears in translations of prayers and songs of religious significance. According to the first translators who tried to render the rules of Christian thought in to local language, it was parallel with the act of creating, establishing relationships with holiness, initiating something that is to come into existence. However, within the semantic field of *yachay* there is also something nurturing and giving birth to something, becoming similar or identical to something else. Organic imagery indirectly diminishes differences between the subject and object and, taking into account that we are talking about the process of weaving, dyeing and wearing fabrics which would seem trivial from the point of view of Europeans, we enter the scope of the impact of ideas that cannot and do not bear any deeper meaning outside the local world. Simply put, “for us it’s just colored striped wool,” while for the residents it is an expression of their unity with nature (Crickmay, 1988, pp. 40–44). The process of “weaving” assumes that designs, shapes and colors exist beyond our perception. They are part of the matter that “interacts” with the person, or rather, the body of the craftsman. A weaver who reaches mastery is defined as a *santuyoq*, which literally means “possessing the saint,” and the creation of patterns is related to their discovery in oneself (Crickmay, 1988, p. 45).

Crickmay emphasizes that the focus on knowledge in the case of the Andean population includes a strong sensory component associated with physical closeness to the material space. Knowledge does not exist as a theoretical message and cannot be closed in a particular space, e.g.: “school,” “university,” or “library.” In Western culture, knowledge and the means for recording it favor sight-centrism (reading, writing, watching, publishing), while the other senses are not equally involved in the process of acquiring knowledge (Crickmay, 1988, p. 46). Penny Dransart, who conducted field research in Chile, also points to a certain ecological aspect of sensory control related to the adaptation for life in the concrete natural reality. The distinctive landscape, basically devoid of trees, created a preference for sight as a basic and persistent sense for the inhabitants of the shepherding culture of Islugi, conditioned to search for similarities and color patterns to distinguish their animals according to their color. Dransart paraphrases a famous saying about the beauty that lies in the eye of the beholder, writing in a similar manner about the role of color in the local

culture of the Islugi population, that constitutes the matrix of their whole social life (Dransart, 1988, p. 58).

Based on the concept of color by Johannes Itten and the seven contrasts he proposed: hue; light-dark contrast, cold-warm contrast, complementary contrast, simultaneous contrast, contrast of saturation and contrast of extension, the author emphasizes that regardless of their age, the residents of Islugi were able to distinguish the different contrasts of colors while finding a use for them in textiles, where color was based on the game of opposites. However, which seems surprising, they were hardly able to use the basic and, according to Itten, the simplest of contrasts: hue. Their own system was based on the concept of red as a color from which the others emerge and the rainbow as a harmony of colors (Dransart, 1988, p. 59). Colors of the textiles complimented or resulted from a wider system of practices, encoding religious symbols and sanctioning fundamental divisions and hierarchies.

A similar model, in which colors and transitions between them allow for an expression of more complex concepts, is found in the Andean medicinal practices. A description of a ceremony in which transitions between colors represent stages of transitioning from illness to recovery is given by Cereceda: “Square vs. round, dark vs. bright, respond on the semantic plane to the differences between sickness and health. The task of the native doctor consists of removing the optical difference through gradual color change... First white, to show what is asked. Then a blue gradation, to almost black, through which one returns to the darkness... From that moment, the colors will brighten up towards the center... (Crickmay, 1988, pp. 32–34). The final healing occurs by combining the dark and light colors, until their full communion. The steps of combining colors are intended to restore homeostasis, thanks to which the mind and body recover harmony. Disease is a disruption of balance, which can be recovered through a smooth transition between light and dark tones.

Sensory cultures—summary

Physical palpability of objects that make up the world is subject to gradation: first solids, then liquids, gases, air and light. Consequently, the credibility of the senses is a function of the state of matter of the objects that affect them... The five senses are our ‘interpreters and our journalists’ (Pradier, 2012, p. 330).

Having taken these sentences taken from the writings of the French encyclopedists of the eighteenth century, Jean-Marie Pradier placed them in

the context of the history of theater as an art, wherein intersensoriality combines different physical sensations and various forms of sensual experiences. The starting point is the experience of the body in all of its sensory manifestations, expressed by more than just an illustration or message to the viewer. Corporeality combines two areas of meaning: the biological nature and social context of our physicality, which is the most simply described as culture.

Senses as forms of gaining knowledge about the world (external, internal, social) are included in the sphere of our experience through various modifications regarding how the flow of sensations becomes noticeable (by ourselves), significant (sensory hierarchies) and also available (for others) through their materialization and symbolizations. Sensory cognition is mediated through language, i.e., through defined grammatical and expressive forms, we are able to make complete understandable and whole units out of these experiences. Should one use the metaphor of language, then our sensory experience would be a phoneme, while its graphic symbol would be its materialization in the form of social practices. Sensual grammar systems facilitate the inclusion of sensory experience in the sphere of social activity, and as different cultures use different graphical patterns of letters to encode the same sounds, so in case of postulated sensual grammars, based on the universal neuronal code conducting impulses, culturally determined systems are created.

Given the abundance of literature it was impossible signal the complexity of the issues presented as an attempt to capture the interplay of three elements: language, synchronicity and ethnopoetics, corresponding, respectively, to: expression, the general principle of action, and location among cultural practices. The lost or alternative sensoria are an example of sensual metaphors aspiring to be comprehensive, in which cultural expression and ways of perceiving the world are included in alternative (to the contemporary) sensory orders. Andean cultures in which senses and textiles are mutually associated through the different configurations of color were used as an example of polisensoriality in which colors, sounds and gestures co-create a harmonious whole. The various sensations function as fragmented images of reality, which require “additional” support in the symbolic structure.

An example of polisensoriality from a different cultural context can be the role of rhythm and sense of balance in indigenous African cultures. The sense of balance is not included in the “big five” senses (sight, smell, taste, hearing, and touch). Anglo-Ewe peoples in Ghana connect sensory experiences with the affective sphere. Kathryn Geurts, an anthropologist conducting research on cultural sensualisms, characterized a localized sensorium as based on specific epistemological principles. In Western

traditional epistemology there is a difference between emotion (and its subsequent forms: affect, sentiment, etc.) and impression (created in response to an external stimulus). The senses are recognized as organs that provide us with the knowledge of the outside world and facilitate the creation of its representations in our mind. The five senses basically exhaust the possible forms of experiencing the world, at least for the people of the Western world, while in West Africa, as Geurts argues, there is no equivalent to our term “senses” synthesizing these five ways of experiencing the world. In the Anglo-Ewe culture, the system of positioning and evaluating external experience filtered through the senses is correlated with impressions coming from somatic “internal receptors” (interoceptors). These is a sense of balance and ability to read the information coming from the interior of the body (proprioception) (Geurts, 2002, pp. 180–181).

The integrative function of our experience is taken over by the “inner senses,” especially those that manage rhythm. Kofi Agawu, studying the function of rhythm in the culture of the Anglo-Ewes, emphasizes that even the daily cycle is seen as a manifestation of movement, and the local systematic of time shows only a little overlap with our perception of temporality (Agawu, 1995, pp. 8–30).

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