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Reading Sense in Verse: Synesthesia in the Poetry of Edith Sitwell and Houshang Ebtehaj

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Abstract

Synesthesia, among other rhetorical devices, has played a prominent role in conveying the intended messages in the realm of poetry. Nonetheless, it has not grabbed adequate attention to its nature and function. Belonging to the domain of comparative literature, this essay has benefitted from analogy studies as its methodology to render novel perspectives in the meaning and reading of the poetry of Sitwell and Ebtehaj. Here, we have attempted, firstly, to foreground the function of synesthesia and, secondly, to enrich the understanding of the mentioned poets. This paper concludes that the realization of synesthesia heavily and helpfully affects the perception of literary poems. In addition, to showcase such influence, a reasonable number of poems by Sitwell and Ebtehaj were subjected to scrutiny, indicating that a great deal of their poetry is best understood only after investigating synesthesia. This essay is merely concentrated on two poets, yet its findings can be helpful for the whole field of poetry.

Keywords: synesthesia, comparative literature, Persian literature, Edith Sitwell, Houshang Ebtehaj, poetry

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1. Introduction

Poetry is one of the most suited arenas to display literary and rhetorical devices, captivating the imagination and perception of the readers. The distinctiveness of literature, compared to other manifestations of art, to a great extent, is due to the wide use of these features, that is, textual devices. One of the most central yet less recognized aspects of such rhetorical devices in poetry is synesthesia. Synesthesia is central in understanding and analyzing poetry since it plays a pivotal role in conveying the message to readers vividly and precisely. On the other hand, it is less recognized owing to its convulsion as both a condition and concept. This paper, through a comparative perspective, aims to clarify the nature of synesthesia, and then investigate its effect in the poetry of Dame Edith Louisa Sitwell (1887–1964) and Amir Hushang Ebtehaj (1928–2022).

Eccentric, fashionable, and avant-garde, Edith Sitwell (1887–1964) produced many poems with a wide range of subject matters. In brief, her career as a poet can be discussed under three phases. The first phase is when she and her two brothers—both notable in the realms of art and literature—used to go to nature, finding and feeling natural symbols and beauty. This phase, becoming acquainted with nature, beauty, and symbols, owes its unfolding, firstly, to Sitwell's family life which was rich in unhappiness, misunderstanding, and sadness, especially caused by unaware parents that led her to find a source of calm in places rather than family. Secondly, this phase was critical in forming her poetry due to the guidance of educated governess Helen Rootham, who was a catalyst in introducing Sitwell to symbolist poets of France, such as Rimbaud and Baudelaire. Becoming mature in mental concepts regarding poetry, symbolism, and nature, Sitwell soon raised her voice as the leading innovator in British poetry in the second phase from 1916 to 1939. It was the second phase in which Sitwell reached the apex of her avant-garde poetry, avant-garde in the sense that Sitwell and like poets of the period were against the traditional view of Georgian poets and poetics. Also, in this phase, Sitwell played with the rules of rhythm, imagery, and symbolism, rendering novel poetry with comic flavor. Finally, the third and last phase is called the tranquil phase, in which Sitwell eschewed from innovative poetry of the second phase and instead attended to the meditating power of poetry. This shift in art was a response to World War II and the destruction it brought about in people's physical and mental space. In the third phase, Sitwell accordingly concentrated on spiritual and apocalyptic poetry with the purpose of healing her nation (Persoon & Watson, pp. 447-450). Considering the ebb and flow in Sitwell's poetry, it is fair to claim her poetry is a blend of various senses which seem attractive to readers and a fruitful bedrock for synesthesia.

Amir Hushang Ebtehaj (1928–2022), known mainly by his pen name H. E. Sayeh, whose death brought grief upon the poetry advocates of the nation, was an influential literary figure in contemporary Iran¹. Unlike Sitwell, as mentioned, Ebtehaj's childhood was in a happy, caring, and

¹ Langroudi's *An Analytic History of Persian Modern Poetry* is a detailed, yet critical account of this influence. For more information on his influence, please refer to this book.

devoted family life in which no argument or fight could ever happen. Such cordial atmosphere, together with his father's familiarity with music, prepared Ebtehaj to tread the path of poetry boldly.

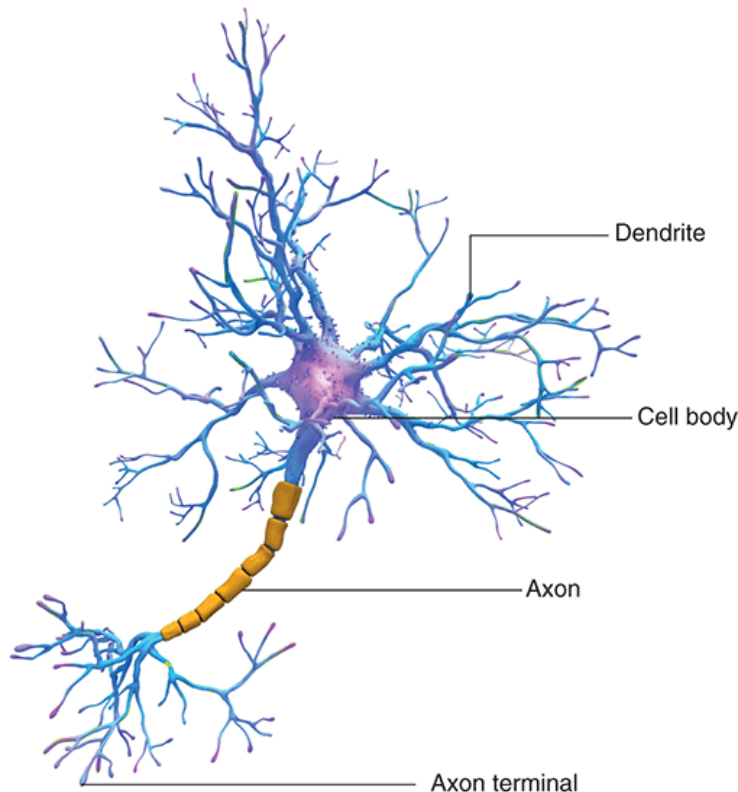
This musicality in the ambiance never abandoned Ebtehaj in mind and literary career, illustrating itself in his poetry. According to Abedi, his literary conduct can be categorized and discussed under four distinct phases. The first phase dates back to 1320 H.S./1941 A.D when he started composing poetry at a young age. In this phase, concordant with the context and mood of youth, poems mainly concentrated on the theme of love and emotion. Then, 1330 H.S/ 1951 A.D was the beginning of a new phase of poetry for Ebtehaj. The second phase was totally different from the first one since he embraced the revolution of romanticism in his poetry. Fueled and fed by English and French Romantic poets, Ebtehaj focused on Romantic imagery such as the moon, sleep, grief, and tree to deliver his message. In this stage, the most important theme was the "search" for transcendental secrets of the world, which often faced failure. After 1330s H.S/ 1951s A.D, having acquainted with Nimā Yushij (1895–1960), who was known for "Free Poetry" or "New Poetry", Ebtehaj entered the third phase of his literary journey. This period is when a shift of theme from individuality to universality in his poems happens. No longer did Ebtehaj speak about individual love and wishes; instead, he highlighted universal love and wishes for all humanity. The last phase, which began from 1350 H.S/ 1971 A.D, was the fruit of 1340 H.S/ 1961 A.D. The latter was the time of poet's silence, a time in which the poet preferred contemplation to composition. As a result of this deep contemplation, Ebtehaj conveys his message through more sophisticated language tinted by mystical themes and concepts in the last phase of his poetic career (Abedi, pp. 75-221). Ebtehaj, in his later years of life, was no longer as active as in his youth; however, a few poems he composed were embraced and welcomed warmly by the majority of society².

Since this paper is centered on the poetry of Sitwell and Ebtehaj, the proper methodology used is in the realm of comparative literature. From a broader perspective, the playground of comparative literature is humanities and art, and it is "a discipline which defines itself as an *inter*-disciplinary, *cross*-cultural, and *trans*-national endeavor" (Behdad & Thomas, p.14). This field is thus a diverse and multi-dimensional one that deals with a variety of topics and disciplines. To that end, and to take a more organized approach, there are various lenses through which comparatists analyze works of art, and among others, this study is focused on "analogy" studies in comparative literature. According to Praver, one of the approaches to comparative literature is when researchers investigate, distinguish and classify topoi of the selected works, including the rhetorical devices (55-60). This paper, taking synesthesia as a rhetorical device, attempts to investigate it in the poetry of Sitwell and Ebtehaj, which in turn boosts the understanding and appreciation of their poetry.

² One of his last poems before death was "Hamzād" which is an instance of this warm welcome by the society.

2. Synesthesia as a Neurological Condition

Synesthesia, as a condition, is studied, researched, and written about under various disciplines, among which neurology is one of the boldest. When treated as a condition, synesthesia is defined “as a rare neurological condition that gives rise to a type of merging of the senses” (Simner, p. 23). This phenomenon is almost always referred to as “rare”, not only because it affects the minority but also because it happens in different forms (24). According to the definition mentioned, this condition is neurological; that is, it happens in the brain through neurons in which axons and dendrites transfer the senses (picture 1). The result of this rare neurological condition is consequently that of the “merging of the sense,” which more precisely indicates the co-occurrence of sensory experiences (24). Although rare, many people live with this condition in real life whose accounts may perplex non-synesthetes. In *Synaesthesia: A Very Short Introduction*, Simner describes a man who has lived under the spell of synesthesia. As soon as hearing the sound of words, this man’s mouth is flooded with different flavors; for instance, the word ‘society’ tastes onion, and the word ‘audience’ tastes peas in his mouth (22-23).



A Neuron Labelled with Its Component Parts (Simner, p. 43).

Synesthesia has been the subject of serious clinical investigations lately, and thanks to technological advances in medical spheres, such as PET, DIT, and fMRI, precise results of this phenomenon have been yielded. The mentioned “merging of the senses” was further studied in brain images of synesthetes, indicating that “synaesthesia is a type of co-experiencing of two

different properties—such as a letter-shape and its synesthetic color. This co-experiencing might very logically be caused by some type of cross-communication (or in neuroscientific terms, cross-activation) between the areas responsible for letters and colors respectively” (40). This mental status contains various types and categories, and American Synesthesia Association has determined nineteen different sensory perceptions. The most frequent types are grapheme-color³ synesthesia and sound-color synesthesia, while the least frequent types are “sound-odor, temperature-color, taste-touch, touch-smell, and vision-touch” synesthesia (Cavallaro, pp. 6-10).

As multifaceted and varied as synesthesia is, with its recent legitimacy in medical and neurological discourses, it is not an easy condition to diagnose and classify. Happening in the nexus of neurons in each unique brain makes this task even harder. Nonetheless, five criteria are said to be effective in its diagnosis. The first is that “synesthesia is involuntary but elicited”; that is, synesthesia is an automatic condition, in response to a stimulus, with no conscious effort on behalf of the synesthete. The second is that “synesthesia is spatially extended,” which means the point of stimulus is always “projected” outside the mind and imagination of the synesthete. In other words, a stimulus, such as a color or sound, must exist outside for the process to begin. The third criterion is that “synesthetic percepts are consistent and discrete”; that is, regardless of the passage of time, the stimulus brings up the same experience. For example, a sound of a saxophone will always bring the color blue for a synesthete. The fourth and fifth criteria, closely related, are based on the fact that synesthesia is “memorable” and “emotional”. Synesthesia is memorable because it contains at least one semantic part in its structure, and the semantic part always makes the memory of synesthesia fresh and vivid. Also, since the semantic part, they relate to is perceived as real and unchanging, synesthetes feel a great sensation to the semantic part. In a scenario in which a synesthete, for instance, relates the name of a person with a color pink, it has been reported that the synesthete is highly likely to forget the real name, but s/he will remember the color and the emotion that person has had (Cytowic, pp. 67-69).

Since synesthesia is not a common condition for most people in most societies, many individuals have doubted the reality of this phenomenon. According to neuroscientists, this condition is real, and is not a fruit of imagination; they also claim that there are other states in which the same feelings are experienced. Among them, one can name “drug-induced synesthesia”, “eidetic imagery”, “Hallucinosi of temporal lobe epilepsy,” and “Electrical stimulation of the brain (ESB)”. In the mentioned cases, regardless of the means, the achieved effect is similar to what a real synesthete experiences. In other words, these phenomena all have stimulus-experience because external forces alter part of the brain, yet similar experience happens as those who genetically go through synesthesia. After all, considering the mentioned phenomena and brain images, there is a slight doubt about the actuality of this condition these days (99-104).

³ In naming different types of synesthesia, the first word is inducer and the second is the experience.

3. *Synesthesia as a Concept*

Apart from the mentioned medical condition, synesthesia also has a far-reaching history in the disciplines of philosophy, rhetoric, and literary criticism. Scholars have rendered varied yet similar definitions of synesthesia from ancient to contemporary times. Among others, Aristotle (384–322 BC), highlights the use of synesthesia under the name of *enargeia* in his *Rhetoric*. To explain *enargeia*, Aristotle discusses *Sensus Communis*, whose focus is on the synesthetic faculty of the human mind (Suzuki 10). What Aristotle describes by *enargeia* is the fact that metaphors add to the “liveliness” of communication, that is, “of calling things before the auditor’s eye” (Dyck, p. 41). The fruit of *enargeia*, in Aristotle’s view, is “the vivacity and interdependence of verbal and visual media” (41). Following Aristotle’s footsteps, Quintilian (c. 35 – c. 100 AD) develops *enargeia* in his *Institutio Oratoria* to point out who a great orator is. Quintilian maintains that oratory is at its peak when verbal and visual representations are intermingled to the “eyes of the mind”, leading to a variety of sensory registers (41). The same direction is followed by George Puttenham (1529–1590), an English critic, in his book called *The Arte of English Poesie*. Puttenham, indebted to Aristotle, also claims that *enargeia* is synesthetic because of the interdependence of visual and verbal registers, though he favors the auditory register above other sensations (41).

Another important philosopher who theoretically expounded the status of the mind is Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Succeeding Hume and a line of empiricists, Kant proposed his ideas in his magnum opus *Critique of Judgment* (1790), *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) and *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). In contrast to outside experience and observations, Kant emphasized the active role of mind in perception, analysis and understanding. In so doing, Kant suggests universal mental forms and categories, present in each person’s mind. In other words, never can we understand “things-in-themselves” or outside data without the sensory data existing in our perception process (Leitch, pp. 425-429). Kantian stance on the role of mental processes is in line with neuroscientist belief that synesthesia exists because of an active, rather than a passive, mind.

Active play of mind, in opposition to a fixed receiver, makes creativity a pivotal element in synesthesia. Whereas robots are loyal to the “things-in-themselves”, we human beings, due to our creativity, are always in the process of formation. Simply put, robots retain information as they are given; however, human beings alter and then retain the outside information according to the level of creativity in their minds:

We can summarize here the favorable influence of synesthesia on organization, creativity, and memory. There is a tendency to prefer order, neatness, symmetry, and balance. Work cannot be done unless the desk is arranged just so, or everything is put away in the kitchen in its proper place. This preference for order extends to other people’s homes and offices as well. Synesthetes resort to mentally redecorating the environmental spaces in which they find themselves. (Cytowic, 296)

It is unequivocal to undermine the ubiquity of synesthesia amongst artists. Whether as an effect or cause, artists are reported to acknowledge synesthesia as a normal condition. Of reputable ones, one can name Nikolai Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908), Alexander Nikolayevich Scriabin (1871–1915), Olivier Messiaen (1908 – 1992), Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) and David Hockney (born 9 July 1937). Literary personages have also been counted in the circle of synesthetes, such as Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), Edgar Allan Poe (1809 –1849), James Joyce (1882–1941), and Arthur Rimbaud (1854–1891), just to name a few (Burrow, pp. 26-28).

While synesthesia as a condition is the subject of study in medical discourses, synesthesia as a concept is scrutinized as an artistic device in the domain of art. Artistic synesthesia is the technique used by artists to convey their intended meaning more precisely through sensory messages. In other words, some artists may be “pure” synesthetes, and others may just employ this device to deliver their message. Whatever the case of the artists, artistic synesthesia is a “range of creative gestures” that is “capable of evoking synesthetic effects due to neither natural proclivities nor aesthetic predilections on the part of their creators, but rather as a result of cross-sensory propensities in the recipients themselves” (Cavallaro, p. 5). This artistic synesthesia has been explored and traced in different spheres of art, such as music, painting, and literature.



Wassily Kandinsky, *Gegenklänge (Opposing Accords)*, 1924, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France.⁴

⁴ A typical example [of synesthesia] is the painting *Opposing accords (Gegenklänge)*. The title recalls sounds, and at the same time underlines contrast. Then, the picture itself evokes opposites and specifically contrasting tunes. According to the artist, an artwork should express an equilibrium of tensions in order to produce the desired effect or “maximal sound” through the opposition of elements. First of all, the contrast is between the two circles, one on the left and one on the right. Secondly, the audience can perceive opposition while looking at yellow and blue in the upper circle, which in turn opposes the zig-zagged line at the bottom. (Laurentis, Daily Art Magazine)

Synesthesia in literature, literary synesthesia alternatively, is defined “as a writer’s use of the “metaphor of the senses” or of expressions and concepts related to it” (O’Malley, p. 391). Narrowing the definition of literary synesthesia to serve the purpose of this paper, that is, in poetry, synesthesia is “the phenomenon in which one sense is felt, perceived, or described in terms of another” (Greene et al., 1398). Put it differently, the language at the hands of poets is altered so that the language could cross the senses and thus render a new feeling and meaning for the audience. This power of language to put synesthetic meanings across is mostly found in the function of metaphor.

Of synesthesia being a simile or metaphor, a spirited debate is present in literary and academic circles. On the whole, synesthesia is known to be in the realm of metaphoric language. Synesthesia, in this sense, “is a kind of metaphor that features the conceptual conflict between separate sensory concepts involved, where our consistent conceptual structures are challenged, and a consistent link between the different conceptual areas cannot be identified” (Zhao et al., p. 558). Most experts thus believe synesthesia is a function of metaphor to intermingle sensual conceptions; however, a few experts opine that synesthesia is a simile that functions like a metaphor. All in all, synesthesia as a metaphor outweighs its being a simile. A researched-base account of synesthesia as a metaphor states that:

Even 4-year-olds show at least some capacity to translate meanings metaphorically from one modality to another (such as rating “lowpitched” as dim and “high-pitched” as bright). Improvements with age in making metaphoric translations of synesthetic expressions parallel both the childrens’ increasing differentiation of meanings along literal dimensions, and their increasing capacity to integrate component meanings in compound expressions. (Cytowic, p. 278)

In other words, synesthesia operates under the function of metaphor, which is subjective, emotional, and experiential. For instance, a commonly-referred phrase of “sweet voice” indicates how metaphors act in the heart of synesthesia. To clarify, we shall extend the phrase “sweet voice,” which is the metaphorical version of the sentence “the voice which is sweet as a candy”. Thus, in the realm of rhetoric, it is mostly claimed that synesthesia exists under the category of metaphor.

The well-suited *mise en scène* for synesthesia, presupposing it as a metaphorical function, is believed to be the domain of literature. According to *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, the history of synesthesia in literature dates back to the earliest literary works such as *Iliad* and *Odyssey*⁵. Of course, this continuum is connected by different schools of poetry afterward, such as romantic and metaphysical poetry. As for Romantic poetry, to give an example, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) uses synesthesia to speak of the aroma of plants as music,” And the hyacinth, purple and white and blue,/ Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew/ Of music so delicate, soft,

⁵ Instances of the said works in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*: in the *Iliad* 3.152, the voices of the old Trojans are likened to the “lily-like” voices of cicadas; in the *Iliad* 3.222, Odysseus’s words fall like winter snowflakes; and in the *Odyssey* 12.187, in the “honey-voice” of the Sirens. (Greene et al., 1398)

and intense” (Greene et al., 1398). Synesthesia as a rhetorical device is by no means limited to English or Persian poetry; rather, this device's traces can be observed in world literature. This paper nonetheless aims to compare synesthesia in the poetry of Ebtehaj and Sitwell.

For the sake of simplicity, shorthand symbolic language is used to show the relation of the senses. According to Ruddick in his essay “Synaesthesia in Emily Dickinson’s Poetry”, five sensations of human beings are optical, auditory, nasal, gustatory, and tactile, which are respectively noted by O, A, N, G, and T. Furthermore, because different feelings are merged in the case of synesthesia, two terms are employed to display the transition of the senses. The first one is called “source,” which marks the beginning of the sensation, and the second is called “destination,” which marks the final spot of sensation (62-63). Using these symbols and terminologies, we can analyze poems more vividly and clearly.

4. Synesthesia in Ebtehaj and Sitwell’s Poetry

Two of the sensations used in the poetry of both poets are when optical and tactile experiences are merged to magnify the intended meaning. Both poets have composed poems in which the source has been optical and the destination tactile, simply O>T. Ebtehaj, in his famous poem, “The Art of Time's Pace”, describes the pain of patience by using cross-sensory experience: “Blood drips from the eyes in the corner of patience/This patience that I am going through is the squeeze of the soul” (199). The mentioned verse indicates how the source of transfer, “eyes,” to be precise, leads to the “touch” of the skin by blood in its destination. In simple terms, the poet has selected eyes as the channel to show the warmth, pain, burn and agony of blood on his skin. By this synesthetic merge, the effect readers can feel is doubled. Likewise, Sitwell mentions this O>T connection in her “The Madness of Saul”. The landscape employed here is that of the sun and the moon, thus bringing optical sense into the play boldly:

The Sun’s wide wings have fanned our bodies black:
 With eyelids like the flashing of a sword
 And lips like fire of flowers or frankincense
 We builded Day with our immortal kiss.
 We bring thee flowers, some pale with unshed tears.
 All lustrous with the echoes of the dawn,
 And perfumed with the light, or flame of flowers
 As yellow as the hair of Iacchus —
 They grew in palace portals of the Sun.
 And these shall touch the eyelids of the moon
 With Slumber, fill with music the chill air. (128)

This stanza, as usual with other poems of Sitwell, is heavily laden with synesthetic phrases, which we shall focus on the line “And these shall touch the eyelids of the moon”. Sitwell portrays a

landscape for readers in which flowers are artistically mentioned. Then, the described flowers are to “touch the eyelids of the moon”. Unraveling this line, we can say that the source of this sense lies in seeing the moon or the optical sensation. The destination, thus, is the touch (tactile sensation) of the moon (the optical sensation).

The reverse of the above connection, among others, exists in the poetry of Ebtehaj and Sitwell. In this case, the place of the source and destination sensations are shifted, and the readers are guided to the sense of sight through the sense of touch. In other words, the whole line, verse or phrase refers to the optical sensation via the medium of the sense of touch, which is symbolically shown as T>O. In “Lost Love”, an early poem dating back to 1328 H.S/1949 A.D, Ebtehaj says:

Where the dew of the stars dripped
On the azure face—the shining flower of the sky.
In search of the slippery dew of the meteor
Moonlight drew on the face of the flower, tongue... (27)

The first line highlights the relation between the two senses, from tactile to optical sensory perception. Simply put, the whole line refers to the end of “seeing” the stars while mentioning the dew as a route of seeing. The perception of the dew readily brings to mind the sense of touch (source), which leads to seeing the stars (destination). This T>O relation, the reverse of the abovementioned O>T, is also seen in the poetry of Sitwell. In her poem, “At the Fair”, she states: “Through the dark heavens, and the dew/ Falls on my eyes and sense thrills through” (1919), which is the very counterpart of Ebtehaj’s mentioned stanza. In the like manner, Sitwell accounts for the dew, which, first and foremost, is a tactile sensation. In other words, in Sitwell’s line, the dew has to touch the face first (source) so that it could be revealed to the eyes (destination). Thus, the same T>O relation is seen in the perception of sense transfer in Sitwell’s line.

The gustatory or taste sense of various sensations in poetry is considered a rare one. However, poets whose poetry is full of colorful images and phrases have overcome this rarity. Ebtehaj in “Sama’ of Burning”, for example, to convey his message in his poetry, uses the taste sensation adroitly:

A rose which is boiled blood
Has drunk the juice of the sun
The one who gets rose water from rose
Also gets the juice of the sun. (186)

The repeated phrase in these lines, “the juice of the sun”, is an excellent instance of using gustatory sense in poetry. This phrase is actually a sense transfer of gustatory source to optical destination. For the phrase to become truly meaningful, the reader has to understand the meaning of juice, the taste sensation, to reach the sun, the vision sensation; thus, symbolically, it would be G>O. The same relation is also true in the poetry of Sitwell when she mentions:

Green wooden leaves clap light away,
Severely practical, as they

Shelter the children candy-pale,
The chestnut-candles flicker, fail . . . (1919)

In the last line, Sitwell has used a great transfer from gustatory to optical sensation like that of Ebtehaj. To understand “the chestnut-candles flicker, fail”, first, one needs to discern and digest “the chestnut-candles” phrase in which the sense of taste is mainly highlighted. Only then can the reader proceed to the “flicker, fail” part of the line, whose comprehension rests on vision sensation as when one sees a candle flicker. Symbolically put, G>O is the sense transfer in Sitwell’s line that begins with gustatory (source) and continues to optical (destination) sensation.

Other types of sensory experiences must not be unnoticed in the poetry of Ebtehaj and Sitwell, namely nasal and auditory. As for the nasal sensation, Ebtehaj utters the phrase of “your intoxicating smell” in his poem “Jasmine Flowers”:

Ah, I knew, oh cute bud!
The secret of your intoxicating smell:
In that chain, it was twisted
A lock of your beautiful hair! (10)

The very phrase “your intoxicating smell” is a blend of nasal and gustatory senses in which the sense of gustatory as a source leads to the sense of nasal as a destination. In other words, Ebtehaj merges these two sensations to intensify the smell for the reader; the smell is no ordinary one, yet it intoxicates whoever feels it exactly as does a cup of wine. The symbolic language of the phrase considering the involved sensations would be G>N.

Likewise, Sitwell uses nasal and optical sensory experiences in her poem “The Sleeping Beauty”. The senses are used in a way to convey the message clearer to the reader:

'Midst brightly perfumed water-flowing
Eighteenth-century silks where growing
Strawberry flowers of the frail frost
Upon the diamond-panes are lost. (14)

The sentence “midst brightly perfumed water-flowing” is an amalgam of four sensations which is quite extraordinary in a line of poetry⁶. In parallel to Ebtehaj, the sensation of the nasal as a source is used to transfer the senses to the optical sensation as a destination, N>O. In simple words, Sitwell has added a nasal quality of perfume to the sight of water-flowing; hence, the water-flowing smells as well its beauty in sight.

The last sensation worth mentioning is the auditory sensorium, which affects hearing. Ebtehaj, for instance, in his poem “Caravan”:

Beautiful is the dance and coquetry of your fingertips
On the strings of musical instrument,
But a thousand weaver girls of this time

⁶ “midst brightly perfumed water-flowing” symbolically would be as: O>N>T>H/O

With blood from the wounds of their fingertips
 Live in a tight cage in the loom
 Because of the humble salary more than which
 You throw into the lap of a beggar. (67)

To portray the instrument's playing more vividly, Ebtehaj addresses the sense of hearing of the instrument. That is to say, to satisfy the sense of seeing, Ebtehaj relies on the audio involved in the scene. Thus, symbolically, "Beautiful is the dance and coquetry of your fingertips/ On the strings of a musical instrument" is shown as A>O. The source sense is the instrument's sound, which leads readers to the destination sense, the optical sense of the act of playing.

Sitwell, also applies auditory sensation to deliver her message more clearly. In "The Lady With The Sewing-Machine", for example, she says: "Dusty voice that throbs with heat,/ Hoping with your steel-thin beat". Here, the source sense is the "voice," which leads to "heat" as the destination source⁷. The whole line, differently put, is an exercise of emotion from auditory to tactile (A>T).

We have thus far covered the instances of two sensations intermingled together, yet the other number of sensations can exist in synesthetic poetry, like that of Ebtehaj and Sitwell. Here, three sensations are just touched to show the variety of synesthesia in poetry. In her poem "Four in the Morning," Sitwell expresses a great example of three sensations in a line: "The tropical leaves are whispering white/As water; I race the wind in my flight". Respectively, the sensations of auditory (whispering), optical (white) and tactile (water) are summoned, which is symbolically as A>O>T.

The same is true in the poetry of Ebtehaj, when he summons three sensations of different sources to reach the destination in his poetry. In his poem "Sleep", Ebtehaj says:

And the scent of your black hair
 With my lips
 Is mixed
 Meeting became possible and...
 I woke up crying. (149)

Here, three sensations of the reader are elicited for the poem to become entirely meaningful. Respectively, the sensations are nasal (scent), optical (black), and tactile (hair), which symbolically would be as N>O>T.

5. Conclusion

Synesthesia is a vital rhetorical device in the creation of poetry and literature. Whether the poets consciously use it or otherwise is not so central; instead, the effects it has on readers are of great importance. Synesthesia, the fusion of diverse senses of human beings, heightens the appreciation and digestion of poetry because it involves readers not from one but from many

⁷ "Dusty voice" itself could be counted as synesthesia of T>A.

dimensions. In the poetry of Ebtehaj and Sitwell, in a comparative analogy, it was concluded that all five sensations —auditory, tactile, optical, nasal, and gustatory— are present in their poetry. Although these poets have different worldviews, they have widely used synesthetic images and phrases to enhance the joy and comprehension of poetry for readers.

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