

Interactive Aspects of Postmodern Sensory Imagery: A Linguistics of Marketing

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Abstract. The current study focuses on the issue of interactive sensory imagery widely exploited in mass literature of today, though hardly approached so far within the field of linguistics. In view of non-tenability of traditional ways of interpreting sensory imagery in contemporary fiction from esthetic or stylistic perspectives, postmodern imagery claims for new methods of analysis that require a joint effort of several disciplines. Such methods are based on the assumption that sensory perception is not triggered by monochannel anchors, but involves fluctuations coming from different sensory organs at a time, bringing into force action rather than mere contemplation on the part of the perceiver. Fluctuating perception is defined in this study as engagement of multiple sensory sensations in perceiving fluctuating objects of the literary text reality and implies readers' involvement. Sensory images in this paper rely upon a fluctuating perception, represent multi-strata models that stratify and overlap, fuse and condense and get transpierced by omnipresent in different strata archetype(s) and symbol(s). Despite such compound structure, archetype or symbol-centered models account for recognizability of sensory image in postmodern linguistic and extralinguistic environment and envisage their interactive potency. It is argued that interactive sensory images in their linguistic dimensions address more elaborate readership, which is demonstrated here via the analysis of four sensory images taken from bestselling books which form the series "A Song of Ice and Fire" by George R. Martin, namely "A Clash of Kings", "A Storm of Swords 2: Blood and Gold" and "A Dance with Dragons".

Keywords: *symbolic reference, virtual sensory imagery, fluctuating perception, condensation, interpenetration, interactive potency.*

Introduction. The idea behind this study grew out of my tenuous effort in the analysis of imagery that contemporary mass literature abounds in, which did not give satisfactory results due to the insufficiency of methods and techniques of interpreting postmodern sensory imagery. Therefore, while handling the problem of sensory imagery in bestsellers linguistically, I also relied upon my marketing background, for bestselling novels are, in the long run, a part of the elaborated book promotion marketing strategy.

Publications Overview. Traditional approach to construing the network of images in a literary text envisages, among other procedures, the scanning of multiple tropes and figures of speech that jointly create a recognizable slant. Their convergence may integrate sensory images (visual, aural, olfactory, gustatory or tactile) that generate emotions, whether positive or negative, or develop into symbolic images designed to hook the reader. Thus, except for putting the reader in a particular set of mind, sensory images usually mask symbols [1, p. 11] relevant to the specific type of knowledge they convey, not infrequently reaching Jungian archetypes [1, p. 66], involving cultural stereotypes [1, p. 121], or the author's idiosyncratic symbols. This relatedness to the sphere of psycho in part accounts for the feasibility of mass literature authors' claim to grow popular and widen their readership.

In this study, sensory images in mass literature are regarded as such that are designed to gain bigger readership through providing a fluctuating perception due to exploiting various sensory channels *Fluctuating perception* as the central focus of the readers' involvement is defined as engagement of multiple sensory sensations in perceiving 'flickering', 'shaky', fluctuating objects of the literary text 'virtual reality' [5, p. 457]. According to Gilbert Durand, fluctuating perception can be viewed through the prism of Jungian interpretation of the image content as 'semiotic representation of pulsation' and symbolic liaison of 'spiritual sense' and 'natural' [1, p. 66] or, in other terms, 'non-symbolized' instinct [4, p. 328]. Thus, the mass literature sensory image is exposed

to rhythm, pulsation, color condensation, shifts, which, clearly, endows it with 'cinematic' [3, p. 91; 4, p. 328] interactive power, when compared with the contemplating nature of sensory imagery in belles-lettres. In terms of cognitive linguistics image reflected in words, syntax, grammar and so on is believed to belong to a fundamental, universal, cross-lingual subtype of frames derived from our 'bodily interactions, from linguistic experience, and from historical context' [2, p. 23], and more examination is required to provide persuasive argument for virtual sensory imagery revealed in textual markers (numerous reiterations, textual arrangement that follows the structure of compulsive thoughts, parallel constructions, forwarding and so on) that structurally and semantically converge with the sphere of psycho and thus virtualize sensory image.

Goals. In this study I challenge the goal to provide an analytical overview of several epitomized postmodern sensory images and thus construe a design model of virtual sensory image plausible both in linguistics of postmodern literary text analysis and extralinguistic sphere of marketing strategies and technofactors in scope.

Data and Methods. The evidence to support my hypothesis has been obtained from George R. Martin's website [9], which claims an enormous marketing success and states that the first book of "A Song of Ice and Fire" was nominated for and scored two nominations on WGA (Writers Guild of America) 2014 Awards shortlist.

The selection of sensory images from this series was regulated by two major criteria: (i) excerpts had to represent eventful sensory images; (ii) sensory images under consideration should entail a fluctuating sense perception due to their interactive potency. The methodology used in this study accounts for both linguistic and extralinguistic factors in the literary text analysis. The eventfulness is regarded here as lexically, syntactically, grammatically, semantically and stylistically testified compactness of textual markers within sensory image. Further analysis focuses on sensory imagery capacity to appeal to multiple sensory organs at a time involving a

hypothesized fluctuating perception. The design of sensory image is modeled here as a multidimensional construction supported by overlapping or stratifying sensory modes with symbol as a focal point and influenced by interactive artistic reality. Given that the data are evidently restricted, the results obtained should be regarded as preliminary and require more extensive evidence.

The data will be processed in four steps. First, we single out excerpts which contain eventful references to sense perception. Second, we identify a set of sensory textual markers of a hypothesized fluctuating perception and trace the way they are arranged in the text. Third, we make assumptions as to further range of techniques appropriate for sensory image analysis and interpretation. And finally, we generalize upon a model of virtual sensory image on the basis of cumulative inferences on each particular sensory image within this study.

Analysis and Discussion. The data are represented by excerpts taken from George R. Martin's novels "A Clash of Kings", "A Storm of Swords 2: Blood and Gold", "A Dance with Dragons" from series "A Song of Ice and Fire". They contain four key sensory images pertaining to (i) lexical, syntactic, semantic or stylistic eventfulness; and (ii) stratification or overlapping of sensations. Thus *virtual sensory image* is viewed in this paper as a type of frame that translates embodied understanding derived from bodily interactions, linguistic experience, and historical context via eventful textual markers that are bound by different modes of sensory perception (stratification or overlapping). To start with I suggest an excerpt with stratification and overlapping techniques combined.

Sample One. *In the Queen's Ballroom, they broke their fast on honeycakes baked with blackberries and nuts, gammon steaks, bacon, fingerfish crisped in breadcrumbs, autumn pears, and a Dornish dish of onions, cheese, and chopped eggs cooked with fiery peppers. [...] There were flagons of milk and flagons of mead and flagons of light sweet golden wine to wash it down* [7, p. 230].

In this fragment from "A Storm of Swords 2: Blood and Gold" eventfulness is revealed on lexico-semantic (lexemes to denote courses), syntactic (enumeration, parallel constructions, homogeneous indirect Objects), grammatical (Noun + Past Participle, with/in + Noun), phonosemantic (/fl-/ , /l-/ , /ld-/ consonant clusters, as well as similar vowel sound combinations reiterated in the excerpt to create an effect of fluidity) and stylistic (compactness of multiple gustatory images supported by visual imagery) levels. Immediate proximity of so many gustatory images results in gradual semantic-stylistic stratification of images and contributes to the effect of spread, rather than course. Exquisite modes of cooking expressed on the grammatical level by Past Participle + with/in + Noun as '*crisped in breadcrumbs*', '*cooked with fiery peppers*', '*baked with blackberries and nuts*' supposedly tease the readers by extra visualization of courses. Thus, each gustatory image is supplemented by specific cooking techniques that form a fiction cookbook suggesting a shift to interactive entertainment pertaining to cinematography, TV cookery shows and food products commercials, etc.

Another excerpt from the novel "A Dance with Dragons" exemplifies a fluctuating perception with regard to dynamism through the prism of symbolic reference.

Sample Two. *It was too late. The current had them in its teeth. They drifted inexorably toward the bridge. Yandry stabbed out with his pole to keep them from smashing into a pier. The thrust shoved them sideways, through a curtain of pale grey moss. Tyrion felt tendrils brush against his face, soft as whore's fingers. Then there was a crash behind him, and the deck tilted so suddenly that he almost lost his feet and went pitching over the side* [8, p. 279].

The eventfulness of visual images in this excerpt, where darkness is presented as a part of the day, water as a frightful sacred element, the bridge and the pier as obstacles on the way to salvation is supported by ambivalent, both rough '*tilted so suddenly*', '*felt tendrils brush against his face*', '*the thrust*', '*a crash*', '*smashing*' and tender '*soft as whore's fingers*', tactile and auditory images. From linguistic perspective, most verbs are motion *drift, stab out, smash, shove, tilt, pitch over the side*, which cumulatively contribute to dynamic image. This dynamism is highlighted by rough auditory images. Visual line is manifested through Nouns *the current, the pole, the bridge, the pier, pale grey moss, the deck* as well as states of being late, trapped in current's teeth that add and stratify. When condensed and fused, they create a holistic and multifaceted image of shipwreck, bringing to the surface the archetypal symbols of death and danger. Such condensation and fusion accounts for overlapping and is scarcely possible without a pivot that pins all imagery strata through. Therefore, this pivot is regarded as transcendent, omnipresent in different strata of imagery and thus archetypal. The pivot I refer to is a symbol. With regard to its versatile depiction this holistic virtual image may activate the memory of marine accidents as well as entertain the reader as an imitation of multi-dimension movies and computer simulators.

The following excerpt borrowed from the novel "A Clash of Kings" focuses on condensation and interpenetration of virtual fluctuating images.

Sample Three. *That night she lay in her narrow bed upon the scratchy straw, listening to the voices of the living and the dead whisper and argue as she waited for the moon to rise. They were the only voices she trusted any more. She could hear the sound of her own breath, and the wolves as well, a great pack of them now. They are closer than the one I heard in the godswood, she thought. They are calling to me* [6, p. 812].

The auditory images that dominate in the above excerpt range from '*dead whisper*' and '*the sound of her own breath*' to wolves' howling whereas the tactile images of '*narrow bed*' and '*scratchy straw*' accompany them to highlighten the transfer from utter silence in bounded space to wild animal howl. The crescendo of auditory images adds up to the density of imagery as a particular way of textual sensory image condensation that can be acoustically scaled and, what is more, perceived in close bodily contact as '*they are closer*', '*they are calling to me*.' The omission of visual imagery in the excerpt accounts for vision blockage. Thus the focus is shifted towards tactile imagery, though the dark suggested by the excerpt is intentional. Thus, new psychological facets of images are being revealed as a key factor to tease the unconscious fear.

Each postmodern sample of imagery tends to embrace as many theater and movie techniques as possible to gain

popularity and profit. Therefore, fiction is abundant in vivid multichannel perception means.

Sample Four. *This time the clink and scrape were followed by a slithering and the soft swift patter of skinfeet on stone. The wind brought the faintest whiff of a man-smell he did not know. Stranger. Danger. Death* [6, p. 600].

This excerpt involves versatile auditory, tactile and olfactory sensory imagery concentrated in two initial sentences. In terms of phonosemantics, [s]-cluster chain 'scrape – slithering – soft – swift – skinfeet – stone' produces the connotative effect of secret shadowing. From the semantic perspective, three one-word final sentences gradually construe the crescendo model from a harmless person no one knows to a villain who is capable of insulting and may even cause lethal injury. The chain 'stranger – danger – death' testifies the IFF (identification friend-or-foe). Auditory images 'the clink and scrape', 'the swift patter of skinfeet on stone', tactile images 'a slithering', 'the wind', and the olfactory image 'the faintest whiff of a man-smell' cohere by the symbol of danger. Thus, danger is a matter which fluctuates from the sound to touch and smell. With this regard different theater techniques appear to be plausible to vitalize

perception and discover new applications for such imagery. For instance, Smell-O-Vision as a system that releases odor so that the perceiver can "smell" what is happening on the stage or in the movie (4D movies and the like).

Eventually it proves to be possible to deduce a model of virtual sensory image (Fig. 1) as the one that is based on distant sensations enabling the reader to detect, sense fictional objects that alike with physical objects induce pressure waves and low-frequency vibrations (receptor number ranges are arbitrary and need further investigation in cognitive linguistics), and synchronize the sensory perception with the symbol as the strongest latent stimulus that is activated via rapid fire of both homogeneous or heterogeneous receptors which support the virtual image. The symbol is a construct inferred on the basis of its observable manifestations – prevailing sensory images. As long as receptor firing is rapid and mostly heterogeneous, we believe such varying criteria as fluctuation, condensation, interpenetration, and interactive potency plausible in the investigation of sensory imagery. The more times a particular receptor is involved, the more prominence this particular sensory image gains.

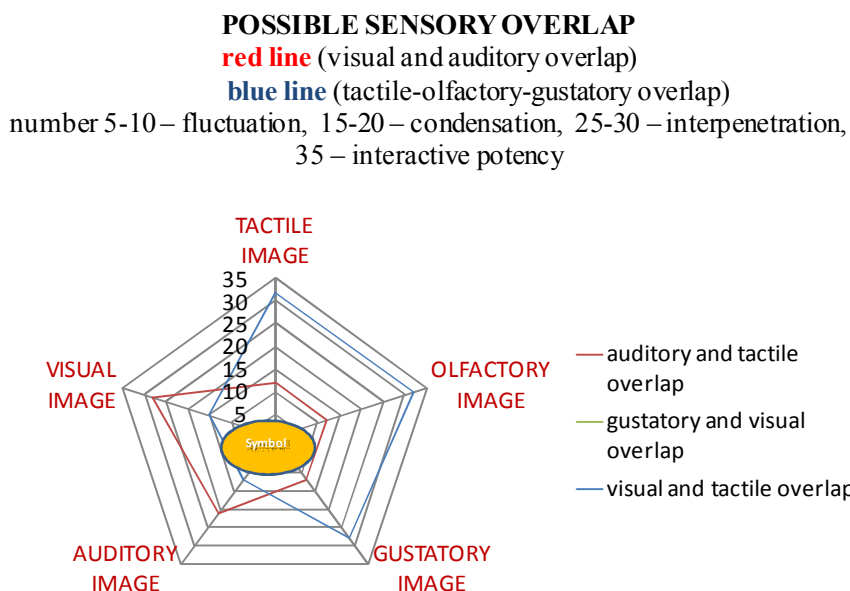


Figure 1.

The pivot of this 3-dimensional five-sided pyramidal model (Fig. 1) is a symbol supported by five sensory modes which interact and overlap within the respective virtual sensory image. The symbol is made prominent due to its psychological impact. Fluctuation, condensation, interpenetration and interactive potency construe the layers of this pyramid and represent core aspects of such image. Numbers correlate with receptor firing and highlight significance a particular layer may gain. The ranges suggested in this pyramid are arbitrary. The significance of each layer may be derived by either the number of particular receptors involved or by their percentage segment within the virtual image model. The more layers are brought into play, the more elaborated

and teasing the sensory image is. As a result, the range of virtual fields of sensory image application widens, and may include cinema, television, or commercials and trailers, computer games and so on.

For instance, in Sample One the predominant gustatory receptors (11 homogeneous receptors fired) supported by sight sensors (4 receptors for modes of cooking fired) are potentially applicable in culinary shows and food commercials. In Sample Two tactile sensors outnumber the visual ones (8 receptors against 4) and construe a film experience augmented with physical or environmental effects. Sample Three is abundant in heterogeneous images, 9 receptors fired for auditory sensor, 3 for tactile and 1 for background visual sensor, therefore they prove

to be legitimate at creating prelude to dramatic visual and tactile effects, especially in cybernetic entertainment, horror scenes and sad stories. In Sample Four three equally proportioned perception channels are simultaneously used – auditory, tactile and olfactory. They altogether evoke the versatile image which supports the verbally expressed danger (symbol in Fig.1) with its possible facets. The danger one can feel, the danger one can smell and the danger one can hear. These techniques are helpful in postmodern fiction, horror movies, fairytales and their film versions.

Provided the writer of a book tends to use such elaborated sensory imagery, s/he is likely to ensure marketing success with mass readership and, what is more, a larger target audience of PC users, TV addicts and the like. With this regard it is crucial for literary agencies to search for the writers who exploit virtual imagery to enhance sales, create new product distribution channels and gain popularity.

Conclusion. Our findings confirm the hypothesis that postmodern sensory imagery requires new interactive

approaches to imagery based on the deducible criteria of fluctuation, condensation, interpenetration, interactive potency and symbolic reference. This new type of image preserves its symbolic nature drawn from traditional paradigms while getting immersed into current interactive reality via cybernetic, digital, cinematic and other projections, which accounts for the marketing success of such imagery. Irrespective of which sensory modes prevail in presenting objects of virtual fictional reality, the core element that guarantees their recognizability through culturally shared background is the respective symbol which gets activated for the mass reader when it is perceived as fluctuating, condensed, interpenetrative and interactively plausible.

The results of this study are applicable in the field of postmodern literary text analysis with the focus shifted from traditional sensory imagery to its virtual modeling within a wider social and cultural context. The design model suggested in this paper provides a tool-kit for the virtual sensory image analysis, which may be used both in linguistics and marketing.

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Интерактивные аспекты постмодернистской сенсорной образности: лингвистика маркетинга

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается проблематика интерактивной сенсорной образности, широко используемой в современной массовой литературе, но сложно поддающейся исследованию с позиций лингвистики. Учитывая ненадежность традиционных подходов к интерпретации сенсорной образности в современной художественной литературе с позиций эстетики или стилистики для объяснения постмодернистской образности нужны новые методы анализа, требующие совместных усилий представителей разных дисциплин. Такие методы основываются на том предположении о том, что сенсорное восприятие не происходит в одноканальном режиме, а вовлекает флуктуации, порождаемые несколькими органами чувств одновременно и активирующее механизм действия, а не созерцания. Следовательно, структура сенсорного образа подвергается изменениям и трансформациям в своем приспособлении к интерактивной художественной реальности. Предполагается, что постмодернистские сенсорные образы обращены к более взыскательной читательской аудитории, что показано в статье на материале анализа четырех сенсорных образов из серии книг Дж.Р. Мартина "A Song of Ice and Fire" ("Песня льда и огня"), уже ставших бестселлерами.

Ключевые слова: *символьная референция, виртуальный сенсорный образ, флуктуационное восприятие, конденсация, взаимопроникновение, интерактивный потенциал.*