

## Spring school “Dialogues with the Senses”

26-27 May, 2022, Toila (<https://www.toilaspa.ee/en/>)

### Program

#### 26 May

9.15 Joint start in bus from Estonian Literary Museum (Vanemuise 42, Tartu) towards Toila

11.15-11.45 Arrival in Toila, coffee in seminar area

Session I – moderated by Reet Hiimäe

11.45-12.00 **Reet Hiimäe**. *Introduction: Dialogues with the Senses*

12.00-13.00. **Frog**. *Practice and Perception: Empirical and Imaginal Experience from Shamanic Séances to Sinister Cemeteries*

13.00-13.30 **Kristel Kivari**. *Negotiations with the Sense of the Supernatural: Liminality and Authority*

13.30-14.30 Lunch

Session II – moderated by Piret Voolaid

14.30-15.30 **Silvi Tenjes**. *Multimodal Communication at the Heart of Action and Perception*

15.30-16.00 **Laur Vallikivi**. *There are a Thousand Ways to Be Silent: Communication and Emotion in the Nenets Tundra*

16.00-16.30 Coffee break

Session III – moderated by Andrus Tins

16.30-18.00 **Kadri Kangilaski, Toomas Tõnissoo**. *Conscious Use of Emotions on the Example of Artistic Creation*

18.00-19.00 Dinner

19.00- Socializing, networking and leisure

## **27 May**

7.15-9.15 Breakfast

Session I – moderated by Katrin Saar

9.15-10.15 **Ene Vainik**. *Making Sense of the Senses and Beyond. A Linguist's Perspective*

10.15-10.45 **Karin Zurbuchen**. *What Does It Taste Like? A Comparative Study of Taste Terms in Estonian and German*

10.45-11.15 **Mona Tärk**. *Vision and Touch in the History of Western Philosophy*

11.15-11.30 Coffee break

Moderated by Sergei Troitskii

11.30-12.00 **Eugenio Israel Chávez Barreto**. *Towards a Semiotic Theory of the Subject: On the Semiotics of Touch*

12-12.30 **Silvia Kurr**. *Ekphrasis in Dialogue with the Senses*

12.30-13.00 **Anastasiya Fiadotava**. *The Sensibility of the Sense of Humour: Resolving Moral Dilemmas in Family Communication*

13.00-13.30 **Michele Tita**. *Imagining Wilderness: Engagement with a Non-Perceivable Environment*

13.30-14.30 Lunch

Moderated by Alina Oprelianska

14.30-15.00 **Prince Tomar**. *Toward the Dust: Life around the Un-dead Infrastructures of the Indo-Nepal border*

15.00-15.30 **Malay Bera**. *Human-Divine Dyadic Sensations: Navigating the Natural and the Supernatural World through Other Senses*

15.30-16.00 **Mare Kõiva**. *The Sensory Complexity of Healing Magic Events*

16.00-17.00 **Kathryn Linn Geurts**. *A Dialogue with West Africa's Seselelāme: Bodily Ways of Knowing and Sensory Diversity*

17.00-17.15 **Reet Hiimäe**. *Concluding words*

17.15-17.35 Good-bye coffee break

17.35 Bus back to Tartu

The event will be organized with the support of European Union, European Regional Development Fund (ASTRA project of Estonian Literary Museum, EKMDHUM) and Estonian Literary Museum, it is also related to Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies (CEES).

## Abstracts

### **Practice and Perception: Empirical and Imaginal Experience from Shamanic Séances to Sinister Cemeteries**

Frog, Department of Cultures, University of Helsinki

This lecture outlines an approach to ways that cultural practices structure experience by leading the empirical to be interpreted through, and potentially subordinated by, the imaginal (I prefer ‘imaginal’ for the role of imagination in perception and understanding, because ‘imaginary’ has connotations of being ‘not real’). The framework presented is built on a semiotic approach to culture, whereby culture is viewed in terms of socially accessible signs. Some of those signs have ‘mythic’ status, in the sense that they are emotionally invested by people as models of ‘reality’. Investment in such signs produces convictions about things in the world – commonly called ‘beliefs’.

We begin with ritual specialists in non-modern traditions (I prefer ‘non-modern’ to ‘pre-modern’ because the traditions are rooted in a pre-modern milieu but may found in modernized societies among modernized people). Their practices are approached in terms of ‘ritual technologies’, which are bound up with models of the body and things in the world. The first ritual technology considered is that of ‘classic’ shamanism, looking at the role of verbal art in shifting the performer’s ‘reality orientation’ from the world of the empirical senses to the imaginal world of ritual poetry. The second ritual technology is that of the Finno-Karelian *tietäjä* [‘knower, one who knows’]. Verbal art is also central here, but the conception of the body is different: it can affect things beyond the physical body’s borders and become so ‘hard’ that even bullets cannot pierce it. The third ritual technology is that of Karelian lamenters, which equipped them to communicate with the dead and other supernatural agents. This technology was essential to ensure that a deceased person successfully joined the community of the ancestors. With these three types of ritual specialists, we can look at the dialectics the practices create between the empirical and the imaginal, actualizing and orchestrating unseen dimensions of reality and even remote otherworlds through performance.

From the specialists, we turn to the people with whom they engage or who observe them. ‘Performance arena’ is normally used to describe the virtual space of meaning-making in which performances are produced and interpreted. Entering a performance arena entails a shift in how words and other signs are interpreted. We will look at performance arenas as potentially involving more than shifts in meaning, but also shifts in emotional engagements with some signs as models of reality. For example, people naturalized to a performance arena will, when it is entered, accept a shaman’s, *tietäjä*’s, or lamenter’s performed interactions with unseen agents and forces as ‘real’, whereas an outsider such as a researcher will not. This aspect of a performance arena will be considered in relation to the customary environment of performance, and how the actual situation of performance can support entering the performance arena or interfere with it (e.g. an interview in a hotel), so that even the performer may have difficulty.

Finally, we will advance to the construction of places through practices that connect with them. The concept of 'otherworlding' will be introduced. Otherworlding refers to the othering of spaces and places through discourse. The process of otherworlding will be considered in combination with the concept of 'tradition ecology' – a concept that views traditions, their intersection and interaction on the metaphor of an ecology (rather than looking at traditions in relation to the natural ecology). The relationship of tradition ecologies to constructing types of places such as a cemetery will be discussed, looking at processes of otherworlding in relation to the variety of practices and performance arenas linked to the place, as well as discourse about those practices and what happens in the place.

### **Negotiations with the Sense of the Supernatural: Liminality and Authority**

Kristel Kivari, Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, University of Tartu

Paranormal investigation – inspecting the sites of paranormal events such as haunted places, places of ufo encounters, but also various natural landscapes – often resemble a rite of passage to encounter the supernatural. These situations constitute an environment for intensive storytelling, but, as field trips, they are essentially sensuous experiences.

Entering the liminal environment between natural and supernatural, the senses get re-organized, where body becomes an instrument for clairvoyance and certain impulses get the authority to prove the existence of supernatural. 'Energies', 'gut feelings', anxiety or temperature, for example, help to carve out the supernatural landscapes from the everyday order. The tradition of interpreting the sense of the supernatural takes bodily insight as a nexus for collaborating with tradition through re-interpretation, negotiation or setting up the authority.

The presentation takes the interviews and fieldnotes of investigation into paranormal (material collected between 2012-2019 in Estonia) to discuss the storyworld emerging in sensuous impulses, the senses, being re-conceptualized as empowering tools in making sense of the supernatural.

### **Multimodal Communication at the Heart of Action and Perception**

Silvi Tenjes, Estonian Military Academy

#### *Theses*

##### Multimodal communication

- Humans as biological beings are multimodal in their expressive capacities at all known communication levels: gestures, facial expressions, legs, or trunk movements, and even voice/speech (movements).
- Multimodal communication is part of the interpersonal communication system. It is a process that occurs in an immediate interaction that occurs in *a visible space*.
- There are also areas of the brain that support multimodal sensory and motor integration.

##### Action and perception

- Action is a means of acquiring perceptual information about the environment.
- Perception and understanding of others' actions is foundational to how we communicate, learn about the social and physical world, regulate emotions, and develop attachments with others.

### Attention

- The allocation of attention has been a pivotal factor in shaping learning ability.
- Due to the abundance of materials, the scientific study of attention as a field of research has remained mainly in the field of military studies.

### Embodied modes

- We can use the term “*embodied modes*,”: a term that refers to both gestures and language, showing that modes are generally of equal value and allowing the analyst to decide which mode (if any) plays a predominant role in a particular interaction.

### Intersubjectivity

- In this presentation, the notion of intersubjectivity, i.e., shared meaning space, is discussed in relation to the concepts of imitation, empathy, and *ascription* of intentions.

### Embodied simulation

- Embodied simulation is our brain-body system which models its interactions with the world.
- Simulation is conceived of as an unconscious, pre-reflective functional mechanism of the brain-body system whose function is to model objects, agents, and events. This mechanism can be triggered during our interactions with others.
- We don't necessarily have to experience the specific content of other people's experiences, but experience those others as having experiences similar to ours.
- Our brain models other people's behaviors in the same way that it models our own. The result of this modeling process enables us to understand and predict what the behavior of others will be.
- The embodied view posits that action underlies perception, involving common coding or motor simulation systems, and examines the relationship between action observation, imitation, and the understanding of intention.

## **There Are a Thousand Ways to Be Silent: Communication and Emotion in the Nenets Tundra**

Laur Vallikivi, Department of Ethnology, University of Tartu

People living in the Far North are often characterised in outsiders' accounts as silent and taciturn. The aim of this talk is to understand their silences as socially constituted by looking at the boundaries of speech and non-speech, both inside Indigenous communities and during their negotiation with strangers whom they may perceive as verbose.

My ethnographic examples come from the Nenets tundra where reindeer herders meet various kinds of reformers such as state agents and Christian missionaries, who struggle with the

reticence of the nomads. I discuss Nenets notions of powerful words which define the social uses of silence and other forms of tacit communication. I also ask what it means to fall silent as an act of refusal or to avoid saying things because of a sense that words can create undesirable relations and emotions.

I show how these instances are often bound to local concepts of distributed personhood, as well as to wider cosmological assumptions about what kind of agents can understand human speech, and what words can do in animists' relations with animals and predatory spirits. For instance, this entails the widespread avoidance of naming illness spirits or the recently dead by their proper names in order not to invoke their unwanted presence or in case of game animals, not to forewarn of a hunt. Instead, a parallel language using euphemisms is the way to manage relations with various nonhumans out on the land.

Such ethnographic cases of the absence of speech in the Arctic help to build an argument for a wider anthropology of silence, in which the well-established concept of speech act will turn out to be balanced by an equally powerful concept of silence act.

### **Conscious Use of Emotions on the Example of Artistic Creation**

Kadri Kangilaski, Toomas Tõnissoo, Estonian Academy of Arts

We share our experience of how we have consciously used different emotions when making art, when teaching, and in other activities.

By drawing, you will explore how you can consciously activate emotions and see what colors and rhythms appear in your images as you tune into different emotions. You will also find out which emotions are more familiar to us and which are not. Among the latter there can be some that might be very practical to use in certain circumstances.

### **Making Sense of the Senses and Beyond. A Linguist's Perspective**

Ene Vainik, Institute of the Estonian Language

Being and acting in this world as a human being means using one's senses, emotions, and cognitive capabilities as well as discussing these experiences with fellow human beings. Therefore, it is natural that psychologically oriented linguistics has taken interest in the manifestations of these psychological faculties in the world's languages during the past half of a century, or so.

The present lecture will provide an insight into the main topics, methods and claims of the so-called "sensory linguistics" (Winter 2019) and describe also some areas of research beyond the senses, like the linguistic manifestation of emotions and affective phenomena in general.

The issue of how the senses and beyond are coded in language and its structure is still not fully uncovered, yet. The interrelatedness of senses and emotions/affect in Estonian will be illustrated by a case study of taste and emotions (Vainik 2018). Another case study will describe the free

associations of colour terms in Estonian and look for the link between colour terms and emotions (Vainik, submitted).

#### References:

Winter, Bodo 2019. *Sensory Linguistics. Language, perception, and metaphor*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Vainik, Ene 2018. Emotion meets taste. Taste-motivated emotion terms in Estonian. *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore*, 71 (1), 129–155. DOI: 10.7592/FEJF2018.71.vainik.

Vainik, Ene (submitted). Free associations of colour terms in Estonian. Distribution, types and motivation.

### **What Does it Taste Like? A Comparative Study of Taste Terms in Estonian and German**

Karin Zurbuchen, PhD student of the Department of Linguistics, Tallinn University

**Keywords:** language, perception, taste terms, lexicalization, cultural factors

Discussions about food, eating and taste are omnipresent. Taste sensations as deeply individual sensory experiences can be shared only via language which reflects individual and cultural distinctions of perception (Diederich 2015). A gustatory experience, furthermore, is multimodal and multisensorial, influenced by smell, temperature, texture and intensity of food. Since food ingestion is one of the most basic human needs, it is presumed that gustatory experience should be reflected in all languages with a rich vocabulary. Contrary to the expected universality, taste terms differ across languages to a great degree (Rhee & Koo 2017).

The aim of this study is to provide complementary insights into perception vocabulary by comparing actively used taste terms and lexical strategies in Estonian and German. The studied languages are genetically unrelated but culturally linked, since German had a significant impact on the development of Estonian literary language during the period of its establishment (Ross 2016).

Based on the taste terms collected from 43 native speakers of both languages in two consecutive field experiments (developed by Davies & Corbett 1995), the comparative approach enables to detect relevant cognitive and cultural aspects of the active taste vocabulary of Estonian and German on the basis of similarities and differences between the two languages.

In both languages, the speakers primarily listed basic taste terms (see Berlin & Kay 1968; Bieler, Runte 2010: 113), such as *magus/süß* ‘sweet’, *soolane/salzig* ‘salty’, *hapu/sauer* ‘sour’ and *kibe, mõru/bitter* ‘bitter’, followed by the terms that refer to temperature (e.g. *külm/kalt* ‘cold’, *kuum/heiß* ‘hot’), intensity (e.g. *scharf* ‘sharp’), and subjective evaluation (e.g. *hea/gut* ‘good’, *halb/schlecht* ‘bad’, *vastik/ekelig, ekelhaft* ‘disgusting’).

Current study indicates that the Estonian language displays many influences from German and the cultural and habitual similarities in the two language communities have a significant impact on cognitive exploits and the resulting selection of lexical strategies for naming and characterising taste experiences.

#### References:

Berlin, B. and Kay, P. 1969. *Basic color terms: their universality and evolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bieler, L. M. and Runte, M. 2010. Semantik der Sinne. Die lexikografische Erfassung von Geschmacksadjektiven. *Lexicographica*, 26, 109–128.

Davies, I. R. L. and Corbett, G. G. 1995. A practical field method for identifying probable basic colour terms. *Languages of the World*, 9,1, 25–36.

Diederich, C. 2015. *Sensory Adjectives in the Discourse of Food. A frame semantic approach to language and perception*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Ross, K. 2016. Die Entstehung der estnischen Schriftsprache im Kontext der deutschen und estnischen Kulturgeschichte. *Jahrbuch des Vereins für niederdeutsche Sprachforschung* (Niederdeutsches Jahrbuch). Kiel/Hamburg: Wachholtz Verlag - Murmann Publishers, 57–68.

Rhee, S. and Koo H.-J. 2017. *Multifaceted gustation*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

## **Vision and Touch in the History of Western Philosophy**

Mona Tärk, MA student of the Department of Philosophy, University of Tartu

In the course of the history, vision and touch have been focused on in the philosophical treatment of the senses. In this presentation, I will give an overview of thoughts about these senses and focus on a phenomenological discussion on the role of otherness in touch.

Vision has been deemed the strongest sense in connection with philosophy, for thinking has been explained a multitude of times with the metaphor of casting a light on the examined object. Thus, when one thinks correctly, one also sees clearly. This approach has gained critique: vision is a sense that is not involved in what it perceives but can behold its object from a far. This kind of ideal is repeated in philosophy: a thinker views its object from a distance and does not get involved with the world. However, as the phenomenological approaches for example have understood, we are always amidst the world and the things we think about. Therefore, philosophy should also appreciate other senses.

Touch has also been thought to be the primary sense, albeit for other reasons. It has been thought that touch is what all other senses rely on: in smell, for example, the smell of some object touches us, and so on. Touch has also been experienced as an immediate sense because its objects need to be near to the touching.

In a more specified phenomenological context, interesting discussions revolve around touch. For Husserl, the immediacy of one touching oneself constitutes the liveliness of the body, and the mediatedness of one touching the others constitutes a strict and fundamental divide between me and others. Merleau-Ponty has challenged this view, stating that touch is never immediate, and that some otherness always lies at the core of ourselves.

Altogether, it seems that vision and touch have found their focus in philosophers' thinking for the reason that they have clear qualities, although ones opposing each other: vision being an abstract sense, touch very concrete.

## **Towards a Semiotic Theory of the Subject: On the Semiotics of Touch**

Eugenio Israel Chávez Barret, PhD student of the Department of Semiotics, University of Tartu

One of the main challenges for contemporary semiotics is to produce a semiotic theory of the subject, i.e. a theory that can give an account of what a subject *is* inasmuch as it participates of sign relations, i.e. inasmuch as they *interpret signs*, or *create meanings*. Semiotics research in this regard has mostly come from *biosemiotics*, a branch of semiotics which operates under the hypothesis that the action of life and the action of signs are coextensive. through examining notions such as *agency* (Sharov and Tonnessen 2021), *semiotic self* (see Miyamoto forthcoming), *minimal cognition* or *minimal semiosis* (Castro 2018, Rodríguez Higuera 2016), *protosemiosis* (Sharov and Vehkavaara 2015), among others. In our view, the value of biosemiotic research strives in the fact that biosemiotics theories can help in better developing both general and cultural semiotics.

The aim of this presentation is to make some steps towards a theory of the subject that takes into account the recent findings of biosemiotics. In this way, while the scope of the theory proper will be restricted to cultural semiotics, its principles will be cemented in a general semiotic theory that includes biosemiotics. The main axis of our theory will be constituted by the semiotic theory of the subject put forward by Luis Prieto. According to Prieto, a subject is so only to the extent that it is aware of its own numeric identity, i.e. of the fact that it is *one*. This awareness comes from the “discovery” of other subjects, that is by recognizing that its own body has limits, and by recognizing that there is something else which itself *is* not (Prieto 1991). This proposal was primarily used by Prieto to develop a semiotic theory of art, but it was not developed as a general theory of the subject in the sense outlined above.

The proposal this presentation will put forward will mainly consist in developing Prieto’s theory of the subject. This will be done by putting together some premises put forward by biosemiotics together with Prieto’s theory of cognitive acts (Prieto 1975). Prieto’s theory of cognitive acts proposes that cognition begins in *aesthesis*, understood as ‘sense-perception’. Prieto, however, did not go into the details of the different mechanisms and processes, i.e. the senses, by means of which cognition can truly begin. Accordingly, the core of the proposal will be to examine touch, and touching, as a semiotic process by means of which the discovery of the other, and thus of the subject’s self takes place.

### References:

- Castro, Oscar 2018. Slime mould: The fundamental mechanism of biological cognition. *Biosystems* 165: 57-70.
- Miyamoto, Oscar forthcoming. Questions concerning certain faculties claimed for semiotic selves.
- Prieto, Luis Jorge 1975. *Pertinence et pratique*. Paris : Éditions de Minuit.
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Rodríguez Higuera, Claudio J. 2016. The place of semantics in biosemiotics: Conceptualization of a minimal model of semiotic capabilities. PhD dissertation, Tartu University.

Sharov, Alexei; Tonnessen, Morten 2021. *Semiotic Agency*. Switzerland: Springer.

Sharov, Alexei; Vehkavaara, Tommi 2015. Protosemiosis: Agency with reduced Representation Capacity. *Biosemiotics* 8 (1): 103-123.

## **Ekphrasis in Dialogue with the Senses**

Silvia Kurr, PhD student of Literature and Theatre Studies, University of Tartu

If in antiquity ekphrasis denoted a rhetorical device that “brings the subject matter vividly before the eyes” (Webb 2009: 1), in contemporary discourse, ekphrasis refers to a wide array of intermedial phenomena, from descriptions of paintings, sculpture, and architecture to the integration of film, photography, and digital media in literary works. Given that many contemporary ekphrastic works engage with the body, David Kennedy argues that there is a need to examine what he calls “the ekphrastic body” (89–90). Drawing upon new materialism and embodiment theories (Hayles 1999; Wegenstein 2010; Braidotti 2017), I, in turn, argue that ekphrasis has the capacity to foreground embodied, multi-sensory experience. In contrast to the “static concept” of the body, embodiment focuses on “how particular subjects live and experience being a body dynamically, in specific, concrete ways” (Wegenstein 2010: 20). I propose to theorize the ekphrastic engagement with the senses and contextual bodily experience as ekphrastic embodiment. In my presentation, I will show that ekphrastic embodiment can reveal the discrepancy between the body as static, passive object of depiction and the dynamic nature of embodied, multi-sensory experience.

### References:

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## **The Sensibility of the Sense of humour: Resolving Moral Dilemmas in Family Communication**

Anastasiya Fiadotava, Department of Folkloristics, Estonian Literary Museum

The sense of humour has become one of the most desirable character traits in contemporary world: it is sought after in romantic relationships, appreciated in friendships and considered to be a useful asset in politicians' rhetorical toolkits. It is thus unsurprising that the sense of humour also plays an important role in everyday family communication, and family members explicitly underscore that they are able and willing to address even the most difficult and unpleasant aspects of family life with humour. While they might admit that the senses of humour in the family differ (for example, between male and female family members), the general attitude towards the sense of humour and its applications in family interactions is very benevolent.

However, many families also recognize “the other side” of the sense of humour, namely, the ability to tease and ridicule other people in a malevolent way. Such a behaviour has aggressive connotations for many families and thus does not fit into the generally positive image of using the sense of humour in family interactions. At the same time, under certain circumstances (for example, during conflicts or while expressing criticism) this type of humour comes to the forefront. Therefore, families have to constantly balance on the fuzzy border between accepting the sense of humour as a desirable trait and condemning aggression, even if it is expressed in a humorous manner. This presentation describes harmful as well as benevolent expressions of the sense of humor in the family context, and the multiple ways people use to negotiate the boundary between them.

## **Imagining Wilderness: Engagement with a Non-Perceivable Environment**

Michele Tita, PhD student of the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, University of Tartu

In his 2000 book “The Perception of the Environment”, anthropologist Tim Ingold describes the perception of an organism – both human and nonhuman – as directly tied to the presence of an environment of other living and non-living beings that surrounds them and interacts with them. In this regard, he mentions repeatedly the concept of *perceptual engagement with the environment*, mostly referring to humans who need to deal with their environment and its sensorial perception for their living processes.

Despite the undeniable anthropic influence on the world that we inhabit, not all the surface of our planet is easily accessible to our species and accordingly remains in a state of absolute wilderness (Kull 1998). Wilderness, in this sense, can be defined as a domain that is untouched, unseen, and unheard to humans, who cannot engage with it perceptually. Accordingly, if humans need or want to engage with wilderness, they must *imagine* it, and they can do it through folklore.

In this paper, two case studies – from the Italian Alps and from the Karbi community of Northeast India – will illustrate how wilderness has been imagined and re-constructed in folk narratives, as well as embodied in specific figures of the local folk traditions. For example, the figures of wild men (Forth 2007) such as the Italian *uomo selvatico* or the Karbi *Kenglong-Po*

represent wilderness and the idea of wild in those areas, articulating the relationship between humans and the non-anthropogenic environments that they cannot access physically.

### **Toward the Dust: Life around the Un-dead Infrastructures of the Indo-Nepal border**

Prince Tomar, PhD student of Centre for Landscape and Culture, Tallinn University

In this newly growing field of anthropology of senses, infrastructure has been felt, smelled, and visualised, among other sensory experiences. But what happens when something hinders such experiences?

During my fieldwork at the Raxaul-Birgunj borderland on the Indo-Nepal border in March 2020, I encountered something as unacknowledged as breathing, and yet as visible as people. It has a brute omnipresence that spares nobody. It is behind the accelerating vehicles; on the faces of the people; on the entrances of the shops; on the market wares and covering various kinds of infrastructures in the region. It is dust. Some find the border by following it and some stay away because of it. It is the most border-less entity as well as the most border-full. It connects the infrastructures facilitating the mobility to infrastructures delaying the crossing. The dust here is a part of the quotidian life.

This project is about the dual nature of the infrastructures — mobility-facilitation and mobility-hindrance, in the region through the ever-present dust. Due to the variety of material infrastructures in the region, this article will study those that are either not quite fulfilling their purposes and have become medium to other purposes (hence, un-dead), including dilapidating structures, halted construction work, amid the increasing global trade relations of Nepal.

Instead of just experiencing the dust merely through a visual sense, this presentation studies it through the hindrances it produces to multiple sensory experiences that then mediate the meaning of infrastructures in this borderland. Infrastructures here are not felt, they are not smelled, and are not properly visible, and yet their mere presence is embedded in the lives of the people of the region.

### **Human-Divine Dyadic Sensations: Navigating the Natural and the Supernatural World through Other Senses**

Malay Bera, PhD student of Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, University of Tartu

Scholars have studied dyadic traditions as linguistic and behavioural interactions in two-person groups. However, the definition of these groups remains largely restricted to two human beings. Developing further on this line of thought, I ask what if we were to open the barriers between the human and the non-human? Can we look at the human–non-human interactions as dyadic traditions? If yes, how do these traditions work? Drawing from my fieldwork in Bagnan, a provincial Bengali town in Eastern India, I will probe the fine line between the natural and the supernatural world to analyze the human-divine dyadic traditions.

Human-divine dyadic traditions operate through sensations beyond the conventional senses. The ability to sense “otherworldly” happenings is enabled by sense receptors that are nameless,

formless and unlocatable in the human body. However, they often overlap with the conventional sensory experiences of sight, sound, taste, touch and smell. At best these senses can be explained as an intuition, an uncanny sensation, an unease or a comforting reception. These Other senses help people navigate through, what in Western terminology are called, the natural and the supernatural worlds. To the people of Bagnan, however, the natural and the supernatural world are but one and the same where a god is as much of a person as a human being. The mode of interaction between a human being and a god, therefore, can be potentially referred to as dyadic sensations. Dyadic sensations have the ability to diffuse and make way for larger traditions in a community.

### **The Sensory Complexity of Healing Magic Events**

Mare Kõiva, Department of Folkloristics, Estonian Literary Museum

Over the past century, the share of magical practices has changed in the European context due to many factors. On the example of Estonia, we are looking at the dynamics and trajectories of traditional and new practices in the magic healing. Various circumstances are considered as reasons for the preservation of the tradition, such as the return to beliefs of ancestors on practical, or religious grounds. The impact of new religious movements, but also the influence of national movement and associated media, are noticeable. On the other hand, there are worldview reasons, family traditions and tourism that play a role.

Over time, hundreds of cross-cultural ethnographies have built a cumulative body of knowledge. But although we know much about the social functions of magic healing, how it operates at the social or group level, little is known about the psychological basis of the ritual, the senses which operate at the individual level or of the role in organizing and reconfiguring the self.

In the current presentation, I will analyse the complexity of senses on the data coming from folkloristic fieldwork, from the diaries of the healers, and other written and recorded sources (1900-2018). Additionally, I will address the question of the role that senses play in the healing complexity, and, particularly, the effectiveness of the sixth sense – intuition.

### **A Dialogue with West Africa's *Seselelāme*: Bodily Ways of Knowing and Sensory Diversity**

Kathryn Linn Geurts, Global Studies Department, Hamline University

West Africans enjoy a sensory-emotional, embodied way of knowing that can be summed up with the compelling phrase *seselelāme* – feel-feel-at-flesh-inside or *bodily ways of knowing* – which comes from the Anlo-Ewe language spoken in Ghana and Togo. Functionally, *seselelāme* captures a panoply of sensory-emotional experiences, signals and perceptions, distinguishing it from ontological traditions that emphasize atomization, fragmentation, and categorization. This situates *seselelāme* almost in opposition to longstanding Euro-American ways of being which have privileged splits among cognition, sensory perception, emotional feeling, and behavioral expressions. The very existence of this way-of-knowing challenges a longstanding mind/body

dichotomy that has dominated Western society for centuries, and therefore encourages us to explore sensory diversity within the human species.

This presentation aims to modally introduce you to an Anlo-Ewe lifeworld in which I initially found myself visually starved, kinesthetically disabled, and disoriented by echoes in an aural labyrinth. Through ethnographic practices aimed at “being of two sensoria” I eventually began to “make sense” of the rhythms, contours, and gradations of Anlo-Ewe sensibilities and thereby learned to appreciate “diversity” not as a superficial marker of differences but as deeply embodied, thoroughly modulated waves of human distinction. Theoretically, the presentation will encourage us to appreciate the importance of work on the senses. In an era marked by vicious cultural clashes, globally placing the planet in peril, the nascent field of sensory studies has the potential to contribute profound shifts in the way humans understand our very relations with each other, different species, and the earth.

## Further reading

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