

# Doing Sensory Ethnography

## 8 Between Experience and Scholarship: Representing Sensory Ethnography

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## 8 Between Experience and Scholarship: Representing Sensory Ethnography

The sensory ethnography approaches and methods advocated in the preceding chapters seek to bring researchers and their audiences close to other people's multisensory experiences, knowing, practice, memories and imaginations. They simultaneously acknowledge and attend to the cultural and biographical specificity and categories through which these are conceptualised. In the pursuit of their own project-specific research questions, the ethnographers whose work I have examined have developed a range of innovative research methods. These include ethnographies in movement, in dance, based on interviews, sound-recording, through audiovisual media and through apprenticeship relations. To represent the emplaced knowing that grows from such projects, most of these ethnographers have used established methods – predominantly academic writing. Others have produced ethnographic film or video and sound composition. In this chapter I discuss how these existing practices and other emergent and innovative ways of communicating ethnographic knowing might be mobilised to represent sensory ethnography.

Scholarly writing remains a central, and I believe crucial, medium for the description, evocation, argument and theoretical debating of ethnographic research that attends to the senses. Yet conventional scholarly practice is limited in its capacity to communicate about the directness of the sensory and affective elements of emplaced experience. Alternative routes to representing sensory knowing have been developed in arts practice and there are opportunities for these practices to both inform and be developed collaboratively with sensory approaches to ethnographic representation. Connections between artistic, scholarly and applied work are already made by a number of scholars in the social sciences. For example, the sociologist and cultural criminologist Maggie O'Neill, whose work involves collaborations with participants and different types of artists (2008: 4), argues that 'the role of the sociologist and artist as interpreters producing knowledge through interdisciplinary phenomenological [p. 133 ↓ ] research

and artistic re-presentations of lived experience can help to counter identity thinking, make critical interventions, and help us to get in touch with our social worlds' (O'Neill 2008: 53). O'Neill's points are relevant across the ethnographic disciplines. The anthropologist Arnd Schneider has specifically called for a further 'dialogue with the arts', to benefit both anthropologists and arts practitioners (2008:172, see also Schneider and Wright 2006). Such engagements have been developed in the work of anthropologists/artists (e.g. Ravetz 2007) and in appropriations of arts practice techniques in geography (e.g. Butler 2006) and archaeology (e.g. Witmore 2004).

Yet meeting points between ethnography, scholarship, intervention and art can also raise questions concerning the nature of these engagements. For instance, should researchers harness arts for the production of scholarship and theoretically informed applied interventions *or* forsake the conventions of scholarship and established ethnographic epistemologies to produce ways of knowing that are more accessible through arts practice? (See Ravetz 2007 for a discussion of some of these issues.) However, seeing this as a binary, whereby a project either serves artistic or scholarly purposes, is a false dichotomy (as are dichotomies between applied and scholarly practice (Pink 2005a, 2007e)). Between different projects there will be variations in the types of argument and experience ethnographers seek to represent to different audiences. They will aim to contribute to specific types of discourse and debate, using the most appropriate media and methods for each task. Relationships and appropriations between scholarly research, arts practices and applied interventions will depend on the aims and frames of each unique project. They will also be contingent on the skills of individual researchers and types of collaboration they enter into.

Sensory ethnographers developing academic or applied interventions, who wish to situate their work within the existing trajectories of their discipline, are faced with two challenges. The first is to seek appropriate (perhaps new) ways to communicate about their own and other people's sensory knowing, emplacement and mobilisations of cultural categories, and more. The second entails involving these more experiential engagements in the production of work that is at once theoretical (in that they can make a contribution to scholarship and discussion) *and* substantive (in that they contribute to a body of academic knowledge about a particular theme), as well as possibly informing or serving as social interventions.

# Thinking About Sensory Representation: Intimacy, Media and Place

In this chapter I review a series of pertinent existing works to suggest how the task of representing sensory knowing has already been approached. I first address practices that are already established in ethnography (i.e. writing, film/video-making and soundscape composition), before considering those more commonly associated with arts practice (scent (re)production and walking). I do not propose a template for creating sensory ethnographic representations. Rather, drawing both from the works reviewed and the theoretical approach proposed in Chapter 2, I examine a series of themes and connections: the production of a sense of intimacy; relationships between [p. 134 ↓] techniques and media in ethnographic and scholarly communication; and the idea of representation as ethnographic place. These themes and approaches, I suggest, might guide the production of sensory ethnography representations.

The possibility that ethnographic and artistic representations might create a sense of intimacy sufficiently powerful to invite empathetic understandings and communicate experiential knowing to audiences has been suggested across practices and media. The visual anthropologist Peter Biella has proposed that 'Ethnographic films that depict the intimate confidences between anthropologists and informants, and show intimacies among informants, offer viewers the vicarious experience and discovery of close personal revelations and vulnerabilities by people in other cultural worlds'. He suggests film offers a 'sense of *virtual intimacy*' which, because it does not require immediate reciprocation, 'is a safe first step into a world of increased awareness and compassion' (Biella 2009). Similar possibilities have been attributed to written text. Stoller has proposed that 'Using sensuous ethnography to bear witness to ... forms of social trauma, abuse, and repression ... has the potential to shock readers into newfound awareness, enabling them ... to think new thoughts or feel new feelings' (2004: 832). Likewise, particular capacities to produce new forms of awareness and of intimacy have been claimed for sound (e.g. Feld and Brenneis 2004) and smell (e.g. Arning 2006). These methods and media may provide routes through which ethnographers can communicate the sensory emplaced knowing of the research

encounter and of participants to their audiences. However, this is not the only task of the sensory ethnographer.

There is no absolute agreement across (or within) disciplines regarding the ideal relationship between written scholarly communication and other media and techniques of ethnographic representation. While some have suggested that text-based scholarship might be challenged through alternative representations (e.g. MacDougall 1997), my own approach focuses more on seeking ways that writing and other methods might work together (see Pink 2006). Writing has already developed and maintained a central role and set of purposes in sensory ethnography representation. Significantly, it facilitates the contribution to existing scholarship that might be made through the kind of emplaced knowing with which the sensory ethnographer is concerned. Yet, while as Stoller (2004) suggests that written texts might propel readers to new levels of compassionate awareness, they cannot achieve the impression of a direct connection to experiential realities that is implied by sound or video-recordings or scents. Therefore it is pertinent that the use of alternative practices and media of representation to create a sense of intimacy and awareness should not be developed in isolation from a consideration of the relationship of these forms to established scholarship.

A number of the practitioners and scholars discussed below seek to represent the sensoriality and meanings of place. They are concerned with communicating aspects of how particular place-events were experienced. Here I suggest conceptualising such sensory representations as ethnographic places. Ethnographic places are abstractions. Using various narrative and technological practices and processes, they create routes to and bring together selected sensations, emotions, meanings, reflexivity, descriptions, arguments and theories. Ultimately, these components become [p. 135 ↓ ] involved in new place-events as they become interwoven with the trajectories of audiences and readers.

## Printed Text: Sensual Words and Images

Most of the ethnographers who have made significant contributions to sensory sub-field(s) (for instance, in anthropology, geography and sociology) have done so in published monographs, book chapters and journal articles. Some critics have suggested

that ethnographic writing distracts us from the sensorial and experiential. For instance, MacDougall points to the 'potential incommensurability of sensory experience and anthropological writing' (2005: 60) and Schneider and Wright have suggested that most 'sensual experiences involved in fieldwork normally disappear from anthropological writing' (2006: 13). Yet, existing literature demonstrates that writing can connect sensory experience and theoretical discussion in instructive ways (see also Howes 2005b: 4).

There are good reasons for writing. The written word is the most embedded and developed form of ethnographic representation, and a sophisticated technique for scholarly communication. It remains the dominant method of relating the findings, methodologies and theoretical implications of ethnographic studies generally, as well as those that attend to the senses. Written scholarship facilitates ethnographers' engagements in theoretical debate. Thus it allows academics to harness the sensory knowing of ethnographic experience to contribute to existing scholarship. There are many examples of this already discussed in earlier chapters. For example, in Chapter 2 among others, I have drawn from the work of Seremetakis (1994), whose evocative ethnographic descriptions are interwoven with theoretical considerations of sensory memories, and from Downey's (2007) text, where understandings of embodiment are developed in relation to his ethnographic experience.

In making these points I am not suggesting that writing is the superior or exclusive medium for ethnographic representation. Neither would I argue that the purpose of working with other media is simply to *support* written contributions. MacDougall has suggested that scholars look for a 'greater parity amongst modes of expression' by turning to 'the visual, auditory and textual modes of expression found in film' (2005: 60). This offers a way of thinking about written and other texts in relation to each other. Thus ethnographers need to account for the role of written narratives in making crucial connections between, on the one hand, alternative representations of knowing and arguments based on emplaced experience and, on the other, existing strands in scholarly and applied disciplines. Any call for greater attention to the senses in ethnographic writing should be accompanied by the need to develop relationships between sensual knowing, description and evocation (whatever medium this is represented through) and theoretical discussion.

It would be inappropriate to suggest that the writing of the 'sensory ethnography' monograph, chapter or article constitutes a genre in itself. While for the purposes of this book I have grouped a set of works together as sensory ethnographies, in fact when viewed from the perspectives of other subdisciplines these books, articles or chapters equally belong to and share concerns with those of, for example, [p. 136 ↓ ] food studies (e.g. Sutton 2001, 2006), urban geography (e.g. Law 2005; Spinney 2007), the anthropology/sociology of the home (e.g. Pink 2004) or medical anthropology or sociology (e.g. Lammer 2007).

Along with the diversity in how sensory ethnographies are written, and are situated in relation to other literatures, there are some notable common concerns: first, the relationship or interweaving between descriptive and/or evocative text and theoretical and methodological discussion and argument; second, the question of how sensory classifications and categories might be most effectively employed (see Chapter 7); and third, how to engage readers with the text in ways that are sensual, empathetic and reflexive. In addition to this, ethnographic writing should generally incorporate a level of reflexivity and acknowledgement of the processes through which knowing and knowledge are produced, as well as the status of these.

The idea of interweaving theoretical and experiential narratives in sensory ethnography was initially highlighted by Stoller through his monograph *Sensuous Scholarship* (1997). Stoller describes the book as 'an attempt to reawaken profoundly the scholar's body by demonstrating how the fusion of the intelligible and the sensible can be applied to scholarly practices and representations' (Stoller 1997: xv). Through six chapters, he demonstrates how such essays might be composed to represent the embodied experiences of the ethnographer, of others and in the analysis of the sensorial evocation of film.

However, printed text often does not include just written words. Mirko Zardini's book *Sense of the City* (2005) uses a range of written and visual genres (including scholarly writing) to represent urban sensescapes. Among these are photographs that powerfully suggest the textures, smells, tastes, lightness and darkness, heat and cold of urban environments. While the images included in Zardini's text are not presented as part of an ethnographic project, they demonstrate the potential for photography in printed sensory ethnography representation. Photographs have the capacity to bring textures,



surfaces and the sensory experiences they evoke right up close to the reader: they both invoke embodied reactions and offer routes by which, via our own memories and subjectivities, we might anticipate what it feels like to be in another place.

There is an increasing tendency for ethnographers to combine writing with still images in their publications. While they generally do not engage with the potential of photography that is demonstrated in Zardini's (2005) text, sensory ethnography monographs and journal articles are no exception (e.g. Sutton 2001; Geurts 2002), although recent edited readers focusing on the senses (Bull and Back 2003; Classen 2005; Howes 2005a; Drobnik 2006) are curiously devoid of photographs. In some cases there are good reasons for not including images – in my monograph *Home Truths* (Pink 2004), for reasons relating to the image quality of video stills and confidentiality, I restricted the representation to written words (see Pink 2004). Generally, however, a combination of written and visual representation can be beneficial in creating possibilities for engaging them in mutual meaning-making (see Pink 2007a for a detailed discussion). In the case of writing that seeks to represent the senses, this technique might be engaged to enable readers to encounter and comprehend the forms of intimacy and awareness of others' experiences that might be implied through this medium.

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As yet no conventions or techniques for visual-textual sensory evocation in ethnographic texts are established. For example, Stoller includes photographs relevant to the themes discussed in each chapter (Stoller 1997); Geurts' photographs are grouped together with no explicit interweaving in relation to the written text (see Geurts 2002: pages between 84 and 85); and Sutton (2006) interweaves written texts with video stills. In Chapters 4 and 6, I have included images (Figures 4.1, 4.2, 6.1 and 6.2) from my research about the Cittàslow movement in the text. I use written captions to frame the objects or activities represented in the images, and to indicate the emplaced emotions and practices for which they stand. The images are intended to work in relation to, rather than as illustrations of, experiences discussed in writing, as such to communicate on a different register.

An example of how the interweaving of writing and images to represent the sensoriality of ethnographic experience descriptively and analytically is demonstrated in Sutton's anthropological work on modern cooking practices (Sutton 2006). Sutton's ethnography of cooking involved interviewing and filming research subjects 'as they go about cooking "ordinary" and "special dishes"', which he suggests 'allows us to develop a profile and also a sort of culinary biography of some of the key experiences and values that have led people to their current cooking practices' (2006:102). Before discussing the ethnography, Sutton introduces a series of theoretical questions regarding skill and modernity. Thus he establishes that one of the tasks of his chapter is to respond to these issues. His presentation of the ethnographic detail is interesting in a number of ways. First, the analysis focuses on specific encounters that involved research participants engaging in activities on video and being interviewed. Sutton weaves together information about the participants, descriptions of their actual practices, quotations of participants' commentaries, discussions that link these to existing research and theory, and descriptively captioned video stills. The narrative moves between different registers (resonating to some extent with Stoller's call for ethnographic writing to move between the 'intelligible' and the 'sensible' (Stoller 1997)). Sutton's chapter conforms to some principles of conventional academic writing and debate. Yet it simultaneously engages possibilities for empathetic engagement with participants' experiences through words and video stills. For example Sutton's descriptions of one participant's cooking practices emphasise the visual and tactile aspects of her engagements with ingredients and tools. He writes:

*In this recipe all but two ingredients were measured by sight. The two excluded from this were vinegar and an egg. Drawing her fingers together and pulling up slightly to create a cup of her right hand with her thumb forming the outer edge of the bowl by being crooked against her first finger, she poured the vinegar into her left hand to measure the correct amount. ... (Sutton 2006: 103–4, original italics)*

These descriptions are italicised, and related directly to the video stills which represent aspects of the processes described. The images offer the reader a route through which to imagine the tactile and visual senses of pouring, measuring, rolling out and other skilled material engagements that cooking involves. Thus the text becomes an ethnographic place where theoretical debate, written description, visual evocation

[p. 138 ↓ ] and more are intentionally brought together and interwoven. With the engagement of an audience these narratives become further entangled with other theoretical, biographical and imaginative threads brought by the reader/viewer.

Reading experiences are themselves sensorial, as Marks (2000) has argued for film (see below). The environments in which books are read and readers' corporeal responses to their narratives all contribute to the understandings that we gain from them. Another strategy shared by ethnographers who write about sensory experience entails inviting readers more directly to sensory engagements through exercises or activities. For example, in attempting to 'teach' her readers to be aware of their own sensory ways of knowing, Hahn presents readers with a series of 'orientation' exercises. In the first of these she asks readers to 'Imagine taking a drink of water from a glass as performance' (original italics), then to reflect on elements of this experience and describe it. Her point is that 'conveying lived experience is challenging, particularly if it is a performance practice you "know" in your own body but do not regularly transmit to someone else – either through demonstration or through writing' (Hahn 2007: 19–21). Noting how anthropologists 'struggle with representing the dynamics of social life in static textual form, and work with various strategies – multivocality, evocation, indeterminacy – to subvert the limits of our genre' in his monograph *Remembrance of Repasts* (2001), Sutton invites readers to experience Greek cooking. However, providing two written recipes that might be followed, he warns that it was unusual for research participants to give him recipes that could be transcribed. In fact he points out that there was part of one recipe that they 'could not articulate to me in written instructions' (2001: 156–7). Although the recipes Sutton relates were not initially presented to him in writing, in modern western cultures writing recipes down is a conventional practice. The recipes are not direct representations of tastes but offer routes to experience. Another non-textual experience that is nevertheless represented in written form is music. In the next section I discuss sound-recording and composition in ethnography, yet written text can also be harnessed for sonic representation. For example, in an essay concerned with the atmosphere and soundscapes of football matches, Les Back uses musical scores to represent the tonal quality of the songs, along with their words printed underneath (2003). This invites readers to new and embodied engagements with texts and sounds should they seek to reproduce the sounds themselves by reading/playing/singing the tones – in ways informed by Back's

written discussions. Thus readers might imagine themselves into the sensory or affective worlds of others by singing their songs, with the written knowledge about these 'others' situatedness already in mind. Such engagements do not guarantee that readers will reconstitute the printed music as performed song in the way it was sung in the research context, and indeed require some musical skills. They nevertheless suggest a route to another way of knowing.

Participation in such exercises invites readers to their own experiences of elements of other people's worlds described in ethnographies. Moreover, it creates routes through which they may gain new levels of reflexive awareness of their own sensory subjectivities. The idea of the self-reflexive reader implies a reader whose awareness of her or his own subjectivity is constantly reconstituted. She or he is open to becoming aware of difference and uses her or his own experiences as routes to the [p. 139 ↓] appreciation of the emplacement, memories and imaginations of others. Facilitating such forms of readership supports a scholarship that hopes to create cross-cultural understanding by producing senses of intimacy with 'others'.

None of these methods of communicating about sensory knowing discussed above provides readers with the same sensory experiences of the ethnographer or research participants discussed in such texts. They may, however, offer readers a basis from which to understand the experiences of both researcher and research participants and deeper reflexive understandings of their own sensory awareness.

## Audiovisual Media and Aesthetic Evocation

Visual ethnographers are increasingly developing audiovisual representations that are intended to invoke the sensorial, affective and aesthetic dimensions of the lives and environments of the participants in their research. Examples include MacDougall's Doon School project, in which he focuses on the 'social aesthetics' of the school (see MacDougall 2005: 94–119) and Lammer's *Making Contact* (2004), a video that represents the sensorial and affective world of interventional radiology: 'it engages all of the senses to tell a story: incorporating touch, taste and smell into a surreal, sterile yet fleshy audio-visual imagination' (Lammer 2007: 99). MacDougall suggests that social aesthetics might be filmed 'through the events and material objects in which it

played a variety of roles' (2005: 108) and Lammer's *Making Contact* uses observational, artistic and playful techniques (see Lammer 2007: 98). In doing so, she succeeds in documenting a process of interventional radiology and evoking its sensorial and experiential dimensions. In Chapter 7, I drew on the work of MacDougall (1998, 2005) and Marks (2000) to suggest that film and video might offer ethnographers routes to feeling re-emplaced in fieldwork encounters. In this section, I apply these ideas, along with Marks' understanding of 'embodied viewing experience' (2000: 211), to consider video as a multisensory medium.

Marks describes the experience of viewing as embodied in that 'We take in many kinds of "extradiegetic" sensory information, information from outside a film's world, when we "watch" a film'. She invites us to compare different viewing contexts (2000: 211–2). For the purposes of the audiovisual representations that academic ethnographers are likely to produce, these might include a film theatre, a conference room, a living room, a seminar room, a lecture theatre or a library video screening room. Through collaborations outside academia, other performance and exhibition venues would also be probable. Thus viewing contexts are multisensory environments. They combine different tastes, smells, proximities to others, types of seating, levels of comfort and more. They are already evocative of sensory memories and imaginations.

Marks argues further, that 'the audiovisual image necessarily evokes other sense memories' (2000: 13). A straightforward way to understand this is through what Marks calls 'narrative identification':

Characters are shown eating, making love, and so forth, and we viewers identify with their activity. We salivate or become aroused on verbal and visual cue. Beyond this it [p. 140 ↓] is common for cinema to evoke sense experience through intersensory links: sounds may evoke textures; sights may evoke smells (rising steam or smoke evokes smells of fire, incense, or cooking). (2000: 213)

While Marks refers to the fictional narratives of intercultural cinema, her points are applicable to ethnographic video or film representations. In her interpretation, such film experiences engage audiences as participants. She argues that 'Our experience of the world is fundamentally mimetic, a completing of the self in a sensory meeting

with the world'. As 'a mimetic medium' cinema is 'capable of drawing us into sensory participation with its world' to an extent written language cannot (Marks 2000: 214). MacDougall has likewise proposed that the spectator's involvement in film is both psychological and corporeal. He suggests that films 'provide us with a series of perceptual clues' creating 'spaces analogous to those we experience in everyday life, as we sample visual and other sensory information' (2005:25). In both everyday life and as spectators of film, we are urged to interpret and complete this information into a 'complete picture' (2005: 25). Thus, MacDougall proposes that for the spectator there is 'an almost continuous impetus towards convergence with the objects and bodies on the screen' (2005: 26) as well as with the body of the filmmaker in that 'The viewer's response [to film] is ... one of double synchrony with the film subject and the filmmaker' (MacDougall 1998: 53). These understandings, combined with Biella's argument that films offer a 'sense of *virtual intimacy*' and a 'step into a world of increased awareness and compassion' (Biella 2009, my italics), mean Marks' proposals become particularly pertinent. They imply that film and video offer ethnographers routes to communicate their own and participants' encounters and emplaced knowing to audiences.

If we are to understand ethnographers' and audiences' relationships with film and video as one of 'sensory participation', two related questions are implied. First, how might film represent place? Second, how might audiences (and individual viewers) be involved in the making of ethnographic places?

Films and videos can be understood through an appropriation and abstraction of the concept of place. Indeed, when MacDougall suggests that films create '*spaces analogous to those we experience in everyday life*' (2005: 25, my italics) his use of 'space' might be refigured through a concept of place. The making of an ethnographic documentary might be conceptualised as the intentional and/or serendipitous bringing together of a series of interconnected events involving encounters, objects, emotions, sensations, weather, persons and more, which together constitute place. These are edited/interwoven into a representation, a deliberate rendering of place, itself loaded with ideologies, theory and more. The viewing of the film, however, becomes another form of place, here through her or his 'sensory participation' (Marks 2000) with the film and through the sense of 'virtual intimacy' she or he feels (Biella 2009) the viewer becomes part of and engaged corporeally, affectively and intellectually in



an ethnographic place. This would engage the viewer's own cultural, biographical and scholarly experience and knowing, enabling her or him to participate in the constitution of a renewed ethnographic place, and to arrive at a particular form of multisensory knowing (see Pink 2007d).

Thus film/video can be understood as a medium through which the specificity and experience of the ethnographic place-event might be represented to audiences. It [p. 141 ↓ ] offers a sense of intimacy, a route to intercultural understandings and ways of knowing not available in the same direct way when represented through written words. These points create a strong argument for the role of video in sensory ethnography representation. However, while video can potentially communicate in the very ways that seem essential to sensory ethnography practice, it cannot directly participate in scholarly debates already developed in carefully crafted written theoretical discussions (see Pink 2006). It might nevertheless be engaged in such discussions when appropriate connections are made – often through written text. The two audiovisual works cited at the beginning of this section are both accompanied by written texts. MacDougall writes about his Doon School project and films in *The Corporeal Image* (2005) and Lammer's *Making Contact* (2004) is discussed in her written work, including a book chapter (Lammer 2007) and linked with other materials on her website (see Lammer n.d).

## The Sound of Ethnography

In common with ethnographic writing and video/filmmaking, sound-recording allows ethnographers and artists to create permanent edited recordings or compositions that might be disseminated to wide audiences. The publication of audio recordings is not widespread among ethnographers. Yet convincing texts and arguments advocate the possibilities of sound ethnography. Scholars and artists working in this area frequently cite the World Soundscapes Project led by Murray Schafer in the 1970s as a key influence in the movement towards both sound ethnography and art. This project involved Schafer recording acoustic environments/ecologies in diverse geographical locations. Of particular relevance to discussions developed in Chapter 4 and later in this chapter, he often used the method of recording soundwalks (Wrightson 2000; Adams and Bruce 2008).

Sound ethnography involves recording as a research practice and composition as a representational practice. The acousmatic music and soundscape composition artist Drever has suggested a series of congruences between ethnography and soundscape composition (see Chapter 1). Moreover, he proposes that 'soundscape composition practice perhaps can offer ethnographic practice alternative models of cultural poetics: that of the analytical and creative tools for grasping at the sound world'. Going further, he suggests that 'soundscape composition [could be] ... a pertinent substitute to writing an academic ethnographic report and *vice versa*' (Drever 2002: 25). While existing practice demonstrates that ethnographic experiences can be represented through soundscape composition, the idea these might replace an '*academic ethnographic report*' (2002: 25, my italics) is less viable. Indeed, direct substitutions across any media of ethnographic representation are difficult to achieve. To replace, or play the same role of, academic writing, a composition would have to explicitly contribute to scholarly theoretical and empirical discussions, which have been developed through sophisticated techniques of writing. It is more beneficial to probe the unique qualities of soundscape composition, and determine what these contribute to ethnographic representation that writing cannot.

Drever does not outline exactly what he has in mind. However, as an example he refers to the work of Feld, whose body of writing and sound art is informed by [p. 142 ↓] (and informs) ethnographic and theoretical scholarship. Feld's practice is guided by the concept of 'acoustemology', which he defines as 'an exploration of sonic sensibilities, specifically of ways in which sound is central to making sense, to knowing, to experiential truth'. He also focuses theoretically and acoustemologically on place and suggests that 'the experience of place potentially can always be grounded in an acoustic dimension' (Feld 1996: 97). In Chapter 5 I discussed Feld's use of audio-recordings as a sonic elicitation method. His practice extends beyond this to include the production of sound ethnographies.

In an interview with Donald Brenneis (Feld and Brenneis 2004), Feld discusses his earlier work, including two LPs, *Music of the Kaluli* (1982) and *Kaluli Weeping and Song* (1985), that accompanied his monograph *Sound and Sentiment* (1982). The themes of *Music of the Kaluli*, as Feld describes them, are inextricable from central questions in the social sciences: 'the whole first side of the LP was about sociality in sound, acoustic co-presence and interaction – the relationship between the people, the forest, voice



and sound' (Feld and Brenneis 2004: 464); and in this and his later CD, *Voices of the Rainforest* (Feld 1991), 'the idea was ... to have sound raise the question about the indexicality of voice and place, to provoke you to hear sound as place making'. Comparing the publication of a sound ethnography with written text, he proposes that 'when you hear the way birds overlap in the forest and you hear the way voices overlap in the forest, all of a sudden you can grasp something at a sensuous level that is considerably more abstract and difficult to convey in a written ethnography' (Brenneis and Feld 2004: 465).

The idea that sound recordings can represent a sense of intimacy is also represented in Feld's work. He describes how his *Voices of the Rainforest* (1991) CD is 'a 30-minute soundscape of 24 hours of sounds, a day in the forest with Kaluli people', which was edited using a 'compositional technique ... layering and overlapping different recordings from the 24-hour cycle' (Feld and Brenneis 2004: 465). Reflecting on the process through which this was created, he relates that: 'the tape recorder was always something I wore. I just went where people went. And the editing involved techniques that heightened and marked that sense of intimacy and spontaneity and contact between recorder and recorded, between listener and sounds' (Feld and Brenneis 2004: 465). Feld's concern with bringing this sense of intimacy to the forefront of the edited composition is noteworthy and is drawn out again later in the interview when he suggests: 'The recording takes you there, into that place, and you can have a very sensuous, affective, feeling relationship with voice and place by listening' (2004: 468). Returning to Biella's (2009) suggestion that the production of a sense of intimacy in ethnographic representation can contribute to a moral project of increasing intercultural awareness, this would imply that sound ethnographies likewise have the potential to work towards such goals.

Feld has continued to develop his practice in slightly different directions in his later work, including his CD *Rainforest Soundwalks* (2001a). In an interview with Carlos Palombini, Feld describes how each soundwalk occurs at a particular time of day and location in the forest. Yet he points out that each soundwalk is 'about a way of listening to and at the forest edge' thus 'The "soundwalk" takes place in *the head and the body, in the way of listening* in the attention to the surrounding/motional sound field' (Palombini n.d., my italics). Indeed, as Feld goes on to remark, the soundwalks are

also constituted through his own twenty-five year 'history of listening and being taught to listen'.

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Therefore soundscape compositions can be understood not as simply ways of representing what 'places' sound like, but as invitations to listen in particular embodied ways. Following this, we can better understand what might be learnt from listening to what Feld calls the 'sonic everyday' of others. With reference to his *Rainforest Soundwalks* (2001a), he relates: 'It is through and on the attentive listening to this world that Bosavi people built their songs and musical lives' (Palombini n.d.). Ethnographic soundscape representations might thus be designed to offer listeners a route through which to hear as others might. This, however, should involve not simply providing them with a composition, but also with some guidance on how to hear.

Feld's sound art offers academic researchers and others certain routes into his own and Bosavi experiences of sound. These are edited compositions, rather than simply real-time recordings of everyday life as it unfolds. Their production involves sophisticated ethnographic knowing and technical skills. Feld's work is not intended solely for academic audiences (see Palombini n.d.). Nevertheless, when situated through his written work, it facilitates a route through which such emplaced knowing can be engaged to contribute to scholarly debate. Feld's written texts (e.g. 1996) theorise the experiential, the intimacy and the sound as place-making practice.

Soundscape composition as ethnographic representation is a complex process and requires specialist skills and sensitivities. Some of these are technical, others relate to ethnographic experience. Paul Moore (2003) highlights some of the challenges through a consideration of his research about different (protestant and catholic) soundscapes in Northern Ireland. Some issues are unique to specific projects; to understand the challenges Moore discusses requires some knowledge of sound in the context of the Northern Irish conflict. He describes how 'the historical representations of the loyalist and nationalist communities resonate with opposing sounds and patterns' (2003: 268). Comparing protestant and catholic linguistic sounds, drumming and religious services, he suggests that these 'conflicting sectarian sounds ... dominate the aural soundscape in Northern Ireland'. Yet, simultaneously, Moore points out that both groups share

a soundscape of 'violence' which includes gunfire, bombings, riots, sirens and the silence of funerals (2003: 274). He analyses these sounds as 'purveyors and indicators of cultural memory', which are 'echoes of the sacred, passed without words from generation to generation, underpinning the notion that for communities united under a perceived threat, hearing as well as seeing is believing' (2003: 274).

How might this auditory knowledge be represented to an audience unfamiliar with such ways of experiencing and knowing? Moore discusses the complexities of how an artificial soundscape composed from recorded sound might be produced for this purpose. He outlines that to achieve this would require a self-conscious and reflexive composer who 'constantly interrogates the soundscape composition'. This would involve addressing a set of issues, to include: ensuring that visual props do not distract attention from sound in installations; attending to the 'active listening position' of soundscape listeners; questions of perspective; the listeners 'point of listening' and understanding; and the potential cacophony of an edited soundscape that might lead it to become 'a meaningless jumble of indecipherable noise' (2003: 274–6). These are real concerns which, as Moore presents them, represent the beginnings of a check-list for ethnographers working in this area. More generally, however, they indicate that there would be a need for the education of both composers and listeners to facilitate means [p. 144 ↓ ] of communicating about sonic knowing that can accommodate both scholarly and experiential understandings.

Sound is inevitable in ethnography and even silences are laden with meanings. Making sounds and silences explicit in the representation of ethnographic places and experiences can be an evocative route to multisensory ways of knowing. However, this also requires some degree of educating listeners in how to hear and, as such, how to engage in the aural ways of knowing of others, and of making embodied aural knowing meaningful in relation to scholarly understandings.

# Olfaction, Art and Potential Lessons for Ethnographers

It is perhaps most difficult to imagine how an ethnographer might represent olfactory experiences, let alone reproduce them. Indeed, writing in the catalogue for an exhibition entitled *Sensorium*, Bill Arning comments that 'To attempt to include smell-based work in a catalogue like this is to experience the inadequacy of both reproductive media and language', noting how 'In distributed smell technologies, the olfactory equivalent of a photographically illustrated text is barely on the horizon today' (Arning 2006: 98). Yet some olfactory artists have attempted to 'put smell to paper'. When I was writing this chapter a colleague forwarded to me a postcard announcing an event entitled *If There Ever Was: An Exhibition of Extinct and Impossible Smells* at the Reg Vardy Gallery (University of Sunderland, UK, 2008). As I handled the textured card I noticed a faint and unfamiliar smell, holding it closer to inhale confirmed that the card was scented and drew my attention to the written text which ends with the words '... This is what the sun smells like'. The back of the card acknowledges the creator of the odour (Geza Schön, International Flavours and Fragrances). The smell of the card was crucial in determining my relationship to its materiality, my experience of it, and its sensory agency as a reminder about the exhibition, as at odd moments I was drawn to it as I caught a whiff of its smell while writing at my desk.

The use of scents in arts and documentary practice are not new (and, as I noted in Chapter 1, have some parallels in business and marketing contexts). For instance, Marks describes how since the early twentieth century filmmakers have used smell to create part of a 'cinematic experience'. This has included burning incense during film screenings, scratch and sniff cards coordinated to correspond to the film narrative, the diffusion of smells into rooms during films, and following film screenings with 'recreations of the meals in the films at local restaurants' (see Marks 2000: 212 for details). However, Marks points out that while 'Such extradiegetic sense experience amplifies the multisensory appeal of a movie' there are also limits and possible problems associated with such practices. Indeed, one of the examples she cites led to a 'public panic'. This, she suggests, is because 'Associations with actual smells

are so haphazard and individual that even the commonest odors incite reactions from relaxation to arousal, disgust or horror' (2000: 212; and see Hinton et al. 2006). While Marks's comments imply that there might be little certainty in how one might use scent to communicate with others and in particular across cultures, these characteristics are also part of its appeal. Indeed, Drobnik and Fisher suggest that in a contemporary context artists who are 'seeking to redefine aesthetic [p. 145 ↓ ] experience' tend to be attracted to 'the distinctive qualities of scent – such as its ephemerality, evocativeness, intimacy, variability, intensity' (2008: 350).

The olfactory artist Sissel Tolaas researches and then recreates smells from a variety of lived contexts. Ceri Hand's description of a project Tolaas undertook in Liverpool (UK) outlines how: 'For her project OUSIDEIN Tolaas walked with Liverpoolians from the north, west, south and east of the city. Together they paced the city, using high-end technology to collect smells from streets and neighbourhoods and recording perceptions and feelings in response to their sense of smell' (Hand 2007: 41). Tolaas then recreates these scents chemically in her laboratory for public exhibition in gallery spaces. This short description of Tolaas's practices already begins to strike resonance with some of the sensory ethnography practices discussed in earlier chapters. Her practice of pacing the city with local people to 'collect smells' and record 'perceptions and feelings' corresponds with the ethnographic methods involving 'walking with' research participants discussed in Chapter 5. How, and what, then might smells communicate to audiences in gallery contexts? Arning, noting the impossibility of communicating about smell verbally, suggests that the audience for Tolaas's work is limited because 'scents cannot be conveyed beyond the first person sniffer'. He identifies a further limitation in that 'many exhibition visitors' are unwilling 'to put their noses on the line and sniff'. Smell can signify an intense form of intimacy with a person or object. Arning suggests that some 'refuse Tolaas's open invitation to conceptually dense olfactory experiences, as if to accept would forever compromise their personal security' (2006: 98), thus indicating indeed that opening oneself up to the intimacy of smell in a gallery context might invite a challenging way of knowing.

Our experiences of other people and places, including the home, inevitably involve smell. While domestic odours often escape the control of human agents, the intentional addition of scents, production and concealment of smells (e.g. of cooking, cleaning and more) is equally important to the constitution of place. My research about domestic

life demonstrated how people engage in everyday practices aimed at creating specific olfactory environments in their homes, which are attached to identities, moralities and more. These involve considerations about the relationship between 'natural' outdoor smells, domestic cleaning or other products, cooking smells, and olfactory 'decoration' through the use of, for example, scented oils or candles (e.g. Pink 2004). In a review of an olfactory exhibition, Drobnik and Fisher discuss the work of artist Oswaldo Maciá, which represents domestic spaces *vis-à-vis* their odours. Maciá's installation *1 Woodchurch Road, London NW6 3PL*, draws on a building in which the artist once lived along with other people of diverse generations, nationalities and household compositions. The installation, consisting of five garbage cans is described as presenting 'a selection of smells that Maciá found most typical of the building's occupants' which were 'naftalin (mothballs), olive oil, Listerine, eucalyptus, and baby powder' (Drobnik and Fisher 2008: 350). Visitors to the exhibition lifted the lids of the garbage cans to inhale their scents. Drobnik and Fisher suggest that one of the effects of this is that 'Each sniff of the contents of the containers inspires reflection upon how a sense of community can develop from a heterogeneous mix of identities' (2008: 350–2). While I imagine the reflections actually inspired among diverse sniffers of the scents would vary, the connection that Drobnik and Fisher make between scents and identities is significant. As I noted above, odours play an important role in the processes through which homes [p. 146 ↓ ] and self-identities are mutually constituted through domestic practice. Although the sensory home is much more than its odours (see also Pink 2004), discussions of arts practice, such as Maciá's, invite us to consider how olfactory installations might be mobilised to communicate about the relationship between, on the one hand, the materiality and multisensoriality of domestic (and other) practices and environments and, on the other, the identities and moralities that are lived and constituted through these. As scholarly communications, such representations of olfactory sensory knowing would benefit from being connected to theoretical strands, and arguably written discussions might play a role in this.

In fact, in existing practice scents are not only 'exhibited' but disseminated as part of printed texts. The extent to which this can be viable in academic publishing is questionable. Yet a recent example demonstrates some of the possibilities such experimentation might afford ethnographers. Robert Blackson's (2008) *If There Ever Was: A Book of Extinct and Impossible Smells* was published in connection with *If*



*There Ever Was: An Exhibition of Extinct and Impossible Smells* (also 2008). The book provides an interesting example of the intimacies, empathies and challenges scents might invite. The scents commissioned for this exhibition were 'inspired by absence'. They represent historical 'stories', referring to things that in most cases no longer exist in material forms. Blackson describes each scent as 'a harmonious composition blending multiple notes and, like a story, have a beginning, middle and end' (Blackson 2008: 6). In the book each scent, which is represented on a piece of card that the reader must rub to release the smell, is guided by one of Blackson's written narratives printed on the facing page. 'These words' he writes, 'are not intended to direct interpretation, but to set a stage for the scent to fill' (2008: 6–7). The book provides an example of how text and scent together offer readers/smellers seductive resources through which to create routes into empathetic imaginaries about the material, sensorial and affective elements of other people's emplacement. These are not all comforting experiences, for instance Steven Pearce's scent represents the last meal of a man who was executed in the United States. Here, in particular, the written text frames the scent through a story that potentially creates sympathy between the reader and representation of the executed man: Blackson tells us that his conviction would probably have been overturned had evidence that became available later been forthcoming earlier. The prospect of smelling this meal invites the reader to imagine a level of intimacy and empathy that goes beyond the sympathetic engagement invoked through the written text, thus making it a difficult level of engagement since it offers the reader an olfactory route into imagining *his* emplacement and the material and affective aspects of this.

Other scents represent collective experiences, for example two scents by Christophe Laudamiel are inspired by 'the vibration of Hiroshima's atomic blast' (Blackson 2008: 16) and air of the middle ages (Blackson 2008: 32), and Sissel Tolaas created what is described as 'the smell of communism', characterised as 'the stale air of imposed uniformity' (Blackson 2008: 36). Rather differently, another text describes how in East Berlin the Stasi took samples of suspects' body odour on pieces of fabric, through the story of a young woman who was tried and cautioned by the Stasi (Blackson 2008: 20). Whether or not the accompanying scent by Maki Udea included on the page facing the narrative reproduces the sweat of this particular [p. 147 ↓] woman, the sense of

it being a personal odour produced under particular circumstances is what makes it compelling.

*If There Ever Was* affords a series of insights that are useful for considering the roles scent might play in sensory ethnography representation and that are broadly coherent with the themes of intimacy, place and the text/sense relationship explored in this chapter. The idea of sharing a scent that was experienced by other individuals or collectivities, historically or biographically, can be highly evocative of feelings of empathy and intimacy. Such scents do not necessarily allow us to share *the same* scents as others – positioned historically, socially or culturally differently to us. Moreover, the multisensoriality of the specific environments in which individual users of the book experience the scents means their sensing always takes ‘place’ in a new environment. Indeed, whether or not the chemically reproduced smells are identical to those experienced by others historically is less important than the point that they offer us sensory routes into imagining other people's material and emotional emplacement. Thus, using scent to create such routes, connections, intimacies and empathies offers sensory ethnographers a way to invite their audiences to sense the places occupied by others. As Blackson notes, ‘To know something by its scent alone, as a pure “olfactory image” is a rare event’ (2008: 7), and indeed for those who read the texts in his volume before rubbing and smelling the scents on their opposite pages, the olfactory experience is already set in relation to a series of other biographical and cultural frames that contribute to the sense that is made from it. Thus the written narratives play an important role in framing olfactory arts practice and making it accessible to its audience. Such combinations would be equally important in ethnographic representations that work with scent.

Olfactory reproduction on cards and in books, as exhibition installations, though emplaced practices, and more, hold exciting potential for sensory ethnography representation. Scents alone cannot contribute to scholarly debates or make theoretical arguments. However, their introduction into ethnographic representations can produce forms of intimacy and senses of place that draw audiences into new relationships to ethnographers and research participants.



# The Participating Audience: Walking Ethnographic Representation

Several experimental approaches that combine ethnography and performance – including theatre anthropology (Hastrup 1998; see also Barba 1995), ethno-mimesis (O'Neill 2008) and the film genre of ethno-fiction (originating in the work of the anthropological filmmaker Jean Rouch) have been developed. More recently, and with specific attention to the senses, there has been a growing interest in walking as a way of communicating about academic work. Such approaches include elements of documentary and performance, often through video and audio-recordings. In earlier chapters I discussed the research methods of walking with others and walking with video. Building on approaches and practices, the idea of walking as ethnographic representation offers a potential route to communicating about the emplaced [p. 148 ↓] knowing of ethnographer and of research participants, using technologies designed to engage audiences through the senses.

The soundwalk method is well established in arts practice and increasingly so in ethnographic practice. Above I have discussed Feld's audio-recorded *Rainforest Soundwalks* (2001a) as a method of representing other people's emplacement through sound. Another approach to the soundwalk invites audiences to engage by not only listening but by simultaneously walking themselves. This method usually involves the participant wearing headphones through which she or he listens to and is guided by an audio narrative while walking predetermined routes designed by the artist. The soundwalk artist Janet Cardiff's work, which follows this principle, is generating significant interest among scholars concerned with the senses (e.g. Butler 2006; Witmore 2004; Rawes 2008). The multisensoriality of the experience of Cardiff's work has been characterised by Marjory Jacobson as follows:

Instead of hearing the standard audioguide tape, the listener is immediately plunged into a discordant world where reality, reverie, and fiction coexist. Before long, 'Janet's' memories seem implanted into our consciousness. Our proprioceptive sense heightened, we're thinking, touching, and smelling in unison with our guide. (2006: 58)

Jacobson goes on to suggest that this feeling of unison can be disturbing in that 'As the synaesthetic aura becomes unbearably intense, the very notion of the self is called into question' (2006: 58). While the experiences Jacobson describes do not necessarily represent *the* universal experience of Cardiff's work, they resonate with the ideas of scholars discussed earlier in this book (see Chapter 2) that we might come to share other people's emplacement as a route to understanding how they experience their worlds; and that as one engages in new emplaced forms of knowing, the self is transformed. Thus the sound walk presents a medium and practice that might offer ethnographic audiences routes to understanding the emplacement of both researcher and research participants.

Scholar/practitioners have already begun to make these connections. For example, Toby Butler has suggested that 'experiments in combining walking, sound, memory and artistic practice could be useful tools for the geographer to research, apply and present site-specific cultural geography' (2006: 890). His work suggests that the soundwalk might be connected to both the sensoriality and sociality of place in that walks in which participants listen to the artist's guiding narrative through headphones can be understood as multisensorial experiences of place (with all the implications for invoking memories and imagination this holds), and soundwalks may create relationships between their participants and other elements of the environment – rather than isolating them through the dominance of the headphone audio track (2006: 298). Butler's oral history research involved recording 'experiences and memories of people at riverside locations' along the River Thames in London (2006: 901). From these materials he produced 'a carefully constructed three mile walk with 12 different sound points along the route, containing a total of an hour of memories from 14 people' (2006: 903). While soundwalks require their users to actually participate through walking, the presence of the ethnographer her or himself is represented through the audio-recording, which can [p. 149 ↓] be disseminated digitally. In 2006, Butler reported that during a five-month period his soundwalk had been downloaded digitally (from the website <http://www.memoryscape.org.uk/>) or purchased on CD by 600 people and at least 350 had participated in the walks (2006: 906). Butler's comments concerning how people experienced these walks are especially pertinent:

The recordings slowed walkers down, gave people time to consider their surroundings and experience other people's memories in a more

sensitised way. Hearing authentic voices from other people also seemed to make people empathise towards the community that they listened to, despite their prior assumptions or even antipathy towards, say, houseboat dwellers or West London bungalow owners. (Butler 2006: 904)

As I suggested above, alternative forms of representation might engender a sense of intimacy and a route to other people's experiences. Butler's work, along with his emphasis on the multisensoriality and sociality implied by the soundwalk, continues this theme.

In Chapter 6, I introduced the idea of walking with video (see also Pink 2007d), already an established technique in ethnographic film and visual ethnography practice. The associations between video, walking and place, and their capacity to invoke imaginations and memories that make this technique so effective in visual ethnography research, are also relevant to other emergent uses of walking with video which draw from arts practice. Christopher Witmore develops similar themes to explore the relationship between art and archaeology. Witmore is particularly concerned with place (a central concept in archaeology) and with sensory embodied experience (2004: 59). In seeking ways to communicate about place that go beyond 'documentation and inscription' (2004: 59–60), he proposes a process of 'mediation'. This 'mode of engagement', which goes beyond scholarly narrative (2004: 60), would permit ethnographers to, as Witmore puts it, 'attain richer and fuller translations of bodily experience and materiality that are located, multi-textured, reflexive, sensory and polysemous' (2004:60).

Witmore also draws on Cardiff's practice, which, like Jacobson (2006), he suggests 'explores sensory evocation by creating moments of intimacy with the participant' (2004: 61). While Butler's (2006) developments built on Cardiff's audio-recorded soundwalk practice, Witmore draws on her video walks, whereby participants walk while viewing a pre-recorded walk on the screen of a digital video camera and listening with headphones. Witmore points out how 'Cardiff asks participants to synchronize their movements through the same locale with her pre-recorded journey by maintaining the same pace'. Thus the participant's body becomes engaged in the work of evoking Cardiff's experience. The potential of this practice for bringing audiences closer to

elements of the emplacement of ethnographers and research participants is clear. Indeed, Witmore suggests that 'Throughout the walk the body of the participant (the listener-viewer) and the artist occupy the same space and perform the same movements' (2004: 61). For Witmore, such 'peripatetic video infuses aural and visual mediation into the corporeal activities of movement and interaction' (2004: 62). He proposes that when applied to the task of communicating about experience in archaeology, 'this form of media overlay constitutes a more fulfilling means [p. 150 ↓ ] of interposing the lived experience of the archaeologist with that of the participant' (2004: 63–4). Through a discussion of a series of experiments with peripatetic video in archaeological field sites, Witmore's conclusions include two points that resonate strongly with the themes identified at the beginning of this chapter. He suggests that 'this form of mediation brings us to new levels of intimacy between archaeologists and their audience' and that 'disparities between different individuals' negotiations and interpretations of place are set in high relief when they themselves surrender to the experience of another' (2004: 68). Walking with 'peripatetic video' cannot reproduce exactly the past emplacement of others. Nevertheless, Witmore's discussion indicates how it might enable users to feel in some ways *similarly* emplaced and evoke a sense of another's 'being there'.

While the walks discussed above rely on pre-produced audio/visual digital media, other recent arts practice has engaged audiences/participants in different activities. In March 2008 as part of ROAM, a walking arts event developed by Loughborough University (UK), I participated in one of the artist Tim Brennan's walks. Brennan describes his walks as 'manoeuvres' that 'exist in a region between traditions of performance art, the historical tour, loco-descriptive poetry, pilgrimage, expanded notions of sculpture, curating and plain old pedestrianism' (<http://wwwmysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk/manoeuvre/index.jhtml>). The walk was based on careful planning and research. It was described as follows.

Tim Brennan's new walk for Loughborough retraces the route taken by the town's Luddites on an infamous evening in June 1816. The route drops into a number of the pubs in which the Luddites drank, shoring up their nerve prior to their notorious night of machine wrecking.

Using a broad range of quotations, which revisit or undermine historical facts, Tim Brennan's guided walks encourage new takes on historical events. (ROAM programme, Loughborough University, 2008)

Describing the process by which he creates the walks, Brennan told me 'There are two main aspects to each manoeuvre coming into being: the route and the quotations. I begin by walking around the area to which I have been invited and thinking through fields of cultural interest. ... Through this "scouting," I try and focus down on what it is that I want to hold as a primary object of study (so from the outset the manoeuvre is never encyclopaedic or random)'. In Loughborough, he 'discovered that the Luddites went on their own journey (a pub crawl/drinking spree) before raiding the mill and developed a spatialised/geographic relationship through a walking practice'. Once Brennan has determined a rough annotated route (which covers different types of pathway and terrain), he then works through an 'iterative method'. In his words: 'I go back and forth between route planning and sourcing texts. I treat this stage as if the work (the montage of quotes and sites) was a concrete poem. This leads to an editing of quotes which end up pasted into a journal/study book which is used on the walk. Sometimes quotes are placed in envelopes to be distributed or exist as a published guidebook' (Brennan, personal communication 2008).

Brennan's manoeuvres offer an example of how through an experiential performance-based way of making, and knowing, a place might be constituted and communicated [p. 151 ↓] through a form of audience engagement. During the walk I participated in, Brennan's readings were largely historical as his route through Loughborough focused, among other things, on the town's Luddite history. I shared the Luddite's route through the town, traversed different terrains underfoot, listened to Brennan's readings, gazed on sculptures, houses, etc. The performance included a stop at a Loughborough pub where we bought drinks and socialised. In this sense the engagements that this walk offered were multisensory, and multimedia. It included sensing the town underfoot, through the rainy weather, through the tastes of the drinks in the pub, listening to and interacting with the readings, making a wish as I touched the toe of the statue in the market place. It also involved different sorts of engagement, from the intellectual task of thinking about the issues and debates that were raised by the readings and articulating questions about these verbally, to picking my way through the rubble surrounding a site where buildings had recently been demolished. The walk communicated effectively

because it involved a process of learning through participation, and shared experience, thus offering participants an embodied way of knowing that went beyond what we were told verbally. It inspired me to think about how a multimedia, multisensorial academic presentation might be created.

Ethnographers now recognise the significance of walking as a practice of everyday life (e.g. Ingold and Lee-Vergunst 2008) and walking with others as a research method (see Chapter 4). This, combined with the developments in scholarly and arts practice discussed above in this section, suggest that walking offers a potentially rich medium for sensory ethnographic representation. Ethnographic filmmakers have already, for many years, represented their own walks with others (including walking with processions) in documentary film (see Pink 2007d for a discussion of this). The experienced walk, of course, only happens once. Therefore, walking as ethnographic representation would have a similar temporality to that of a performed conference paper. But it would differ in that it would entail a more participatory performance. If it was to be written up, then it would inevitably be flattened. If it were filmed, then it would create a new type of academic film genre which would offer its audience new possibilities for imagining (as outlined above with reference to ethnographic filmmaking).

Scholarly discussions of walking in common have established the idea of walking as a form of place-making (e.g. de Certeau 1984; Gray 2003; Lee and Ingold 2006). Walking as sensory ethnography representation can be understood in the same way. It offers walkers an opportunity to experience place in ways that are informed by the experiences of ethnographers and participants in their research. It might include walking over different terrains, consuming food or drink, sound and smells, visual displays, sculptures, verbal lectures, distributing leaflets – a whole range of possible strategies that might be developed as ways of encouraging participants to engage with different ways of knowing about and feeling a sense of intimacy with the ethnographer's and research participants' experience of place. However, such a representation would simultaneously invite walkers to create their own places in relation to these representations. It is thus emblematic of the idea of a 'sensory ethnographic place' – that is, constituted through the practices of, and occupied by, the consumers of the ethnography.

[p. 152 ↓ ]



# Thinking About Sensory Audiences

At the beginning of this chapter I highlighted the inevitable falsity of separating out the senses in ethnographic representation. Yet, as the discussion above indicates, the practices of representation that are developing in arts and ethnographic practice – at least among those reported on in Europe and the United States – often follow the classifications set out by a modern western five-sense sensorium. Moreover, they often focus on one sensory modality as a route to knowing – as in, for example, the *soundwalk* or *olfactory* art. The use of these categories is not surprising given that these works are largely developed for and presented in modern western cultures. A cross-cultural tour to review the sensory strategies and categories used in other arts cultures would surely reveal different practices and categories. Nevertheless, the existing practices of, for instance, soundscape composition (e.g. Drever 2002; Feld and Brenneis 2004), olfactory art works (e.g. Blackson 2008, Drobnik and Fisher 2008), not to mention audiovisual art, immediately invite at the least a qualification through the prism of multisensoriality, and at the most a critique. Most scholars who practise or write about sensory representation are aware that no one sense can truly be isolated from others. Moreover, often their practice is directed at the evocation of fuller embodied multisensory experience through a focus on one sensory modality.

How then might we understand audience encounters with these sensory representations? How might the audiences of a sensory ethnography ‘make sense’ of soundwalks or scapes, olfactory installations, audiovisual performances and more? Or, to put it another way, how are understandings of ethnographic representations bound up with human perception, the precise nature of our engagements and the power relations through which audiences are situated? In Chapter 2, I introduced a series of principles for a sensory ethnography through a focus on perception, place, knowing, memory and imagination. These ideas have informed my discussions of sensory ethnographic practice throughout this book and are equally relevant to an understanding of ethnographic representation. Thus, audience engagements with representations are, whether they are with an olfactory installation or a soundwalk, always multisensorial. For instance, an olfactory installation or scratch-and-sniff book are not experienced simply through the nose. The smells that are encountered as audiences engage with

the material object from which they are released become, and are perceived as, part of a total environment, through sensing bodies. Indeed, a scratch-and-sniff book already implies the tactile experience of contact with the page and the visual experience of reading its pages. In such contexts, scents might be seen as the manufactured 'drivers' in the experience of a representation, in as far as they stand for the intentionality of the ethnographer/artist. However, a scent in isolation is neither the complete nor direct medium of communication, nor is it registered directly on the perceiving body as such. Likewise, our experiences of viewing films are not simply audiovisual and when we eat we do not simply taste, but engage with textures, visual impressions and smells. These are nevertheless the categories through which the experience is presented by the ethnographer/artist. They can thus be understood as categories and routes through which embodied ways of knowing are created.

Thus we might understand the potential for ethnographic representation to harness existing culturally specific sensory categories as contexts through which to produce [p. 153 ↓] meanings, imaginaries and memories. In doing so, as I have outlined above, there are a good number of techniques through which ethnographers might go about inviting audiences to engage in the empathies, intimacies, self-reflexivity and intellectual/scholarly engagements that we would hope could bring them closer to imagining and comprehending the lives of others. We cannot know what audiences themselves will come to know through their encounters with representations. Nevertheless, a consideration of audience practices should also involve accounting for the memories, knowing, theoretical commitments and more that audiences bring to any ethnographic representation.

## Summing UP

Ethnographic representation is a complex craft. It involves the creation of media through which the ethnographer seeks to lend audiences a sense of knowing as she or he and others have. It is, moreover, a strategic practice – the ethnographer's task is often not simply to *represent*, but to convince. She or he seeks to invite empathetic engagements and in doing so to invoke a sense of intimacy and sympathy in the viewer/reader/user. This task involves not only engaging audiences in ways that enable their sense of knowing, in some embodied way, about what it was like to be with – or even to be –



the person(s) who participated in the research. It also involves a theoretical narrative through which this knowing informs a scholarly knowledge and that convinces an audience through an established form or method of intellectual argumentation.

A sensory ethnography invites new forms of ethnographic knowing and routes into other people's experiences. It provides us with ways of responding to research questions that involve focusing on forms of intimacy, sociality and emplacement, with which ethnographers who are not sensitive to the multisensoriality of our experiences and environments would not engage. The results are inspiring new layers of knowing, which, when interrogated theoretically, can challenge, contribute to and shift understandings conventional to written scholarship. Yet our exposure to and engagement with the multisensoriality of the places we encounter, share and make as ethnographers simultaneously complicates our task. It leads us to doubt the adequacy of the existing methods and genres of ethnographic representation for the task of communicating about these ways of knowing. As the examples and arguments discussed in this chapter demonstrate, this urge to seek forms of representation that can go beyond ethnographic writing has produced a series of recent innovations (as well as the established work of ethnographic filmmakers such as David MacDougall and sound artists such as Steven Feld). These doubts, and the explorations and innovations they are leading to, are of themselves an outcome of the 'sensory turn' in the social sciences and humanities. Accompanied by a strong interest in the senses among contemporary artists, this mix of more established and emergent ethnographic genres and styles and sensory arts practice offers ethnographers a series of inspiring models.

[p. 154 ↓ ]

## Recommended Further Reading

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