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## **The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies**

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### **Embodiment and the senses**

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### 3

## EMBODIMENT AND THE SENSES

*David Howes*

The four cases presented below highlight some of the many issues raised by foregrounding sound and the power of hearing as both object of study and means of inquiry – a theoretical and methodological move which has been integral to the “sensory turn” in the humanities and social sciences. The sensory turn, which commenced in the 1990s, may be seen as an outgrowth of the corporeal turn of the 1980s, when “embodiment” emerged as a paradigm for research in the human sciences (Csordas 1990; Bynum 1995). More on this presently.

The anthropologist Paul Stoller recounts an incident from his fieldwork among the Songhay people of Niger, where he apprenticed himself to a healer. The healer had been called to the bed of a sick man who was the victim of a curse. The healer determined that a sorcerer had taken possession of the man’s double and was slowly devouring him from within. To prevent the man from dying, the healer had to find and liberate the patient’s double. He prepared a remedy to be applied to the man’s joints and sensory orifices, then led Stoller on a search that took them to the edge of the village. They came to the crest of a dune where there was a large pile of millet seed husk. The healer bent to sift through the pile, then abruptly stood up and cried out “Wo, wo, wo, wo ...” He asked Stoller:

“Did you hear it?”

“Hear what?” I asked dumbfounded.

“Did you feel it?”

“Feel what?” I wondered.

“Did you see it?”

“What are you talking about?” I demanded.

The healer then enjoined him: “You look but you do not see. You touch, but you do not feel. You listen but you do not hear. Without sight or touch ... one can learn a great deal. But you must learn how to *hear* or you will learn little about our ways” (Stoller 1989: 115).

Among the Suyà (also known as the Kisêdjê) people of the Mato Grosso region of Brazil, boys and girls are fitted with ear-discs upon reaching puberty. In addition to the ear-discs, adult men are permitted to wear lip-discs. These adornments, or extensions of the ear and mouth, symbolize the importance attached to “hearing well” and speaking as well as singing clearly. The largest lip-discs are reserved for the chiefs and this reflects their prerogative to engage in “everybody

listen talk” or “plaza speech” during the communal rituals which take place at night. The figure of the chief contrasts with that of the witch. Witches are distinguished by their tendency to mumble (or “perverted speech”), their poor hearing (which explains their anti-social ways) and their extraordinary vision which enables them to “see things” that are invisible to the eyes of more cultured individuals. The sensory profile of the chief also contrasts with that of women. Suyà women do not wear lip-discs (only ear-discs), and their principal role at Suyà feasts is “as audience and suppliers of food rather than as singers” (Seeger 1975: 215).

In early China (the China of the Warring States Period, 475–221 BCE), the senses were typically classified in a fivefold manner, much as in ancient Greece (Vinge 2009). However, there was some diversity of opinion as to which bodily organs counted as senses. Most lists include the eyes, ears, mouth, nose and body (or form), but some iterations leave out one or other of these body parts, while others continue with, for example, “trust, awe and peace” (that is emotions).

Significantly, in view of the highly bureaucratic nature of Chinese court society, the most common model of the sensorium depicted the five senses as five “officials” with the “heart-mind” (xin) as their ruler.

Ear, eye, nose, mouth, and form, each has its own contacts [lit. “receptions” or “meetings”] and does not do things for the others. Now, these are called the heavenly officials. The heartmind dwells in the central cavity and governs the five officials. Now this is called the heavenly ruler.

(*Xunzi* quoted in Geaney 2002: 19)

The idea here is that the senses are intelligencers of the ruler, with priority attached to the offices of hearing and sight. Interestingly, one way in which a ruler would gauge the state of his realm was by summoning musicians from each of its territories and checking whether their instruments (as well as local folk songs) were attuned to the five notes of the Chinese musical scale. If all of the provincial orchestras and songs were in tune (according to the ruler’s ear), there would be harmony; if not, there was danger of discord (Tame 1984: 15–16).

The power of music as a medium for rulers to gauge the state of the realm, or express and wield power, is further attested by the following excerpt from the “Record of Music” (*Yueji*) in the *Book of Rites*:

So it is that when [proper] music is in place then logic is clear, the ears and eyes are perspicacious and acute, blood and material force (*qi*) attain harmony and equilibrium, cultural environments and customs change [gradually], and all under heaven is tranquil.

(quoted in Brindley 2006: 1)

Finally, an English play from the early seventeenth century gives an amusing insight into the ex-centricity of the senses, or conflict of the faculties, in the early modern period. It is entitled *Lingua, or the Combat of the Tongue, and the Five Senses for Superiority* (Tomkis 1607). The play (a comedy) begins with the outsider persona of Ladie Lingua (the tongue and faculty of language) protesting that she is no less worthy than the five senses and should be included in their circle. She trickily sparks dissension within the ranks of the pentarchy by concealing a robe and crown for the five to discover and fight over. The sensorium quickly breaks down into warring sense organs, each proclaiming its own importance as the most worthy of the senses. Common Sense steps in to umpire the debate, commanding each sense to “present their objects” and arguments for why they should be considered the most worthy. Olfactus presents the pleasing smell of flowers, but in counterargument it is observed that every good smell has its contrary, and in any

event “he smelleth best that doth of nothing smell.” Tactus proffers the hand, “the instrument of instruments,” and further argues that his skinfulness is “the eldest, and biggest of all the rest.” His *coup de grace* is to assert

Tell me what sense is not beholding to me;  
The nose is hot or cold, the eyes do weep;  
The ears do feel, the taste a kind of touching,  
That when I please, I can command them all,  
And make them tremble when I threaten them.  
(Tomkis n.p.)

Tactus’s argument is later undone when the others conspire to tickle him. And so it goes with each of the senses: that is, each sense plays up his most distinctive, only to be humbled by his peers. How did the dispute end? What did Common Sense decide? The answer is best left to a later point in this essay when we are in a better position to appreciate the intricacies of the judgment of Common Sense.

There are four major implications I would like to draw from a consideration of these cases. The first has to do with the discrimination or individuation of the senses. Different cultures divide the senses differently and the bounds of sense cannot be assumed in advance. Which senses are counted, and what counts as a sense (for example emotions as well as perceptions in some cases, or speech as well as hearing) is contingent on culture and history. Even the conventional (Western) distinction between cognition and perception, or mind and the senses, can be elided (for example in Buddhism the mind is regarded as a sense on a par with the other five). This underscores the importance of focussing on the relations *between* the senses, rather than analysing them individually, one-at-a-time (for example Goldstein 2004), and has implications for the very definition of “sound studies” or “auditory culture” (we use the terms interchangeably). Sound studies must be seen as a branch of sensory studies, which treats the sensorium as a *whole* as its object of study.

Second, each culture should be approached on its own sensory terms. This entails attending to its sensory priorities and developing an awareness of the culture’s own techniques of perception or “ways of sensing” (Howes and Classen 2013). Put another way, the senses are made, not given; perception is a cultural act, not simply a psychophysical phenomenon. The cultural modulation of perception is apparent in Stoller’s bewilderment at how the Songhay healer used his senses. Stoller lacked the requisite technique to hear the sound of the patient’s double being released. It is also manifest in the different models of the sensorium which different cultures embrace, whether it be the five officials of early Chinese epistemology, or the bestiary of the senses in medieval Christianity – which regarded the eagle as an emblem of sight, the spider of touch and so on (Classen 1998), or the “computational” theory of vision and the other senses that prevails today (Nudds 2014).

Third, sensory values are social values, and how the senses are conditioned is intimately tied to the condition of different groups within society. For example, the condition of women and the condition of witches in Suyà society reflects the differential moral value and development of the senses of hearing, speech or singing and sight (women listen but do not sing; the witch’s vision is overdeveloped, their hearing and speech underdeveloped). The ear- and lip-discs worn by the Suyà socialize the senses. They are constant reminders of the moral value attached to hearing and speaking/singing. Significantly, the Suyà term *m-ba*, “to hear” also means “to understand.” The centrality of aurality to Suyà epistemology and ceremonial life led their ethnographer to propose that: “the Suyà village [with its central plaza and huts arranged in a circle] can

be likened to a concert hall, its annual round equated with a concert series” (Seeger 1987: 65). Singing, according to Seeger, created “a certain kind of settlement, in which sounds revealed what vision could not penetrate”: it coordinated collective action, mediated gender relations and imprinted its structure on the experience of space, time and personhood (ibid. 140).

Fourth, while the senses complement each other and normally work in concert, they may also conflict. On a quotidian level, this is evidenced by the way a stick in water may look crooked to the eye but feel straight to the touch. On a ritual level, the Suyà practice of staging their ceremonies at night has the effect of accentuating the role of the ‘other’ senses, most notably hearing and speaking/singing, relative to sight. On an epistemological level, it is exemplified by the personification of the senses in *Lingua* and their “combat” for superiority. One way of summing up the foregoing discussion would be to say that the sense of the senses is in their use, that perception is best understood in terms of performance rather than psychophysics.

The suggestion that perception is best understood as performance might seem to bring the approach advocated here into line with the position of Tim Ingold, who insists that perception is a “skill” (Ingold 2000). Ingold has emerged as a dominant voice within sensory anthropology, and has attracted numerous disciples (for example Hsu 2008; Pink, in Pink and Howes 2010) ever since publishing a scathing (if unfounded) critique of the anthropology of the senses in *The Perception of the Environment* (Ingold 2000: chs. 9, 14), which drummed out the voices of a host of earlier theorists and ethnographers, including Edmund Carpenter (1973), Marshall McLuhan (1964), Paul Stoller (1989), Anthony Seeger (1975, 1987), Constance Classen (1993), Steven Feld (1982) and Alfred Gell (1995), as well as the present writer (Howes 1991). Ingold dismisses the contribution of these “sensuous scholars” (Stoller 1997) because their accounts of the senses fail to cohere with the dictates of the “phenomenology of perception” according to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, which insists on the subjectivity of perception and “prereflective unity” of the senses, and the “ecological psychology” of J.J. Gibson, which treats the senses as “perceptual systems” and limits their operation to picking up on the pre-given “affordances” of the environment.

In an oft-cited article entitled “Against Soundscape,” Ingold goes further and in one fell swoop dismisses the whole (interdisciplinary) field of sound studies (insofar as it is predicated on R. Murray Schafer’s concept of the soundscape) and visual culture (insofar as it is primarily focussed on the interpretation of images). He argues that sound “is not the object but the medium of our perception. It is what we hear *in*. Similarly, we do not see light but see *in* it. ... [e.g.] When we look around on a fine day, we see a landscape bathed in sunlight, not a lightscape” (Ingold 2007: 11). It is all so simple the way Ingold puts it. Too simple actually.

What is missing from Ingold’s account is any sense of the social organization of the senses and perception. This is because he prides himself on being a post-social anthropologist. The social is dissolved into “a field of relations,” and Ingold insists that “relations among humans, which we are accustomed to calling ‘social’, are but a subset of ecological relations” (Ingold 2000: 5). His work starts “from the premise that every living being is a particular nexus of growth and development within a field of relations. Skills of perception and action indeed emerge within these processes of ontogenetic development” (Ingold, in Ingold and Howes 2011: 314). Ontogeny is not only privileged over phylogeny on this account, it is all there is. Indeed Ingold’s focus on the individual obliterates any sense of the social just as his preoccupation with “activity” prevents him from paying much, if any, attention to structure (never mind reflection). As discussed elsewhere, Ingold’s idea of “the environment” is equally impoverished, from a sensorial perspective: his environment is “one in which you can look, listen, and are always on the move, but not taste or smell” (Howes 2005).<sup>1</sup>

The crux of Ingold’s argument is that hearing involves “an experience of sound” and seeing involves “an experience of light” *tout court*. A poke in the eye belies this argument, since it causes

one to “see stars” independent of any light source. (The equivalent experience in the auditory realm would be feeling infrasonic vibrations.) However, even if one did accept Ingold’s premise, the fact is that the experience of light (and shadow and darkness, I would add) is conditioned by culture, and imbued with social values. For example, there is the premium attached to *hygge* (a warm, cozy light) in Danish society (Bille and Sørensen 2007), the value attached to “shimmering” light in Australian aboriginal cultures (Deger 2007) or the salience ascribed to shadows in Japanese culture (Tanizaki 1977). None of these instances of the cultural construction of light in different traditions matter to Ingold because his approach is purely psychophysical. A further problem has to do with his insistence on the “prereflective unity” and “interchangeability” of the senses (following Gibson and Merleau-Ponty). Indeed, Ingold posits that vision, understood as “a mode of active, exploratory engagement with the environment . . . has much more in common with audition than is often supposed, and for that matter also with gustation and olfaction” (Ingold, in Ingold and Howes 2011: 314; Ingold 2000: ch. 14). However, it is only in the most abstract (and uninteresting) sense that this proposition is true. Of course all the senses are “active, exploratory modes of engagement with the environment.” This even goes without saying. The real question is *how*, and that is where the cultural conditioning of the senses intervenes.

Let me flesh out what is meant here by “the cultural conditioning of the senses” by drawing on my research in Papua New Guinea. Among the Kwoma of the Middle Sepik River region of Papua New Guinea, social status is the precondition of what and how far one can see. Each year, in the context of the yam harvest ceremony, the initiated men stage a ritual which involves them making a stupendous din with various instruments (the sacred flutes, bullroarers, etc.) within the screened-off confines of the men’s house. The sounds produced are said to be the voices of the spirits. Women and uninitiated men, who hear these sounds from the other side of the screen, believe their ears and are frightened of the spirits whereas the men inside know the secret of the sounds’ human origins because they alone are able to see as well as hear. If this secret were exposed it would undermine the men’s authority as the guardians of the spirits and sole intercessors with the supernatural. The men’s anxieties as regards the bases of their authority is expressed in a myth which relates how the women were the ones who first discovered the flutes and kept knowledge of them from the men. They kept the flutes in a tree-house and commanded the men to bring them food while they played on and on – until the day the men, tired of being abused by the women, by an act of treachery, toppled the tree-house and seized the flutes. The men have lorded their control of the means of communication with the spirits over the rest of society ever since. (The women are now the ones who must prepare food and bring it to the men ensconced in their men’s house.) Here we see a situation where it is precisely the split between seeing and hearing, and the non-interchangeability of these two sensory registers, that undergirds the structure of Kwoma society (Howes 2003: ch. 5).

Consideration of the Kwoma case suggests that, contrary to Ingold, what a properly sensory anthropology calls for is *more reflexivity*, not less; more attention to relations of *intersensoriality*, not (some putative) unity or interchangeability; and, above all, more awareness of the *indissociability* of the social and the sensible (Laplantine 2015), not just “the environment” or “landscape.” In his critique of soundscape, Ingold makes much of what he calls the “prototypical concept of landscape.” This concept commends itself to his way of thinking because “it is not tied to any specific sensory register – whether vision, hearing, touch, smell or whatever. In ordinary perceptual practice these registers cooperate so closely, and with such overlap of function, that their respective contributions are impossible to tease apart” (Ingold 2007: 10). In point of fact, the concept of landscape is a product of a particular painterly style (the so-called picturesque) which originated in the eighteenth century. It is not “prototypical.” Rather it is thoroughly historical and ineluctably beholden to sight. This is precisely what inspired Schafer and others to embrace

the concept of soundscape as an antidote to the visualism of the idea of landscape, and use it as a means to open up other sensory dimensions of the environment for investigation.

Probing deeper, we can see how Ingold's inability to "tease apart" the respective contributions of the senses (an "impossibility" which he projects onto all humanity) is an effect, an artifact, of his prior *abstraction* of the operation of the senses from their embeddedness – or *emplacement* – in a given social context. For example, the Kwoma do discern and enforce a separation between vision and hearing in certain ritual contexts (i.e. the yam ceremony). Or again, when Ingold affirms: "I am, at once, my tasting, my listening, and so forth" (Ingold, in Ingold and Howes 2011: 321), he is legislating for all humanity again, without the least trace of any reflexivity as to the particularity of his own experience. There exist other subject positions (for example that of women), but Ingold is too self-centred to recognize this.

Ingold's abstract, purely psychophysical, radically individualist, post-social approach to the study of the senses and perception is not a sensible paradigm for research. Compare Constance Classen's position in "Foundations for an Anthropology of the Senses," which is attuned to sensory diversity both across and within cultures. She writes:

When we examine the meanings associated with various sensory faculties and sensations in different cultures, we discover a cornucopia of potent sensory symbolism. Sight may be linked to reason or to witchcraft, taste may be used as a metaphor for aesthetic discrimination or for sexual experience, an odour may signify sanctity or sin, political power or social exclusion. Together, these sensory meanings and values form the *sensory model* espoused by a society, according to which the members of that society "make sense" of the world, or translate sensory perceptions and concepts into a particular "worldview." There will likely be challenges to this model from within the society, persons and groups who differ on certain sensory values, yet this model will provide the basic perceptual paradigm to be followed or resisted.

(Classen 1997: 402)

Following Classen, we come to see how the senses are constructed and lived differently in different societies, giving rise to different models – and the practices which support them. Such models frequently have a cosmological dimension, according to Classen (1998), which leads her to speak of "sensory cosmologies" (rather than "worldviews"). By way of example, in the early modern period, in a pattern that had its roots in ancient Greece (Vinge 2009), each of the senses was held to operate through a different medium or element. In *Lingua*, for example, the chief reason for dismissing Ladie Lingua's petition to be counted a sense was that this would go against the fivefold division of the cosmos, or elementary structure of the universe:

The number of the *Senses* in this little world is answerable to the first bodies in the great world: now since there be but five in the Universe, the four elements and the pure substance of the heavens [i.e. the aether], therefore there can be but five Senses in our *Microcosm*, correspondent to those, as the sight to the heavens, hearing to the air, touching to the earth, smelling to the fire, tasting to the water; by which five means only the understanding is able to apprehend the knowledge of all corporal substances.

On this account, the medium of hearing is air (not sound), earth is the medium of touch, fire of smell, water of taste and the aether (not light) is the medium of sight. The composition of the body and senses manifests the same multimodal, quintessential structure as the composition of the universe. (This elemental understanding of perception would be lost on Ingold, who blindly



cleaves to his own ontology.) It follows that the senses act outwardly through their “corresponding” medium or element. This extramissive understanding of how the senses function is the inverse of the intromissive or mentalist ideology of same that dates from the seventeenth century and was first and most forcibly articulated by John Locke (see Howes and Classen 2013: vh.6).

This idea of sensory “correspondence” was also foundational to the epistemology and ritual life of early China. According to the “Theory of the Five Elements” (or “Evolutive Phases”), each of the principal elements of Fire, Wood, Earth, Metal and Water corresponded to a different musical note, colour, odour, taste, season and direction. For example, the musical note *chih* and colour red, a smoky scent, bitter taste, season of summer and direction of south all corresponded to the element of Fire. These correspondences inflected all aspects of daily life – from diet to colour of apparel, and from the perfumes that were worn to the orientation of living space in different seasons – in the Emperor’s court (itself a microcosm of the universe). Great importance was attached to maintaining the proper relations between sensations, and this was tied to maintaining the proper relations between persons.

Heaven and Earth have their patterns, and people take these for their patterns ... [Among these patterns are] the five tastes, manifested in five colors and displayed in the five notes. When these are in excess, there ensue obscurity and confusion, and people lose their nature. That is why they were made to support that nature... There were ruler and minister, high and low ... There were husband and wife ... There were father and son, elder and younger brother...

(cited by Wang 2000: 184)

As this quote makes clear, sensory relations were mapped onto social relations. “Thinking and living according to the established pattern of cross-modal associations provided a potent model for the maintenance of orderly and interdependent relationships within society” (Howes and Classen 2013: 163–4).

Ingold’s “ecological psychology” may be faulted not only for its inattention to the sociology and cosmology of sensation, but also for its failure to theorize the mediumship of the senses. He treats auditory perception as “an experience of sound” and visual perception as “an experience of light” without regard to how these experiences are modulated by cultural schemas. Consider Renaissance painting. True, without light one could not see a painting, but more to the point is how a painting structures perception. In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger convincingly argues that the technique of linear perspective, which emerged during the Renaissance, and which centres everything in the eye of the spectator, contributed to the growth of individualism. “The visible world is arranged for the spectator as the universe was once thought to be arranged for God” (Berger 1972: 16). The spectator became the unique centre, and this had the effect of prying the individual loose from the hierarchized, communal structure of the medieval social order.

Ingold is dismissive of readings such as Berger’s:

We should not be fooled by art historians and other students of visual culture who write books about the history of seeing that are entirely about the contemplation of images [with no mention of light]. Their conceit is to imagine the eyes are not so much organs of observation as instruments of playback, lodged in the image rather than the body of the observer. It is as though the eyes did our seeing for us, leaving us to (re)view the images they relay to our consciousness.

(Ingold 2007: 10)



Ingold's rejection of media studies (visual, auditory, etc.) here prevents him from seeing how media, such as painting, which are best viewed as "extensions of the senses" (following McLuhan 1964) *modulate* the perception of the social and physical environment. In place of Ingold's theory of the transparency of light and psychophysics of sight, we need a theory of the *mediatory* role of media, which is precisely what the field of sound studies and visual culture have to offer. We become what (and, more importantly, how) we behold, to rejig the old adage.

McLuhan's media-centric theory of perception is a far more sensible approach than Ingold's, though it too has its problems. For example, its technological determinism, its essentialist construction of the senses,<sup>2</sup> its bipolarism (as if everything turned on whether the ear or eye is the dominant modality). Contrary to McLuhan's "Great Divide" theory of the differences between oral (read: aural) and literate (read: visual) mentalities and societies, it has been shown that there is as much sensory diversity within the category of "oral societies" as there is between oral societies and literate societies (Classen 1993). This is why we prefer the concept of "ways of sensing," with its emphasis on cultural practice, to McLuhan's media-driven concept of the "sense-ratio" (Howes and Classen 2013).

One point on which we must nevertheless agree with Ingold in his diatribe against the art historians is his critique of their exclusive focus on visual images. A more relational, intersensorial approach, attuned to practice and context, is called for, even when it comes to the interpretation of a painting. For example, it has recently come to light that paintings were sung to in the Renaissance. The singing was integral to the experience of viewing (Stowell 2016). It is important to attend to these patterns and practices of intersensoriality if we are to arrive at an understanding of the "period sensorium" (see further Classen 2017). Most studies stop at the "period eye."

The same critique could be levelled at sound studies. Its exclusive focus on sound may prove counterproductive. In *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (2015), Nina Sun Eidsheim exposes the limitations of the paradigm of music as sound by rethinking music as a "practice of vibration." She was brought to this position by studying the vocal performance of Juliana Snapper, the underwater opera singer. Snapper's practice sparked in Eidsheim a shift in focus from pre-fixed definition to issues of transmission, transduction and transformation. In *Eye h(Ear): The Visual in Music* (2013), Simon Shaw-Miller relates how the modernist embrace of "absolute music," conceived as "pure sound," actually had the effect of interpellating the visual in countless complex ways (from the centrality of the score and musical notation to the site (and sight) of the concert hall which took the place of the concert hall or tavern). His aim is "to claim music for art historians" (of all people!). In both these works, music is reconceptualized as intersensorial practice.

In this essay, the emphasis has been on arriving at an understanding of sensory diversity in history and across cultures. But there is also intra-cultural diversity, or the question of subaltern sensoria, as when Classen cautions: "There will likely be challenges to [the sensory model] from within the society, persons and groups who differ on certain sensory values, yet this model will provide the basic perceptual paradigm to be followed or resisted" (Classen 1997: 402). What of women's senses, for example? The reader will no doubt have noticed that both among the Suyà of Brazil and the Kwoma of Papua New Guinea, women's sensory role seems limited to listening and preparing food for the men. Is that it? The Suyà ethnography is silent on this score, and the Kwoma ethnographic record is not much better. However, I can offer a few precisions regarding how the division of the senses and the division of the sexes intersect. One thing that struck me during my fieldwork among the Kwoma is that women had elaborated their powers of touch to a remarkable degree through their continuous production of net bags (billum). This female hypertactility (or feminine dexterity) stands in contrast to how men control the aural universe through their mastery of the flutes and other instruments, and also control the visual universe

through their production of paintings and sculptures. In effect, the sensory model of Kwoma society is structured on a visual scaffolding (through the use of screens). It is a highly exclusionary, fractured society, with little or no transparency, only enmity between the nine autonomous villages which make it up. Significantly, women must move to the village of their husband upon marriage, while the men stay put. Through marrying out the women, the women literally weave the society (such as it is) together. This profoundly social fact is also reflected in the weave of the netbags they produce and gift to their husbands and brothers. The male gaze divides and fractures, the female touch integrates. Women's skill at weaving complements the men's skill at painting, and it is the interrelationship of the two socially distinct skill sets that constitutes the fabric of Kwoma society (Howes 2003: ch. 5).

Ladie Lingua's petition in the court of Common Sense presents another example of what Classen calls resistance to the sensory model. The five senses in *Lingua* are all male, she is the only female, so this battle of the senses was also a battle of the sexes. She stated her case well (as one would expect of the tongue). For example, she points out that she alone is able to represent things which are not present, only to be called out by the others for her propensity to prevaricate. In the end, Common Sense (in a very tactical move) awarded the crown to Visus and the robe to Tactus (as representatives of *Commoditie* or "well-being" and *Necessity* respectively), while distributing consolation prizes to the other three senses. Common Sense goes on to invoke the argument from design (that is the quintessential structure of the universe) to scuttle Ladie Lingua's position, and concludes: "wherefore we judge you to be no *Sense* simply; onely thus much we from henceforth pronounce, that all women for your sake, shall have six *Senses*, seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching, and the last and feminine sense, the sense of speaking." (It is apparent from other references that what Common Senses means by "speaking" is really only chattering or prattling.) Ladie Lingua is nonplussed at being dubbed "half a sense" and seeks retaliation by drugging the five senses, but her plot is foiled. It seems that a sixth (that is a supernumerary) sense is the best the second sex can expect, until a female playwright comes along and rewrites the script.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of this essay it was noted that the sensory turn of the 1990s could be seen as an outgrowth of the corporeal turn of the 1980s, when "embodiment" emerged as a paradigm for research. Some further clarification is necessary by way of closing. The embodiment paradigm sought to overcome the longstanding split between body and mind in the Western tradition, and gave rise to such concepts as the "mindful body" and "embodied mind." This stress on unity or integration proved to be a bit much, and accordingly fractured as the sensory turn unfolded and shifted attention to analysing the relations *between* the senses (relations which are not always harmonious, and can be oppositional). The sensory turn also introduced more complexity and reflexivity into the conversation by taking media as "extensions of the senses" seriously and by introducing the notion of "emplacement," or "the sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment" (Howes 2005: 7). The point is that perception can only meaningfully be studied in context – that is, in some environment (a point which the embodiment paradigm tends to overlook), and that the senses "mingle" with the world (Serres 1985). Perception does not simply go on in the head. Rather, "the perceptual is *cultural and political*" (Bull et al. 2006), and the meaning or import of the senses is in their use.

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## Notes

- 1 Ingold is an action man, not an ideas man. Indeed, he scorns any suggestion that there is an ideational component or “prior design” to the production of artifacts (see Ingold 2007). This is why we say there is no room for reflection in his “activity theory” (as it is sometimes called). Other absences include how there is no reference to gender, class or race (all staple topics in social anthropology) in *The Perception of the Environment*, just as there is no mention of taste or smell or texture. His book would be more accurately called *The Misperception of the Environment*. It is a testimony to the poverty of phenomenology (see Howes and Classen 2013).
- 2 That is to say, McLuhan attributes certain intrinsic qualities to sound and “acoustic space,” but they remain just that, attributions. They are variable, not essential, across cultures. McLuhan’s ideas about sound were of a piece with those of the hip culture of his day (see Ford 2013).
- 3 Actually, already in the seventeenth century, there was such a playwright, Margaret Cavendish, who penned many other works as well (see Classen 1998: ch. 4).

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