

Loose Ends: Lines, Media and Social Change

Shaun Moores

Professor of Media and Communications, Centre for Research in Media and Cultural Studies,
University of Sunderland (shaun.moores@sunderland.ac.uk)

Working Paper for the EASA Media Anthropology Network's 40th e-Seminar

19 June – 3 July 2012

www.media-anthropology.net

I hope that ... I have left plentiful loose ends for others to follow and to take in ways they wish.

Tim Ingold, *Lines*, 2007, p. 170

In this paper, I am writing primarily for anthropologists (who have some commitment to the study of media), about certain aspects of the work of a leading contemporary anthropologist, Tim Ingold, and yet I am not an anthropologist myself. I should begin, then, by establishing a few things about my own academic background and research interests, and by explaining what it was that first brought me to Ingold's recent writings (I will be making reference mainly to Ingold, 2000, 2007, 2011). In this introductory section, I also indicate briefly, in outline form, what it is about those writings that I find interesting and helpful for my own purposes, and what it is that I have trouble with and want to take issue with (my engagement with Ingold's anthropology will be a sympathetic yet critical one).

For over 25 years, I have been working in the field of media studies (I am also writing partly for colleagues in that field who have some interest in anthropology, and so may have found their way here). My entry into media studies was through a degree course of that name at the Polytechnic of Central London, now the University of Westminster, which was then the only undergraduate programme in Britain with this title. One of the reasons that I mention my degree course is because I can see, in retrospect, how the final-year dissertation that I wrote in 1985 (published in revised form as Moores, 1988) helped to shape the research interests I still have today. Supervised by a social historian of broadcasting, Paddy Scannell (see Scannell & Cardiff, 1991), I carried out oral history research in my home town in North-West England, exploring radio's arrival in, and subsequent incorporation into, household settings and routines during the 1920s and 1930s. Whilst I did not express it in quite this way at the time, my concern was with 'the domestication of a new media technology' (Moores, 2000, p. 42), as well as with a new technological mediation of the domestic, and, ever since, I have been committed to developing an understanding of media and their uses within wider circumstances of everyday living and social change.

Borrowing a term from David Morley (2009), I now think of my work as a case of 'non-media-centric media studies', in which the distinctive characteristics and affordances of media are acknowledged, but also, crucially, in which day-to-day practices rather than media themselves are put at the centre of investigation. For example, the most recent empirical research project that I have been involved in (Moores & Metykova, 2009, 2010) was a study of the environmental experiences of trans-European migrants. Although an important element of that qualitative research was a concern with the media uses of these migrants (young people from new European Union member states in eastern Europe, who had come to live and work in Britain during the mid 2000s), the project sought to situate their media uses

(including what Urry, 2007, would call their imaginative, virtual and mobile-communicative travel) within a broader range of activities. This range included the ‘mobilities’ (Urry, 2000, 2007) of routinely walking, driving and travelling by bus or train in cities, and, on a less frequent basis, of taking budget-airline flights to visit family and friends back in eastern Europe. In combination, those various activities constituted particular social-historical experiences of migration and of place-making or attachment to environments too.

While there are clearly significant differences between an investigation of early radio in the domestic sphere and research on contemporary trans-European migration, the same concern to de-centre media in relation to the everyday runs through this empirical work (the continuity is also evident in other research that I have been involved in, including my ethnographic study of households in three urban neighbourhoods in South Wales, where what was then the new media technology of satellite television had just arrived, see, for instance, Moores, 1996, 2000). However, this continuity is not so evident if I reflect back on the shifting conceptual vocabulary that I have employed down the years. In the initial stages of my academic career, when I was starting to develop my teaching and research on media in everyday living, I was getting to grips with the literature of the day in my field. More specifically, I was dealing with a literature on the relationships between media, ‘audiences’ and popular culture (for example, see Moores, 1992, 1993a). This was predominantly a mixture of Western Marxist perspectives on ideology and hegemony with approaches to representation and interpretation that had their roots in structuralism and semiotics (hence terms such as ‘encoding’ and ‘decoding’, see Hall, 1980), as well as particular notions of subjectivity and power that had been appropriated from psychoanalysis and later from Foucauldian theory. Although I worked broadly within that framework for a period of time, finding some helpful things there, I never felt wholly comfortable with it, since my principal concern was with conceptualising day-to-day practices and experiences (and since at least some of this media and cultural theory was openly suspicious of the practical and the experiential), so I found myself searching for alternative theoretical perspectives.

A few of the thinkers that I first came across a long while ago seemed to be pointing in a more promising direction. From fairly early on, then, I was impressed by Raymond Williams’ discussion of broadcasting in the context of a lifestyle that he termed mobile privatisation (see Williams, 1990 [1974]; Moores, 1993b, 2000). Valentin Volosinov’s distinctive brand of social semiotics (Volosinov, 1986 [1973]) was also interesting, precisely because it was based on a critique of, rather than an application of, Saussurean linguistics. I became interested, too, in Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology of taste (Bourdieu, 1984) and his related theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990), as well as in Michel de Certeau’s differently inflected account of ‘the practice of everyday life’ (de Certeau, 1984). Anthony Giddens’ writings on the ‘structuration’ of social practices (Giddens, 1984) and the experiential dimensions of modernity (Giddens, 1990, 1991) provided further helpful concepts (see, for example, Moores, 1995, 2000). For me, though, a key turning point more recently has been my engagement with phenomenological perspectives. Moving in this direction was no doubt influenced, to some extent, by my former supervisor’s phenomenological turn (Scannell, 1996; and see Moores, 2005, for commentaries on that book of Scannell’s, and on work by Volosinov, Bourdieu, Giddens and others). Scannell’s phenomenological approach to radio and television (see also Scannell, forthcoming) is informed by Martin Heidegger’s philosophy (mainly by Heidegger, 1962), emphasising broadcasting’s ‘dailiness’ (Scannell, 1996, p. 149) and readiness-to-hand, and my own attempt to develop a phenomenology of media uses has led me to Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s work on embodied perception and the acquisition of habit (Merleau-Ponty, 2002 [1962]; Moores, 2009).

So whereas media uses were once approached, during the early stages of my career, primarily via questions about ideology, representation and interpretation (and although many academics in media studies are still operating within a paradigm that relates meaning solely to symbolic representations and their cultural circulation), I now prefer to regard media uses as place-making practices (or as ‘practices of wayfaring’, see Ingold, 2007, p. 89), which need to be explored alongside other such meaningful practices in everyday living. This interest in matters of place and associated matters of mobility (Moore, 2012) took me, in part, to literature in the discipline of geography, including Nigel Thrift’s writings on non-representational theory (for instance, Thrift, 1996, 1999, 2004a, 2007). It was there that I initially found references to Ingold’s anthropology, and especially (in Thrift, 1999) to a discussion of what Ingold (1995, 2000; see also Heidegger, 1993 [1971]) calls a dwelling perspective. Soon after, I acquired a copy of *The Perception of the Environment* (Ingold, 2000), engaging in particular with his essays on dwelling, which were written in a style that was, for me at least, far easier going than the work of either Thrift or Heidegger! From this book, I moved on to *Lines* (Ingold, 2007) and to the further collected essays that are gathered together in *Being Alive* (Ingold, 2011), also taking in some collaborative work along the way (for example, Lee & Ingold, 2006).

Apart from the admirable clarity of Ingold’s writings, then, what do I find appealing and valuable there? I want to identify three closely related things, which I will be returning to discuss in greater detail. The first is a crucial question posed by Ingold (2011, p. 77): ‘What kind of meaning can there be in the absence of symbolic representation?’ In my view, it would be helpful to ask precisely this question in media studies (and in media anthropology too), because it might lead to a further reconsideration of the objects of investigation, allowing a non-representational or more-than-representational approach to complement a non-media-centric one. Secondly, I am interested in his insistence on ‘the primacy of movement’ (Ingold, 2011, p. xii), and in his relating of matters of dwelling or habitation to matters of movement (to ‘the idea of life as lived along lines’). Thirdly, following on directly from this, I find Ingold’s concept of ‘inhabitant knowledge’ (Ingold, 2007, p. 89), and his emphasis on its ‘alongly integrated’ character, to be valuable for an understanding of media uses, as well as for an understanding of day-to-day practices and experiences more generally.

At the same time, though, there are a couple of things in Ingold’s recent writings which, quite frankly, frustrate me, and which present a significant obstacle to the incorporation of his ideas into non-media-centric media studies. Once again, I mention these just briefly here (I will be returning to them in due course). The first of my critical points has to do with the lack of any serious consideration by Ingold of contemporary media of communication. I accept, of course, that he is an anthropologist and not a media theorist, and I have been arguing, in any case, for a de-centring of media so as to centre everyday living (about which he has important things to say). However, when I read his accounts of dwelling and movement, of ‘life ... lived along lines’ (Ingold, 2011, p. xii), I am puzzled as to why he pays so little attention to people’s media uses today. The most likely explanation for that absence is Ingold’s implicit understanding of long-term social change, which brings me to my other critical point. I want to argue that he offers an overly pessimistic view of what he calls ‘modern metropolitan societies’ (Ingold, 2007, p. 75). Whilst it is true that there are occasional flashes of optimism in Ingold’s commentaries on such societies, and while the key purpose of his work has been ‘to bring anthropology back to life’ (Ingold, 2011, p. 14) by emphasising ‘multiple trails of becoming’, he tends to associate modernity predominantly with ‘transport’ rather than

wayfaring, and with ‘upwardly integrated’ (Ingold, 2007, p. 89) rather than inhabitant knowledge (or ‘storied knowledge’, see Ingold, 2011, p. 159).

In providing a sympathetic critique of Ingold’s work, I am accepting the open and generous invitation that he issues in the final paragraph of *Lines*, where he states that: ‘I have left plentiful loose ends for others to follow and to take in ways they wish’ (Ingold, 2007, p. 170). My aim in this paper is to pull on what I see as some of those loose or trailing ends, and, in doing so, to thread together a productive argument about lines, media and social change.

In the Absence of Symbolic Representation

Let me come back now to Ingold’s question about meaning ‘in the absence of symbolic representation’ (Ingold, 2011, p. 77), because, as I suggested earlier, it has the potential to shift the traditional preoccupations of media studies (a field in which models of media and culture have typically revolved around the category of symbolic representations). When he refers to representation, he employs the term in two closely related ways. On the one hand, then, Ingold (2011, p. 76) writes of ‘systems of significant symbols’ (these words are borrowed from Geertz, 1973, p. 46), which many social anthropologists have assumed must ‘necessarily’ mediate human relations with environments, and, on the other hand, he writes about the notion of ‘interior mental representation’ (Ingold, 2011, p. 77) and about the rationalist or cognitivist assumption that there can be ‘no action in the world’ that is ‘not preceded by’ such mental representation (‘no action without forethought’). His anthropological project is concerned to contest both of those assumptions.

Although it is in his most recent book, *Being Alive*, that Ingold asks the question about symbolic representation in this specific form, his challenging of assumptions to do with representation is already evident in the essays on dwelling that appear in *The Perception of the Environment*. For instance, Ingold (2000, p. 160) is critical there of a theoretical position (within his own discipline) from which people are seen to live out their relationships to an external world exclusively through ‘a framework of symbolic meanings ... which gives shape to the raw material of experience and direction to human feeling and action’. Indeed, a similar sort of position has frequently informed research in media studies (the view that it is through symbolic representations and their cultural circulation that the world is made meaningful). Ingold (2000, p. 191) is also critical of the associated view that there is a ‘separation between the human perceiver and the world, such that the perceiver has to reconstruct the world, in consciousness, prior to any meaningful engagement with it’. So how does he then go beyond these views? To pose his question one more time, what kind of meaning can there be in the absence of symbolic representation?

From Ingold’s dwelling perspective, human relations with environments do not necessarily require significant symbols, and he argues that it is actually ‘rarely’ the case that ‘we think before we act’ (Ingold, 2011, p. 77) in ordinary circumstances of everyday living. Rather, a meaningful engagement is best conceptualised as a ‘practical engagement’ (Ingold, 2000, p. 168): ‘meaning is ... in the relational contexts of people’s practical engagement with their lived-in environments’. Furthermore, following Heidegger, Ingold (2000, p. 169) points to the way in which ‘self and world merge in the activity of dwelling’, and, following Merleau-Ponty, he emphasises the ‘embodied’ character of that ‘being-in-the-world’ (the body is not an object directed by mental representation but ‘is rather the subject of perception’, leading Ingold, 2000, p. 171, to write of an ‘embodied mind’; see also Merleau-Ponty, 2004 [1964], p. 37, on an ‘incarnate’ subjectivity).

A good illustration of what Ingold is getting at can be found in an account of his collaborative ethnographic research with Jo Lee on practices of walking in North-East Scotland. Lee and Ingold (2006, p. 83), taking a critical view of the well-known anthropological work of Clifford Geertz (see especially Geertz, 1973), declare their interest in the ‘webs of significance’ that are ‘comprised of trails ... trodden on the ground, not spun in the symbolic ether, as people make their way about’ (see also de Certeau, 1984, p. 93, on how the ‘intertwining’ paths of pedestrians in cities can create ‘an urban “text” that nevertheless ‘remains ... other ... to representations’). This kind of meaning or significance emerges out of (rather than being imposed upon) bodily practice and mobility, as people’s ‘oft-repeated walks’ (Lee & Ingold, 2006, p. 77) form “thick lines” of ... meaningful place-making’. In other words, the meaningfulness in this context is directly associated with what geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1977, p. v) once called ‘environmental experience’. Such experience is far from simply ‘raw material’ (Ingold, 2000, p. 160) that is waiting to be given shape by ‘a framework of symbolic meanings’.

So what could be the general consequences of Ingold’s perspective (and, more broadly, of approaches that are ‘phenomenologically inspired’, see Lee & Ingold, 2006, p. 83) for the field of media studies? I will identify two potential consequences here, and will follow this up by anticipating likely objections. First, in the light of my discussion so far, Ingold’s challenging of assumptions to do with representation should help those working within media studies to overcome the theoretical difficulties or limitations that result mainly from the field’s importing of structuralism and (Saussurean) semiotics many years ago. Few academics in media (and cultural) studies today will explicitly identify themselves with this tradition of analysis, yet many, even in an academic field where the work of Bourdieu and de Certeau gets cited, would still subscribe to the view that it is only through representation that the world can be made to mean, and such a view already implies a problematic ‘separation between the human perceiver and the world’ (Ingold, 2000, p. 191). Secondly, it is my contention that media studies should be paying much greater attention to people’s practical, meaningful engagements with media in everyday living, as well as to their accompanying routine practices. This must include attention to issues of embodied perception and habit in media use (see also Bennett, 2005, p. 93, on the problems associated with a traditional conception of media use ‘as essentially disembodied, as if ... relations to ... media take place without ... eyes, ears ... and fingers being particularly involved’). For example, picking up on Tony Bennett’s reference there to the involvement of fingers, John Tomlinson (2007, p. 108) points to the importance of investigating ‘our habitual way of accessing and communicating via keyboards and keypads’. Such an investigation would require an understanding of pre-cognitive familiarity with everyday environments (more specifically, of what Merleau-Ponty, 2002 [1962], p. 166, calls ‘knowledge in the hands’; and similarly, see Ingold, 2004, 2011, on the world perceived through the feet).

Of course, I can already hear the sort of questions and attached objections that colleagues working in my own field might want to raise. Does a dwelling perspective or a non-representational approach involve simply leaving behind a concern with cognition and the study of, say, images, speech and writing? Does close attention to embodied, habitual practices, to pre-cognitive familiarity with everyday environments or to the ‘thick lines’ (Lee & Ingold, 2006, p. 77) of meaningful place-making also involve leaving behind any commitment to addressing issues of social difference and power (because, after all, media and cultural studies have typically been characterised by political concerns)? Indeed, I note that in Nick Couldry’s newly published book (I consider him to be one of the sharpest commentators

in my field, and he is also known to media anthropologists), there is a dismissal of Thrift's non-representational theory, for roughly the reasons set out here, as 'deeply unhelpful for studying media' (Couldry, 2012, p. 31). This is despite the fact that Couldry (2012, p. 43; and see Couldry, 2010) is arguing, quite rightly in my view, for a focus on matters of practice or on 'what people are doing in relation to media'.

In order to respond to the first of the objections that I have anticipated (the question about what happens to the categories of cognition and representation after a turn to practice), I will go initially to Thrift (2004a, p. 90), who insists that 'none of this is meant to suggest that cognition is not important'. Rather, as he puts it, 'it is ... to radically extend what thinking might be' (Thrift, 2004a, p. 90), so as to appreciate the ways in which 'other thinking ... lies in the body' (it might be best to say that such knowing is intimately bound up with bodily practice and mobility in 'lived-in environments', see Ingold, 2000, p. 168). According to Thrift (2004a, p. 90), knowledge cannot be confined to the 'smallest part of thinking' that is 'explicitly cognitive' (I will be coming back to this point in the next section of my paper, when I discuss Ingold's closely related concept of inhabitant knowledge). In addition, Thrift (1996, p. 8) does not seek to deny what he terms 'the reality of representations'. However, what the non-representational theorists in geography are refusing to accept is the notion that language or representation can be somehow 'anterior to ... and determinative of' (Wylie, 2007, p. 164) day-to-day activity, preferring to regard communications involving images, speech and writing as 'in and of the world of embodied practice' (and the practice of writing is one of Ingold's concerns, see especially Ingold, 2007). Interestingly, that approach to communication resembles Volosinov's historical-materialist critique of 'abstract objectivism' (Volosinov, 1986 [1973], p. 58), by which Volosinov means Saussurean linguistics. For Volosinov (1986 [1973], p. 81), then, what became known as structuralism is guilty of 'reifying the system of language and ... viewing ... language as if it were external to the stream of verbal communication', when in fact 'language moves together with that stream and is inseparable from it ... language ... endures as a continuous process of becoming' (see also Ingold, 2011, p. 161, who quotes part of that passage from Volosinov).

Regarding the further possible objection that all of this is leaving behind issues of social difference and power, my argument is that it need not do so. Admittedly, my sympathetic critique of Ingold's work does not foreground politics (in any case, there are quite a lot of other things for me to deal with in this paper), but I want to insist that the adoption of a non-representational or more-than-representational approach is not just about ditching concerns with difference and inequality. Let me take the example of Bourdieu's theory of practice.

Thrift (1999, p. 303) identifies Bourdieu as a 'non-representational' theorist, and Bourdieu's theory of practice, alongside the phenomenological philosophy of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty (and the ecological psychology of Gibson, 1986 [1979]), has been important in the formation of Ingold's dwelling perspective. Indeed, Bourdieu has been described by one of his many collaborators as Merleau-Ponty's 'sociological heir' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 20). Like the phenomenologists before him, Bourdieu (1990, p. 66) is particularly interested in an 'involvement in the world which presupposes no representation', and, in a fascinating discussion of bodily knowledge (defined as 'a practical comprehension of the world quite different from the ... decoding that is normally designated by the idea of comprehension', see Bourdieu, 2000, p. 135), he writes: 'The agent engaged in practice knows the world but ... as Merleau-Ponty showed ... knows it ... without objectifying distance ... is caught up in it ... inhabits it like ... a familiar habitat ... feels at home' (Bourdieu, 2000, pp. 142-3). A key concept of Bourdieu's, of course, is that of 'habitus' (a set of 'durable,

transposable dispositions' that are embodied, see Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72), but where his ideas on embodiment go beyond Merleau-Ponty's is in relating bodily dispositions to social positions and inequalities, so as to understand what he calls the 'coincidence between habitus and habitat' (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 147) in particular social-historical conditions. This is a move that serves precisely to politicise habitual practices, pre-cognitive familiarity and meaningful place-making, because it raises questions about who feels at home (or feels uncomfortable) in which specific social situations and contexts. Ingold (2000, p. 162) is clearly aware of Bourdieu's attention to such differences, and is keen to stress that when people 'from different backgrounds orient themselves in different ways, this is not because they are interpreting the same sensory experience in terms of alternative cultural models or cognitive schemata, but because ... their senses are differently attuned to the environment'.

The Primacy of Movement

In the previous section, whilst explaining how meanings emerge out of practices, I touched on passing on Ingold's relating of matters of dwelling and movement (I also hinted at the importance of his concept of inhabitant knowledge), and the time has come for me to discuss those things in greater detail. As Ingold (2011, p. 4) points out in the prologue to *Being Alive*, the most recent 'phases' of his 'efforts to restore anthropology to life' have involved considerations of 'the notion of "dwelling"' and 'the idea that life is lived along lines', yet he sees these very much as overlapping considerations: 'I have not ceased thinking about dwelling in my current explorations ... of the line, which grew from the realisation that every being is instantiated in the world as a path of movement along a way of life.' Thrift (1999, p. 308) once commented, helpfully, that a dwelling perspective is 'based upon the primacy of practices', but, as a result of the overlap between the research phases mentioned above, Ingold speaks today of the primacy of movement. In fact, this leads him to express some retrospective doubts over his use of the word 'dwelling', since he feels it is in danger of suggesting a 'snug, well-wrapped localism that is out of tune with an emphasis on the primacy of movement' (Ingold, 2011, p. 12; see also Ingold, 2008), and he therefore states his preference 'for the less loaded concept of habitation'.

Whether or not the term continues to be employed (and personally, although I like Ingold's talk of 'a process of inhabiting', see Ingold, 2008, p. 1808, I see no reason why the concept of dwelling should be dropped altogether), the crucial point here is that dwelling, habitation or place-making always has to be theorised in relation to 'movements to, from and around' (Lee & Ingold, 2006, p. 76), so that place is never simply associated with stasis and location. Ingold (2007, p. 2) is absolutely correct in asking, near the start of his *Lines*, 'how could there be places ... if people did not come and go?' 'Life on the spot' (Ingold, 2007, p. 2), he continues, 'surely cannot yield an experience of place', because 'every somewhere must lie on one or several paths of movement to and from places elsewhere'. Earlier in my paper, too, I referred to Lee and Ingold's noticing of oft-repeated walks ('circuits around the city', see Lee & Ingold, 2006, p. 77), which can be thought of as lines of meaningful place-making. Dwelling or inhabiting depends upon movement (and, following Urry, 2007; see also Elliott & Urry, 2010, I am proposing that the concern with movement is extended to include an interest in imaginative, virtual and mobile-communicative travel, with which bodily practice and mobility are so closely bound up).

This focus on movement brings me to Ingold's valuable ideas about inhabitant knowledge. In my view, this particular concept is of the utmost relevance to anyone who may be interested (as I am) in the possibility of developing non-representational, non-media-centric media

studies. However, I need to discuss the way in which Ingold employs the term in his own work before I get round to addressing its relevance for the study of media in everyday living.

The concept of inhabitant knowledge gets a good airing in Ingold's reflections on maps and on 'what it means to know one's whereabouts' (Ingold, 2000, p. 219). In the course of these reflections, he mentions two kinds of map. There are those that are 'held ... in the hand' (Ingold, 2000, p. 219) and those that are often assumed to be carried about 'in the head', the first of which he refers to as 'an artefactual map' (or 'cartographic map', see Ingold, 2007, p. 88) and the second of which has been called a "'cognitive" map'. An artefactual map is produced by surveyors who join up 'observations taken from a number of fixed points' (Ingold, 2007, p. 88) to offer an apparent view from above. Cartographic knowledge is, as Ingold (2007, p. 89) neatly puts it, 'upwardly' integrated, and he accepts that on occasion an artefactual map might be helpful in the hands of a 'stranger ... in unfamiliar country' (Ingold, 2000, p. 219). Meanwhile, proponents of the notion of a cognitive map are assuming that 'we are all surveyors in our everyday lives' (Ingold, 2007, p. 88), collecting a range of fixed-point data 'from which ... the mind assembles a ... representation of the world' to guide movement. For Ingold, though, such in-the-head maps do not exist. This is because 'the ways of knowing of inhabitants go along ... not up' (Ingold, 2007, p. 89), hence his pivotal claim that: 'Inhabitants ... know as they go' (Ingold, 2011, p. 154). In other words, 'inhabitant knowledge ... is alongly integrated' (Ingold, 2007, p. 89) and inhabitants know 'by way of their practice' (Ingold, 2011, p. 159). 'Far from being ancillary to the ... collection of data ... for subsequent processing', insists Ingold (2011, p. 154), 'movement is ... the inhabitant's way of knowing.' Most of the time, in practical, meaningful engagements with lived-in environments, 'we know where we are' (Ingold, 2000, p. 219) perfectly well without the aid of either an artefactual or a cognitive map (that is, in the absence of symbolic representation). Ordinary skills of orientation and wayfaring involve determining 'one's current position within the historical context of journeys previously made ... journeys to, from and around' (Ingold, 2000, p. 219).

What I want to open up here, then, is an exploration of how media users know as they go. Media users have what Ingold describes as alongly integrated inhabitant knowledge, both in terms of their embodied relationships to the range of media technologies that they incorporate into their routines through habitual use and in terms of their technologically mediated mobilities (as they repeatedly move through and thereby inhabit, say, on-screen worlds). Taking Ingold's concept of inhabitant knowledge as a source of inspiration, might it be possible, I wonder, to approach media in everyday living primarily via questions about habitation, orientation and wayfaring? To give some indication of the way forward for such an exploration, I will offer just a few examples.

My initial example is one drawn from personal experience. A few years ago, having left the UK to live and work in Australia, I was watching television in Melbourne for the first time, sitting on somebody else's sofa in a rented house. Although certain programmes were known to me already (since a small number of the shows were also being screened in Britain), and while the basic technology of the television set was obviously familiar, the various channels and schedules, along with many of the personalities, were unknown. Like Ingold's 'stranger ... in unfamiliar country' (Ingold, 2000, p. 219) with a printed map, or like the car driver in an unknown area who makes use of a satellite-navigation system, I initially consulted a television guide to enable me to identify my locations (in Ingold's words, my "'being here" and "going there""). For the most part, though, it was through my improvised wanderings in that media environment, over a period of several months, that I gradually got

my bearings and came to feel at home and comfortable with television in Melbourne, as well as coming to feel at home and comfortable on the borrowed sofa. After a while, my fingers and thumbs were operating the remote-control device with ease (suggesting a rather different sense of the term digital media!), as I was engaging simultaneously in imaginative travel.

For my next example, I turn to the old medium of the newspaper, which evidently has characteristics and affordances that differ in certain respects from those of television. It would be safe to assume that the regular readers of any particular daily newspaper are expecting to see something new each day that they buy it, because they do so for the overt purpose of accessing news. However, a possibly more significant aspect of their engagement with and attachment to the newspaper is their finding of the same things over and over, day after day. A newspaper's layout, then, tends to be fairly constant, so that readers are able to get around there with ease (they have developed a pre-cognitive familiarity with it on the basis 'of journeys previously made', see Ingold, 2000, p. 219). They turn the pages with their fingers and thumbs, having acquired the necessary bodily dispositions to 'make their way about' (Lee & Ingold, 2006, p. 83), although it is also worth noting here that the regular readers of a popular tabloid might struggle to make their way about in, and may feel uncomfortable with, a broadsheet newspaper (and vice versa). Pauses are taken at the entertainment section, the sports pages and so on, and over time readers have become accustomed to the 'genres of ... performance' (Volosinov, 1986 [1973], p. 96) of the journalists who routinely contribute columns. I would add that newspapers, as an early instance of what are now known as mobile media, allow their users to get around simultaneously in other settings too, as they walk and pause in the street or as they travel by bus and train.

In the case of internet use, whether it involves sitting in front of a desktop computer or handling a mobile-media technology whilst on the move, often in the midst of other activities, there are broadly similar issues that have to do with embodiment, habit and mobility. For instance, returning to Tomlinson's point about investigating communications 'via keyboards and keypads' (Tomlinson, 2007, p. 89), it is necessary to consider the skilful, knowledgeable movements of hands as digits press down on the keys at a rapid rate. As sociologist Nick Crossley (2001, p. 122) has noted, when writing several years ago about his own use of a computer keyboard, 'my fingers just move in the direction of the correct keys ... however ... I could not give a reflective ... account of the keyboard layout'. Of course, the reason that he could not give a reflective account of this layout (if separated from the laptop I am currently working on, neither could I) is because his knowledge of it is pre-cognitive or 'pre-reflective' (Crossley, 2001, p. 122), and is part of a wider 'capacity to move around ... without first having to think how to do so' (that is, without first having to think in an 'explicitly' cognitive fashion, see Thrift, 2004a, p. 90). A further example of that sort of bodily knowledge is provided by Mark Nunes (2006, p. 39), who has written of internet users' routine 'point-and-click' practices, which involve manoeuvring a mouse to shift the cursor and 'knowing the proper speed to "double click"' (Nunes, 2006, p. 41). Nowadays, these point-and-click practices are increasingly being replaced by a sliding and tapping of the fingers on a touchpad or a touch-screen device. Crucially, though, it is important to emphasise the close fit between those manual dexterities and users' experiences of dwelling and moving online (partly because so many of the early claims about internet use had to do with its supposedly disembodied character). Going to personal homepages and email inboxes, or taking paths through familiar computer-game worlds, also typically involves what Crossley (2001, p. 122) calls the capacity for movement 'without first having to think' (even if he was not referring to movement of this kind when these words were written). Like knowing 'in the hands'

(Merleau-Ponty, 2002 [1962], p. 166) how to make one's way about on a keyboard or keypad, knowledge of how to get around such online settings is alongly integrated.

At this point in the paper, before I get to my criticism of Ingold's view of social change, let me respond to one further anticipated question and objection, which I can imagine coming from some of those who specialise in studies of new media. Is this attempt to apply Ingold's ideas about inhabitant knowledge in danger of simply reiterating notions of virtual place and navigation that have been around for a long time now in considerations of internet use? For example, back in the 1990s, architectural and media theorist William Mitchell (1995, p. 22) was already referring to 'virtual places' that 'serve as shared access, multiuser locations' (and outside academia, too, there has long been talk of visiting sites and navigating the net). More recently, and more promisingly from my perspective, geographer Paul Adams (2005, p. 17) makes the interesting observation that: 'Navigation skills learned in physical spaces help children get around in virtual spaces and vice versa.' However, there remain certain difficulties with such earlier conceptions. In Mitchell's case, the giveaway term in the quotation above is 'locations' (Mitchell, 1995, p. 22), since he regards a virtual place primarily as a location rather than as a practical accomplishment involving movements to, from and around. Like many others who have written or spoken of virtual places (often used interchangeably with the term virtual spaces), Mitchell tends to understand place in relation to the 'fact of occupation' (Ingold, 2000, p. 185) rather than in relation to what Ingold defines as dwelling or habitation. I have far greater sympathy for what Adams is seeking to do when he brings together offline and online movements, but the main problem there, for me, is his continued employment of the word navigation, which suggests an association with cartographic knowledge rather than with inhabitant knowledge. My own preference, then, would be to talk about these things in terms of 'everyday skills of orientation' (Ingold, 2000, p. 219) and practices of wayfaring, which provides me with a convenient lead into the concluding section of my paper.

An Interesting Question

Having stated that Ingold himself pays little attention to people's media uses today, I should acknowledge that there is an endnote in his latest book in which he does reflect briefly on the lines of internet use. Given the rarity of his references to contemporary media of communication, I will reproduce that endnote here almost in full (one of the things that I have left out is a rather dated use of the metaphor of surfing):

To me, as a relatively inexperienced user, navigating the internet is a matter of activating a sequence of links that take me, almost instantaneously, from site to site. Each link is a connector, and the web itself is a network of interconnected sites. Travel through cyberspace thus resembles transport. Experienced users, however, tell me that ... they follow trails like wayfarers, with no particular destination in mind. For them, the web may seem more like a mesh than a net. How, precisely, we should understand 'movement' through the internet is an interesting question. (Ingold, 2011, p. 249)

I absolutely agree with Ingold that this is an interesting question! Indeed, although it is tucked away in the small print at the back of *Being Alive*, for me it comes close to the importance of his interesting question about meaning in the absence of symbolic representation. This is because it promises to open up a wider consideration of media uses as practices of wayfaring, along the lines I have at least begun to indicate in the preceding pages. The problem is that he quickly passes over it by adding that 'it is ... most certainly beyond my own competence ... to address it further' (Ingold, 2011, p. 249). Now, whilst Ingold's admission could be regarded as refreshing academic honesty (and I have to admit that it would be beyond my competence

to address issues of reindeer herding in northern Finland, about which Ingold knows much), my feeling is that he is being rather too dismissive of a kind of media use that might cause trouble for his account of social change and of modern metropolitan societies.

In order to develop my critique, I need to deal with Ingold's distinction between transport and wayfaring, which runs through his endnote on internet use (remember that for him 'navigating the internet ... resembles transport', see Ingold, 2011, p. 249, whereas other users may 'follow trails like wayfarers' and experience the internet as 'more like a mesh than a net'). To start with, though, as a way into my discussion of that distinction (and before I touch briefly on his concept of 'meshwork', see Ingold, 2011, p. 63), I want to consider what he has to say about stories and their relationship to wayfaring.

Ingold (2000, p. 219) makes the intriguing remark that finding one's way about 'resembles storytelling' (referring elsewhere to 'narratives' of movement, see Ingold, 2000, p. 237), and this view of storytelling and wayfaring appears to owe much to one originally offered by de Certeau (1984, p. 110) in his work on walking in the city, where he writes of 'the pedestrian unfolding of ... stories'. In addition, just as Ingold compares everyday practices of getting around with storytelling, so he is interested in approaching story-journey relations from the opposite direction, too, asking whether involvement in a story (including the reading or hearing of a narrative) could be understood as making one's way about in an environment. His answer is that it is possible to conceptualise stories in this manner, since 'the storyline goes along' (Ingold, 2007, p. 90) and because 'in the story, as in life, it is in ... movement ... that knowledge is integrated' (Ingold, 2011, p. 161; see also de Certeau, 1984, p. 115, who insists that: 'Every story is a travel story').

I welcome this distinctive perspective on narrative. It serves precisely to highlight matters of dwelling or habitation and movement, and it suggests productively bringing together investigations of bodily and imaginative mobilities. Still, for reasons that will become clearer shortly, Ingold's examples of, say, reading as wayfaring are far from contemporary. For instance, he notes the way in which: 'Commentators from the Middle Ages ... would time and again compare reading to wayfaring, and ... the page to an inhabited landscape ... to read ... was to retrace a trail through the text' (Ingold, 2007, p. 91).

Is it really necessary for Ingold to go quite so far back, in order to come up with an example of how involvement in a story might be understood as making one's way about in an environment? For instance, recalling an aspect of Scannell's work on radio, television and modern life (Scannell, 1996), I wonder whether a broadcast soap opera or continuous serial can also be thought of as 'an inhabited landscape' (Ingold, 2007, p. 91) for its regular followers? While such programmes are sometimes denigrated, Scannell (1996, p. 156) actually regards soap operas as 'among the most remarkable things that broadcasting does'. These stories, some of which have been running several times a week for several decades, provide listeners and viewers with routine 'access to ... fictional worlds' (Scannell, 1996, p. 159) of a sort that 'corresponds closely to the forms of access one has to the people in one's own everyday world'. The narratives unfold, then, at the same rate as the life-times of listeners and viewers, and have 'no perceptible ending' (Scannell, 1996, p. 157). Furthermore, regular followers are able to draw on their knowledge of the serials' pasts (in Ingold's terms, the historical context of journeys previously made) so as to speculate on possible narrative futures. My guess, though, is that Ingold, who has nothing to say about radio and television (let alone soap operas) in his writing on stories, would be reluctant to accept the comparison I

have just made between his work and Scannell's. Let me try to explain why it is that I am assuming this.

Staying with stories for a little while longer, I need to go back to Ingold's note on how commentators 'from the Middle Ages ... compare reading to wayfaring' (Ingold, 2007, p. 91), because he adds that 'there is no difference, in principle, between the handwritten manuscript and the story voiced in speech' (in other words, between the reading or hearing of such a manuscript). However, he proceeds to say something else that is crucial for an appreciation of his broadly pessimistic view of modernity. Once again, given the significance of this statement, I will quote Ingold (2007, pp. 91-2) at length:

There is ... a fundamental difference between the line that is written or voiced and that of a modern typed or printed composition. ... Writing as conceived in the modern project is not ... inscription ... the lines of the plot are not traced by the reader. ... These lines are connectors. To read them ... is to study a plan rather than to follow a trail ... the modern reader surveys the page as if from a great height. ... But ... does not inhabit it.

For him, the technologies of the typewriter and, later, the word processor (indeed, more generally, the technologies of printing) are seen as part of a wider historical process in which 'the line became straight' (Ingold, 2007, p. 152). He acknowledges 'that typing is a manual operation' (Ingold, 2007, p. 144), but his contention is that, in contrast to the hand movements of the scribe, the hands 'of ... typists dance on ... the keyboard, not on ... the page'. His view seems to be that using a keyboard to compose a text is somehow less human than writing with a pen.

It is noticeable, in the passage reproduced above, that Ingold (2007, p. 91) is drawing a parallel between the 'modern typed or printed composition' and the cartographic map. I detect this in his notion that the contemporary reader is studying 'a plan' (Ingold, 2007, p. 92) and surveying the page 'as if from a great height', rather than following 'a trail' and thereby inhabiting the page. In thinking of 'the lines of the plot' as 'connectors' (Ingold, 2007, p. 92), he is also inviting a further comparison, this time with the various transportation networks that he associates with modern metropolitan societies. His assessment of modernity identifies changes in each of the three 'related fields of travel ... mapping ... and textuality' (Ingold, 2007, p. 75), and, having so far covered maps and texts, my emphasis shifts now to travel and to that distinction made by Ingold between wayfaring and 'destination-oriented transport'.

The specific examples that Ingold gives of travel as wayfaring are taken mainly from reports of research carried out by other anthropologists, and most of these examples relate to cultural contexts that he would presumably see as being beyond, though not untouched by, modern metropolitan societies. In the majority of cases, they have to do with bodily mobility on foot. Sometimes they feature movement that is powered by animals or by the wind. Where they do occasionally feature a technology such as 'a motor-bike ... or snowmobile' (Ingold, 2007, p. 78), or even 'the car', the drivers of those vehicles are not in modern urban settings. For instance, Ingold (2007, p. 78) notes that: 'In the Australian Western Desert Aboriginal people have turned the car into an organ of wayfaring ... in the bush ... cars are driven gesturally.' When Ingold has been involved in collaborative research that is partly about movements in urban settings (see again Lee & Ingold, 2006), it is telling that this is an ethnography of walking, just as de Certeau's earlier account of the 'wandering lines' (de Certeau, 1984, p. xviii) and intertwining paths of a 'mobile city' (de Certeau, 1984, p. 110) is concerned with pedestrian movement rather than with, say, practices of 'driving in the city' (Thrift, 2004b). Indeed, the difficulty that I have with Ingold's view of keyboard use is similar to one that Thrift (2004b) has with de Certeau's walking-in-the-city thesis. Thrift is puzzled by the

absence of the car in de Certeau's arguments about the inhabiting of urban settings, suggesting that this may be because de Certeau implicitly understands walking as more human (embodied and sensuous) than driving. For Thrift (2007, p. 10), the human is a 'tool-being'. The car is therefore regarded as a means of dwelling or habitation, and practices of driving as profoundly embodied and sensuous. This would include, of course, driving in a modern metropolis just as much as 'in the bush' (Ingold, 2007, p. 78).

Ingold's selection of examples with which to illustrate travel as wayfaring has to be seen in the light of his contrasting conceptualisation of transport. Transportation, for him, is not to 'go along ... to thread one's way through the world' (Ingold, 2007, p. 79) as the wayfarer or inhabitant does, but to be moved instead 'from point to point across its surface'. He regards transport, then, as the mode of travel that characterises modern metropolitan societies, and he distinguishes 'the network as a set of interconnected points from the meshwork as an interweaving of lines' (Ingold, 2011, p. 64). So, for instance, Ingold (2011, p. 152) writes of 'transport systems that span the globe', such as the system of international air travel, as having 'converted travel ... into ... an experience of ... enforced immobility and sensory deprivation', to the extent that the traveller 'who departs from one location and arrives at another is, in between, nowhere at all' (Ingold, 2007, p. 84; see also Augé, 2009 [1995], for a surprisingly similar and equally problematic position on the so-called 'non-places' of transit). Whilst Ingold's case is eloquently argued, I find his perspective on transport and social change to be unnecessarily dark and negative (even if he is confident in his assertion that ultimately life 'will not be contained', see Ingold, 2007, p. 103). At the same time, I have no desire to deny that there are containing elements of modern social organisation, and nor do I wish to adopt the unbridled optimism of de Certeau (1984, p. 40), who is overly concerned to flag up the 'clever tricks of the "weak"'. What I have sought to do in this paper, though, is to start to widen the applications of certain key ideas in Ingold's work. Let me ask once more: might it be possible to approach media in everyday living primarily via questions about habitation, orientation and wayfaring? If the answer is a positive one, there needs to be a discussion of methodological challenges now facing media studies (and media anthropology), so as to find better ways of researching the combination of bodily and technologically mediated mobilities in people's day-to-day routines. Such a discussion is beyond the scope of the current paper.

References

- Adams, P. (2005) *The Boundless Self: Communication in Physical and Virtual Spaces* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press).
- Augé, M. (2009 [1995]) *Non-Places* (London: Verso).
- Bennett, T. (2005) 'The Media Sensorium: Cultural Technologies, the Senses and Society', in M. Gillespie (ed.) *Media Audiences* (Maidenhead: Open University Press).
- Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul).
- (1990) *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity).
- (2000) *Pascalian Meditations* (Cambridge: Polity).
- Bourdieu, P. & L. Wacquant (1992) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity).
- Couldry, N. (2010) 'Theorising Media as Practice', in B. Bräuchler & J. Postill (eds) *Theorising Media and Practice* (Oxford: Berghahn).

- (2012) *Media, Society, World: Social Theory and Digital Media Practice* (Cambridge: Polity).
- Crossley, N. (2001) *The Social Body: Habit, Identity and Desire* (London: Sage).
- de Certeau, M. (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).
- Elliott, A. & J. Urry (2010) *Mobile Lives* (London: Routledge).
- Geertz, C. (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books).
- Gibson, J. (1986 [1979]) *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum).
- Giddens, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity).
- (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity).
- (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity).
- Hall, S. (1980) 'Encoding/Decoding', in S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe & P. Willis (eds) *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79* (London: Hutchinson).
- Heidegger, M. (1962) *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell).
- (1993 [1971]) 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in D. Krell (ed.) *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (London: Routledge).
- Ingold, T. (1995) 'Building, Dwelling, Living: How Animals and People Make Themselves at Home in the World', in M. Strathern (ed.) *Shifting Contexts: Transformations in Anthropological Knowledge* (London: Routledge).
- (2000) *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London: Routledge).
- (2004) 'Culture on the Ground: The World Perceived through the Feet', *Journal of Material Culture*, 9(3), pp. 315-40.
- (2007) *Lines: A Brief History* (London: Routledge).
- (2008) 'Bindings against Boundaries: Entanglements of Life in an Open World', *Environment and Planning A*, 40(8), pp. 1796-810.
- (2011) *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (London: Routledge).
- Lee, J. & T. Ingold (2006) 'Fieldwork on Foot: Perceiving, Routing, Socializing', in S. Coleman & P. Collins (eds) *Locating the Field: Space, Place and Context in Anthropology* (Oxford: Berg).
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2002 [1962]) *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge).
- (2004 [1964]) 'Merleau-Ponty's Prospectus of His Work', in T. Baldwin (ed.) *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings* (London: Routledge).
- Mitchell, W. (1995) *City of Bits: Space, Place and the Infobahn* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).
- Moore, S. (1988) "'The Box on the Dresser': Memories of Early Radio and Everyday Life", *Media, Culture and Society*, 10(1), pp. 23-40.
- (1992) 'Texts, Readers and Contexts of Reading', in P. Scannell, P. Schlesinger & C. Sparks (eds) *Culture and Power: A Media, Culture and Society Reader* (London: Sage).
- (1993a) *Interpreting Audiences: The Ethnography of Media Consumption* (London: Sage).
- (1993b) 'Television, Geography and "Mobile Privatization"', *European Journal of Communication*, 8(3), pp. 365-79.
- (1995) 'Media, Modernity and Lived Experience', *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 19(1), pp. 5-19.

- (1996) *Satellite Television and Everyday Life: Articulating Technology* (Luton: John Libbey Media).
- (2000) *Media and Everyday Life in Modern Society* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).
- (2005) *Media/Theory: Thinking about Media and Communications* (London: Routledge).
- (2009) 'That Familiarity with the World Born of Habit: A Phenomenological Approach to the Study of Media Uses in Daily Living', *Interactions: Studies in Communication and Culture*, 1(3), pp. 301-12.
- (2012) *Media, Place and Mobility* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Moores, S. & M. Metykova (2009) 'Knowing How to Get Around: Place, Migration and Communication', *The Communication Review*, 12(4), pp. 313-26.
- (2010) "'I Didn't Realize How Attached I Am": On the Environmental Experiences of Trans-European Migrants', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 13(2), pp. 171-89.
- Morley, D. (2009) 'For a Materialist, Non-Media-Centric Media Studies', *Television and New Media*, 10(1), pp. 114-16.
- Nunes, M. (2006) *Cyberspaces of Everyday Life* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press).
- Scannell, P. (1996) *Radio, Television and Modern Life: A Phenomenological Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell).
- (forthcoming) *Television and the Meaning of 'Live'* (Cambridge: Polity).
- Scannell, P. & D. Cardiff (1991) *A Social History of British Broadcasting: 1922-1939, Serving the Nation* (Oxford: Blackwell).
- Thrift, N. (1996) *Spatial Formations* (London: Sage).
- (1999) 'Steps to an Ecology of Place', in D. Massey, J. Allen & P. Sarre (eds) *Human Geography Today* (Cambridge: Polity).
- (2004a) 'Summoning Life', in P. Cloke, P. Crang & M. Goodwin (eds) *Envisioning Human Geographies* (London: Arnold).
- (2004b) 'Driving in the City', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 21(4/5), pp. 41-59.
- (2007) *Non-Representational Theory: Space/Politics/Affect* (London: Routledge).
- Tomlinson, J. (2007) *The Culture of Speed: The Coming of Immediacy* (London: Sage).
- Tuan, Y. (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press).
- Urry, J. (2000) *Sociology beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge).
- (2007) *Mobilities* (Cambridge: Polity).
- Volosinov, V. (1986 [1973]) *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
- Williams, R. (1990 [1974]) *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Routledge).
- Wylie, J. (2007) *Landscape* (London: Routledge).