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Angaben zur Veröffentlichung / Publication details:

Hey, Maya, L. Sasha Gora, Sevgi Mutlu Sirakova, Philine Schiller, Lena M. Schlegel, and Penelope Volinia. 2026. "Sensoriography: immersing, recording, and storying the senses in more-than-human worlds." *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment* 17 (2): 226–48. https://doi.org/10.37536/ECOZONA.2026.17.1.5905.

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Sensoriographic Sensibilities: Immersing, Recording, and Storying the Senses in Multispecies Worlds

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.37536/ECOZONA.2026.17.1.5905

ECOZON@ | Vol 17, No 2

Abstract

Multispecies research relies on multisensory methods to know other earthly beings. This new mode of research faces a double challenge: how to know others in multi-sensory ways and how to document and communicate them back to a human audience. Previous work has expanded on the need for combining multispecies and multisensory modalities. However, limited scholarship speaks to this approach's practical challenges, including how to re-visit, re-write, and ethically re-present sensory experiences with other species long after fieldwork. This paper explicitly addresses these challenges with an experimental process we consider "sensoriographic." A sensoriographic practice iterates through sensory experiences, such that they span spatio-temporal divides from immersive fieldwork and the (inevitable re-)turn to writing. Sensoriographic sensibilities shift the focus from singular

[1] This paper is a collectively written endeavour that was ideated, prepared, discussed, revised, and formatted by all six of us. As such, we list surnames in alphabetical order with a nod to the facilitation role that the first author took during gatherings over the past two years.

encounters to recursively reliving experiences, asking researchers to synthesise the many partialities of knowing. We ponder: How do we overcome sensory biases like sight and individual experience while immersing in multispecies fieldwork? How do we deal with the ephemerality of sensory experiences and the fallibility of our memory in recording data? And how do we speak alongside and with other-than-human creatures as we try to write worlds thick with more-than-human life? Across diverse locations and with diverse species, we come together to stay with the trouble of immersing, recording, and storying the senses as we seek to create more responsive multispecies stories.

Keywords: Multispecies, multisensory, ethnographic writing, methodologies, storytelling.

Resumen

La investigación multiespecie depende de métodos multisensoriales para conocer otros seres terrestres. Este nuevo campo de investigación se enfrenta a un reto doble: cómo conocer a seres más que humanos de formas menos centradas en el ser humano y cómo comunicar ese conocimiento, éticamente, a un público humano. Los trabajos anteriores se han desarollado bajo la necesidad de combinar modalidades multiespecie y multisensoriales. Sin embargo, son escasos los estudios que abordan los retos prácticos de este enfoque, como la forma de re-visitar, re-escribir y re-presentar éticamente las experiencias sensoriales con otras especies mucho tiempo después del trabajo de campo. Este artículo aborda explícitamente estos retos con un proceso experimental que denominamos provisionalmente "sensoriografía." La sensoriografía reitera la revivificación de las experiencias sensoriales, de modo que abarcan intencionadamente las divisiones espacio-temporales entre el trabajo de campo inmersivo y la (inevitable) vuelta a la escritura. La sensoriografía desplaza el centro de atención de un encuentro episódico a revivir experiencias de forma recursiva, pidiendo a los investigadores que sinteticen las múltiples parcialidades del conocimiento. Abordamos cuestiones como: ¿Cómo superamos los sesgos sensoriales con la vista y las experiencias individuales mientras nos sumergimos en el trabajo de campo multiespecie? ¿Cómo afrontamos lo efímero de las experiencias sensoriales y la falibilidad de nuestra memoria al registrar "datos"? ¿Cómo hablamos con criaturas que no son humanas mientras intentamos escribir mundos repletos de vida no humana? En diversos lugares y con diversas especies, nos reunimos para enfrentarnos al problema de sumergir, registrar y narrar los sentidos mientras tratamos de crear historias multiespecíficas más sólidas y sensibles.

Palabras clave: Multiespecies, multisensorial, escritura etnográfica, metodologías, narración.

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Introduction

Smells and sounds, textures and tastes can story the everyday and forever unfolding encounters between humans and the many critters we share the world with. Scholarship in human–nonhuman entanglements has been growing to better understand and convey the lives and worlds of other-than-human beings. These studies typically combine multispecies questions with multisensory methods, even calling upon multimodal forms of representation. However, two core difficulties remain: how to know other earthly beings beyond sight and language, and how to record and share this knowledge, ethically and practically, beyond the immersive experiences of a singular researcher. In response, we propose a *sensoriographic* sensibility to complement such complex inquiries, which combines a multisensory mode of knowing and a practice of recursive writing of multispecies encounters.

Rather than claim sensoriography as a comprehensive method of *writing the*

senses, we consider this sensoriographic attentiveness to be both an academic practice and a methodological sensitivity toward and through our senses during (sensorio-) data collection and documentation (-graphy). We base this approach on reflections of the limits we face in our own research, namely, that our creatures of interest cannot be observed in straightforward ways since they live in inaccessible (e.g., aquatic) environments, in temporalities different from our ours (e.g., nocturnal) or simply escape our gaze (e.g., microbes). Our hope is that the sensoriographic sensibilities we outline will allow future research to confidently lead with diverse means for knowing and showing their worlds.

We arrived at sensoriographic considerations, in part, by noticing a disconnect between the sprawl of multispecies case studies—across disciplines as diverse as literary, media and cultural studies, design, human geography, and anthropology, history, sociology, and philosophy—and the fact that these scholarly perspectives offer no overarching guidance on "the embodied practicalities of knowing" (Despret 69). How exactly *do* we combine multispecies and multisensory datasets and transform them into outputs and, more importantly, what are the pitfalls to consider along the process of synthesising these encounters? How can we account for sensory qualities of inquiry *throughout* the processual and enduring aspects of research? And how can our writing absorb these considerations? Our paper begins by showing the recent growth and limitations to using sensory approaches in multispecies research, followed by our own rationales for moving past current challenges and our approach to generating material we cite herein. We organise our challenges into three analytical themes—immersing in, recording, and storying the senses in more-than-human encounters—and elaborate on sensoriographic considerations in each. We conclude with aspirations for future studies in this vein.

Synthesising Multispecies & Sensory Research

The linkage between multispecies and multisensory inquiry is recent, if tenuous. While anthropology offers entry points to sensory ethnography (Stoller's *Taste of Ethnographic Things*; Pink's *Doing Sensory Ethnography*)[2], few studies *explicitly* employ sensory methods to study more-than-humans (Myers' "Plant Sensing," Puig de la Bellacasa's "Haptic Vision"). A special issue by Natasha Fijn and Muhammad Kavesh marks a key exception and signals broader interests in the intersections between multispecies and multisensory research. Nearby disciplines also champion "multispecies ethnography" (Kirksey and Helmreich; Ameli), through tools of "attunement" (van Dooren et al.) and ethology (Hartigan Jr.), with somewhat separate discourses on how to approach ethnographic writing (de Gennaro) or qualitative methods for more-than-human inquiry (Elton et al.). Amidst these developments, we take seriously the ways in which "the time of writing shape

[2] We recognise anthropology's significant contributions to scholarly engagements with the senses; however, given our multidisciplinary and multispecies approach, we cannot expand on disciplinary debates here. For a more detailed discussion see Pink and Howes 2010 and Ingold 2011.

ethnographic accounts, sifting and filtering the unruly assemblage of fieldwork experiences" (Lien and Pálsson, 3).

To hybridise multispecies and multisensory research, we take our cues from feminist thinkers who decentre humans as the premise. For instance, Anna Tsing calls for "immersion" in more-than-human sociality (27) and Donna Haraway (*When Species Meet*) evokes agility in more-than-human "contact zones." Vinciane Despret names sensory cues in her analysis of proximities and responses created between primatologists and the baboons they study. She offers the example of a researcher relieving herself in front of the baboons emphasising sensory cues "in urine, in noise, in surprise" (66), which show how bodily impressions and affective experiences are inseparable from knowledge. Similarly, Karen Barad uses the figure of a brittle star to collapse knowing, touching, and being, blurring the lines "between the mind of the knowing subject and the materiality of the outside world" ("Invertebrate Visions" 227). These works highlight the importance of sensory cues and a need for an ongoing reflexivity of how our embodied experiences and culturally shaped sensory biases (Howes and Classen) influence how we perceive, respond to, and represent other than human beings and their worlds.

Our own endeavours prompt us with the question of how to *hold onto that attention and immersive experiences* long after field research is completed, especially when we write about our encounters in scholarly and expository genres. In particular, we see a dearth in discussions about responsible representations of the emergent and ephemeral nature of sensory experience and the spatio-temporal distance between empirical encounters i.e., at the time of data collection, and the writing process i.e., the "documentation" of multisensory "data" (with the exceptions of Elain Gan's "diagramming" and Sadokierski and Rissanen's drawings). This is why we emphasise the modes and frequency of *documentation* in a sensoriographic approach to keep sensory cues alive long enough to make more sense of them.

Amidst multisensory/multispecies guides, the topic of writing is scant with often a generalised call for "writing that is attuned to life's emergence within a shifting assemblage of agentive beings" (Ogden et al. 6) without naming *to which sense* we attune or how. Most of these works build on Tsing's "arts of noticing" (*Mushroom at the End* 27), interpreted as a "reflexive ethnography of the sensory kind [...] paying attention to the sensibilities of diverse more-than-human entangled ways of life" (Palmer 80). We also see the immediacy of immersing oneself in the field with "rubber boots" to counter "knowledge production ... dominated by sensing from afar" (Bubandt et al. 6-7). We draw on these approaches, but also see an assumption that one can simply sense the world and spell it out on paper. Furthermore, reflections often stop short of what to do at the point of writing. Phenomenologists (like Tim Ingold and Maurice Merleau-Ponty) have pointed out the inseparability of bodily experience and conceptual thought, but translating thoughts into writing seems such a given that it does not warrant guidance. Meanwhile, philosophers like Michel Serres (132) and Jacques Derrida (405) interrogate the irreducibility of material and vital

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things to mere language/signs as forms of representation.[3] How, then, do we hold the tensions between sensing the world and writing its complexities? How do we write with the worlds we study?

Ethical pursuits to both know and portray earthly beings raises a line of questioning: Who are we speaking for, with, and to what effects when *storying* more-than-human worlds? And what modes of representation are apt to the stories they convey? Ever since the animal turn, researchers have called to diversify representations of nonhuman creatures (Haraway, *When Species Meet,* 19). Early zoologists like Jane Goodall (photography) and Konrad Lorenz (cinematography) have employed multiple forms of media (McHugh 212). However, despite these diversifications, more-than-human stories remain focussed on linguistic and visual accounts. In response, artistic methods (e.g., Petitt et al.) and design (e.g., Westerlaken) have tried to elaborate multiple modalities—a promising development. That said, we also turn our attention to the craft of words as the craft of worlds, because "it matters what stories we tell" *and write* (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble,* 12). In this regard we are inspired by literary examples that foreground histories (e.g., Ruby Ekkel's account of lyrebirds) and biographies (White and Whitlock's "Writings and Rights"), poetic convergences (Magrane's climate geopoetics, Cooke's Ethological Poetics, or Desmond's use of poetry in animal ethnography), as well as popular books since they lead with less prominent senses, like Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (sound), Michael Pollan's *Omnivore's Dilemma* (taste), and Melanie Kiechle's *Smell Detectives* (scent). Each affirm that sensory experiences can have profound impacts on how we write the nonhuman.

At the heart of sensoriographic considerations is the reality that sensory knowledge can be simple, self-evident, even mundane, but as a scientific practice it can be difficult to systematise, confusing to explain, and a challenge to synthesise and validate. We thereby define this approach as a multisensory mode of knowing and documenting multispecies encounters that accounts for the practical and conceptual challenge of keeping the senses alive long enough to revisit. In sum, within the surge in multispecies studies, difficulties in sensing, documenting, and representing remain a perennial problem. Our paper takes up these challenges and asks not only how the senses can help us know and make knowable the nonhuman, but also how we might navigate the methodological challenges that arise across disciplines.

On Approach

As researchers who hail from diverse disciplines but converge at the question of multispecies inquiry, we share an interest in clarifying what it means to experience, document, and write our encounters with other earthly beings. Our approach was first informed by a 2024 workshop at the University of Augsburg, with prompts to

[3] For debates on (animal) representations and discourses on non-representational theory (NRT) see Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am* as well as Philip Vannini's edited collection *Non-representational and More-than-human Research*.

prime the senses, walks, and writing exercises.[4] The workshop's goal was to articulate when and how sensory details can augment our understanding of more-than-human worlds, with subsequent iterations over six online meetings over two years (Figure 1). Through these iterations, and drawing on our field sites and species of interest, we noticed the tensions and limits of current methods: what to document, by which means, and with what integrity?

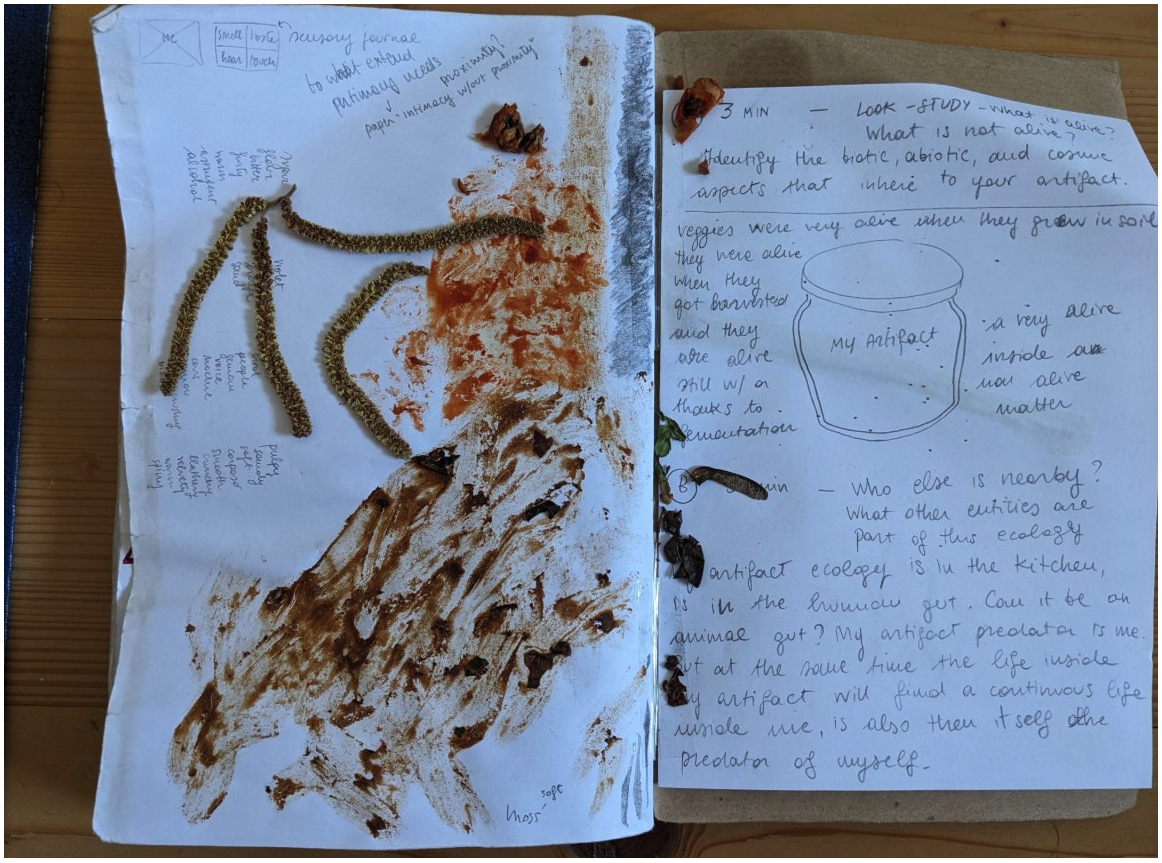


Figure 1

Rooted in our respective research practices, we understand sensory modes to *expand* ways of knowing more-than-human others, allowing us to know and make knowable the more-than-human world in less anthropocentric terms. With expand, we gesture to the wider array of senses beyond the visual—sound, taste, scent, touch, movement, and more, and in combinatorial ways—while also accounting for the challenges of representing these experiences. These challenges raise questions of practicalities (how to represent smells?) and of formats (how to represent smells in

[4] Sample prompts included: How can immersive practices help us make sense of/with other living entities? How can we document our encounters with others? For the latter, participants were asked to engage with a (living) artefact, that contained/evoked multispecies and multisensory encounters. Probing questions included: What all is in this artifact? Identify the biotic, abiotic, and cosmic aspects that inhere to your artifact. Who else is nearby? What other entities are part of this ecology? Identify what other forces could engage with your artifact if left on its own. How will aspects of this artifact change in 1 hour, 1 day, 1 week, 1 month, 1 year, 1 decade, 1 human lifetime, 1 century? When possible, engage from a nonhuman point of view, paying attention to when you use active/passive voice.

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scholarly publications?). Our discussions below thus hold the tensions of how one comes to know (sensorially)—while also staying with the trouble of not being able to fully know other earthly beings given our sensorial subjectivities and the spatio-temporal distance from moments of encounter to that of writing.

We coded these tensions and arrived at three themes—challenges with immersing, recording, and storying—at the intersection of multispecies research and sensory methods. Thus, beyond the workshop and back in the throes of research, we drew on the granular details from our experiences with diverse species—aquatic, nocturnal, and microscopic—and field sites across Europe, Australia, and North America. Since our initial workshop was framed both as an applied and conceptual intervention, we use this paper to enumerate the challenges of trying to collect, analyse, and articulate sensory data long after the fact.

In acknowledging the partiality and subjectivity of our collective endeavour, on one level the "we" in this article refers to the six of us and the range of sites, species, and contexts (on land, and in water) "visible" to the ear, nose, or tongue. But "we" also refers to researchers furthering multispecies scholarship. These two levels allow us to extrapolate shared frustrations while specifying the species and research contexts we bring into view. To add further scaffolding, we offer a portrait of the six researchers and their fields of inquiry, grouped together by species-specific challenges.

Diving into aquatic relations, Sasha follows cod to an island off of what is now easternmost Canada: Newfoundland and Labrador. "Everyone is here because of fish," an eighth generation Fogo Islander tells her. But this changed in 1992, when the industry collapsed and the government announced a moratorium that lasted until 2024. So, more specifically, Sasha follows the ghosts of an industrial fish, including their lives in water and their representations on land. Pepe encounters sea urchins by hand, and repeatedly again through memory. On the wharf in Tromsø, she tries to understand echinoderms beyond sight, with sound and touch holding overlapping yet distinct memories. Fingertips become tools to see and simultaneously record. Philine follows the immobile oyster that nevertheless travels internationally and finds itself shucked on global plates. Even in the water, the oyster is silent, so to understand its history she looks to the environments and people that grow and eat them. Her journey spans the landmass between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, recounting her rookie experience of shucking in Maine. She recounts her impressive encounter in listed form, impressive not for the killing (that happens, extraordinarily, in her mouth) but for the immense difficulty of trying *not* to speak for or through the oyster's lives.

Through the stories of nocturnal gliders and possums, Lena traces the impacts of native-forest logging in southeast Australia, a place where evolutionary and Anthropocene timescales collide in a fiery present. Challenged with both the ephemerality of sensory experience and of telling a multispecies story with multiple temporal layers, Lena thinks about forests and their more-than-human inhabitants with leaves, narrating their impressions through poetry.

Microbes, famously, challenge sight's monopoly on sensing who and what is

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present and where, yet microbial relations are inherently multispecies because they call in insects and plants (as well as humans) into sociality. Sevgi shares the excitement of the first tasting of wine produced by her family in Gokceada, Turkey, setting the stage for sensing interactions among microbes, fruit flies, and humans that surround the practice of making wine. Maya studies microbes in fermentation, sometimes in Japan, and sometimes overnight.

The following sections cite our previously written sensory accounts from our workshop, vignettes that came from subsequent online meetings, and our own data sets. We iterated on these writings to *revisit* our data (a notion to which we return), most of which is unpublished as fieldnotes and processual documentation. In analysing our notes, we collectively name three characteristics and tensions that span challenges in immersing, recording, and storying sensory experiences. We lead with these tensions, which we organise in three sets related to different phases of multispecies research: immersing, recording, and storying. We use progressive verbs rather than static nouns to highlight the dynamic and iterative nature of sensoriographic writing, partly to emphasise how our contribution is a methodological one.

Immersing

Following Tsing and others in crafting "critical descriptions" ("More-than-Human Sociality" 28), we find that sensoriographic accounts rely on immersion where direct participation in more-than-human worlds allows us to make sense *of* and *with* them. By immersing ourselves in worlds unfamiliar to human primal senses, we face challenges such as ocularcentrism and a privileging of individual over communal experience.

Ocularcentrism

What does the tongue know that the eye does not? And what about the nose or the ear? Sensing is plural. It is to engage the senses as an ensemble and not as a soloist and yet sight too often dominates descriptions of what it entails—and how it feels—to immerse yourself in your site of study. Furthermore, ocularcentrism may rule on land but loses its power in water, even with goggles, and so to document and detail acts of immersing, we challenge ocularcentrism by leading with other sensory cues in the following two examples.

Graduate school taught Sasha to memorise research methods as if she were studying for a citizenship exam: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed, interviews, oral histories, and participant observation, close reading, mapping, and analysis. But on the floor of the processing plant where workers bank an hourly wage to turn fish into food, what helps her most to sense, to notice, to remember, are the dance lessons that shaped her limbs as they grew from adolescent to adult. "I call on my body to store the sights and sounds and smells of fish becoming food, shrinking into fillets, as if they

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were choreography to repeat and rehearse and, eventually, perform," she recalls. "But maybe I should do this even when notebooks and phones are allowed?" she wonders. After all, phones cannot record smells (although hers certainly track streaks of butter, prints of chocolate) and yet smell is often essential for immersing, for sensing, for orientation and for knowing if something edible has gone "off."

In the nocturnal forests of East Gippsland, Lena can detect the small gliding mammal she seeks high up in the canopy only by mediation: Through the red light of torches, gentle on the eyes whose shine she scans the treetops for, cross-referenced with her attention to the sounds of rustling leaves, the alarm of an owl calling, and the odd sensation of a silent shadow gliding overhead, she tracks the southern greater glider, whose arboreal life, threatened by logging and repeated forest fire, has only recently been visualised by Australian researchers. Detecting their presence is spatial as it is auditory, a kind of knowing that may not be proximal but still felt (Santaoja et al. 139). The immediacy of sight precludes the changes of other senses chiming into the experience. Night-time heightens the non-visual senses in ways that make the forest contexts rich in textures (Schlegel 330-334).

Individual versus Communal Scale of Sensory Experience

These are individual accounts, so how does a single experience of sensory knowing scale up to the many who can sense? How is sensing shared? And does it confirm or clash with someone else's experience? Philine encountered communal forms of sensing, when a mollusc farmer invited her to his wharf and his son handed her a bucket of oysters: "More than once, I got it wrong and splintered the shells, standing as if over a broken egg […] And yet [...] I had shucked oysters; I had become part, for a moment, of *a shared choreography* across space and time." Immersing ourselves in multispecies worlds situates the researcher in particular coordinates of time and space that reflect continuities (and discontinuities) for knowing other earthly beings.

During fieldwork in Turkey, Sevgi breaks the spell of sipping wine with locals by posing a question that they would never think to ask. A question that interrupts: "How do you make good wine?" Her uncle, his lips courting his third glass, was the only one who took her seriously. "To make good wine, you watch the flies," he tells her. And although she did not know if he said this "under the influence of the alcohol produced by the microbes," she coaxed him to say more. "To make good wine, you follow the vinegar flies. When you leave the grapes to ferment for wine, vinegar flies appear on them. These flies enable the wine to ferment. They disappear when the boiling stops and the fermented grapes (must) settle to the bottom. That's when the wine is ready to be filtered."

Experiences with such traditional practices confront us with unruly questions: How can we sense and represent multisensory experiences that slip past Western ways of sensing, or engage with ritual and spiritual realms that are often written off in favour of scientific explanations? In other words, how can we render the crucial

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sensory engagements through which people navigate multispecies relations in traditional practices, such as the rituals of making wine that are performed collectively but rarely written down or even discussed among practitioners themselves? The stakes of engaging with communal sensing pushes us to move beyond debates in the so-called high and low senses, so named to privilege sight and sound as objective modes of observing the natural world (i.e., over the more subjective and idiosyncratic discernments in taste and touch).[5] By attuning to the multiplicity of sensing (synaesthetically within a body, collectively across several bodies), sensoriographic approaches thus have the potential to take in sensorial worlds and resist Western, Global North, or scientific gazes that reduce earthly beings to captured data.

We extend our argument about collective sensing to the other earthly beings in and of the worlds we study since what kind of data can we collect and analyse if we only keep to sight and human-centered accounts?[6] Sensorially speaking, there is the question of what the cod knows, what the flies know of the microbes, what the oyster and sea urchin know.[7] Like Philine, Pepe encounters a bucket full of life. It is raining in Tromsø and her hand dives into the bucket of sea water to catch a green urchin. "Its spikes move in an alien way," she details. "Does it want to go somewhere specific? Does it know that the sea—and not just its water—is on the other side of this wall?" To her eyes, the sea is close, but what does the sea urchin sense? Seeing alone is not immersive. The other senses have to tag along, and even take over at times, to better represent the thickness of experience, the stickiness of research.

Recording

Flashes of moments are all we have as we return to our sensory encounters to write them.[8] Even if we record something in visual or audio forms to review later, we first experienced them at a different time/place with nothing but our bodies to provide the continuity of then/there. Since one's sensory experiences are situated and first written onto the body as inscriptions, to document multispecies worlds is to distribute modes of knowing across the body to produce multiple accounts—both in sensory cues and the ways they are documented. A sensoriographic approach to recording data thus lives from repeatedly encountering, reliving the senses, both first-hand and mediated. In engaging with sensoriographic modes of recording, we face two main challenges: the fallibility of memory and the ephemerality of sensory experience.

[5] For sensory hierarchies, consult Anthony Synnott (1991) and Constance Classen (1993).
[6] See, for instance, the works of Eduardo Kohn's *How Forests Think,* Agustín Fuentes' "Naturalcultural Encounters in Bali," and Michael Marder's *Plant-Thinking.*
[7] For what animals know, see Despret's *What Would Animals Say If We Asked the Right Questions?*
[8] Ingold explains the process as such: "You try very hard to remember what you have observed, or what people have told you, and lest you forget, you write it all down in fieldnotes as soon as the opportunity arises" ("That's Enough About Ethnography!" 386).

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Fallibility of Memory

Our recall is fallible, so critically engaging with the possibilities and limitations of memory is an explicit part of sensoriographic practice. In Sevgi's case, wine-making needs to be "remade all the time, made new," both materially and in/from memory. Writing her fieldnotes is not about retrieving exact records, but about a vulnerable reconstruction of lived experience, reconstructed by "the particular relationship formed … with a particular set of people in a particular time and place" (Behar 5). Memory is thus formative, shaped by the act of recording itself. It is a bridge between the personal nature of sensory experience and the dimensions of documenting it. While sensory moments are ephemeral and often resist stable documentation, memory allows these fleeting impressions to be revisited, re-felt, and reformulated into something shareable. In this way, rather than striving for a single, objective capture, memory invites multiplicity where each remembered sensation inflects a different subjectivity.

Far too often we task our camera phones with remembering sites and recording sounds. But at the fish processing plant Sasha's phone stays sandwiched in her jacket pocket, which she was required to take off before entering the factory floor. "My sole tool for recording my research is my own body, my only recording equipment is my senses, my memory," she writes. "What happens when memory is your only way to return to, to process your research? And if memory turns off, if its clarity flickers, how do you turn it back on?"

Memory can also be selective, Pepe acknowledges. "Everything has happened so fast. My memory fails remembering which tools I use to crush the sea urchin. But I do remember crushing it open. So much water spills out." When memory fails in one account, it registers in another. In Pepe's example, visual memory happened to be selective where she does not remember the tool, but the sensation of cold water running through her fingers revived the memory of crushing the shell. The issue is gathering as many different sensory memories that one can have an array of experiential data. We understand a sensoriographic approach as explicitly engaging with this remit.

We see memory as a means of *revisiting* research. Iteration allows sensory data to span research temporalities, such as the times of data collection (field notes) and data analysis (exegesis). For instance, in Haraway's reading of Despret's "curious practice" (*Staying with the Trouble*), "visiting" emerges not as passive observation, but as an active mode of curiosity—one that resists mastery and instead invites openness to being changed by the encounter. To visit, in this sense, is to approach beings, data, or concepts not to extract meaning, but to dwell with them, to listen differently, and to remain accountable to their alterity. Building on this, we argue that *re-visiting* data is not a mere act of recall, but a renewed, embodied engagement—a sensory re-encounter that acknowledges the shifting nature of knowledge and perception. Re-visiting becomes an opportunity to sense again, to be affected anew,

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and to sustain curiosity as an epistemic stance rather than a methodological phase.

Thought of in this way, writing fieldnotes becomes an intentional reliving moment that allows a creative tool to engage with the sensory aspects of knowing more-than-human others. Much like Marcel Proust's madeleine (*Remembrance of Things Past*), where the taste triggers an involuntary flood of memory, writing becomes the opportunity to relive sensation as a way of knowing/exploring. It is not just the memory of salt hitting the tongue, but also the recollection of a movement, the action of shucking an oyster that can fire words. As Philine writes, "If your body remembers, and not just your brain, then the movement from knife to pen can be swift." By re-living the sense-making process of what we encounter, we can analyse data from elsewhere, elsewhen.

By acknowledging our own bodily complicity in the matter, sensoriographic data collection is not just a mental recall, but a bodily reliving and a proactive, recursive attempt at multiplicitously documenting each iteration. Rather than prioritising a perfect account that is "captured" from the start, a sensoriographic approach prioritises the multiplicity of sensory accounts, both within one body, and across multiple bodily encounters over time.

Ephemerality of Sensory Experience

Repetition also allows ephemeral sensory data to span research temporalities and repetition can exist outside of written notes.[9] For instance, Sasha asks: how do you task your body with not only sensing an experience, but recording it through gestures and triggers? "To record my research, I must remember and to remember I must repeat." Sensoriographic writing uses materials, both physical and textual, to invite researchers to *revisit* earlier encounters.

Revisiting data is less of a reminder and more of a renewed encounter through re-embodying sensory forms. For Sevgi, "these sensory experiences might seem to revolve around people," but she notes, "with *every* revisit, more-than-human details come alive." Each encounter with family members, grapes, yeast, and flies show the deep evolutionary relationship across animal, plant, insect, and microscopic species. For yeast and flies especially, "Both feed on decaying foods, but flies have an extraordinary sensitivity to the flavours produced by yeasts," so much so that the flies become the visible markers of wine's microscopic transformation. In traditional winemaking, people followed flies, reaching into the insect's sensoria much like how hunting dogs help humans perceive what they cannot. Over time, the taste of microbial transformation correlate with fruit fly patterns, and taste memories become written into her body as much as in the wine. With iterative visits, a bottle brought back from a visit, poems drafted, tastings, sniffs, and photographs feel more evocative than any other ethnographic note.

"My hand was holding not a pen, but a knife," Philine writes of her oyster-

[9] For a discussion of inscribing sensory experiences *onto* the body in the form of performance, see Denise Nuttall's "The Art of Tabla Playing."

shucking tutorial, pointing to the utter impossibility of writing experiences as they happen. For her, the repeated act of shucking became the data worth savouring: "It was the process—pry, twist, wrench, cut—that served as a mnemonic bridge, a way to hang on to the memory and keep alive the finger-feel of oyster shells." Much later, Philine notes the value in this repetition. "Mentally immersing myself in this routine," she writes, "helps me recall details registered months ago that come alive again in the moment of writing." The routinised movements of shucking became a tool for reactivating sense-memory.

Philine's finger-feel of the oyster shell mirrors how Pepe makes sense of sea urchins: "The materiality and sound of the test crack surprised me. Water came out, more than I expected, as well as other strings belonging to the digestive tract. Aristotle's lantern—the sea urchin complex mouth apparatus—was the next element *my fingertips were looking at*. It seemed like a fidgeting puzzle, so compact and complex." In recounting the moment of cracking open an urchin, Pepe's "fingertips were looking at" its mouth apparatus. Here, it is not her eyes that see: there is no technical description of the mouth. Instead, her fingertips see, consistent with what Eva Hayward calls "fingeryeyes" (580) in the haptic/optic way we make sense of first impressions.

For Lena, the touch and scent of eucalyptus leaves collected during her strolls through the forests of East Gippsland offer a reminder of the ephemerality of sensory data: as leaves decay, their structure changes, colours dwindle, and scent diminishes (Figure 2). They offer vivid recollections of those forests and the creatures inhabiting them, as she tracked forms of multispecies care in the aftermath of the Black Summer Bushfires. Months later, the dried and pressed leaves make a reappearance in Augsburg—once a delicate peppermint gum tree, the favourite food of ringtail possums now makes for a pale and flat reflection, the leathery structure of Errinundra shining gum only hinting at the majestic appearance of this endemic tree which greater gliders favour for their dens—allowing Lena to produce a ten-verse poem as part of her analytical process (Schlegel 330-334). Unaware that they would later allow her to re-embody a time/place of then/there, re-placing herself into an immersed mode of being with and in the forests, as she picked up leaves and slipped them into her notebooks: "I had sensed that once back in the distance of my office, *I might need something more substantial than pictures or notes to animate my writing* about those encounters that shaped the deeply more-than-human experience of my fieldwork."

Lena, again, unexpectedly encounters eucalyptus trees while in Puglia on a writing retreat. Upon rubbing them in her hand, she unlocks a repository of lemon-scented sensory experience, which simultaneously reminds her of the ephemerality of leaves and the lingering impression of their scent. She reflects in her poem:

> A whiff of a memory pulls me back
> on a track dug by potoroos
> And the scratching of lyrebirds
> Just as I grasp it, it escapes. (Schlegel, verse 9)

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These scented senses become recorded on multiple registers: imprinted into the body of a researcher, onto the "page" that a researcher produces, and within the minds of the reader who takes up such publications.

Sensoriographic recording offers an invitation of not shrugging off the possibility to capture ephemeral data. It serves future provocations and re-immerses us in sensorial, affective, and contextual ways.

Storying

Reliving memories, both figuratively and materially, is also the prerequisite for what we call storying—collating sensory experiences into a cogent whole. This process is non-innocent, in that sensoriographic storying entails actively (re)creating immersive, more-than-human experiences as selective narratives. It therefore concludes the challenge of double translation—of articulating one's experiences into writing and toward a wider audience. With possibilities also come responsibilities, and we note two main tensions with regard to storying, including how to articulate and revise the partial experiences created through recursive and diverse forms of documentation, and the problem of representation, that is, how to speak for, through and with other-than-human beings and their worlds. The recursive nature of sensoriographic writing thus continues through the storying phase, where researchers are called to continuously interrogate the implications of the worlds (re)produced through our narrations.

Partial and Recurring Revisions

Multispecies storytelling faces the challenge of tidying up multisensory and more-than-human data into compelling narratives, tailored to an audience, and perhaps to certain objectives (Bencke and Bruhn 10). Sensoriographic storying is about staying with these tensions and creating rich and situated accounts by engaging with a diversity of data and documentation, then iteratively revisiting them. To the extent that direct, immersive experience helps us notice differences that come to matter, turning our immersive multisensory encounters back into stories challenges us to iteratively employ diverse and multimodal practices.

As Lena notes when trying to detail the scent of a tree significant to her field site, language sometimes falls flat in describing things in their own terms rather than by comparison. The southern sassafras occurs as a canopy tree in Victoria's rare cool temperate rainforests and its scent is as distinct as it is unfamiliar. When she later revisits the scene to write about it, she realises with frustration that what she memorised as a unique experience was commonly described either by comparing it to familiar smells—cinnamon—or to scientific nomenclature—e.g. butyric acid. However, these descriptions failed to capture both the immediate impression of smell and the wider embodied experience of being in that forest (Figure 2).

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Figure 2

Every time we re-live immersive experiences, we encounter different layers of noticing and questioning. Although writing can be facilitated with materials from archives and field work, we argue that it is the recursive and repeated (re)writing—and thinking—that can bring words, rhythms, and provocations to life. Storying more-than-human worlds is about writing anew, mingling with the trouble of double

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translation: Of first making sense of unfamiliar experiences ourselves, and then articulating that experience back to a wider audience. Recursive writing is what makes it a living account—both in processes (of data analysis) and in outputs (publications).

We thereby expand Adrienne Rich's argument (18) that writing is re-vision, and re-viewing—seeing once again what was—and unpack its multisensory potential to engage the full body's memory (recall, for example, the notion of touching as seeing).[10] In this sense, sensoriographic storying is a more-than-textual "diffractive practice," to draw on Barad's account—of "re-turning as in turning it over and over again" ("Diffracting Diffraction" 168)—and of thereby making anew. By attending to the diverse sensibilities that arise at different stages of research, we recognise both the limits of our senses and the situatedness of our experiences (Haraway, "Situated Knowledges"). Sensoriographic analysis takes these challenges not as limitations, but as productive tensions of providing partial accounts, in Haraway's words: for "the connections and unexpected openings" that "situated knowledges make possible" (590).

Here, we follow feminist critiques of objectivity that point to the impossibility of one true, value-neutral, universalised account. Sensory data inheres to particularities such that they lay no claim for enduring, infallible, holistic, or generalisable accounts. Processual in nature, the iterative approach of sensoriographic storying explicitly engages with different senses, perspectives, formats/media, sensing bodies, and encounters over time. Rather than prioritizing a perfect account that is "captured" from the start, a sensoriographic approach commits to stories "ruled by partial sight and limited voice—not partiality for its own sake but, rather, for the sake of the connections and unexpected openings situated knowledges make possible" (ibid).

We thereby also seek to displace hierarchies that privilege certain senses (namely sight and sound) over others (taste, touch) on account of their being subjectively interpreted (Korsmeyer, chapter 1; Mol, chapter 3). The sensoriographic goal of "writing the senses" is not necessarily accuracy of what happened then/there distilled down to a singular story of what is being (re-)presented here/now. Rather, the goal is more varied accounts synthesised by the many, diverse, partial accounts that make up complex knowing.

Speaking for, through, and with

To sense with, through, and on behalf of other beings also raises questions about the boundaries of (human) perception: Can we sense what others can sense? And do we even have the capacity to represent their sensory experiences ethically,

[10] The irony is not lost on us that we're mobilizing a visual metaphor while also advocating for more-than-visual means to engage with sensory worlds. In this sense, a better concept may be Sarah Whatmore's "return" to materiality in "that what is new (as in different) about the something/happening […] is a product of repetition—turning seemingly familiar matters over and over, like the pebbles on a beach" ("Materialist Returns" 601).

without ventriloquism defaulting to a human narrator? Who or what are we representing, which imaginaries are we inadvertently feeding into, and for whom does this matter?

These questions invite researchers to be conscious and critical about the language they use and the claims they make. Maya notes the way that sourdough microbes—in an effort to steer away from their germ-centric imaginary—are often anthropomorphised as being "happy" when they are bubbling in metabolic activity, and "dead" when dormant or when undesirable microbes take over (visually, the same critique applies). While the monikers are relatable to human readers, the language of "happy" and "dead" obscures who microbes are since we cannot know if or how they are happy, let alone limit the ones worth noticing to the (sourdough) microbes who leaven (and not the undesirable ones who are very much alive).[11] Language is never innocent, accused of being granted "too much power" (Barad's "Posthumanist Performativity" 801). It can deceive and silence as much as it can enchant and enliven.

Philine notes the tension between her sensing and that of another creature's, especially with regards to how to make claims on the oyster's experience. In a list of axioms, she writes:

> 1. Be an oyster.
> 2. Don't hear with your ears; don't smell with your nose: you have neither.
> 3. How do you experience the world around you?
> […]
> 7. Does the oyster lack senses vital to our understanding of the world, or do we lack the capacity to understand theirs?
> […]
> 9. If an oyster tastes of a place and of the things it eats, does it taste them, too? How does it experience the water it gulps, filters, and absorbs?

Here, she struggles to narrativize an oyster's experience, whereby the imperative form shifts perspective out of an anthropocentric frame.

Lena, too, grapples with the authority of telling multispecies stories of life and loss in the forests of East Gippsland. For her, poetry becomes another way of telling both the lifeworlds of the species at stake, and the multiple temporalities of evolution, land use, and disasters clashing in what Tsing and others have called the "patchy Anthropocene" (186):

> Generations of gliders
> Inhabiting hollows
> Forests enduring ice ages
> But not the dozers and blazes
> […]
> Ghosts of extinction

[11] The critique here is not about anthropomorphism per se, since, as Natasha Myers notes, anthropomorphism can open up entirely new concepts and epistemologies. In studying how plant biologists know what a plant can know: "She is interested in how plants do the things they do and she uses available concepts to communicate her insights. These concepts are lures [...] And yet, it is by bringing these concepts to bear on plant sensory phenomena that she is simultaneously changing the very meaning of these terms" (62).

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Haunting dead coupes
Lineages broken
Renewal suppressed (Schlegel, verses 2, 4)

In mobilising the affective quality of words (Ingold's "From Experience to Language"), poetry stimulates nonlinear thinking and layers the material and affective impressions of field encounters, while leaving room for multiple interpretations. Amid the political struggles over forest management, affect becomes a crucial "sense" to think with and relate to animals whose nocturnal, arboreal lives tend to remain in the dark even as their worlds collapse.

Storying thus brings into question our place (beyond protagonist positions) while also being in the worlds in which we write. A helpful distinction made by Ingold is in how the "ethnographicness" of an account differs from the real-life, inter-personal (indeed inter-species) encounters. An account "is rather a judgment that is cast upon them through a retrospective conversion of the learning, remembering and note-taking …. It is this that turns your experience, your memory and your notes into material" ("That's Enough About Ethnography!" 386). Similarly, a sensoriographic account is a series of judgments—throughout immersing and recording and beyond—about what to convert from the experiential into noteworthy material. Famously, Ingold critiqued how (ethnographic) accounts are always *with* rather than *about* a community, ("Anthropology is Not Ethnography" 82-83).[12] We would add proposing of a sensoriographic sensibility is to direct our focus toward how to do this kind of accounting *with* our critters of study and not *about* them. To write *with* other creatures, their sensoria, our (collective) sensoria, over time, requires myriad "conversions" (to borrow Ingold's term) that make up storying processes. In this manner, sensoriographic storying takes these challenges not as limitations, but as productive tensions in thinking and *sensing-with* other earthly beings.

Toward More Responsive Accounts of Multispecies Research

Our shared interests in studying and writing about the more-than-human prompted us to engage with the practical, experiential, and ethical challenges that arise from a sensoriographic approach. Building on feminist ethics of response-ability (Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* 2; Despret 68), we see sensoriographic approaches as being responsive, centring the senses within multispecies research. In doing so, we seek to explicitly bridge the growing body of multispecies/multisensory scholarship by providing practical insights into using the senses during field research

[12] In *Being Alive,* Ingold argues that sensory experiences cannot be embodied as that would imply a kind of containment within a bounded body that is ontologically separated from the world. To thus "embody" sensory cues would mean that we are plonked on top of a "landscape" surface, rather than acknowledge our being "in the swirling midst of the weather-world" (*Being Alive* 135). "Far from being enfolded into the body," he writes, light, sound, and feelings *move us* and *move through us* precisely because we are immersed in these worlds (134). We nevertheless use the language of embodiment to signal our commitments to (new) materialist and feminist literature on how differential bodies can know and know otherwise.

and beyond. Sensoriographic praxis emerges as a reflexive learning process in which researchers cultivate sensibilities to the ways human–nonhuman interactions can be sensed and recorded, remembered and represented.

As our vignettes show, immersion requires multisensory attentiveness and curiosity toward other species including imagining and attending to unfamiliar species and sensorial realms beyond our individual experience. In recording our impressions, we are called to creatively engage with a variety of source materials and forms of documentation as we reflect on the limitations of our own memory and the ephemerality of sensory experience. Finally, to story in lively yet robust ways, we re-visit, re-view, re-write, and reflect on our recordings again and again. So, although we cluster our sensoriographic experience in three phases following the research process from field to text—immersion, recording, and storying—this is not a linear process; instead, it is a dynamic set of iterative practices. It stays true to particularities by moving beyond simply extracting sensorial data: it invites embodied, relational, and responsive sensorial engagements with more-than-human worlds and a willingness to stay with the stickiness that such an endeavour affords.

What we offer here is by no means a complete account of sensoriography. Instead, we hope that by sharing our challenges and insights, we invite future experimentations to multiply and diversify it as a praxis, even helping to "transform existing frameworks, practices, and approaches to research" (Bastian et al. 1). As a mode of data collection/analysis, a sensoriographic approach holds tensions of speaking for/with/nearby, it invites more-than-anthropological accounts, and it relies on the affordances and limits of senses and our memories of them.

It also diversifies what counts as data, including the range of documentations, the voices they represent, and the politics they imply. It provides insights for future multispecies-multisensory research that nuances debates in "writing culture" (Clifford and Marcus) and "thick descriptions" (Whatmore) especially in ethnographies. Lastly, a sensoriographic sensibility privileges modes of knowing that remain relegated and downplayed in academic knowledge production (beyond vision, for instance), whether that is the so-called lower senses (taste, smell, touch), emotions, and phrasings other than English, and sensorial experiences that extend/challenge hegemonic (western, Global North) perceptions of the senses.[13]

Our paper addresses the difficulties of documenting the senses in intersubjective, trans-species terms. By shifting approaches from one episodic encounter to recursively reliving experience over temporal/spatial divides, the goal of a sensoriographic approach is to create responsive accounts of multilayered experience, synthesised by the many, diverse, partial accounts that make up complex knowing. And, as such, it contributes to ongoing debates about non-/representational modes of knowledge production. As disciplines in the humanities and social sciences increasingly examine earthly beings in their environments and relational webs, a

[13] That said, we acknowledge the limitations, including the potentially Anglo-centric, ableist, and totalizing tendencies, of centering the bodily senses.

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sensoriographic approach simultaneously broadens the tools and hones the analytical precision of more-than-human study. We propose a sensoriographic approach as a methodological intervention because it discerns both what happens within (one's body, one's sense organs) as well as what happens throughout (a space)—we feel it and it feels us.

Submission received 9 July 2025 Revised version accepted 23 February 2026

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