

Playing with Visual Vernaculars

INTRODUCTION

John is sitting by the window on the train. He's heading into work in Melbourne's CBD. It's mid December and the day promises to be hot. He checks Facebook to pass the time. He sees a photo of the first snow of the year taken by a friend earlier. His friend lives in Holland. The photo is carefully framed with a vignette effect. It has a melancholy air and the caption "Time to hibernate". John 'likes' the photo and takes a photo of out of the train window, adds an ironic comment about the hot north wind that is currently blowing in Melbourne to the photo and posts it to the comments section of his friend's post. His friend replies, "send it here, but with my luck it'll come via the Siberian route". John finds and posts a picture of Grumpy cat. He grins, anticipating a feisty response from his friend.

Social media has reignited John's old love for writing poetry and taking photographs and now he has an audience. It has given him a reason to write poems again and to take photographs. He found it pointless before because his friends and family treated it as one of his indulgent hobbies. Now he has found a network of people who share their poems and images on a daily basis and give each other encouragement to stretch their wings. He gladly jumps into social media streams every day to share his own work and to appreciate the work of his newly found fellow travellers. People perform and enact their creative impulses in their social media timelines through new vernaculars and cultural memes such as lol cats. Social media is floating world of evolving nuanced cultural

meaning systems that sits in the background where we spend time with family, friends and fellow travellers who share our interests. Social media spaces have connections to physical environments as well. They transcend specific local time zones, seasons and weather so that people may be in a common social media space synchronously yet be experiencing completely different local physical conditions. Social media collapses weather and time zones so these can longer be taken for granted when we communicate with online interlocutors. My question in this chapter is: How do people play with emergent visual vernaculars to enact their creative practice?

In previous work (Berry 2015), I have identified how visual vernaculars have developed as a way of talking about these differences using images as a form of shorthand. The vignette at the start of this chapter is an illustration of how social media posts use photographs as an idiomatic shorthand to evoke contrasting sensory perspectives of the present moment in two geographic locations with different seasons. To better understand the nuances of how new visual vernaculars are improvised and enacted, I draw on Ingold's (2007, 2008) concept of a zone of entanglement, which allows me to re-explore the messy connections between people and social media evident in the opening vignette and unpack how creative practices are intertwined with other daily and routine activities. I use his concept as a theoretical framing device think about emergent vernacular film-making and photography in non-representational ways and interpret the some of the implications of the ubiquitous presence of smartphones for creative practice.

Opportunities for image making (Schleser et al. 2013; Keep and Berry 2013) are embedded in the background of everyday routines because of the affordances of smartphones. I wanted to explore and map some of the relationships creative and evocative expressions such as video, poetry and photographs have with contemporary everyday life with its affective and sensory dimensions and how these might be understood within a broader context of emerging visualities and social media. My focus quite deliberately includes what is in the background, on the taken for granted and habitual aspects so that I can examine thoughts and creative practices in action using a non-representational lens (Thrift 2008; Vannini 2015; Ingold 2010). I invited people in my personal Facebook and Twitter networks to participate in interviews about their use of social media at the start of October 2013 to find out more about how they used social and mobile media for mundane as well as creative purposes.

According to Postill and Pink (2012), the distinction between online and offline is problematic so they advocated that to understand the impacts of social media, one really ought to look at how “research participants navigate their wider social, material and technological worlds” (Postill and Pink 2012, 123). So, to address the importance of being able to gain insights into the entanglements of the online and offline, I asked my participants questions about where social media sat in relation to the totality of their social relations as well as their creative practices.

Within a fortnight, I had received sixteen responses from self-identified creative practitioners from Australia, USA, UK, Pakistan, Korea and the Netherlands. I also had their permission to observe their public interactions with others in social media provided I kept their identities anonymous. Collectively, my respondents all reported daily routines with different social media platforms, which were embedded alongside other activities including their creative practice and social lives. They frequently posted images connected to where they were and referred to what they were doing or thinking in the present moment. They also posted numerous creative expressions such as photographs and short form poetry to special interest groups for artists, writers and photographers.

This chapter contains extracts and vignettes derived from the content of the interviews. The extracts from interviews are presented verbatim. To compose the vignettes in this chapter, I used a writing technique, commonly used in anthropology, called enhanced ethnography (Humphreys and Watson 2009) to protect the identities of my participants. I provide a more expansive discussion of this way of working in Chap. 1. Drawing on my own practice as a creative writer, I fictionalized the characters or protagonists for the vignettes and used my field notes and interviews for the patterns of events. In this way, I have used techniques more commonly associated with fiction writing forms interweaving “novel-like detailed descriptions of natural sounding events” (Humphreys and Watson 2009, 48) to present the information gathered from my informants about routines with social media in an accurate yet evocative way.

The extracts and vignettes show that zones of entanglement between online and offline include improvisations by artists and poets which create new vernaculars. These zones also include a strong sense of audience, may rely on phatic communication and rapport and provide spaces for the enactment of new and emplaced visualities. This chapter is organized into four sections. The first section discusses the emergence of

new vernaculars within the context of participatory cultures; the second explores the importance of rapport and audience for creative practice and how the use of social media facilitates this within creative practice networks; the third section focuses on how visualities are enacted within everyday routines and figured in the emergence of new vernaculars; and the final section returns to zones of entanglement and the unfolding of creative practices to provide some concluding remarks about how new vernaculars are enacted and improvised.

USING NEW VERNACULARS FOR PARTICIPATION

Creative vernaculars are a series of creative practices located in the everyday that now include vernacular photography and film-making. They may be figurative as well as literal in their meaning. These vernacular practices predate networked mobile media but have taken on new forms in social media, whereby the digital objects that are produced are shared with a wider audience than their analogue counterparts and participate in broader local and global conversations. For example, demotic forms such as family photo albums, holiday movies and scrapbooks can be shared and passed on through social media and these participate in public conversations. In the context of smartphone cameras and social media, these practices highlight the popularity of cultural participation and present new opportunities for creative practice.

Burgess (2008) describes vernacular creativity as “both an ideal and an heuristic device, to describe and illuminate creative practices that emerge from highly particular and non-elite social contexts and communicative conventions” (p. 215). She situates her discussion from a cultural studies perspective and proposes that “the term signifies what Chris Atton calls ‘the capacity to reduce cultural distance’ between the conditions of cultural production and the everyday experiences from which they are derived and to which they return (2001)” (p. 216). There are numerous Facebook groups that encourage non-elite participation. For example, the London-based public Facebook group called Ghostsigns¹ founded by Sam Roberts has reduced both cultural and geographic distance and relies on participation for its content. The site is an informal archive of hand-painted advertising on the brickwork of buildings. The main photographic images on the timeline are from contributors all over the UK and are examples of vernacular creativity. The conversations through the comments on the timeline reveal how people have become inspired to

find and share ghost signs in their own local areas by Sam Roberts's initial photographs. The *Mirror*² has picked up on the increasing popularity of ghost signs.

Participatory cultures, such as the Facebook group Ghostsigns, have grown around social media platforms and are facilitated by smartphones. The lines between producers and consumers of content have become truly blurred, and this is a key factor driving the emergence of new vernaculars. People improvise ways of sharing by remixing and remediating images (Bolter and Grushin 1999) with the look and feel of old and new media to communicate aspects of their lives and creative undertakings to create new idiomatic expressions. Innovative forms are being used within spaces created by social media where new creative vernaculars (Burgess 2006) are burgeoning, and now we have the ability to observe the unfolding of people's creative processes through social media networks. We can trace and observe their interactions with other people and their social networks.

Another public group on Facebook called Haiku provides eloquent and evocative examples of how visual images have been added to an ancient form of poetry to remediate it, and how in turn haiku now has vernacular dimensions. One post in this group's timeline in April 2015 caught my attention. It was an image taken with a smartphone of bird poop on a car's side mirror which was overlaid with this haiku: "blue Robin / left his presence / behind".³ The comments left on the post were humorous, informal and supportive. One read, "Lovely, it must be Spring—lol (smiley face)", the author of the post responded "Indeed! (smiley face)"; another said "glad it was not Christopher Robin".

Both of these Facebook groups have opened up new places for people like John, from the opening vignette where they can express themselves and find new friends who inspire their creative endeavours. Social media started out as a subjunctive play space for John. He started tentatively posting haikus in 2010 on Twitter in response to challenge words. He was pleasantly surprised that people responded favourably to his offerings. He opened a Facebook account when his friends on Twitter encouraged him to join them there because there was more scope to post longer poems and have more detailed conversations because there was no 140-character limit. Again he found a wealth of contacts that shared his love for poetry and photography, so he was inspired to start experimenting with smartphone photography and video applications. Building rapport with his audience also means much to John. In the next section, I discuss how people seek to create rapport through visual vernaculars.

BUILDING RAPPORT IN SENSORY WAYS

Sharing objects such as photographs and video has become a part of our daily routines (Pink and Hjorth 2012). We are out and about in all kinds of weather going about our routine business such as commuting to work, eating, playing with our pets, and we can too share these with our social circles engaging in a networked sociality (Wittel 2001). We communicate many moments of our embodied and phenomenological existence to bring others into our lives through social media. The photographs taken by John and his friend are not only representational in terms of the weather conditions but also performative in function. They serve to mesh the kinetic and phenomenological aspects of two separate lifeworlds and paths together in one social space where both interlocutors are synchronously co-present (Ito 2006), even though John is in Melbourne enjoying a hot day in summer and his interlocutor is complaining of a cold winter in Holland. The photographs have vitality, and it may be said that they participate in an ethos of animation (Vannini 2015).

It has become very easy to share an image with others who are synchronously co-present online with smartphones. And if they are not synchronously co-present, they can see the posts later. The mendacities of life and associated thoughts are openly posted including the details of where people are walking, what they are eating and whom they are with. Photographs and videos are clear ways of creating empathy for our locomotive, affective and embodied experiences in the age of ubiquitous computing and social media. Visual images can readily communicate a sense of what it is like to be here and now in the physical world in an animated, evocative and visceral way. Jenny, a grandmother in her sixties and who lives alone in Wales, is a case in point of the urge to build rapport in sensory ways through mobile social media. She has been a practising artist for many years. Her intention to share multisensory aspects of her life is evident in the vignette below drawn from her response to a question about the kinds of photographs she shares and what motivates her to share them. Her smartphone has become integral to her creative practice and allows her to participate in an ethos of animation (Vannini 2015).

Frogs, Wasps and an Abandoned Liner

It was a mild early summer morning. Jenny was sitting by the water irises by her pond having her breakfast of tea and toast. The frogs were sunning themselves on the stones around her garden pond. She recollected

the mixed reactions she'd had last night sparked by a picture she'd taken of a wasp. Photos were a good way of starting conversations and making friends online she thought.

She stretched, enjoying the soft sun on her face. She took a picture of a frog on a stone with her phone and shared it to Instagram, Facebook and Twitter saying how much she loves her garden frogs. A message came back saying "kiss him and he might turn into a prince". She grinned and responded, "I don't want no princes, I want a man who can do the heavy work 'round here". The bantering continued while Jenny drank her tea. This gave her an idea for a series of photographs called *A Marriage of Frogs and Wasps* ...

She mulled this idea over as she drove to her local garden center. When she arrived she checked Twitter on her smartphone and saw that over a dozen people had retweeted her wasp and frog photos. She took a photo of a dragon statue in the garden center, inserted a text box using a photo app saying "Thank you to all for retweeting my photos" and posted it to Twitter. She bought the two bags of potting mix she had come for.

On her way home, she decided to stop by an abandoned ocean liner. She took lots of photos cycling through her smartphone apps playing with the filter effects. The gathering clouds and rising wind added mystery to the scene. She played with the idea that the liner was haunted. She felt she had enough now for a show at the local gallery where she had regular exhibitions. She posted several of these pictures on Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram. One image was just posted to the timeline without the use of any filter effects, others she altered and added a text overlay with poetry. She waited anxiously for reactions from her online circle of acquaintances. She's planning to use the feedback in her application for the gallery space. She was hoping they'd be open to a show featuring images she'd taken with her smartphone.

"Why not," she thought, "there was a show featuring mobile phone photos at one of the major galleries in London recently."

Jenny's smartphone creative practice and social media practices show how "life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines ... unexceptional interactions and affective dispositions" (Lorimer 2005). Banter has become a feature of her art-making actions and process. There are numerous small actions that make up her practice—some of them quite playful and for her it is also a way of socializing and building rapport in social media spaces.

Geographical distance from loved ones and the need to stay connected to familiar social networks also can become an instigating force for sharing vernacular and sometimes banal photographs through social media on a regular basis. Min is a Korean international student undertaking doctoral studies in fine art who currently resides in Melbourne and relies on social media to share the details of her life with her friends and family back in Korea. She told me that she uses Facebook, Twitter and Kakao Story (Korean SNS). When asked to describe how using social media fits into her days, she says:

It is like a daily routine, same as having meal, I reckon. When I wake up in the morning, I check mine and my friends' Kakao story's photos and comments first. Then I take photos of mundane things such as my dog, breakfast, and weather...and upload them to my Kakao Story. So I can talk with my friends and family without seeing each other at the cafe. But I am so happy because they know my life in Melbourne and I know what they're doing in Seoul everyday.

Min was a special case in my study in that she is a transient migrant and I pick up on this later. My concern here is that building and maintaining relationships were important to all of the participants in my digital ethnography and many relied on creative expressions that also functioned as phatic communication to cement ongoing relationships. For now, I wish to discuss the emergence of using vernacular images as a form of social glue. Numerous studies explore phatic communication in social media (see, e.g. Radovanovic and Ragnedda 2012; Marwick and boyd 2010; Miller 2008). Phatic communication is “a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words” (Malinowski 1923: 151). Its main purpose is to create a rapport between interlocutors. Roman Jakobson identified a phatic function for language where the objective is to maintain social ties and relationships. He refers to small talk as an example. Opinions on the value of phatic communication in social media networks are varied. According to Radovanovic and Ragnedda (2012), “the relevance of the phatic function of microposts is emerging as a form of online intimacy and of social connections in social networks ” (p. 13). The phatic aspects of social media figure prominently in Min's days and use of visual vernacular images in her posts do create a sense of intimacy with her family and friends in Korea. They perform as a form of affectionate small talk to reduce a sense of distance.

Nonetheless, some new media researchers denounce the emergence of phatic communication in online ecologies as being nihilistic and without substantial content. For example, Vincent Miller (2008, 398) asserts that we “are seeing how in many ways the internet has become as much about interaction with others as it has about accessing information”. He claims “communication has been subordinated to the role of the simple maintenance of ever expanding networks and the notion of a connected presence” (p. 398) and that “communication without content has taken precedence” (p. 398) and concludes that we are moving away from “communities, narratives, substantive communication, and towards networks, databases and phatic communion” (p. 399) where we are obliged to remain connected to others through posts and yet “remaining fairly oblivious as to the consumption (and production) of information” (p. 399).

There is no denying that people do spend a substantial amount of time in social media networks on phatic communication; however, a more fine-grained approach to rapport building and phatic communication is needed to better understand the complexities of sharing and interacting in these environments. I have found concrete evidence to counter Miller’s (2008) more abstract conceptual position that phatic communication is effectively oblivious to substance. Min’s response indicates that she has not moved away from communities, narratives and substantive communication; indeed, the phatic and rapport building aspects of her routine sharing of updates with friends and family in Korea serve to reinforce her narrative of living as an international doctoral candidate in Melbourne. Min is not an isolated case. Numerous studies attest to the importance of phatic communication as a rapport building tactic in the online interactions of transient migrants. For example, Panagakos and Horst (2006) argue that migrants often use communication technology to stay connected, communicate and create co-presence.

A sense of rapport with both her imagined and known audience is also an intention of Jenny’s creative improvisations as the vignette above shows, her use of social media and smartphones do include phatic dimensions to stay connected but she is certainly not oblivious to content either. Contexts, where the exchange of creative expressions is the norm may be created, maintained and extended to include sensory and affective aspects through phatic communication. What my ethnography reveals is that “much like writers, social media participants imagine an audience and tailor their online writing to match” (Marwick and boyd 2010, 15). Building rapport and sharing small talk are

definitely intertwined with audience awareness and improvisation for my participants.

Another case illustrative of the desire to build rapport with imagined and known audiences that I derive from my ethnography is Paul. He is another like John who has been inspired through his social media interactions to join the ranks of creative artists. He is a retired psychotherapist who has taken up creative writing and photo-media art since his retirement. He has a keen sense of his potential audience and is consciously aware of the content he produces and shares as a tactic “to get his work out there”. He lives in the UK. His images have appeared as covers on his friends’ poetry volumes and he is a published author. He is self-deprecating about his photography and sees it as a hobby he enjoys immensely, whereas he takes his writing seriously—he sees himself as a writer rather than a visual artist. When I asked him how he uses his smartphone camera and social media, he responded:

I photograph local scenery/landscapes, family & friends. I also create photoart: compilations of images on a certain theme or ‘straight’ images that I’ve changed & embellished using Apple iPhone photo apps. Iphoneography has become a valued hobby, to the point where I’ve almost abandoned my DSLR camera as I find it easier & much more fun to take & edit photos on my iPhone. It’s a hobby you can pick up & put down as & when time/space dictates ... I find it very enjoyable & fulfilling. I also enjoy having my ego stroked when people comment positively on my photos, either on Facebook or Instagram.

Rapport and phatic communication is an important precondition for the emergence and circulation of creative visual vernaculars. In the next section, I consider how people enact visualities and visual vernaculars with mobile media and how such actions and enactments reflect and shape creative impulses.

ENACTING VISUALITY ONLINE AND OFFLINE

In order to discuss how visualities and visual vernaculars in play out in mobile media, I first turn my attention to situate co-presence. Digital or networked co-presence (Okabe and Ito 2006) is a feature of our daily encounters with geographic places. The notion of a networked co-presence presupposes the centrality of co-presence to social interaction. In

his book *Behavior in public places* (1963), Goffman analysed contexts of co-presence. According to Goffman, an awareness of presence is essential for “persons must sense that they are close enough to be perceived in whatever they are doing, including their experiencing of others, and close enough to be perceived in this sensing of being perceived” (Goffman 1963: 17). All face-to-face interactions and encounters have the physical co-presence of interlocutors as given in Goffman’s theory. He identified gatherings as two or more individuals who are in each other’s immediate presence and situations as “the full spatial environment anywhere within which an entering person becomes a member of the gathering that is (or does then become) present” (Goffman 1963: 18). But in online environments, physical co-presence is not given and spaces are fluid and dynamic. I propose that contexts for co-presence have expanded and now include social media as situations where networked co-present gatherings take place and that these situations are now ever-present in the background of everyday life.

Furthermore, new kinds of co-presence are emerging where online and offline cartographies have become meshed together. Pink and Hjorth (2012) theorize such social phenomena as “a shift from networked visibility to emplaced visibility and sociality” (p. 145). Anyone can easily observe networked and emplaced visibilities on his or her social media timelines where people post, share and “like” each other’s visual images. Networked co-present situations and gatherings do provide an impetus for the evolution of new visibilities and creative vernaculars. The ease of enacting visibilities with the current smooth and almost immediate connections between online and offline with smartphones was arguably “unimaginable even a decade ago” (Vickers 2013, 139). Social media timelines are filled with examples of spaces “where many things gather, not just deliberative humans, but a diverse array of actors and forces, some of which we know about, some not, and some just on the edge of awareness” (Anderson and Harrison 2010, 10). Furthermore, such spaces or ecologies are a part of a liquid modernity that Bauman (2003) theorized as being one where “change is *the only* permanence and uncertainty *the only* certainty” (Bauman 2012, viii–ix). Creative visual vernaculars are adaptive responses to the dynamics and ambiguities of mobile media ecologies.

Social and mobile media assemblages and affordances are encouraging many to participate in creative practice networks (Berry 2011), which in turn are creating constellations of narratives with their own rhetoric

about the use and place of technology. To show how emergent visualities are enacted on an everyday basis, I refer to the case of Joseph (Berry 2015). Joseph is a published poet in his homeland Holland who also works as a project engineer as a consultant. In his interview with me in 2013, he reported that he found co-dependence between his inspiration and his connections on social media, especially Twitter.

A Routine day

A dog nuzzles his sleeping master. The sky is streaked with pink and orange. Joseph wakes and stretches his arms over his head. He wonders what kind of response he has received from the project finance manager. The project is going well, Joseph thinks to himself and smiles. He remembers how he dreamed of this day as a young man, a day when he could work at home on design projects and chat to his diaspora family each day by video so he could see their faces.

The boiled egg makes a most satisfying crack this morning. Joseph opens the lid of his laptop whilst absentmindedly sipping his coffee and dipping toast into the runny centre of his boiled egg. Twitter and Facebook sit side by side on two screens and smiles at the latest poetry. He loves the way Tweetdeck lets him look at several hash tags at once. He writes a short haiku about his boiled egg likening it a new dawn. Not convinced by his metaphor he posts it anyway. Within moments it is retweeted.

His camera, lying on the desk beckons, the videos of his dogs on their evening walk yesterday worked out quite well. People enjoy the antics of his two springer spaniels with their goofy, innocent faces. Time to bring a little light into the world, he thinks and uploads the best sequence to Facebook. He nods with satisfaction. Yes, the sequence does justice to the melancholic clouds in the late afternoon light and the dogs make a wonderful counterpoint. He posts a haiku about clouds growing older in Twitter and pastes it to a Facebook group for poets and artists called Small Stones. Tempted to wait for comments and likes, he tousles his dog's ears, kisses their noses and tells them that it's time for work. Twitter and Facebook now sit in the background.

He opens a second web browser and logs into his professional email and the enterprise system and share drives. No dramas there. He responds to routine questions. He sends the revised specifications to the team. Joseph flicks back to Facebook and sees that ten people have liked yesterday's photos and video of his dogs and five have left comments. He sees a direct message from his cousin in the UK. He can see she is still online

so they chat about the upcoming Easter break and his forthcoming trip to London. As he waits for her responses, he is checking the various haiku hash tags on Twitter. He is hoping there is a challenge to use a particular word but alas, nothing today. Indeed, there hasn't been much action for the past month. He suspects there will be more action over in the haiku groups on Facebook so he opens a haiku closed group page. His suspicions are confirmed and the funny thing is that all his old contacts from Twitter seem to have migrated to Facebook. Why is that, he wonders?

His work email beeps insistently, interrupting his reverie. He answers it, shakes his head at the questions with obvious answers and opens the enterprise database. He stands up stretches, goes to the kitchen, boils the kettle and makes coffee. The smell gives him strength. It really is time to get back to work. He steadfastly responds to the emails demanding attention. He hopes they have a good filing system in the organization because some of the email chains are over twenty messages long.

After a couple of hours, the dogs come into his study; carrying food bowls in their mouths. Joseph's stomach is complaining too. He feeds the dogs and sets out with them both for his favourite local café for lunch. They walk back through the fields. He stops to take a picture of the vista and posts it to Instagram and Facebook straight away. He adds a caption to let people know he is out walking with his dogs. Bruno has found an enormous stick and is struggling to carry it. Joseph laughs at the sight. He posts a 15s video to Instagram, Facebook and Twitter simultaneously with a humorous caption. Others will share his mirth, for sure. And sure enough, a friend from Yorkshire sends back a smiley face. He continues his walk home through the fields with the dogs that insist on smelling every tree. (Berry 2015, 57–58)

The ease of switching between online and offline provided by smartphones issues us with a challenge to rethink video and photography practices. What is evident in Joseph's story is the degree to which creative vernaculars such as writing haiku and taking photographs are a part of mundane routines such as taking one's dogs for a walk. These creative practices sit in the background of everything Joseph does, just waiting for the right impetus. Photography in social media environments has expanded exponentially incorporate what Goggin (2006) identified as a "demotic turn" (Goggin 2006, 146). This demotic turn is evident in Joseph's use of creative vernaculars. Indeed, since Goggin wrote about the demotic turn in photography in 2006, photography has changed even further because of the extreme accessibility of smartphones and can

consider commonplace. Online and offline worlds are essentially mingled so that it is possible for Joseph to go walking alone with a dog, yet be accompanied by digitally co-present others (Hjorth and Pink 2014). (I pick up on this notion more in Chap. 4.) He can take photographs, use filters to create visual expressions, share these almost immediately and receive a response.

In 2009, Jenkins proposed that a new form of culture with participation as its hallmark was emerging through the use of social media and Web 2.0 technologies. These participatory cultures have indeed arisen where anyone with a smartphone can participate and, in turn, shape creative vernaculars. In addition, participatory cultures are alive and evolving through the demotic turn and associated vernaculars in similar ways to language usage. Emergent visualities and socialities (Pink and Hjorth 2012) do encourage people to participate actively with new and remediated (Bolter and Grushin 1999) forms of video and photography, in complex media ecologies where the lines between online and offline are blurred and have become increasingly meaningless. The respondents in my ethnography are a part of these evolving participatory cultures and media ecologies that have volume and immediacy as their hallmarks. They all indicated that social media participation was a potential source of distraction as well as inspiration for them. As my respondent Jane, a single mother from the UK, put it, “I find social media really enjoyable so I purposely try to apply some boundaries to prevent me from spending too much time on it at the expense of other things”. By day, she works as a freelance professional writer but she aspires to become a journalist.

Jane looks rushed. The deadline for the technical report she is editing draws closer. She blows a raspberry at the clunky language. She sits at her computer, looks at Facebook on her smart phone. She really should check LinkedIn to see if there are any leads for jobs. Freelance work is great but she is worried about her rent. Once the report is done she will be unemployed. The kids need new shoes too. There are a couple of promising prospects. She makes a note of them and relaxes. One of them will come through for sure. She tweets out a link to her writing portfolio site and checks her number of followers. She has broken through the 3000 mark. Her portfolio blog has over 60,000 hits. That will look good on her CV.

She returns to Facebook. Her close friend Lyn has posted a new poem. She shares it and then reads it slowly, savoring the images - lyrical as ever.

There's a link to a video of a cat drinking straight from a tap. Jane sniggers and posts a comment. Others join in. Cats are always a good talking point. She writes a short poem about cats and posts it to her poetry-writing group. There's a post there from Jack. The anthology they self-published has raised over \$400 for UNICEF so far.

She returns to copy editing the report thinking social networking is way too much fun. Perhaps it's time to use the application on her Smartphone she downloaded yesterday that blocks her access to the Internet for a few hours so she can meet her deadline.

Jane's case shows how that boundaries between online and offline have become blurred and that a binary approach to conceptualizing mobile and social media spaces in opposition to geographic places has become redundant. However, if we look at Jane's action through a lens drawn from non-representational theory (Thrift 2008), we can begin to appreciate how visual vernaculars are emerging from ordinary everyday practices because of the use of smartphone assemblages. They are also a response to the rapid pace of change and the ambiguities and misunderstanding that arise all too easily in social media.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: UNFOLDING CREATIVE PRACTICES

Digital and mobile media is part of our material culture and is woven into the fabric of every life. Horst and Miller (2012) claim that

Being human is a cultural and normative concept. We may employ technologies to shape our conceptualization of what it means to be human, but it is our definition of being human that mediates the technology, not the other way around. (Horst and Miller 2012, 108)

Through unfolding the actions that make up the creative practices of my participants, we can see that their working and tacit conceptualizations of what it means to be human are both messy and dynamic. They adopt and adapt creative visual vernaculars to socialize and to express themselves. The emerging phenomena associated with socially networked media provide opportunities to rethink how creative vernaculars arise, and why the mundane aspects of everyday life hold such compelling appeal. In the introduction of this chapter, I suggested that we also have unprecedented access to people's thoughts, feelings and creative processes

through social media and smartphones. I have put forward clear evidence of the seamless yet messy interrelationships between my participants' embodied daily routines and their social interactions using networked communication and smartphones to support my claims.

Phatic communication is a significant feature of global social media landscapes where contexts have collapsed (Marwick and boyd 2010). New types of visual vernaculars are improvised and enacted in these landscapes. These vernaculars traverse global time zones to make bridges between local cultural contexts. John was killing time scrolling through his Facebook timeline on a hot morning in December in Melbourne. A photograph posted by a friend in the UK captured his attention so he responded in kind with visual images to bridge the distance between them. Jenny turned to the intertextuality of fairy tales and poetic aesthetics to communicate the embodied and affective dimensions of her life and used her posts to improvise creative outputs as drafts for her concepts for future exhibitions. Min photographed the stuff of her daily life to share with her friends and family in her home country so as to reduce the geographic distance between them. The actions of the protagonists in my vignettes all display a finely tuned awareness of known and imagined interlocutors and audience within their social media circles.

The sense of a networked and digital co-presence in social media situations is also a sensibility shared by my participants. The story of Joseph shows that my participants were not only conscious of potential audiences for their creative outputs but also assumed their networked co-presence. Joseph sensed that others would perceive him if he posted an update to his Instagram and Facebook timelines about walking with his dogs. The thought of having networked co-present followers and friends there with him while he was walking alone with his dogs inspired him to make a humorous video clip of one of his dogs lugging a huge stick. His assumption about being with networked co-present acquaintances on his walk was borne out as correct when he received a response from his friend who lives in Yorkshire.

The participatory cultures found in social media have provided a space for drifting, jamming and avoiding the task at hand for my respondents. For example, Jane is easily distracted from looming deadlines by her social media. At the same time, these floating worlds enabled by smartphones and new visual vernaculars can be a catalyst for creative pursuits such as poetry. For Jane, social media is a space to get involved collaborative creative projects such as poetry anthologies because "wireless,

mobile and ubiquitous technologies are a portal to new modes of experience, thanks to which a user can be part of the bigger picture in the mediascape” (Schleser 2013, 94). Being part of a broader mediascape through having a significant online presence is important for Jane’s portfolio career as a freelance writer as well as for her creative practice as a poet.

To sum up, being human and our relationship with mobile media technologies are a messy entanglement of the embodied, phenomenological and the mediated. We communicate across time zones, geographic locations, seasonal weather conditions as well as various and diverse cultural contexts. Ingold’s theory of zones of entanglement does provide a novel way to think about these interrelationships in a way that acknowledges their complex and dynamic nature. Smartphones have become taken for granted and have given rise to the emergence of new creative vernaculars. They sit in the background providing a means to capture and trace our paths, thoughts, feelings and inspirations as we go about our everyday business. In short, smartphones and social media expand the conditions of possibility for creative practice. In the next chapter, I explore the selfie phenomenon and draw links between selfies, emplaced visualities and the emergence of creative visual vernaculars.

NOTES

1. <https://www.facebook.com/ghostsigns?fref=ts>.
2. <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/ghost-signs-secrets-fascinating-adverts-5462049>.
3. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=980745885292932&set=gm.10152782810367547&type=1&theater>.

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