

A Kinaesthetic Spirituality:
An Autophenomenographic Account of Running
250km of the Camino Portugués



FHS in Geography
Candidate Number: 217981
Year of Finals: 2014
Word Count: 11,983

Abstract

***A Kinaesthetic Spirituality:* An Autophenomenographic Account of Running 250km of the Camino Portugués**

This dissertation offers an experiential account of running 250km of *el Camino Portugués* over 6 days. As a phenomenological appreciation of landscape, it prioritises the sensual and embodied experiences of landscape over traditional ocular-centric and textual representations that have dominated landscape study in the past. It explores how the dualistic epistemologies of inner contemplation and external ‘empirical’ vision; mind and body; and landscape and self may be written otherwise within the practice of running. This study focuses on the ‘*body broken*’: the deconstruction of the body into its constituent parts that inform a phenomenological account, but also the intense sensibilities that arise from a ‘*broken body*’; an injured body running in pain. It argues that an exclusive focus on the body alone does not sufficiently denote experience. The experiences of the ‘out-of-body’ features of the Camino, its resonances with the spiritual and immaterial, are consequently brought into a phenomenology of landscape. It is concluded that the experience of pain can be recognised as an anti-Cartesian device that returns the mind to the body as the subject of its focus. It facilitates a mode of ‘being-in-the-world’ that can be aligned with mindfulness: an intense appreciation of the present moment. Running in pain also calls us to consider Spinoza’s claim that we do not know what the body is capable of. Although potentially ‘affectively deadening’, pain reminds us of the unpredictable capacities of our body. This dissertation seeks to illustrate how landscape and self come into being through *practice*. Informed by non-representational theories, and the surrounding concerns of the unspeakability of experience, this research is experimental in its fragmentary writing style and structure, adopted as a means to conjure the essence of experience.

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Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank my Dad, Richard, who acted as my guide, mentor, and support throughout the researching of this dissertation. Accompanying me on his bike, Dad travelled with me along the *Camino Portugués* from Porto to Santiago de Compostela. With the majority of our gear strapped precariously to his bike rack, Dad also completed the equivalent of six marathons in six days with me. Every morning before setting off, each of us with a map and guidebook, we would agree to meet at proposed rest stops. Although I usually ran with a small hydration pack for water and essentials, my Dad carried 25kg of our camping gear and belongings 250 kilometres across the undulating topography of Northwest Portugal and Spain on two wheels. Without him, I am certain I would not have been able to undertake the research I did. Cycling in temperatures that reached 45°C, for an old man, Dad's achievement was probably greater than my own. I would also like to thank Marcus, a brilliant soundboard who offered great support. I would also like to dedicate this research to Joe and Annie, doing the Camino in their memory.

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Introduction

“Perhaps pilgrimage, the Path of Enquiry, will lead us to that point of understanding where there is no longer any separation between path and goal, where life itself is a pilgrimage and every step a prayer. In the meantime, we stumble along in dark clouds of unknowing and that is, perhaps, the essential beginning place; to have the courage to admit we are lost and humility to ask directions” (Brierley, 2013:6; Foreword to A Pilgrim’s Guide to the Camino Portugués)

“To fold with the world in this way is not a method in the traditional sense, but a matter of finding a way of going-on, a way of getting somewhere. There is no set of instructions for this method, no programme to unroll, not even a handy Baedeker or Lonely Planet guide” (Dewsbury et al., 2002:439)

This research does not seek to create objective knowledges or theorise the embodied experience of long-distance running. It is not a sociological or historical study of the Camino, nor is it concerned with who walks it or why. Instead, it aims to describe and explore the relationship between landscape, running and self as they become emergent within the context of non-representational and performative geographies. This phenomenological approach seeks to get closer to a subjective understanding of experience. Although running a linear path from Porto to Santiago – from start to finish – I do not wish to end up at a distance, further away from the lived experience with a disembodied theory of it. I hope to get closer; to finish where I started.

An approach of this kind diverges from traditional landscape discourses that have been ocular-centric and considered the thoughtful, static subject as the locus of knowledge production. A Cartesian ‘spectorial epistemology’ (Wylie, 2007) has dominated the study of landscape which promotes a disembodied, dispassionate perspective. It advocates a bifurcation of mind and body; inner contemplation and external ‘empirical’ vision; seer and seen. Rather than viewing landscape as text, seen as inert, objective and fixed, this dissertation instead seeks to explore the notion of landscape as dwelling.

It is through practice that phenomenology attempts such a task. Walking has been the predominant means by which phenomenologies of landscape have been researched (Wylie,

2005; Ingold, 2004; Edensor, 2000). As a means to stimulate thought (Solnit, 2001) walking has been considered a meditative practice (Slavin, 2003) seen as a way one can achieve a therapeutic state of self-actualisation and self-restoration (Edensor, 2000). The body has been understood as a negative interference, distracting us from reality by interrupting our attention with sensational commotion. In this dissertation I seek to reorient the body as site of knowledge production within its own right, suggesting that the way we move through a landscape determines our experience and knowledge of it (Spinney, 2006; Cresswell, 2003). In taking the physically exerting practice of running as my focus, I consider whether running might stimulate a meditation; how it might forge a different experience of landscape. In framing research as a creative practice we are able to address some novel questions about experience. As such, this dissertation argues that the difficulties of presenting the immaterial and subjective experiences of pain, kinaesthetic embodiment and spirituality do not render them any less important. Furthermore, it points to the different kinds of knowledge that performative techniques may produce, which may well be more capable of dealing with the inconsistencies and contradictions of our lived experience; of a world that is 'more excessive than we can theorise' (Dewsbury et al., 2002:437).

The pilgrimage route of el Camino de Santiago de Compostela was chosen as the site of study due to its resonances with phenomenology. The *Oficina del Peregrinos* in Santiago de Compostela only formally recognises *peregrinos* (pilgrims) who have travelled a minimum of 100km to Santiago on foot or cycled a minimum of 200km. Evidently, the value of the Camino is placed very much on the *journey* and the suffering endured, not the destination, like many other pilgrimage sites. The Camino is therefore a fitting subject and site of study, acting as a real manifestation of phenomenological critique that centres knowledge not to be gained on arrival at a destination, but in the very *process* of getting there.

This dissertation is therefore positioned at the nexus of geographies of landscape, the body, phenomenology, and the immaterial realms of spirituality and pain. It is a story of 'becoming'. It seeks to destabilise essentialist notions of landscape and self, arguing instead that they become emergent in the process of running. Accordingly, this research is guided by three research questions:

1. To what extent does phenomenology allow us to present different geographies of landscape?

2. How does the practice of running forge an appreciation of landscape, and to what extent can this appreciation be considered meditative?
3. What role do the immaterial realms of pain and spirituality have in a phenomenology of landscape?

Literature Review

This literature review begins by exploring the traditional study of landscape as understood in terms of representation; as a ‘way of seeing’. It addresses how the advent of non-representational approaches to landscape has moved away from this, notably in understanding landscape to be in a perpetual state of becoming via our practice with it. It sets up concerns relating to the ‘how’ of presenting experiences of landscape and, specifically, those that are entangled in running, spirituality, mediation and pain.

Spectorial Epistemologies

Landscape is a contested term with a complex genealogy. Traditional approaches to landscape remained consistent with a commitment to studying it through an ocular lens (Rodaway 1994; Olwig 2002; Cosgrove 2002; MacDonald 2003). For many scholars, landscape is something that we stand back to view:

“What I wish to emphasize here is that, when we consider landscape, we are almost always concerned with a visual construct. Landscape is something we look at or imagine as a visual metaphor.” (Porteous 1990:4)

Cosgrove and Daniels (1988) contributed to our understanding of this visualisation of landscape, as a way of seeing (Berger, 1972), considering landscape to be representational. Landscape was a text to be read (Olwig, 2004). It was depicted as the realistic representations of the visible world: ‘the idea of landscape is linked to notions of visual observation, detachment and objective knowledge’ (Wylie, 2007:144). This has resulted in the ocular-centric approach to landscape, where landscapes are ‘physical ‘somethings’ that are simply viewed’ (Waterton, forthcoming). Such a ‘spectorial epistemology’ (Wylie, 2007:145), identified in the philosophy of Descartes, is premised on the basis that there is ‘an external pre-given reality observed and represented from a detached position by an independent perceiving

human subject' (Wylie, 2007:145). One can stand back from landscape and ascertain perspective.

These discourses that celebrate the 'imperialism of the eye' (Urry, 1992) – presupposing vision as the means by which we acquire knowledge – permeate Western thought. Martin Jay's (1993) philosophical history of vision showcases how deeply engrained visual metaphors are, suggesting that vision is the basis of reliable knowledge. Colloquially, someone may ask for one's *perspective* on something. They may say that their *point of view* differs. Or, if one is in agreement, they might '*see what you mean*'. There are deep historic associations between visual perception and the way we come to know the world (Wylie, 2007).

A spectral epistemology of landscape also places importance on stasis. In the 18th century, value was placed on a sedentary perception of the world unobstructed by any haptic or kinaesthetic sensation experienced in the feet. Ingold (2011) notes how it was considered that 'only when the mind is set at rest, no longer jolted and jarred by the physical displacement of its bodily housing, can it operate properly' (2011:38). Shusterman (2010; 2012) comments on philosophers continued perception of the body as a negative interference, distracting us from reality by interrupting our attention with sensational commotion. As Solnit understands 'originally, walking seems to have been incidental, part of the process of moving around to find the best view' (2001:96). The stationary mind, encased within a body in motion, is prioritised as the way we assemble knowledge. This resulted in the subjugation of embodied movement, in favour of detached, static and speculative contemplation (de Certeau, 1984).

The perception of landscape being accumulated from successive points of rest was challenged by Gibson's (1986) work on visual perception. Gibson held that perception occurred not from a fixed vantage point but from 'paths of observation' when in continuous movement. As such, 'locomotion, not cognition, must be the starting point for the study of perceptual activity' (Ingold, 2000:166). Holding that locomotion and cognition are inseparable, Cresswell (2006) and Ingold (2011) align themselves with Spinney (2006) to open up the field of enquiry which suggests our perception of landscape is altered by the techniques of footwork. This has led me to explore how the practice of running will mediate and direct the way I come to know the world.

Phenomenological Approaches to Landscape

Thrift (1996) was dissatisfied with this privileging of the visual, which he saw took ‘precedence over lived experience and materiality’ (1996:4). From a non-representational vein, Macpherson (2009) notes how previous prioritisation of the visual may blind us to other avenues of researching landscape: ‘the reading and seeing of landscape-as-text was a limited perspectival expression of social criticism’ (Lorimer, 2005:85). Exploring landscape from an embodied, non-representational perspective seeks to make sense of the ecologies of places that are created in the act of doing. Macpherson’s work on blindness argues that to be without sight does not mean to be without landscape. The recent performative turn has sought to understand landscape as embodied interaction, a ‘whole-body activity’ (Ingold, 2004). Drawing on the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1962) and the environmental psychology of Gibson (1986), Ingold argues interpretations of landscape are subjective, dynamic and constitutive in our being in the landscape. Our experience of landscape is not just composed of the external, material world but also internal information, such as muscular effort and locomotion (Macpherson, 2009). At the heart of phenomenological approaches to landscape is the championing of the role of the senses in contrast to abstract, cognitive knowledge. Phenomenology is therefore fundamentally anti-Cartesian; it does not seek to hold cognition above the corporeal experience.

Cartesian Dualisms

Authors of non-representational thought ‘have sought to critique a prevailing Cartesian intellectualism which creates a dualism between mind (conscious intellect) and body (matter) and subsequently prioritizes the former’ (Cadman, 2009:3). For the Romantic walkers, landscape acted as an external stimulus for mental contemplation. Walking was a predominantly aesthetic experience; a way to admire the Sublimity of nature. Indeed, some thinkers believed that in order to gain this higher mental domain, one must walk on specific terrain, not too uneven as it ‘distracts and irritates the mind’ (Robinson, 1989:18). The reflexive constructions of walking are regarded as conducive to a higher state of intellectual focus (Edensor, 2000). Such conceptions are based on a hegemonic Cartesian dualism which suggests that knowledge can only come from the mind, where the mind is separated from action.

For Wordsworth, walking was a compositional method for his poetry. The rhythmic motion of walking facilitated a mental consciousness where his body could disengage from his mind; his

thoughts would fracture from the materiality of the physical world and hover above like a mirage (Solnit, 2001). There has therefore been a recognition of ‘head over heels as the locus of creative intelligence’ (Ingold, 2011:44) in Western society. But what if there was to be a orientation towards the ground? What new paths would a consideration of body over mind as the locus of knowledge reveal? Thrift considers this when he asks where does all other thinking lie, if ‘only the smallest part of thinking is explicitly cognitive?...It lies in the body’ (2004:90).

This is precisely what a phenomenological approach to landscape studies seeks to do; to expose and transgress the stark Cartesian dualism of body and mind, overturning the detached, spectral epistemology. Loland (1992) notes how ‘in a Cartesian dualistic universe, the body is seen as *res extensa*, a mindless matter moving around in a deterministic world in which there is no room for concepts like intentions, experience, meaning, and value, concepts that play an important role in an understanding of bodily movement as lived, practical experience’ (1992:61). Phenomenologists do not consider the human body as distinct from and controlled by the mind, but as ‘subject in itself, deriving subjectivity from itself’ (Meier, 1988:91). Practice is therefore prioritised as it ‘frees us from representation; movement is a primary form of consciousness’ (Cresswell, 2003:276). Such a conceptualisation regards the body as the fundamental point of contact and means by which we understand the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1969). Mind and body are thus part and parcel in our understanding of it.

Merleau-Ponty believed the body’s spatiality is an anchorage in the world: ‘a thing amongst things, it is caught in the fabric of the world’ (1969:256). Spinney regards the body as central to the way we ‘create a place of *sense* and a sense of place’ (2006:715). As the primary means of apprehension and experience, the senses of the body become fundamental in a phenomenology of landscape as they ‘both experience and structure space’ (Edensor, 2000:100). As a ‘body-subject’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) one approaches the world and learns to call forth habits and rhythms non-reflexively, opening up the possibility that place is constituted pre-representationally (Spinney, 2006). The body is constructor and cofounder of knowledge within the world.

Solvitur ambulando

If the body is the primary way in which we come to have world (Merleau-Ponty, 1969) – our primary form of consciousness (Cresswell, 2003) – then the way we move through a space is

important in determining our engagement with it (Spinney, 2006). In his phenomenological account of cycling Mount Ventoux, Spinney argues that ‘embodied rhythms and kinaesthetic sensations of the movement of cycling are constitutive of the character and meanings of particular places’ (2006:709). Indeed, cycling has been a means by which geographers have explored the phenomenology of place and landscape, yet this is dwarfed by literature on walking which has a far greater heritage (Wylie, 2005; Edensor, 2000; Ingold, 2011). Solnit believes that:

‘The rhythm of walking generates a kind of rhythm of thinking, and the passage through a landscape echoes or stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts. This creates an odd consonance between internal and external passage, one that suggests that the mind is also landscape of sorts and that walking is one way to traverse it’ (2001:5-6).

Through walking, this example showcases the Cartesian dualistic thinking of a bifurcation between external landscape and internal cognition; body and mind. Walking has been considered conducive to a sort of meditative practice (Slavin, 2003). In his *Confessions*, Rousseau posits ‘I can only meditate when I am walking. When I stop, I cease to think; my mind only works with my legs’ (1953:382). This seems a perfectly plausible sentiment. Those who have engaged in ethnographies of phenomenological accounts of walking have celebrated it not only for its conduciveness to research (Slavin, 2003; McCormack, 2008), but that there is a profound relationship between walking and thinking: ‘I like walking because it is slow, and I suspect that the mind, like the feet, works at about three miles an hour’ (Solnit, 2001:10). Wainwright, doyen of fell-walkers, believed walking to be ‘the perfect tonic for a jaded mind’ (1968:xix cited in Edensor, 2000:84). Indeed, walking has been aligned with a search for self-actualisation and self-restoration (Edensor, 2000) via what some call a ‘walking-cure’ or ‘psychotherapeutic walking’ (Wallace, 1993:7). As meditative practice, walking is depicted as a means of self-discovery.

If walking is a meditative practice, allowing the body to wander literally whilst the mind does so figuratively, is this the same for running? Does running the Camino allow the body and mind to fracture? Is the kinaesthetic appreciation of the body constitutive in how we gain knowledge and understanding of landscape?

Pilgrimage, specifically the Camino, is an apt means by which to explore these considerations. The Camino is inherently concerned with movement. In contrast to many other pilgrimage sites like Lourdes or the Vatican, the real gravitas of the pilgrimage is placed on the *journey* taken

to get there. The focus of the Camino specifically is on ‘the transformative process of journeying and its challenges, rather than giving primacy to experience and ritual at the final destination [of Santiago]’ (Maddrell and della Dora, 2013:1108). As a phenomenological approach is concerned with how landscape emerges in the act of journeying through it, not the detached representation imbued on it on arrival, the Camino and phenomenology have interesting resonances. Both are concerned with the journey, not the destination.

Running

Regardless of the recent mobilities turn in the social sciences, running has eluded any comprehensive study (Bale, 2004; Lorimer, 2012; Allen-Collinson 2007). The research that does exist comprises a history of the emergence of the practice (Latham, 2013) or explores running as a competitive endeavour. There is a serious dearth in the literature that explores the experiential nature of running (Allen-Collinson and Hockey 2007; 2009). Lorimer (2012) stands alone in his exploration of a phenomenology of landscape via running, arguing in his auto-ethnographic account for running as a vehicle to gain place knowledge and as an exploratory tool.

The experience of running divides into two realms: that of spiritual escapism and that of physical punishment (Cook, 2013). Constituting elements of both these realms, running seems to have a clear association with pilgrimage: a form of spiritual practice, accompanied by an element of enforced pain and masochism. Running seems an appropriate mode of practice by which to explore the spiritual pilgrimage route of the Camino.

(Im)material Spirituality

‘There is a part of us which is in closer contact with the divinities than our direct perceptions’
(Marias 2004:22)

Although there has been a neglect to account for the spiritual in cultural geography (Dewsbury and Cloke, 2009) there has been renewed interest in recent years (Holloway, 2003; Maddrell and della Dora, 2013). How can spirituality fit into a phenomenological study, when considering conceptions of landscape which are based on the embodied and sensual experiences of the landscape around us? Can there be a phenomenology of spirituality, something that is introspective and elusive, evading sensory perception? Spirituality appears antithetical to notions of landscape, those often perceived as tangible; in the material present.

Dewsbury and Cloke (2009) suggest that the conception of 'spiritual landscapes' offers alternative avenues to think about being-in-the-world. They open the spiritual up at a phenomenological register. The spiritual matters 'precisely because it presents the unknown to us...the outside of knowing as opposed to direct perception' (2009:698). Addressing spirituality in a phenomenological study highlights a generative tension between the material and immaterial; perhaps suggesting a post-phenomenology of landscape which seeks to problematize the boundaries of what constitutes experience. If 'the world is more excessive than we can theorise' (Dewsbury et al., 2002:437), spirituality is an important realm to advance non-representational theory. della Dora (2011) champions the importance of thinking 'sacred' spaces in geography:

'Sacred space eludes us. It stretches our senses. It problematizes traditional binary distinctions, such as those between the spiritual and the material, the invisible and the visible, the eternal and the contingent' (2011:165)

The very process of pilgrimage appears an example of a real-world attempt to overcome the immateriality of spirituality. Premised on the idea that the sacred is not entirely immaterial, Solnit notes:

'pilgrimage walks a delicate line between the spiritual and the material...it reconciles the spiritual and the material, for to go on pilgrimage is to make the body and its actions express the desires and beliefs of the soul. Pilgrimage unites belief with action, thinking with doing, and it makes sense that this harmony is achieved when the sacred has material presence in location.' (2001:50)

Following the route of Saint James, where he preached and where his body was carried to rest, the Camino Portugués is an attempt to reconcile the material with the immaterial. Pilgrimage is an attempted manifestation of a spiritual journey which cannot be represented.

Pain

Leading on from the concerns of immateriality and representation, pain becomes of fundamental concern, yet it remains understudied within the social sciences (Green, 2011). There are a few notable exemptions. Bissell (2009) explores chronic pain and its capacity to limit the body's ability to affect or be affected by other intensities. Le Breton (2000), on the other hand, explores how pain is a search for personally generated meaning, a validation of

the self and lived experience. Žižek (2012) notes how those who self-harm, far from indicating a desire for self-annihilation, radically attempt to regain a hold on reality, to ground the self firmly in bodily reality: 'pain makes the experience real' (Green, 2011:384).

Perhaps the study of pain 'is made difficult by the very qualities that make it worthy of study, for pain is too raw, immediate and internal to be expressed to another' (Green, 2011:381). As a loud embodied signal, the sensation of pain demands that we attend to our embodied experience (Ahmed, 2002). The shift in orientation to non-representational approaches to landscape gives us an interesting angle to approach pain; a sensational quality that shatters language and communication (Scarry, 1985).

How pain influences the experience of landscape can be approached in the practice of running and bodily exertion. Suffering is an important element of both pilgrimage and long-distance running; a validation of faith and effort. Long-distance running and pilgrimage converge in this way, both taking on a spiritual dimension. Solnit argues that the elements of 'asceticism and physical exertion are almost universally understood as a means of spiritual development' (2001:46). Pilgrims often walk the Camino in the hope that the process will lead to a form of self-actualisation and discovery. There is a sadomasochistic element in both pursuits. This retrospective pleasure in pain remains under-researched in the social science literature (Green, 2011). Pain and spirituality are consequently two hooks that guide this study; both existing as realms of experience that evade representation.

This dissertation therefore responds to the question posed by Waterton (forthcoming) of 'how to access the unspeakable – the agency of landscape, affect and sensuous experience' via the practice of running.

Methodology

‘...it would have to work out how to move differently, how to step from one topic to the next, one matter to the next, and initiate new ways of relating, walk new routes without tripping (or at least not often). It would have to take risks, invent new terms, new tones, new objects. It would draw new maps. Perhaps most importantly, it would have to keep changing, not settle in the dissatisfaction of judgment but keep experimenting...’ (Anderson and Harrison, 2010:1)

Anderson and Harrison’s quote above re-instilled confidence in my experimental pursuit in times of doubt. Their desire for a geography that ‘moves differently’, ‘walks new routes’ and ‘draws new maps’ gave me confidence that a phenomenology of running the Camino was a fruitful endeavour. Their aspirations for non-representational styles of working directed my ‘Way’: both the choice of the Camino as the site of study, and the way (the attitude in which) I carried out my research.

This dissertation responds to the calls by Thrift (2004) and Latham (2003) that we need a wider methodological horizon. We need to rework and reconsider the ways geographers undertake research. It grapples with Nash’s (2000) question of how to take the approach of non-representational theory to the field: ‘how does one study knowledge or non-cognitive forms of knowledge. How does one *do* ‘the performative turn?’’ (Braun, 2008:673). Accordingly, we must be more ‘hospitable’ (Dewsbury et al., 2002:438). There must be an ‘allowance of a certain amount of methodological naïvete’ (Latham, 2003:2012)

From Disembodied Gaze to Lived Experience

Phenomenology is concerned with the study of how things appear to the consciousness (Giorgio, 1986). Although not the most prominent antecedents, phenomenological philosophers – such as Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty – have influenced non-representational geographies over the past decades (Cloke et al., 1991). Stressing direct, bodily contact with and experience of landscape, a phenomenological approach seeks to explore how landscape and self are emergent (undergo processes of becoming) both together made and communicated in lived experience (Wylie, 2007). This approach regards landscape as mobile and multi-sensory; ‘it surrounds us as well as being in front of us’ (Wylie, 2007:143).

Phenomenology therefore does not regard the Cartesian perspective to truthfully and sufficiently describe lived, human experience (Wylie, 2007). Merleau-Ponty's conception of the 'body-subject' offers a sustained attempt to overturn the dominant Cartesian understanding in Western philosophy that champions cognitive representation and mental reflection. In privileging the ongoing corporal nature of knowledge and experience, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of world, body, and self dictates a new definition of landscape. No longer a spectral epistemology, but a phenomenological ontology as a milieu of engagement: 'a world to live in, not a scene to view' (Wylie, 2007:149).

Prioritising the subjectivities of individual experience, phenomenology has been criticised by positivist scholars who charge it with 'irresponsible subjectivism' (Spiegelberg, 1975:32) as they see it to valorise subjective meaning in general. However, phenomenology can be brought into line with non-representational approaches which seek to advocate this pluralism in the world by '[partaking] in the stretch of expression of the world' (Dewsbury et al., 2002:439) in a bid to rearticulate what counts as significant. The very nature of non-representational theory does not seek to represent or explain the world, but to present it; and to see what comes of such a presentation.

If phenomenology is one leg in this dissertation, autoethnography is the other. Autoethnography has gained widespread acceptance and usage in geography (Reed-Danahay, 1997; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Sparkes, 2000). Arising from the 'crisis of representation' (Sparkes, 1995) within qualitative research, autoethnography can be viewed as a reaction to the 'realist conception of validity' (Hammersley, 1992:2). However, its focus on the personal has also burdened it with the criticism of indulging in navel-gazing, introspection and narcissism (Coffey, 1999) and for generating something more in line with autobiographical writing than rigorous, scholarly research (Allen-Collinson, 2012).

Style

I felt caught in the cross-fire between these two schools of thought during research: between adhering to the structure of a formal traditionally 'scholarly' dissertation (with a conventional structure, signposting a clear and logical progression of argument) and the call that 'within the phenomenological approach, the purpose of writing is to bring the essences of the lived experience into being' (Kerry and Armour, 2000:9). Style therefore became an important consideration. I had to attempt to evoke my experience to the reader. Accordingly, I use a

fragmentary written style with a photo essay format alongside, in a bid to evoke the fragmentary nature of the run itself: my stopping; my starting. Much of what I studied also evaded representation. Combined with an animated style, I hoped these photographs interspersed within the text would attempt to conjure up these non-representational aspects of experience. A positivist set of criteria is clearly deficient for judgement of my autoethnography. Instead, autoethnographic studies should be based more on criteria such as the notion of resonance or ‘empathetic validity’ (Dadds, 2008) where the findings should reverberate with the reader in a way that allows a feeling of empathy for the author. This style, rich in narrative and animation, has been deemed ‘irrational, particularistic, private, and subjective, rather than reasonable, universal, public, and objective’ (Greenhalgh, 2001:55). Others, however, have argued that this approach gives autoethnographers an advantage: of in-depth, highly nuanced knowledge about lived experience in the specific field of study which would not be possible via other means (Allen-Collinson, 2012). Such evocative styles offer thought-provoking ways to address the mundane ‘unspeakable’ aspects of life.

‘Autophenomenography’

Autophenomenography may at first appear somewhat tautological: the study of the lived experience, by the self. However, the synthesis of elements of phenomenology and autoethnography produces a fruitful, novel and distinctive research form (Allen-Collinson, 2012). First referenced by Gruppette (2004), autophenomenography is the ‘genre in which the phenomenological researcher is both researcher and participant in her/his study of a particular phenomenon, subjecting her/his own lived experience to sustained and rigorous phenomenological analysis’ (Allen-Collinson, 2012:17). The primary focus is therefore the researcher’s lived experience of phenomena, as opposed to the ‘cultural place’ which is the case in autoethnographies. Allen-Collinson (2011) considered autophenomenography rather than autophenomenology a more appropriate term as ‘graphy’ refers to the research process in general, as well as the write-up process. Use of ‘ology’ would also engage in the highly contested debates around phenomenology that this dissertation does not have the scope to engage in. Advocates see autophenomenography to respond to criticism of phenomenological researchers who rarely participate in the processes under study, relying instead on second-hand information.

I was confident that I would fulfil Garfinkel’s (2002) ‘unique adequacy requirement’ where the researcher is competent to the production of phenomena at hand, as I am an experienced long-

distance runner, having run competitively since the age of twelve. However, hand-in-hand with this comes the concern of ‘bracketing’ (Husserl, 1983): ‘the attempted suspension...of the researcher’s pre-suppositions and assumptions about the phenomenon’ (Allen-Collinson, 2012:200). This notion was grounded in Husserl’s (1983) exhortation that in order to engage in a pure phenomenological experience, the researcher must return to things in their very essence, free from the researcher’s tacit assumptions of what is claimed to be ‘known’ about phenomenon, approaching the field without prejudgement. There is the expectation that we must enter the field with ‘naïve eyes’ (Allen-Collinson, 2012). For me, Husserl’s contention was idealistic. Seeking to stand outside of any historical or cultural baggage and engage in ‘pure’ reflection of running the Camino appeared impossible. I did, however, undertake every action possible to attempt to engage in a process of bracketing which required my heightened reflexivity, in order to analyse the taken-for-granted processes of the familiar ‘lifeworld’ of running.

Preparation:

Aside from the research preparation, the physical training for the run itself was paramount. Training for and running the London Marathon three months previously, I was able to physically complete 42km in less than four hours. The real challenge was preparing lead-heavy legs to complete the same distance again for six successive days. After the London Marathon I increased my training schedule to 84km throughout the week, with stretching daily. During my longer runs I trained with a hydration pack on my back to practice carrying water.

Techniques for Generating Materials

‘How, when such movement is often below the cognitive threshold of representational awareness that defines what is admitted into serious research, does one give a word to a movement without seeking to represent it?’ (McCormack, 2002:470)

‘The camera’s eye

Does not lie

But it cannot show

The life within

The life of a runner

Of your or mine’

Extract from *The Runner* - W.H. Auden (Cook, 2013)

I used my iPhone to take pictures, recordings and make annotations along the Way. I use these photos as visual aids to help convey something of my journey, my pilgrimage. However, as the extract from Auden notes, these photographs cannot sufficiently represent the embodied, sensual experience of running. I considered video-recording the run (see Simpson, 2011), as autophenomenographic approaches seek not to separate locomotion from cognition (Ingold, 2000). However, the temptation to use video – a series of images – did not seem to address the underlying problem.

I recorded my experiences each day and transcribed the recordings each evening into a journal. I found that my emotions varied drastically over the course of a day's running. As such, it was important to make a number of journal entries each day.

I used my GPS watch to gauge distance, elevation and heart rate during the run. While running, my GPS watch acted as an immediate form of reflexive representation. I then uploaded this data onto my laptop each evening. I explored how distance, elevation and heart rate themselves came to act as indicators of pain, while also exploring how these representations were more-than-representational, in the sense that these representations themselves fed into my experience of the Camino (see McCormack, 2012). Elevation profiles, records of heart rate and distances covered, were more than just representations but re-presented themselves as formative elements of the study that informed and often came to dominate my experience.

With these considerations in mind, let us get on The Way.

Analysis

Adopting a phenomenological approach to landscape, my analysis centres on the body. I begin by addressing the ‘body broken’ into its constituent parts; I identify those elements that were important in my experience. I then discuss the ‘broken body’; the role of the painful body in the actualisation and realisation of the self. I progress to advance the discussion to consider the ‘out-of-body’ attachment I had to landscape, those that were more than the corporeal, via what I coin ‘nostalgic empathy’.

An Introduction to the *Camino Portugués*

“The walk is the destination, not Santiago” (Alison, peregrina)



Figure 1:30km from Santiago ‘Life is a journey, you can never leave the walk’

‘The Way’, or Camino de Santiago, is a large network of pilgrim routes that stretch across Europe leading to the tomb of St James in Santiago de Compostela in north-west Spain. It ranks with Rome and Jerusalem as one of Christendom’s great pilgrimages and has been walked by pilgrims for 1200 years. The Camino Portugués is celebrated as one of the most frequented and sacred Caminos. It is believed that it was here that St James preached Christ’s message in Iberia and where, as legend has it, his body was transported to Galicia by a boat and then carried in land by his disciples to where Santiago de Compostela is now located.

In 2012, 192,448 *peregrinos* completed the Camino from various routes across Europe. The *Oficina del Peregrinos* in Santiago de Compostela give ‘*Compostelas*’ (stamped certificates) to *peregrinos* who have travelled a minimum of 100km to Santiago on foot or cycled a minimum of 200km. Evidently, the value of the Camino is placed very much in the *process* of getting there and the suffering endured.

The Body, Deconstructed

During the first day of running, I fell injured from a strained knee. My body was ‘broken’ from the outset. A phenomenology of the Camino demanded a *deconstruction* of the constituent elements of my body and how these relationships with and within landscape informed my experience.

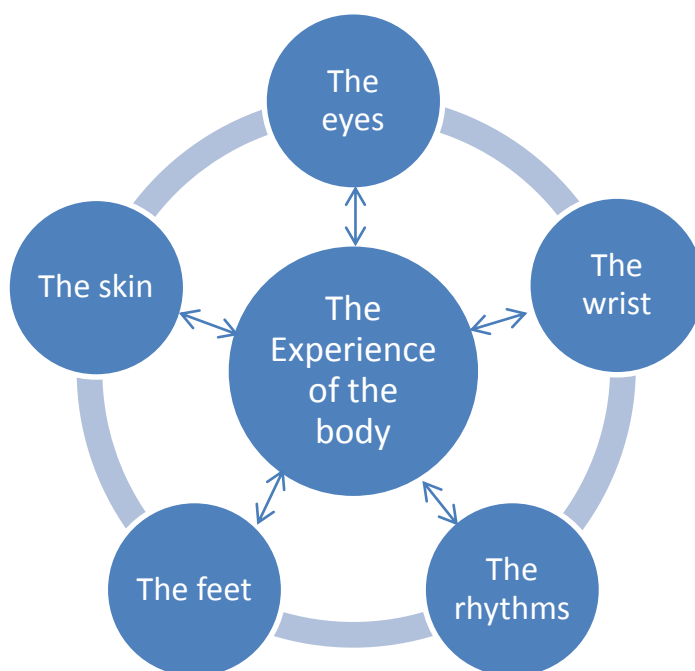


Figure 2: The ‘body’ deconstructed into its constituent elements that informed my experience.

My Feet: ‘Surfaces matter’ (Lorimer, 2012)

Where to begin a phenomenological account of the Camino? Surely we must start with the basics, the fundamentals, at the ground. As the point of contact, it is with our feet that we are primarily in touch with our surroundings. A perception of the landscape that is literally more *grounded* (Ingold, 2004) would readdress the imbalance of the senses in our perception of the world. I took Lorimer’s lead who considers runners as highly accomplished sensationalists, ‘well-schooled students of *terra firma*’ (2012:83) and used my feet as sensory devices.

“Running over granite boulders, I spent the morning running with my head down, focused on getting stable footing, concerned about misplacing a foot down a crack and twisting an ankle. It’s tiring, concentrating for so long” (Day 2)

The Camino Portugués follows the Via Romane XIX, a major Roman road that formed the backbone of the Roman Empire. The area is dominated by granite that the Romans exploited to construct the roads that remain today. But the Via Romane XIX is more than just a cultural relic of the Camino, whose history informed my experience. It was the very granite under my feet that influenced how I ran. Unable to appreciate the vistas around me, my experience was directed by my feet and determined by the granite rocks I traversed. For me, running the Camino was far from ocular-centric.



Figure 3: The granite boulders along the Via Romane XIX

My Skin: Heat

Running in the heat of mid-July, my skin became an important surface to analyse. As the heat beat down on my shoulders, I found myself being drawn to the shade; the heat receptors in my body were guiding my bodily actions. Although my eyes could not feel the cool of the shade, nor my body before the cool is experienced, they worked together, pre-cognitively, to guide myself towards it in a bid to cool it.

“I’m drawn to these dark oases. They let my skin breathe, for just a moment, until I plunge back into the heat of the Portuguese sun” (Day 2)

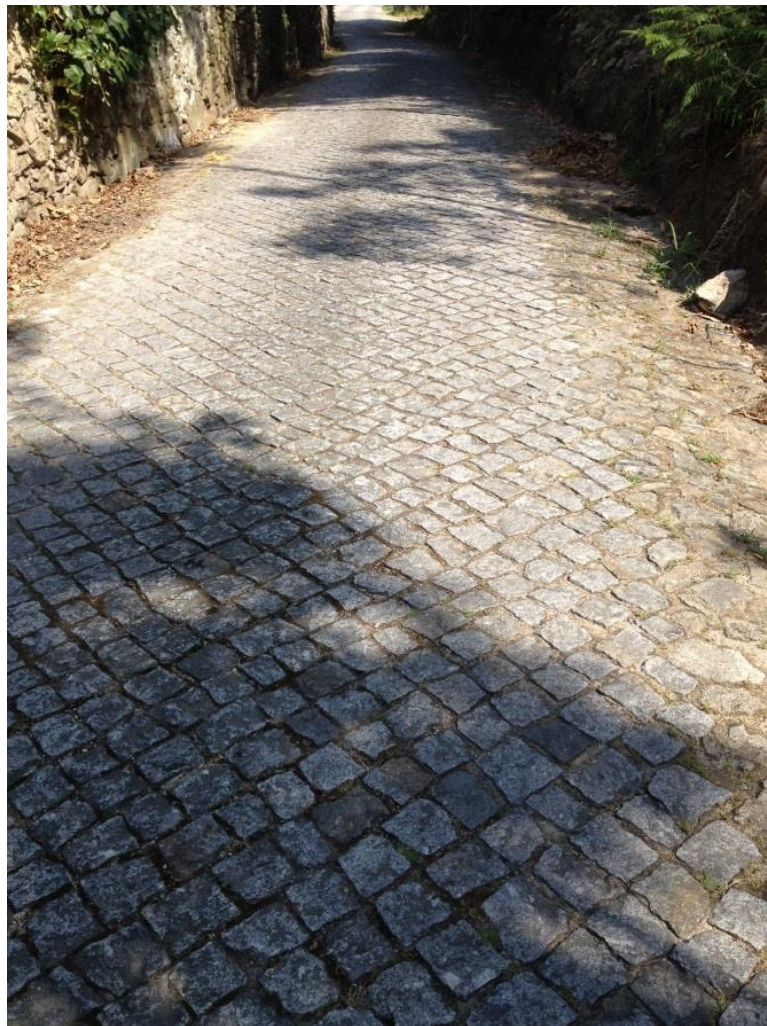


Figure 4: Dappled light; following the path of least resistance as I meandered in and out of shade and light

I found it was often my skin that directed my movement. In line with Spinney (2006), the primacy of the visual was challenged here. It was not my eyes leading my body, but my skin, seeking the cool shade. My experience promoted an appreciation of pre-cognitive and non-reflexive sensations in directing experience of and movement in landscape. In creating such an urgent bodily intensity, other elements of the landscape were occluded. The road almost *became* shade and light.

My Eyes: Discombobulated

Although an embodied appreciation of landscape may reprioritise the other senses, this does not mean sight should be overlooked (Gibson, 1986). On the third day I culminated 50kms with a 7.9km stretch through an Industrial Park in Porriño. Exhausted, I trudged on. My head was light with fatigue, my body limp. When I looked up, focusing on the destination ahead, I noticed the scene would jolt with each step I took. The image would rise and fall, shudder when I lost my footing.

“The linearity of the road, the fixed horizon, the lamp posts that grow as they approach. I feel dizzy by how rigid it all is” (Day 3)

The rigidity of the experience caused my vision to blur. I was discombobulated and dizzied by stability. I recognised how subjective one’s experience of landscape can be. The pedestrians that I passed were surely not disorientated by the same landscape. It reminded me that it is through the *body* that we fundamentally perceive the world. As Lorimer (2012) suggests, such experiences offer a ‘powerful reminder nevertheless that it is in our bodies that we live our lives. It’s that very thesis that underpins phenomenology as a philosophy of human existence’ (2012:84).



Figure 5: Discombobulated: an image taken during the 7.9km stretch of road that comprised the section of the Camino that followed the industrial estate in Porriño.

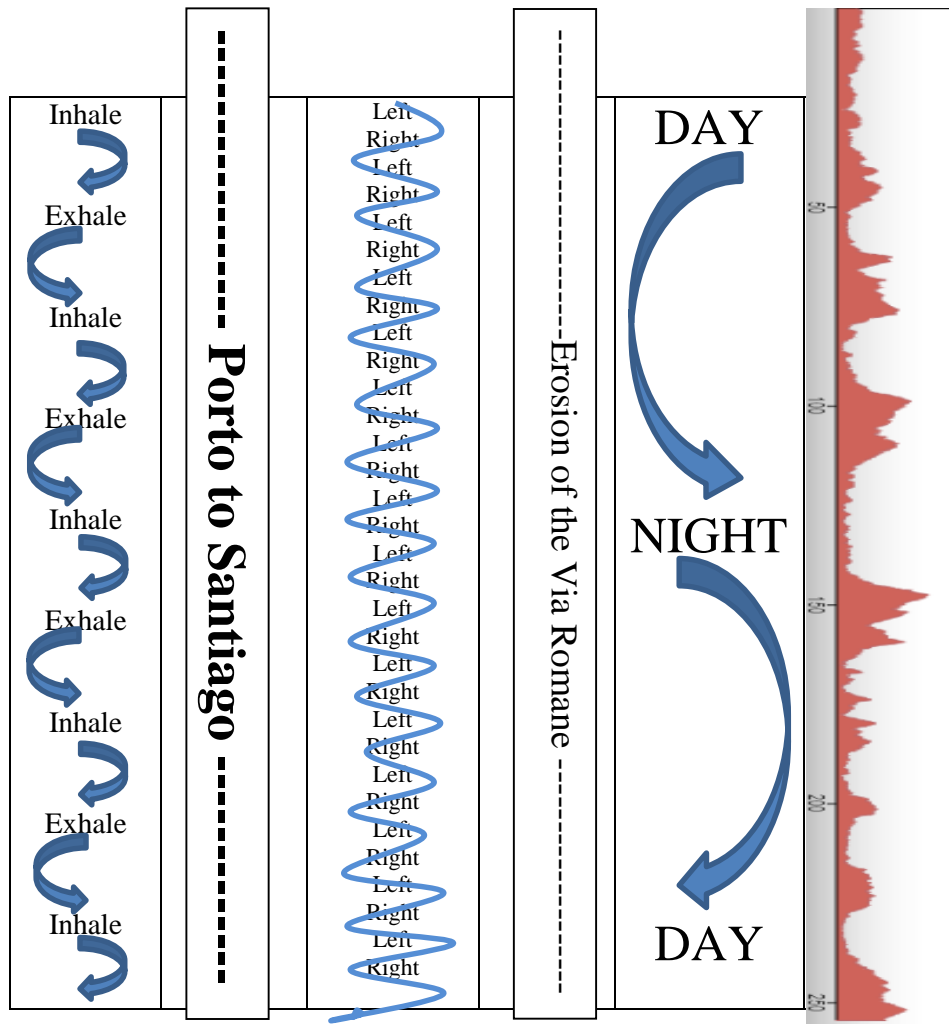
My Rhythms: Entanglement

Lefebvre holds that the production of space can only be understood through rhythms: ‘everywhere where there is an interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is a rhythm’ (2004:15). Running the Camino I inhabited a composition of rhythms that undermined the binary between perceiving subject and external object. A focus on this entanglement of rhythms validated the corporeal, and was a reminder that the Camino was being brought forth and taking on an identity of its own in the very process of running it.

My moving body was an entanglement of rhythms. Analysis of rhythms is important as doing so attempts to ‘capture the temporal and lived character of space’ (Degen, 2010:24). Rhythmanalysis holds that place is not static, but in the process of becoming. Our movement through a space determines the rhythms and consequent experience of place (Spinney, 2006). I want to adopt Lefebvre’s rhythmanalysis, but diverge from it in three ways: considering the

rural – not urban – as a polyrhythmic ensemble; the bodily creation of rhythm *as it moves* instead of from a static vantage point; and explore the body itself as a polyrhythmic ensemble, which engages with landscape via the rhythms it creates and occur around it.

Running in the heat of July, my days became punctuated by the sun and avoiding its intensity at midday. Waking at 5:00am, I would be on my Way by 6:00am. As 11:00am approached, I raced against the sun, as it rose and beat down unbearably above. The rhythm of the terrain underfoot interlaced with diurnal rhythms which in turn dictated *my* rhythm; uphill slogs would be impossible in such heat. Accordingly, I would plan my breaks around the undulating terrain: down-hills would offer respite, while I would rest pre-emptively before up-hills, taking glucose on board. It was not the abstract notion of time read from my watch that dictated my breaks, but the rhythm of the sun and the undulating variations in terrain. Running therefore constituted an assemblage of rhythms: the repetitive sounds of my trainers and my breathing alongside the cyclical rhythms of the sun and terrain rising and falling.



Arrhythmia

Many runners find the embodiment of these rhythms therapeutic, helping to soothe a stressed mind. Reassurance of the predictable rhythms of running acted as a meditative faculty when I ran. As these rhythms have become pre-cognitive, learnt over years of practice, I could rely on my body to run proficiently, while my mind could wander elsewhere. However, it is perhaps when the body is thrown out of rhythm, that rhythms really become noticeable.

Running with a rucksack is something that I usually do not do. Somewhat ill-prepared for the 250km ahead, I began my journey with a poorly fitting rucksack.

“I could hear my varied stepping pattern trying to overcome the thudding of my rucksack against my back. I was trying to fall into a synced rhythm, body and bag together, but I couldn’t get into my groove” (Day 1)

Edensor (2010) notes how the disruption of learnt rhythms can lead to discomfort. But what if discomfort itself becomes a rhythm? Not only does the body fit and become attuned to place, but in arrhythmia, bodies *produce* place. Along the Camino I experienced a divergence from my normal ‘symmetrical’ rhythm, due not only to the irregular rhythm of the bag hitting my back, but by altering my stepping in an attempt to overcome it. Similarly, while in pain I exhibited a limping rhythm. Although repetitive, a limp never maintains the same rhythm. The limp is interrupted by attempts to overcome it, to run normally. The disruption of the rhythm of breathing comes into play; you gasp when you feel a twinge.

The Camino emerged as an entanglement of rhythms. Attention to my embodied rhythms urged me to further question the ‘spectorial epistemology’ that disregards corporeal appreciation of landscape. The character of the Camino was forged in the embodied sensations I felt while immersed; running through it.

Time can be understood as an abstract or predefined rhythm. Although a central component of distance running, relatively little sports literature takes time as its analytic focus (Allen-Collinson, 2012). Depending on how we act and are orientated in the world, time is always perceived subjectively rather than absolutely (May and Thrift, 2001; Crang, 2001). My conception of time oscillated while in and out of pain.

“There was about 400m left of the ascent. I just stared down at the road and watched my feet strike the pavement, one after the other. I was lulled by the rhythm; it was the only thing that would keep me going” (Day 4)

As pain dominated much of my experience, I lost a sense of time. Although the urge to get to Santiago only increased daily, it was a feeling of being in pain that dominated my sense of being-in-the-world. It became that this preoccupation and complete submergence in the moment never enabled me to meditate or access ‘another realm’ while running. My mind could

not disengage from my body. Pain was a distraction. Lefebvre's consideration of appropriated time, when the subject is immersed in an activity such that 'time no longer counts' (2004:76) rose to the fore. Immersed in the activity of running, my mind became entirely occupied with the activity at hand such that all other thought was occluded. This trance-like state felt meditative, as a synthesis of mind and body and one that is anti-Cartesian in nature.

"I don't know how long I've been running since Pontevedra. I don't care. I just keep focus on my feet. Left, right, left, right" (Day 5)

Analogue time became meaningless. I was set in a trance by my feet. This complete immersion in the embodied activity of that moment came to resemble a form of meditation. A complete phenomenological awareness of the self in embodied activity.

My Wrist: My Garmin Forerunner301

"Every 30 seconds I would glance down at my wrist. 13.45 km to Arcade...13.37km. Time slowed, 1km became 4km. The more I clocked my distance, the further Arcade seemed to be. I wish I could zone out. But it feels like it's just me and the watch" (Day 4).

'Representations are not causes or outcomes of action, but actions themselves' (Dewsbury et al., 2002:438)

Representations, abstractions of reality, themselves play into an embodied reality of landscape. They are one of the primary means in which runners come to reflexively understand progress in running. My Garmin ForeRunner GPS watch which displayed my mileage, pace, elevation and heart rate; the maps I used to direct my run; and the elevation graphs in my guide book, were all formative in directing my run. As constant references, my GPS watch and pocket map were technological-abstractions of the embodied experience of running.

Quick glance: 13km to go

However, I found these representations themselves had agency. Glancing at my GPS watch was as formative of my experience as it was informative of my progress. Whilst 'non-representational theory' would seem to suggest an apparent rejection of representation, proponents of this approach employ representations as agents of discourse themselves. Indeed, abstractions make 'more, not less, of the experiential and material complexity of lived time

spaces' (McCormack, 2012:717). They allow life to register as experience. Abstractions and lived experience need not be juxtaposed (McCormack, 2012). Abstractions of time and space (my watch and maps) were constitutive and formative elements in my own lived experience of the Camino.

12km (only 1km down!?)

Representations were a fundamental means in which I gauged my progress. My GPS watch added a layer of reflexive informational data which offered instantaneous self-representations through monitoring of split times, speeds and distance. Pacing oneself during long-distance running is a fine art, and gauging the pace is often hard on varied terrain. My GPS watch would notify me if I was running faster than recommended, and I would slow down accordingly.

Another look: 5km to Arcade (that flew by! The final push)

In doing so, I was able to conserve my energy to ensure I could complete the required distance daily. Although informative, my GPS watch was also incredibly off-putting. When in pain, I would become fixated on reaching the next stop. With the remaining distance being monitored on my wrist, it began to dominate my experience in a way that it occluded everything else. My experience became a relationship between myself and the watch: ticking off the kilometres, keeping up my speed.



Figure 7: My Garmin Forerunner301 showing time, pace, and distance at 100 miles

This notion of representations continually acting as reference points that fed into knowledge production is in line with Latour's 'circulating references' (1999). Each evening I fed the data from my GPS watch into my laptop, and was able to analyse my progress. Latour believes that 'thanks to inscriptions, we are able to oversee and control a situation in which we are submerged, we become superior to that which is greater than us, and we are able to gather together synoptically all the actions that have occurred over many days that we have since forgotten' (1999:65). I had a cumulative knowledge of all I had completed, represented in graphs and figures. But were these diagrammatic and cartographic representations from my Garmin more abstract or more concrete? I found it hard to reconcile these positivist representations of 'reality' and my embodied and multifarious experience of the Camino. Latour recognises this paradox when he notes 'scientists do not speak of the world, but speak of representations that seem always to push it away, but also to bring it closer' (1999:30). However, I came to realise that my Garmin 'does not resemble anything. It does *more* than resembling' (Latour, 1999:67). It formatively feeds into my experience via the notion of circulating reference. Anticipating the next rest stop, I would continually check my distance and pace. The more I did so, the more fixated I became with it. An abstract representation of reality ('13.5km remaining' was just a figure) became the focus of my energies: minimising

this number was my only goal. I came to see these abstractions as more than merely representations of reality, but with agency themselves.

More-than-representation

My Garmin therefore occupied the dual role of both representing but also informing experience via its role as circulating reference. But the Camino still remained as more-than-representational: these abstractions were insufficient in representing ‘how life takes shape in...embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interaction and sensuous disposition’ (Lorimer, 2005:84). Some things will always escape the process of being sufficiently represented (Latham, 2003)...

“I met people, had conversations with them, learned how the recession had affected them, saw what they grew, saw the effects of depopulation, ran beside new intercity rail links, crossed bridges built by Romans, bought the bread, drank the wine, ate picnics by the sea, felt the hard granite underfoot as I ran south to north through drowned river valleys, felt the sun on the back of my neck, smelled the eucalyptus trees, witnessed locked-up hotels with no staff, got my credential stamped, rested on cool church verandas, dipped my feet in hot springs, ran down vine-roofed alleys, swam in rivers, slept on a bed of wild basil, bathed aching limbs in an animal water trough, dodged lorries on busy roads, got lost, picked up bedbugs, got scratched by brambles, drank from fountains, watched dragonflies dance above the river, stretched my legs, checked into albergues sweaty and sunburnt, ate oysters, lay awake at nights, watched the stars, chased my shadow, clambered up scree, pushed Dad up hills, was pushed by Dad up hills, swore, bandaged a throbbing knee, cried. I got sunstroke, trespassed on farmer’s land, washed clothes in rivers, woke up to cockerels, ate lunch with the locals, spoke Spanish, hugged peregrinos, held their hands, looked across from the cathedral of Santiago, listened to the priest quote in Spanish from a special passage of St James, got my Compostela...” (Day 7; the flight home)

As Carolan (2008) notes ‘it is not that we cannot represent sensuous, corporeal, lived experience but that the moment we do so we immediately lose something’ (2008:412). The Camino was always in excess, brimming with emphatic moments that passed as quickly as they came. It was perpetually more than I could theorise.

“I’m shattered”...The Body in Pain

*“Sat rigid on the plane home, my legs are stiff, my knee throbbing, my skin burnt and chaffed.
I’m shattered. My body is broken” (Day 7)*

My feet, skin, eyes, rhythms and wrist offer a deconstruction of my body in practice; they act as a break-down of the formative elements of my experience. But it was the body, broken from the pain of injury on the first day, which arose as my most dominant bodily intensity.



Figure 8 and 9: Injury: A bandaged knee on the first day and my blistered feet on completion.

Distance running usually involves a high degree of dys-ease or ‘Zatopekian pain’ (Howe, 2004:152) where one comes to normalize a certain level of discomfort and pain. However, the pain I felt from my injured knee was not a positive pain as a result of muscular burn (see Spinney, 2006) but an alarming pain which seemed to be urging me to stop. During research, I

found that pain influenced my experience of landscape so adversely that the ‘landscape emerge[d] as malignant’ (Wylie, 2007:244). Being in pain directed my being-in-the-world.

Affectively Deadening

“My groin is in agony. I try to focus on the falling distance to Santiago written on the pillars: 56.7km... 56.3km to keep my mind off it. But the pain is so overwhelming I can focus on nothing but my body. I shut the world out. Every step feels like I’m being stabbed” (Day 5)



Figure 10: Counting down: an example of one of the many hundreds of granite pillars showing the distance remaining to Santiago

If walking pain-free allows my mind to wander, running in pain draws my body to its attention. It calls into question the feeling of connection and fusing with the world during action, what Csikszentmihalyi (1975) calls the sense of ‘flow’ and what Le Breton calls a ‘melting of self into action’ (2000:3) where there is full immersion in activity at a time of high concentration. Flow suggests a fundamentally phenomenological association of ‘being-in-the-world’ and a form of meditation where mind and body unite in action; a ‘personally generated spirituality’ (Le Breton, 2000:2). This immersive state was something I rarely attained. Pain blocked this experience.

When in pain, I could no longer appreciate the ‘sublime’ visual aspects of the Camino. The intensity of pain appeared to have the capacity to destroy my conscious world and very much tied my mind to the body. Like Wylie, when walking the Southern coastal path, my experience challenged the Cartesian mind-body dualism. My ‘world contracts’ (Wylie, 2005:244) when in pain.

“Pain takes hold. I feel my shoes rubbing on my blisters, the burn of the sun on my neck, the chaff of my backpack on my burnt shoulders. I feel like the world is pressed up against me.”
(Day 3)

It was in the broken body, and its dysfunction, that my thoughts became consumed by its presence. Pain came to the fore and dominated experience. Ahmed (2002) notes that it is when the body is functioning correctly that an awareness of one’s body seems to disappear from view, allowing the mind to concentrate on other things. Yet, when in pain, my body turned in on itself; it seized my attention most strongly. I was unable to step back and appreciate the landscape as a detached observer when running. I was bent double, exhausted, with my head down, focusing on the rhythm of my feet. The stones were more important, the cracks in the granite, avoiding boulders and streams. Not only could I not ‘lose myself’ in the beautiful vistas, but the constant rub of my trainers reminded me of my immediate presence in the landscape, the proximity between me and my surroundings. The malignant landscape was pressed up against me. Pain had a ‘deadening of affective charge’ (Bissell, 2009:920).

Pain therefore mediated my experience of the Camino. It had both the ‘capacity to enhance [and] deplete life’ (Bissell, 2009:912). This resounding pain had the scope to occlude other affective sensibilities, yet simultaneously pain added to my experience in *defining* it. Arendt

(1998) considers this paradox, regarding bodily pain as ‘the most intense feeling we know of, intense to the point of blocking out all other experiences’ (1998 in Bissell, 2009:917).

Although affectively deadening, pain oddly brought with it a form of liberation; a form of self-actualisation and discovery. Why did I keep going? Why did I not stop when the pain became almost unbearable? How can I understand this paradoxical jubilation born from suffering that kept me going?

Self-discovery in pain

Perhaps it was the confirmation of experience that I felt in pain that kept me running. I felt a true fullness of presence when in pain (Katz, 2004): my body came to life in times of difficulty. Pushing my body to its limits, I felt alive. Bissell notes how ‘the maximisation of corporeal intensity is taken to be a confirmation of the liveliness of being: an affirmation of life’ (2009:914). To have pain is to have certainty (Scarry, 1985). I found that the pain I experienced during the Camino validated the experience and the self. In times of real pain and exhaustion, I found myself discombobulated:

“The cobbles blur and vibrate in my peripheries. My head feels lighter. My skin tingles. I feel like I’m swimming. Warm air rushes past me cold. It’s like being in a dream” (Day 2)

Massumi (2002) argues that these moments of self-displacement are important for self-discovery. In pushing myself to the limit in pain I was able to *surpass* my limit. Running the Camino became a test of strength of character and the capabilities of what my body could do. While pain was affectively deadening, it called me to consider Spinoza’s claim that we do not know what the body is capable of (Deleuze, 1978). Philosophy continues to orientate itself around a focus on the soul and the mind, yet we still do not even know what the body can do. My body’s capacity to continue on in pain reminded me that I know little about the capabilities of my own body. Acknowledgement of the excessive *unpredictability* of the body, my capacity to surpass my expectations when in pain, was a feature of self-discovery for me.

This self-discovery in pain has a spiritual element. In moments of real physical and mental endurance and pain there can be a ‘clarity and spiritual mobility...that is also acquired through meditation’ (Messner, 1975:14 cited in Le Breton, 2000). Such a moment is considered an exercise of personal transfiguration, a moment of self-actualisation caused by exhaustion. In

my endurance of pain I was able to confirm something in myself. Le Breton (2000) regards this moment as a 'sacred experience'. There was a spirituality born from my self-flagellation.

"I grit my teeth with each step. As we approach Santiago, Caminos converge and pilgrims become more common. I run past a group of priests slashing their backs. Why would they cause themselves such pain? Then I consider my own actions in light of theirs. No one has told me to continue, to cause myself this pain, yet I do. How do my actions differ?" (Day 6)

Although an atheist, the pain that I endured felt spiritual. Broken down by pain, I could greater recognise what I was made of. Coming face-to-face with the limits of my body, a self *deconstructed* in pain, I knew myself better. It was not just in 'doing' the Camino that 'offer[ed] a means to better know the self' (Brierley, 2013:15), but it was doing the Camino *in pain* that offered a means of self-discovery. My experience was therefore in opposition to Murray and Graham (1997) who believe only through walking can clarity of mind and a sense of self-discovery be attained. For me, self-discovery came in pushing my personal limits both physically and emotionally.

‘Nostalgic Empathy’

So far I have considered a deconstructed body – a body broken into respective parts – but also the body deconstructed in pain. However, an exclusive focus on the body was insufficient in constituting my experience of the Camino. What about the more-than-bodily experiences? If we are ‘caught in the fabric of the world’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:125), cast in its materiality, how can the non-bodily ‘unspeakable’ experiences of my run be brought into a phenomenology?

On the second evening, the *albergue* that my father and I had planned to stay in was closed. Exhausted, and with night falling, we set up camp where we were. Clambering through a vineyard we found a flat area to sleep, out of view.

“Sleeping outside, roughing it like a real pilgrim, I feel a deep attachment to the Camino. Inside my sleeping bag, lying next to Dad, below the dense vines and watching the light fade behind the ridge, I no longer feel I’m cheating the Camino as an atheist. I’m becoming part of it as it becomes part of me. Lying in this field under the stars, I feel strangely close to all those who have gone before me - done what I’m doing now. I really am ‘doing’ the ‘Compostela’, ”¹

Realising that pilgrims have spent nights looking up at these same stars for the last 1200 years roused a closeness to the Way that was more than physical. I felt an empathy for the imagined pilgrims who had felt what I had.

¹ “*Compostela*” is derived from the Latin “*Campus Stellarum*” meaning *field of the stars*.



Figure 11: Camping out: a photograph of where Dad and I set up camp, beside a vineyard, under the stars.

I felt the symbolism and cultural meaning of landscape was brought forth through my engagement with it. Wylie also recognises how the symbolism and meaning of landscape cannot be detached from practice and experience in it in his ascent of a Glastonbury Tor. For me, sleeping in a field, lying under the stars, I was physically imbricated ‘in’ a landscape that I gave meaning. But it was more than just the bodily engagement of ‘driving the pegs into the ground, muddying one’s shoes and knees’ (Wylie, 2002:449) that engendered meaning. It was the elements that were outside of the bodily engagement with the landscape. The landscape was filled with the imagined pilgrims who had walked before me: those who had washed *their* socks in the stream and shared *their* bottles of cheap wine. Meaning was created in the practice of pilgrimage and I realised what it meant to be a pilgrim. Constitutively, I too became a pilgrim in the process of my engagement with the Camino. Although recognising the individuality of the pilgrim experience, I felt a camaraderie or ‘nostalgic empathy’ with the imagined body of pilgrims who had gone before me. It was in acting like a pilgrim that I began to feel like a pilgrim.

This feeling of camaraderie with an imagined body of pilgrims was most prevalent in times of pain. My experience of the Camino was incredibly solitary.

“I haven’t passed anyone for hours. The pain isn’t helping either. It’s just me and this sharp jab in my knee” (Day 3)

Enduring pain for its majority, I spent hours each day turning in on myself to find the strength to continue. Running at a faster pace than walking pilgrims, I would perhaps only share a “*Buen Camino*” with those I passed. Although I was running alone I found motivation and camaraderie in recognising that to be a pilgrim one must suffer. Those who had gone before me would have suffered and made sacrifices along The Way. It was a nostalgic empathy with a body of pilgrims who may not even exist.

I recognised these imagined pilgrims in the mark they left on the landscape. Although I could not engage with past pilgrims, their imprint remained in the eroded footpaths, shrines and messages that peppered the route.



Figure 12: I came across a shrine at the top of a dangerous ascent. Straddled by main roads either side, the path was very much 'off the beaten track'. Yet the track was beaten: personal possessions peppered the shrine, laying respect to a pilgrim who had lost their life.

In opposition to the Romantics, who imagined the 'untrodden' spaces as the most sacred' (Edensor, 2000:91) for me, this evidence of the thousands of pilgrims who had gone before me was sacred. After reaching Santiago, collapsing in front of the cathedral, my father and I sat in the square with its magnificent shadow cast over us. Complete strangers were embracing, crying and holding hands. The Camino was a shared common goal that anchored everyone in an empathetic understanding of the hardship each individual had endured. For

many of these pilgrims, the Camino was a manifestation of other personal hardships being overcome. The personal and unrepresentable became common. There was a real sense of camaraderie: the Camino had been a personal spiritual journey, but here, at Pilgrims Mass at noon, not only hundreds of physical paths, but hundreds of personal paths converged outside the Cathedral of St James. If spiritual features of landscape prove ‘an impossible representation’ (Meyer, 2006) as they exceed people’s representational capacities, for me, I felt a sense of spirituality in individual, personal goals being collectively overcome. A recognition of shared pain; in a camaraderie.



Figure 13: The view of pilgrims arriving and embracing in the square from the steps of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

Sat outside the Cathedral of Saint James, I came to realise the goals’ of these pilgrims were not dissimilar from my own, specifically non-representational, pursuit. Pilgrimage itself attempts to overcome the non-representational, as ‘pilgrimages make is possible to move physically, through the exertion of one’s body, step by step, towards those intangible spiritual goals that

are otherwise so hard to grasp' (Solnit, 2001:50). This spiritual journey is enacted in the embodied practice of going forth. Practice is fundamental.



Figure 14: Exhausted: collapsed outside the steps of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela on completion.

Figure 15: The final seal of The Way: a stamped copy of my 'Compostela', collected from The Oficina del Peregrinos outside the Cathedral on completion.

Conclusions

A Heightened Sense of Mindfulness

The route from Porto to Santiago is a line on map: a linearity from A \rightarrow B. Yet there was a certain circularity in my experience where I came full circle. Running the Camino might not have been meditative in the way I had presumed, but it offered a *different form* of meditation. Initially, I expected running to foreground an experience that was spiritual, provoked in part through the sublime vistas, endorphic high and rhythmic movement of the running body. I had expected my mind to remove itself from a focus on the corporeal and ‘wander’ elsewhere. However, injury on the first day, and the resultant pain, directed my experience and precluded a meditation of this kind. With each step came an ache that would return my mind to my body as its focus. As such, my experience of running the Camino honed a different appreciation of landscape to those of the Romantic walkers and other phenomenologists. I could never ‘meditate’ in the way the Romantic walkers did. Yet this is not to say that my experience of running did not facilitate any form of meditation. My experience was dominated by a consciousness of the very presence of the moment, as each passing moment brought with it a new passage of pain. Being fully present in the moment, an awareness of being-in-the-world at *that* moment in time, became a form of meditation. I have therefore come full circle; running the Camino *was* meditative, but a meditation more akin to mindfulness. As a form of spiritual faculty, mindfulness is premised on paying complete attention to the present experience with each moment (Marlatt and Kristeller, 1999). Mindfulness is phenomenological in its nature as it premises a being-in-the-world and acknowledgement of the present, lived moment while also focusing fully on the sensations of the body (Kabat-Zinn, 2009). My experience was dominated by a state of mind that could not divide itself from the body. Mindfulness is closely aligned with non-representational approaches to landscape; these approaches sharing the common focus of ‘accessing the ‘now’ of experience as it edges into view’ (Waterton, forthcoming). Mindfulness offers an interesting avenue for further research of the co-constitutive relationship between the mind and body in experience of landscape. Such a relationship suggests that the mind, alongside the body, should be brought back into studies of landscape.

“We do not know what the body is capable of”

Pain and spirituality clearly played a key role in my phenomenology of the Camino. They were central to a state of mindfulness. However, they contributed in more ways than this. With the body as its focus, my research amplified Spinoza’s claim that we do not know what a body can do. While enduring pain, I pushed the limits of what I thought my body could do – and exceeded them. The capacity for my body to be affected, and to endure pain, was greater than I had thought. For me, this is the means by which I personally engaged in self-discovery during the Camino. Pain should therefore be an important realm of study in geography for two reasons. Firstly, if we can learn more about the personal experience of pain’s affectivity and pre-cognitive dimensions, then we can ‘*learn how to hear what is impossible*, to allow ourselves to be moved by pain that we cannot feel, and to get closer to others’ (Ahmed, 2002:29). Its evasion of representation makes it worthy of study. Exploring the subjectivity of pain will not directly uncover greater knowledge of the universal, but understanding our own subjectivities of lived experience is important to learning how we can relate to others. The study of pain therefore aligns itself with non-representational approaches, which are said to recognise the subjectivities of the world, its pluralisms, yet welcomes them in a hospitability (Dewsbury et al., 2002); a democracy that reconfigures what counts as knowledge (Thrift, 2004), where all voices are heard.

Secondly, my experience of continuing the Camino in pain acted not only to affirm lived experience, but it also allowed me to explore and surpass the limits of the body. In doing so, pain offers an avenue for self-discovery and self-actualisation. The study of pain resonates strongly with phenomenological study: both are orientated around a validation or search for the lived experience. This being-in-the-world, an all-consuming focus on the present, gave my experience a spiritual element. A form of meditation occurred while I ran where my mind and body united; pain occluded cognitive thought and dominated, forcing recognition of *my* body in *that* space in *that* time. Adhering to the principals of mindfulness, this experience is anti-Cartesian: in pain, the mind and body are forced to unite when one’s sphere of extension is ‘contracted down to the small circle of one’s immediate presence’ (Scarry, 1985:207). The mind cannot wander, but is tied to the throbbing, sharp, or prickling intensities of the injured body.

Post-phenomenology

These conclusions ask us to reconsider phenomenology as an approach to the study of self and landscape. In destabilising the self, we are reminded that the self is continually in a process of becoming. Undoubtedly, phenomenology allows us to present the subjective, embodied and multifarious geographies of landscape. However, phenomenological accounts have reintroduced the intentional subject (Ingold, 2000) regarded by some as too subject-centred as they ‘assume that experience is *given to* a pre-given subject’ (Wylie, 2006:521). Post-phenomenology problematizes the phenomenological approach which locates the self in the body and the body in landscape (Lea, 2009) and acknowledges this folding of self and world; the togetherness and co-constituency of self and landscape (Simpson and Ash, 2012). Troubling the category of experience itself, my research advocates a post-phenomenology. My experience of the Camino was directed by the body, but not to the occlusion of the spiritual: those sensations that register at the margins of human experience. The location of experience did not just reside in the contours of the throbbing, injured body. Attention to the corporeal sensations of a body ‘broken’ in pain, was not enough. Aligning itself with post-structuralist theories, my research is distinctive in extending the ‘boundaries of the phenomenological focus upon the experiencing subject’ (Lea, 2009:373). It notes how the self is not just an *a priori* subject ready to perceive and be affected by the world, but the self emerges co-constitutively with landscape through practice. My experience showed up as an experience ‘with’ the Camino, rather than as an experience ‘of’ the Camino (Wylie, 2006).

Day 6: Caldas del Reis-Santiago: (250km) 38°C; 42.880587,-8.544749
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This dissertation has promoted a valorisation of the sensuous, situated practice of running as a means to draw landscape into being. I have sought to question philosophy’s continued disregard of the importance of the consciousness of the body in foregrounding more corporeal ways of knowing and feeling. Rather than begin from the idea that there is a foundational structure from which knowledge can be based (Thrift, 1996) I have sought to illustrate how landscape and self come into being through *practice*. The only thing ‘that landscape ever is, is the practices that make it relevant’ (Rose, 2002:463). The diary I wrote along the way, the stamping of the credentials at each *albergue*, my *Compostela* (Figure 15); these point to the very personal and embodied nature of the Camino Portugués. They emphasise that the

experience of ‘doing’ the Camino is more important than the arrival or the significance of the textual and visual representations of Santiago. A personal narrative that is subjectively constituted dominates, rather than a disembodied narrative. Meaning is created in the journey, not the arrival itself. Moreover, rather than explaining the running of the Camino, this dissertation has sought to bring to light the different nature that accounts of such a journey can take.

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