Landscape Research

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/clar20

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Compositions and the Walking Body

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Published online: 28 Feb 2012.

To cite this article: Katrín Lund (2012) Landscapes and Narratives: Compositions and the Walking Body, Landscape Research, 37:2, 225-237, DOI: 10.1080/01426397.2011.651111

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01426397.2011.651111

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Landscapes and Narratives:
Compositions and the Walking Body

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ABSTRACT This paper explores how landscapes are narrated through the activity of walking. It follows the footsteps of walkers as they traverse different kinds of terrains in different circumstances and aims to examine how the walking body and the landscape as entwined entities shape each other. The focus is on narrative compositions and how they appear in the landscape through the course of walking. The paper starts by exploring two different types of compositions and then analyses how walking narratives are composed through the connections and disconnections of the walking body with the surroundings, creating a narrative landscape of absences and presences.

KEY WORDS: Walking, landscape, narrative compositions, connecting and disconnecting

Introduction
This paper is about the merging of person and landscape through the activity of walking. I will look at the ever-moving act of synchronisation inherent where the walker and the landscape combine, at the most fundamental level, where the foot meets the ground. I want to claim that this meeting does not separate the foot and the ground as two entities, rather the nature of the meeting is an entanglement in which any assumed boundaries between the body and the landscape blur. Thus, the materiality of the landscape is shaped through the movement of walking, not prior to it. To further illustrate the entanglement I look to de Certeau (1984) who famously described how places primarily become what they are through everyday practices, such as walking, by which they are narrated. From the perspective of those who dwell in them, landscapes are woven together by a plethora of narratives although their characteristics make them different from those of places. These characteristics are shaped by the way in which landscapes extend themselves beyond all spatio-temporal horizons and into unknown territories in a way which goes beyond place dynamics. As such, landscapes exist through:

constant motion, [forever] taking on new shapes and forms. The lives of human beings are tangled up with the temporalities of constantly unfolding landscapes, in a never ending journey. (Lund & Benediktsson, 2010, p.6)
Following this line of thought, the focus of this paper is on landscape narratives gathered through the motion of various types of footsteps. In this context it is important to bear in mind that the paths and routes that the wandering feet follow shape stories as they direct the walks, and are simultaneously shaped during the course of the walk. Different narratives provide a different ambience and each has its own character. Sometimes they flow smoothly but sometimes the tone can be disorderly and even troublesome depending on how the landscape lends itself to the walking body and how the walker lends him/herself to the landscape. How the landscape and the walker’s body merge and synchronise movements is of key importance here in order to see how the narratives materialise.

My attempt is to get closer to how landscape is narrated through footsteps as the walking body moves step by step, gathering new horizons. Narratives emerge in the landscape as “the furnishing of the visual and its arrangement into patterns of seer and seen” (Wylie, 2006, p. 532). This is not furnishing in the sense that the ground is already furnished with features such as trees, rivers, mountains and lakes, but rather how, from the perspective of the walker, the surroundings emerge as features and forms during the course of the walk. The landscape takes on different shapes and forms according to movement and perspective. The narratives I will use come from different directions in order to provide distinctive yet comparative views into how walking narratives may be composed. In this context the bodily position of the walker, in or with the landscape, is important. Tilley (2008) discusses phenomenological walking which he claims is “utterly different from a real walk in space-time, since it involves temporal expansion” (2008, p. 270). The distinction is reflected through the way ‘phenomenological’ walking, or walking as a method in landscape studies, is a conscious act through which the researcher actively explores his involvement with the landscape whilst walking. This is a walking “in which one perceives in order to be able to know” (Tilley, 2008, p. 270.). In this passage, Tilley is describing just one type of walking amongst others, where walking is performed as a conscious act of exploration. My claim is that all walking can be considered as phenomenological. It is always, consciously or unconsciously, an act of exploration because walking is always about heading in a direction; however, as I have pointed out in previous writing (Lund, 2005), the explorations can be as much directed inwardly, towards the body, as they are directed outwardly, and simultaneously they can be directed both inwardly and outwardly depending on how the body and the landscape enmesh.

To demonstrate the phenomenology of walking I have chosen three different types of walking to compare. My investigations start with reflections of my own walking in Iceland, reflections that prompted the original urge to write this paper. The reasons for this were the difficulties I experienced whilst trying to adjust to the Reykjavik urban landscape during my everyday walking, sometimes making me conscious of every step taken. My account reflects on problematic walking through which the walker’s engagement with landscape appears to be somehow on unequal terms. From contemporary Iceland I will go back in time to nineteenth-century France to look at how a particular way of walking became defined as a type of mental illness. This was a type of walking that was, however, allied to conditions of amnesia and therefore the steps taken appear to fade away. I look at these two parts as cases of narrative composition through which landscapes materialise in
different ways depending on the how walkers position themselves in the surroundings. In the final part I shall look closer at how narratives may be composed through how the walking body connects and disconnects to and from the landscape although being simultaneously entangled with it. This I will do by considering urban, everyday walking in Belfast, Northern Ireland based on interviews I collected whilst working on a project about interaction between different modes of transport in the city.\(^1\) What these different examples provide are different bodily interactions with the surroundings, thus different ways in which the walker and the landscape mingle, resulting in different types of narratives, and how they materialise. In this context I want to follow Ingold’s (2007) argument which points out that people “make their way *through* a world-in-formation rather than *across* its pre-formed surface” (2007, p. S32). Thus the approach puts at the foreground the constant fluidity of the landscape and the walker as they entwine and shape each other.

### Composition 1

It was around 6 pm on an evening in November 2006 and I was coming out of my local supermarket in Reykjavík, Iceland. It was pitch dark and the car park at the back of the supermarket was badly lit. The pavement at the front was even worse to cross than the badly lit carpark, as cars had been driving on the ice and made it less slippery around the tyre tracks. The ice at the front, by contrast, was like glass and I did not attempt to walk on it, at least not in the dark. With bags full of groceries in each hand, I tried to balance my body as I crossed the car park slowly, aware of each step in terms of where I put my feet, frequently stopping and letting surfing cars go by. I felt vulnerable in this car-dominated space. I knew the worst part was still to come. After walking across the car park I had to cross an alleyway leading out to a short stretch of pavement that had not been gritted at all. Here I came out of the shelter of the supermarket building and got the strong northerly wind straight at me, at the same time as I was trying to concentrate on the ground and avoiding the cars going by. The wind altered the balance of my body and made each step more difficult to take, as well as being bitterly cold. I was suddenly reminded how forceful and nasty a wind like this can feel. As such, I took it as my enemy, preventing me from getting where I wanted to and at the same time using its force to hurt my skin. In the end I managed to get over this stretch, finding myself on a gritted pedestrian path that took me home, though still fighting the strength of the wind. Ten minutes later, sitting comfortably on my sofa, listening to the soothing sound of the same wind I had been fighting before, I tried to organise this short trip to the shop in my head as I jotted down a few notes. In contrast to the surroundings of my living room it felt somehow disorderly, obscure and difficult to put the notes together into a linear sequence. There were initially no forms in which I could express my experience, only entangled but muddled feelings of discomfort. It was only with effort that I could put the experience into a coherent narrative.

This tale is only one of many which come to mind from the bitterly cold winter of 2006 in Reykjavík. I had returned to Iceland after living abroad for 15 years and I found it a struggle, especially regarding my car-free lifestyle. The private car has
gained an enormous importance in terms of how Icelanders have embraced modernity (Árnason et al., 2007; Huijbens & Benediktsson, 2007). This explains the lack of sand on the slippery ice outside the supermarket, as normally one would be expected to use a car for shopping, especially outside the main pedestrian shopping areas. Adams observes in relation to urban car culture in the United States that the private car allows its owner to cover greater distances at more speed with the result that “landscapes are reorganized to support greater mobility” (2001, p. 190). Adams’s claim is that this vehicle lifestyle has increasingly situated “the walker outside the social fabric” (p. 188). Although I agree with Adams, there was more to my frustration in Reykjavík than merely being a sole walker amongst fast moving cars. Darkness, ice on the ground and strong gusts of wind are all environmental conditions that restricted my movements. This was the landscape I was entangled with.

In his discussion about embodiment and everyday experience, Harrison claims that “actions are not reflections of underlying structures (of the world or the individual) but enactments of a world and an individual” (2000, p. 502). From this view, Adams’s claim is based on the pre-given structures of the social world and leaves out the forces that continually shape our everyday involvement with the surroundings: combinations of weather, temperature, light and darkness, which Harrison refers to as the “noise of the everyday” (2000, p. 497). I could have described other conditions such as cold vertical sleet coming from all directions or snow through which one has to wade at least up to the knees. I frequently found myself struggling when adjusting to the surroundings not only because they sometimes felt harsh and brutal, but also, I want to claim, because I myself was not open to them.

Wylie (2005) describes his walking along the South West Coast Path in Britain. Of his three weeks of walking he selects only one walking day to write about, the reason being that on this day “certain arguments regarding the self-landscape relations seemed to crystalize” (2005, p. 234). The day before he had attempted too long a distance and as result walking became an act of effort which distanced him from the surroundings and yet simultaneously made him intensively aware of them. Although Wylie and I are walking through different kinds of landscape, I can relate to his experience. Body/landscape encounters happen simultaneously externally and internally, precisely because they entwine. “Sensibility and feeling are in touch with an outside because they are constantly attaching, weaving, and disconnecting; constantly mutating and creating” (Harrison, 2000, p. 502). For 15 years I had not been exposed to these circumstances. I was finding my way in the Icelandic urban landscape, measuring myself to it in the process of encountering it. I was, during this process, not unlike Wylie, immensely aware of my surroundings. As I walked through this sometimes alien, although so familiar, landscape I experienced a bodily resistance to my movement through how I felt the landscape acted upon me. I was tremendously aware of this landscape through the physical imbalance inherent in how I connected to it, paradoxically sometimes resulting in the sense of feeling disconnected.

Adams (2001) discusses two different aspects of walking in Western society, what he calls “light peripatetic walking” as opposed to “dark peripatetic walking”. To illustrate the imagery of light peripatetic walking, Adams looks towards
romanticism in which the walker associates with the environment a sense of a wholeness and direct connections to a place. He describes this walking as a “rhythmic harmonization, [that] produces a heightened sensitivity to the environment, as well as a heightened or special sense of self” (2001, p. 193). Dark peripatetic walking, on the other hand, produces an imagery of “an ominous excursion: out of doors, out of society, out of community, out of normal reality, and perhaps even out of life itself” (2001, p. 196). What I want to follow up from Adams’s analysis is that walking can be seen as a metaphor for one’s position in life. He claims that in contemporary urban society walking represents dark peripatetic imagery. The walker is at the edge of society in a landscape of vehicular mobility, or walking among a flow of strangers: walking “becomes an emblem of loneliness” (2001, p. 200). Nevertheless, by leaving out the immediate surroundings which compose the landscape his dichotomy blurs. Whilst experiencing a sense of a solitude in my activity and an imbalance with the surroundings, I was not walking out of society, or life itself, in same way as dark peripatetic imagery metaphorises walking. Rather, I was retracing my steps back into Icelandic society and finding my feet in a landscape that emerged as I walked through it, treading on ice, fighting with wind and being hurt by the cold. As such the landscape materialised and narrated itself through how I experienced it as a force against me. Yet, as Merleau-Ponty points out, “the seer is caught up in what he sees, it is still himself he sees” (1968, p. 139). The landscape that appeared was a narration of my own insecure state of being in trying to find a direction in a process of re-familiarisation. As Ingold points out, the path which one takes through landscape is “the primary condition of being, or rather of becoming” (2008, p. 1808).

**Composition 2**

If one’s path through life reflects the becoming of a person, it is clear that walking can be analysed as a metaphor for one’s position in life as well as in society. This echoes Jackson’s writings about how we think through the body. Metaphors, he states:

... are activated on such critical occasions to mediate changes in people’s bodies and experience, as well as alter their relationships with one another and the world. (1983, p. 134)

Thus the changing rhythm of walking indicates an alteration in one’s relations to the outside world, social as well as physical. Thus walking is a metaphor that indicates finding a direction in life and, as Jackson states, metaphors are “means of doing things and not merely ways of saying things” (1983, p. 138). Jackson’s writing influenced my thoughts as I read the accounts of the ‘Mad Traveler’, as illustrated and analysed by philosopher of science Ian Hacking (1998). Hacking follows the medical reports of ‘Albert’, who was regularly hospitalised in the Saint-André hospital in Bordeaux, France. Albert’s medical condition was described as ambulatory automatism and in the late nineteenth century he was the first such case to be defined in Europe, but the diagnosis of his condition “set off a small epidemic of compulsive mad voyagers” (1998, p. 7) that spread out over the
continent. Hacking’s tale of Albert starts with a quote from the first observation of his medical team:

It all began “one morning last July when we noticed a young man of twenty-six crying in his bed in Dr. Pitre’s ward. He had just come from a long journey on foot and was exhausted, but that was not the cause of his tears. He wept because he could not prevent himself from departing on a trip when the need took him; he deserted family, work and daily life to walk as fast as he could, straight ahead, sometimes doing 70 kilometres a day on foot, until in the end he would be arrested for vagrancy and thrown in prison”. (Hacking 1998, p. 7)

I became curious about Albert and his travels, however for different reasons from Hacking. In his analysis Hacking examines his medical reports in order to critically explore how nineteenth-century European medical science defined and labelled mental disorders. My inquisitiveness, on the other hand, wanted to follow Albert’s footsteps, the way in which he walked and his involvement with the surroundings, to get a glimpse into the landscape through which he walked. It was however difficult to follow his footsteps through the accounts provided, first, because the medical records emphasised how he suffered from amnesia. It appeared that he forgot all details about his travel until he found himself suddenly at a particular place without remembering how he got there. Second, the records follow a person who was defined as sick, although the medical basis for this is open to question. His activity is seen as antisocial and as an effect of some underlying mental condition which the doctors were seeking to uncover. In this context, the walking that Albert undertakes can be seen as ‘dark peripatetic imagery’ in the way it opposes social norms. It is a solitary act that takes him out of society. In his analysis, Hacking hints that Albert’s need to walk away could be grounded in his everyday social conditions in which he felt trapped. Walking for Albert could thus be looked at as a “bodily expression of male powerlessness” (Hacking, 1998, p. 49). Albert was a gas worker in Bordeaux, coming from a family of gas workers. It appears that his close-knit environment was defined by this working-class position tightly associated with a particular place—the narrow streets of Bordeaux, a town that Hacking suggests was a place one would want to leave.

In the late nineteenth century touring and travelling had also become a mode of being for the middle class, and thus mobility was associated with a way of living for those who could afford it. There was also a type of travelling that was looked down upon, vagrancy, but Albert did not fit into this category either as he had a home and a place in life. His walking therefore falls in between two existing social categories “romantic tourism” and “criminal vagrancy” (Hacking, 1998, p. 81). There is, however, more to his need to travel than feeling socially trapped, as his doctors’ observations show, once he has been hospitalised:

At 11:30, on leaving the hospital, we notice Albert walking very quickly from one end to the other of the long corridor.

He walks in a hurry, head low, without looking at the people he encounters on the way. He evades obstacles. We stop him. He recognizes us. He says that
walking like this calms him down. We return to the hospital at four o’clock in the afternoon. Albert is still walking in as lively a way as before . . . Albert did not pause and made no requests of the nursing sister or the hospital director.

“Why do you walk so much?” we ask him.
“I have a terrible headache,” he replies. “I would be more at ease on the open road where I can walk freely.”
“Are you tired?”

“Not in the least. I never get tired. I do 70 kilometres a day. Walking clears my head and does not tire my body.” (Hacking, 1998, p. 155)

This episode hints at Albert’s need for walking, expressed not only as a form of resistance to his social circumstances, but also as a strong bodily urge. He gets headaches, but walking clears his mind and does not exhaust his body. Walking appears to free up both social and physical conditions that otherwise make him feel captured by himself. Rebecca Solnit writes:

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 a landscape of sorts and that walking is one way to traverse it. (2000, p. 6)

Thus traversing the ground is about traversing the self. Compared with my own walk described earlier, Albert’s walking is about leaving behind what captures him, whilst I walked through a landscape that confined me. At the same time, I was finding a place for myself in an alien landscape that reacted to my inability to do so. Albert, on the other hand, appears to leave a landscape with which he is not comfortable when he undertakes his journeys. As Hacking points to in his analysis, Albert feels trapped by his everyday environment and walking brings him into different worlds. He reacts to the conditions and has power and energy to walk long distances, to take his life into new directions, giving him the opportunity to play with his ‘medical conditions’ and those who define them. There is nothing that stops him from taking off, and having the medical classification of being a ‘mad walker’ means that he is even expected to do so. Continuing this line of thought, I want to argue that the movement of walking creates a sense of belonging for Albert even though there does not appear to be a physical place that he is actually going to. This echoes de Certeau’s comment that walking is “the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper” (1984, p. 103), in other words, although one may appear to be disconnected and nowhere, one is always in a continuous process of becoming. By following Albert’s travel narratives, his footsteps, it is possible to reveal a sense of belonging in the movement itself that is reflected through the appearance of the landscape he walks through.

To examine this further I want to consider Albert’s amnesia, or the fact that according to his medical reports he had no recollections of his travels and thus the narratives seem to be lost. A passage from his medical records states that:
Once departed, he no longer knows what he is doing; he is unconscious; if it rains, he gets wet without noticing the rain falling on him; he eats and drinks, in all probability, but he is not sure about that; the only reason that he said so was that of course he must have eaten and drunk during the days when he had his attack and his days of walking when he wanted to be alone. *He does not feel alive*, or, if he does, he does not remember it. (Hacking, 1998, p. 152, emphasis added)

This describes the process of how he forgets, attempting to emphasise his amnesic condition. In his analysis of movement and the human body, Van den Berg (1952), on the other hand, gives an example of how the mountaineer forgets his body in the process of walking but that in fact it “is only by forgetting” that he will “be able to devote himself to the laborious task that has to be performed” (1952, p. 170). He is absorbed in the landscape and the “body . . . is realized as a landscape” (p. 170). Although Albert may not be travelling in the same manner as a mountaineer, what Albert’s doctors explain as an amnesia is the result of a bodily condition experienced by the laborious body at its task. Earlier I discussed Wylie’s (2005) walking along the South West Coast Path and his awareness of bodily imbalance with the surroundings since his physical condition prevented him from feeling comfortable. In that case he senses disconnection with the surroundings whilst the body of Van Den Berg’s mountaineer is realised as a landscape and it is “because he forgets his body, [that] this body can realize itself as a living body” (1952, p. 170); the body is absorbed by the landscape as it moves with it. Thus, it may be assumed that Albert is comfortably at one with himself as he walks through the landscape. The medical reports also reveal, on the other hand, that on occasions he remembers, which brings me to how his landscape narratives materialise:

Albert’s memory resembles a photographic plate of which certain parts are blurred, while other parts had come out well. One must hear him tell of his travels. And yet this is a lad who has received no education. He is very humorous on occasion. That’s how he describes to us the rotund wife of the mayor of a village near Friederichsdorf. He speaks to us of kingdoms, duchies, and provinces that he had visited; he tells us the name of the rivers that he crossed, the towns where he had admired monuments; he gives us details of the clothes worn by the inhabitants, adding this or that historical fact that made them famous. (Hacking, 1998, p. 151)

Unlike the previous quotation, this suggests direct visions into landscape. They show how Albert’s walking creates episodes of contact with landscapes to which he associates and with which he is at ease. His descriptions provide a sense of harmony, meeting points where the landscape appears as ever moving and ever changing as he continuously moves beyond the horizon. His narratives furnish the landscape (Wylie, 2006). Landscapes are furnished, patterned and arranged by bodies that move in and out of them, towards them and from them but always through them. As Low puts it: “The body is at the same time the original tool with which humans shape their world and the substance out of which the world is shaped” (2003, p. 12). Albert’s walking creates landscapes through how he connects, yet also through how he disconnects with his surroundings during the course of his travels. What he forgets is as
important as what he remembers because his landscapes become alive through the combination of both. It is, however, worth remembering that his narratives, as they appear in the medical reports, are told at a distance from the walking itself, or afterwards when he re-counts them for his doctors. Thus his position may be based on a reflection on the walking, rather than the immediate experience of it. Nevertheless, it provides a sense of how a composition is based on the combination of connecting and disconnecting. A further thought on how this may happen brings me back again to the urban environment, where I follow some walkers on their way to and from work in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Connecting and Disconnecting

As I move back into the city it is relevant to return to Adams’s discussion about how walking in the city reflects the dark peripatetic imagery in which the walker finds him or herself on the edge of society. In his account the urban pedestrian becomes an “extravagant wanderer, prone to cross boundaries and stray in all sorts of symbolic ways” (2001, p. 203). The walker is lost in the city and is not an active part in the modern design.

Edensor compares the design of the city to that of the museum, as described by the historian Tony Bennet, in which:

Performative conventions and normative choreographies were co-ordinated by attendants and spatially guided by the layout of display cases, special rooms, information boards and room plans. (Edensor, 2000, p. 125)

The design of the city, like the museum, restricts the flow of wandering bodies. It directs the walker into “toned-down, self-regulated forms of physical expression” (Edensor, 2000, p. 125). Those who cross these boundaries of restriction are those who have crossed the lines of normal sociality, such as the homeless; those who do not belong to a place. Their directions follow their basic bodily needs, “searches for places to sleep, keep warm, eat, rest, beg, and excrete” (p. 129). Thus, according to this, the walking of the everyday, urban pedestrians are not to be compared to the leisurely strolls of the observing flâneur who walked amongst the crowd “for himself, his ideas, and the arts” (Amato, 2004, p. 174). Rather they come closer to the badaud who replaced the flâneur in a city designed by the spirit of commercialism (Jay, 1993).

The badaud has no individuality and is “absorbed by the outside world ... which intoxicates him to the point where he forgets himself” (Jay, 1993, p. 119). Urban pedestrians are directed by the surroundings, become part of the crowd and are, as such, denied creativity, and thus defined by a social framework that categorises their activities. They are stripped of the world that surrounds them. Harrison, on the other hand, claims that to “live in the world is to be involved in the constant changing of direction (constant variation), not the determinism and normativism of a straight line” (2000, p. 499). Thus, the path which one follows is never straight because the walker is a sensual being who is in the world, not simply treading the surface. Being in the world is to be involved with the landscape that surrounds from all directions, providing the “homeland of our thoughts” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 28). It is in this creative space that the narratives emerge; the narratives that furnish the landscape.
A walker in Belfast describes to me his daily route to work and how he walks it when he adds:

I suppose all that I’m saying is that you are walking on a public path but you are not really conscious about what is happening around you because you are thinking about a lecture or paper or whatever there might be. And you’ve got several thoughts going through your head or things that you have to do, on these occasions, yes, you are broadly aware of what is happening around you but you walk past friends because you really are much busier with your thoughts than with your surroundings.

This walker is absorbed in his own thoughts as he passes through surroundings that are familiar to him. His apparent absence from the surroundings does not mean that he is unconscious about his surroundings, but rather it indicates how he is a part of them and they are a part of him. Whilst he may appear as disconnected from them he is thoroughly connected to them as he walks with them. Like Van den Berg’s mountaineer, mentioned above, he forgets his body. Still he needs to consider what is happening around him and most walkers described how inherent in the process of walking is a continuous shifting between what is near and what is far as revealed in the interview snippet below:

K: Now you were saying how you were in your own world when you are walking. When it comes to traffic lights or when it comes to crossing the road. How do you cross the road and doesn’t it disturb the whole thing?

S: It does, especially when you have been walking uninterrupted for quite a while. You go into a rhythm, you go into a pace, your thoughts are in a same kind of rhythm, and you get to a traffic light and that rhythm is sort of thrown off and so you have to stop, re-assess and you never feel like you get back into the same rhythm again, you get into a different one, and then you have to stop again. So it kind of changes all the time but ... Sometimes that can be nice as well ... you know, to come out of your own world and you look around and see what’s there and you see what is around you ... maybe, see the people who are around and they lost the track of the traffic lights or they might be ahead of you now ... it gives you a chance to re-assess, to take things in.

Like Albert remembering the river he crosses and the people he meets, this walker tells me how crossing traffic lights can bring her into a different rhythm of walking which momentarily attunes her differently to the surroundings. She tunes in and out with the surroundings which bring her thoughts into different directions and her path follows these different directions that furnish the landscape as a sequence of events that compose narrative. This brings forth de Certeau’s (1984) analyses of *synecdoche* and *asyndeton*, two figures derived from linguistics, which can reveal how a walker’s path may be composed as narratives. Synecdoche in relation to walking “expands a spatial element in order to make it play the role of a ‘more’ (a totality) and take its place”. An example is how one single word may come to stand for a whole of which it forms only a part, like the word ‘marble’ is used for a statue although it only
represents the material the statue is made out of. In walking this may be when one thing, say a building or a bench, can stand for a whole street, things that catch the attention of the walker and stand for the whole route. Asyndeton, on the other hand, “creates a ‘less,’ opens gaps in the continuum, and retains only selected parts of it that amount almost to relics’ (1984, p. 101). The continuum of an expression is broken up, such as: meeting, loving, leaving; story of life—the conjunctions that link the words have been omitted. Asyndeton thus leaves gaps whilst synecdoche compresses. In this context the traffic lights in the interview snippet above may be seen as playing the role of synecdoche. The walker is suddenly reminded of the route taken by the traffic lights, yet the uninterrupted journey before the traffic lights is omitted from the process. The rivers Albert remembers crossing and the towns he passes through play the same role on his travels and connect up landscapes and create continuity in his narratives; river, town, people, etc. The landscape brings about a change of direction which the walker needs to adjust to and suddenly becomes aware of the body.

However, this analysis offers a chronological take on narratives as a result of both the Belfast walker and Albert reporting their walks whilst not being in the actual process of walking. The experience is not immediate and the narratives are framed as stories and events. What is missing are “the ‘closest things’, [which] in all their complexity, are forgotten” (Harrison, 2000, p. 497), the noise of the everyday, but are nevertheless a part of the narratives as an absence to the presence. The story is a narrative missing the lived body. When I ask a walker how she walks she starts answering by focusing on her bodily position whilst walking and thus embodying the experience:

It’s funny, I would tend to look down at the pavement when I’m walking and I wouldn’t be looking around me and I would be going off into my own world, so I would tend to be looking down and you do notice things ... And like you notice pavements which have lots of chewing gum everywhere, and you do think honestly, ‘where does this all come from’ because I always throw my chewing gum away, so where does all this come from, there is so much chewing gum ... whose is it? You know, when people drop chewing gum, it is almost like leaving your mark, it’s going to be a permanent sort of. Yeah, it’s like pebble dash. It somehow looks horrible but it somehow looks right. Things are very grey, it’s almost variation. The chewing gum looks right, I don’t like it, but it looks like it should be there. You know you can’t imagine anyone actually dropping it but it feels like it is part of the pavement, it’s meant to be there and maybe they did it when they laid the pavement, just dropped chewing gum all over it (laughter). It’s just that, chewing gum on pavements makes sense.

The chewing gum on the pavement merges into the walker’s consciousness as she is occupied in her own world, but never separated from the surroundings. The walker is not just in the surroundings but is a part of them and as the walker passes through them she composes them through the holes and the gaps the movement creates. The urban environment may be said to restrict and direct pedestrians but the pedestrian does not just remain senseless of the environment, they continuously furnish them. During the most mundane walking the walker composes a passage which is a
combination of presence and absence—the constant shift between being connected and disconnected to the self and the surroundings. It is through these ongoing narratives in which the walker locates the self and simultaneously furnishes the landscape.

Conclusions

In this paper I have moved across different grounds in order to throw light on how landscapes are composed as narratives and the way these narratives appear through the manner in which landscapes are furnished and arranged in the process of walking. What emerges is that landscapes happen through the continual and motional entwining of inhabitants and the surroundings. By emphasising the walking body in this context, my aim has been to argue that the way the landscape materialises happens through the way the walking body is located within its surroundings. In this case location does not imply status quo, but is rather about being with it and moving through it in a process of becoming. Thus the location includes not only the actual physical movement, but also feelings, emotions, intentions, together with the ‘noise of the everyday’ provided by the texture of the surroundings as experienced by the walking body.

The different compositions reflect on walking as a process of becoming in the attempt to locate oneself within the world as a connection and disconnection between internal and external. Thus, my claim is that walking is always an act of exploration, either consciously or unconsciously, because walking is as much about exploring oneself as exploring the surroundings. In the compositions this becomes apparent through the ways in which the walkers attempt to walk with landscapes that are simultaneously familiar and alien to them. In composition 1, I try to find my feet as I re-encounter a familiar landscape that has become partially alien to me after 15 years of absence. Albert on the other hand finds himself alienated from what is familiar to him and walks away to connect with himself as he traverses foreign terrains. This recalls Tilley’s statement in which he separates the phenomenological walk, which is undertaken precisely to further one’s knowledge through exploration, from the everyday walk. What is being explored in the compositions are not the details of the landscape from an observational point of view, but rather details of the self as they are in direct touch with the surrounding landscape. It is through this process that the landscape appears, through the presences and the absences, or the way the walking body ties it together through the narratives of walking.

Note

1. The project ‘Sensing Risk: Driver-Walker and Walker-Driver Interactions in the City’ was funded by the ESRC and led by Dr Fiona Magowan, School of History and Anthropology, Queen’s University, Belfast.

References