

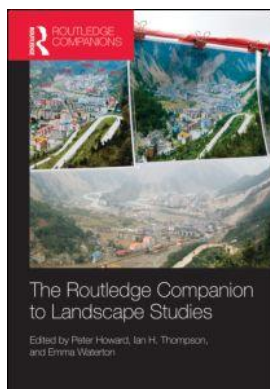
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Landscape and phenomenology

John Wylie

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What is the nature of the relationship between landscape and phenomenology? Phenomenology is a branch of continental philosophy which aims to elucidate and express the meaning and nature of things in the world – of *phenomena* – through a focus upon human lived experience, perception, sensation and understanding. One element of this aim involves developing an account of culture–nature relations that is radically different from an orthodox scientific conception of ‘nature’ as an external realm, distinct from human thought and practice – a conception which underwrites many contemporary Western attitudes to nature, both academic and lay. Phenomenology is also a diverse and still–evolving tradition, but in terms of its influence upon landscape research, the ‘existential’ phenomenology of two mid–twentieth–century thinkers, Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau–Ponty, has been especially notable. And landscape is ... well, to offer an initial definition would be jumping the gun, especially in a volume such as this one, teeming with competing definitions of the word. Instead of doing so, a definition of landscape from a phenomenological perspective will emerge progressively through the course of the chapter.

In this chapter, I will propose three answers to my initial question above concerning the relation between landscape and phenomenology, and discussion of these answers will serve to organize and structure the chapter. In turn, I will consider the following propositions:

- that ‘landscape’ and ‘phenomenology’ share a common heritage in terms of *romanticism*, and are thus deeply entwined together from the outset;
- that, if the story of landscape research is really the story of ongoing debates over the definition of landscape, then phenomenology is a persistent questioning presence in such debates, albeit one that researchers have often found difficult to place squarely at the heart of their inquiries;
- the pragmatic answer: phenomenology offers a particular approach to the study of landscapes, shaping both *what* is studied under the heading of ‘landscape’, and *how* it is studied.

Landscape, phenomenology and romanticism

I will begin with what is perhaps the boldest possible proposition concerning the relation between landscape and phenomenology. This is that our two putative objects of enquiry,

‘landscape’ and ‘phenomenology’, cannot be conceived of separately from each other. Without phenomenological modes of thinking there can hardly be a concept of ‘landscape’ *per se*. Equally, phenomenology, as a tradition of thinking and understanding, is centrally preoccupied with questions regarding the multifarious relationships – distant or intimate, technical or emotional – between human cultures and natural worlds—the questions of landscape, in other words.

In preparing this chapter, I was initially offered a particular topic to address: ‘landscape and phenomenology’. Now, I think, we are straight away invited by this phrasing to perceive two distinct things. On the one hand, landscape; on the other, phenomenology. And the clear implication is that the former (landscape) is the context, or ground, to which the latter (phenomenology) shall be applied – thus, the chapter should set out to explain how phenomenology, as a particular style of thinking, and a particular set of research concerns, can be applied to the study of landscapes.

But taking such an approach, and only such an approach, would run the risk of occluding deeper cultural and historical associations. Because it can be argued that landscape and phenomenology share, to an extent, a common genesis. Specifically, they share one point of origin insofar as both can be connected back to the inauguration and elaboration of *romantic* attitudes to nature and humanity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In this way, from the start, landscape and phenomenology are conjoined.

A more concrete example may help to clarify this argument. Early on in her recent *A Book of Silence* – a memoir and meditation on landscape, solitude and contemplation – the author Sara Maitland finds herself walking, alone, on the hills and moors of the Isle of Skye, in north-west Scotland. And there, she describes the following experience:

I sat on a rock and ate cheese sandwiches – and thought I was *perfectly* happy. It was so huge. And so wild and so empty and so free.

And there, quite suddenly and unexpectedly, I slipped a gear, or something like that. There was not me and the landscape, but a kind of oneness: a connection as though my skin had been blown off. More than that – as though the molecules and atoms I am made of had reunited themselves with the molecules and atoms that the rest of the world is made of. I felt absolutely connected to everything. It was very brief, but it was a total moment. ...

... This ‘gift’ is experienced as both integrative – the whole self is engaged and *known* to itself, to the subject, in quite a new way – *and* as connecting that self to something larger.

(Maitland, 2008, p.63, original emphasis)

‘Not me and the landscape, but a kind of oneness’. I believe Maitland’s experience is of interest here precisely because it highlights the deeper, perhaps even ‘orginary’ connection between landscape and phenomenology I have claimed above. Hers is very much an experience redolent of a romantic sensibility – and she is, moreover, well aware of this. When I say ‘romantic sensibility’ here, my reference points are the romantic movements in art, literature, music, science and philosophy which flowered in Western Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and whose influences can still be seen clearly at work today in the Western world in particular.¹ Romanticism has undoubtedly profoundly influenced senses of landscape in several different registers. While there are obviously dangers here in speaking too generally, it would be hard to deny that romanticism has helped shape contemporary tastes for landscape and nature ‘wild and empty and free’ as Maitland puts it. A sense, today, that something beautiful, good and true can be witnessed in ‘wild’ landscapes, and moreover that such landscapes offer aesthetic and spiritual sustenance in a manner that transcends utilitarian and rational attitudes is a clear

romantic inheritance. A solitary ‘confrontation’ with landscape, and a subsequent epiphanic sense of connection and oneness, is another. These inheritances, we can argue, give a degree shape and definition to the entire idea of ‘landscape’ itself in the Western world today. More pragmatically, therefore, we can also trace strong connections between romantic attitudes and the rise of modern tourism and tastes for landscape in the scenic sense (see McNaughten and Urry, 1998; Edensor, 2000). And connections also between romanticism and a sense that certain landscapes merit designation and protection – as ‘National Parks’, for example, in the UK. Romanticism, finally, also shapes the contours of ‘landscape science’ itself, of physical and human geography as they emerge in the nineteenth century, in the German-speaking world in particular (on this argument see Minca, 2007 and Tang, 2008), and this in turn goes on to shape Anglo-American human geography in the twentieth century.

Turning to phenomenology, it would be too simplistic to say that romanticism has played a shaping and defining role, as I would argue it *has* done with landscape. Nevertheless both phenomenology and romanticism are part of a broader, ‘continental’ tradition in philosophy, and it is quite possible to discern a series of romantic motifs and inheritances within the rise to prominence of phenomenology that occurs the 1930s and 1940s. Phenomenology is a philosophy that, above all, stresses the importance of lived experience, of the human subject’s ongoing immersion in the world; and that thus seeks to move away from a description of subjectivity in terms of rational, distanced observation, towards an alternate understanding of human being – of what it is to be human – in terms of expressive engagement and involvement with the world. This embedded, relational and fleshed-out conception of human existence emerges from Heidegger’s (1962) foundational analyses of human being as a ‘dwelling’ in the world, and from Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) conception of the lived body, entwined with the world in everyday perception and movement. Herein we can see, as with romanticism, a certain rejection of scientific or utilitarian approaches to understanding, and a desire to embrace instead alternate, non-scientific or ‘pre-objective’ forms of knowing. In tandem a sense arises in both romantic and phenomenological thinking that deeper truths about humanity and nature are perhaps best accessed and expressed *via* artistic media – through art, poetry, music. Moreover, if romanticism is characterized by, and caricatured through, an extolling of the individual as solitary, creative genius, then phenomenology, perhaps more than anything else, is an investigation of the nature of individual human subjectivity. And lastly, again more pragmatically, we can note a sense that both romanticism and phenomenology seem to sometimes share a preference for non-urban, remote and unpeopled landscape, as both an ideal landscape form, and as a testing-ground for enquiries into ‘knowing the self’ – into both ‘self-integration’, and ‘oneness’ with the world, to quote Maitland again.

This is my first proposition, then. If we want to understand landscape and phenomenology together, we need to consider them as conjoined in the cultural and historical contexts of romanticism, to which many of the key concerns of phenomenological thinking are linked, and from which some of the most influential articulations of landscape derive. And today, when those who are wary regarding the use of phenomenological approaches to landscape want to pinpoint their objections, this is the word they most often use: ‘romantic’ (e.g. Nash, 2000; Cresswell, 2003). Phenomenology, they often say, offers a ‘romantic’ or ‘romanticized’ account of humans and landscapes.

Phenomenology and landscape theory

What is the nature of the relationship between landscape and phenomenology? I have sketched one answer already: from the perspective of a certain philosophical and aesthetic history, they

emerge together, already intertwined, from the same, broad *milieu* of romantic thinking. In this section I want to explore a second, perhaps more direct answer. If ‘landscape’ is understood as a debatable term, which generations of scholars from various academic disciplines have sought to theorize, define and understand, then ‘phenomenology’ is a key player in this landscape debate. At times, including the present, phenomenological arguments have been clearly heard in debates over the definition of landscape. But there have also been periods in which phenomenology has been at the margins of debate. If I were to choose a word to characterize phenomenology’s position within landscape theory, it would be: *anxious*. The tone in which phenomenological arguments are debated is, it seems to me, very often an anxious tone – whether this be an anxious voice claiming that, without phenomenology, the significance of the lived experience of landscape, and of landscape’s materiality, will be overlooked; or conversely an equally anxious voice suggesting that an emphasis on the phenomenology of landscape downplays the role of politics and power in the shaping of landscapes.

Another way of expressing this thought would be to say that, like a ghost, phenomenology refuses ever completely to go away, or be wholly exorcized from landscape studies. While in one way it is true to say that phenomenological approaches to landscape have come notably to the fore in the past ten to fifteen years, in disciplines such as cultural geography (e.g. Wylie 2005; Rose 2006), performance studies (e.g. Pearson 2006), interpretative archaeology (Tilley 2004), and cultural anthropology (e.g. Ingold 2001; Ingold and Vergunst 2008), it has also to be recognized that this is only the latest in quite a long line of phenomenological incarnations. We have already seen that the embryo of a phenomenological conception of human being is there at the dawning of the selfsame romanticism which gives us both some of the most influential ‘popular’ understandings of Western landscape, and the grounds of landscape science. Equally, as Duncan and Duncan (2010, p. 226) highlight, Carl Sauer’s foundational morphological account of landscape in cultural geography, originally published in 1925, and heavily influenced by Germanic notions of landscape and culture, was grounded in ‘the phenomenological study of forms and relations as they ... occur’.

Tracking forward through time, to the decades post-Second World War, the American landscape writer J.B. Jackson’s conceptions were much more decisively imprinted with a phenomenological sensibility; this is evident in both his *credo* that ‘far from being spectators of the world, we are participants in it’ (Jackson, 1997, p. 2), and in the way his studies often focused upon landscape practices and the *feeling* of specific landscapes (see Cresswell, 2003). In part influenced by Jackson’s work (see Meinig, 1979), the 1970s thereafter represent something of a high tide for phenomenological perspectives on landscape, with the flowering of humanistic approaches in human geography, environmental psychology and landscape architecture, associated with scholars such as David Seamon, Edward Relph and Yi-Fu Tuan (a standout collection in this respect being Seamon and Mugerauer, 1985).

Then come the wilderness years. Through the 1980s and 1990s, phenomenology recedes, almost to vanishing point, as research turns instead to focus upon how landscapes, and especially landscape images and texts, express and sustain certain types of cultural and political power relations. Landscape is thus conceived in ideological, symbolic and discursive terms, rather than, and in some ways opposed to, phenomenological ones. It is also defined as primarily *visual* in nature – landscape a particular ‘way of seeing’, framing and representing the world. There is not the space here to dwell in detail upon this process (see Wylie, 2007, Chapters 3 and 4), but it must be noted that the turn to a critique of landscape as a visual ideology, expressing (variously) elitist, masculinist, racialized and eurocentric discourses, involves, as a starting-point soon left behind, a negative characterization of phenomenologically inspired humanistic landscape studies, as representing a kind of naivety.

They are seen as too individualistic, as opposed to social, in their conception of landscape; and as too meditative, as opposed to critical, in their analytic practice (see Cosgrove, 1985; Daniels, 1986).

The critical analyses of landscape that emerged through the 1980s and 1990s provide an inescapable context for any discussion of phenomenology and landscape theory today. If, today, there has been a resurgence of interest in phenomenological approaches to landscape – as I noted at the start of this section, and will explore in more detail in the next – then this has been accompanied, from the start, by a sense of anxiety about the cogency of such approaches, about where they might lead and about what they might overlook. For example, such an anxiety is a striking feature, indeed almost a structural principle, of one of the most distinctive and interesting recent publications on landscape – Rachael Ziady DeLue and James Elkin's *Landscape Theory* (DeLue and Elkins, 2008). Much of *Landscape Theory's* interest, and relevance here, arises from its innovative organization and format. It begins by presenting a number of previously published 'key essays' on landscape. The book's centrepiece, however, is an annotated transcription of a day-long round-table seminar discussion held at the Burren College of Art in western Ireland, in June 2006. In addition to the editors, the seminar participants comprised ten notable landscape scholars and writers, including Denis Cosgrove, Jessica Dubow, Rebecca Solnit and Anne Whiston Spirn. The transcribed seminar discussion is then followed, lastly, by eighteen 'assessments', solicited from authors to whom the transcription had been sent. These assessments comprise a series of essays, variable in tone, length and approach, with contributions again from several well-known landscape authors, including Kenneth Olwig, Stephen Daniels, Malcolm Andrews and David Nye. This format has the notable effect of encouraging and permitting a freedom of expression beyond that commonly found in most edited collections or handbooks.

A tension between 'ideological' and 'phenomenological' understandings of landscape is a key motif of *Landscape Theory*. This is introduced by the seminar moderator, James Elkins, in terms which also develop an interesting definition of the aims and remit of landscape phenomenology:

Theorising on landscape, which was once avowedly an ideological matter, has been increasingly replaced by a kind of de facto phenomenological understanding. Landscape is taken to be the most diffuse and dispersed ... but also the most optimal occasion for meditating on the unity of the self ... Landscape, in this way of thinking, is an exemplary encounter with subjectivity.

(DeLue and Elkins, 2008, p.103)

Here, therefore, in ways that recall the quote from Sara Maitland in the previous section, phenomenology is described in terms of an encounter – a lived, embodied and affective experience – *from which* arises both a sense of self, and a sense of landscape. Whether this encounter emerges as a sense of 'oneness' with the world, *or* perhaps as a sense of difference and estrangement, the phenomenology of landscape involves above all thinking through the constitution of subjectivity *and* landscape in lived experience. In the discussion that follows in *Landscape Theory*, another participant, Jessica Dubow, supplies an eloquent summation of these ideas:

What's at issue in landscape is obviously a founding relation of self to object, a relation that in phenomenological terms would be a reciprocity, a kind of mutual entwining. Landscape experience, then, is not just how a given view comes to be represented, but how its viewer stakes a claim to perception and to presence. It's not just about an optical

sight or symbolic mediation, but about all those more hidden sensory and affective processes that allow a view to 'come into being' for the subject, all those embodied practices which, prior to representation, allow for its realisation.

(DeLue and Elkins, 2008, p.104)

In other words, from a phenomenological standpoint, landscape is more-than-visual and more-than-symbolic. To study landscape in this way involves attending instead to myriad everyday embodied practices of interaction with and through landscape. It also involves ongoing reflection on more abstract and first-order questions regarding the nature of subjectivity, and human relationships with the world. We will see in the next section that these *are* the issues which occupy many contemporary landscape phenomenologies.

However, in *Landscape Theory*, the quite precise summations of landscape phenomenology given in the two quotes above are not taken up and endorsed by the remainder of the seminar; instead the discussion which follows is equivocal, at best, regarding both the potential and the precise contribution of a phenomenological approach to landscape. Several of the ensuing 'assessments', however, take the issue up more directly, and critically. Maunu Hayrynen, for example, argues that a turn to phenomenology 'places the emphasis on the experience of landscape, which, however defined, entails the risk of leaving the wider context of the politics and economics of landscape in the background' (ibid., p. 177). This has become something of a standard critique in recent years. It is voiced further in *Landscape Theory* by Jennifer Jane Marshall, who in an otherwise sympathetic engagement nonetheless observes that 'as participants considered the phenomenological turn as perhaps a way to reinterpret landscape as an intimate experience devoid of any semiotic, political or moral determination, one couldn't help but get a little uneasy. Was this not just politics all over again, but in the guise of neutrality?' (ibid., p. 200). Marshall also cites the anthropologist Daniel Miller, for whom phenomenologists are 'the "romantics" of the field' (ibid., p. 201). Lastly, Stephen Daniels pinpoints another common criticism of landscape phenomenology – its seeming lack of attention to the historicity of landscape – in stating that 'it can never be a matter of isolating moments of "becoming" from the matrix of a story. To do would be losing the plot', (ibid, p. 241).

In sum, a series of anxieties continue to cluster around landscape phenomenology. It appears, to some at least, to be at once too intimate and too abstract. Too intimate in that, by focusing on lived encounters from which individualized subjects and landscapes emerge, it neglects, or even neutralizes, broader critical questions concerning the cultural, political and economic forces which shape landscapes, and shape perceptions of landscape also. And too abstract in the sense of being overly preoccupied with philosophical considerations around subjectivity, perception and so on, and thus insufficiently tethered to the historical and material specificities of landscapes.

My wider proposition – that phenomenology has long been, and continues to be, a key 'player' in theoretical debates around landscape – has hopefully been demonstrated through the course of this section. A supplementary clause stated that, despite this, phenomenological work on landscape has seemingly always been regarded by some with a degree of concern and anxiety. In fleshing out this contention, I have focused on current debates over 'ideological' versus 'phenomenological' approaches to landscape. As several contributors to *Landscape Theory* point out, these are by no means the only ways in which one might approach landscape; nor are they themselves internally homogenous. Nevertheless, the debate here has been particularly sharp in recent years. In the next section, in the course of considering the positive contribution of recent landscape phenomenologies, I will also point to ways in which this debate might be moved forward.

Current landscape phenomenologies

The aim of this third and final substantive section is to highlight and describe the kinds of research projects and agendas that a phenomenological approach to landscape has inspired over the past ten to fifteen years, in a variety of academic disciplines which include landscape amongst their concerns. In doing so I will also point to ways in which critical concerns around phenomenology – concerns about its ‘romantic’ nature, its subjectivism, and its lack of attention to wider social, political and economic considerations – are being addressed by contemporary writers.

An inaugurating moment for much current landscape phenomenology was the publication, in 1993, of Tim Ingold’s essay ‘The Temporality of the Landscape’ (Ingold, 1993, republished in Ingold, 2000). Ingold’s timing was propitious, insofar as this essay caught and crystallized a sense of dissatisfaction with some elements of the then-prevailing dispensation, in which, as was noted above, landscape was understood as a ‘way of seeing’ and representing the world that tended to express and reinforce elitist, gendered and Eurocentric world-views. For Ingold, and for many others who subsequently followed up on his thinking, the difficulty with this understanding of landscape was most definitely *not* the critical politics of culture and identity it advocated. I would argue that the vast majority of those using phenomenological approaches would endorse and support the argument that landscape representations and practices need to be understood in terms of cultural hierarchies and processes of exclusion, and symbolic and material oppression. Rather, the difficulty lay with what the definition of landscape as a ‘cultural image’ or way of seeing the world (Berger, 1972; Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988) missed out, or neglected to address. For Ingold, this missing element was a sense of landscape as a lived-in world, as a material and sensuous world of everyday rhythms, patterns and performances in which ‘landscape’ and ‘life’ reciprocally shape each other – and in which, in fact, ‘landscape’ and ‘life’ cannot be meaningfully separated out from one other as discrete entities. Underpinning this sense of landscape is what Ingold calls ‘the dwelling perspective’, a phenomenological understanding of human being derived from the work of Martin Heidegger. In this perspective, Ingold (2000, p. 51) argues, human meaning and sense-marking arise from ‘the relational contexts of the perceiver’s involvement in the world’, and not from a separate exercise of mentally reflecting upon one’s activities and practices. In other words, it is through our ongoing, lifelong practices of dwelling *in* and *with* the world – *including* practices of picturing, writing etc. – that our understandings *of* ourselves and the world are shaped. And the name given to such practices of dwelling is: landscape.

Thus Ingold states that ‘it is through being inhabited that the world becomes a meaningful environment (ibid., p. 173). And if the word ‘landscape’ describes ‘the everyday project of dwelling in the world’ (ibid., p. 191), then it can also be defined as ‘the world as it is known to those who dwell therein’. In summary, then:

Landscape, in short, is not a totality that you or anyone else can look *at*, it is rather the world *in which* we stand ... And it is in the context of this attentive involvement in landscape that the human imagination gets to work in fashioning ideas about it. For the landscape, to borrow a phrase from Merleau-Ponty, is not so much the object as ‘the homeland of our thoughts’.

(Ingold, 2000, p.207, emphasis in original)

Ingold’s work provides a conceptual platform from which landscape can be understood in terms of phenomenological ideas of bodily practice, dwelling and inhabitation. In the fifteen years

since its publication, and especially over the past ten years, many landscape researchers have sought to further investigate and explore this argument, most commonly through ‘grounded’ studies of landscape practices. In other words, the main focus of research has been upon what geographer Hayden Lorimer (2005, p. 85) calls ‘*embodied acts of landscaping*’ – lived practices which shape senses of self and world. A substantial literature has quite quickly sprung up here. The practical application of phenomenological arguments to landscape issues has thus produced a range of studies from disciplines including geography, archaeology, anthropology and performance studies. These include studies of *walking* (Michaels, 2000; Lorimer and Lund, 2003; Wylie, 2005; Ingold and Vergunst, 2008; Sidaway, 2009), of *looking and spectating* (Wylie 2002, 2009; Edensor, 2010), of *writing* (Romanillos, 2008; Brace and Johns-Putra, 2010), of *gardening* (Clope and Jones, 2001; Crouch 2003) of *touching and feeling* (Macpherson, 2000; Tilley, 2004), of *spiritual or therapeutic retreat and contemplation*, (Conradson, 2000; Dewsbury and Cloke, 2009), of *angling and watercraft*, (Bull and Leyshon, 2010; Eden and Bear, 2011), of *cycling* (Spinney, 2006), of *climbing* (Lewis, 2000) and of *train travel* (Watts, 2008; Bissell, 2009).

This is a long list of what can be called ‘landscape phenomenologies’, but it is by no means exhaustive. Nor do these works take their inspiration exclusively from phenomenology. They collectively testify to the successful ways in which phenomenological approaches can enable and inform distinctive landscape studies, and also supplement other approaches. I offer these studies here in order to indicate the breadth and depth of current work in this area, and to supply a means of further reading and exploration beyond this chapter.

Moving towards a conclusion, however, I want to focus now upon two related areas in which landscape research informed by phenomenology may develop interpretative practices and frameworks through which some of the concerns and anxieties that have been voiced regarding this approach may be addressed. The first of these is work dealing with issues of memory and materiality, and the second of these focuses upon subjectivity, affectivity and presence.

Memory – in terms of practices of remembering and commemoration – has long been a core concern of phenomenological philosophy (see Casey, 2000). And equally questions around materiality have been a touchstone for analysis in this area, for example for much of the work referenced above. Here, the materialities of specific landscapes – their solidities, liquidities and atmospheres – can be understood as soliciting and inspiring senses of self (see Lingis, 1998; Anderson and Wylie, 2009; Martin, 2011). Recent work, mostly by geographers, but also by performance scholars, has worked from these premises to offer innovative accounts of life, landscape and memory. For example, Caitlin DeSilvey (2007a, 2007b), Hayden Lorimer (2003, 2006) and Owain Jones (2007, 2008) set out to amplify the memorial and material qualities at work in specific landscapes – for DeSilvey, a Montana homestead, for Jones the Severn estuary in England, and for Lorimer the Scottish Highlands. Performance scholars Mike Pearson (2007) and Carl Lavery (2009) similarly use phenomenological and performative approaches, including walking, writing and *in situ* dramaturgy, to broach questions around the relationships between landscape, identity and memory, both personal and collective. The points I would wish to highlight from these kinds of studies are, firstly, that phenomenology offers possibilities for more evocative and creative forms of academic writing, and secondly, that a focus upon individual lives and landscapes *can* enable the forging of connections with wider cultural, historical and political questions regarding the constitution of landscapes. What we see here are accounts in which landscape’s political and historical resonance – its paradoxical function as both preserver and eraser of memory – is accessed *via* the lens of corporeal and material practices.

If studies of landscape informed by phenomenology have begun to find ways in which to shuttle between ‘embodied acts of landscaping’ and issues of power, memory and identity, other recent work has also sought to address and examine what has often been seen as the

problematically ‘subjective’ nature of phenomenological research, and the associated tendency to focus upon ‘romantic’ instances of ‘oneness’ and connection with landscape. One avenue of inquiry here has involved drawing upon the post-phenomenological philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, to focus upon ‘affectivity’ rather than ‘subjectivity’. A focus upon ‘affective atmospheres’ – that is, upon trans-personal and non-subjective circulations of moods, materials and emotional charge – enables attention to be paid to how senses of selfhood, and of landscape, are both equally emergent, rather than following what would be a ‘classically’ phenomenological stance in which a *pre-given* and assumed self encounters landscape (see Wylie, 2005; Stewart, 2007; Martin, 2011; DeSilvey 2012). A slighter larger set of studies sets out from a different set of propositions – the post-phenomenologies of Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy and Emmanuel Levinas – in order to counter the problematic notions of rootedness, belonging, ‘homeland’, and indeed senses of ‘oneness’ with landscape that have at times, it is argued, surreptitiously accompanied studies of embodied acts of landscaping. This constitutes what Jessica Dubow (2010) terms a ‘negative phenomenology’ of landscape, insofar as the focus falls upon the dislocated, de-centred and precarious nature of subjective experience and perception. Hence, while preserving the insight that a phenomenological focus on lived experience is crucial to understanding landscape, a sense of landscape as composed as much of distances and absences, as of presences and proximities, works to render obsolete any claim that landscape phenomenology condones a romantic or naïve subjectivism. Such a sensibility is evident, for instance, in Romanillos’ (2008) study of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s fictional landscapes, in Harrison’s (2009) critical account of Ingold’s reading of landscape, in Rose’s (2006) analysis of landscape as a ‘dream of presence’, and in my own study of landscape, absence and love (Wylie, 2009). If landscape is reconfigured in terms of a subjectivity always in some sense distant and separate from the world, and from itself, then it may be understood, as Robin Kelsey (2008, p. 207) puts it in *Landscape Theory*, as a ‘space to define humanity as a species that does not belong’.

In a chapter of this length it is not possible to cover all of the work that might be grouped under the heading of ‘landscape phenomenology’, But I do trust that this section of the chapter has substantiated my third proposition: that phenomenology offers a means of both defining landscape anew, and of conducting original research into the constitution and meaning of lived landscapes.

Conclusion

It would be difficult to deny, today, the salience of phenomenological understandings within landscape research. The editorial introductions to three recent collections of scholarly landscape writing – Jeff Malpas’s (2011) *The Place of Landscape*, Karl Benediktsson and Katrin Lund’s (2010) *Conversations with Landscape* and Catherine Brace and Adeline Johns-Putra’s (2010) *Process: Landscape and Text* – would tend to confirm this statement. All three dwell at length upon the contribution of phenomenological thinking to the definition of what landscape is, and how it might be studied and understood.

To study landscape from a phenomenological perspective involves foregrounding lived, embodied experience and perception. In part, this is a ‘practical’ question of examining the varied practices and activities wherein people and landscape mutually interact. But it is also a matter of continuing to use landscape as a venue for questioning categories such as ‘experience’, ‘subjectivity’ and ‘perception’ in themselves. Landscape may be defined, phenomenologically, as the creative tension of self and world. I hope to have shown, especially in the final section of this chapter, that while phenomenology, like landscape itself, is connected to romantic traditions of thinking, it does not necessarily presume, or idealize, any ‘romantic’

sense of belonging and connecting, or any naïve sense of stable and given selfhood. While its seat at the table of landscape debate has at times provoked anxiety, and may continue to do so, this chapter has hopefully demonstrated the strength and diversity of landscape phenomenology today.

Notes

- 1 The literature on Romanticism is vast. For an up-to-date introduction, see Ferber (2010) *Romanticism: a very short introduction*. More specifically, in terms of my arguments here, see Oerlemans (2004) *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature*; Bate (2000) *The Song of the Earth*; Tang (2008) *The Geographic Imagination of Modernity*.

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