



Poetry as a resonant method for multi-sensory research

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the potential of poetry for attuning to and expressing resonance in multi-sensory geographies. I argue that poetic inquiry can provide novel ways to address sensory geographies, by shifting the focus from individual senses to a more integrated understanding of how sensory phenomena resonates across bodies and spaces. By doing this, poetry also becomes a resonant method that allows one to merge different subjectivities and express pluriversal worlds. I draw upon Erlmann's discussion of resonance as a way to overcome three dichotomies regarding knowing and the senses that have been recently contested in sensory geographies, namely the dichotomies between reasoning and the affective, the external and internal, and attention and distraction. In order to demonstrate the potential of poetry as a resonant method, I present a poetic exploration of the life of the Staines Reservoirs. The findings of this experiment show that poetry can be a resonant method when the geographer-poet is attuned to the way in which thinking and feeling are intertwined, the ways in which the senses mix themselves in the experience of the world, and the ways in which the world resonates within bodies and bodies echo in the world.

1. Introduction

Poetry as a research method has received a significant amount of attention by geographers in recent years (Cresswell, 2014; Magrane, 2015; Boyd, 2017; de Leeuw and Hawkins, 2017; Magrane et al., 2019). Poetry has been a consistent, albeit marginal, topic of interest for geographers for a long time, but it has been mostly conceived as an object of study up until recently (Ribeiro, 1980; Porteous, 1984; Lafaille, 1989; Pinheiro and Silva, 2004). Several authors have pointed out the potential that poetry affords for geographers interested in engaging with affective matters in diverse topics such as therapy (Boyd, 2017), geopolitics (Madge, 2014; Last, 2015, 2017), racial, gender, and class differences (Eshun and Madge, 2012, 2016; McKittrick, 2016; Springer, 2017), urban geographies (Jones and Ham, 2016; Palmgren, 2018), historical geographies (Griffiths, 2018), and ecological writing (Magrane, 2015). It has been argued that the promise of poetry in geographical research lies within the affective power of this literary form, which is helpful to express particularly emotional aspects of the spatial experience and to promote empathy across difference (Eshun and Madge, 2012, 2016; McKittrick, 2016; Boyd, 2017; Palmgren, 2018). Moreover, the plasticity of poetry as a means of expression has been valued as a way to give voice to individuals who might be excluded from more formal ways of communicating in the public sphere (Madge, 2014; Boyd, 2017; de Leeuw and Hawkins, 2017; Springer,

2017). Despite this, the limitations of poetry as a method have also been debated and pointed out (Madge, 2014; de Leeuw and Hawkins, 2017; Springer, 2017).

In this article, I want to contribute to the exploration of poetry as a method by addressing the potential of poetry for attuning to and expressing resonance in multi-sensory geographies. It has been argued that geographers of the senses must move away from a focus on individual senses to wider understandings of the manifold ways in which sensory stimuli traverse bodies across space and interact with each other (Paterson, 2011; Straughan, 2012; Harriet and Straughan, 2014; Gallagher et al., 2017; Paiva, 2018). I argue that, in order to achieve this task, it is crucial to explore methods that are able to attune to and express resonance. Ash and Simpson (2019) have argued that attuning to resonance allows us to understand the affective impact of the encounters between sensing beings and objects by unveiling how expressive stimuli are diffused in spatio-temporal settings and how they come to change the affective-cognitive state of beings. It is my contention that poetry as a method not only allows researchers to attune to these resonant processes, but also to express them in a way that conveys their sensory, intellectual, affective, and emotional power. With this in mind, I draw on Erlmann's (2010) discussion of resonance to explain how it can be helpful to reconcile three dichotomies regarding knowing and the senses that have been recently contested in sensory geographies, such as sonic, haptic, and olfactory geographies. First,

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resonance directs our attention to how the cognitive emerges from affective experience, rather than distinguishing between intellectual and affective senses. Secondly, resonance dilutes boundaries between the internal and the external in sensory experiences. Thirdly, resonance reconciles attention and distraction by unveiling how the senses are modulated during everyday experiences. Therefore, resonance is more than the flow of sensory stimuli and its affects on bodies. It is also a form of emplaced epistemology that emerges as an alternative to reflexive reasoning (Erlmann, 2010).

Taking this into account, in this article I draw upon my own experience on applying poetry as a research method to study the sense-scape of the Staines Reservoirs in West London to explore the potential of poetry as a resonant method for multi-sensory geographies. The findings of this exploration show that poetry as a resonant method can attune to and express the ways in which the senses interact in everyday experiences and how thinking and sensing are intertwined in those experiences.

2. Poetry as a research method

While the exploration of poetry's potential in geography is part of a wider rethinking of the act of writing that geographers have engaged with for some time now (see Curry, 1991; DeLyser and Hawkins, 2014; Jacobson and Larsen, 2014; Lorimer and Parr, 2014; Ward, 2014; Lorimer, 2018), it has been argued that poetry offers distinct opportunities for geographical inquiry (Eshun and Madge, 2012; Cresswell, 2014; Madge, 2014; Magrane, 2015; Boyd, 2017; de Leeuw and Hawkins, 2017). Poetry has been conceived as an alternative form of researching (Magrane, 2015; Boyd, 2017), writing (Lorimer, 2008; Springer, 2017), and communicating (Sekeres and Gregg, 2008; Rawling, 2010; Turner, 2016).

Poetry has been framed as a critical engagement that resists dominant forms of thought and communication in academic discourse. Indeed, the most common claim about the value of poetry seems to be that it has the power to convey subjectivity and the affective experience of places in a way that traditional discourses cannot (Boyd, 2017; Springer, 2017; de Leeuw and Hawkins, 2017; de Leeuw, 2019). Boyd (2017) draws upon Franke's (2011) notion of involved knowing to describe the merits of poetic inquiry. Involved knowing refers to affectively charged personal experiences and relations to others, therefore opposite to objective knowledge which would be distanced and emotionally detached (Franke, 2011; Boyd, 2017). The potential of poetry to express involved knowing emerges from the plasticity of the medium, that is, the relative freedom that poets have to merge sensations, emotions, insights, emotions, reflections, imaginations, descriptions, and affects (Boyd, 2017). As Sheers argues, just like in the experience of landscape itself, in poetry "a vast array of abstract associations are delivered in concrete form and presented as a coherent whole" (2008, p. 174). The expressiveness of the medium has been considered a significant opportunity to convey diverse everyday worlds (Butz et al., 2011; McKittrick, 2016; Eshun and Madge, 2016). More importantly, the poetic expression of diverse or pluriversal everyday worlds has been regarded as a way to promote "empathy and (...) understanding beyond direct experience" (Eshun and Madge, 2016, p. 782; also Bristow, 2015; Madge, 2016). As an art form that assembles diverse things and perspectives together, it has also been noted that poetry can weave together politics and art (Eshun and Madge, 2016). Thus, it presents opportunities to blend intimate, affective, and subjective understandings of the world and political concerns and anxieties about social and environmental issues (Magrane, 2015; de Leeuw and Hawkins, 2017).

The value of poetry as a research method also lies within its power to change our minds (Springer, 2017; de Leeuw, 2019). The plasticity of poetry has the potential to do something for the plasticity of the subject that writes and the subject that reads. Here, I am referring to the concept of plasticity that Malabou uses to characterize "the material

organization of thought and being" (2010, p. 61). Plasticity is defined by Malabou (2010, p. 7) as "the spontaneous organization of fragments" that alters the form of the being throughout time. In other words, plasticity refers to the way that beings are able to change, adapt, or mould themselves into something different as fragments of experience emerge in the presence of the world. This implies a process of synthesis in which the being finds itself confronting its prior knowledge and new cognitive inputs, which in turn leads to the emergence of an internal alterity, as the being moves into different forms (Malabou, 2010). Poetic explorations of the world put a priori conceptions at risk because the plasticity of poetry engages directly with plasticity of being. Poetic engagement in the field allows one "to rework their embodied relationship with built environment and event" as writing poetry allows geographers "to remake the fleeting micro-ambiances of spaces in the moment, layering on personal histories and creative ideas" (Jones and Jam, 2016, p. 322). In this process, the poet-geographer questions her or his own senses, the way in which the world co-emerged in a coherent experience, the emotions that were felt, and the knowledge that was gathered. On the other hand, as Jones and Jam (2016) argue, this practice of situated thinking also acts on the atmospheres of place as it leads the poet-geographer to find new perspectives, attune to less noticed environmental stimuli, or become aware of the subtle nuances of the more obvious environmental stimuli. So far, the reflections on poetry as a geographic research method have mainly focused on its potential for the study of human subjectivity, but some authors have also explored animal and vegetal subjectivities through poetry (Cresswell, 2013; Magrane, 2014, 2015; 2016). Magrane (2015) argues that poetry can inspire the experience of the physical world itself, drawing us away from abstraction, and he calls our attention to the possibilities of using poetry for imagining and enacting other ways of inhabiting the world. I would add that engaging with these non-human ways of inhabiting the world in geographic poetry is vital if we truly wish to engage with and express a pluriversal world.

Furthermore, poetry affords possibilities to re-present research data in a way that expresses the aspects of spatial experience that seem to escape conceptual definitions (Turner, 2016; Palmgren, 2018; Rose et al., 2018). There has been some debate on the efficacy of poetry, which has been often related to questions about how the aesthetic quality of poetry can be evaluated (Cresswell, 2014; Madge, 2014; Boyd, 2017), rather than a consideration of the value of the work it might do. However, following Madge (2014) and Magrane (2015), I would argue this is a muddy topic to get into, because if we value poetry for its ability to express and value the experiences of diverse people, would we not be excluding some experiences if we start applying rigid standards of aesthetic quality? Nevertheless, the issue of the efficacy of the poem in terms of promoting empathy across difference does pose serious questions to the use of poetry as research. Boyd (2013) and Madge (2014) pointed out that there are limitations in terms of speaking for others, as well as limits to empathy that are linked to the complex politics of disconnection in everyday life. Eshun and Madge (2012, 2016) also called attention to the difficulties of translation that may hinder emphatic understanding. They argue that while the plasticity of poetry is generally beneficial, certain forms or messages might not be understood or fall into deaf ears. I believe this threat is a good reminder that poet-geographers should be also concerned with the curation of their work, namely the way it is transmitted and the conditions in which it is read. As de Leeuw and Hawkins (2017) have pointed out, creative methods are not inherently critical.

In sum, poetry as a research method presents an opportunity to address intimate, affective, and subjective understandings of the world in a way that other research methods cannot, as the plasticity of poetry, and the questioning of everyday experience that it stimulates, provides a spacetime of emplaced thinking. In addition, the poem that emerges from this process is itself a means of communicating research findings. This can be useful for geographers engaging with sensory experiences, if poetic practice is able to attune to and express the resonance of

everyday experience. In the next section, I will outline the concept of resonance and discuss its usefulness for poetic inquiry.

3. Resonance

I believe the plasticity of poetry and the questioning of everyday experience that it stimulates can provide novel ways to address sensory geographies, by shifting the focus from individual senses to a more integrated understanding of how sensory phenomena resonates across bodies and spaces. By doing this, poetry also becomes a resonant method that allows one to merge different subjectivities and express pluriversal worlds. However, before I delve into the ways in which poetry can attune to and express resonance, a more detailed explanation of what I mean by resonance is needed.

Erlmann (2010) contests the idea that modern rationality has been solely focused on the idea of reflection, and presents resonance as an alternative metaphor for reasoning. Reflection is the basic metaphor for thinking that underpins Cartesian rationalism, in which rational knowledge comes from the thinking mind, an entity which is separated from the sensory body which can be tricked by sensations and emotions. In the reflection metaphor, “[j]ust as the mirror reflects the light waves without its own substance becoming affected, the mind mimetically represents the outside world while at the same time remaining separate from it” (Erlmann, 2010, p. 9). Thus, reflection establishes an absolute separation between subject and object, between perceiver and perceived. Knowledge then becomes objective, because it focuses on the properties of objects themselves, without the biases of the observer. In this metaphor, objective rational knowledge also becomes associated to vision. On the other hand, resonance stands as the absolute opposite of reflection, as no boundary is established between perceiver and perceived. Resonance implies the conjunction of subjects and objects through some shared sensation, affect, or experience. Erlmann (2010) contests the idea that modern reason is exclusively anchored in an understanding of thinking as reflection and visual thinking, and presents a history of the presence of the resonance metaphor in modern philosophy, from the Romantic period to contemporary phenomenology.

What I highlight in Erlmann's (2010) investigation of the history of reason and resonance is the potential of thinking about resonance to move beyond common dichotomies regarding sensing places. Erlmann (2010) contests three dichotomies regarding knowing and the senses which have also been a matter of critique in geographic studies of the senses, especially in sonic, haptic, and olfactory geographies.

The first dichotomy is understanding the visual as objective and intellectual, and other senses as subjective and affective. This dichotomy is often subjacent in some scholarly discourses which highlight the particular affective qualities of hearing and listening, often as opposite to the predominance of the visual and its association to objectivity (Bull, 2000; Smith, 2000; Nancy, 2007). Similarly, social and cultural studies of olfaction and touch have highlighted the affectivity of this sense and the experiences and emotions associated with it (Classen et al., 1994; Pallasma, 2005; Chiang, 2008; Tan, 2013; Kitson and McHugh, 2019). These associations are problematic not only because at times the affective potential of the visual seems unacknowledged but more importantly because it denies the other senses a role in objective thinking. This is all the more obvious when recent geographical studies have shown that light and colour possess an affective power capable of changing emotional responses to places (Ebbensgaard, 2014; Edensor and Sumartojo, 2018; Edensor and Bille, 2019), and studies on art-science practices have emphasized the role that touch can play in learning (Straughan, 2019), and the ways in which olfaction can be a part of educational practices (Straughan, 2014).

The second dichotomy that Erlmann (2010) identifies is understanding the visual as external and the aural as internal. This dichotomy is related to the first one, as it is based in the idea that the visual entails

a separation between observer and observed, and thus an observation of the external properties of what is observed, while the aural penetrates subjects and so it accesses the internal, the bodily, the visceral. This nuance is relevant because it is at the core of the differences between the reflection and the resonance metaphors for reason. It is however problematic because it leads us away from myriad ways in which the internal and the external communicate through instances of multi-sensoriality. As Hayes-Conroy and Saenz Montoya have argued, bodily resonance “refers to a self-defined interior sense that the situation or thing currently confronting the body actually, in the given moment/context, corresponds well to it” (2017, p. 148).

Indeed, recent work has stressed the role of the senses as instruments that blend rather than separate the internal mind-body and the external world. For instance, Pink (2017) has called for an emplaced sensory perspective that goes beyond embodiment (i.e. the fusion of body and mind) to also include the environment, therefore addressing the fluxes between body, mind, and the environment. Likewise, geographers have called for an expanded understanding of the senses (such as listening or touching) that underlines the fluidity of sensations between subject and world and the co-creation of experiences (Harriet and Straughan, 2014; Berrens, 2016; Gallagher et al., 2017). The porosity of sensing organs such as the skin have been put into evidence in studies that follow this line of thought (Scriven, 2019; Nieuwenhuis, 2019). As Erlmann argues, “what we call “truth” or “reality” is a useable approximation that emerges not because of the strict separation of subject and object, fact and fiction, outside and inside, but from the neglect of these dichotomies” (2010, p. 341).

Taking this into account, it seems fair to argue that all senses play a role in immersing the self in worldly experiences and, consequently, in reasoning and feeling. This is not to say that all senses provide similar ways of relating to the world. In fact, it has been noted that some situations elicit different senses which leads to different ways of using the body (Middleton, 2010; Berrens, 2016; Paiva and Cachinho, 2018). However, it is the interplay of senses that must be underlined. Some works have addressed the interplay of vision and sound (Hawkins and Straughan, 2014; Paiva and Cachinho, 2018; Bell, 2019), vision and touch (Paterson, 2011; Berrens, 2019), or sound and touch (Revill, 2016), and others have applied multi-sensory perspectives on practices such as tourism, cycling, or fieldwork (Van Duppen and Spierings, 2013; Jensen et al., 2015; Phillips, 2015; Simpson, 2019). Some studies have also proposed integrated understandings of certain ways of sensing, namely those that approach haptic and somatic geographies, which integrate the various senses associated with touching and moving (Paterson, 2009; Dixon and Straughan, 2010; Straughan, 2012; Paterson and Dodge, 2016; McHugh and Kitson, 2018; Watson, 2019). These studies show that “different atmospheric or elemental senses are interrelated and interrelate” in the co-creation of immersed everyday experiences (Simpson, 2019, p. 1066), but this body of works is still quite limited comparing to the amount of studies on specific senses. For this reason, I would argue geographers have merely scratched the surface when it comes to understand the intricate connections between senses that make up the coherence of perception and how these connections are modulated by the situational socio-environmental context.

This leads us to the third dichotomy that Erlmann (2010) contests which is separating attention and distraction. It is common across sensory studies to distinguish between the active and passive modes of several senses (Stoller, 1997; Howes, 2005; Howes and Classen, 2014; Middleton, 2010). For instance, several sound theorists debated the dichotomy between hearing and listening, often calling for a sonic education that promotes active listening (Westerkamp, 1988; Schafer, 1994; Nancy, 2007; Simpson, 2009). It has also been common to frame passive modes of sensing as negative, related to detachment, alienation, solitude, and active modes as positive, environmentally aware, engaging, or connected (García Quiñones et al., 2013; Erlmann, 2010). However, this rather simplistic way of thinking about attention and distraction does not seem to acknowledge how attention and distraction

are themselves entangled in any experience. As Waldenfels (2011) has argued, attention is not a one-sided activity that can be mastered at all times. Instead, attention is co-produced with the environment as stimuli emerge and re-create our attentive state over time. In this sense, attention involves both selection and emergence, as individuals can choose what they attend to, but environmental stimuli can also hinder those choices (Waldenfels, 2011). In this process, different senses are used, and some activities might activate certain senses or body parts numb or render them numb. What is important in this process is that the activation or deactivation of certain senses to attend to certain environmental stimuli is related to the emergence of concerns about that environment. According to Waldenfels (2011), attending to something is already the beginning of wanting to know more or caring about that thing. Therefore, a resonant approach that is attuned to the modulation of senses in bodily experiences is crucial to grasp the way in which the environment participates in generating concerns.

The methodological potential of approaching resonance has been noted by Ash and Simpson (2019) who underline its spatio-temporal significance. They note that resonance unveils “the moments of encounter and translation when (...) objects collide with human sense and change both objects and humans in the process” (Ash and Simpson, 2019: 146) and call for attention to the temporality of reverberation as a propagation effect of what resonates. Elsewhere, Ash et al. (2018) suggest that the concept of resonance might be useful for studying phenomena other than sound. Indeed, they argue that a methodological vocabulary based on sound is particularly useful to attend to the mixed and synaesthetic nature of everyday sensing, especially because it allows one to avoid equivocal distinctions between theory and practice (Ash et al., 2018). Ash et al. (2018) apply a Deleuze-Guattarian definition of concept to argue that concepts are instruments of through instead of pure abstractions or clear accounts of reality. In this sense, concepts themselves resonate, as they change and are changed by perceived realities.

Following these arguments, I argue that poetry can be a resonant method when the poet is attuned to the ways in which thinking and feeling are intertwined, the ways in which the senses mix themselves in the experience of the world, and the ways in which the world resonates within bodies and bodies echo in the world. Therefore, a resonance approach entails allowing emplaced experiences to be written in a way that expresses these affective-cognitive flows, rather than categorizing segments of experience. In the next section, I will describe the Staines Reservoirs and explain how poetic inquiry allowed me to attune to and express the resonance of the site.

4. Reservoir

The Staines Reservoirs, built in 1902, were the first of a series of water reservoirs that can be found across West London and the Surrey council (Thompson, 2012). Currently, they are run by Thames Water and supply drinking water to London and the Thames Valley region. The Staines Reservoirs include two basins with approximately 1.7 km², which are divided by a causeway where pedestrians can walk. The basins are made of concrete, fenced, and surrounded by grass. A large brick tower stands out on the margin of the North basin.

The Staines Reservoirs can be seen as a liminal space in two ways. On one hand, they are located at the border between the Greater London Built-up Area and the rural space beyond it. The Reservoirs lie in between the urbanized area of West London, where Heathrow Airport and Stanwell Village are located, and the natural space of the Colne Valley Regional Park. On the other hand, the function of this space is to store water that will afterwards be subject to treatment in order to be used in London's water distribution system. In this sense, the Reservoirs also establish a connecting point between the natural and the urban worlds in which water is gathered through rain and the channels linked to the Thames River, and afterwards channelled to the city. As such, the Reservoirs also function as a sort of pause in London's

hydrological cycle.

Despite this, the Staines Reservoirs are more than a large body of water that is waiting. They house a particular ecology of animal life, one that is closely related to the specific characteristics of this space. Along with several other water reservoirs in the West London area, the Staines Reservoirs are often signalled as an interesting wildlife-watching area in London wildlife guides (e.g. Taylor et al., 1997; Taylor, 2010). Although these guides often describe the reservoirs as artificial and dull, they highlighted them as important sites for bird-watching, where less common species can be observed throughout the year. The Staines Reservoirs are also currently a part of the Staines Moor Site of Special Scientific Interest and belong to the Colne Valley Regional Park. As such, the wildlife of the site is clearly signposted, highlighting bird species such as the mallard, goldeneye, tufted duck, coot, common tern, osprey, and Brent goose. These bird species are attracted by the large expanse of water of the Reservoirs and the relative calmness of the site where very few humans are present at any time. Besides the bird population, there is also a flock of sheep that grazes on the grass around the Reservoirs. Thames Water uses this method to mow the grass without causing harm to the bird nests that might appear near the Reservoir's basins. Lastly, the Reservoirs are also notorious for its swarms of flies, mosquitoes and mayflies.

5. Resonating the reservoir

Between August and November 2018, I visited the Staines Reservoirs regularly. The visits lasted between one and 3 h, and I would generally undertake one visit per day, sometimes two. Most visits were made during the weekend. I was interested in exploring the possibilities of knowing the Reservoirs by sensing its life with my own body and writing, not using technologies such as cameras or sound recorders (Longhurst et al., 2008). Therefore, the visits were generally divided in two moments. The first moment was dedicated to sensory exploration. It involved walking across the Reservoirs, sitting down in the benches, or standing leaning over the causeway's fences observing the landscape and the human and animal life. The second moment was dedicated to poetic writing. As I started writing about what I sensed, felt, and learned, I also began experimenting with new ways of sensing that involved a more careful observation.

One of these experiments involved exploring how the senses resonate with each other in the experience of the world to generate profound understandings of what takes place around the body. A number of events that came to my attention led me to combine specific senses to make sense of them. For instance, the sound and sight of the reservoirs' waves and the call of gulls that flew above them led me to try to observe the event in greater detail. I could hear the lapping waves and the call of the gulls, and I could see them flying in the heights above the waters and land on them occasionally. But I could not hear them land on the water, or the sound of the wind that was causing the waves. However, this visual input resonated within me, and the sounding rhythms of these events came to mind very clear, as if I was flying over the waters myself:

down there the plain surface seems to freeze the rumble

I am promised the safe emptiness

a certain way to sift through the effusive minimal tides

that such a livid giant has learned from the itself

this great giant is engrafted but its voice is soft

sitting at so many margins until he is himself

As I leaned over the causeway's fence, I would feel the cold hard metal of the iron bars. Occasionally, they would vibrate as birdwatchers leaned over them with cameras, or when a crow landed and walked on them. On some occasions, I could hear the metal's clink, but more often

I could only see the source of the vibration. This would lead me to perceive the distance of the vibration traversing solid matter, and write about this:

so quickly enraged by the cusp of a wanting
I am torn but careless
no warning no consequence
except the same fault lines across me
the first as the second as the third
as the sleep across the retention

This exploration of the resonance of senses eschews the dichotomies that relate certain senses to objectivity and externality and oppose them to others as affective and internal (Erlmann, 2010; Nieuwenhuis, 2019; Straughan, 2019). Rather, it shows how the senses resonate with each other to generate wider cognitive-affective understandings of what takes place. In this way, the resonance of the senses does not merely entail dialogues between seeing, hearing, and touching. Rather, it implies what Malabou (2010, p. 7) refers to as “the spontaneous organization of fragments”, that is, the compilation and interweaving of all sorts of impressions – intellectual, emotional, superfluous, visceral, intense, distracted, curious, carefree – into a resonant sensemaking. This spontaneous compilation and interweaving of impressions transforms me as a perceptual being as it fills blind spots to generate a coherent worlding. In addition, this shows that certain experiences elicit specific combinations of senses that are blend together in order to attend to an event. Attention is therefore a product of spatio-temporal events external to the body, but it is also constituted by specific body assemblages that make attending to something possible (Waldenfels, 2011).

The second experiment consisted on exploring the interplay of sensing with memory and the imagination. As I revisited the reservoirs over and over, I obviously became very familiar with the landscape of the place, its rhythms, movements, and events. Over time, my memories of the reservoirs filled my own sensing of the place, and the absence of living beings eventually became present:

it is intangible unspoken at the viscera of my rhizome
how I concatenate the less than sober almost songs
the august underneath the splendid all-around
I have every day forgot to tell you what diegesis stumbles
upon the crease
should this excavation unearth the distance
that embraces all the hermit sirens of this emptiness?
or must the insignificant hint pour out
of the scroll?
what if bringing the abysses to this port
has erased the name of the shore?

On the other hand, getting to know the reservoirs also implied sensing its life with my imagination, especially to reach spaces that none of my senses can approach, such as two water bodies in the basin. I began writing the coot's dive into the depths as if it was my own:

I reach the velvet skin of the depth
which presses and in that pressing
an ancient world echoes in hollow bones
turning back into what is now a dome of white
I am told the interference and the consequence

but assertive hands bring me forth

In fact, writing the resonance of the reservoirs led me to sense not exactly which sensory stimuli were there, but especially how bodies, atmosphere, ground, and everything else are affected by the moving vibrancy of the place. I began writing small dialogues between the bodies of other beings and things. I imagined myself in the position of the different beings that dwelled on the reservoirs: wagtails, crows, moorhens, gulls, mayflies, spiders, grasses, shrubs. These would describe my own understanding of the events that took place, such as the flight of the wagtail:

you engraved your flight into a cold effervescence
were we tunnels for air were we a drilling mouth?
I know the rumble of the world
before it is inaugurated at the shoreline of my wings
the swift unannounced presence of something yet again

These fragments demonstrate how thinking and feeling are intertwined in everyday experiencing. They are the concatenation of sensed events – along with the feeling and emotions that they provoke – and the work of reasoning, imagining and making sense, not as two separate tasks but as an intricate process that unfolds over time. This not only underlines the notion that affective-cognitive perception is a product of ongoing flows between mind, body, and environment (Harriet and Straughan, 2014; Berrens, 2016; Gallagher et al., 2017; Pink, 2017), but also the way in which ideas and the world resonate with each other (Erlmann, 2010; Waldenfels, 2011). Ideas, concepts, and notions about the world not only emerge through perceiving and are changed by perceived realities, but also generate new ways of perceiving the world, filling perceptual gaps (Ash and Simpson, 2019).

These poetic fragments, which were written in several different visits to the reservoirs, were afterwards assembled into one poem in which various perspectives on the reservoirs succeed each other, and which might echo each other or abruptly break away from one another.¹ Poetic inquiry not only allowed me to explore these sensory processes, but also to produce a poetic text that is not a mere descriptive representation of a landscape experience, but an experimental writing that retains something about the way in which things and bodies resonated within me. This could include many things that were present in the experience which are also present in the poem: affects, sensations, feelings, emotions, knowledges, or memories. In this sense, the poem does not aim to capture a landscape and reproduce it in order to provide a semi-direct experience (Eshun and Madge, 2016; Bristow, 2015; Madge, 2016). Instead, the poem expresses the ways in which the multiplicity of the reservoir's life resonates across its bodies, drawing attention to the mixing of sensory, intellectual, and emotional experiences. Therefore, instead of allowing readers to get to know the reservoirs, the poem elicits personal experiences that the reader might empathise with. While there are certainly limits to empathy (Boyd, 2013; Madge, 2014; Eshun and Madge, 2012, 2016), I would argue that the difficulties of interpretation that might arise can themselves be generative as readers draw upon their own experiences to make sense of the poetic text. Following Springer (2017), I argue that the power of the poetic text lies precisely in the way in which forces readers to draw upon their own experiences to make sense of poetic text. In this sense, the words of the poem are themselves resonant and the knowledge they transmit is always co-produced by the text and the reader, unlike traditional descriptions which attempt to provide a clear-cut description of places and experiences.

¹ The full poem can be read here: https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/89dd45_7b8846c3b6f94fc2824100864ed427f8.pdf.

6. Conclusion

My objective in this article was to contribute to the exploration of poetry as a method by addressing the potential of poetry for attuning to and expressing resonance in multi-sensory geographies. I have shown how poetry can be a resonant method when the geographer-poet is attuned to the way in which thinking and feeling are intertwined, the ways in which the senses mix themselves in the experience of the world, and the ways in which the world resonates within bodies and bodies echo in the world. This places poetry as a crucial method for geographers of the senses who are interested in moving away from a focus on individual senses to wider understandings of the manifold ways in which sensory stimuli traverse bodies across space and interact with each other (Paterson, 2011; Straughan, 2012; Harriet and Straughan, 2014; Gallagher et al., 2017; Paiva, 2018).

I have argued that, in order to achieve this task, it is crucial to explore methods that are able to attune to and express resonance. Poetry can provide a resonant approach to the world in which knowledge emerges not only from single sensorial inputs, but from the interplay of different senses and sensibilities. It can also provide an opportunity to mix perceived and imagined perspectives, and to assemble and blend distinct perspectives, generating polyvocal accounts that do not correspond to any specific subjectivity, but to a sort of multiversal subjectivity (Boyd, 2013; Madge, 2014; Eshun and Madge, 2012, 2016). By this, I mean that poems can convey an experience made from a bundle of different experiences, giving a sense of diversity and heterogeneity in a (more or less) fluid account. The exploration of this poetic plasticity affects and reworks the experience and knowledge of the researcher which is itself plastic, and is able to create a communicational medium that is aimed to play with the plasticity of being by resonating knowledge when the geographer's poems encounter the subjectivities of readers (Malabou, 2010; Springer, 2017). In this sense, the poem disrupts traditional conventions of communicating academic knowledge by allowing it to be both transformative and transformed throughout the entire process of researching, writing, and communicating. For these reasons, poetry as a research method can provide a methodological alternative for sensory geographies. As such, poetry can also contribute to new paths of inquiry in some lines of research, such as visceral geographies, geographies of difference, and landscape geographies.

Poetry can be used as a resonant method in the field of visceral geographies, namely by those interested in unveiling the affective and visceral dimension of political ideas and practices. While some of the studies on the visceral affectivity of politics already apply artistic research (e.g. Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2013; Duffy et al., 2016; Doughty, 2019), poetry opens up new possibilities to explore the cognitive-affective nexus in politics, that is, how everyday subjective experiences participate in the processes of political reasoning.

Poetry as a resonant method can also be used as a technique to establish dialogues across divisions of class, gender, and race (Eshun and Madge, 2012, 2016; McKittrick, 2016; de Leeuw and Hawkins, 2017). Regarding this issue, it is interesting that poetry is not only a medium that allows marginalized voices and identities to speak and establish a political space, but it can also function as a common ground to generate new dialogues across difference. Sensory geographers can play an important role in this matter by exploring the emergence of the commons in intercultural and intersectional sensory practices.

Lastly, poetry as a resonant method can help us to destabilize the dichotomy between human and non-human subjectivities in landscape studies, by providing a novel way to think through how other beings perceive, experience, understand, appropriate, and alter spaces. It has been argued that understanding the world through the lenses of other beings has the potential of telling us much about their lifeworlds, and also to defy the hegemony of human thinking in the processes of knowledge-making about the world (Marder, 2013; Herman, 2018). The emphatic resonance that poetry elicits can also provide an

interesting medium to experiment with cross-species subjectivities.

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