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**Making Meaning through Movement:  
Hiking the Cathar Trail in the South of France**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of**

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**in**

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores how meaning is formed through movement. It argues that the way in which hikers perceive, experience and make sense of their environment is contingent on their movement. Specifically, it explores walkers' lived experiences and perceptions of their environments on a long-distance hiking trail. The thesis is based on participant observation on the Cathar Trail in the south of France in 2013 and on archival research. The Cathar Trail lends itself to such an investigation because it invites visitors who are intent on hiking and on the history of the Cathars, a persecuted thirteenth-century religious minority. To interrelate processes of interpretation and interaction in an anthropological perspective, I adopt a phenomenological approach and Ingold's (2000a) ecological approach to human-environment interaction in combination with interdisciplinary and interpretative approaches.

The thesis situates hikers' journeys in socio-political and geographical contexts by deconstructing the twentieth-century historical narratives, heritage discourses and sites (ruined fortresses) which are the basis of the Trail. I then show that hikers came to know the Trail through their physical engagement with their environments. To highlight that walkers' environment-related movement was constitutive of their sense of place, I propose the holistic concept of *terroir* as an alternative to 'landscape'. My discussion of wayfinding demonstrates that hikers made their own way, shaped by movement, topography, sensory perception, technologies and other hikers. I show that walking the Cathar Trail produces a knowledge particular to people's bodily movement along a path and to histories.

Crucially, I develop the theory of a hiking spatiality which is generated by, and specific to, hikers' movement along the Trail. Locally specific but encompassing in its scope, the thesis seeks a common ground in movement. Throughout, I use photographs to engage the reader through intimated and intuited bodily experience. Interweaving epistemology and methodology, the thesis is at one and the same time about meaning-making in movement and is in itself a form of knowledge formed from movement (in particular through the employed 'walking-with' method) according to a research agenda.



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
GLOSSARY.....	xiii
<b>CHAPTER 1: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Travelling through space and time? Project(ed) aims.....	3
Stepping out: methods.....	11
Devising a thesis from hiking perceptions and experiences.....	15
Conclusion.....	19
<b>CHAPTER 2: Setting things up: many 'histories' and one trail.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Cathar 'histories': a historiography.....</b>	<b>22</b>
Where are the Cathars? History on the ground.....	23
Who are the Cathars (and their historians)?.....	29
Why the Cathars? Shadow and light.....	37
<b>The making of the Cathar Trail.....</b>	<b>41</b>
The Cathar Trail project: origins.....	42
Belonging: the Cathar Trail network.....	45
A trail with a cultural theme: hiking with history.....	48
Conclusion: hiking histories.....	53
<b>CHAPTER 3: Coming to know the Cathar Country.....</b>	<b>57</b>
The Cathar Country project.....	58
Medieval monuments and more.....	68
Cathar representations.....	78
Conclusion: a trail <i>in</i> and castles <i>of</i> the Cathar <i>Country</i> .....	84
<b>CHAPTER 4: A trail with(out) castles, a hiking sense of place.....</b>	<b>87</b>
To walk in nature: motivations.....	89
Time out ..., time in ..., no time: performing authenticity.....	97
<i>Terroir</i> : a sense of place.....	111
Conclusion: Trail-making.....	120

<b>CHAPTER 5: Maps and markers: going off Trail .....</b>	<b>123</b>
The lost place of maps .....	126
Waymarkings: between place and map .....	135
Transition: between interpretation and experience.....	142
<b>CHAPTER 6: Finding and making the way.....</b>	<b>147</b>
A way through the senses .....	148
Making the way together.....	159
Conclusion: many ways but one in experience.....	169
<b>CHAPTER 7: Movement and meaning: walking the land with the Cathars.....</b>	<b>171</b>
Conscious walking on and off the Trail .....	172
The spirituality of self and environment .....	183
‘Découverte profonde des Terres Cathares’: movement, places, histories .....	189
Conclusion: moving as a way of knowing .....	202
<b>CHAPTER 8: Hiking spatiality: body-movement-space .....</b>	<b>205</b>
‘I’ve been over there’: outlining the journey .....	206
‘I am going there’: hiking spatiality .....	221
‘I am here’: lived experience .....	238
Conclusion: experience and perception .....	251
<b>CHAPTER 9: Methodology: thinking-moving-writing.....</b>	<b>253</b>
Researching in movement.....	253
No stepping back: embodied field experience.....	262
The issue of representation .....	273
Conclusion: in retrospect .....	281
<b>CHAPTER 10: Conclusion.....</b>	<b>283</b>
Moving through meaning: chapter recapitulation .....	284
Hiking is not a metaphor: contribution to knowledge.....	286
Reflecting on the research process.....	288
Practice and theory: difficulties and possibilities .....	289
And a continuing learning process .....	291
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>293</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>331</b>
APPENDIX 1: Information Sheets and Consent Forms .....	331
APPENDIX 2: Interview Guides.....	337
APPENDIX 3: Lyrics .....	343

## LIST OF FIGURES

---

All photographs in this thesis were taken by the author during fieldwork unless otherwise indicated.

Figure 1.1. The geographical location of the Cathar Trail .....	2
Figure 1.2. This map shows relevant travel routes .....	3
Figure 2.1. Juxtaposition of the two religions.....	24
Figure 2.2. Two sequences in one mural on the wall of an abbey .....	25
Figure 2.3. The mystical Cathar aura .....	31
Figure 2.4. Staged joust with Carcassonne as a backdrop .....	37
Figure 2.5. Inside the Museum of Catharism in Mazamet.....	41
Figure 2.6. The Cathar Trail itinerary from the sea to the town of Foix.....	42
Figure 2.7. Looking out from the Archives départementales.....	45
Figure 2.8. Reunion of history and nature in the Cathar Country .....	48
Figure 2.9. 1997 – 2001 – 2011: The evolution of a guidebook.....	50
Figure 2.10. Poster on the window of the tourist office in Foix .....	54
Figure 3.1. The Cathar Country: a network of sites.....	62
Figure 3.2. Signs advertising the castles as historic sites and the Cathar Country .....	63
Figure 3.3. Forbidden to climb the stairs or onto the wall .....	70
Figure 3.4. This information panel at the gate to Puilaurens outlines the history.....	73
Figure 3.5. Audio guide advertised on a panel before entering Peyrepertuse.....	76
Figure 3.6. Visitors sitting with handset at Quéribus.....	77
Figure 3.7. Travelling within the <i>Pays Cathare</i> network.....	81
Figure 3.8. The Occitan cross twice.....	83
Figure 3.9. The flag with the Occitan cross, symbol for Occitania.....	86
Figure 4.1. Peyrepertuse is one of the tourist sites named ‘citadelles du vertige’ .....	91
Figure 4.2. The first tourist office on the Trail .....	97

Figure 4.3. ‘History is at the castle, life at the village’?.....	102
Figure 4.4. Taking the time for every step at Montségur?.....	104
Figure 4.5. The Apostles walking together towards the next village .....	109
Figure 4.6. Enchanting and arduous Quéribus.....	111
Figure 4.7. ‘Attention: Nature is fragile’ .....	117
Figure 4.8. Vines with Aguilar castle at the back.....	119
Figure 5.1. Schematic map of the Cathar Trail route .....	123
Figure 5.2. Cathar Trail guidebook .....	129
Figure 5.3. Cathar Trail map extract.....	130
Figure 5.4. Where the Australian couple sits.....	132
Figure 5.5. The Apostles .....	134
Figure 5.6. The complete Cathar Trail signage .....	137
Figure 5.7. Many ways lead to Galamus .....	140
Figure 5.8. Three markers on a rock by the wayside.....	140
Figure 6.1. A rocky path from a village to its castle.....	147
Figure 6.2. The path through the Gorges de la Frau.....	153
Figure 6.3. View into the gorge from the previous stage .....	154
Figure 6.4. Enjoying the tranquillity in the morning at a hostel.....	158
Figure 6.5. The Apostles walking into the gorge.....	164
Figure 6.6. Interlude in Carcassonne .....	168
Figure 6.7. Cattle, clouds and a continuing track .....	170
Figure 7.1. The weight and density of the rock face and vegetation .....	176
Figure 7.2. The Belgian group walking consciously .....	178
Figure 7.3. Butterfly, flowers and curiously shaped branches .....	182
Figure 7.4. Slanting movement.....	188
Figure 7.5. The ruin participates in our ‘hiking field’ .....	193
Figure 7.6. Rixende with her staff on the way to Montségur .....	197
Figure 8.1. Approaching each other through the mountain meadow.....	207

Figure 8.2. Topographic trajectories of movement.....	211
Figure 8.3. About to walk into the next valley in the Corbières .....	212
Figure 8.4. A tilted hiking horizon on the Trail .....	219
Figure 8.5. Benches and castle walls orient our perspective.....	229
Figure 8.6. On Peyreperouse.....	233
Figure 8.7. ‘Inside’ Peyreperouse .....	238
Figure 8.8. In the process of unpacking at the hostel in Duilhac .....	241
Figure 8.9. A different place .....	244
Figure 8.10. The first place .....	244
Figure 8.11. Spatial plasticity in light and dark .....	248
Figure 8.12. A densely textured and integrated relief of hills, valleys and clouds .....	249
Figure 8.13. A place for resting in the shade of trees .....	250
Figure 9.1. Self-reflection .....	263
Figure 9.2. Reflection by and through others.....	264
Figure 9.3. ‘Hungry as a wolf’ in the village of Cucugnan.....	266
Figure 9.4. Climbing the rough track on the first morning on the Trail.....	268
Figure 9.5. Shut in for the day .....	273
Figure 9.6. The first evening in the field.....	277
Appendix 3. A ‘colchique’ seen from the Trail .....	343



## GLOSSARY

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**Association des Sites du Pays Cathare** The Association of the Sites of the Cathar Country. A collective organised around central sites (*sites pôles*) of the Cathar Country.

**CDR** *Comité Départemental de Randonnées* The County Hiking Committee, designer of the Cathar Trail. Later integrated into the FFRP.

**CDT** *Comité Départemental du Tourisme* The tourism committee of the county.

**Conseil Général de l'Aude** The General Council of Aude.

**Département** A smaller administrative division of France than 'region', comparable to a 'county'.

**FFRP** *Fédération Française de la Randonnée Pédestre* The national French Hiking Federation.

**GR** *Grande Randonnée* A hiking trail which belongs to the national network of long-distance footpaths owned and run by the FFRP.

A note on translation: Throughout the thesis I have translated into English direct quotes from participants as well as all passages from archival material and from sources listed in another language than English in the Bibliography.



## CHAPTER 1

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# Introduction

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As a teenager in the summer of 1999 I spent a holiday walking on the Cathar Trail with my father. The Cathar Trail is a long-distance hiking<sup>1</sup> trail which leads from the Mediterranean coast westwards towards the Pyrenees in the south of France. I remember the bright summer heat and the heavy downpours at night, long and infuriating stretches of the path and surprise encounters with all the more beautiful and tragic sites and events. However, my interest in Cathar history started before that at school in Berlin with a chance encounter with a children's novel by Inge Ott (1997 [1973]). Subsequently, on a holiday in the south of France I discovered a guidebook to the Cathar Trail (Barthes et al. 1997 [1988]). I was intrigued by the high-perched castle on both book covers and by the books' evocative historical narratives.<sup>2</sup> These sparked a lasting interest in the Trail and later inspired me to travel it. The Trail appealed to me as an adventure; one with both personal and tragic dimensions – a history visibly manifest in striking ruins and landscapes. Many years and long-distance hiking trips later, I was still preoccupied with travel on foot and the past: how is it we know a place and history in situ, or through fiction or literary reflection? How do individual experiences relate to an environment, particularly when the land holds the material traces of dramatic pasts?

In twelve stages over 250 kilometres, the Cathar Trail heads from the town of Port-la-Nouvelle on the Mediterranean coast inland into the hills to the town of Foix through a variety of rural landscapes (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2). Setting off in arid lowland, today's hikers traverse *garrigue* (scrubland), villages, vineyards, ravines and an increasingly hilly and forested countryside with mid-elevation mountains and, as the southern horizon, the Pyrenean high mountain range. The Trail itself is named after the Cathars, a religious minority who were persecuted and massacred as heretics by the Catholic Church and the French crown in the thirteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The Trail joins a series of

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<sup>1</sup> 'Hiking' is the equivalent European term to 'tramping' in New Zealand vernacular.

<sup>2</sup> The guidebook read like a storybook; directions were given as an aside (see also Chapter 2).

<sup>3</sup> The term 'Cathars' often exists in tension with another term – 'good people'. As historians and research participants pointed out, 'Cathars' was a designation created by their enemies, carrying negative

ruined fortresses, the impressive tourist attractions widely, albeit ‘erroneously’ (see below), known as the medieval ‘Cathar castles’, the strongholds of the Cathar resistance and ultimately the sites of their defeat. While the first ruins one encounters on the Trail are merely parts of low stone walls suggestive of more, the further along one travels, the higher the fortresses are located, and the more spectacular they become. Situated on rocky mountaintops, these awe-inspiring vestiges blend in with the surrounding Mediterranean and later Pyrenean landscape and offer extensive panoramas. In the following section I introduce my research design and how it evolved in its final approach. The presentation of Cathar and Trail histories stands at the beginning of the chapter and the thesis because they belong to the development of my research project and lead to the core of the thesis: movement and meaning. This justifies the resulting structure of the thesis and, in itself, shows the process of interpretation at work.

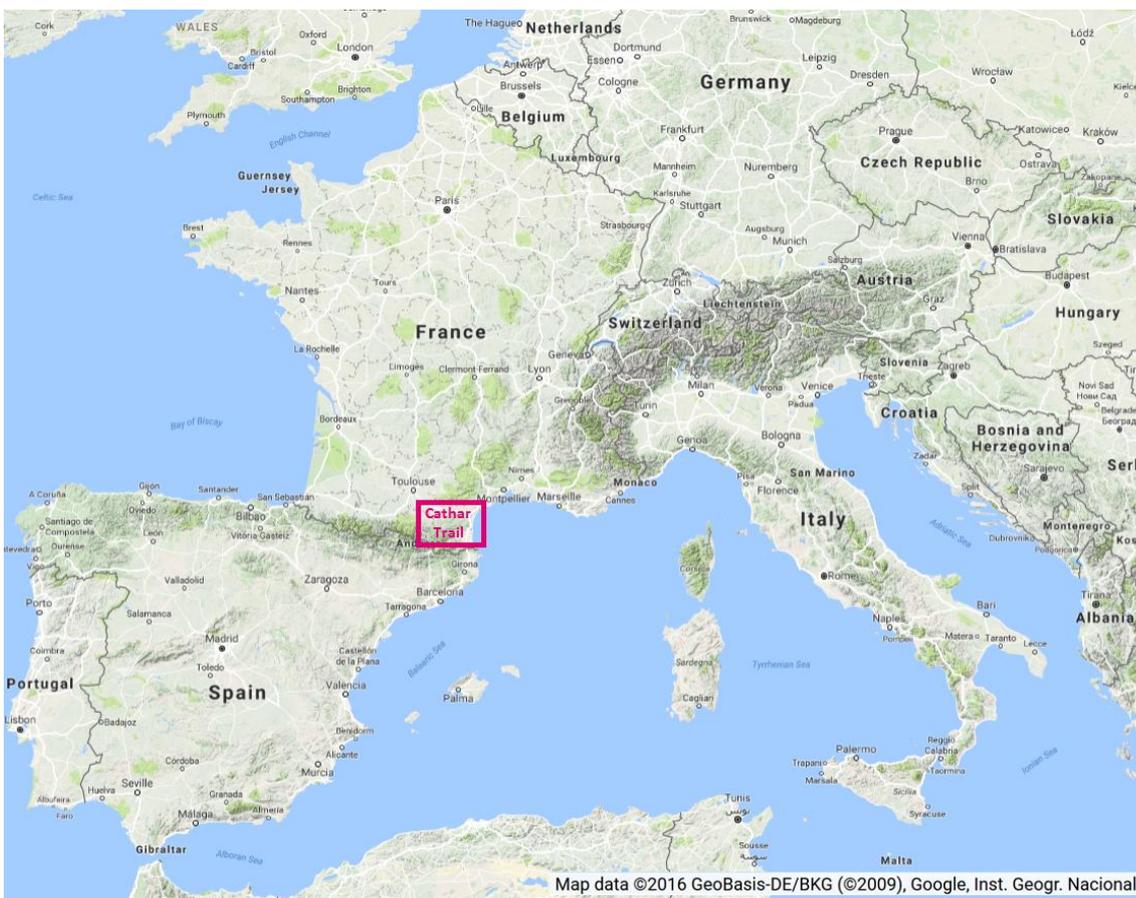


Figure 1.1. The geographical location of the Cathar Trail in the wider European setting (adapted from Google Maps 2016).

connotations (see Chapter 2). However, I use the term ‘Cathars’ rather than ‘good people’ throughout this thesis because my research refers to the ‘Cathar’ Trail, though it should be acknowledged that they prefer ‘good men/women’.

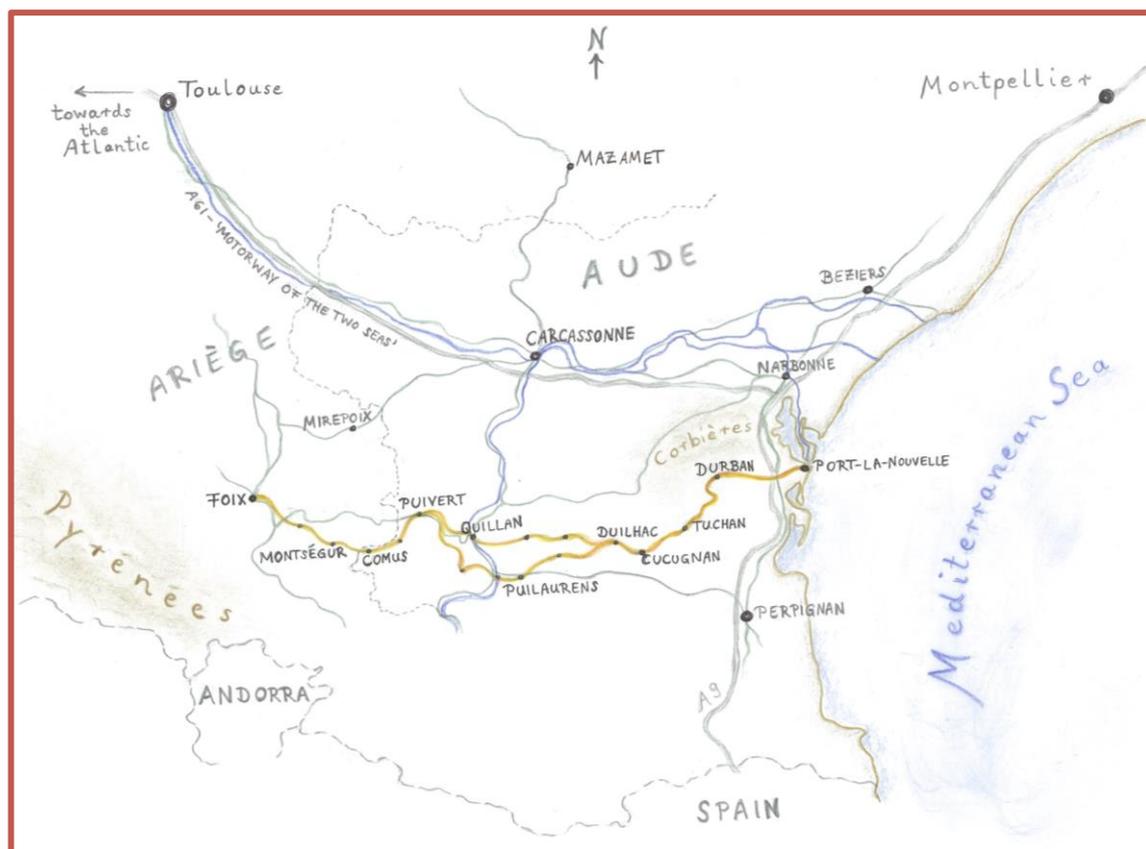


Figure 1.2. This map shows relevant travel routes, towns, villages and borders in the area around the Cathar Trail (in ochre). Drawn by the author due to the difficulty to find a suitable map which crosses county borders, see Chapters 2 and 3 for further explanation.

## Travelling through space and time? Project(ed) aims

### Research questions

When I began research into the Cathar Trail for this thesis, I learnt that not only had the (now ruined) castles not been Cathar dwellings but, moreover, the Cathar Trail linking them was not a medieval ‘route’ (Caubet 2013c). Rather, as interviews with experts and archival research showed, the Trail was a 1980s’ creation responding to a hiking trend and a contemporaneous culturally and historically oriented tourism agenda. The ruins, too, postdate the Cathars. Refuting the common conflation of ‘Cathar’ and ‘castles’, archaeologists have shown that the monuments are the remains of fortresses which the French king, Louis IX, had built after the demise of the Cathars (Quehen and Dieltiens 1983: 463). Hence, I recognised the historical dimension of the Cathar Trail as being more complex, multi-dimensional and political than immediately apparent. Simultaneously, its role in my research became less pervasive since present-day hikers’

perceptions and experiences did not directly respond to the agenda of those who established the historical Trail (see Chapter 4).

On account of the name of the Trail, my own fascination for the Trail and the Cathar history and the appeal of the Cathar history to novelists (see, for example, Mosse 2013 [2005]) and the ruins on the Trail as symbols of the tragic Cathar destiny, I still expected hikers to choose the Cathar Trail because of their interest in the Cathars.<sup>4</sup> (Fieldwork was a game-changer. I make my previous personal bias explicit at this point because doing so is part of the practice of reflexivity which shaped my research.) Reminiscent of nineteenth-century ethnographers and explorers, who by retracing the journeys of their predecessors intended to revivify the past (Amato 2004: 123), numerous guidebooks suggest that to walk through a particular landscape is to walk through history (see the writer and popular historian Robin Neillands 1995: 6). Furthermore, during my pre-fieldwork literature review I had found a rich body of work on the interconnection of ‘history’ and place. Work on fabricated tourist experiences and the heritage industry (and to a lesser extent on historical narratives) abounds in tourism studies, heritage studies and (cultural) geography (Anheier and Isar 2011; Fairclough, Harrison, Jameson and Schofield 2008; Gibson and Pendlebury 2009; Jackson and Kidd 2011).<sup>5</sup> The literature on tourism concentrates on representation and authenticity when looking at place. Various anthropologists (among them Filippucci 2010a; Roseman, Herrero and Fife 2008; Schlunke 2006; Smith 2006) discuss visitors’ appraisal of a particular past in terms of a particular place and vice versa. I was curious about how the idea of treading historic paths leading to final places of refuge would affect hikers’ lived Trail experiences. Did hikers imagine themselves to be following a medieval route, tracking a history dating back eight centuries on this twentieth-century trail, emotionally compelled by the Cathars but admiring the royal fortresses of their persecutors? How did they ‘relive’ the Cathar history through anti-Cathar vestiges?

When I left for fieldwork on the Trail in 2013 I expected to find out what hikers made of the Trail construct and its historic sites through their physical engagement with their environments. How were official narratives of history and place a part of hikers’ immediate lived experience in situ – their own bodily apprehension of a place? Public

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<sup>4</sup> Mosse’s novels are among the recommended historical readings for hikers who prepare their Trail trip (see CDT n.d.c).

<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, I relied more on the ‘The invention of tradition’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) in anthropology than on the above studies (see Chapter 3).

discussions by academics which address ‘history’ and memorialisation in a national context (see, for example, Kulturstiftung des Bundes 2012) tend to focus on the future. They largely ignore how people’s present activities might shape memorialisation, heritage and ‘history’. The Cathar history and heritage in their association with mnemonic landmarks (see also Basso 1996) lend themselves to investigations into the interaction of place, embodied experience, sensory perception and official narratives. My research objective was to investigate how hikers interact with, and interpret, their surroundings when walking on the Trail. How do the physical process of walking, a place and constructed histories interrelate in the specific case of the Cathar Trail?

Consistent with my initial research question, my research objective led me to elucidate the formation of knowledge as emergent from these intersections through physical movement and Trail-making. Perceptual experience, movement and the production of meaning with its historical and environmental dimensions are the main strands of my research. My examination of human-environmental relations in a European setting with a specific history connects multiple historical narratives (Chapter 2), the workings of heritage (Chapter 3) and people’s bodily experiences (Chapter 4 onwards). I draw out how movement is constitutive of meaning in visitors’ experience on the Trail. This is not necessarily an explicitly historical meaning: most hikers I met did not visit the castles on the Trail.

### **Context and basis of the research**

From the start, my main interest has been in movement (specifically walking) and in the Cathar Trail as one particularly scenic and historical itinerary. Through fieldwork and analysis, my thesis intention came to be a demonstration of the creative quality of movement. Walking, banal when considered out of context, is an elementary mode of perception and experience.

Regarding the study’s wider social implications, the experience of walking ‘in nature’ is often romanticised as a post-industrial, post-modern endeavour (see Solnit 2001). Socially constructed and culturally constituted, walking is a multifaceted exercise. Hiking holidays and “‘spiritual tourism’” (Liogier 2009: 15) have been on the rise over recent decades, fitting in well with the contemporary ideology of ‘nomadology’ (Amselle 2011). Practitioners write of outdoor leisure practices like hiking as not just physical exercise but meaningful ventures and adventures providing out-of-the-ordinary

experiences of oneself and the world, of one's own presence within one's material surroundings (see Brämer 2006; Louv 2005). Their 'celebration' of walking operates through an implicit Cartesian dualism of body/mind and in a society versus nature frame, both of which my holistic approach rejects. However, such popular hiking writers have contributed to the valorisation of walking. To enjoy the slow progression of walking, taking time out from the accelerating lifestyles that people perceive and deride, has become a challenge taken up as an antidote to this 'modern' dilemma, one often written about and disseminated after their trek.<sup>6</sup> A large number of books, commenting on 'history', nature and culture, are written after long treks (for example Armitage 2012; Coelho 2009; Kerkeling 2006; Neillands 1995; Terhart 2003). It is interesting to observe, however, that in most of these accounts, the actual process of walking remains implicit, serving only as a vehicle through which intriguing anecdotes can be introduced.

My research aim was therefore to investigate walking as a subject. Moreover, as a subject, walking must be considered existent in both a particular place<sup>7</sup> and time. I intended to investigate the connection between what hikers told me about their surroundings and experiences of these and the physical texture of the terrain (examples are Macfarlane 2012; Shepherd 1977). By analysing how hikers experienced walking on the Trail I would show how place, activity and knowledge interrelate, how meaning and context make sense together.

Anthropological literature with a principal ethnographic focus on walking as a socio-cultural practice was rather scarce through most of the twentieth century (Mauss 1992 [1934]; De Certeau 1984) but has seen increased attention in recent years (Morris 2001; Slavin 2003; Ingold 2004; Ingold and Vergunst 2008; Vust 2010; Legat 2012; Nijs and Daems 2012). Additional studies can be found in sociology, geography and tourism (for example Edensor 2000 and 2010b; Lorimer and Lund 2003; Michael 2000; Wylie 2005). Today, walking is an object of study (see also 'Des piéton·nes et des villes' 2015). In some other studies however, whilst walking might play a role it would not be a theme (for example Walter 1988: 10–12, 253). I hypothesised that a socio-cultural

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<sup>6</sup> Popular historians such as Wallace (1993) and Solnit (2001) explore the 'peripatetic' culture in literature and the arts. Modernity's speed is a common trope among writers (see, for example, Amato 2004: 276; Depardon and Virilio 2008: 20; Virilio 1997 [1995]).

<sup>7</sup> In the course of the thesis, however, I will work more with the concepts of trail, *terroir* and spatiality than place.

research of movement would further illuminate the human-environment and material/cognitive relationships often disputed, calling for a new understanding of situated and embodied forms of learning and knowing.

My own study's affiliation with environmental anthropology stems from its examination of human-environment interaction carried out in an area commonly identified within the nature-culture opposition (see Chapter 4). Environmental anthropology continues to be a major field of research in which studies on place, landscape, tourism and heritage abound (Goehler 2012). From the late twentieth century onwards, anthropologists, influenced by postmodernism and political developments, have deconstructed 'realities' like 'nature' and discussed them as relative concepts (Descola and Pálsson 1996; Dwyer 1996; MacCormack and Strathern 1980; Macnaghten and Urry 1998; Milton 1993). Their research is oriented towards processes, transient spaces and the crossing of (disciplinary) boundaries (Haus der Kulturen der Welt 2013). The prevalence of sources other than from anthropology in my study is itself indicative that former anthropological studies of human-environmental relations have focused almost exclusively on place-attachment, community and identity. While drawing on environmental studies, I include politics and historical narratives as well as show how the latter and movement through an environment evolve together as mutually co-dependent.

It is generally accepted that the freedom of choice and movement associated with travel is distinctive of our lives in a globalised and exceedingly mobile world (Ong 1999: 243). Contemporary arts, politics and economics present mobility as a central issue, as a necessity and a demand (Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine 2012; Kaur and Hutnyk 1999; Kirby 2009; Ong 1999; Salazar 2013). The term 'mobility' is deployed in a wide array of scientific titles referring to global connectivity, bodies, objects, technologies and hypermobility in the virtual and material worlds (Fincham, McGuinness and Murray 2010: 3). Still, it mostly denotes currents in a dynamic topography, the "frozen speed" (Yudell 1977: 72) of a passive and immobilised body instead of bodily movement (Bergman 2008: 21). Diverging from a notion of global, non-localised 'mobility' and from research in environmental anthropology, I adopt a different view of pedestrian movement. In my take on hiking, movement is active, even creative, and bodily. My use of the qualifier 'bodily' underlines that movement is not happening without or *to* the body. Contrary to dualistic thinking, it does not set up a contrast to a

mental realm. Striving for a grasp of what Kirby calls the ‘human-scale experience of movement’ (2009: 2), I conceptualise movement as localised. Dawdy (2013: 257), an archaeologist of movement, explains that ‘movement here operates more at the scale of a dance [with one’s environment, with things] than of ocean currents—it is human, interactive, and intimate’. Contemporary mobile research critically examines, in this way, mundane and taken-for-granted practices like walking (Fincham, McGuinness and Murray 2010: 5; Murray 2010: 24). In the context of my research, walking is subsumed in hiking rather than hiking being a subcategory of walking. Based on my fieldwork, I explore both hiking and walking as forms of movement.

The body is crucial in this study of motion and knowledge on the Trail. Yet, as the philosopher Drew Leder (1990) states, the body is characterised by absence in discourses and self-awareness. Moreover, overviews of the anthropology of the body, such as Howes’ (2011), rarely examine movement. Alternatively, there seems to be a tension between bodies being moved and moving bodies or body motion (see McDonald 2011). Individual movement is equally absent in evocative sensory studies of the effect of ‘natural’ features such as a river on the perceiver (for example Smith 2007 [2005]). The thesis researches the relation between body, movement and space by examining the ways in which people experience space, the physical terrain and themselves in bodily terms (see Chapter 8 in particular).

Developing the politics of mobility, Cresswell investigates mobility in three aspects: (1) the physical moving as a fact; (2) the meanings ascribed to this fact (for example in the form of narratives) and (3) ‘the experienced and embodied practice of movement’ (2008: 130). Nonetheless, he also argues for connecting dimensions of actual movement with a differentiated meaning in mobility studies (2006: 7). According to my thesis rationale, it is fundamental not to split lived experience into categories (such as 1 to 3 above) when analysing. My thesis is a disparate proposition in which physicality, particular discourses and experienced practice are not segregating parameters but intrinsic to each other in meaning-making.

### **Theoretical framework**

For a holistic, comparative and integrative understanding of experience, meaning and representation I combine experiential and phenomenological, ecological, interdisciplinary and interpretative approaches (such as Downey 2007; Ingold 2000a;

Merleau-Ponty 1945; Solnit 2001; Turnbull 2002). I draw literature from various non-anthropological fields and resources, including, but not limited to, cultural theory, cultural geography, neuroscience, popular history as well as guidebooks, maps, travel accounts, fiction and works of art. The diversity of sources opens interrelated lines of enquiry and counterbalances persistently contemporary and transitory preoccupations without treating them in isolation and immobilising them.

My primary theoretical framework is a phenomenological approach to human-environment interaction. My objective is to focus on hikers' lived experiences in movement and in relation to their environments and to go beyond culture/nature, mind/body and subject/object dualisms. I adopt phenomenology as an effective interpretative paradigm to holistically explore how people and environment exist in unison (Jirón 2011: 37). With Heidegger (1977) and Merleau-Ponty (1945) perception, sensory experience and meaning can be apprehended as participatory and inseparable from our body and our surroundings. A phenomenological approach highlights the connectedness of elements which partake in the process of people's knowing and making sense of their environments.

There is frequently a preoccupation in phenomenological literature, especially in archaeology (see Tilley 1993, 2004; Tilley, Hamilton and Bender 2000), with people's encounter with the material. Such studies are necessarily small-scale since they delve into particular experiences and places. My research, equally small-scale, contributes to the less frequently examined phenomenological studies of the more difficult to grasp individual experiences and meaning making processes of Cathar Trail visitors. I highlight the significance of physical movement and 'subjective' experience. Rather than posing a problem for generalisation, the partiality of the findings demonstrates how history and space are not objective entities. Here, the ambiguity of subjective experience, the relation between perception and reality, is what *makes* the results valid even if they are partial, incomplete and in process (see Jirón 2011: 37). Phenomenology provides an overarching link between individual experiences by drawing out the role of human experience in the making of meaning within the context of being in the world (Ingold 2000b: 266; Jirón 2011: 37).

I endeavour not to set later theorising against embodied experience and observation as if different in kind. Accordingly, I speak to literature throughout the chapters rather than

rounding it up in a dedicated review chapter. Geographers have identified a need for studies which link interpretation and embodied experience, for example, through a focus on performance (Knudsen, Rickly-Boyd and Metro-Roland 2012: 206). Inspired by the anthropology of the senses (see Feld 2005; Whitmore 2006), I underline that *what* we know is about *how* we know something. According to the anthropology of the senses, how we sense a place becomes embodied knowledge which shapes present perceptions, anticipations and even the past. If the senses are not just passing on information but are participatory and constitutive, the appreciation of places and landscapes becomes a question of interaction with them. How people engage with their environment determines how they experience and perceive it and make sense of it. Ingold (2000b: 259) develops an ecological approach which is based on ecological psychology and revolves around movement, connectivity and relationality. Here, meaning emerges in relationship between organism and environment. Ingold's concept of 'the whole-organism-in-its-environment' (2000a: 19) takes an environment to be relative to the living organism (the person) in it, both constituting an inseparable and integrated whole.

To study movement means consequently also to explore knowledge creation through physical activity (see Downey 2007; Milton 2002). Hiking does not just shape perceptions and experiences but contributes to the forming of meaning and thus people's knowledge of their environment. I draw on anthropological studies of creativity and perception to portray how physical movement engenders perceptions and experiences of an environment and generates meaning. An ecological approach understands walking as a basis of our existence and as 'itself a way of thinking and of feeling' (Ingold and Vergunst 2008: 2). The thesis thus takes walking to be a way of knowing in action and in the terrain. In *Ways of walking* (Ingold and Vergunst 2008) the editors argue that both walking and the world are inherently ongoing.<sup>8</sup> Walking generates an awareness of the being *in* and *with* one's environment. It brings forth an itinerant knowledge (Ingold 2007: 2). An examination of walking as a formative process enables me to reveal how movement, environment and knowledge interrelate.

I develop this processual perspective through investigating the experience of walking the Trail and visitors' perceptions. My fieldwork enquiry was primarily concerned with people who do not take their surroundings for granted but display curiosity and

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<sup>8</sup> The book researches walking in relation to narrative, ruins, 'Munro bagging' and hunter-gatherers.

enjoyment and choose their destination according to their aspirations. This is not to suggest treating experiential and socially constructed factors in separation, however. For an appraisal of an experientially ‘grounded’ as well as culturally, historically and socio-politically informed journey, I combine a historical and socio-political perspective with the processual and experiential angle of a phenomenological approach and Ingold’s ecological theories.

I take up the above mentioned perspectives to expose how assumedly separate factors belong together in human experience. Cultural meanings shape how we draw knowledge from experience and are themselves constituted by it. Hikers perceive and know their surroundings in a way which is particular to hiking (such as sustained locomotion, carrying the weight of the backpack, pace and perception). The Cathar history and assumed Cathar sites add the dimension of constructed narratives and places to the above theories. In the Cathar case, hikers also negotiate among multiple ‘pasts’ and their own bodily apprehension of the place while they walk on the constructed Cathar Trail, which they possibly experience as *the* Cathar Trail. Walking the Cathar Trail produces a knowledge particular to the bodily movement through an environment and to historical narratives (see especially Chapter 7 for the latter). Hikers know histories and the Trail as they walk on paths.

## **Stepping out: methods**

### **The fieldwork undertaking**

The thesis is based on two months ethnographic fieldwork on the Cathar Trail in September and October 2013. The fieldwork was timed to take place in autumn, during the tourist and hiking season, before the onset of cold weather and the reduced access to tourist attractions and accommodation facilities from December onwards. I anticipated that autumn would be a likely choice for keen hikers in France since during summer the first Cathar Trail stages can be very hot with little shade (Chapter 4 discusses weather conditions). To ensure a sufficient number of hiker-participants on the Trail before I embarked on fieldwork, I asked the tourism committees of the *départements* of Aude and Ariège<sup>9</sup> in which the Cathar Trail is located for an estimate of the average number of visitors on the Trail in September and October. Although the committees did not give

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<sup>9</sup> A *département* is a smaller administrative division of France than ‘region’.

me an answer, when I contacted hostels and bed and breakfasts on these stages, they were fully booked. However, as I explain in Chapter 9, I met a smaller number of hikers than expected once I was on the Trail.

I walked the Cathar Trail twice from the sea to the mountains. The middle section of the Trail branches off into a northern and a southern variant which reunite four stages later (see Figure 1.2). I took each route once. On the way, I stopped for visits to the ruined fortresses on the Trail, to visitor centres and museums. Between my two treks, I stayed a week first in Foix (the town at the end of the Trail) and then in Carcassonne (the administrative centre of the ‘Cathar Country’) to organise meetings with tourist agents, historians and tour guides and access records on the history and tourism of the Cathar Trail in archives, visitor and recreation centres and museums. Chapter 2 relies most heavily on this archival material, consisting predominantly of letters and project drafts of the Trail. While my fieldwork was not long-term, my involvement in pedestrian travel and in the Cathar Trail have persisted over several years. As such, they inform my conceptual approach, Trail experience and interpretation.

The Trail can be done by people in good physical condition but without long-distance hiking experience. The path is well kept. Still, as I will discuss in Chapter 9, the loaded backpack, rough uneven terrain and occasional steep ascents can make social interaction on the Trail more difficult. The hike is strenuous in that climbs and descents alternate (averaging about 700 metres climb) with stages of an average of 24 kilometres a day. Some daily stages cannot be shortened because hikers travel on an occasionally remote Trail; there is no closer village to stay overnight on the way. Concerning logistics, the towns on the Trail (Port-la-Nouvelle, Quillan and Foix) have railway access but apart from these gateways the Trail leads from village to village and is difficult to access by public transport (restricted bus service). Most stages end in another small village where local amenities are limited. I considered the usual potential hazards of hiking outdoors (physical injuries) when planning my fieldwork. Although fieldwork proved challenging (see Chapter 9), it was not dangerous although hunting was surprisingly widespread around some stretches of the Trail at this time of the year.

Participants in my study are grouped into hikers and local experts. The former are my main focus, the latter include tour and mountain guides, accommodation owners, several museum and castle keepers, administrative tourist agents and historians. Taking

advantage of the set-up of the Trail, I relied on meeting hikers in casual encounters along the way or at the hostels on the Trail. Hikers were dispersed along the Trail and our conversations were most often spontaneous and short. Chapter 4 will explain why I did not recruit participants when visiting tourist attractions as I had anticipated. Local experts, on the other hand, in their capacity as service providers to visitors, were available for open-ended interviews.

Walking trails in France are public and freely accessible. Most hikers I talked with were French, some were Belgian, German and Spanish (see Chapter 4 for a presentation of the Trail audience). We mostly communicated in French unless they preferred English. Twice I walked with a large group. These episodes stood out in my fieldwork. I spent the fourth until the sixth southern Trail stage with a group of eleven French hikers; together we became nicknamed the Twelve Apostles. At a later stage, I walked one day with seven mostly Belgian female walkers. Our group was nicknamed the Seven Dwarfs and Snow White. The groups devised these names themselves in response to outsiders who tried to ascertain the size of the group. Otherwise, my fellow hikers kept changing, often co-participating only for short time spans, ranging from a few minutes (when we were walking in opposite directions) to half a day. Repeatedly, I crossed paths with groups and solo hikers walking in the opposite direction to mine or on a daytrip which partly followed the Trail itinerary. Then we both stopped for a brief chat. With several couples I walked half-day and half-hour stretches of the way.

### **Participant observation and interviews**

My fieldwork involved participant observation, my experiences and hikers' accounts which I interpreted in an experiential framework. A deeper discussion of methods will follow in the penultimate chapter. I used a mobile method, the 'walking with' method (Lee and Ingold 2006: 82; Pink 2007: 246), in which the researcher shares the path with participants, participates in the hiking activity and interacts with fellow hikers. I walked and talked with and observed hikers on the Trail and at places of convergence (accommodation and castles). I built on the casual exchange which is common between hikers, itself facilitated by sharing the path, the hiking activity and accommodation (see

also Devanne 2005: 111).<sup>10</sup> Depending on the situation, I engaged in opportunistic informal conversations with individual walkers, couples and groups.

In conversations and interviews I pursued different questions with different kinds of research interlocutors. With hikers I aimed for an insight into their perceptions and understandings of their environment and history in their relation to the walking activity. My questions addressed hikers' motivations for walking the Trail, their expectations and organisation of their treks and their experiences and interpretations of their surroundings (see Appendix 2). With 'local experts' (gatekeepers to the Trail and to the Cathar histories and tourism) I undertook several one-off, one-to-one semi-structured interviews, using the general interview guide approach. These interviews took place at the interviewees' workplaces (visitor centres, museums, research centres) or in their homes. Interviews with local experts operated more like consultations for quoting their knowledge on Trail tourism and Trail historicity, for an idea of what visitors look for and how and where they are guided, rather than unravelling personal hiking experiences. They also shared their expert network with me. In accordance with Massey University's Code of Ethical Conduct, I asked for participants' permission and used a business card, information sheets and consent forms as possible under way on the Trail (see Appendix 1). The ethical approval process helped me to ensure that my research would not cause any harm and would respect participants' privacy and confidentiality.

The study is inevitably limited by the difficulty of evoking the dynamics of movement with language. Chapter 9 explores how movement can be worded without immobilising it and thereby rendering it non-existent. Also, it focuses on actual experience, largely leaving aside the subversive potential of walking as well as wider social, political and economic ramifications and personal travel biographies, travel agencies, packaged tours to and partly on the Cathar Trail and the tourism economy.

### **Recording fieldwork**

Open to situatedness and reflexivity, the walking-with method involved discursive, observational and auto-ethnographic perspectives which followed up research questions, the development of lines of enquiry and personal experiences. For a more comprehensive account of lived experience I recorded data through writing in a field

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<sup>10</sup> The accommodation on the Trail includes hostelstyle *gîtes d'étape* which offer basic dormitories (privately run or in municipal facilities) and bed and breakfasts.

notebook, photographing with a digital camera, audio recording and collecting promotional brochures. Over the day's walking, I jotted notes when wind and time permitted and occasionally did audio recordings. The latter were limited by the capacity of the recording device and infrequent access to a computer and internet. Furthermore, the audibility of walking conversations was restricted by ambient noise such as the scunch of our steps on the track.

I assiduously photographed the Trail with its surroundings to 'capture' its presence. Thereafter, in New Zealand, I used these photographs for detailed documentation of the sites and as mnemonic devices in the writing process. One needs to keep in mind, however, as Fetterman (2010 [1989]: 80) underlines, that a camera is a projective tool and photographs are not free from manipulation and context. So these pictures are taken in a tourist frame. They were triggered by what struck me as remarkable. My use of photographs reflects the notion that photographs constitute in themselves a particular relation between idea (the photographer's motive) and material reality. Chapter 9 conceptualises my use of photographs.

As a tourist among tourists, I could unobtrusively take pictures. In keeping with ethical considerations and my research aims, I took them in public spaces and from a distance to capture the 'big picture', people's positioning in the landscape and their viewpoints. In the few cases that individuals are identifiable, they have given me permission. At the tourist hubs, I took note of the memorabilia on offer and borrowed audio-guides to get an insight into the construction of narratives and the presentation of tourist attractions.<sup>11</sup> To learn about visitors' interpretations, I recorded comments written in visitors' books at accommodation and tourist sites which pertained to my research questions.

## **Devising a thesis from hiking perceptions and experiences**

### **The 'how' of the thesis argument**

The thesis is at once about meaning-making in movement and is in itself a form of knowledge formed from movement according to a research agenda. It explores how we perceive, experience and make sense of our environment when moving. People's engagement in activity with an environment brings out a particular meaning (Ingold

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<sup>11</sup> I was unable to join guided tours of castles because there were none on offer in autumn.

2000a: 22). Hence, movement is crucial. Inevitably, this enquiry follows on from my personal sense of, or feeling for, movement and space.<sup>12</sup>

The kind of knowledge at stake in the thesis is the ‘how’ rather than the ‘what’ knowledge which will remain vague and contradictory. The point of the thesis is not ‘what’ hikers see or feel, but ‘how’ they come to know their environment in movement through experience and perception. My outlook is consequently holistic and processual: I do not reason in terms of being but in terms of activity. In this respect, I differ from the type of phenomenology which posits ‘that the question of “*how* something can mean something” is a semiotic problem, while “*what* something is” is a phenomenological question’ (Møystad 2012, original emphasis). The thesis traces processes of meaning-making from an experiential perspective without leading readers to a final endpoint. The processes themselves constitute its core. For the reader who focuses on the ‘what’, the angles will keep shifting, various avenues will not lead to a conclusive destination and multiple ‘points’ will stand in conflict with each other. The problem of such a ‘how’ perspective is that the ‘how’ can only be examined through the ‘what’ (and the ‘who’!). So in the thesis I rely on particular instances to express a process which is always particular but which goes beyond the immediate.

### **Thesis axes**

One line of enquiry of the thesis assesses how experience relates to constructs. Initially, I envisioned the thesis chapters as operating within a reciprocal exchange between constructs and experience. The narratives of novels and guidebooks, for example, would shape visitors’ perception of a place and their bodily experience in place, in turn, would transform these narratives. Both would become indistinguishable. Moreover, I would have juxtaposed the official Trail structure and users’ Trail experience. The ‘inauthenticity’ of the ‘Cathar’ castles would have lent itself to an interesting discussion of how visitors’ experiences relate to constructed places. However, as the thesis progressed, I left aside an initially planned chapter on the imaginaries and physical

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<sup>12</sup> The American and British translations of the Danish novel *Smilla’s Sense of Snow* (1993) and *Miss Smilla’s Feeling for Snow* (1993), respectively, illustrate the linguistic choice between a more passive ‘sense of’ and an overly emotive ‘feeling for’ to express the main protagonist’s ‘astonishing ability to “read” snow. Not only does she know all of its types and their behaviours and effects, but she can see how someone has walked through it, and she can use her feeling for or sense of it to guide her home across it in Greenland’ (Malmkjær n.d.: 4). In his research on Eco-Paganism, Harris develops the notion of such a “‘felt sense” – an embodied tacit knowing’ (2013: 406) and a sensitivity to place (2013: 409).

experiences of visitors at the ruins because, after all, works of fiction and castle visits only played a marginal role for the hikers I met.

The constructs-experience polarity did therefore not become the organising principle of the thesis. Instead, the thesis is hinged on bodily experience and the process of making sense (also as a repercussion of my fieldwork experience). My early chapters analyse official constructs, while later chapters focus on individual experience and are more thoroughly phenomenological. While people's embodied experiences in movement are the core of the thesis, my process of analysis of field material began with Chapters 2 and 3. These two chapters were part of my making of socio-cultural meaning in and of the field. They also serve to show in the thesis that meaning is not formed in a cultural vacuum. Travellers come with histories and they come to places with histories and with ties to other places and people. The particular Cathar narratives of these early chapters are also reference points which are an important basis at the beginning of the thesis because I draw on them in the later chapters to explicate the role of movement in walkers' making of meaning (in particular in Chapter 7). Chapter 6 is the turning point from a focus on constructs and discourses to embodied experiences in movement. Yet this shift in attention is not a move away from constructs to emplaced and embodied experience. Rather, I position official constructs (for example in the form of a signpost in Chapter 6) as integral to individual embodied experience and as partaking in movement. Still, my main focus is neither on the dialectics between constructs and experience nor on the interpolation of constructs within embodied experience. As explained earlier, movement is the groundwork of the thesis. The experience-construct interrelation is an aspect of the journeying along the Cathar Trail.

### **Chapter overview**

The thesis begins with a presentation and deconstruction of the constructed historical narratives and heritage sites which are the basis of the Cathar Trail. Chapters 2 and 3 situate hikers' experiences on the Trail in a socio-political and geographical context. Advertised as integrating (the experience of) nature, culture and history, the Cathar Trail is distinctive in that it invites visitors who are intent on hiking and interested in 'history'. Presenting the stage for tourism performances, Chapter 3 explains that the area beyond the Trail and the castles is made resonant to a Cathar inheritance through the 'Cathar Country' programme. Here, Chapters 3 and 7 connect: rather than through

castle visits, the Cathar histories become components of the *terroir*<sup>13</sup> for walkers (see also Chapter 4). As to the sourcing of material, Chapters 2 and 3 work with academic and popular writers, my conversations with local experts and promotional material. All the subsequent chapters centre on the hiking activity. They draw on my observations of fellow walkers and conversations with them and my Trail experiences (some of which I only remembered when writing the chapters).

While my first chapters develop the official base of the Trail, the chapters following Chapter 4 increasingly depart from the prescribed journey to focus on aspects of individuals' journeying experiences in which official constructs are an integral part. They reposition the Cathar histories in terms of individual Trail experiences. Chapter 4 investigates the cultural versus material landscape and develops the concept of *terroir* as a kind of meaning-making which involves people's activities in relation to their environment. I refer to *terroir* again in later chapters but the thesis remains about the process of meaning-making rather than attached to this one manifestation of the link between cultural landscapes and physical topography. Chapter 4 investigates what meanings the Trail had for hikers in practice by examining hikers' motivations, the organisation of their journey and their activities on the Trail. It shows how travellers' Cathar Trail journeys are different from the official heritage discourse.

The paired Chapters 5 and 6 are at the centre of the thesis. Their discussion of wayfinding demonstrates that the constructed Cathar Trail is part of the embodied Trail in hikers' experiences. Here, phenomenology meets discourses. Note, however, that my take on phenomenology does not exclude cultural constructions since I consider cultural constructions not to be a mental prerogative. Chapter 5 exposes official constructs (Cathar Trail prescriptions such as markers) in the landscape, while Chapter 6 traces situated sensory perception in relation to official constructs.

Where Chapters 5 and 6 revolve around the presumed tension between individual sensory perception and physically marked Trail constructs, Chapter 7 changes tack. It starts from one hiking group's project of conscious walking. Here the emplaced Cathar histories (discussed in Chapters 2 and 3) recur in walkers' lived experiences. Yet instead of a conflicting relationship between individual experiences and official

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<sup>13</sup> An alternative concept to 'cultural landscape' which does not divide immaterial from material properties of the land.

discourses, it is the walking itself which takes individuals to the Cathars. The Cathars *make sense* through individuals' walking experiences in the 'Cathar Country'. Hereby I do not discount official discourses but reveal meaning-making in practice with the aforementioned discourses being part of this practice. If the movement on a signposted path through a landscape is also about narratives, then topography, histories and fiction cannot be isolated from each other. I show that all three are mutually constitutive when examining how people come to know their environments.

The thesis culminates with Chapter 8 which explores meaning through movement in a discussion of space. This chapter develops the theory of a hiking spatiality, arguing that hikers' physical moving generated a specific spatiality. In its consideration of landscape and sensory perception, Chapter 8 connects to Chapters 4 and 6. It also leads over into Chapter 9 which is epistemological as much as methodological and which elaborates on why both approaches were inseparable in the development of the thesis. The methodology chapter (Chapter 9) comes last in the thesis because it traces the formation of research knowledge through the reciprocal relationship between form and content, research design and my embodied tacit understanding (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011 [2002]: 11). Meaning and context make sense together. It reflects on the process of analysis and interpretation of fieldwork material which evolved through my chapter writing. Seeking adequate means of understanding lived experiences, how to integrate thinking, writing and observation, the study follows the lead of Tilley, Hamilton and Bender (2000: 45). It takes up the lines of both writing and walking, while highlighting the incongruence between both. For a format of writing that follows (from) the content I make use of photography. The study thus offers an insight into various facets of walking the Trail by taking into account how written accounts not only appropriate and interpret but also actualise the transient experience of motion and the Trail.

## **Conclusion**

The thesis explores the role of human experience and bodily movement in the making of meaning. It propounds a holistic conception of how we relate to our environment and how our environment relates to us in knowledge, experience and action, how we make sense of our environment and locate ourselves in the world. I posit that such an investigation linking movement, perception and meaning might help to go beyond the persisting culture/nature, mind/world, mind/body and subject/object dualisms. My

## CHAPTER 1

examination of human-environmental relations in a European setting with a specific history (constituted by a multitude of narratives) grounds movement in situations and localities to show how motion is crucial to the experience and knowledge of one's environment. Locally specific but encompassing in its scope, the thesis seeks a common ground in movement. How do we know our environment in and through localised movement? This thesis itself is an instance of this knowing, crafted through a process of hiking and researching the Cathar Trail.

## CHAPTER 2

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# Setting things up: many ‘histories’ and one trail

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This chapter and the next explore the constructed narratives and places which underlie hikers’ journeys on the Cathar Trail. The function is to situate hikers’ experiences within historical, socio-political and geographical contexts. The chapter depends a lot on historical discourses but has an anthropological outlook. It uses academic historical works and written archival sources alongside interviews and conversations with research participants and my personal field experiences. The research participants are, in this case, what I call ‘local experts’ (see Chapter 1). Their voices will be interwoven with scholarly writings, often creating a fragmented discursive landscape with contrasting knowledges. In turn this enables the reader to enter into a similar ‘meshwork’<sup>14</sup> as that in which hikers experience and articulate their journey. The chapter is split into two parts. In the first part I deliberately use the present tense to underline that Cathar ‘histories’ are part of a present-in-the-making even if a particular constellation of this present is momentary. Thereafter, field accounts are written in the past tense to acknowledge ever-changing situations regarding participants and the Cathar Trail. As later chapters will show, any one trail has diverse significance for hikers as it is repeatedly made and re-made through experience. Since the context is constitutive of the content (Chapter 9 explains this concept), the relation between where a story takes place and where and by whom it is narrated will be central. I will therefore situate how historical material originated in the field and problematise the positionality of interlocutors to show how procedure and meaning-making are connected in my process of constructing the thesis.

Geographically speaking, this chapter is the most encompassing, including urban areas away from the Cathar Trail such as Carcassonne, Mazamet and Toulouse, which are

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<sup>14</sup> In Ingold’s concept of meshwork various lines of life and movement interweave rather than forming an ordered network of self-contained entities (2011: 63).

formative places in the current making of the Cathar history (Figure 1.2). The first part of this chapter places the Cathars in geographical locations, scholarly accounts and museums. In order to delineate Cathar ‘histories’ in action, it proceeds from the ground (where are the Cathars?) to the historians (who are the Cathars?) to their socio-political milieu (why the Cathars?). We cannot ask: ‘Who are the Cathars today?’ without asking ‘for whom’. The ever present ‘who’ in the following comprises historians, non-academic writers and local experts. When I asked the latter about the Cathars and the Cathar sites, they referred me to specific, ‘serious’ historians and to ‘enlightening’ novels.<sup>15</sup>

The second part of this chapter presents the Cathar Trail as a commercial and political project based on heritage sites but also Cathar history, on cultural tourism but also an outdoor trend. The Trail was intended to promote ‘development’ in a range of fields and the agendas behind it could be conflicting at times. These agendas are materialised in the very substance of the Trail and form the basis of the trail which hikers walk today.

## Cathar ‘histories’: a historiography

To set the scene for the Cathar Trail hiking, I draw on the cultural history of the geographical area, taking into account divergent interpretations of the Cathar legacy over time and how individual historians construct meaningful narratives. This first part of the chapter plaits *one* narrative through multiple histories to prepare the ground for the Cathar Trail and its hikers. It is oriented by individuals’ perspectives today rather than being a systematic portrayal of historical individuals and the Cathar faith and rituals.<sup>16</sup> My historiographical reading rests to a large extent on French Cathar histories written in the 1980s and 1990s and held in Australian university libraries.<sup>17</sup> Today, Catharism appears to have no longer the allure it had in the 1980s and 1990s. The Catharism presented by today’s historians and local experts has moral overtones. In

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<sup>15</sup> An independent hiking tour operator similarly asserts that ‘[t]o discover [Catharism], the hiker must immerse himself in it through reading, imagine himself in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and let his imagination roam’ (Caubet 2013a).

<sup>16</sup> The prefaces and epilogues in historical accounts have been an insightful source, disclosing each author’s relationship to the Cathars and the Cathars’ socio-political relevance at present and over the last century.

<sup>17</sup> Australia has its own studies of Catharism (Ward 2011). While much has been written since, this selection of historical sources reflects the popularity of Catharism in academia in the 1980s. The Cathar Trail and all things Cathar continued to have a strong resonance in the 1990s (see McCaffrey’s Ph.D. thesis in 1999).

their narrations, the Cathars symbolise respect for the ‘other’ and thereby for oneself. As will be seen in the following, geographical locales play a particular role in representations of Catharism since the Cathar stories unravel from places, while the places in turn live through the stories.

## **Where are the Cathars? History on the ground**

### **Paths of freedom and resistance: geographical emplacement of Catharism**

The public resonance of Catharism (often emotional and romantic) is particular in that it is tied not only to a (mystical) spiritual quest but also to a topography and a ‘Pyrenees mythology’ (Taussig 2006: 27) which speaks of death and escape and historical passages (Peyrou 2002: 21, 23). In the case of the Cathar Trail, freedom is a feature of both activity – the physical and imaginative freedom of travel – and locality, the Pyrenees as a stronghold for political and religious opposition. As in Southeast Asia (see Scott 2009), mountains here function as zones of refuge which endure over centuries. They are ‘a space of political resistance but also of cultural refusal’ (Scott 2009: 20) and of religious and linguistic difference and autonomy. In the archaeological museum in Montségur (the village below the most renowned castle of the same name on the Cathar Trail) I find the head of the museum dressed all in white in a medieval-style. He tells me about tourists and Cathars. Medieval historians and local experts understand Catharism, in his words, as ‘a very diversified European phenomenon’. Yet, in Languedoc, an area in the south of France, Catharism gained momentum. With a strong and tolerant local nobility, Languedoc was thriving culturally and economically in the twelfth century (Costen 1997: 51; Labal 1982: 59, 147). Supported by literate Occitan lords, Catharism became the religion of the people. In a time of destabilising social change, urban expansion, commercial activity and loss of orientation and roots, Catharism, rather than the Catholic Church, offered answers and hope (Labal 1982: 64, 70) and respected the ‘common’ people (see Figure 2.1). Catharism was an alternative Christian movement which preached a dualist doctrine (God versus the Devil) and practiced asceticism. Its organisational structure was more egalitarian and inclusive than the established Catholic Church.



Figure 2.1. Juxtaposition of the two religions, Catholic Church and Catharism. Puilaurens castle (nowadays associated with a Cathar refuge) and a church in the village below, both on the Cathar Trail. Often, both the ruined castle on top of the mountain and the neighbouring village, nowadays located at the foot of the mountain, bear the same name. Most of the castles are also day trip destinations for motorised visitors who leave their cars in the car park and walk the last half hour to the castle.

One dark Saturday night in Tuchan, a village early on the Cathar Trail, I ask a young woman for directions to the hikers' accommodation. While she drives me to my destination I learn that she is a local archaeologist and former guide at Montségur. During an interview in her home a few days later, Claire paints the following picture:<sup>18</sup> 'One has to imagine that at that time the "common" people were *extremely* poor, they had the right to absolutely *nothing*. One had to pay for everything. There were constant taxes and surtaxes. The people had *nothing* to live. There's an oppressive image of religion'. Arrive the Cathars, who preach in the vernacular and offer to heal people with plants and 'never ask for *anything*' because they 'don't care', since they believe that 'life on earth is useless. In fact, the true life is after death. They said that hell was on earth. Therefore they weren't attached to any material possessions. On the contrary, they rejected them'. The non-existence of Cathar castles (see below) is thus intrinsically connected to who the Cathars were. As an expert asserts, 'Catharism has left no visible material evidence of its existence. The Cathars have not built anything, have not written

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<sup>18</sup> Claire spoke to me in her capacity as seasoned tour guide. She also narrated her personal experience of the place with hindsight. For better readability I have contracted the passages where I quote participants at length.

anything’ (Caubet 2013a; for re-iteration of this idea see also the Museum of Catharism and Baier 1991: 183; O’Shea 2001 [2000]: 248; Pegg 2011: 588).<sup>19</sup>

In Claire’s words, the Cathars thus stand out against the medieval Catholic Church which is ‘*poisoned by material possessions*’, and requires people to pay ‘to have their place in paradise’ and ‘who stuffs herself with money and in feasts’. Not unlike monks, the Cathars returned to basics with their ideology. The monks however, Claire stresses, ‘are *locked up in monasteries*’. Set against this background, writers describe how the Cathars’ practices were integral to their daily life and their surroundings (Bertrand 1982: 17; Labal 1982: 69; Lambert 1998: 73; Raffy 2011: 66). The Cathars walk from village to village to preach (see far left on Figure 2.2) and devotees gather at Cathar meeting houses in villages and sometimes at sites like Montségur to hear them preach (Bruschi 2009: 62, 138; Martin 2008 [2005]: 127; Roquebert 2006 [1970]: 429).



Figure 2.2. Two sequences in one mural on the wall of an abbey: Cathar practices (left) and the crusade against them (right) in a street in Carcassonne (Rue Trivalle).

To situate Catharism, local museums such as Montségur and Mazamet (see below and Figure 2.5) not only refer to a time of upheaval but also to people’s sense that the apocalypse and the Devil were near. The Albigensian Crusade (Figure 2.2 above) was initiated by the Catholic Church in 1209, carried on by French lords and later adopted by the king, Louis VIII of France. A text panel from 2005 in the Museum of Catharism in Mazamet, a town one hundred kilometres north of the Cathar Trail, states about the crusade: ‘One can say that it was the Pope [Innocent III, 1198–1216] who declared it, the king of France who won it and the Occitan lords who lost it’. The museum presents

<sup>19</sup> Local experts referred to the Museum of Catharism (see below) as a ‘centre d’interprétation’ rather than a museum since it does not display artefacts.

the evolution of the war during which previous sieges are taken up again, inhabitants massacred and Cathars burned as heretics at the stake. The war ends with the inclusion of Languedoc into the French kingdom in 1229.

The power narrative of the crusade feeds into border stories associated with the Pyrenees. From the Middle Ages to after the Second World War, the multiple histories of persecuted minorities fleeing across and alongside the geographical and political border of the mountain chain left their mark on the region. Among these sites are a centre of the French resistance movement and internment camps from the Second World War, as well as another trail associated with the Cathars (the *Chemin des Bonshommes*, see Chapter 4). The latter leads from one of the ruins on the Cathar Trail to Spain. The notion and the materiality of the border and its routes come to the fore here as well as the importance of sites which had been centres of Cathar resistance. The Cathar resistance had organised networks and secret paths (Bruschi 2009: 65, 75; Labal 1982: 184; Lambert 1998: 141; Niel 1973: 258; Oldenbourg 1961 [1959]: 321). Cathars fled to the isolated, armed fortresses or hid in fortified caves in the woods and the hills (Labal 1982: 145; Nelli 1991 [1966]: 150). A heritage association's temporary exhibition on the castles in the Maison des Mémoires Mazamet tells visitors that the fall 'of Montségur (in 1244) and Quéribus (in 1255) [...] mark the end of military operations and of the Cathar resistance'. Next, I investigate the role of locales and archaeology in constructing 'truths', exemplified by the history of the 'Cathar castles'.

### **'Truths' of(f) the ground: Cathar castles which do not exist**

Since the 1980s, the mystical idea of the fortresses being symbolic in their layout (Bertrand 1982: 26; Niel 1965: 388) has largely been superseded by the knowledge that the ruins are not even Cathar constructions, but the remains of royal military fortresses built between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries on the locations of the previously demolished fortified villages used by Cathars (Brenon 1995 [1988]; Roquebert 1992: 20; Quehen and Dieltiens 1983). The royal fortresses were built under the French king Louis IX on 'a defensive line' to secure the frontier to Spain (which was further north than today) and to control the locals (Lannoy 2005: 80; Roquebert 1982: 301; Quehen and Dieltiens 1983: 463). Claire emphasises that the original homesteads had not been 'Cathar castles' either, but had been constructed between the tenth and twelfth centuries, before the Cathars. Effectively, 'Cathar castles' is 'a term in advertising without a

historical foundation'. The Cathars never built fortresses. The latter come into existence when they are first mentioned in writing. She explains that the castles are 'Cathar' in the sense that Cathars stayed on site, hosted and protected by the local lord.<sup>20</sup> The only castle rebuilt for Cathars was Montségur, she argues, referring to a document written by Cathars which bears such a request. Since neither material structure nor artefacts bear Cathar characteristics, it is the association of the locale with a textually documented Cathar presence which identifies Montségur as a Cathar site (equally Roquebert 1992: 37). However, once again, the castle visited today was built after the Cathars.

Even later, the heritage exhibition in Mazamet (see subsection above) explains, the 1659 treaty of the Pyrenees sealed the peace between France and Spain and made the fortresses redundant. Left derelict and serving as stone quarries until the 1900s, they were subsequently researched, classified as historical monuments (between 1900 and 1950) and consolidated before they became tourist attractions under the label 'châteaux cathares' in 1966 (Baro, Pous and Térés 2008: 17; Burjade and Bayrou 2005/2006: 19; Gau and Gau 2004: 16; Langlois and Peytavie 2012; Lannoy 2005: 5). From then on, they underwent "Catharisation" (Soula 2005: 530). In the 1980s, the ruins were redefined in the light of current scholarship and became part of the *Pays Cathare* programme as castles of the Cathar Country (Langlois and Peytavie 2012). The next chapter will explain this political programme of regional economic development.

Today, historical 'facts' still clash with public representations and common assumptions. Quehen and Dieltiens (1983: 9) and Lannoy (2005: 80) point out the paradox that visitors, attracted by the Cathar tragedy, are awed by these manifestations of the royal power's domination.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, however, the sites themselves impress their story on people, at least according to Brenon. She argues that while the imaginary Catharism continues in poetry, religious sects and mass tourism, the development of medieval archaeology in the second half of the twentieth century uncovered the absence of Cathar traces (Brenon 1995 [1988]: 269; 2000: 360, 367). Yet, Brenon neither specifies whether, nor how, tourists might come to look beyond the presumed Cathar castles, even as archaeologists 'at last' search the ruins for their own

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<sup>20</sup> For the Cathar historian Jean Duvernoy, the existence of Cathars on site justifies the identification of the Cathars with the castles (cited in Garcia and Genieys 2005: 127). Ironically, the ruins themselves 'materialise' what the Cathars' own immateriality left little trace of.

<sup>21</sup> The English guide to the Cathar Trail (Mattingly 2012 [2006]) and the 2013 Lonely Planet guidebook (Williams et al. 2013 [1994]: 751–752) present the 'Cathar castles' to the tourist.

sake instead of for the Cathars (Langlois and Peytavie 2012). Claire tells me that archaeological research is stopped nowadays due to ‘des histoires archéologiques’ (issues to do with the practice of archaeology). The archaeologists have to publish their findings before they can continue finding. Here, archaeology (unintentionally) feeds the mystery of treasures yet to be recovered and discovered. Only the production of an academic text validates the findings and legitimates further excavations.

The Cathar case raises the issue of ‘proper science’ and the relationship between knowledge, interpretation and material vestiges and between history and archaeology.<sup>22</sup> An archaeologist herself, Claire argues that without archaeology ‘historians wouldn’t have *any* evidence’ and consequently no knowledge of the past. According to history, she says, all that exists is what/who appears in written accounts. Another local expert similarly states about historic monuments that ‘one speaks of history when a building is mentioned for the first time in a text’. Claire classifies archaeology as a secondary and ‘incomplete science since we don’t base ourselves on texts but on material vestiges’. The rest in archaeology is interpretation yet still separate from personal beliefs and convictions according to her. Nonetheless, the physical evidence of the Cathar history remains open to interpretation and explorations guided by the researchers’ motivations and imagination (Brenon 2000: 357, 360; Quehen and Dieltiens 1983: 31) especially due to the scarcity of Cathar texts. We know Catharism paradoxically ‘thanks to’ (Ployé 2014) or *because of* the Inquisition and through its records (Arnold 2001: 4; McCaffrey 2001: 115).

Variety and divergences among historians demonstrate not only the changing state of ‘evidence’ over the years but also the rendered nature of histories which might guide hikers on the Cathar Trail and shape their experience and knowledge of a place. Historians including Hobsbawm (1983: 1) and Samuel (1994) have developed the idea more generally that history and heritage are invented, socially constructed through myths, fantasy and fiction, deployed in the present for specific purposes. Nature trails are in this way set up to re-enact a connection with the past, to enable “History on the Ground” (Samuel 1994: 187, original capitalisation), which will also benefit the region economically. Crain (1997) describes the reinvention of an Andalusian pilgrimage to a

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<sup>22</sup> Power plays a role here. Political stakeholders mobilise archaeology as a form of scientific (objective) knowledge which establishes the meaning of the past and legitimises particular collective identities (Smith 2009: 122, 123).

shrine which has been replaced and ‘enhanced’ by tourist amenities but which is where people come to recover the past. The experience of the pilgrimage is heavily mediated and constructed through regional-national narratives. Similarly, the locations on the Cathar Trail are crucial in my study also as symbolic carriers of meanings which attract numerous visitors. The experience of being in impressive locations may or may not change people’s received narratives. Chapter 4 investigates hikers’ attractions to and understanding of places. The following section positions the authors of Cathar histories in spiritual and commercial contexts.

## **Who are the Cathars (and their historians)?**

### **Catharism: a mystical quest and a contemporary commodity**

Barber (2000), Brenon (1994: 83–84) and Markale (1986) are among the historians who analyse the lasting fascination with Catharism and ‘conspiracy theories’ concerning a Cathar treasure. They describe how the search for the occult brought forth numerous popular (often fictitious) and scientific publications, Grail searchers and esoteric movements such as the neo-Cathars in the twentieth century. Writers such as the Protestant pastor Napoléon Peyrat (1809-1881), Otto Rahn (1904–1939) in the 1930s (Brenon 2000: 361; Muller 1995: 191) and Bertrand (1982: 28, 32, 42) in the 1980s associated the Cathars with Grail mystics, druids and and neolithic pagan rites. Both Peyrat and Rahn believed themselves to be descendants of the Cathars. Rahn, a medievalist and member of the SS, based his explorations on fiction (Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival*), which he treated as actual history, and on findings from ‘Cathar’ caves (2006 [1933]: xxi).<sup>23</sup> His book *Crusade against the Grail: the struggle between the Cathars, the Templars, and the Church of Rome* (2006 [1933]) revived interest in Catharism (Bernadac 1994 [1978]: 182). By ‘enlightening’ readers with his vision of a hidden Cathar treasure, Rahn ‘obscured’ what Claire calls the ‘pure’ history and archaeology of the Cathars. His research encouraged the ‘myths which are affixed to this original history’ and more clandestine excavations. Today, the latter prevent accurate dating of a place which has been ‘extremely pillaged’ in the past and as such

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<sup>23</sup> Rahn physically investigated the sites, climbing the hills. He wrote that with his stay in ‘one of the most beautiful (and at the same time savage and inhospitable) parts of the Pyrenees [...] I wished to place in situ a subject that had captured my imagination’ (2006 [1933]: xxi). His writings did not explicitly state a political affiliation but they were of service to the National Socialist agenda (Muller 1995: 196).

myth is considered by many to be an enemy of historical and archaeological reality (see Langlois and Peytavie 2012):

For a long time myth has thus prevailed over history, mistaking the castles and fortresses of the Midi for the places of Cathar life and cult, or else these sites were simply considered to be solar temples or the citadels of the holy Grail. (Langlois and Peytavie 2012)

Further on, I will show how truth and myth change places with different authors.

With respect to the Cathar history, Barber (2000) addresses the commercialisation of symbols in the mass media, arguing that disparate attributes like mythmaking and the consumption of symbols become integral to each other (see Figure 2.3). McCaffrey (2001: 126; 2002) equally notes the popularity of Catharism promoted by the media in local history, tourism and for collective identity.

In the 1960s and 1970s the general public rediscovered the Cathars, the Inquisition and the mysticism of the Grail (Barrère et al. 2007: 305). The manager of the Montségur museum, talks about how a ‘Cathar product’ developed. Late twentieth-century books or films featuring ‘Cathar’ in the title were sure to sell (Cazenave 1995: 8), responding to the demand for the sensational and fantasy (Albaret and Audouy 1999: 127). On a car journey between fieldwork sites, an elderly local responds to my interest in the Cathar history by recounting how his relatives went and queued to go up and down Montségur following the final episode of the 1966 television series on the Cathars (Lorenzi 1966) which ended with the scene of Cathars burning at the foot of the mountain. Through the series, the general public discovered the Cathars and became enthralled by their story (Langlois and Peytavie 2012; McCaffrey 2002: 425). Scholars confirm the subsequent mass of visitors to Montségur (Barrère et al. 2007: 304). Here, the Cathar history had become a lived (and remembered) event and the ruin a freely accessible site. The museum manager tells me that by 1982 Montségur had an entry fee and a growing cluster of stalls which sold postcards, food and other paraphernalia until the *commune* (parish) and in particular Catharism advocates, concerned about preserving the site (the castle with its natural surroundings), banned them. According to the above historians, public representations transformed Catharism into a sensational medieval saga and a commodity: ‘the “Cathar landscape” is haunted by memories and tourists’ (Lafont and Pech 1982: 8).



Figure 2.3. The mystical Cathar aura. Postcards sold at Puilaurens castle with ‘Cathar fortress’ and ‘Cathar castles’ as subtitle and caption (cards drawn by Bruno Sych).

### **Making atrocities real: a museum visit in the field**

Drawing on a Cathar reality and imaginary, the Musée de L’Inquisition et des châteaux cathares is one example of how Cathar history is presented today. Located in the medieval walled heart of the city of Carcassonne between the Cathar Trail to the south and the Museum of Catharism in Mazamet to the north (fifty kilometres each way, see Figure 1.2), the museum exploits past atrocities to influence contemporary society. The exhibition opens with: ‘Here you enter the sad and mad reality of the past’, and goes on: ‘The adjective “Cathar” defines several realities and as many imaginaries...’<sup>24</sup> The museum makes the Cathars’ suffering more tangible through a ‘do-not-touch’ display of

<sup>24</sup> A tourist brochure on Catharism (CDT and CEC n.d.) uses almost identical wording.

torture instruments from the Inquisition<sup>25</sup> and explanations of the methods of torture in texts, images and recreated scenes, while it equally retains some mystery. Secretive and privately owned together with the Haunted House (another tourist attraction nearby), it associates Cathar history and ghost stories and depicts the Cathars as one group among other victims of the Inquisition. Casting itself as a serious museum of history, it intends to condemn religious fanaticism and barbarism by shocking the visitor through realistic presentations of instruments and life size wax figures in dioramas of scenes of torture and sound effects (Musée de L'Inquisition n.d.; Vautherot 2011). Yet, at the entrance, families are told that the display intends to represent, not to shock. My observation of other visitors while I was there, travellers' reviews (Tripadvisor 2014), a historian's assessment (McCaffrey 2002: 420) and my own personal experience reveal that visitor responses fluctuate between considering the exhibition a great joke, feeling indeed moved and instructed, and being disappointed or revolted. The latter responses are to do with inauthentic objects, a ghoulish, melodramatic and shoddy display caricaturing the Inquisition, an overly expensive entry fee and/or feeling physically sickened. One visitor (Ovmjm 2014) criticises the lack of distinction between the imaginary and the real (facts) and compares the museum visit to a poor cinema session. Interestingly, it resembles too closely a horror show for visitors to identify with the victims in the displayed tableaux the way other studies have suggested. According to Gouriévidis (2010: 97–98), for example, visitors respond with empathy and identification to public displays of the Scottish Clearances.

My visit is marked by the sudden appearance of a museum keeper at my side, interrogating me on my note-taking. Young, clad in black from head to toe and personally in favour of the Inquisition rather than the Cathars, he tells me to look for the Cathars elsewhere, at the Mazamet Museum or certain guided tours where the guide reenacts the inquisitor (frightening, according to him). It is the end of the day; I am the last visitor. He ushers me out into the street to lock up where he confronts me with his views, standing outside the gate. In his opinion, which he presents to me as 'moderate', society is too lax today and could be improved through the imposition of threats as shown in the Inquisition. Disturbed by what he said and what I saw, I will carry the

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<sup>25</sup> The visitor is told that the instruments are originals although they might be newer judging by their appearance and the use of props and texts (the latter apparently cut out of tourist brochures). My recalled impression might however be skewed and photography was prohibited inside the museum.

violence of the exhibits and of his opinion around with me over the coming days but his statement has nevertheless made my museum visit valuable.

The Cathars thus have the power to emotionally move and antagonise present-day visitors as well as locals. Some local experts record a Catholic public piqued at the Cathars, while other local experts dismiss such responses as belonging to the past. Castle visits involve people's religious beliefs or personal convictions. Claire tells me of Catholic visitors who feel judged and criticise her, telling her: "I find that you are *very* hard on the Catholic religion. You shouldn't take sides. You should do a *neutral* tour". She replied to them: "But I *am* neutral. Well, one has to know that one is on a site where a *massacre* took place. And the massacre happened. Whether you want it or not. Whether you refuse the implication of the Catholic religion or not". Claire argues that the Catholic religion has done 'a lot of damage' (in the form of multiple wars and massacres) in the past in France. 'Historically speaking I cannot say that the Catholic religion is neutral. This isn't true'. She emphasises that she does not judge the Catholic critics, 'but I can't *not say* what happened at Montségur. So you automatically take sides since they [the Inquisition] massacred them [the Cathars]'. Especially if they are deep-seated, visitors' attitudes towards contemporary established religion shape how visitors feel about the Cathars and react to Cathar histories. The latter can polarise. In the Cathar case, we must ask who and/or what makes history in the first place?

### **Myths and histories**

Cathar specialists (see Biget 1995: 268, 270; Cazenave 1995: 26, Pegg 2008: xii) distance themselves from historical novels which 'distort' 'history' by combining a present-day sentiment, imagination and symbolism with events in the Cathar history. They denounce novelists' exploitation of this past as an exotic (because long gone and different) and thereby sensational resource. In contrast, these specialists declare that they themselves strive for a Cathar history based on scientific enterprise devoid of emotional attachment and untainted by commercial interests. A commercial commitment signifies corruption of scholarly integrity to them. (Still, over the last decades Cathar research centres have come and gone dependent on funding, prominent historians and political support. The prominent historians have been implicated in public life to varying degrees and have correspondingly been supported and antagonised by different parties.) Yet, as will be seen in the following, historians' claim to detached

‘truth’ itself partakes in a certain Cathar historiography. Tonkin (1990) argues in this vein that while realism is a myth which guides historians, their own narratives remain anchored in subjective points of view. Claire refers me to Michel Roquebert, author of the detailed five-volume *L'épopée cathare* (2006–2007 [1970–1996]), as ‘the historian who is truly a historian of the Cathar period’ as opposed to a ‘local scholar’ who builds theories on the symbolic potential of the Cathar history. She tells me I ‘can’t go wrong. He bases his argument on texts. And he’s a *passionate* historian and you feel that in his books’.

An analysis of historical accounts shows how individual historians participate in and contribute to a Cathar historiography written in tension between ‘actual history’ and fiction, mediating between scholarly history and popular memorialisation and commercialisation (McCaffrey 2002: 426). Yet, although McCaffrey (2001; 2002) deconstructs the public image of the Cathars as romantic heroes and martyrs, she leaves the myth of the Cathar castles intact. In her socio-political historiography, Montségur features as an instance where truth-seeking historians like Roquebert succumb to myth, becoming emotional and romantic about this ‘magic mountain’ of Montségur (2002: 423, 424; similarly Garcia 1999: 167). Here, the castles play a role ‘only’ in terms of how they are articulated by historians. Concentrating on the workings of the media, she ignores the designation controversy (whether they are Cathar or not). Besides the fortresses, the Cathar terminology itself has been debated.

A recent example of contested Cathar history within the discipline is Pegg’s (2011: 580) argument that the established historical narratives, starting with the term ‘Cathar’ itself, are wrong.<sup>26</sup> While ‘Cathar’ is still the standard term used in local settings, I found, however, in the field that local inhabitants and institutions underlined this ‘misinterpretation’ of the faith. The museum in Montségur and the Museum of Catharism, among others, define ‘Cathars’ or ‘Perfecti’ as derogatory names given by the inquisitors with the intention to insult them, to make them ironic. ‘Bons hommes’ and ‘bonnes femmes’ (Good Men and Good Women), I was told, that is what their neighbours called them and ‘bons chrétiens’ (Good Christians) or ‘les amis de dieu’ (God’s Friends) is what they called themselves. Equally on the side of historical

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<sup>26</sup> According to Pegg (2011), ‘Catharism’ and ‘heresy’, more generally, are social constructions but not understood as such by historians. Pegg argues that the fabricated terminology commonly leads to misconceptions. He also contends that ‘[t]he modern fantasy of Cathars ambling over hill and dale is just plain wrong’ (Pegg 2008: 190–191).

scholarship, Lafont and Pech's (1982: 8) objective is to perpetuate accurate knowledge of the Cathar era in the light of the present relevance of Catharism. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (Frassetto 2010: 351–353), similarly, presents purportedly reliable facts on Catharism. Still, these are based on a selection of Cathar historians' accounts.

Cathar historians in the 1960s, represented by René Nelli (1964) (a defining historian in Cathar historiography), strive to render the spirit of the Cathar faith without 'scientifically' obliterating its power. Decades later, Brenon (1995 [1988]: 316–317) and Cazenave (1995: 5) trace the development of the Cathar history from romanticising and mystification to demystification on the basis of documents and a reconstitution of the Cathars' lived 'reality'. In response to the commercialised and commodified mythical Catharism, historians (McCaffrey cites Roquebert and Brenon as examples) are dedicated to presenting Catharism 'authentically' (McCaffrey 2002: 421). Along similar lines, keepers of local museums and research centres highlight that excessive vulgarisation (for example the touristic and commercial use of the Cathar label) empties Catharism of its substance (also Soula 2005: 11). The public thus tends to 'forget the spiritual adventure' which Catharism is and 'forget that the Cathars were living beings'. The Museum of Catharism exhibition ends with a quote and signature from Brenon, its curator: 'the Good Men deserve [...] that one is true to them'. According to Roquebert (1982: 298) and Brenon (1994: 13), the Cathar tragedy is more than meaningful enough in itself and not in need of people's fantasies. At the show '*L'histoire du Curé de Cucugnan*' (the priest of Cucugnan) in the Théâtre Achille Mir, which is part of the visit to Quéribus castle, visitors hear about the local history marked by the Cathars: 'Reality is more beautiful [or in this case, more powerful] than fiction'.

The Cathar history fits in well with Arnold's (2001: 1–2) argument that death and stories are the essence of history. Writing a metahistory on the Cathars' voices in history, he sees the relationship between historian and subject of study as characterised by the desire to reanimate the dead while also respecting their silences (Arnold 2001: 15). Cathar historians at a commemoration in the 1990s acknowledged scholars' deflection on their studies and how legends become part of history, calling for 'an archaeology of the imaginary and an imaginary of archaeology' (Débats et Bilans 1995: 340; also Cazenave 1995: 5). For a different reason, Baier (1991: 173, 183) also attributes a prominent role to the historian's imagination. According to him, the Cathars

tell us through the Inquisition where they lived ‘but the places themselves do not know anything about it’ (Baier 1991: 183).<sup>27</sup> Contemporary Cathar historians use the very rare Cathar texts to re-establish the reality about the Cathars. They differentiate this ‘real’ Catharism from the multiple accounts of the crusade and the documents of the Inquisition (Musée du Catharisme 2013b). Pegg (2011: 597) and Garcia (1999: 142) argue on the other hand that historians themselves construct a discourse from historical sources; and in reconstructing an Inquisition record, they create ‘another constructed text’ (Bruschi 2009: 13). In historians’ writings, truth and myth work through each other.

Many of the above mentioned historians might be dismissive of a contemporary esoteric ‘appropriation’ of the Cathars (and esoteric writers deride scholarly efforts, see Bertrand 1982) but at the same time build their accounts on ruins which they believe to be Cathar. Lowenthal’s (1985) notion of an omnipresent past might apply to these historical accounts. The extent to which the past is viewed as different from the present seems to vary, however, and while often the present provides a personal entry into their study, Cathar historians see their task as bringing the imaginary image back to the reality which is ‘history’ (Biget 1995: 289). Chapter 3 will show that ‘true’ history is not only a concern among historians to do with words and publications, but is also at stake in the construction of tourist attractions (Figure 2.4).

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<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, Chapter 7 suggests that hikers experience the opposite. They experience the Cathars in the terrain rather than in writings. Other writers equally locate the Cathars in ‘the memory of places’ (de Tonnac 2008: 9).

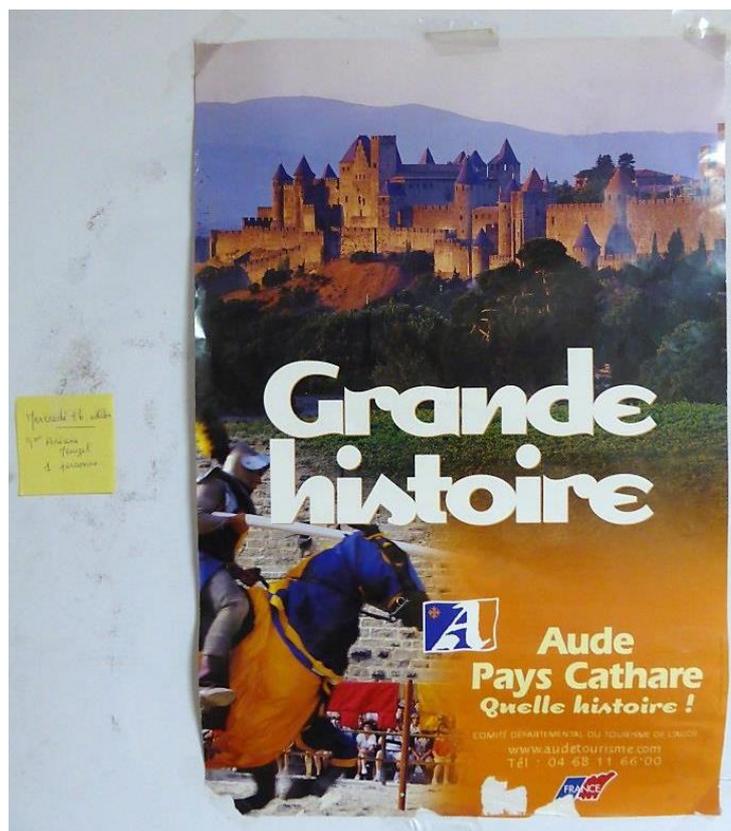


Figure 2.4. Staged joust with Carcassonne as a backdrop, advertised by the tourism committee of the *département*. A poster on the dormitory door in the hostel of Duilhac-sous-Peyrepertuse, a village on the Trail.

## Why the Cathars? Shadow and light

### Socio-political contexts

Apart from concerns with truth and the importance of place, Cathar ‘histories’ are also articulated within particular political contexts. Taking the latter into account opens up the way to a more processual and interactive take on the making of histories. It situates socially and politically hikers’ experiences and perceptions on the Trail. The Cathars have been remembered in different ways over the centuries even if repeatedly historians have been concerned with identifying the origins of the Cathar religion and its definition as heresy (McCaffrey 2001: 115–117; Oldenbourg 1961 [1959]: 29; Pegg 2008: 22–25; 2011: 587, 595). ‘Catharism, eliminated from History before the end of the Middle Ages, remains for a long time forgotten. It reappears with the romantic enthusiasm of the nineteenth century which rediscovers the Occitania of the troubadours and celebrates freedom of thought’, the Catharism Museum concludes. As some historians

(Barrère et al. 2007: 295) wrote, '[a]nd then History returned and it returned from the outside' with promoters such as Napoléon Peyrat (see the previous section).

The Albigensian Crusade represented a taboo in the national narrative of French state-building (Modica 2012: 3). Part of theological history until the eighteenth century, the Cathars became a political statement in nineteenth-century French national history and served French writers (of different camps) as ideological analogy during the German occupation in the twentieth-century (Martel 1982; McCaffrey 2001: 118, 121). The crusade (as a conflict between north and south, between two nations and ideologies) functioned as a parable for the 1940s' occupation (Martel 1982: 468–471). At a time of national-socialist totalitarianism and its censorship, French opponents held up democracy through writing about a tolerant Occitan society. Vichy France supporters, on the other hand, continued the Catholic orthodox discourse advocating moral, social and religious order and positioning the Cathars as morally and socially subversive. In the 1970s and 1980s, Catharism became very popular as French historians, in search of a regional identity, constructed a mythical medieval democratic Cathar society (Barber 2000: 221; Martel 1982: 458; McCaffrey 2001: 124; Roquebert 2006 [1970]: 12–13). Occitania had already been for Rahn (2006 [1933]: 117) the country of spiritual freedom and religious tolerance. In 1968 locals adopted a 'political Occitanism' (Barrère et al. 2007: 302), a collective imaginary of revolt and Occitan independence. The Cathars were considered examples of locally rooted longstanding opposition to the '*pouvoir central*', the dominant religion and political authority. Today, a tour guide to the Cathar Trail whose group I followed on my last day on the Trail, states that the Cathar history 'has become present again but through the sense of belonging to Occitania. There is an amalgam between Catharism and Occitania' (Ployé 2014). In this context, many historians themselves are drawn to the Cathars out of their personal sympathy with nonconformity (see Costen 1997: ix). Local pasts become political as historians write their particular agendas into their study.

The weight accorded to either religion or politics plays into historians' explanations of historical events. At times, the crusade is a military enterprise, a political conquest, a conflict between north and south, French versus Occitan society (Labal 1982: 137; Martel 1982: 411) or a holy war of God against the Devil and his advocates (Labal 1982: 136; Lambert 1998; Pegg 2008: 61; Roquebert 2004: 6). 'Heresy', in this medieval context, was a product of Roman Catholic spirituality, as the Museum of

Catharism reminds the visitor. According to Martel (1982: 411), the notion of heresy and the Inquisition were to prevent a politically autonomous region with its own language (Occitan) and its own (dualist) religion (Catharism). For Brenon (1992: 297), the demise of Catharism represents a significant change in the history of politics and ideas; for Lafont and Pech (1982: 8) it represents a change in history towards the modern European states. In Brenon's view, the independence and identity of the lands in the south is lost, the king and the inquisitors take control (1992: 297). The Cathar rituals change to mark the passage towards death rather than to spread evangelisation and the southern population engages in a new and stronger anticlericalism (Brenon 1992: 300, 301). Lafont and Pech advance that the territory had been at a juncture between northern and southern European imperialisms, Occident and Orient, Christianity and Islam and now becomes part of and empowers one major kingdom (France).

Markale (1986), Baier (1991), McCaffrey (2002) and Brenon and de Tonnac (2008: 17) suggest that the Cathar martyrs, who subverted the authority of the Catholic Church and the existing social structure, have become symbols of independence, tolerance and resistance and attract tourists like pilgrims with the tragedy of their lost cause. The Museum of Catharism thus presents the Cathars as a group condemned by the powers in place during the Middle Ages and destroyed by religious persecution (crusades, Inquisition). Present-day visitors on a guided tour around the castle of Carcassonne are told that the 'Inquisition' itself was invented in Carcassonne and took momentum with the persecution of the Cathars. The next and final part of this section follows up on the contemporary appropriation of Catharism responding to a spiritual need for the Cathars.

### **Catharism today**

Overall, according to local experts, Catharism appears to be a 'light' in today's society. Over lunch in a restaurant in Carcassonne, the president of the *Association d'Etudes du catharisme/ René Nelli* (the Cathar research centre in Carcassonne) and nephew and inheritor of René Nelli, affirms that individuals in present-day society feel 'the need to breathe' and, most importantly, the need for spirituality. In Montségur, the museum manager mentioned earlier believes that visitors' fascination with the Cathars 'expresses a deep spiritual ill-being of Western society'. The Cathar imaginary, the president of the research centre again says, is where the enticement of Catharism lies. Existential

concerns, philosophy and politics all add to the imaginary. Catharism, he continues, is ‘a religion and a philosophy to answer the question of the meaning of life’, a question which remains pertinent to this day. The Catholic clergy notes that ‘our contemporaries have lost their bearings’ (Jacquin 2009: 18). There is a demand for personal development which builds on spiritual resonance. This trend leads to a spiritualism by default and to a multitude of venues like public sacred places (sanctuaries).

For the museum manager in Montségur, the Cathars embody ‘an original Christianity’. They brought real moral values, sharing with people, being nonviolent and not condemning people and refusing to take the feudal oath. They lived ascetically, according to the gospels, as disciples of the apostles of Christ. Hence they were truer to the original fundamental Christian values. Visitors to the Catharism Museum (see Figure 2.5) learn that the Cathars developed their dualistic religion, opposing God and the visible, corruptible world created by the Devil, by drawing on the New Testament and the Gospel of John.<sup>28</sup> To ‘onlookers’ the Cathars (re)present a minority and, as a ‘true spirituality’, a ‘pure’ and authentic alternative (to the current state of affairs). They motivate for example the following English comment in a visitors’ book at a tourist office along the Trail: ‘Be inspired by the Cathars- fight corruption and fight for your true convictions. Be a warrior, not a slave!’ (July 2013). In the view of the museum manager in Montségur, the Cathars aimed ‘to change the society in depth, from the inside, by being the example, having spoken words in agreement with their deeds’, and committing to the above values. The Cathars lend themselves to being such vehicles reflecting back on the ills of society (Albaret and Audouy 1999: 129). They themselves believed that ‘there is no shadow without light’, the museum manager tells me. To today’s enthusiasts, Catharism represents a light which counters the shadows. In the words of the president of the Cathar research centre, Catharism is potent for people as a means ‘to commemorate an injustice against a fundamental freedom’. Indeed, the tragic Cathars’ fate can horrify people.<sup>29</sup> The Cathars have left us no material objects but a spiritual legacy. This material indeterminacy allows enthusiasts to project a Catharism which fulfils their need for an independent cultural identity, for the mysterious and authentic and for ‘escape and encounter with oneself’ (Peyrou 2002: 21).

<sup>28</sup> In Catharism (according to Inquisition registers), the visible world is the Devil’s creation in contrast to the spiritual world (Martin 2008 [2005]: 7; McCaffrey 2002: 410; Oldenbourg 1961 [1959]: 34).

<sup>29</sup> With reference to their mass murder and the systematic cleansing of the south of France, historians have used the terms ‘holocaust’ (Roquebert 2006 [1970]: 427) and ‘genocide’ (Pegg 2008: 188).



Figure 2.5. Inside the Museum of Catharism in Mazamet. Notice the use of light and dark and the absence of artefacts. Painted hands on the wall evoke the Cathar sacrament of ‘laying on of hands’.

## The making of the Cathar Trail

The second part of this chapter investigates what kind of trail hikers walk. The Trail’s own history is complex and separate from both scholarly and popular accounts of Cathar history. None of them mention the Trail. Only blogs by independent hiking tour operators (Caubet 2013c), a close reading of the Trail guidebook (Barthes et al. 2011) and project drafts, letters and newspaper clippings in the district archives indicate the Trail’s origins. What is the agenda and consequent meaning of the Trail according to its creators? The current presentation of the Cathar Trail by the Conseil Général de l’Aude (the elected body of the *département* of Aude, based in Carcassonne) reads:

This trail [...] leaves from the sea [...] to finish in Foix. It is [...] one of the most famous hikes in France. The trek, done on horseback or on foot, allows one to cross the whole *département* in 12 stages from east to west, while discovering many of the ‘citadelles du vertige’. (Conseil Général n.d.d; Figure 2.6)<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> The term ‘vertiginous citadels’ was appropriated from Roquebert and Soula’s book title from 1966.

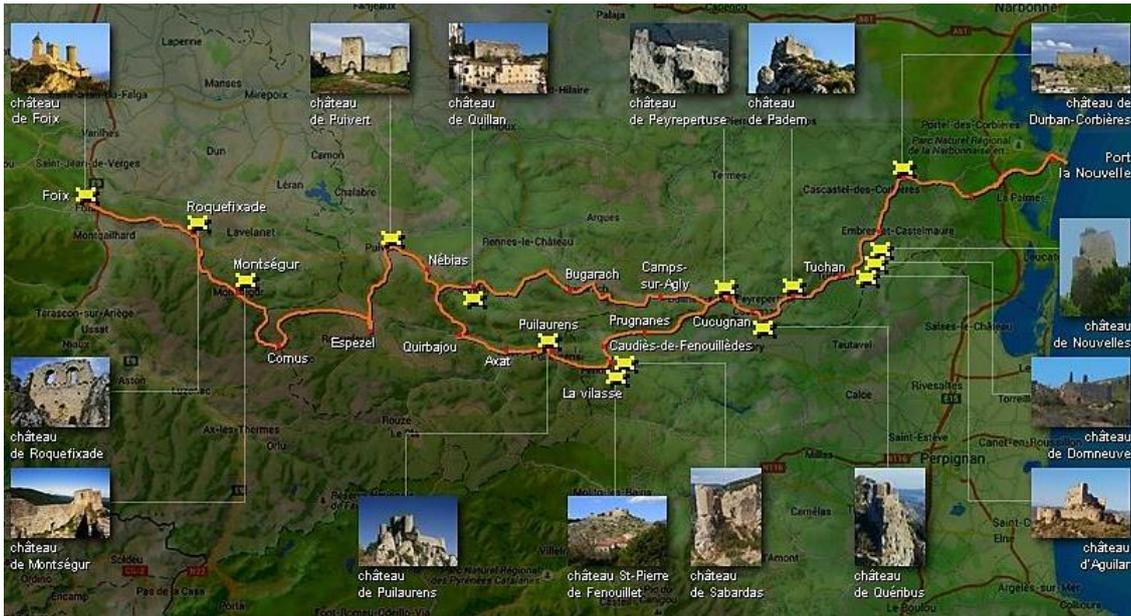


Figure 2.6. The Cathar Trail itinerary from the sea to the town of Foix, right to left. To facilitate readers' locating of field accounts, the castles in the order of the Cathar Trail are: Durban, Aguilar, Padern, Quéribus, Peyreperthus, Puilaurens, Puivert, Montségur, Roquefixade and Foix. The map additionally displays a few smaller ruins which are located along the Trail (Chaigneau 2015, reproduced with permission of the author).

## The Cathar Trail project: origins

### A history of the Cathar Trail

As demonstrated with the first part of this chapter, the Cathars exist today because of publications written over the last century. However, within these pages the Cathar Trail does not actually feature. Possibly because of its recent creation, the Cathar Trail has largely no written history. Its histories and agendas are told on the heavily inscribed terrain itself (see Chapter 5 about multiple waymarkings) and in the incongruences of information attached to the Trail. The origins of the Cathar Trail belong clearly to the past, not least to the realm of my interviewees' personal memories. A helpful employee in the Archives départementales de l'Aude on the outskirts of Carcassonne referred me to Véronique Ponrouch as a creator of the Cathar Trail. That same afternoon, Madame Ponrouch granted me an interview in her current workplace at the regional Conseils d'Architecture, d'Urbanisme et de l'Environnement across the road from the archives. As she was no longer involved in the Cathar Trail, my questions reminded her of her early career as director of the Comité Départemental de Randonnée (the County Hiking Committee) who co-established the Trail. My interest mystified her, but in her warm and husky voice and dynamic manner she told me at length how she set up the

programme of regional development in the 1980s, giving me a real sense of the Cathar Trail as an undertaking in a socio-political context. Still, here the initial Trail project was no longer part of the present but had been filed away as archival material. In the Archives départementales, a large amount of correspondence attests to the process of creation of the Cathar Trail. As Chapter 7 will highlight, for many participants the Cathar Trail was nonetheless a medieval reality. Following on now, however, is an outline of the first idea and instigators of the Trail.

### **The beginnings**

Tourism agents (Caubet 2013c, d) date the initial idea of what was to become the Cathar Trail back to 1970. A regional daily newspaper (*Sentier Cathare* 2011) portrays the origins of the Trail the following way:

Since the beginning of the 1970s the idea was born to connect the Mediterranean to Montségur via the medieval castles, contemporaries of the crusade. It was not a matter of a Cathar itinerary but of a hiking trail, of a different spirit, highlighting the symbolic content of Montségur, a Mecca for Catharism, and of the Mediterranean closely tied to the Orient, as well as the natural contrasts between maritime Corbières and the Pyrenean mountains.

In the 1980s, at a time when ‘hiking becomes a social phenomenon’ (Caubet 2013c), the Cathar Trail is reconceptualised. Véronique Ponrouch, a Trail monitor (see below) and the County Tourism Committee (CDT n.d.a) all agreed that the itinerary is determined by railway access, castles and remarkable sites.<sup>31</sup>

From Carcassonne I took the train to Toulouse to meet a seasoned guide and monitor of the Trail recommended to me by the René Nelli Cathar research centre in Carcassonne. This expert called the Trail a ‘political and practical invention’ and provided a hands-on perspective of it. The Cathar Trail was inaugurated in 1988 after what a spokesperson of the CDT considered only a few years in the making. The CDT of Aude is the tourism committee of the *département*, based in Carcassonne and housed in a large building together with the Conseil Général de l’Aude. Here, in an hour-long interview, this spokesperson presented the Trail as the result of a ‘public initiative’ instigated by the Conseil Général. The latter became indeed its contracting authority, financing the project with the Green tax (Caubet 2013c; Montagné 1987a). An innovative project, the Trail was also financially supported by the European Regional Development Fund

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<sup>31</sup> Subsequent references in the text and in the bibliography will replace ‘Comité Départemental de Randonnées’ and ‘Comité Départemental du Tourisme de l’Aude’ with the official acronyms ‘CDR’ and ‘CDT’, respectively.

which invested in regional economic and social development (Montagné 1987a). From the beginning, however, the Trail was a collaborative product between tourism agents, politicians and heritage, ethnological and hiking organisations such as the CDR (1987b). While the Conseil Général took care of the waymarking and maintenance of the Trail, the CDT was in charge of its promotion in 2013. The many letters in the archives are traces of the on-going, and at times strained, teamwork.

### **Materialising the Cathar Trail**

As the Trail monitor introduced above pointed out, unlike the Santiago de Compostela, the Cathar Trail is a creation without a ‘historical reality’. Then again, ninety per cent of the paths existed before the officially established Cathar Trail according to him. The Trail makers reinhabited these paths which were available and where right of way and a permanent itinerary could be ensured (CDR n.d.a). The technical realisation of the Trail thus involved identifying a route, clearing and marking the paths, determining the Trail stages, setting up a network of accommodation (*gites d'étapes*), organising luggage transport and the hiring of horses and bicycles as well as creating a waymarking and logo, training guides and devising a guidebook (Caubet 2013c; CDR 1987c; Randonnées Pyrénéennes 1985; Véronique Ponrouch). The *gites d'étapes* were and still are vital for the Trail. Some of the original ones like the ones established in Puivert and Comus exist to this day.

Still intrigued by the history of the Cathar Trail after having completed my first Trail journey, I searched for local records in the Archives départementales (Figure 2.7) when in Carcassonne on my ‘hiking break’. The archivist who showed me around took my project to be an investigation of the historical routes which make up the Cathar Trail. Amalgamating ‘history’ and ‘Cathar Trail’, he directed me accordingly to land registers, maps of the National Geographic Institute (IGN) and eighteenth-century maps. In his understanding, to trace the history of the Cathar Trail meant to seek to establish the material basis of the Trail. Similarly, Raaflaub and Talbert’s *Geography and ethnography* (2010) examines ethnography within the past (records). It does not thematise historical geographies in terms of ethnography (today). Metaphorically speaking, the roots of the Trail are consequently of varying lengths for different people. While officials emphasised the implementation of a departmental initiative, advertising

and the general public invoked the Cathars as authors of the Trail. Others, like the employee mentioned above, in turn ‘read’ the Trail in terms of historical documents.



Figure 2.7. Looking out from the Archives départementales de l’Aude in Carcassonne.

## **Belonging: the Cathar Trail network**

### **The local within**

The Cathar Trail in its entirety was also a way for tourism agents to not only integrate villages into the Trail, but also communes into the *département*, the *département* into national tourism, and a regional project into European development (CDR n.d.b).

Operating in a network of sites and according to the particular politics of the time, the Trail was to develop both the region and the identity of individual villages, Véronique Ponrouch told me. The Trail was launched with a multitude of events: storytelling, site visits, exhibitions, radio programmes, medieval festivals, conferences and music performances (CDR 1987b). One objective was to ‘restore the collective memory of the place’ (CDR 1987c), the historical and cultural specificity, and to enhance the image of ‘savoir-faire and of knowing how to welcome’ (CDR n.d.b). The Cathar Trail was set up through the participation of the local population who contributed to the technical realisation of the Trail, provided facilities for tourists and organised events (Montagné 1987a). Tourism agents (CDR 1987a; Véronique Ponrouch) declared, however, that locals have never sufficiently engaged with and appropriated the project. Inhabitants who lived nearby but off the Trail, on the other hand, begrudged the choice of route

because their villages remain invisible to hikers. Despite an attempt of revival in 2008/2009, the Trail remains an incoherent product lacking activities, according to the tourism committee's spokesperson, who considered the lack of a product manager of the Trail to be the reason why. Eco-Counters indicated that hiker numbers on the Trail had steadily decreased between 2009 and 2013.

Véronique Ponrouch and a Trail technician, who was in charge of the maintenance of the Trail in 2013 and who I briefly met at the Conseil Général, highlighted that the Cathar Trail is a 'programme' which crosses borders – between *départements* (Aude and Ariège), regions (Languedoc-Roussillon and Midi-Pyrénées)<sup>32</sup> and local and national bodies (CDR and Fédération Française de la Randonnée Pédestre, hereafter 'FFRP'). While intended to be 'a very strong physical connection' (Montagné 1991), the coordination has proved difficult in terms of itinerary and accommodation among other things. By 2013, the CDRP (Comité Départemental de la Randonnée Pédestre, a member of the FFRP) had replaced the CDR, designer of the Trail. The Trail technician, Véronique Ponrouch and other local experts rejected the appropriation of the Trail by the FFRP so as to preserve the Cathar Trail's uniqueness. Chapter 5 will elucidate how this tension is reflected in the waymarks themselves.

The task of the Cathar Trail was to make the Aude *département* stand out in terms of French cultural tourism (CDR n.d.c: 4). It had to involve the whole *département*, to promote the whole of Aude (CDR 1987c). The designers of the Trail stated, the Cathar Trail

[...] needs to be perceived in its entirety [...] from the Sea to Montségur. It is very important to visualise the whole of the Cathar area with its landmarks which are the castles [...] [as well as the organisational framework of the itinerary]. This trail has to be engraved into the minds of natives and tourists for a development of the image of the *pays*. (CDR n.d.b)

The Trail was thus a local product of the official agenda for departmental integration and comprehensiveness which shaped the programme of the Cathar Country (explained in the next chapter). It was a building block in the promotion of the *département*.

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<sup>32</sup> In September 2016, a new administrative region named 'Occitanie' merged the former regions of Languedoc-Roussillon and Midi-Pyrénées.

### **The Cathar Trail: a product of green tourism and rural development**

The representative of the CDT designated the Cathar Trail a political product, where hikers are the consumers. The Trail was a means to commercialise the struggling rural areas and capitalise on the hiking trend.<sup>33</sup> Its purpose was ‘to be the leader of hiking in Aude’ (Montagné 1987b), of a green and sustainable tourism based on outdoor activities, as Véronique Ponrouch told me. She explained that the Cathar Trail was at the start of the *département*’s programme of hiking which she developed and which consisted of walks of varying lengths around this ‘linear long-distance trek’. Hikers were free to choose the direction they wanted to do the Cathar Trail in and the portion of the Trail they wanted to walk (CDR n.d.a). The Trail was also addressed to riders and cyclists as these were considered essential for the financial viability of the Trail (Montagné 1987a).

Overall, the Trail was motivated by an economic agenda of rural development. According to tourism agents (CDR n.d.c: 4; Véronique Ponrouch), the *département* used a green and cultural tourism in the form of the Trail as a strategy for local economic development. The creators considered ‘the cultural theme of the trail to be a “carrier” from a commercial perspective’ (Montagné 1987a). ‘The dimension of this project exceeds the boundaries of the *département*, and even of the region. The echo to be obtained is to be international due to the interest in Catharism’ (Montagné 1987c). Today, the CDT builds on beautiful landscapes, the inhabitants’ welcome and tourists as designers of their own visits to advertise the Cathar Trail as a strategy of sustainable development in terms of natural environment and local economy. ‘Heretical by culture, the Cathar Country has been able to anchor, step by step, its development in the long term since its origins’ (CDT n.d.a; Figure 2.8).

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<sup>33</sup> For the twentieth-century fashion for ‘pedestrian tourism’ see Amato (2004: 268), Segrave (2006: 103, 109) and Solnit (2001).

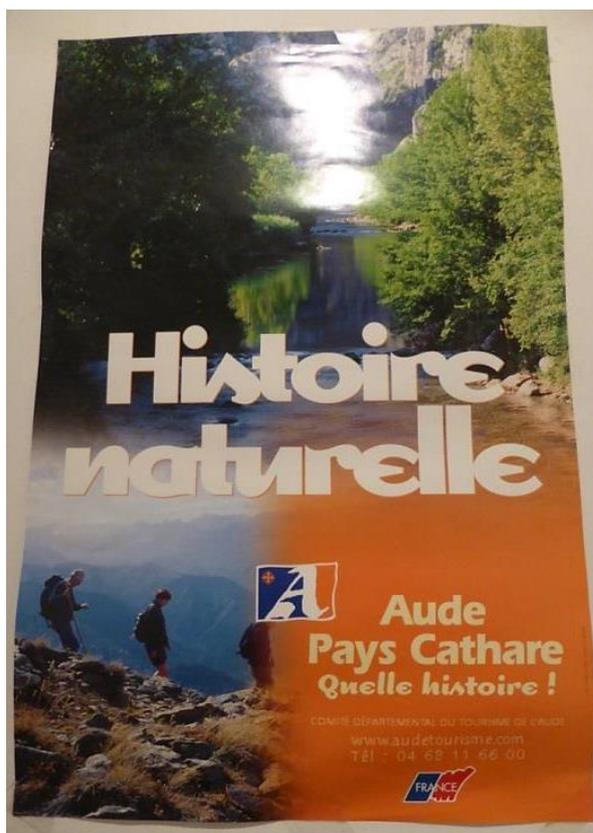


Figure 2.8. Reunion of history and nature in the Cathar Country. Another poster advertised by the CDT in the hostel of Duilhac.

## A trail with a cultural theme: hiking with history

### A hiking trail for non-hikers

In the 1980s, the Cathar Trail epitomised a new product, a product of ‘cultural tourism based on the castles as iconic sites’, in the words of the CDT’s representative. In the same building, but at the opposite end of the CDT, I interviewed the spokesperson and promotion manager of the Association des Sites du Pays Cathare (a Cathar Country collective, see Chapter 3), in her office. Unable to reach anyone from the association until the Cathar research centre connected me with this her, my impression of a ghostlike organisation consisting of empty offices was quickly dispelled when I sat opposite this young and dynamic representative. She declared that the Trail constituted a cultural tourism project which signified a ‘junction’ of hiking and history. Until then, the previously mentioned seasoned guide told me, people would ‘walk in order to walk’, with the goal to get from A to B, according to the principle of five kilometres per hour and twenty kilometres per day. The representatives of the tourism committee and of the Cathar Country described how in the context of the hiking trend, the Cathar Trail

arrived with a different and novel political approach and objective, the objective of a trail with a cultural theme linking history and hiking. Thereafter, the guide continued, walking became secondary to and instrumental in popular pursuits of cultural leisure and, in particular, of the newfound importance of history. In the context of the ‘selling of photographs, of images, of the imagination’, walking was used as a ‘subterfuge’. People on the Trail, he argued, engaged in ‘walking with an objective which was not walking’ but cultural and historical immersion. Walking had become a means beyond itself.

Records on the Cathar Trail corroborate that the Trail was designed to address an audience who invests in ‘cultural leisure activities’ rather than hikers (CDR 1990b). A draft of the Trail guidebook stated: ‘With his daily walking the hiker does not seek a physical performance [sports]’ (Sarret 1986). Rather, the trek is paced by the visits to Cathar sites. ‘The particularity of the Cathar Trail is its string of castles which follow each other all along the route. [...] Every day, a different castle presents itself to the [...] hiker’ (Caubet 2013d; see also Figure 2.6 above). Possibly focusing more on the present than the past, the Cathar Country manager introduced above, on the other hand, declared this tourism of discovery and encounter is to reach a larger audience through combining hiking, natural environment and cultural elements. She argued that it aims ‘to lead people to this cultural sensitivity’ by attracting visitors to the castles who are not interested in culture in the first place. The hiking public has grown. According to her, both the Trail and the castles share today the same public as the castles and the landscapes ‘form one whole project’. Over the last two decades, the Cathar Trail appears to have shifted in meaning from a primacy of history to one of hiking.

The Cathar Trail in itself is constituted by the cooperation between hikers, tourism agents, historians and archaeologists (CDR 1987c). As such it carries multiple and at times discordant meanings. The Trail was based on the Cathar history but also on the quality of diverse landscapes. It was meant to promote the local cultural and natural heritage (castles), the basis of rural tourism (CDR n.d.c: 4). Tourism agents throughout agreed that the Trail was created to link a number of castles, the ‘impressive “citadelles du vertige”’ and Cathar sites (CDR 1990a; also Sparbier 2011). The representative of the CDT confirmed that the sites preceded the Trail; nothing linked the castles before. My 1997 edition of the guidebook (there is only one in French) bears on its cover the heading ‘on foot from castle to castle’.

### ***A Sentier cathare***

The Cathar Trail was consequently motivated by a historical agenda but in a certain form. With the creation of the Trail came a guidebook, the seventh edition (Barthes et al. 2011 [1988]) of which was sold in 2013 at newsagents', in bookshops in the region and at a few of the castles, but often difficult to find. The only alternative guide was Mattingly's *The Cathar Way* in English (2012 [2006]). Most hikers I met however did not use a guidebook (see Chapter 5 on the role my guidebook played for participants). The first edition of the Trail guidebook spelled out: 'It is the term 'Cathar' which gives it [the Cathar Trail] its unity, although a trail of that name has never existed historically' (Barthes, Baudreu, Salavy and Sarret 1988: 13). The second half of this sentence still appears in the updated guidebook (Barthes et al. 2011 [1988]: 5) but is easily overlooked. Although presented as 'steeped in spirituality' (Lettre des pyrénées 1988), following the 'Spanish March' and traversing 'wild and grand landscapes which are steeped in history' (Sentier cathare n.d.), the Cathar Trail differs from the Santiago de Compostela in that it 'is a trail of our time, which enables us to see again one after the other, the Citadels of the past' (Lettre des pyrénées 1988). The cover of the first guidebook editions until 2000 featured a back view of what resembles a pilgrim walking towards a fortress (Barthes et al. 1988), suggesting that the Cathar Trail is a historical pilgrimage between Cathar castles (see Figure 2.9).<sup>34</sup>

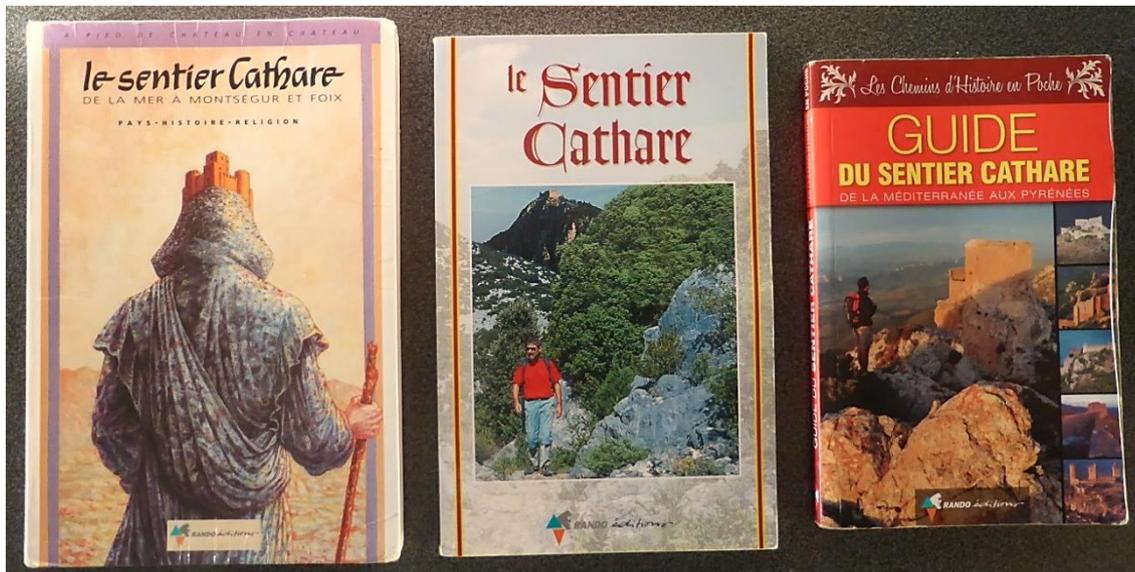


Figure 2.9. 1997 – 2001 – 2011: The evolution of a guidebook from the initial style to the present, from having environmental and historical information and drawings at its centre and Trail indications on the page margins to the proportional opposite today (© Éditions Glénat / Rando Éditions, 37 rue Servan 38000 Grenoble, reproduced with permission).

<sup>34</sup>

Paradoxically, pilgrimage was one form of penance imposed on dissidents by the Catholic Church (Bruschi 2009: 73; Oldenbourg 1961 [1959]: 305). Another form of atonements for sins was participating in the crusade (Madden 2010: 471; Roquebert 2006 [1970]: 548).

Indeed, it is only in the course of constructing the Cathar Trail that the drafters of the project took the Cathars out of the castles so to speak. The 1989 order of English and German translations of promotional Trail documents reveals that the notion of Cathar castles had been present until then when Véronique Ponrouch (1989) clarified it as inaccurate (see CDR n.d.c). This raises the question of how and why a trail based on this sequence of castles was called ‘*Sentier cathare*’. Its name rests on historians’ assertion that the Cathars crisscrossed Languedoc. So even if the Cathar Trail was not set up following an original Cathar route, it is still anchored in particular Cathar places, the designers argued (Sarret 1986). The itinerary, while determined by practical hiking considerations, was also symbolic. Although the departure town is devoid of Cathar history, for example, it was a logical choice in that ‘Catharism came from the Orient across the seas and La Nouvelle is a harbour [town]!’ (Etape 1986). By calling the Trail ‘Cathar’, the constructors of the Trail affirmed and promoted a sense of belonging to a particular history and to particular places.

The Cathar Trail, while built on iconic sites, is also political in content. The CDT’s representative remarked on how it works with the political Occitanism of the 1970s and 1980s, the collective imaginary of revolt and Occitan independence. Catharism, as a movement against the dominant religion and the central government, stands in for the Audois population of that time. ‘The itinerary is marked on the terrain with the blood and gold colours of the coat of arms of Languedoc’ (Lettre des pyrénées 1988) and the guidebook strives to explain to the ‘cultural hiker’ (Salavy n.d.) the natural environment in which not only Catharism but Occitan civilisation more generally is rooted (CDR n.d.a; *Sentier cathare* n.d.).

### **Cathars on the Cathar Trail?**

Aware of the contestation of these sites, the Trail creators defined the Trail as ‘Cathar’ by situating it in a material and spiritual Cathar setting which was shaped by (their knowledge of) written Cathar histories. The CDT advertises the Cathar Trail as a pathway to history: ‘To do the Cathar Trail is to delve into a search for meaning and to listen to the lessons of history’ (Conseil Général n.d.d). In 1986, the then director of the hiking committee Véronique Ponrouch explained the Trail in a letter to the well-known

novelist, poet and storyteller Henri Gougaud, who she consults and invites to contribute to the guidebook. She wrote:

The progression from the sea towards Montségur is the way to an initiation into the life, the ideology, the environment of the Cathars. As the trail is not the reflection of a historical itinerary, we have considered it appropriate to take advantage of this itinerary to use the events and landscapes by which it is punctuated. [...] [A] place, a name of a village, a forest, a building will enable an evocation of the daily life of the Cathars. (Ponrouch 1986)<sup>35</sup>

The ruins function not as historical witnesses whose order of encounter is important but as triggers which evoke history (Lebédel 2010: 114). The Cathar Trail does not embody or exist through the Cathars but it evokes them. The draft of the guidebook called the Cathar Trail ‘a path of initiation’ (Sentier cathare n.d.) to the Cathars’ ideology, daily life and persecution. Hikers are led to history through the landscape, with the help of their imagination and possibly of a guide. The following tour operator’s advertisement identifies the Cathars somewhat paradoxically with the land but also as immaterial. ‘The Cathar history is silent since they did not leave any visible and tangible heritage [...] their presence [is] in the landscape’ (Caubet 2013b). Eventually, Henri Gougaud, who is a favourite with the local experts in the field and whose books French visitors often buy in the castle shops, wrote only the cover blurb for the first guidebook. His review reads:

This book incites [the reader] to go on a real journey: on terrestrial paths it leads to mysteries, to fragments of history, to this kind of knowledge which tastes of origins. [...] But it also narrates, it opens a door onto history, onto the life of these ‘Good Men’ who in the past dreamt higher than their forehead while walking these same paths [...]. To walk beside them [...], is what those who have written these pages invite us to [...] [;] [the authors] have enlightened what went before in this country of seekers of spiritual gold. (Barthes et al. 1988)

On the Cathar Trail, hikers are told, they will walk ‘in the footsteps of history’ (Sentier Cathare 2011) and of the Cathars (Le sentier cathare 1990). Once on the Trail, they do not actually walk in the footsteps of the Cathars, but the Trail operates through the reference to the Cathars and their histories which roam the land.

Promoted through the guidebook and travel agents, the early Cathar Trail was a *must* for every French traveller; it was innovative and accessible. As the Trail guide and monitor recalled, just as ‘one had to *have done* Morocco [...] one had to have done the Cathar Trail’. The Trail offered the French tourist a short and easy trip, at a low price, with comfort and concomitant aspects of landscape, architecture and history. At the time,

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<sup>35</sup> Chapter 7 will show to the contrary that, if at all, hikers experience the Trail as ‘Cathar’ through their walking activity rather than through site visits.

tourists came for the Cathar heritage (Soula 2005: 424). The lack of a map of the Cathar Trail meant that tour operators were crucial. While two thirds of the early Cathar Trail hikers consisted of groups who 'booked' the Cathar Trail through a travel agent, today two thirds of its hikers belong to clubs or informal groups. In Foix, the representative of the tourism bureau of Ariège agreed that the Cathar tourism, which boomed in the 1980s and 1990s, has decreased since, not least due to presently more fashionable trails like the Santiago de Compostela or the *Chemin des Bonshommes*.

### **Conclusion: hiking histories**

Over the past decades those drawn to the Cathars have tended to come from outside the region rather than from the local village. As an organiser of cultural community activities and former guide of 'Cathar' caves told me in the hostel in Foix (her workplace and my place of stay), especially the local younger generations are 'fed up with all things medieval' (Figure 2.10). She confirmed what I noticed, that bigger centres in the 'Cathar Country' (like Foix and Carcassonne) are 'dead' after the summer season and without the tourists. By October many tourist amenities were closed. Other local experts like the monitor of tourism in Foix, the museum manager in Montségur and a guide of Carcassonne castle similarly suggested that major sites have been drained of their histories by too much publicity, which turned Catharism into a commodity of mass consumption. The museum manager explained that labelling everything 'Cathar' had led the French public to the other 'extreme', where the places are no longer Cathar at all.

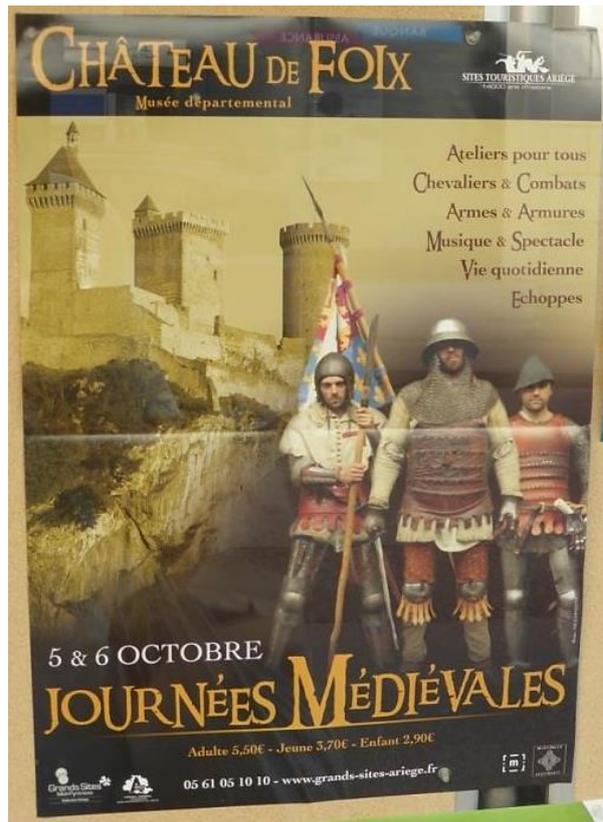


Figure 2.10. Poster on the window of the tourist office in Foix, advertising the annual medieval festival at the last castle on the Trail.

This chapter has portrayed Catharism in socio-political contexts by taking historical accounts to reflect the context in which they were created. Narratives of Cathar history are complex and constructed interactively. The chapter has shown how Cathar histories exist as landmarks and points of reference for Cathar historians, writers and local experts. They involve the histories of castles and the constructing of knowledge through material objects and texts, questioning what and who makes history. Nowadays, historians and locals challenge even the terminology of the ‘Cathar history’ itself. The mystery of ‘not-knowing’ remains and fuels more stories, whether they are called truths or myths. The following chapter examines how ‘Cathar’ heritage sites are cultivated, materially and symbolically, in the name of a medieval episode.

The Cathar Trail has its own histories which are associated with the local identity of the people (Occitan) and the region (specific landscapes). The tracing of these reveals that it is a recently constructed trail. As such, the Cathar Trail is a 1980s’ creation with an agenda which responded to a particular socio-political context and the contemporary hiking trend. Later chapters will show that the Trail is continuously in process, in the making. Today, it is a space which lives principally from and through the physical

movement of the hikers. Still, hikers' experiences are materially grounded and consequently intrinsically tied to the substance of the Trail, a substance which carries particular agendas and meanings. The Cathar Trail is made of 'History and stories. [...]. Those which one writes for oneself [...] when walking on a path... In short, the Cathar Trail is an adventure for the head as much as for the legs' (Jyhes 2011). And again, the website dedicated to the Cathar Trail thus advertises the Trail to visitors (CDT n.d.b, original capitalisation): 'Here [...] History and Geography are indissociable. To set foot on the Cathar Trail is to step back in time [...]. To take a big breath of history. Without a time machine, simply by travelling on foot. Ready, then, for the adventure?'



## CHAPTER 3

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# Coming to know the Cathar Country

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This chapter discusses the construction of knowledge and of heritage sites and territory, the ‘Cathar Country’. It ties in with experts’ Cathar histories and Trail portrayed in Chapter 2, although it presents an independent enterprise. As a socio-political situating of hikers’ experiences, this chapter accordingly outlines official constructions of heritage sites which compose the Cathar Trail. It presents the bigger setting of the *Pays Cathare* (‘Cathar Country’), the political programme in which the Cathar Trail is situated geographically, ideologically and commercially. In this official Cathar context, historic sites and Cathar Country are intertwined. Within the thesis, this chapter shifts from the historical Chapter 2 to the geographical establishment of the Cathar Country to then lead over into the more ‘practical’ Chapter 4 which introduces hikers’ journeys. Cathar histories and the Cathar Country provide a context for the Cathar Trail and reference points to which I will return in later chapters to explicate the making of meaning in hikers’ embodied experiences along this particular Trail.

To draw out the making of meanings of places, the chapter involves three factors: my own process of making sense of data (which itself constructs a particular narrative), site makers’ discourses and the sites they produce. Based on Foucault’s concept of discourse as social practices which themselves create the object of their discourse (1969: 67), this chapter indicates the relations between various stakeholders which conceptually and materially construct the sites. It thereby problematises the constitution of knowledge of the sites, how they are understood, interpreted, represented and invested with power and meaning by interest groups.<sup>36</sup> Their discourses, while of different scales, appear to overlap and assimilate building blocks from conflicting discourses, with a participant occasionally representing more than one discourse. The predominant economic agenda, for example, was mostly phrased in terms of history and identity.

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<sup>36</sup> The anthropologist Lena Mortensen (2009) similarly investigates power relations and knowledge construction. Her study of a Honduran ‘archaeology industry’ shows how archaeologists and tourism operators produce a specific Mayan past.

By centring on the sites, on which they all hinge, I juxtapose these discourses and show how they vary in their claims as to what kind of place the sites, the Cathar Country and Trail are. As will become apparent in the course of this chapter, the articulated discourses are sometimes in tension with each other, ‘talk past each other’ or diverge. In Chapters 4 to 6, such inconsistencies and gaps between discourses will bring out the role of individual experience more clearly. The present chapter draws on interviews with professionals in the tourism industry and local inhabitants, on archival material, sociological and historical publications and observations at the sites.

The chapter begins by explaining the late twentieth-century background to the Cathar Country programme, its concept of and functioning in a network of individual sites and the historical contention it triggered. Secondly, I consider the structuring of the sites through ownership, management, heritage classification and lastly the tours and signs guiding visitors at the castles. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of the representations and commercialisation of the sites and, in particular, with the Cathar Country label and logo. The Cathar Trail surfaces again here, cutting across what is a clearly demarcated political project.

## **The Cathar Country project**

### **A pioneering political programme**

The Cathar Country discourse was created by the *département* of Aude and is driven by an agenda of economic development. It overlaps with the Cathar Trail discourse, presented in the previous chapter. Differing in scale, tourists find the Trail within the wider and more encompassing Cathar Country. Both discourses create a localised heritage with Cathar connotations. Yet, in spite of my questions, the initial and present-day relationship between *Sentier Cathare* and *Pays Cathare* remained unclear.

Interlocutors differed as to whether and how the two, launched in 1988 and 1989 respectively, belong together. According to Véronique Ponrouch, who worked on the establishment of both, the Cathar Trail project ‘preceded and triggered the Cathar Country programme’. The latter ‘realised everything we had experimented with the Cathar Trail, namely, from the valorisation of important heritage *sites*, castles or abbeys, associating a castle with a territory, we would incite local development on the whole territory around this site’.

Today, the Conseil Général de l'Aude successfully uses the architectural patrimony and territorial identity as instruments for rural development (Conseil Général n.d.c). Ruins like Peyrepertuse have been made more attractive and accessible to visitors through their consolidation, restoration and expanded access and retail space. A representative of the site of Peyrepertuse told me that in 2013, 91,400 people visited Peyrepertuse which is one of the most visited ruins on the Trail. Over the years, the proceeds from the castle entrance fee and shop have allowed the creation of jobs at the sites and in the vicinity (Rainaud 2001). The village benefits from the neighbouring ruin, offering tourists accommodation, food and complementary cultural facilities like the refurbished working windmill and the Théâtre Achille Mir (mentioned in Chapter 2) in Cucugnan below Quéribus. I observed visitors come to Cucugnan to buy pricy bread from the windmill and to be entertained by the audiovisual show at the theatre. It will become more apparent below how this discourse of regional economic development is articulated in terms of heritage, Cathar history and territorial identity and effectively defines all three as well as generates economic change.

An examination of the role of the sites in the programme reveals how the departmental discourse generated a heritage complex. The castles as emblematic heritage sites function as 'keystones' and markers of the Cathar Country (Garcia and Genieys 2005: 127). To consolidate the castles as tourist centres, the representative of the tourism committee of Aude explained, the programme created the *site pôle du Pays Cathare*, a unity of castle and village. These *sites pôles* represent 'a heritage group' of twenty-one medieval castles, towns, abbeys and museums, including the 'Five Sons of Carcassonne', a historical alignment of royal fortresses defending the frontier to Spain and commanded from Carcassonne. Of these, Quéribus, Peyrepertuse, Puilaurens and Aguilar are on the Trail. Only the fifth, Termes, is further north. The sites have accordingly multiple affiliations, belonging to a historical episode, a hiking trail and a departmental programme.

The meanings of the sites are inherently political since, as Foucault (1984: 175) contends, knowledge is produced through processes and relations which involve power. The Cathar Country discourse being the predominant 'register', its knowledge and produced sites could be seen as being imposed on tourists. The *sites pôles* epitomise the Cathar Country programme. In the above mentioned tourist agent's view, the Cathar Country consists of 'heritage sites, surrounding territories and products labelled *Pays*

*Cathare*'. Thus the programme integrated and coordinated tourism, culture, natural environment and economic development (Conseil Général 1989) through interconnecting various local professionals: tourism service providers, agrifood producers, restaurant owners and artisans. This chapter retraces what I found in the field, however. The discourses of the individual representatives of this overarching programme can be inconsistent and incoherent. Diverging agendas generate conflicting meanings of these sites. Truths being constructed in discourses (Foucault 1984: 205), knowledge thus becomes a political investment. The Cathar Country project itself evolved in a specific context, its political agenda determining its significance in the past and today.

The 'Cathar Country' was delineated within a wider political context. The representative of the County Tourism Committee underlined that the *Pays Cathare* is a programme. It took shape as a strategy of territorial and economic development in the regionalism of the 1980s (Garcia and Genieys 2005: 25). Devised and administered by the Conseil Général of Aude, the project was based on surveys conducted with tourists from neighbouring countries (Raffy 2011: 62) and with the local population of Aude and supported by European funds. The surveys confirmed 'the evocative power and the prominence of the sites of the Pays Cathare'. Véronique Ponrouch recalled how in 1989 a young, dynamic team, backed by the political interests of the time, set it up. The spokesperson of the *Pays Cathare* programme in 2013, pointed out that 'the programme of territorial development was "avant-gardist", an economic lever based on sites. It spearheaded tourism projects of the European Union' and became a reference for subsequent European programmes. Today, the programme stands for innovative and successful local development. It has effectively furthered local hospitality infrastructure, businesses and employment and its logo is a persistent presence when travelling through the region. The number of visitors has more than tripled since the beginning of the programme (Raffy 2011: 62). I explain next how this future- and Europe-oriented departmental discourse mobilises the local.

### ***Sites phares: a network of sites***

Like lighthouses, the flagship sites of Aude illuminate the surrounding lands and signal to each other (Conseil Général [2013]: 134).<sup>37</sup> 'The foundation of the *Pays Cathare*

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<sup>37</sup> *Phares* translates as 'lighthouses' in English, *sites phares* as 'flagship sites'.

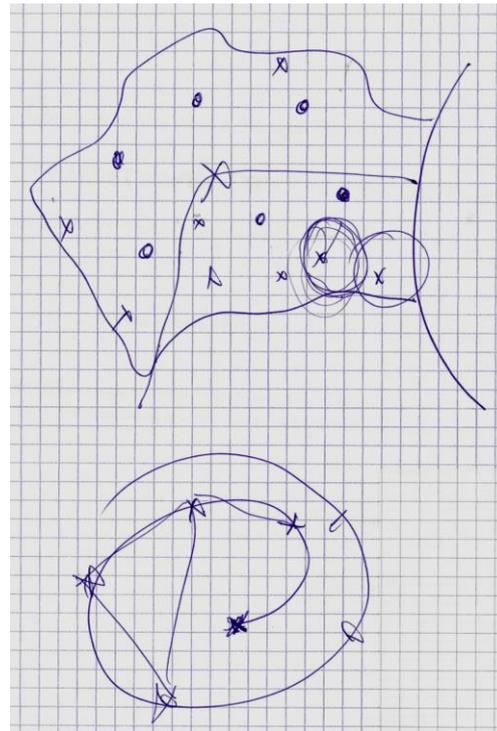
programme’, said the tourism committee’s representative, ‘are these sites and the idea of interconnecting them and sending visitors from site to site within this network’. As a result, the drawing of connectors across the territory produces and defines the incorporated sites as part of the Cathar Country network (see Figure 3.1).

These sites are, however, not only nodes in the departmental economic discourse but also nodes between diverging discourses, most of which emanate from one place, Carcassonne. Articulating a more historical perspective than the economic discourse, the former president of the Cathar research centre in Carcassonne put down ‘history’ and ‘places’ as the basis of the concept *Pays Cathare*. An English online guide to France explains similarly that the Cathar Country is based on what the sites share: the Cathar history. Its purpose was ‘to create a coherence between many of the remarkable local historic monuments’ (About-France.com n.d.).

Véronique Ponrouch, in turn, accentuated the interlinking of various local professionals (described above) rather than sites (Figure 3.1). Her team ‘created a solidarity between all the players through the creation of a territorial label with specifications’. The development of synergies emerged as a leitmotiv. According to the Conseil Général’s motto, “To be together and to be oneself” (Conseil Général 2013b: 5), the *Pays Cathare* programme promotes ‘micro territories’ (Conseil Général n.d.c) with their cultural, social and economic specificities, such as a particular village identity that shows one facet of the medieval civilisation of Languedoc (Gau and Gau 2004: 31).

Simultaneously, the hospitality infrastructure produced means visitors travel within a network of interdependent tourist destinations. The Cathar Country managers co-opt and homogenise scholarly and popular historians’ Cathar discourses ‘which have invented and then imagined Catharism, its localities, its characters’ (Gouzy 1999: 89) and which render the Cathar Country unique and attractive and consequently successful.

Figure 3.1. The Cathar Country: a network of sites (above) and of service providers (below). Crosses and dots represent important centres (*sites pôles*) and individual members. The river Aude, coming from the Pyrenees in the south, cuts across and through Carcassonne (central, biggest cross, above) and flows into the Mediterranean (border on the right). Diagram drawn by Véronique Ponrouch during the interview to illustrate the idea of the *Pays Cathare* (used with permission of Véronique Ponrouch).



The scope of the discourse of regional cohesion and development is encompassing but depends on individuals. With regard to the programme's functioning, Véronique Ponrouch elucidated that by referring visitors to other local agents, local stakeholders in hospitality, agriculture and crafts were 'to participate in a collective project, *everyone* standing together, *each player* supportive of the quality of the other, like in a chain', part of a collective entity. 'The idea is that the strength of one benefits all' are the words employed by the Conseil Général (n.d.c). Madame Ponrouch characterised it as 'a programme of local development, what one calls in English "sustainable development"'. It is really a political project of "bottom-up" and of participation of the inhabitants'. As local business owners, the residents of the region are constituents of the programme and promoters of territorial identity. She noted, however, that between 2004 and 2013 (date of my fieldwork) the political drive for the *Pays Cathare* programme and stakeholder participation and cooperation had waned.

The ties between players and between sites are not necessarily obvious to the visitor travelling through this 'country'. At times, they are 'signposted' along country roads (see Figure 3.2) or in product labels. Large information panels advertise the Cathar Country and its castles on roadsides, while hikers follow waymarks and the *Pays Cathare* logo without explanatory text. Arguably, and perhaps ironically, the driving tourist might thus travel more with the Cathars in mind than the hiker, being

consistently pointed to and reminded of the Cathar Country through these advertisements. While the programme uses the Cathars as a means for economic development, visitors ‘pick up on’ the Cathars and their histories rather than on this contemporary agenda. Early on the Trail, I shared accommodation with a Dutch couple and their toddler on holiday in the region. Concurrently, they were investigating the regional vineyards for business purposes and told me that they had discovered the Cathar history through roadside signs. One day further on the Trail, at the intercommunal tourist office between Quéribus and Peyrepertuse, I read this comment in English: ‘So enjoyed driving around Cathar Country’. Visitors, accordingly, get to ‘know’ the Cathars through the late twentieth-century agenda of regional economic development. The latter’s success is due to the Cathar connotation but it has also come to define what is ‘Cathar’. To visitors, the Cathars provide a visible, signposted connection between places. As outlined above, however, the tourism agenda which informs visitors’ Cathar discourse uses the Cathars as a means for economic development, appropriating the Cathars as thoroughly political travel guides. A passport, which is discussed next, gives privileged access to their sites.



Figure 3.2. Signs advertising the castles as historic sites and the Cathar Country at a road junction near Tuchan, a village on the Trail.

The *Passport to the Cathar Country Sites*, produced by the Association des Sites du Pays Cathare, refers visitors from site to site, offering a reduced admission fee when more than one *Pays Cathare* site is visited. While this inter-site card is rated by the Cathar Country spokesperson as successful, in other instances the networking of the sites has failed. According to the young employee in the intervillage tourist office, the Museum of Catharism in Mazamet (discussed in the previous chapter), which is one of the ‘passport sites’, remains unknown to people visiting the most famous castles on the Trail. A brief conversation with the director of the *Archives départementales de l’Ariège* in Foix clarified the context of the establishment of the museum. She indicated that the museum opened in 2005 in Mazamet, outside the marketed Cathar Country for economic and political reasons, which included disputes within Cathar scholarship. Here, tourism agents’ and historians’ discourses overlap without pursuing the same agenda. Whereas Cathar historians are concerned with presenting ‘the truth’ (see Chapter 2), the tourism discourse reasons that emplaced history in the form of a ruined medieval castle on the border of the town legitimates Mazamet to be one of the *sites pôles* of the *Pays Cathare*. The latter are marked by Occitan medieval history, complement each other thematically (Conseil Général n.d.e) and are synergised by the Association des Sites (Association des Sites n.d.a). The economically driven discourse of tourism comprises heritage, identity and history. Just as Cathar historians position their accounts in relation to appropriations of the Cathars in the public arena, so the tourism discourse draws on legitimating Cathar historians to construct a particular cultural heritage built around these non-Cathar vestiges. In Mazamet, the Museum of Catharism builds on the premise that the land is the beginning of, and the access to, Catharism and Cathar history, respectively. It promotes tourism and heritage, advertising the sites of the *Pays Cathare* as ‘an *incredible* cultural heritage’ (Musée du Catharisme 2013a, original emphasis). Heritage, here used in the sense of inheritance, will be explored later in this chapter.

### **An invented country**

The concept of Cathar Country thrives on the credibility of this ‘incredible’ cultural heritage although researchers have challenged its self-evidence. An examination of the Cathar Country project in historical discourses, contrary to the foregoing approach, reveals the rift between Cathar Country and historians’ discourses. The former president of the Cathar research centre understands ‘the *Pays Cathare* as a historico-economic

and touristic concept, a revived concept'. She and the director of the archives in Foix pointed me to the 'controversy of the *Pays Cathare* as imaginary territory'. After discussions in 1996,<sup>38</sup> it is now Garcia and Genieys' political and sociological problematisation of the *Pays Cathare* as an imagined territory which provokes debate among Cathar historians and enthusiasts and shapes Cathar research and research centres. It raises the question of the relationship between historians' writings and their role in the public sphere and while the debate has found its way into the literature, it tends to be voiced in newspapers, booklets and similar publications which relate to the marketing and promoting of the geographical area. Scholarly accounts rarely historicise the 'Pays Cathare' (Garcia 1999: 152).

Using Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) and Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities' (1991), Garcia and Genieys (2005: 129) expose the invention of the referent *Pays Cathare* with its political and economic agenda and instrumentalising of local history. They argue that 'scholars' deconstruction of the esoteric dimension of the "Myth of the Cathars" has been replaced by the emergence of another myth, the myth of the Pays Cathare' which furthers a particular historical territorial identity (Garcia and Genieys 2005: 25). Its commercial aspect and usage of 'Cathar' and 'castles' in combination has antagonised certain historians and local experts for reasons of historical integrity, among them Brenon (Garcia and Genieys 2005: 115, 126) and the current Cathar research centre in Carcassonne and several residents of the designated *Pays Cathare* who I met along the Trail.

Academic perspectives on the Cathar Country reveal the relation between Cathar Country and non-Cathar castles, representing economic and historical discourses, respectively. Because of the 'historical argument' and archaeological evidence of Cathar castles being "a scientific aberration" (an unnamed local heritage expert cited in Garcia and Genieys 2005: 57), the project developers discarded their idea of a themed trail (Genieys 1997: 123) and invested in tourist centres and in the 'meshing of the territory around significant sites' (Garcia and Genieys 2005: 57). The cited heritage expert together with the project developers took a strong stance against the 'scientifically' inaccurate notion of 'Cathar castles'. Local businesses, activities and events operate in the framework of the Cathar Country, whether it is a 'Cathar' rally, an

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<sup>38</sup> See Roquebert n.d.: 1 (this document was given to me by the former president of the Cathar research centre and lacks a date).

inn (*Les 3 Cathares* below Peyrepertuse), entertainment (*Paintball Cathare*) or guided excursions on horseback (*Cheval Cathare*). They situate themselves within the Cathar Country and are ‘Cathar’ in name, yet often advertise themselves without referring further to the Cathars and their histories at all. The Cathar Country has become a geographical term. Here it becomes apparent that historical discourses take a back seat in the Cathar Country agenda. The Conseil Général’s discourse is not a historical one: ‘History is a subterfuge to speak of the territory of Aude, of its development, of its future’ (Garcia 1999: 159).<sup>39</sup> Garcia’s archival research revealed that the political agents of the Cathar Country programme rarely refer to the Cathars. They use an ethnological and ecological heritage as frame of reference, not a Cathar heritage as justification (Garcia 1999: 153). On the contrary, it is the programme which legitimises Catharism as meaningful for economic development (Garcia 1999: 161). Simultaneously however, the programme relies on historians: its designers based the Cathar Country on historians’ ‘historical authentication of a site’ (Garcia 1999: 144). Monuments are pivotal in heritage and tourism discourses. They ‘mediate between multiple agents to create enduring claims of community’ (Di Giovine 2009: 9).

Tourism as well as analytical discourses link the present and past through the making of histories, fictions and commercialisation. Its makers define the *Pays Cathare* broadly as ‘a territory where Cathars lived’ (Garcia and Genieys 2005: 58). The *département* of ‘Aude is, through the [reifying] discourse on the Cathar Country, symbolically invested with Catharism’ (Garcia 1999: 161). The heritage sites become thus purveyors of a territory defined by a collective identity (McDowell 2008: 47). ‘Today a Cathar Country. Yesterday, the country of the Cathars’ (CDT and CEC n.d.) reads a heading in an English tourist brochure. Garcia and Genieys (2005: 58) present the conceptualisation of the *Pays Cathare* as the result of ‘a strategic syncretism’ between a late twentieth-century reinterpretation of Cathar history and Occitanism.

Notwithstanding that the Cathars were active in this geographical area (as well as beyond it) due to political and social circumstances, Garcia and Genieys (2005: 29) contend that the Cathar Country thereby mobilises and territorialises a historical fiction. Before the territorial reform in 2016, ‘Occitanie has never existed as a political entity, comprising as it did several shifting, conflicting and independent territories’ (McCaffrey 2001: 124; also Roach 1997: 1). Inhabitants imagine themselves in a tradition and

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<sup>39</sup> In the Trail context, walking had been a ‘subterfuge’ for history (see Chapter 2).

community of freedom and tolerance founded on histories of the crusade (McCaffrey 2001: 131). For Occitans, ‘the dream is more real than reality: it has the advantage of existing... and of making them exist’ (Bernadac 1994 [1978]: 183). Here, the mythical resonance of ‘Cathar’ is not contingent on the historical discourse or the castles (Garcia 1999: 167). ‘Cathar’ has become the characterisation and historical denominator of a ‘space’ rather than the history of singular monuments.

As to the Cathars, according to Claire, they survive through the commercialisation of the castles and the label ‘Cathar’ in a region which is still poor except for the ‘Cathar’ castles (see also Garcia and Genieys 2005: 42). At the same time, they are the means which ensure the region’s future, the *département* using its past in the form of the castles for its economic development (Antoni and Roche 1997 [1996]: 88). Claire considered the heritage of the Cathars and the castles a basis for the regional identity which needs strengthening. This local economic perspective, which conceptualises ‘Cathars’ and ‘prosperity’ as the keys to each other, exists alongside the question of what is constructed, what is the truth, readily debated by locals, tourism agents and scholars alike.

The Cathar specialist Michel Roquebert (n.d.: 1, 7) compares Garcia and Genieys’ book with earlier deconstructions of the historical discourse of the Cathars and remarks that the authors deconstruct the concept of ‘pays’ but not of ‘Cathars’. Developing a socio-political discourse, Garcia and Genieys critically assess the Cathar Country by checking it against historical Cathar facts. They omit, however, to develop a differentiated understanding of the multiple Cathar histories. In response to them, using primary sources as evidence for a scientific history, Roquebert proves that a medieval Cathar territory (and the usage of the term ‘Cathar’) is a ‘historical reality’ (Roquebert n.d.: 10), albeit having been originally referred to as *Pays albigeois* (Albigensian country) and bigger in size than Aude today. The *Pays Cathare* did not exist as such in the thirteenth century because the term ‘Albigensian’ was more commonly used than ‘Cathar’ (Roquebert n.d.: 8, 9). Roquebert challenges Garcia and Genieys, arguing that if the *Pays Cathare* is imaginary, then the Cathars are, too, ‘since we deny them the essential condition of their existence: a territory wherein to exist’ (Roquebert n.d.: 10). The crusade and the Inquisition seeking out these lands, prove, however, according to him, that the Cathars were a historical reality and branded a territory (Roquebert n.d.:

10). Identifying the Cathars with the land, Roquebert rejects the sociological discourse as a construction rather than the programme's historical Cathar foundation.

Whether due to the *Pays Cathare* discourse and marketing or to historical 'realities', today the Cathar Trail and heritage sites are tied closely into the Cathar Country, a grouping of medieval sites with Cathar connotations which exceeds the borders of Aude. In Foix, on the other side of the departmental border, a monitor of tourism in Ariège, highlighted the political contention of the Cathar Country map. Located in Ariège, a different *département*, Montségur, the most famous ruin on the Trail, is now no longer part of the *Pays Cathare* but has in the past been incorporated on its map. This shows how the mapping of the Cathar Country realised the invention of 'a new territorial space' (Langlois and Peytavie 2012). The initial *Pays Cathare* map was devised by the regional hiking committee as part of the maintenance and improvement of the Cathar Trail in 1989. This map set out to feature tourism information including 'heritage, accommodation, walks, outdoor activities, leisure facilities, information points' (Conseil Général 1989). Nowadays, visitors are presented with 'les châteaux du *Pays Cathare*', a Cathar country built around non-Cathar sites and with twenty years of experience in tourism. The programme effectively produces locality and regional identity through tourism, through attracting and circulating visitors. So, how do these tourist sites operate in practice, how are they managed and presented?

## **Medieval monuments and more**

### **Ownership and management**

As seen above, the castles in the Cathar Country and on the Cathar Trail are claimed by regional and national agendas with Carcassonne as the administrative centre of the *Pays Cathare*. Yet these sites take their meaning equally from how they are managed locally and from interpretive infrastructure. As heritage studies reveal about the production of sites, sites are 'selected, interpreted, packaged and promoted through deliberate policy' (Ashworth 2008: 231). Local experts at the Association des Sites, the intercommunal tourist office and in archives elucidated that most castles are owned and managed by the municipality and that 'the mayors are consequently responsible for them'. The following example illustrates that local development does not necessarily concur with a tourism discourse based on history and culture.

On the day I stayed in Durban, a village on the Trail, I met repeatedly, in different parts of the village, the deputy mayor who was a mine of information and perpetually active around the community. From him and Claire in Tuchan, I heard that the ruins belong to the village situated below and are part of the latter's infrastructure and that funding is not necessarily invested in heritage. Lacking sufficient financial resources, the village of Durban for example invests in a new water tank rather than in the castle as a tourist site. For the time being, the castle and its small archaeological museum are only opened on special occasions like the annual *Journées du Patrimoine* and a barrier with a sign prohibits access to the unconsolidated ruin. The *Journées du Patrimoine* (Heritage Days) are a weekend in September with free entry to the Cathar Country castles and, overall, to heritage sites throughout France and entertainment. They highlight the notion of cultural heritage on the Trail and 'the intention of the department to lead tourists in a shared history' (Conseil Général n.d.c). The *Journées du Patrimoine* being the following day, I was able to accompany the deputy mayor on his survey of the museum located in the stone wine depot next to the gateway to the ruin at the top of the village. While he was showcasing the museum, an elderly English couple wandered in, too, and looked and listened. So, tourists come to know the sites through engaging with them in ways which are not always prescribed by tourism discourses.

On the other hand, the heritage conservation paradigm is reified in places (Byrne 2008: 158). 'By becoming "historic ruins" [...] remains from the past are produced as entirely new places: as sites in which the forces of material decay are to be halted in the name of their intrinsic value as carriers of history' (Gordillo 2009: 32). 'Places function as signs in the sense that they are signified with meaning' (Byrne 2008: 152). More than inscribed platforms for tourists, such sites are social actors: they work through narratives (communicated through signage for instance) which shape how visitors interpret the site (Di Giovine 2009: 276). I learned that sites along the Trail bear the mark of ownership indicated by barriers and signs (see Figure 3.3) and that these site 'markers' have multiple meanings which join the terrain, the owner's and manager's interest and visitors' behaviour. Nevertheless, mostly I just felt that the signs circumscribed my visit, safety regulations limiting the public space and thus the sightseeing. In prolongation of the Trail logic, where following signposts is crucial, the arrows indicating directions and the barriers and prohibition signs provided unquestioned guidance (at least until I took on board local experts' insider advice, see

below). Indeed, even non-hiking tourists apparently follow the signs and, in the role of guide, Claire was also policing visitors. Although these sites are exposed, accidents, according to local experts, are rare and minor, caused by visitors' expectations of finding castles (pretty edifices) and not ruins and consequently their wearing of inadequate footwear. Some local inhabitants even suggested that I could trespass and just acknowledge certain signs as reminders of individual responsibility. They raved about the views they had experienced standing on the wall at Montségur, beyond the stairs barred to sightseers. Still, visitors, as outsiders, remained generally unaware of how local structures organise the sites (for hikers' reception of the official Trail structure in the form of waymarks see Chapters 5 and 6), while locals were at home in the ruins in that they chose to read the signs not as absolute constraints. The latter had witnessed the increasing regulation of the sites. Their familiarity with the pre-signage ruins enabled them to interact with the sites in a less circumscribed way.



Figure 3.3. Forbidden to climb the stairs or onto the wall: signs inside Peyrepertuse and Puivert ensure that the owner of the site cannot be held responsible for visitors' actions. Puivert is unusually privately owned.

## Heritage sites

The meanings and values of the sites are defined by a heritage discourse which produces history and culture. Heritage classification of the castles in the *Pays Cathare* and on the Cathar Trail dates to the nineteenth century (Débats et Bilans 1995: 349). In an email to me, a tourist information officer in the town of Quillan (midway on the Trail) indicated that these historical monuments and heritage sites have been restored, consolidated and signposted. On entering Peyrepertuse, visitors are informed that, ‘Your admission ticket enables us to continue to preserve this exceptional site, jewel of the Pays Cathare’.

Smith (2006, 2011) conceptualises heritage as a social construct and performance which create meaning. Public interaction with places is affected by their presentation as sites of historical significance, she argues. So, while enabling the remembrance and narration of what is distant in time but present in space, monuments reflect, but also direct, heritage interpretation. Heritage is thus about cultivating a particular relation to the past (Lynch 1972: 53). It is political and dynamic (McDowell 2008: 49). To inhabitants, it can be meaningful through values like cultural identity (Rose 2002: 464). As ‘heritage is put *to task*’ (Rose 2002: 465, original emphasis) through people’s practices, it does something. Through its network, the Cathar Country discourse closely links territorial identity and heritage. The president of the Conseil Général de l’Aude declares that the castles of the *Pays Cathare* are ‘Memorial sites to discover’ (Conseil Général n.d.b), intentionally drawing on Nora’s (1984–1992) notion of places as sites of memory construction. Nora’s landmark work on place and memory locates cultural ‘memory-places’ of French identity, demonstrating how memory is rooted in places, from the immaterial to the territory of France. Identity is territorialised and collectivised on the basis of heritage (Ashworth 2008: 238; Byrne 2008: 169). ‘The castles, as built heritage, [...] constitute *our* Audoise identity. This strong sense of “built” identity is in *our* history and this is what makes the difference from other departments of the Mediterranean region’ (Conseil Général n.d.c, original emphasis). He builds the future of Aude on heritage: ‘A land which ignores its past has no future’ (Conseil Général 2013c: 3). Motivated by an agenda of economic development, the Conseil Général’s heritage discourse revolves around culture and history as the way to the future (also Garcia 1999: 158), with the Cathars serving as a distinctive identity for the *département*. Integral to this shared identity of the *Pays Cathare* is the medieval town of Carcassonne, a nineteenth-century reconstruction (Pitte 1986 and 1989: 96, 98) and

since 1997 a UNESCO World Heritage site. The originality of its fabric has however been contested (Lewi 2008: 147). This ‘theme park’ is authenticated through its association with the Cathar heritage (Lewi 2008: 157).

Paradoxically, as a result of the co-option of historical discourses by the Cathar Country programme, the Cathar Country complex has become more ‘authentic’ than Cathar localities. ‘The formula [*Pays Cathare*] itself is worth all guarantees of authenticity’ (Brenon and de Tonnac 2008: 13). A stated long-term goal of the Conseil Général is for ‘emblematic sites of the Pays Cathare’ to be categorised as UNESCO World Heritage sites for this particular heritage to play a role internationally and cooperate more closely with the existing regional UNESCO World Heritage sites (Conseil Général [2013]: 131, 133). The castles are here treated as witnesses of an important episode in history. The application process for UNESCO World Heritage status will assess whether the *Pays Cathare* heritage is authentic – valuable because temporally intransient (see Di Giovine 2009: 13) – and define ‘scientifically’ what (castles, villages, landscape) constitutes this heritage (Rouquette 2013). The submission will reveal whether a Cathar past represents an exceptional universal value in the world today (Rouquette 2013), the assessors searching for an essential ‘Cathar-ness’ in and through the engineered Cathar Country.

The next section continues to draw out what Smith (2011: 71) terms the ‘Authorised Heritage Discourse’ in European policy and practice, here the construed innate value of *Pays Cathare* sites. Heritage authoritatively valorises a locality. A site is re-contextualised in ‘a particular collection for a specific reason’ (Di Giovine 2009: 208). A world heritage site represents a value defined by UNESCO which, in turn, redefines the material building to mediate this value to which tourists will react (Di Giovine 2009: 39). Heritage is authentic through ‘elicited feelings, emotions, sense of place responding to visitors’ collective memory’ rather than ‘historical accuracy’, Smith (2011: 76) tells us. At the Cathar Country castles, both are however brought out in conflict as the subsequent examination of the guidance provided on site makes evident.

### **Castle tours**

Tourism agents, the Conseil Général, the Association des Sites, tourist offices and tour guides, but also audience responses fashion the presentation of these heritage and tourist sites and participate in the social production of experiences. They categorise the castles as *public* sites and as ‘non-religious architectural heritage’ (Conseil Général [2013]:

129). On guided tours, the Cathars remain nevertheless a sensitive topic. A castle keeper and former tour guide at Puilaurens, explained to me that because tour audiences are often unfamiliar with the Cathars, commonly confuse Cathars with enigmatic figures like Templars and raise religion-based objections to the tour narrative, the guide embroiders the architectural construction. Around the castle, educational panels like Figure 3.4 and viewpoint indicators engage visitors equally in this location of medieval ‘everyday life and combat life’ and in the function of the site as well as connecting it to other castles. Additional to such ‘non-religious’ heritage tours, booklets<sup>40</sup> sold at castle shops disseminate the military history and architecture of each castle in which the Cathars play only an intermittent role. Diverting from the Cathars and deliberately countering visitors’ expectations is a strategy of site makers’ historical discourse which operates however within a tourism discourse as well as in response to visitors’ ‘misinterpretations’. Their discourse keeps to historical ‘facts’ although the telling of Cathar tragedies promises a strong public resonance beyond the particular site.



Figure 3.4. This information panel at the gate to Puilaurens outlines the history of the castle, presenting it as thirteenth-century refuge for rebels against the crusaders from the north without specifying whether they were of the Cathar creed.

<sup>40</sup> Written by experts and published by the Conseil Général de l’Aude, the Centre d’Archéologie Médiévale du Languedoc and the Association des Sites du Pays Cathare.

Claire's experiences as a guide at Montségur demonstrate however that visitors' understanding and usage of the site can clash with its official presentation as well as with each other. Montségur is special compared to other castles on the Trail in that it attracts among other visitors an esoterically-inclined audience. Typically, Claire's four daily tours during summer had a mixed audience. Some people were new to the Cathars and the site; they came to discover what Montségur is. Some *knew* the Cathar history and wanted to know the site of the massacre, while others came for sun worship and the telluric energies which are said to pass through the place. 'Most of the time the tour went very well', she recounted. 'There was just the part of the fortified tower which was a bit tricky' because here the last group felt a particularly strong spiritual affinity with the Cathars. Claire's historical, factual tour narrative – "historically speaking this tower is probably not Cathar at all" – could not deter them from what they came for and experienced: 'a revelation when sitting down in the tower'. From Claire's perspective, these visitors 'didn't understand', they did not distinguish the Cathars from the non-Cathar building and vice versa. Nevertheless, she did not prohibit their actions as long as they respected the site and her narration. This was once not the case when New Age adherents disrupted her talk with their singing, dancing and screaming. The loud imposition of their convictions was blocked by the intervention of other visitors. The guide's discourse of history and culture collided here with visitors' esoteric discourse and experience of essentialised Cathar-ness and site value (in relation to cosmic energies).

When interpreting such fraught social interaction motivated by spiritual beliefs, thinking of heritage as constructed and transformed in activity (Harrison, Fairclough, Jameson and Schofield 2008: 10) helps to overcome the dichotomy between 'true' and 'imagined' history. Here, meaning forms through activities of heritage and history in places (Johnson 2004: 238). The *Pays Cathare* sites are shaped in dialogue with visitors and become sites of confrontation between 'factual history' (yes, the Cathars really existed but no, these are not Cathar castles) and spiritual leanings (you may relive Catharism through this believed-to-be Cathar building). A French/English leaflet for Peyrepertuse also presents the summer entertainment at the castle under the motto: 'Relive the past in the present'. To a certain extent, visitors are thus directly encouraged to have their own experience of the past at the site, implying their individual

experiences and, by association, interpretations, are valid. Still, their experiences and interpretations are not only framed but partly constituted by the aforementioned official discourses. The next paragraphs continue to depict master narratives of tour guides and the making of meaning in tourism.

Tour guides are ‘knowledge workers’ (Salazar 2010: 51). They are storytellers who make a site and a history meaningful to tourists (Salazar 2010: 52). Lewi, who analyses consumer spectacle and architectural heritage through the example of Carcassonne, points out ‘the heritage industry’s broad agenda of education, and the use of didactic interpretation that aims to “show and tell” a site’s significance’ (2008: 146). In French, ‘histoire’ translates both as ‘history’ and ‘story’ dependent on the context. Claire indicated that guides at sites create a plot to relay the Cathar history. Especially Montségur ‘is a site where you tell a story’, the siege and tragic end of Montségur, as well as explain the architecture. The plot is given by the need ‘to explain the Cathar history before explaining the history of the place itself since these are connected’. Here, the castle is situated in the Cathar context. The audio guide at Quéribus, similarly, takes visitors to accompany the fictional character Captain Alban on a mission to examine the state of the castle (Figures 3.5 and 3.6). The short audio sequences proceed through the architectural construction, incorporating the captain’s comments about the physical exertion of the climb to the castle and being exposed to strong winds. Each sequence ends with the sound of footsteps on the gravel. Beginning with the position of the castle and its relationship with other castles, the guide, Captain Alban, pinpoints the twelfth century and defines Quéribus as a ‘refuge for rebels’ and ‘the last bastion of the Cathar resistance’.

Over the visit, the touristic advertising of the region is interspersed with a showcasing of local history. Although indicating how the building has been modified since the Cathars, Captain Alban evokes the past through the present architecture, describing a room as ‘still resounding with a beautiful fraternity’. Simultaneously, however, the Cathars are relegated to fictitious passages in the tour-guide narrative. The information panel at the entrance of Quéribus concludes with a tragic mystery: ‘To this day we do not know the fate that awaited the heretics and knights who had sought refuge between these walls’.



Figure 3.5. Audio guide advertised on a panel before entering Peyrepertuse. Captain Alban, the same fictional character as at Quéribus, takes visitors through the castle here.



Figure 3.6. Visitors sitting with handset at Quéribus: ‘all ears’ to the audio guide, ‘all eyes’ to the view.

While information panels at Quéribus draw visitors’ attention to the site’s architectural construction and its usage, they do not spell out that this is not a Cathar castle. Other presentations of places, like the animated show of the Théâtre Achille Mir in Cucugnan (the village below Quéribus), on the other hand, tell tourists that Cathar knights and ‘the Cathar castles don’t exist; they’re an invention for tourists’. This different type of touristic presentation of history and culture might be possible because here the focal point is, as the show’s title indicates, not the Cathars but *L’histoire du Curé de Cucugnan*, the fictional story of the priest of Cucugnan, which is however replete with historical components. Aimed at tourists and included in the ticket to Quéribus, it stages a new adaptation of an old history: ‘this, about twenty-minutes-long, timeless journey, narrates 1000 years of history, from the dramatic events of the Albigensian Crusade until today’ (Mairie de Cucugnan 2014). With three-dimensional animatic images projected around the viewer on the walls and ceiling of the small theatre, it makes the local history, in which the Cathars play a role, accessible to a wider public. Although part of the Cathar Country through its association with Quéribus, the theatre is run by

the municipality and diverges from the ‘Cathar Country’ discourse through its stated local and fictional specificity.

In other instances, a more itemised discourse of history and culture rejects the wide-ranging tourism discourse (Cathar Country) because of the Cathars. In the case of Puilaurens and Durban, the ‘imaginary’ Cathar association is made explicit at the castle itself. Inside Puilaurens castle an information panel elucidates how this ‘majestic’ appearing ruin has fuelled the ‘romantic and poetic imaginary’ and thereby ‘the myth of a “Cathar castle”, the royal French fortress being mistaken for the refuge of the southern knights and heretics. Of this original castle not a single trace remains’. Certain castles on the Trail are completely dissociated from the Cathars. Outside the wine depot at the foot of the ruined castle in Durban, an information board – the only one at the site – announces: ‘This is not a so-called “Cathar” castle’ but the eleventh-century family country house of the lords of Durban who did not take sides during the Cathar persecution. Integrated in the village, its purpose was agricultural rather than defensive. Here, heritage is defined on territorial terms but explicitly distanced from the Cathars. The competing discourses develop in reaction to each other, usually linked by the Cathars but sometimes divided by them.

## **Cathar representations**

### **Castle shops and symbols**

The castle shops at the major sites on the Trail are the gateways to, and commoditisers of, the ruins presenting visitors with images of the Cathar Country as well as being shaped by visitors’ demands and shop managers. As tourism scholars argue, through characteristic goods and services, commodified places are consumed by tourists notwithstanding their authenticity (Cartier 2005: 9; Crang 2011b; Urry 1995). History and culture and tourism discourses work hand in hand at the medieval ruins as long as they are not disrupted by visitors’ discourse of essentialised Cathar-ness.

The gift shops differ noticeably as they are owned either by the Association des Sites du Pays Cathare, the municipality or a private bookshop (Association des Sites n.d.a).

Overall, they capitalise on the medieval connotations of the sites rather than specifically on the Cathars. They stock a variety of fairy-tale style children’s books inspired by medieval life and war. The other book section comprises popular Cathar and medieval

histories and Cathar country guides in various foreign languages. Novels in English (for example Mosse 2013 [2005]), featuring Cathars, are displayed next to easy-read non-fiction accounts of Cathar history (like Gougoud 1997; Lebédel 2010; Martin 2008 [2005]; Oldenbourg 1961 [1959]).

Surprisingly, rather than maximising Cathar symbols, the economic promoters of the *département* expressly refute these. As Véronique Ponrouch made clear, ‘Catharism has no iconographic representation at all’. The castle shops commodify medieval insignia, more generally, together with the castles. Cathar symbols are only ‘hidden presences’, appearing on book covers and postcards (see Figure 2.3), overlapping with or being defined as non-Cathar symbols. The manager of Puilaurens castle chose an array of paraphernalia, from contemporary wooden local artworks and walking sticks to ‘medieval’ tea mixtures and T-shirts imprinted with Puilaurens castle and the Occitan cross. She justified the latter with the fact that ‘we are in Occitania here’, while she emphasised that she repudiated the association of the castle and the shop with Cathar symbolism, possibly not least to counteract visitors’ frequent erroneous definition of Puilaurens as a Cathar castle. On the other hand, for Véronique Ponrouch and Claire, who highly valued the development of local economy and identity, Occitania and the Cathar Country were closely related if not identical.

### ***Pays Cathare*: a label and a logo**

The European *Pays Cathare* trademark is the major building block of the *Pays Cathare* programme. With its patenting in 1992 the Conseil Général de l’Aude also intended to protect the label and logo abroad, reasoning that ‘the historical Cathar event not being solely of the Languedoc and hence French, Bulgaria or Yugoslavia could very well develop on the basis of the Bogomil heresy [allegedly precursors of the Cathar] a certain competition’ (Baudry 1991). The *Pays Cathare* label certifies and markets the Cathar Country origin of local goods and savoir-faire (hospitality industry, agriculture, gastronomy activities and crafts), their quality and authenticity (Conseil Général n.d.a) (I discuss authenticity in Chapter 4).

‘Pays Cathare’ is a collective label which ties together products, people’s know-how and territories. It demonstrates that producers and service providers commit to participating in and representing ‘the culture and the traditions of their territory’ (Conseil Général n.d.c). In my interview with her, Véronique Ponrouch set out the

original idea: product and service providers shared through about thirty lists of specifications

a single objective: the quality of product but also quality of welcome, rejecting a soulless tourism without the will to share a history, a culture. To get the label *Pays Cathare* one had to justify the quality of one's product but one also had to be capable of welcoming visitors like *you* and of speaking to them about Catharism, military and religious architecture, the land and the nine small territorial identities of our *département* and make use of the solidarities.

The specifications, operating within the terms of the shared values of quality, local identity, authenticity and 'savoir faire', require local professionals to subscribe to this agenda according to the particular sector, whether it is agri-food, tourism or crafts. The Cathar-ness of a product is not itself a criterion but the publicising of the Cathar history and supporting of the Pays Cathare network, its shared values, main products and services, is (Pays Cathare 2008: 5). Over the years, the label has evolved from a commercial to a 'territorial' label, a new type of label in Europe, based on 'a global approach of territory concerned with an integrated, harmonious and joint development' (Conseil Général n.d.a). In the critical perspective of the sociologist Marie-Carmen Garcia, the criteria of quality and authenticity of products thus rest on a territorial identity which is defined by a cultural reference to the territorialised existence of Catharism, not the history of Catharism (Garcia 1999: 161).

The above discourse about the appreciation of regional culture, history and cuisine defines the regional identity in terms of regional output.<sup>41</sup> In seeming contradiction to the discourse of an essentialised Cathar-ness, it nevertheless makes use of this notion to represent this regional composite. Contributing to the image-making of the *Pays Cathare*, the official ideogram of the Pays Cathare label is kept simple in a dark/light contrast (see Figure 3.7). Véronique Ponrouch and an accommodation owner on the Trail explained that it represents the material/spiritual Cathar dualism, the celestial body (sun/moon) shining on the land. The designers decided against complete abstraction so as not to 'overly trivialise the identity of the Cathar phenomenon' and lose its meaning (Le Pays Cathare n.d.). This 'signature' identifies *Pays Cathare* products and materialises the territorial cohesion of the *Pays Cathare* for visitors (Conseil Général 2013c: 7), clothing the regional discourse in essentialised Cathar-ness. Chapter 5 will elaborate on the practical significance of this official logo for hikers.

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<sup>41</sup> 'The community is encouraged, for example, to use its skills to create products for tourists that can be linked to the cultural and geographic specificity of the Pays Cathare, such as Cathar bread, cheese, wine, arts and crafts, museums and theater productions' (McCaffrey 2001: 129–130).



Figure 3.7. Travelling within the *Pays Cathare* network: a poster in the window of the grocer's shop in Tuchan and a road sign nearby with the logos of historical monument and Cathar Country.

Regarding promotion, Garcia and Genieys (2005: 119) argue that the marketing of the territory has become more important than heritage and history. The Cathar Trail developed in the 1980s when

the department of Aude, in search for an identity, raids the Cathar image. A vast operation of “Cathar washing” [English in the original, alluding to

‘greenwashing’] is set up. From Narbonne to Castelnaudary, through the Corbières, everything which can be eaten, breathed in or looked at, turns Cathar. The Trail is no exception and takes its Christian name. (Caubet 2013c)

In the opinion of a tourism monitor in Foix and the head of the museum in Montségur, both from outside Aude, the general public has today interiorised Aude as ‘Pays Cathare’ as a result of the very successful commercialisation, while at the same time applying the Cathar label to everything has ‘emptied Catharism of its substance’. Apparently subverting their own agendas, tourism agents often engaged in a discourse of Cathar essence and history and culture. This tendency is characteristic of the tourism industry at large.

The following example illustrates that while products are required to highlight ‘*l’esprit cathare*’ to obtain the *Pays Cathare* label (Garcia and Genieys 2005: 123) the Cathar spirit is transposed to faraway lands. In between my two treks on the Trail I came upon a *Paysans cathares* shop (Figure 3.8) where the manager justified the name by referring to its location in the Cathar Country (note, that it is in Ariège, not in Aude) and to selling local produce and supporting ‘the small farmers who are disappearing, even if they are not burnt like the Cathars’. On the basis of their marginality and threatened existence, the shop equally sells a range of packed African goods incorporating thereby African farmers who are ‘close to the earth’ in how they produce their products. So today, inhabitants affiliate with the Cathars through the Cathar Country and use the Cathars according to their strategic agendas, for example to redress power inequality. In the course of tourism marketing, their distinctive marginal status (as seen from the marketers’ perspective) is transposed to other, contemporary, groups, possibly for the latter’s benefit but certainly to promote local business. Economic interests find expression in this ethno-political agenda.



Figure 3.8. The Occitan cross twice. On the left, a 1960 stele commemorates and inscribes the Cathars and the neo-Cathars, the twentieth-century esoteric group who erected it, into the site of Montségur. On the right, ‘The Cathar farmers’: a shop selling local and African produce and sporting the Occitan cross in Mirepoix (Ariège).

### Reconstructing field sites

This chapter differs in its more structuralist approach and subject matter from subsequent chapters. It evolved through the problematisation of its theme. A reconstruction of the process of analysis can therefore elucidate the theme itself. My starting point for the chapter was the tourist sites on the Cathar Trail, places where agendas of various stakeholders converge. Initially, its function was to portray the historic sites on the Cathar Trail in preparation for a Chapter 4 in which I would discuss tourists’ responses to these sites. Tourism studies argue that places are constructed, perceived and represented as authentic spectacles by the tourism industry and visitors (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998: 81; Little 1991: 161; Urry and Larsen 2011 [1990]: 49). The ideas of spectacles, authenticity and fiction seemed particularly relevant in the case of the ‘Cathar castles’. (Would the presentation of the Cathar sites reinforce hikers’ expectations or make them question the ‘Cathar myth’?)

The deconstruction of authoritative place-making, the separating out and categorising of the co-constitutive discourses, proved intricate. From conceptualising them as merely framing hikers’ experiences, I came to understand the discourses as working with,

against, through and within other discourses. Foucauldian theory was a tool to interpret the Cathar territory as ground and context for Cathar Trail journeys. The chapter, at times inconclusive, reflects how participants' discourses seemed inconsistent when cast in rationalised and systematic forms.

Delving into the complexities of people's discourses while writing the chapter, I was resisting to remain caught up on the discursive level. Rather than advance that the making of meaning is all about discourses, my ultimate objective with my chapters was initially to show how people's lived experiences in places relate to discourses in the meaning making process. Drawing on Foucault (1984), I proceeded in three steps, from discourses to sites to individuals' activities and discourses in places. The official discourses form an inter-discursive meshing. They also create sites. Through treating what tourism agents told me as constitutive of a place, this chapter leads to people's experiences. Although site visits in themselves are no longer at the forefront of the final thesis,<sup>42</sup> Chapter 3 remains relevant because it explains how discourses construct sites through the surrounding lands which they define as 'Cathar'. Chapters 4 and 7, in particular, will rely on such an interconnected significance of territory. Chapter 4 leads over from the historical, regional and touristic discourses of Chapters 2 and 3 into people's embodied experience of hiking.

### **Conclusion: a trail *in* and castles *of* the Cathar Country**

Returning to the puzzle of the ill-defined relationship between the Cathar Trail and Country noted at the beginning of this chapter, how does the Trail fit into the Cathar Country? When researching both, I did not find the Cathar Trail named in the abundant official *Pays Cathare* material. Is the Trail too insignificant to be mentioned or does it jar with the Cathar Country programme?

The label and logo *Pays Cathare* clarify the correlation between them. The representative of the County Tourism Committee stated that although of the same name, paradoxically, the Cathar Trail as a touristic product and its itinerary was never labelled *Pays Cathare* (Trail waymarks are described in Chapter 5). Chronologically prior to the Cathar Country, in its early years the Trail adopted the logo without the specifications

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<sup>42</sup> Heritage is not my main focus, even if heritage (see for instance Adell, Bendix, Bortolotto and Tauschek 2015; Di Giovine 2009; Labadi and Long 2010), heritage tourism and authenticity (for example Chhabra, Healy and Sills 2003) and rural heritage tourism (for example Hodges 2009) are important topics in academic research.

of product and service origin, authenticity and quality which are fundamental to the *Pays Cathare* programme. The 2011 edition of the Trail guidebook even states: ‘The Cathar Country logo identifies the Trail’ (Barthes et al. 2011: 9). In practice, the brand tends, then, to be confused with ‘the destination Cathar country’, the tourism committee’s representative said. Véronique Ponrouch highlighted that one needs to distinguish and speak of a product *of* the Cathar Country, not of a *Cathar product*. The notion of Cathar-ness produces an intersection between discourses where the friction between the different meanings of a place and a history emerges.

With regard to the sites, the label has allowed ‘non-Cathar’ castles to be defined as belonging to the Cathar territory by virtue of their location rather than through the particular history of each building (see Figure 3.9). By deflecting the focus from singular castles to a network of sites, the Cathar Country makers sidestepped the avowal of the archaeological and historical ‘fact’ that these are not Cathar castles but post-Cathar royal military vestiges, as presented in Chapter 2. Official discourses gave the territory of the Cathar Country meaning through the historical territorialised identity they had created. They constituted a ‘Cathar Country’.

Local historians (see Chapter 2) and political agents consequently contribute to the contemporary appeal of the Cathars (Garcia 1999: 167). Chapters 2 and 3 have explained the groundwork of the Cathar Trail by deconstructing its historical narrative. Following on from Chapter 2, Chapter 3 has analysed the official discourses which fashion the heritage sites onto which the Cathar Trail and the region are mapped. Within the overall frame of the thesis, however, I do not approach my subject matter on either discursive or non-discursive terms. Body versus ideas, ontology and epistemology, are not the classificatory parameters of my study.

The present chapter, then, is about knowledge and place(s). Its aim is for the reader (and writer) to come to know the Cathar Country and get a sense of what kind of places the sites on the Trail are. The chapter title refers consequently to the construction of places through processes of assembling and interpreting field data in writing rather than to hikers on the Trail who, after all, might not come to know the Cathar Country as such. The next chapter will show that the officially stated purpose of the Trail differs from tourists’ motivation and experience on the Trail. In her email to me, an information officer in Quillan wrote that in the everyday practice of tourism operators, Catharism

consists of ‘the label, the so-called Cathar castles and the individuals eager to discover the Cathar history’. Addressing tourism in addition to Chapter 3’s heritage, Chapter 4 will explore how individuals craft their Cathar journey in practice. It proceeds with hikers’ agendas, expectations, trip organisation and responses to show how, through their travelling, they experience and fashion a Cathar Trail and sites at odds with official discourses. Travel has the potential to form meaning through interrelations in which discourses participate.



Figure 3.9. The flag with the Occitan cross, symbol for Occitania and often (misleadingly) associated with the Cathars, is often seen along the Cathar Trail (here in the village of Bugarach) and on postcards, badges, artwork, jewellery, T-shirts and flyers advertising local businesses.

## CHAPTER 4

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# A trail with(out) castles, a hiking sense of place

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This chapter discusses hikers' sense of place when moving along the Cathar Trail in relation to a cultural landscape consisting of (but not only as we will see) the historical narratives and heritage sites presented in Chapters 2 and 3. To recapitulate, the Cathar Trail is based on constructed Cathar histories and sites. Ruined castles determine the itinerary as sites of Cathar history. Here, in the thirteenth century, the Cathars resisted the Catholic Church and the French army until they were massacred by them. All the same, the Cathar Trail is not a historical pilgrimage route but was created in the 1980s to promote rural economic development through combining green tourism and cultural tourism. This current chapter originated from my pre-fieldwork expectation that hikers would do the Cathar Trail for the tragic Cathar history and the awe-inspiring tourist attractions known as 'Cathar castles' and my puzzling (and irksome) observation that hikers seemed to be doing the Trail *without* its history.<sup>43</sup>

Promotional material and tourist guides such as the Trail website (CDT n.d.b), map (Institut Géographique National and Rando Éditions 2011) and guidebook (Barthes et al. 2011 [1988]) all present the Cathar Trail as a journey in history, going back to the medieval period, as we have seen. In this chapter, I draw on my fieldwork to show how, in 2013, hikers' use and interpretation of the Trail did not seem to be in line with the official Trail objective of historical immersion. Not a single hiker I met was walking the whole Cathar Trail with all its castles. What meanings did the Cathar Trail have for these hikers in practice, then?

Anthropologists have characterised tourism as a 'form of meaning-making' (Di Giovine 2009: 10) and 'an ideological framing of history, nature and tradition' (Salazar 2010: 167). Following Chapter 3, one can understand the sites along the Cathar Trail as

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<sup>43</sup> The former were the reasons why I had first hiked and, more recently, chosen the Trail for research. Moreover, where was the eagerness the tourism agent at the end of the last chapter had referred to?

‘authorised’ (Ryan 2002: 9), involving power and negotiation, rather than inherently authentic. The sites, which are constructed with the purpose of territorial economic development, work with and through tourists. The Cathar Trail hikers I met, on the other hand, were motivated by a nature setting and a fashion for the outdoors. Their attraction to nature differs from, but fits well with, the official heritage discourse in Chapter 3. So, with changed referents, Chapter 4 continues to investigate official discourses as well as travellers’ practices. It delineates how the castles fit into hikers’ journeys to explain the performance of heritage on the Cathar Trail, thereby reinforcing the relevance of movement in tourism which has been underlined by Di Giovine (2009: 146) and Quinlan Cutler, Carmichael and Doherty (2014: 152). Visitors’ hiking projects and activities will be crucial in defining Trail experiences.

This chapter examines constructions and experiences of nature, authenticity and time to show how tourists’ interaction with their environments in walking brought into being an alternative landscape and trail which were experienced and interpreted as genuine. It reveals a divergence and discordance in meaning between hiking practices and official Trail agendas. Beyond and through that, it conceptualises *terroir* as an alternative to ‘cultural landscape’ and an example of a movement-specific making of meaning.

The chapter is a transversal assemblage of aspects of hikers’ journeys whereas subsequent chapters will follow particular avenues. Fieldwork induced me to think according to participants’ responses in situ rather than to seek a landscape’s meaning by laying bare an underlying, ideologically determined structure (see also Rose 2002). My present objective is consequently not a deconstruction of the concept of nature. Rather, I focus on how qualities like ‘nature’ and ‘authenticity’ hang together, working by association with terms participants used and my observations. The chapter begins with the social context of travelling on the Cathar Trail. It then examines hikers’ Trail performances in relation to time and ends with an adoption of *terroir* as a holistic formulation of hikers’ sense of place in which ruins and the ‘natural’ environment, qualities like the terrain and the seasons, are integrated. Thereby I highlight the significance of connecting histories and places with a contemporary human activity. Ultimately, to hike on the Cathar Trail is not to access a history in the landscape but to generate individual narratives which are formed through hiking the Trail.

## To walk in nature: motivations

### A hiking holiday

Like other heritage tourism destinations, the Cathar Trail is the manifestation of particular official discourses, some of which have been discussed in Chapter 3. Before embarking on their journeys, visitors will have a mediated conception of the Trail (see also Olafsdottir 2013: 211), which is expressed in their expectations and trip organisation. I begin therefore with hikers' motivations, before investigating hikers' sense of place once on the Trail in relation to these motivations and to constitutive discourses. Lund and Benediktsson (2010: 1) propose an open and dynamic interpretation of the human-landscape relation as conversations: 'the result of the perceptual encounter between humans and landscape depends upon where and how the human is positioned in the landscape and what intentions he/she may have for acting upon it' (Lund and Benediktsson 2010: 7). Person-environment interactions are consequently shaped by people's agendas and the affordances of an environment (also Ward Thompson 2013: 29).

I began fieldwork intending to find out what hikers make of the complex Trail construct in practice. The Trail design explained in Chapter 2 suggested that hikers would do the Cathar Trail for the tragic Cathar history and the awe-inspiring ruined fortresses. On the Cathar Trail I learned from hikers and locals that most hikers hiked the Trail without visiting its castles. Contrary to the official Trail objective, most hikers I met on the Trail did not seem (geographically) motivated by the official narratives of Cathar history and place. The reason and explanation for this discrepancy with the castle-based Trail agenda are hikers' motivations for coming in the first place. These refer to a desire for a constructed outdoor activity which comes with a predefined setting. Most hiker-participants chose the Cathar Trail to walk in nature.

One evening at the hostel in Puivert, midway on the Trail, I met a middle-aged couple (hereafter called the 'Pontoise couple') from the Paris region, on the Trail without their six children.<sup>44</sup> They had seized the opportunity to combine a family visit nearby with doing this Trail which had been recommended by a friend. Plus, the husband recalled seeing advertisements for the Cathar Country in the metro in Paris. The common ground

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<sup>44</sup> According to hospitality staff on the Trail, seventy per cent of Trail hikers are French. The remaining thirty per cent mostly consist of Belgian, Dutch, German and Spanish tourists.

with other hikers was, however, the couple's motivation 'to walk in nature'. They considered the Cathar castles to be 'piles of stones' and the Cathar history just a 'small bonus' on site. 'The ruins are of no interest except for the architecture and the technical feat of building the castles', the husband declared. What impressed many visitors was construction in these high-perched, fairly inaccessible locations, marking the landscape to this day (see Figure 4.1).

That hikers did not visit the castles bore importantly on how they experienced the Trail and constructed an understanding. Rather than responding to propositions by the tourist industry, hikers understood places through the hiking project and activity. Hikers' motivations and interaction with their environments on the Cathar Trail shaped their negotiation of official constructions of history and historically constructed sites on the Trail. Rather than the heritage narrative discussed in Chapter 3, hikers performed a nature discourse of authenticity which their hiking, in turn, reinforced. The discussion on time later in this chapter will explain how, for hikers, the ruins detracted from their progress along the Trail, a site visit being a detour. For hikers, the Cathar Trail was a trail to hike in nature. Here, both the hiking activity and the natural setting are culturally situated and (partly) constituted, as hikers' journeys will be by extension. I will consider each in turn, although the discussion of authenticity thereafter will show the interlocking of nature and performative hiking.



Figure 4.1. Peyrepertuse is one of the tourist sites named ‘citadelles du vertige’ (vertiginous citadels) after Roquebert and Soula’s (1994 [1966]) book title. Note the sheer drop on the right and the visitor car park below. The Trail passes the ruin further below the cliff on the right. I took the photograph from the higher half of the ruin.

### **The hiking trend**

This subsection situates the Cathar Trail within the contemporary hiking trend. The standing of the Trail was shaped by this fashion for ‘pedestrian tourism’ (on the latter see Amato 2004: 268; Neillands 1995; Solnit 2001). The Cathar Trail was for many

hikers one among several other hiking destinations such as the Camino de Santiago or the GR10 which connects the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea traversing the Pyrenees. A ‘GR’ is a *Grande Randonnée*, a hiking trail which belongs to the national network of long-distance footpaths run by the French Hiking Federation (FFRandonnée 2015). In 2013, local experts were divided on the uncertain future of the Cathar Trail as a GR. Some expected the Trail to become better marketed in the future; others believed that it would lose its singularity as a standardised GR with a number like others.

Without my knowing it until six months later, my fieldwork took place in the last hiking season before the Cathar Trail became the GR367. This name no longer refers to the Cathars.<sup>45</sup> Notwithstanding such changes, the marks of past interpretations often remain on the ground. In October 2013, a weathered Trail panel still informed hikers on arrival in Quillan of ‘[t]he Sentier Cathare: a historical hiking trail [...] [which] goes through the main Cathar sites (twelfth to thirteenth century)’.

Throughout my research, interlocutors associated the Cathar Trail with a pilgrimage (possibly because of its name or the media presence of pilgrimage trails like the Camino de Santiago).<sup>46</sup> On the way to Bugarach, a village midway on the Trail, which had been in the spotlight of the media in 2012 for its significance as a safe haven in the Mayan prophecy of the end of the world, I walked briefly with two middle-aged French day-walkers. Drawing on her experience on the Camino de Santiago (a popular pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela in Spain), one of them talked about the Cathar Trail as a ‘mythical trail’ and hiking on it as an ‘initiator journey’. It was also advertised as such in a tourist brochure (Office de Tourisme Intercommunal 2010: [4]). Discerning my scepticism, she conceded to my perception that the Cathar Trail might be too short for the psychological transformation which weeks and months on the Camino engender (see also Frey 1998: 221). She added that today the ‘Sentier Cathare has lost its soul’. As became clear, hikers’ experiences on the Cathar Trail were articulated in relation to their experiences of other trails. Next, I illustrate how the Trail could often be defined in practice by travellers’ project of adventure.

Hikers’ motivations and name for the Trail shaped each other as well as their experiences once on the Trail. Several walked against the prescribed direction of the

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<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, the 2016 editions of the Trail guidebook and map appear to reverse this prioritising of hiking over history. Newly, their covers present ruins devoid of walkers.

<sup>46</sup> Having recently had to accept the twentieth-century origin of the Trail myself, I found myself repeatedly refuting this association.

Trail, combined it with other trails and/or walked only part of it. One among various hiking trails, a convenient connector and the final segment of a longer trek, is what the Cathar Trail was for a couple from Quebec, who spent their sabbatical walking across France from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean. They appeared at the hostel in Montségur for dinner on one of my last evenings on the Trail. We laughed when they reported that, as they linked sections of trails such as the Camino de Santiago and the Cathar Trail and walked against their prescribed direction, they baffled fellow travellers and locals. Such ‘adventure hikers’, who use the Camino as a GR are equally reported by a study of the France-based Camino (CRT Midi Pyrénées, CRT Aquitaine, Qappa and BVA 2003: 7).

One tourist office employee on the Trail broadly typified visitors according to sportiness. She reported that hikers come in for information on accommodation, food and water supply and, only occasionally, Cathar history. Young, educated, middleclass Catalan tourists do the Trail with big backpacks and from a feeling of belonging to Occitania, to a shared marginal identity, she said. ‘Occitania’ designates the southern region in which the Trail is located. It is associated with the Cathar history and the spirit of regional independence (Roquebert 2006 [1970]: 12–13) and a shared history and language with Catalonia.

The Cathars did not mean anything however to the three athletic Catalan hikers I met where both the Cathar Trail and *Chemin des Bonshommes* (The Way of the Good Men), also called GR107, overlap. The three young women were taking the GR107 as a cross-frontier sporting challenge to cross the Pyrenean mountain range from France into Spain. They passed by the castles since they had visited them on previous trips. They did not associate them with the Cathars. Over dinner at the hostel in Comus they told me that the GR107 is renowned in Catalonia. They were, however, unfamiliar with its other name, *Chemin des Bonshommes*, and with the Cathars generally although the ‘Good Men’ is another, historically more accurate, name for the Cathars. The latter trail emulates the Cathar Trail and was described by other local hiker-participants and experts as being ‘really’ on the Cathar traces, more than the Cathar Trail. In these cases, hikers appropriate the trail in their own ways and reinforce the hiking trend. The Catalan hikers mentioned above presented their hike on the GR107 as a physical challenge they had set themselves. Possibly their sense of belonging to this territory also played a role since they had come there more than once. Overall, hikers came

predominantly for the hiking activity. The functionality of a trail for individual hikers' projects overshadowed its historical name.

### **The outdoor setting: nature tourism**

Why did hikers choose this particular trail? Their motives responded to official representations of the region and to what the physical setting offered them. They came to walk in nature. Their chosen 'natural' destination featured particular attributes, among which was an essential authenticity in terms of southern geographical location, rugged topography and Mediterranean vegetation and climate. I will discuss aspects of these here before I theorise authenticity, more largely, in relation to performance in the next section.

In keeping with official natural heritage discourses, many hikers decided on the Trail because of its appeal as one of the most pure and wild hiking destinations in France. In this respect, hikers actually adopted the official heritage discourse since the Cathar Country tourism axis equally rests on the idea of the south of France as epitomising original landscapes. The region invests in the promotion of its natural heritage (Conseil Général [2013]: 154). The audio guide at Quéribus castle narrates some of the 'natural ingredients' of the Cathar Country: Mediterranean civilisation, rich lands, powerful landscapes, anti-industrialisation, local culture and non-standardised tourism. With its authentic sites, it is advertised as a unique destination where history (in the form of stones), nature and human activity (as in vineyards) harmonise. One of the major French guidebooks equally presents the area as rocky and rugged, sinuous and harsh but harmonious in its luminosity, colours and climate (Gloaguen et al. 2013: 223). An accommodation owner on the first Trail stage explained that the land is 'a force' which calls visitors back. Other local inhabitants spoke of experiencing themselves this 'pull of the land'. In the visitors' books at the castles and tourist offices along the Trail, visitors praised the 'unique nature', 'the arid and authentic landscape' and the 'sunny welcome at the heart of a wild and charming region' with which they feel a connection. For visitors from further north such as the Belgian women's group, this region likewise represented the south with its luminosity and warmth, full of sunshine (in opposition to their northern place of residence).<sup>47</sup> Generally, visitors were attracted to an experience

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<sup>47</sup> A tourist agent explained in 2013 that Aude had launched a new advertising strategy which unites geography and history. The new slogan, 'Le Sud a son Histoire', rebrands the south (of France) as having its own history, heritage and culture as well as Cathar roots (Agence de Développement 2014: 4; Le Sud a

of close contact with rural surroundings, resonating with the romantic alliance between humans and landscape (for example Taylor 2000).

Still, while for tourism agents the Trail was not travelled enough, for some hikers it was not wild enough. What is the measure of ‘authenticity’ for whom? The tourism industry offers nature as a resource: tourists can overcome alienation and regain authenticity and real experiences through nature (Saarinen 2004: 439). Research in Scandinavian countries (Wall-Reinius 2012: 626; Ween and Abram 2012) finds visitors’ main motivation to be to experience nature, sometimes to escape from civilisation and everyday life. Visitors define ‘wilderness’ as having few visitors, inhabitants and trails, silence and remoteness in contrast to their home environment (Wall-Reinius 2012: 626). Hikers’ origins on the Cathar Trail are consequently an influencing factor but will not be problematised here due to the individualised and fragmented nature of my fieldwork. Apart from that, visitors’ idea of the Trail as an untouched holiday destination was confirmed by the Trail logistics: the Trail was difficult to access and accommodation was relatively sparse and not always available off-season. An organised hiking group I met halfway on the Trail was surprised by the lack of amenities and felt distant from civilisation.

Contrasting nature and civilisation, hikers told me they came for landscapes made of vineyards, *garrigue* (scrubland), holm oak trees, limestone and weathered rocks. These distinctively Mediterranean features were considered resistant, to time, to civilisation – travellers formed their personal idea but, overall, cultural and ecological values aligned in their imaginaries and practices (also advertised as such, see CDT n.d.e: 5). With respect to heritage, such integrity, ‘wholeness and intactness of the natural and/or cultural heritage’ (Taylor 2009: 23), denotes authenticity. The associations of natural heritage fit in well with the historical spirit of independence of the inhabitants as long as socio-critical scholars do not upend the idyllic picture. Vaccaro, for instance, denounces the ‘transformation of the rural landscape into a leisure supermarket for urban populations’ (2006: 370), the Pyrenees serving as a resource for recreation in post-industrial capitalist society. He describes how in times of global networks the Pyrenean landscape is commoditised, produced, marketed and consumed through ecotourism. In his view, ‘[n]ature is translated into culture’ (2007: 267). Less radical, Cummins’

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son histoire 2014). The logo uses light and shadows to convey the message of medieval history as a constant companion to visitors (Agence de Développement 2014: 4).

ethnography (2009) explores issues of land tenure, use and conservation as found in pastoralism, transhumance, tourism and ecology in the Pyrenees. Such studies postulate a conflict between natural and social heritage and see travellers operating within market-oriented networks. They position nature, even if it is classified as a cultural item (see Vaccaro above), as the counterpart to society. A focus on hikers' Trail journeys, however, acknowledges individual practice in situ aside from classifications of society and nature which are involved in 'nature-based tourism' (Coghlan and Buckley 2013: 334).<sup>48</sup> Hinchliffe stresses 'that natures are made but not in ways that are reducible to human meaning systems' (2007: 3). Practices like representing, thinking but also digging make natures (Hinchliffe 2007: 1). Macnaghten and Urry (1998: 1) replace 'nature' with multiple, contested 'natures' produced and consumed in practices. 'Rather than being simply "there" for observation, nature is mobilized in a different way, as partner in action' (Crouch 2003: 23).

An abundance of flora and fauna characterises the region. The Trail map states: 'All along the 250 km of the Cathar Trail you will discover unspoiled nature, preserved spaces often declared protected areas [...] rich in rare [...] fauna [...] and flora [...]' (Institut Géographique National and Rando Éditions 2011). Correspondingly, walkers valued the fruits, herbs and flowers along the path and the catering at the hostels which used produce from the garden. Some of the Belgian group took wild thyme from beside the path to replant on their balcony at home. The Apostles at one of the dinners appreciated the vanilla custard which the farmstay owner had made with lavender from the garden. Furthermore, city-dwellers characterised the Trail as an occasionally slightly scary place due to the animals they encountered on their way. Here, wild animals roam (see also Figure 4.2 and Cummins 2009 on the recent reintroduction of bears in the nearby Pyrenees). Wild boars, for example, rummaged at night in the harvested vineyards through which I passed. A local told me they were foraging for grapes. Hunting was another autumnal feature of the Trail. Many evenings and weekends by day, I walked to the barking of packs of hounds, shouting and gunshots in the near distance. In an otherwise peaceful landscape with rolling hills and valleys, the occasional pickup trucks parked on the side of the track with their cargo of small cages open and empty made a desolate impression on me. A tourist agent pointed out that the

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<sup>48</sup> Anthropologists established in the 1990s that nature is culturally constructed (Ellen and Fukui 1996). The relationship between culture and nature is often at stake in diverse interpretations of landscape (Wylie 2011: 313).

region is relatively poor and little populated and urbanised. The limited number of people on and around the Trail was indeed one criterion which contributed to the appeal of the Cathar Trail as a natural destination. Below I will show that such narratives of natural heritage can be interpreted as being realised through people hiking. As Edensor points out, ‘walking also (re)produces and (re)interprets space and place’ (2000: 82) and can reinforce ideologies about nature.



Figure 4.2. The first tourist office on the Trail (between Quéribus and Peyrepertuse), officially named intercommunal tourist office of the ‘wild Corbières’. Notice the prominently displayed wild boar with ‘Corbières sauvages’ written below which brands the area as wild and the tour bus on the left.

### **Time out ..., time in ..., no time: performing authenticity**

This section of the chapter problematises the seeming paradox of how authenticity can be performed and concludes, following a non-essentialist ‘activity-based approach’ (Rickly-Boyd 2013: 680), that hikers’ performances can authenticate place. Authenticity implies faithful resemblance to an original (Oxford English Dictionary 2014). The link between the two can be understood as constituted through performance. In practice, authenticity emerges from process and relationship (Dovey 2000 [1985]: 33). Within

this context, authenticity is also socially attributed, produced through discourse (de St. Maurice 2014: 67). The term ‘discourses’ highlights that this is a political process (Bender 2002: S104). Performativity is a productive interpretative lens here. Crouch, a geographer, defines this notion in terms of practices which are shaped by context and shaping that context (2010: 47). It is open and bodily and has people’s doing at its centre (Crouch 2010: 48).

The following discussion presents hikers’ journeys as performances of place through performances of time. How was the Trail design which was based on heritage sites and historical immersion appropriated by hikers? Participants did not explicitly mention authenticity in this context but this notion carried over from their motivations as a basis for their journeys. Individuals’ motivations and choices, how they hiked the Cathar Trail, generated a particular trail. The most striking particularity was that hikers did the Trail without actually visiting its castles. From an Antipodean perspective, European and urban inhabitants could be considered ‘saturated’ and impatient with manifestations of civilisation such as ‘history’ and drawn to places which they defined as wild. For my present purpose, however, it is more pertinent to explain and understand what kind of trail is performed by looking at time, place and practice in combination. Was hikers’ experience of nature rather than of the history which the Cathar Trail officially represents a consequence of their performance of time? Was their journey one of hiking without history simply because they did not take the time for ‘history’? This would show that people’s performances form the meaning of a place.

### **Walking time...**

Hikers’ journeys took place in present time. This time was first of all limited by the start and end dates of their trip. Most hiker-participants were on an individual or organised weeklong holiday because their ‘work time’ (Adam 1995: 96) determined the time available for walking. In their walking from starting point to destination, hikers therefore travelled within current time frames with only a rare reference to historical pasts. Castle visitors, who were not necessarily hikers,<sup>49</sup> were more likely to remark on time travel through emplaced experience. In the visitors’ book at Peyrepertuse, for example, someone stated: ‘Very beautiful journey in time’. For motorised tourists, the castles represented outings to spectacular and picturesque sites, an investment in time.

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<sup>49</sup> In fact, I did not see other backpacks when I stored my bag in the castle shops at the entrance of the sites. Nor did I see hikers with backpacks visiting the ruins.

Hikers' continuing Trail journey contrasts with motorised castle visitors who considered the ruin a standalone destination for an outing, driving from one tourist site to another. Hikers, however, were on a short stint on a trail dedicated to a long history. So, different kinds of time were at play and places differed through performance (also Cresswell and Merriman 2011: 7).

Time and space in their interrelation form, according to Adam, a 'timescape' (2004: 143). We experience time in terms of our interaction with our environment (Hall 1989 [1983]: 41, 148). Vice versa, '[a]s psychologists and phenomenologists have stressed, human beings come to know space through "motor projects" (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 5). An itinerary translates the spatial order of a map into temporal sequence, defining proximity and distance in terms of time and feasibility' (Adler 1989: 1369). On the Cathar Trail, time was a constraint for hikers as the inexperienced but fit Pontoise couple made painfully (and triumphantly) clear. Being one day short, they completed two Trail stages in one day in order to fit their hike into their available holiday time. At night, they arrived at the hostel in Montségur where I was also staying. They were aching but proud. They *had made* the hostel, their proclaimed destination for the day. During the couple's conversation with the hostel manager there, they discussed remedies for the wife's sore back and I could hear that their valuations of time and of place differed.

The couple were charting time and measuring their achievement in terms of quotidian clock-driven time. Scholars have qualified clock-time as decontextualised, quantified, directional and invariant (Adam 2003: 64; Macnaghten and Urry 1998: 144; Urry 2000: 106). As Northcott (2008: 230) has stated, this mechanical and efficient time characterises modern tourism and determines tourists' pace. The couple's progression along the Trail was temporal as well as spatial (see also Devanne 2005: 296, 312). The Trail guidebook itself guides hikers' progress according to time indications (see, for example, Barthes et al. 2011 [1988]: 19). The estimated times given in the guidebook rely on measuring and achievement-based time. Even without employing the guidebook (the way most hiker-participants were travelling), the above couple were pairing achievement and time. By covering a stretch of the way in as little time as possible they were performing quotidian time measured by the clock. They performed the Trail in terms of their work-life notion and performances of time, antithetical to the concept of 'time out'. Bragard's (2009) anthropological research on long-distance on the GR20 (in

Corsica) and on the Chapada Diamantina (Brazil) equally underlines the tension between the departure and arrival point of a hike. He shows that hikers know their journey in measurements, from the weight of their backpack to the timing of stages and breaks, the height in meters to climb and the time indications of the guidebook. These orient the hiker in space and time and physical exertion and tell him/her how far he/she has still to go (Bragard 2009: 192). Present, past and future locations are connected through the hiker's anticipation of the destination and through walking (Bragard 2009: 192).

The couple's appreciations of time and of place were inextricably linked. As a constraint, time shaped these hikers' experiences of the Trail. The reaching of the destination counted more than the way. This is also how the Cathar Trail functioned in practice: the time constraints of the daily stages were a reality for every hiker on the Trail. The distance between villages and amenities meant that every day we needed to reach the next village with accommodation, and preferably food, before nightfall. Hikers' journeying was thus more geared towards these destinations than towards the heritage sites, even if most hostels were close to the major Trail ruins since they had been part of the original Cathar Trail set-up which was based on these sites. The hostel manager at Montségur, however, advocated a different management of time. He seemed to disapprove of the Pontoise couple's style of Cathar Trail hiking of pushing oneself. In his hostel he was advertising a friend's meditative walking trips which centred on the engaged activity of walking in specific places (the poster showed the desert).<sup>50</sup> Hence, his attitude might relate to what has been written about sacred (archetypal) landscapes which resonate with us: '[m]oments of transcendence impel us to abandon ordinary, everyday 'profane' time, which is linear and composed of the hours, days, and years of our life' (Mann 2010: 6). Perhaps the Pontoise couple, following this perspective, had taken not 'time out', but 'place out'.

Mullins' ethnography of canoe tripping in Canada, on the other hand, demonstrates how narratives (in particular, place meanings) are formed through practices such as the group's canoeing (Mullins 2009: 236). His participants experienced and understood a place in terms of their physical ability (Mullins 2009: 242). They described the experienced challenge when moving rather than a scenic place. Instead of place

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<sup>50</sup> See Chapter 7 for a study of this type of walking.

performance on the Cathar Trail, then, it might be more appropriate to speak of Trail performances. Ness suggests in this vein that we experience and know place or “way-making” (2007: 80) as a result of movement, in particular of a choreographic activity which involves technical practice, is corporeal and meaningful through its kind of motility. ‘Meaning grows mainly out of the motile, corporeal experience of the movement performed’ (Ness 2007: 80), *not* principally from narrative practices.

In this context, travel time emerges in performance and is contingent on travellers’ activity and environment (Jain 2009: 105). Still in Montségur, the local museum manager pointed out that visitors come for holidays and consequently ignore or misread signs such as Figure 4.3. Interestingly, this leads visitors to expect not only road access to the castle but also the present-day village to be adjacent to the castle as the Cathar village had been in the thirteenth century.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, I observed that the speedy Pontoise couple did not read information panels along the way for lack of time.<sup>52</sup> Focused on their progress, they talked only sparingly, sporadically commenting dispassionately on change of ground, the muddy path or surrounding vegetation or landscape, and did not mark any hesitation at junctions or stop for photographs along the way. In the morning, they hurried each other on to leave the hostel. Equipped with medium-sized backpacks, they kept a regular and brisk pace with long strides and few breaks. On the day we walked together, I was hardly able to keep step with them. The end of my fieldwork approaching, my progress was weighed down with gleaned brochures. Individuals’ motivations, trip organisation and style of travel thus generated a particular trail in action. This trail was defined by the progression of hiking rather than by historic sites. Research on the Inca Trail in Peru has shown similarly that the physical hiking experience predominates over the visit to the heritage destination of the trail. Participants experienced a disjunction between trail experience and heritage destination (Quinlan Cutler, Carmichael and Doherty 2014: 163). The authors conclude that physical strain marks hikers’ experience and prevents historical experiences (Chapter 7 re-evaluates this conflict): ‘the experience of Machu Picchu is eclipsed by the emotional, educational, and physical journey of reaching it’ (Quinlan Cutler,

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<sup>51</sup> If archaeological traces of Cathar habitation exist at present, these are to be found in the hardly visible traces of houses adjacent to the fortress rather than in the fortress itself (Brenon 1995 [1988]: 258).

<sup>52</sup> On our day together I turned guide and indicated places to them despite feeling uncomfortable about adopting such a directive role. The discordance between the constructed place provisions and the couple’s visit prompted my action.

Carmichael and Doherty 2014: 165). On the Cathar Trail, time performance becomes place performance: hikers performed the Trail with its landscapes through time.



Figure 4.3. ‘History is at the castle, life at the village’? Board at the car park halfway between the village (at the front) and the ruin of Montségur (on the mountaintop).

### **Authenticity in place and time travel**

In practice, the Cathar Trail is a paradox. It is based on the idea that on the Cathar Trail the hiker can access and experience a different time (the medieval Cathar history) through immersing her-/himself in the present place (a pristine landscape). Time is the hinge between contemporary and past place: if one takes the time one will discover these mysterious lands. Evoking a timeless landscape, the creators’ Trail promotes a different way of being in place from our current one in which time is experienced rather than measured. Yet, hikers did not consider themselves to be travelling into the past. In contradiction with the Trail ideology, the Trail in its making and its hikers operated with contemporary chronological time. Hikers kept the measure of the time passing and the spatial distance to be covered in this time through signage and through charting their progress on maps. In synthesis, the Cathar Trail is characterised by the paradox of time travel. It is officially defined by physical progression and chronological time but simultaneously by the passage between historical past and present through place.

As set out earlier, hikers were engaging in ideas and environments of natural rather than cultural heritage. Some participants referred to this other kind of historical passage when they talked about journeying according to natural rhythms. They conceived of their own progression as responding and corresponding to the seasons, day and night and, above all, the topography. The head of the museum in Montségur village suggested, for example, that a place imposes itself on the hiker. One just had to take the time to *be* there at Montségur, to listen and understand the mountain on which the ruin is located (Figure 4.4). Researchers of places concur that, through their unique rhythms, places have unique temporalities which are ‘experiential and performative’ (Wunderlich 2010: 56). Place, time and invested energy are interrelated in rhythm and the material, sensory and social interact (Edensor 2010a: 3). Long-distance hiking thus requires and intensifies the hiker’s attuned movements to the ‘archi-textural meshwork’ (Ingold 2007: 80) of entangled trails of movement which is her/his environment (Ingold 2007: 101). However, speed may be equally a factor in hikers’ journeys. In my own Trail experience, the rugged terrain, the strong winds and the ruins did indeed require time but provoked a need to prevail over them rather than open up to them. The two times I passed through Montségur I felt the time pressure most acutely, from arriving in a rush, lacking accommodation and food, to being pulled on to complete the Trail (only two more stages to go!).



Figure 4.4. Taking the time for every step at Montségur?

Allegations of inauthenticity against the Trail and the castles, probably made in the public arena by people who know the complex history of ‘Cathar’ castles (see Chapter 2), give an insight into the slippage in understanding between activity and Trail and into the ‘reality’ of both. On the one hand, it is an inauthentic trail with constructed sites in

terms of Cathar origins (see Chapter 3). On the other hand, it is very much real for hikers who have experienced the Trail physically. A response on an American travel site protests against the allegations: ‘I have to disagree with you, the Cathar trail very much exists, it is quite a piece of hiking, very challenging if you do it completely with all your gear on your back’ (Rif 2014). Senda-Cook, who investigates hiking in an American national park, maintains that people practice walking as an authentic experience (2012: 138). Authenticity is physical in people’s constructed experience (Senda-Cook 2012: 149). The Cathar Trail is certain to exist because it has been experienced as physically real. Hiking realises the Trail. The hiker has experienced it authentically; consequently the Trail becomes authentic in itself. Aside from such ‘misunderstandings’, for most hikers the Cathar Trail existed as a historical reality rather than a creation even if they did not intentionally engage with its historical claim (more about walkers’ rapport with the Cathars in Chapter 7).

As illustrated above, what makes the Trail authentic might be the walking in its duration rather than the Trail’s connection with historical time. An owner of a farmstay on the Trail reminded her guests at the communal dinner of the role of walking: former generations walked to school; nowadays ‘people take time out to walk’. In the past, walking was how everyday life was carried out. It was the ordinary means to get to where one needed to be. Today, walking is scheduled in people’s diary. The numerous walking studies document and attest that it has become a matter of choice, an alternative and escape from the quotidian (see Amato 2004; Neillands 1995; Solnit 2001). By virtue of requiring walking, the Cathar Trail is automatically an exceptional space where the relation between time and place is enacted also through the people’s rhythm of walking. ‘Movement takes time. But movement also makes time [duration]’ (Manning 2009: 17). Nowadays, we are stressed and ‘out of time’; to walk is to slow down. The hostel in Puivert displayed an article by the French philosopher Frédéric Gros. Gros (2011) suggests that walkers experience expanded time through the slowness, regularity and repetitiveness of walking. A day on the Trail is experienced as longer than a work-life day through the sustained physical involvement in hiking. A hiking temporality is dynamic, multiple, heterogeneous, and somatic (Edensor 2010a: 1).<sup>53</sup> The hiker becomes more receptive to the environment and experiences it more

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<sup>53</sup> The main protagonist’s story in Grossman’s novel *To the end of the Land* (2010) (the original Hebrew title is *A woman flees tidings*) is a poignant example of a place-related walking temporality against the fatality of news from war.

consciously. Le Breton, an anthropologist, elaborates on the effect of a walking temporality on individuals' perception. He characterises walking in the contemporary neoliberal world of speed, utility and output as anachronistic, resisting and subverting the quotidian. In his view, the walker steps out of that time and routine and becomes receptive to the present moment and to encounters along the way. The walker's greater sensory alertness leads to his/her experience of unique moments (Le Breton 2011).

Walking is accordingly associated with slowed time and the out-of-the-ordinary. Such a slow time is rare in the information age (Eriksen 2001). It is in living the exceptional moments of this ordinary movement that hikers share their walking experience with people across time and space, whether these are the Cathars (see Chapter 7) or fellow hikers (see Chapter 6) who they cross path with or who precede or succeed them on the path. Solnit similarly states about pilgrimage that 'to follow a route is to accept an interpretation [of the best way to take], or to stalk your predecessors on it' (2001: 68). As Merriman amends, however, mobile agents do not move '*in, across or through* space and time' (2012: 9, original emphasis) but *with* spatialities and temporalities (hence the importance of rhythm, see the next chapters). Promoting a processual approach, he argues that movement is primary (2012: 43) and that places are 'distinctive rhythmic configurations of bodies, architectures, atmospheres, affects and circulating forces' (Merriman 2012: 60). In the following subsection I return to the specificity of the Cathar Trail, the ruined fortresses, as such 'socio-material intensities' (2012: 59) to explore how hikers constituted the Trail through their allocation of time.

### **... castle time?**

As shown above, people's travel practices performed and produced multiple interlaced Trail temporalities, walking rhythm and clock-time (also Crang 2011a: 341; Middleton 2009: 1958; Watts and Urry 2008: 868). Middleton (2009: 1958) tells us that even types of walking which are focused on efficiency and saving time like walking to work involve non-linear experiential and collective temporalities. On the other hand, Edensor (2000) refutes the romantic discourse of walking in nature as liberating. He underlines that walking is a regulated activity, subject to norms (in the case of the Cathar Trail, clock-time). Since these different temporalities were marked by the duration of the hiking activity (also Crang 2011a: 339), what was the position of the castles in the context of travel?

As mentioned earlier, hikers took ‘time out’ from their daily routine but lacked the time for the castles. The castles, part of the Trail in the Trail guidebook, were also dead ends, which often did not fit into the rhythm of the trek. Waiting to no avail for the hostel in Montségur to open on my first trek, I briefly talked with a sporty middle-aged French couple from Toulouse (a local city), who had come for food and to reconnect with this fondly remembered hostel. They were among the few hikers who completed the whole Cathar Trail and they told me that ‘when doing the Cathar Trail there is no time to visit the castles. For the castles you need to come back by car’. Right then, they were not heading for Montségur castle. Instead, they were hurrying on since they already knew the castle from a mountain race, were camping anyway and had to be back at work in three days’ time. They had lost time when, being tired, they took a wrong turn at the north/south variant junction of the Trail several days previously (an experience which highlights the continuance of the journey which Chapters 6 and 8 will discuss). The employees in the tourist office in Quillan confirmed that hikers do not show interest in the castles. Some hikers (see the Apostles below) agreed with tourist agents that the ruins represented ‘history’. This was a history made of names and dates and anecdotes which contextualise the castles and locate historical events. Information panels, guided tours and the retail space of the site narrate past centuries, in particular the medieval era. Nevertheless, these hikers, separating the castles from the Trail, did not define their Trail journey as historical. The castle keeper at Puilaurens was indignant at the hiking groups who use the castle car park for their cars and walk away from the castle without visiting it.

The Cathar Trail guidebook aims to allow hikers to adapt the trip to their personal time requirements and interests. While describing the tourist attractions, it does therefore not include site visits in the length of a stage (CDR n.d.a). Also, the Cathar Trail idea is intended to work even when not done in its entirety: ‘[t]o do one or two stages of the Cathar Trail corresponds in the mind of the hiker to “having done” the Cathar Trail’ (CDR n.d.b). Still, in practice, hiking and ‘history’ were incompatible. Hikers had to choose between either visiting a ruined fortress or doing more walking along the Trail. This was, however, only an option for those with a car escort. With their three cars, a few of the group of the ‘Apostles’ (introduced in Chapter 1), for example, drove every morning and evening back and forth between hostels to hike the stage with their companions (always stationing two cars at either end of the stage).

The hikers from abroad and on an organised trek were more likely to visit the castles because they were fascinated by the Cathar martyrs and were provided some transfers by car in addition to luggage transport. A former transport service provider stated that on such organised trips the only thing tourists have to do is walk, all else is taken care of. For a trio of German tourists, their weeklong vacation on the Trail was a standalone and exceptional episode motivated by an interest in the Cathars and organised by a travel agent. We met when I was walking with the Apostles and later we stayed at the same hostel. Their trip itinerary was determined by castles and natural highlights. Intermittently, a transfer (by car) allowed time for a castle visit. Some of the Apostles live nearby, on the other hand, and frequently drive to the individual heritage sites for outings. While walking the Trail, they therefore passed the castles without visiting them. What was more, one of them, Paul, reflected in retrospect that ‘our mind does not focus on the Sentier Cathare; admittedly, our steps follow a path which has been called *Sentier Cathare*, but we do not experience it as such!’ He suggested that this appraisal might be informed by their place of residence in a rural area. ‘Cathar’ was just a name given to the Trail. It did not cover the Apostles’ sense of the Trail itself, which was shaped by their interest in the vegetation along the way. Their trip experience, characterised as an ‘unparalleled change of scenery’, was marked by the distinctive and varied natural and social environment with the local heritage apparent, but not important. What they enjoyed was the changing vegetation and the convivial hiking together (see Figure 4.5). Hence, ‘[t]ourists do not experience destinations as a series of individual objects, but as a whole landscape’ (Knudsen, Rickly-Boyd and Metro-Roland 2012: 204) which includes socio-environmental relations and feeds into travel narratives.



Figure 4.5. The Apostles walking together towards the next village on the Trail.

Usually, hikers kept to their schedule and did not stop under way to visit a castle. Exceptionally, on the last day of their weeklong hike, another member of the Apostles, Antoine, put his foot down for a visit to Puilaurens, the last castle on their way. So, they chose the castle visit *instead of* walking. Having driven to the castle, we even arrived before opening hours, but the castle keeper allowed us to come in and pay the entry fee on our return. The group enjoyed the visit and was pleased to have visited the castle, new to some of them, rather than hike for three hours. Paul's email to me from 18 February 2014 praises the '[b]eautiful Cathar building perched on an impressive promontory where the view at the top takes in the valley! Wonderful'.

Sites were embodied places which site visitors experienced as situated in distinctive natural surroundings. The ruin imposed its own time on visitors through a winding access path and many steps (see Figure 4.6 below and Figure 4.4 further above). Although visitors' time investment here was in the site, they came to know the latter through the environs, through negotiating the access to the ruin and enjoying the view away from it (Chapter 8 elaborates this point). In their constructivist phenomenological study, Rakić and Chambers (2012) explore the relation between the body, the senses

and cognition, preconstructed notions and affect when visiting the Athenian Acropolis. Taking into account ‘the thinking, emotional and active bodies’ (Rakić and Chambers 2012: 1629), they argue that places are consumed and constructed on site. Once there, the castle ‘detour’ was generally experienced as highly rewarding by walkers who were on shorter or longer excursions. Comments in visitors’ books at Quéribus and Peyrepertuse praise their stunning location and fantastic views, the castle and its access. ‘Very beautiful place and magnificent castle.’ ‘Quaint path, cool view.’ At Quéribus, though, the visitors’ book also records hikers’ dissatisfaction with the functionality of the site as a hiking destination with no running water. In mid-summer 2013, a visitor from northern France both eulogised and criticised: ‘A real enchantment for the eyes and the imagination. The only negative thing is the absence of a fountain [...]. Hardly bearable at more than 30°...’ (see Figure 4.6). Then again, another entry reads: ‘Very beautiful view... the castle is a real cultural pearl. Not to be missed! The end justifies the means’. An Australian agreed that the castles and the views were worth the climb: ‘Absolutely magnificent... four hours well spent. Spectacular views and history’.

Visitors consistently experienced the sites through looking out from them rather than focusing on the remaining walls of the fortresses. The surroundings, even the distant hills and valleys, forests and settlements, were part of the site visit through people’s views. These were the most enjoyed moments of the visit, the site being a gateway to other places. Long-distance hikers on the Cathar Trail were, however, more likely to inscribe their passage in the testimonial books (when existing) at accommodation rather than at the castles. Their allocation of time shows that they usually chose hiking over the castle visits. The role of the castles depended on their motivations for walking the Trail and their trip organisation.

This section has provided an insight into the tensions of the Cathar Trail between different places and times. By examining the role of the castles one learns about how hikers *knew* the Trail with its landscapes in terms of their hiking (through their hiking project and activity). In accordance with Rose’s a-structuralist and practice-focused interpretation of landscape, landscape ‘is called forth and put to task. In this sense the only thing that the landscape ever *is* is the practices that make it relevant. While it appears as a definable material space, its materiality is constituted by the totality of possible performances immanent within it’ (Rose 2002: 462–463, original emphasis). I

suggest in the next section that in my research ‘terroir’ rather than ‘landscape’ expresses such participatory and active making.



Figure 4.6. Enchanting and arduous Quéribus.

## ***Terroir: a sense of place***

### ***Defining terroir***

Rather than cultural and material landscape, I use *terroir* as a concept to highlight the importance of embodied activity and get beyond the intricacies of authenticity and performance in tourism. I prefer the term *terroir* because of its holistic scope and because the concept of ‘landscape’ remains ambiguous (see Morgan 2004: 173). Various landscape theorists have presented landscapes as subjective, in process,

temporal and emerging in socio-politically mediated interaction between people and their surroundings and through practices and performances (Bender 2002; Ingold 1992: 44 and 2000a: 190, 199; Myers 2000). Traditional anthropological and geographical materialist and idealist approaches which posited ‘landscape’ as an external reality and a cultural construct, respectively (Thomas 2001; Wylie 2011: 303), remain, nonetheless, touchstones.

I conceptualise terroir as one example of meaning-making which involves people in activity in and with the terrain. Ingold’s ‘taskscape’ (2000a: 195) in which past and present are linked through a temporal landscape and historicity is a comparable concept which highlights people, their activities and agendas, and their environments in their mutual embeddedness. Chapter 7 further crystallises a taskscape which is formed through the sedimented activity of the Cathars and tourists’ walking. At present, the notion of terroir is suitable on two levels: it is how the Languedoc region is represented, being identified as an ancient and extensive wine region,<sup>54</sup> and it provides a holistic understanding of hikers’ sense of place. This encompassing term was used by a tourism office employee on the Trail when she said that tourists come for ‘a combination of diverse elements: wine, landscape, culture, history...’. Originally used to refer to wine (Schuilenburg 2011: 25), terroir refers to a composite of soil, topography, weather, climate, seasons and human activity and the like (Dougherty 2012: 24; Goode and Harrop 2011: 19; Wilson 1999: 55). In the late twentieth century, terroir became a versatile concept appropriated across disciplines (‘Paysages et terroirs’ 2012). Drawing on UNESCO reports, Unwin presents terroir as formed in the interaction between human and natural environment. Terroir is living spaces (Unwin 2012: 39).<sup>55</sup>

While ‘cultural landscape’ might have a similar signification in anthropology (see Stewart and Strathern 2003: 10), in geography it is frequently used in contrast to ‘material landscape’ (Wylie 2007). The UNESCO conservation category ‘cultural

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<sup>54</sup> Because of its particular Mediterranean climate, ‘Languedoc-Roussillon was [...] one of the oldest, if not the oldest, civilized and grape-producing areas in Gaul’ (Wilson 1999: 313), dating back to Roman Antiquity. Today, the CDT advertises it as ‘the biggest vineyard in the world’ (CDT n.d.e: 2; see also Burns 2012: 99).

<sup>55</sup> Forty years ago, journalist Mario Soldati (as cited in Croce and Perri 2010 [2008]: 3) argued that to know a wine, a product of terroir, requires visiting the particular vineyard and ‘walking and walking [there], attentively observing the surroundings, following the quality and direction of the wind, noting, with the passing of the hours, the evolving shadows on the hills, contemplating the shapes of the clouds and scrutinizing the distinctive architecture of the farmhouses and buildings; and perhaps even more important, it means talking to the winemaker, to the oenologist and so on...’.

landscape' is valuable because it bridges the formerly separate categories of cultural and natural heritage (Taylor 2009: 14). In its application, however, it retains a tension between the two as parameters and emphasises 'landscape as cultural process' (Taylor 2009: 8) and 'living history' (Taylor 2009: 13). Such 'living landscapes' (Taylor 2009: 12) are the product of human-nature interaction, 'an imprint of human history' (Taylor 2009: 13). The notion of terroir does not depend or build on this contrast between culture and nature although wine scholars differ on whether and to what extent to include human 'intervention' in 'terroir' (Burns 2012; Dougherty 2012: 27; Gladstones 2011: 202; Goode and Harrop 2011: 26; Unwin 2012). Most often, practitioners and theorists such as the culinary anthropologist Amy Trubek use 'terroir' as a category of taste, an understanding of place through the senses (taste and smell) which evoke a particular landscape and place (Trubek 2008: 18, 54, 55). It embodies geographical origin and valorisation of nature and heritage (de St. Maurice 2014: 68; SCA Mont Tauch 2014).

Formed through material and immaterial properties, in my use of the term, terroir allows for individual agency in context and exists in its histories of human-environment interaction. Discourses and experiences can be negotiated on a similar level by the hiker on the Trail (and by the theoriser at her desk). The plot of my chapter is legitimate on the basis of Bender's argument that the theoriser can make her understandings serve her purpose: 'we have the right to position ourselves within the postmodern flux in order to produce something that feels true to us and *effective* at a given moment in time' (Bender 2002: S105, original emphasis). She thereby resolves the contradiction between inherently subjective categories such as landscape and the presentation to the reader of *one* argument as 'right'. Rose stresses 'that interpretative practice is not *only* the way the world falls apart but also the means through which it takes shape. It is through indetermination and contingency that the world comes to matter' (2002: 465, original emphasis). Terroir matters in this way. Being by definition holistic rather than of hierarchical structure, it enables an interpretation not confined to a possibly limited (or limiting) sense of what is authentic and articulated. The term allows for 'unaccountables'. It demonstrates the participation of sensory and ephemeral dimensions more acutely than 'landscape' does (see, for example, Chapter 6 for vapour trails and wind, Chapter 8 for fog and sunshine). I show next how terroir is open, non-prescriptive, dynamic and multiple compared to performance and performativity which

tend to entail a two-way exchange and which I paired with authenticity earlier. Rather than stopping at an interpretation which postulates that hikers perform an authentic nature, I indicate how we participate in a terroir.

### **Terroir and authenticity**

For many, the Trail landscape was one of nature and authenticity. Following a causal link between individual agent (hiker) and cultural constructions and (activity in) place reveals that hikers arranged that their experiences in situ corroborated their expectations. This raises the question of whether authenticity, after all, does not refer to travellers' expectations (how the experience in situ fares in relation to preconceptions).<sup>56</sup> On the fourth Trail stage I crossed paths with a Belgian couple who had timed their vacation according to the season, the weather and the number of visitors. They had carefully chosen the off-peak season to enjoy the natural environment they desired away from tourists. Then the crowds of tourists were gone and they could take paths which they defined as ideal for walking and observing at leisure butterflies and flowers. In contrast, they considered that over the summer months this was a place of crowds of tourists. The social travelling environment was thereby included in walkers' sense of 'natural' place: the Trail was more or less wild according to different seasons and fellow travellers. What follows is a brief overview of the Trail audience.

Hikers' social and natural environment was inseparable. As hiking was seasonal, the place was seasonal. Generally, hospitality staff grouped types of hikers by age and seasons, most hikers being from fifty years upwards. In their account, groups and individuals, experienced hikers, come in spring and autumn (May/June and September), while young people, sometimes first-time hikers, and families come during the summer holidays (July/August). The latter come for outdoor activities, to hike in a four-day loop on the Cathar Trail, not for the 'Cathar castles' which just serve as a subterfuge, a legitimate 'cover'. This suggests that history is reputable business, amateur hiking less so. In a hostel owner's experience, only very few come for the Cathar history. The above-mentioned Belgian couple, for example, identified history with books and told me that they had come for a holiday and would not have the time to look up the Cathar history on their return home. Visits to Qu eribus, the guard there told me, are in summer

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<sup>56</sup> This brings to mind MacCannell's (1999 [1976]) notion of the staged authenticity of tourist sites, a post-modern commodity created for tourists.

motivated by the ruin's proximity to the sea and out of season by an interest in and knowledge of the Cathar history. Climate and weather affect walkers' choice of place and time. The person who monitors the annual number of Cathar Trail hikers stated that hiker numbers peak in July/August and depend on school holidays and climate.

Although May and June are said to be the best months for the Trail, the exceedingly wet weather in spring 2013 had reduced the turnout of the principal hiking season. In contrast, during my fieldwork between September and November that year, I did not have a single day of rain. The weather is a variable when planning and booking holidays ahead.

In terms of authenticity and performance, we have then a multiplicity of places tied to individual motivations, experiences and discourses together with the qualities and material properties of the destination. Possibly more grounded in the physical terrain, terroir is not authentic *to* something. It is true to people's experiences which include mediated representations. Place, here, exceeds individuals and discourses. Hikers participate in the forming of a trail which is continually in the making. As they perform it, they become part of a landscape which is more or less wild. Although 'history' may not play a primary role here, it remains a reference throughout the thesis since it is a defining component of the Trail construct. It also helps to demonstrate the creative potential of walking activities. Through their choices and trip organisation, Cathar Trail hikers contributed to the meaning of the Trail as a wild hiking destination.

When looking through the lens of performativity, hikers produce an authentic place as they perform it, contributing to the meaning of this place as a hiking destination and influencing regional policies of economic development and investments into hiking infrastructure. The following is an example of the performativity of hikers' actions made visible through inscription. Information panels and signs along the Trail such as Figure 4.7 instruct visitors about vegetation and the protection of nature. Several signs had people's responses inscribed as graffiti. On one large, old sign in a gloomy and seemingly abandoned forest with scattered debris, a walker had annotated the series of interdictions by the forest's owners. To the interdiction of gathering stones, sand, soil, plants, dry leaves, forest fruits and mushrooms the walker responded 'Ridiculous!! (don't you have enough to eat?)'. The owners end with informing hikers that they need their permission to enter this private forest 'just like one has to have your permission to enter your garden, your flat or your house'. The same walker bristled: 'has nothing to do

with it! Nature, forest, mountains can't be owned!' Both, the official and the superimposed message explicitly stated a divide between nature and people. The walker performatively experienced and formulated a natural space which keeps humans and nature apart (only when starving would the walker rely on the forest for food). Yet, this remains an isolating interpretation of the messages. It pays insufficient attention to place and to people's writing of their relationship to a place *into* the place. The board, as it was for me, after passing a literally grounded car wreck, was inherently part of this forest. When I read it, it was weathered and blotted by tree residue. Some of the graffiti had faded. Inscriptions such as these and other traces of hikers' journeys become part of the place as hikers perform it and part of the terroir. This terroir includes therefore people's performances of authentic nature, but not only. What could be considered the 'composition' of a particular terroir gets defined in hikers' practical experiences and in writing *about* that place. The terroir described in this thesis, for example, also reflects my own experiences and academic purposes.



Figure 4.7. 'Attention: Nature is fragile: Let us take care of her'. No driving, no littering, no lighting of fires ... Warning sign by the hunters of Aude.

### Castles and terroir

A focus on human-environment interaction furthers a holistic understanding of hikers' Trail and landscapes beyond the nature-versus-history question or the society/nature dualism. By understanding hikers as experiencing a terroir, I sidestep the nature-versus-history question: how can a landscape be natural if it has been shaped by humans? Environmental research has investigated the meanings of 'wilderness', its implications and paradoxes (Anderson and Berglund 2003: 2; Coates 1998: 157; Milton 2002: 113). Although I did not frame my project in terms of this question which pertains to the society/nature debate, in practice I remained caught by ideas of physical topography and social constructs (as in the buildings of the castles). The deconstructed character of the ruined fortifications could be interpreted as in process of re-naturalisation (see Kirchhoff and Vicenzotti 2014: 455) but this approach would not eventually lead out of the society/nature dualism. A dualist interpretative frame would have to contend with the paradox that hikers came for nature *but* the Cathars were part of that nature which consequently was no longer untouched. Quite the reverse, a panel in the interior of Puilaurens castle explains that, over the centuries, residents had a hand in the dismantling of the fortresses by recycling their building material. The concept of terroir modifies the parameters from the creating and performing of heritage on the Trail to hikers' sense of place. It is holistic and entails visitors' ideals and experiences of authenticity.

In this case, the Cathar lands are wild *because* they have human histories. In its association with the land, 'history' was interrelated with 'nature' on the Trail. Hikers' journeys, which brought out 'nature', were, to some extent, based on the Trail which itself materialised a territorialised historical discourse. Drawing on Roepstorff and Bubandt (2003: 11), one can argue that people semiotise and reproduce 'nature' as they practice it. 'Nature' results from their perception and practice (and discourses), while these perceptions and practices are also a consequence of people's place-contingent activity (Roepstorff and Bubandt 2003: 15, 26). Hikers' perception of 'walking in nature' did not exclude the ruins because they experienced the ruins in integration with the natural environment. As the Cathar Country representative told me from what she knew from visitors, 'the castles and the landscapes, they form a whole. The fortress merges with the cliff, the natural place'. A journalist describes how the ruins (history) have become landscape: fossilised time (Roquebert and Soula 1994 [1966]: 12). While the Cathars were mostly not explicit in hikers' agendas, the ruins

participated in hikers' place experience even without being visited (see also Chapter 7). At the hostel in Carcassonne I met a professional long-distance walker who had walked along the Trail previously. In her perception, the Cathar castles provided a scenic setting for the Trail, including both nature and a fascinating history. They were not only associated with crowns and cultural pearls but also, metaphorically, with an animal habitat. She described in her online journal how, looking up from the valley, she saw '[s]ome of them [the hills] crowned with castle ruins [...]. The castles were almost impossibly glued to the crest like birds' nests' (German Tourist 2013). Perched up high, they stand out as 'impregnable' sites. Yet, as hikers walk a path, they walk a terroir in which the ruins participate. Figure 4.8 displays that the ruins on the Trail are an integral part of the topography and landscape of hills and vineyards, the 'authentic' nature for which hikers seek. Site designers likewise presented the castles as incorporated in a natural habitat. Visitors accessed the ruins of Aguilar (Figure 4.8) and, several stages later, Puilaurens via a path with botanic labels for a discovery of the native flora. This path transitioned into the fortified access way which led into the ramparts.



Figure 4.8. Vines with Aguilar castle at the back, early on the Trail.<sup>57</sup> The Trail leads through the vineyards towards the ruin.

<sup>57</sup> The caption of a very similar photograph of a less ruined fortress in Croce and Perri (2010 [2008]: 77) reads: 'Landscape as identity: vines in the land of Cathars (Languedoc Roussillon, France)'.

‘Travelling through castle country’, the initial title for this chapter, works, then, after all, in the sense that the fortresses were part of the terroir. History and heritage narratives were not excluded from the Trail which hikers formed through their journey. They did not need to be (as per ‘nature’) nor *could* they be (since the terroir includes human involvement, and over time). In their research, Bérard and Marchenay (2004) associate similarly agricultural terroir products and cultural heritage products. To them, both, terroir and heritage, are about the link between time, people (or tradition) and spaces (or place). They consequently understand both as overlapping and operating in parallel to each other, while I propose to understand heritage as integral to terroir. Histories, past and present people’s actions, are constitutive of a terroir. For example, according to experts, a winegrower’s philosophy and actions are intrinsic to a wine (Goode and Harrop 2011: 111). Wine can ‘show a sense of place’ (Goode and Harrop 2011: 183). ‘It tells a story, first of that place, and second of that year’ (Goode and Harrop 2011: 253). Ruins and natural environment are integrated in hikers’ experiences in movement and narratives tell of their own origins, the story of a particular place and time in movement. Along the Cathar Trail, hikers experienced histories *in* place instead of the history *of* a place.

### **Conclusion: Trail-making**

This chapter on contemporary Trail practice argues that Cathar Trail hikers’ travelling was not about the past. It was about the here and now. The chapter has explored how the Trail is formed in practice in the course of hikers’ journeys. Ignoring the official discourse of cultural heritage tourism, most hikers I met followed the Trail itinerary but, by and large, not the original Trail agenda. I observed and was told by them that they were doing the Trail *without* visiting its heritage sites. It seemed to me at the time that the Trail’s historical basis was thereby sidelined. The hikers omitted the fundamental building blocks of the Trail – the castles. They redefined the Cathar Trail in practice through their motivations for walking the Trail, their trip organisation and their interaction with their environments on the Trail, sometimes in reference to official constructions of heritage. Hikers came for the natural characteristics of the terroir which were, in turn, reinforced through their fashionable outdoor activity (hiking).

More than displaying the construction of heritage, the castles had the function in this chapter to demonstrate the Trail as emergent through the hiker-environment interaction in movement. Hikers *knew* places in terms of their hiking. Walking being a slow pursuit with a potential for discovery but also limited in time, hikers usually considered and experienced castle visits as events separate from the Trail. They invested in the hiking progression rather than in particular places. The latter, according to the Trail design, would take them into the past. Hikers' investment in time, however, fuelled a present-day adventure in wild terrain.

My thinking shifted from a focus on place to thinking with people's Trail-making. According to the latter, Trail-walking did not exclusively consist of a traced route. Rather, it formed terroir as well as being formed by it. Hikers' Cathar Trail did not rely on individual site visits but made sense to hikers in integration with its surroundings as they went along. A terroir particular to hiking emerged through their Trail performances and, in turn, informed their notions of authenticity. This terroir is characterised by sustained embodied engagement and movement and physical textures and seasons. In this way, the meaning of the Cathar Trail is open, dynamic and diverse. I learned against my expectations that hiking is not a way to access the Cathar history. Hikers' experience is not one of a narrative of history in place. Instead, the hiking *generates* narratives from places. The Trail is made of individual histories which consist in hikers' perceptions and performances. These histories and the Trail were connected and specific to hiking. In this way, the Cathar Trail is continuously in process. Its meanings are dynamic and multiple, formed by individual projects. Today, the Cathar Trail lives principally from and through hikers' journeying.

This chapter develops my thesis argument of movement-based meaning by referring to terroir as one concretisation of the relationship between movement and meaning. The notion of terroir draws attention to the importance of experience and to how the process of activity is involved in hikers' sense of place (also Chapter 7). The following chapters expand on hikers' Trail experiences in the hiking process rather than being geared towards the castles in reference to official constructions. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss hikers' wayfinding on the Cathar Trail, a preoccupation which 'engages the traveller in the temporality of landscape, connecting and creating places through narratives of movement and activity' (Mullins 2009: 250). To this end, I begin Chapter 5 with an extract from my field diary.

In a context of hyperautomobility and ‘non-places’ which are considered divorced from people’s experiences (Augé 2008: 63; Vannini 2009: 7), the concept of terroir counterbalances the alleged loss of the local and authentic. Terroir means uniqueness and diversity (Dougherty 2012: 26; Trubek 2008: 250). ‘It is the *terroir* that is the *genius loci* or spirit of a place, giving it its distinctive atmosphere’ (Croce and Perri 2010 [2008]: 20, original italicisation). Chapter 7 will explore this ‘spirit’ through the embodied perception of walkers. Terroir, to conclude, works against people’s sense that ‘here’ is elsewhere, that we are not really here but elsewhere within the global network (for the latter see Depardon and Virilio 2008; Virilio 1997: 37). At the same time, terroir remedies the tendency of individual conversations with landscapes to unfold in ‘the phenomenological literature [which] has a wonderful fine-grainedness, but risks losing sight of the larger picture’ (Bender 2001: 83). In this context, terroir invokes temporalities, change and various movements across scales, whether they are large-scale socio-political landscapes or phenomenological landscapes (Bender 2001: 77). Bender avers, ‘[i]t is a question of moving to and fro between scales of human activity and understanding, creating open-ended interactions between agencies and historical and spatial contingencies’ (2001: 77). Hikers’ sense of place demonstrates how place and individual experience also have a political relevance and are never solely small-scale (also Schuilenburg 2011).

## CHAPTER 5

# Maps and markers: going off Trail

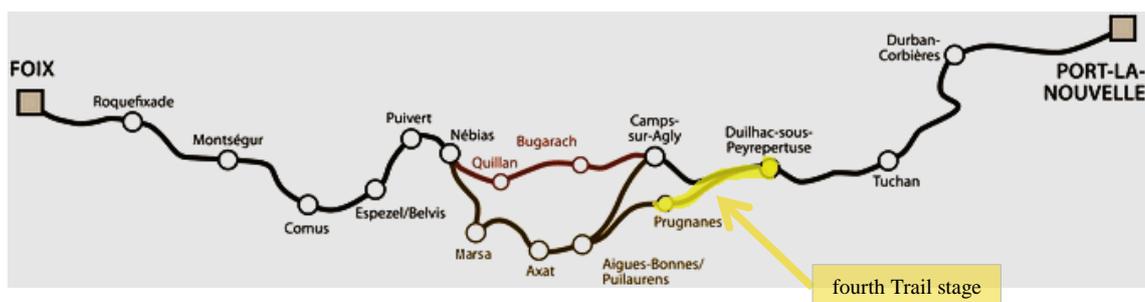


Figure 5.1. Schematic map of the Cathar Trail route. I have indicated the Trail stage from Duilhac to Prugnanes to which this chapter refers (adapted from CDT n.d.d, reproduced with permission of the CDT/ADT of Aude).

Thursday, 19 September 2013

*One week into my trek, fourth Trail stage [see Figure 5.1 above]. After yesterday's valley walking and a couple of hours of level walking today, I leave Quéribus and Peyrepertuse behind me. They gradually become indistinguishable from the curved silhouette of the hills in the distance. It is still morning when a large group catches up with me. After a short chat I continue with them. Over the next two days I learn that their group consists of family and friends from nearby and northern France, almost all of them retired. At the core of the group: three brothers, Martin, Paul and Simon. With them are the first two's wives, a cousin and his wife, Antoine and Corinne, and two befriended couples. I will become the 'little adopted' twelfth member of 'the Apostles', as Nicole, one of the friends, names us later in jest.*

*Together we leave the Cathar Trail to walk around an exposed ridge until we reach the road that leads through the Gorges de Galamus. After a detour to the tourist attraction in the gorge, a hermitage built into the rock face, we descend in zigzags on a narrow signposted path to the river which forms the gorge. We cross to the opposite bank, where a young Australian couple sit dangling their feet in the water in the early afternoon sun. I speak briefly with them before I hurry to catch up with the Apostles.*

*We head uphill again, climbing steadily in the shade of a forest of low trees. In dribs and drabs, we arrive at a level wooded junction where the group reassembles. A few of the group have gone off to reconnoitre the correct path to take. While we hover around the junction, discussing the correct way and waiting for their return, three middle-aged German ladies pass us and continue straight ahead. After a while, however, the latter, slightly weary, are back. The missing Apostles having cheerily returned but with inconclusive results, both groups examine their maps together. The maps indicate that we need to turn left at a junction of paths, but which one? 'That's a good map', Martin declares, impressed, looking at the others' map. Still, the maps show us several junctions and, considering the way we have come, the way the Apostles explored and the way the German trio continued, we cannot determine which one we are at.*

*Meanwhile, I have taken out my Trail guidebook and concluded from its description that the pathway straight ahead is the more likely option, although the maps and the German hikers' experience say the contrary. It takes repeated reading out loud by me and others until the information reaches Martin, the informal guide of the Apostles, absorbed in getting his bearings. We decide to go the guidebook way, where the trio came back down from. The latter hesitate, slightly irritated about their wasted effort, but finally, when I explain in German and when they see the Apostles disappear ahead, decide to follow.*

*The path ahead is rocky, with a few sharp bends and not well marked; the climb is tiring and hot as the forest recedes and views open up onto the surrounding hills. At last, we reach the junction where we need to turn left. The waymarks are clear here and agree with the map and the guidebook. Further on, we stop for a few minutes and the Apostles suddenly wonder where the trio is. I explain that, after reaching the right junction, they decided to continue at their own (slower) pace. Later that afternoon in another valley, we meet them again outside our accommodation for the night. (There was no point in hurrying: a sign on the door advises us that the hostel does not open before 5 p.m. and the hamlet appears deserted.)*

This chapter and the next both revolve around the junction on the Cathar Trail where experiences of wayfinding were interrupted and negotiated. In continuation of my discussion (in Chapter 4) of time and terroir, these chapters focus on ways of knowing

through experience in relation to terroir (places which include constructs and representations and activity). With the above field account, which describes how two groups of hikers lost the Cathar Trail, I want to discuss the tensions between constructs, or ‘mediated representations’ (Tilley 2012: 15), such as the Trail map and guidebook, and situated embodied experience. Together, both chapters explore how hikers sense and *make* sense of their surroundings through movement and ‘being with’ their environments. I will show that ‘mental’ representations and ‘embodied’ experience do not revolve in different realms. Rather than interpreting the situation at the junction through the mould of the spatial orientation of maps, I will trace multiple ‘ways’ (including maps, as well as the wind, cows and blisters) which converge at the junction. This, as will become clearer in the course of these chapters, is to develop a closer, retrospectively interpreted but also experientially informed, understanding of hikers’ experiences and the terroir there and then.<sup>58</sup>

This chapter discusses official constructions in empirical (and individual) context; Chapter 6 demonstrates how the hiking environment is more than ‘context’. In this chapter I begin with the political structuring of the Trail space, the function and usage of maps and waymarkings. I discuss how hikers questioned the (right) way in spite of and because of waymarkings and maps which were intended to provide them with orientation. Importantly, Cathar Trail hikers’ wayfinding device was usually a map, not the guidebook. (The contents of the guidebook remain peripheral in my analysis, reflecting hikers’ experience in situ.) Going over into Chapter 6, I demonstrate how hikers experience official constructions in integration with other environmental features as part of the terroir. I argue that official Trail guidelines such as waymarkings and maps played a role in determining the way and our location, but they did so through the interaction between hikers and their social and natural environment in hiking. In hikers’ experiences, their social and natural environment was indivisible. By inserting official constructions into conceptualisations of hikers’ experiences and building on the notion of terroir from Chapter 4, Chapters 5 and 6 together strive to counter the binary structure of individual experiences versus official constructs, and the mind/body dichotomy more generally, which was present in the preceding chapters. They refute

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<sup>58</sup> The one ‘right’ way which I refer to in these chapters should be taken as a relative expression of hikers’ endeavour, not as an absolute which negates other possibilities.

Tilley's opposition between external and internal world, outsider and insider knowledge (Tilley 2012: 15).

Chapter 6 goes on to investigate the role of the hiking activity and of hikers' social and natural environment in determining 'the right way' and in the meaning-making process. The last section does not work in terms of maps and markers, but explores the Cathar Trail in its overall duration as it is experienced by hikers. It examines how hikers find and make their way together and thereby shape the Cathar Trail. Regarding field data, in the course of these chapters, I will draw on several segments from earlier on the day when we lost the Trail. This, in itself, expresses the continuation and interlinking of Trail experiences.<sup>59</sup> By exploring the interrelated spatial, social and political factors involved in wayfinding, both chapters together will show how hikers make their own way on the Cathar Trail.

## **The lost place of maps**

In this chapter, the reader is faced with confusing lines, colours and numbers which represent markers, signs and names of trails. Since wayfinding is embodied and emplaced, this text can only attempt to convey what needs to be bodily experienced to be fully grasped. The significance of signposts, markers, maps and right or left turns can ultimately only be understood in their complexity when physically engaged in the Trail and relying on the Trail signage. The sense of direction which underlies the Trail and wayfinding, generally, only makes 'real' sense on the way. As such, the seated reader must imagine the journeying and decision-making. However, imaginative travel is rarely tied to these sorts of signage and technologies which participate in terroir.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, the chapter itself gives readers an understanding of the implications of embodied experience and its absence.

## **Map and guidebook instructions**

When we encountered the junction situation, it could be expected that official technologies in the form of waymarkings, maps, the guidebook, placenames and

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<sup>59</sup> None of the photographs which give these two chapters colour were taken at the junction because I was engulfed in the matter at hand, the identifying of the right way. The chosen pictures connect the junction to other places and moments during the journey, thereby strengthening again the argument of continuance of the Trail. Albeit different, the depicted places participated in the ongoing journey and were experienced in the light of the experience at the junction as well as vice versa.

<sup>60</sup> A researcher with reduced mobility describes how her imagining of a trip she is planning is free of physical restrictions (Bell 2014: 42).

accommodation hosts' advice would guide hikers' journeying. According to scholars, maps guide action. They invoke and enable connections (Turnbull 1989: 62) and 'project and often induce [...] [bodily] movement' (Casey 2002: xiv). Why, then, were both groups uncertain of which way to go? I will argue that the answer lies in the interplay between place, waymarkings and map in hikers' perceptions and experiences.

When I asked how hikers followed the route, Trail managers referred to various technologies such as maps, the guidebook and a Global Positioning System. In practice, however, I observed hikers using predominantly maps on the Trail, whereas I used the Trail guidebook but rarely the Trail map. Even so, my guidebook came in useful a few times when fellow hikers used it to confirm their assessment of distances and direction. Trail managers considered the purpose of maps to be to give hikers a choice between routes. Both experts were involved in 'groundwork' such as Trail organisation, marking and maintenance, although their arguments (stated below) could easily have been interpreted as being removed from the hiking realities on the Trail. Our interviews took place in urban settings, in Toulouse and at the Conseil Général in Carcassonne, respectively. Moreover, while the map's 'objectivity' sounded like a logical advantage to me, I also disagreed inwardly with their views after encountering several 'junction situations' along the Trail. They argued that, unlike the guidebook, the map serves to enable a hiker to veer *off* the path. 'The guidebook and GPS tell me I'm on the Trail', a Trail manager explained, 'but the map of the Trail gives a different spatial vision'. It enables a re-appropriation of the trek so that hikers are flexible, able to choose their own route strategically. Thereby 'one deconsecrates the Trail itself and inscribes it into a territory', he argued.

From a geographical perspective, Cosgrove (1999: 2) also argues that maps enable one to be free of the 'linearity of narrative description and the confining perspective of photographic [...] images'. Where the guidebook generates a confining linear, single representation of the trail route and itinerary, the map fosters a 'topographic overview', surveying a landscape from an elevated viewpoint (Matless 1999: 198, 200). As such, mappings are 'acts of visualizing, conceptualizing, recording, representing and creating spaces graphically' (Cosgrove 1999: 1). Thus, space specialists such as geographers and architects tell us that maps are not neutral but naturalised mediated products: 'mappings do not *represent geographies* or ideas; rather they *effect* their actualization' (Corner 1999: 225, original italics). Maps 'make present—they represent—the accumulated

thought and labor of the past [...]. In so doing they enable the past to become part of our living ... *now ... here*' (Wood with Fels 1992: 1, original emphasis). In this performative sense, the mapmakers' agendas and hikers' usage of maps brings a particular trail and place into being.

Indeed, as suggested by the Trail experts, hikers adapted the Trail to their needs, shortening stages, walking in a loop and apparently using just a map, no guidebook. Thus, the Apostles walked with, in Martin's hands, an IGN<sup>61</sup> 1:25,000 topographic map which was studied and discussed together during breaks. Martin, the organiser of the trip, however also showed admiration for the trios' map with its singular route and reduced options which had been personalised by their travel agent. Although not intended, in practice, however, the avenues opened up by our maps allowed us also to go astray more easily. The choice between two routes triggered an interrogation of where the 'right' way was because the Cathar Trail repeatedly shared the path with other trails, mostly labelled GR<sup>62</sup>. Hence, the 'right' way was open to interpretation. Both map and guidebook (see Figure 5.2) told us to leave the GR36 (on which we had walked the last stretch) by a left turn before reaching the Pla de Lagal:

continue on a path which climbs steeply, always ahead, to the ... **5.05 16.6 km** wooded **Col de Lenti** (382 m). Pass the path leading to Saint-Paul-de-Fenouillet on the left (yellow waymarkings) and continue climbing on the right, direction: Pla de Lagal. The path gains height on the southern slopes of the Roc del Nissol. The landscape becomes visible as one climbs. After two sharp turns, reach a ... **5.20 17.3 km Y junction of paths** (510 m), where one leaves the GR36. To go to Prugnanes choose therefore the left path (directional arrow: Caudiès). It steadily goes back down to a wide track (390 m) (Barthes et al. 2011 [1988]: 48, font and colours are similar to the original; the grey digits are time indications in hours, counted from the start of the stage).

<sup>61</sup> The French National Geographic Institute produces IGN maps comparable to Ordnance Survey maps.

<sup>62</sup> A member of the network of long distance footpaths owned by the French Hiking Federation, FFRP (see also Chapter 4).

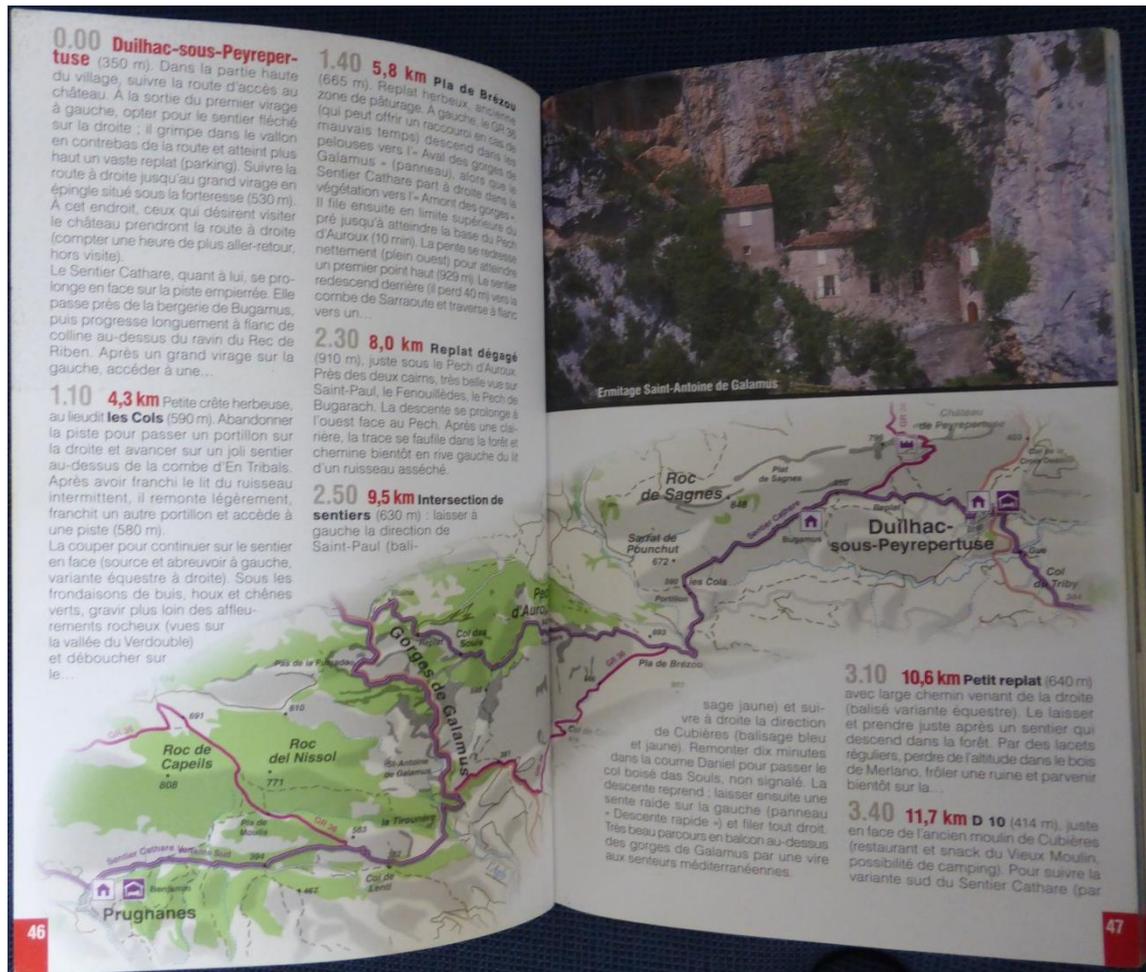


Figure 5.2. Cathar Trail guidebook (Barthes et al. 2011 [1988]: 46–47). Note the description of the junction, quoted above, is on the following page, while the map excerpt spans the complete daily stage from Duilhac to Prughanes, six hours from the start. Way descriptions to be read from left to right, the map from right to left (© Éditions Glénat / Rando Éditions, 37 rue Servan 38000 Grenoble, reproduced with permission).

Since the guidebook and a signpost indicated that we were going to the Pla de Lagal straight ahead, we were disinclined to follow the same GR36 waymarkings any longer. Having passed a Y junction already, our difficulty was to establish our spatial location on the map (see Figure 5.3).



Figure 5.3. Cathar Trail map extract (issued by Institut Géographique National and Rando Éditions 2011), to be followed from right to left. The Col de Lenti, between the Gorges de Galamus and Prugnanes, is where we searched for the Cathar Trail. Difficult to distinguish: the purple lines are the Cathar Trail (north and south variant); the red lines are GRs and roads (© Éditions Glénat / Rando Éditions, 37 rue Servan 38000 Grenoble, reproduced with permission).

### Maps in places: where is here?

To determine our position in relation to the junction on the map, we explored our surroundings, trying out different directions. Knowing our environments did, however, not directly add up to deciphering the map since being in place was not contingent on the map setting. It did not require knowledge of the wider surroundings. A map narrates the spatial identity of a location with name, height in meters from sea level and position relative to other locations in a Euclidian space. In terms of spatial layout and positioning of places, landmarks and routes are major ‘anchor points’ and connectors, respectively (Golledge 1999: 17) – on the map, that is. At the junction, the traced paths – the actual worn routes on the ground – suggested continuance but they were not defined by distinct places (because we could not sensorily apprehend those places), neither with regard to our location nor with regard to end points. While we physically knew our environment, we were ‘lost’ on the map.

According to cognitive science, map-readers need to know the spatial relations between places, the distance and direction of their destination, in connection to their position and

physical environment to orient themselves (Downs and Stea 1977: 53; Rieser and Pick 2007: 84). In this vein, hikers in the Pyrenees determine their spatial and temporal position and progress in their journey by transposing from the path to the map and vice versa (Devanne 2005: 324). Geographers (Corner 1999: 214–215; Cosgrove 1999: 9, Golledge 1999: 13) tell us that maps are analogous or iconographic – they join map surface and ground – and abstract – they codify geographies through frame (grid), scale (spatial relation), orientation, selection, indexing and naming.<sup>63</sup> Latour, in his analysis of a hiking experience, found his bearings and knowledge of *where* he was through the correspondence of map, markers and path ‘*despite* the clouds, the confusion of my senses, and the unfamiliarity of the site’ (Latour 2013 [2012]: 74, my emphasis; also Hutchins 1995: 13). It is worth noting that throughout his book the senses are prone to mistakes (Latour 2013 [2012]: 49, 74, 76), even if ‘alignment’ is partly made possible through *looking* from map to valley. Latour finds the same information on map and landscape. He can locate the mountain through the map (as referent) and interpret the map through the mountain (2013 [2012]: 76). At the junction on the Cathar Trail this was not possible. We were unable to align the map with the environment through interpretation, to reconcile features of our environment and the cartographic representation of the route. Instead of providing orientation at the junction, maps and waymarkings made hikers question the ‘right’ way because these tools did not correspond to hikers’ experience of the place they were in.

Earlier, at the bed of the gorge where our climb to the bewildering junction had begun, our brief encounter with the Australian couple seemed to emphasise the enticement of place over map.<sup>64</sup> Descending from the road which leads into the Gorges de Galamus, we had glimpsed through trees calm waters in a pool of blinding light and an atmosphere of stillness and a young couple who blended in with this place, closed in by the forest of holm oaks we were walking through (see Figure 5.4). With their feet in the water and in patches of warm afternoon sun, they became visible only progressively as

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<sup>63</sup> Semioticians, following Charles S. Peirce, read maps and the environment as sign systems (Jensen 2013: 119; Lindström, Palang and Kull 2013: 98; Wood with Fels 1992: 2). A sign operates in the relation between the sign, its object and its interpretant (Arnesen 2011: 364; Jensen 2013: 119). Its meaning depends on ‘a given sign user situation’ (Arnesen 2011: 366). All in all, I do not use semiotics as an analytical lens because it is overly schematic and does not account for the ephemeral and material making of *terroir*.

<sup>64</sup> Casey argues that ‘it is by my body—by my lived body—that I am here’ (1993: 50). This ‘here’ moves as I move bodily (Casey 1993: 53). His concept of ‘here’ implies ‘actual and virtual theres’ (1993: 54). We are ‘here’ in relation to theres: ‘This means that to become oriented again I have to know the respective *theres* of my changing here’ (Casey 1993: 54, original emphasis).

we walked closer. Once there, we saw that a warning sign kept them from jumping into the water. It will remain a mystery to me how they arrived here. Not being hikers, they knew neither the path we had come down on nor that this river, further on, forms impressive basins at the heart of a famous gorge. Their receptiveness to their immediate surroundings coupled with their unawareness of their geographic location, of ‘place-connectors’, paths, rivers and lines on the map, stood in stark contrast to some motorised tourists who, following their GPS, drove from castle to castle for sightseeing. The latter knew their destination, but not their way. Maps, guidebook and GPS consequently relate landscape, trail and people in different ways. While the guidebook gives hikers sequential guidelines to follow in the landscape and the map contextualises hikers’ journeys within a network of trails, the GPS defines travellers’ locations in terms of their destination. The motorised tourists did not need environmental cues to reach their destination. The GPS determined the location of their destination (Golledge 1999: 12), the way becoming an unidentified interval between isolated destinations.

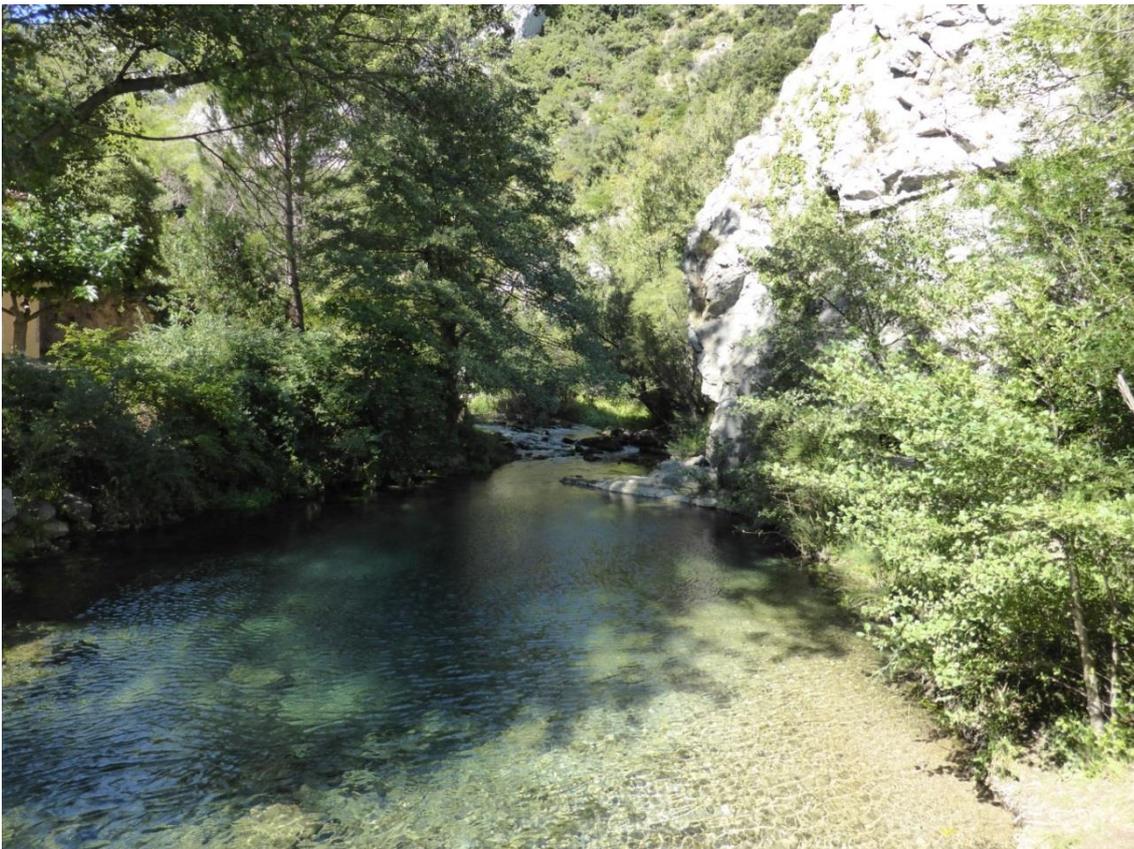


Figure 5.4. Where the Australian couple sits: a place ‘lost’ on the map (to the couple) yet ‘known’ in situ. Ahead of us and unknown to us, the confusing junction.

As hillwalkers want to discover and create their own routes, they are reluctant to have a GPS choose the way for them (Lorimer and Lund 2003: 141). Walking in this sense expresses human agency, indicative of the creativity inherent in wayfinding. At the junction, the ‘right’ way was questioned, challenged and redefined. Equipped and informed, the hiking groups were ‘going loose’ in their endeavour to ascertain the right way, but did not get lost (see also Vergunst 2008: 119–120). Without instruments such as GPS, for hikers, the question of how we know where we are addresses the interchange between place and map. It is also a matter of waymarkings (I explain the waymarkings in the next section) and, depending on the circumstances, my guidebook’s way descriptions also played a role. Sometimes, when the guidebook’s map excerpt and corresponding way descriptions were not on the same page (see Figure 5.2), when the guidebook’s (2011 [1988]: 27) minute time indication ‘after a few minutes’ was inaccurate, or when I could not identify the beehives and tree varieties the guidebook referred to, I struggled to transpose from guidebook to place and vice versa. Walking with the guidebook, I understood the landscape as transient while the guidebook pointed me to a past landscape, not because it told the history of ruins but because the landscape had changed since the book was written. Every so often, the guidebook descriptions were inconsistent with my perceived surroundings. Here, the journey’s temporality involving body, environment and book overlaid the constructed historical text.

The scale of the Cathar Trail map was, however, more crucial than the disparity between my experience and the guidebook’s experiential referents of time and sights to expect. It was difficult to localise one’s position on the non-standard, neither small- nor large-scale, official Trail map. An online comment in a regional newspaper reviews this map with irony: ‘Hiking and mental calculation... It’ll be practical to use, a hiking map at 1:55,000°! that’s to say 1.81 km per cm, it’ll develop the muscles of neurons as much as of pins’ (Valdia 2011). Two days after the experience at the junction, at our last lunchtime picnic, Martin and his cousin Antoine studied Antoine’s newly bought Cathar Trail map, the three of us holding the map together. Martin was proposing a second stint on the Cathar Trail to the group (see also Figure 5.5).

Martin: ‘Where is the Cathar Trail here?’

Antoine: ‘Well, it’s blue;<sup>65</sup> you’ve got it there. It’s all this, yes!’

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<sup>65</sup> Colour of the line on the map; confusion between blue and purple.

Martin: ‘I hadn’t seen it. ... I’d like to do the next part of the Trail. Puivert – that’s pretty: you walk through all this forest here [he points and follows a traced line on the map with his finger]; there you are on even ground anyway.’

Antoine [interrupts and corrects]: ‘But that’s not where you are but here! It’s not the same, is it!’

All of us laugh.



Figure 5.5. The Apostles (here: the three brothers and the cousin) presenting themselves with the Trail map at the car park outside Puilaurens early in the morning. Note the board with the Cathar Country map with logo at the back.

Martin’s map reading shows that although he knew the route of the current trip on his larger scale, more detailed IGN map well, on this new map, the Cathar Trail was not obvious to him. He interpreted the way by measuring walking distances of stages with his hand on the map (four kilometres being one hand) and assessing differences in height from the contour lines on the map. As Lorimer and Lund observe, ‘the more experienced walker learns to use the map as a way of looking *into* the landscape, and seeing how the topography rises and falls’ (2003: 137, original emphasis).<sup>66</sup> The aesthetically pleasing environment which Martin interpreted from the map, but based on

<sup>66</sup> Still, as the geographer Denis Wood emphasises, the map itself is ‘not walking, [...] it’s a graphic material thing’ (2012: 286).

the wrong trail ‘line’, inserts the experienced and imagined Trail back into the map. In a hiker’s experiences and perceptions, the map, sometimes considered an external, fixed and ‘dead’ representation (Liben and Myers 2007: 212; Tilley 2012: 15), and the ‘lived’ environment do not start where the other ends and vice versa. Conversely, maps are emplaced and contextual technologies that co-constitute terroir. They are part of hikers’ engagement in their environments and, in turn, shape hikers’ experiences (Lorimer and Lund 2003: 137). The environment is an ‘archi-textural meshwork’ (Ingold 2007: 80) of entangled lines of movement in which route-finding with maps participate. My experience on the Trail suggests that our spatial awareness grew with our maps in relation to here, where we stood, walked and talked with others and to their and our narration of maps and environments. Inspired by the role of Australian Aboriginal elders’ stories in spatial orientation, artist and writer Karen O’Rourke (2013: 118) states that ‘[t]here is a direct correlation between storytelling, verbal evocation, tracking, and wayfinding’. For example, ‘European maps are not autonomous. They can only be read through the myths that Europeans tell about their relationship to the land’ (Turnbull 1989: 51). Map reading brings forth the reader’s relationship to the land.

### **Waymarkings: between place and map**

An examination of maps has provided a first insight into the hiking-environment correlation. In the following section I discuss the workings of waymarkings and demonstrate that waymarks are crucial in the relation between a dot on the map and the person’s place on, or perhaps already off, the Trail. However, waymarks also tell their own story. Why had we lost the way at the junction although there were waymarks? Taking into account the political make-up of the Cathar Trail waymarkings, I will suggest that hikers may lose the way *because* of waymarks rather than *in spite of* them. Rather than envisioning a multiplication of trails and landscapes, I want to explore constructed representations and embodied experience in unison.

### **Marked meaning on the way**

In hiking, waymarkings mediate between place and map (Latour 2013 [2012]: 79). According to Latour’s model, map and place are part of an assemblage of different media such as paths, tourism offices, hiking boots, backpacks and romantic walking ideals (Latour 2013 [2012]: 78). While ‘outdoors’, he experienced being ‘*inside* a network’ (2013 [2012]: 75 original emphasis). Latour’s composite network operates

through the ‘chains’ or linkages between such dissimilar and constant referents. Their dissimilarity produces a continuous itinerary (Latour 2013 [2012]: 77, 110) and through the network he knows his destination, the mountain.

Waymarks are essential to the Cathar Trail and to hikers’ way-making. According to Golledge, ‘human wayfinding is directed and motivated’ (1999: 1). The direction is defined in relation to a frame of reference (Golledge 1999: 12) which, in this case, is the Cathar Trail and the motivation to follow it. This ‘frame’ is the product of a particular agenda. Aimed at the travellers, the official waymarkings mark meanings on the way. The Conseil Général, in charge of the Cathar Trail markings and maintenance, guides visitors spatially and thematically. Trail markers indicate the way as well as viewpoints and sites (CDR n.d.a). At certain junctions and at the border of villages along the Trail, schematic map excerpts indicate facilities and upcoming stage highlights (see Figure 5.6). Large educational panels explain to the passer-by local features such as l’Escale, a hamlet burned to the ground in the Second World War. The Conseil Général’s objective is the circulation of tourists within the *département* through ‘making known and attracting, informing and providing entertainment, directing and guiding, locating and welcoming’ (Conseil Général 2013a: 15) to a site. Since the Trail makers designed the markers to ‘entail a logo of the Trail, and to inform hikers of the hiking policy of the *département*’ (CDR n.d.a) the *département*’s agenda might be expected to be manifest on the Cathar Trail even if perennial Trail markers do not remain unchanged. Yet the message of historical immersion was not predominant: no board explained the origin of the Cathar Trail, hardly any Trail signage depicted the Cathar history and waymarks at the castles were the exception. As for the Cathar history, between ruins, only a panorama board at the first viewpoint of the Trail, looking upon the Mediterranean coastline and an outdated signpost in Quillan (see Chapter 4) feature the Cathars, although their dualist logo accompanies hikers along the Trail on signposts (Figure 5.6).



Figure 5.6. The complete Cathar Trail signage which is only provided a few times on each stage: tricoloured Trail collars, black Cathar Country logo and stage overview (from top down).

At the junction I have been describing, the waymarks could make us lose the way partly because of the make-up of the Cathar Trail itself. The Trail's development was inscribed into the terrain. Named after the Cathars, it started as a regional project in the

1980s (see Chapter 2) and since then, regional councils and regional and national hiking associations have competed over its ownership, marking the Trail in different colours. The official constructs presented above, and with them the primary continuity and linearity of the Cathar Trail, are in themselves geographically and temporally disrupted by the diverse stakeholders involved in the Trail. In 2013,<sup>67</sup> the blue and yellow (orange, according to the Trail guidebook, Barthes et al. 2011 [1988]: 8) stripes of the Trail waymarking identified the Cathar Trail as belonging to Aude and not to the French Hiking Federation (FFRP). However, the Trail crossed the border between two *départements*, Aude and Ariège, plus its ownership had been claimed by a departmental and a national body, the *département* of Aude and the FFRP, respectively. I got a sense of the tensions between stakeholders when talking about the evolution of the Cathar Trail with the former secretary of the regional hiking organisation who was now active in the FFRP. Next I will explain how this wider social and political context had an impact on the Trail as we hiked it.

Waymarks specific to the Cathar Trail and signposts along the Trail identify the Trail by colour and Cathar logo. These official waymarkings function on various levels. They direct visitors as well as state who owns the Trail *and* imply a relation to other trails. The junction where we searched for the way was on one of the sections of the Trail where the blue/yellow Cathar Trail markers were overridden by red/white GR markers. The latter always took precedence when a GR and the Cathar Trail shared the way. The two diverging paths, straight ahead and turning left at the junction, were signposted but not with Cathar Trail markings. Thus the choice of colours indicates not only physically the Cathar Trail, but also the ownership of the Cathar Trail and the conflict between the Conseil Général and the FFRP. The colours of the waymarks are political. Yet they are also governed by environmental conditions and hiking requirements.

With the latter in mind, an experienced guide and monitor of the Cathar Trail, explained to me the link between a specific type of trail, the colour of the waymarking and its ownership. However, he also explained that only three colours – yellow, blue, red – are usable for standard waymarking for the practical reasons of visibility in a natural environment. Initially, the Cathar Trail had been defined by length as a ‘tour de pays’ (a short hiking path) and had consequently been marked in yellow/red, the regulation

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<sup>67</sup> Before becoming a GR in 2014.

colours for this type of path. Both classification and markings were a registered trademark of the FFRP, he told me. The Conseil Général subsequently superimposed the *Pays Cathare* logo on to the coloured stripes. He explained that later conflicts between individuals in the Conseil Général and the FFRP caused the Trail to change to the local colours of the Aude *département*. Blue/yellow stripes and the *Pays Cathare* logo marked the Trail as part of Aude's *Pays Cathare* (see Chapter 3). These were the colours of the Trail in 2013 as long as the Trail was in Aude and not taken over by a GR with the same route.

### **Walking with waymarkings**

The Cathar Trail is consequently a socio-political package which is not homogenous and cohesive but is conflicting in itself through its initial agenda, diverse stakeholders and maintenance and, more generally, the tensions between Aude and Ariège and historians and tourism agents (see Chapter 3). The blue/yellow stripes and the Cathar Country logo are recurrently present along the length of the Cathar Trail (see Figures 5.6 and 5.7). Yet, changes in waymarking are a characteristic of the Cathar Trail since the physical, spatial and temporal crossing of boundaries beyond present time is inbuilt in the Trail (see also Chapter 4). The history and changes of the coloured markers played a role on the Trail in 2013 since in wayfinding hikers needed to know which markers, out of the GR and local rambling options, to follow. Because of the map indication to turn left at a junction, together with the choice of routes and the multiple non-Cathar Trail waymarks, we were uncertain about which one was the *right* way, the Cathar Trail. The Trail being visibly ruptured in such a way raises the question of how other hikers found the way through the various markers and whether the disrupted signage made hikers construct a meaning of the Trail other than the official one. Were the markers political in hikers' experiences and, if so, how?



Figure 5.7. Many ways lead to Galamus. Having come from Duilhac (the blue/orange marker in the middle indicates the reverse way for riders), the Apostles and I followed the red/white GR sign to Galamus. The Cathar Trail route (blue/yellow at the top) was too dangerous that day. Note, the GR sign equally bears the Cathar Country logo (the line with the blue and achromatic circle)!



Figure 5.8. Three markers on a rock by the wayside. Left: red/white GR (by the FFRP), middle: erased with grey paint, right: blue/yellow Cathar Trail (by the Conseil Général) with an orange dot for horseriders.

When reading the environment as a text, as one experienced hiker suggested, the history of the Trail is ‘made present’ through the coloured markers of the earlier Cathar Trail enterprise. Paradoxically, again and again, I found the way through *erased* waymarks, the supplanted yellow/red waymarks which had been ‘erased’ (covered) with grey paint (see Figure 5.8). From my first trip to the Cathar Trail as a teenager, I recognised some of these, which had been overlooked by the painter, and I was then using the grey slabs as a guideline. While the political agendas behind such ‘inconsistencies’ were not clear to me initially, I had to negotiate different markers. A power struggle was implicit, maybe not the one between official bodies, but one which involved the relational interaction and continuous adjustment between hikers’ physical bodies, their experiences and sensory perceptions and usage of guidelines to date (also Lorimer and Lund 2003: 132). Just as a map is political (Smith 2003: 73), so the markers involve and effect power relationships between people and meanings. Less obviously a flexible tool which can be adapted to individuals’ needs, markers draw attention to how official constructs are an integral part of hikers’ experiences. The implicit agenda of markers (and maps) does not define the Trail experience but informs it together with individuals’ bodily experience.

In practice, the markers thus call on hikers’ knowledge. This knowledge, manifested through trust in the signs, is fundamental for the use of a hiking trail. Waymarking clearly points the traveller in one direction (or is at least meant to do so) and communicate one thing and not another, implicitly excluding another way (if one wishes to reach a particular destination). Ween and Abram thus detect waymarking and other technologies as political factors which already shape walking experiences in the Norwegian countryside just by ordering the latter (2012: 163). At the junction I discussed earlier, however, our continuing on the Trail was halted by the very waymarks which were intended to ensure our continuation. Hence, not only obvious erasures but also the diversity of waymarks made hikers question the signs. If hikers’ journeys were guided by maps and markers with definite agendas, what did they make of the signs themselves?

Hikers’ reading and usage of signs interpreted and appropriated official constructions. What was apparent and verbally expressed by participants in the field was the functionality of waymarkers. Whether blue/yellow or red/white, hiker participants read

the waymarks relative to their own destination and intent. On our way down from a hilltop, the Belgian group and I sat in the shade under a tree on the side of the track and ate an afternoon snack. Here, asked by members of the female-only group, the guide explained necessary hiking equipment and how to read a map and waymarks. According to her interpretation for the group, ‘a cross [“x”] isn’t good for the way but is good when needing to go to the toilet’. Shortly after, a well-trained, minimally clothed male hiker passed us speedily, taking the ‘x’ marked way. We goggled and giggled at his sudden appearance but knew that his ‘way’ was a different one to which the ‘x’ did not apply (he was not intending to go to the toilet). The cross was relative to a specifically coloured trail. At intersections, the cross-marked way indicated the wrong direction for this trail. What was a way with a cross for one, could, however, be the route to take for another trail. The guide had added her interpretation through practical usage, treating the cross-marked path as dead end. So, standardised marks and logos become individually meaningful. Taking on the Cathar Trail without knowing its signifiers (markers and logo), the Pontoise couple did not know what to make of the Cathar Country logo. They freely associated it with ‘a misshaped yin and yang’. While their association may not be prompted by the original meaning of the sign, it nevertheless fits in its dualist ‘character’. Yet, if the signs were that idiosyncratic, how did we find the ‘one’ way? I have indicated so far that part of the explanation is that spatial technologies do not involve separations of body, object and environment. I will demonstrate further how the environment comes into play through embodied and sensing hiking.

### **Transition: between interpretation and experience**

This section provides the transition to Chapter 6 which discusses how waymarkings function in hikers’ experience through sensory perception. Looking back at this chapter and ahead to the next, the hikers’ environment is more than the markers as lines in a text. Waymarkings link map and place but waymarkings, maps and places only work in wayfinding through the interaction of hikers in and with their environment. Next, I therefore explore what is involved in finding the way, revealing interrelations between place, movement and official constructions. Before moving to the next chapter I consider the guidebook and names (without which we walked). Thereafter I elucidate the role of our experiences in action and place even if eventually the guidebook was the catalyst for our selection of the ‘right’ path. The edited diary entry at the beginning of

the chapter described how, together, the Apostles with my guidebook resolved the ‘correct’ way to go. They decided on the most likely option despite their disinclinations for this way.

The situation at the junction shows the significance of the Trail guidebook in hikers’ journeying. I reached the junction with the last Apostles when the rest of the group had already dispersed in their search for the correct way forward. Working on my role as participant observer and not wanting to impose ‘my’ way on them, I had previously put my guidebook away and followed my fellow hikers’ guidance.<sup>68</sup> Consulted at the junction in the middle of the confusion about which way to take, the guidebook became (Martin’s words) ‘la bible d’Ariane’. By the end of the day, he was full of praise for it and asked me where he could buy it. His question revealed the importance of the network of distribution of the book which a Trail monitor had pointed out. For the Trail guidebook and map, hikers were most often sent (by locals) to bookshops and newsagents which, if anything, usually had the map rather than the guidebook.

At and around the junction the guidebook became meaningful through the walking rather than vice versa (the walking materialising what is described in the guidebook). What crystallised was the interrelation between individual, hiking activity, environment and official markers. This can be interpreted in the light of walking studies, in particular De Certeau’s notion of ‘pedestrian speech acts’ (1984: 98) which, like writing, appropriate and actualise places by inserting them into the human territoriality and organising them into itineraries. For him, the everyday practice of walking was ‘a way of being in the world’ (1984: 97).

According to the Trail guide and monitor, the guidebook materialises the Trail, the sites being almost an extra. The guidebook is like ‘a guided museum visit’, traced and guided. With artistic drawings and evocative descriptions, the early guidebooks could very well have been used as bedtime reading material without setting foot on the Trail. The 2011 edition is less comprehensive. It includes map extracts but no longer the equestrian variant and is smaller and lighter, more practical for the hiker who has to carry it (see Figure 2.10). The main focus is no longer on the places and their histories but to get the readers (physically) from departure point to destination. It includes practical information (accommodation, description of itinerary with differences in

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<sup>68</sup> I easily appropriated the ‘guidebook way’ as ‘my way’ since no other hiker I met used it.

height above sea level) as well as touristic information (Catharism, medieval history more generally, fauna and flora) in equal measure. The guidebook designs the Trail.

Nevertheless, the anticipated association with places and the grounding of experiences in named places played no major role because hikers, travelling without the guidebook, would not get attached to a place which was named, explained and highlighted in the book. The Trail did not operate through names and was not defined by them. The junction was nameless until the guidebook made us decide where we were: at the Col de Lenti. At the end of the day, the German trio could not tell me whether they had taken the exposed Brezou ridge way or not in the morning, because they had followed the guidelines of their personalised map (possibly also because French and Occitan are foreign languages to them). Hikers left the names of sites by the wayside. Most of them did not visit the ruins where the evocative Occitan site name would have been substantiated through a site experience. Rather than on distinct sites, they focused on the linear progression of the Trail to stay on track and on their destination for the day. Tilley (1994: 30) writes that paths structure the experiences of the places they link, resulting in a linear order. On the map identified by a line, in place the Trail was a composite of people, terrain, weather, map and so on, without clear boundaries. The linearity here was not one of form but of experiential sequence, hiking being an activity of moving forwards.<sup>69</sup>

To find the Trail was to make sense of our surroundings. Several scholars explore the relation between embodied experience and cognition in the context of spatial orientation (Feinberg and Genz 2012; Istomin and Dwyer 2009; Rakić and Chambers 2012; Turnbull 2007). Often their research on traditional indigenous spatial orientation highlights the importance of embodied experience in home environments. This could suggest that in 'new terrain', cognitive orientation becomes prevalent. For Istomin and Dwyer (2009: 36, 41), human wayfinding relies on both experiential route knowledge (practical mastery) and abstract survey knowledge (mental maps) to varying degrees. They are not conflicting but complementary. On a more subtle note, Feinberg and Genz (2012: 337) in their research into traditional sailing in the Solomon Islands problematise that certain kinds of kinaesthetic knowledge do not have linguistic representations.

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<sup>69</sup> Hunters and gatherers in the Andaman Islands mapped such movements to a destination. In their case, their movements defined space and constituted the map itself (Pandya 1990: 777, 793). Ingold argues similarly that maps index movement; they are regional, not local (2000a: 226).

Tilley, convinced that walking can be an interpretative practice, believes, on the other hand, that ‘language and knowing are synonymous’ (2012: 28) in the context of his phenomenological walk. Tilley’s phenomenological landscape does, however, not apply to hiking on a long-distance trail where time and distances are an issue and the landscape is not known in this sense. Latour (2013 [2012]: xix-xx, 71) equally conceptualises the correspondence between interpretation and experience, but in a different way. He insists that the mountain and its map are different (2013 [2012]: 87, 114). The inscribed mountain on the map is not equal to the mountain, both exist simultaneously (Latour 2013 [2012]: 88). Instead of people mentally projecting meaning on a material world, ‘it is *the world itself that is articulated*’ (Latour 2013 [2012]: 256, original emphasis). The mountain ‘exists and endures and imposes itself on my steps’ (Latour 2013 [2012]: 82). Still, our knowledge of our environment is also mediated. Latour ‘accesses’ the mountain through its network. With the ‘minded and mindful body’ (Tilley 2012: 19) in mind, I will examine the way of the senses next.



## CHAPTER 6

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### Finding and making the way

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Figure 6.1. A rocky path from a village to its castle but this one with a Cathar Trail signpost and the blue/yellow Trail waymarks painted on the ground before going deeper into the thicket.

## A way through the senses

### Waymarks as part of the environment

The experience of having ‘lost the way’ reveals how hikers’ being and moving in place relates to materialised linear constructs such as waymarkings and time. After continuing straight ahead at the junction (see diary entry at the beginning of Chapter 5), the German trio retraced their steps to the junction because they experienced the right path as the ‘wrong’ way in terms of environmental factors and linear progression. This wrongness was for them confirmed by the absence of waymarks beyond the junction. From a geographer’s and predominantly visual perspective this was an experience of wayfinding in an obstructed environment. Without a consistent pattern of environmental cues, the route was not sufficiently ‘legible’ (Golledge 1999: 6). The path was narrower than the previous path. It was ‘wild’, overgrown and physically demanding, going uphill across rocky terrain (see Figure 6.1 above). With the scrub around them and the turns of the path, the German hikers had seen no end in sight, as if the path was leading to nowhere, only deeper into the bush. They were in doubt about whether they were on the correct way because of their reading of the environment when walking on.

The presence of views (or lack of them) and conceptions and experiences of time seem connected in hikers’ experiences of going astray. Hikers experienced a path as endless when they were closed in by trees, without waymarks. A day after the problematic junction, the Apostles, nearing the end of the stage, experienced walking on such a track. Our hiking time extended because of this ‘monotonous’ even and wide track without waymarks and visibility. Increasingly discontented, we wondered, ‘was this the right way?’, although we knew the track to be right in terms of spatial orientation. Weary of the way, the Apostles walked in pairs or alone. The women in the group stopped chatting to each other, wanting to already *be* at the targeted hostel. Maybe it was our focus on our destination which made us perceive the forest along our way as unchanging. The walking became an exercise in patience. The men started chatting about non-hiking related matters. Momentarily, they seemed to have lost interest in the hike or were trying to distract themselves. In contrast, in other situations, numerous intersections on the Trail made the way seem shorter and time pass more quickly, yet they also increased the risk of taking a wrong turn. When the terrain changed from track to road to footpath in quick succession, my focus was on what the signs in place told me. They broke the stage into short segments with the intersections as turning points.

On the other hand, after walking through a few intersections of nothing but paths, my attention would wander. In this case, time could pass inadvertently, making me miss a crossing, until I realised I might have gone too far. The orientation and pace of a walker is consequently ‘responsive to his perceptual monitoring of the environment that is revealed along the way’ (Ingold 2007: 78).

The ‘composition’ and ‘pacing’ of environmental features shape hikers’ experience and interpretation of a way. Over time, the environment can engage the hiker in a fairly repetitive way: one step resembles the next on a wide and even track. Exploring the relationship between time and space, Lefebvre and Régulier (2004: 73) distinguish between non-mechanical cyclical rhythmised times and linear times of monotonous repetition, abstract and quantitative. They speak of a ‘polyrhythmic’ perception of one’s environment which works through the rhythms of the body and rhythms of features in the environment (Lefebvre and Régulier 2004: 80). Lefebvre’s conceptualisation of rhythm reveals ‘the dynamic interdependencies of place, time, and energy’ (Middleton 2009: 1956). Although the configuration of the above forest track meant that our eyes were free to wander, the overall similarity of the high trees and the gently undulating track evoked a sense of not moving at all in relation to a track which outdistanced us. Our expectations contributed to our discouragement. The previous night’s hostel owner had recommended this track because of the low-level Cathar Trail route being too boggy. He had also told us we would see a famous mountain from the track. This a-priori familiarisation with an environment through verbal description (Golledge 1999: 9) plus the Apostles’ previous sightings of the invisible mountain meant that anticipation guided our perception (Milton 2002: 43). We were looking out for an anticipated view which did not show.

As introduced above, hikers participate in the forming of a terroir and often do so together. In this relationship, waymarkings do not represent an external and determining imposition on the landscape and thereby on hikers. In hikers’ experiences they are part of the landscape and thus emerge through the hiker-environment interaction. The perceived structures in a landscape are the function of the terms of engagement (Gibson cited in Ingold 2000a: 166; Milton 2002: 100), in this case the hiking on a long-distance trail. According to Gibson’s ecological psychology, perception consists of a dynamic and reciprocal person-environment relationship: we perceive a landscape ‘in terms of what it affords for the pursuit of the action in which we are currently engaged’ (Ingold

1992: 44). The perceiver's activity (here walking) determines which 'affordances' are relevant to her/his exploration of the environment (Milton 2002: 42). These, in turn, enable and restrain activity. Meaning, then, is not imposed on a landscape or a preconceived design, but 'emerges from and exists in the practices of [human-environment] engagement' (Watson 2003: 149). In this case, markers are indeed crucial but they structure the journey together with and through landmarks and the terrain. In spite of Golledge's focus on cognitive mapping, and although I disagree with his division between route- and environment-based knowledge (and objective physical reality versus subjective worlds), his conclusions are useful. They highlight that one knows a route through its structure and required behaviours (route- and self-related knowledge) rather than an independent environment through which the route passes. 'Environmental features such as landmarks are learned only insofar as they help to prime turns or distances along segments' (Golledge 1999: 9).

Hence, with regard to wayfinding, the notion of terroir or Ingold's concept of 'taskscape' (2000a: 195) are more helpful than the notion of a 'natural' landscape devoid of people, activities and agendas. 'Taskscape' refers to the temporality of the landscape, to the mutual embeddedness of humans and environment in humans' practices. Here mind and matter are indissoluble. Inspired by Australian Aboriginal songlines, a 'taskscape' implies activity. Walking the songlines, Australian Aboriginal people re-perform the activities of their ancestors which have metamorphosed into the landscape (Ingold 2000a: 53). Thus the landscape is perpetually coming into being. The following examples from my fieldwork bring out how wayfinding involves the interaction between traveller and environment.

Hikers perceived the waymarkings as part of the landscape. The waymarkings, in turn, were part of individuals' sensory perception and kinaesthetic experience. This was maybe most apparent visually, but was not limited to visual perception. Visibly, the linear, discrete waymarks were integral to my hiking environment. At times their yellow-orange was indiscernible from yellowing autumn leaves, all glistening in patches of sunlight when I walked through light forests (see Figure 5.5). Another example reveals the role of the body in wayfinding more fully. Waymarks were often painted on the ground (see Figure 6.1). Thus they became a feature and function of hikers' environment. The paths were often rocky and uneven. So hikers needed to watch the ground when walking and balance their weight. Their physical movement and posture

responded to the terrain through touch and rhythm in a reciprocal exchange (Ingold 2004: 332). Chapter 8 elaborates on how a hiker's visual and haptic perceptions were inseparable since vision entailed all her senses, movement and subjective engagement (Ingold 2004: 331). From psychology we learn that the body is the frame of reference in orientation even beyond the vicinity (Sholl cited in Golledge 1999: 33) and that locomotion shapes our spatial orientation (Rieser 1999: 173). The sense of direction is related to the relationship between the hiker's body and the path. A sense of direction, perspective and scale develops through movement in the environment (Tuan 1977: 12). As we move, a relational knowledge develops. In the following, I will examine sensory 'guides' in the context of particular places.

### **Sensory guides**

When I was walking alone it was sometimes the sun, the wind, a view, or a chiming church bell which guided me as well as affected my attention to markers. Various writers have pointed out that we locate ourselves and find our way through sensory cues such as colour, shape, light, shadow but also aural signals, touch and gravity (Golledge 1999: 12; Lynch 1960; Rieser and Pick 2007: 83). Near the end of the Trail, for instance, the track enclosed by towering limestone walls and the view of white residue of planes in the blue sky showed me the way while I was walking in the long, deep and narrow Gorges de la Frau ('Gorge of fright'). Although inaccessible and just an ephemeral trace of movement within a 'moving geography' (Hazen 1983: 26) rather than a fixed point of reference, the linearity of the vapour trails told me of progression, and potential arrival at a destination. Offering me another, sensorial, kind of map, it could take me 'on board' (with a bit of imagination and a strong desire to complete the stage). Ness (2007: 83) similarly experienced that her looking towards a landmark such as falls in Yosemite Valley boosted her motility. It performatively reenergised her walking. She checked her progress by the falls. Carpenter describes how Aivilik trackers in the Canadian Arctic oriented themselves through the various sensory perceptions in their interrelation, observing the direction of the wind as well as landmarks. While Carpenter himself 'stooped to scrutinize the trail, they stepped back, taking in the whole' (Carpenter 1973: 22).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Wayfinding accordingly requires people to engage with their physical environment including the sky and the weather (Aporta and Higgs 2005: 742). While I followed a sky trace in the land, Lynch describes an example of how inhabitants in the Arctic read the sky to find a safe route across expansive bays.

Regarding this kind of perceptual engagement, Willerslev argues that seeing is to come close to things through distance. Koyukon hunters in Alaska experience a form of self-reflexivity, ‘a forest of eyes’ (Willerslev 2006: 30). The surroundings look back. In the sight of others we can see our own activity of seeing. So we find also a unity between perceiver and perceived in vision. The incommensurability of the medium (air – impossible for walking on) and the plane traces in the gorge demonstrate how not only the materially solid is co-constitutive of one’s spatial orientation. Ingold speaks of a ‘weather-world’ in which ‘the sky is not a surface, real or imaginary, but a medium’ (2005: 104). It does not consist in the perception of visual surfaces as Gibson (1950) had argued. The aerial traces contrasted with my space of movement which was bounded by dense walls and where I could not see a way out, neither immediately ahead nor to my sides (see Figures 6.2 and 6.3). A British walker and writer describes the same ‘scene’ and his experience on his website:

Massive walls of limestone clothed in trees and bushes converged on a point a mile distant. I was walking into the jaws of a nutcracker as the sides of the gorge soared above me. This was the entrance to the Gorges de la Frau [...]. The sign on the side warned - Dangerous Path, Avalanche Risk in Bad Weather. The sun disappeared as I entered the narrow funnel of the gorge. I had to crane my neck to scan the eight hundred foot walls of rock above. A few stones clattered down without warning. (Cudbird n.d.)

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Colour and shape of the reflection of the sky indicated open water, sea-ice or land-ice below (Lynch 1973: 308).

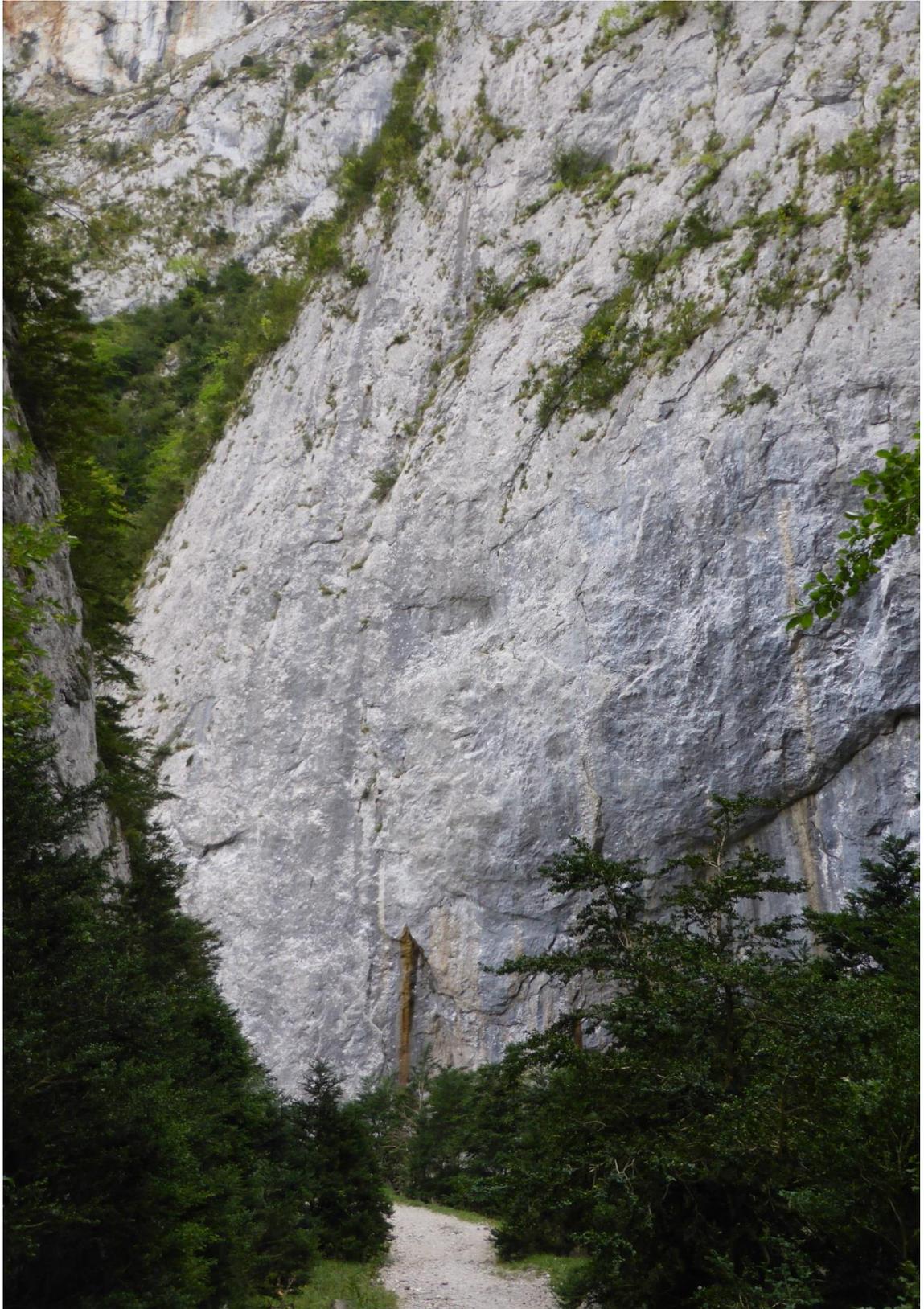


Figure 6.2. The path through the Gorges de la Frau.



Figure 6.3. View into the gorge from the previous stage.

A long and continuous climb on a muddy forest track led me out of the gorge. Sounds guided and helped me along, as on other days announcing the next village, bringing it close. Approaching, I heard Montségur village and machines cutting trees on this Saturday afternoon and I saw fences and knew I was on track. What I saw confirmed what I had heard, even though I never saw the actual source of the sound. Hearing can indicate material things so that ‘the visible becomes audible’ (Thibaud 2003: 336). In a dense tropical forest environment such as in Papua New Guinea, the invisible but audible is present in a dynamic, temporal landscape (Gell 1995: 238; Feld 1996: 98). What helps here is not to divide different kinds of landscapes and senses, such as into a visual landscape characterised by distance and disengagement (Jay 1993: 8) and a soundscape of embodiment and emplacement (Gow 1995: 56; Ong 1982: 72; Stoller 1989: 112). A more empirical and productive approach accepts that experience cannot be split by the senses (Handel 2006: vii). Instead of contrasting official guidelines with subjective perceptions, mind and body, this chapter aims to understand hiking as participating in a terroir. Thus, in hikers’ experience, the ‘official’ Trail was not radically distinct from properties of the terrain and ‘immaterial’ elements such as the weather. The sensory and official waymarkings worked together, through each other. Sensory landscapes could also work without waymarkings, but waymarkings not without these landscapes. The traced Trail materialised the Trail enterprise. Its tracing, however, was landscape-contingent. It followed terrain and scenic variety and other affordances. So, from the perspective of the hiker’s experience, waymarkings are inherent in the landscape.

In another case of distinctively sensory waymaking, on one of the first stages of the Trail, a church bell tolled twelve and drew me forward to Padern village together with the views onto the ruined castle of Padern and a clearly traced track. Without reflection, I knew what the sound meant, a village. Villages and ruins were what the Trail was made of. It also told me the time, time which I needed to keep track of to reach the day’s destination. My way was ‘marked’ through these qualities. Both the bell and the ruin held my attention at eyelevel. As a result I forgot to look for waymarkings. As so often, when I suddenly remembered and turned around to look for confirmation that I was on the right way, I actually found markers. My attention shifted to focus on the Trail and its low-level attributes (markers) as delimited from other trails and ‘non-trails’. Then again, as we lost the ‘right’ way at the junction, we engaged with and

reflected on our environment more consciously. Speaking from experience and observation, Vergunst (2008: 119) argues that being lost is a disruption in walking which makes walkers ‘invest’ consciously in re-grounding their route. Similarly, Careri’s (2002: 47) study of walking as an aesthetic practice contends that getting lost has a psychically regenerating effect since, being perplexed, hikers have to recreate their points of reference. Being lost actually heightens one’s consciousness of the place. At the junction, our perceptions became more salient since we drew on them to find the way. The body-mind-environment relationship was more apparent in such moments. However, the experience or logical deduction that ‘[t]o lose the way is to experience a disconnection or a disjunction from one’s surroundings’ (Vergunst 2008: 119) did not apply to the Cathar Trail hiking. There, the incongruity was on the part of the map. Our place was not the map’s. The disconnection was between place and map, mediated by the waymarkings of another trail.

Knowing the way through the senses and the walking – knowing it from experience – made me feel free and light on my second trek. I did not need to walk with the guidebook in hand to repeatedly assess my surroundings in terms of the book. I knew when difficult passages or junctions were coming and where to pay attention because I had physically experienced them before. Still, the ‘same’ way and places were often different from how I remembered them. The second time round, a turn in the path came ‘late’, a panoramic hilltop was shrouded in mist, a hostel was empty which had been full before. My remembered ‘experience of being there’ (Aporta 2009: 42) led my way. I had expected the places to be the places I remembered and reimagined. Golledge’s (1999: 9) notion of the impact of a-priori familiarisation with an environment is relevant here again. Spots where I had met hikers before felt empty. The place I knew was removed from me in time. I felt as if a long time had passed. I had the sense of thoroughly knowing the route but was simultaneously negotiating a different environment. This showed me that a place was not a given but a process, changing and temporal (Hirsch 1995: 22; Ingold 2000a: 191; Lefebvre 1996: 230), different for every hiker and every time. I learned that the way we know emerges in the process of walking.

### **Why this way? Windy walking**

Experience is again the clue when examining the reasons for taking a particular hiking route. Here I trace how properties of the physical terrain and the wind contributed to

constituting the meaning of a place through the experience of hiking along the Trail. At the hostel the morning following the confusion at the junction, Martin discussed our wayfinding at the Col de Lenti with the hostel owner, stating: ‘It’s the Trail which wants us to go this way for the viewpoint’. As we had not understood the ‘right’ way for a while, the Trail itself became an agent for him, directing us to have a certain experience of the place. In retrospect, he justified the route which felt wrong to us through the view which we had experienced after this stretch of the way. This was the Cathar Trail of the guidebook, at variance with his pre-existing notion of linear progression, of another more direct way leading to the destination down in the valley. The thought seemed to linger that we would also have reached the hostel by this other path on the left. The implicit reasoning might have been that views do not line up, that walking in this ‘natural setting’ requires readiness to follow the layout of the land (with the expectation that the Trail would offer variation). Narratives thus express the relation between knowledge and experience in navigating a landscape. In Native American hunters’ accounts this relation produces dreams from which they can know the location and trail of their prey (Brody 2002 [1981]: 44). The actual hunt would then take up the dream. In unfamiliar territory, the visitors on the Cathar Trail found their way into the place first and then, through this experience, imagined places into being.

Another environmental factor which, this time, made hikers actually take an alternative route to the ‘official’ Cathar Trail was the wind. The weather, specifically the wind, in combination with the terrain and its exposure was involved in our walking the way. In the morning, shortly after meeting the Apostles on the day of the Col de Lenti, the Apostles and I deviated from the Cathar Trail to circumvent the Pla de Brezou. The previous night’s hostel managers had told us to avoid this ridge because of a forecast of high winds. A pleasant, sheltered low-level route took us around the plateau to the Gorges de Galamus. On my second passing I understood why we had been advised to take an alternative route. Chapter 8 will analyse my boulder hopping and hanging on to small, withered trees next to a precipice on the designated route on a calm day. A study of wind draws attention to how humans and environment, mind and body are mutually-embedded (Low and Hsu 2007: 1, 2). ‘Wind provides an exceptional sensory experience. [...] It can be [...] heard and felt, if not touched, and its effects are visible’ (Low and Hsu 2007: 10).

Strong wind was a common feature all along the Trail at this time of the year (autumn). It meant proceeding with difficulty and, according to signposts, danger. Especially during the first stages I had to struggle against the wind. Signs along the way warned of the danger of falling stones, some even prohibiting access to a ruin. My motivation to always reach the next highest point was dampened after I realised that I could not rest there because of the wind. It could even force hikers to disregard viewpoints and shaped a ‘weathered’ hiking body. On the day I visited Quéribus, visitors pulled themselves forward by a rope to take one step at a time up the steps through the ruin’s gate which was at such an angle and height that the wind funnelled into it (see Figure 4.5). The day of the Col de Lenti illustrates likewise the force of the wind. Back up on the road after the detour to the hermitage lower down in the gorge, this time on the precipice side of the road, we sidled along the road barrier, walking closely one after the other. Winding our way out of the gorge, at a corner, Antoine, who walked just in front of me, cried out. His hat had disappeared behind rocks towering above the opposite side of the road, blown off and up by a gust of wind. Taken unawares, we stopped and stared up. The wind became the object of conversation but did not bring the hat back down. In contrast, the warm but delicate light and stillness of some mornings and evenings felt particularly peaceful (see Figure 6.4).



Figure 6.4. Enjoying the tranquillity in the morning at a hostel early on the Trail.

Throughout, types of wind and their meanings, rather than placenames, were recurrent and determined hikers' route. While a toponym identifies and localises a place, the wind is not bounded. The wind itself is movement and differs according to the terrain while carrying with it the places it came from. Knowing the wind is a kind of insider knowledge of a place and area. Brody describes the Athapaskan peoples in subarctic Canada as hunters who are sensitive and flexible. The decision about when to go hunting is determined by 'a sense of weather [...] and by a sense of rightness' (Brody 2002 [1981]: 37), by animal movement and land use. All these are not separate factors but interconnected, 'a composite': 'the decision is taken in the doing' (Brody 2002 [1981]: 37), in sync with the environment. During the hunt hunters follow the animals by reading the texture and shape of their tracks in relation to the wind's direction and the terrain (Brody 2002 [1981]: 183). Wind, terrain and knowledge are similarly intrinsically linked in Inuit spatial orientation. By knowing the different kinds of wind and their behaviour, they can find their bearings. 'These bearings constitute a wind-compass that Inuit use to situate objects, describe locations, and locate people's relative positions while travelling. [...] Inuit rely [...] on snowdrifts shaped by different prevailing winds and showing several distinctive forms' (Aporta and Higgs 2005: 731). Pacific navigators similarly steer their canoe according to wind directions, wave patterns and currents (Feinberg and Genz 2012: 344; Lynch 1973: 309). Claire explained to me the different types of wind of the Cathar Trail: the maritime wind coming from the Mediterranean, bringing rain, a strong wind from the North which brings good weather but difficult hiking, the Tramontana which blows across the mountains and a wind from the Sahara which twice a year covers the cars in sand (see also Wilson 1999: 40, 318). The wind was part of the place in hiking. Hikers were made to feel the wind and participate in its meaning and thereby in the place and terroir.

### **Making the way together**

The communal experience of travel is central in this chapter and the last because, on the Cathar Trail, hikers found and made their way together. They walked in groups and joined in with fellow hikers and knew about others elsewhere on the Trail. Thereby they traced a particular trail made by, and of, places and people. Wayfaring along the Cathar Trail took shape in a social environment which could not be divorced from hikers' natural environment. As Hutchins (1995) argues from a cognitive perspective, people

know together and with their socio-material environments, in interaction with the world. Hikers' interpretation of the way (including the right/wrong way) articulated meanings which developed through the exchange and sharing of knowledge and space between hikers. Hikers engaged individually with their environments while also sharing with others the continuation of the waymarked Trail and often the daily stage destinations during their journey: the hostels on the Trail.

### **Loops in a continuum: the possibility of paths and people**

After the Apostles and I joined up with the German ladies, I learned from the Apostles that they had seen them in the distance earlier that same day. Through the hiking activity and people and places, hikers experienced the Trail as continuity as well as temporality. As hikers moved on and along the Trail, they came to know about other hikers elsewhere on the Trail. On my second trek, I received a call from Paul when I was in the same gorge we had walked through together on the day of the Col de Lenti. Although I learned from his call that the Apostles were on a day outing only one stage away, I would not see them this time because I could not reach them on foot in time. Over days spent hiking, distances and time came to be measured in paces; and connections between people and places were established.

Similarly, in the context of tracking in hunting, Turnbull explains 'the connectivity of trails – the creation of meaning through marking and linking' (2007: 143). According to him, a trail is performative: it connects 'things' (such as people and actions) and is a physical trail connected through them (Turnbull 2007: 143). The sporty hikers I met near the end of the Trail, outside the hostel in Montségur,<sup>71</sup> knew about me from a couple who holidayed in their campervan at one of the resting places halfway on the Trail. 'The place with the fountain damaged by German bombs [in the Second World War]', they told me. Unfamiliar with this story, I was only able to place the people (and vice versa: people the place) once they mentioned that the couple was there looking for mushrooms. Indeed I had chatted with the wife and even used the fountain after asking her whether this was drinking water. Such encounters evoked a sense of continuum and loops on the Trail, a sense of moving on but taking past, people and places with you (see also Legat 2008: 36; Tilley 2012: 19). I was reminded of my previous experience in that place and the people and the place were brought forward to the present. Sometimes,

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<sup>71</sup> See the middle section in Chapter 4.

unasked questions would be answered by different travellers who had come across the same people and/or places.

At the same time, even doing the ‘same’ stage on the same day did not mean hikers shared the same space. Walking is creative. As Turnbull (2007: 142) tells us, ‘[w]e make our world in the process of moving through and knowing it’. Following a phenomenological perspective, one can conceptualise hiking as generating specific perceptions of an environment. We know our surroundings through movement. Places therefore differ and change as people change. On one day, all of us, the Pontoise couple, a tattooed Englishman and I were on the same stretch of way but I did not meet the Englishman until the junction where our paths separated. The Pontoise couple and I only met at night at the hostel in Puivert. On this stretch, we each experienced a different way because here the path was obstructed and obscured by massive cut trees and mud. The Pontoise couple walked around, the Englishman cut across. The couple and I ended up with mud up to our knees and torn clothes from cutting through the forest.

Moreover, we experience each of these paths differently every time we take them again. While predetermined by name, by the map and our knowledge of its facilities (such as available accommodation and food), we do not *know* the destination. Our idea of the destination may inform our actions (Rieser and Pick 2007: 87). However, we can only know it in relation to our experience of the way to and from it (the Trail continues beyond it), through walking to it along the Trail (Ingold 2004: 331): ‘we know *as* we go, not *before* we go’ (Ingold 2000a: 230, original emphasis). Hodology, the study of pathways, promotes a performative understanding of the coproduction of knowledge and space. Knowing is performative; through it we produce space (Turnbull 2007: 142). At the Col de Lenti, we could not understand the destination-driven way indicators because we had not been to the destination.

Hikers’ journeys, whether in private or with a travel agent, were determined by accommodation places, *not* by the heritage sites, although, for the most part, the hostels are close to the major Trail ruins since they are part of the Cathar Trail set-up which was based on these sites. Examining the Trail map at our lunchtime picnic, Martin asserted that the limited and widely spaced facilities make shorter stages impossible: ‘Look Antoine! What guides you, in fact, are the hostels, in the end. There, you see,

there you're sure that you can find accommodation, there', Martin pointed on the map. Some ruins and villages such as Roquefixade (an undeveloped site) are 'nothing special' to Martin but nevertheless necessary for the completion of the Trail.

Consequently, accommodation places play a role in wayfinding because they were where hikers were headed as well as being where hikers gathered and met again hikers they had met before. Still, hikers only rarely discussed 'the way' there because their travel itineraries usually varied.

Hikers' social and natural environment was inseparable: the sharing of knowledge between hikers shaped the hiking experiences on the Cathar Trail to a large extent. Hikers' sense of continuity and temporality of the Trail (described above) came about through the times and places when and where hikers actually met (and referred to other Trail hikers and places). Seeing hikers walk in opposite directions within the frame of one photograph made me realise what I will trace in the following section: these loops in a line were, overall, still a one-way movement for every individual, although we frequently crossed paths with hikers walking in the opposite direction.

### **Joining in with others**

Hikers find and make their way together in wayfaring. Wayfaring is movement and connecting along the way (Ingold 2007: 15–16, 77, 98). At the junction, the Apostles and the German hikers clustered together quickly and effortlessly despite language barriers. The experience of not knowing the 'right' way was shared. Both groups were confused by the problem of finding the way. Standing around the maps, we deliberated about the way to take. The hikers did not just find the way by constructing a mental map, an overview of present place and destination measured in lines. Instead, the hikers' experience seemed to be more one of continuing the way with the awareness of a distant lower level track leading to the destination roughly in parallel. Based on my experience and observation, wayfinding was a question of corporeal continuity, an organism's attunement to its environment (Ingold 2000a: 242; Tilley 2012: 19). We were engaged in the continuity inherent in movement and shared this continuity with others. Having walked a track with hairpin bends up to the junction, we did not dismiss another change in Trail direction when we reached its level ground. In connection with navigational skills such as map reading, wayfinding involved individuals' physical and social engagement. Exploring a 'therapeutic landscape', Doughty discusses embodied

landscape and embodied interaction. She finds that ‘the companionship of walking-with [in led group walks in England] was creating a shared sense of presence and sense of discovery of the unfolding of place, which had the potential to focus attention in the embodied present’ (Doughty 2013: 144). At the wooded junction, we could neither see where the different paths led, nor how they continued. Unsure of the way, hikers ‘experimented’ in response to their environment.

Middleton argues that ‘rhythm is a way of understanding the multiple temporalities, spatialities, and corporalities of walking together’ (2009: 1956). The meeting of paths and people at the Col de Lenti shows how hikers’ rhythms of movement perceptibly differ, change and are relative to their social and natural environment. Some Apostles continued, going on close reconnaissance then retracing their steps to the junction where others were waiting. There, hikers needed to trust in the companions who had scouted out the ground and in the decision made. Although not convinced that this was the right way, for security reasons (in terms of numbers, spatial orientation and difficulty to communicate in French), the German hikers (three women) followed the Apostles (a group of mixed gender with eleven members but guided by men) when the latter left the junction. There was no alternative route the women considered correct. Eventually, they preferred to follow because they feared getting lost alone. Both groups did not stay together for long, however, since they did not have the same pace and needs. The dance philosopher Erin Manning who will be key in my development of the notion of a ‘hiking spatiality’ in Chapter 8 describes such walking-with people as ‘moving the relation’ (Manning 2009: 30) between people and people and their surroundings (Manning 2009: 34). Although I am disinclined to itemise ‘the relation’, Manning here draws attention to how individuals and their environments move relative to each other.

Our perceptions and social interaction while walking are shaped by our walking rhythm which in turn is shaped by our environment (Doughty 2013: 143; Lee and Ingold 2006: 68, 80). With the eleven Apostles I became aware that hikers move individually and in accord with each other and with their environment. On narrow paths downhill individuals focused on negotiating the path and the group crowded together. In the Gorges de Galamus on the other hand, the group stretched out (see Figure 6.5). We walked along the even, narrow, serpentine road which traverses the gorge, rock face on one side, precipice with an invisible river deep below on the other. From time to time, a call, warning of an approaching car, rippled through the group. Then the Apostles,

otherwise chatting in twos and threes or on their mobile phones, fell into step in a single file and almost grazed the rock face. Like an accordion, the rhythm when road-walking condensed and expanded, depending partly on passing cars which made us step aside and the on-going verbal exchange and protruding rocks (no visibility beyond the next bend). As here illustrated, the rhythm of walking is irregular. It is continually responsive to place (Vergunst 2008: 116) which is rhythmic itself (Edensor 2010b: 78; Wunderlich 2008: 134). In walking, the rhythms of winds, seasons, climate and weather are drawn in (Edensor 2010b: 75) as well as people's bodies and feelings and the hiking sociality. The perceiver participates, immersed, in the 'world-in-formation' (Ingold 2011: 129), in a terroir in process. Below, I continue to discuss how perceptions and interactions and walking rhythm and environment mutually inform each other.



Figure 6.5. The Apostles walking into the gorge: a few more bends to go.

Research into walking rhythms articulates the body-place-other beings relation. By analysing the experiential flow of walking rhythms, authors such as Edensor and Holloway (2008) override the actor network theorists' separation of representation and sensory involvement. In walking we think and feel 'in a movement that is both

rhythmically resonant with the movements of others around us – whose journeys we share and whose paths we cross – and open-ended’ (Ingold and Vergunst 2008: 2). After a couple of days walking amidst the Apostles, now alone I suddenly needed to refocus on waymarkings. With them, I had kept going in the flow of the guided group and followed in others’ footsteps. Next I elaborate on how hikers’ walking rhythms also formed through the way up to the junction. Earlier places ‘carried on’ through the hiking activity and were part of the Trail-making.

### **Carrying on**

Hikers did not experience the Cathar Trail as a mapped line dotted with discrete localities but as an ongoing process forming through activity. In Tilley’s (2012: 17) words, ‘[w]alking is always a gathering together of place encountered along the way [...]. A walk gathers together the landscape in relation to my body’ and mediates it. Hikers experienced an ongoing trail which carried on even when confusion over the correct way required us to define a place in order to locate ourselves in relation to the two-dimensional map. The philosopher Brian Massumi states that ‘position [actually] emerges from movement’ (2002: 180). People orient through proprioception, through the rhythm of movement through space (Massumi 2002: 179, 180). It seemed indeed that at the junction, the continuation of movement was more important than constructing a mental map. Ingold and Vergunst (2008) argue that both walking and the world are inherently ongoing. Walking generates an awareness of the being *in* and *with* one’s environment. So hikers did not merely pass through places but walked *with their* environment. Through the hiking activity, hikers experienced the Col de Lenti not in isolation from other places but in relation to earlier activity, encounters and places.

Discussing narratives, Tilley argues that place, movement, landscape involve ‘a presencing of previous experiences in present context’ (1994: 32). Vergunst equally highlights the continuity and temporality of walking, ‘senses of past, present and future’ (2010: 382) gathered together. The climb to the next junction was only a difference in height of 128 metres (the guidebook tells me) but making the way involved more than the here and now. It was an ‘education of attention’ (Ingold 2000a: 190). It included us, how we had come here, and the times, terrains and spaces which had preceded the junction. The hill I climbed or the cow which frightened me in the morning and the guidebook’s stage description of what is still to come are integral to how I experience

the present place.<sup>72</sup> The German hikers showed signs of tiredness and irritation because they had crossed a longer distance than the official stage on that day and had had a confrontation with a cow blocking their way. So our way was experienced in this light and one place became meaningful in relation to another. A place emerges on a path of movement between other places (Ingold 2007: 2; Tilley 1994: 27). It is a temporal event: ‘if everything is moving [...], [...] [i]f there are no fixed points then where is here? [...] Then “here” is no more (and no less) than our encounter, and what is made of it. It is, irretrievably, here *and* now’ (Massey 2005: 138–139, original emphasis).

Later, on reaching an even track in the valley below, one of the Apostles’ unintended pun ‘Je suis à plat’ (to feel all-in) expressed in French both his physical state and material surroundings, blending both and making sense through our experience of long ascents and descents. Now he was on ground which he experienced as flat in relation to his previous walking downhill. We laughed because of the timing of his statement. Through our stiff and aching legs we carried the terrain, ‘the ground underfoot, [...] gradients, surfaces and textures’ (Edensor 2010b: 73), bodily with us, our muscles and blisters manifesting our physical way-making. Edensor (2010b: 73) makes the point that blisters, sore muscles and walking poles also influence the walking rhythm. Our perceptions were consequently also shaped through technology, such as hiking boots and walking poles, and physical condition as the body was engaged ‘as part of the landscape’ (Tilley 2012: 17).

Waymarkings, too, could become a personal attribute. Over the journey traced by the Trail colours I carried waymarkings with me. When I resisted the change in colours of the markers at the Aude/Ariège border, I noticed that I had internalised them. Having hiked a red and yellow Cathar Trail on a first trip as a teenager, I now learned to know and appropriate the Trail through the blue/yellow<sup>73</sup> markers which showed me the way from the start to the tenth stage out of the twelve Trail stages. After crossing the otherwise invisible departmental border I did not identify the new GR colours automatically with the Cathar Trail and continued to look for the Aude colours. The blue/yellow had become identifiers of the Trail and signalled to me that this was *my* present journey.

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<sup>72</sup> This statement echoes Husserl’s concept of retention and protention, the previous and the still-to-come (Tilley 1994: 31; Tuan 1979: 399–400).

<sup>73</sup> Officially, ‘orange’ rather than yellow (see Chapter 5).

Interestingly, what made the Pontoise couple progress speedily without hesitation even at junctions from their second day onwards was the fact they got lost on their first day of the hike. Having ‘lost time’, they now ‘made up for it’ (see Chapter 4). The experience on their first day was enough for them to learn which waymarkings to follow, although they travelled only with a printed-out itinerary outline from the Trail website (no guidebook or map) and had not been familiar with the Trail markers when they started. They had learned fast on the way. The waymarkings became meaningful through practice.

In Foix, the end of the Trail, I came to an abrupt halt. The signed Trail stopped without warning or announcement before entering the town centre, but I could still feel the movement continuing. Between treks, I could not help but look for waymarkings. When I saw some, as in Figure 6.6, the place became meaningful because it conveyed travelling and movement generally, as opposed to an apparently static built environment. *This* place was part of a pedestrian network. I could go and reach another place from here. The marker therefore gave me a sense of freedom from place confinement while offering me a way which consisted of movement. As such it signified connectivity, openness and potential for discovery but also the assurance of guidance.<sup>74</sup> The junction, too, had been a potential turning point in the ongoing walking process. Such a concrete moment, open to different ways, reveals cognition as coming from embodied action (Varela 1992: 336). Creativity is involved in making sense; it emerges from the potential for reconfiguration (Harrison 2000: 509).

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<sup>74</sup> The Camino provides a similar guidance. ‘The sense of direction and purpose felt so strongly during the journey may be lost at home when the yellow arrows of the Camino no longer indicate the way (Frey 1998: 188–189).



Figure 6.6. Interlude in Carcassonne: spotting a marker, the wrong one (GR instead of Cathar Trail) but a marker nonetheless, in an unexpected place. It indicates a right turn to pass between the town walls to enter the medieval heart of Carcassonne.

Latour (2013 [2012]: 265) writes about how habit makes the hiker go for the seen path (when inadvertently having gone off-path) without reflecting. So on a more prosaic level, spotting markers had become a reflex for me. Yet, I never followed any of these

markers when between my two treks, seeing them and wondering where they led was sufficient. Paradoxically, these were markers which ‘did not work’ because people did not follow them. Here, people made their own way, irrespective of markers and occasionally even of pathways (like the youngster who hauls himself across the wall in Figure 6.6). The markers work when they are connectors between settlements, not within large agglomerations where even professional long-distance hikers take shortcuts (on foot or by public transport). Yet, I felt the need for them. Through these markers one can understand both body and mind as connected in feeling.

The Cathar Trail is many lines but experienced as one through the meshed experience in place. In the sense of personal journey, the Trail is a progression but it is not experienced as a mapped line determined by discrete sites. Hikers experienced places physically through their interaction with their environment and in relation to past and future and in relation with other places.

### **Conclusion: many ways but one in experience**

This chapter and the last unfold from an incident at a junction. My initial objective was to show how official constructions and constituents of the Trail guide hikers’ experiences, but that hikers also act out ‘spaces’ of improvisation when they negotiate their way with official markers and encounter the unexpected. When assembling the field data for these chapters, I realised that this data did not tally with my intended outline. It was not so much about ‘being lost’, as about ‘finding the (right) way’. While I started out with ‘getting and being lost’ in mind, I understood, working through my data, that hikers continuously formed the Cathar Trail. Thus, these chapters build on the discussion of ‘terroir’ in Chapter 4. We were not lost; we had only lost the designated Cathar way of the maps. This led me to a holistic reflection on the correlation between constructions of place and embodied experience. Rather than inverting the mind over body perspective by advocating that the ‘natural’ environment guided me instead of the official Trail constructs, I argue that a focus on bodily perception situates these constructs as part of, and working through, a place.

Chapters 5 and 6 have laid out how, in wayfinding, hikers made their own way, which was not the Cathar Trail of the guidebook but the Trail of their experience. It is traced out as Cathar Trail but it is never the same. Hikers’ experiences are shaped by physical topography, the continuation of movement and joining in with other hikers. People

make the way through waymarkings, maps and, most importantly, through their movement through places. These chapters have shown that orientation is not just spatial but also social (including the fieldworker with the guidebook) and political (official markers designating ‘ownership’ of portions of the Trail). I have argued that waymarkings can contribute to hikers both losing, and finding, the way. The terrain, trees, the weather, sounds, animals and people are also relevant to hikers finding their way and official guidelines are integral to this same environment (see Figure 6.7). Only the meanings which emerge through hikers’ interactions with their environments may be different. These environments comprise social and natural dimensions, fellow hikers as well as topography, in unison. So, an inquiry into wayfinding brings out how hikers know their environments through physical movement and sensory perception and how hikers continuously form the Cathar Trail. The following chapter will explore in more depth how people know their environment through bodily movement and perception, specifically, how the Cathars’ walking was embodied in contemporary mindful walking.

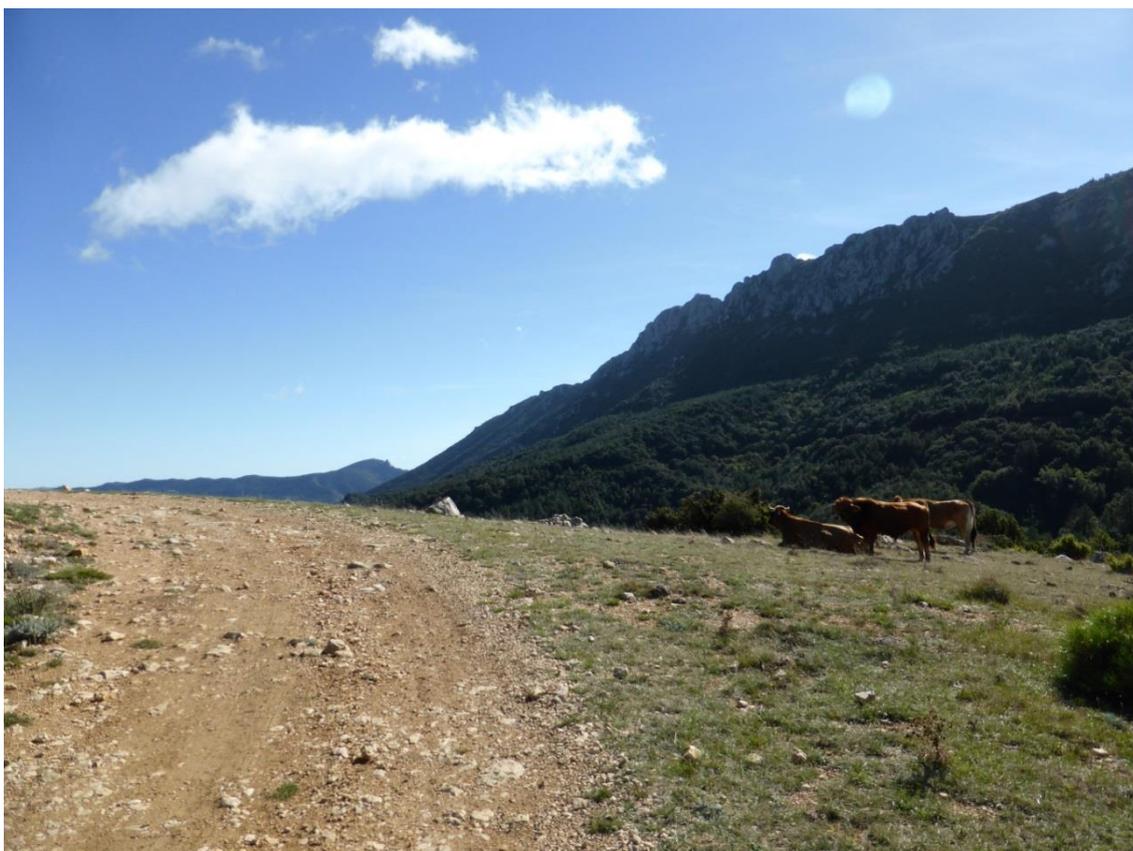


Figure 6.7. Cattle, clouds and a continuing track in the morning before I met the Apostles and before the Col de Lenti.

## CHAPTER 7

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# Movement and meaning: walking the land with the Cathars

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This chapter is about walking and meaning. It explores a particular kind of walking which draws attention to the togetherness of body-mind-environment. Thus it addresses the core question of the thesis: how meaning is formed through movement. It draws on the mythical Cathar histories from Chapter 2, the sense of Cathar Country and terroir from Chapters 3 and 4 and the role of sensory environmental perception from Chapters 5 and 6. This chapter is more introspective and draws inevitably on my personal experiences. Additional sources are online blogs and websites since the conscious walking process I experienced along with a walking group was mostly silent.

The chapter begins by introducing a group of Belgian women who practiced conscious walking. It discusses walking as intentional interaction with one's environment. Thereafter, it presents the spiritual background of conscious walking by discussing walking meditation and notions of nature and self. Finally, I investigate at length the resonance of places and the role of walking in the formation of particular Cathar meanings. Continuing the themes of Chapters 2 to 4, this chapter asks how travellers' trips are 'Cathar journeys', recalling that Chapter 4 suggested that, in practice, in the way hikers walk the Cathar Trail there is little of the Cathars in their journey. My day with the Belgian group showed me otherwise, even if they walked more off than on the Trail. This chapter focuses on how their experiences were associated with the Cathars on the basis of their bodily engagement with their environment in walking. There was a different kind of knowledge from the knowledge of historical facts. This chapter discusses, then, travellers' Cathar Trail as a historical reality. It highlights the significance of walking and promotes a holistic way of knowing.

## Conscious walking on and off the Trail

### The Seven Dwarfs and Snow White of one day

In this chapter I explore a specific way of walking which overlaps with longitudinal Cathar Trail hiking.<sup>75</sup> The chapter highlights the relationship between individual walkers and their environment. It emphasises how walking generates meaning, while also being part of a particular pre-determined project. From the point of view of experience in situ, both are indivisible. Meaning forms through embodiment and interaction and intersubjectively (Violi 2008: 65, 73). Context is constitutive: concepts ‘participate in situations’ (Violi 2008: 66). Furthermore, the analyst is quickly caught in a counterproductive circular logic when trying to determine the linkage between walking practice and concepts. I will consequently not seek to establish the precedence of one over the other but explore how both significance and embodied experiences are inherent in each other.

This chapter is a case study of ‘conscious walking’ as practiced by a group of six women from Belgium and their guide Mariehélène Faurès (she signs her communications with MH, which I will use from now on) who is originally from Ariège.<sup>76</sup> They were on a weeklong organised trip of revitalisation in nature named ‘Découverte profonde des Terres Cathares’ (‘Deep Discovery of the Cathar Lands’). Their retreat can be classified as a form of holistic wellness tourism (Bushell and Sheldon 2009) or spiritual tourism. It entailed non-ordinary experiences of deep engagement in an activity and environment and of interconnectedness between nature/culture, inner/outer being, tactile/intangible and physical/mental (Singh and Singh 2009: 148). Conscious walking is an accessible ‘Art of walking’ (Zanin n.d.b, original capitalisation) and a meditation in action. It entails warm-up exercises, paying attention to the stepping process, being in harmony with the environment, silence and relaxation (Faurès n.d.a). Although I first encountered the group on the Cathar Trail, they were not doing the Trail as such, but were staying at one fixed base – the village of Comus – which is the ninth Trail destination out of the twelve Cathar Trail stages. From there, they left for day walks which were off as well as on the Trail.

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<sup>75</sup> Pilgrimage, as described by Frey (1998), could be positioned as the nexus between conscious walking and long-distance hiking in that a pilgrimage is an inner as well as outer journey, geared to the sacred and a place (Ozarak 2006: 69).

<sup>76</sup> Conscious walking draws on various traditions and has been personalised by MH and other instructors (Faurès n.d.a; Zanin n.d.c). MH works in a cooperative named *Géode* and is the author of most of the websites in this chapter.

After a long ascent on one hot afternoon, I was nearing the forested border of an extensive plateau, when I first passed the group. Several were relaxing on the side of the path; others were walking towards me. At my feet, a wrapped red rain jacket stopped me. I turned around and held it up to signal the group had lost something. A shout came in response to put it back down. I complied and hurried on, not knowing then that the jacket was part of the set-up for an exercise. Later, after the path had gone over into a road, the ladies passed me piled into a small car, now curious to see me trudging on with my backpack. In the evening I discovered I had come to their base. After a chat with my immediate neighbour, I was introduced to the group. We were staying in bungalow accommodation but most of the group were sleeping in the communal yurt. Invited by the group, I joined them on the following day which was also their last day. On the walk that day, one of the participants named us the Seven Dwarfs and Snow White. The ‘Seven Dwarfs’ (who were not small at all) were interested in movement, dance and silent retreats in monasteries. Among them was a doctor who practices homeopathy and an applied kinesiologist.<sup>77</sup> Coincidentally, that year there were only women in the group.

MH’s online invitation, which I looked up later, provides an insight into the trip’s intended agenda:

The ‘Deep discovery of the Cathar lands’ is a sojourn to meet the spirit of these Cathar lands: from the plateau of Sault, [...] of a preserved beauty and diversity, we discover the sacred mountains of the massif of Tabe, the location of ancient pilgrimages. Nomads, we walk along, in nature on the Cathar paths. With the apprenticeship of conscious and Afghan walking and of sitting in nature,<sup>78</sup> we regain the sacred sense of the footstep, a simple, ancestral and foundational gesture of the human being, a gesture of respect and humility of the human in a sensitive relationship with his/her environment. (Géode- Terres Pyrénéennes n.d.b)

In the following, I discuss certain features from this programme as they were pertinent to the group’s experiences and pertained to walkers’ interaction with their environments and as I experienced and learned about them in the field.

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<sup>77</sup> A form of alternative medicine which evaluates energy in the body.

<sup>78</sup> MH integrates here the Christian orthodox theologian Jean-Yves Leloup’s (2011) concept of being seated in one’s body (centring on oneself in meditation) and walking (partaking in life’s movement). Leloup argues that both, meditating and walking are complementary (2011: 13).

## On whose terms?

My enquiry into walking and meaning inevitably interlocked the researcher's and practitioners' conceptions and required me to negotiate ideologies without invalidating them. When MH first explained their sojourn to me, she said that conscious walking was oriented neither inwards nor outwards but was unfolding together with the environment (as a whole). This notion suited my phenomenological inclination regarding human-environment interaction. Phenomenology apprehends perception, sensory experience and meaning as participatory and inseparable from our body and surroundings. Developing notions of relationship, participation and situatedness, twentieth-century phenomenological philosophers elaborated on the constitution of meaning in human experience. Heidegger's (1977) concept of dwelling states that people are inherently connected to locations and spaces. The world around us is part of our dwelling. Merleau-Ponty adopts the human body as basis of our existence and experience, as object and subject, both forming one unity in perception (1945: 231). The exploration of the Belgian group's trip will demonstrate how walking lends itself to such conceptualisation.

MH's walking practice cultivates a certain relationship with the environment which gave me an insight into the significance of walking. This insight, in turn, was marked by my enthusiastic response to MH's 'holistic walking' which probably facilitated the development of a further exchange and MH's invitation for the next day. MH had introduced the Belgian group to 'conscious walking', a practice which entails being fully attentive to one's environment and to living the present moment. While walking along together in the afternoon, MH described how the conscious walker walks 'towards meeting the landscape' and embodies the environment, whether it is a tree along the way, a mountain or a stone on the path (see Figure 7.1). Rather than trying to name and evaluate what we perceive, like 'this stone is in my way' or 'that tree is a ...', the walker becomes aware of the presence of her environment and forms one body with the tree, for example.<sup>79</sup> Devanne attributes hikers' experience of symbiosis with the mountain to a feeling of wellbeing, harmony and physical happiness (2005: 166).

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<sup>79</sup> The French 'faire corps avec l'arbre' does not specify that there is only *one* body and that it is circumscribed. In the West, these are exceptional moments of 'compassionate mutuality with nature' (Leder 1990: 164) and aesthetic sensitivity. Gillet's geopoetical study of experience, spatiality and motion expresses similarly a sense of participation and movement of persons and cairns (piles of stones marking a trail or a place) (2009: 285). He suggests thinking people, things and places together, involved in the world and forming the world in a reciprocal relationship (Gillet 2009: 288).

Hikers seek to be in physical contact with the mountain through sensory appreciation of the physical environment, for example through touch (Devanne 2005: 166). Such perceptions fit well with my argument that the environment any walker knows is not completely defined by categories. As Merleau-Ponty (1945) argued, perception is never disembodied; rather, we know the world through the experience of immediate involvement with it, the preobjective being-in-the-world. The phenomenological landscape is accordingly multisensory, perceived with all the senses and the whole body, and involves embodied practices of interaction (Lindström, Palang and Kull 2013: 101; Wylie 2013: 59).



Figure 7.1. The weight and density of the rock face and vegetation reinforced my sense of walking towards and *with* a corridor. The ruin of Roquefixade towers invisibly on the crag on the right.

I would add that the walking experience moreover involves walkers' worldviews. When analysing the encounter with the Belgian group I learned that, although (or maybe because) MH's position seemed to exemplify my phenomenological approach, I could

not take walking as the starting point of the chapter (and thesis) without acknowledging the individual background. To do otherwise would be to essentialise walking (and Westerners' perceptions of their environments) and its meanings. On the other hand, backwards and barefoot walking show below that contexts and terms like 'mindfulness' do not have overriding validity over experience.

In the context of my theoretical framework and the Belgian group's walking practice, I suggest that it might be misleading to use the term 'mindfulness' to translate MH's 'marche consciente' into 'mindful walking'. Teachers of the Buddhist practice of mindfulness promote a non-conceptual awareness in which body and mind are united (Avstreich 2014: 186; Kabat-Zinn 2005: 66, 170; Thich 2011 [1985]: 7) and in which we are in 'direct contact with the experience itself' (Kabat-Zinn 2005 [1994]: 56). Yet, at other times, they understand mindfulness as a mental act (Bodhi 2011: 30). To me, 'mindful walking' suggests the mind's hold within and beyond the body, reinforcing the mind/body dualism (for example Kabat-Zinn 2005 [1994]: 145 and 2005: 268). It is a cultivation of attention and awareness, a form of meditation, to reach a different state of *mind*. 'The challenge in mindful walking is to keep mind and body together in the present moment' (Kabat-Zinn 2005: 271). Martial arts practicing philosophers similarly presume a mind/body split. For them, mindfulness is a training which leads to a highly valued 'mindless' or 'thoughtless' state (Saltzman 2010: 176). Through 'embody[ing] the movements and mindset' (Saltzman 2010: 172) of a martial arts form, the proficient performer becomes the form of movement. Both 'become one and are dissolved: into pure, mindless movement' (Saltzman 2010: 176).

At variance with such a *minded* body, I aim to trace a forming of meaning which is specific to a togetherness of movement and conceptualisations and not driven by a 'mind' which is striving to achieve a non-conceptual state which is beyond thinking (see Kabat-Zinn 2005 [1994]: 94). This is a kinaesthetic and sensory knowing which contributes to place and Cathar knowledge (see Section 3 of this chapter). It is not helpful and against my objectives to ascribe this awareness to the body *or* the mind. To overcome the Cartesian mind/body dualism, Csordas (1994: 5), one of the phenomenological anthropologists, puts forward the concept of embodiment as something fundamentally indeterminate. Knowledge is only possible through the body, which is the locus and agent of experience. So speaking from my experience rather than the constructed format of a mindful exercise, it is not the mind directing the steps but a

bodily awareness which is in my step (in balance on the stony path). The Belgian ladies' conscious walking consisted in a physical awareness of their movement and surroundings. Good examples were their exercises in walking backwards and barefoot (see Figure 7.2) which they had engaged in before I joined them. As MH stated, to walk backwards is to take in or enter the environment even more, to experience one's surroundings even more intensely.



Figure 7.2. The Belgian group walking consciously (photograph by Christiane Lefebvre, reproduced with permission).

## Walking with my environment

The speed and duration of our movement contributed to the cultivation of a conscious bond with our environments. For the Belgian women, walking was a mode of intentionally slow travel. In this instance, then, their walking was incompatible with hikers' destination-driven long-distance hiking which I discussed in Chapter 4. A longstanding and quick-witted hostel owner in Comus declared she would be too impatient to take the course of a journey's unfolding rather than constantly reach for the destination. MH explains online that she offers people a reinvention of what it means to walk. Instead of the common experience of walking 'as a burden, a performance to deliver, a goal to achieve', she invites people to walk for pleasure, for oneself, respecting one's body, to enjoy 'the communion with nature' and 'with the quality of the gesture and not the quantity, the being and not the doing, [as] the only objective' (Faurès n.d.a).<sup>80</sup> Her slow walking is motivated by an attunement to one's environment and to the present. When I asked, she agreed that one is looking at the rocky path when walking: 'That's why one needs to stop inbetween' to fully perceive the surroundings. A mindfulness practitioner credits the brain, eye and feet for our terrain-conforming stepping (Kabat-Zinn 2005 [1994]: 127, 128). According to him, hiking across rough terrain already has 'built-in mindfulness' (Kabat-Zinn 2005 [1994]: 128). On a tricky passage on his way to Santiago de Compostela, Slavin describes himself as being 'one with the task and thus entirely present in' (2003: 16) his activity and the movement.

So where does conscious walking lead the walker if not towards a destination? While still directional, the Belgian ladies' walking was circular and deliberately slow on the day I joined them. In terms of geographical location, we ended where we had begun. Yet, the day's walk had brought new experiences. It had been invested with a stronger intentionality and conscious negotiation of my surroundings than my previous hiking days and its implications and effects were radical in my own experience. During the walk, I suddenly (after having spent weeks hiking!) struggled to maintain my balance despite walking at my own rhythm like the others and not having the weight of my big pack. My stepping was wobbly, my legs felt heavy and I experienced a tension in my shoulders and legs. I felt out of sync with my environment, maybe because I lacked my

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<sup>80</sup> Mindfulness training equally practices walking for itself (Kabat-Zinn 2005 [1994]: 145; Thich 2011 [1985]: 11), 'simply walking and knowing that you are walking, [...] being here for the walking, in the walking, being with every step, [...] when walking, just walk?' (Kabat-Zinn 2005: 271). Slavin characterises the Santiago pilgrimage as an exercise in 'mindfulness', overcoming psychological projections to stay fully in the present moment (2003: 9, 13).

backpack's habitual weight to steady and 'ground' me or, as MH later explained, because of the missing momentum. Faster walking gathers momentum. Possibly it was the very disruption of a rhythm, which I had assumed I had mastered after weeks on the Trail, which made me aware of the movement of walking and my environment in a, for me, new way.

Sheets-Johnstone (1999), a contributor to the corporeal turn, puts forward the useful notion that we perceive and know (make sense of) the world through movement. Yet, although her 'mindful body' (Sheets-Johnstone 1999: 516) with its 'non-separation of sensing and moving' (Sheets-Johnstone 1999: 516) is to overcome the body/brain division, she seems to concentrate on an inner consciousness or knowledge which employs external perception. Place plays consequently little role. Coming from a different, linguistic and philosophical, background, Lakoff and Johnson equally make a case for mental concepts formed through bodily perception and movement (1999: 555). Alternative to the notion of embodiment, which still implies a 'mindful body' in space and a human/nature division, Ingold (2000b: 259) develops an ecological understanding of knowledge which revolves around movement, connectivity and relationality. His concept of 'the whole-organism-in-its-environment' (Ingold 2000a: 19) takes an environment to be relative to the living organism (the body) in it, both constituting an inseparable and integrated whole.

Returning to walking, each placing of my step was a negotiation of body posture and movement responding to my environment. Walking meditation becomes pertinent here once again because it 'attend[s] to the walking itself' (Kabat-Zinn 2005 [1994]: 145), the cyclical process of 'lifting, moving, placing, shifting' (Kabat-Zinn 2005: 270). Walking is commonly understood as 'controlled falling' (Massumi 2002: 217; also Kabat-Zinn 2005: 268; O'Rourke 2013: 28) with each step. It is a play with gravity: an energising experience of lifting and grounding the body (Gros 2009: 147, 247). According to a movement expert, 'lifting the foot results in a very specific feeling: in this revolt over weight we are given a *feeling* of freedom and with it our feeling of self' (Stevens n.d.). It involves impulse and thought and is an expression of our will and intention. A French yoga and meditation association explains online:

Conscious Walking is also a way of looking at oneself, to concentrate on one's sensations (the movement of the feet, placing of the body, muscular tonus, breathing cycle). It is characterised by a slow economic gentle pace, where the

feet “listen to the earth”. A true meditation, it permits a simultaneous awareness of nature, the environment, the beauty of the countryside and of ourselves, and involves all movements of the body, heart and mentality. (le fil de Soi n.d., original capitalisation)

Where conscious walking took me, then, was a more acute sensation of the presence of my environment as I moved with it. I noticed small things and nuances – a leaf, a stone, hues of colour (Figure 7.3). The aftereffects of conscious walking were considerable. The day following the walk with the Belgian ladies I walked through the Gorges de la Frau (see also Chapter 6). I was conscious of sounds, space and ground and of space in relation to people. I noted while walking: *Calm, only birds, sense of silence even if flies buzzing and plane overhead. Alone but not lonely: I’m glad I’m not walking through this narrow gorge with a group of people. The sound of my steps in the gravel anchors me. After yesterday I breathe in the surroundings. The group brought me back to the enjoyment of walking (with my environment); for once I’m free of the pressure to chase after people and data, according to guidebook times and with the cold season on my heels. I’ve a sense of the gorge as coming towards me as I walk, which, in turn, makes me want to touch it.*<sup>81</sup> *Raising my eyes from the path, I see the close stone wall going up high and straight, but it doesn’t feel oppressive. There’s a serene atmosphere.*

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<sup>81</sup> I was reminded then of Merleau-Ponty’s (1945: 109) work on the experience of tactility and tangibility in touching one hand with the other which Abram had extended to evoke the sensory reciprocity of touch between person and environment (Abram 1996: 68, 268; also Tilley 2004: 18).



Figure 7.3. Butterfly, flowers and curiously shaped branches: noticing the small things on the way after the Gorges de la Frau.

In retrospect, I recall a sense of almost dancing along; I felt that light and in harmony with my environment. My backpack was part of that kinaesthetic experience (my sense of movement). MH herself advocates a gentle and light walking (Géode- Terres Pyrénéennes n.d.b). That morning in the gorge was the only time I was able to

simultaneously walk and write jot notes and to concentrate on both – what I wanted to record from yesterday and my concurring perceptions as well as my stepping and my environment – without stumbling and heaving against the slight incline. On my second crossing of the Gorge de la Frau, on the other hand, I pressed on against time and this incline became a sorely felt obstacle which slowed my progress and caught my breath. I was puzzled and annoyed because I had not even remembered it from my first passage. There is a connection in terms of time between this chapter and Chapter 4. While Chapter 4 examined spatialised time, here walking develops a temporal space experience. Walking slowly, we perceive our environments as having corresponding characteristics. The time of a space is the time of movement. When I traversed the gorge again, I endeavoured to accelerate my pace. My experience was of a too slow advance and of a resisting path and obstructing stone walls ahead. In contrast, the fluidity of my first passage (cor)responded to a densely textured yet dynamic environment (remember the plane traces in Chapter 6).

## **The spirituality of self and environment**

### **Walking meditation**

In the Belgian ladies' trip, walking played a particular role. Their trip revolved around particular ways of walking. It worked with walking meditation and breathing practices, the latter being relative to the activity and the terrain. The rhythm of breathing was essential to the group's walks, especially in their practice of 'Afghan walking'. This energising and regenerating walking style has been adopted from Afghan nomads (Zanin n.d.a). It is primarily a technique to cover long distances across any terrain, even mountains and desert, swiftly and with ease, based on specific regular breathing and stepping rhythms which are adapted to the environment as well as a particular body posture and weight balancing when stepping (Géode- Terres Pyrénéennes n.d.a and n.d.d).<sup>82</sup> 'Afghan walking' highlights the synergy of walking and breathing rhythms and walking environment and intention. As a result, it promotes mental wellbeing and an altered state of consciousness which is open and meditative (Zanin cited in Vignau 2010). Mindfulness trainers equally argue that the foot and the ground are connected through breathing (Thich 2011 [1985]: 71). Breathing is 'a centering activity' (Minton

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<sup>82</sup> One member of the Belgian group was surprised that her fragile knees did not become painful as usual when walking a while.

2003: 69) which increases energy and thereby body awareness and anchors us in the present (Kabat-Zinn 2005 [1994]: 19).

Overall, the structure of the Belgians' sojourn itself was determined by the agenda of the retreat: a deeper awareness of one's environment and thereby of oneself. When they reviewed their trip at their last dinner together, MH, the guide, told the group that she had arranged the daytrips into times of inhaling and exhaling regarding the walking environments and exercises of the day. The day they walked from fountain to fountain, for example, stood out for the group participants in the thus produced order and variation of the programme. MH explained that she reconnoitred the ground to determine which routes and places afforded her schedule of conscious walking and, on the day, sometimes adapted her teaching of the various walking practices to the situation.

The Belgian ladies' trip and the ways of walking they practiced were based on MH's philosophy. Their trip was one of several trips pooled by *Géode*, an organisation which also includes yoga, Reiki and shamanism (*Géode- Terres Pyrénéennes n.d.c*). Rather than entertainment and exoticism, this organisation states that it offers restoration and interiority, 'a journey to the centre of yourself' (Faurès n.d.b). Thus, MH's conscious walking strives for a greater sense of self in the world. For her,

[c]onscious walking is a psychological-physical-spiritual practice of daily life which invites us in silence, peace and quiet, in rhythm and in connection with our earth to refocus ourselves on who we really are, on our Essential, step by step for more Presence to one's self. (Faurès n.d.a, original capitalisation)

It means to walk towards oneself, to take care of one's self and experience inner peace and wellbeing. 'Walking becomes a powerful and deep means for physical and spiritual regeneration: attentive presence to the moment, calming of the mind, [...] meditation in action' (Faurès n.d.a). Buddhist walking meditation promotes likewise a spiritual experience of peace and harmony (Thich 2011 [1985]: 21) but not self-consciousness (Kabat-Zinn 2005 [1994]: 22).

On my day with the Belgian ladies we drove to the beginning of the walk. There (without prompting) we gathered in a circle and focused under MH's guidance. She asked us to let go of worries such as 'Did I bring enough water for today?' (which would have been a vital question had we been hiking). She then asked us to find our own mantra to walk with today. The mantra I was walking with became clearer to me

during my unaccompanied walking in the gorge on the following day: ‘*confiance*’, which translates as trust as well as confidence, in the environment and thereby in oneself. I did not know then that this personal relating to and, to a certain extent, depending on the environment was a central tenet of conscious walking.

Silence is an aspect of MH’s and other adherents’ conscious walking which is said to help in perceiving the environment more intimately, enabling attentiveness, relaxation and an experience of peace (Faurès n.d.a). On pilgrimages, silence similarly furthers pilgrims’ sense of sacred space and self-transformation (Davidsson Bremborg 2013: 554, 557). MH and her colleague state online:

We often suggest a certain abstention from speaking during these walking times because to walk is to take advantage of the surrounding silence in order to establish an inner silence deep down in our selves; it is to enjoy the physical exertion as a bodily unity of all our cells which chime together with one same goal; it is to regain at last the childlike enjoyment of feeling alive. (MH and Charles n.d.)

Writers present walking in general as a reconnecting with a more authentic child-self (Amato 2004: 277; Olafsdottir 2013: 212). Mindful walkers, in particular, emphasise becoming fully alive (Kabat-Zinn 2005 [1994]: 12; Thich 2011 [1985]: 8).

I joined the Belgian group’s walk without prior instructions. Silence was not conspicuous to me as I concentrated on the slow walking in balance. A week of practice meant that my fellow walkers were silent on their own accord. Towards the end of the walk I engaged MH in a dialogue, asking her various questions about her walking ideology which she answered freely. It was only after that I realised how the ambience of our walking then changed and that the silence had been central to the walking process. The end of our walk felt more frayed and flighty, as if each individual was taking a different path although we now shared a large and fairly even track. It was, however, also when the group, on seeing autumn crocuses along our way, took up the song of these flowers (see Appendix 3).<sup>83</sup> The walkers’ voices rang out into the countryside. According to Le Breton, singing establishes and celebrates the complicity among walkers and between them and the environment (2000: 57). One member of the group expressed this being in tune with her environment and her immersion in her environment by extending music and movement through each other. From walking and singing about the flowers, Anne went on to humming a fountain song and dancing with

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<sup>83</sup> The Apostles had sung the same ritornello.

the fountain at which we were waiting for the car to return to the accommodation. With the tune, she was moving her hands along on the low stonewall which enclosed the large water basin. There was an atmosphere of ease and softness which came after the deep centring, an enjoyment of being here and walking home together, enjoying the drawing to a close of the day and the summer. The quiet conversations and the joined singing did not negate or stand in conflict with the premeditated and meditative silence. In another seeming contradiction to this deep focusing, all along, the group participants took pictures of themselves while walking. Online, too, walking experts advertise photographs and videos of walking meditation. In the following, I sketch some deeper implications of the practiced silence as they pertain to a greater sense of one's self through a heightened sense of one's environment and vice versa.

### **Our nature, our self**

MH's walks are motivated by the viewpoint that due to our present lifestyle, the human being is 'over-informed without being connected [...] [to] nature, our environment and hence [...] [to] our profound Nature' (Faurès n.d.b). The Belgian ladies' trip promoted simplicity. Group participants were housed in a yurt at the *Silence du Midi*, a guesthouse in a mountain village without network coverage. The trip intentionally involved a distancing from daily habits to return to basics in nature. For MH, attentiveness to the walking process helps participants to bond again with Mother Earth and experience again the step as sacred because essential to the human:

The real spirituality [...] (and my preferred way of meditating) is experienced through these two natural and original (so simple yet little visible) gestures to which the human being attaches only little importance which are the step and the breath, walking and breathing, ancestral gestures, authentic and humble, necessary to life. (Faurès n.d.a)

Walking adepts characterise walking in general as a regrounding in the elementary human (Delorme 2010: 525; Le Breton 2012: 48).

MH explains online that she deems human beings fundamentally nomadic. She travels 'out of passion for movement [...] to experience this [interior] nomadism' (Faurès n.d.a; similarly Chatwin 1998 [1987]). Ultimately, she walks to experience the immutability of the self. Walking can be therapeutic, 'a means of gathering stillness without having to stay still, a means of contemplation and mystical communion to be found within the body' (Thrift 2000: 46). Conscious walking 'is to give again MEANING to our nomadic roots which put us in our proper place [...] ... it is a state of Being in the

world, [...] in balance on one's two legs, between "exhilaration and humility" (Mhfaures 2013, original capitalisation). According to her, 'the right posture [...], gently, invites us to work on our centring, our rootedness and our interior verticality' (Géode- Terres Pyrénéennes n.d.d).<sup>84</sup> Conscious walking strengthens our original verticality, rooting ourselves in the ground with every step; 'our body, centred and aligned, becomes tree in movement' (Faurès n.d.a).<sup>85</sup>

Here, walking is a philosophy. Besides being a way to find our place in the universe (Géode- Terres Pyrénéennes n.d.d), it 'opens us to the world' (Deiller 2010). Through practicing synchronised breathing and walking in nature (as in Afghan walking), walkers' selves and their environments, exterior and interior, become a permeable and harmonious unity (Faurès n.d.a). 'We have passed through the desert and the desert has passed through us!', exclaims an expert and establisher of conscious and Afghan walking who guides walking trips in more faraway places (Zanin n.d.b). In this way, the traveller walks 'towards a state of being [...] in rhythm with the Earth and with the breath of Life' (Géode- Terres Pyrénéennes n.d.d, original capitalisation). Walking is intended to further an inner development through reflection and inspiration in harmonious exchange with the universe (Faurès n.d.a). Such an objective evokes a New Age philosophy which 'emphasises self-improvement for mind, body and soul through harmony of the universe' (Timothy 2013: 37). The contemporary Cathar faithful themselves practice silence and meditation, understand their prayer as a breathing and strive for discovery of one's self (de La Farge 2009: 13).

According to the experts, then, Afghan and conscious walking bring about experiences of 'being in the present' and simultaneously an awareness of surroundings and ourselves (see Figure 7.4). On a less programmatic level, Chapter 6 and the last section of this chapter show how walkers and hikers on the Cathar Trail were inevitably aware of themselves and of their inextricably linked environment through physical movement. This, however, was not an awareness of the body as object.

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<sup>84</sup> In her research on yoga, Bailly (2014) explores the question of whether embodiment is spiritually transformative. Does adopting a yogic posture and breathing make the yoga practitioner (who is mostly interested in health benefits and body maintenance) also adopt the spiritual background of yoga? Bailly finds that yoga improved practitioners' mental and emotional states (2014: 73).

<sup>85</sup> In Le Breton's poetic declarations, walking becomes similarly a powerful agent: walking roots the human being in his/her existence (2000: 11). Especially when we walk long distances, we consciously experience breathing, tiredness, hunger, thirst and pain (Le Breton 1997: 126).



Figure 7.4. Slanting movement. The Belgian ladies descending from the high point of our walk together.

### **Walking spiritually?**

Conscious walking is intimate and consequently rarely expressed unless it is a specifically framed enterprise like MH's retreat. MH's projects attribute a certain meaning to walking which contributes to making walking into a subject of discussion. On the other hand, such a strong spiritual basis suggests that meaning comes before the movement, that the ideas *behind* walking are prescriptive, and that people's walking experiences are regulated.

It is important to discuss the spiritual constitution of the Belgian ladies' walking (as done above). This chapter argues however also that conscious walking is not altogether different in kind from other, supposedly 'non-conscious', walking. Instead, it reveals a heightened awareness and articulation of processes involved in many modes of walking. While spiritually loaded, MH's walking practice can be understood as an extension of an individual's quotidian walking and hiking. MH herself considers conscious walking to be training for everyday walking and for hikes and pilgrimages (Faurès n.d.a). Hence, my interpretation of conscious walking does not exclude longitudinal Cathar Trail

hiking, as long as the reader keeps in mind that the walking on the Trail is always part of individual life trajectories and as such is never ‘blank’ before the start of the walk. Conscious walking and hiking are not distinct categories but different in intensity: between a conscious negotiation of a slow walking process for a day and multiday exertion. My experience of walking the Trail through the gorge after my day with the conscious walking group contrasted with my previous and later Trail experiences which were dominated by time and data pressures. Bratton finds similarly that most Appalachian Trail hikers in the United States do not experience transcendence through hiking (2012: 198). Their ‘struggle and impatience’ (Bratton 2012: 192) to cover the length of the Trail and reach their goal determines their journeys (see also Chapter 4). Long-distance hiking has nonetheless the potential to foster spiritual wellness through the intentional interaction with one’s environment (Bratton 2012: 22). Slavin notes, for example, that the sustained walking on the Camino can take the walker to a spiritual realm through the body (2003: 7). The next section shows the importance of place and how meanings develop through walking in places. Through shared space and, crucially, shared activity, walkers associate their experiences with the Cathars. In the context of the thesis, the Cathars here represent one example of travellers’ making of meaning.

## **‘Découverte profonde des Terres Cathares’:<sup>86</sup> movement, places, histories**

### **By virtue of place: in the steps of the Cathars**

The thesis argues that various visitors chose this ‘wild’ Cathar Trail or region to experience a stronger affinity with their surroundings. Wild places appear to be places which respond to a need for something beyond the human. Above I have shown that this ideal consists also of the deeply human which is resonant to itself through others. MH’s trips strive to further the awareness of the present through the impact of particular places on us. To her, wild nature is ‘presencing’. The lands and places of serenity like the desert embody the force of the elements and the harmonious co-existence of human and nature (Géode- Terres Pyrénéennes n.d.a). They are wise and we can learn from them (Mhfaures 2013). The Cathar lands seem to be conducive to conscious walking experiences. Often, they are the walking experts’ chosen destination for this kind of

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<sup>86</sup> ‘Deep Discovery of the Cathar Lands’.

walking. At the hostel in Montségur, which was the next overnight stop after Comus, I found the last copy of a leaflet by a professional in Afghan and conscious walking.

MH's walking experiences around Comus informed her walking projects and knowledge of the 'virtues' of the Cathar lands. The Cathar 'spirit' is an important element in her trips. She engages in conscious walking with the Cathars in mind. To her, the Cathars lived *with* nature, whereas we are cut off from it nowadays. In a similar vein, in an entry in the visitors' book at the hostel two Trail stages after Comus a hiker wrote in French that she felt close to the Cathars who respect nature: 'They can teach us to live in harmony [...]. I leave these grandiose landscapes with very [undecipherable] memories'. Another French entry muses, '[b]esides, isn't what you find in the region a bit the treasure (or the spirit) of the Cathars? What is it other than the simple and honest life of humble people, but rich in human warmth?'. It can be interpreted that by way of present-day landscapes and local hosts, the Cathars represent an alternative life to the commercial and political powers. MH pointed out how various current inhabitants relocated here from other parts of France because the Cathars deeply resonate with them. Passionate about the Cathars, they associate land and people (Cathars). Thereby, places impart knowledge. Immaterial mysteries can be present in and part of a place and mapped, for example, by psychogeographers such as Self (2013) or Robinson (1996; 2006).

The official heritage promotion reinforces the notion that the Cathar history can be found in the land. The hostel manager in Comus told me that the Cathar 'spirit' had replaced the Cathar castles in today's advertising, suggesting that travellers in the Cathar Country can experience the Cathar spirit. As the Cathar Trail guide states, the Cathar country<sup>87</sup> is outside (land, paths, sun, wind) and inside (Cathar ideology) (Le sentier cathare 1990). Roquebert declares in the same register that what remains 'is just an epic of which the words are made of stone, the music of light, scents and wind' (Roquebert and Soula 1994 [1966]: 29). He tells the reader that the Cathars remain present in the land, expressed for instance through a 'language of light and shade' (Bibollet and Roquebert 2000 [1992]: xvi). The Cathar belief that life on earth was evil has accordingly not deterred enthusiasts (for example Cazenave 1995: 32; Niel 1973: 299; Roquebert 2006 [1970]: 430) from seeing the Cathar spirituality expressed in

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<sup>87</sup> No capitalisation because here the authors do not refer to the programme of economic development.

material places. Some historians like Niel (1973) are fairly apparent in their own spiritual affinities, recounting their experience of magical forests and sacred mountain tops. A medieval archaeology which takes the material world to be full of meaning in medieval thought (Hines 2010: 93) adds another layer to the historians' tracing of previous activity and experience.<sup>88</sup> It furthers the theory that tourists on the Trail today can connect with the martyrs and reach the essence of Catharism through experiencing the material stone constructions and spectacular landscapes (Raffy 2011: 63; Quehen and Dieltiens 1983: 409).

The mystery to which the Cathar path leads the way appears to endure in the landscape<sup>89</sup> and in the stone buildings which bear the traces of the conflict. A coffee table book tells readers that through walking there they can 'capture *the spirit of the place*' (Royer-Pantin and Bibollet 2003: 8, original italicisation). One motivation for Claire (the archaeologist and tour guide introduced in Chapter 2) to do the Cathar Trail was to remember the Cathars in the places they have lived in. Anne, of the Belgian group, also came for the Cathars. Deeply disturbed by the accounts of the Cathar tragedy, she sought to fathom what happened, how the Cathars – women and children included – could go into the pyre at Montségur. Being in these places was for her a way towards understanding what might not be materially visible or intellectually knowable from historians' accounts. Anthropologists argue that people remember war and violence through being in the destroyed places where atrocities happened (Filippucci 2010b: 165) and where subjective experiences of conflicts have become part of the physical terrain (Gordillo 2004). People can begin to grasp the incommunicable and incomprehensible through the material place. This affective relating to the past involves the body in our knowing (Schlunke 2006: 183). Bunkše narrates the experience of connection with past inhabitants of the land when immersed in an active landscape and experiencing the landscape through all the senses (2011: 27, 28, 31). This shared

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<sup>88</sup> As an archaeologist affirms, we cannot experience past meaning '[b]ut we can put ourselves inside a set of material circumstances which were integral to a meaningful world in the past [...] [u]sing our own bodies as analogs for those of the past' (Thomas 2001: 180–181).

<sup>89</sup> These landscapes are shaped by human activity. Even the *garrigue* (scrubland) was shaped by neighbouring cultivation (Durand 2003: 301). According to landscape architect Anne Whiston Spirn, we can read the material, social and cultural processes which formed a landscape features from its shape (Spirn 1998: 27, 99, 105). 'A river's history, a tree's, is the sum of all its dialogues' (Spirn 1998: 48). Historian Sean Martin (2008 [2005]: 66) argues that the Languedoc landscape has hardly changed since the Cathars.

intersubjectivity gives rise to ‘invisible [felt and sensed] landscapes’ (Bunkše 2011: 33). I argue that the Cathar terroir consists in walkers’ engagement with their environments.

For the Belgian group, the land itself, rather than the sites, was Cathar (a perception which is congruent with the Cathar Country discourse discussed in Chapter 3). Without visiting the castles, the latter were still present (see Figure 7.5). They were part of the terroir through traces such as paths and individuals’ embodied experience. During our walk together, MH stated that the Cathars walked everywhere; there is not one trail but a plurality of paths. We were in an area crisscrossed by the Cathars. Historians tell us that major travel axes stretched from west to east and north to south (Quehen and Dieltiens 1983: 15). Within historians’ and archaeologists’ debates of what is authentically Cathar, Claire started from the ruin of Montségur to state that this castle is not Cathar. She then enlarged the scope to ascribe the mountainside to the Cathars because of archaeological traces of settlement. Local experts and exhibitions like the museum in Montségur presented individual sites as existing in a network of sites and, especially, in relation to the locales on the margin of that network. The museum portrayed several small, unrecognised villages and their ruins as representing the Cathar spirit better than the top tourist destinations. The head of the museum, told me that ‘the truly authentic Cathar places are away from the beaten track’. As exemplified by the Mazamet exhibition (see Chapter 2), these places are even more valued because there are few of them, because little is left (only low stone walls), because they are contact points with the ‘original’ building of the time of the Cathars and because they are material and enduring manifestations of (Cathar) resistance. So what is the effect of such Cathar environs on the Cathar Trail? In what follows, I explain how hikers experienced the Cathars as present through their own walking in places.



Figure 7.5. The ruin participates in our ‘hiking field’: Montségur on top of the central cone-shaped elevation, seen from the plateau where I first met the Belgian group.

### **Meaning through movement: we walk – the Cathars walked**

More than sharing a space with the Cathars, it was the act of walking which was constitutive of meaning for walkers and hikers. The Cathars did not necessarily feature in physical experiences but for some travellers walking was the common denominator, the link to the Cathars through bodily movement in place.

The Cathar Trail is part of the Cathar terroir described in the previous subsection. The Belgian case study demonstrates how walking along paths in the (visual) vicinity of villages and castles and *not* the visits to Cathar sites can bring the Cathars close. The group walked with a view to Montségur, without feeling the need to visit the tourist site. According to MH, we can experience a place without visiting the site. Walking in the area (with the castle visible) brings you closer to the Cathars than visiting the castles since you share in the Cathars’ activity of walking which was integral to their religious practice as well as to the ‘Cathar spirituality’ which she characterised as a pure connection to the holy in nature. In so doing, walkers relate to surroundings the Cathars related to (see also my discussion of a gestural imagining below). In comparison, a visit

to a castle would remain arguably rather superficial. Adding to her argument that the Cathars walked everywhere (see the previous subsection), MH suggested we were closer to the Cathars off the waymarked Trail, when guided and walking full of awareness and associating stories with places. The monitored Cathar Trail tended to keep hikers on the tourist track, inhibiting a deeper engagement. So, walking off Trail reinforces the Cathar in 'Cathar Trail'. Walking on paths as the Cathars walked and experiencing a path or a view like the Cathars refashions the fabricated Cathar Trail and Country.

The Cathars walked. From historians' accounts and novels, residents and Cathar enthusiasts knew the Cathars as itinerants. Historical narratives describe how the Cathar clergy's constant itinerancy was inherently ideological, motivated by its religious duties to walk and preach (Brenon 2001: 84; Bruschi 2009: 120; Gougaud 1982: 9). This "living, travelling church" represents the very essence of Catharism' (Bruschi 2009: 194) and consisted in territorial networks of movements and connections (Bruschi 2009: 65). The Cathars walked between villages and long distances (for example to Italy) on commercial or pilgrimage routes and using Cathar 'houses' (hospices, private houses, huts in the woods) along the way (Bruschi 2009: 59). Travel was safer when disguised as pilgrims (Bruschi 2009: 72). As persecution increased, Cathars fled on less conspicuous shepherds' paths, off road, in adverse weather conditions and at night (Bruschi 2009: 75).

For some prospective hikers the knowledge that the Cathars walked explained the Cathar Trail and their own motivation. They usually detached the Cathars from historical writings and knew the Cathars as walkers. Claire aspired to know more about the Cathars and to better understand them by doing the Cathar Trail itself. She wanted to do the Cathar Trail because she regarded it as more truly Cathar than the castles since the Cathars walked and were not attached to material things. Interestingly, when I asked the former president of the Cathar research centre in Carcassonne after the Cathar Trail, my query prompted her to refer to a novel on walking Cathars. In this novel, Brenon describes at length how a shepherd is walking the paths, escorting the Cathar clergy. His life is outside and in movement, at home on the paths (Brenon 2001: 249; similarly Gougaud 1991: 212). He knows the land intimately (Brenon 2001: 140, 228). Various other historical novels describe the Cathars as travelling on foot in daily life, fleeing across the region, hiding in woods and being close to nature (Gougaud 1982: 25 and

1997: 129; Maurin 1995: 188, 189; Oldenbourg 1961: 300). Similarly, in the early years of the Trail, there had been a radio broadcast which took listeners through a hiking landscape in which the Cathars ‘walk on paths, night and day, in all seasons, and hiding. Wanted, sometimes denounced, they have to flee, while preaching their doctrine’ (France Inter 1990: 7). The use of the present tense suggests to listeners that they can set off alongside the Cathars.

The places and paths themselves are made through movement and, in turn, shape movement (Snead 2009: 52). Landscape archaeologists understand trails as expressing human movement through the landscape, creating ‘landscapes of movement’ (Snead, Erickson and Darling 2009: 2). They consider a landscape to be a record of human involvement. Moreover, trails not only embody certain ways of moving but also the significance of these movements (Byrne 2008: 155; Gibson 2007; Mullins 2009: 248; Snead 2009: 43). To walk along a path is to trace predecessors’ movements like Australian Aboriginal people who know their ancestral past through moving through the land (Morphy 1995: 196; Morris 2004: 180). It resonates with past place- and activity-specific affordances and weaves narratives of past movement (Mullins 2009: 250). Many Camino pilgrims feel connected to past pilgrims through the body walking ‘over the same lands in common purpose’ (Frey 1998: 44) and returning to basics (Frey 1998: 82), experiencing reality, past and present, in its tangibility (Frey 1998: 222). Hikers in the Pyrenees, too, associate their experiences on a particular path with historic predecessors on this path (the persecuted who tried to escape the Second World War, smugglers or Romans). ‘To be on the same path as them is to see the same thing as them’ (Devanne 2005: 306).<sup>90</sup> Path and landscape have a history of people using them in a certain way.

The idea that the Cathars walked where we walk today was also at work in the experiences and imaginings of visitors to the tourist sites (similarly DeSilvey and Edensor 2012: 472). Visitors were invited to join the Cathars on the thirty-minute walk up to the fortress of Montségur from the car park. A Cathar woman painted on the rocks by the path showed them the way (Figure 7.6). A sign at the ticket booth explained to visitors that they would ‘follow in the footsteps of RIXENDE [the Cathar woman] and

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<sup>90</sup> Pearson and Shanks observe that scholars use visibility and movement as a means of insight. “‘Here people walked and understood the world in this way’, is the recurrent motif” (Pearson and Shanks 2001: 153). They criticise such ethnographic analogies which are based on intuitive experience and a subjectivist aesthetic for projecting the author’s experience into the past.

all the other Cathars who lived up there or visited the place to listen to their sermons during 40 years, 800 years ago' (original capitalisation). 'How did they carry up the stones?', was a refrain among the visitors who were laboriously making their way up to the ruined fortresses.<sup>91</sup> Implied was a shared experience of a hot, tiring climb, weathering the wind, to reach the top. Contemporary walkers on a historic Indigenous trail in Colombia similarly disclose past victims' experiences on this trail through their own experience of sore feet (Sotelo 2010: 68). Walkers on these paths know the past through their sensory and kinetic experience.

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<sup>91</sup> And which exasperated Claire when she did her guided tours. 'They didn't!', she exclaimed vehemently.



Figure 7.6. Rixende with her staff on the way to Montségur. An example of Cathars guiding the walker.

Yet, Bender (1998: 37) and Snead (2009: 46) also underline the importance of people's socio-political representations. Our experience differs from our predecessors due to changes in the landscape and the social constructedness of experience (Snead, Erickson

and Darling 2009: 15).<sup>92</sup> To interpret a trail we need to engage in the particular (Cathar) structure of movement but also in the particular historically and culturally constructed (Cathar) perspective (Snead 2009: 44; also Aldred 2010: 60). The Cathars did not believe in pilgrimage as redemptive, for example, and did not undertake them unless the inquisitors condemned them to do them (Kaelber 2002: 59, 62). People's movement and its context are, from this angle, always particular.

Then again, because a specialty of movement is gestural imagining (as I explain in the following), movement remains key in people's relationship to places and histories. I argue that imagination and perception mutually constitute each other. Following cultural ecologist and geo-philosopher David Abram (and Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty), imagining is not interior but forms through our sensory perceptions (Abram 1996: 58). In perceiving we imagine since to imagine is 'to participate from within, through perception and action, in the very becoming of things' (Ingold 2012: 3). Ingold suggests that the Australian Aboriginal songlines are an example of trajectories between past and present in which the temporality of the landscape and historicity form a 'taskscape' (2000a: 195) (also referred to in Chapters 4 and 6). Walkers imagine the Cathars through walking the land (after Vergunst 2012: 36). In this '*gestural* mode [...] memories are forged in the very process of redrawing the lines of pathways of ancestral activity' (Ingold 2012: 8, original emphasis). Meaning forms through people's gestures in the process of their engagement with their environment (Vergunst 2012: 29). The gestures themselves are relative to the place in a way predecessors' gestures were (Vergunst 2012: 35). So, walkers and Cathars share for example their walking rhythm in its relation to surroundings which persist in the way they unfold in walking rather than as frozen inscription.

As argued above, the activities of predecessors contributed to how places changed. In Massey's words, places are unique 'entanglements and configurations of multiple trajectories, multiple histories' (2005: 148). An archaeology of movement thus understands the past through movement, focusing on the 'history of entanglements' (Aldred 2013: 48) in which material systems, such as a track or waymarkers, and moving bodies are related. Aldred explores the entanglements of different

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<sup>92</sup> 'Experience', in European understandings, evokes an interior, introspective process, 'a person's subjective awareness of' (Desjarlais 1996: 73). Yet, Desjarlais argues that experience is also rhetorical and contingent (1996: 89).

interdependent ‘materials, forces, flows, and energies’ (2013: 48) in moving sheep in Iceland in the past. He does so ‘by following them as they may have *moved* in the past’ (Aldred 2013: 48, original emphasis). He takes the path towards a predetermined destination; yet, his progression is also responsive to ‘constantly materializing contexts’ (Aldred 2013: 57), the very conditions in which farmers and sheep were moving in. ‘[T]he footfalls of previous walkers will have created a “desire line” through the landscape: the force and weight of bodies, and traction of boots, wearing away ground vegetation [...]. The desire line will have been dictated by the lay of the land’ (Lorimer 2011: 28). Historians suppose accordingly that medieval paths in Languedoc were not on the ridgeline but crossed big differences in height, linking villages via valleys and mountain passes and passing along hillsides (Quehen and Dieltiens 1983: 14). Like the Cathar Trail, they mostly wound around pinnacles.

During my long and steep descent from Quéribus I realised how much the path relies on ‘natural’ components in this arid and ‘worn’<sup>93</sup> terrain. Steps are formed from timber and the sliding red sandy soil, rock faces bear markers and bushes form corridors and guide our looking. This loose terrain showed that the signature of individuals’ steps (Le Breton 2000: 80) shaped even established routes. Like Land Art which displays walking as a sculptural act (Fuchs 1986: 47), Tilley (2004: 221) advocates that the body in movement and places form each other. Attuned to the environment, the movement of the body actualises the shape of the land. The hiker performs the protuberances of the land. On my way into the valley after Quéribus I experienced the slope as a downhill gradient *through* my proprioceptive negotiation of the sandy terrain. It was ‘slope’ through my effort at not slithering down the path. I picked my way with care, concentrating on stepping on firmer ground at a rotated angle between my bodily posture and the terrain and on balancing the weight of my backpack in response to the traction I encountered. Protuberances consequently exist for the hiker through her interaction with her environment, without which they would have a different meaning. Walkers’ movements and the terrain shape the path and thereby hikers’ experiences. Movement forms the land.

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<sup>93</sup> This was how a New Zealand friend described the place on seeing my photographs.

## Walking – an experience

Even if not motivated by the Cathars, visitors might discover the Cathars and their histories through walking in places. On the Trail, Cathar histories were subsumed in the process of hiking in places. The Belgian butterfly-seeking couple I crossed paths with after Duilhac (see Chapter 4), for example, told me that ‘it’s not the Cathars who bring us here but the walking which takes us to the Cathars’. In their case, the Cathars were relevant only in situ, not beforehand nor once back home. Similarly, people’s visiting practices at Hadrian’s Wall (England) correspond to the embodied experience of the Roman soldier: ‘visitors re-garrison the Wall, hold the strategic high ground and command the view to the north. Few visitors cross the Wall to walk in *Barbaricum* beyond’ (Witcher cited in Witcher, Tolia-Kelly and Hingley 2010: 121, original italicisation). Tourists’ engagement in the walking activity and in particular places could likewise lead to the Cathars. It is the people who have walked in these places who make the *Pays Cathare*. Today, the space and the movement are different yet the same (at least in how they relate to each other).

Still, even during the journey, the affordances of places for hikers come first rather than the Cathars (following Gibson 1966: 285). Hikers learned to know places in terms of hiking practicalities. A professional long-distance hiker, who I shared the hostel dormitory with in Carcassonne, described how she appraised places, identifying suitable campsites, power sockets, sources of water, shade, space, provision of food and repair and replacements of equipment. On the other hand, pedestrian travellers throughout time share a negotiation of amenities. I learned, for instance, that for tourist information about local facilities or guided castle tours I needed to go to the village town halls. In another village I only gained access to the hostel via the village grocery store. This is knowledge which is relative to the hiking activity. As will be seen next, an analysis of hikers’ practices of meaning- or place-making also calls for a different awareness of the body.

Walking generates meanings which involve body and mind in integration. The following statement inserts the Cathars into the earlier examination of conscious walking. We were sitting in the car, driving back to the guesthouse, when Anne, who had been dancing with the fountain earlier, said that she was taken by the Cathars because they went to the end. They were ‘of integrity’ and elevated or pure. She saw an element of Catharism in walking itself since walking brings a heightened state of

consciousness. The Cathar Trail spoke to her much more than the Camino de Santiago. It made sense to her. Similarly, for MH it made sense to walk the Cathar Trail from the sea to Foix because she regarded it as a progressive elevation and knowing of one's self both spiritually (Cathars) and physically. The landscape with its lofty ruined fortresses 'embod[ies] a glorious resistance and an ethereal spirituality of which the memory, to be accessible, requires first a salvational effort of ascension' (Soula 2005: 531). The hiker is subsequently walking in the Cathars' (ideological) elevation. While walking together, MH quoted from environmentalist and Buddhist Gary Snyder's *The practice of the wild*: walking is 'spirit and humility' (Snyder 1990: 18). Snyder considers walking a primordial meditation and hence a source of 'body-mind joy' (1990: 94). Walking takes us to 'the real world, real self' (1990: 94). It unites inspiration, exaltation and insight (1990: 94). Walking here is performative. Individuals can engage spiritually with the Cathars through walking on paths in the region. The consciousness of the Cathars is immanent in walker's sensory participation and grows with the activity.

Hiking can be an initiation to the Cathars through the experience of hardship. The walking process is transformative: it can imaginatively transform the walker into a Cathar by joining a collective history and a personal history (of doing the Trail).<sup>94</sup> In the visitor book at a hostel near Roquefixade (eleventh Trail destination), a hiking club comments that hiking on the Cathar Trail enriches the soul and 'perfects' the hikers' physical condition. The writer enumerates what constitutes the experience on the Cathar Trail: enduring climbs and descents, wrong winds, blisters and the snoring in shared dormitories. Accordingly, hiking can mean effort of the self and to go beyond one's limit, to endure aching knees and blistered feet, to be day in day out weighed down by a backpack. The writer concludes half-jokingly that, from 'roughing it', hikers come out as *Perfecti* (name of the Cathar clergy, see Chapter 2). In the 'physical endurance and spiritual strength' (Amato 2004: 262) proper to hiking, hikers join exceptional people (Cathars) through living exceptional moments.

Sustained walking provides an experience of being in charge of one's way and one's destiny. It is a grounded experience of investing oneself into one's environment and working one's way through places. The above mentioned professional hiker saw people hike for self-affirmation. Her own objectives were to be moving in a 'flow', outside,

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<sup>94</sup> Studies of long-distance walking as a secular pilgrimage equally address 'narratives of self-transformation' (Dawney 2014: 127).

with time to think (walking as meditation). She did not seek the spectacular but relished the experience of needing only little. In brief, through sensory and reflective walking hikers experienced life's joys.

Bodily involvement in hiking can consequently contribute to a certain sense of self. Researchers note however also that it can prevent immersion in place and 'higher levels of thinking or reflection on experiences' (Quinlan Cutler, Carmichael and Doherty 2014: 162), not allowing hikers' 'minds to wander to a more imagined [historical] space' (Quinlan Cutler, Carmichael and Doherty 2014: 162). Terry and Vartabedian thus discover that long-distance hiking on the Appalachian Trail consists, above all, in being acutely aware of one's body, of 'blisters, hunger pangs, and throbbing muscles' (2013: 348), which thwarts the aspired oneness with one's surroundings which I discussed in the middle of this chapter. On the Inca Trail, too, participants were too preoccupied by physical discomfort to engage with the historical and cultural dimensions of "Incaness" (Quinlan Cutler, Carmichael and Doherty 2014: 162). Chapter 9 will problematise these physical challenges of hiking in terms of my fieldwork. Impositions of structuralist history or knowledge are likely to draw a blank in hikers' 'minds'. A processual perspective, on the other hand, participates in and pays attention to meaning in the making throughout the research. It develops a different kind of knowledge.

### **Conclusion: moving as a way of knowing**

Movement and meaning are at the heart of the thesis. This chapter is its pivotal element. It funnels in on the body-mind-environment relationship by discussing the role of movement and embodied experience (which is intrinsically linked to place) in the making of meaning. In this chapter, visitors' walking experiences seem to be consonant with the Cathar Country discourse presented in Chapter 3. Nonetheless, these walkers do not extend and overlay the memorial space of the heritage sites over the whole county. Instead, they draw on personal and shared imaginaries which evoke historical narratives. Crucially, their process of making sense reinforces the Cathar resonance through walking. The next chapter spirals outwards again from the inward focus (as in conscious walking) to a more distant, yet local, focus: hikers' horizons. Its concept of a hiking spatiality makes sense of large and small scales, such as expansive plateaus and muscle contractions, through movement. Chapter 8 is an exceptionally long chapter.

This is because it tightly interweaves ethnographic description and theoretical literature to communicate a sense space which involves various dimensions or media (for example, light). This sense of space also lives from hikers' continuing journeying. The reader may get a sense of this continuance through the chapter.

Walking is emplaced and embodied as well as, in a present-day context of technological innovation, an activity characteristic of the past (see Chapter 4's discussion of the time of walking). This chapter has explored walkers' sense of place and sense of the past through movement. Some walkers and hikers associated their journey with the Cathars through being in a Cathar space and through walking as the Cathars did. Others interpreted their experiences as an affirmation of the self without relating their experiences to the Cathars. Some of the Belgian ladies knew their environment and thereby the Cathars through conscious walking on paths, through their particular attention to and awareness of their environment, through sharing the movement of walking with the Cathars and through interacting with places. They practiced a deeper awareness of and being with one's self through the Cathar terroir. Their awareness of their environment and of their self grew in their hiking activity. In summary, walking can lead to the Cathars but it can also lead to other places and people and to a different sense of self.



## CHAPTER 8

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# Hiking spatiality: body-movement-space

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This chapter is about how long-distance hiking generates a certain spatiality as well as being formed through this lived space. I adopt the concept of ‘spatiality’, also called ‘lived space’, from geography and phenomenological philosophy. My understanding of spatiality draws initially on the phenomenologist Max van Manen:

Lived space (spatiality) is felt space. Lived space is a category for inquiring into the ways we experience spatial dimensions of our day-to-day existence. [...] [It] is [...] difficult to put into words since the experience of lived space (like that of lived time or body) is largely pre-verbal; we do not ordinarily reflect on it. And yet we know that *the space in which we find ourselves* affects the way we feel. (van Manen 2011, my emphasis)

Departing from van Manen’s interpretation, I will highlight that we do not simply ‘find’ ourselves in a certain space but bring it about through our movement. I argue that physical movement is a major factor which forms hikers’ lived and perceived spaces. These spaces are dynamic. They are contingent on individual’s hiking activity and its particular place and time.

The theoretical core concept of this chapter is ‘Space’. Since I conceptualise hiking as generating space, ‘space’ when used in this way is singular.<sup>95</sup> ‘Space’ multiplies when I refer to several hikers, spatiality being individual, continuous and open-ended in experience. The chapter, however, stays mostly within this individual lived space rather than comparing and contrasting conflicting and/or overlapping spaces. I explore ‘space’ as one expression of a movement-related knowing of one’s environment. Here, meaning forms in movement and is immediate, bodily (Abram 1996: 74). Official Trail constructs still contribute to this meaning-making since individuals’ hiking spatialities

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<sup>95</sup> While this is, potentially, a universalist claim in terms of form (walking generates space), it remains individually specific in content (what kind of lived space). In my emphasis on movement, I do not mean to isolate movement, as a phenomenon, from people.

are also a function of the traced Trail. However, my focus is on the hiker-environment relation (hiking space) rather than on heritage sites (hiked places).

‘[W]alking is an inherently spatial practice’ (Middleton 2009: 1958). This chapter grounds space in movement, whereas Chapter 7 grounded movement in place. While Chapter 7 emphasised the present moment of walking, Chapter 8 underlines the ‘long-distance’ quality of hiking, conceptualising movement on a spatially larger scale. Taking into account the continuing journeying, Chapter 8 explores movement, space and time in integration. It argues against the common interpretation of space as abstract and only place as experiential and embodied. I contend that a physical movement-dependent space is crucial in hiking and in mountaineering in particular. The interaction of hikers’ embodied movement with the topography and terrain, with views from vantage points, and weather phenomena and atmosphere actively creates a hiking spatiality. Hikers’ space is consequently oriented by bodily movement, performative through visual perception and textured by the qualities of perceptual media such as fog and light. I use the example of perceiving horizons in hiking to show that this is a relative space. Space is part of place through the interaction between person and environment in movement. Specific to the topography and journeying on the Cathar Trail, alternations of expansion and narrowness meant that hikers experienced space in terms of spaciousness. Visual highlights feature prominently but, as I demonstrate, they do not determine hikers’ journeys in themselves. The photographs in this chapter serve as indicators of spaces. The chapter begins with some characteristics of journeying. Subsequently, it conceptualises space experience as climbing *with* a mountain and discusses the integration of space and place. Finally, it explores weather phenomena and atmosphere in relation to space. The chapter thereby brings to the fore the potency of movement through allegedly intangible space.

## **‘I’ve been over there’: outlining the journey**

### **Opening**

From a lengthy morning climb in the woods, on my way to Comus on the ninth Trail stage, I emerged on the extensive Plateau de Languerail which sloped gently upwards along a wide mountain ridge. Spaced out across the meadow, I saw several women gradually approaching (see Figure 8.1). We were walking in opposite directions. They

came from the mountains, whereas I was walking towards them. I intercepted one of the walkers, who was equipped with nothing but a water bottle. She explained in English that the group of women was on a multiple-day tour, stretching from Roquefixade via Montségur to Puivert, with luggage service and intermittent car transfers. Exhilarated by the just-discovered views, she half turned towards the way she had come and alerted me that I would see Montségur and Roquefixade from the top of the ridge. For that I needed to continue the climb which was now on the upland and in the bright sunshine. She recounted an empowering feeling on the top when she had traced her journey from Roquefixade and Montségur to where she had been standing: ‘I have been over there!’, she had told herself amazed and proud. Walking, she had been to Roquefixade and Montségur and now she was here on the Plateau de Languerail. From afar, she had appeared to me as ambling across the wide wildflower meadow, yet solidly upright and grounded, moving steadily and purposefully through the high grass. This encounter took place a few hours before I met the Belgian group at the top of that same plateau (but 200 metres higher). From the top I walked into the woods and three kilometres further I reached the culmination of the Cathar Trail at the Col de la Gargante, a wooded mountain pass at 1352 metres above sea level (so my guidebook tells me now; the pass did not mark my journey nor my photographs that day).



Figure 8.1. Approaching each other through the mountain meadow. I hurriedly stopped to take the photograph before we had passed each other.

The above encounter evokes the duration of space in a journey. It highlights the link between physical achievement and situating oneself within the journey. Crests with their views onto previously walked and now distant landmarks such as prominent peaks and castles could prompt hikers to valorise their progress and develop a sense of spatio-temporal depth in their journey and a personal history and space. The above hiker evoked this depth when she experienced her location and her progression in relation to surrounding features, in her relative distance to/from the ruins (see also Morris 2004: 1, 2; Rieser and Pick 2007: 80; Straus 1963 [1935]: 345, 384–385). Her experience was also based in her current situation, her intentions and directionality (see also Casey 1993: 58, 59; Stern 2012: 217). This tangible relevance of spatial depth is also evident in pilgrimages with their prominent start and end places (Julia 1997: 33). Historically, pilgrims walked long distances over an extended period of time. Long-distance hiking is likewise characterised by temporal duration, which involves space-time rather than measurable space (see also Carlstein, Parkes and Thrift 1978: 11; Devanne 2005: 35; Manning 2009: 17; Parkes and Thrift 1980: 279; van Manen 2002: 3). Hikers measure progress in the walking time required to reach their destination (Devanne 2005: 226; also Chapter 4). Here, space and time include each other (Massumi 2002: 185). ‘The “There” of distance is not merely a spatially, but also a temporally distant point’ (Straus 1963 [1935]: 387). Or to put it another way:

“‘Here’ is ‘now’, ‘there’ is ‘then’” (Tuan 1979: 390).

The above quote places the space ‘here’ coterminously in time ‘now’. In their interrelation, these time and space referents establish duration. ‘Movement, and the making of relations, take/make time’ (Massey 2005: 119). A focus on duration allows us to take into account a continuous space experience throughout the journey and, thereby, the changes across Trail stages. Continuity and change tell us that spatiality is active and dynamic. It is characterised by the duration of hiking and by a person’s feelings.

For example, after crossing a plain and then dim woods I felt ‘on top of the world’ on the plateau. Guided by the hiker’s recommendation, I looked out and spotted Montségur with its prominent location and distinctive outline (see Figure 7.5) but failed to discriminate the ruin of Roquefixade in the distance. It did not jut out from the outline of the hills like Montségur; I had not been there yet and I did not remember it from depictions in tourist brochures and postcards. Roquefixade, following Merleau-Ponty’s

(1945: 10) explanation, belonged to an indeterminate background against which Montségur was recognised and foregrounded in my experience. I perceived the pinnacle in the context of this background. Furthermore, this focal point in my perceptual field was informed by my previous personal experience. Montségur I knew from my previous visit as a teenager and from postcards sold in the area. It is the most famous castle on the Trail. Drawn on the cover of a children's book, it was also the first Cathar site which I knew from school. My experience made me attentive to the outline of mountain fortresses among the hills and consequently foregrounded them.

On my second trek during fieldwork, I distinguished from far away only partly visible sites of the Trail which were more embedded than Roquefixade. Walking towards them again, I remembered the ruin of Aguilar, the Prieuré de Molhet (a ruined priory) and the village of Cucugnan. I had been there. The place in the distance had become part of my journey. My being 'here' was defined by my experience of 'there'. The 'there' is in the 'here' (and vice versa) through the body (Casey 1993: 66 and 1997: 215), forming a corporeal history characterised by relation and continuity. The interrelationship between perceiving and experiencing and knowing a place will be explored further on in this chapter. What is to note here is that hikers' perceptions of space are formed through their journeying by walking a certain route with particular places. In practice, the Cathar Trail is inherently spatial since it enables movement in its function as an itinerary (see also Olsen 2003: 91; Spirn 1998: 108). Next, I delineate how the connectivity of the particular Trail topography constitutes hikers' space.

### **And up and down a *pic* and up and down a *pech* and up and down a *pog***

So what spatiality does the Cathar Trail afford?<sup>96</sup> At first sight, the Trail cohered through the openness of horizon landscapes. Landscape extended according to topography. The journey through low- and uplands offered hikers to engage in the relationship to other places through 'visual openness' (Devanne n.d.: 2). They could see where they had been and where they were going. The first half of the Cathar Trail traversed the Corbières, an area of low shrubs, small trees and arid ground. After the Corbières, it was high vantage points such as the ruin of Montségur which allowed

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<sup>96</sup> Gibson (1966) developed the concept of environmental affordances (properties of an environment) and the senses as perceptual systems. According to his ecological psychology, perception functions in a cycle: we perceive a landscape 'in terms of what it affords for the pursuit of the action in which we are currently engaged' (Ingold 1992: 44). Hence, walking determines which 'affordances' are relevant to the wayfarer's exploration of the environment (Milton 2002: 42).

views over the increasingly wooded surrounding land. From this ruin's wall, inhabitants from the region had seen and marvelled at the connecting line between Montségur and Roquefixade and Puivert. In 2013, however, access to the wall was no longer permitted (see Chapter 3 on site management). Other vantage points such as the Plateau de Languerail (see above) or the ridge of the Pech d'Auroux in the Corbières were directly on the Cathar Trail and without a castle. So even when shunning the ruins, hikers gradually had a sense of a continuing journey space through the coherence of their journey and the Trail topography.

Here, then, it is the topography such as a mountain chain or a plateau which 'modulates [guides and paces] movement' (Spirn 1998: 108) and which participates in the formation of space (Norberg-Schulz 1980 [1979]: 32).<sup>97</sup> Topographic features such as mountains or vegetation, guided, for example, the direction farmers historically took to move sheep. The farmers knew them as markers through their observation when moving through the land (Aldred 2013: 56). Such an archaeology of mobility interrelates time, objects, persons and space and traces movement trajectories (Beaudry and Parno 2013: 1, 3). Space can be understood in this way as 'the sphere of a multiplicity of trajectories' (Massey 2005: 119), not 'a kind of composite of instants of different times, [...] a collage of the static' (Massey 2005: 119). The Pech d'Auroux, where I scrambled across boulders, offered me a panorama of surrounding valleys and distant ridges which delineated plains and the straight line of a road from the Mediterranean Sea in the East to the West. The latter was a visible, lower (in sea level) and more southerly, straighter parallel trajectory to the Trail. Standing there, I remembered what a local tourism agent had told me: ancient East-West exchange routes connected the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. The Cathar Trail is therefore one trajectory among other lateral axes which orient travelling along the Pyrenean mountain chain via slopes and plains and plateaus. I argue that as well as determining spatial extension, topography thereby conditions hikers' progression (see Figure 8.2). Lived space consists in a trajectory which is a line of movement defined by the progression of the hiker hiking in hilly terrain.

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<sup>97</sup> For a discussion of how buildings orientate visitors' movement see the second section of this chapter.



Figure 8.2. Topographic trajectories of movement. Looking down and ahead from Quéribus. Roads and tracks are winding around the ridges, to the right and the left. They run according to topography (Lorimer 2011: 21). The general direction of the Trail is from the stone steps in the foreground towards the upper right corner of the photograph.

Topography is accordingly reflected in hikers' journeying. My Trail space was tied to topographical features, especially mountains. Hills and mountains on the Trail are many and diverse. Various local designations – *pic*, *pech*, *pog* – attest to their prevalence. While 'pic' is the standard French for 'mountain peak', 'pech' and 'pog' are regional adaptations of the Occitan term for a hill or a peak (Barthes et al. 2011 [1988]: 119). All three appeared in toponyms on maps, in the guidebook and in conversations throughout the Trail journey.<sup>98</sup> As a result of the lie of the land, hikers particularly appreciated open vistas. Yet, seen from vantage points, the hiking path itself was often hidden amidst scrub except for bare stretches or landmarks (see Figure 8.3). Because the Trail was thus embedded in the terrain, particularly in rocks and vegetation, it was the process of walking which built up hikers' sense of a consistent Trail rather than unifying viewpoints. The latter were themselves embedded in the Trail topography.

<sup>98</sup> Montségur, specifically, is called a *pog*. Interestingly, the guidebook states that this mountain symbolises the Cathar resistance against the assault of the army. The mountain would not let itself be taken (Barthes et al. 2011 [1988]: 95).



Figure 8.3. About to walk into the next valley in the Corbières. A narrow path embedded in thick, scratchy scrubland on the second Trail stage. The walker experiences being part of the landscape through both expansiveness and narrowness.

I learned slowly that the pinnacle of a stage could be a mountain pass like the ‘Col du vent’ situated in the midst of woods without open vistas. This ‘Pass of the wind’ on the way between Bugarach and Quillan was not exposed or windy as its name had let me to expect. De Certeau makes the point that placenames have magical powers: they direct walkers (1984: 104, 105). Before I reached the pass, I had aspired to an anticipated view. However, the views on the Trail came more as surprises to discover rather than as climaxes which would validate and provide the focus of the hiker’s movement. In the course of the journey, my experiences were less directed towards a *viewpoint* than growing through the activity and discovery of space in place even if new toponyms persistently motivated my progression. Devanne states that hillwalking is characterised by change in altitude and by diversity which lead to viewpoints and surprises (2005: 198). Hikers find their hike beautiful when landscapes take them by surprise (Devanne 2005: 318). Such surprises require duration, the continuation of the hike. They come through unexpected change over time. Hiking is consequently a spatial process.

Hikers experienced journeying through their movement rather than through the occasional sweeping view. The views were often stunning but they themselves were

integral to one's progression. The middle section of this chapter explains how views made sense through the foregone route and the latest ascent to a plateau. Various phenomenologists draw on Husserl's theory of retention and protention to express how previous experiences participate in the present (Tilley 1994: 31; Tuan 1979: 399–400). Spatiality is ongoing: we carry foregone trajectories and potentialities of becoming with us (see also Massumi 2002: 200). I could not even see Roquefixade from the Plateau de Languerail because I had not travelled by it. My perception was of the geometrical silhouette of Montségur on a coneshaped insular mountain, not of a journey in which Montségur and Roquefixade participated, as they did for the hiker I encountered. What the panorama did for her was to make visible her progression. Lived space is thus individual and movement-dependent.

A hiking spatiality forms through physical progression. As identified at the end of Chapter 7, the bodily experience of spatial depth can be self-affirming and energising. The hiker invests energy (see Tuan 1979: 400). Reciprocally, walking to and being in places is invigorating. Hikers are bodily implicated in time and in space as it extends in duration (Manning 2009: 25). A focus on the journey thus shows that hikers' Trail experience is both temporal and spatial. Devanne maintains that both pathway and progress (*chemin* and *cheminement*) together define hiking. 'The progress both underlies the experience and is a product of it. The walker makes his pathway, attributing meaning to it [...]. It is via the pathway that he reaches the mountain, that space opens up to him' (Devanne 2005: 312). The pathway organises space and individuals experience space as perspective through their movement (Waldrep 2013: 18, 19). As such, space is heterogeneous, 'multiple, differential, specific' (Grosz 2001: 128). It extends through people's trajectories of movement. Speaking from my experience, what comes as a conclusion in a reasoned argument was a given on the Trail: the Trail space is individual in experience, contingent on individual progression. It involves the terrain and the hiker since it is tied to direction and speed of movement. Both topography and hiker together form the lived Trail space.

### **Place, space and movement: a review of the literature**

A brief outline of space and place conceptualisations situates the journey on the Cathar Trail *in* movement rather than *between* place and space. Theorists have understood place and space in different ways, primarily as absolute or relational categories (Warf

2009: 59). However, ‘in all disciplines, space is a representational strategy’ (Crang and Thrift 2000: 1). One trend in the social sciences has been to interpret mobility as antithetical to place. ‘Place is pause in movement’ (Tuan 1978: 14). Places in the plural are static, fixed and bounded entities between which bodies move (Bassin, Ely and Stockdale 2010: 11; Casey 1997: x and 2011: 68, 71; Tuan 1977: 179). In the context of global processes, place is presented as rooted in ecology and topography, in dwelling and authenticity (Dirlik 2001: 22; Harvey 1993: 11–12). In opposition to this stable ‘place’, space is often associated with mobility, hypermobility and freedom (Bergmann and Sager 2008). The spatial metaphor of contemporary postmodernity portrays space as infinite networks (Casey 1997: x; Warf 2009: 70).

Over the last decades, a spatial turn took place across the social sciences and humanities promoting a postmodern ‘relative and relational’ (Warf 2009: 74) theory of space (Warf and Arias 2009: 1). The Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre and the geographer Doreen Massey initiated the antiessentialist contention that space is socially produced by interrelations in interaction, by mobilities and other processes (Cresswell 2006; Harvey 1996: 53, 293; Lefebvre 1974: 112, 152; Massey 2005: 6, 9, 11, 139). Space is not a given, a closed container or a surface (Massey 2005: 2) but a ‘*process and in process*’ (Crang and Thrift 2000: 3, original emphasis), ‘open, multiple and relational, unfinished and always becoming’ (Massey 2005: 59). The significance of space is consequently contingent on practices (Massey 2005: 107), bound to a particular time and situation (Devanne 2005: 43). Devanne, an environmental scientist, demonstrates for instance how hillwalkers do not simply consume open spaces. Their experience of space entails the assigning of meaning to their surroundings in interaction (Devanne 2005: 315).

Since the 1990s, promoters of the mobilities paradigm understand places and people as mutually constitutive (Cresswell 2006; Fincham, McGuinness and Murray 2010). We relate to space, place and time through mobility which is embodied and meaningful (Fincham, McGuinness and Murray 2010: 1). Here, places are open, fluid and in process (Massey 1993: 66–67 and 2005: 6, 139; Pink 2011: 348; Shaw and Williams 2004: 186; Thrift 1999: 296, 310). They are ‘spatio-temporal events’ (Massey 2005: 130). Mobility research has shown that a focus on movement in context opens up static notions of place and points to the physical bearing of space. The continuity of activity raises the question of the relation between place and space in journeying.

Casey, a proponent of place, describes journeying as a movement between places (1993: 275), experiencing ‘the differences between here and there and [...] near and far’ (1993: 64). One place becomes meaningful in relation to another (Murray 2010: 13) since walking is not ‘a series of fixed and static viewpoints. When we walk we encounter sites in motion and in relationship to one another, suggesting that things seem different depending on whether we are “coming to” or “going from”’ (Rendell 2006: 188). As people move between them they connect different places and times (Rendell 2006: 188; Tilley 1994: 27–28). Inspired by Aboriginal Australia, Byrne (2008: 157) thus argues for understanding a heritage site on a pathway between several sites. A focus on the journey between places consequently features spatiality as formed in the interlinking of places. ‘While on the trail one is always somewhere. But every “somewhere” is on the way to somewhere else’ (Ingold 2009: 34).

However, I maintain that the difference of places tends to overshadow the individual trajectory. For my purposes (exploring meaning-making in movement), a ceaselessly forming space reflects my hiking experience better than a place neither bounded nor static. As I have shown in Chapters 5 and 6, the Cathar Trail is an ongoing process and composite of people, environment and activity rather than a string of localities (see also Knudsen, Rickly-Boyd and Metro-Roland 2012: 204). In walking the Trail, hikers experienced a continuing trail and its places in integration. The Cathar Trail is lateral in orientation without, however, culminating at a final destination as a pilgrimage would. Except for a couple, none of the hikers I met had the Trail end (Foix) as their goal. The rounded, at times craggy, hills and rolling valleys, the fields and villages and ruins blended. Especially mountaineers felt continually frustrated by the repeated ascents and descents characteristic of the Trail. This was the case with the French alpine club in the hostel at Roquefixade whose motivation it was to scale mountains. Trail hikers moved up and down and along (without discrimination, at best) between sea level and mid-range mountains without losing touch with the base (returning repeatedly to 300 metres above sea level).

Overall, I experienced one continuous, changing Trail space rather than a plurality of Trail places due to my ongoing travelling. I argue that hiking spatiality is indivisible. Perception is not just shaped by ‘the mere position of body parts in movement, but the overall dynamic resonance between body and world over the course of movement—movement is not to be decomposed into component positions, but has a melodic

character that stretches over time' (Morris 2004: 40). Like a melody which entails duration (continuation, in progress) and differentiation, long-distance hikers experience difference *because* the journey is ongoing. The philosopher Henri Bergson established the primacy of movement and conceptualised duration as a heterogeneous flow (Bergson 1988 [1896]: 186; Game 1995: 195). 'Position no longer comes first, with movement a problematic second. It is secondary to movement and derived from it' (Massumi 2002: 7). A path sees continuing movement, with position emerging (Massumi 2002: 6, 8).

Movement is only divisible in how it is represented (Bergson 1988 [1896]: 191). In other words, when we analyse movement as connecting positions, we immobilise movement in our thinking (Massumi 2002: 6). Movement then becomes 'subordinated to the positions it connects' (Massumi 2002: 3). To characterise lived space as continuous is to resist the segmentation of experience (see also Crouch 2010: 22). It is not to say that it is the same or one homogenous space. The last section in this chapter will explain the ever-changing space formation of one location. Actively involved in their environment, hikers do not divorce places from activity. In this sense, long-distance hiking is not a procedure of 'point-to-point connectors' (Ingold 2009: 37) but is to move along paths in what Ingold terms 'wayfaring' (2009: 35).

Space is dynamic through time and movement. Non-representational theory highlights the dynamic nature of space: 'a time-space practice [...] is [...] [not] a stitching together of pre-given points [...]. Rather it is a becoming of velocities, directions, turnings, detours, exits and entries' (Cragg 2001: 206). It is temporal, a performance, an event and not a framework (Cragg 2001: 200). Space is in process, lived and open-ended. Its beginning varies individually. In the following, I demonstrate that horizons show paradoxically (if it is assumed that a horizon is more contingent on space than place) how space is emplaced and movement-related. As non-representational theorists have asserted, embodied practices performatively constitute space (Cragg 2001: 187, 194; Crouch 2001: 71; Thrift 1999: 302).

### **Hiking horizons**

My emphasis on a movement-related space does not deny the social and political construction of space (see Lefebvre 1974 and Massey 2005) but it frames lived space differently, while maintaining a non-absolute notion of space. Space has commonly

been conceptualised as either material or constructed (mental) (Soja 1996: 56). In anthropology, Low and Lawrence-Zuñiga develop the concept of ‘embodied space’ which includes both material and representational dimensions (as exemplified in proxemics, spatial orientation and language). ‘Embodied space is the location where human experience and consciousness take on material and spatial form’ (Low and Lawrence-Zuñiga 2003: 2). Similarly, Pink uses the example of Spanish bullfighting to ‘emplace’ the performing body within various social, material and sensory entanglements (2011: 349, 353). She interprets bullfighting as a complex ‘place-event’ in which the body is involved in historicity and representations which exceed the body.

Like certain architects, I argue for the pertinence of bodily experience and contend that many scholars seem nevertheless to investigate a metaphorical and generic space nowadays in which the body disappears: ‘in many forms of discourse, metaphorical space has taken over from bodily space as if the two were the same’ (Blundell Jones 2015: 6). Some architects (Fat 1998: 86–87) have argued that this is because a particular activity is no longer tied to a particular space. The role of space in the spatial turn is informed by the prominence of cyberspace in everyday life (Warf and Arias 2009: 5). Technology enables travel in virtual spaces. Furthermore, under the impact of ‘the compressed space of mediated communication and accelerated travel corridors’ (Kirby 2009: 2), the ‘human-scale experience of movement is neglected’ (Kirby 2009: 2) by social scientists fascinated by global processes. Devanne (2005), for example, analyses open mountain spaces in the Pyrenees in terms of their significance for hikers. She does not discuss hikers’ space as a function of their hiking (2005: 214). Instead, her concept of ‘open space’ is socio-political (2005: 322) as is Jirón’s in Santiago de Chile. Jirón elaborates a concept of ‘place enlargement’, ‘feelings of spatial freedom and the experience of appropriation of spaces’ (2009: 127), and place confinement which manifests social inequality in urban mobility.

All these models, however, neglect the very physicality of space. This is something I argue needs to be moved from the sidelines and fully integrated in our understanding of space. My definition of space starts with the individual’s embodied movement. It is a kind of meaning which is made kinaesthetically (see also Morris 2004: 103). Within this chapter I will further explore the spatiality experienced by hikers and concretise how space makes sense physically through movement. Due to the predominantly non-physical concept of space prevalent in recent decades, I adapt a theoretically outmoded

space advocated by architects combining elements of a model popular with geographers and philosophers. Theorisers of architecture and of physical activities such as skateboarding or dance concretise this movement-related lived space. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Norwegian architect and phenomenologist Christian Norberg-Schulz (2000: 189) considered space to be qualitative and existential, constituted in the relationships between human and environment. The philosopher Erin Manning goes further in her dance research. She identifies two conceptualisations of movement and space. In the first one, a space such as a room pre-exists a walking body who subsequently ‘cuts across the space’ (Manning 2009: 15). In the second model, ‘[...] movement creates the space that I will come to understand as “the room.” The room is defined by my body + the environment [...]. Without that particular moving body that particular environment does not exist’ (Manning 2009: 15).<sup>99</sup> Critically, spatiality does not pre-exist action. It forms with and through movement taking form in the process of an activity. Movement creates space (Manning 2009: 13).

The tying of spatiality to movement, following Bergson’s ‘primacy of movement’ (Abrahamsson 2011: 166), is problematic in that it requires a (moving) perceiver at its centre. Norberg-Schulz rejected the ‘absurd conclusion that “architecture comes into being only when experienced”. [...] Architectural space certainly exists independently’ (1971: 13). However, my focus is on spatiality as a quality of individual experience. Moreover, Manning’s differentiated analysis emphasises the incipience of movement, the ‘preacceleration’ (Manning 2009: 6) and ‘immanent movement’ (Manning 2009: 9) preceding an actual move. Hence, even stillness can be understood as formative of spatiality (Abrahamsson 2011: 157; Murphie 2011: 28). Next, I explain how the horizon can literally *go with* movement.

The theorist who follows movement recognises shifting perspectives (Manning 2009: 14–15). In their book on the multi-sensory conversations between humans and landscapes, Lund and Benediktsson (2010: 7) argue that the concept of horizon is useful as it implies movement, and thereby changing positions and spaces. In their opinion, landscape is not static and meaning emerges through the conversation. Bodily mobility enables us to experience a perspective and, thereby, a horizon (Casey 1993: 62). The

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<sup>99</sup> Ingold had already earlier emphasised the indivisibility of ‘the whole-organism-in-its-environment’ (2000a: 19). Here, ‘environment’ takes a possessive determiner since it is relative to a particular living organism.

philosopher Frédéric Gros (2011) elaborates regarding the horizon and connectivity through activity:

[w]alking [...] one rediscovers the sense of the horizon. What is missing today is the sense of the horizon: everything is flat. Labyrinthine, infinite, but flat. One surfs [the Internet], one glides, but one stays on the surface, a surface without depth, desperately. The network does not have a horizon.

According to Gros, sustained walking opens the mind to a conscious appreciation of the beauty of the environment and furthers an intense experience of a panorama and of a horizon which exists through the walker, through her/his activity (see Figure 8.4). My horizon was relative to my step-by-step progression along the Cathar Trail, changing with my hiking trajectory, rising onto plateaus and dipping into valleys. Spatial depth, distances and directions shift as the individual moves (Bollnow 2011 [1963]: 73; Brauckmann 2003: 266; Rieser and Pick 2007: 77; Straus 1963 [1935]: 319). I was hiking (with) my horizon. The latter was involved in my walking and constituted by it.

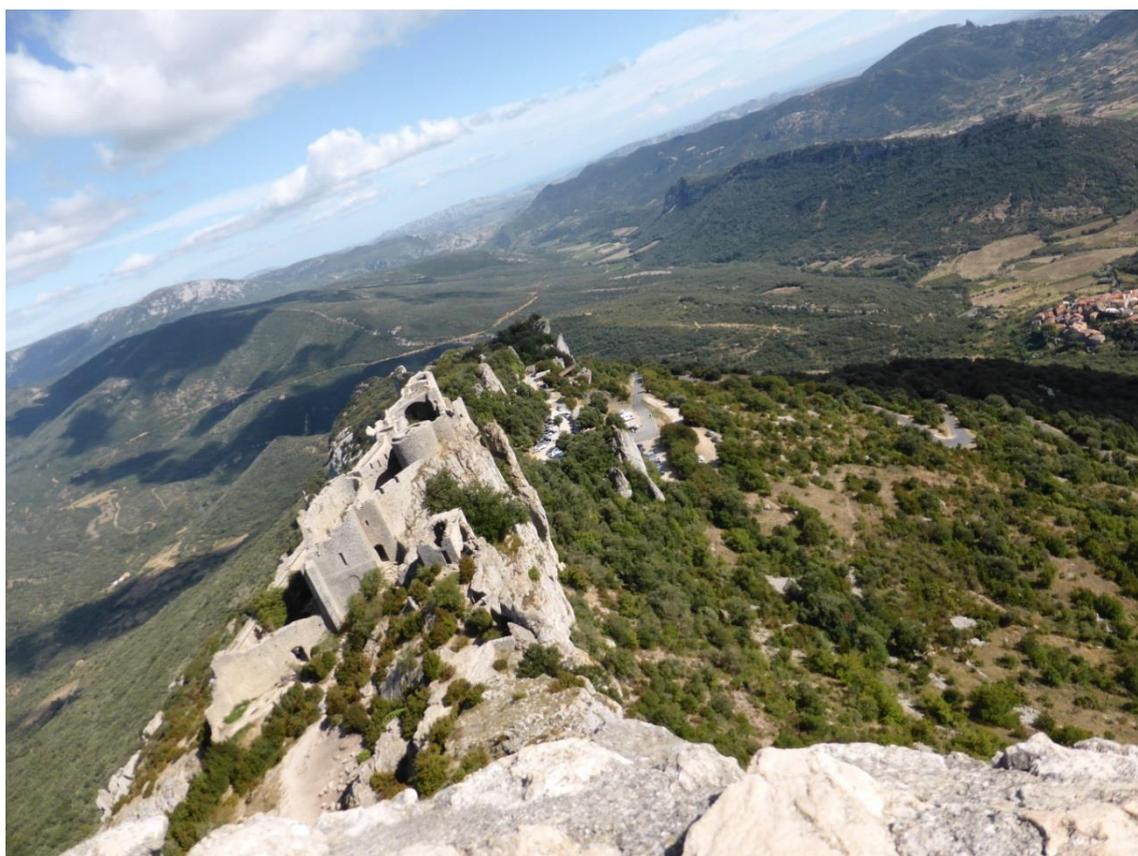


Figure 8.4. A tilted hiking horizon on the Trail. Looking back from Peyrepertuse: Duilhac village is below on the right. Quéribus from the previous Trail stage protrudes from the contours of the chain of hills near the top right corner. I took the photograph diagonally to express my sense of dynamic trajectory and gradient from Quéribus to Duilhac and Peyrepertuse's curved corridor of rocks. I aligned it according to topography rather than horizontal and vertical coordinates to show that hikers' horizons are not static but moving as they move and incline their body.

Such an outlook might sound egocentric or, at best, anthropocentric (see for example Brauckmann 2003: 266) but I am not trying to atomise space or place into individual perceptual systems. Rather, I argue that space is relative to the perceiver's movement. Giedion's classic work *Space, time and architecture* defines space as changing 'with the point from which it is viewed. In order to grasp the true nature of space the observer must *project himself through it*' (1967 [1941]: 436, my emphasis). In vast places like the Arctic, for example, 'size and distance can be ascertained only through *movement*' (Hastrup 2010: 195, original emphasis). Reciprocally, people perceive space in terms of their movement (Hastrup 2010: 195; Morris 2004: 125). Israeli soldiers' trained bodily positions and patrolling, for example, embodied and constituted occupied and distanced spaces in a dialectic body-space relation (Clarke 2009: 73–75, 88). On the Trail, it was the actual movement going up, down and along which brought out a place in a certain light (in a literal sense: see the final subsection of the chapter).

The example of perceiving horizons in hiking demonstrates that space is relative. On the second and second longest (28 kilometres) Trail stage, I was expecting to arrive at the village halfway along the stage soon. After tedious and relentlessly hot walking in a gully (with the sounds of crickets), walking on the plateau was easy. Yet it felt endless, walking along in parallel to a chain of hills on the other side of the valley. Impatient, I had the impression of walking in circles: had I been walking in the opposite direction along the chain yonder and was now undoing my progress? A hiking horizon can thus draw in the hiker to the extent that she loses her sense of differential location and, jolted, projects her journey to situate herself. Space and place are intrinsically connected through movement. Lived space emerges dynamically in relation to place (see also Morris 2004: viii, 23). It is emplaced and grounded in the hiking activity.

Hikers experience space in terms of plasticity and velocity (speed and direction of movement) and stepping scale (Le Breton 1997: 126, 138). My horizon differed according to factors such as where I had just walked through or whether I carried a heavy pack. Moreover, it formed with my and others' movements in relation to a topography. After days of hilly, forest walking, my first glimpse out of Lafage, a hamlet midway on the Trail, took me by surprise. I was impressed and unsettled by the large and flat plain which opened up before me. It was dominated by the noise of thundering trucks and a road which cut straight across the monotonous expanse. I was hit by the

instantaneous and constant hum of traffic. Non-Western studies have shown that sound communicates spatial scale. The dense Papuan forest landscape is perceived by the Umeda (its inhabitants) through hearing as dynamic and as extending through sound (Gell 1995: 240, 242). The plain on the Trail extended with sound and vice versa. Through this resounding space, the Trail became second-rate. It felt static to me, a mere sandy support for walking. The action was taking place on the road in the middle distance. The trucks could thunder along on the straight and flat tarmac, while I was walking on a rutted farm track, circumnavigating puddles. Their powered motion sound intruded into my sense of step-by-step progression, numbing it.

Perception of space, then, is formed through the individual hiking history: i.e. where the hiker has been and where she or he is going. The ‘horizon landscape[s]’ (Kayser Nielsen 1999: 284) characteristic of the Cathar Trail further a physical self-awareness in relation to space. Following Merleau-Ponty, several scholars have stated ‘that the spatiality of the body is not a spatiality of *position*, but one of *situation*’ (Simonsen 2010: 224, original emphasis; also Kayser Nielsen 1999: 279). Additionally taking Lefebvre into account, Simonsen suggests that practice and the body are intrinsically spatial and situated in space-time (2010: 224). Another research on hiking in the Pyrenees has shown that a trail space exceeds the immediate since the trip is experienced in continuity with places and times prior to the trip (see Devanne 2005: 319 and the point made in Chapter 4 that daily work life shapes holiday time). The hiker’s ‘I’ve been over there’ at the start of the chapter illustrates how the ruins had become reference points in her journey. She articulated her own involvement in this unfolding space by evoking how she had walked from the ruins on the horizon to here.

### **‘I am going there’: hiking spatiality**

How does the hiker know the mountain? The following section conceptualises spatiality, the correlation between space and the hiking body, furthering the argument that space is not abstract but bodily generated.

### **Climbing the mountain: body space**

Exponents of the traditional duality of space and place contrast abstract, intangible, infinite, uniform space with concrete and meaningful place. What people experience – live, practice, embody – is place, not space (Argenbright 2010: 144, 145; Bassin, Ely

and Stockdale 2010: 11; Casey 2001: 404; Godkin 1980: 73; Kayser Nielsen 1999: 278; Lippard 1997: 11; Norberg-Schulz 1980 [1979]: 12; Platt 1996: 112; Relph 1976: 8; Tuan 1977: 6, 35, 179).<sup>100</sup> Casey's phenomenological philosophy of place privileges place as primordial, as fundamental for being-in-the-world (1993: xvii, 46, 313; 2000 [1987]: 215). We dwell in place, not in space (1993: xiii). We are inherently 'implaced' through the body (1993: 64). It is places which, by situating bodily movement, enable our journeying (1993: 289). Space functions as a frame or a context in which places are located (2001: 404). According to Yi-Fu Tuan (1977: 6, 35), humanist geographer and expert on toponophilia, and place expert Edward Relph (1976: 8, 28), space transforms into place and becomes meaningful only once experienced as place. To Hastrup (2010: 191), the place/space duality is analytical rather than ontological. Focusing on emotion, she understands social space to be involved in physical place. Even before the spatial turn, de Certeau had inverted the established conceptualisation of place and space. '[S]pace is a practiced place' (de Certeau 1984: 117, original emphasis) through walking and stories. Pedestrians, for instance, are active agents who re-signify the social order which is the street (a place) as it is devised by urban planners (de Certeau 1984: 117). After this brief presentation of the body-place affiliation, I demonstrate how, through movement, space is, on the contrary, inherently corporeal.

The following fieldwork account illustrates how lived Trail space was formed through the physicality of climbing, how one's environment makes 'sense' (in both denotations of the word) in and through one's hiking. Hikers perceive their environment according to the physical activity, in particular movement and body posture. From the Pla de Brézou, on the fourth stage, the Trail follows the ridge to the Pech d'Auroux (940 metres above sea level) on the way to the Gorges de Galamus. I trudged for several long kilometres on this unusually narrow path. It was very hot. I climbed up to the ridge with the help of trees. Without looking at them and singling them out, I was grasping the slender trunks of the holm oaks by the wayside to pull and push myself up against the incline and the heavy weight of my backpack. I kept my eyes trained on the natural and uneven paving blocks which constituted the path. I trusted the trees and was only rarely scratched when my hand did not find a suitable hold. In the process I was reminded of Downey's discussion of peripheral vision when doing Capoeira. Combining

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<sup>100</sup> Anthropologists have preferred qualitative, cultural, places to space (Brauckmann 2003: 267; Kirby 2009: 11).

neuroscience and anthropology, Downey investigates the interrelation of movement and cognition. He argues that sight is a function of bodily movement and, in particular, of touch (2007: 227). Lewis even states that knowledge in rock climbing is corporeal rather than cognitive, a kinaesthetic ‘embodied awareness of a body in an environment’ (Lewis 2000: 71). The climber primarily navigates by touch, not vision (Lewis 2000: 71). In what follows, I explore the role of proprioception in the relation between body and space.

I argue that the physical activity of the climb engages body and space. Without this involvement, the hiker would not be able to proceed up and down the mountain. A bit higher, I was climbing uphill across the karstic limestone boulders with my hands on the rocks. I was scared by the high and exposed passages alongside a precipice: ‘Never again!’ My fear of slipping called upon and foregrounded proprioception and my vestibular sense. The emotion made me speed up and stride in efficient, tactical moves without intermission. Sheets-Johnstone defines proprioception as awareness of our own movements in relation to space and surroundings, rather than a sense of one’s body position in space (1999: 163, 168). ‘[T]hrough proprioception a hill is felt by the leg muscles, as resistance (when climbing) or as a persistent acceleration (when descending)’ (Adams 2001: 188). Fear of the sheer drop made my quadriceps contract to resist gravity with the force of my body. It also made me fixate on the immediate vicinity – the stone path and the trees for hold – and assess where to step and how (were the boulders slippery?). With the low box trees flanking the path I felt more secure (no open fall). My space experience consequently formed within this tension between wideness and close-up, concentrating on the incipient stepping. Muscle tension manifests the concreteness of spatiality in individual experience. As Downey (2007: 236) indicates, the body changes physiologically through its embodied knowledge of its environment. In a psychoanalytical, phenomenological and poetic sense, a path is inscribed in the walker through his ‘muscular consciousness’ of the path as ‘countermuscles’ (Bachelard 2014 [1957]: 33).<sup>101</sup> Vice versa, mountaineers measure their body according to the ground, adapting their speeds and postures to gradient and footholds (Lund 2005: 33). Thus it has been said that ‘[t]he body [...] is realized as *landscape*’ (Van Den Berg 1952: 170, original emphasis).

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<sup>101</sup> Paterson (2009: 768) makes clear that the somatic senses work in a synergy with each other and should not be classified into ‘interoception’ and ‘exteroception’, inward and outward sensations.

Movement, awareness and response play a role in the dynamic force field proper to walking. My space perception and my engagement with my environment (clinging to trees out of fear) responded to each other. Despite the boulders I did not get lost on the ridge. The route was well-marked on the slabs on which I stepped. The waymarks were right within my vision since my eyes were cast down. Once I reached the top I was amazed by the views, hesitated but continued on. Albeit hungry and wishing for a break, I wanted to overcome the exposed passages first to be able to release the felt tension when resting.

An analysis of spatiality reveals how hikers' bodily involvement in their environments generates space instead of a self-contained body interacting with and apprehending an independent, given 'container space'. When the Apostles and I descended from our visit to Puilaurens, we walked slowly down the stone steps on the serpentine path with the rock face on the left and the precipice on the right. The steps were smooth and worn from the weather and the many people who had walked here over the centuries. Just before a bend, Nicole remarked on the danger of slipping. She bent her knees and held her hands ready to steady herself and noticed a small tree on our left growing amidst rocks. The trunk had darker shining bark where people had clung to it so as to not to slip. The other Apostles who followed did not hold on to it, the steps being dry and therefore not too slippery. Their upper bodies swayed slightly towards the rock face on their left, they rotated on their body axis and turned to face where they came from in the serpentine. Various scholars develop the notion of a body space, arguing that our sense of space originates in our body (Blundell Jones 2015: 4; Tilley 2004: 3). The 'body implicates space' (Tuan 1979: 405). We are spatially oriented and experience dimensions and directions through the body's inherent axes of front/behind, up/down, left/right, above/below (Bloomer and Moore 1977: 1; Bollnow 2011 [1963]: 44, Casey 1993: 48, 50, 72; Lefebvre 1974: 203, 226, 465; Tuan 1977: 44).

More than an isolated body it is bodily movement which orients and produces space (Lefebvre 1974: 199, 226; Merleau-Ponty 1945: 119). Movement is intrinsically spatial in its relatedness to its environment. 'Movements such as the simple ability to kick one's legs and stretch one's arms are basic to the awareness of space. Space is experienced directly as having room in which to move' (Tuan 1977: 12).<sup>102</sup> Conversely,

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<sup>102</sup> 'Room is cognate with the German *Raum*, which means "space"' (Casey 1993: 22) or 'the "elbow-room" for a movement, the [...] distance between things (Bollnow 2011 [1963]: 33). My understanding of

a limitation of space to move within (a restriction in movement) makes us aware of the deprivation of the liberty to move. Our knowledge of the potential space for movement co-constitutes the existing space. The hiker is doing this room-based moving *with* her/his environment. Manning reveals how the ground is intrinsic to dance: ‘the ground moves (with) the dance’ (2009: 70). Walking techniques involve interaction with the terrain underfoot. ‘When we walk, we set up a certain gait [...] [which] also takes up the rhythm of the rocky or sandy ground [...]. It takes up the rhythm one walks with’ (Lingis 2004: 279).<sup>103</sup> The slippery texture of the steps was implicated in Nicole’s spatiality, her way of moving and perceiving her surroundings. When I climbed to the ridge and when Nicole picked her way down from Puilaurens our walking technique was attuned, rhythmically responsive, to the terrain (see also Vergunst 2008: 113). We felt our body through our negotiation with our environments (see also Wunderlich 2008: 129).

Consequently, hikers do not just move *in* space but *with* space. Space is not ‘embodied’ in the sense that external space would be internalised and materialised through the body.<sup>104</sup> Movement changes the picture: place may be embodied but space *is* bodily. The physical activity of the climb engages body and space and the movement changes in the interaction as each step informs the next (see Manning 2009: 71; Norberg-Schulz 1971: 35). Walking is not mechanical and uniform but is ‘continually and fluently responsive to an ongoing perceptual monitoring of the ground ahead’ (Ingold 2004: 332). Nicole and I concentrated, in sensory participation with our environments. Thus, in walking we proprioceptively ‘feel-with’ our movement and environment through our senses, balance and spacing (Manning 2009: 49). This was especially noticeable when we were climbing or descending a steep hill and when there was an opening such as a precipice. Climbing, my balance was not just based in myself but was negotiated with and upheld through the affordances of trees and rocks. Tactile experience can shape

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‘space’ is informed by the connotations of the French ‘espace’ and the German ‘Raum’. Neither fully coincide with each other, nor with the English (Shields 1999: 154). The German ‘Raum’ is both closed and open, linked to place (Ingold 2011: 147). ‘Espace’ has less contained overtones. As ‘open, infinite, liberated and free’ (Merriman 2012: 24), it corresponds better to hikers’ expansive outdoor environments.

<sup>103</sup> A person’s gait is also a learned, socio-cultural technique. Mauss’ classic essay (1992 [1934]: 469) gives the example of marching soldiers to highlight that ways of walking differ.

<sup>104</sup> According to Sheets-Johnstone, ‘embodiment’ is merely a ‘lexical band-aid[...].’ (2011: 119) which still presupposes a mind/body divide. There are different takes on embodiment, however (Violi 2008: 54, 60). Thrift argues that embodiment is ‘a process word rather than a noun’ (1997: 139).

spatial perception and vice versa.<sup>105</sup> Borden's analysis of skateboarding similarly highlights the reciprocal internalisation of skater and terrain (2001: 133). Individuals move with space and experience and produce space through physical activity (Borden 2004 [2000]: 296). Spatiality expresses the intercorporeality (Merleau-Ponty cited in Simonsen 2010: 223) of body and world which unfolds in movement.

In conclusion, space forms through the interaction of body and environment in movement. As such, it is contingent on this interaction: I was hiking with a space which was emerging in the very process of moving. This space is a manifestation of meaning-making in movement, a knowing in terms of rhythms and textures (see also Borden 2001: 202, 262; Di Paolo, Rohde and De Jaegher 2010: 39; Farnell 2012: 121). As Borden states, '[r]hythms disclose things, not through explanation or codified interpretation, but through lived experience' (2001: 227). Psychologists of the spatial mind agree that bodily actions disclose and produce meaning and that spatiality develops in the organism-environment interaction (Plumert, Hund and Recker 2007: 26; Smith, Maouene and Hidaka 2007: 169). In Manning's words, movement is 'body-worlding. We move [...] not to extend it [space] or to embody it, but to create it' (2009: 13). While the creation of space might not be hikers' intentional objective, the label 'creative' has the advantage of explicating the active role of movement in meaning-making. Space forms in the course of movement, formed by that movement (Bergmann 2008: 22, 23). Next I discuss vision and experience in their relation with each other.

### **On top of the mountain: experiencing views**

Like other theorists, I refute previous occularcentric theories which suggest that vision is the most obvious mode in spatial perception (Jay 1993: 113). At stake here is not so much a visual arena as an emplaced but mobile experience within a long-distance journey. As an official Trail promoter of the tourist service of Aude stated, the experience of the Cathar Trail lies in the surroundings. He defined the brand of the Cathar Trail in the following way: 'C'est une expérience en soi d'être en haut de Peyrepertuse; elle se suffit à elle-même'.<sup>106</sup> A literal translation from the French would be 'it is self-sufficient'. Being up on the mountain with its ruin does not require history

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<sup>105</sup> Pallasmaa's description of the door handle as handshake of a building is another example which indicates the interrelatedness of individual and environment in the form of a tactile experience (1996: 40).

<sup>106</sup> 'It is an experience in itself to be at the top of Peyrepertuse [or another peak on the Trail]; it has a value in itself.'

books to be meaningful, as he put it. Hikers can undertake the climb ‘just’ for the sake of the experience of being up there on the mountain. The experience on the mountain is fulfilling and self-explanatory in this sense. More than merely justifying the climb, the encompassing and transformative potential of the walking experience renders the climbed places significant. This potential (see also Bachelard 2014 [1957]: 34) is instantiated through continuity and motion which enable spatial differentiation. Next, I describe the particularity of ‘Cathar views’ which draw space and the past into place.

The views from the ruin enabled local inhabitants with a Cathar affinity to look into the past. For them, the Cathars were in the place. Looking out from the *pog* of Montségur, the museum manager in Montségur village (see Chapter 2), considered the mountain and its surroundings to be as they were at the time of the Cathars (when ignoring the village below). In his eyes, village and castle were two different worlds. At the ruin, time and space ‘*inhere in place*’ (Casey 1993: 288, original emphasis). The notion of a shared view fits in well with Cathar historians’ accounts of their personal experiences of the Cathar locales and draws attention to visitors’ positioning in a setting oriented towards the panorama from the ruins on the mountain tops. Brenon’s (1992: 303) encompassing portrayal of Cathar society induces a sense of lived immediacy through the use of inquisition documents but also through the recounting of her personal experience of the past in places. She describes the space of the gaze looking at the horizon which Cathars and people today have in common (Brenon 1994: 15, 38, 59). A philosopher experienced a sense of immensity when on a Cathar site. He describes the site as a human-built ‘opening, like a window [...]’. Where I look out from, others have looked out from. A gaze made in stone’ (Galibert 1999: 186). His and Brenon’s association of landscape and the Cathars’ lives in their actuality reminds one of Lowenthal’s (1979: 108) argument that the past becomes tangible in our present-day perceptions of assumedly enduring physical traces in the landscape. This way the past is experienced in and through contemporary perspectives.

Theorists equally address the idea of shared perception through shared position in a shared environment. The philosopher Alphonso Lingis’s statement that ‘distances ahead are also distances in time’ (2009: 306) opens up the possibility of a shared perspective with people of the past. From his perception at the centre of his perceptual field, the viewer has an overview in which space and time are connected, ‘past routes and future direction’ (Spirn 1998: 171) forming one whole (Hillis 1999: 29). Rapson (2012)

investigates memorial spaces at concentration camp sites in which tourists' spatial experience is shaped through factors which have persisted over time. Echoing Brenon, she argues that visitors' positioning in a place offers a spatial *and* historical perspective (Rapson 2012: 165). By standing in the same spot 'visitors may gain [...] a view that was also that of the victims, an opportunity to place ourselves in their perspective' (Rapson 2012: 175). Visitors can feel close to them while also being aware of the gap in time through ruins and decay, what Tuan calls 'the time-depth of ruins' (1977: 125). This is a visualist appraisal, however, which fails to consider perception as involving the senses in integration. Sounds and smells, for example, differ now from then. In addition, visitors' perspective is an intentional engagement with certain narratives within a contemporary context. While positioning might permit an approximation of predecessors' perspective, I contend that the activity of looking out is a stronger common denominator between walkers and Cathars (see also Chapter 7).<sup>107</sup>

Space is performative. To look out from Cathar Trail viewpoint is, then, to re-enact and relive past body positions and perspectives (see Edensor 2005: 151). Regarding the views opened by memorial benches, Wylie, in this way, describes his experience of looking-*with* the ghosts, of the presence of absence, loss and haunting through the tension of openness and distance and the distancing of gazing subject and world (2009: 282).<sup>108</sup> Figure 8.5 illustrates how emplaced contemporary benches and castle walls positioned and framed my perspective. By being in the place, I was sharing a lived space with previous hikers and visitors by moving according to the physical affordances of my environment as well as according to my walking style (see Casey 2000 [1987]: 194; Morris 2004: 45). People perform 'buildings, by moving through and around them but buildings also perform people by constraining their movements and by making likely certain kinds of encounters between them and others' (Turnbull 2002: 135). Built structures spatially orient perception (Tilley 1993: 73, 81).

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<sup>107</sup> A ruin also allows and encourages trajectories and perspectives which had not been planned and had not been possible in the intact building (Ginsberg 2004: 73).

<sup>108</sup> Wylie is against the phenomenological unity of self and world (2009: 282).



Figure 8.5. Benches and castle walls orient our perspective. Looking out through a gate from the fortress in Foix. Final Trail destination.

However, Turnbull argues that Neolithic (or, in my case, medieval) knowledge draws on a different spatiality to ours (2002: 137). Space is performative and therefore has a history (Turnbull 2002: 135). The architecture theorist Iain Borden takes both into

account in his 'materialist history of the experience of architecture' (2001: 266). This history traces how people's phenomenological engagement with buildings relates 'to the ideological and material processes which condition them' (Borden 2001: 266). Form (architecture, a staircase) is a composition 'of space, bodily action and physical matter' (Borden 2001: 120). To me, the Cathars were a property of the Trail space rather than individualised agents. Personal names and historical dates mattered little to me, walking the Trail. The Cathars' tragic destiny, which I was familiar with beforehand, however, made sense to me through my experience of a rugged land and vice versa. Turnbull suggests that people perform space, and thereby knowledge, through movement (2002: 130). 'We create space in the process of travelling through it and in creating narratives of journeys we simultaneously construct knowledge' (Turnbull 2002: 133). The polished tree trunk above our slippery path on the Apostles's descent from Puilaurens and the white, shiny rocks on the path polished by walkers' feet and weather phenomena (visible on various photographs throughout the thesis) shaped our experience and, in turn, were shaped by our movement. Their state of slipperiness was both momentary and persistently regenerated through hikers' journeying.

Yet what about the majority of hiker-participants who did not enter the castle bounds and hence did not look out from the castle? Chapters 4 and 7 have explained that walkers perceived the ruins as part of the wider landscape (or *terroir*). Hikers were looking out, too, but from along the Trail. Therefore, this chapter does not single out mountaintops; it also works with valleys. Besides the viewpoints at castles, the landscape features of the Cathar Trail provided openings, such as the Plateau de Languerail, with views onto hills and ruins at various moments during the journey (see also above). These were not 'points' as such but stretched out along the way, in keeping and shifting with the topography and surrounding vegetation. In this sense, on the Cathar Trail as it was practiced by hikers, mountaintops did not provide the unique and isolated finitude of an infinite view. Rather, hikers perceived a mountain and ruin through (and often from) surrounding valleys. Within the long-distance hike, lowlands and uplands were a question of perception. The same track in the opposite direction offers a different perspective defined by velocity which is responsive to topographic demands. A Trail technician recommended starting the Cathar Trail by the sea because in walking towards the mountains the Trail builds up momentum with an unfolding perspective and increasingly impressive landmarks (peaks, ruins, gorges). 'Landmarks

are like magnetic poles that vectorize the space of orientation' (Massumi 2002: 180). A vector is a line which indicates movement and, in particular, direction (Adey 2011: 138). Lowlands and uplands were contingent on when and where (plus where from and where to) a wanderer encountered them. They were spaces in movement and projection. Apart from the guidebook, I referred to landmarks, such as a distinctive craggy outcrop, only irregularly to measure the distance to my destination in the terrain (see Rieser and Pick 2007: 80). What role did previous experiences and social interaction play?

In my discussion, lived space is inherently, but not exclusively, physical.<sup>109</sup> My watching out for Montségur and Roquefixade demonstrated at the outset of the chapter that spatial perception is shaped by our knowledge and previous experience. Imaginings and objectives co-constituted my perception and experience. I recognised Montségur also because I knew it from photographs and drawings in magazines and books and on postcards. Edensor (2005: 135) writes that visitors attach memory to heritage sites. Memory is spatialised in our ordering of things and space. Space is political, a practice-knowledge which includes representative knowledges (Crouch 1999: 3; Ravenscroft 1999: 81; Werlen 1993 [1988]: 3). Hence, language and discourses are constitutive of my interpretation of spatiality.

The interaction with other hikers and with the Trail environment generated my particular sense of space. My movement and sense of space were shaped by other people, composing an emerging entangled social body space.<sup>110</sup> The latter consisted in buildings with their surroundings, including social relations, which Lefebvre calls 'archi-textures', a composite of time, space and rhythm (1974: 140). The opening example of walking towards each other in the meadow and the 'accordion' in Chapter 6 illustrate that spatiality thus involves the relationships between bodies and their movement (also Blundell Jones 2015: 166; Crouch 2005: 29, 33; Morris 2004: 27; Rendell and Wells 2001: 132). Devanne argues that such encounters between hikers socially produce hikers' experiences of openness and wellbeing in the mountains (n.d.: 5). So the Cathar Trail space is a physical and social space formed through the interaction between people, environment and activity.

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<sup>109</sup> By characterising lived space as 'physical', I seek to differentiate it from the common metaphorical or abstract 'space'.

<sup>110</sup> See also Barad 2007: 141; Borden 2001: 113; Crouch 1999: 266; Massumi 2002: 9.

The relation between space and place theorised at the beginning of the chapter becomes relevant once again. In a larger context, the (motorised) inaccessibility or difficult access of places on foot reveals that, reaching a summit, a hiker has a sense of place through space and vice versa. Still, I do not reinstate the model of place as static, discrete entity against a space which is abstract and enabling mobility. Rather, I advocate a non-segregated physical and dynamic spatiality and use ‘place’ to denote a particular identity. The relative inaccessibility of the castle ruins due to topography and terrain characterised hikers’ lived space on the Cathar Trail, for example. The Trail is a ‘Walking-only space’ where topography, terrain and infrastructure participate in forming a particular hiking spatiality and confer the most inaccessible sites a unique identity as a destination. A representative and manager of the Cathar Country sites highlighted the value of inaccessibility: ‘the visit to the castle must be earned which means added value’ but also that ‘in themselves they will never be ideal film locations’ because of technical constraints. These places require walking.<sup>111</sup> Space is consequently incorporated (through the body) in place (via movement). Still, Cathar Trail hikers’ experience was less place-gearred than other visitors’ since they did not head for the castles. I develop the notion that, rather than operating in terms of places, the Trail operated as hiking space. It was practice-bound, a practice which is intrinsically environment-related, as we will see next.

### **Beyond the mountain?**

Here, I examine the experience of spatial openness and vastness when on a highpoint.

Importantly, visual experiences are formed through place-contingent bodily action. Yet

[b]ecause empirical studies of perspectival vision were originally imported from art historical analyses of art objects, they privilege the visual and often consider the mechanics of vision without movement. But the whole point of the experience of landscape and of architecture is movement. (Birksted 1999: 4)

From the low hills of the early Trail stages, the latter part of the Trail takes hikers to high altitudes. Montségur is the highest ruin of the Trail at 1207 metres above sea level.

Although I use my visit to the ruin of Montségur to elucidate the experience of spatial

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<sup>111</sup> At the time of fieldwork, new regulations were focusing on a new tourist market: all public sites (including hikers’ accommodation) were to be adapted to visitors with special needs. The Cathar Country representative told an amusing anecdote of how a mayor complied and developed the project of a lift for Peyrepertuse, demonstrating the absurdity of the political demand to make a historical monument accessible as required. In such structural impositions, places become defiant. The ‘nature’ and heritage construction of the place, which is unique through how space and activity is involved in it, resists mechanical access.

expansion, other castle-less peaks such as the Plateau de Languerail or la Récaoufa on the second Trail stage had similar effects. Castle visitors were mostly drawn to and impressed by the views from the ruins, encouraged by site-specific panorama boards (see Figure 8.6 and also Edensor and Falconer 2012: 77).



Figure 8.6. On Peyrepertuse. Visitors looking out over the hills from a ‘balcony’.<sup>112</sup>

On the Sunday afternoon I stayed up on Montségur I observed that once visitors had reached the ruin on top of the mountain, they swiftly crossed the interior of the building, open overhead. They headed for the outside of the castle walls. Whereas the thick fortress walls had become gateways, there, the view made them pause for a while and admire its beauty. The fortress was a place where people looked *out from*, taking in the surroundings. An atomic interpretation classifying places reveals an interesting paradox of visitors not *looking at* but *away from* the place which had been the goal in their ascent. Wylie equally observes ‘that people travel to see the [Glastonbury] Tor and end up seeing *from* it, with it’ (Wylie 2002: 454). Montségur then becomes a gateway to *other* places, visually. However, my concern here is more with a bodily experience of space through place than with the implied distinction between places. Even the distant hills and valleys, forests and towns were comprised in the experienced surroundings since visitors’ view reached into the distance. ‘The distant and the near are experienced

<sup>112</sup> Roquebert describes the ruins as balconies giving onto the surroundings lands (Roquebert and Soula 1994 [1966]: 181).

with the same intensity, and they [together with the imaginary] merge into one coherent experience' (Pallasmaa 1996: 30). A philosopher visiting Cathar sites evokes the imminence of the horizon on these sites. Surrounded by lower lying lands, the latter are 'islands' amidst 'nothingness'. The horizon is the sites' immediate neighbour (Galibert 1999: 189).

I advocate that one place does not give way to another in this perspective. Rather, hikers' spatiality develops through their multimodal bodily engagement with place. Views on and from a peak are formed through the individual's ascent in touch with the ground (see also Larsen 2012: 73; Wylie 2002: 454). Seeing is integrated with the mountaineer's moving body, the work of the muscles and negotiation of balance (Lund 2005: 28, 40). The summit outlook is therefore not divorced from the kinaesthetic climb to the viewpoint. Speaking from my own experience in retrospect, my eyes cast down on the path and my inclined, balancing body modulated vertical versus horizontal geometric planes and axes (Leenhardt 1999: 87; Paterson 2009: 769; Sheets-Johnstone 2011: 115; Yudell 1977: 58).<sup>113</sup> I looked into the distance only intermittently. Both visual focus and posture fed into my perception of spaciousness which gave me a sensation of freedom. Tuan associates space with freedom and the power to move: 'Spaciousness is closely associated with the sense of being free. Freedom implies space; it means having the power and enough room in which to act' (1977: 52). Remember the hiker's elation at the start of the chapter: the hiker's sense of her own vitality can be expressed as 'freedom' (see also Massumi 2002: 34). She had a dynamic space experience in terms of scale, distance and proportions in relation to her current bodily situation.<sup>114</sup>

I argue that space participates in place (see also Casey 1997: 275, 342). What stood out on the mountaintop at Montségur was the prevalence of the sky. There, the sky was so vast, almost a 360 degree panorama, that I felt I was *in* the sky. At these dizzy heights I

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<sup>113</sup> Remember also my impression of the hiker approaching me at the beginning of the chapter as a vertical moving in relation to a horizontal.

<sup>114</sup> Even our 'static' images and spatial prepositions are dynamic and interactive. They are meaningful through embodied sensorimotor experience (Johansson Falck 2012: 348; Langacker 2012: 212). At the conference on *Movements, Narratives & Landscapes* in Zadar (Croatia) in 2015, the local guide, who was giving us a tour of an archaeological site further inland, made me aware of spatial arrangement in the outdoor environment. We were standing on a slight elevation in a vast plain. 'Downstairs' the guide said, pointing to surrounding features. While this 'downstairs' might be a particularity of linguistic translation (referring simply to 'down'), it brought home to me the spatial connectedness between myself and the lower lying fields. It implied the movement of us going down: the surrounding features were in dynamic relation to us. They were downstairs from us.

overheard visitors commenting on how they felt there was more oxygen here. The excruciating climb had been physically breath-taking. The laborious breathing during the climb transformed into deeper, extended, relieved breathing at the top. The panorama was ‘breath-giving’, bringing an almost intoxicating release in breath. At Montségur, exposed as it was, individuals became conscious of their own inclusion in large surroundings. I overheard a young English couple hesitate about whether to continue their visit of the site. ‘I’m just wondering about these clouds’, the man said. The woman countered ‘We’re not going to disappear into a cloud’, whereupon he clarified: ‘No, that’s not it; I’m just thinking it might rain’. Their exchange expresses the presence of the unsettled weather on that day and of the almost overwhelming encompassing sky space. Massumi avers that the weather refutes metric space with its empty air and grid of determinate positions (2002: 10). Likewise, Borden shows that an action like skateboarding (or climbing) unites features of the terrain including the air between walls as part of architecture (2001: 107).

Hikers’ space experience disproves accordingly the conventional theory in which ‘[s]pace becomes a container for experience’ (Manning 2009: 165), abstract, empty and to be filled (see also Casey 1997: 199; Kirby 2009: 15; Pink 2011: 348). ‘Because of this abstraction of space, what is measured in Euclidean geometry is considered concrete: space is abstract, bodies and landscape are concrete’ (Manning 2009: 165). This is the space Ingold argues against; a ‘boundless totality’ (2009: 31). He considers space a case of the modern logic of inversion which ‘turn[s] the pathways along which life is lived into boundaries within which it is enclosed’ (2009: 29). Movement becomes ‘sheer mechanical displacement’ without duration and space a lifeless continuum (Ingold 2009: 39). ‘However, the apparent solidity, or exaggerated durability, of such “structures” [the space-container] is a projection of our desire to stabilize our environments. These perceptions are convenient, but fully artificial, artefacts of our work of sense-making’ (Sedgwick 2009: 173). Alternatively, Ingold emphasises movement and becoming. ‘In wayfaring [...] things are instantiated in the world as their paths of movement, not as objects located in space’ (Ingold 2011: 162). Needing spatiality as an attribute of hiking, my interpretation of space as grounded is at variance with Ingold’s (2009: 30). While he establishes a dynamic ontology of a ‘meshwork of intertwined trails’ (2009: 33; 2011: 149), I explicate the particular mode of hiking and climbing, in particular. Climbing crucially entails the spatiality of the mountaineer’s

body moving with its environment. Its reaching for and establishing of holds with hands and feet requires and, in turn, engenders space or, adapting Tuan (1977: 12), room in which to move *with*. Other anthropologists and archaeologists, too, promote a dynamic, active understanding of space (Munn 1996: 449; Pandya 1990: 774, 776; Tilley 1994: 10).

Space was not a vacuum in hikers' experience. It was physical and evanescent. It was shaped by the physicality of the climb, the weather, light, wind, the night and other factors. Visitors such as the English couple above experienced a powerful feeling of being in and with space, a reciprocal relationship between entering the mountain's space and being imbued with the space of the place. According to Devanne, walking gives access to the materiality of space. The walker becomes aware of his/her body and connects to space via this body (Devanne 2005: 43, 45). The higher the site, the smaller I felt. Yet, I still felt secure on the *pog* of Montségur, contrary to Quéribus where the force of the wind in the exposed terrain had scared me. At Montségur, the day was calm.

The Trail space extended horizontally and vertically with the sky, clouds and light part of a place. How did these two extensions work together in relation to notions of place and space? Hikers' horizons were particularly marked by verticality (up- and downhill). A specificity of the Cathar Trail ruins was the openness and permeability of the material structure. When seeing the ruins from afar, they did not appear as impositions on the landscape. Close-up the weight of their thick stone walls was alleviated by their open-ended (partly crumbling with breaches in walls) structure and their merging into the rocks, the fabric of which they were built. Elements like the wind (at Quéribus) and the ground (uneven, grassy and rocky) were incorporated in the building. Perched on its promontory the ruin not only soared into the sky, but let the sky in. Sky and ruin intertwined in place (see also Ginsberg 2004: 18). Researchers, writing from their own walking experience convey how the visitor in a ruin experiences the weather, gravity and a sensation of energy in matter (Edensor 2005: 91; Ginsberg 2004: 9, 20, 38). A particular landscape materialises in this interweaving (Le Breton 2012: 77). A review of my photographs shows the sky, clouds and surrounding hills and valleys as part of the ruins (and hence of place) as they blended into each other: roofs and ceilings were rare, windows revealing, walls irregular (see Figure 8.7). The intersecting of sky and land could also be experienced closely in a valley or a gorge as in Chapter 6. Helena

Guàrdia's art installation in the Gorges de la Frau brought the line of the horizon to the ground by using a mirror to reflect this relief. Later she rearranged the horizon fragments from various locations to create a new horizon (Guàrdia n.d.). 'The landscape character [...] becomes manifest as silhouette against the sky' (Norberg-Schulz 1980 [1979]: 40) through the properties of the sky: light, colour, clouds. Spaciousness, then, is part of place experience. Hikers, as 'Trail practitioners', were living outdoors by virtue of the Trail rather than being designers of shapes. Still, the ensuing exploration into hiking experiences in fog and light illustrates how a spatial relief formed in and through hikers' activity.



Figure 8.7. ‘Inside’ Peyrepertuse: depth and density through stones and clouds.

### **‘I am here’: lived experience**

I adopted the previous headings ‘I’ve been over there’ and ‘I am going there’ from a fellow hiker’s and my own statement during her and my journey, respectively. I extrapolated the current ‘I am here’, on the other hand, from fellow hikers’ and my own

experience. This last subheading is to conjure the lived experience of hiking with one's environment by highlighting the imminence of fog and light.

### **In the open**

The Cathar Trail is characterised by ongoing and open movement and space since hikers are 'in the open air' all day long. In Gros's words, hikers inhabit the outdoors (2009: 49). They are within the weather, immersed 'in the fluxes of the medium' as Ingold (2011: 115) calls it. While the accommodation is always a different one on a long-distance hike, the hiker's element is the outside. The Trail has the continuity of the hiker being out-of-doors day after day. Walking, Gros clarifies, does not proceed in a displacement of landscape features. The landscape transforms together with the walking body (Gros 2009: 55). I had a strong sense of spatiality and a keen awareness of movement through the embodied experience of my environment in hiking. The risk of a boggy path, rain or strong wind became acute since I was outdoors all day, reliant on my environment.<sup>115</sup> The weather together with the topography and the terrain shaped my hiking spatiality. I learned to appreciate forest walking on sandy tracks which was more sheltered and drier on rainy or foggy days than a bare plateau. Impending darkness in the evenings and cold mornings hastened my pace, contributing to a spatial trajectory towards shelter and warmth.

I argue that due to such a mingling with their surroundings (Ingold 2011: 115) hikers knew their environment in terms of spaciousness. Here, I use the term 'space' to evoke degrees of extension between plateaus and valleys. This spaciousness is an aspect of the hiking spatiality which I have conceptualised so far. Specially, it is characterised by topography and buildings. Yet again, it is not absolute but dynamic and contingent on hiking. Hikers were sensitive to spatial changes from openness to confinement and vice versa. They had a sense of dynamism through such changing spaciousness. The experienced openness on a crest like the Plateau de Languerail, for example, accompanied the hiker I met on her journey. Conversely, towns like Quillan, midway, and Foix, at the Trail end, came as a 'shock' to me. After many days on the Trail I no longer felt I fitted into their tight, partitioned spaces. The space of the modernist urban setting has been characterised as homogenous and fragmented (Borden 2001: 194). In

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<sup>115</sup> Rantala, Valtonen and Markuksela (2011) address the importance of the weather in outdoor practices. the weather conditions tourists' actions and movements by materially shaping the environment (Rantala, Valtonen and Markuksela 2011: 292). By extension, it can be argued that several layers of clothing to protect against the cold condition travellers' elbowroom.

the spatiality of daily work life, both outside and inside are more fixed and bounded than on the Trail. We spend most of our time indoors. Walls, ceilings, windows and doors afford a certain kind of lived space. When we go outside we cross a threshold (Casey 2011: 72) and the urban outdoors is mostly intervals between buildings. Long-distance hiking does not operate in terms of these thresholds. Hiking space is not compartmented even if the path involves stiles, gates and house doors (see also Blundell Jones 2015: 169). It changes gradually as the hiker moves and according to her/his movement. Simultaneously, the hiker's movement changes according to spatial affordances. As the above discussions of Trail characteristics and climbing have shown, hiking works *with* space, adapted and responsive to the topography. The topography, in turn, was brought out in experience through movement. Thus, topography entails movement as the movement entails the terrain. Both form a Trail space which is not an abstract void but is lived and includes scales of spaciousness.

The contrast between openness and containment is also at work in the arrangement of hiking equipment. Before leaving, we had carefully selected and possibly weighed every item. Every morning on the Trail we had to repack our backpacks. After several days of this routine, we easily found the ideal place in our bag for each item for a good weight distribution (in carrying) and ease of access during the day. Some of the Apostles used packing cells which facilitated the compilation and compartmentalising of personal effects inside the backpack. Once arrived inside another dormitory, we unpacked again (Figure 8.8). Hikers themselves were grouped together in a room when they shared a dormitory and bunk bed. I would spread my belongings out across the floor and the bunk before assembling them again and squeezing them tightly into my backpack the next morning. Pedersen argues that Mongolian reindeer herders regulate the infinite network of heterogeneous places in which they migrate at their camps where they undertake a formalised order of packing and unpacking (2003: 251; 2009: 148). By carrying our packed bag over the day, we did not embody a containment which would counteract external openness, however. Despite Le Breton's claim that the walker is in an ambivalent situation, 'at the same time outside and inside, here and there' (1997: 138), I contend that openness and containment are implicated in each other. The panorama was vast in my experience through my effort at keeping my belongings close to me on windy days in open country. Every time I took food from inside my backpack

at break times, I subsequently compacted my backpack again. My interpretation, then, develops the notion of a progressive hiking spatiality rather than of binary spaces.



Figure 8.8. In the process of unpacking at the hostel in Duilhac: spreading and arranging things using communal facilities.

Although the journey was accordingly not all outdoors, indoor settings did not necessarily negate daytime experiences. On my second day, a booked-out accommodation owner offered me her cellar, ‘a nice and cool refuge from the heat’, to stay overnight in when she saw me, overburdened and hot, at the fountain on the deserted village square in the glaring midday sun. Over the days, however, I experienced overnight and picnic stopping places as transient stages in an ongoing process, everyday anew whilst also continuing. Le Breton underlines the temporal structure of the journey. ‘In fact, the walker does not take up residence in space but in time’ (2000: 26). Nomadic camps, likewise, are ‘not a site of permanent dwelling, but a temporary place of rest’ (Pedersen 2009: 148). Furthermore, the accommodation places were prolongations of the outdoor Trail space, often unlocked and no barrier to animals from the outside. Once I changed to the bunk bed on the opposite wall because a gecko – green and big – had come to sit on the wall close to my bed. I was the only occupant of the dormitory and unsure where the gecko would go since I was unfamiliar with

geckos. Another place also functioned as a restaurant and had tables set outside as well as in the sleeping quarters upstairs. I was relieved to find that there were no dinner guests next to where I would sleep.

There were also exceptions though. The accommodation, named ‘House of Nature and Hiking’, at the foot of the mystical mountain of Bugarach jarred with hikers’ outdoors experience.<sup>116</sup> Even in bad weather, hikers were barred until the ‘House’ opened late in the afternoon. While motorised visitors’ comments in its guest book were positive, hikers objected to an inauthentic interior design which was not true to the local, not adequate to the terroir (see Chapter 4). They compared the bathrooms to a service area, which is to say to a ‘non-place’ (Augé 2008 [1992]) when one is familiar with the motorways in France. That the rooms were named after African countries was experienced as displacement. I slept in ‘Mali’, with photographs of skyscrapers and streets of New York on the wall. Sitting in the large empty building (I was the only guest), looking out at the full moon above the Pic de Bugarach, was eerie. Outside, Bugarach persisted despite my disorientation. The next morning, after a lunar eclipse which I had overslept, I left the building quickly but that day I had little sense of Trail progression. The foggy day contributed to my feeling of standstill and estrangement from my surroundings.

### **Place and fog**

Weather phenomena and atmosphere constitute lived space. Research into walking offers an opportunity to interrelate weather and atmosphere with place and space. With walking studies becoming established, Lorimer recommends future investigations into lived physical experience which include atmosphere, moods and memories not limited to the human body (2011: 30).<sup>117</sup> Landscape architect Anne Whiston Spirn was one of several writers who had previously conveyed the richness of the landscape experience. The mood of a place differs according to peoples’ access and their rhythm of movement, to the time of day, the season, the weather and light (Norberg-Schulz 1980 [1979]: 14, 32; Shepherd 1977: 86; Spirn 1998: 236; Tilley 1993: 54). Ingold’s meshwork explains that the landscape differs materially according to sunlight, shadows

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<sup>116</sup> Bugarach had been in the French media the year preceding my fieldwork as the place which would survive the end of the world predicted by the Mayan calendar on 21 December 2012. My sense of Bugarach consequently had certain mystical connotations. The mountain is just off the Trail. It is the culmination of the Corbières mountain range and is known for its far-reaching panorama.

<sup>117</sup> Chapter 4’s concept of terroir is a step in that direction.

and air (Ingold 2011: 21). It is a substance embedded in a medium of light, weather and other media and cannot be divorced from these media (Ingold 2011: 97). When we perceive things differently in different weather (Ingold 2005: 102), we become attentive to the medium. Not only topography and scale, but equally texture, colour and vegetation spatially shape the terrain and constitute a place-specific atmosphere (Norberg-Schulz 1980 [1979]: 35 and 2000: 85). Philosopher, urban planner and musicologist Jean-François Augoyard interprets atmospheres as

configurations in which properties of space interweave with immaterials (light, wind, sound, etc.), but also our own constitution as subject, with our past and what I feel now, my emotions [...] [and imagination (see Bachelard 2014 [1957])]. It is about complex configurations in which body and knowledge, objects and subjects are inextricably linked. (Augoyard, Sevin and Voilmy 2009)

Atmosphere is a spatial expression of the relation between person and environment (Griffero 2014 [2010]: 139; Pallasmaa 2014: 20). In philosophical analysis, ‘atmospheres are spatialised feelings: [...] they are the specific emotional quality of a given “lived space”’ (Griffero 2014 [2010]: 36), situational and corporeal (Griffero 2014 [2010]: 112) and ‘holistically and synaesthetically perceived’ (Griffero 2014 [2010]: 55).

When I returned to the beginning of the Trail for my second trek, the same places were different due to the seasons, the weather and people. Brambles still lined the way but were now dried out and the vineyards were almost all harvested. Autumn was well under way. From the long ascent, from carrying a pack and the heat of the sun, I had been drenched on my first climb to the statue of la Récaoufa, the most impressive viewpoint of the initial Trail stages. This time round I was not walking in the full sun. The sky was overcast and colours were faint. Contrary to my first passage, I was able to stop and put down my bag on the top because there was no wind blowing. However, I soon felt cold sitting by the column of the black Virgin Mary statue. The most glaring difference from my earlier passing was, however, what I could not see in the present mist (see Figure 8.9). Before, I had had a 360 degree panorama over the Corbières hills from the statue (Figure 8.10). Now I strained to see. My view was defined by what was invisible. My expectation from my previous experience of this place shaped my present place experience. I had known this place through its views and exposed situation. Now, I did not recognise the hilltop as the same because of its ‘missing’ surroundings.

Weather phenomena are thus constitutive of space and thereby of place and the hiking process.<sup>118</sup> Hikers walk ‘in the weather-world’ (Ingold 2010: S136).



Figure 8.9. A different place. The view from La Récaoufa on my second trek.



Figure 8.10. The first place, from a slightly different angle but these lowlands and hills encircled the statue.

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<sup>118</sup> The poet and hillwalker Nan Shepherd (1977) has found that a mountain includes wind and the weather and is involved in what we do. It is never the same.

Research partaking in the ‘climatic turn’ (Morris 2013: 89) is not only enriching because it allows the weather to play a role in people’s spatialities but also because it overcomes the tangible/intangible separation. In discussing the weather, I aim to expand the allegedly confined place and to substantialise the assumedly immaterial space. Morris (2013) thus describes how an atmospheric phenomenon (or micro-climate) like a specific form of fog (the Scottish *haar*) can be a tangible and intangible heritage. Tied to a physical topography, it is historic (since it is recurrent) and a transient but localised process (Morris 2013: 89, 90). The *haar* is not spatially bounded and not fixed in place, yet it is visible and tactile (Morris 2013: 97). In Ingold’s terms, it manifests that we see *in* the medium, active and material, which is the weather (2011: 17). There were days on the Trail when morning mist or low-hanging clouds made my environment more palpable. One morning I marvelled at large cobwebs lined with dewdrops. Together, the webs and weather phenomena were visible. On another day, in a forest, I was glad to find the sandy track more solid and easier for walking on than a bare plateau in such high humidity. I became, however, annoyed to be walking repeatedly (head first) into cobwebs. Whether I liked it or not, I was part of this environment, breathing in the moist air, clutching my clammy equipment and hearing muffled noises and the squishing sounds of my footsteps on the muddy track. The weather together with the topography and the terrain shaped my hiking spatiality. My visual field being occluded, the audible was enhanced. The texture of the ground was not just an underlying layer but participated in my perception of my environment as a whole (see also Petrescu 2015: 121). My spatiality was shaped through the sounds of my steps, through the interaction of myself and my material environment (see also Olsen 2003: 91). Space is material in the weather forming the land when medium and substance, such as fog and soil, mingle (for the latter see Ingold 2011: 119, 130).

Weather phenomena are accordingly constitutive of the hiking process and of lived space. On my way to the village of Bugarach, halfway on the Trail, I was walking in the fog with hardly any visibility, sometimes slipping on the stony and muddy path. Up on a plateau, I could not even discern the signposted way anymore. Instead, I was surprised how the flattened grass of the path stood out, albeit faint. I tracked these traces of wear to find my way and walked towards openings visible in the dark shape of the grove ahead across the meadow. Passages where I was walking in a ‘channel’ with trees on

both sides of the path helped me to stay on the way. The Trail space thus involved weather phenomena as well as the path. My own localisation in relation to my surroundings was distorted. By reconfiguring the dimensions of space and place, the experience of hiking in fog does not reveal the limits of place but the limits of common conceptions of place. It equally brings the importance of experience in place to bear on preconceived places and official guidelines. Hiking space is emplaced through the interaction between person and environment in movement. It forms with the individual walking the ground.

### **Experiencing contrasts: light**

Here, I continue to explore the involvement of a hiker's environment in the walking experience to show how my interaction with the Trail environment in hiking generated my particular sense of space. A focus on light defines space in terms of texture, depth and distance. The slogan of the Conseil Général de l'Aude, '*Etre près, voir loin*' (n.d.b), ties 'to be close' and 'see far' together. I argue that the hiker's far-ranging vision is part of a relationship in which hiker and environment are interrelated. My perceptions of distance and closeness (to a place on the Trail) through dark and light contributed to my experience of space. This space had a relief made through contrasts of light and shade. The transitions from forest to plateau were particularly impressive. As described at the start of this chapter, I was exhilarated to come out of the forest on the Plateau de Languerail at last. Landscape features were differently placed on open expanses. After Lafage I saw the straight lines of the road. A professional trail walker's<sup>119</sup> blog description of the Corbières evokes large basins encircled by mountains: plains bathed in sunshine, 'full with vineyards, orchards or olive trees' (German Tourist 2013). In my retrospective notes I remarked that I rarely perceived, or at least explicitly mentioned, mountains when I was 'in' them. Plains enabled me to identify mountains from the distance. Devanne notes that hikers on a day trek in the Pyrenees stop for a picnic, appreciate the mountains and have a sense of beauty when they have an open view from a mountaintop, the highlight of their trip (2005: 151, 220).

I became aware of the relation between forest and plateau when plunging back into a dark forest after the exposed ridge of the Pech d'Auroux. In the dark forest, it was difficult to make out the terrain; I needed to take care not to twist my ankle on the path.

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<sup>119</sup> I met her in Carcassonne (see Chapter 4).

A focus on how space is shaped through the contrast of light and dark suggests a shift from seeing as something external to (corporeal) perception and experience as *knowing* something.

Scholars have argued that the visual aspects of the weather are an experience of light itself: we perceive things in luminosity (Ingold 2011: 96). Such an experience refutes the idea that we operate in empty space. ‘Light is an integral part of space’ (Edensor 2010: 229). It ‘suffuses space’ (Le Breton 2012: 51; also Lingis 1998: 13 and 2009: 299). In Lingis’s philosophical writings, the elements and especially the vibrant light have a powerful and emotional presence, suffusing his journey in the Gobi desert (Lingis 2009: 306). In Iceland, visitors experience the Northern Lights in terms of energy and bodily feeling (Edensor 2010: 236). Light creates atmosphere and guides movement and visual perception (Bille and Sørensen 2007: 271; Lingis 2009: 299). In philosophy, light has been interpreted as texture, a woven fabric which is all of the following: ‘surface, material, matrix and frame’ (Vasseleu 1998: 11–12). ‘Weaving’ is equally used by Spirm in her conceptualisation of ‘context’. ‘Context weaves patterns of events, materials, forms, and spaces. [...] A gate is context for passage, its form determining how things flow through it’ (Spirm 1998: 133). Context is thus active, processual and dynamic, rather than static. It endows things with meaning (Spirm 1998: 133). Such an approach recognises the interrelationality in which spatiality and light form.

I became conscious of light through the transition from fog to clarity one morning when I was walking away from a hamlet at 800 metres altitude after a night with little sleep because of the cold. Continuing my way at that height, I observed the mist lifting from the valley, dewy leaves shining in the sunlight. I heard the sound of construction work in the distance. Soon, the mist had dissipated; it was going to be a very hot day. On these hot and clear days, mountains and ruins were clear cut against the blue sky in the bright sun light. On my way from Padern to Quéribus (second trek, third Trail stage) I was reminded of the Belgian group’s breathing spaces. I was walking along an even track on the flank of hills with a view down and across to the valley slightly below. Around me, clouds formed dark patches on the hills, structuring the landscape (see Figure 8.4). On other days, beams of sunlight streamed through clouds and distinct landscape features such as hills and valleys, materially integrating them into a dense

relief of light and dark (see Figures 8.11 and 8.12).<sup>120</sup> Illumination and shadows thus shape spatial plasticity (see also Bille and Sørensen 2007: 271, 280), always perceived from the particular route and perspective during the hike. As Le Breton tells us, walking is immersion in the ‘sensory thickness of the world’ (1997: 128).

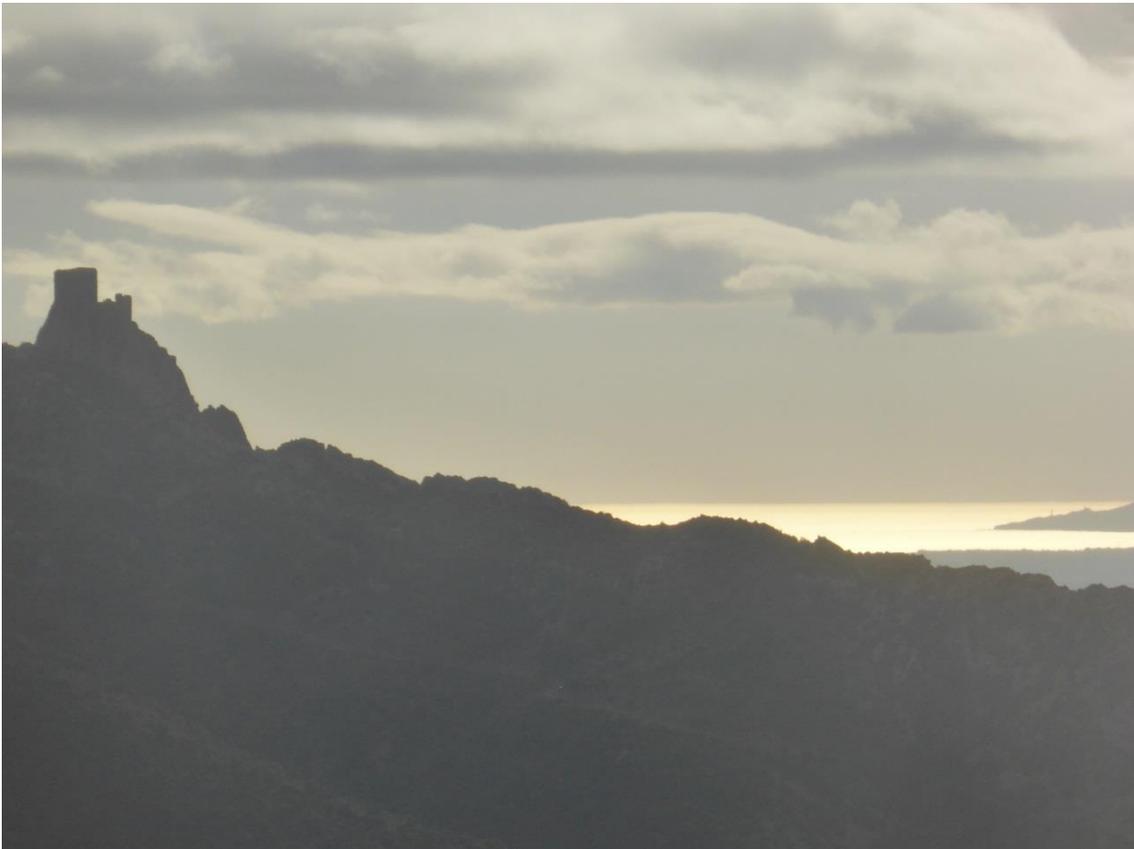


Figure 8.11. Spatial plasticity in light and dark: Quéribus zoomed in from Duilhac when leaving the hostel in the morning.

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<sup>120</sup> According to Spirm, ‘sky, [...] mountain, and valley are contexts for cloud. Clouds describe the surface over which air flows—the quality of terrain’ (1998: 142). Ingold underlines that we know the texture of the ground through shades and colours (2010: S131).



Figure 8.12. A densely textured and integrated relief of hills, valleys and clouds, carved and blended in sunlight. The ruin of Aguilar (on the left) in the evening, before quickly touring the ruin and pressing on to Tuchan (in the valley) for overnight stay (second Trail stage).

Resting places are one feature of a movement-space. Hikers' chosen places for resting were often marked by a strong contrast between brightness and shade. Most days were hot and the Apostles as well as the Belgian group stopped for breaks in the shade where there was sufficient space to accommodate the group and sometimes benches, a table and a spring. Preferably, this place offered an outlook onto the continuing Trail and the wider surroundings. The openness of these resting places in the shade came from *both* light and dark, expansiveness and sheltering (see Figure 8.13). In such moments, I was attentive to the bright and distant hills. They were foregrounded in my perception in relation to my location which receded into the background (see Merleau-Ponty 1945: 10 and the start of this chapter). They were implicated in each other. Sitting and facing outwards, I perceived the spaciousness as more enveloping than in walking.<sup>121</sup> As shown at the beginning of the chapter, movement is extension. The continuing hiking activity engenders a processual and open space experience. At break times, I was less focused on one direction. In relaxed contemplation, the physical engagement with my

<sup>121</sup> Wylie, similarly, describes viewpoints as landscape gathering into this place (2002).

surroundings provided me with a sense of harmony with them and embeddedness in the wider surroundings.<sup>122</sup>



Figure 8.13. A place for resting in the shade of trees: spaciousness in light. Looking south to the Pyrenees from a plateau, just before the path plunged into the final Trail destination, Foix.

My discussion of atmospheres, which adopts Lorimer's (2011) and Griffero's (2014 [2010]) use of the term, is limited to movement and space since my focus is on the space which is generated through (and generative of) movement. On the Trail, atmospheres were involved in lived space. Sustained walking sometimes brought a certain enchantment. While strolling on a sheltered downhill path lined by bushes in the early afternoon, Corinne (of the Apostles) repeatedly crooned softly and contentedly: 'How nice it is!'. During a picnic, she soaked in the afternoon sun. As Gros (2009: 192, 193) explains, walking enables the experience of pleasure through the encounter with something else, like fruits, sunshine or water. Walking brings intensity of experience, bodily wellbeing and joy of living (Gros 2009: 196). Le Breton suggests that the walker's interior space and the physical exterior space harmonise. The walker

<sup>122</sup> Similarly, the artist James Turrell's 'Skyspaces' consist in a room with a special opening in the wall or the ceiling which makes visitors 'experience looking at the sky as a movement of opening' (Sinnreich 2009: 23). His works are a 'dovetailing of interior and exterior space' (Sinnreich 2009: 40).

experiences his/her surroundings in ‘continuity with himself/herself’ (Le Breton 2012: 51). Outer space can be intimately tied to our being, to our imagination, personal history and memories (Bachelard 2014 [1957]: 156, 222). Bachelard’s philosophical and poetic notion of lived space is accordingly material, metaphorical and psychological (Game 1995: 200). Corinne’s enjoyment shows the imminence of the surroundings and her immersion in her surroundings.

The feeling of wellbeing ‘is a spatial practice’ (de Certeau 1984: 108); it is a forming of personal histories in a place. Movement generates lived space and hikers appreciate this space through movement. Devanne found that the aesthetic discourse which highlights the beautiful, the good and the pleasant in hiking ‘applies not so much to the mountain than to walking, not so much to space than to *movement* in space’ (2005: 319, my emphasis). She presupposes the existence of a space, something I have argued against in this chapter. However, her point is useful in revealing that hikers getting along well with each other (as the Apostles did) informs atmosphere and thereby space. Atmosphere and lived space are interrelated. They make sense through movement.

### **Conclusion: experience and perception**

This chapter explained the role of corporeal movement in space formation. Hikers’ lived space is hiking-dependent. Hiking, in turn, is specific to one’s environment. The landscape characteristics of the Trail – hills and open views – informed a perception of space shaped by the journey’s connectivity. It was continuing, shifting and individual and scaled by steps.

I discussed the obvious – views – but as integrated into corporeal spatiality. Surroundings were not external to but involved in the hike. Horizons were relative. A distant view was tied to the viewer’s location and movement. Hikers knew their environment through climbing. In the process, the climber became attentive to body and environment working together. Spatiality is accordingly a function of the activity and is an integral component in it. It emerges in the person-environment interaction. Lived space is neither abstract nor static but bodily generated.

The space of this chapter is an example of how movement makes meaning. This meaning, the emerging space (ever in process, in formation), is tied to long-distance hiking and hikers’ environment. It is a hiking spatiality which is individual, processual

and interconnected. The ‘meaning’ I explore by explicating spatiality has been previously formulated by phenomenological and non-representational theorists. The latter understand the meaning of something to be situated, embodied and formed in interactions (Anderson and Harrison 2010: 2, 7; Simonsen 2010: 222; Thrift 1996: 9, 38). Perceived properties of something manifest ‘the perceiver’s and the perceived’s concrete inclusion in each other’s world’ (Massumi 2002: 90), the conjunction between the two. Moreover, we make sense through movement: ‘moving is a way of knowing’ (Sheets-Johnstone 1999: xv). What I have done in this chapter then is to qualify movement. I have developed the concept of spatiality as one of the qualities of movement.

The chapter posed the difficulty of keeping its material contained. I needed to analyse spaciousness by defining a track without curtailing what I aimed to depict.<sup>123</sup> I took particular moments from my field journal to exemplify processes which discussions of space could be hinged on. This way, I aimed to retain the openness and changeability of a hiking space without freezing it into an infinite and static panorama from a viewpoint. The difficulty is how to *think* lived space. Space becomes abstract and static when isolated from movement and place. ‘As with time, it is only thought space that is abstract; lived, experienced imagined space is qualitative space’ (Game 1995: 206). From a philosophical and psychological angle, Golledge states that we can only know space by conceptually stopping the continuous process which is space, immobilising external reality by imposing ordering mental structures on it (1979: 114, 115). While Golledge’s assertion appears plausible, I came to a different conclusion in the analysis of my fieldwork. I will continue to discuss the incommensurability of experience and words in the following chapter. The latter will suggest that *how* you know your environment through walking and what kind of environment you know are interrelated. Experience-wise, hiking generates a specific spatiality.

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<sup>123</sup> To Merriman (2012: 14), the concept of spatiality does not do justice to movement and its qualities.

## CHAPTER 9

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# Methodology: thinking-moving-writing

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This chapter is about ways of knowing through processes of hiking and researching. It explores the interrelations between my field experience and the methods I used and the formation of knowledge in and of the field (hiking on a long-distance trail). I discuss mobile characteristics of the walking-with method and my embodied experience in the field. Lastly, I follow up the relation between writing, knowledge and experience. The question is: how we can get a sense of the experience and of movement on the Trail through written text? There appears to be a disparity between text and lived experience.

I found in the field that having hiking as a means and object of research can make the recording of participants' sensory perceptions and bodily experiences difficult and impede an analysis *in situ*. On the other hand, the kind of 'data' produced through such a method shows how research methods form the research project and its outcomes. So beyond a discussion of methods, this chapter conceptualises the generative context of knowledge-making. It addresses how my thinking and writing about walking developed, tracing my process of making sense of my fieldwork. My aim is to combine processes of interpretation and interaction, to trace the connections between knowledge and experience in the interrelational making of meaning.<sup>124</sup>

### **Researching in movement**

Participants' and my own mobility was crucial in shaping not only our hiking experiences but also my ethnographic fieldwork. I experienced my own involvement in the activity in a place as limiting and preventing potential avenues of investigation. In the following subsections I elaborate on certain practicalities which conditioned my fieldwork on-the-move.

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<sup>124</sup> Aldred (2010: 73) notes a lack of studies which connect field experience and interpretations.

### **First encounters on-the-move in time-space**

Ironically, my foremost difficulty with mobile ethnography was my own and participants' mobility (see equally Howard 2013: 150). Mobility made it difficult to meet potential participants in the first place. My plan had been to find participants in casual encounters when walking on the Trail. On one hand, access to, exchange (informal conversations) with travellers and the building of rapport were facilitated through sharing the hiking activity, the path and facilities such as the hostels.<sup>125</sup>

However, only a couple of stages into my Trail journey I came to query how to find participants when I was on the move myself.<sup>126</sup> All in all, hikers on the Trail were few. I needed concomitance of time and location to cross paths with another hiker. Mobility limited me to hikers with similar timings and locations (and preferably, direction) to mine. Because of how the Trail was designed, consecutive, linear and with villages at each end of the daily stages, I did not have the flexibility to switch locations or to stay posted under way in one location and wait for hikers to pass through. Like other hikers, I relied on the Trail amenities and needed to complete the daily stages in time to reach the next accommodation before nightfall. My own moving prevented me from meeting other hikers who were moving along the Trail elsewhere.

Mobility equally conditioned first encounters with potential research participants. I had to be constantly ready to seize the unexpected. Hikers would suddenly appear as if out of nowhere. I had presumed that hikers would mostly follow the itinerary of the guidebook but realised that I could not anticipate the various individual trajectories. It was difficult to maintain a state of alertness all through the day when the terrain, weather and backpack demanded continuous attention over the twenty or so kilometres of a Trail stage. Furthermore, participants kept changing, often co-participating only for short time spans (something I had anticipated). Figure 8.1 at the start of Chapter 8 evokes the transience of a meeting point between the hiker in the mountain meadow and myself, walking in opposite directions and consequently approaching each other until passing each other and walking away from each other. In this particular instance, the unusual open Trail terrain ahead enabled me to anticipate the situation. There was only one short meeting point, where we exchanged a few words. I could not delay travellers and neither of us changed direction. We nonetheless participated in each other's

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<sup>125</sup> Particularly with hikers walking in the opposite direction I could easily start a conversation by asking about the route and the terrain behind them but ahead of me.

<sup>126</sup> Most hikers skipped the first two stages of the Cathar Trail due to their lengthiness and bareness.

journeys by crossing each other – an encounter, a pause of a few minutes, on both our journeys.

The hikers I focused on at first were not always easy to identify. Especially at the beginning of fieldwork, I was looking for multi-day hikers with hiking backpacks (ideally they would be walking the whole length of the Trail). These were scattered along the Trail. I did not recognise any when I visited the castles. Sometimes their location (for example waiting in front of a hostel) and their backpacks gave clear indications of their hiker status.<sup>127</sup> Yet, when I dived fairly straight into my research questions, these potential participants evaporated, hardly responding to my questions and quickly taking leave. Then there were chance encounters on the Trail with a ‘research future’. Taking a break at a vantage point on my way up to the Pla de Brézou, I saw a hiking group in the distance coming my way. Then I heard their voices growing louder in the forest before they appeared and stopped for a rest where I was sitting. Waiting for them was a risk (I might have to struggle with the completion of the day’s stage) but the shared rest on the rock led into a conversation and a continuing together with the group which was to become ‘the Apostles’. The starting off with the Belgian group, on the other hand, was awkward and gruff but interaction with the group was to become highly fruitful in the course of the evening and the following day. It became the basis for Chapter 7. I first passed the group on the Trail but rapport developed at the guesthouse where all of us were staying. They invited me to join them on their next (and last) day. Although our journeys were joined, they did not evolve identically then. While these walkers’ trips were coming to a close, I was still in the middle of my own journey and research.

By then, I had expanded my focus to pay more attention to ‘short passages’ on the Trail: tourists who were doing day walks in the region, long-distance hikers who were aligning stretches of various trails and local inhabitants on short outings. I walked different lengths of time with different people. The shorter stretches were often with daywalkers or hikers who combined the Cathar Trail with a different route. With the above-mentioned groups I spent the last days of their trips. This inevitably limited our co-participation. Otherwise, especially on my first trek, I hesitated about how far to go with whom. My decision was informed by gauged productivity and practical reasons

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<sup>127</sup> If they were travelling with a car escort, they could carry just a daypack or a water bottle like the hiker at the start of Chapter 8.

(pull and push factors): my ability to keep step, the availability of accommodation and my personal affinity with the group. Shared experiences (in the case of the Apostles, Antoine's hat gone in the wind, see Chapter 6) were decisive in my commitment to particular participants. I ceased worrying so much about missing opportunities with new hikers who might appear at any moment and have a different rhythm. Joining a group also meant that my exchanges with hikers outside this group were limited because of my desire to keep up with the group. I 'sacrificed' opportunities to engage with individuals in favour of developing rapport with the group.

### **What holds the field together: participation without participants**

I often walked *without* participants because of the practical limitations of mobile ethnography mentioned above and the small number of hikers. In addition, I knew from my own experience and could observe on the Trail what an accommodation owner asserted, that certain hikers were solitary. At one hostel I met a long-distance hiker in pristine white socks who told me that he walked along singing but refrained from conversations when walking. Hikers like him came to the Trail to be away from people, to walk alone. 'Walking-with' was not possible with them. As a researcher it was easier to join a pre-existing group. The 'walking-with' as prerequisite to conducting research meant inevitably that participants liked walking with others and therefore their experiences were to varying extents also experiences of companionability with others rather than solitary communion with nature or private immersion in the history of the Cathars.

Nevertheless, I continued on the Trail even without participants. I needed to move to complete each daily stage before nightfall to find accommodation and food, and to complete the Trail before the end of the hiking season and onset of winter. I was hoping that I would catch hikers further along the way (especially since most hikers skipped the first Trail stages). Repeatedly, my progress in research was dictated by the limitations imposed by closed or full accommodation due to too few hikers or, respectively, too large groups on the Trail stage. Albeit the ideal season for hiking in terms of weather conditions, September and October were already out of season in terms of facilities for travellers. Several amenities were closed and tourist brochures were out of stock.

Besides these practicalities conditioning my fieldwork on-the-move, my principal reason for carrying on even without participants was to experience the continuity of a

long-distance hike. The second section of this chapter explains how I was held to the Cathar Trail, fully immersed and unable to walk away. Stationing myself at one hostel would have allowed me to chart hikers (amidst other tourists) travelling through. Yet, it would not have given me an embodied sense of their movement experiences since hikers hardly ever verbalised their physical waymaking in terms of movement (see the conversations and email data in the second section).<sup>128</sup> Similarly, only the walking around a place with participants gave Rockefeller a lived sense of a rural settlement in rural Bolivia.

Although I could learn something about Quirpini just by walking around, articulating the parts of the terrain through my own movement, as long as what I saw appeared static, like the elements of a landscape, as long as I was not engaged with the life of the place so as to appreciate the movement that interconnected everything there, then what I was seeing was not the place itself. (Rockefeller 2010: 7)

Rockefeller's objective, however, was more people-oriented than mine. He strove to learn something about the people in a place. In comparison, my focus is on the process of hiking rather than on particular places or people.

Since I had times with and without participants, what holds my research together? An easier question to begin with is what formed my field or how was my field defined. In practice, the Cathar Trail itself was the answer. When walking on the Trail, I experienced a strong directionality towards the final Trail destination. I travelled according to the Trail (consecutive stages over more than ten days). Within the Trail context I adjusted my travel to hiker-participants: stopping where they stopped, according to their rhythm. The directionality also existed for other hikers even if they walked only a middle segment of the Trail. It was rhythmised by the daily stages. The lengths of these stages, in turn, was a consequence of the topography and overnight accommodation. Yet, in itself, my field data did not bear the coherence and cohesion of the Trail, the thread which was inevitably present when walking the Trail (cf. Lee and Ingold 2006: 74). My field data is fragmented due to the nature of mobile research as explained at the beginning of the chapter. To construct a thesis chapter I had to collate

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<sup>128</sup> My experience of waymarking a trail at the Oxfam Trailwalker in New Zealand in 2014 reassured me that it is crucial to walk with walkers to get a sense of their experience. Positioning oneself at departure, stopover and arrival points remains inadequate. Bratton discovered that for her research on the Appalachian Trail the most productive method of data collecting was questionnaires at hostels and catching hikers in the evening at the overnight accommodation rather than at road crossings (Bratton 2012: 43). Still, her focus was on the spiritual experience on that trail rather than on walking as embodied experience.

snippets of data and extrapolate from them in conjunction with my remembered experience to define a thread in the thesis.

At the source of the disjuncture is my research design. My thesis is driven by a perceived sensibility for movement (see the example of Smilla in Chapter 1) and theoretical concepts rather than people.<sup>129</sup> Hiking precedes participants in effective importance in my research. I was consequently able to participate *in* hiking, even if there was no fellow hiker to participate *with*. Mostly, I use the term ‘hikers’ rather than ‘participants’ because my research project did not overlay people’s hiking. My research gave me a mission beyond the completion of the Trail, which reinforced my experience of directionality and the making sense of experience in terms of the Trail. Although I am critical of the essentialising of meaning, my field data bears elements of the following phenomenological approach:

From a phenomenological point of view we are not primarily interested in the subjective experiences of our so-called subjects or informants [...] for the sake of being able to report on how something is seen from their particular view, perspective, or vantage point. Rather, the aim is to collect examples of possible experiences in order to reflect on the meanings that may inhere in them. (van Manen 2011)

The ideas I drew on in my research design have academic currency and have a tendency to be enlisted to make universal claims. Non-representational geographies for example risk being individualistic, apolitical and universalising (Nash 2000: 662). Crapanzano (2004: 6) argues that a greater focus on the individual perspective counteracts generalising categories. Ingold concurs that theorists might revel in abstractions without a foundation in their concrete engagement with the world (2006: 892). He criticises ‘the academic model of knowledge production’ (2013: 175) which strategically produces ‘empirical material for subsequent interpretation’ (2013: 174) through ‘data collection’ (2013: 174).

Although my research design is not free from such a tendency, the kind of data gathered is specific to hiking on the Cathar Trail. While indexing and structuring my fieldwork material, I realised that this data hinged on material things, leading me to a study of the Cathar Trail rather than of people walking. Obviously, the Trail held the ‘field’ together since I did not follow the same people through their journey but followed the Trail

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<sup>129</sup> Sutton’s research on a Greek island is another example which is ethnographic but theory-focused (2001: ix).

itself. My inquiry into hiking might be closer to ‘field work’<sup>130</sup> than ‘fieldwork’ in that hiking the Trail was physical work<sup>131</sup> which could be transformative. As such, it could be done communally with other people but equally continue when I was alone.

Beyond the material trigger, however, the Trail can be understood as an expression (see people’s historical trajectories in Chapter 7) or the context (defined as a dynamic interweaving, see Chapter 8) of people’s movement. The ‘field’ extends with previous and present field participants’ (Cathar Trail walkers’) activity. As I left pieces of my luggage behind (to be collected on my return) and carried items and greetings between accommodation hosts along the Trail, I tied people and places together, making a trail. The hosts were Trail constituents. Thus, research is performative. The field was defined through my and other hikers’ activity (Crang and Cook 2007: 202). It was performative as well as performed by my hiking for research (see Coleman 2010: 225; Kennerly 2002; Latham 2003: 2002) according to my research focus and the concrete place (Madden 2010: 39, 44). Space, movement and place interrelated and formed the field. It was actively formed in continuation with my pre- and post-fieldwork place of writing in New Zealand.

### **Field-integration: the sociality of travel**

On the Trail I was another hiker. I had ‘participant conversations’ (Senda-Cook 2012: 135), talking with others as another hiker. Therefore I do not thematise my own presence in the field in isolation from other hikers but myself in integration together with the others and the others with myself. Who were we on the Trail? The two large hiking groups I walked with defined themselves by name in the context of the shared hiking activity. Their names, the Twelve Apostles and the Seven Dwarfs and Snow White, demonstrate my implication in the field. I became an integral member of each group. Rapport often (but not always) developed easily and quickly through our common project and engagement of walking the Trail and spending twenty-four hours together. At the same time, participants’ biographies were not the topic of conversation.

The Apostles considered shared experience to be their primary motivation: ‘we only think of having fun’, they told me. ‘Walking is to have a good time together’, walking,

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<sup>130</sup> A term I had inadvertently used as a literal translation of ‘fieldwork’ in German when I went to see a doctor about my feet after ‘field work’. I realised that the state of my feet could just as well have been the result of ‘field work’.

<sup>131</sup> Not exclusively physically but I am emphasising the bodily implication in the ‘field’ here.

reminiscing and laughing together. This buoyancy peaked at mealtimes when they shared food and drink with me. Animated voices over dinner created a buzz around the long table in the hostel where we waited for and ate the multiple courses prepared by the accommodation owner. Sharing a dormitory was part of the adventure: the friendly banter and race for showers and sockets to charge electronic devices and the sharing of equipment and advice (such as: how best to wash and dry clothes on-the-go). Like other hikers, I learned that a particular hostel could be good for socialising but be a several-kilometre walk uphill, away from the Trail and from the village with its amenities (most importantly, food provision). Another hostel would be in a convenient central location and good for washing clothes but offer little social contact. Some hostels gave me philosophical insights into walking through the articles and advertisements they displayed on their pinboards. In the village of Bugarach (see Chapter 8), the only place to buy groceries was the café/shop with esoteric books. My references to certain philosophers, historians and novelists in this thesis are informed by local inhabitants' and walkers' choice of writers. Fieldwork and fellow Trail-makers consequently also inspired my analysis in the thesis.

The researcher-participant relationship was complicated by an imbalance in objectives. Our co-presence and intentions inevitably changed our respective experiences intrinsically. My Trail experience when I was on my own with my guidebook and backpack differed considerably from when I followed a group (occasionally without my backpack). Alone, I was attentive to signposts and waymarks and sensitive to the uneven track. In the group, I joined in the flow of movement, walking-along, following participants' guidance and sometimes losing track of dates. When I did walk with hikers I shared their movement through places and their goal of walking towards the 'same' destination. We were looking with each other, walking side by side. As Lee and Ingold put it in their exploration of the relationship between walking, embodiment and sociability: '[i]n that sense I am with you in my movements, and probably in my thoughts as well' (2006: 80). This process worked according to the planned walking-with method. However, rather than joining in and following and observing participants I became at times their guide, showing them places or the way (for example, because I was the only one with the Trail guidebook, see Chapters 4 and 5). How could I do cultural mapping if people did not take me on their journeys but if I was the one with the guidebook? My research turned out to be somewhat incompatible with Strang's

(2010) or Kusenbach's (2003) 'go-along' method where the objective is cultural mapping. In go-alongs the researcher can access walkers' experiences and interpretations (Kusenbach 2003: 463). Cultural mapping is an ethnographic method which, in the 'walkabout' process, generates an understanding of a local area through narratives (Strang 2010).<sup>132</sup> The method brings out site and area-specific data, human-environment interaction and the spatialities of memories and meanings, how cultural landscapes relate to a physical topography (Strang 2010: 133). It exposes how travelling with informants in participant observation enables an experience of relatedness, facilitates interviews and oral narratives and includes experiential and abstract types of knowledge (Strang 2010: 151).

I chose this form of participant observation ('walking-with') to understand the lived experiences and perceptions of people walking the Cathar Trail. As is the case with other forms of participant observation, mobile methods are methodological tools as well as integral to the data itself (Fincham, McGuinness and Murray 2010: 9). So, walking was methodological tool, my means of participation in the field (Lashua and Cohen 2010: 82), and means of understanding participants' experiences (Brown and Spinney 2010: 133), plus it was also the object of study. However, I will explain that what was inherent in my research – researching movement through movement; walking as method and object of research – made my research more difficult and did not generate the anticipated results.

Crucially, here, data is collected in context, *in situ* and on-the-move. I intended to show how meaning and context make sense together, how knowledge is holistically produced in context. As Fincham, McGuinness and Murray (2010: 2, 10) point out, the context of movement is crucial to be able to grasp and represent people's experiences and the significance of what might otherwise seem 'banal' phenomena like wayfinding strategies, physical strain (such as heat or tripping) and emotional responses. By analysing the methods of data collection I consequently explore the reciprocal relationship between form and content, how meaning and context make sense together and how my embodied tacit understanding informs my analysis (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011 [2002]: 11). My plan was to use the mobile method of 'walking-with' to bridge the gaps between form and content, text and life.

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<sup>132</sup> Cultural mapping entails recording the date, audiotape number, a detailed site description and indexing of significant themes (Strang 2010: 141, 143).

## **No stepping back: embodied field experience**

Embodied experience and movement are at the centre of my research project. I ask how hikers experience space, the physical terrain and themselves bodily. A related question became pressing during fieldwork: how can the researcher experience bodily and understand the other?

## **No bag but bedbugs: the ethnographic self**

It has been argued that closeness to the research heightens self-reflexivity (Jaffe 1993: 52) and that the anthropologist's subjective reflexivity can be an asset rather than an impediment. It entails a heightened awareness of the relation between self and other (Jaffe 1993: 52) and place and self (Neumann 1996: 185). Using one's self as an ethnographic resource enriches the research process with one's own embodied experience, what Collins calls 'an awareness of the feel of things' (2010: 229). The researcher's self is crucial to ethnography: '[m]inimally [...] it [ethnography] has always meant the attempt to understand another life world using the self - as much of it as possible- as the instrument of knowing' (Ortner 1995: 173). I adopt a radical empiricism that treats the ethnographer's experience as data (see Luhrmann 2010: 213). As Mullins demonstrates, this is an intersubjective, social experience (2009: 239).

As intended, I used the 'walking-with' method and auto-ethnography, using the ethnographic self as resource (Collins 2010). I was attentive to my own embodied experiences through self-observation and reflexivity (illustrated in Figure 9.1). While unable to make the participant's experience my own I thereby spell out and analyse my biases, emotional responses and interactions in the field and my personal influence on the research setting (Jirón 2011: 37; Krieger 1996: 184; Wolcott 2005: 156). The integration of autobiography into the research discloses how data is subjective, intersubjective and reflexive. It helps to understand participants and give a more just account of their experiences (Collins 2010: 241). Here, memory plays an important role as mediator and generator of knowledge (Collins 2010: 229). I consequently take into account how my recollection of encounters and experiences informs my writing and interpretation of data through forming my embodied experience and emotional responses in the field.



Figure 9.1. Self-reflection. About to leave the hostel dormitory in Puivert in the morning.

Returning to the heightened awareness of self and other mentioned above, my entry into the ‘field’ began with my hiking backpack lost by the airline in Paris. It remained missing for six days. Stranded for these days of uncertainty in Port-la-Nouvelle, the town at the start of the Cathar Trail, I felt disoriented by the unusual situation and out of my comfort zone. I had to stretch out the possibilities of my hand luggage and make do with what I could easily acquire. Forced to stay in town, hoping that my backpack would be located and forwarded to me from Paris, I moved between hotels and rooms where I was plagued by bedbugs. The hardest thing was being in limbo. For days my insistent phone calls to the airline returned no news about my backpack. I did not know what the day would bring and if and when ‘fieldwork’ was going to happen since I was missing most of my equipment. Daylong, I crisscrossed the town in the summer heat. The next week, the bag suddenly reappeared. By then, I had accumulated additional belongings which I needed to sort to repack my backpack for the trek. Over the first stages and in the middle of my two treks again I had to leave belongings behind at accommodation places to pick up on my return.

From this untoward start into fieldwork, I relied on potential participants for help. Albeit I was uneasy at thus mixing the professional and personal, this tension between researcher versus hiker roles continued along my journey. Local experts not only gave me interviews but also directed me towards available accommodation. The facility to make friends with hikers meant that formal requirements of the research became secondary. They considered me another hiker and reacted to my backpack which, as one traveller put it, was ‘weightier’ than I was myself. Several female tourists also expressed a gender-related concern when they commented at the start of our conversations that they thought I was brave to travel alone like that. I became aware of the unequal relationship between me as a researcher-hiker and fellow hikers when I saw that we treated each other’s presence differently. I was careful about how people featured in my photographs. For example, I avoided showing identifiable faces because of ethical considerations (Figure 5.4 is an exception, reproduced with permission). Hikers’ attributes, above all hiking boots, can be equally ethically sensitive. Boots are personal, shaped by the individual’s body and journey through the terrain. They are fundamental in hiking. Vice versa, however, I discovered myself included in other hikers’ pictures (Figure 9.2) and videotaping and recorded in entries in a hostel’s visitor book and in a traveller’s blog.



Figure 9.2. Reflection by and through others (photograph by W. Härten-Kräft, reproduced with permission). Looking at the path with one of the Apostles; myself on the left. On the plateau after the confusing junction discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. Still with the Trail guidebook in hand.

The limited, widely spaced and not always open, facilities on the Trail made my own and fellow hikers' travelling more challenging. On my anxious search for accommodation and food on a Saturday afternoon in the village of the most famous castle of the Trail, Montségur, I was driven away by barking dogs and the screaming owner and closed restaurants on the Sunday night. Another time, I was standing outside the locked hostel. When I phoned, I was told I should book online. Travelling necessitated internet access although mobile phone coverage was already limited. Some accommodation owners did not seem welcoming. Taciturn and inflexible in the middle of nowhere, they required advance booking, ordered hikers where to leave their boots and what time dinner would be served (late!). The wait for food made the Apostles improvise a hidden aperitif with warm wine and nibbles from their cars, squatting on the floor and beds, cramped in one dormitory one evening. Much laughter ensued. One hiking couple commented on the difficulty of procuring food. They perceived the villages to be defined by an absence of infrastructure. My provisions could last a few days but especially on my first trek I did not know in advance what food would be available in the next village. On a few afternoons I was a hiker 'hungry as a wolf'. Such was the case, for example, when I traversed the village after Quéribus and spotted the fitting illustration for this saying along the road (displayed in Figure 9.3). Ensuring provisions and sharing dormitories contributed to my immersion. At the same time, these factors were integral to the experiences and perceptions I wanted to record.



Figure 9.3. ‘Hungry as a wolf’ in the village of Cucugnan. Cover of a children’s book by Pintus and Saillard (2010) displayed on a public fence along the main road. It presumably advertises the storytelling festival held annually in Cucugnan.

### **The physicality of fieldwork: self-immersion**

Scholars characterise mobile methods as giving an insight into tacit knowledge. Murray argues that mobile methods reveal ‘the contextualised production of knowledge’ (2010: 14) in the context of embodiment, motion and place. So through ‘walking-with’ I aimed to get an insight into tacit bodily hiking knowledge. Generative and legitimising

(Murray 2010: 24), the walking-with method was to allow me to get close to other hikers' embodied experiences from the ground up. This tacit knowledge, something between physical terrain and people's statements about their surroundings and experiences, is formed in walking (examples are Macfarlane 2012; Shepherd 1977).<sup>133</sup> I intended to observe hikers' movements and behaviour on the Trail and at historic sites and juxtapose my observations with participants' accounts when analysing (see DeWalt and DeWalt 2011 [2002]: 91). Yet, the connection between the two was difficult to assess in terms of movement because hikers' tacit bodily knowledge was not easily defined.

My level of fitness generally matched the hikers' level. Hence, my experience was more similar to participants' than if I had been fitter than them or less fit. Nonetheless, my fieldwork experience and analysis questioned the widely accepted idea that the researcher can 'make statements about [...] [other] actors' reasons for acting because he is also' (Rose 1980: 130) an actor. Any transference felt like I imputed data to my own research agenda. Over the course of my fieldwork I came to consider it naïve and presumptuous to assume I could access participants' tacit knowing through my own bodily experience and autoethnography (what I had intended to do).<sup>134</sup> Similarly, *their* experiences were not all the same as one another, either. Mostly this had a practical reason: my own involvement in the field. I was immersed in my environment and the present moment and unavoidably embodied. I was fully taken up by the hiking.<sup>135</sup> Most of the time, I had to concentrate on the rocky, uneven paths and tracks (see Figure 9.4). Especially on the very first Trail stages – not a person in sight all along except for a man walking his dog and eyeing my backpack doubtfully<sup>136</sup> – I was too preoccupied managing the weight of my backpack to research others. (I shed big parts of my belongings at the next accommodation.) Their length, the stony and exposed terrain and the heat rendered these stages difficult. On my first Trail day, I staggered at dusk into the accommodation. Overall, the completion of the Trail stages proved physically taxing. The strains of hiking prevented me often from observing more intensely the

<sup>133</sup> The concept of *terroir* developed in Chapter 4 is one expression of such a tacit knowledge.

<sup>134</sup> Possibly, this would have been more successful had I focused on participants' and my 'co-experiencing' (Howard 2013: 152) rather than on movement.

<sup>135</sup> Wacquant's sociology of boxing is a similar study '*from the body*' (2004 [2000]: viii, original emphasis), using the body as tool and source of knowledge, with the difference that boxing involves a different degree of social interaction. He speaks of "'observant participation'" (2004 [2000]: 6) to convey how he is drawn into participating rather than observing.

<sup>136</sup> We walked together for about thirty minutes until we reached a junction where he indicated the Cathar Trail route before turning back.

movements and behaviour of the hiker walking next to me when I was walking with others. Yet, this involvement was not a becoming part of a place and not being aware of what was happening around me, but a participation in an ongoing journeying.



Figure 9.4. Climbing the rough track on the first morning on the Trail.

My fieldwork difficulties accordingly relate to the bodily embeddedness of the hiker in the hiking process. Bodily experience was potentially generative, but I tried to reach pre-set ideas (my research design) through it which led to my frustrated ambitions. I experienced the demands of ‘research’ as an external pressure in conflict with my physical engagement and sensory perception: the terrain, the carrying of my backpack, the limited daylight, struggling against high winds and even fellow hikers. Retrospectively, I felt like I was running all the time during fieldwork although this was actually impossible considering the terrain and my backpack.<sup>137</sup> Especially my stay in the city of Carcassonne, in between my two treks, was disorienting and without respite. I was arranging meetings with hikers and local experts and interviewing the latter and evaluating the many letters in the departmental archives. My days in Carcassonne were

<sup>137</sup> For another example of a tired and rushed ethnographer see Holmes-Rodman (2004).

unpredictable (on call from local experts), following their' leads to other experts rather than walking along a trail. I was out all day on short errands, travelling to and fro (still on foot) rather than geographically progressing by my own walking effort. I missed the clear guidance and consecutive sequence of the Trail. I was relieved once I was back on the Trail for my second trek.

A difficulty of my fieldwork was the strain of spending twenty-four hours with other hikers, whether on the physically demanding Trail or in shared dormitories. It was a twenty-four hour immersion and study. I had anticipated that the time for privacy and 'time off' for writing expanded, analytic field notes would mostly be limited to the evenings, once I had arrived at the day's destination, but I did not imagine how spent I would be. I quickly scribbled notes during breaks so as not to forget what had happened then and there. At a couple of hostels I stayed 'incognito' and did not declare my research mission. In this case, I felt unwell and needed time and space to myself and did not have the energy to confront a group of intrusive hosts and non-hiking guests with my 'strange' project (this is how it felt to me at the time).

I was physically marred by my fieldwork. I started hiking the Trail with blisters which had formed when I was walking day after day in my hiking boots on the tarmac in the heat in Port-la-Nouvelle, waiting for news about my missing check-in luggage. (Eventually I found a flimsy substitute at a small shop among the souvenir shops.) Halfway through fieldwork, with strengthened leg muscles by then, but also irregular eating habits dependent on the availability of food, I became aware of my own fragility and need for privacy. I was unwell after eating brambles I had picked along the track and, on another day, figs picked by a villager from a tree in a village. After a troubled night, I started the next morning with wobbly legs. Individuals' radical statements (see, for example, the Inquisition Museum in Chapter 2) had a similar effect on me. They made me sick in my stomach and wobbly in my thinking. Delighted with Carcassonne's numerous food offers and compensating for my first trek, I walked into the Inquisition Museum, crêpe in hand. As explained above, the interludes between my Trail journeys were replete with tasks: I needed to eat but also visit the museum which was closing shortly after. Under the impact of the museum visit, I could not eat anything else that evening. Towards the end of my second trek, my knee signalled the end of my fieldwork. It ached when I was walking downhill and my backpack had become too heavy with amassed brochures.

My fieldwork experience on the Cathar Trail taught me that ‘walking-with’ was different from the ‘go-along’ method. The latter relies on short everyday walks for research, whereas I encountered difficulties of mobility and the ‘walking-with’ method which had specifically to do with long-distance hiking. I only noticed the following caveat after my fieldwork: ‘[g]o-alongs are clearly unfit to explore the many sites and activities that do not accommodate conversation, such as physically exhausting activities or rituals that require silence’ (Kusenbach 2003: 477). The practical issues of a continuous, two-week-long (250-kilometre-long) journey reflected back on my theoretical framework. I had not anticipated to what extent the ‘how’ (methods) of the research would inherently define the ‘what’ (data).

### **Reflection on versus engagement in hiking**

Following authors on mobile methods, I expected the walking process to be conducive to a holistic awareness in which body, movement and space belong together with multi-sensory impressions and a sense of self and other (Büscher et al. 2011: 120; DeWalt and DeWalt 2011 [2002]: 6). Various philosophically-inclined scholars, among them Ingold (2013: 174) and Massumi (2002: 231), understand thinking and participating as one. We know *in* the activity, in ongoing participation; we are aware when actively engaged in a situation (Massumi 2002: 231). There is a reciprocity between perceived things, body and thought (Massumi 2002: 90). They are implicated in each other (Massumi 2002: 95). More specifically, ‘perception and thought are two poles of the same process. They lie along a continuum’ (Massumi 2002: 91). Even according to a more pragmatic approach like Devanne’s, my involvement in hiking should not have prevented thinking. Devanne asserts about her research with hikers in the Pyrenees that, when walking, only our feet are busy stepping ahead; our mind is at leisure to ‘think, ponder, understand’ (2005: 97) and our hands are free to take notes.

When I planned my fieldwork, I adopted the walking method of mundane, daily walks as a model for my study (which I also intended to use as a means for myself to ‘grow’ into the bodily hiking knowledge) of hiking. Through fieldwork and analysis, I became aware of working with two different styles of movement, walking and hiking, which were not commensurable. I was trying to implement Tilley’s ‘phenomenological walk’ in the field – ‘walking as an active interpretative and methodological practice, as a means of study rather than something that might be studied’ (Tilley 2012: 28). In its

duration and physicality, long-distance hiking, however, operated with forms of observation and participation and knowing which were different from walking.<sup>138</sup> Even if hikers did not do the complete Trail, their journey was continuous from their chosen start to end. The daily stages were not walks they did every day.

According to a phenomenological approach, knowledge should have been elicited and not hindered by my being in place and movement. At least, that was what I expected and that was the kind of knowledge (the ‘how’, not the ‘what’, knowledge) I wanted to draw out. Arteaga (2012) calls it a sensuous knowledge which emerges in experience. I wanted to walk with others and grasp a tacit knowledge which was proper to walking and which we shared. However, I did not find the hiking process conducive to thinking (or at least in the taught way of thinking, under pressure to accumulate data) and to this holistic awareness. I struggled to gather field data because I did not have the time to stop and take stock. I was under constant pressure to find ‘research participants’ (and valuable data) and this produced a sense of lack of data.

Another external pressure was the need to record data. The research process challenged me to record and interpret participants’ and my own experiences. Madden advocates a ‘step-out’ (2010: 125) and ‘stand back’ (2010: 26) time: ‘[e]thnographers can step in and out of events to record participatory notes [...]. At other times note-taking can occur within the participation’ (Madden 2010: 123). However, I lacked the time and energy for writing as well as analytical reflection. Wind and nightfall limited where and hence when I could write but not as much as my tiredness. Because I did not want to isolate my writing from my moving, I tried taking jot notes over the day’s walking. But this resulted in itemising my environment and not being aware of its unfolding and of the unfolding hiking activity. Recording the lived experience in activity halted my movement. Writing could only be part of my hiking when I had the energy to keep walking in a ‘stop and go’- rhythm or to jot down words while walking (such as in the gorge in Chapter 7).

I equally found that audio recording what I observed while walking disrupted my sensory engagement, fundamentally changing my walking experience, not least making me puff while walking. Verbalising my environment and journeying out loud felt like I

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<sup>138</sup> Lund and Willson note that studies of walking tend to be romantic ‘trouble-free walking’ (2010: 99), emphasising the direct contact with surroundings rather than the practical stepping.

was supplanting my being and moving with my environment. It made me feel not just self-conscious but removed from my environment. Conversations with fellow hikers along the way rarely proceeded as interviews and rarely immediately formulated what we were doing and experiencing right at that moment.

Taking photographs with my digital camera was the easiest method of recording data (convenient and quick) but habitually punctuated the hiking process into walking towards a view, stopping, capturing, leaving this view behind. I had intended to use photographs as detailed documentation of Trail surroundings and as ‘mnemonic devices’ (Fetterman 2010 [1989]: 78) in my post-field analysis but further below I will problematise their function as representations.

In the end, I left the field with stories, shared experiences but little verbatim material from participants because their research participation had been continuously implicated in the hiking. My field diary (which partly reads like a travel account) became the main source for the thesis chapters. Then there were photographs, a few video and audio recordings, emails from participants and copies of archival records. I coded, categorised and indexed my written, visual and audio records and drafted a thesis outline on that basis. In the process of writing a chapter, I remembered other, unrecorded, details and sensations which I integrated in the chapter through an analytical lens.

While walking, reflection was an additional burden. It proved to be a struggle and at times impossible. This was the case not only with fellow participants on this hiking trail but also when I was walking alone: when I tried to reflect on the activity I was engaged in (walking) while I was walking, I was not fully immersed in it. Travelling within the tension between observation and participation, between reflection *on* and engagement *in*, my own involvement in the field prevented me literally from stepping back and from conceptualising my perceptions and experiences as ‘findings’. I could not observe fellow hikers’ meaning-making through walking without abstracting it from myself, from the activity and the place. But because I was immersed in the hiking, this abstracting was rare. Inevitably embodied, I realised that I could not abstract myself from my ‘object’ of study, the lived experience of hiking which I wanted to explore on this trail. Wylie (2005: 245) similarly struggled with a perceived disjunction between his intellectual goals and the concrete place until he came to understand that his interpretations were actually particular to the place experience and that there was no

pre-given world. While reflection appeared incompatible with embodied experience, I could not help remembering earlier hiking experiences when walking, especially when I came back on my second trek on the Trail and when I was in a similar situation (climbing or descending). As a result, I perceived places through their difference and similarity to my first trip. They also had a personal history which energised my walking through my sense of knowing the way.

### **The issue of representation**

My take on meaning is empirical. I expected that I would find the sense of the walking experience in the walking itself. Instead, the making sense was a separate process from the walking which required construction of knowledge and representations in words through a process of abstraction which produces ‘data’ (see Figure 9.5).

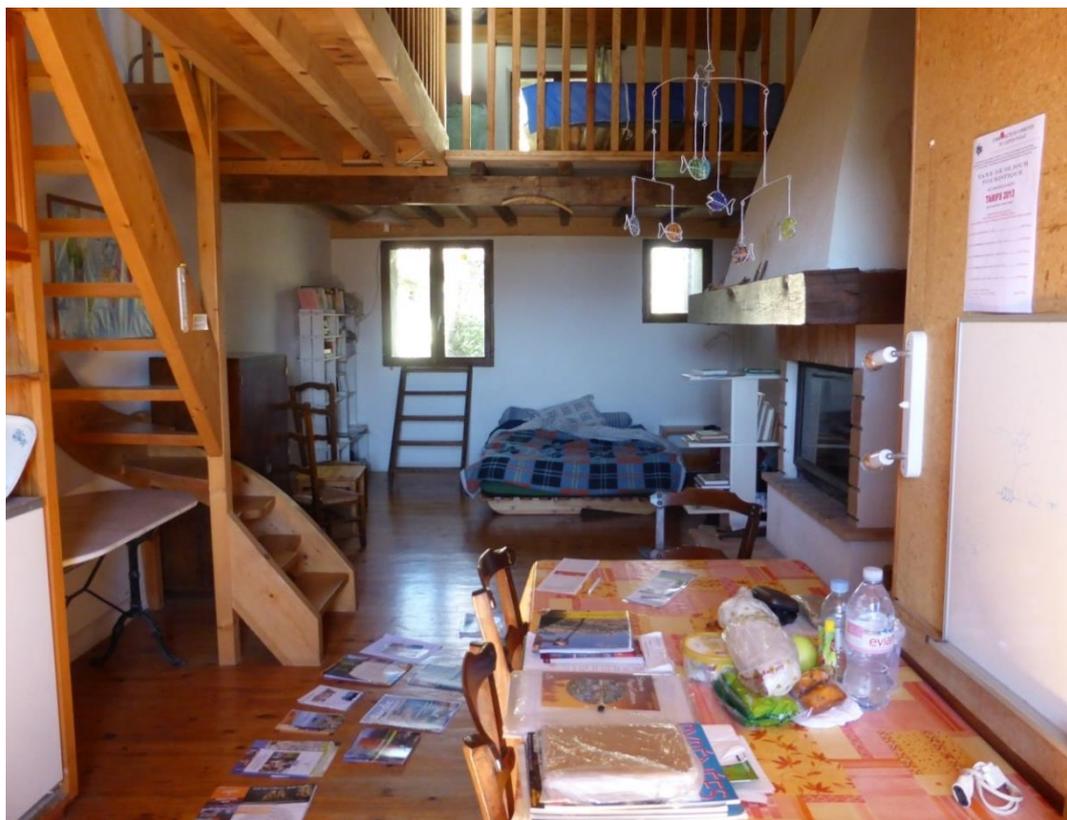


Figure 9.5. Shut in for the day: taking stock. Writing up notes and organising tourist brochures at an accommodation on the Trail. Possible because I had the room to myself.

### **Field experience versus research design**

The disparity between my theoretical framework and research design and my fieldwork became apparent when I was repeatedly concerned about the accuracy of my

representation in my analysis. My research design envisaged holistic theories actualised in my fieldwork, developing in the hiking, a knowing *from* life (see Ingold 2010: S122; 2013: 173). I had to accept that in practice I was thinking in a linear logic of production which I experienced as opposite to an immersion in hiking. This was partly caused by methodological anxieties: ‘Is this research? Am I doing enough? Does this count?’ (Cook 2010: 245). I was learning to work with a research framework. Because of prior practice, hiking was comparably easy for me to take up but I needed to remind myself of it as research.

‘Experience’ is key in this thesis. It was my field immersion rather than my research design which determined the formation of my ethnographic data. The walking method generated a specific kind of data. Missing expanded notes and analytic notes between jot notes and ‘headnotes’ (Ottenberg 1990), I struggled to bridge the gap between my daily field journal and theories. Due to the lack of participants’ verbalised reflections on their experience, I needed to build an analytical level from my impressions for my interpretation.<sup>139</sup> As a result, this thesis is more impressionistic, speculative and intuitive than originally envisaged, because it is based on what the field data afforded me. When writing chapters, I developed themes from fieldwork material and my theoretical interests and gradually added layers of interpretation, drawing on comparative and theoretical literature. For a stronger grounding (‘thickening’) of my interpretation, I drew on psychology and various other disciplines.

When I worked at verbalising my hiking experiences, the result remained in certain respects vague. Yet, this vagueness expresses in itself the potentiality of experience. Massumi explains that vagueness has a value: the indeterminacy (2002: 5) of experience. This vagueness is constitutive, existential, not a ‘lack of information’ (Massumi 2002: 232). ‘[T]he being that precedes cognition is always actively engaged in a defining actualization of potential. It is a being in becoming. As such, it carries a certain vagueness’ (Massumi 2002: 232). He uses the notion of intensity to express how matter and event and body relate (Massumi 2002: 33, 74). Walking enthusiast Frédéric Gros, who values the silence proper to walking, advocates that not everything that is part of the hiker’s journey should be explained, coded, put into words (2009: 89). I would not sanctify walking like this but agree that words should not be the measure of

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<sup>139</sup> Differently, Frey’s multi-sited ethnography on the Camino draws on pilgrims’ self-reflection on their experiences and works with their diverse stories (Frey 1998: 232, 235).

walking. Other forms of engagement such as drawing (Ingold 2007: 73; Taussig 2011) may communicate qualities of walking experiences.

The thesis writing process was not a ‘writing up’, collating, of ‘collected’ field data. Rather, knowledge formed through field experiences and encounters and through their analysis and through remembering. The tacit hiking knowledge did largely not translate into recorded data. The moving ‘body’ disappeared as participants rarely verbalised it. At the same time, I wrote my own corporeal movement into the thesis. Hiking the Tongariro Crossing in New Zealand in 2015 enabled me to revisit my Cathar Trail experiences because my physical engagement (my effort and fear when climbing or descending steep slopes) reminded me of what is involved in hiking. As Leder argues, awareness is embodied but becomes disembodied when perception is isolated from movement (1990: 116–117). In such body memories we are ‘remembering places, events, people *with* and *in* the lived body’ (Casey 2000 [1987]: xi).<sup>140</sup> Writing itself is embodied and temporal (Game 1995: 192). Overall, my experience of the hiking activity together with participants’ words formed the basis of my research.

My methods were inconclusive, not delivering the results I anticipated. But in a different, more obscure way, they demonstrated what I wanted to show with my data (through theorising the data) and which I did not find (participants did not tell me). Namely, that we do not *use* our bodies but that corporeal movement is an emergent and performative interrelation. I could not cut myself loose from the physical demands of hiking. This shows how the interrelations between place, movement and narratives encompass the research project and process themselves. My thinking was generated by the physical nature of my research. The thesis journey was *my* process of making sense.

## Photographs

Issues of articulation and representation apply not only to writing but also to imagery. Crang has judged photography a ‘spatio-temporal displacement’ (1999: 248) which uproots events from their time and space setting. This might be true when photographs serve to document. Indeed, the intended role of my photographs was documentation of the Cathar Trail (especially when hikers were absent). I took a little over 2,300 photographs during fieldwork. Once on the Trail, I compulsively photographed

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<sup>140</sup> Skinner, following ‘headnotes’, writes of ‘bodynote’ which is ‘a muscle memory, such as a dance step’ (Skinner 2010: 121) which is ‘motility and memory made manifest’ (Skinner 2010: 121).

waymarks and signposts when I was walking alone. They localised me on the Trail and indicated with their varying colours the complex making of the Trail. However, in the process of analysing data, my photographs soon became manifestations of my fieldwork practice. Only sometimes I felt too muddy, hungry or in a hurry because of fog to stop and take a picture. These are not just practical concerns but relevant to the knowledge formation in the field. Moreover, the overall 'sanitised' appearance of my photographs is a result of these lived situations. The pictures therefore work together with the text and are not set off from the text by a black frame.

More importantly, my photographs have become statements which, in integration with verbal records and my observations, built my argument. Similarly, in his monograph on skateboarding, Borden's photographs 'perform part of the argument of the book' (Borden 2001: 6). They are not just representations explained through text but statements. Most often, my photographs were not final additions to a chapter's contents. When writing a chapter I was frequently talking *to* a photograph. Photographs are consequently located at certain moments in the writing and reading process. The text developed with and sometimes from the pictures. As such they are not simply illustrations of verbally articulated statements except for the photographs in this chapter and in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 which construct the context of the field.

My photographs are however not so much statements about people as about my experience of movement. This is why they often do not feature people. I use photographs to share with the reader a sense of the lived Trail, my experience of involvement in movement with my environment. This 'sense' may be considered mostly visual because the interaction which is specific to the Trail is missing (we are currently neither hiking nor on the Cathar Trail). My use of photographs can potentially further a spectator mentality of flattened gaze without plasticity (after Pallasmaa 1996: 20). These are just images with a pretension to depth on the flat printed page or screen in front of the reader. In this vein and especially in the preceding chapter with its panoramas, my photographs might look, to a critical reader, like postcards of scenic landscapes, contradicting my argument of meaning formed through movement. Such a response comes as a provocation to my reasoning since my photographs are invitations to experiencing processes and things in formation (see Figure 9.6).



Figure 9.6. The first evening in the field. Wandering along the beachfront in Port-la-Nouvelle, missing my luggage. My fieldwork ingredients: the stones (environment) I need to come to grips with, the hiking boot which is part of my bodily being in place and my shadow which gives the field my shape. My self is many and part of my surroundings.

What I do not want to do with my photographs is to objectify experience. Therefore I did not highlight objects like boots as such. This would, in my experience, have led the reader to fixate on a definite object (boots) and encouraged an object- and metaphor-oriented understanding of the hiking experience. Most of my images do not stand in a metaphoric relation to hiking experiences *in situ*. I am not explaining hiking experiences through objects. The graspability of objects makes it hard to see the open-ended potential of movement. Taking up Bergson's philosophy of movement, Bachelard argues for 'the power of becoming which is expressed in movement. Motion, examined objectively as in a study of mechanics, becomes simply the transporting of an unchanging object through space' (1988 [1943]: 255): static. The problem with representation is how to have pictures evoke movement.

When I checked my photographs during the Trail stages, I missed the physical depth and steepness which I experienced acutely in terms of my effort (climbing a plateau for example) but was evened out in the picture. Besides, camera zoom was useful but I would have liked to also include the larger landscape setting in close-up photographs (for example in my shots of painted waymarks). Images cannot capture or show rhythm (Lefebvre cited in Borden 2001: 266; Crouch 2010: 79). How can the researcher then

analyse and communicate the performative, including various sensory dimensions, of experience (Borden 2001: 266)?

Videorecording (for example with a mounted GoPro camera) is a popular alternative nowadays to incorporeal stills (Pink 2015 [2009]: 182). However, I felt that at least my amateur filming produced a picture in motion seen *as if* through my eyes but that my body and the walker's kinaesthesia (sense of movement) were missing (see also Adey 2010: 143). Pink, on the other hand, highlights that video as well as photography are composed by the environment and situation in which they were produced and are shaped by the moving body of the recorder (2007: 250; 2013 [2001]: 40; 2015 [2009]: 125). Nonetheless, although thus embodied and emplaced, video does not entail or require the viewer's movement. The body here becomes as if transparent rather than being made explicit. The pictures were moving scenes, not an integrated environment moving. Through the interchange between my photographs and text, I aim to engage the reader. The evocation of movement develops through the reader's intuition and embodied imagination, beginning from the reader's own awareness of her/his bodily presence. Finally, to return to the photographing itself, Crang (1997: 366) has helpfully argued that a photograph is part of the event in which it was made. Taking photographs under way is to engage with and be attuned to the emplaced walking experience; it involves a 'reflexive sensibility' (Dawney 2014: 134). My photographs are then the result of my engaging with my surroundings in embodied motion.

### **Writing about walking**

In this last subsection, I trace the formation of knowledge through subsequent writing about walking in the thesis. Initially, I strove to write as close as possible to lived experience. Through structuring and writing the thesis I learned to accept and appreciate that writing is different from walking and that I should not strive for mimesis (making words the same as this lived experience). Until then I had explained my difficulty to articulate verbally my purpose and impressions by referring to a lack of words (similarly Paterson 2009: 766). I realised, however, that a possible shortcoming of language was not the point.<sup>141</sup> Words work differently as another form of lived experience. I can evoke something through writing. This does not mean that there is no relation between words and walking. On the contrary, the difference between text and

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<sup>141</sup> Csordas argues 'that the polarization of language and experience is itself a function of a predominantly representationalist theory of language' (1994: 11).

lived experience can be a productive resource (Spry 2011: 101), triggering reflection. My thesis developed in and through the formulated relation between the two. Although I still felt ambivalent about constructing meaning for research purposes, I increasingly accepted and appreciated that I was making meaning in the process of analysing. Chapter 8 with its thick theorising of spatiality is the foremost example.

The question of how to verbally represent movement remains. Except for this methodology chapter, chapter writing confronted me with a lack of words to express what, in our classificatory system, are ‘intangibles’. With objects we classify the world:

‘phenomenon’ and ‘object’ are two aspects of the same matter. We abstract the most invariant properties of the phenomena and call them objects. [...] A ‘phenomenological’ description is an illusion, as it necessarily has to classify the phenomena, that is, it has to be carried out in terms of objects. (Norberg-Schulz 1968 [1965]: 53)

For an interpretation I have to use defined concepts when I describe. The relation between theory and experience therefore poses a challenge in phenomenology, phenomenology being a means to access the meanings of lived experience (Norberg-Schulz 2000: 21).

Even empirically grounded writing struggles to be true to the field experiences, to rationalise them without draining them of their meaning, and especially so when researching mobile spaces. This raises the question of how ‘a static format’ (Fincham, McGuinness and Murray 2010: 10), the representation of walking, can convey the conscious experience of lived immediacy, the sense of being in place or the dynamics of movement. According to Lefebvre (1974: 134), objects (static and completed) preclude an understanding of the processes involved in forming the object. Sheets-Johnstone argues for a corporeal turn. She asks ‘to be mindful of movement’ (1999: xviii) and ‘to language these experiences [of ourselves moving and the movement in our surroundings] and to come to know them in ways that are phenomenologically consonant with the dynamically resonant kinesthetic and kinetic experiences they are’ (1999: xviii). Still, the structures of language remain dominant since corporeal knowing is signified in language (Gren 2001: 222). ‘One problem is that we do not intersubjectively share our bodies, but the signs we communicate’ (Gren 2001: 215). Words remain approximate as movement, in its immateriality, eludes language. De Certeau addresses the question of how to make actions legible when analysing so that ‘[t]he trace left behind [the legible graphic representation] is [not] substituted for the

practice' (de Certeau 1984: 97) in writing. Knowing 'what someone did' is easier than knowing 'how they did it' (Smyth and Wing 1984: 2).

Movement becomes complex when one tries to describe it with its speed, fluency and change. 'The difficulties experienced in devising systems for notating movement illustrate the complexity of movement itself' (Smyth and Wing 1984: 2). It is difficult to record the temporality and spatiality of movement since the 'coordination with mediating structure' is missing when we try to verbally articulate motor skills (Hutchins 1995: 311). The challenge for researchers is to develop creative methods to 'engage in, capture, notate, analyse, (re)present the spatio-temporal rhythms that choreograph leisure and everyday mobilities' (Haldrup 2011: 54) and to communicate them to others (van Manen and Adams 2009: 20).

Non-representational approaches guided my interpretation of field material. According to them, knowledge is situated and embodied (Gren 2001: 213; Thrift 1999: 304). Non-representational theorists focus on practice and performance (Thrift 1999: 304) and on processes of becoming, instead of structuring the world according to static representations of experience (Cloeke, Crang and Goodwin 2014: 742). They suggest placing and representing 'every trajectory [...] in its own timespace contexts' (Gren 2001: 212) and making the representation corporeal. Additionally, they advocate a performative view of language (Thrift 1999: 315). It performs and coordinates thoughts and actions in timespace. 'This suggests a change of perspective from nouns to verbs, and a focus on the bringing forth of the relation rather than the end-product of the related. Consequently, epistemology should no longer be understood as being about what knowledge *is*, but instead about how knowledge is *done*' (Gren 2001: 221, original emphasis). 'Theory becomes a *practical means of going on rather than something concerned with enabling us to see, contemplatively, the supposedly true nature of what something is*' (Thrift 1999: 304, original emphasis). I have thus tried to convey movement with words which carried over and carried on from hiking rather than building systematic categorisations.

I am consequently not drawing on a '[r]epresentationalist view of cognition' (Johnson cited in de Oliveira and de Souza Bittencourt 2008: 33), according to which our thinking operates in words, as mental images in relation to external objects.

Representation does not cancel out practice. Rather, my chapters explore a knowing in

movement, through practice, in engagement with our environments (Ingold 2003: 53). ‘Inhabitants [...] know as they go, as they journey *through* the world *along* a path of travel. [...] movement is itself the inhabitant’s way of knowing. [...] Such knowledge is neither classified nor networked but *meshworked*’ (Ingold 2009: 41, original emphasis). Theorising involves this kind of knowing, too. As Grosz writes about philosophy, it is not ‘a kind of pure reflection of thought, but in fact [...] an active labor of words – writing, arguing, criticizing. These are not just mental or conceptual skills but techniques of production’ (Grosz 2001: 5). In this vein, text is not static. Reading, writing and photographing are ‘practices embroiled in the performativities of’ (Merriman et al. 2008: 193) material things. My writing is consequently performative in this way (see Crouch 2010: 7). It is shaping and shaped by my ‘subject matter’. The process of analysis involved in the other chapters, for example, informed this methodology chapter which I wrote last. Here I note self-reflections throughout the writing process. These, in turn, reflected back on the data in the other chapters. An advantage of such autoethnographic writing is that it positions readers as ‘active participants in your research journey’ (Crang and Cook 2007: 175) and shows the writer involved in the research process. Drawing on performance theory, Senda-Cook proposes the concept of ‘rhetorical practices’ (2012: 131) which are dynamic and ephemeral. Her rhetorical practices have the advantage of including the material body-space (2012: 134, 135). It can be argued by extension that the reader bodily shares a lived space with the writer. Both engage with a book or computer.

### **Conclusion: in retrospect**

Embodied experience and movement are at the centre of my enquiry into human-environment interaction. Yet my fieldwork experiences led me to ponder how the researcher can bodily experience and understand other people’s experiences. Through an examination of my field experiences in relation to particular methods and situations I have traced how my phenomenological approach to human-environment interaction did not ‘work out’ *in situ*. I grappled with the question of how to work with and through one’s kinaesthetic sense in research. Yet, the methodological difficulties addressed in this chapter are part and parcel of the answers to my research question of *how* we do something informing *what* we know. Here, ‘meaning’ does not offer itself to the researcher but forms in the activity of hiking and research.

## CHAPTER 9

My study draws on personal experience, the ethnographic self, and the making of knowledge in movement, observing and sharing other hikers' journeys and talking with local experts. On the Trail, I could not easily observe how meaning came about. No, with fellow hikers I was forming it through my aspirations and my activity. Walking the Trail, the fieldworker is not only immersed in the field but is also performatively participating in bringing the research into being. In this respect, my movement along the Trail continues in my writing.

## CHAPTER 10

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# Conclusion

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This thesis has shown how hikers perceive, experience and make sense of their environments through walking along the Cathar Trail. A response to the question ‘how?’ necessarily explores particular moments and trajectories of movement *in situ*. I have argued that there is no determinate answer except to demonstrate that movement is key. Movement is the basis of the thesis. Moving is something we do, experience and share with others in various ways. In this context, the Cathar Trail is a particular journey, not so much *in* time and space as temporally and spatially made by Trail walkers.

My research is exploratory in kind. Processes of moving and meaning-making are at its centre. Drawing on phenomenological, ecological, interdisciplinary and interpretative approaches, it adopts a processual and experiential perspective in a holistic and integrative theoretical framework. Throughout, my thesis is informed by Ingold’s and Merleau-Ponty’s works. However, I did not cite them on all aspects of hikers’ Trail journeys since, to me, their value lies also in the integrity of their ideas which made me refrain from constantly taking a ‘piece’ of their theories to fit to a particular situation. Similarly, while the meaning making process might seem to involve a number of discrete parts, I wanted to adopt a view of the experience of movement in place as integrating all these as part of each other. To clarify, in my use of the term ‘meaning’, I do not set mental representation and sensory perception apart. Ways of knowing/moving participate in and constitute what we know. According to phenomenology, movement is the essence of perception (Ingold 2000a: 203). Hikers’ perception and knowledge of their surroundings was specific to hiking, their sustained locomotion, shouldering a backpack, their pace and sense of spaciousness.

The thesis accordingly problematises the role of movement in hikers’ experiences and sensory perceptions on the Cathar Trail. When I walked with hikers along the Trail in 2013, I focused on others’ and my own physical movement and verbalised experience. I

intended to show hikers' making of meaning in the context of human-environment interaction by exploring the relation between body, movement and space and between sensory perception, knowledge and place. How did hikers' embodied experiences of place and historical narratives interrelate? What emerged from these intersections?

### **Moving through meaning: chapter recapitulation**

On the basis of the complex constructions of Cathar histories and places, I had initially set out to investigate how hikers' lived experiences related to these official narratives and sites which held an aesthetic and emotional appeal to novelists and historians and to myself. In accordance with the development of my analysis of field material, the thesis began by presenting the Cathar Trail and its heritage sites as constructed and contested. Chapters 2 and 3 situated hikers' journeys in socio-political and geographical contexts by deconstructing the twentieth-century historical narratives of the Cathar history, heritage discourses and sites which are the basis of the Trail. These initial chapters served to demonstrate that multiple histories and socio-political agendas are relevant to the Cathar Trail. The waymarkings at the centre of Chapters 5 and 6, for example, function in relation to these constructs. Chapters 2 and 3 were consequently a context for later chapters, not in the sense of 'framing' but of dimensions which 'interweave' (see the definition of context in Chapter 8) with hikers' embodied experiences. Hikers' experiences were grounded in the substance of the Trail in which the Trail designers' agendas of the 1980s are materialised. The Trail, in turn, operates ideologically and commercially within the political programme of the 'Cathar Country' discussed by Chapter 3.

Yet Chapter 4 showed that hikers came to know the Cathar Trail largely in terms of their hiking, so through their physical interaction with their environments in journeying. The trail they hiked differed in meaning from official Trail agendas. Walking time – slow and expanding, but also limited – was a crucial factor in their journeys which usually prevented them from visiting the castle ruins along the Trail. Hikers were thus making the Trail through their practices, agendas, expectations and trip organisation. With the holistic concept of *terroir*, I highlighted the importance of their active engagement in material place. I used *terroir* as one concretisation of a movement-based meaning-making which does not discriminate between cultural landscapes and physical topography and which fits well with hikers' experiences and their sense of place. Rather

than accessing the ‘Cathar history’ in the landscape, hikers’ Trail journeys constituted individual narratives.

In Chapter 5 and 6, I argued that hikers’ wayfinding on the Trail involves official Trail constructs (waymarkings and maps) and hikers’ embodied experiences together. These paired chapters reveal movement, experience and meaning as indivisible. Official discourses are not separate from people’s ‘embodied’ experience. My discussion of wayfinding demonstrates that hikers made their own way, shaped by physical movement, topography, sensory perception, technologies and other hikers. I showed environmental orientation to be spatial, sensory, social as well as political.

Chapter 7 demonstrated the potential of the embodied and emplaced physical activity of walking in the Cathar context. My investigation of the particular mode of a group’s conscious walking in the Cathar Country highlighted the body-mind-environment integration, a heightened awareness of one’s sense of self and a holistic way of knowing. The very process of walking and a more attentive engagement with one’s environment can engage the imagination and, at times, the Cathars, who were walkers themselves on these paths. The Cathars here become one example of hikers’ making of meaning through movement: walkers came to know them through their own walking on paths in the Cathar lands.

Chapter 8 developed the theory of spatiality as an experiential quality of movement, in particular of long-distance hiking and mountaineering. Hikers’ movement along the Trail makes meaning by generating a hiking-specific spatiality. Here I drew attention to hikers’ continuing temporal journeys, their trajectories of travel which also responded to the Trail topography and to how they oriented themselves through their moving body in the terrain. My own experience of a fearful tree-clinging ridge climb manifested the interdependency of body and environment. The meaning which forms in such particular and individual situations pertains to a deep body-environment engagement. I further characterised this hiking spatiality by explaining that views from vantage points and the horizon are relative to the hiker moving. Spatiality expands and contracts through various, ever-changing media such as the ground, the weather and light.

Chapter 9 explicated the development of my analysis of hiking experiences for research purposes, how others’ and my own interactions on the Trail and my interpretations interrelate. It explained that analytical research data could not be abstracted from my

physical engagement as hiker in the Trail environment. The tension I experienced between research impositions and Trail demands were a symptom of this interrelation. Meaning formed in my hiking practice which was my research practice as well. Furthermore, representations of these experiences in writing and photography shape and extend this interrelation which emerged in hiking along the Trail. Longer and shorter chapters alternate and some passages in the thesis are more heavily theorised, whereas others are more fluent field narratives. It is hoped that this uneven rhythm makes the experience of reading the thesis more dynamic.

### **Hiking is not a metaphor: contribution to knowledge**

The main contribution of my research is to demonstrate the importance of bodily movement in how we perceive our surroundings. The thesis promotes a dynamic and interactive understanding of perception which involves the making of meaning. It shows that embodied experience is crucial even in a world which is commonly characterised by technological intervention and digital availability. Alternative to the abstract motion of objects shuttling around in a network, I present movement as localised, active and bodily (inseparable from the ‘mental’). In the context of the Cathar Trail along which I met hikers from further afield as well as local day walkers, I included walking in hiking.

An analysis of the process of walking the Cathar Trail is of value to anthropological research as it addresses the critical issue in anthropology of how people make sense of their environment and how and where they locate themselves. By exploring movement, perception and meaning in integration, the thesis goes beyond the persisting, mind/body and mind/world dualisms. It promotes a holistic understanding of how people and environment reciprocally relate to each other in action. As such, the thesis develops an integrative approach which does not oppose cultural constructs (discourses) and ‘phenomenological experience’ (for the latter see Tilley 2004: 30; van Manen 2014: 28).

My research adds to landscape studies by proposing the term *terroir*. Terroir conveys a sense of place which overcomes the tension of cognitive constructs versus material terrain which is often at stake in discussions of landscape. It does not discriminate between situated embodied experiences and cultural constructions. Critically, it highlights people’s activities and ephemeral weather conditions. I make sense of the Trail through *terroir*. Here my study can be associated with the collaboration between

art and science and with the aims of aesthetic sustainability to establish novel connections between knowledge, experiences and action (Goehler 2012). It is based on the senses, requires new forms of learning and includes human activity in conceptions of natural or cultural heritage.

My study draws on various academic disciplines together with anthropology: geography, tourism, environmental studies, architecture, philosophy, psychology, architecture, movement studies, dance studies, history and others. The thesis speaks to contemporary practices which foreground movement, forms of body practices which bring forth a heightened sense of self and awareness of the process of walking (see Thrift 2000: 35). Hiking in challenging terrain can likewise make individuals more attentive to their environments. The thesis develops the theory of a particular, dynamic and interconnected hiking spatiality which replaces the established notion of an abstract and static container space. This is a movement-based sense of space which is bodily generated. In terms of methodology, the study conceptualised the making of knowledge in the field and during the process of analysis as challenging yet enriching. It elucidated that the research as well as the hike were situated and embodied forms of learning and knowing.

I have investigated human-environment relations in a European setting which is narrated in multiple historical narratives. By drawing out the particularities of hikers' physical engagement with their environments, my study equally contributes to anthropological understandings across scales. The study of people's movement resolves the problem in anthropology of how to unite small (the lived embodied space of phenomenology) and large (transnational space) and multiple scales (Rockefeller 2010: 20, 248, 268). Rockefeller's research demonstrates that the dynamic pattern made by people's actions and travels (2010: 9, 23) is 'intrinsically connected to other places' (2010: 248). Even my study which is focused on place contingencies, trail-bound experiences like the hiking on a particular trail (a geographical fixture), is not insular. It involves other people and geographical places in people's experience. As to wider social and practical significance, the research is relevant for tourism, environmental conservation and cultural heritage. A practical benefit of the project is making the Cathar Trail and the area known to a wider audience.

## Reflecting on the research process

In a way, hikers' Trail journeys in 2013 are already 'history'. The Trail is no longer the same, either. Now a GR with a new guidebook and map, it has been transformed in 2014 down to its official constitution, further adding to the Trail complexities.

Nonetheless, my journey of exploration continued as I invoked hikers' Trail-making in writing the chapters for the thesis. The years of thinking and writing about the hike prolonged other hikers' and my own experiences on the Trail and made them present to me. I grew attached to the researched Trail and felt a sense of loss and of having been cheated when I heard about the change to the Trail. Even so, we had participated in the Trail's history and our hiking continued in other places. The Apostles returned to the Cathar Trail a year later to hike the stages which remained from their first time round.

The research process of the thesis was shaped by my research design. The question that I had carried around with me over several undergraduate years and backpacking trips – how do people experience 'history' in the landscape when they are hiking – was soon answered in my fieldwork on the Cathar Trail: they do not. This recognition stopped me short, not on the Trail but in my process of analysis. I grappled with my undermined research question. My belief in history made me 'hunt' for the hiker who would do the Trail in the way of history. Implied in the question is the problematic essentialist assumption that history exists out there, in itself (plus it uses the Western concept of landscape as a reality). I learned that there were various discourses at work (see Chapter 3), that there was not one layer of history added to one layer of place or landscape. Fieldwork showed that neither 'history' nor 'place' worked for my purposes (except as reflections of my conceptualisation). I needed to find a conceptual way into movement. Yet although I wanted very much to take 'movement' as organising principle for the thesis, I could not formulate a mould in which to conceptualise it. Through thinking and writing and walking I slowly became more accepting and more appreciative of 'the proliferation of loose ends' (Ingold 2013: 177) which is the world as we live it. If we understand ourselves, and the participant observer in particular, as relating to things in a relation of 'correspondence' (Ingold 2011: 241), we can acknowledge life, and by extension learning, from within. In this sense, I responded to things as I encountered them in the process of my research and slowly began to learn from them as I became more attentive to them.

So my study is not autoethnographic in the sense of being about myself as much as giving the reader a certain understanding of movement through my experience.<sup>142</sup> The frequent use of the personal pronoun ‘I’ is part of phenomenological writing. To a certain extent, Ness’s experience of a ‘contingent, hiker-being self’ (2007: 82) reflects my hiking experience in relation to my self:

I sought through hiking to regain a certain motile way of being in/with the landscape. The goal was literally to re-member, and physically to re-turn our Selves to “hikerbeing” – to selves whose experience was more *grounded* (in the sense that dancers colloquially use that term) in the Valley’s geographical features. The hiking “I” was a way-making “I”, an “I” that began to manifest only once we had an experience of being *on our way*, [...]. We hiked so as to live a certain kind of motile “Iness”, a subjectivity contingent on a locomotive habit of conduct and otherwise lost to awareness. The Four Mile Trail was the kind of “space” – as that term is often used by performing artists to describe performance venues such as theatres, arenas or concert halls – that could bring out our hiker I’s in a particularly spectacular way. (Ness 2007: 82, original emphasis)

When setting out on the present research project, I felt that the sense I had of movement in hiking could be rendered more salient in texts in the social sciences. With fieldwork and subsequent analysis, however, I learned that movement is not a ‘standalone’ absolute. Of course, movement does not ‘stand’ by itself but ‘takes place’ in and through individual histories. It exists as a verb, ‘moving’. So what I tried to do was to indicate relations between ‘things’ (in Ingold’s use of the term). We can experience and observe and work with movement in its relativity to things. I returned to texts I had previously cast aside and began a slow process of concretising movement through particular instances such as placemaking (which became Trail-making as Chapter 4 progressed), wayfinding at a junction (Chapters 5 and 6) and meditative stepping (Chapter 7). Chapter 8’s spatiality comes the closest to my initial idea of movement but required the most support from literature.

### **Practice and theory: difficulties and possibilities**

Here I address two interrelated limitations in my research and recommendations for future research. The first limitation is practical, the second stems from the mutual implication of practice and theory. Timing was a crucial practical factor in my fieldwork since hiking a Trail for research is a spatial and temporal journey which relies on other people and on the Trail and weather conditions. Autumn (September/October) is the

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<sup>142</sup> See also Pink’s (2015 [2009]: 123–113) comment on Lund’s exploration of seeing in motion.

ideal hiking season for the Cathar Trail in terms of weather conditions. As I found, however, the Trail was not busy then and certain amenities were already closed. A similar field research during the months of May and June is likely to benefit from a higher number of hikers on the Trail (and thus more opportunities for research). At the same time, however, I was probably able to develop better rapport and gain a better understanding of their journeying and their experiences because I could spend more time with the same hikers or walkers than I would have on a busy trail.

Chapter 9 explained how mobile methods could limit meeting points between mobile researcher and mobile hikers. Our encounters were temporally and spatially contingent on our respective trajectory and progression. Presumably, I could have recorded numerous travel stories had I awaited hikers at hostels (see Frey 1998). However, for an insight into tacit embodied hiking knowledge and the experience of an ‘uninterrupted’ journeying on foot over several days I decided to travel as the other hikers on the Trail did. Some casual encounters along the way led to unexpected insights into the role of movement and environmental perception in hikers’ experiences. Future research projects into long-distance hiking might find a combination of both walking-with and being stationed in one place useful.

The second limitation in my research relates to the question of hikers’ participation in my research project. My emphasis on movement could be said to have a tendency to overshadow people with their life histories.<sup>143</sup> I did not examine the issue of agency because my concern was to highlight that movement is crucial in how we understand our environments. This is a matter of emphasis and is not to negate other aspects. Inevitably, my research was formed by my research design. Similarly, I emphasised kinaesthesia but did not mean to exclude other senses. In my understanding, perception is not split into separate senses. Again, when I defined movement (or spatiality in Chapter 8) as ‘physical’ or constructions as ‘cultural’ or ‘social’, I underlined a certain dimension of movement or constructions but did not intend to imply that movement is physical in opposition to mental processes.

To make sense of embodied experience, I needed to extrapolate from walkers’ statements and my observations. Literature and other hikers’ and my own experiences

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<sup>143</sup> Hill’s criticism of Wylie’s writings reveals similarly that Wylie’s accounts focus on his thoughts, feelings and memories and neglect other people (2013: 382).

corresponded to varying degrees. Sometimes, it was the difference between the two which helped me to indicate knowledge which hikers did not verbally express. Sometimes, the more heavily theoretically referenced passages in chapters helped me to conceptualise my kinaesthetic experience. This was a personal process of making of meaning in the sense that other hikers did not themselves work with this literature.<sup>144</sup> Future studies could give participants a stronger voice by focusing more on the diverse hikers who walk the Trail and by developing a more dialogic ethnography with hiker-participants. For hikers to have a stronger and more active role in such a phenomenological research, however, they would optimally join in with the interpretative meaning-making. In Mullins's (2009) research, for example, his participants prepare for their canoe tour by reading the phenomenological literature which he then uses to analyse his research material. For a more situation- and activity-based research it might be better to build an interpretation more on the shared activity rather than on such theoretical 'guidebooks'. Participants who engage in walking with a particular philosophical, spiritual or artistic agenda might be more likely to talk about their embodied experience. The Belgian group in Chapter 7, for example, cultivated a heightened awareness of their own movement through their environment. I maintain that walking with hikers remains crucial throughout. The way hikers walked the Cathar Trail and my own practical constraints shaped my research. Both hikers and my journeying were in themselves integral to the Cathar Trail.

### **And a continuing learning process**

My interpretative shift from constructed tourist sites to hiking spatiality reflects the experiential grounding of the thesis which I progressively learned to conceptualise through writing the chapters. This focus makes for a thesis which is written more in terms of hikers' experiences, rather than oriented towards official guidelines. The thesis thereby also narrates my learning process of how to write fellow hikers' and my sense of movement. I have given our lived experiences a certain form. As MH said, adapting the words of Saint Augustine, '[t]o walk is to make a path'. I have learned through my struggle with the mobile method of walking-with and analytical dissonance that my project itself is movement-made. Interweaving epistemology and methodology, the

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<sup>144</sup> Other walkers and I share, however, their literary and philosophical references through which I equally interpret our experiences.

## CHAPTER 10

thesis is at one and the same time about meaning-making through movement and is in itself a form of knowledge formed from movement.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: Information Sheets and Consent Forms for participants (English and French)



MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES  
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

### ***Travelling through Space and Time: Perceptions and Experiences of Hikers on the Cathar Trail in Southern France***

#### INFORMATION SHEET

Thank you for taking the time to learn about my project. My name is Ariadne Menzel and this field research is part of my PhD thesis in Social Anthropology at Massey University, New Zealand. The aim of this project is to find out how hikers interact with their environment on the Cathar Trail in southern France and how they interpret these surroundings. It explores how hiking and history influence people's perceptions and experiences of place. I would very much appreciate your participation in my research.

To collect data for my thesis I will talk with hikers when walking on the trail and visiting tourist attractions. In visitor centres and shops I will also talk with tourism sector employees. I will identify local experts in advance through local research centres, publications and advertisements on websites. Via email I will introduce my project and invite them to contribute. I will hand out Consent Forms to participants or ask you for oral consent.

I will walk with hikers and ask questions in casual conversations and in one-to-one interviews with local experts. Interviews will last up to 45 minutes; the length of informal conversations will vary. I will document information in writing, photographs and occasional audio recordings, maps and sketches. I cannot absolutely guarantee the confidentiality of data but I will strive to ensure it as much as possible. Your name will not appear in my thesis.

Collected data will be securely stored with my valuables during my journey and only be accessible to myself and my supervisor. In New Zealand, it will be safely kept for five years before being disposed of in accordance with the University guidelines. Project results may be presented at conferences and seminars and may be published. My thesis will be available in the Massey University Library. If you wish, I will be happy to email you a summary of the project findings.

Te Kunenga  
ki Pūrehuroa

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MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES  
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

*You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:*

- *decline to answer any particular question;*
- *in the case of recorded interviews, ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;*
- *withdraw from the study until 2 weeks after the interview;*
- *withdraw your data until 2 weeks after the interview;*
- *ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;*
- *provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;*
- *be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.*

*Please feel free to contact myself and/or my supervisor if you have any questions about the project:*

Ariadne Menzel [a.menzel@massey.ac.nz](mailto:a.menzel@massey.ac.nz)

or: Professor Kathryn Rountree  
+64 9 414 0800 43476  
[k.e.rountree@massey.ac.nz](mailto:k.e.rountree@massey.ac.nz)

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application 13/021. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Ralph Bathurst, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone +64 9 414 0800 43404, email [humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz).

Thank you for your interest.

Te Kūnenga  
ki Pūrehuroa

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MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES  
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
TE KURA PŪKĒNGA TANGATA

*Voyager à travers l'Espace et le Temps*  
**PERCEPTIONS ET EXPÉRIENCES DE RANDONNEURS**  
*Sur le Sentier Cathare dans le sud de la France*

FICHE D'INFORMATION

Merci de m'accorder quelques minutes d'attention afin de vous présenter mon projet. Je m'appelle Ariadne Menzel. Ce travail sur le terrain fait partie intégrante de ma thèse de doctorat en anthropologie sociale à l'Université de Massey en Nouvelle-Zélande. Ce projet a pour objectif de découvrir comment les randonneurs interagissent avec leur environnement sur le Sentier Cathare dans le sud de la France et comment ils interprètent cet environnement. L'objet de l'étude est d'examiner comment la marche et l'histoire influent sur les perceptions et les expériences des gens par rapport à l'endroit où ils se trouvent. J'apprécierais beaucoup votre participation à mon projet.

Pour la collecte des données, je vais parler avec des randonneurs en marchant sur le sentier et en visitant des attractions touristiques. Je vais également m'entretenir avec des employés du tourisme dans des Centres et Offices de tourisme et des boutiques de souvenirs pour les touristes. Je vais identifier les experts locaux au préalable par le biais des centres locaux de recherche, des publications et des annonces sur le site web. Par courrier électronique, je vais présenter mon projet à ces experts et les inviter à y prendre part. Je vais vous donner le Formulaire de Consentement, à vous participants, ou solliciter votre consentement verbal.

Je vais marcher avec les randonneurs et leur poser des questions au cours de conversations informelles et dans des interviews individuelles avec des experts locaux. Les interviews vont durer jusqu'à trois quarts d'heure; la durée des conversations informelles pourra varier. Je vais enregistrer les données à l'écrit, en photographies et enregistrements-audio occasionnels, et les illustrer par des cartes et des croquis. Je ne peux pas garantir totalement la confidentialité des données, mais je vais faire de mon mieux. Votre nom n'apparaîtra pas dans ma thèse.

Pendant mon voyage, les données recueillies vont être conservées en sécurité avec mes objets de valeurs. Elles seront uniquement accessibles à moi-même et à ma directrice de thèse. En Nouvelle-Zélande, je les garderai en lieu sûr pendant cinq ans avant de les détruire selon les règles de l'Université. Il se peut que les résultats du projet soient présentés à des conférences et des séminaires et qu'ils soient publiés. Ma thèse sera disponible dans la bibliothèque de l'Université de Massey. Si vous le souhaitez, je vous enverrai volontiers un résumé des résultats du projet par courrier électronique.

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*Vous n'êtes en aucun cas obligé(s) d'accepter cette invitation. Si vous décidez de participer, vous avez le droit de:*

- *refuser de répondre à n'importe quelle question spécifique;*
- *demander que le magnétophone soit éteint à tout moment pendant l'interview dans le cas d'interviews enregistrées;*
- *vous retirer de l'étude jusqu'à 2 semaines après l'interview;*
- *retirer vos données jusqu'à 2 semaines après l'interview;*
- *poser n'importe quelle question concernant le projet à tout moment dans le cadre de votre participation;*
- *fournir des informations en sachant que votre nom ne sera pas utilisé sauf si vous en donnez l'autorisation au chercheur;*
- *d'avoir accès à un résumé des résultats des recherches quand le projet sera terminé.*

*Au cas où vous auriez des questions au sujet du projet de recherche, n'hésitez pas à me contacter et/ou de contacter ma directrice de thèse:*

Ariadne Menzel [a.menzel@massey.ac.nz](mailto:a.menzel@massey.ac.nz)

Ou bien: Professor Kathryn Rountree  
+64 9 414 0800 43476  
[k.e.rountree@massey.ac.nz](mailto:k.e.rountree@massey.ac.nz)

Ce projet a été examiné et approuvé par le Comité d'Éthique Humaine de l'Université de Massey: Nord, Dossier 13/021. Si vous avez des questions concernant la méthode selon laquelle cette étude est menée, n'hésitez pas à contacter Dr Ralph Bathurst, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, téléphone: +64 9 414 0800 43404, e-mail: [humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz).

Merci de votre attention.

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MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
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AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
TE KURA PŪKĒNGA TANGATA

***Travelling through Space and Time:  
Perceptions and Experiences of Hikers  
on the Cathar Trail in Southern France***

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree / do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Full Name - printed** \_\_\_\_\_

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## *Voyager à travers l'Espace et le Temps*

### **PERCEPTIONS ET EXPÉRIENCES DE RANDONNEURS**

#### *Sur le Sentier Cathare dans le sud de la France*

##### FORMULAIRE DE CONSENTEMENT DU PARTICIPANT - INDIVIDUEL

- J'ai lu la fiche d'information et on m'a expliqué les détails de l'étude. J'ai eu des réponses satisfaisantes à mes questions, et je comprends que je peux poser d'autres questions à tout moment.
- Je suis d'accord / Je ne suis pas d'accord qu'il y ait un enregistrement audio de l'interview.
- Je suis d'accord pour participer à cette étude aux conditions spécifiées sur la fiche d'information.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Nom et prénom –  
en majuscules \_\_\_\_\_

Te Kunenga  
ki Pūrehuroa

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## APPENDIX 2: Interview Guides (English and French)

### Researcher introduction for casual conversations

In informal settings (when walking on the Cathar Trail) I will introduce myself in the following way:

*My name is Ariadne Menzel and I am doing research on hikers on the Cathar Trail for my PhD in social anthropology. I am interested in people's experiences on the Trail and what they take away from it. For example, I want to find out what hikers make today of the Cathars and of the landscape we are walking through right now. Would you like to participate in my research? You would help me in advancing my project. We can just have a casual conversation which takes as long as you want. And I will take notes to record some of it later or while we are walking. Or if you are happy with it I can audio record it. I will be careful with the information you give me. Here is my card with my contact details and I have an Information Sheet and Consent Form for you which give some more details if you want.*

Layout of the business card:



With hikers:

**1. Why did you decide to do this trek?**

– motivations for hiking & motivations for choosing this trail or a section of it rather than another (values, environmental concern, ideas about the Cathars and the Pyrenean landscapes, influence of fiction etc.)

**2. What do you like / dislike on the Cathar Way? What strikes you and why?**

– features in the landscape, risks and problems encountered

**3. How do you feel in this place? How does this ruin make you feel?**

**How close do you feel to the Cathar past/ to your surroundings? What makes you feel connected?**

– features in the landscape, tramping etc.

**4. What surprises you? What did you expect?**

Experiencing it, what do you make of the Cathar history and the trail?

How would you change the guidebooks/ travel accounts which guide your trip?

– difference between reading about it and being engaged in activity on site

**5. What do you think about the tourist sites (their management, presentation)?**

– the visitor experience; the significance of sites

**6. How did you prepare for your trip? How did you choose your itinerary and direction to walk?**

– role of travel accounts and guidebooks (which?), accommodation, choice of equipment etc.

**7. What guides you on your trip? How does 'it' guide you and where to? What is your destination?**

– navigation: narratives, topographies

**8. How do you find your way? Which tools do you use for orientation?**

– guides and maps (which?), signposts, way-markings, compass, GPS etc.

**9. How do you organise your time (breaks etc.)? How do you start and end the day?**

– rhythm of walking; the pragmatics of travel

**10. Do you record your journey? If yes, how and according to which criteria? By**

putting it down on a map, with photographs, in writing, by buying postcards (of what?), souvenirs (what kind of souvenirs?) etc.?

– constructing narratives

**11. Tell me about the stages you have done already: How was your day yesterday? Why, what happened or what was special?**

– spatial narratives

**12. What do you think about somebody researching people on the trail?**

– what value do trampers attribute to what they are doing and perceiving/experiencing

With local experts and inhabitants:

1. What is your favourite part in the 'Cathar country'? Why? Why is one site more significant than another?

2. What makes a site authentic? How important is it that sites are authentic?

3. What is Catharism for you? What role does the Cathar history play?

4. How has the tourism of the Cathar Trail and sites changed over time? Who walks the trail and visits the sites?
5. How have the Cathar Trail and sites changed over time? What do you think about the management of the trail and the sites and the services for visitors?
6. Who set up, funds, manages and/or markets the Cathar Trail and sites (a national body, a trust, a history society etc.)? With what objective(s)? Who is the target audience?
7. What is the role of local experts? How important are historians, mountain guides etc.? What can they influence?

Additional questions for historians specialising in Cathar history:

- a) How did you come across Catharism?
- b) Why did you choose to specialise in Cathar history? What is fascinating to you about it?
- c) What is and has been the agenda of past and current Cathar research centres? Who initiated them and why?

Additional questions for tourism sector employees (mountain guides etc.):

- a) Where do visitors want to go? What do they look for?
- b) Why do visitors come? What is the relationship between nature, culture and history on the Cathar Trail?
- c) Where do you take visitors? Why?
- d) How do you guide groups? What do you comment on during the tour?
- e) Which tourist attractions are the most/ least successful? What are problems?
- f) Where are visitors from?
- g) When do they come and how long do they stay?

## Guides pour la conduite de l'interview

### Présentation informelle du projet:

*Je m'appelle Ariadne Menzel et je fais des recherches sur les randonneurs sur le Sentier Cathare pour mon doctorat en anthropologie sociale. Je m'intéresse aux expériences des gens sur le sentier et à leurs interprétations. Par exemple, je veux découvrir comment les randonneurs trouvent aujourd'hui les cathares et qu'est-ce qu'ils pensent du paysage qu'on est en train de traverser. Est-ce que vous voudriez participer à mon projet? Vous m'aideriez à avancer mon projet. On peut simplement avoir une conversation informelle qui dure aussi longtemps que vous le voulez. Et je vais prendre des notes de la conversation plus tard ou en marchant. Ou, si vous n'avez rien contre, je peux faire un enregistrement audio. Je vais prendre soin de vos données. Voici ma carte avec mes coordonnées et j'ai une fiche d'information et un formulaire de consentement pour vous qui donnent plus de détails si vous voulez.*

### Avec des randonneurs

#### **1. Pourquoi est-ce que vous avez décidé de faire cette randonnée?**

– Les motivations pour faire de la marche à pied & les motivations pour choisir ce sentier de randonnée ou un tronçon de ce sentier plutôt qu'un autre (valeurs, préoccupations en matière d'environnement, idées portant sur les Cathares et les paysages pyrénéens, influence de fictions historiques etc.)

#### **2. Qu'est-ce qui vous plaît / vous déplaît sur le Sentier Cathare? Qu'est-ce qui vous frappe et pourquoi?**

– Les caractéristiques du paysage, les risques et problèmes rencontrés

#### **3. Comment vous sentez-vous dans cet endroit? Qu'est-ce que cette ruine vous fait comme effet?**

#### **En quoi vous sentez-vous proche du passé cathare/ par rapport à votre environnement?**

Qu'est-ce qui vous fait sentir proche?

– Les caractéristiques du paysage, de la marche etc.

#### **4. Qu'est-ce qui vous surprend? A quoi vous attendiez-vous?**

Avec votre expérience sur place et en marchant, qu'est-ce que vous pensez de l'histoire cathare et du sentier?

Comment changeriez-vous les guides et récits de voyages qui guident votre voyage?

– La différence entre lire des textes et être impliqué dans l'activité sur place

#### **5. Qu'est-ce que vous pensez des sites touristiques (leur aménagement, leur aspect)?**

–L'expérience que font les visiteurs; la signification des sites

#### **6. Comment est-ce que vous avez préparé votre voyage? Comment est-ce que vous avez choisi votre itinéraire et le sens de la marche?**

– Le rôle des récits de voyages et des guides (lesquelles?), l'hébergement, le choix de l'équipement etc.

#### **7. Qu'est-ce qui vous guide pendant votre voyage? Comment 'cela' vous guide et où est-ce que 'cela' vous guide? Quelle est votre destination?**

– Navigation: récits, topographies

#### **8. Comment est-ce que vous trouvez votre chemin? Quels instruments utilisez-vous pour vous orienter?**

– Les guides et les cartes (lesquels?), les panneaux, le balisage, la boussole, le GPS etc.

- 9. Comment est-ce que vous organisez votre temps (haltes etc.)?** Comment est-ce que vous commencez et finissez la journée?  
– Le rythme de la marche; l’aspect pratique du voyage
- 10. Est-ce que vous documentez votre voyage? Si oui, comment et selon quels critères?** En traçant le voyage sur une carte, avec des photographies, par écrit, en achetant des cartes postales (de quoi?), des souvenirs (quel genre de souvenirs?) etc.?  
– L’élaboration des récits
- 11. Racontez-moi les étapes que vous avez déjà faites: Comment était votre journée hier?**  
Qu’est-ce qui s’est passé ou qu’est-ce qui était particulier, pourquoi?  
– Les récits spatiaux
- 12. Que pensez-vous de quelqu’un faisant des recherches sur les gens sur le sentier?**  
– La valeur que les randonneurs attribuent à ce qu’ils font et perçoivent/vivent

#### Avec les experts et habitants locaux

1. Quelle est votre partie préférée du ‘Pays cathare’? Pourquoi? Pourquoi un site est-il plus significatif qu’un autre à vos yeux?
2. Qu’est-ce qui rend un site authentique? Quelle est l’importance de l’authenticité des sites?
3. Qu’est-ce que le Catharisme pour vous? Quel rôle joue l’histoire cathare dans votre vie, votre travail scientifique?
4. Comment est-ce que le tourisme du Sentier Cathare et de ses sites a changé au fil du temps? Qui est-ce qui prend le sentier et visite les sites?
5. Comment le Sentier Cathare et ses sites ont-ils changé au fil du temps? Qu’est-ce que vous pensez de l’aménagement du sentier, des sites et des services pour les visiteurs?
6. Qui est-ce qui a établi le Sentier Cathare et ses sites? Qui est-ce qui les finance, les gère et/ou les commercialise (un organisme national, une fondation, une association ayant l’histoire cathare pour centre d’intérêt etc.)?  
Avec quel(s) objectif(s)? Quel en est le groupe cible?
7. Quel est le rôle des experts locaux? Quel est l’importance des historiens, des guides de montagnes etc.? Que peuvent-ils influencer?

#### Questions supplémentaires pour les historiens spécialisés en histoire cathare

- a) Comment avez-vous découvert le Catharisme?
- b) Pourquoi avez-vous choisi de vous spécialiser en histoire cathare? Qu’est-ce qui vous fascine dans ce domaine?
- c) Quel est et quel a été le programme des Centres de recherches cathares passé et présent? Qui les a fondés et pourquoi ?

#### Questions supplémentaires pour les employés dans le secteur du Tourisme (guides de montagnes etc.)

- a) Où les visiteurs désirent-ils aller? Que recherchent-ils?
- b) Pourquoi les visiteurs viennent-ils ici? Quel est le lien entre nature, culture et histoire sur le Sentier Cathare?
- c) Où emmenez-vous les visiteurs? Pourquoi?
- d) Comment guidez-vous les groupes? Que commentez-vous pendant la visite guidée?
- e) Quelles attractions touristiques ont le plus / le moins de succès? Qu’est-ce qu’il y a comme problèmes?
- f) D’où viennent les visiteurs?
- g) Quand viennent-ils et combien de temps restent-ils?





[REDACTED]