WINNER ENGLISH PEN AWARD

Walking Is Not a Sport

A PHILOSOPHY OF WALKING

FRÉDÉRIC GROS

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FRÉDÉRIC GROS

Translated by John Howe

VERSO
London • New York

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ENGLISH PEN

Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

This book has been selected to receive financial assistance from English PEN's 'PEN Translates!' programme, supported by Arts Council England. English PEN exists to promote literature and our understanding of it, to uphold writers' freedoms around the world, to campaign against the persecution and imprisonment of writers for stating their views, and to promote the friendly co-operation of writers and the free exchange of ideas. www.englishpen.org

This English-language edition published by Verso 2014
Translation © John Howe 2014
First published as *Marcher, une philosophie*
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1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Verso
UK: 6 Meard Street, London W1F 0EG
US: 20 Jay Street, Suite 1010, Brooklyn, NY 11201
www.versobooks.com

Verso is the imprint of New Left Books

ISBN-13: 978-1-78168-270-8 (HBK)
ISBN-13: 978-1-78168-629-4 (EXPORT)
eISBN-13: 978-1-78168-271-5 (US)
eISBN-13: 978-1-78168-644-7 (UK)

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gros, Frédéric.
[Marcher, une philosophie. English]
A philosophy of walking : / Frédéric Gros ; translated by John Howe.
pages cm
ISBN 978-1-78168-270-8 (alk. paper)
1. Walking--Philosophy. I. Title.
B105.W25G7613 2014
128'.4–dc23
2013045065

Typeset in Trinité by MJ & N Gavan, Truro, Cornwall
Printed in the UK by CPI Mackays

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1

Walking Is Not a Sport

Walking is not a sport.

Sport is a matter of techniques and rules, scores and competition, necessitating lengthy training: knowing the postures, learning the right movements. Then, a long time later, come improvisation and talent.

Sport is keeping score: what's your ranking? Your time? Your place in the results? Always the same division between victor and vanquished that there is in war – there is a kinship between war and sport, one that honours war and dishonours sport: respect for the adversary; hatred of the enemy.

Sport also obviously means cultivation of endurance, of a taste for effort, for discipline. An ethic. A labour.

But then again it is material: reviews, spectacles, a market.

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It is performance. Sport gives rise to immense mediatic ceremonies, crowded with consumers of brands and images. Money invades it to empty souls, medical science to construct artificial bodies.

Walking is not a sport. Putting one foot in front of the other is child's play. When walkers meet, there is no result, no time: the walker may say which way he has come, mention the best path for viewing the landscape, what can be seen from this or that promontory.

Efforts have nevertheless been made to create a new market in accessories: revolutionary shoes, incredible socks, high-performance trousers ... the sporting spirit is being surreptitiously introduced, you no longer walk but do a 'trek'. Pointed staffs are on sale to give walkers the appearance of improbable skiers. But none of that goes very far. It can't go far.

Walking is the best way to go more slowly than any other method that has ever been found. To walk, you need to start with two legs. The rest is optional. If you want to go faster, then don't walk, do something else: drive, slide or fly. Don't walk. And when you are walking, there is only one sort of performance that counts: the brilliance of the sky, the splendour of the landscape. Walking is not a sport.

Once on his feet, though, man does not stay where he is.

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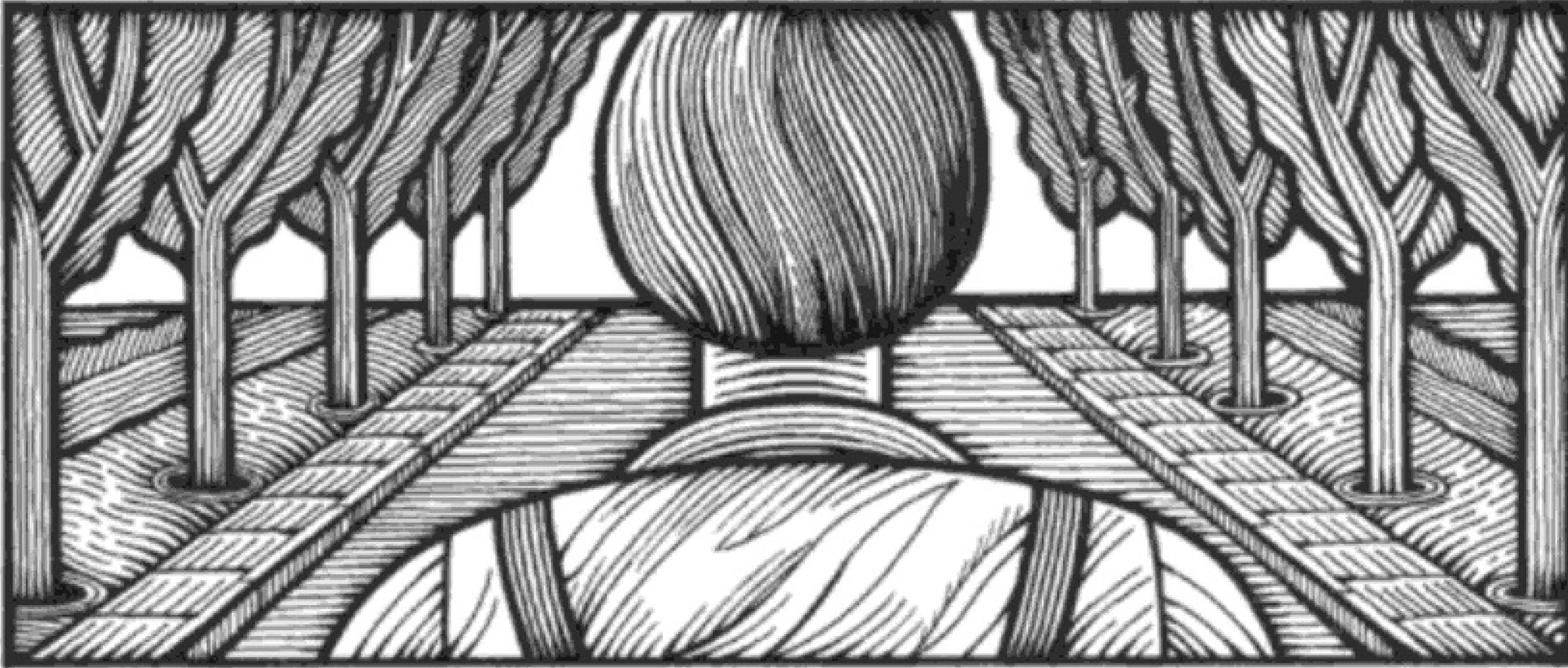
2

Freedoms



First of all, there is the *suspensive* freedom that comes by walking, even a simple short stroll: throwing off the burden of cares, forgetting business for a time. You choose to leave the office behind, go out, stroll around, think about other things. With a longer excursion of several days, the process of self-liberation is accentuated: you escape the constraints of work, throw off the yoke of routine. But how could walking make you feel this freedom more than a long journey?

Because, after all, other equally tiresome constraints make themselves felt: the weight of the rucksack, the length of the stages, the uncertain weather (threat of rain, of storms, of murderous heat), the primitive accommodation,

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things like that ... Yet only walking manages to free us from our illusions about the essential.

As such, it is still ruled by powerful necessities. To complete a given stage you have to walk so many hours, meaning so many paces; scope for improvisation is limited, you aren't wandering down garden paths and you have to turn the right way at junctions, or you'll regret it. When fog shrouds the mountains or rain starts to fall in sheets you have to continue, to keep going. Food and water are subject to detailed advance planning, depending on routes and sources. And I am not talking about discomfort, although the real miracle is that one is happy not despite that, but because of it. What I mean is that not having an infinite choice of food or drink, being subject to the inevitability of weather in all its moods, and relying only on one's steady pace – all this quickly makes the profusion of what is available (merchandise, transport, networking), the easy access to facilities (to communicate, to buy, to move about), seem like dependencies. These micro-liberations all constitute accelerations of the system, which imprisons you all the more strongly. But whatever liberates you from time and space *alienates you from speed.*

To someone who has never had the experience, a simple description of the walker's condition quickly appears an absurdity, an aberration, a form of voluntary servitude. Because the city-dweller tends spontaneously to interpret such activity in terms of deprivation, whereas the walker considers it a liberation to be disentangled from the web of exchanges, no longer reduced to a junction in the network

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redistributing information, images and goods; to see that these things have only the reality and importance you give them. Not only does your world not collapse within these disconnected moments, but those connections suddenly appear to be burdensome, stifling, over-restrictive entanglements.

Freedom then is a mouthful of bread, a draught of cool water, and the open country. That said, rejoicing in that suspensive freedom, happy to set off, one is also happy to return. It's a blessing in parentheses, freedom in an escapade lasting a couple of days or less. Nothing has really changed when you return. And the old inertias are back at once: speed, neglect of the self, of others, excitement and fatigue. The appeal of simplicity has lasted for the time of a hike. 'The fresh air's done you good.' A blink of liberation, and straight back to the grindstone.

The second freedom is more aggressive and rebellious. Walking only permits a temporary 'disconnection' from our daily lives: escape from the web for a few days, a brief out-of-system experience wandering untrodden paths. But one can also decide on a complete break.

The appeal of transgression, the call of the great outdoors are easily found in the writings of Kerouac or Snyder: throwing off moronic conventions, the soporific security of four walls, the boredom of the Same, the wear of repetition, the chilliness of the well-heeled and their hatred of change. The need to provoke departures, transgressions, to give substance at last to folly and dreams. The decision to walk (to head somewhere far off, anywhere, to try

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something else) can be understood this time as the Call of the Wild.

When walking in this mode we discover the immense vigour of starry night skies, elemental energies, and our appetites follow: they are enormous, and our bodies are satisfied. When you have slammed the world's door, there is nothing left to hold you: pavements no longer guide your steps (the path, a hundred thousand times repeated, of the return to the fold). Crossroads shimmer like hesitant stars, you rediscover the tremulous fear of choosing, a vertiginous freedom.

This time, there's no question of freeing yourself from artifice to taste simple joys. Instead there is the promise of meeting a freedom head-on as an outer limit of the self and of the human, an internal overflowing of a rebellious Nature that goes beyond you. Walking can provoke these excesses: surfeits of fatigue that make the mind wander, abundances of beauty that turn the soul over, excesses of drunkenness on the peaks, the high passes (where the body explodes). Walking ends by awakening this rebellious, archaic part of us: our appetites become rough and uncompromising, our impulses inspired. Because walking puts us on the vertical axis of life: swept along by the torrent that rushes just beneath us.

What I mean is that by walking you are not going to meet yourself. By walking, you escape from the very idea of identity, the temptation to be someone, to have a name and a history. Being someone is all very well for smart parties where everyone is telling their story, it's all very well for

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psychologists' consulting rooms. But isn't being someone also a social obligation which trails in its wake – for one has to be faithful to the self-portrait – a stupid and burdensome fiction? The freedom in walking lies in not being anyone; for the walking body has no history, it is just an eddy in the stream of immemorial life.

So we are a moving two-legged beast, just a pure force among big trees, just a cry. For often, while walking, we shout to assert our recovered animal presence. No doubt, in the great liberation exalted by the beat generation of Ginsberg and Burroughs, in that debauch of energy that was meant to tear up our lives and blow sky-high the dens of the submissive, walking in the mountains was just one means among others: others that included the drugs, the booze and the orgies through which we hoped to attain innocence.

But a dream can be glimpsed in that freedom: walking to express rejection of a rotten, polluted, alienating, shabby civilization. As Kerouac writes in *The Dharma Bums*:

> i've been reading whitman, you know what he says, cheer up slaves, and horrify foreign despots, he means that's the attitude for the bard, the zen lunacy bard of old desert paths, see the whole thing is a world full of rucksack wanderers, dharma bums refusing to subscribe to the general demand that they consume production and there have to work for the privilege of consuming, all that crap they didn't really want anyway such as refrigerators, tv sets, cars, at least new fancy cars, certain hair oils and deodorants and general junk you finally always see a week later in the garbage anyway, all of them imprisoned in a system of work, produce, consume, work,

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> produce, consume, i see a vision of a great rucksack revolution thousands or even millions of young americans wandering around with rucksacks.

The walker's last freedom is more uncommon. It is a third stage, after the rediscovery of simple joys and the reconquest of the primitive animal: the freedom of *renunciation*. Heinrich Zimmer, one of the great writers on Indian civilizations, tells us that Hindu philosophy distinguishes four stages on the journey through life. The first is that of the pupil, the student, the disciple. Thus in the morning of life, the essential tasks are to obey the master's injunctions, absorb his lessons, submit to criticism and conform to the principles laid down. It is a time for receiving and accepting. In the second stage the man, now adult, in the midday of his life, becomes the master of a house, married, responsible for a family: he manages his property as well as he can, contributes to the upkeep of the priests, exercises a trade or skill, submits to social constraints and imposes them on others. He agrees to wear the social masks that define a role for him in society and in the family.

Later, in the afternoon of his life, when the children are ready to take over, the man can abandon all social duties, family expenses and economic concerns, to become a hermit. This is the stage of 'withdrawal to the forest', in which through contemplation and meditation he familiarizes himself with what has always lain unchanged within us, waiting for us to awaken it: the eternal Self, transcending masks, functions, identities, histories.

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And the pilgrim eventually succeeds the hermit, in what should be the endless, glorious summer evening of our lives: a life henceforth dedicated to travel in which endless walking, in one direction and another, illustrates the harmonization of the nameless Self with the omnipresent heart of the World. The sage has now renounced everything and attained the highest level of freedom: that of perfect detachment. He is no longer involved, either in himself or in the world. Indifferent to past and future alike, he is nothing other than the eternal present of coexistence. And as we know from the pilgrimage diaries of Swami Ramdas, it is when we renounce everything that everything is given to us, in abundance. Everything: meaning the intensity of presence itself.

During long cross-country wanders, you do glimpse that freedom of pure renunciation. When you walk for a long time, there comes a moment when you no longer know how many hours have passed, or how many more will be needed to get there; you feel on your shoulders the weight of the bare necessities, you tell yourself that's quite enough – that really nothing more is needed to keep body and soul together – and you feel you could carry on like this for days, for centuries. You can hardly remember where you are going or why; that is as meaningless as your history, or what the time is. And you feel free, because whenever you remember the former signs of your commitments in hell – name, age, profession, CV – it all seems absolutely derisory, minuscule, insubstantial.

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3

Why I Am Such a Good Walker – Nietzsche

Sit as little as possible; do not believe any idea that was not born in the open air and of free movement – in which the muscles do not also revel. All prejudices emanate from the bowels. – Sitting still (I said it once already) – is the real sin against the Holy Ghost.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*

Ruptures, Nietzsche wrote, are difficult, because of the suffering caused by the removal of a bond. But in its place, we soon receive a boost. Nietzsche's life was to be made up of these detachments, these breaks, these isolations: from the world, society, travelling companions, colleagues, wives, friends, relations. But every deepening of his solitude signified a further extension of his freedom: no

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explanations to give, no compromises to stand in his way, his vision clear and detached.

Nietzsche was a remarkable walker, tireless. He mentioned it all the time. Walking out of doors was as it were the *natural element* of his oeuvre, the invariable accompaniment to his writing.

His life can be divided into four main acts, the first covering his formative years, from his birth in 1844 to his appointment as professor of philology at the University of Basle. His father was a pastor, a good and upright man who died young, when Friedrich was four years old. The young Nietzsche liked to imagine himself the last scion of a noble Polish lineage (the Nietzskis).

After his father's death he became the pampered darling of his mother, grandmother and sister, the object of intense solicitude. Highly intelligent, the boy received a classical education at the renowned (and tough) Pforta secondary school. There he was subjected to an iron regime whose efficacy he was to recognize later in life, based on the Greek equation: you must know how to obey in order to know how to command. His loving and admiring mother hoped that he would use his brilliant intellect in God's service, seeing him as a theologian. He was a vigorous boy with excellent health, afflicted only by severe short-sightedness, doubtless very badly corrected.

A brilliant academic career in philology followed at the University of Bonn, then at Leipzig. At the precocious age of twenty-four, he was appointed professor of philology at the University of Basle, on the recommendation of the

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philologist and librarian Friedrich Ritschi. The second act opened.

For ten years he taught Greek philology, ten years of struggle and difficulty. The workload was enormous: in addition to his lectures at the university, he was required to lecture at the town's main secondary school (the Pedagogium). But Nietzsche's interests extended beyond philology alone. Attracted by music at an early age, he was later fascinated by philosophy; but it was the science of philology that had welcomed him. And he embraced it in return, slightly unhappily, for it was not his true vocation. It did enable him at least to read the Greek authors: tragedians (Aeschylus, Sophocles), poets (Homer, Hesiod), philosophers (Heraclitus, Anaximander) and historians (especially Diogenes Laertius, because, he said, his writings portrayed men, over and above systems). The first year went very well: he worked with fervour on his lectures, enjoyed success among the students, found new colleagues – one of whom, Franz Overbeck, professor of theology, became his dear and faithful friend. The friend through thick and thin, the one who is called on to help; the one who went to look for him in Turin after the catastrophe.

It was in 1869 that Nietzsche made a trip to Lucerne, going on to Tribschen where he made his emotional visit to the 'Master' (Wagner) in the latter's immense, monumental house. There he was much taken with Cosima (whom he would call, in the letters he wrote after going mad, his 'Princess Ariane, my beloved – a prejudice makes

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me a man, but it is true that I have long frequented them' – January 1889).

The enthusiasm, academic ardour and bounding health did not last long, however. Fainting fits and seizures started to occur. The body was avenging a series of bad mistakes.

Professional trouble began with the appearance in 1871 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, which rendered professional philologists speechless, often with rage. Could he really have meant to write such a work? Less the outcome of serious research than of vague, metaphysical intuitions: the eternal conflict between chaos and form. He was troubled in his friendships, too. He went regularly to Bayreuth to attend the Master's annual consecration, returned to Tribschen, became a travelling companion in Europe, but came more and more to understand that Wagner's fanatical dogmatism and arrogance represented all that he most execrated, and that above all the music made him ill.

Wagner's music, he was to write, drowns you, it's a marasmus, you have to 'swim' continuously in it, it submerges you in a throbbing, chaotic wave. You lose your footing when you listen to it. Rossini on the other hand makes you want to dance. Not to mention Bizet's *Carmen*. Misfortune in love plagued him too: refusal after refusal answered his – somewhat abrupt – proposals of marriage. And lastly, social failure, for he did not manage to take root either in the worldly clamour of Bayreuth or in academic and intellectual circles.

Everything became more difficult. Every term was harder, more impossible. Increasingly he was seized by terrible

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headaches that kept him in bed, lying in the dark, gasping with agony. His eyes hurt, he could hardly read or write. Each quarter-hour of reading or writing cost him hours of migraine. He asked to be read to, for his eyes wavered on contact with the page.

Nietzsche tried to compromise, asking to be discharged from one course, and soon after even from his teaching obligations at the secondary school. He obtained a year off to breathe, recover, gather his strength. But nothing worked.

Nevertheless, what he meant at the time to be a restorative carried the mark of his future destiny: long walks and great solitude, two remedies against throbbing, terrible pain. Flight from the arousal, the demands, the agitations of the world, always paid for in hours of suffering. And walking, walking for hours at a time to disperse, divert, forget the hammering in his temples. He had not yet become fascinated by the hard minerality of high mountains or the scented aridity of the South's rocky paths. He walked mainly beside lakes (Lake Léman, with Carl von Gersdorff, six hours a day), or plunged into the shade of forests (pine forests, at Steinabad near the southern end of the Black Forest: 'I am walking a lot, through the forest, and having tremendous conversations with myself').

By August 1877 he was at Rosenlaui, living as a hermit: 'If only I could have a little house somewhere like this; I would walk for six or eight hours a day, composing thoughts that I would later jot down on paper.'

But nothing really helped. The pain was too fierce. Migraine attacks kept him in bed for days at a time, painful

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vomiting kept him awake all night. His eyes hurt, and his sight started to fade. In May 1879 he submitted his resignation to the university.

Now began the third major period of his life: ten years between the summer of 1879 and the beginning of 1889. He was living on the combination of three small grants that enabled him to live very modestly, stay in small inns, afford the train fare from the mountains to the sea, from the sea to the mountains, or sometimes to Venice to visit Peter Gast. It was at this time that he became the peerless walker of legend. Nietzsche walked, he walked as others work. And he worked while he was walking.

The first summer he discovered his mountain, the Upper Engadine, and the following year his village, Sils-Maria. The air was clear there, the wind brisk, the light piercing. He detested stifling heat, so spent every summer there until the collapse (apart from the year of Lou). He wrote to his friends Overbeck and Köselitz that he had found his own nature, his element; and to his mother he wrote that he had found 'the best paths that the half-blind man I have become could hope for, and the most tonic air' (July 1879). This was his landscape, and he felt related to it 'by blood, nay even more to me'. Starting that first summer, he walked, alone, for up to eight hours a day, and wrote *The Wanderer and His Shadow*. All of it except a few lines was thought out en route, and scribbled down in pencil in six small notebooks.

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He spent the winter in southern towns, essentially Genoa, the bay of Rapallo and later Nice ('I walk on average an hour in the morning, three hours in the afternoon, at a good pace – always the same route: it is beautiful enough to bear repetition', March 1888), Menton just once ('I have found eight walks', November 1884). The hills were his writing bench, the sea his great arch ('The sea and the pure sky! Why did I so torture myself in the past?' January 1881).

Thus walking, looking down on the world and men, he composed in the open air, imagined, discovered, grew excited, was frightened by what he found, astonished and gripped by what came to him on his walks:

> The intensity of my feelings makes me laugh and shiver at the same time – it has happened several times that I have been unable to leave my room for the ridiculous reason that my eyes were red – and for what cause? Just that on the previous day during my long walks I had wept too much, and not sentimental tears but tears of happiness, singing and staggering, taken over by a new gaze that marks my privilege over the men of today.

In those ten years he wrote his greatest books, from *The Dawn* to *On the Genealogy of Morality*, from *The Gay Science* to *Beyond Good and Evil*, not forgetting *Zarathustra*. He became the hermit ('find myself once again a hermit, and do ten hours a day of hermit's walking', July 1880); the solitary, the wanderer.

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Walking here is not, as with Kant, a distraction from work, a minimal ablution enabling the body to recover from sitting in one place, stooping, bent double. For Nietzsche, it was the work's precondition. More than a relaxation, or even an accompaniment, walking was truly his element.

> We do not belong to those who have ideas only among books, when stimulated by books. It is our habit to think outdoors – walking, leaping, climbing, dancing, preferably on lonely mountains or near the sea where even the trails become thoughtful. Our first questions about the value of a book, of a human being, or a musical composition are: Can they walk? Even more, can they dance?

Many others have written their books solely from their reading of other books, so that many books exude the stuffy odour of libraries. By what does one judge a book? By its smell (and even more, as we shall see, by its cadence). Its smell: far too many books have the fusty odour of reading rooms or desks. Lightless rooms, poorly ventilated. The air circulates badly between the shelves and becomes saturated with the scent of mildew, the slow decomposition of paper, ink undergoing chemical change. The air is loaded with miasmas there. Other books breathe a livelier air; the bracing air of outdoors, the wind of high mountains, even the icy gust of the high crags buffeting the body; or in the morning, the cool scented air of southern paths through the pines. These books breathe. They are not overloaded, saturated, with dead, vain erudition.

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> How quickly we guess how someone has come by his ideas; whether it was while sitting in front of his inkwell, with a pinched belly, his head bowed low over the paper – in which case we are quickly finished with his book, too! Cramped intestines betray themselves – you can bet on that – no less than closet air, closet ceilings, closet narrowness.

There is also the quest for a different light. Libraries are always too dark. The heaping, the piling up, the infinite juxtaposition of volumes, the height of the stacks, everything converges to obstruct daylight.

Other books reflect piercing mountain light, or the sea sparkling in sunshine. And above all, colours. Libraries are grey, and grey are the books written in them: overloaded with quotations, references, footnotes, explicatory prudence, indefinite refutations.

Think of the scribe's body: his hands, his feet, his shoulders and legs. Think of the book as an expression of physiology. In all too many books the reader can sense the seated body, doubled up, stooped, shrivelled in on itself. The walking body is unfolded and tensed like a bow: opened to wide spaces like a flower to the sun, exposed torso, tensed legs, lean arms.

Our first question about the value of a book, of a human being, or a musical composition are: can they walk?

Books by authors imprisoned in their studies, grafted to their chairs, are heavy and indigestible. They are born of a compilation of the other books on the table. They are like fattened geese: crammed with citations, stuffed with references, weighed down with annotations. They are weighty,

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obese, *boring*, and are read slowly, with difficulty. Books made from other books, by comparing lines with other lines, by repeating what others have said of what still others have thoroughly explained. They verify, specify, rectify; a phrase becomes a paragraph, a whole chapter. A book becomes the commentary of a hundred books on a single sentence from another book.

An author who composes while walking, on the other hand, is free from such bonds; his thought is not the slave of other volumes, not swollen with verifications, nor weighted with the thought of others. It contains no explanation owed to anyone: just thought, judgement, decision. It is thought born of a movement, an impulse. In it we can feel the body's elasticity, the rhythm of a dance. It retains and expresses the energy, the springiness of the body. Here is thought about the thing itself, without the scrambling, the fogginess, the barriers, the customs clearances of culture and tradition. The result will not be long and meticulous exegesis, but thoughts that are light and profound. That is really the challenge: the lighter a thought, the more it rises, and becomes profound by rising – vertiginously – above the thick marshes of conviction, opinion, established thought. While books conceived in the library are on the contrary superficial and heavy. They remain on the level of recopying.

Think while walking, walk while thinking, and let writing be but the light pause, as the body on a walk rests in contemplation of wide open spaces.

This leads neatly, in conclusion, to Nietzsche's eulogy of the foot: we write only with the hand; we write well 'only

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with our feet'. The foot is an excellent witness, perhaps the most reliable. We should notice if, while reading, the foot 'pricks up its ears' – for the foot listens. We read in Zarathustra's second 'dance song': 'My toes rose up to listen; for a dancer's ears are carried on his toes' – when it shivers with pleasure because invited to dance, at the beginning, *outside*.

To judge the quality of a piece of music, we should trust the foot. If, when listening, the wish arises in the foot to mark the rhythm, it's a good sign. All music is an invitation to lightness. Wagner's music depresses the foot in this respect: it makes it panic, it forgets how to place itself. Worse still, it languishes, drags, turns this way and that, gets irritated. While listening to Wagner, as Nietzsche tells us in his last texts, it's impossible to feel the desire to dance, for one is submerged in swirling meanders of music, vague torrents, muddled yearnings.

> I can no longer breathe with ease when this music begins to have its effect upon me ... my foot immediately begins to feel indignant at it and rebels: for what it needs is time, dance, march; even the young German Kaiser could not march to Wagner's Imperial March; what my foot demands in the first place from music is that ecstasy which lies in good walking, stepping and dancing.

Nietzsche walked all day long, scribbling down here and there what the walking body – confronting sky, sea, glaciers – breathed into his thought. I am, says Zarathustra, 'a wanderer and mountain-climber, said he to his heart, I love not the plains, and it seemeth I cannot long sit still.

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And whatever may still overtake me as fate and experience – a wandering will be therein, and a mountain-climbing: in the end one experienceth only oneself.'

With Nietzsche, walking meant rising, scrambling, climbing. At Sorrento in 1876, he chose for his daily walks the mountain paths behind the town. From Nice, he liked to climb the path leading straight uphill to the small village of Èze, where he was almost vertically above the sea. From Sils-Maria he took the paths climbing towards high valleys. At Rapallo, he conquered Monte Allegro ('the principal summit in the region').

In Gérard de Nerval's case, forest paths – flat labyrinths – and gentle plains invite the walker's body to softness, to languor. And memories arise like eddying mists. The air is more bracing with Nietzsche, and above all sharp, transparent. The thought is trenchant, the body wide awake, trembling. So instead of sluggishly returning memories there are judgements being made: diagnoses, discoveries, interpolations, verdicts.

The climbing body demands effort; it is under continuous tension. It is an aid to thought in the pursuit of examination: pushing on a little further, a little higher. It's important not to weaken, but to mobilize energy to advance, to place the foot firmly and hoist the body slowly, then restore balance. So with thought: an idea to rise to something even more astonishing, unheard-of, *new*. And then again: it is a matter of gaining altitude. There are thoughts that can only occur at 6,000 feet above the plains and mournful shores.

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> 'Six thousand feet beyond man and time.' That day I happened to be wandering through the woods alongside of the Lake of Silvaplana, and I halted not far from Surlei, beside a huge rock that towered aloft like a pyramid. It was then that the thought struck me.

To know that the world swarms under his feet. *Suave turba magna* ... how sweet it is to perceive, through the clear glacial air, the motionless crowd stagnating on the spot far below? But no, Nietzsche's aristocratic outlook does not extend to such arrogant contempt.

Rather it is that for thinking one needs a detached outlook, to be at a distance, to have clear air. One needs to be unconstrained to think far. And what then do details, definitions, exactitudes mean? It is the armature of human destiny that one needs to see laid out. From very high up one sees the movement of landscapes, the design of hills. And thus with history: Antiquity, Christianity, modernity ... what do they produce in the way of archetypes, characters, essences? The moment your nose is buried in dates, in facts, everything falls back on your own clenched peculiarity. Whereas the need is to construct fictions, myths, *general* destinies.

We still need to climb a good stretch of road, slowly, but ever higher, in order to reach a properly detached point of view on our old civilization.

Something clear, like the line of a road. Not the sedentary man's stupid failure to understand, but rather the compassion Nietzsche had always recognized as his problem ('ever since I was a child, I have never ceased to notice that "pity

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is my greatest peril'", September 1884). That compassion on seeing human beings busying themselves, going to Mass or entertainments, seeking recognition from their peers, becoming mired in sad images: poor in themselves. While from above, from a detached position, one understands what made mankind sick: the poison of sedentary moralities.

Then too, during very long walks, there is always that emergence through a high pass where another landscape appears all of a sudden. After the effort, the long climb, the body turns round and sees at its feet the offered immensity; or, at a turn in the path, it witnesses a transformation: a range of mountains, a splendour lying in wait. Many aphorisms are built on these reversals of perspective, these final exclamations where something else is unveiled, the secret of a discovery like a new landscape, and the jubilation that accompanies it.

Finally it is worth mentioning what Eternal Recurrence owes to the experience of walking (bearing in mind, too, that Nietzsche's long excursions were made on known paths, signposted routes that he liked to repeat). When one has walked a long way to reach the turning in the path that discloses an anticipated view, and that view appears, there is always a vibration of the landscape. It is repeated in the walker's body. The harmony of the two presences, like two strings in tune, each feeding off the vibration of the other, is like an endless relaunch. Eternal Recurrence is the unfolding in a continuous circle of the repetition of those two affirmations, the circular transformation of the vibration

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of the presences. The walker's immobility facing that of the landscape … it is the very intensity of that co-presence that gives birth to an indefinite circularity of exchanges: I have always been here, tomorrow, contemplating this landscape.

By the middle of the 1880s, however, Nietzsche was complaining that he couldn't walk as well as he should. He was suffering from back pain and had to spend long periods reclining in a chair. He persisted nevertheless, but his walks became shorter. Sometimes he even took companions along. The 'hermit of Sils', as he was called, began often to walk in the company of protectresses, young female admirers: Helen Zimmern who had translated his text on Schopenhauer, Meta von Salis, a young aristocrat who brought him the heavyweight endorsement of the local nobility, the student Resa von Schirnhofer, and Hélène Druscowitz, newly awakened to philosophy.

These less solitary walks were no longer the same. Nietzsche increasingly played the urbane gent, the gallant surrounded by cultivated women. He took them to see the rock where he had received illumination on Eternal Recurrence, confided poignantly on his friendship with Wagner. And pain slowly took hold of him once more: from 1886 he was complaining of horribly prolonged migraine attacks. The vomiting reappeared too. After each excursion he needed several days to recover. Sometimes a long walk left him exhausted for days.

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Towns increasingly disgusted him: he found them dirty and expensive. During his winter sojourns in Nice, he could not afford to pay for south-facing rooms, and suffered from the cold. At Sils, in summer, the weather often seemed bad to him. Venice he found atrociously depressing. His condition worsened.

There was one last metamorphosis. The final act of his life opened like a song of renewal, an ode to joy: he discovered Turin for the first time in April 1888. It was like a revelation: the city was absolutely classical 'for the feet as for the eyes – and what cobblestones!' Long walks on the banks of the Po enchanted him. After a final summer at Sils, grimmer than ever, he returned to Turin in September. The same miracle, a renewal of joy.

There was a sudden access of happiness, and of magnificent health. The ailments all went away as if by magic, and he now felt his body only as a lightness, a bounding momentum. He was working quickly and well. His eyes no longer hurt; his stomach could digest anything. In a few months he dashed off several books, like a powder-train. He walked with passionate dedication, in the evening accumulating notes for his planned four works on the 'transvaluation of values'.

But early in 1889, Jacob Burckhardt received a letter from Nietzsche dated 6 January. It worried him: it was the letter of one demented, a madman ('In the final analysis, I would rather have been a professor at Basle than God; but I hesitated to take egotism to the point of dispensing with the creation of the world'). Other letters sent in that first week

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of January reveal the same state. Nietzsche signed himself Dionysus, or the Crucified ('once discovered, it was easy for you to find me; the difficulty henceforth will be to lose me').

Burckhardt immediately informed Overbeck, who hurried to Turin, where he struggled to find Nietzsche in his small lodging in Davide Fino's house. His landlords were at a loss: Nietzsche had become uncontrollable. He had clung, weeping, to the neck of a horse whose driver had whipped the animal. He had wandered around mumbling incoherent ideas, harangued passers-by, and gate-crashed funerals, claiming to be the deceased. Overbeck found Nietzsche slumped in an armchair, haggard, looking in dismay at the proofs of his latest book. He looked up and, seeing his old friend, sprang up in surprise and embraced him: he had recognized him. And he wept, held on and wept; as if, Overbeck wrote, he could see the abyss opening beneath him. Then he sat down and curled up once more.

Nietzsche had become extremely grand: apparently he was a prince and was owed every courtesy. He was coaxed, bawling songs and shouting, to the station and into a train. He was mad. His friends managed to get him as far as Basle by saying that His Excellency was awaited there for a reception worthy of him.

He was admitted to the clinic in Basle, then was sent from there to Jena, without noticeable improvement. Eventually his mother took him in, at Naumburg. She cared for him until her own death with love, patience and devotion. She washed and tidied him, consoled him, took him for walks, watched over him night and day. For seven years.

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Nietzsche increasingly walled himself up in silence, or made incoherent speeches. His sentences were shreds, vestiges; he no longer thought. Sometimes, still, he improvised for a while on the piano. He no longer had migraines, or eye trouble.

His mother understood that only long walks did him any good. But it wasn't easy: he would take against passers-by in the street, utter meaningless bellows. She soon shortened their outings, because she was ashamed, ashamed of her big forty-four-year-old son who roared like a bear, or cursed into the wind. Sometimes she would take him out in the late afternoon, when people were indoors and he could yell without upsetting anyone.

Soon, however, the body itself became obstructive: paralysis crept gradually through his spine. He was back in a wheelchair in which people pushed him around, took him out. He stared at his hands for hours at a time, first one, then the other, or held books upside down, mumbling. He lay helpless in a chair, while others bustled around him. He had regressed to childhood. His mother wheeled him up and down the verandah. After autumn 1894 he could only recognize his immediate family, his mother and sister, and remained prostrate, usually motionless, staring at his hands. Very rarely he would say something: 'When all is said and done, death'; 'I don't sow horses'; 'More light'.

The decline was slow, ineluctable. His eyes sank into his skull, their gaze vertiginously withdrawn. He died on 25 August 1900, in Weimar.

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It is probable that I will be, for men still to come, an inevitability, the inevitable – it is therefore entirely possible that one day I will fall silent, for love of humanity!!!

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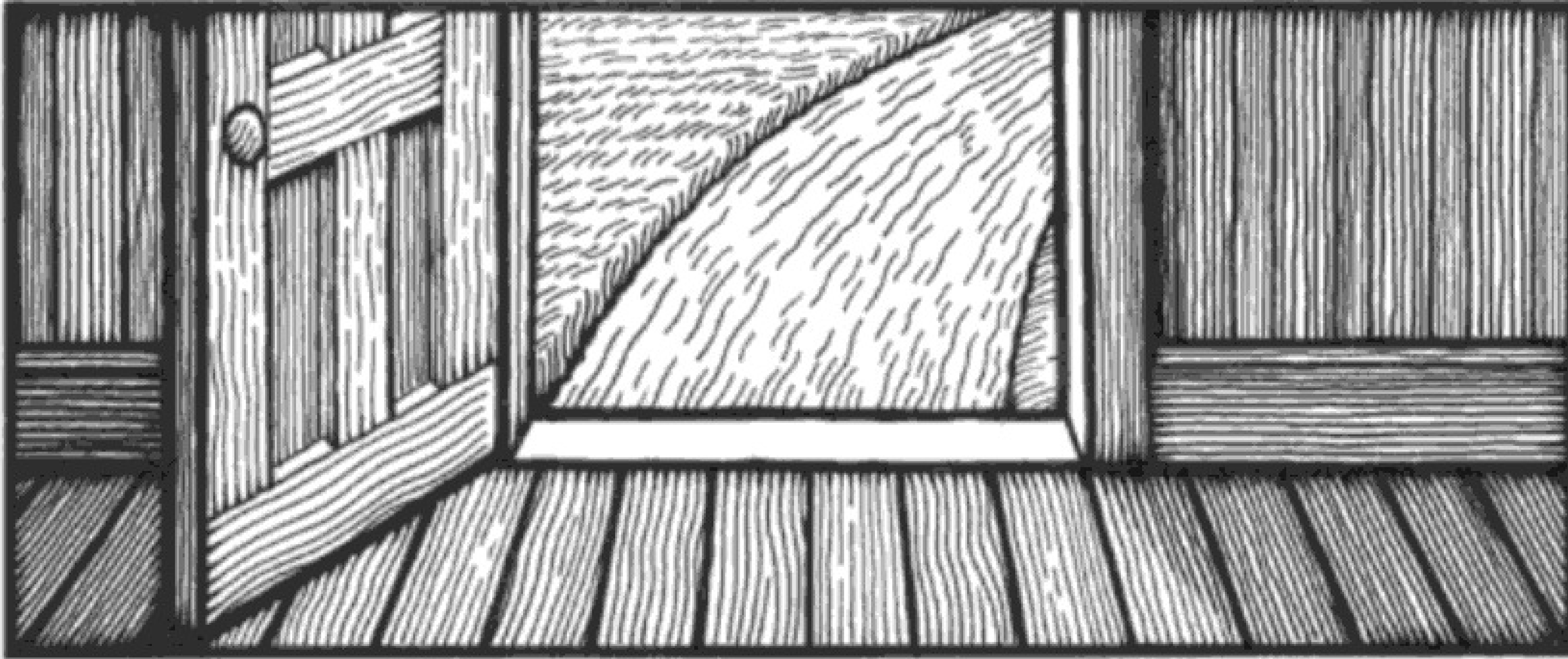
4

Outside



Walking means being out of doors, outside, 'in the fresh air', as they say. Walking causes the inversion of town-dweller's logics, and even of our most widespread condition.

When you go 'outside' it is always to pass from one 'inside' to another: from house to office, from your place to the nearest shops. You go out to do something, somewhere else. Outside is a transition: the thing that separates; almost an obstacle between here and there. But one that has no value of its own. You make it from your place to the tube station in all weathers, with a hurried body, a mind still half-occupied with domestic details but already projected towards work obligations, legs galloping while the hand

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nervously checks the pockets to ensure nothing has been forgotten. Outside hardly exists: it is like a big separating corridor, a tunnel, an immense airlock.

It's true that you can go out sometimes just to 'get some air'; some relief from the weighty immobility of objects and walls. Because you feel stifled indoors, you take a breather while the sun is shining out there; it just seems unfair to deny yourself the exposure to light. Then, yes, you go out and take a step round the block, simply to be outside rather than to go here or there. To feel the lively freshness of a spring breeze, or the fragile warmth of winter sunshine. An interlude, a managed pause. Children, too, go out just for the sake of it. 'Going out' at that age means playing, running, laughing. Later it will mean seeing their friends, escaping from parents, doing something different. But more often than not, once again outside is placed between two insides: a stage, a transition. It is some space that takes some time.

Outside. Out of doors. In walks that extend over several days, during major expeditions, everything is inverted. 'Outside' is no longer a transition, but the element in which stability exists. It's the other way round: you go from lodging to lodging, shelter to shelter, and the thing that changes is the infinitely variable 'indoors'. You never sleep twice in the same bed, different hosts put you up each night. Every new décor, every change in ambiance, is a new surprise; the variety of walls, of stones. You stop: the body is tired, night is falling, you need rest. But these interiors are milestones every time, means to help keep you outside for longer: transitions.

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Another thing worth mentioning is the strange impression made by your first steps, in the morning. You have looked at the map, chosen your route, said your goodbyes, packed your rucksack, identified the right path, checked its direction. It seems like a kind of hesitation, trampling about slightly, back and forth, as it were punctuations: stopping, checking the direction, turning around on the spot. Then the path opens, you head off, pick up the rhythm. You lift your head, you're on your way, but really just to be walking, to be out of doors. That's it, that's all, and you're there. Outdoors is our element: the exact sensation of living there. You leave one lodging for another, but continuity, what lasts and persists, comes from the surrounding landscapes, the chains of hills that are always there. And it is I who wind through them, I stroll there as if at home: by walking, I take the measure of my dwelling. The obligatory passages, which you traverse and leave behind, are bedrooms for one night, dining rooms for one dinner and one breakfast, the people who run them, the ghosts that inhabit them; but not the landscape.

That is how the big separation between outside and inside is turned upside down by walking. We shouldn't say that we cross mountains and plains, and that we stop at lodgings. It is almost the opposite: for several days I live in a landscape, I slowly take possession of it, I make it my site.

Then that strange morning impression can arise, when you have left the walls of rest behind you, and find yourself with the wind on your face, right in the middle of the world: this is really my home all day long, this is where I am going to dwell by walking.

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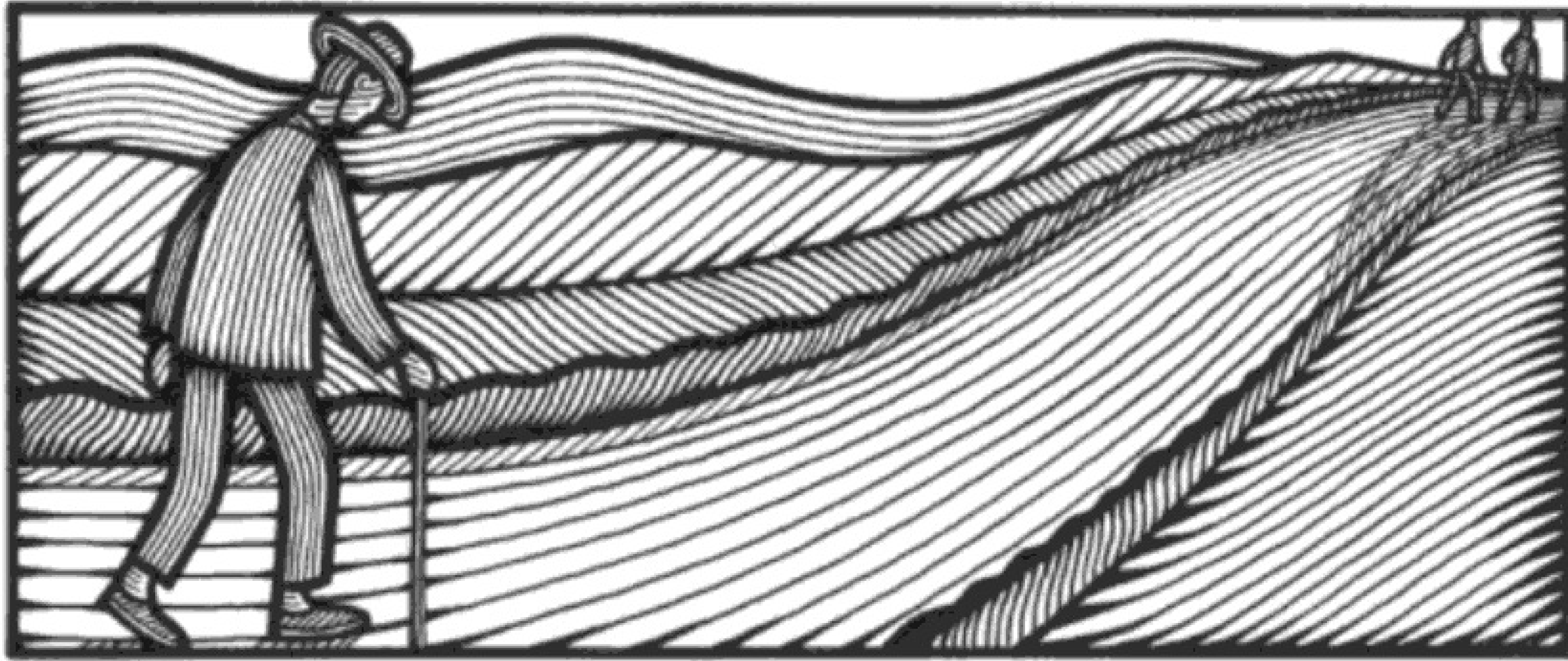
5

Slowness



I will always remember what he said. We were climbing a steep path in the Italian Alps. Mateo was my senior by at least half a century, being over seventy-five years old at that time. He was whipcord-thin, with big rough hands, a lined face and an erect posture. He kept his arms folded when walking, as if feeling cold, and wore beige canvas trousers.

It was he who taught me to walk. Although I was saying just now: you don't learn to walk, at least here, no technique, no panic about getting it right or not, about doing it this way rather than that, no pressure to pull yourself together, practise, concentrate. Everyone knows how to walk. One foot in front of the other, that's the proper rhythm, the

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good distance to go somewhere, anywhere. And all you have to do is resume: one foot in front of the other.

I say he 'taught' me for the sake of brevity and effect. We had been walking for several minutes on a climbing path and began to feel a sort of pressure from behind. A group of young people, boisterous, wanting to hurry and overtake us, trod a little noisily to make their presence felt. So we stood aside and let the loud, hurrying troupe pass, and were thanked with slightly smug smiles. It was then, as he watched them recede, that Mateo said: 'Well look, they're afraid they won't get there, wanting to walk at that speed!'

The lesson was that in walking, the authentic sign of assurance is a good slowness. What I mean is a sort of slowness that isn't exactly the opposite of speed. In the first place it's the extreme regularity of paces, a uniformity. Here one might almost say that a good walker glides, or perhaps that his legs rotate, describing circles. A bad walker may sometimes go fast, accelerate, then slow down. His movements are jerky, his legs form clumsy angles. His speed will be made of sudden accelerations, followed by heavy breathing. Large voluntary movements, a new decision every time the body is pushed or pulled, a red perspiring face. Slowness really is the opposite of *haste*. When we reached the summit and caught up with the 'sportsmen', they were sitting down, discussing their time with enthusiasm and making incomprehensible calculations. The reason they were hurrying like that was that they wanted to make a particular time. We stopped for a minute to look at the view. Then,

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while the group continued to make long commentaries and interminable comparisons, we slowly started back.

The illusion of speed is the belief that it saves time. It looks simple at first sight: finish something in two hours instead of three, gain an hour. It's an abstract calculation, though, done as if each hour of the day were like an hour on the clock, absolutely equal.

But haste and speed accelerate time, which passes more quickly, and two hours of hurry shorten a day. Every minute is torn apart by being segmented, stuffed to bursting. You can pile a mountain of things into an hour. Days of slow walking are very long: they make you live longer, because you have allowed every hour, every minute, every second to breathe, to deepen, instead of filling them up by straining the joints. Hurrying means doing several things at once, and quickly: this; then that; and then something else. When you hurry, time is filled to bursting, like a badly-arranged drawer in which you have stuffed different things without any attempt at order.

Slowness means cleaving perfectly to time, so closely that the seconds fall one by one, drop by drop like the steady dripping of a tap on stone. This stretching of time deepens space. It is one of the secrets of walking: a slow approach to landscapes that gradually renders them familiar. Like the regular encounters that deepen friendship. Thus a mountain skyline that stays with you all day, which you observe in different lights, defines and articulates itself. When you are walking, nothing moves: only imperceptibly do the hills draw closer, the surroundings change. In a train or car, we

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see a mountain coming towards us. The eye is quick, active, it thinks it has understood everything, grasped it all. When you are walking, nothing really moves: it is rather that presence is slowly established in the body. When we are walking, it isn't so much that we are drawing nearer, more that the things out there become more and more insistent in our body. The landscape is a set of tastes, colours, scents which the body absorbs.

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6

The Passion for Escape – Rimbaud

I can't give you an address to reply to this, for I don't know personally where I may find myself dragged next, or by what routes, on the way to where, or why, or how!

Arthur Rimbaud, Letter from Aden, 5 May 1884

Verlaine called him 'the man with soles of wind'. The man himself, when still very young, had described himself thus: 'I'm a pedestrian, nothing more.' Rimbaud walked throughout his life.

Obstinately, with passion. Between the ages of fifteen and seventeen, he walked to reach great cities: the Paris of literary hopes, to become known in Parnassian circles, to meet poets like himself, desperately lonely and longing to

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be loved (read his poems). To Brussels, to pursue a career in journalism. Between twenty and twenty-four, he several times tried the route to the South, returning home for the winter. Preparation for travel ... There were incessant shuttles between Mediterranean ports (Marseille or Genoa) and Charleville; walking towards the sun. And from the age of twenty-five until his death, desert roads.

At fifteen, drawn to the city of poets, and feeling lonely and decidedly redundant in Charleville, Rimbaud took off for Paris, his head full of naïve dreams. He left on foot very early one August morning, without a word to anyone. He walked probably to Givet, and there took the train. But selling his books – valuable ones, for he had been an excellent pupil – did not produce enough money to pay for the full journey to the capital. On arrival at the Gare de Strasbourg, he found the police waiting: he was arrested for theft, deemed a vagabond, and taken immediately to the local police station, then to the Mazas prison. His teacher of rhetoric, the famous Georges Izambard, rushed to his rescue and secured his pupil's release by paying the railway company the unpaid portion of his fare. The line to Charleville being still cut because of the Franco-Prussian war, Rimbaud went to stay at Douai, with his protector's family. There followed a sequence of happy days, talking literature and being spoiled by big sisters. But his mother sent for him.

Barely a month later, Rimbaud sold some more books

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and ran away again. He took the train as far as Fumay, then continued on foot, from village to village (Vireux, Givet) along the Meuse. To Charleroi. 'Eight days earlier, I had ripped my ankle-boots on the stones of the roads. I was entering Charleroi.'

There he offered his services to the *Journal de Charleroi*, which turned him down. Rimbaud went on to Brussels, penniless, still on foot, to find, or so he hoped, his protector Izambard. 'I set off, my fists in my torn pockets; my overcoat too was becoming ideal; I was going under the sky, Muse! And I was your vassal; Oh good heavens, what splendid amours I dreamed!'

Fifty kilometres of joyous exclamation, hands in pockets and dreaming of literary glory and love. But Izambard wasn't there. Durand, the teacher's friend, gave him enough to set him on his way. Rimbaud did not go straight home, but to Douai, to his new family: 'It's me, I've come back.' He arrived charged with a poetry born all along the roads – illuminations of flights and escapades – composed to the rhythms of paths and swinging arms.

A poetry of well-being, of festive relaxation in country inns. Satisfaction with the day's progress, the body filled with space. Youth.

'Blissfully happy, I stretched my legs under the table.'

Days and days of walking through golden autumn colours. Laughing outdoor nights, on roadside verges, under the glittering roof of stars.

'My inn was at the sign of the Great Bear. – My stars in the sky making a gentle fuss.'

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Rimbaud made careful fair copies of his inventions on big white sheets. Happy in the affection of his new family. He was sixteen. On 1 November Rimbaud's mother ('mouth of shadow') ordered Izambard to return her son forthwith, via the police 'to avoid expense'.

In February 1871, with the Franco-Prussian war under way, Rimbaud still dreamed of Paris, of which he had only seen the inside of a prison the first time. Charleville was still in the grip of winter. Arthur took on airs, allowed his hair to grow to an unseemly length, walked proudly up and down the main street smoking a pipe. He fretted and fumed; again without saying anything, secretly, he prepared his next escape. This time he had sold a silver watch, and had enough to pay for a rail ticket to his destination.

By 25 February he was wandering through Paris, gazing excitedly into bookshop windows, wondering what was new in poetry, sleeping in coal barges, living on gathered scraps and leavings, seeking feverishly to make contact with the literary Brotherhood. But it was not a time for literature: the Prussians were coming, the town had veiled itself in darkness. Stomach and pockets empty, Rimbaud crossed the enemy lines to return home, on foot all the way but sometimes given lifts on farm carts. He reached home 'at night, almost naked and suffering from bad bronchitis'.

Did he leave again that spring? Legend or reality? An enigma, anyway ... Will we ever know for sure? Rimbaud would have trembled eagerly at news of the Paris Commune. He must have chafed in Charleville, knowing that they were in rebellion down there, he the author of a

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communist constitution ... His childhood had been pious, but he had become fiercely republican, rabidly anti-clerical. News of the uprising, in the name of liberty and fraternity, entranced him: 'order is vanquished'. The decree establishing the Commune was issued in March. He is said to have been spotted in Paris in April. But not for certain. Ernest Delahaye recounts that Arthur joined the communard militia, that he enrolled as a sniper at Babylon barracks ... the episode may have lasted a fortnight. Having arrived on a coal barge, he is thought to have returned home on foot, destitute and starving. It's difficult when you have no money.

He returned to Paris for a fourth visit (or was it only the third?). This time, though, was to be the real consecration. Autumn 1871, just as he turned seventeen. This time, too, his mother had been informed: an official trip, almost. Because he was expected there; invited, it would seem, by a smitten Verlaine to whom he had sent his poems ('Come, come quickly, *great dear soul*'). A collection had been organized to pay his train fare. He was carrying his *Bateau ivre* by way of offering, qualification and evidence.

There followed, as we know, three years during which Verlaine kept Rimbaud, three long years of stormy, passionate relations: thoughtless follies, three tormented visits to London together, sordid binges, monstrous storms and sublime reconciliations, until the unhappy pistol shot in Brussels (wounding Rimbaud in the arm) which ended everything. Verlaine went to prison, while his provocateur-victim made several more returns to the starting line

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(Charleville or Roche). As always, Rimbaud was bored rigid, but his cavortings with Verlaine had led to his exclusion from literary circles. From his first appearance in Paris his reputation had been that of a filthy brat: a dirty, unpleasant hooligan and inveterate drunkard.

He was twenty in 1875, and had written his *Season in Hell* and *Illuminations*, also (perhaps) a *Spiritual Hunt* which is permanently lost. The publication of *A Season in Hell* had been a sad disaster. He couldn't pay the publisher, and had received only a handful of copies. He was never to see his *Illuminations* in print. A street urchin had transformed the whole of literature in the space of five years. He would never write another poem.

Plenty of letters of course, written in telegraphic style (newsflashes), but not a single poem. He still walked a lot, obstinately. But now he wanted to travel far; alone in his room, he learned languages. He learned German, applied himself to Italian, glanced at Spanish, worked on a Greek-Russian dictionary, doubtless also picked up rudiments of Arabic. For five years, he spent his winters learning. Long walks were for springtime.

In Stuttgart in 1875, he decided to go to Italy. He crossed Switzerland, at first by train, but soon ran short of money and continued on foot, climbing the Saint Gotthard pass, and arrived exhausted in Milan, where a mysterious woman nursed him. He set off to walk to Brindisi, but was laid low by sunstroke on the road between Leghorn and Siena. Repatriated to Marseille, he reached Paris, then Charleville once again.

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1876 was a year of adventures, rather than walks. He left for Russia (first having his head shaved), but only got as far as Vienna where he was found half dead and without papers after a beating from a coachman. He enlisted in the Dutch army, but deserted in Salatiga (Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia).

In 1877 he left for Bremen, hoping to reach the Americas, but ended up in Stockholm as the ticket collector on a circus turnstile. He returned to Charleville, and in 1878 boarded a ship to Egypt at Marseille, but quickly fell ill and was repatriated. Returning home on foot, he left for Switzerland. Over the Saint Gotthard again, on foot, to Genoa where he embarked for Cyprus (where he was to become a foreman). But in the spring of 1879 his fever returned and worsened. He went home again. With the first winter chills, however, he headed back to Marseille, but was again stopped by fever, and turned around. It was always the same movement, the same slow oscillation: winter getting bored at home, champing at the bit, learning languages from dictionaries; the rest of the time trying his luck.

In 1880 he left once more, again for Cyprus. From there, after a hurried departure – had he inflicted a mortal wound on a worker? – he pushed southwards for the first time instead of returning to the North: down the Red Sea to Aden. There began the last act of his life, a decade spent mainly between Aden and Harar.

Aden was an oven, with temperatures in the region of 40° Celsius. Rimbaud worked as a supervisor in the selection and sorting of coffee, and was valued by his employers.

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An established trader, Alfred Bardey, asked him to open a new agency at Harar in Abyssinia, amid high farming land. At 6,000 feet the climate is temperate. Rimbaud agreed and prepared a caravan. To reach Harar he had to travel some 300 kilometres through jungle, stony deserts and finally forests and mountains, with steep passes. Rimbaud was sometimes mounted but usually had to walk. The caravan advanced slowly. The journey took two weeks.

The boss of the new agency traded, became acclimatized, got bored, became distracted, and organized expeditions. A year in Harar, then back to Aden; then Harar again, and Aden once more. Back and forth on the same gruelling route. He changed jobs as the agency's fortunes fluctuated. Nothing really worked out. He launched mad projects which failed, either soon or straight away. He wanted to amass some money, a bit of capital to set him up for good and bring some peace.

In 1885, he had an idea that ought to make him a fortune at last: he would take a consignment of military weapons and ammunition by caravan to Choa, where he would sell them to King Menelik. He invested all his savings in the scheme and found two partners, Soleillat and Labatut. Both soon died, but Rimbaud did not give in. He left in September 1886 ('the route is very long, nearly two months' march all the way to Ankober').

Ugo Ferrandi witnessed his departure: 'He walked ahead of the caravan, always on foot ... A journey of fifty days in the most arid of deserts.' Between Tajoura and Ankober was a remote track across the dead immensity of a desert of basalt.

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The sun burned savagely. The roads were 'horrible, recalling the presumed horror of lunar landscapes'. When he arrived, the king was not there. The expedition turned into a financial disaster. Rimbaud was exhausted and had lost everything. He returned to Harar and calmly resumed his small trading. Until his knee started hurting, and swelled enormously. He was thirty-six.

Arthur Rimbaud at fifteen: a frail boy with eyes of a striking and distant blue. At dawn, on the mornings of his escapes, he rose without a sound in the dark house, and closed the front door quietly behind him. And with beating heart watched the small pale roads calmly emerging from shadow. 'Let's go!' On foot. Every time on foot, and measuring with his 'unrivalled legs' the breadth of the earth.

How many times, from Charleville to Charleroi? How many times with Delahaye, in the months of war when the college was closed, to buy tobacco in Belgium? How many times returning from Paris without anything of value, belly gnawed with hunger? How many times later on the southern routes: Marseille or Italy? How many times finally along the desert roads, from Zeilah to Harar, and the 1885 expedition?

Always on foot, every time. 'I'm a pedestrian, nothing more.' Nothing more.

To walk, to make progress, anger is needed. With him there is always that parting cry, that furious joy.

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> Let's go, hat, greatcoat, both fists in pockets, and step outside.
> Forward, route!
> Let's go!

And he walked.

Anger is needed to leave, to walk. That doesn't come from outside. In the hollow of the belly the pain of being here, the impossibility of remaining where you are, of being buried alive, of simply staying. The weather is bad where you are, he wrote from the mountains of Harar. Where you are, the winters are too long and the rain too cold. But here, where we are, in Abyssinia, the misery and boredom are just as impossible, the immobility palls: nothing to read, no one to talk to, nothing to gain.

Here, it's impossible. Impossible here, for a single day more. Here, it's 'atrocious'. Time to go; 'Forward, route!' Every route is good to follow, every road towards the sun, towards more light. Doubtless it's no better elsewhere, but at least it's away from here. The route is needed, to get there. 'Fists in my ripped pockets.' In reality it is only en route, on paths, on roads, that there isn't a here.

'Adieu to here, no matter where.'

Walking as an expression of anger, of empty decision. Taking to the road always means departing: leaving behind. In departures on foot there is always something final which is lacking from other forms of transport that make it possible to turn back, where nothing is irreversible. And when you leave, you always feel this mixture of anxiety and light-heartedness. Anxious because you are abandoning something (coming back is a failure; it is impossible to

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