

## Chapter 1

# Introduction

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When did our walk begin? When will it ever end? We cannot remember, and will never know. Walking, in this regard, is much like talking, and both are quintessential features of what we take to be a human form of life. We are already talking by the time we realize that this is what we are doing; and only those who remain after we are gone will know which words will have been our last. So it is, too, with our first and last steps. Life itself is as much a long walk as it is a long conversation, and the ways along which we walk are those along which we live. There are beginnings and endings, of course. But every moment of beginning is itself in the midst of things and must, for that reason, be also a moment of ending in relation to whatever went before. Likewise, every step faces both ways: it is both the ending, or tip, of a trail that leads back through our past life, and a new beginning that moves us forward towards future destinations unknown. The same goes for the words we read and write. We begin to write, and you begin to read, in the thick of things, and only because we have set aside other tasks for the time being. We do not, however, travel alone. Our principal contention is that walking is a profoundly social activity: that in their timings, rhythms and inflections, the feet respond as much as does the voice to the presence and activity of others. Social relations, we maintain, are not enacted *in situ* but are paced out along the ground.

With this book we draw together several lines of thinking in contemporary social science: about the human body and its movements; about perception and the work of the senses; about education, enskillment and the formation of knowledge; about the constitution of space and place; about wayfaring and storytelling; and about the relations between humans and non-humans. We follow in the footsteps of Marcel Mauss who, in his famous essay of 1934 on *Techniques of the Body*, was perhaps the first to put walking on the agenda as a serious topic for comparative ethnological inquiry (Mauss 1979, 95-135). As in so many of his writings, Mauss left no more than a fragmentary and unfinished sketch for a programme of work that had still to be undertaken, and one that was so anachronistic in its formulation – with its lists of customs from around the world – and yet so far ahead of its time in the questions it opened up, that for long it fell on deaf ears. So thoroughly had it been forgotten that when, some four decades later, Pierre Bourdieu (1977) launched his theory of practice centred on the bodily dispositions of the *habitus*, few recalled that Mauss had already introduced the *habitus* to anthropology, as the key to his understanding of the social formation of body techniques, taking care to distinguish it from the merely idiosyncratic ‘habits’ of individuals, and illustrating it by way of a narrative of walking. Significantly, the narrative was about the arms and hands:

I think I can recognize a girl who has been raised in a convent. In general, she will walk with her fists closed. And I can still remember my third-form teacher shouting at me: "Idiot! why do you walk around the whole time with your hands flapping wide open?" Thus there exists an education in walking too (Mauss 1979, 100).

Indeed, walking is an accomplishment of the whole body in motion, as much the work of the hands and lungs as of the feet.

Of course Bourdieu's understanding of the *habitus* was far removed from that of Mauss. For Mauss was still enough of a disciple of his mentor, Emile Durkheim, to give pride of place in his thinking to systems of collective representations. His point was simply that to be enacted or given physical expression, these representations must call upon some material means, and for human beings these means are furnished, first and foremost, by the body – whether or not extended by extra-somatic instruments. The body thus plays object to the collective subject otherwise known as 'society'. Refusing such subject/object dichotomies, Bourdieu placed the *habitus* firmly in the space of the body's active engagement in its surroundings, in the 'practical mastery' of everyday tasks involving characteristic postures and gestures, or a particular body *hexis* (Bourdieu 1977, 87). A way of walking, for example, does not merely express thoughts and feelings that have already been imparted through an education in cultural precepts and proprieties. It is itself a way of thinking and of feeling, through which, in the practice of pedestrian movement, these cultural forms are continually generated (*ibid.*, 93-4).

But could we not also put this proposition in reverse, to argue that thinking and feeling are ways of walking? This would, admittedly, be to interpret the notion of walking more broadly than is usual, as a paradigmatic instance of what Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1999) has called 'thinking in movement'. Taking this step, however, obliges us to acknowledge that to think and feel is not to set up a relation of external contact or correspondence between subjective states of mind and objectively given conditions of the material world, but rather to make one's way *through* a world-information, in a movement that is both rhythmically resonant with the movements of others around us – whose journeys we share or whose paths we cross – and open-ended, having neither a point of origin nor any final destination. Not only, then, do we walk because we are social beings, we are also social beings because we walk. That walking is social may seem obvious, although it is all the more remarkable, in this light, that social scientists have devoted so little attention to it. However to hold – as we do – that social life is walked is to make a far stronger claim, namely for the rooting of the social in the actual ground of lived experience, where the earth we tread interfaces with the air we breathe. It is along this ground, and not in some ethereal realm of discursively constructed significance, over and above the material world, that lives are paced out in their mutual relations. Thus careful, ethnographic analysis of walking, we suggest, can help us rethink what being social actually means. This is a task that remains to be done. Amidst the clamour of calls to understand the body as an existential ground for the production of cultural form, rather than only as a source of physical and metaphorical means for its expression (Csordas 1990, 5), we tend to forget that the body itself is grounded in movement. Walking is not just what a body *does*; it is what a body *is*. And if the body is foundational to culture, then

walking – or thinking in movement – is ‘foundational to being a body’ (Sheets-Johnstone 1999, 494).

Ethnographers, as we have noted elsewhere (Lee and Ingold 2006), are accustomed to carrying out much of their work on foot. But while living with a group of people usually means walking around with them, it is rare to find ethnography that reflects on walking itself, least of all from the kind of comparative perspective that we offer in this book. No doubt the topic of walking figures often enough in ethnographers’ fieldnotes. Once they come to write up their results, however, it tends to be sidelined in favour of ‘what really matters’, such as the destinations towards which people were bound or the conversations that happened en route. Even multi-sited fieldwork (Marcus 1998) focuses on the sites themselves, as though life were lived at a scatter of fixed locales rather than along the highways and byways upon which they lie. But *how* people go along on foot (as the vast majority of human beings have done, throughout history) is important. How do they prepare and set out, and how do they carry on through places in which, for any number of reasons, it may be difficult to walk? How do they arrive? Drawing on a phenomenological tradition (Jackson 1996), we aim to embed our ideas of the social and the symbolic within the immediate day-to-day activities that bind practice and representation, doing, thinking and talking, and to show that everything takes place, in one way or the other, on the move. In describing their own trails or those of the people in many lands with whom they have walked, the contributors to this book – though they come from a variety of disciplines and represent more than one theoretical perspective – share an ambition to pay attention to experiences of tactile, feet-first, engagement with the world. By way of introduction we will go around to meet them, eventually returning, as befits a tour, to where we began.

### Setting out

As we embark on our walk, our eyes are not upon a distant horizon. The first steps we take are tentative, even experimental, and time passes slowly as we attempt them. As yet unsure of our bearing or direction, each step feels like our first: a one-off that may lead to a second, a third, and so on, but that may just as well come to nothing. We do not, in other words, *start* to walk as the athlete starts to run, at the shot of a pistol, springing into action at the instant. For it is only after quite a few steps, when the feet have found their rhythm and the body its momentum, that we discover – without having been aware of any moment of commencement – that we are already walking. In this respect setting out recapitulates, albeit in a highly abbreviated form, what happens in infancy. The infant’s attention, too, is on the close-at-hand. Seeking to reach it by whatever means possible, he or she will improvise a mode of locomotion that mixes steps and tumbles – quaintly known as ‘toddling’ – until, after what seems like an age, it matures into a fully-fledged walk. Rarely, of course, do infants walk alone, as parents or older siblings give a helping hand. Between whiles, they may be carried, and it is surely while sitting astride or behind the shoulders of a grown-up that the infant first experiences walking as a rhythmic activity in which the eyes can set their sights on more expansive vistas while leaving

the feet to look after themselves. Before that, of course, the unborn baby will have experienced something of the same rhythmic movement while carried in the womb.

Even when they have found their feet, small children's focus on the near-at-hand and their boundless curiosity in everything in the vicinity – which they want to reach out and touch as well as look at – can continually thwart the intentions of the adults with whom they walk. Nowhere is this more so than in a modern Western city where rules of orderliness and proper conduct on the street combine with real risks from passing traffic or of becoming separated in the throng. Tightly held hands can mediate something approaching a tug-of-war in which the adult, due to superior strength and stature, invariably wins out while the child has to put one foot before the other simply to avoid falling flat on the face. For younger children, of course, the ultimate penalty for insubordination is to be forcibly strapped into a push-chair, wheeled with steely determination by the victorious adult. Older children are dragged along behind. Sociologist Michael Wolff has described how city parents treat under-sevens like baggage to be pulled like a suitcase on wheels (Wolff 1973). While the adult looks ahead, negotiating a path through eye-to-eye contact with oncomers, the child's eyes are resolutely downcast. By the time the child has reached school age, he or she is supposed to have been trained by such discipline, and already to 'know' how to walk.

Meet Elizabeth Curtis (Chapter 10), as she escorts classes of primary schoolchildren by foot along the streets of the city of Aberdeen, in north-east Scotland. The purpose of these educational outings is to enhance children's awareness of the architectural heritage of the city. They follow a pre-planned trail linking a series of sites of special interest. At each successive site they stop to make and record their observations. These may be auditory and tactile as well as visual, such as the sound of running water in a concealed gully or the texture of cut stone. So far as their teachers are concerned, however, walking itself is not understood as a practice of observation, nor do the trail booklets they use make any reference to it. Observations are to be made from a stationary position, not on the move. Walking, then, is considered simply as a means to get from one site to the next. During walks, children are expected to behave sensibly and to follow the rules of road safety. Ideally they should march two abreast in a neat line, a formation traditionally known as the 'crocodile'. Though instructed to look and listen, attention is to be focused on traffic and passers-by, in order to avoid accident, rather than on such things as the wind, rain or sunshine, the flight of birds and the barking of dogs, puddles and autumn leaves, and the myriad trifles from snails to conkers, and from dropped coins to telltale litter, that make every street a place of such absorbing interest to the miniature detective whose eyes are still close to the ground. For every child is such a detective, especially as – unsupervised – they make their way on foot to school and back, absorbing as they do the sights, sounds, feel, and smells of their surroundings through varying weather and changing seasons.

## Learning the way

The supervised heritage trail, as Curtis shows, transforms the streets into a classroom. It does so by taking outdoors an axiom fundamental to the constitution of the classroom as an indoor learning environment, namely, that knowledge is to be pieced together through the work of head and hands, from information obtained at diverse locations, rather than grown along the paths children take as they make their ways on foot, from place to place, through the world about which they learn. Such a division between knowledge and movement would seem strange to the Batek of Malaysia, forest-dwelling hunter-gatherers described by Lye Tuck-Po (Chapter 2). We come across Lye fumbling her way through the tropical forest, an environment that could not be more different from the paved streetscape of her childhood, when the jungle was remembered as an alien and fearsome place. Now, living with the Batek, she finds herself slipping and slithering through a dense tangle of roots, vines, ooze and debris, where one can never be sure of one's footing and where to hang on to vegetation risks bringing the whole lot down on one's head. In this highly dynamic environment nothing is ever quite the same from one moment to the next. Batek 'train' their children in the arts of negotiating the forest not through the imposition of discipline, or by keeping them on a leash, but rather by leaving them as much as possible to their own devices. Adults follow from the rear rather than taking the lead, and allow children to find their own ways, at their own pace, while keeping them under close but benign observation. For the Batek, as Lye shows, walking comprises a suite of bodily performances that include observing, monitoring, remembering, listening, touching, crouching and climbing. And it is through these performances, *along the way*, that their knowledge is forged.

Movement, here, is not adjunct to knowledge, as it is in the educational theory that underwrites classroom practice. Rather, the movement of walking is itself a way of knowing. A knowledgeable person is distinguished from a novice not by the sheer amount of information packed into his or her head – information that would in any case be perpetually obsolescent in an ever-changing environment – but by observational acuity and an awareness of the consequences of actions. Let us join Alice Legat (Chapter 3) as she walks with hunter-gatherers from the other side of the world, the Tł̥ch̥q̥ (Dogrib) people of northwest Canada, in their boreal forest environment. Here too, walking is as much a movement of pensive observation – of thinking as you watch and watching as you think – as it is a way of getting around. Someone who has walked knows the ways of the world. To know, here, means to be able to take action, with a reasonable knowledge of what its consequences will be. Knowledgeable people, in short, can *tell*, in all senses of the word. As discerning observers, they can tell what is going on in the world around them, such as the movements of animals or impending changes in the weather. But they can also tell the stories that, for Tł̥ch̥q̥ people, are fundamental to all understanding. And by relating their observations, taken while walking, to the appropriate narratives, they can tell what will come to pass.

Tł̥ch̥q̥ adults are compulsive storytellers. Whatever the matter at hand, they can always find a story stretching back to old times but extended and embellished through their own experience, by which its significance can be interpreted. Children grow up

hearing these stories almost every day. This storytelling is not however invested with didactic purpose or understood, as it might be by Western educationalists, as a child-centred way of conveying valued knowledge and information. Stories are stories, not coded messages. As Legat shows, simply having heard the stories is not enough to make an individual knowledgeable in the sense of having the capacity to take action. True knowledge depends on the confirmation of stories in personal experience, and to achieve this one must travel the trails and visit the places of which they tell, in the company of already knowledgeable elders. Between hearing the stories and walking the land, there is therefore a transitional stage in children's learning. At this stage children know the stories but do not yet know what they mean, and so cannot be guided by them in their action. This carries a crucial implication regarding the inter-generational transmission of knowledge, which is of great concern to Ṭḥcḥo elders. It is that the continuity of knowledge can be secured only by ensuring that generations overlap in their actual experience of walking the land. An intermediate generation that has heard the stories but has not had those stories validated by experience will not be able to guide its successors. That is why Ṭḥcḥo elders attach such importance to providing opportunities for young people to walk with them. Far from being accessory to the conveyance of knowledge by means of stories, walking is in their view the very means by which stories are converted into knowledge.

### **Leaving footprints**

In this conversion – in walking their stories – predecessors leave footprints for successors to follow. Ṭḥcḥo people regard knowledge and footprints as part and parcel of the same action, and often speak of them as though they were one and the same. Readers accustomed to the discourses of modernity may be perplexed by this equivalence. Is not knowledge a property of the mind? And are footprints not marks in the physical world? Knowledge and footprints, it would seem, lie on opposite sides of a division between the mental and the material: on the one side the mental content that we take with us into our encounter with the world; on the other the marks left after we are gone. This view, however, betrays an assumption that underwrites the entire project of colonial expansion, namely that the surface of the earth is presented to encompassing humanity as a space to be occupied, and subsequently perhaps abandoned once its resources are used up. As Friedrich Engels famously put it, humans are destined in their imperial ambition to 'impress the stamp of their will upon the earth' (Engels 1934, 179). Something of this ambition is evident in the project of the 'confluencers' documented by Thomas Widlok (Chapter 4), who aim to visit every site on the terrestrial surface where whole degree lines of latitude and longitude intersect, and thereby to obtain 'an organised sampling of the world'. Though the resource that confluencers seek is more symbolic than real, there is the same concern with the occupation of space, with 'getting there first' and leaving one's mark. And the procedure of organized sampling, which the confluence movement shares with the field sciences and cartography, likewise has as its aim to make the unknown known by assembling data collected from multiple locations into a comprehensive survey. Confluencers stamp the earth at predetermined points

rather than leaving their footprints along paths of habitation, as do people indigenous to the lands they visit. For them the whole world is a classroom – a full-sized replica of the classroom globe.

We meet Widlok in northern Namibia, a region he knows well from his fieldwork among the Akhøe Hai//om hunter-gatherers who have always lived there. To find out how the indigenous perspective compares with that of the prospecting confluencer, he has decided to register as a confluencer himself and to visit three sites of full degree intersection of latitude and longitude in the region. Unsurprisingly, he finds that the places and paths that are salient to the Akhøe Hai//om, and paced out in their everyday lives, fall through the grid of confluence sites. From the perspective of confluencers, these places and paths are all but invisible. It is as though, in reaching and taking possession of their sites, they were setting foot in a world as yet unoccupied. For the Akhøe Hai//om, on the other hand, confluence sites are of no significance unless they can be incorporated into local narratives of walking and place-making. For their task in life is not to *occupy* the world but to *inhabit* it (Ingold 2007, 81-4). In the pursuit of this task the footprints left by both human and non-human inhabitants of the land serve as useful clues to the whereabouts of local resources. Their footprints, however, are formed by walking within the world rather than tramping upon its exterior surface. These prints are not stamps but impressions. Moreover, as Legat observes of the Ṭḥq̣, even after people have left a place where they have walked, something of themselves remains there. That is why treading in predecessors' footprints, so that they mingle with one's own, is enough to establish a relationship of co-presence. For inhabitants' footprints are traces of memory. Knowledge and footprints are not then opposed as mental to material. The relation between them is rather tantamount to one between bodily movement and its impression. If knowledge and footprints appear equivalent, it is because knowing is doing, doing is carrying out tasks, and carrying out tasks is remembering the way they are done.

### **Making an impression**

Evidently, leaving footprints is not at all like printmaking. The printer stamps a design that has already been engraved or set, upon an absolutely flat, homogeneous and resistant surface. The surface itself is not deformed by this movement, which leaves a mark only because the plate or type has been inked. The surfaces on which inhabitants walk, however, are neither flat nor homogeneous. As Jo Vergunst explains in Chapter 8, they are *textured*. Joining him on his walks in the city of Aberdeen and the surrounding countryside, we become aware of the delicate footwork by which people negotiate the minor hazards of textured ground, and of the trips and slips that threaten to lay them low. Hardwearing surfaces such as of gravel, bedrock, cobblestone or asphalt are unmarked by this footwork, though they may be gradually eroded by it. Paths that have been worn in vegetation through the regular passage of feet, as on a grassy meadow, are revealed not as an accumulation of prints but in the stunted or bent growth of trampled plant stems. Actual, distinct footprints show up most clearly in surfaces that, being soft and malleable, are easily impressed, such

as of snow, sand, mud or moss. Yet precisely because surfaces of this kind do not readily hold their form, such prints tend to be relatively ephemeral. Snow may be covered by further falls or may eventually melt away, sand may be sculpted anew by the wind or washed by the tide, mud may be dissolved by the rain, and moss may grow over again. Footprints thus have a temporal existence, a duration, which is bound to the very dynamics of the landscape to which they belong: to the cycles of organic growth and decay, of weather, and of the seasons. As Kenneth Olwig argues in Chapter 6, the landscape of inhabitants should be compared not to a stage that they perform *upon* but to a tapestry *within* which their own lives are interwoven. Footprints are part of the weave.

In all these ways – in their texture, their temporality and their literal embeddedness in a landscape of habitation – footprints differ from stamps. Perhaps, then, they should be likened to inscriptions, to lines traced in a surface rather than stamped upon it. This, after all, is how handwriting is distinguished from print: whereas in printing there is no relation between the technically effective gesture and the graphic forms it serves to deliver, on a manuscript the letter, word or character is revealed as the actual trace of a gestural movement of the hand. Yet here again, footprints differ. One can read a pedestrian movement from footprints, as one can a manual gesture from the written line (Ingold 2004, 333). But whereas the writing hand with its inscribing tool glides across the surface, leaving a sinuous mark, the treading foot falls upon it so as to leave a dent with a certain outline and surface conformation. It is from these latter clues that the detective or tracker can ‘read’ the movements and possible intentions of previous passers-by. Footprints are, in short, *impressions* rather than *inscriptions*, and the movement they register is one of changing pressure distributions at the interface between the body and the ground. The sensory experience of such pressure is commonly described as touch. For this reason, as Vergunst points out, ground texture is intrinsically linked to tactility.

Just as word follows word along a line of text, however, so print follows print along a track. In both cases it is from reading the marks in sequence, rather than inspecting each individually, that the narrative thread unfolds. The analogy between narrative writing and walking is indeed a beguiling one. Michel de Certeau describes writing as ‘an itinerant, progressive and regulated practice’, or in a nutshell, as a ‘walk’ (1984, 134). Rebecca Solnit, taking up the same theme, argues that narrative writing is closely bound up with walking precisely because, just as with following footsteps, it allows one to read the words of someone – the author – who has gone before (Solnit 2001, 72). Whether reading words or following footsteps, however, the narrative trail is revealed on the surface as a series of discontinuous marks or imprints rather than a continuous line. On paper, written words are separated by spaces, as are footprints on the ground. Yet although the traces are discontinuous, the movement they register is a continuous one. Even with a cursive script, handwriters have to lift the pen from time to time from the paper surface, between words and sometimes between letters. So too, walkers have to lift their feet between steps. But the writer does not cease to write on lifting the pen, nor does the walker cease to walk on lifting each foot, alternately, from the ground. Nor, for that matter, does the singer or storyteller cease his recitation every time he pauses for breath. ‘Stories walk’, writes John Berger, ‘like animals and men. And their steps are not only between



narrated events but between each sentence, sometimes each word. Every step is a stride over something not said' (Berger 1982, 284-5).

### Stories on foot

But this leaves us with a tricky question. If, with Berger, we compare narrative writing or oral storytelling to pedestrian walking, then does every footfall correspond to a word or to a space between words? Are footprints akin to words or to punctuation? Originally, punctuation was introduced into written texts in order to assist their oral delivery, to show where the narrator could pause for breath (Parkes 1992). Does every step, then, correspond to a sounded word or to a silent inhalation? Is the narrative of the walk revealed in the footprints of the walker, or does it fall through the spaces between them, as spoken words fall through the spaces between successive intakes of breath? Consider a concrete instance. From her vantage point in the church belltower, high above the village of Bubión in Andalusia, Spain, Katrín Lund (Chapter 7) is watching the annual procession of San Sebastian in which a statue of the saint is carried around the village along a circuitous route that begins and ends at the church square. Villagers tell of how the statue was returned to the village following its absence during the Spanish Civil War. Then, too, it had been carried in procession from a neighbouring village where, in the panic of the war, the statue was found to have been mislaid. The story of the statue, however, is not yet over, which is why villagers themselves do not call it a story but simply 'what people say'. And what people say – the *narration* – is continually carried onwards not just in their spoken words but in their pacing feet which, in the saint's annual fiesta, carry the statue itself, onwards through and around the village. The procession, in short, does not *re-enact* a story that is already finished, but rather *keeps it going*. And in so doing, it momentarily fuses or brings into phase the otherwise divergent and unsynchronized life trajectories of individual participants into a unified tale of belonging to this place.

Lund, on this occasion, is not at street level with the procession but assisting three companions with the task of ringing the church bells. The bells ring while feet walk, and when the procession pauses, or reaches its climax back in the square, the bells fall silent. Are the bells, then, the footsteps of the saint, sounding in the air as human feet, in unison, tread the ground? If every word of a story, like every peal of a bell, corresponded to a footfall, then what would the story sound like? In her account of the Batek, Lye provides an example. Walking and talking, she observes, are inseparable for the Batek. Here, an old man recounts a walk he made to visit a sick grandson: '... and I walked, walked, walked, I thought. I thought, thought, thought in my mind, I walked. I walked, walked, walked, I thought. I thought ...'. Where, as in this example, word follows word as foot follows foot, what is passed over is everything about where the man has been, what incidents occurred or what he observed along the way, and what thoughts were going through his mind: everything, in brief, that would comprise a narrative. This man's talking is like the pealing of bells. His breathing is voiced as words, while his actual narrative remains silent and unspoken: it lies in the spaces in between the words he utters. In Bubión, likewise,

the events of the story unfold in the spaces between the peals of the bells, and it is precisely when the bells fall silent that the most climactic events occur.

All this is not to question the analogy between walking and storytelling or narrative. It is merely to observe that there is far more to walking than what is registered on the ground in the monotonous tread of feet. But by the same token, to concentrate exclusively on the spaces in between would yield an equally reductive account, as Tim Edensor shows in Chapter 9. We find him walking around in the ruins of abandoned industrial buildings. The ruin offers a labyrinthine tangle of pathways through what was once an intensely regulated space, in which normal entrances and exits such as doorways are often blocked, while openings appear in broken walls and windows, and the fallen beams of collapsed ceilings rather than staircases allow access to higher levels. As he improvises a path through the rubble, Edensor is accosted by a barrage of tactile, auditory and olfactory as well as visual sensations, triggering a jumble of alarms and surprises, memories and feelings. Narrative writing, he argues, can never capture more than a tiny proportion of the sensuality, affectivity, materiality and entropy of such a walk. Although the ruin may represent an extreme case, it highlights what he takes to be a general limitation of the narrative form. A purely verbal account of events or observations along a walk can convey little or nothing of the embodied experience of the walker, from which they have been abstracted for the purposes of the narrative plot. It is important to bear in mind, however, that just as there is more to walking than the iteration of footsteps, so there is more to narration than the concatenation of words. If the elements of narrative fall through the gaps between the walker's steps, there is a contrary tendency for the bodily experience of the storyteller or writer to fall through the intervals between words. In practice, the storyteller harnesses the power of the voice and lungs to deliver a performance no less visceral and muscular than that of walking. Nor should our familiarity with words as they appear on the printed page or the computer screen lead us to forget the deeply sensual, embodied and improvisatory effort of writing by hand, the sheer physical effort involved, and the expressivity of the inscribed lines themselves, quite apart from the words written in them (Ingold 2007, 146).

### **Walking with non-humans**

Human beings are not the only inhabitants of the urban industrial landscape. The city teems with non-human forms of animal life, from dogs, cats, foxes and rodents to birds, insects and spiders. Apart from domestic animals with which urban dwellers knowingly share their homes, these non-humans are normally sequestered in concealed or confined spaces where they do not significantly impinge on everyday human lives. In ruins, however, they have the upper hand. To walk through a ruin, as Edensor did, is at once to recognize the limitations of ordinary bipedal locomotion and to admit this modality of movement as just one of a much broader range, more often on four feet than two, by which the legs are deployed alongside other limbs in creeping, crawling, climbing and burrowing over and under the crumbling infrastructure of industrial society. Indeed Edensor's account has much in common with Lye's of moving through the rainforest, and it would probably not be far-fetched to regard

the ruin as the rainforest's urban equivalent. In both environments ground can give way underfoot, debris can trip you up, and whatever you might cling to for support is liable to come crashing down along with everything to which it is attached. Getting around under these conditions frequently involves copying, so far as is practically feasible, modalities of movement routinely employed by other creatures, and in so doing, perceiving the environment in ways similar to theirs.

Among hunting and gathering people such as the Batek and the T̄h̄ch̄o, it is generally acknowledged that successful tracking calls for a precise understanding of the way the target animal moves about, and of how these movements mark the ground. To anticipate what the animal will do the hunter has to move like it, and therefore to perceive the world as it does; to reconstruct what it has done, he has to be able to read back from its traces to the movements that gave rise to them. In this way, Kenneth Olwig (Chapter 6) suggests, hunters and gatherers develop a feel for the land that is mediated as much by the feet of the animals they follow as by their own. And if this is true of hunters, then it is even more so of pastoralists who ordinarily walk *with* their animals in their practice of herding. Through an etymological excursion into the possessive verb 'to have' and its cognates, Olwig finds a link with the herding of sheep. As they roam the hill pastures, sheep are said to bond with the land. By way of their four-footed movement, they *heft* (or *hafi*) onto it. These pastures, by extension, are known as the 'heft' of the farm, and so people will say of themselves that they are 'hefted' to the land to which they belong and that, by the same token, belongs to them. It is a belonging, however, that is established primarily through the quadrupedal perambulations of the sheep, and only derivatively through the movements of the human bipeds who herd them. Every shepherd knows that to manage a flock one must be able to see the world, as it were, through the eyes of the sheep, to understand their rhythms of grazing on the move, and to be alert to their moods and motivations.

Pernille Gooch (Chapter 5) recalls her experience, from three decades ago, of herding goats in the hills and woods around her home in northern Sweden. As soon as the animals became restless, she would call them to her and lead the way to a new spot, with the swift-footed goats following behind. But she could do this only because she had usurped the position of the she-goat that would otherwise have led the flock, becoming – at least in the eyes of her caprine charges – something of a goat herself. But when we meet her some twenty years later, on the trail of the Van Gujjars of the Central Indian Himalayas as they wend their way, at the end of the summer, on their annual migration from mountain pastures near the tree line to the forests in the foothills where they will spend the winter, everything seems, to her, back to front. The Van Gujjars are herders of large, ponderous and extremely slow-moving buffalo. You cannot, as Gooch discovered, take a buffalo for a walk. The animals know the way, and will go at their own speed. They are in the lead. The herders can only follow along behind, on the tails of their animals, adjusting their pace to that of their charges not by reducing the length of their stride but by increasing its duration, as though walking in slow motion. Who then is walking, and who being walked? Are the buffaloes, as they make their way down from the mountains, taking their minders for a walk?

With such a close, centaurian synergy of human and beast, it is difficult to assign agency unequivocally to one side or the other. The Van Gujjars on migration become, in effect, ‘buffalo-people’ – human-animal hybrids whose combined feet and hooves move in unison and whose perception is attuned to features of the world of common concern to such compound beings. Their walking, then, manifests a compound agency: it is what ‘buffalo-people’ do. On migration, however, the buffaloes with their herders move ahead of the rest of the household, including women, children and pack animals (bullocks and ponies). Moving more quickly, the latter can catch up later at the next halt. In these household movements, people of all ages, along with the animals, walk side by side. Each, in this case, is a separate agent; each walks. But the pace of walking is adjusted to that of the slowest member of the group, whether human or animal. In these adjustments we can see not only that walking is a social activity, but also that the social relations of walking crosscut the divide between humans and animals, and between the pacing of two feet and of four. The same can be readily observed of any domestic group in a Western society – including members of all ages and statures, along with the family dog – as they stroll at leisure. Sometimes they are physically connected: the child gripped by an adult’s hand, the dog held on a leash. So long as they walk in harmony, mutually ‘tuning’ their steps of different amplitude, the grip is relaxed and the leash slack. As in the case of adult and child described earlier, however, so with human and dog: tautness in the leash is an index of conflicting agencies as first one and then the other, digging in the heels or leaning backwards to retain stability, is induced to step forward in order to remain upright. The balance of power, in this case, can swing like a see-saw as first the human and then the animal gains the upper hand. Each, alternately, ‘walks’ the other.

### **Crossing the road**

The Van Gujjars are no longer free to choose the routes of their transhumance. Their room for manoeuvre is tightly curtailed by a government that wants to see them settled and to that end is intent on putting ever more hurdles in their path. They are forced to take their buffaloes along roads now busy with trucks and tourist vehicles whose noise and lights can scare the animals. Roads are dangerous. Along them, powerful people move in their motorized vehicles. To walk the roads, with feet and hooves, amounts for the Van Gujjars to a form of political resistance. For the Akhoe Hai//om of Namibia, prior to independence when the country was administered by South Africa, anyone seen crossing a road, or whose tracks remained as evidence, risked being shot. As Widlok explains (Chapter 4), the South African army had cut a grid of roads through the territory, in order to protect land occupied by White settlers from infiltration by fighters of the independence movement SWAPO. These roads served a dual purpose. On the one hand, they allowed the rapid deployment of troops into the area; on the other, they functioned as clearings in the bush that would expose anyone attempting to cross and thus deter them from doing so. They are, like all military roads, lines of occupation. Riding roughshod over the meandrine lines of habitation that indigenous people thread in their everyday lives, they both

*open up* land to the forces of colonization, channelling the import of personnel into the area and the export of resources from it, and, at the same time, *close it off* to its inhabitants, for whom they are not so much thoroughfares as boundaries. Such roads, in short, are just as much a way of keeping inhabitants out as of bringing occupants in.

Generally speaking, powerful colonizers ride rather than going about on foot, as inhabitants usually do. In the past, as Widlok reminds us, they rode on horseback or in ox-drawn wagons, or were even carried by servants on a palanquin. Nowadays they use motor vehicles such as the ubiquitous jeep or truck. It would however be a mistake to conclude that colonization is invariably conducted by vehicle, and habitation invariably on foot. The Roman occupation of Britain, for example, was undertaken principally by pedestrian means, along dead-straight roads specially constructed for the purpose. However the footwork of colonial occupation is of a peculiar kind, namely the *march*. Characteristic of marching is that the body is propelled on a predetermined course by a mechanical movement that is unresponsive to any kind of interaction with the environment that opens up along the way. Soldiers on the march are expected to keep to the steady beat of a drum, but not to look where they are going. Before their unswerving gaze and in their deafened ears the world passes by unnoticed and unheard. In this regard their pedestrian movement contrasts markedly with that of inhabitants whose gait, pace and posture respond with sensitivity and precision to a close and continual perceptual monitoring of the country through which they pass and which offers them sustenance for life. But if colonists do not always ride, nor do inhabitants go about only on foot. They may use vehicles of many kinds, from bicycles to automobiles. They ride these vehicles, however, as often off-road as on them, and in ways that are as improvisational as they are inventive in answering to the ever-changing conditions of their surroundings (Ingold 2007, 78-9).

Whereas occupants march along roads, inhabitants more usually step across them – if they can without being run over or shot at. For both human and non-human inhabitants, the business of life lies not at end of the road but in the lands on either side of it, and in carrying on they may have no alternative but to cross over from time to time. They do so at considerable risk to life and limb, and have no reason to linger there for any longer than necessary. For all kinds of creatures, great and small, the road can be a killing field. For parents and teachers with responsibilities towards children, as Curtis shows in Chapter 10, the road is perceived primarily as a place of peril where safety has to take precedence over all other considerations. The road itself is a desert; nothing can live or grow there. Uncovered by ground vegetation and unprotected by bushes or trees, the road can be a bleak, open space: tiring to walk on, prone to mudslides and with its own micro-climate characterized by extremes of wind, solar radiation, aridity or frost. This is especially true of a road that has been surfaced, such as with asphalt. While in the eyes of the transport engineer the point of surfacing a road is to enable it to withstand the impact of the heavy traffic that rolls on top, for inhabitants it may seem to have another purpose altogether, more repressive than enabling, which is to prevent any growth from below. Life binds the substances of the earth with the medium of air, on exposure to sunlight. Thus to

*surface* the earth – to separate it from air by means of an impenetrable barrier – is tantamount to the suppression of life itself.

Of course, roads of occupation and paths of habitation are not always as starkly opposed as in the sands of Namibia or the Himalayan forests. Over time, paths can become roads and vice versa. In Britain, for example, the routes of many modern trunk roads follow the byways of previous inhabitants while, conversely, residual fragments of roads built long ago for the purposes of occupation are frequently incorporated by rural inhabitants into countryside walks. In the city, the layout of streets has often emerged organically, and over a considerable period, as an irregular mesh of lines of habitation, and may differ only in degree from the more planned and arterial roads that connect the city to its hinterlands. Moreover moves are afoot in many European cities to re-establish parity between the lines of occupation and habitation, or more simply, between roads and streets, through policies of pedestrian empowerment. Sonia Lavadinho and Yves Winkin (Chapter 11) have been mingling with pedestrians in the city of Geneva, which is currently in the process of implementing a Pedestrian Masterplan intended to promote walking within the urban environment. One key to the plan is the establishment of so-called ‘encounter areas’, in which pedestrians, motorists and other users of civic space jostle on equal terms, finding a way through the throng, as pedestrians have always done with one another, through the ceaseless negotiation of their right of way with oncomers from all directions. In an encounter area there is no longer any need for such artefacts as pavements and zebra-crossings, designed to segregate the flow of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, whether spatially or temporally. There is probably greater safety, and certainly greater enjoyment, in a free-for-all where no-one can move much faster than walking pace, and where everyone – whatever their mode of locomotion – has to keep their eyes and ears open for everyone else.

### **Collecting life**

In a densely populated encounter area, civic space is transformed from a static array of geometrically circumscribed zones and structures into something more like a whirlpool of humanity-on-the-move. For the individual pedestrian, surrounded on all sides by the ebb and flow of the crowd, it takes on the character of a labyrinth. The wonder is how people routinely manage to find a way through the labyrinth without becoming hopelessly lost and disoriented. Ray Lucas (Chapter 12) went to Tokyo, one of the most crowded cities in the world, to find out, and we can join him there as he attempts to navigate the vast subway interchange station of Shinjuku. Having walked counter to the flow, both in and out of rush hours, Lucas recalls his own movements from a body-centred perspective, initially by comparing his walking to dance. This allows him to record these bodily movements by means of standardized dance notation. The record reveals a number of recurrent motifs, which he can then re-describe using the conventions of architectural drawing. Each motif takes the form of a corridor whose lineal axis corresponds to the passage of time. In this way Lucas is able to reconstruct the actual architectural experience of individual subway walkers as they deal with the movements of crowds, the distractions of

advertising and signage, and the many obstacles placed in their path. Instead of regarding walking as a practice of occupation, channelled within the confines of a predetermined architectural space, he can show us how for the inhabitant of the subway, walking is itself a practice of architecture that generates its own forms, out of which emerges the totality of the labyrinth. Corresponding to nothing that could ever be shown on an official plan or map of the station, these are the forms through which people really move as they make their everyday journeys around the city.

It was in this labyrinthine form that the city also appeared, and appealed, to the *flâneur*, much celebrated both in the poetry of Charles Baudelaire and subsequently in the writings of the philosopher and critic, Walter Benjamin. A wanderer who impresses the byways of the city with his feet, the *flâneur* finds in its passing details an endless source of fascination. The character he performs, as Benjamin observes, is that of the detective. With his eyes and ears open and alert to any fortuitous but revealing incident, his interest in every little clue to the myriad lives around him resembles that of the small child on his way to school. As Curtis shows us in Chapter 10, there is a world of difference between urban children's unsupervised explorations and their experience of being marched in crocodile formation from point to point, in their organized excursions on the city streets. Likewise, the *flâneur* is the exact opposite of the marcher on parade who, as he strides along, sees and hears nothing of what is going on. So, too, in contrast to Edensor's (Chapter 9) depiction of the regulated, signposted and monitored circulation of pedestrians in the modern city, with its walkways, conveyors and surveillance cameras, Lavadinho and Winkin (Chapter 11) describe the delight that urban dwellers take in the incorporation of little places of their own – a garden, a bench, or a bridge over a stream – where they may linger for a moment to wonder, to dream, to remember and possibly to be astonished by the unexpected. These places are not destinations or sites of special interest to be made the occasion of a separate visit. They are but resting places along the paths that people take on their everyday walks around their homes and offices: places to pause and take stock.

As a collector and recollector of the passing incidents of life, the *flâneur* bears comparison with another pedestrian character to whom we are introduced, in Chapter 13, by Hayden Lorimer and Katrin Lund. This character is the 'Munro-bagger'. But the things the Munro-bagger collects are not small or ephemeral. They are *mountains* – or more specifically, summits in Scotland rising at least three thousand feet above sea level. Every mountain climbed is another Munro in the bag, and the ambition of the true enthusiast is to bag them all. Like the *flâneur*, the Munroist collects things with his feet rather than his hands, that is, by *going about*. Mountains can be collected in any order, under all sorts of weather conditions, yielding a trail that, were it mapped out, would be as haphazard, labyrinthine and contingent upon circumstance as that of the *flâneur*, and, if retold, as replete with the apparently trivial and the incidental. The parallel ends there, however. For Munroists are nothing if not methodical. Though their ambition is driven more by national than global ideals, they otherwise resemble the confluencers described by Widlok in that the summits they seek are picked out by an arbitrary criterion that nevertheless carries the imprimatur of scientific measurement: here of altitude rather than of latitude and longitude. The bagging of a Munro resembles the registration of

a confluence, and a collection of Munros offers an ‘organised sampling’ of views of the Scottish Highlands not unlike what the collection of confluences is supposed to offer of the entire terrestrial world.

However as Lorimer and Lund show, although in one sense every conquered mountaintop can be ‘brought back’ and catalogued alongside the others as a kind of trophy, in a logbook or on a wallchart, in the pedestrian practice of Munroists themselves collections are not so much assembled as grown. In so far as they are experienced and remembered rather than merely logged and tabulated, summits are not just objects but *topics*, each a way-station along a path where walkers can pause to rest, relax, wander about, chat with companions, and take stock of their achievements so far. They are, in that sense, rather similar in function – though entirely different in scale, accessibility and the physical demands placed on walkers – to the little places of enchantment placed around the city, described by Lavadinho and Winkin (Chapter 11). Collecting on foot, for Munroists, is a kind of gathering or ‘pulling together’: at once a gathering of narratives into a coherent story of personal growth and fulfilment, and a gathering of the peaks of which they tell into a seamless landscape. Standing on the final summit, and viewing others he has climbed arrayed all around, the Munroist has the satisfaction of seeing a lifetime’s effort laid out in the terrain. His ‘collection’ is none other than the landscape itself. As they collect their mountains, Munroists collect themselves.

### **Coming and going**

Compressed into the preceding pages are many lives of walking, paced out at greater length in the following chapters. Setting out from the first steps of infancy we have gone to school and walked with the class, listened to the stories of elders, followed their trails and left footprints in our wake, clambered through ruins and slithered in the rainforest, joined a religious procession, herded sheep, goats and buffalo, tracked across sands and scaled mountains, wandered city streets and breasted rush-hour crowds, and now – older, wiser, and perhaps a little foot-weary – we are coming home. Not that there is any finishing line. Just as no definite point marks where we start to walk, so there is no point, on homecoming, at which we come to a stop. Rather, in an almost exact inversion of setting out, the stride is gradually shortened to a shuffle, and as the body loses its forward momentum there is no longer any certainty of follow-through from one step to the next. Each becomes a separate movement. Indeed if setting out recapitulates in brief the development of walking in infancy, then coming home presages the decline of walking late in life. Barring accident, older people do not, of an instant, stop walking. However as muscles waste and the body’s centre of gravity consequently rises, old age generally brings reductions in both strength and stability. With every step becoming more tentative, auxiliary means have to be improvised for getting around, often involving the co-option of sticks, frames and other people for support. Time slows, and attention lowers from the horizon to the ever nearer at hand. Gradually and imperceptibly, pedestrian movement drifts into the grey area between walking and non-walking commonly described by such



terms as ‘tottering’, ‘doddering’ or even – in the flagrant infantilization of old age characteristic of modern Western society – ‘toddling’.

Growing older, however, is a lifelong process, and people have continually to readjust the patterns and styles of their walking in order to accommodate the changes undergone not only by their own developing bodies but also by the bodies of those, including young children or the elderly, whom they walk *with*. It is not as though these adjustments were limited to early childhood and old age. They go on all the time. One has constantly, as it were, to go back to the beginning, learning and relearning to walk along the way, in order to cope with ever-changing bodily capacities and environmental conditions. For the long walk of life is not a unidirectional progress from start to finish, or from cradle to grave. It does not go *from* A to B. With no discernible beginning or ending, it rather goes *around* A, B, C, D, E and any number of further places, in a circuitous movement. Leaving any place, in such a movement, is part of the process of returning to it. Far from leading inexorably from the past on a one-way march into the future, it is a movement that keeps itself going by picking up and carrying onward the trails of earlier life. Since to follow a trail is to remember how it goes, making one’s way in the present is itself a recollection of the past. Thus every move forwards, as Lye reminds us (Chapter 2), takes one back to old haunts and pathways, the past and history.

To the extent that onward movement is itself a return, walkers are able to resolve what Widlok, in Chapter 4, calls the ‘coming is going’ dilemma, namely that to turn towards some place is necessarily to turn away from some place else. The dilemma, Widlok shows, concerns not just the walker but other people as well, for it implies a renunciation of relationships with those remaining in the place whence one has turned, and the initiation of relationships with those in the place whither one is bound. Granted that no-one can be everywhere at once, the dilemma can never be fully resolved. Nevertheless, by leaving in every place a token of continuing presence that carries the promise of eventual return, a person can turn his or her back on others and head towards them at the same time. In a roundabout movement, as Widlok points out, there can be no distinction – no marked point of separation – between ‘going out’ and ‘coming back’. People whose lives are caught up in such a movement, including most of us for most of the time, are neither coming nor going but perpetually ‘coming and going’. For example in the regions they inhabit, the Van Gujjars described by Gooch (Chapter 5) are known as ‘coming-going people’ (*ana-jana lok*), as they make their ways back and forth between summer and winter pastures and, at each end of the transhumance orbit, between the camp and the spots where the animals will graze. These latter movements are to the main seasonal migration like the loose, frayed ends of a single knotted rope. During the winter months in the forest, the buffaloes feed overnight on the leaves of branches lopped from trees, starting with trees furthest from the camp and then coming ever closer as the season progresses. Every evening and morning, animals go and come between the camp and the lopped trees, guided by the sounds of human voices. The coming and going of both human and buffalo feet, as Gooch shows, creates an intricate web of paths, fanning out from the camp into the forest.

For the Batek, too, the coming and going of camp life – in Lye’s words ‘a constantly iterated process of walking here, there and everywhere’ – enacts in microcosm a

more expansive pattern of movement. Thus in their foraging expeditions, people will go fairly directly to the furthest point from the camp, and then wend their ways back along innumerable detours as they search for and harvest the bounty of the forest. As Lye explains, both coming and going are combined in the Batek term *lew*, which means both 'to leave' and 'to arrive'. Yet the confidence the Batek display in finding their ways through the tangle of the forest is laced with uncertainty. Even when following a path, every step forward is a step into the unknown. As in a labyrinth, the path may turn out to be deceptive, to come to a dead-end, or to lead one astray. One may leave and *not* arrive. Thus the Batek are not unafraid of the forest. Fear and confidence are, for them as for people everywhere, two sides of the same coin. Occasionally people *do* get lost, just as they sometimes fall sick, especially if they are overconfident and fail to observe proper precautions or watch where they are going as carefully as they should. In Chapter 8, Vergunst describes what it felt like to become lost while walking with his companions in the hills of north-east Scotland. It was an unsettling experience. Life seemed more tenuous than usual, and the ground less firm underfoot. Losing the way is like falling asleep: amounting to a temporary loss of consciousness, you can have no awareness of it at the moment when it happens. By the time any kind of awareness dawns, that moment is already long past. And what if you never wake? What if you never find your way back to your walk of life? In an uncertain world, the only thing of which each of us can be sure is that we will eventually die. As we walk through life, with greater or lesser degrees of confidence, we do so with care and concern, and with the knowledge that the ultimate question is not *whether* we will eventually lose the way, but *when*. But even as we mourn those whom we have lost, they live on in the memories of those who follow in their footsteps. As one journey ends, others begin, and life goes on.

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