

THE WALK OF LEAST RESISTANCE

You start with a single premise. For instance, “turn left.” And then you set out in a straight line and engage the constraint (turn left) only and whenever a blockage occurs—a red light, a T intersection, impenetrable crowds, a river, barbed wire, a dog standing guard. Sometimes you go straight on for miles, while at other times you seem to go around in circles, to the left.

ROUSSEAU: *THE REVERIES OF A SOLITARY WALKER*

For Rousseau walking was a solitary breach of a rift of sky drifting to a gate. And the gate swung shut. Rousseau began walking

at the age of 15, when, returning to Geneva late one night, he found himself locked out. Turned around fast enough to make the trees run

in the night, rather warm. And why not go on?

The first walk: the first line: that so alone am I who loved so is walking always walking toward. I saw myself in shards. The drift that drives

the eye into time. He could not turn back to the music set in the hands of friends we find the things that break ringing

with the gates of Geneva swinging in the breeze. There's not much to leave when you're only 15 between the adamant and the sheer.

Walks 1 through 5

Walking on too late fended off whole ages blooming along the way
and yet I say but yet I have not lived. And look back on a heart
astray in a field and look back on wind. God is just.

Amid the road, suddenly as wide as it is long. And so we come
to the point at which a gentleman feels himself inseparably
a part of all. So shall I live the other distance of His hand.

I ran into friends who found themselves facing a ghost who said
(I said) to be as lost as a public park towered an alley
of flowering limes, and every time I faltered I lost another tree to flower.

And I suffered built of things along with every man
comes a piece of history leading to open country. Only
called out again: the geometric congruence between
one's lone immortality and the steps winding down

Stone weighed the stone, and the stone gave in. It weighed against
and sailed. The whole way home in a straight line under lines
of beeches equally straight and the sun itself aslant.

Any walk Rousseau once said is endless where the wild might seem
to have a name undone from within the unanswered flaw written out
by hand. The entire text of what is now known as *The Reveries of a Solitary Walker*
was found scrawled and the hand goes on, has its own hundreds of miles to go.

The slope—the loping slant—distance times the rhythm inherent in the word
whose lighter step is heard outside on the gravel To have a body only audible,

more easily lost, you were drawing a map in pale pencil and along it
an overhanging oak, its every leaf, a mirror as it falls and then falls on

past the long grey trees in the distanced fields beyond the fields
of grey sky, which are a lighter grey receding, an army retreating, lost in thought

the entire length of France, which won.

Walks 6 through 10

This I who ran adrift. Should it rain. Begin again. The rain.
Kept me in all morning among my hands. What rags
had slipped. By the fifth walk I had to resort to a boat. And this is how
we begin again. I rowed with all my might.

There once was a river here the Bièvre, walking toward a boy
I cannot begin to face, and so I am again a chain of events down which
and beneath which a river still runs in the dark.

Moved along, hidden, I saw, so slowly was I falling and called it
therefore wander. You can see me there wandering, ecstatic
in the green of it, the grove of it, the mind.

Distilled the soul is always found alone in the clearing of a grove.
And shivers in a crowd. A hand reached out
into the green light a truce tearing at its edge.

I fell today as I walked I was talking to myself it was something I said
that broke the air and kept on breaking it down into smaller
and smaller pieces.

There's a visceral relationship between the pace at which you walk and that
at which you write as if a line of stones edged the road seeming accidental

and accidentally even, the spine of a ridge equally incident in its perfect alignment
with the line of the road itself, walking alone the few hours each day he could

spare for that occupation saying I am crushed in man and on this dust. His last yes

was a detailed list of everything he saw living along the way, the distance became
an imperative, though as he grew older, displacement tends a gentleman who

confused his face with something seen or almost seen in a forest or only glimpsed
and barely with the sun always beside you always walking.

Moved along, hidden I saw, so slowly was I falling, and called it
therefore wander. You can see me there wandering, ecstatic in

the green of it, the grove of it, amid, and am by heart becoming
all the plants on earth, the meadow in a riot of mind in the spiral stair

up through the stem, what window there, that arch, aimless, one
lies down in the luminous surface, the orchard of animals tied

to small sounds in the undergrowth that in their turn, turn away.
“In walking is the forgetting of the world” dissolved of body, small

in timing, sharp in lightning, and full of such abandon, hand in hand,
the heart rains from within, I think, the found, once trusted, veers.

A WALK ON MAY 17

On a quiet street, narrow, a street lined with shops and very few people, on a night
with warm light still around, and all is calm.

I’m walking east on the quiet street, 9pm, when a very well-dressed, even elegant,
and handsome man, mid to late 30s, smiling, stops me, I assume to ask directions, and
asks for spare change.

The street is calm. The night is still warm, and it’s still not yet dark. 10:15, and a man
is walking his cat. Unlikely, I know. He knows it, too. But it looks like an established
routine. Man goes one way. Cat stays at corner; man comes back, making here-here
noises; cat goes the other way; man follows. The street is calm.