Introduction

The geographer Strabo preserves an amusing anecdote about the interaction of Romans and "barbarians" on the Iberian peninsula in the first century BCE. Although the Romans had formed a political alliance with the Vettonians, there was inevitably a certain degree of culture clash (*Geog.* 3.4.16):

τοὺς δὲ Οὐέττωντας, ὅτε πρῶτον εἰς τὸ τῶν Ῥωμαίων παρῆλθον στρατόπεδον, ἰδόντας τῶν ταξιαρχῶν τινας ἀνακάμπτοντας ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς περιπάτου χάριν, μανίαν ὑπολαβόντας, ἠγεῖσθαι τὴν ὁδὸν αὐτοῖς ἐπὶ τὰς σκηνάς, ὡς δέον ἢ μένειν καθ' ἡσυχίαν ἱδρυθέντας ἢ μάχεσθαι.

When the Vettonians first arrived at the Roman camp and saw some of the generals enjoying a stroll by walking back and forth on the roads, they assumed that they were crazy and tried to lead them down the road into the tents, since they thought that one should either stay seated and at rest or engage in battle.[1]

We are clearly meant to chuckle at the naïveté of the Vettonians. Strabo even puts the entire incident in indirect speech ("they say that. . ."), reinforcing the impression that the story of the dim-witted barbarians has attained legendary status, and that there is a long history of tellers and listeners who, by joking at the expense of the barbarian other, have affirmed their own status as insiders, part of the cultured elite. And in case it is not abundantly clear to his readers that the Vettonians' reaction to the strolling generals betrays a lack of culture, Strabo follows up this anecdote with further evidence of their outsider status: "Some would also regard the fashion of some of their women as a sign of their barbaric appearance" (*Geog.* 3.4.17: τῆς δὲ βαρβαρικῆς ἰδέας καὶ τὸν τῶν γυναικῶν ἐνίων κόσμον θείη τις ἄν). The geographer goes on to describe the various headdresses of the local women with a level of astonishment rivaling, no doubt unwittingly, that of the Vettonian yokels he has just ridiculed. The

[1] Except where noted, all translations are my own.

veracity of the Vettonian incident is beside the point; what is significant is the anecdote's promulgation, the zest with which we can imagine its telling, and the way in which Strabo portrays leisurely walking as a shibboleth of cultured (read: Greek and Roman) identity, as something that separates "us" from "them."

The anecdote perfectly conveys the power of the human tendency to categorize and to draw distinctions: even walking, a trait that is more or less universally human, indeed a trait that distinguishes humans from other species, can become the means through which one human marks himself as completely different from another. Nor is this tendency a lost relic of antiquity. H. F. Tozer, commenting on this passage in the nineteenth century, registers precisely the response that Strabo expected (1893, 104):

> [T]his view of walking exercise is not surprising in barbarous peoples, whose own life alternates between violent exertion and absolute indolence. Oriental peoples are possessed by the same idea in a somewhat modified form. The French translators remark – "La première chose qui frappe un Turc quand il vient chez les nations policées de l'Europe, est de voir des hommes se promener sans autre but que celui du plaisir ou de la santé."[2]

Strabo and Tozer, for all the distance between them, engage in a similar game. For both, the barbarian other is a man of extremes, either lolling around in luxury or rushing forth to battle with animal heroism. But instead of seeing these mutually exclusive stereotypes as evidence for the inadequacy of all stereotypes, they even blame the barbarian for their own logical flaw, as if the problem were not one of "our" perception but "their" inconsistency. And for both ancient and modern observers, walking a certain way could serve as a touchstone of "cultured" behavior, with insiders and outsiders clearly delineated (or so they insisted) by the way they moved through society.

The subject of this book – a history of Roman walking – would surely have puzzled Strabo and his contemporaries. Yet at the same time Strabo's portrayal of the Vettonian incident suggests an awareness in antiquity that walking could be viewed through an analytical lens. It even suggests an awareness that walking has its own history. Strabo is a Greek author trying to flatter the Romans among his readers, and this anecdote is part of the flattery: let us agree, suggests Strabo, that the Romans, notwithstanding

[2] "The first thing to strike a Turk when he arrives among the refined nations of Europe is the sight of men strolling with no other goal than that of pleasure or health." The comments of the French translators (La Porte du Theil, Koraes, *et al.* 1805–19) also appear in the translation of Hamilton and Falconer (1854, 246).

their barbarian past, now fall on the "correct" side of the Greek/barbarian dichotomy – just look at the way their generals stroll like gentlemen, even in camp.[3] In other words, even Strabo seems aware that although the *act* of walking may be a universal human trait, the way we interpret that act is culturally determined. Moreover, there is far more to interpret than we might realize at first glance. In spite of – or perhaps *because* of – its pervasive presence in everyday life, walking is rarely analyzed on its own terms, as a distinct category of investigation; as I hope to show, this neglect is unfortunate, particularly in the case of the Romans. Because of the privileged position that it occupies in human life, walking plays a central role in our relationship to the world around us; it is essential to our experience of place, to the way we see and think, and to our assumptions about identity (of others and our own).

A few recent volumes have begun to investigate the history of walking.[4] Authors both academic and popular have sought to explore the ways in which this most basic human trait has changed over time, and our perceptions, past and present, of what it means when we walk. A particular focus has been those eras when people consciously cultivated an art of walking, such as the Romantic period, when poets like Wordsworth wrote about their rambles through the countryside, or nineteenth-century Paris, where solitary flâneurs roamed through city sidewalks.[5] Artists, too, have begun to investigate the ways in which walking determines our experience of space; most famously, the contemporary British artist Richard Long creates works that are walks through landscape, and viewers can only access the work through his visual or written documentation of that walk.[6]

When scholars and artists seek out ancient prototypes for self-conscious ambulation, they inevitably light upon the world of Greek philosophy, and with good reason. As is well known, two major philosophical schools that arose in fourth-century Athens acquired names that either refer directly to

[3] Notice the similar way in which the British Tozer positions himself and the unnamed "French translators" as cultural allies united against the barbarian Turks.

[4] Solnit 2000; Amato 2004; Nicholson 2008. While there have been no book-length studies of walking in Roman antiquity, both Corbeill 2004, 107–39 and Fowler 2007 explore the role that walking played in the larger context of Roman deportment. The forthcoming volume (which I have not seen) on movement in the Roman city, edited by Laurence and Newsome, promises to advance our understanding of the topic.

[5] On the theme of walking in Wordsworth, see Wallace 1993 and Langan 1995; in Romantic literature and culture more broadly: Robinson 1989 and Jarvis 1997; in the modernist European novel: Barta 1996; in twentieth-century American poetry: Gilbert 1991. On flânerie, see Buck-Morss 1989 and Tester 1994.

[6] On Richard Long, see Fuchs 1986; on Richard Long and other walking artists, see Solnit 2000, 267–76.

walking (the Peripatetics) or to an ambulatory setting (the Stoics). More generally, a host of anecdotes from antiquity, from Diogenes wandering the world looking for an honest man to Thales stumbling into a pit while lost in thought, attest to a real connection between walking and Greek philosophical practice.[7] The association has been strengthened by a long history of reception; European philosophers and artists embraced the culture of the pensive stroll, often in self-conscious imitation of Greek culture. Kant's walks were such a regular feature of his day that, according to Heine (1882, 108–9), the natives of Königsberg set their watches by them. Kierkegaard too was famous for his walks through Copenhagen, and at least one scholar has wondered whether the habit was an act of Socratic emulation.[8] Inspired no doubt by both modern and ancient practice, Nietzsche pushes the association between philosophy and walking to its logical extreme:

> *On ne peut penser et écrire qu'assis* [One cannot think and write except while sitting down] (G. Flaubert). – I've caught you, nihilist! Sitting still [das Sitzfleisch] is the very *sin* against the Holy Spirit. Only *peripatetic* thoughts [die ergangenen Gedanken] have any value.[9]

Nietzsche doesn't simply disagree with Flaubert; he seems to accuse him of a laziness both physical *and* intellectual, as if Flaubert's propensity for sitting leaves him more vulnerable to Nietzsche's attack.

Yet the notion that Greek philosophers *only* practiced their craft while on foot is a fiction.[10] And it was the Romans, in a sense, who enabled and promoted this fiction. Thus Nietzsche's objection is a parody of Greek philosophical practice, for as any reader of Plato will know the bulk of the Socratic dialogues favor Flaubert's suggestion.[11] It is certainly true that the Romans inherited from the Greeks the connection between walking and thinking. But as we shall see in this book they did not hand it down to Europe without making their own contribution. Thus it is especially

[7] For the image of the wandering Greek sage, see Montiglio 2005; see also Redfield 1985, 98–102, Bremmer 1991, Nightingale 2001, and my Chapter 5 below.

[8] Pattison 2005, 181. On the central place of walking in Kierkegaard's philosophical project, see Solnit 2000, 23–6.

[9] Ridley and Norman 2005, 160 (Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, Maxims and Arrows 34). I am grateful to Judith Norman for drawing my attention to this passage.

[10] As Montiglio 2005 shows, the connotations of wandering in the Greek imagination are far too complex and polyvalent to allow for any simple equivalence between walking and philosophical practice, despite later stereotypes.

[11] Montiglio 2005, 171–9 explores the symbolism of walking, sitting, and standing in Plato's dialogues, and argues for the greater importance of sitting and standing still as philosophical poses for Plato. See also Solnit 2000, 14–16, who points out that the later appropriation of ancient Greek walking involves a healthy dose of fantasy.

unfortunate that the role of Roman culture in the reception of Greek philosophical walking has been largely ignored.[12] The wholehearted embrace of walking for leisure during the European age of Enlightenment – what Joseph Amato refers to as "the birth of walking by choice" and Rebecca Solnit calls "walking as a conscious cultural act" – had earlier precedents in the villa gardens and public porticoes in ancient Rome.[13] This Roman reception of Greek ambulatory modes has profoundly altered the way we see Greek philosophical wandering, and this reception, I argue, is an essential precursor to the ambulatory reverie of later authors such as Rousseau, Wordsworth, and Thoreau.

Despite this lineage, the two modes of leisurely walking most associated with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe – the urban promenade and the country ramble – seem not to have had much appeal for the Romans, at least not to the same extent that these practices captured later imaginations. Stories of solitary or lonely Roman wanderers through nature are few and far between in our extant evidence. In part, this silence is due to the very different attitude to untamed nature in antiquity. Even those passages that do suggest an interest in the wild often betray a preference for places marked by human activity and even revulsion for the wilderness.[14] Seneca, for instance, mocks elite Romans with too much time on their hands who wander from one spot to the next, unable to escape themselves: "'We should go see uncultivated places: let's seek out the woodlands of Bruttium and Lucania.' Yet amidst these deserted regions they require something pleasant, the sort of thing that might give their immoderate eyes a break from the extensive squalor of those frightful locales" (Sen. *Tranq*. 2.13: "*inculta videantur, Bruttios et Lucaniae saltus persequamur." aliquid tamen inter deserta amoeni requiritur, in quo luxuriosi oculi longo locorum horrentium squalore releventur*). Seneca manages to confirm in the same paragraph both the existence of an interest in untamed nature in antiquity and the typical negative attitude to those places; while this

[12] Rebecca Solnit's excellent *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* is a fine example: in her discussion of ancient walking, the Peripatetics get their necessary nod, but the Romans are nowhere to be found. Amato 2004 does include a section on Roman walking (34–9), focusing in particular on the use of Roman roads by soldiers and travelers.

[13] "[W]alking by choice": Amato 2004, 2; see also his Chapter 3 (71–100) on the rise of the promenade in early modern Europe. "[W]alking as a conscious cultural act": Solnit 2000, 14.

[14] A noteworthy exception is Horace's encounter with a wolf during his stroll through the Sabine woods (*Carm*. 1.22.9–12), though the end of the poem, in which the poet confirms his commitment to Lalage even in the remotest of places, confirms (albeit ironically) the unusual nature of this walk. Another exception is Cicero's *De legibus*, in which the orator strolls through the countryside around Arpinum along with his brother Quintus and his friend Atticus; see Chapter 5 below.

extreme mood swing, as it were, is surely meant to evoke the inconstancy of the elites he lampoons, his description of the woodlands as "extensive squalor" is hard to reconcile with modern attitudes to nature.[15]

More generally, what makes Roman walking distinctive from both earlier and later analogues is the clear emphasis on walking as a profoundly *social* activity, both in the private and in the public realm. As we shall see, strolling with friends was a hallmark of villa culture, so much so that the walk became a virtual symbol of time spent together with a good friend. As Cicero confides to Atticus, "And so then I wait for you, I miss your company, I even demand your return. For there are many things that are worrying and distressing me, and if I only had your ear, I feel I could pour them all out in one walk's conversation" (*Att*. 1.18.1: *quare te exspectamus, te desideramus, te iam etiam arcessimus. multa sunt enim quae me sollicitant anguntque, quae mihi videor aures nactus tuas unius ambulationis sermone exhaurire posse*). When Cicero imagines himself reunited with his friend, he imagines them not just conversing together, but *walking* together. For Cicero, the primary benefit of a stroll is the opportunity for conversation and company. Yet he acknowledges the possibility of solitary contemplation even during a walk with friends: "If someone preparing for a trial were to practice to himself on a journey or on a walk, or if he were to ponder something else rather intently, he would not be at fault, but if he were to do the same thing at a dinner party, he would seem rude because of his ignorance of the occasion" (*Off*. 1.144: *ut si qui, cum causam sit acturus, in itinere aut in ambulatione secum ipse meditetur, aut si quid aliud attentius cogitet, non reprehendatur, at hoc idem si in convivio faciat, inhumanus videatur inscitia temporis*). Cicero's qualification presumes that the walk is a standard setting for conversation among friends; he puts it in the same general category as the dinner party, if at a slightly less formal or rule-bound level. His admonition only makes sense in a society in which a walk or a journey was often a social occasion.

So too in the urban setting. We rarely encounter in Latin literature the solitary urban flâneur that has captured the modern imagination.[16] Even

[15] Cf. Beagon 1992, 159–61 on the cruelty of nature (particularly the sea) in the thought of Pliny the Elder. Though she argues (161–77) that Pliny's attitude to the land (as opposed to the sea) is generally positive, he is usually referring to land cultivated through agriculture. See also Davies 1971 on the distinct attitude to natural beauty in the works of Cicero.

[16] Walter Benjamin, one of the first to investigate the phenomenon of flânerie, makes this very point (1999, 417): "Paris created the type of the flâneur. What is remarkable is that it wasn't Rome. And the reason? Does not dreaming itself take the high road in Rome? And isn't that city too full of temples, enclosed squares, national shrines, to be able to enter *tout entière* – with every cobblestone, every shop sign, every step, and every gateway – into the passerby's dream?" On the similarities between flânerie and Roman walking, see Larmour and Spencer 2007b, 17–18.

Horace's famous stroll down the Via Sacra (*Sat.* 1.9) is not as solitary as it might seem, despite the poem's introspective opening; it takes the threat of conversation with the pest to reveal to the reader that there was a slave by Horace's side all along.[17] Elsewhere Horace boasts that he is free to wander through the circus and the forum by himself, but here we have the exception that proves the rule; Horace cites his solitary walks as another way he stands out from the crowd of his overly ambitious peers.[18] There were a number of details about urban life – the lack of a real police force, the constant threat of fire, the paucity of consistently enforced building codes, overcrowding – that must have made walking through the city a daunting experience.[19] Yet the ubiquity of personal attendants and bodyguards is a reflection of the very different realities not only of Rome itself but also of a slave-owning society.[20] There is, in other words, a class filter that disguises the true extent of solitary urban walking; we do not hear much from those who had to walk through the city alone.

But the emphasis on walking in groups in Roman culture, I argue, is more than just a response to urban realities or a symptom of a slave society; it is a reflection of the larger truth that walking, for the Romans, was a marker of identity. There is a constant emphasis on the performative quality of Roman walking, and a constant assumption of an audience to appreciate the performance. These viewers see someone walking (or imagine him or her, through literature) and are immediately able to appreciate something about that individual's identity – whether because he is walking alongside others like him; or because he walks at the center of a group of acolytes; or because he walks in a certain place, at a certain time, or on a certain occasion; or because he sits in a litter, and lets his slaves do the walking. Or even because he moves his body in a certain way. Roman walking, in other words, was not only a way of moving through space but also a performance of identity. By looking at how Romans talk about walking, this book sheds light on the Romans themselves, not only how they

[17] Horace begins the poem in solitary contemplation, "musing over something trivial, and absorbed in it" (Hor. *Sat.* 1.9.2: *nescio quid meditans nugarum, totus in illis*); a few lines later, we find out he's not alone: "I say something or other into my slave's ear" (1.9.9–10: *in aurem | dicere nescio quid puero*).

[18] "Thus I live more pleasantly than you, illustrious senator, and thousands of others: I walk alone, wherever I want; I ask how much the vegetables and wheat cost; I often wander the deceptive circus and forum in the evening; I stand awhile by the soothsayers; then I go on home to a plate of leeks, chickpeas, and pancakes" (Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.110–15: *hoc ego commodius quam tu, praeclare senator, | milibus atque aliis vivo. quacumque libido est, | incedo solus, percontor quanti holus ac far, | fallacem circum vespertinumque pererro | saepe forum, adsisto divinis, inde domum me | ad porri et ciceris refero laganique catinum*).

[19] Ramage 1983 and Scobie 1986 offer the best guides to the difficulties of daily life in ancient Rome.

[20] On the effect the ubiquity of slaves had on the Roman imagination, see especially Fitzgerald 2000.

perceived themselves and their experience of the world, but also how they drew distinctions between work and play, body and mind, man and woman, "manly" and "effeminate," rich and poor, citizen and slave, emperor and subject, child and adult, philosopher and student, republic and empire. Walking served as a critical tool of categorization. And how the Romans made sense of themselves and their world is, after all, at the heart of what we try to uncover when we study antiquity.

The book's first chapter ("The Art of Walking") examines how the gait functioned as an index of personal and social identity in Roman culture. Latin literature of all periods shows how the act of walking distinguished free men from slaves, men from women, and insiders from outsiders. Yet the classification of individuals by their gaits involved a certain degree of paradox, particularly in terms of gender. The gait was on the one hand an irreducible, visible feature of individual identity, yet on the other hand, in a society where the performance of social identity was so important, was also treated as a technique of the body susceptible to instruction and manipulation. As this chapter demonstrates, categories such as male and female were not dependent principally on the presence or absence of certain sexual organs, but on the quality of the performance of life: you were a man or a woman if you walked like one. The study of the gait therefore gets to the heart of how Romans thought about their bodies, and the relationship of their bodies to their personal identity.

Walking was not just about the body, however. There was a pervasive belief in antiquity that the movement of the body reflected the movement of the mind. The second chapter ("Seneca on the Mind in Motion") uses the work of the younger Seneca to reveal how the gait was understood to be a mirror of the mind of the walker. Seneca's tragedies frequently stage acts of gait interpretation, with the act of walking becoming a unified performance of physical and mental activity. There were precedents for such an association in ancient playwriting, so in one sense Seneca was the heir of a robust dramatic tradition. Yet a careful study of his other writings reveals that the gait had a philosophical meaning as well: as a Stoic, Seneca cared about how people walked. The path, after all, was the principal metaphor for the acquisition of Stoic principles; for students of Stoicism, even walking like a sage helped them advance on the road to virtue.

The Stoic path often led to the heart of the city itself, as Seneca's writings also make clear. The third chapter ("Urban Walkers on Display") examines how Romans making their way through the city were assessed not only by how they walked but also by who walked alongside them. There were a host

of ambulatory rituals in Rome; spectacular processions such as the triumph and aristocratic funeral have attracted most of the scholarly attention. This chapter focuses instead on other common types of processions, such as the escort that accompanied aristocrats as they made their way to the forum and around the city. The entourage that surrounded powerful men was a well-known ancient phenomenon; during the Roman republic, it was particularly associated with candidates for office. Yet the phenomenon of the escort persisted long after republican institutions had died, and a consideration of how authors such as Pliny and Tacitus deploy these associations suggests that ambulatory movement through the city could promote an ideological attachment to the past.

The purposeful stride of the powerful man in the city also acquired meaning by its contrast to the leisurely stroll popular among Roman aristocrats at home. The fourth chapter ("Cicero's Legs") investigates the culture of the *ambulatio*, or leisurely walk, in the Roman villa, particularly as described in the letters and philosophical dialogues of Cicero. The Roman *ambulatio* flaunted the economic independence of the walker, who did not need to use his body to earn a wage, and could instead walk back and forth with no particular destination. The regular movement of a walking in a portico, with arms and legs swaying in a more or less consistent rhythm, allowed for an increased focus on the conversation itself, as the body disappeared into its automatic movement. The Roman *ambulatio* was therefore a social and even an intellectual activity, a setting for conversation among social equals.

The intellectual associations of walking for leisure also had an historical explanation, since Romans associated this activity with Greeks in particular. Chapter 5 ("Theoretical Travels") explores in greater detail the intellectual background of the Roman *ambulatio*, particularly in the concept of *theoria*, or traveling to see and learn, which Plato and others adopted as a model for philosophical inquiry. For these philosophers, the mind could travel where the body could not, and retreating into the flight of the mind even involved an abnegation of the body. The notion of philosophical inquiry as metaphorical travel persists in Roman culture, as passages in Varro and Seneca make clear. I argue, however, that Roman *ambulatio* culture represents a further refinement of this idea, embracing the movement of the body as an activation of the notion of *theoria* and travel. The chapter thus reveals the intellectual background necessary to understand the domestic displays of the Roman villa and town house which, as many scholars have shown, encouraged the visitor to think of other places and times as he strolled through.

We are fortunate to have a remnant of just such a domestic decorative ensemble: the Roman fresco known as the Odyssey Landscapes, now housed in the Vatican. The final chapter ("Walking with Odysseus") demonstrates how an appreciation of the culture of Roman walking can alter our perception of one of the most studied artifacts from antiquity. The late republican painting is duly famous for its sensitive rendition of landscape, but less famous for the fictive portico frame that is painted "over" the frieze, dividing it into individual scenes. I argue that this portico would have evoked in the Roman viewer the experience of the *ambulatio*, and thus served an interpretive function in addition to its more familiar narrative function. The painted portico put the viewers in the proper frame of mind to appreciate the intellectual associations of the Odyssey Landscapes, as they walked with Odysseus on a parallel journey to greater insight.