

LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

Methods of Walking and the Inscription of the Walk in Literary Creation: Reflections from a Writing Project – A Creative Journal

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Abstract: The rearrangement of fragmented land parcels to increase production and efficiency, a practice known as land consolidation (*remembrement*), was intensively implemented in France after the war and up until the 1980s, marking an important milestone in the history of many municipalities. How can we write a documentary account of place that takes these changes into consideration? How can we collect the traces left behind by this period? Can walking be a tool for literary investigation? Based on an ongoing creative writing experience, this article aims to document the implications of walking as part of the writing process, echoing and conversing with the literary works of Hélène Gaudy, Philippe Vasset, Patrick Varetz and Jean-Christophe Bailly. Within this context, walking is perceived as a multifaceted concept and will thus be approached as a plurality of methods, with a focus on surveying archives and writing in situ. Finally, beyond the usefulness of walking as an extra-textual writing method, this article revisits how the walk imposed its presence on the text, becoming inscribed into the spatial narrative itself.

Keywords: creative writing; walking as a tool for literary investigation; spatial narrative; creative journal; writing the remembrance; cartographic surveying; virtual surveying; field writing.

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The approach

Those who practice hiking or climbing are familiar with ‘the approach’: walking the trail that leads to the foot of the mountain to be scaled or the route to be hiked. This walk is the necessary preamble that leads to the elevation that will be ascended. Much in the same way, this introduction functions as an approach walk, in which I explain the literary project I have been working on for several years and which I will be talking about throughout this text.

My dream is to compose a spatial narrative that will be neither an erudite travelogue nor a geography book detailing the structures of a landscape, but rather a text that seeks to paint a portrait of a proximal place, both spatially and biographically, and my relationship to it. A topography and an autobiography at the same time, my account will survey this literary hamlet for little pieces of history both intimate and collective. For several years now, I have been working on writing a story about the place where I grew up. I came up with this project after making a discovery in my mother’s things. I was at her home helping her sort through old documents, when I opened a cardboard folder holding numerous cadastral maps of the commune of Bazoges-en-Pareds, a rural commune in the West of France. Old and annotated, these maps represented fragments of the place I had grown up in. Immediately questions started to resurface, stirred by the word on the cover of the folder: *Remembrement* (land consolidation).

It all starts with this word. It refers to a land development practice that consists of reorganizing land parcels in order to consolidate land properties. In the context of rural development, land consolidation is often practiced to limit the effects of land fragmentation caused by the succession of multiple owners. It also aims at reorganizing zones of agricultural production with a view to increasing the number of plots that can be cultivated and improving the output of rural properties. Even today, the practice of agricultural consolidation is still implemented and supported by landscape movements. However, after the Second World War, France experienced a long period of intensive land consolidation as part of an effort to transform the national land plots, modify agricultural practices and industrialize agricultural production. The 1960 agricultural orientation law in particular accelerated this process, as it focused on significantly increasing the country’s agricultural output in order to boost exports. Land consolidation was one of the many tools France used to enter globalization and increase its export capacities. As a result, over a period of ten years, from 1965 to 1975, the town of Bazoges-en-Pareds experienced radical land consolidation. Numerous hedgerows were torn out, embankments and winding paths were destroyed, in order to flatten the landscape, to ‘rationalize’ it. Therefore, land consolidation is deeply linked to the question of the circulation spaces that develop in every landscape. It is a story of plots and properties, but it is also a story of paths. More than that, it is a story of a network of paths that are organized into a landscape and that, in turn, organize the landscape.

This extensive reconfiguration of space along with the practices used to achieve it constitute a defining milestone not only in the history of agriculture and the environment, but

also in my own family history, as I come from a family of farmers. The place I am writing about is one I have only known through memories. I was born in 1988 in the landscape of the aftermath. But I carry deep inside me the marks that the consolidation left on the members of my family and other people in the village. I remember people talking about consolidation paths at the back of the house and the anger or the heavy silence that often followed the utterance of this word. I began my investigation in an effort to pierce through these silences, but was immediately faced with methodological questions: how do you go about tracing the history of a place? How do you write about the different layers of a familiar place? Archives are valuable, but also have their limits, since they always privilege the official, institutional version of events. On the other hand, oral history can only ever reveal the feelings and experiences of others, when I wanted to feel the history of the place for myself. I decided that the best approach would have to be as multilayered as the place I was investigating. So, I set out to combine visual encounters with historical maps and bodily encounters with the landscape itself. Among the tools used during the making of *Remembrements* (working title), walking started taking on an increasingly important role, until it fully imposed its presence on the text. It is this presence of walking as a method and motif of literary creation that I wish to revisit with this article. By retracing the path of the text of *Remembrements*, I aim to re-experience the different moments when walking insinuated itself into the creation, in an effort to illuminate the different stages of the writing process and my main concerns as a writer.

Echoing questions that run through many discussions around the field of literary geography more broadly, I wish to account for how writing has been informed and shaped by its formative environment. In his *Tableau de la géographie littéraire* [Tableau of Literary Geography], Marc Brosseau identified several approaches to literary geography that differ significantly according to their various theoretical or epistemological viewpoints (humanist, Marxist, or belonging to a ‘new’ cultural geography). He identifies a real ‘textual turn’ that places the question of discourse and language at the heart of the reflections of both writers and geographers. ‘Literature is conceived there not as the mimetic reflection of a pre-existing geographical reality, but rather as a discourse that generates a representation of the world with the potential to destabilize both our ways of conceiving and writing about it, and therefore challenge our understanding of the complex relationships between modes of representation, knowledge, and reality (Brosseau 2022: 106).¹ My own work encapsulates and expands on these reflections not only by paying attention to how the spaces of literary practice act within the creative process, but also by finding stylistic forms that account for a geography beyond mere referential description, but rather through a formal, aesthetic exploration that restores something of the landscape.

Traversing the layers of the place from a distance

As if it were my only way to summon the space it represents, the map discovered at my mother’s house became my focal point, a tensor for writing. Since it was through a map that this project occurred to me, I started my investigation in the archives: among others, I scoured cadastral plans, municipal archives of the land consolidation, law articles from the 1960s,

publications in the Government Gazette. I did not return to the place, not at first. Indeed, walking did not manifestly impose itself on the creative process from the beginning. It took me several months to return and inscribe my body into the landscape of my childhood.

Instead, I chose to first observe the territory from afar or, more accurately, from above, since I lingered at length on the cadastral plans, survey maps and aerial photographs that I had at my disposal. All these transcriptions of the place allowed me to begin the process of reconnecting with the place of my childhood from a much needed distance, following in the footsteps of the novelist Patrick Varetz, who in *Rougeville: Promenade élégiaque* endeavors to portray his hometown (Marles-les-Mines, renamed Rougeville by the author) by moving around on a map via the Google Street View application. I opted for observing the place through the archives and specifically by means of aerial photographs, which can be consulted online on the website of the *Institut national de l'information Géographique et Forestière* (formerly the *Institut de Géographie Nationale*, whose acronym IGN it retains). On this public mapping site, it is possible to consult aerial views taken over the entire national territory, including the period from the 1950s until today. I could thus observe, from the sky, the changes in land plots, the destruction of hedges as well as the changes in the layout of roads and paths.

In his story, Patrick Varetz uses the term 'promenade' in the book's subtitle to refer to his mediated movements through the cartographic application. The use of this word is significant because it establishes an equivalence between an actual movement carried out in a landscape and a virtual movement performed on a computer. Indeed, Patrick Varetz constantly punctuates his story with verbs that refer to walking. 'Why did I have to take the main street of Rougeville this morning...?' (Varetz 2018: 9); 'I go along the fenced enclosure on my left... I pass on my right the junction of rue Rosalie' (14). By wandering digitally through the map of Marles-les-Mines, Varetz summons memories and unravels the history of the city, as if fragments of its history and clearly autobiographic elements are shaken loose by moving around the place's cartographic rendering. Although the experience of the body is absent here, this form of digital walking reinforces the literary writing of the place. This type of walking, in virtual space, is already recomposing a relationship with the territory; it is already (re)writing.

In *Rougeville*, the progress of the story is not linear or chronological. This naturally evokes Rousseau and his *Reveries of the solitary walker* which, as Rebecca Solnit rightly points out, uses the walk as a literary structure that 'encourages digression and association of ideas, in contrast to the stricter form of a discourse or the chronological progression of a biographical or historical narrative' (Solnit 2000: 23). Through walking, even when it is virtual, a narrative structure opens up that facilitates ruptures of meaning, echoes or even changes of direction in the unfolding of thought. 'I am now walking back up the interminable rue Gustave-Beaufromé... In front of me is the parking lot of the Escale... I am approaching it – with the help of zoom' (Varetz 2018: 39). The walk is retraced in the present and alternates between the author's reminiscences of past sensations, his real knowledge of them, and the distance from which he has chosen to return to the place. 'The present – while I am writing – remains undecided: it forces me to slip between two simultaneous layers of the same reality (two superimposed rather than parallel worlds)' (39). It is precisely this superposition of times,

made possible by the mediated walk on Google Street View, that illuminates a unique relationship with the place. This kind of virtual walk, from a distance and through images, allows access to another truth of the place that real, *in situ* walking would not have allowed, particularly because, as it happens, ‘the application crashes, displaying a black screen’ (46). It is in these gaps or lack of image that the author finds his way back to his memories and is able to unearth more intimate reflections. For example, when he cannot approach the street where he grew up because the application denies him access, Varetz describes the surroundings of this inaccessible place. He writes: ‘A cable, probably a telephone cable, connects three exaggeratedly thin pylons with an uncertain line, drawing a perspective that for me leads nowhere (wanting to write these last two words, I typed a little quickly “nul père”)’ (V46). In French, ‘nowhere’ [nulle-part] and ‘without father’ [nulle père] are almost homophones. If, at first, the author enjoys the shift from nulle-part to nulle-père, in a second, he seizes on it, making this slip of the tongue the starting point for a reflection on his complicated relationship with his father. The digression of the walk is here prompted by the aporias of the application.

This distancing is what I sought to emulate during the first phase of writing my own story. Instead of rushing to the place, I chose to survey the aerial images as a way of forging ahead with the writing and finding my way towards the text. Whether perpendicular or oblique, aerial views are unique in so far as they drastically alter our reading of a place by crushing the volumes and reinforcing the lines and textures of landscapes or structures. Seen from the sky, the landscape becomes a drawing made of lines (paths, roads), materials (forest, meadow, architecture) and geometric shapes, a perspective that played an important role in the way I link the motifs of page and place in my story. ‘From these effects a less univocal readability is born’ (Gervais 2001: 12), capable of renewing the relationship between subject and place. What I experience when walking on a path is displaced by my knowledge of this same space from the point of view of aerial photographs, adding a fresh dimension to my perception of my home country. Thus, in a passage of *Remembrements*, I document the landscape I am walking through as seen from the sky: ‘It’s the skin of the country that I am traversing. Tirelessly, I scrutinize its roughness, the hamlets that dot its surface with small spots of bran, its scrapes, its velvet patches.’

Furthermore, the possibility of accessing the different phases of the area (before and after consolidation and its present state) opened up a space for diachronic strolling that on-site walking alone could never offer, because when on site, I am always in the country of post-consolidation. On the IGN’s ‘Remonter le temps’ [Go back in time] application, it is possible to position yourself at a location and view the state of the landscape from one era to another by superimposing one map on another. Thanks to the application’s simple navigation, I was able to oscillate between different aerial images dating from 1955, 1965, 1980, 2000, and 2013. The journey through time that this application allows captivated me for a long time. In effect, by exploring the different strata of land registers through the gaze, I gained a little more insight into what the inhabitants of the commune experienced during the rearrangement and redevelopment of the land plots in 1975. In the photographs, I could see the disappearance of certain paths bordering embankments and hedges as well as the disappearance of wooded

areas in favor of large fields, clearly delineated by right angles. Of course, this does not emulate the actual experience of the land consolidation in any way, but it does provide a glimpse into what the process must have been like on the ground.

Finding the place, writing *in situ*

No matter how enriching this walk from a distance might be, no matter how many opportunities a zenithal point of view might offer for shifts in the gaze, at the end of the day, they also represent an image of what the violence of the consolidation in many cases looked like: a rewriting of the landscape from a single surveyor-cartographer point of view. So, after this initial approach from the sky, eventually I would have to well and truly land. If part of the story was lodged in the archives, the rest was to be found on the paths, in the landscape and my relationship with it in the present, and in movement.

In his book *Un nouvel âge de l'enquête*, Laurent Demanze writes at length about an increasing taste for the field, reaffirmed by many contemporary authors who push the practice of writing towards the outdoors and, in particular, on to paths. Like, for example, Hélène Gaudy who in *Grands lieux* walks the banks of the eponymous Lake Grand-lieu in the Nantes region to write about a place whose edges are very difficult to access. In this story, the writer walks on site, repeating her walks in different seasons in order to 'approach the lake, to probe the landscape' (Gaudy 2017: 28). Writing begins with the surveying experience, which is carried out with great attention to detail and extreme care for the individual perceptions that words will eventually weave into a textual whole. I am also reminded of Philippe Vasset who, to write *Un livre blanc*, decides to walk in the white areas of a Parisian map in order to explore what is happening there. Through walking, he notices that in these spaces, described in the maps as empty wastelands, there is in fact a bustle of activity. Skateboarders or graffiti artists meet to practice, while others indulge in the practice of urbex (urban exploration). Another example is Jean-Christophe Bailly who, in *Le dépaysement*, (2001) takes to the road in France in order to experience the different textures that the word *France* encompasses, summons, and assembles. All these writers, and many more since this list is by no means exhaustive, felt driven to hit the road, to walk outside in order to truly get in touch with the place they write about and with the sensations and memories that it reactivates, in full awareness that the act of leaving the writing desk is conducive to a decentering of the self and surrendering to 'a bold dynamic of self-change' (Demanze 2019: 90). To confront the field is, necessarily, to let oneself be moved, in particular by the confrontation with otherness. Indeed, the mappable place is also an existential place for the many human and non-human presences that travel through it simultaneously. In this sense, the place is always in motion, crisscrossed by a multitude of dynamics and saturated with steps that *in situ* exploration allows us to at least partially explore and experience. When Philippe Vasset goes for a walk in the areas left blank on the map of Paris, he discovers the reverse of an absence, a profusion of forms, architectures, practices and spatial uses. 'These areas might be white on the map, but, in reality, they are multi-colored, disappearing under the spray-painted lettering, the bright colors and all the graffiti characters with their oversized heads' (Vasset 2007: 47).

In the same way, the animal tracks that punctuate my entire text and led to several short poems evoking the form of haikus appeared to me when I returned to the places I was writing about. During my various walks, I could not help but note how much this portion of space was saturated with presences, rhythms that rub shoulders with or steer clear of each other, giving the place dimension. The recurring animal appearances during my walks made me realize that they were an intrinsic part of the place and it was thus necessary for me to integrate them into the text. Just as walkers experience all these presences as they walk through the place, readers should confront them as they progress through the text. This is the meaning, for example, of the following fragments: 'black piebald dress in the shade of the walnut tree / Dutch cow / bides its time' or 'ashes spread / on the wheat / buzzard seeks its nest.' Here, the exploratory walk in the field prompted a complexification of the writing space.

Moreover, walking *in situ* also has the virtue of reactivating memories, therefore increasing and enhancing the autobiographical material of the text. It was during the various walks that I took for the writing of *Remembrements* that many memories came back to me. Fragments of my childhood, scenes from my parents' daily life at work, or even fleeting impressions imprinted on the landscape by the passing of the seasons slowly rose to the surface of my consciousness. As the philosopher Gaston Bachelard wrote, 'It is through space, it is in space that we find the beautiful fossils of time made concrete by their long sojourns' (Bachelard 1957: 62). Invoking a philosopher known for his reflections on intimate space may seem counterintuitive, but if Bachelard's thought was a true support during the writing process, it is precisely because, from an agricultural perspective, the relationship to space is inherently intimate. The farmers who cultivate their fields maintain an intimate connection to their land. This is the type of connection to place that my text addresses. Writing about land consolidation stems from the same autobiographical intimacy that I would have drawn on to write about the nooks and crannies of my childhood home. Instead, here intimacy is played out outdoors, in the outside world.

Finding the place, particularly through walking, means to stimulate a gradual emergence of memories. Indeed, when I went back to the actual place and re-trod the paths of my childhood, I was able to experience firsthand the link between walking and memory. Far from being a modern discovery, this link dates back to much older times. One example is memory palaces, a mnemonic device used by the orators of ancient Greece to memorize the elements of a speech. This technique consisted of imprinting memory with an architecture, a garden, real or imaginary, divided into distinct areas. The images associated with the various elements of the speech were then placed in the different areas of this garden or palace. Once this was done, all the orator had to do to revive the memory of the speech was go through these spaces in turn and think back to what had been placed there. As the philosopher and historian of architecture Sébastien Marot writes, 'the method guarantees that we remember the different points in the right order, since the order is determined by the succession of places in the building' (Marot 2010: 20). The link between place and memory is therefore closely associated with the idea of circulation, of movement in space, of a journey. More broadly, the mental walk in the memory palace is a way of remobilizing ideas, while turning the speaker into a real walker.

Writing in the field and especially walking in the field encourages this play on the connection between walking, place and memory. Nothing beats walking *in situ* when trying to unearth Bachelard's 'beautiful fossils of time.' It is the inverse of the memory palace: instead of mentally constructing a place to house portions of discourse and then mentally walking around it to reactivate these discursive fragments, walking in the field means walking in a real place to release the fragments of memories already attached to it. This is also the process that Hélène Gaudy uses for writing *Grands lieux*. She walks around the lake, attentive to the reminiscences that she will record in her story as well as the impressionistic touches that will help express the place in all its complexity, preserving in writing all the echoes that it produces. She writes: 'In the vicinity of the lake, home comes back to me. I could probably walk there, from afar, recognizing every angle, every corner. The house of childhood, of holidays, of long weekends' (Gaudy 2017: 10). This story is not only the story of a concrete place; it is also the story of the surges of memory that the walk around the lake induced in the author's mind. What is at play in the present of my walk is a succession of perceptions that intertwine with the multitude of materials and images that my investigation has brought to the surface. Though in a less controlled and reproducible way than the orators' memory palace, my walk also led to the re-emergence of personal memories.

Thanks to walking, the sensitivity of the author's body and the on-the-spot notation nourish the text's spatial descriptions. 'Night will soon come but the blue seems brighter, fresher than in broad daylight. On the path, piles of black, damp wood litter the dark grass. The space between the trees has the mauve, rough hue of a threadbare fabric' (Gaudy 2017: 29). While writing *Remembrements*, walking allowed me to access the different time scales (vegetal, geological, human, etc.) that make up the place, particularly through the seasons and the metamorphoses of the flora. The notes I took about the flora during my walks, like the presence of an oak in this plot, the carpet of lungwort on the edge of that path, or the appearance of a stream in the middle of the meadow in autumn, were all written down on the spot and helped reinforce certain descriptive passages in the text.

In this sense, walking was a very important tool in the investigation I conducted prior to writing the text. It allowed me to access old memories again, but also, by updating my perceptions, it helped me nurture the descriptive passages of my text into a style of writing that more closely resembles a landscape painting. As Hélène Gaudy so rightly puts it, 'while walking, sometimes, I collect, I fill myself with everything that passes by... [the landscape] allows and arouses the keenness of our perception of it... one could believe it rewires us, it teaches us to connect' (Gaudy 2017: 52-53). In other words, walking in the landscape facilitates writing because it yields images, perceptions, memories that will then coalesce into a cohesive whole through story.

Inscribing the walk into the story

Through most of *Remembrements*, I only occasionally speak about the paths. The most obvious evocation of the paths and the transformations they underwent due to the land consolidation, which breathed new life into the local promenades, comes through the testimony of my

grandmother. She is the one who confided in me and most vividly described what the transit routes were like before the redevelopment. This testimony also voices one of the rare arguments in favor of the land consolidation in the area. Indeed, my grandmother mentions the sunken paths and the transit problems that they had caused in winter: 'The paths were dirty. To go from our home, from La Mercerie, to Bazoges, we had to take two pairs of shoes with us in the winter... It was barely three kilometers to get to the town... but if you wanted to go there by bike in winter, you had to go through Pareds or Loup-Pendu, so it turned into six or seven kilometers... In any case, it was necessary... it was certainly obvious something needed to be done, but what that should be was not as clear' (Baudry 2025). Throughout the rest of the text, the paths are sporadically mentioned, but only via small impressionistic touches; they are not central to the text, despite the fact that the paths, along with the hedges, are among the landscape elements that were greatly transformed by the land consolidation process. Even though I chose not to write about paths at length, it still seemed important to me to make room in the text for walking, especially because the modification of the paths has led to a significant transformation of local foot traffic. In a sense, by making space in the text for the walk, I was also talking about the paths through the movement they allow and facilitate or disrupt.

The different approaches to walking presented in the two previous sections of the article concern the pre-text; in other words, the preparation for the text. For certain literary projects, walking might be only exploratory, having no place in the actual story or making a merely occasional appearance. During my many work walks, I more and more sensed that walking could not be completely ousted from my text, mainly because land consolidation is, among other things, an event that brings the spaces of movement and circulation into question.

When seen from the sky or on a map, land consolidation, the reorganization of land properties by reducing and modifying plots, resembles a large reassembly or recomposition. It is reminiscent of intarsia, a woodworking technique where panels of various materials can be moved around and rearranged in order to enlarge the pattern of a mosaic. I have sought to conjure this effect of composition, of assembly, in most of the text. Thus, with the exception of the last pages, the text is made up of fragments of different natures: poetic blocks evoking haikus, fragments of prose that relate the different stages of my investigation into the archives of the land consolidation, blocks of prose that evoke a diary and return to childhood memories or my relationship with my family, elements of 'administrative poetry' (pieces of legal texts or speeches that I have cut out and reassembled). This stylistic mishmash is accentuated by a play on the typography or the page layout, translating the textual variations on the body of the page in a plastic way so as to better reflect the diversity of materials used in the body of the text, which in turn evokes the heterogeneity of the bocage, the hodgepodge nature of the French countryside. Most of the writing that occupies this book is a sort of fragmented writing that deliberately blurs or complicates the connections between its parts. However, what I experienced through walking is that it is not only a way to bring forth or shed light on emotions, ideas, images; it is also a way to tell a story through the body.

In her book *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, Rebecca Solnit writes at length about the joys of walking and, in particular, about all it allows. She recounts having experienced, in England, what walking can offer to those who experience it. 'If walking sews together the land that ownership tears apart, then trespassing does so as a political statement' (Solnit 2000: 218). Walking allows us to transcend legal writings. When walking, it is not necessary or obligatory to follow cadastral lines, paths or property boundaries, and walkers can free themselves from such divisions. Thus, walking opens up a whole array of sensibilities that has little to do with the demarcations of law, politics or society. The full power of this remark by Rebecca Solnit is highlighted in my work, since her words resonate directly with the issues and difficulties engendered by agricultural consolidation. In Bazoges-en-Pareds, as in all the communes that have experienced such redevelopment, there was a lot of anger among landowners and non-owner farm laborers who saw their property or workplace being transformed or moved. The users and inhabitants of the place at the time of the consolidation felt that their land was being torn away from them and the violence of the act was perceived as a symbolic dismemberment. Abandoning a plot where a grandfather had planted a few fruit trees to another farmer in order to rationalize property distribution was experienced as a real pain. This fragmentation is precisely what the first and longest part of the text addresses.

In *A Brief History of Lines*, anthropologist Tim Ingold discusses at length the importance of lines in human life. I followed the designated lines, the new paths created by the land consolidation, but I also moved through the fields as a way of reappropriating the marks left by this period by rendering them inoperative: walking in space, as I see fit, without necessarily taking into account the lines, is to carry out a symbolic and poetic land consolidation. It is a way of weaving a thread between oneself and the environment; in other words, a way for me to rewrite my relationship to the place. In his book, Ingold evokes in particular the different conceptions that human cultures have of places. For modern Western culture, the place is a point that can be connected/joined by a segment of road, of path, while in other cultures the place is only a moment of intersection between different paths. In the first case, the place is thought of as a closed point, inert, waiting to be connected; in the second, the place is where several movements meet, which will then continue elsewhere and in different directions. In this second conception, the place is a ball of entangled presences. The anthropologist invites us to rethink the relationship that humans have with their environment and posits that 'we might do better to revert from the paradigm of the assembly to that of the walk' (Ingold 2024: 107). For Ingold, the walk, instead of connecting one point to the next, allows us to see a trace appear, a line that is also a movement. The walk encapsulates the ideas of fluidity, continuity and habitat, as life is lived along the lines of a meshwork of trails. 'Wayfaring, I believe, is the most fundamental mode by which living beings, both human and non-human, inhabit the earth' (113). This is also what Rebecca Solnit points out when she writes that 'walking returns the body to its original limits again, to something supple, sensitive, and vulnerable, but walking itself extends into the world as do those tools that augment the body. The path is an extension of walking, the places set aside for walking are monuments to that pursuit, and walking is a mode of making the world as well as being in it.' (Solnit 2000: 28). During my various walks in preparation for writing, I was able to experience very concretely how walking can become

a world-making process. It was, for example, during these walks that a symbolic link was forged between the memory deficit linked to the history of land consolidation and the Neolithic burial necropolis located in the commune. In the book, I gradually established a connection between this unique space, this monument, and the land consolidation process by creating a continuity between the dead of the necropolis and the victims of these territorial developments.

The natural connecting power of the walk motivated me to think of a way to integrate walking into the text not as a mere method of literary creation, restricted to the extra-textual, but as an actual, textual motif. During my excursions to Bazoges-en-Pareds, I thought about this idea of walking as a way of living and it dawned on me that a text about land consolidation had to end with a moment of walking. This movement of the body in landscape, as well as its capacity for writing or even rewriting, had to be inscribed within the story itself. My thinking was that walking is writing on the skin of space. Walking is phrasing. In this sense, walking is already writing. In order to complete the text, it became necessary for me to grasp how much walking in a place could allow a rereading of it in the present. This is the purpose of the last pages of my story, which relate a long walk that I took, starting from the town hall located in the center of the town, passing by an ancient necropolis and continuing a long reverie along the river that crosses Bazoges-en-Pareds through the consolidation paths that I walked as a child, all the way to the farm of my childhood. This farm has now become a sort of factory farm, a symbol of the intensive agricultural development that land consolidation was meant to facilitate in the region. This long walk evokes the real duration of a promenade, but also functions as the connecting tissue that brings the preceding, more fragmented, text together and helps the reader see the whole in a new light.

In an essay devoted to prose, the writer Jean-Paul Goux wrote a sentence that has been etched in my mind. 'To link, to put in relation, is to re-member or reconstitute - to transform the fragmentary into a coherent whole.' (Goux 1999: 25). The connection offered by walking allows for a symbolic 're-memberment', which is precisely what guided my writing project: to speak of a place, to express it in writing and, in doing so, propose a new approach to its history, using storytelling to suggest a rewriting that is both intimate and collective. As the geographer Pauline Guignard has very rightly demonstrated, 'literature does not simply create imaginary spaces. Through the practices, uses or projects it generates, it can participate in the tangible making of contemporary spaces' (Guignard 2019: 162).

These few pages retrace a writing journey of several years. If virtual and *in situ* walking were integral to this writing project from its early stages, the inscription of the walk in the course of the actual story took, as I mentioned, more time to transpire. Even though each writing process is different, I believe that this journey towards a spatial narrative is not exceptional. Writers, geographers, philosophers have always written from their various experiences of walking. Therefore, these short reflections by no means constitute a definitive method, but I hope they will be able to illuminate some of the links that connect walking and writing, the imprints of which are inscribed in *Remembrements*.

Notes

¹ For all works not published in English, the translations are by the author of this article.

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