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Stumping and Stunts

Walking in Circles in the “Go-As-You-Please” Race

Kirstin Smith

Their Long Jaunt Begun

“At 12 o’clock this morning the go-as-you-please-race in Madison Square Garden was started,” the *New York World* reported on 28 April 1884. A crowd of “fully five thousand persons” watched 14 male competitors begin their journey “on a dead run, as though they had but one hour to race instead of 143.” For the next six days, the contestants would walk, jog, sprint, or shuffle round and round the sawdust-covered track. Unlike in some other walking races, the walkers were not required to keep part of a foot on the ground at all times—hence the name, the “go-as-you-please” race. The “pedestrians,” or “peds” for short, could also eat and rest when they liked, adding to the suggestion of free choice. Their aim, however, was to travel as far as possible in the available time. The incentive for completing this grueling task was a cash prize of potentially thousands of dollars.

While the go-as-you-please race was just beginning, professional pedestrianism in general was in its dying days. At its height, from the mid-1830s to the 1860s, pedestrianism in North America had been “second only to horse racing in popular appeal” (Moss 1974:392). In a revival of interest in the 1870s, hundreds of “advertisements, news stories, and challenges” relating to the sport appeared in the press (Bernstein 1980:701). A great range of walking and running performances by men and women included: races against the clock, one-on-one matches, individual journeys across vast distances, saloon performances in which pedestrians “walked the plank” for 30 hours straight, and—an 1870s innovation—six-day track races (Cumming 1981:48).

These six-day contests anticipated the endurance dance marathons, often called “walkathons,” that developed in the United States in the 1920s and became elaborate entertainment events during the Great Depression (Martin 1994:42, xviii). The repetitiousness and duration of the six-day walking races also prefigured minimalist and durational performance art works of the late 1960s and early 1970s, which explored space, time, and the aesthetics of the ordinary through walking. Bruce Nauman walked repeatedly around a taped-down square (*Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square*, 1967–68); Steve Paxton choreographed nonprofessional dancers to walk across an empty stage (*Satisfyin’ Lover*, 1967); Trisha Brown created dance pieces that set the quotidian act of walking in gravity-defying locations (*Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*, 1970; *Walking on the Wall*, 1971); and Richard Long’s durational, spiraling walk through England, documented in a line drawing (*A Thousand Miles, A Thousand Hours*, 1974) was an allusion to a pedestrian feat of 1809. Finally, the six-day contest’s inadvertent exploration of labor, time, and extremity bears comparison with explicit explorations of these themes in recent walking and running performances. In 1997, Lone Twin began a sustained exploration of walking by traveling the distance from the base camp to the summit of Mount Everest, following, back and forth, a line drawn on the floor of a theatre (*On Everest*). In GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN’s *Weigh Me Down* (2010), Hester Chillingworth ran on a treadmill for the first 90 minutes of every 2 hours, for 12 consecutive hours, reading a stream of other people’s apologies. In 2013, Mick Douglas spent four days walking up and down an open

Student Essay Contest Winner

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Doctoral students in the **Department of Drama at Queen Mary University of London** study in one of the United Kingdom's leading centers for research in theatre and performance. The department ranked 1st out of 84 considered by the Music, Drama, Dance, and Performing Arts panel in the UK-wide 2014 Research Excellence Framework. Research by the department's staff and students is focused through four main—but overlapping—strands of enquiry: cultural histories of theatre and performance; transnational theatre and performance; live art; applied and socially engaged performance. Research students are supported through individual supervision and by an extensive program of research training offered by the department in collaboration with the Queen Mary Doctoral College. Research students are a central part of the department's intellectual life and research culture, and in addition to pursuing their own scholarly projects, organize Quorum, a research seminar series, as well as symposia and conferences driven by their research interests. Students are actively encouraged to present their research at national and international conferences, to publish articles, reviews, journalism, plays, and DVDs, and to produce works of performance for audiences in the UK and internationally. Research students also play an important part in the department's collaborations with leading arts organizations, including the Barbican, Beijing Dance Academy, Duckie, Shakespeare's Globe, Gran Teatre del Liceu Barcelona, Actors' Touring Company, the London Film Festival, LIFT, and AfroReggae.

shipping container of salt on a dock in Wellington, New Zealand, inviting others to join him in a physical consideration of global trade and labor (*container walk*). There are also a broad range of peripatetic performances that interweave walking and audio, by artists and groups such as Janet Cardiff, Rimini Protokoll, and Wrights & Sights.¹

The flourish of six-day contests in the 1870s was perhaps a last gasp for pedestrianism, anticipating its subsequent decline. The enterprise was at a new low according to one of the most famous 19th-century walkers, Edward Weston. He told a New York reporter in 1883 that he was "disgusted with pedestrianism, which had descended to hippodroming" (Cumming 1981:94). "Hippodroming" was a slang term for fixing races: the reference to a hippodrome arena suggested that the sport was being distorted by modes of theatricality usually found in circus. (P.T. Barnum had initially called Madison Square Garden the "Great Roman Hippodrome" when he converted it from a railway depot in 1874.) By the early 1880s, the increasing popularity of amateur and college sports had compounded a view that walking for money degraded pedestrianism. Specifically, gambling—a morally suspect activity to begin with—destroyed competition, because contestants could frequently earn more by throwing a race than they could by winning it. By replacing competition with concealed forms of organization and cooperation, hippodroming reduced the event to what it arguably was all along: walking in circles, with no meaning or purpose beyond (potentially not very interesting) entertainment, and the circulation of money (largely in favor of bookmakers).

1. On the performances named in this paragraph, see for example: Karen O'Rourke (2013); Richard Long (2002); David Williams and Carl Lavery (2011); Gregg Whelan (2012); Fiona Wilkie (2015); Daniela Hahn (2014).

It was, in part, repeatedly walking in circles that Edward Weston found degrading. On the first few occasions that Weston raced round a track, rather than through countryside, towns, and cities, he had to bow out, stating: "I am convinced that walking upon a circular track is not only against my nature, but unnatural to either man or horse" (in Marshall 2012:48). The "continued walk round the circle" caused him to feel nauseous and dizzy. Walking a repetitious circuit was, in Weston's view, unfit for living beings.

Thus the walking contest of 1884 enacted and troubled *circulation* in two senses: the act of repeatedly walking in circles, and the circulation of capital. The race partook of modes of circulation that some perceived as morally corrosive, degrading, or pointless: circulation that seemed to detract rather than add value. What was at stake in the walking contest, in a highly visible and complex way, was the *value* of walking. A consideration of this vexed subject points to fault lines of valorization: lines between work and life; work and leisure; and sporting and theatrical modes of performance.

The Value of Walking

Professional pedestrians like those racing in Madison Square Garden were figures of particular concern in essays that shaped a new discourse of walking in the 19th century, by writers such as Henry David Thoreau, John Burroughs, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Lesley Stephen. Stevenson insisted that the ideal walker was "none of your athletic men in purple stockings, who walk their fifty miles a day" (1904:252). Stephen felt that such walkers practiced only out of "vanity" or "the spirit of competition," motives that might lead to walking's "degeneration" (1910:261, 255). These writers held up the professional pedestrian as a prime example of how *not* to walk.

Instead, the essayists called upon readers to "'cultivate the art' of pedestrianism" (Burroughs 2001:47), and understand the "genius" for "sauntering" (Thoreau 1914:4). Walking was to be valued for fostering reflection, a sense of freedom, continuity with the past, and communion with nature. In *Walking, Literature, and English Culture*, Anne Wallace named this discourse "the peripatetic," and traced its development in England and North America from the early 19th century, attributing it largely to the influence of Wordsworth's poetry (1993:13). The peripatetic discourse depicted the continuous movement of walking as a means to experience a moral order inherent in the natural landscape. Through thoughtful walking, these essays suggest, one could find or rediscover one's rightful place in a natural order, which transcended economy and society. Thus, walking became a rather sophisticated form of recreation which, Wallace notes, "carrie[d] connotations of both labour and leisure, both the remaking of self and world and the sense of relaxation and respite from labour" (170).

In order for walking to serve as a "cultivating labour" that facilitated the "recreation of the self," it had to be detached from commerce and figured as intrinsically valuable (Wallace 1993:14, 17). Stevenson called walking "a reward in itself" (1904:246), and Stephen concurred that the "true walker is one to whom the pursuit is in itself delightful" (1910:256). William Hazlitt was loath to talk to people during his walking ventures, because he feared the conversation might "hint" at his "profession and pursuits" (1951:15). Even the mention of professional work would disrupt Hazlitt's effort to lose his "personal identity in the elements of nature" (16).

Clearly, walking as fast as possible, with as little rest as possible, round and round a circular route, for a cash prize, was not what these writers had in mind for walking. The romantic, amateur ideal, that stipulates the participant be at leisure to reap the benefits of the practice, was constructed in opposition to professional walkers. As Nicholas Ridout writes in his study of the "passionate amateur" in theatre, the categories of professional and amateur are mutually dependent: "The amateur does for pleasure (or some other personal or collective purpose) something that others do for wages. One cannot practice, as an amateur, something for which there is no corresponding professional or 'work' version" (2013:106). The "go-as-you-please" race and peripatetic discourse present two distinct and conflicting conceptions of leisure. While

the race's name, "go-as-you-please," suggested free choice, the reality was that the competitors could choose whether to walk or run around a prescribed route, with a fixed goal, taking occasional breaks. In this sense, the race was a crude summation of choice in capitalist economies. The essayists, by contrast, saw *their* walking as external to this closed circuit. In the privileged position of having time to commit to daily walks, they sought to preserve walking as an activity beyond necessity.

Yet on closer inspection, the essayists' walks were not as far from labor as they believed. Through walking, these writers not only undertook the reproductive labor of remaking the self, they also engaged in immaterial labor, the stuff of their intellectual trades. Stevenson's ideal walker was "composing articles, delivering orations, and conducting the most impassioned interviews" on the road (1904:250). In keeping with Ridout's analysis, the "passionate amateur" of the peripatetic discourse turns out to be another kind of professional, who may manage their own time and choose their own route, but who is nonetheless at work (2013:45). Rather than escaping the logic of capitalism, the essayists converted walking from manual to intellectual labor. However, as I'll go on to explore, the go-as-you-please race engaged in its own disruptions of work/leisure binaries.

The peripatetic discourse continues to play an important role in current histories and philosophies of walking, which often insist that walking has intrinsic value and base this statement, in part, on a dismissal of sport and commerce. Frédéric Gros entitled the first chapter of his 2013 *Philosophy of Walking*, "Walking Is Not a Sport," distinguishing walking from sport on the grounds that walking is not labor, performance, or spectacle (1). In a similar vein, writer and novelist Geoff Nicholson's history of pedestrianism, *The Lost Art of Walking*, espouses the intrinsic value of walking with the claim that walking is "definitely not a stunt. It's something entirely worth doing for its own sake" (2010:16).

Given that in the peripatetic discourse, professional pedestrians exemplified how *not* to walk, Nicholson's insistence that walking is *not* a stunt suggests that, as a performance form and concept, the "stunt" might be an illuminating lens for viewing the go-as-you-please race.

Indeed, the first meaning of "stunt" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* serves as a summary for the contest overall: "a prescribed item in an athletic competition [...] an act which is striking for the skill, strength, or the like, required to do it; a feat." Just as "hippodroming" suggested theatrical as well as sporting modes of performance, the first meaning of "stunt" also spans these two contexts: a stunt is "an item in an entertainment, a (theatrical, etc.) 'turn.'"² Stunt's second meaning is also of direct relevance to the contest: "an enterprise set on foot with the object of gaining reputation or signal advantage," hence, in advertising or journalism, "a 'gimmick' or device for attracting attention." A stunt is "a piece of business, an act, enterprise, or exploit," unavoidably tarred by a commercial brush. This is why "stunt" is often—as in Nicholson's history—to some extent derogatory, hinting at degradation or devaluation.

In 1884, the word "stunt" was just beginning to be used in the sense of "feat." Its varied meanings and implications—in terms of challenge, time, attention, and limitations—shape my analysis of circulation in the walking contest.

Stumping

In 1895, when the word stunt first appeared in *Dialect Notes*, the editor wrote: "stunts is used in N.Y. City by boys in the sense of performing some feat in rivalry,—a long jump for instance,—one boy 'stumping' or challenging another" (1896:400). "Stumping" was also a contemporary colloquial term for walking.

2. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "stunt, n.2," accessed 18 December 2014, www.oed.com/view/Entry/192178?rskey=wiVsug&result=2#eid. Unless otherwise noted, definitions of "stunt" are from this source.

The customary impetus for walking contests was a challenge. Pedestrians or their backers would publish a letter in a newspaper, issuing a challenge to prospective contestants, and determining the stake necessary to compete. In 1884, the sporting newspaper *Turf, Field and Farm* published a challenge from Peter Duryea, on behalf of the champion English walker, Charles Rowell. Duryea was a sports manager, who had produced several six-day races and was reportedly very wealthy (NPG 23/05/1885). As well as backing Rowell, Duryea managed the whole contest. *Turf, Field and Farm* also played an active role in producing the event. Early in 1884, Rowell and his prospective competitors signed contracts at the newspaper's office, and put "in the hands of the editor of the TURF, FIELD AND FARM a stake of \$500" (TFF 8/2/1884). A series of subsequent articles sought to drum up interest in the competition. The newspaper announced that the venue had been booked, introduced other contestants who had come forward, and advised anyone interested in securing "privileges" (presumably the right to sell goods or services, including taking bets) to contact the office and place their bids (TFF 4/4/1884, 11/4/1884). At the behest of other prominent pedestrians, the stake was eventually reduced to \$100, perhaps belying the *National Police Gazette's* claim that "walking matches have the same fascination as they had of old, notwithstanding that many believed that such entertainments were played out" (NPG 10/5/1884). The admission fee was set at 50 cents, lower than it had been in previous years (TFF 4/4/1884).

The influence of *Turf, Field and Farm* and other newspapers was evident in the list of officials. The referee, one of the judges, and the superintendent of scoring were all from the staff of the newspaper (TFF 2/5/1884). The two remaining officials came from the *New York Herald* and the *Sun* respectively. Ties between competitive walking and newspapers went further: one pedestrian, John Hughes, was backed directly by the *National Police Gazette* and advertised its title on his jersey (Cumming 1981:103). Several other walkers, including Weston, are recorded as having worked as journalists for short periods.

Interest was not limited to specialist sporting newspapers. Reportage of walking contests was just as intense in the popular press. Joseph Pulitzer's newspaper, the *New York World*, provided detailed, day-by-day coverage of the go-as-you-please race on its front pages. When Pulitzer bought the newspaper in 1883, he pioneered an increased use of illustration, aiming to attract working people, particularly recent migrants, who might read little or no English. In the tradition of penny papers, Pulitzer's *World* focused on crime, divorce, and scandal. His efforts to popularize the newspaper came under criticism: he was later accused of creating "hysterical, sensational, untrue" journalism with "a pervading spirit of vulgarity, indecency and recklessness" (Stevens 1991:99).

Pulitzer recognized the importance of a specialized sports section in his efforts to drive circulation (Juergens 1966:119). The walking contest was a particularly effective circulation-booster because like the newspaper's readers, pedestrians were commonly recent or second-generation immigrants and served as unofficial representatives of their own communities. This contributed to a popular following for pedestrianism in New York, where so many immigrants resided.

Though Pulitzer's strategy was highly successful, the *World's* rising popularity and boasts about its circulation provoked complaints, which paralleled criticism of the walking contest. In 1884, the *Journalist* accused Pulitzer of publishing ordinary people's portraits merely in order to boost figures: "*The World* is getting most of its advertising on the pretense that its actual circulation is represented in the figures shown by these sales to vain men who want to see their features in print. It is a pretty hollow sort of affair" (IJ 6/12/1884). This comment draws a distinction between "actual" circulation and "hollow" circulation, the latter perceived as driven by the vanity of ordinary people, and as a result, insubstantial. In fact, the *World's* circulation grew consistently, precisely because of Pulitzer's popularizing strategies. These complaints suggest once again that in the 1880s some types of circulation were causing consternation: they seemed to be unproductive, dishonest, or pointless, nothing more than going round and round.

Circulating People

On the first day of the go-as-you-please race, the *World* gave a short introduction to each pedestrian, illustrated with a caricatured portrait. Contestants came from far and wide, and most were depicted as representing a community, nation, race, or ethnicity. The group is a snapshot of people's movements within North America and Canada, and across the Atlantic. As it is unclear whether or not many of the competitors were in New York to stay, this "snapshot" is productively blurred, suggesting people in motion rather than anonymous (and sometimes misleading) numbers crossing borders. Some traveled specifically to compete: one "came on purpose from England," and after withdrawing early, was left "penniless," without means to return (TW 1/5/1884).

A significant contingent came from Great Britain and Ireland, as migrants and/or visitors (pedestrianism was a trans-Atlantic sport). Rowell and Samuel Day were from England, George Noremas from Scotland, and Bobby Vint and Patrick Fitzgerald from Ireland (TW 28/4/1884). Rowell was a noted pedestrian, who had saved \$50,000 and bought a house in England from his winnings (TW 30/4/1884). He was the current holder of the Astley Belt, "a large silver and gold international championship belt" donated by English aristocrat Lord Astley in 1878 (Cumming 1981:90). There was a strong sporting rivalry between North America and England: Weston declared he was "ready to prove that no man in England, so long as I stand on my own two feet, can beat any man in America at pedestrianism" (Marshall 2012:38).

Other competitors traveled within North America, from east coast and west. Winston H. Burrill was an African American from Philadelphia who had decided to compete when another black pedestrian, the very successful Frank Hitchcock (protégé of champion Irishman Dan O'Leary), pulled out. Burrill was a "carpet-cleaner" by trade; on hearing there would be no black competitors, he "decided to try his luck" (TW 28/4/1884). This gives an impression of the range of experience, training, and motivations among the entrants. Rowell, Vint, and Noremas had trained in Williamsburg in advance.

By contrast, William Wallace

Lounsbury joked that he made the attempt "because the admission fee is low and insures him free entrance to the Garden" (TW 28/4/1884).

The youngest competitor, Nitaw-eg-Ebow, was a Native American, described as "a Chippewa Indian from Dakota," "very intelligent," and "the only good-looking man in the race" (TW 28/4/1884). While there is no record of Nitaw-eg-Ebow's personal history, two months before the race, the Turtle Mountain reservation in North Dakota was dramatically reduced in size; it is possible that he had recently been displaced (Wilkins 2009:496). Native Americans had figured prominently in writings about walking, depicted as possessing a natural and well-practiced talent for the activity. In his early history of pedestrianism, English writer

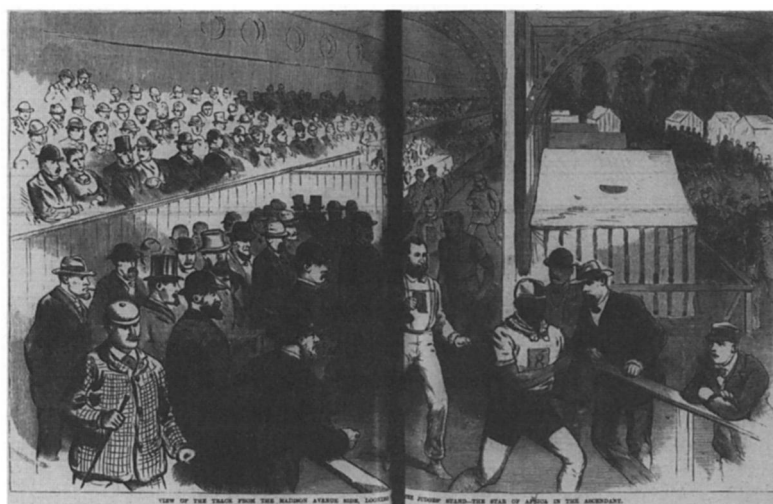


Figure 2. Illustration of the start of the six-day race for the Astley Belt at Madison Square Garden in 1879, featuring Frederick (or Frank) Hart in the lead, the pedestrians' tents, and bandstand, in "The Great Walk," *National Police Gazette*, 4 October 1879:8-9. (Artist unknown; Microform and Electronic Resources Center, Library of Congress, LCCN-sn-94095956)

Walter Thom saw cause for national celebration in the assertion that walkers such as pedestrian Captain Robert Barclay had performed “feats more astonishing” than those of “American Indians,” who “go journies of a thousand leagues in six weeks” and “pursue the elk with such rapidity, that they are able to fatigue and secure him” (1813:255). In his history *Runners and Walkers*, John Cumming writes that in the mid-19th century the impression of the “Indian’s native ability” as a runner was so great that sponsors of races in towns near reservations often set up separate races for Native Americans, excluding them from mainstream competitions, presumably to prevent them from winning (1981:12). Yet several runners overcame this restriction to achieve widespread acclaim. In the 1870s, Native Americans were mentioned in accounts of walking feats as both participants and spectators, and the *World* reporter remarked that a “squad of Kickapoo Indians” attended the first night of the walking race (Marshall 2012:43; TW 28/4/1884).

Pedestrianism reflected and was part of patterns of continental and global migration largely dictated by urban industrial capitalism. As competitions took place throughout America and in Britain, the sport was boosted by the transport revolution, for the practical reason that prominent walkers could afford the time and money to travel to competitions. Because the majority of pedestrians were migrants and peripatetic athletes, the competition in Madison Square Garden performed mobility in specific ways. The race functioned as a highly visible metonym for the industrial city, as a place to which people moved, and where people moved about, almost ceaselessly. By spatially limiting urban movement and divorcing it from ordinary motivations, the race presented the city as a “living construction” based in people rather than buildings: a process—“how people live together”—as well as a “huge production machine” creating representations of the realities it shapes (Schipper 2014:26, 21–22). As the contest was an occasion for expressing national, racial, and ethnic identities, the displacements and absences involved in creating the industrial city were particularly evident. The arena became a site in which other places were remembered and celebrated. For the contestants, the race also offered the promise of *social* mobility, achieved in an unusually literal manner: as much movement as their bodies could bear.

Though walkers in cities have received a lot of critical attention, there is a misfit between these pedestrians and privileged theories of urban walking, summarized by Carl Lavery and Nicholas Whybrow as, “Walter Benjamin on the *flâneur*, the Situationist International’s notion of drifting (*la dérive*) and Michel de Certeau’s tactical reappropriation of what he terms ‘the long poem of walking’” (2012:4). Both the *flâneur* and a participant in a *dérive* are conceived as meandering along paths that are to a large extent chosen by the walker (though the *flâneur*’s path might be said to be dictated by the planned, modern city, and the Situationists saw their route as revealing the city’s psychogeography). Competitive pedestrians in six-day races did not pick their routes or privilege a slow pace. Most crucially, perhaps, these pedestrians did not endow walking with political significance or frame it as “an act of subversion and resistance in a globalized society obsessed with speed and mobility” (Lavery and Whybrow 2012:4). On the contrary, the race seemed to celebrate a globalized society obsessed with speed and mobility.

Nonetheless, de Certeau’s description of walkers as the “ordinary practitioners of the city” illuminates mobility in the go-as-you-please race (1984:93). Through the act of walking, de Certeau writes, ordinary practitioners create the city: “Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together” (97). The distinction between this claim and the associations between walking and narration in the peripatetic discourse is that, for de Certeau, these walkers are unable to read the urban text that their movements write. The everyday practice of the city exists “below the threshold at which visibility begins.” De Certeau envisions a “migrational, or metaphorical city,” which “slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city,” but maintains its own, invisible life beneath (93).

The go-as-you-please race distilled and spectacularized the practice of walking, an activity normally so ordinary that “pedestrian” has long been a byword for “dull” and “common-

place.”³ By spectacularizing walking, the contest sent it over the threshold of visibility: the walkers momentarily exposed the migrational, metaphorical city that usually went unseen. To claim such an act as resistant, however, would be to misunderstand what that visibility entailed. The pedestrians did not merely become visible, they became a spectacle. This process of spectacularization began with the space itself. Madison Square Garden was a highly organized, commodified, and abstracted space, and for the race it was further removed from the everyday; tracks had to be measured and standardized if records were to have any significance. The arena embodied precisely the culture of spectacle and urban planning that the Situationists would go on to resist half a century later, and the kind of intensive urban development geared towards a “happily regulated vision of pleasure” that continues to spark debate and performative interventions (Schipper 2014:21). If the walking contest staged resistance at all, it was not by refusing to follow the dominant pace and routes of the industrial city. Instead, through repetitive and sustained action, the contest pushed the abstraction of urban space even further, to a point of absurdity. In fact, the common ground between Situationist thinking and the go-as-you-please race was not resistance, but rather a tendency towards parody.

Walking Round the Clock

“Stunt” is of “obscure origin”; one theory is that it may have derived from the German word, *Stunde*, or hour. This sense of temporality carried over into one of its early meanings, “stint.”

The pedestrians walked almost continuously for six days (or as long as they could manage). Most took a few hours of rest in the early morning, before their trainers woke them up and sent them back to the track. The repetitiousness and duration of the go-as-you-please race, which pitted a six-day timeframe against the pedestrians’ need for sleep and rest, prefigured durational aesthetics of the mid-20th century. Durational artworks, Adrian Heathfield and Tehching Hsieh write, tend to “establish a temporal measure against which the work can be interpreted, and deploy an alteration of its [the temporal measure’s] (culturally) ascribed terms.” Heathfield and Hsieh go on to suggest what such an alteration might involve, citing disruptions to rhythm and pace, and a “proliferation, contraction or extension of the ‘proper’ time of work” (2009:22). Both of these dynamics were inherent to the walking contest.

After a fast, exciting start, the contest developed into a “monotonous tramp,” occasionally interrupted by one of the pedestrians accelerating to a “dog-trot” (TW 29/4/1884). Rowell took and maintained an early lead, with Day and Fitzgerald close behind. With no change in these positions for the next three days, there can be little doubt that large stretches of the spectacular contest felt slow and mundane (“pedestrian”) to spectators and competitors alike:

Great crowds hung all day about the fences encircling the sawdust ring, watching with a strange fascination the monotonous twinkle of flying feet. The most enthusiastic of the spectators admitted that they could not explain in what the fascination existed. They only knew that the longer they remained, the more difficult it was to tear themselves away. (TW 29/4/1884)

Day said he watched the audience to distract himself from the long journey to come, and he threatened to bring a mouth harp and “beguile the tedious tramp with music” (TW 29/4/1884).

As Lara Shalson writes in “On Duration and Multiplicity,” one of the enduring appeals of durational performance is its capacity to “*slow down* in the face of an ever-accelerating pace of life” (2012:99–100). Slowness is also, Fiona Wilkie notes in *Performance, Transport and Mobility*,

3. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “pedestrian, adj. and n.,” accessed 19 December 2014, www.oed.com/view/Entry/139574?redirectedFrom=pedestrian#eid.

commonly held as a peculiar and beneficial characteristic of walking (2015:35). Wilkie points out that statements about the slowness of walking contain an implicit comparison with other, faster, forms of transport. She cautions, however, that “walking is not uncomplicatedly slow, any more than technologically driven transport is always experienced as speed” (37).

Walking contests were definitely not “uncomplicatedly slow,” and there is little evidence that pedestrians like those in Madison Square Garden walked in resistance to the inhuman speed of transport technologies, as is sometimes claimed for present-day walking. (Will Self called walking “the only possible response to a civilisation crazed with its own sense of mobility” [Self 2006].) In 1877, the *New York Clipper Almanac* featured a double-page spread that listed record times for traveling from one to 1,000 miles by foot, immediately followed by the best times for steamships, sailing vessels, and railroads (1877:54–55). This suggests that pedestrianism pitted walking against rapid transport technologies, prizing speed rather than the particular pleasures of slow walking. A manual for young pedestrians called on the present generation to prove that in a time with “abounding facilities in every city for reaching any given point,” they could still perform feats of speed and endurance on their own two feet (Champion Publishing Co. 1882:3). Extreme walking was a means of demonstrating that autonomous movement could still cut it in the modern age.

Yet any sense of speed was hard to maintain across six days of monotonous walking. Rather than spectacular racing, the major draw of the event seemed to be an opportunity to watch the men at close quarters, performing their everyday practices of eating, resting, and walking, day and night, under the scrutiny of judges, reporters, and thousands of spectators. There was a hut for each walker at one end of the track, in a line the *World* dubbed “Pedestrian Row” or “rue de tramp” (TW 28/4/1884, 30/4/1884). “One of the greatest points of interest is the trainers’ end of the garden, where the huts are,” the journalist explained, and he visited regularly for news on competitors’ torn muscles, stiffness, and appetites (TW 30/4/1884). In addition to distances traveled, the *World* reported daily on how long the men had slept. The race was a performance of staying alive, sustaining oneself just enough to keep going.

In this sense, the walking contest diluted a separation between sport and life, in a manner similar to the way in which later, durational performance artworks, such as those by Hsieh, diluted divisions between art and life. During the late 1970s and 1980s, Hsieh spent a year living in solitary confinement, a year living outdoors, and a year tied to fellow artist Linda Montano. In “One Year Performance, 1985–1986,” Hsieh announced that he would not do, talk, see, or read about art: “I [redacted] just go in life” ([1 July 1985]; in Heathfield and Hsieh 2009:296). In common with these works, the walking contest created a sustained condition of privation, which provoked prolonged focus on the everyday state of being alive.

Over six days, the comings and goings of the crowd turned the arena into an organic clock: “The day grew older, and by degrees men who must sit behind counters all to-day in business offices left the Garden and another class of sight-seers arrived. They were workmen with their shovels and picks on their shoulders” who remained “until nearly 7 o’clock” in the morning (TW 3/5/1884). Then, women came “with gentleman friends,” alone, or in groups, some of whom “spent the entire afternoon alternately reading and watching the men” (TW 29/4/1884). At four o’clock an “accession of downtown business men” caused the contestants to “put on an extra spurt in recognition of their new arrivals.” As the evening began, the workmen who had left “clean-handed and bright returned with grimy faces” (TW 4/5/1884). Shortly before seven o’clock, some of the walkers ducked into their huts and emerged “radiant in the natty costumes worn during the remainder of the night,” satin knee trunks and silk shirts (provided by the pedestrians or their backers). The contestants raced in earnest until the crowd dispersed around 11 o’clock, when they slowed to a walk. The crowd’s movements and the walkers’ quickening pace and natty evening costumes demonstrate that “show time” was still programmed to coincide with the majority of the spectators’ hours of leisure.

Shalson notes that durational art has often been viewed as an intervention into industrial time-discipline (2012:100). The industrial revolution, when the time period rather than the task became the key measure of production, instituted a strict division between work and leisure, as well as a sense of “time-thrift”: “Time is now currency: it is no longer passed but spent” (Thompson 1967:61). Though the walking contest was not conceived as an intervention into time-discipline, in practice, it unsettled conceptions of the “‘proper’ time of work.” For when the workday and conventional “show time” were both over, the walkers kept walking. The *World* journalist compared the pedestrians’ sustained action to the movement of the large clock that hung in the arena: “Ceaselessly and as tirelessly, unlike the walkers, the two hands of the clock kept on their course and no wrinkles on the white face told the story of labor as did the black lines on the features of the men on the track” (TW 4/5/1884). By walking around the clock, the pedestrians seem to have posed the vexed contemporary question of what a working day should be. At a time of national campaigns for an eight-hour day, rather than the 10 or 12 hours commonly demanded, the walkers set to work for as many of the 24 hours as could possibly be worked.

The walkers’ efforts to be on their feet for as long as they could manage was particularly charged in relation to immigration. Newspapers expressed the widespread fear that recent immigrants would work excessively and undo the value of work through *too much* work. Even Pulitzer’s *World*, which generally expressed a pro-immigration position, showed little sympathy for Chinese, Slavic, and Southern European arrivals in America. Two weeks prior to the race, Pulitzer’s editorial read: “these foreigners, who it is said, ‘work for fifty cents a day and live like hogs’, are not Hungarians. They are Slavs [*sic*]” (Pulitzer 1884b). Sharp distinctions were beginning to be drawn between those who came to live and those who came to work excessively and leave, figured as specific national, racial, or ethnic groups. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which prohibited the immigration of Chinese laborers, was the first piece of legislation designed to prevent industrial immigration. Alan M. Kraut argues that concern was gradually shifting from “protecting the immigrant against the hardships of America” to “protecting America from potentially dangerous elements in the immigrant population” (1982:52).

Interestingly, Pulitzer’s *support* of immigrants was usually expressed in terms of physical strength: they brought “strong blood and unlimited possibilities” (Pulitzer 1884a). Mirroring Pulitzer’s conflicting sentiments, the walking contest simultaneously performed an *ideal* of industrial immigrant labor (a never-ending supply of labor power and potential) and a *nightmare* of industrial immigrant labor (labor that devalued itself in the doing).

Expanding the working day to its absolute limit, the contest disrupted urban, capitalist narratives of ceaseless productivity by taking them too literally. It sent “time-thrift” into overdrive, and broke down industrial time and work discipline into their constituent actions: endless, absurd, repetitious circuits, without meaning or purpose. Everyone involved seemed to be confronted by the pointlessness of the walkers’ “self-imposed tasks” (TW 2/5/1884). By the second day, “All of the men seemed tired of walking and willing to stop if the man in front would do the same,” but as long as one pedestrian was making circuits, the others were falling behind unless they too walked. Each looked “at his competitors as though they were responsible for his hard task” (TW 30/4/1884). Summing up the race, the *New York Herald* declared, “between eight and ten thousand men and women shouted and breathed tobacco smoke in Madison Square Garden last night. What for? To see a set of emaciated, woe-begone fellows limp about a queer shaped ring” (NYH 3/5/1884).

Economies of Walking

A stunt is an “exploit,” a “gimmick,” or device for attracting attention.”

Although the pedestrians’ “works of labor” unwittingly parodied industrial time-discipline, professional pedestrianism had an ambivalent status when it came to work (TW 4/5/1884). The *Genesee Valley Herald* wrote of Edward Weston, “Most men find it necessary to work for a living,

but Weston walks and has his name kept before the public” (in Marshall 2012:44). For the *Herald* journalist, walking functioned as a device for attracting attention; walking didn’t count as work.

Professional walking was an entrepreneurial business for which the pedestrians risked their bodies as well as their own or somebody else’s money. Having put down a stake, the walkers usually had to meet a minimum number of miles (sometimes as many as 500) in order to qualify for a portion of the gate money and other earnings. It was quite possible, therefore, for a contestant to walk for several days and not only see no return, but actually lose money in the process. The alternative scenario was that a walker could become rich. In a major race in 1879, Rowell won \$19,500 in prize and gate money, and a further \$6,000 in sweepstakes (the other pedestrians’ stakes), all of which was split with his backer (Cumming 1981:103). Perhaps reflecting the decline of interest in pedestrianism, the final prizes in 1884 ranged from \$9,468 for the winner, to around \$500 for the man who placed seventh (TFF 9/5/1884).

Additional forms of gambling were another vital part of the walking economy. Bets hugely expanded opportunities for money to change hands, because they were not restricted to sporting questions of who would win or how far they would walk. Almost any aspect of the event could and did become an occasion for a bet among audience members; for example, Cumming writes that in the 1879 race, odds were offered on whether or not Weston would show up (1981:92). Pedestrians also sometimes bet on themselves in order to supplement their earnings (22).

As the *Herald’s* criticism of Weston’s efforts to have “his name kept before the public” suggests, walking and gambling were not the only ways to boost one’s earning potential in the contest. A well-known sportsman in the audience at the 1884 race explained, “There is an intense desire among a number of gentlemen to become famous, respected and wealthy through the walking match” (TW 2/5/1884). Weston’s first walk from Boston to Capitol Hill is a good example of how this could work: it began as a wager with a friend on the outcome of the presidential election, and Weston funded it by acting as an advertising medium, delivering leaflets for companies selling sewing machines, photography services, waterproof clothing, and drugs (Marshall 2012:2). Later, Weston made money by lecturing on walking and temperance, giving demonstrations of his gait at three, four, and five miles an hour, and walking backwards (42). Thus Weston acted as a medium for circulation, and he also put *himself* into circulation.

In this sense, Michel Foucault’s term for the neocapitalist laborer, the “entrepreneur of himself,” is also an apt description of the professional pedestrian at the end of the 19th century (2008:219). Pedestrians invested themselves in an effort to boost their “human capital,” add value to themselves, and cash in on that capital in the form of endorsements, appearances, and advertisements. The *Sun* reported that in the 1879 race, Weston was more concerned with amusing the crowd than breaking records: “he kicked up his heels, cantered stiff legged, went sideways, balanced his cane on his nose, and played other childish antics” (in Marshall 2012:241). Weston’s contemporaries did not altogether approve of his exploits. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* wrote: “the necessity or desirability of him is becoming less and less apparent. We have no hard feeling toward him, but we challenge his right to occupy so much attention” (BDE 10/10/1874).

Rather than competing earnestly for prizes, Weston seems to have acted according to the present-day operating structure posited by Michael Goldhaber, “the attention economy.” Goldhaber argued that people and objects gain value through others paying them attention: “obtaining attention is obtaining a kind of enduring wealth, a form of wealth that puts you in a preferred position to get anything this new economy offers” (1997). During the race, this capacity for making attention productive even applied to the audience, who “attracted almost as much attention as did the men on the track” (TW 1/5/1884). Prominent New Yorkers only had to turn up at the arena in a smart suit to be sure of publicity from the *World*.

Some contestants were depicted as primarily entertainment, with little or no consideration as worthy competitors. Peter Napoleon Campana, nicknamed “Old Sport,” was “induced to join the army of trampers at the Garden to make sport, cut up capers, and keep the crowd in good humor” (TW 28/4/1884). The journalist described him as the “clown of the ring,” who “trot[ted] around with contortions that threaten[ed] to dismember him” (TW 29/4/1884). Indeed, the *National Police Gazette* reported that Campana had been “engaged as the clown of the exhibition” and was “to remain on the track until the close” (NPG 17/5/1884). There is, however, no record of if, or how, this work was remunerated.

Similarly, the *World* commented of Nitaw-eg-Ebow: “As for the Indian, he was regarded like ‘Old Sport,’ as simply engaged to wear good clothes and please the ladies.” Nitaw-eg-Ebow “changed his costume more frequently than any other man on the track,” slept more, and thus looked “fresher” than the others and “ran with more ease and grace” (TW 1/5/1884). *Turf, Field and Farm* explained that by the third day, Nitaw-eg-Ebow was ready to give up, but as “his admirers and the management realized that his occasional presence on the track would prove interesting to the spectators, he was requested to remain and occasionally run a fast five or ten miles as he saw fit” (TFF 9/5/1884). This reframing of Nitaw-eg-Ebow as a vaudeville-style spectacle—“a sideshow to please the ladies”—was part of a more general exoticization (TW 1/5/1884). In his portrait, Nitaw-eg-Ebow appeared in a feather headdress and tunic, holding a tomahawk and drinking from a flask of “Fire Water” (TW 28/4/1884). His actual racing costume was similar to the other contestants: “blue tights, white belt and blue shirt, with a white cap.” He was described as running “as light of foot as if on the trail of his native woods,” suggesting he was innocent of the race in which he participated and merely expressing his natural instincts (TW 30/4/1884). On the second day, the journalist noted that the “novel spectacle” of a race between Nitaw-eg-Ebow and Winston H. Burrill, the African American pedestrian, caused great excitement in the crowd (TW 30/4/1884). Their performances in the walking contest were shadowed by other performances commonly hosted in the arena (and others around the country), including exhibitions of “Indian life,” and—as a sideshow during the race—a stand at which people could “peg the negro’s head with a baseball” (Trib 8/12/1874; TW 1/5/1884). Having agreed to stay on as an incorporated “sideshow,” Nitaw-eg-Ebow’s attention-grabbing antics drifted further from the competition’s goal: at one point he gave up walking and took a spin around Central Park in a carriage (TW 2/5/1884).

The combination of sporting and theatrical performance modes reached new heights in dance marathons of the 1920s and 1930s. Producing dance marathons “as theater,” Carol Martin writes, was a “solution to the problem of audience interest in what was otherwise a long and repetitious contest” (1994:23). Ultimately, the audience’s attention was as scarce a resource as the dancers’ energy. The result was that there were “all manner of stunts worked into the contest itself, a variety of extra divertissements thrown in” to keep audiences engaged (Gingrich 1933:61). Such entertainments included “comedy sketches, weddings, mock weddings, elimination contests, and mud wrestling” (Martin 1994:42). These additional entertainments were sometimes participatory: there were prize draws offering bags of groceries, and audience members could request performances from particular dancers (56). Martin quotes an interview with “Jessie,” a female contestant in a 1934 dance marathon, who recalled, “one night they gave me a singing lesson for my solo stunt” (82).

In dance marathons, then, stunts were the *extra* entertainments and additional tasks performed by the dancers. The go-as-you-please race, like the dance marathon, was a diversion with its own diversions. As well as “sideshows” within the sporting competition itself, there were peripheral entertainments at which spectators could engage in “pulse-driving exercises with a huge mallet,” test “their skill with a rifle,” or weigh themselves (TW 1/5/1884).

This characteristic—the double or two-fold diversion—made the walking contest a particularly compelling exploration of the relationship between work and leisure. The “stunts”

undertaken by Weston, Campana, and Nitaw-eg-Ebow—balancing a cane on the nose, doing funny walks, taking a trip in a carriage—gave their performances the appearance of play. A *Gazette* reporter wrote of Weston: “To judge from his playfulness, one would think that a six-day walk was a holiday with him, and the tan bark [the sawdust-covered track] a delightful playground” (in Cumming 1981:93). This dynamic parallels theatrical performance: Ridout writes that theatre is an “experience that is not normally experienced as work, but as some kind of nonwork or ‘play.’” Of course, he goes on to say, “it is no such thing: it is work for those who make it.” The experience of theatre as nonwork is, for Ridout, an effect of the fact that in theatre the “division of labor,” whereby one person’s leisure is another’s work, is “literally, on show, night after night” (2013:9). Like theatre, the walking contest put the division of labor on display, and the separation between work and leisure under pressure.

In the walking contest, the experience of work as nonwork was twofold. The competition as a whole was a form of entertainment, in which the walkers engaged in the “nonwork” of walking. Within this forum for nonwork, a *further*, unstable division of labor took place, in which some walkers appeared to engage in nonwork or play, and other walkers in work. The result was a thorough destabilization of the work/leisure binary. One spectator at the race, an ex-boxer, expressed pedestrianism’s combination of labor and leisure thus: “‘I thought they [illegible] trained me pretty hard for a prize fight, but this kind of work for fun beats me all to pieces’” (TW 3/5/1884). Despite its goal-oriented, commercial nature, then, professional pedestrianism contained elements of playful meandering and improvisation, suggesting that such pursuits were not confined to the flâneur or peripatetic essayist.

The “stunts” performed by Weston, Campana, and Nitaw-eg-Ebow had the appearance of exceptional instances in the race, moments in which the contestants were not applying themselves to the task at hand. However, stunts were not confined to Weston’s comic walks or Nitaw-eg-Ebow’s carriage ride: on the contrary, the entire contest was a stunt. Those acts seemed to be doubly removed from the ordinary rules of economy, production, and labor, but in fact, these twice-diverted-diversions reflected the structure not only of the contest as a whole, but also of major industries in which an attention economy operated, such as newspapers, advertising, and various forms of entertainment. In these industries, there was no sound or unsound circulation: circulation was productive in itself, because the crucial thing was to be seen by as many people as possible. This disturbed prevailing notions of value and productivity.

Experimentation with what should or could be valuable was concomitant with urban migration on a vast scale. As new arrivals in New York, 19th-century immigrants may not have known what aspects of their bodies or personalities, their skills or abilities, might prove economically advantageous. Precisely where value was situated was difficult to specify. As Kraut put it: “The new immigrants in the United States faced the difficult task of carving for themselves a niche in a society to which they were strangers. What could they do here? What did they have that America needed?” (1982:74). In 1887, a *World* reporter stationed at the port described the disembarkation of two tall German men who didn’t speak much English, remarking on their impressive height. Following the newspaper’s publication the next morning, the owner of a clothes shop on Broadway sent his clerk to find and employ the “German giants.” The new arrivals were immediately engaged to walk up and down the busy street, dressed in the shop’s finery, its name emblazoned upon their backs (TW 27/11/1887).

The stunts, then—those apparently extraordinary double diversions—demonstrated not only the economy of the walking contest, but also a much wider economic condition.

Limits

The early affinity between stunt and “stint” contributes stunt’s meaning as a “limitation” or “the cessation of an action.”⁴

Pedestrians giving up were as vital to the contest’s dramaturgy as the race for the finish. The “first wrecked” was William Wallace Lounsbury, who dropped out on the first day, complaining that the tobacco smoke in the Garden was nauseating (NPG 17/5/1884; TW 29/4/1884). The second day saw two more defectors: John Sullivan, who also felt sick, and Campana, who told the *World*, “I’ve been so disheartened and disgusted by the jibing of the people in the Garden that I can’t go any further” (NPG 17/5/1884; TW 29/4/1884). The third day “settled three more of the ambitious plodders,” including Burrill, who “thought it was no use continuing the race, as he could not cover enough miles to regain his entrance fee” (NPG 17/5/1884). Burrill “did not look out of form,” and according to the *World* journalist, simply declared, “I’ve had all de walking dis chile wants” (NPG 17/5/1884; TW 1/5/1884). Despite Day’s strong start, he too abandoned the race that evening. Day had “pushed along all day in spite of disordered stomach and swollen limbs,” but finally admitted that “nature could stand no more” (NPG 17/5/1884). The coverage conveys a strong interest in each competitor’s limit, in the context of a wider attempt to explore humanity’s limits. *Turf, Field and Farm* reported that a special box had been reserved for “distinguished physicians who desire[d] to study the effects of diet and physical exertion upon the pedestrian” (TFF 4/4/1884).

As successive contestants retired, the competition intensified. On the fourth day, “Rowell, who had all along been at the head, lost his lead [...] At 1.45 A.M. Fitzgerald and Rowell came on the track and raced around at a faster pace than at any time since Monday. Between 2 and 3 o’clock each made 7 miles.” The pace proved “too hot for Rowell,” and Fitzgerald took the lead (NPG 17/5/1884).

On the fifth day, eight walkers remained, and most were in “a state of the most abject misery” (TW 2/5/1884). The contest reduced its participants to “the simple capacity to get on” (TW 3/5/1884). The *World* described the appearance of an exhausted pedestrian: “His eyes are either sunken with blackened ridges beneath them or else protrude from their sockets and have almost the stare of death.” Portrayals of the pedestrians’ decline suggest that the breakdown of their bodies became a troubling indicator of the decline of their respective peoples. On the final day, famous athlete Harry Vaughn took a few turns around the track with his child. The *World* compared Vaughn — “his shoulders square, chest out and his legs as strong beneath him as iron shafts” — to Rowell and Fitzgerald, who “seemed like descendants of a degenerated race. They were limp and weak; he was all strength and vitality” (TW 2/5/1884). Vaughn’s upright walk is an example of what Tim Ingold describes as the “so-called ‘striding gait’ with which the walkers of Western civilisation (especially men) have been enjoined since Antiquity to sally forth in the world, asserting as they go their superiority over subject people and animals” (2011:48). Such ethnocentrism is evident in the description of the exhausted walkers: “his cheek bones stand out more prominently than those of the wildest aborigine of the far West.” It is as though by losing their disciplined, military stride, the pedestrians had loosened their grip on whiteness, masculinity, and humanity. The structural similarities between pedestrianism and horseracing — shared locations, format, economies, and, often, participants — gave rise to frequent parallels between knackered horses and broken down pedestrians (comparisons also prevalent in dance marathons [Martin 1994:30]). In a speech following a race in 1867, Weston likened the competitor who experienced “complete exhaustion” to “an animal” (in Marshall 2012:37). During the final stages

4. Oxford English Dictionary Online, s.v. “stint, n.1,” accessed 19 December 2014, www.oed.com/view/Entry/190426?rskey=EpTjIh&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid.

of the walking contest, the journalist noted that Fitzgerald's "mouth was open and his tongue hung out. He looked like a jaded car horse" (TW 4/5/1884). The contest—an effort towards record human achievement—thus involved the prolonged spectacle of people in a reduced, bestial, and "abject" condition. The journalist's description of the walkers as "descendants of a degenerated race" portrays the spectacle as evolution in reverse.

Degeneration

Stunt's original meaning, which predates the sense of "feat" by around a century, is "a check in growth," or "a state of arrested growth or development."⁵

It is perhaps not surprising that the pedestrians appeared bestial or degenerate to the journalist, given the significance of an upright walk in conceptions of what makes humans human. Bipedalism was for a long time seen as the foundation for humanity's "pre-eminence in the animal kingdom, and for the growth of culture and civilisation" (Ingold 2011:33). Ingold focuses on what bipedalism entailed for the feet, both physically and symbolically. As feet took on functions of weight-bearing and motion, he argues, hands "became answerable to the call of reason" (35). With "the onward march of civilisation," hands grew ever more dexterous, but feet were progressively constricted. Because of advances in footwear such as restrictive boots, the foot "regressed to the status of a merely mechanical apparatus." Ingold notes that in 1881, Edward Tylor's *Anthropology* stated that the Western foot had become "nothing more than a 'stepping-machine'" (36).

Pedestrianism, however, centered on the foot rather than privileging the hand, a trait it shared with theatre and dance (Lavery and Whybrow 2012:3). Depictions of the pedestrians as abject or bestial accord with the common connotations of the foot: it is "the most humble and despised of all body parts" which "provides us with a disturbing and profane(d) aesthetics" (3, 6). Instead of hiding feet away, pedestrianism made feet the subject of intense scrutiny. In 1874, the *New York Herald* reported: "To the men—and there are many of them—who frequent the Hippodrome during Weston's walk, the condition of the pedestrian's feet becomes a matter of absorbing importance; the general color of his corns, and, the brilliancy of his blisters, and the temperature of his toes, are subjects of the gravest discussion and the wildest speculations" (in Marshall 2012:91).

Indeed, Burroughs proposed pedestrianism as a solution to the general restriction of feet. Enjoying the sense of profanity, he began his essay with an ode to the "naked, human foot, [...] a thing sensuous and alive, that seems to take cognizance of whatever it touches or passes" (39). Next to the "high-heeled boot," he noted, it looked "primitive and uncivil," "a real barbarian in the parlor!" Burroughs feared that the American man was falling behind in the "manly art of walking" because his feet were becoming dainty through constriction and lack of use (42). His essay set forth "to brag as lustily as [he could] on behalf of the pedestrian," and propose walking as a means of checking the effeminizing, weakening effects of civilization (39).

Burroughs was not the only writer to make this claim. Quoting Christopher Christian Sturm, British writer Walter Thom argued that in "a state of civilisation," man "does not know how much strength he possesses; how much he loses by effeminacy, nor how much he can acquire by frequent exercise" (1813:256). Thom, writing when Britain was at war with both the United States and France, advocated pedestrianism as a means to rediscover and test this strength, with the aim of being in a state of preparedness for battle: "Our regiments are gradually wasted by sickness and disease, for they are not fitted by a course of preparatory training" (35). Ordinary citizens, Thom argued, should imitate the soldier through practices of bodily discipline; they should march.

5. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "stunt, n.1," accessed 22 December 2014, www.oed.com/view/Entry/192177?rskey=wiVsug&result=1#eid.

From this perspective, the walking contest had a peculiar double role. On the one hand, it celebrated an activity seen as the catalyst for human evolution and civilization; on the other, it checked the undesirable effects of civilization. Curiously, this brings together both common meanings of the word “stunt”: civilization in the form of boots and shoes checked the growth and development of feet, and spectacular feats of walking were the proposed solution.

The journalists’ descriptions of the crowd imply—with varying degrees of seriousness—that the event also felt increasingly chaotic and *uncivilized*, adding to the mix the reference to “civil” as “polite.” During the first two days, relations between pedestrians and audience, and within the audience, were largely convivial. Some walkers chatted with spectators, and audience members awarded their favorite contestants bouquets. However, as Rowell and Fitzgerald became the two frontrunners, tensions grew between English and Irish spectators, respectively. There were “hisses heard” when Rowell was given flowers, as partisanship built among audience members. The *World* described one man’s shouts of support: “‘Give it to the tarrier!’ cried a burly red-headed man, evidently a recent arrival from England. ‘Don’t let the Mick beat you’” (TW 2/5/1884).

By the following day, a police inspector was, to the reporter’s amusement, “solemnly impressed with the entirely original idea that there would be a war of races and a terrible riot” (TW 3/5/1884). That evening, the bar at the Garden did a strong trade and fights broke out between audience members: “A snarl of voices, a gleam of clubs, a leap of stalwart policemen.” By this time, the crowd struck the reporter as “without exception the most ruthless assemblage that was ever gathered under a roof in New York,” “a rude, bluff, insensible kind of humanity.” In the journalist’s imagination, the scene gave an impression of “what the Roman amphitheatre must have been”; the walking match invoked “Nero’s Circus, and the mixed mob of plebeians and parasites who poured through the vomitories glutted with blood when it was all over.” Rowell and Fitzgerald, were described in terms that recall a tragic sacrifice: “Some kind of inexplicable fascination keeps [spectators’] eyes fixed on that narrow strip of track and upon the two uninteresting and gaunt men upon whom the strife has settled” (TW 3/5/1884). And yet, the writer repeated, “this is only a walking match”: the journalist’s heightened register, the pedestrians’ “awful agony,” and the “mad crowd” were all out of kilter with the event’s entertainment status (TW 4/5/1884).

Stopping

In his analysis of endurance marathons, Gregg Whelan posits that the key point of transformation is the moment at which the runner stops: “the opportunity to stop running at the end of a marathon—to halt the considerable difficulty that running has generated—is the most humane of offerings, the opportunity to re-enter the non-running world, to begin the world again” (2012:117). An endurance marathon feels like “a catastrophe of sorts,” Whelan writes, but it is, crucially, a “freely-entered-into suffering; suffering undertaken so that suffering can end” (118).

This compelling answer to Whelan’s question “why run?” is, of course, complicated by money (111). With more than experience at stake in the go-as-you-please race, pedestrians, backers, and trainers were incentivized to push as far as possible. A *World* illustration entitled *Almost Gone* shows an exhausted man being pushed from behind, hinting at the trainers’ role in keeping the contestants going: “There are men who are not, to use a sporting phrase ‘dead game’” and in such situations, trainers “must oftentimes use brute force to get him out of bed.” There was speculation that some trainers drugged the athletes to sustain them. At one point, Fitzgerald disappeared into his tent with his trainer for five minutes. When he emerged, “his face was clearer, his gait stronger, his eyes flashed and sparkled” and the “general impression was that he had been given injections of morphine” (TW 4/5/1884). As the *World*’s descriptions suggest, for periods of the race, some contestants gave up their freedom to choose, or temporarily agreed to be forced, complicating the degree to which the action was “freely-entered-into.”



Figure 3. Illustrations of worn out contestants "Almost Gone" and "All Broke Up," by Valerian Gribayedoff in "Far Beyond the Record," *The World*, 2 May 1884:1. (Newspaper and Current Periodical, Library of Congress, LCCN-sn-86071683)

Granted there was money involved, but the hope or promise of economic reward did not justify the degree of suffering many endured. The *World* journalist wrote that immediately after having stopped, the pedestrians "seemed to have forgotten all their pains and aches, or was it as many supposed—that they had suffered so much that they could feel no longer and if they fell now on this last lap it would not be to faint, but to die?" (TW 4/5/1984). The reporter seemed unable to decide whether the event was glorious or shameful.

At the end of the race, having covered 610 miles and rested for less than 29 hours in total, Fitzgerald took the prize. Nationalist tensions stirred by the contest were brought to a symbolic conclusion:

The band played "See the Conquering Hero Comes," and the hero, Fitz., walked with Rowell by his side. Fitz. carried two flags, one Irish and the other American. Rowell snatched the green one from him, and forgetting everyone and everything dashed down the stretch waving the colors. The victor followed fluttering the Stars and Stripes. (TW 4/5/1884)

According to the *World*, Rowell was initially unwilling to carry the Irish flag, but had done so at the behest of Duryea as a "little ruse to pacify any national spite" (TW 4/5/1884). Regardless

of Rowell's inclination, then, the organizers thought it necessary to demonstrate that the pedestrians had to some extent transcended narrow national identities. The strategy was successful: the crowd "cheered and howled [...] as though they had won a lost world." The *World* journalist's impression seems in accord with Whelan's sense that the end of an endurance marathon offers a chance, for both runners and spectators, "to begin the world again."

The table given below shows the final score, with total times and rests:

NAME.	Miles.	Yards.	Total time.			Rests.		
			H.	M.	S.	H.	M.	S.
Fitzgerald.....	610	—	140	34	40	25	41	13
Rowell.....	602	—	140	39	30	24	55	48
Panchot.....	564	880	140	26	15	35	19	41
Noremac.....	545	114	140	37	00	45	32	35
Herty.....	539	660	130	30	00	27	15	31
Vint.....	530	—	140	14	45	39	3	40
Elson.....	525	660	140	04	—	30	20	73
Nitaw.....	154	830	140	—	—	—	—	—
Day.....	237	—	68	19	—	21	4	15
Thompson.....	151	830	57	25	—	17	49	00
Bu rell.....	140	440	51	21	—	16	37	5
Camp na.....	71	220	13	6	30	3	17	00
Sullivan.....	78	—	29	25	—	6	35	7
Lounsbury.....	46	830	19	21	—	—	32	—

Figure 4. Table of final distances walked, time spent walking, and time spent resting, in "Hurrah For Fitzgerald," *The World*, 4 May 1884:2. (Newspaper and Current Periodical, Library of Congress, LCCN-sn-86071683)

before the big clock where they had started almost six days before [...] Fitzgerald extended his hand and the Englishman grasped it. The fifteen thousand people cheered and the race was done." Fitzgerald took a prize of over \$9000, which his wife hoped they would use to return to the "old country" (TW 4/5/1884).

For the reporter, the end invoked circularity as well as completion, a sense of being back where they began: "Rowell and Fitzgerald stood again

Back at the Beginning...

As I suggested at the outset, at stake in the go-as-you-please race was the *value of walking*. By putting walking into circulation, the walking contest undermined contemporary claims that walking should be isolated from commerce and should only have intrinsic value. In exposing walking to economic valorization, the contest revealed the arbitrary nature of value. (Based on the prizes doled out, the exchange value of walking came to somewhere between \$83.00 an hour for the top winner and a negative figure for the losers.) The ordinary but ambivalent status of walking, pulled as it was back and forth between work and leisure, made walking a particularly effective practice for demonstrating the highly contingent nature of value. The political potential of this ambivalence is demonstrated in recent works such as Mick Douglas's *auto yard walk*, performed as part of *Value Encounter 1: 10 hours 67 Minutes Friendship* (2013). Douglas, and at times Andrea Haenggi, walked around a disused car park in New York, with car tires strapped to their backpacks, inviting others to walk with them. When I saw Douglas present this as part of *walked works*, a performance installation in a London studio in 2014, Douglas walked around the audience in circles, speaking the text from *auto yard walk*: "Walk / Walk Labor [...] Walk debris walk opportunity walk auto-mobility / Walk oil walk carbon walk economy [...] walk circles" (Douglas 2014). During both performances, Douglas enacted circulation, and walking served as a means of marking and questioning the movement of goods, people, and capital.

I also began by suggesting that stunts and six-day walking contests, coexisting performance forms in 1880s New York, might be analyzed productively together. Both forms had sporting and theatrical characteristics, engaged with temporality, were commercially motivated exploits, and relied on attracting attention. The identification of specific acts as "stunts" within dance marathons marked them as exceptional moments, in which valorization operated differently. In fact, however, these acts, and their embryonic versions in the go-as-you-please race, demonstrated the operating structure of the events as a whole. Stunts performed a more extreme version of walking's ambivalences regarding work and life, and work and leisure.

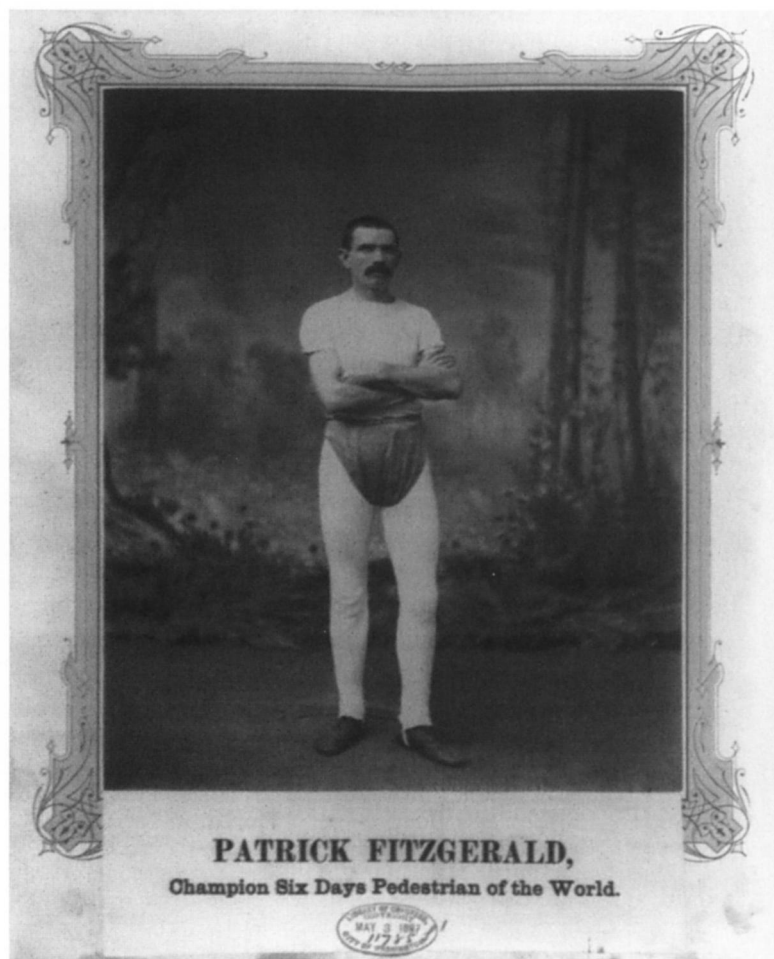


Figure 5. The caption for this portrait of Patrick Fitzgerald (copyrighted 1887) refers to his 1884 victory. (Photographer unknown; Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-84440)

Though created without resistant intentions, the race nonetheless bordered on the absurd; it performed latent contradictions, which stirred reflections about the temporal and spatial organization of a globalized, industrialized city. Stunts might be compared to the advertisements reproduced in the short-lived journal *Internationale Situationniste* as examples of capitalism parodying itself (one was for a “Peace O’ Mind Fallout Shelter” [in Marcus 2002:12]). Like these advertisements, the walking contest both performed and unwittingly parodied the hyperexploitative conditions of capitalism.

Walking stunts of the 1880s troubled ethnocentric conceptions of human progress by focusing on the feet and staging exhaustion. This disturbance of progress invoked an earlier meaning of “stunt” as a check in growth. In the context of the walking contests, there is a connection between these two meanings of the word: spectacular physical feats were seen as a solution to the stultifying effects of civilization. Gregg Whelan writes that one appeal of “freely-entered-into-suffering” in the endurance marathon is “the act of testing one’s ability to survive conflict until conflict abates” (2012:118). Extreme 19th-century walking stunts responded to a similar urge to rehearse conflict, both individually and collectively.

The triviality of the competition—“only a walking match”—was a vital factor in enabling such rehearsals of conflict and explorations of value. In a devalued state (walking as stunt) rather than an ideal one (walking as meditation and communion with nature), walking in circles in the 1884 race became an unwieldy but powerful tool for revealing the economic, temporal, and ontological structures of living and working in the industrial city.

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