



Honoré d'O over the edges Gent 2000

Terminalia Turnaround february 26, 2023

A PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIC WALK IN GHENT

WITH IENKE KASTELEIN AND WITOLD VAN RATINGEN

Start @ Sint-Veerleplein

Required: interactive participation, walking shoes, warm (rainproof) clothing

The ancient Terminalia festival was celebrated on the last day of the Roman calendar year: February 23. This holiday centered on one of the oldest Roman gods, Terminus, a mysterious and largely forgotten deity who was often represented in the form of the stone boundary markers guarding the outer limits of the Roman empire. But Terminus was imagined to hold influence over less physical boundaries too, like that between two months, or between two groups of people. In this tradition, the Terminalia Festival of Psychogeography takes place every year with walks around the globe that explore 'frontiers'. As part of the festival, Ienke Kastelein and Witold van Ratingen organize an annual participative walk with choreographic and textual elements.

This year, the celebration of Terminalia of the Low Countries takes place in Gent: a walk as a turning point, looking back and forward with a Janus Head and a handkerchief as props.

Welcome everyone, to the Terminalia of 2023.

The Terminalia were an ancient Roman New Year's Eve celebration named after Terminus, the god of borders, who was honored on this boundary between the old and the new year. Traditionally, neighbors would come together on this day in late February to share a picnic on the boundary of their properties and celebrate their harmonious co-existence. All the stone border markers of the Roman Empire and the cities within it were dedicated to Terminus and were also called *termini*, for that reason. One of these ancient border stones near the city of Rome, which historically marked the edge of the city's territory, became the site of large-scale sacrificial feasts. Visitors from the city could enjoy a snack and a drink and jovially converse while watching the stone get soaked in the blood of lambs and bulls.

The Terminalia Festival of Psychogeography can be seen as an effort to restore this beautiful tradition in a somewhat more animal-friendly fashion. People around the world organize walks around the theme of borders and boundaries.

The starting point of our walk today, at the Sint-Veerleplein (Saint Pharaïldis' square) – "at the end", as you can read there on the facade – is no coincidence. This place is known informally in Ghent as the *square of death*, used in the Middle Ages to conduct the most gruesome executions. I will spare you the details, but they involved very large cooking pots. Today, the square has become a place where

the start of new life is celebrated. Each time a child is born in a Ghent maternity ward, the lanterns on the square sparkle festively.

We will explain a little more about the practicalities of the walk in a minute. Please follow us!





We invite you to walk in silence

Statue for the disappeared persons

The statue you see here is the monument for disappeared persons. It was dedicated to a Honduran human rights activist named Eduardo Lopez. And although our fate is hopefully less dark than that of Eduardo, in a way we are all disappeared persons, in the possession of abandoned versions of ourselves that we carry within us, but no longer embody.

Soon, we will ask each of you to step across the symbolic border that separates the Terminalia from our everyday lives. Feel free to liberate your inner *homo ludens* in the coming two hours. The thinkers of the Situationist International, who gave birth to the practice of psychogeography, considered play and playfulness to be the salvation of humanity and the foundation of all culture. We invite you to turn the city into your playground. Within the bounds of propriety, of course.

Hence, a few practical concerns on the ethics of a psychogeographic walk. You are welcome to take pictures, in principle – if there are no objections? However, please remember that psychogeography is a participative practice that should be experienced through your feet and your senses, and not mediated by your phone. We want to encourage you play freely with anything that piques your interest and involve others as you please. But we want to stay silent during the first part of the walk, whenever possible. So please elect gestures and silly faces over words. We will let you know when the gag order is lifted. Now, let the Terminalia begin!











St. Baafsabdij

The old Terminalia festival, celebrated on the 23rd of February of our calendar, marked the end of the old year and the beginning of the new, coinciding with the start of spring.

It was Julius Caesar who later moved the start of the year to January, where it has since remained. January, named after Janus, the Roman god of gates, transitions, doors and passages. In the later Roman Empire, Janus would take an increasingly important position in the pantheon. Janus was attributed mastery over time itself: he ruled over history and future, over the origins of the world and of every human life.

The Roman historian Livius wrote that Numa, a wise king in the early days of the city, wanted to soothe the hot-headed and violent tendencies of his people by cultivating awe and reverence in them. To help do that, he built the Gate of Janus, a great temple near the Roman Forum. In times of war, the doors were ritually opened, in hopes that dispatched soldiers would quickly return to the heart of the city. And in the rare times of peace that the Roman Empire knew, the doors were closed, so that peace could be contained within the temple. Perhaps a small source of comfort, as we unfortunately find ourselves facing a closed gate.

In daily life, Romans ritually rubbed wolf fat on their doorways, to keep out evil spirits and invite Janus to bless their families with new life. We have unfortunately had to

conclude that EU regulations these days have rendered wolf fat a difficult product to obtain. We have considered substituting wool fat, but ultimately decided to spare you the sticky fingers. So we will make do with a piece of wool, allowing you to beseech Janus' blessings when you get home.

You are also welcome to speak again from this moment onward :)







Finale

As the god responsible for the origin of time, or perhaps the embodiment of time itself, Janus might have been considered elevated above all other gods. Ovid wrote that all Romans should call upon Janus first, before praying to whichever other god they hoped to mollify.

Of course, the deal with the Romans was that all those gods had to compete for the scarce attention and sacrificial resources of the people, a little bit like contemporary celebrities. So the growing prominence of Janus meant that Terminus was gradually pushed to the background. He got the short end of the stick and got stuck with February, a forgettable little month whose main redeeming quality is ending sooner than the others.



Strange, though, to have two gods. If Janus governs time, he should oversee all beginnings and endings alike. So why would we still need Terminus, the god of the border? What silliness to divide this power between the two. Wouldn't it be much more elegant to interpret Janus' two faces by deciding that Janus and Terminus are one and the same, that one refers to beginnings and the other to conclusions?

Oh well. If we must have two separate gods, Janus for the beginning and Terminus for the end, I am afraid that Janus is at least a little overrated. People love beginnings: newborn babies, youth, first loves, promising start-ups. Pure desire, pure future, without all those heavy memories and hard-learned lessons weighing them down. The lightness of new being isn't unbearable, it is simply blissful.



Still, each beginning only draws its significance from an ending. As Heidegger writes, death does not approach us from the outside; it is part of us, the kind of creatures that we are, and its shadow impregnates our lives with meaning. Things that have begun, says Augustine, will always be a source of great anxiety, until they have been brought to an ending, an ending to which our minds are ever set with great anticipation. So it is with all lives, all years, all walks: it is finitude that makes them what they are.

We have reached our end for today. But spring is coming, and we will not have to wait long for a new beginning. The Romans saw every New Year's Day as an omen for the rest of the year, and so they spent it wishing each other good fortune, and exchanging dates, figs, and honey.
May your futures taste sweet.



Concept Walk: lenke Kastelein and Witold van Ratingen
Props and choreographie : lenke Kastelein
Text : Witold van Ratingen
Photography : lenke Kastelein and Hans van Lunteren



For more information about Terminalia, see
<http://terminaliafestival.org/>.

ienkekastelein@xs4all.nl / witold@metropollination.com
ienke +31613282205 / witold +32456142560

