第十届CASIO杯翻译竞赛原文（英语组）

Path

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Humans are animals and like all animals we leave tracks as we walk: signs of passage made in snow, sand, mud, grass, dew, earth or moss. The language of hunting has a luminous word for such mark-making: 'foil'. A creature's 'foil' is its track. We easily forget that we are track-makers, though, because most of our journeys now occur on asphalt and concrete – and these are substances not easily impressed.

'Always, everywhere, people have walked, veining the earth with paths visible and invisible, symmetrical or meandering,' writes Thomas Clark in his enduring prose-poem 'In Praise of Walking'. It's true that, once you begin to notice them, you see that the landscape is still webbed with paths and footways – shadowing the modern-day road network, or meeting it at a slant or perpendicular. Pilgrim paths, green roads, drove roads, corpse roads, trods, leys, dykes, drongs, sarns, snickets – say the names of paths out loud and at speed and they become a poem or rite – holloways, bostles, shutes, driftways, lichways, ridings, halterpaths, cartways, carneys, causeways, herepaths.

Many regions still have their old ways, connecting place to place, leading over passes or round mountains, to church or chapel, river or sea. Not all of their histories are happy. In Ireland there are hundreds of miles of famine roads, built by the starving during the 1840s to connect nothing with nothing in return for little, unregistered on Ordnance Survey base maps. In the Netherlands there are *doodwegen* and *spookwegen* – death roads and ghost roads – which converge on medieval cemeteries. Spain has not only a vast and operational network of *cañada*, or drove roads, but also thousands of miles of the Camino de Santiago, the pilgrim routes that lead to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela. For pilgrims walking the Camino, every footfall is doubled, landing at once on the actual road and also on the path of faith. In Scotland there are *clachan* and *rathad* – cairned paths and shieling paths – and in Japan the slender farm tracks that the poet Bashō followed in 1689 when writing his *Narrow Road to the Far North*. The American prairies were traversed in the nineteenth century by broad 'bison roads', made by herds of buffalo moving several beasts abreast, and then used by early settlers as they pushed westwards across the Great Plains.

Paths of long usage exist on water as well as on land. The oceans are seamed with seaways – routes whose course is determined by prevailing winds and currents – and rivers are among the oldest ways of all. During the winter months, the only route in and out of the remote valley of Zanskar in the Indian Himalayas is along the ice-path formed by a frozen river. The river passes down through steep-sided valleys of shaley rock, on whose slopes snow leopards hunt. In its deeper pools, the ice is blue and lucid. The journey down the river is called the *chadar*, and parties undertaking the *chadar* are

led by experienced walkers known as ‘ice-pilots’, who can tell where the dangers lie.

Different paths have different characteristics, depending on geology and purpose. Certain coffin paths in Cumbria have flat ‘resting stones’ on the uphill side, on which the bearers could place their load, shake out tired arms and roll stiff shoulders; certain coffin paths in the west of Ireland have recessed resting stones, in the alcoves of which each mourner would place a pebble. The prehistoric trackways of the English Downs can still be traced because on their close chalky soil, hard-packed by centuries of trampling, daisies flourish. Thousands of work paths crease the moorland of the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides, so that when seen from the air the moor has the appearance of chamois leather. I think also of the zigzag flexure of mountain paths in the Scottish Highlands, the flagged and bridged packhorse routes of Yorkshire and Mid Wales, and the sunken green-sand paths of Hampshire on whose shady banks ferns emerge in spring, curled like crosiers.

The way-marking of old paths is an esoteric lore of its own, involving cairns, grey wethers, sarsens, hoarstones, longstones, milestones, cromlechs and other guide-signs. On boggy areas of Dartmoor, fragments of white china clay were placed to show safe paths at twilight, like Hansel and Gretel’s pebble trail. In mountain country, boulders often indicate fording points over rivers: Utsi’s Stone in the Cairngorms, for instance, which marks where the Allt Mor burn can be crossed to reach traditional grazing grounds, and onto which has been deftly incised the petroglyph of a reindeer that, when evening sunlight plays over the rock, seems to leap to life.

Paths and their markers have long worked on me like lures: drawing my sight up and on and over. The eye is enticed by a path, and the mind’s eye also. The imagination cannot help but pursue a line in the land – onwards in space, but also backwards in time to the histories of a route and its previous followers. As I walk paths I often wonder about their origins, the impulses that have led to their creation, the records they yield of customary journeys, and the secrets they keep of adventures, meetings and departures. I would guess I have walked perhaps 7,000 or 8,000 miles on footpaths so far in my life: more than most, perhaps, but not nearly so many as others. Thomas De Quincey estimated Wordsworth to have walked a total of 175,000–180,000 miles: Wordsworth’s notoriously knobbly legs, ‘pointedly condemned’ – in De Quincey’s catty phrase – ‘by all … female connoisseurs’, were magnificent shanks when it came to passage and bearing. I’ve covered thousands of foot-miles in my memory, because when – as most nights – I find myself insomniac, I send my mind out to re-walk paths I’ve followed, and in this way can sometimes pace myself into sleep.

‘They give me joy as I proceed,’ wrote John Clare of field paths, simply. Me too. ‘My left hand hooks you round the waist,’ declared Walt Whitman – companionably, erotically, coercively – in *Leaves of Grass* (1855), ‘my right hand points to landscapes of continents, and a plain public road.’ Footpaths are mundane in the best

sense of that word: 'worldly', open to all. As rights of way determined and sustained by use, they constitute a labyrinth of liberty, a slender network of common land that still threads through our aggressively privatized world of barbed wire and gates, CCTV cameras and 'No Trespassing' signs. It is one of the significant differences between land use in Britain and in America that this labyrinth should exist. Americans have long envied the British system of footpaths and the freedoms it offers, as I in turn envy the Scandinavian customary right of *Allemansrätten* ('Everyman's right'). This convention – born of a region that did not pass through centuries of feudalism, and therefore has no inherited deference to a landowning class – allows a citizen to walk anywhere on uncultivated land provided that he or she cause no harm; to light fires; to sleep anywhere beyond the curtilage of a dwelling; to gather flowers, nuts and berries; and to swim in any watercourse (rights to which the newly enlightened access laws of Scotland increasingly approximate).

Paths are the habits of a landscape. They are acts of consensual making. It's hard to create a footpath on your own. The artist Richard Long did it once, treading a dead-straight line into desert sand by turning and turning about dozens of times. But this was a footmark not a footpath: it led nowhere except to its own end, and by walking it Long became a tiger pacing its cage or a swimmer doing lengths. With no promise of extension, his line was to a path what a snapped twig is to a tree. Paths connect. This is their first duty and their chief reason for being. They relate places in a literal sense, and by extension they relate people.

Paths are consensual, too, because without common care and common practice they disappear: overgrown by vegetation, ploughed up or built over (though they may persist in the memorious substance of land law). Like sea channels that require regular dredging to stay open, paths *need* walking. In nineteenth-century Suffolk small sickles called 'hooks' were hung on stiles and posts at the start of certain well-used paths: those running between villages, for instance, or byways to parish churches. A walker would pick up a hook and use it to lop off branches that were starting to impede passage. The hook would then be left at the other end of the path, for a walker coming in the opposite direction. In this manner the path was collectively maintained for general use.

By no means all interesting paths are old paths. In every town and city today, cutting across parks and waste ground, you'll see unofficial paths created by walkers who have abandoned the pavements and roads to take short cuts and make asides. Town planners call these improvised routes 'desire lines' or 'desire paths'. In Detroit – where areas of the city are overgrown by vegetation, where tens of thousands of homes have been abandoned, and where few can now afford cars – walkers and cyclists have created thousands of such elective easements.