WANDERLUST

A History of Walking

Rebecca Solnit

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Chapter 23

Citizens of the Streets: Parties, Processions, and Revolutions

I turned all the way around to see that it was his wings that had made the angel just behind me look so odd out of the corner of my eye. At least, he was dressed as an angel, and various space aliens, tarts, disco kings, and two-legged beasts were all streaming down the street in the same direction, toward Castro Street, as they do every Halloween. The night before I had taken my bike down to the foot of Market Street to ride in Critical Mass, the group ride that is both a protest of the lack of safe space for bicyclists and a festive seizure of that space. Several hundred bicyclists riding together filled the streets, as they have the last Friday of every month since the event began here in 1992. (Cyclists stage Critical Masses around the world, from Geneva to Sydney to Jerusalem to Philadelphia.) Some of the more righteous bicyclists had taken to wearing T-shirts that say "One Less Car," so a trio of runners accompanied us wearing "One Less Bike" shirts, and in honor of the impending holiday some of the cyclists had donned masks or costumes.

Halloween in the Castro is a similarly hybrid event, both celebration and, at least in its origins, political statement—for asserting a queer identity is a bold political statement in itself. Asserting such an identity festively subverts the long tradition of sexuality being secret and homosexuality being shameful—and in

indispensable to his inspiration. In Hugo the crowd enters literature as an object of contemplation. The surging

dreary times joy itself is insurrectionary, as community is in times of isolation. Nowadays, the Castro's Halloween street party is a magnet for a lot of straight people as well, but everyone seems to operate under the aegis of tolerance, campiness, and shameless staring in this event that is nothing more than a few thousand people milling along several blocks of shut-down streets. Nothing is sold, no one is in charge, and everyone is both spectacle and spectator. Earlier Halloween night, several hundred people had marched from Castro Street to the Hall of Justice to protest and mourn the murder of a young gay man in Wyoming, a pretty routine demonstration for San Francisco and for the Castro, which is both a temple of consumerism and home base for a politically active community.

November 2, Día de los Muertos, the Day of the Dead, was celebrated on Twenty-fourth Street in the Mission District. As always, the Aztec dancers—barefoot, spinning and stamping, clad in loincloths, leg rattles, and four-foot-long feather plumes—led the parade. They were followed by participants who bore altars on long poles—a Virgin of Guadalupe atop one and an Aztec god on the other. Behind the altars walked people carrying huge crosses draped in tissue paper, people with faces painted as skulls, people carrying candles, perhaps a thousand participants in all. Unlike bigger parades, this one was made up almost entirely of participants, with only a few onlookers from the windows of their homes. Perhaps it is better described as a procession, for a procession is a participants' journey, while a parade is a performance with audience. Walking together through the streets felt very different than did milling around on Halloween; there was a more tender, melancholic mood about this festival of death and a delicate but satisfying sense of camaraderie in the air that might have come from nothing more than sharing the same space and same purpose while moving together in the same direction. It was as though in aligning our bodies we had somehow aligned our hearts. At Twenty-fifth and Mission another procession invaded ours, a louder one chanting against the impending execution of a death-row inmate, and though it was annoying to be demonstrated at as though we were the executioners, it was useful to be reminded of the reality of death. The bakeries stayed open late selling *pan de muerto*—sweet bread baked into human figures—and the holiday was a fine hybrid of Christian and indigenous Mexican tradition, revised and metamorphosed at the hands of San Francisco's many cultures. Like Halloween, the Day of the Dead is a liminal festival, celebrating the threshholds between life and death, the time in which everything is possible and

ocean is its model, and the thinker who reflects on this eternal spectacle is the true explorer of the crowd in which he

identity itself is in flux, and these two holidays have become thresholds across which different factions of the city meet and the boundaries between strangers drop.

The great German artist Joseph Beuys used to recite, as a maxim and manifesto, the phrase "Everyone an artist." I used to think it meant that he thought everyone should make art, but now I wonder if he wasn't speaking to a more basic possibility: that everyone could become a participant rather than a member of the audience, that everyone could become a producer rather than a consumer of meaning (the same idea lies behind punk culture's DIY—do it yourself—credo). This is the highest ideal of democracy—that everyone can participate in making their own life and the life of the community—and the street is democracy's greatest arena, the place where ordinary people can speak, unsegregated by walls, unmediated by those with more power. It's not a coincidence that *media* and *mediate* have the same root; direct political action in real public space may be the only way to engage in unmediated communication with strangers, as well as a way to reach media audiences by literally making news. Processions and street parties are among the pleasant manifestations of democracy, and even the most solipsistic and hedonistic expressions keep the populace bold and the avenues open for more overtly political uses. Parades, demonstrations, protests, uprisings, and urban revolutions are all about members of the public moving through public space for expressive and political rather than merely practical reasons. In this, they are part of the cultural history of walking.

Public marches mingle the language of the pilgrimage, in which one walks to demonstrate one's commitment, with the strike's picket line, in which one demonstrates the strength of one's group and one's persistence by pacing back and forth, and the festival, in which the boundaries between strangers recede. Walking becomes testifying. Many marches arrive at rally points, but the rallies generally turn participants back into audiences for a few select speakers; I myself have often been deeply moved by walking through the streets en masse and deeply bored by the events after arrival. Most parades and processions are commemorative, and this moving through the space of the city to commemorate other times knits together time and place, memory and possibility, city and citizen, into a vital whole, a ceremonial space in which history can be made. The past becomes the foundation on which the future will be built, and those who

loses himself as he loses himself in the roaring of the sea —WALTER BENJAMIN, CHARLES BAUDELAIRE Then we

honor no past may never make a future. Even the most innocuous parades have an agenda: Saint Patrick's Day parades go back more than two hundred years in New York, and they demonstrate the religious convictions, ethnic pride, and strength of a once-marginal community, as do the much more glittering Chinese New Year's Day parade in San Francisco and colossal Gay Pride parades around the continent. Military parades have always been shows of strength and incitements to tribal pride or citizen intimidation. In Northern Ireland, Orangemen have used their marches celebrating past Protestant victories to symbolically invade Catholic neighborhoods, while Catholics have made the funerals of the slain into massive political processions.

On ordinary days we each walk alone or with a companion or two on the sidewalks, and the streets are used for transit and for commerce. On extraordinary days—on the holidays that are anniversaries of historic and religious events and on the days we make history ourselves—we walk together, and the whole street is for stamping out the meaning of the day. Walking, which can be prayer, sex, communion with the land, or musing, becomes speech in these demonstrations and uprisings, and a lot of history has been written with the feet of citizens walking through their cities. Such walking is a bodily demonstration of political or cultural conviction and one of the most universally available forms of public expression. It could be called marching, in that it is common movement toward a common goal, but the participants have not surrendered their individuality as have those soldiers whose lockstep signifies that they have become interchangeable units under an absolute authority. Instead they signify the possibility of common ground between people who have not ceased to be different from each other, people who have at last become the public. When bodily movement becomes a form of speech, then the distinctions between words and deeds, between representations and actions, begin to blur, and so marches can themselves be liminal, another form of walking into the realm of the representational and symbolic—and sometimes, into history.

Only citizens familiar with their city as both symbolic and practical territory, able to come together on foot and accustomed to walking about their city, can revolt. Few remember that "the right of the people peaceably to assemble" is listed in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, along with freedom of the press, of speech, and of religion, as critical to a democracy. While the other

sallied forth into the streets, arm in arm, continuing the topics of the day, or roaming far and wide until a late hour,

rights are easily recognized, the elimination of the possibility of such assemblies through urban design, automotive dependence, and other factors is hard to trace and seldom framed as a civil rights issue. But when public spaces are eliminated, so ultimately is the public; the individual has ceased to be a citizen capable of experiencing and acting in common with fellow citizens. Citizenship is predicated on the sense of having something in common with strangers, just as democracy is built upon trust in strangers. And public space is the space we share with strangers, the unsegregated zone. In these communal events, that abstraction the public becomes real and tangible. Los Angeles has had tremendous riots—Watts in 1965 and the Rodney King uprising in 1992—but little effective history of protest. It is so diffuse, so centerless, that it possesses neither symbolic space in which to act, nor a pedestrian scale in which to participate as the public (save for a few relict and re-created pedestrian shopping streets). San Francisco, on the other hand, has functioned like the "Paris of the West" it was once called, breeding a regular menu of parades, processions, protests, demonstrations, marches, and other public activities in its central spaces. San Francisco, however, is not a capital, as Paris is, so it is not situated to shake the nation and the national government.

Paris is the great city of walkers. And it is the great city of revolution. Those two facts are often written about as though they are unrelated, but they are vitally linked. Historian Eric Hobsbawm once speculated on "the ideal city for riot and insurrection." It should, he concluded, "be densely populated and not too large in area. Essentially it should still be possible to traverse it on foot. . . . In the ideal insurrectionary city the authorities—the rich, the aristocracy, the government or local administration—will therefore be as intermingled with the central concentration of the poor as possible." All the cities of revolution are old-fashioned cities: their stone and cement are soaked with meanings, with histories, with memories that make the city a theater in which every act echoes the past and makes a future, and power is still visible at the center of things. They are pedestrian cities whose inhabitants are confident in their movements, familiar with the crucial geography. Paris is all these things, and it has had major revolutions and insurrections in 1789, 1830, 1848, 1871, and 1968, and in recent times, myriad protests and strikes.

seeking amid the wild lights and shadows of the populous city, that infinity of mental excitement which quiet

Hobsbawm addresses Haussmann's reshaping of Paris when he writes, "Urban reconstruction, however, had another and probably unintended effect on potential rebellions, for the new and wide avenues provided an ideal location for what became an increasingly important aspect of popular movements, the mass demonstration or rather procession. The more systematic these rings and cartwheels of boulevards, the more effectively isolated those were from the surrounding inhabited area, the easier it became to turn such assemblies into ritual marches rather than preliminaries to riot." In Paris itself, it seems that the saturation of ceremonial, symbolic, and public space makes the people there peculiarly susceptible to revolution. That is to say, the French are a people for whom a parade is an army if it marches like one, for whom the government falls if they believe it has, and this seems to be because they have a capital where the representational and the real are so interfused and because their imaginations too dwell in public, engaged with public issues, public dreams. "I take my desires for reality, because I believe in the reality of my desires," said graffiti on the Sorbonne in the student-led uprising of May 1968. That uprising captured its most crucial territory, the national imagination, and it was on this territory as well as the Latin Quarter and the strike sites around France that they came within a hairsbreadth of toppling Europe's strongest government. "The difference between rebellion at Columbia and rebellion at the Sorbonne is that life in Manhattan went on as before, while in Paris every section of society was set on fire, in the space of a few days," wrote Mavis Gallant, who was there in the streets of the Latin Quarter. "The collective hallucination was that life can change, quite suddenly and for the better. It still strikes me as a noble desire."

Everyone knows how the French Revolution began. On July 11, 1789, Louis XVI dismissed the popular minister Jacques Necker, further stirring up his already turbulent capital. Parisians must have been imagining an armed revolt, for 6,000 of them spontaneously assembled to storm the Invalides and seize the rifles stored there, then went on to conquer the Bastille across the river for more military supplies, with results still celebrated in parades and festivals throughout France every July 14, Bastille Day. Life did change, suddenly and, in the long run, for the better. The liberation of that medieval fortress-prison symbolically ended centuries of despotism but the revolution didn't really begin until the march of the market women three months later. The revolution's intellectual origins lay in the ideals of liberty and justice prompted in part by Enlightenment philosophers

observation can afford.—EDGAR ALLAN POE, "THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE" *In cities men cannot be*

such as Thomas Paine, Rousseau, and Voltaire, but it also had bodily origins. In the summer of 1788 a devastating hailstorm had wiped out much of the harvest across France, and in 1789 the people felt the effects. Bread rose in price and became scarce, ordinary people often began standing in line at the bakeries at 4 A.M. in the hope of buying a loaf that day, and the poor began to become the hungry. Bodily causes had bodily effects; it was to be a revolution not merely of ideas but of bodies liberated, starving, marching, dancing, rioting, decapitated, on the stage of Parisian streets and squares. Revolutions are always politics made bodily, politics when actions become the usual form of speech. Britain and France had had food and tax riots before, but nothing quite like this combination of hunger for food and for ideals.

In the heady days after the fall of the Bastille, the market women and *poissardes*, or fishwives, had grown accustomed to marching together, and they must have first felt their common desires and collective strength during the religious processions they went on that season. At least one local was alarmed "at the discipline, pageantry, and magnitude of the almost daily processions of market women, laundresses, tradesmen, and workers of different districts that, during August and September, wound up the rue Saint-Jacques to the newly built church of Sainte-Genevieve [patroness of Paris] for thanksgiving services." Simon Schama points out that on the feast-day of Saint Louis, August 25, the market women of Paris traditionally went to Versailles to present the queen with bouquets. It is as though having learned the form of the procession, they could give it new content: having marched to pay homage to church and state, they were ready to march to demand terms.

On the morning of October 5, 1789, a girl took a drum to the central markets of Les Halles, while in the insurrectionary faubourg Saint-Antoine a woman compelled a local cleric to ring the church bells in his church. Drum and bells gathered a crowd. The women—now numbering in the thousands—chose a hero of the Bastille to lead them, Stanislas-Marie Maillard, who found himself constantly preaching moderation to his followers. Though made up mostly of poor working women—fishwives, market women, laundresses, portresses—the crowd included some women of means and a few noted revolutionaries, such as Theroigne de Mericourt, known as Theroigne the Amazon. (Prostitutes and men dressed as women loomed large in contemporary accounts of the march, but this seems to

prevented from concerting together, and awakening a mutual excitement which prompts sudden and passionate

have been because many believed "respectable" women were incapable of such insurrection.) The women insisted on moving straight through the Tuileries, still the gardens of the king, and when a guard pulled his sword on one of the women in the lead, Maillard came to her defense—but "she delivered such a blow with her broom to the crossed swords of the men that they were both disarmed." They continued on chanting "Bread and to Versailles!" Later that day the marquis de Lafayette, hero of the American Revolution, led an army of about 20,000 national guards after them in equivocal support.

By early evening they were at the National Assembly in Versailles, demanding that this new governing body deal with the food shortage, and a few women were taken before the king to make their case. Before midnight the crowd was at the palace gates, and early in the morning the crowd came inside. It was a gory arrival—after a guardsman shot a young woman, the crowd decapitated two guards and rushed the royal apartments looking for the hated queen, Marie Antoinette. That day, the terrified royal family was forced to return to Paris with the jubilant, exhausted, victorious crowd. At the head of the long procession—Lafayette estimated it at 60,000—came the royal family in a carriage surrounded by women carrying branches of laurel, followed by the National Guard, escorting wagonloads of wheat and flour. At the rear, writes one historian, marched more women, "their decorated branches amidst the gleaming iron of pikes and musket barrels giving the impression, as one observer thought, of 'a walking forest.' It was still raining, and the roads were ankle deep in mud, yet they all seemed content, even cheerful." They shouted to passersby, "Here come the Baker, the Baker's Wife, and the Baker's Little Boy." The king in Paris was a very different entity than the king in Versailles. There the once absolute power of the French monarchy ebbed away, and he became a constitutional monarch, then a prisoner, and within a few years a victim of the guillotine as the revolution spiraled down into factions and bloodbaths.

History is often described as though it were made up entirely of negotiations in closed spaces and wars in open ones—of talking and fighting, of politicians and warriors. Earlier events of that revolution—the birth of the National Assembly and the storming of the Bastille—correspond to these versions. Yet the market women had managed to make history as ordinary citizens engaged in ordinary gestures. During the walk of the thousands of women to Versailles, they

assemblies. Cities may be looked upon as large assemblies, of which all the inhabitants are members, their populace

had overcome the weight of the past in which they had been deferential to all the usual authorities, while the traumas of the future were yet unforeseen. They had one day in which the world was with them, they feared nothing, armies followed in their wake, and they were not grist for history's mill but the grinders. Like mass marchers everywhere, they displayed a collective power—the power at the very least to withdraw their support and at the most to revolt violently—but they managed to start the revolution largely as marchers. They carried branches as well as muskets—for muskets operate in the realm of the real, but branches in that of the symbolic.

This intertwining of religious festivity, huge gatherings in public squares, and mass marches would appear again on the two hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the French Revolution. The revolutionary year began inauspiciously with government tanks literally crushing the student democracy movement in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, but across Europe Communist governments had lost their appetite for or their confidence in violent repression. Violence itself had become a far less casual tool than it had been before Gandhi spread his doctrine of nonviolence, human rights had become far more established, and media had made events around the world more visible. The American civil rights movement had demonstrated its effectiveness in the West, and peace movements and nonviolent direct-action tactics had become a global language of citizen resistance. As Hobsbawm points out, marching down the boulevard had largely replaced rioting in the quarter. Throughout Eastern Europe the insurrectionaries made it clear that nonviolence was part of their ideology. The revolution in Poland worked the way nonviolent changes are supposed to—slowly, with lots of outside political pressure and inside political negotiation, culminating in the free election of June 4, 1989—and all the revolutions benefited from Mikhail Gorbachev's shrewd dismantling of the Soviet Union. But in Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia, history was made in the streets, and their old cities accommodated public gatherings beautifully.

It was, reported Timothy Garton Ash, a funeral held thirty-one years late for Imre Nagy, executed for his part in the unsuccessful 1956 revolt, that started the revolution in Hungary. On June 16, two hundred thousand people marched in a gathering that would have been violently crushed in previous years. In the exhil-

exercise a prodigious influence upon the magistrates, and frequently execute their own wishes without the

aration of having recovered their history and their voice, dissidents stepped up their efforts, and on October 23, the new Hungarian Republic was born. East Germany was next. Repressive measures were at first stepped up—students on their way home from school and employees returning for work were arrested just for being in the vicinity of disturbances in East Berlin: even the everyday freedom to walk about had become criminalized (as, with curfews and bans on assembly, it often is in turbulent times or under repressive regimes). But Leipzig's Nikolaikirche had long held Monday-evening "prayers for peace" followed by demonstrations on adjacent Karl-Marx-Platz, and there the numbers began to grow. On October 2, fifteen to twenty thousand gathered at that square by the church in the largest spontaneous demonstration in East Germany since 1953, and by October 30, nearly half a million people marched. "From that time forward," writes Ash, "the people acted and the Party reacted." On November 4 a million people gathered in East Berlin's Alexanderplatz, carrying flags, banners, and posters, and on November 9 the Berlin Wall fell. A friend who was there told me it fell because so many people showed up when a false report circulated that the wall was down that they made it into a real event—the guards lost their nerve and let them through. It became true because enough people were there to make it true. Once again people were writing history with their feet.

Czechoslovakia's "Velvet Revolution" was the most marvelous of them all, and the last (Romania's Christmastime violence was something else altogether). In January of that magic year, playwright Václav Havel had been imprisoned for participating in a twentieth-anniversary commemoration of a student who had burned himself to death in Prague's heart, Wenceslas Square, in protest of the crushed "Prague Spring" revolution of 1968. November 17, 1989, was the anniversary of another Czech student martyr, killed by Nazis during the occupation, and this commemorative procession was far larger and far bolder than that of January. The crowd marched from Charles University, and when the official itinerary was over at dusk, they lit candles, produced flowers, and continued on through the streets, singing and chanting antigovernment slogans—the past once again becoming an occasion to address the present. At Wenceslas Square, policemen surrounded them and began clubbing anyone within reach. Marchers stampeded down side streets, where some slipped away or were taken into nearby homes, but many were injured. False accounts that one student had joined the ranks of student martyrs infuriated the nation. Afterward came spontaneous

intervention of public officers.—ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE, DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA *We are nothing if we walk*

marches, strikes, and gatherings in Wenceslas Square—really a kilometer-long, immensely wide boulevard in the heart of the city—with hundreds of thousands of participants. Behind the scenes, in the Magic Lantern Theater, the recently released Havel brought together all the opposition groups into a political force to make something pragmatic of the power being taken in the streets (the Czech opposition was called the Civic Forum; the Slovak equivalent was called the Public Against Violence).

Czechoslovakians had begun to live in public, gathering every day in Wenceslas Square and proceeding down adjoining Národní Avenue, getting their news from other participants, making and reading posters and signs, creating altars of flowers and candles—reclaiming the street as public space whose meaning would be determined by the public. "Prague," reported one journalist, "seemed hypnotized, caught in a magical trance. It had never ceased to be one of Europe's most beautiful cities, but for two long decades a cloud of repressive sadness had enveloped the Gothic and baroque towers. Now it vanished. The crowds were calm, confident and civilized. Each day, people assembled after work at 4pm, filing politely, patiently and purposefully into Wenceslas Square. . . . The city burst with color: posters were plastered on walls, on shop windows, on any inch of free space. After each mass rally, the crowd sang the National Anthem." Four days later the country's two most famous dissidents—Havel and the hero of 1968, Alexander Dubček—appeared on a balcony above the square, the latter in his first public appearance after twenty-one years of enforced silence. Dubček said at this time, "The government is telling us that the street is not the place for things to be solved, but I say the street was and is the place. The voice of the street must be heard."

The revolution that began by remembering a student peaked by celebrating a saint. Saint Agnes of Bohemia, great-granddaughter of the saintly Wenceslas, had been canonized a few weeks earlier. Prague's archbishop, a supporter of the opposition, held an outdoor mass for hundreds of thousands in the snow a few days after Dubček reappeared. Like the Hungarians, the Czechoslovakians had wrested their future free by remembering the heroes and martyrs of the past, for by December 10 there was a new government. Michael Kukral, a young American geographer who was there throughout the Velvet Revolution, wrote, "The time of massive and daily street demonstrations was over after November 27th, and thus, the entire character of the revolution metamorphosed. I did not

alone, we are everything when we walk together in step with other dignified feet.—SUBCOMMANDANTE MARCOS,

awaken the next morning to find myself transformed into a giant bug, but I did feel a sense of sadness knowing that I will probably never again experience the momentum, spontaneity, and exhilaration of these past ten days."

Nineteen-eighty-nine was the year of the squares—of Tiananmen Square, of the Alexanderplatz, of Karl-Marx-Platz, of Wenceslas Square—and of the people who rediscovered the power of the public in such places. Tiananmen Square serves as a reminder that marches, protests, and seizures of public space don't always produce the desired results. But many other struggles lie somewhere in between the Velvet Revolution and the bloodbaths of repression, and the 1980s were a decade of great political activism: in the colossal antinuclear movements in Kazakhstan, Britain, Germany, and the United States, in the myriad marches against U.S. intervention in Central America, in the students around the world who urged their universities to divest from South Africa and helped topple the apartheid regime there, in the queer parades increasing through the decade and the radical AIDS activists at the end of the decade, in the populist movements that took to the streets of the Philippines and many other countries.

A few years earlier another insurrection found a square for its stage. The saga of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo began when these women started to notice each other at the police stations and government offices, making the same fruitless inquiries after children who had been "disappeared" by agents of the brutal military junta that seized power in 1976. "Secrecy," writes Marguerite Guzman Bouvard, "was a hallmark of the junta's Dirty War. . . . In Argentina the abductions were carried out beneath a veneer of normalcy so that there would be no outcry, so that the terrible reality would remain submerged and elusive even to the families of the abducted." Mostly homemakers with little education and no political experience, these women came to realize that they had to make the secret public, and they pursued their cause with a stunning lack of regard for their own safety. On April 30, 1977, fourteen mothers went to the Plaza de Mayo in the center of Buenos Aires. It was the place where Argentinean independence had been proclaimed in 1810 and where Juan Perón had given his populist speeches, a plaza at the heart of the country. Sitting there was, a policeman shouted, tantamount to holding an illegal meeting, and so they began walking around the obelisk in the center of the plaza.

1995 *She's gravely ill now from a hunger strike, and she's told the generals that she'll gladly leave. But she*

There and then, wrote a Frenchman, the generals lost their first battle and the Mothers found their identity. It was the plaza that gave them their name, and their walks there every Friday that made them famous. "Much later," writes Bouvard, "they described their walks as marches, not as walking, because they felt that they were marching toward a goal and not just circling aimlessly. As the Fridays succeeded one another and the numbers of Mothers marching around the plaza increased, the police began to take notice. Vanloads of policemen would arrive, take names, and force the Mothers to leave." Attacked with dogs and clubs, arrested and interrogated, they kept returning to perform this simple act of remembrance for so many years that it became ritual and history and made the name of the plaza known around the world. They marched carrying photographs of those children mounted like political placards on sticks or hung around their neck, and wearing white kerchiefs embroidered with the names of their disappeared children and the dates of their disappearances (later they were embroidered instead, "Bring Them Back Alive").

"They tell me that, while they are marching they feel very close to their children," wrote the poet Marjorie Agosin, who walked with them. "And the truth is, in the plaza where forgetting is not allowed, memory recovers its meaning." For years these women taking the national trauma on a walk were the most public opposition to the regime. By 1980 they had created a network of mothers around the country, and in 1981 they began the first of their annual twenty-four-hour marches to celebrate Human Rights Day (they also joined religious processions around the country). "By this time the Mothers were no longer alone during their marches; the Plaza was swarming with journalists from abroad who had come to cover the strange phenomenon of middle-aged woman marching in defiance of a state of siege." When the military junta fell in 1983, the Mothers were honored guests at the inauguration of the newly elected president, but they kept up their weekly walks counterclockwise around the obelisk in the Plaza de Mayo, and the thousands who had been afraid before joined them. They still walk counterclockwise around the tall obelisk every Thursday.

There are many ways to measure the effectiveness of protest. There's its impact on the wider public, directly and through the media, and there's its impact on the

said, "I want all political prisoners released, and I want to walk to the airport." It's twenty miles from her house to

government—on its audiences. But what's often forgotten is its impact on the protesters, who themselves suddenly become the public in literal public space, no longer an audience but a force. I had a taste, once, of this public life during the first weeks of the Gulf War, of living there more intensely than in San Francisco's many annual marches and parades before and since. Not much was written then or has been since about the huge protests all over the country in January 1991—surrounding Philadelphia's Independence Hall, gathering in Lafayette Park across from the White House, occupying the Washington State and Texas legislatures, shutting down the Brooklyn Bridge, covering Seattle in posters and demonstrations, holding "gas-pump protests" across the South. But there was, amid the fear and more deferential versions of patriotism, a huge outcry that continued for weeks in San Francisco. I don't mean to suggest that we had the courage of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo or the impact of the people of Prague, only that we too lived for a while in public. The whole strategy of that war—its speed, its colossal censorship, its reliance on high-tech weaponry, its very limited ground combat—was organized to defeat opposition at home by limiting information and U.S. casualties, which suggests that protest and popular opinion were so strong a force that the war (and the little wars like it since) was a preemptive strike against them.

We went out into the streets anyway, and the very space of the city was transformed. Before the first bombs dropped, people began to gather spontaneously, to march together, to make bonfires out of the old Christmas trees put out on the streets, to organize rituals and gatherings, to plaster the city with posters that seemed to make the very walls break their silence with calls for specific actions and caustic commentaries on the meaning of the war. Many of the demonstrations here, as elsewhere, instinctively headed for the traffic arteries—bridges, highways—or for the power points—the federal building, the stock exchange—and shut them down. There were protests almost daily into February. The city was being remade as a place whose center did not belong to business or to cars, but to pedestrians moving down the street in this most bodily form of free speech. The streets were no longer antechambers to the interiors of homes, schools, offices, shops, but a colossal amphitheater. I wonder now if anyone has ever protested or paraded simply because such occasions provide the only time when American city streets are a perfect place to be a pedestrian, safe from as-

the airport. And she has so rallied the spirit of her people that the generals rightly fear that the whole country

sault by cars and strangers if not, occasionally, police. From the middle of the street, the sky is wider and the shop windows are opaque.

The Saturday evening before the war began, I ditched my car and walked in the boisterous march that coalesced spontaneously, drawing people out of bars and cafés and homes. I marched in the well-organized protest the day before the war broke out with a few thousand others. I joined more thousands the afternoon the war broke out to march again through the dark and our own horror to the Federal Building. The next morning I blockaded Highway 101 with the group of activists I spent much of the war with, until the highway patrol began clubbing away and broke one man's leg, and later that morning I walked with twenty or thirty others again down the city streets into the financial and commercial district. On the weekend after the war broke out, I walked with 200,000 others who gathered to protest the war with banners and placards, puppets and chants. For those weeks my life seemed to be one continuous procession through the transformed city. Private concerns and personal fears faded away in the incendiary spirit of the time. The streets were our streets, and all our fear was for others. There were mutterings about using nuclear weapons and suggestions that Israel might be drawn into a conflict that seemed as though it could spread like wildfire into a worldwide conflagration. The horror about what was happening far away and the strength of the incendiary resistance inside us and around us generated extraordinary feeling. I have never felt anything as intensely as I did that war except for the most passionate love and the most mourned deaths (and it was a war with plenty of deaths, though few were of Americans until the effects of the war's toxic materials began to materialize).

The afternoon of the first day of the war, I got caught up in a police sweep and spent a few hours sitting down for a change, handcuffed in a bus near the center of activity, looking out the window, and in an odd truce, listening with the policemen to an arrested journalist's shortwave radio broadcasting the war. Missiles were being fired on Israel, and the radio said the inhabitants of Tel Aviv were all in sealed rooms wearing gas masks. That image stuck with me, of a war in which civilians lost sight of the world and of each others' faces and, from behind their hideous masks, lost even the ability to speak. Most Americans weren't much better off, voiceless in front of televisions running the same uninformative footage of the censored war over and over again. In living on the streets we were refusing

would turn out to cheer her if she took that twenty-mile walk.—PAUL MONETTE, ON AUNG SAN SUU KYI IN BURMA

to consume the meaning of that war and instead producing our own meaning, on our streets and in our hearts if not in our government and media.

In those moments of moving through the streets with people who share one's beliefs comes the rare and magical possibility of a kind of populist communion—perhaps some find it in churches, armies, and sports teams, but churches are not so urgent, and armies and teams are driven by less noble dreams. At such times it is as though the still small pool of one's own identity has been overrun by a great flood, bringing its own grand collective desires and resentments, scouring out that pool so thoroughly that one no longer feels fear or sees the reflections of oneself but is carried along on that insurrectionary surge. These moments when individuals find others who share their dreams, when fear is overwhelmed by idealism or by outrage, when people feel a strength that surprises them, are moments in which they become heroes—for what are heroes but those so motivated by ideals that fear cannot sway them, those who speak for us, those who have power for good? A person who feels this all the time may become a fanatic or at least an annoyance, but a person who never feels it is condemned to cynicism and isolation. In those moments everyone becomes a visionary, everyone becomes a hero.

Histories of revolutions and uprisings are full of stories of generosity and trust between strangers, of incidents of extraordinary courage, of transcendence of the petty concerns of everyday life. In *1793*, Victor Hugo's novel of revolution, he wrote, "People lived in public: they ate at tables spread outside the doors, women seated on the steps of the churches made lint as they sang the 'Marseillaise.' Park Monceaux and the Luxembourg Gardens were parade-grounds. . . . Everything was terrible and no one was frightened. . . . Nobody seemed to have leisure: all the world was in a hurry." At the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, George Orwell wrote of Barcelona's transformation, "The revolutionary posters were everywhere, flaming from the walls in clean reds and blues that made the few remaining advertisements look like daubs of mud. Down the Ramblas, the wide central artery of the town where crowds of people streamed constantly to and fro, the loud-speakers were bellowing revolutionary songs all day and far into the night. . . . Above all there was a belief in the revolution and the future, a feeling

BURMA *The Orthodox forbid women to pray together in groups, to pray out loud, and to hold a Torah.*

of having suddenly emerged into an era of equality and freedom." To use a Situationist word, there seems to be a psychogeography of insurrection in which life is lived in public and is about public issues, as manifested by the central ritual of the march, the volubility of strangers and of walls, the throngs in streets and plazas, and the intoxicating atmosphere of potential freedom that means the imagination has already been liberated. "Revolutionary moments are carnivals in which the individual life celebrates its unification with a regenerated society," writes Situationist Raoul Vaneigem.

But nobody remains heroic forever. It is the nature of revolutions to subside, which is not the same thing as to fail. A revolution is a lightning bolt showing us new possibilities and illuminating the darkness of our old arrangements so that we will never see them quite the same way again. People rise up for an absolute freedom, a freedom they will only find in their hopes and their acts at the height of that revolution. Sometimes they may have overthrown a dictator, but other dictators will arise and bring with them other ways of intimidating or enslaving the populace. Sometimes everyone will have a vote at last, food and justice will be adequate if not ideal, but ordinary traffic will return to the streets, the posters will fade, revolutionaries will go back to being housewives or students or garbage collectors, and the heart will become private again. On the first anniversary of the storming of the Bastille came the Fête de la Federation, a national festival of dances, visits, parades, and overflowing joy, and it was the spontaneous participation of all classes of Parisians in readying the Champ de Mars for their fête, rather than the fete itself, that was most exhilarating. A year later, on July 12, 1791, there was a military parade commemorating Voltaire, and the people who had participated in history ferociously and then joyously had become spectators again.

"Resistance is the secret of joy," proclaimed the pamphlet someone from Reclaim the Streets handed me in the middle of a Birmingham street, in the midst of one of their street parties. Reclaim the Streets was founded in London in May 1995 with the understanding that if the twin forces of privatized space and globalized economies are alienating us from each other and from local culture, the reclaiming of public space for public life and public festival is one way to resist both. The very act of revolting—happily and communally and in the middle of the street—

These women gathered to pray at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, and were assaulted by the Orthodox men, their

was no longer a means to an end but victory itself. Imagined thus, the difference between revolutions and festivals becomes even less distinct, for in a world of dreary isolation festivals are inherently revolutionary. The RTS party in Birmingham three years later was intended as a counterpoint to the Group of Eight meeting that weekend, in which leaders from the world's top economic powers would make the world's future without consulting citizens or the poorer nations. Hundreds of thousands gathered by the group Christian Aid formed a human chain around the central city to demand that third-world debt be forgiven. Reclaim the Streets wasn't asking, but taking what they wanted.

There was a glorious moment when trumpeters blew a sort of pedestrian charge, and the thousands who'd come for this Global Street Party surged out of the bus station into Birmingham's main street. People quickly shimmied up light poles and hung banners. "Beneath the Tarmac the Grass," said one about sixty feet long, copping a line from May '68 in Paris, and "Stop the Car/Free the City" said another. Once people settled in, the great spirit of the move forward subsided into a fairly standard party of mostly young and scruffy people, dancing, mingling, stripping down in the steamy heat, not notably different from, say, Halloween in the Castro, except that it was illegal and obstructionist. Walking and marching are communal in spirit in ways that mingling after arrival is not. It wasn't, an RTS activist told me later, one of their great street parties, nothing compared to their three-day street party with the striking Liverpool dockworkers, or the rave-style protest of an intrusive new highway near London that included giant puppets wearing hoop skirts beneath which hid jackhammer operators putting holes in the overpass that were then planted with trees, or RTS spinoff the Revolutionary Pedestrian Front's pranks at an Alfa Romeo promotional event, or the taking over of Trafalgar Square. Perhaps some of the other places where sister street parties were held that day—Ankara, Berlin, Bogotá, Dublin, Istanbul, Madrid, Prague, Seattle, Turin, Vancouver, Zagreb—lived up to the glorious rhetoric of Reclaim the Streets' publications. Though Reclaim the Streets may not have fulfilled its goal, it has set a new one for every street action—now every parade, every march, every festival, can be regarded as a triumph over alienation, a reclaiming of the space of the city, of public space and public life, an opportunity to walk together in what is no longer a journey but already an arrival.

case is still pending in the Israeli Supreme Court.—MARTHA SHELLEY, *HAGGADAH: A CELEBRATION OF FREEDOM*

Chapter 5

Labyrinths and Cadillacs: Walking into the Realm of the Symbolic

I didn't mind not getting into the church at Chimayó along with all the long patient line of pilgrims, because I had another destination. The year before I'd walked the last six or so miles of the pilgrimage, and later, trying to catch up with my friend who'd driven in, I walked past the Cadillac with the stations of the cross painted on it. I kept going after a cursory inspection, and then I did the world's slowest double take. A Cadillac with the fourteen stations began, during the interim between those two Good Fridays, to seem more and more extraordinary, a gorgeous compression of many symbolic languages and desires into one divinely strange chariot. Jerry said, in front of the Santo Niño Chapel, that it was just up the road a hundred yards, and so I limped off to see it again.

Long and pale blue and somehow soft-looking, as though the metal body were dissolving into velvet or veils, this 1976 Cadillac was a contrary thing. The stations of the cross were wrapped around its long lean body, below the chrome line that bisected it horizontally. Jesus was condemned at the rear end of the driver's side and carried the cross, stumbled, and encountered his way around the car to be crucified in the middle of the passenger's side, next to the door handle, and he was buried at the back end of the hood. All along those sides was painted a

outer pilgrimage. One can have one without the other. It is best to have both.—THOMAS MERTON *I was the*

dark gray sky full of lightning that made the place of his suffering into New Mexico, with its volatile thunderclouds. There was Jesus again on the trunk as a big soft-focus head with a crown of thorns, flanked by angels, thorny roses, and the same kind of undulating ribbons that bear inscriptions in medieval and old Mexican religious paintings. The thorns everywhere seemed like further reminders that Chimayó and Jerusalem were both arid landscapes, and the same thorny roses adorned the hood, where Mary, the Sacred Heart, an angel, and a centurion were.

This car was designed to be looked at standing still, but it retained the possibility of moving. It didn't matter if the car ever went far, just that it could, that these images could hurtle down the highway, whipped by wind and drops of rain running sideways. Imagine it doing seventy on the interstate, passing mesas and crumbling adobes and cattle and maybe some billboards for fake Indian trading posts, Dairy Queens, and cheap motels, an eight-cylinder Sistine Chapel turned inside out and speeding toward a stark horizon under changing skies. The artist, Arthur Medina, a slender, restless-looking man with wavy black hair, showed up while I was admiring it and leaned against the adjacent wooden shed to receive compliments and questions. Why a Cadillac? I asked, and he didn't seem to understand my premise that a luxury car is not the most natural and neutral thing on which to paint holy pictures. So I asked him why he painted the car with this subject matter, and he said, "To give the people something for Lent," and indeed he displayed it here every year.

He had, he said, painted other cars and had an Elvis car, and then he darkly intimated that other local artists were imitating him. It was true that another long 1970s car was parked nearer the Santuario, in front of a white-painted adobe shop, and that very shop was painted with perfect accuracy on the side of the car facing the street, while a radiant image of the Santuario itself covered the hood. This made it almost as dizzying a vehicle of meaning as Medina's car, a transformation of immobile place into speeding representations. But the tradition of customized low-rider cars goes back more than a quarter of a century in northern New Mexico, and this other car was painted much more professionally—which is not to say that Medina was a lesser artist, only that most such cars have an orthodox aesthetic that comes from a particular way of handling the airbrush, and Medina had made his figures simpler and flatter and created a much more lushly

first in six generations to leave the Valley, the only one in my family to ever leave home. But I didn't leave all the

misty atmosphere. You could say that most low-rider cars are baroque, with a slightly cynical hyperreality of form, while Medina's had something of the flat devout force of medieval painting about it.

It was an extraordinarily quixotic object, a car about walking, a luxury item about suffering, sacrifice, and humiliation. And the car united two radically different walking traditions, one erotic and one religious. Customized cars exist both as art objects and as the vehicles for an updated version of an old Spanish and now Latin American custom, the paseo or *corso*. For hundreds of years, promenading the plaza in the center of town has been a social custom in these places, one that allows young people to meet, flirt, and stroll together and dictates that villages and cities from Antigua, Guatemala, to Sonoma, California, have a central plaza in which to do so (the more casual promenades of northern Europe take place in parks, quays, and boulevards). In some parts of Mexico and elsewhere the custom was once so formal that the men strolled in one direction and the women in the other, like the indefinitely extended steps of a line dance, but in most nowadays the plaza is the site of less structured promenading. The promenade is a special subset of walking with an emphasis on slow stately movement, socializing, and display. It is not a way of getting anywhere, but a way of being somewhere, and its movements are essentially circular, whether on foot or by car.

During the days I was writing this, I ran into my brother Steve's friend José in Dolores Park after San Francisco's May Day Parade and asked him about the custom. At first he said he knew nothing about it, but as we talked, more and more came back to him, and his eyes shone with the old memories flooding back in a new light. In his hometown in El Salvador, the custom was called "going around the park," though *park* meant the plaza at the center of town. Mostly teenagers used the park for this socializing, in part because the small houses and warm weather made it uncomfortable to socialize at home, at least at that age. Girls didn't go to the park alone, so he was much in request as a sort of midget chaperone by his older sister and his three beautiful cousins. Many Saturday and Sunday evenings of his childhood were spent licking an ice cream cone and ignoring their conversations with boys. The paseo, like less structured courtship walks in other places, allows people to remain visually in public but verbally in private, giving them enough room to talk and enough supervision to do little more. Nobody could afford to stay in the village, he said, and so the romances

parts of me. I kept the ground of my own being. On it I walked away, taking with me the land, the Valley,

kindled during strolls in the parks rarely led to marriage. But when people came back home, they would go around the park again, not to meet people but in reminiscence of this part of their life. Every small town and village in El Salvador and, he ventured, Guatemala had some form of this custom, and "the smaller the town the more important it was for keeping people's sanity." Other versions of the pedestrian paseo exist in Spain, southern Italy, and much of Latin America, the custom turns the world into a kind of ballroom and walking into a slow waltz.

It is hard to say how the customized car and the cruise came together, but the cruise is very much the successor to the paseo or *corso*, with the cars moving at promenade speed and the young people within flirting with and challenging each other. Meridel, my companion on the Chimayó pilgrimage, had in 1980 made one of her earliest series of photographs about New Mexico, a documentary project on low riders. At that time the subculture was booming, and the cars would slowly cruise the old plaza at the center of Santa Fe. Like low riders in most places, these ones met with the hostility of the civic authorities, who turned the four streets around the plaza into a one-way roundabout and took other steps to ban the practice. But when Meridel's series was complete, she organized a show of her work in the plaza, to which the low riders were invited and at which many of their cars were on display. By resituating them within the context of high art, she had reopened the space to them and introduced their work and world to the others in the region. It was the biggest art opening in Santa Fe history, with all kinds of people milling around the plaza to look at the cars, the photographs, and each other, an art paseo.

Though cruising came from the paseo, the cars' imagery sometimes spoke of a very different tradition. In devout New Mexico they bore far more religious imagery than, for example, low-rider cars in California, and Meridel came to see many of them as chapels, reliquaries, and, because of the plush velvet upholstery, even caskets. They express the culture of young people who are both devout and hard-partying as an indivisible whole, not a set of contradictions. And they express something of the centrality of the car in New Mexico, where sidewalks and roadside trails are often hard to find and both rural and urban life are built around the car (even on the pilgrimage, low riders cruised the road and did the occasional doughnut for us pedestrians). Still I find it strange that the paseo should have ceased to be a pedestrian event and become a vehicular one. Cars function best as exclusionary devices, as mobile private space. Even driven as slowly as

Texas—GLORIA ANZALDÚA *An active line on a walk moving freely, without goal. A walk for a walk's*

possible, they still don't allow for the directness of encounter and fluidity of contact that walking does. Medina's car, however, was no longer a vehicle but an object. He stood beside it to receive compliments, and we walked around it less as devotees would walk the stations of the cross than as connoisseurs would tour a gallery.

The stations of the cross are themselves one of those cultural things made up of many strata laid down upon each other. The first layer is the presumed course of events from Jesus's condemnation to the laying of his dead body in the tomb in the cave, a walk from Pilate's house to Golgotha, the walk that the pilgrims dragging crosses to Chimayó imitate. During the Crusades pilgrims in Jerusalem would tour the sites of these events, praying as they went, laying down a second layer, a layer of devout retracing that brought pilgrimage close to tourism. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Franciscan friars created the third layer by formalizing the route as a series of fixed events—the fourteen stages—and abstracting them from their site. From this tradition come the stations of the cross artworks—usually fourteen small paintings or prints running up and down the nave of the church—that adorn nearly all Catholic churches, and it is an amazing abstraction. No longer is it necessary to be in Jerusalem to trace these events two millennia ago. The time is past, the place is elsewhere, but walking and imagining are adequate means to enter into the spirit of those events. (Most of the recommendations on praying the stations emphasize reliving the events of the crucifixion, so that it is an act not merely of prayer but of identification and imagination.) Christianity is a portable religion, and even this route once so specific to Jerusalem was exported around the world.

A path is a prior interpretation of the best way to traverse a landscape, and to follow a route is to accept an interpretation, or to stalk your predecessors on it as scholars and trackers and pilgrims do. To walk the same way is to reiterate something deep; to move through the same space the same way is a means of becoming the same person, thinking the same thoughts. It's a form of spatial theater, but also spiritual theater, since one is emulating saints and gods in the hope of coming closer to them oneself, not just impersonating them for others. It's this that makes pilgrimage, with its emphasis on repetition and imitation, distinct amid all the modes of walking. If in no other way one can resemble a god, one can at least walk like one. And indeed, in the stations of the cross, Jesus appears at his most

sake.—PAUL KLEE, ALLEGORIZING DRAWING *Trebuchant sur les mots comme sur les pavés (stumbling against*

human, stumbling, sweating, suffering, falling three times, and dying in the course of redeeming the Fall. But by the time the stations of the cross had become a sequence of pictures in any church, anywhere, devotees were tracing a path that was no longer through a place but through a story. The stations are set up all along the nave of churches so that worshipers can walk themselves into Jerusalem, into the central story of Christianity.

There are many other devices besides the stations of the cross that let people bodily enter a story. I found one last summer. I had a date to meet some friends for drinks at the famously kitschy old mock-Polynesian bar the Tonga Room in the Fairmont Hotel atop Nob Hill. After walking over Nob Hill, past a grocery store advertising caviar, past a Chinese boy skipping with joy, past the less joyful adults in this posh neighborhood, and around the back of Grace Cathedral, I walked through a courtyard where a fountain was playing and a young man was waving a Bible around and mumbling something. At the far side of the space I saw, to my delight, something new there, a labyrinth. In pale and dark cement it repeated the same pattern made of stone in Chartres Cathedral: eleven concentric circles divided into quadrants through which the path winds until it ends at the six-petaled flower of the center. I was early for my rendezvous, and so I stepped onto the path. The circuit was so absorbing I lost sight of the people nearby and hardly heard the sound of the traffic and the bells for six o'clock.

Inside the labyrinth the two-dimensional surface ceased to be open space one could move across anyhow. Keeping to the winding path became important, and with one's eyes fixed upon it, the space of the labyrinth became large and compelling. The very first length of path after the entrance almost reaches the center of the eleven rings, then turns away to snake round and round, nearer and farther, never so close as that initial promise until long afterward, when the walker has slowed down and become absorbed in the journey—which even on a maze forty feet in diameter like this can take a quarter hour or more. That circle became a world whose rules I lived by, and I understood the moral of mazes: sometimes you have to turn your back on your goal to get there, sometimes you're farthest away when you're closest, sometimes the only way is the long one. After that careful walking and looking down, the stillness of arrival was deeply moving. I

words as against cobblestones)—CHARLES BAUDELAIRE, "LE SOLEIL" *At the other extreme is a group of*

looked up at last to see that white clouds like talons and feathers were tumbling east in a blue sky. It was breathtaking to realize that in the labyrinth, metaphors and meanings could be conveyed spatially. That when you seem farthest from your destination is when you suddenly arrive is a very pat truth in words, but a profound one to find with your feet.

The poet Marianne Moore famously wrote of "real toads in imaginary gardens," and the labyrinth offers us the possibility of being real creatures in symbolic space. I had thought of a children's story as I walked, and the children's books that I loved best were full of characters falling into books and pictures that became real, wandering through gardens where the statues came to life and, most famously, crossing over to the other side of the mirror, where chess pieces, flowers, and animals all were alive and temperamental. These books suggested that the boundaries between the real and the represented were not particularly fixed, and magic happened when one crossed over. In such spaces as the labyrinth, we cross over; we are really traveling, even if the destination is only symbolic, and this is in an entirely different register than is thinking about traveling or looking at a picture of a place we might wish to travel to. For the real is in this context nothing more or less than what we inhabit bodily. A labyrinth is a symbolic journey or a map of the route to salvation, but it is a map we can really walk on, blurring the difference between map and world. If the body is the register of the real, then reading with one's feet is real in a way reading with one's eyes alone is not. And sometimes the map is the territory.

In medieval churches these labyrinths—once common, but now existing only in a few churches—were sometimes called *chemins à Jerusalem*, "roads to Jerusalem," and the center was Jerusalem or heaven itself. Though the historian of mazes and labyrinths W. H. Matthews cautions that there is no written evidence on their intended use, it is widely thought that they offered the possibility of compressing a pilgrimage into the compact space of a church floor, with the difficulties of spiritual progress represented by the twists and turns. At Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, the labyrinth was commissioned by cathedral canon Lauren Artress in 1991. "Labyrinths," she writes, "are usually in the form of a circle with a meandering but purposeful path, from the edge to the center and back out again. Each one has only one path, and once we make the choice to enter it, the path becomes a metaphor for our journey through life." Since then Artress has started something of a labyrinth cult, which has trained nearly 130 people to present

figurative monuments in Kelly Ingram Park in Birmingham, which try to draw the viewer back into the tumult of

labyrinth workshops and programs called "the theater of enlightenment," even publishing a quarterly newsletter on the labyrinth project (including a few pages hawking labyrinth tote bags, jewelry, and other items). Labyrinths as spiritual devices are proliferating around the country, and garden mazes are also undergoing a revival. In the 1960s and 1970s a very different kind of labyrinth proliferation took place, in the work of artists such as Terry Fox, and in the late 1980s Adrian Fisher became a wildly successful maze designer in Britain, designing and building garden mazes at Blenheim Palace and dozens of other locations.

Labyrinths are not merely Christian devices, though they always represent some kind of journey, sometimes one of initiation, death and rebirth, or salvation, sometimes of courtship. Some seem merely to signify the complexity of any journey, the difficulty of finding or knowing one's way. They were much mentioned by the ancient Greeks, and although the legendary labyrinth of Crete in which the minotaur was imprisoned has never been found and probably never existed, the shape now called the Cretan labyrinth appeared on its coins. Other labyrinths have been found: carved in the rock in Sardinia, cleared in the stony desert surface in southern Arizona and California, made of mosaic by the Romans. In Scandinavia there are almost five hundred known labyrinths made of stones laid out upon the earth; until the twentieth century, fishermen would walk them before putting out to sea to ensure good catches or favorable winds. In England turf mazes—mazes cut into the earth—were used by young people for erotic games, often in which a boy ran toward a girl at the center, and the twists and turns of the maze seem to symbolize courtship's complexities. The much better known hedge mazes of that country are a later, more aristocratic innovation of the Renaissance garden. Many who've written about mazes and labyrinths distinguish between the two of them. Mazes, including most garden mazes, have many branchings and are made to perplex those who enter, whereas a labyrinth has only one route, and anyone who stays with it can find the paradise of the center and retrace the route to the exit. Another metaphorical moral seems built into these two structures, for the maze offers the confusions of free will without a clear destination, the labyrinth an inflexible route to salvation.

Like the stations of the cross, the labyrinth and maze offer up stories we can walk into to inhabit bodily, stories we trace with our feet as well as our eyes. There is

the past. Several works designed by James Drake along a path named Freedom Walk commemorate the brutal police

a resemblance not only between these symbolically invested structures but between every path and every story. Part of what makes roads, trails, and paths so unique as built structures is that they cannot be perceived as a whole all at once by a sendentary onlooker. They unfold in time as one travels along them, just as a story does as one listens or reads, and a hairpin turn is like a plot twist, a steep ascent a building of suspense to the view at the summit, a fork in the road an introduction of a new storyline, arrival the end of the story. Just as writing allows one to read the words of someone who is absent, so roads make it possible to trace the route of the absent. Roads are a record of those who have gone before, and to follow them is to follow people who are no longer there—not saints and gods anymore, but shepherds, hunters, engineers, emigrants, peasants to market, or just commuters. Symbolic structures such as labyrinths call attention to the nature of all paths, all journeys.

This is what is behind the special relationship between tale and travel, and, perhaps, the reason why narrative writing is so closely bound up with walking. To write is to carve a new path through the terrain of the imagination, or to point out new features on a familiar route. To read is to travel through that terrain with the author as guide—a guide one may not always agree with or trust, but who can at least be counted upon to take one somewhere. I have often wished that my sentences could be written out as a single line running into the distance so that it would be clear that a sentence is likewise a road and reading is traveling (I did the math once and found the text of one of my books would be four miles long were it rolled out as a single line of words instead of being set in rows on pages, rolled up like thread on a spool). Perhaps those Chinese scrolls one unrolls as one reads preserve something of this sense. The songlines of Australia's aboriginal peoples are the most famous examples conflating landscape and narrative. The songlines are tools of navigation across the deep desert, while the landscape is a mnemonic device for remembering the stories: in other words, the story is a map, the landscape a narrative.

So stories are travels and travels are stories. It is because we imagine life itself as a journey that these symbolic walks and indeed all walks have such resonance. The workings of the mind and the spirit are hard to imagine, as is the nature of time—so we tend to metaphorize all these intangibles as physical objects located in space. Thus our relationship to them becomes physical and spatial: we move toward or away from them. And if time has become space, then the unfolding of

repression of the famous marches in the spring of 1963. In one work, the walkway passes between two vertical slabs,

time that constitutes a life becomes a journey too, however much or little one travels spatially. Walking and traveling have become central metaphors in thought and speech, so central we hardly notice them. Embedded in English are innumerable movement metaphors: steering straight, moving toward the goal, going for the distance, getting ahead. Things get in our way, set us back, help us find our way, give us a head start or the go-ahead as we approach milestones. We move up in the world, reach a fork in the road, hit our stride, take steps. A person in trouble is a lost soul, out of step, has lost her sense of direction, is facing an uphill struggle or going downhill, through a difficult phase, in circles, even nowhere. And there are the far more flowery phrases of sayings and songs—the primrose path, the road to ruin, the high road and the low road, easy street, lonely street, and the boulevard of broken dreams. Walking appears in many more common phrases: set the pace, make great strides, a great step forward, keep pace, hit one's stride, toe the line, follow in his footsteps. Psychic and political events are imagined as spatial ones: thus in his final speech Martin Luther King said, "I've been to the mountaintop," to describe a spiritual state, echoing the state Jesus attained after his literal mountain ascent. King's first book was called *Stride to Freedom*, a title echoed more than three decades later by Nelson Mandela's autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom* (while his former countrywoman Doris Lessing called the second volume of her memoirs *Walking in the Shade*, and then there's Kierkegaard's *Steps on Life's Way* or the literary theorist Umberto Eco's *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, in which he describes reading a book as wandering in a forest).

If life itself, the passage of time allotted to us, is described as a journey, it's most often imagined as a journey on foot, a pilgrim's progress across the landscape of personal history. And often, when we imagine ourselves, we imagine ourselves walking; "when she walked the earth" is one way to describe someone's existence, her profession is her "walk of life," an expert is a "walking encyclopedia," and "he walked with God" is the Old Testament's way of describing a state of grace. The image of the walker, alone and active and passing through rather than settled in the world, is a powerful vision of what it means to be human, whether it's a hominid traversing grasslands or a Samuel Beckett character shuffling down a rural road. The metaphor of walking becomes literal again when we really walk. If life is a journey, then when we are actually journeying our lives have become tangible, with goals we can move toward, progress we can see,

from which bronze attack dogs emerge on either side and lunge into the pedestrian's space. In another the walkway

achievement we can understand, metaphors united with actions. Labyrinths, pilgrimages, mountain climbs, hikes with clear and desirable destinations, all allow us to take our allotted time as a literal journey with spiritual dimensions we can understand through the senses. If journeying and walking are central metaphors, then all journeys, all walks, let us enter the same symbolic space as mazes and rituals do, if not so compellingly.

There are many other arenas in which walking and reading are conflated. Just as the church labyrinth had its secular sibling in the garden maze, so the reading of the stations of the cross has its secular equivalent in the sculpture garden. Premodern Europeans were expected to recognize a large cast of characters in painting, sculpture, and stained glass, from the saints—Saint Peter with his key, Saint Lucy with her eyes on a plate—to the graces, cardinal virtues, and deadly sins. Most churches would have some portion of the Bible translated into art; a particularly elaborate cathedral like Chartres would include such features as the Seven Liberal Arts and the Wise and Foolish Virgins as well as scenes from the life of Christ arranged symbolically. Though book literacy was far lower, image literacy was incomparably higher, and the more educated would be able to recognize the gods and mortals from classical mythology as well as Christian iconography. Because the sources were usually literary, each figure represented a story, and these stories could be arranged in various sequences and often were—sequences that could be "read" by strolling past (embodiments such as Liberty or Spring were not narrative, but they might be arranged in a sequence that was, while gods and heroes often appeared in some climactic moment from a familiar tale, making the sculpture equivalent to a film still). Many gardens were sculpture gardens, not in our modern sense of greenery as a sort of picture frame for various individual objects, but as whole spaces that could be read, making the garden as much an intellectual space as the library. Sculptures and, sometimes, architectural elements were arranged in sequences that the viewer-stroller interpreted as she passed, and part of the charm of these gardens is that walking and reading, body and mind, were harmoniously united there.

The cloisters that were part of every monastery and convent sometimes bore elaborate Christian stories. Usually a square arcade around a garden with a central well, pool, or fountain, the cloister was where monks or nuns could walk without leaving the contemplative space of the order. Renaissance gardens had elaborately arranged mythological and historical statues. Because the walker al-

leads through an opening in a metal wall faced by two water cannons, just off the wall, by the walk, are two bronze

ready knew the story, no words need be said, but in the space and time of the walk and its encounter with the statuary, the story was in a sense retold just by being called to mind. This makes the garden a poetic, literary, mythological, and magical space. The great gardens of the Villa d'Este in Tivoli had a series of basreliefs that told the tales of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. A more completely lost narrative was the labyrinth at Versailles, destroyed in 1775. In it were placed, along with a statue of Aesop, figure groupings from his fables, and "each of the speaking characters represented in the fable groups," writes W. H. Matthews, "emitted a jet of water, representing speech, and each group was accompanied by an engraved plate displaying more or less appropriate verses by the poet de Benserade." The labyrinth was thus a three-dimensional anthology in which walking, reading, and looking united into a journey into the fables' morals and meanings. Versailles, the largest of all Europe's formal gardens, had the most complex sculptural program, in which the Aesop maze was only a minor diversion. It organized nearly all its sculptures around the central image of Louis XIV as the Sun King (subsequent additions and subtractions make it hard to decipher now). Seventy sculptors labored that the sculptures, fountains, and very plants would speak to strollers of the power of the king, a power naturalized and endorsed by the imagery of the sun and the classical sun god Apollo, on a scale that made the symbolic not a scale model but a vast expanse of the world. A century later, the celebrated formal garden at Stowe in Buckingham, England, was transformed into a more naturalistic landscape, but its rolling hills and groves were studded with even more pointedly political architectural motifs. The Temple of Ancient Virtue was located near both the ruined Temple of Modern Virtue and, across a pool, the Temple of British Worthies, featuring the poets and statesmen most appealing to the garden's Whig owner. The conjunction deplored the state of the eighteenth-century world while setting up the Whigs as heirs to the noble ancients. Other elements at Stowe were more humorous for those who could read space and symbolism: the hermitage located near the Temple of Venus, for example, pitting asceticism against sensuality. If a narrative is a sequence of related events, then these sculpture gardens made the world into a book by situating these events in real space, far enough apart to be "read" by walking (and made Versailles and Stowe into books of political propaganda). Sometimes what is to be read in the garden is less literal. "A garden path," write the landscape architects Charles W. Moore, William J. Mitchell, and William Turnbull, "can become the thread of a

figures of African Americans, a man crumpled to the ground and a woman standing with her back against the

plot, connecting moments and incidents into a narrative. The narrative structure might be a simple chain of events with a beginning, middle, and end. It might be embellished with diversions, digressions, and picaresque twists, be accompanied by parallel ways (subplots), or deceptively fork into blind alleys like the alternative scenarios explored in a detective novel." Los Angeles's contribution to this genre is the Walk of the Stars on Hollywood Boulevard, in which tourists read celebrity names as they tread them underfoot.

Sometimes walkers overlay their surroundings with their imaginings and tread truly invented terrain. The American minister and walking enthusiast John Finlay wrote a friend, "You may be interested to know that I have a little game that I play alone: namely, that of walking in some part of the world as many miles as I actually walk here day by day, with the result that I have walked nearly 20,000 miles here in the last six years, which means that I have covered the land part of the earth in a circuit of the globe. I finished last night 2,000 miles since the first of January 1934 and in doing so reached Vancouver from the north." The Nazi architect Albert Speer traversed the world in his imagination while pacing back and forth in his prison yard, like Kierkegaard and his father. The art critic Lucy Lippard found that after her return to Manhattan she could continue to take the daily walks that had been so important a part of her year's residence in rural England "in a kind of out-of-body form—step by step, weather, texture, views, seasons, wildlife encounters."

There is a very practical sense in which to trace even an imaginary route is to trace the spirit or thought of what passed there before. At its most casual, this retracing allows unsought memories of events to return as one encounters the sites of those events. At its most formal it is a means of memorizing. This is the technique of the memory palace, another inheritance from classical Greece widely used until the Renaissance. It was a means of committing quantities of information to memory, an important skill before paper and printing made the written word replace the memory for much storage of rote information. Frances Yates, whose magnificent *Art of Memory* recovered the history of this strange technique for our time, describes the workings of the system in detail. "It is not difficult to get hold of the general principles of the mnemonic," she writes. "The first step

imagined force of the water. Integrated into the pedestrian experience of the park, these monuments invite everyone—

was to imprint on the memory a series of loci or places. The commonest, though not the only, type of mnemonic place system used was the architectural type. The clearest description of the process is that given by Quintilian. In order to form a series of places in memory, he says, a building is to be remembered, as spacious and various a one as possible, the forecourt, the living room, bedrooms, and parlours, not omitting statues and other ornaments with which the rooms are decorated. The images by which the speech is to be remembered . . . are then placed in imagination in the places which have been memorized in the building. This done, as soon as the memory of the facts requires to be revived, all these places are visited in turn and the various deposits demanded of their custodians. We have to think of the ancient orator as moving in imagination through his memory building whilst he is making his speech, drawing from the memorized places the images that he has placed on them. The method ensures that the points are remembered in the right order, since the order is fixed by the sequence of places in the building."

Memory, like the mind and time, is unimaginable without physical dimensions; to imagine it as a physical place is to make it into a landscape in which its contents are located, and what has location can be approached. That is to say, if memory is imagined as a real space—a place, theater, library—then the act of remembering is imagined as a real act, that is, as a physical act: as walking. The scholarly emphasis is always on the device of the imaginary palace, in which the information was placed room by room, object by object, but the means of retrieving the stored information was walking through the rooms like a visitor in a museum, restoring the objects to consciousness. To walk the same route again can mean to think the same thoughts again, as though thoughts and ideas were indeed fixed objects in a landscape one need only know how to travel through. In this way, walking *is* reading, even when both the walking and reading are imaginary, and the landscape of the memory becomes a text as stable as that to be found in the garden, the labyrinth, or the stations.

But if the book has eclipsed the memory palace as a repository of information, it has retained some of its pattern. In other words, if there are walks that resemble books, there are also books that resemble walks and use the "reading" activity of walking to describe a world. The greatest example is Dante's *Divine Comedy*, in which the three realms of the soul after death are explored by Dante, guided by

black or white, young or old—to step for a moment into someone else's shoes.—KIRK SAVAGE *I stride along*

Virgil. It is an unearthly travelogue of sorts, moving past sights and characters steadily, always keeping the pace of a tour. The book is so specific about its geography that many editions contain maps, and Yates suggests that in fact this masterpiece was a memory palace of sorts. Like a vast number of stories before and after, it is a travel story, one in which the movement of the narrative is echoed by the movement of the characters across an imaginary landscape.

with calm, with eyes, with shoes, / with fury, with forgetfulness—PABLO NERUDA

Part II

FROM THE GARDEN TO THE WILD