

## Chapter 4

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### THE UPHILL ROAD TO GRACE: Some Pilgrimages

Walking came from Africa, from evolution, and from necessity, and it went everywhere, usually looking for something. The pilgrimage is one of the basic modes of walking, walking in search of something intangible, and we were on pilgrimage. The red earth between the piñon and juniper trees was covered with a shining mix of quartz pebbles, chips of mica, and the cast-off skins of cicadas who had gone underground again for another seventeen years. It was a strange pavement to be walking on, both lavish and impoverished, like much of New Mexico. We were walking to Chimayó, and it was Good Friday. I was the youngest of the six people setting out cross country for Chimayó that day, and the only nonlocal. The group had coalesced a few days before, when various characters, myself included, asked Greg if he would mind company. Two of the others were members of Greg's cancer survivors' group, a surveyor and a nurse, and my friend Meridel had brought her neighbor David, a carpenter.

Although we were on our own route—or rather Greg's route—we had joined the great annual pilgrimage to the Santuario de Chimayó and thus were walking as pilgrims. Pilgrimage is one of the fundamental structures a journey can take—the quest in search of something, if only one's own transformation, the journey toward a goal—and for pilgrims, walking is work. Secular walking is often imagined as play, however competitive and rigorous that play, and uses gear and techniques to make the body more comfortable and more efficient. Pilgrims, on the

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*yourself / You've gotta gotta go / By yourself / Ain't nobody else / gonna go there for you / Yea, you've gotta go*

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other hand, often try to make their journey harder, recalling the origin of the word travel in *travail*, which also means work, suffering, and the pangs of childbirth. Since the Middle Ages, some pilgrims have traveled barefoot or with stones in their shoes, or fasting, or in special penitential garments. Irish pilgrims at Croagh Patrick still climb that stony mountain barefoot on the last Sunday of every July, and pilgrims in other places finish the journey on their knees. An early Everest mountaineer noted a still more arduous mode of pilgrimage in Tibet. "These devout and simple people travel sometimes two thousand miles, from China and Mongolia, and cover every inch of the way by measuring their length on the ground," wrote Captain John Noel. "They prostrate themselves on their faces, marking the soil with their fingers a little beyond their heads, arise and bring their toes to the mark they have made and fall again, stretched full length on the ground, their arms extended, muttering an already million-times-repeated prayer."

In Chimayó, a few pilgrims every year come carrying crosses, from light-weight and relatively portable models to huge ones that must be dragged step by weary step. Inside the chapel that is their destination one such cross is preserved to the right of the altar, and a small metal plaque by its carrier declares, "This cross is a symbol in thanking God for the safe return of my son Ronald E. Cabrera from combat duty in Viet-Nam. I Ralph A. Cabrera promised to make a pilgrimage, which consisted of walking 150 miles from Grants New Mexico to Chimayó. This pilgrimage was finished on the 28th day of November 1986." Cabrera's plaque and knobby wooden crucifix, about six feet high with a folkloric carved Christ attached to it, make it clear that a pilgrimage is work, or rather labor in a spiritual economy in which effort and privation are rewarded. Nobody has ever quite articulated whether this economy is one in which benefits are incurred for labor expended or the self is refined into something more worthy of such benefit—and nobody needs to; pilgrimage is almost universally embedded in human culture as a literal means of spiritual journey, and asceticism and physical exertion are almost universally understood as means of spiritual development.

Some pilgrimages, such as that to Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain, are entirely on foot from beginning to end, the pilgrimage begins with the first step, and the journey itself is the most important part. Others, such as the Islamic hajj in Mecca or various denominations' visits to Jerusalem, nowadays are

as likely to begin with airplanes, and the walking only begins upon arrival (though West African Muslims may spend a lifetime or generations slowly walking toward Saudi Arabia, and a whole culture of nomads has grown up whose eventual goal is Mecca). Chimayó is still a walking pilgrimage, though most walkers have a driver who dropped them off and will pick them up. It's a pilgrimage in an intensely automotive culture, alongside the highway north from Santa Fe and then on the shoulder of the smaller road northeast to Chimayó. The roadside for the last several miles is studded with cars whose drivers are keeping track of family or friends, and in town the air can be noxious with carbon monoxide from the traffic jam; from Santa Fe onward, it's also studded with signs to drive slowly and watch for pilgrims.

Greg's route began about twelve miles north of Santa Fe and cut across country to join up with the rest of the pilgrims only a few miles from Chimayó. We had arrived at eight in the morning at the land Greg and his wife MaLin had bought long ago, and for him the walk tied their land to the holy land due north some sixteen or so miles. It made sense for the rest of us too; none of us were Catholics or even Christians, and walking cross-country let us be in that nonbeliever's paradise, nature, before we arrived at this most traditional of religious destinations. I kept having to remind myself it wasn't a hike and get over my desire to move at my own speed and make good time. As it turned out, it was slowness that would make this walk hard.

Like much of northern New Mexico, the town of Chimayó exudes a sense of ancientness that sets it apart from the rest of the forgetful United States. The Indians here embedded the landscape with stone buildings, potsherds, and petroglyphs, and Pueblo, Navajo, and Hopi people have remained a very visible portion of the population. The Hispanic population is also large and old, and their ancestors established Santa Fe as the first European-inhabited town in what would become the United States. Neither of these peoples has been forgotten or eradicated as they have in other parts of the country; nobody imagines that this landscape was uninhabited wilderness before the Yankees came. And in fact the Yankees who come tend to borrow and revel in the cultures, becoming connoisseurs of adobe architecture and Indian silver work, of Pueblo dances and Hispanic crafts and everyone's customs, including the pilgrimage.

there by yourself.—TRADITIONAL GOSPEL SONG But if a man walketh in the night, he stumbleth, because there

is no light in him.—JOHN 11:10 But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto

Before the Conquistadors came, Chimayó had been inhabited by ancestors of the contemporary Tewa Pueblo people, and they named the hill above the Santuario Tsi Mayo, "the place of good flaking stone." Records of Spanish settlement in the Chimayó valley date back to 1714, and the plaza at the north end of this narrow, well-watered agricultural valley is said to be one of the best remaining examples of colonial architecture in the region. Like much of New Mexico, it is insular; one of its children, Don Usner, says in his history of the place that those of the plaza didn't intermarry with people at the Potrero in the southern end of the valley. In colonial times the Spanish settlers were forbidden to travel without permission, and an extremely local, land-based identity evolved. In another northern New Mexico village I had lived in the year before this pilgrimage, someone once tartly remarked of a neighbor, "They're not from here. We remember when their great-grandfather moved here." The Spanish spoken here is old-fashioned, and it is often noted that the culture derives from pre-Enlightenment Spain. In its strong agricultural and local ties and traditions, its widespread poverty, its conservative social views, and its devout, magical Catholicism, this culture often seems like a last outpost of the Middle Ages.

The Santuario is in the southern end of Chimayó, on its own little unpaved plaza past a street of crumbling adobe houses and shops with hand-lettered signs and chile *nistras*. Graves fill the courtyard of this small, sturdily built adobe church. Inside it's covered in faded murals depicting the saints and Christ hung on a green cross in a style reminiscent of both Byzantine and Pennsylvania Dutch painting. The northern chapels are what make the church exceptional, though. The first is full of pictures of Jesus, Mary, and the saints brought in by devotees, and hand-painted images mingle with 3D and decoupage icons, a silver-glitter Virgin of Guadalupe, and a printed, varnished, cracked Last Supper. The outer wall of this chapel is covered with crucifixes, in front of which hang a solid row of crutches, their silvery aluminum forming a surface as regular as prison bars through which many Christs peer. Through a low doorway to the west is the most important part of the church, a little chapel where the hole in the unpaved floor yields up the dirt pilgrims take home. This year it had in it a small green plastic scoop from a detergent carton with which to take up the moistly crumbling sandy earth. People used to drink this earth dissolved in water, and they still collect it to apply to diseased and injured areas and write to the church of

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*me. My foot standeth in an open place.—PSALMS 26:1-12*     *The farther pilgrims move from their common*

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miraculous cures. The crutches here testify, as they do in many pilgrimage sites, to cures of lameness.

When I first came here several years before, I had heard of many holy wells of water, but I was astonished to find a holy well of dirt. The Catholic church doesn't generally consider dirt much of a medium for holiness, but the dirt well in Chimayó is exceptional. The anthropologists Victor and Edith Turner use the term "baptizing the customs" to describe how the Catholic church assimilated local practices as it spread across Europe and the Americas—which is why, for example, so many of Ireland's holy wells were holy before they were Christian. It is now thought that the Tewa considered the earth here sacred or at least of medicinal virtue before the Spanish came, and that in the smallpox plague of the 1780s the Spanish women acquired some of their customs. To consider earth holy is to connect the lowest and most material to the most high and ethereal, to close the breach between matter and spirit. It subversively suggests that the whole world might potentially be holy and that the sacred can be underfoot rather than above. On earlier visits, I was given to understand that the well was supposed to replenish itself magically, and such inexhaustibility has been the stuff of miracles since the bottomless drinking horns of Celtic literature and Jesus' own multiplying loaves and fishes. Certainly the hole in the dirt floor of the chapel is still only about the size of a bucket after nearly two centuries of devotees scooping out soil to take home. But the religious literature I bought next door made it clear that the priests add earth from elsewhere that has been blessed, and on Good Friday a large box of such earth rests on the altar.

The story goes that during Holy Week early in the nineteenth century a local landowner, Don Bernardo Abeyta, was performing the customary penances of his religious society in the hills. He saw a light shining from a hole in the ground and found in it a silver crucifix that, when brought to other churches, would be found again in the hole in Chimayó. After the crucifix returned to the hole three times, Don Bernardo understood that the miracle was tied to the site, and he built a private chapel there in 1814-16. The curative properties of the earth were already known in 1813—a pinch of it in the fire was said to abate storms. The miracle story fits the pattern for many pilgrimage sites, notably the medieval "cycle of the shepherds" in which a cowherd, shepherd, or farmer discovers a holy image in the earth or some other humble place amid miraculous light or music or homage by the beasts, an image that cannot be relocated, for the miracle and the place are

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*world, the closer they come to the realm of the divine. We might mention that in Japanese the word for "walk" is the*

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one. The Turners write of Christian pilgrimage, "All sites of pilgrimage have this in common: they are believed to be places where miracles once happened, still happen, and may happen again."

Pilgrimage is premised on the idea that the sacred is not entirely immaterial, but that there is a geography of spiritual power. Pilgrimage walks a delicate line between the spiritual and the material in its emphasis on the story and its setting: though the search is for spirituality, it is pursued in terms of the most material details—of where the Buddha was born or where Christ died, where the relics are or the holy water flows. Or perhaps it reconciles the spiritual and the material, for to go on pilgrimage is to make the body and its actions express the desires and beliefs of the soul. Pilgrimage unites belief with action, thinking with doing, and it makes sense that this harmony is achieved when the sacred has material presence and location. Protestants, as well as the occasional Buddhist and Jew, have objected to pilgrimages as a kind of icon worship and asserted that the spiritual should be sought within as something wholly immaterial, rather than out in the world.

There is a symbiosis between journey and arrival in Christian pilgrimage, as there is in mountaineering. To travel without arriving would be as incomplete as to arrive without having traveled. To walk there is to earn it, through laboriousness and through the transformation that comes during a journey. Pilgrimages make it possible to move physically, through the exertions of one's body, step by step, toward those intangible spiritual goals that are otherwise so hard to grasp. We are eternally perplexed by how to move toward forgiveness or healing or truth, but we know how to walk from here to there, however arduous the journey. Too, we tend to imagine life as a journey, and going on an actual expedition takes hold of that image and makes it concrete, acts it out with the body and the imagination in a world whose geography has become spiritualized. The walker toiling along a road toward some distant place is one of the most compelling and universal images of what it means to be human, depicting the individual as small and solitary in a large world, reliant on the strength of body and will. In pilgrimage, the journey is radiant with hope that arrival at the tangible destination will bring spiritual benefits with it. The pilgrim has achieved a story of his or her own and in this way too becomes part of the religion made up of stories of travel and transformation.

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same word which is used to refer to Buddhist practice, the practitioner (*gyōjin*) is then also the walker, one who does

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Tolstoy captures this in a longing that comes to Princess Marya in *War and Peace* as she feeds the myriad Russian pilgrims that pass by her home: "Often as she listened to the pilgrims' tales she was so fired by their simple speech, natural to them but to her full of deep meaning, that several times she was on the point of abandoning everything and running away from home. In imagination she already pictured herself dressed in coarse rags and with her wallet and staff, walking along a dusty road." She has imagined her life of genteel seclusion become clear, sparse, and intense with a purpose she can move toward. Walking expresses both the simplicity and the purposefulness of the pilgrim. As Nancy Frey writes of the long-distance pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, "When pilgrims begin to walk several things usually begin to happen to their perceptions of the world which continue over the course of the journey: they develop a changing sense of time, a heightening of the senses, and a new awareness of their bodies and the landscape. . . . A young German man expressed it this way: 'In the experience of walking, each step is a thought. You can't escape yourself.'"

In going on pilgrimage, one has left behind the complications of one's place in the world—family, attachments, rank, duties—and become a walker among walkers, for there is no aristocracy among pilgrims save that of achievement and dedication. The Turners talk about pilgrimage as a liminal state—a state of being between one's past and future identities and thus outside the established order, in a state of possibility. Liminality comes from the Latin *limin*, a threshold, and a pilgrim has both symbolically and physically stepped over such a line: "Liminars are stripped of status and authority, removed from a social structure maintained and sanctioned by power and force, and leveled to a homogeneous social state through discipline and ordeal. Their secular powerlessness may be compensated for by a sacred power, however—the power of the weak, derived on the one hand from the resurgence of nature when structural power is removed, and on the other from the reception of sacred knowledge. Much of what has been bound by social structure is liberated, notably the sense of comradeship and communion, or *communitas*."

We started easily enough, on a flat wooden bridge across a stream that watered the banks around it into rare lushness, then up through Greg and MaLin's dogleg cornfield bordered by oaks. From there we went over an irrigation ditch and

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not reside anywhere, who abides in emptiness. All of this is of course related to the notion of Buddhism as a path:

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through the fence that divided their land from the Nambe reservation, the first of many fences we would crawl under, scramble over, or unlatch a wire-fastened gate and pass through. On the Nambe reservation, we passed Nambe Falls, which we could hear roaring in its gorge but not quite see. I liked its invisibility as a reminder that we were not on a scenic walk or the territory of people imbued with the mainstream European tradition of such walks. We could hear it as we approached and, by going to a promontory point and craning, could see part of it, but the only possible clear view on our route would be the quick one during the plummet from the cliff into the deep channel below. So we glimpsed the foaming white edges and lower streambed and went on. We all kept pace with each other for the first half of the expedition, and though the way utterly failed to resemble the route that had looked so coherent when Greg had shown it to us on the topographical maps, the roads and irrigation ditches and landmarks made it clear enough to him.

"Wherever you go, there you are," he said whenever someone asked him if we were lost yet. We had a cheerful morning of it. Sue said that she had expected us to proceed in somber silence, but everyone told stories and made observations. We ate a first snack under a roadside cottonwood tree past the San Juan Reservoir on the Nambe reservation, which adjoins Greg's land, then walked through the outskirts of the reservation town with its horses, fruit trees, sweat lodge, buffalo pasture, and many scattered houses. For the whole length of that road into Nambe, Meridel told us about her first New Age experience in Santa Fe, having her aura balanced in the 1970s, and we variously inquired and wisecracked about the notion. Sue taught us the acronym AFGO, "another fucking growth opportunity," for the plethora of spiritual opportunities (and opportunists) in Santa Fe. Three in our party had had Christian upbringings, and I had come out partly to help Meridel celebrate her fiftieth birthday with a revisionist Passover dinner the day after our walk (she was raised as a nonreligious Jew, and I was raised as nothing in particular by a lapsed Catholic and a nonpracticing Jew). Since the Last Supper was a Passover seder, even Good Friday and Easter are overlaid on the Jewish holiday celebrating the flight from Egypt, and this pilgrimage was built on top of all those layers of meeting, suffering, moving, dying.

We began to drift apart north of the Nambe settlement when we reached the rough sandstone expanse of the badlands, with wind-carved pillars of red stone studding a hot, airless expanse of sand and gravel and ruddy dirt stretching to the

red cliffs in the distance. The two other women began to trail, and the two men I didn't know went on ahead. We all met up at the windmill, which marked a turn in terrain and in direction, and lounged around the shade of its waterless tank. Afterward, Greg and Sue decided to go around a hill the rest of us were going to go straight over, because she was wearing out. The badlands had given way to more of that intricate terrain of hillocks so hard to navigate in, and rather than going over the single hill I had expected, we found ourselves surmounting and descending innumerable tree-studded red-soil rises. We shouted, but we couldn't find them, so we kept walking. One of the other men had gone on far ahead; the other was walking faster than Meridel could. She is an athletic woman, but she is small and had pulled something in her knee, and her steps had grown short.

This drifting apart was dispiriting. When I think about what we were doing, it seems as if it ought to have been an experience of paradise attained—dear friends and amiable new acquaintances moving across a varied landscape toward a remarkable goal under an azure sky. But, alas, we had various bodies and various styles. I had been frustrated for the last few hours by the pace. Someone would stop to pull out binoculars or to confer, and everyone would come to a halt that would grow protracted. Standing or wandering slowly makes my feet hurt; it's why museums and malls are more painful than mountains. And if the devil is in the details, mine was in the heavy-duty boots I thought I had broken in but which had begun to break my feet in all over again. So I oscillated between the man ahead and the woman behind until we finally reached the open grassland. Three of us arrived at the road on the far side of the grassland together. A steady stream of walkers and cars was going by—the former all uphill, the latter in both directions—and Meridel and I joined it. We were now part of the much larger community spread out for dozens of miles along the highway that is the main pilgrimage route. The trail of empty water bottles and orange peels bore evidence to the volunteers farther down the road, people who came every year and set up tables bearing slices of oranges, water, soft drinks, cookies, and occasionally Easter candy that everyone was welcome to take. This was one of the most moving parts of the pilgrimage to me, these people who were out not to earn their own salvation but to support others doing so.

On Good Friday of the year before, I had been struck by how little preparation most of the pilgrims seemed to have made for a long walk. Their everyday clothes had been something of a rebuke to me that this was not a hike, and many



stout people who looked as if they never walked much otherwise persevered. This year the day was much warmer, and everything seemed different: with our aching feet and our packs, we looked more serious, more dogged, than the jaunty young pilgrims in their colorful shorts and jeans and T-shirts (though Meridel's husband Jerry told us when he met us in Chimayó that he had seen a woman from a very small town walking in a fancy white dress—"the kind of dress you would get married in, or buried in"—and two days earlier and thirty miles west I had seen two men in fatigues walking eastward, one of them carrying a large cross). Both times I joined this pilgrimage I had the strange sense that I was walking alongside people in another world, the world of believers, people for whom the Santuario up ahead contained a definite power in a cosmos organized around the Trinity, the mother of God, the saints, and the geography of churches, shrines, altars, and sacraments. But I had suffered like a pilgrim; my feet were killing me.

Pilgrimages are not athletic events, not only because they often punish the body but because they are so often gone on by those who are seeking the restoration of their own or a loved one's health. They are for the least equipped rather than the most. Greg told me, when I called him up to ask if I could join in, that when he had leukemia he made a deal with the gods. Framed in the same easy-going humor he brought to other subjects, the deal's terms were flexible: that if he lived, he would try to go on the pilgrimage when he could. This was his third year of walking it, and it got easier every year. Four years before, when he was deathly ill, Jerry and Meridel walked for him and brought him back some dirt from the Santuario.

This Easter week in which we were walking to Chimayó, a similar pilgrimage from Paris to Chartres would be taking place again, and far larger crowds of Christians would be gathering in Rome and Jerusalem. In the last half century or so, a wide variety of secular and nontraditional pilgrimages have evolved that extend the notion of the pilgrimage into political and economic spheres. Not long before I had set out, a march in San Francisco commemorated the farmworker organizer César Chávez's birthday with a crosstown "Walk for Justice"; and in Memphis, Tennessee, civil rights activists commemorated the thirtieth anniversary of Martin Luther King's assassination there with another march. In the

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*count inhalations and exhalations as you walk slowly around the room. Begin walking with the left foot and walk*

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southwest in April, I could have instead joined the Franciscan-led Nevada Desert Experience on their annual peace walk from Las Vegas to the Nevada Test Site (akin to another pilgrimage route from Chimayó to Los Alamos, birthplace of the atomic bomb, thirty miles west). Then there was the Muscular Dystrophy Association's annual walkathon on the first week of April and the March of Dimes's WalkAmerica the last weekend of that month. I had come across a flyer in Gallup, New Mexico, for "Native Americans for Community Action, Inc. 15th Annual Sacred Mountain 10k Prayer Run and 2k Fun Run/Walk" to be held in Flagstaff in June, which sounded like the Spirit Runs held by the five tribes fighting the proposed Ward Valley nuclear waste dump in southeastern California, and I knew that the annual breast cancer and AIDS walks were coming up in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park and other locations around the country. And no doubt somewhere somebody was walking across the continent for some other good cause. All these were outgrowths of the pilgrimage, or adaptations of its terms.

Imagine all those revisionist versions of pilgrimage as a mighty river of walkers flowing from many sources. The first small trickle comes, like March ice melt from a high glacier, from a single woman almost half a century ago. On January 1, 1953, a woman known to the world only as Peace Pilgrim set out, vowing "to remain a wanderer until mankind has learned the way of peace." She had found her vocation years before when she walked all night through the woods and felt, in her words, "a complete willingness, without any reservations, to give my life to God and to service," and she prepared for her vocation by walking 2,000 miles on the Appalachian Trail. Raised on a farm and active in peace politics before she abandoned her name and began her pilgrimage, she was a peculiarly American figure, plainspoken and confident that the simplicity of life and thought that worked for her could work for everyone. Her cheery accounts of her long years of walking the roads and talking to the people she met are unburdened by complexity, dogma, or doubt and rife with exclamation marks.

She started her pilgrimage by joining the Rose Bowl Parade in Pasadena, and something about setting out on her long odyssey from this corny festivity recalls Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, with her own farmgirl can-do determination, starting down the Yellow Brick Road amid dancing munchkins. Peace Pilgrim kept walking for twenty-eight years through all kinds of weather and every state and Canadian province as well as parts of Mexico. An older woman at the time she

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*in such a way that the foot sinks into the floor, first the heel and then the toes. Walk calmly and steadily, with poise*

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first set out, she wore navy blue pants and shirt, tennis shoes, and a navy blue tunic whose front was stenciled with the words "Peace Pilgrim" and whose back text changed over the years from "walking coast to coast for peace" to "walking 10,000 miles for world disarmament" to "25,000 miles on foot for peace." Something of her brisk, practical piety comes across in her explanation of the choice of dark blue—"it doesn't show dirt," she wrote, and "does represent peace and spirituality." Though she attributes her extraordinary health and stamina to her spirituality, it is hard not to wonder if it was the other way around. She continued her pilgrimage in her simple outfit through snowstorms, rain, a harsh dust storm, and heat, sleeping in cemeteries, in Grand Central Station, on floors, and on an endless succession of the couches of new acquaintances.

Though most of her writings are nonpartisan, she took a strong stand on national and global politics, arguing against the Korean War, the cold war, the arms race, and war in general. The war in Korea was still going on when she set out from Pasadena, as was Senator Joe McCarthy's anticommunist intimidation. It was one of the bleakest periods in American history, with fear of nuclear war and communism driving most Americans into the bunkers of conformity and repression. Even to argue for peace took heroic courage. To set out, as Peace Pilgrim did on the first day of 1953, with nothing more than her single outfit, whose pockets contained "a comb, a folding toothbrush, a ballpoint pen, copies of her message and her current correspondence," was astonishing. While the economy was booming and capitalism was becoming enshrined as a sacrament of freedom, she had dropped out of the money economy—she never carried or used money for the rest of her life. She says of her lack of material possessions, "Think of how free I am! If I want to travel, I just stand up and walk away. There is nothing to tie me down." Though her models were largely Christian, her pilgrimage seems to have arisen from the same 1950s crisis of culture and spirituality that pushed John Cage, Gary Snyder, and many other artists and poets into investigations of Zen Buddhism and other nonwestern traditions and sent Martin Luther King to India to study Gandhi's teachings on nonviolence and *satyagraha*, or soul-force.

Most people who diverge from the mainstream withdraw from its spaces, but Peace Pilgrim had withdrawn from the former to enter the latter, where she would be most required to mediate the gap between her beliefs and national ideology—she was as much an evangelist as a pilgrim. She had set out to walk 25,000 miles for peace, and it took her nine years to do so. Afterward, she con-

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and dignity. The walking must not be done absentmindedly, and the mind must be taut as you concentrate on the

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tinued walking for peace-but stopped counting the miles. As she put it, "I walk until given shelter, fast until given food. I don't ask—it's given without asking. Aren't people good! . . . I usually average twenty-five miles a day walking, depending on how many people stop to talk to me along the way. I have gone up to fifty miles in one day to keep an appointment or because there was no shelter available. On very cold nights I walk through the night to keep warm. Like the birds, I migrate north in the summer and south in the winter." Later she became a widely recognized public speaker and occasionally accepted a ride to get her to her speaking engagements. She died, ironically, in a head-on car crash in July 1981.

Like a pilgrim, she had entered the liminal condition the Turners would later describe, leaving behind an ordinary identity and the goods and circumstances that bolster such identities to achieve that state of anonymous simplicity and clear purpose Tolstoy's Princess Marya longed for. Her walking became a testament to the strength of her convictions and suggests several things. One is that the world was in such trouble that she herself had to drop her ordinary name and ordinary life to try to heal it. Another is that if she could break with the ordinary and go forth unprotected by money, by buildings, and by a place in the world, then perhaps profound change and profound trust were possible on a larger scale. A third is that of the carrier: like Christ taking on the sins of all his followers or the Hebrew scapegoat driven out into the wilderness, burdened with the sins of the community, she had taken personal responsibility for the state of the world, and her life was testimony and expiation as well as example. But what makes her unorthodox is that she adapted a religious form, the pilgrimage, to carry political content. The pilgrimage traditionally dealt with disease and healing of self or loved ones, but she had taken on war, violence, and hate as plagues ravaging the world. The political content that motivated her and the way in which she endeavored to achieve change through influencing her fellow human beings rather than through divine intervention make her the first of a horde of modern political pilgrims.

She foreshadowed this shift in the nature of the pilgrimage, from appealing for divine intervention or holy miracle to demanding political change, making the audience no longer God or the gods, but the public. Perhaps the postwar era marked the end of belief that divine intervention alone was adequate; God had failed to prevent the Jewish Holocaust, and the Jews had seized their promised

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counting—INSTRUCTIONS ON WALKING MEDITATION IN THREE PILLARS OF ZEN Sigmund Freud believed, for

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land through political and military means. African Americans, who had long used metaphors of the Promised Land, stopped waiting too. At the height of the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King said that he was going to Birmingham to lead demonstrations until "Pharaoh lets God's people go." The collective walk brings together the iconography of the pilgrimage with that of the military march and the labor strike and demonstration: it is a show of strength as well as conviction, and an appeal to temporal rather than spiritual powers—or perhaps, in the case of the civil rights movement, both.

Because of the involvement of so many ministers, the practice of nonviolence, and the language of religious redemption and, occasionally, martyrdom, the civil rights movement was more saturated with the temperament and imagery of pilgrimage than most struggles. It was in large part about the rights of access of black people, and it was first fought on the contested sites: sitting down in and then boycotting buses, bringing children into schools, sitting in at lunch counters. But it found its momentum in events that united the protest or the strike with the pilgrimage: the march from Selma to Montgomery to petition for voting rights, the many marches in Birmingham and throughout the country, the culminating March on Washington. In fact, the first major event organized by the newly founded Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was the "prayer pilgrimage" at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., on May 17, 1957, the third anniversary of the Supreme Court ruling in favor of desegregating schools. It was so called to make it sound less threatening, a pilgrimage makes an appeal while a march makes a demand. King was profoundly influenced by the writings and actions of Mahatma Gandhi, and he adapted from Gandhi both the general principle of nonviolence and the specifics of marches and boycotts that had hastened India's liberation from British rule. Perhaps Gandhi was the founder of the political pilgrimage with his famous 200-mile-long Salt March in 1930, in which he and many people living inland walked to the sea to make their own salt in violation of British law and British taxes. Nonviolence means that activists are asking their oppressors for change rather than forcing it, and it can be an extraordinary tool for the less powerful to wring change out of the more powerful.

Six years after the founding of the SCLC, Martin Luther King decided that nonviolent resistance by itself was inadequate, and the violence the southern segregationists inflicted on blacks should be made as public as possible. The audience would no longer be merely the oppressors, but the world. This was the

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*example, that the psychical foundation of all travel was the first separation and the various other departures from*

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strategy of the Birmingham struggle, perhaps the central episode of the civil rights movement, which began on Good Friday of 1963 with the first of many marches, or processions. It is from these protests that the most famous images come, of people being blasted by high-pressure fire hoses and savaged by police dogs, images that provoked worldwide indignation. King and hundreds of others were arrested for marching in Birmingham, and after the supply of willing adults began to run out, high school students were recruited, and their younger siblings volunteered. They marched for freedom with bold jubilation, and on May 2 of that year 900 of these children were arrested. To go out onto the streets knowing they risked attack, injury, arrest, and death took an extraordinary resolve, and the religious ardor of Southern Baptists as well as the Christian iconography of martyrdom seems to have strengthened them. A month after the Birmingham campaign had begun, writes one of King's biographers, "Reverend Charles Billups and other Birmingham ministers led more than 3,000 young people on a prayer pilgrimage to Birmingham jail singing 'I Want Jesus to Walk with Me' as they moved."

A photograph of the 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery march has been on my refrigerator for months, and it speaks of this inspired walking. Taken by Matt Heron, it shows a steady stream of marchers three or four wide moving from right to left across the photograph. He must have lain low to take it, for it raises its subjects up high against a pale, clouded sky. They seem to know they are walking toward transformation and into history, and their wide steps, upraised hands, the confidence of their posture, express the will with which they go to meet it. They have found in this walk a way to make their history rather than suffer it, to measure their strength and rest their freedom, and their movement expresses the same sense of destiny and meaning that resonates in King's deep-voiced, indomitable oratory.

In 1970 the form of the pilgrimage was moved yet further from its origins when the first Walkathon was held by the March of Dimes. Tony Choppa, who has been working on these walks since 1975 and is their unofficial historian, says it was risky at the time, since walking the streets en masse was associated with more radical demonstrations. The first walkers were high school students in San Antonio, Texas, and Columbus, Ohio, and this first "walkathon" was modeled af-

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*one's mother, including the final journey into death. Journeying is therefore an activity related to a larger feminine*

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ter a fund-raiser for a hospital in Canada. It rained on both walks, he says, and there was "no money but great potential. People did actually come out and walk." Over the years the route was trimmed from the initial twenty-five miles to ten kilometers, and participation mushroomed. The year we walked to Chimayó from Greg's land, nearly a million people were expected to join what the March of Dimes now calls WalkAmerica, and they would raise about \$74 million for infant and prenatal health care and supporting research. The walk was cosponsored by K-Mart and Kellogg's, among others. This walkathon structure, with corporations sponsoring the event in return for promotional opportunities and walkers raising the money for the charity, has been adopted by hundreds of organizations, the great majority of them dealing with disease and health care.

The summer before I had accidentally run into the eleventh annual AIDS Walk San Francisco in Golden Gate Park. A huge throng of people in shorts and caps milled around the starting area that sunny day, holding various free beverages, advertisements, and product samples. The hundred-page booklet for the walk consisted almost entirely of advertisements for the dozens of corporate sponsors—clothing companies, brokerage houses—who also had tables set up around the lawn. It was a strange atmosphere, a cross between a gym and a convention, crawling with logos and ads. Yet it must have been profound for some of its participants. The next day the paper said 25,000 walkers had raised \$3.5 million for local AIDS organizations and described a walker who wore a T-shirt printed with photographs of his two sons who had died of AIDS and said, "You never get over it. The walk is a way to cope with it."

These fund-raising walks have become the mainstream American version of the pilgrimage. In many ways they have traveled far from its original nature, notably in the evolution from devoutly appealing for divine intervention to pragmatically asking friends and family for money. And yet, however banal these walks are, they retain much of the content of the pilgrimage: the subject of health and healing, the community of pilgrims, and the earning through suffering or at least exertion. Walking is crucial to these events, or at least it has been. Bikeathons have come into being, and the last indignity dealt to this highly mutated form of pilgrimage came with the virtual walk, including the San Francisco Art Institute's "nonwalk," in which people were asked to give money and were given a T-shirt but weren't obliged to show up, and AIDS Action's "Until It's Over

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*realm, so that it is not surprising that Freud himself was ambivalent about it. Of the landscape he said, "All of these*

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e-March," which proposed that participants electronically sign their names to a letter on the Internet as a substitute for marching or walking.

Fortunately, walkathons are not the end of the story. Though mutant forms of the pilgrimage keep springing up, the older ones thrive, from religious pilgrimages to long political walks. A month after 25,000 people walked ten kilometers to raise money for AIDS organizations in San Francisco, gang counselor Jim Hernandez and antiviolence organizer Heather Taekman finished a 500-mile walk from East Los Angeles to Richmond, California, carrying more than 150 photographs of young murder victims and meeting with teenagers along the way. In 1986 hundreds of people joined together to form the Great Peace March. They walked across the United States together to ask for disarmament in a mass pilgrimage that created its own culture and support structure and had a large impact in some of the small towns through which they trekked. The walk began as a sort of publicity event, but somewhere along the long way the walking itself took over, and the walkers became less concerned with media and message and more with what was happening within themselves. In 1992 two more cross-continental peace walks did much the same thing, and like the walkers of the Great Peace March they drew inspiration from Peace Pilgrim. Similar walks went across the Soviet Union and Europe during the early 1990s, and in 1993 strawberry pickers and other United Farm Workers (UFW) supporters reenacted the great three-hundred-mile Delano-to-Sacramento march César Chávez had organized in 1966 and called a pilgrimage.

Even the most sophisticated yield to the pilgrim's impulse, and even without the superstructure of religion, the ordeal of walking makes sense. The filmmaker Werner Herzog writes, "At the end of November, 1974, a friend from Paris called and told me that Lotte Eisner [a film historian] was seriously ill and would probably die. I said that this must not be, not at this time, German cinema could not do without her now, we would not permit her death. I took a jacket, a compass and a duffel bag with the necessities. My boots were so solid and new that I had confidence in them. I set off on the most direct route to Paris, in full faith, believing that she would stay alive if I came on foot. Besides, I wanted to be alone with myself." He walked the several hundred miles from Munich in winter weather, often wet, often smelly, often thirsty, and usually suffering from great pain in some part of his feet and legs.

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*dark woods, narrow defiles, high grounds and deep penetrations are unconscious sexual imagery, and we are*

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Herzog, as anyone who has seen his films knows, is fond of deep passions and extreme behavior, however obtuse, and in his journals of his long walk to Paris he took on the qualities of one of the obsessives in his films. He walked in all weather, though he occasionally accepted a lift, and he slept in barns and a display mobile home he broke into as well as in strangers' homes and inns. The sparse prose describes walking, suffering, minor encounters, and fragments of scenery. Elaborate fantasies that themselves sound like outlines for Herzog movies are woven into the description of his ordeal. On the fourth day, he writes, "While I was taking a shit, a hare came by at arm's length without noticing me. Pale brandy on my left thigh which hurts from my groin downwards with every step. Why is walking so full of woe?" On the twenty-first day, he put his feet up in Eisner's room, and she smiled at him. "For one splendid fleeting moment something mellow flowed through my deadly tired body. I said to her, open the window, from these last days onward I can fly."

We had arrived too, along the curving road into Chimayó. Sal and I sat down and waited for Meridel on a sidewalk. Cars, policemen, and children carrying Sno-Cones passed by in front of us; behind us bloomed a few stunted fruit trees in a knobby pasture. Afterward, Sal went to stand in the long line in front of the Santuario, and I went off to buy us some lemonade at a little mobile food-stand around the corner, near the Santo Niño Chapel, where people used to offer up children's shoes because the Santo Niño, a version of the Christ child, is said to have worn out his own running errands of mercy around the countryside at night. It was nice to be back on familiar ground. I knew what was inside the Santuario and thought of the thousands of crosses woven into the cyclone fence behind the outdoor chapel below, crosses made of grapevine and cottonwood twigs and larger sticks, and then of the irrigation ditch that flowed just the other side of the fence, of the swift shallow river that runs through the town, of the burrito stand that sold meatless alternatives for Lent, of the old adobe houses and the trailer homes that are beginning to look old, and of the many unwelcoming signs: "Notice: Please Don't Leave Your Belongings Unattended at Any Time," "Not Responsible for Theft," "Beware of Dog." Chimayó is a desperately poor town, known for drugs, violence, and crime as well as for sanctity. Jerry West was waiting for his wife, Meridel, in front of that chapel, and I made my last foot journey

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exploring a woman's body."—PAUL SHEPARD, NATURE AND MADNESS     The geographical pilgrimage is the

back with the lemonade, bade Sal farewell, and went off to my own culminating destination. About ten thousand pilgrims would come into town and stand in line to go into the chapel that day, and Jerry found Greg and Sue standing in line to go in too. When we left after the moon had risen, there were still more figures walking along the narrow shoulder of the road in the night, shadowy groups that no longer looked festive, but dedicated and fragile in the dark.

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symbolic acting out of an inner journey. The inner journey is the interpolation of the meanings and signs of the



## 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 that side. All along those sides was painted a

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

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 nidget 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 ANZALDUA 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

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

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 sedentary 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 bas-reliefs 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 re-tracing 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

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

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

black or white, young or old—to step for a moment into someone else's shoes.—KIRK SWACE 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.