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in Brno
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Walker.Writer.Professor.

POETRY

PROSE FROM POETRY MAGAZINE

Jerusalem

Revealing what had been concealed.

BY PETER COLE

INTRODUCTION

During the years when walking was impossible, especially in this car-crowded city of hills and sprawl, when arthritic pain nailed me to my desk chair, the only way to feel that freshness was to walk through others' lines and times, against the grain of my language. That was the pleasure of translation—of moving and being moved across a landscape into the foreign, and taking on form and sense as they shuttled between the eyes and ears and lips and tongue. Looking down the alleys of assonance, and into the crannies of consonance. There's a glittering weed—or was that planted?—in any case, it's shining. Let me bring that back into an English weave. There's a car bumper holding the sky. Now a breeze shifts over a knoll, rushing through a scrim of jasmine. Is that literature or is it life? How can I capture—no, create—no, capture—the pitch of that coolness and scent?

Walking is a way of remaining in place, or in *a* place, of leaving oneself to return to oneself, of upping the odds that surprise might flow through. Of giving one's eyes something to do, so that the world within might be heard.

* * *

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* * *

Jerusalem exposes one like no other city I've known. It opens one to and within that sense of translation across a landscape where people and syntax, garbage and shade, languages, longing, and soma merge. But it also exposes as in stripping bare—or revealing what had been concealed. Jerusalem will "dissipate romantic expectations," noted Herman Melville, having walked the city. "To some," he added, "the disappointment is heart sickening."

* * *

Walking is a way of erasing oneself by asserting oneself, or asserting oneself through erasure—it's a way of absorbing, of zeroing in on all the little links that involve us, of letting the world in-form us. Maybe words will rise from that influx, like a mist or cloud form. So that an image or cadence emerges, as though from the cells of that registration. And *only* from that registration.

* * *

I pass by the Knesset and Supreme Court buildings, on my way back from a day at the library, and it occurs to me that I am at this point all too numb to the mechanisms of the state and, in a sense, to the nation-state as such. Though not to its landscape—battered and scarred as it is by so much of what happens within those halls.

That soon-to-be-phased-out library and the old university grounds are among the most cultivated and focused places in the city. My pace slows, my breathing widens, as soon as I pass through the main gate. Small groves of cypress and pine, with a limestone footpath winding through them, offer tents of shade from the sun's drill and its leveling glare—restoring a sense of extension and volume. The modest geometries of the international style, deployed around a central, tree-studded carpet of grass, augment the aura of rightness. And an olive tree adds time to the equation, its opening fist of a trunk giving way to the most tender of canopies and indicating that it is much older than this ecumenical paradise, this enclosed green campus, and may be one of the few visible remains of the Arab village that stood where all this now exists.

This tribute to learning and openness is built, in other words, on government-confiscated

land.

* * *

The sage, said Dahlberg, is he who sits. The Hasids say it's he who walks—to gather the sparks, to enter divinity's feminine presence. So it is en route to the accountant, the archive, the demonstration, the doctor, the market, the museum, the post office . . .

* * *

Walking is a way of deferring arrival, but also of making it possible.

* * *

Watching people walk in Jerusalem: is anything more dispiriting? The twisted effort and utter unease of it. As though they were battling not only the dismantled infrastructure of the city—its dug-up, treeless downtown streets, its gaping pipes and makeshift lampposts, as well as the dust and heat—but some more essential or metaphysicalprinciple. And yet . . . Just back from two weeks in ghostly, almost Jew-less Vilna, the Jerusalem of Lithuania; from placid, baroque, and almost Roman Vilnius, the geographical heart of Europe, where the boulevards and plazas are wide and the walking is leisurely and part of the rhythms of the day, and where watching that walking in the municipal space is also part and parcel of that rhythm—I'm reminded that ease is not all.

In *Judenrein* Vilnius, the stroll signifies repose in place and both stained and sustained belonging. In Jew-crammed Jerusalem, the unease echoes exile's depth.

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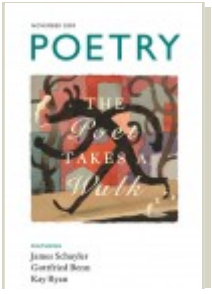

They Are Human After All
BY GOTTFRIED BENN

The Young Hebbel
BY GOTTFRIED BENN

Destitute Peru
BY JAMES SCHUYLER

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BIOGRAPHY

Poet and translator Peter Cole was born in Paterson, New Jersey. His collections of poetry include *Hymns & Qualms* (1998), *Rift* (1989), *What Is Doubled: Poems 1981-1998* (2005), and *Things on Which I've Stumbled* (2008). With Adina Hoffman, he wrote the nonfiction collection *Sacred Trash: The Lost and Found World...*

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POETRY

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PROSE FROM POETRY MAGAZINE

San Francisco

Grounded at last.

BY W. S. DI PIERO

INTRODUCTION

Habit is a stabilizing psycho-biological compass. I have a major one: to take a walk as soon as I get home after even a short flight, not just because I don't have a car and the ground is where I feel ready to deal with the things of the world, but because when I'm up in the ether, I feel physically incomplete. Locomotion makes me more palpable to myself, fleshed out, self-locatable. So I observe the habit, climb three flights to my apartment, drop my bags, walk back down the stairs, then down the hill through my neighborhood. If I'm still travel-dressy, I buy my lettuce and avocados at the corner market or plant myself in a cafe wearing suit and white shirt or whatever I wrapped myself in before departing that now-nearly-forgotten-wherever.

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wing-nuts swing from his imperfect, droopy braids, and the catcher's shin-guards strapped to his legs gleam like greaves. I walk on by, suited up, and feel grounded at last.

* * *

Several weeks ago. I brush my shoes, go out, walk up my hill, then up an even steeper hill where I get an open-fan view of the East Bay and the Oakland seaport's horsy white shipping cranes, the most elegant public sculpture in the Bay Area. From there to the Castro is downhill and nearly all stairways, some that literally skirt people's front doors, so down I go to the flats past the Castro Theater (if Josephine Baker were a movie house . . .) then down Market to the Safeway to pick up more lettuce and avocados (and vodka). A broad-faced, late-middle-aged man with the comportment of a tribal chieftain, a fat snake of dreads trussed to his head with hemp twine, waits to check out half-gallons of soy milk. At the cheese counter a pair of leathered hairy bears bicker over triple creams. A middle-aged pee-wee in wrinkled suit and white shirt, the unmedicated voices in his head now given full voice, harangues two women who moments ago were stabbing half-cartons of eggs at each other. The cereal aisle, bright as the spaceship in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, cheers us all on with its infinitude. By now I can't breathe—the visual overload is cutting into my air supply. But I wouldn't have it any other way (assuming I could) because one task of city walking is to separate one thing from another. Urban walking trains us for storytelling, yes, but my Safeway experience is a speed babble fever dream. I don't own a camera: having to choose *this* or *this* chokes me up.

* * *

Walk enough and you feel San Francisco physically alive in you; its topography tightens through your hamstrings, quads, and Achilles. It guarantees astonishment, too. You live here for years and are still caught unawares by a body of water between buildings, stood on end like stage scenery, or by a tilted sidewalk that rises skyward until it becomes all the horizon there is. Steve McQueen went for a midnight motorcycle ride while in town to film *Bullitt* and next day told the director that when he crested hills his bike wheels left the ground. He could fly. So they discussed shooting a car chase.

* * *

Some festival nights—Halloween, New Year's Eve, the Fourth—I go out late and float neighborhoods, walking and hopping public transit, with stops in bars or cafes. (Riding transit is a kind of wheeled walking.) When I float I don't feel I'm passing through time but that it's passing through me, leaving behind its candy wrappers, lost shoes, cooking

stains, burnt-rubber atmospheres, and muggy lights. It's a run-on narrative composed of extremely long paragraphs, anecdotes mix-mastered into one strange mossy elixir, like the scummy, life-elongating antioxidant a doctor friend once imposed on me but which, next day, made me sick. Take it anyway, it's good for you. Whether it's a float or errand run or planned trek, I don't walk to absorb local color, and I certainly don't do it to gather "material." If I'm moving really fast, it's usually because I've made a mess of something in my life or something in my life has made a mess of me. So I take my trouble for a walk, not to sort through it but to give grievance, sadness, confusion, or rage a quickened shape and action. The broken glass of broken loves, the nauseated conviction that my own emotions have kidnapped me from my life—walking gives momentary, cadenced containment to such disturbances. One Fourth of July, nasty of mood due to writerly aggravations, I went in search of the city's fireworks. No, I didn't, really, because I knew very well where they were happening. I wanted, really, to ambulate toward the shattered, plosive colors in hope that some strangeness would intervene. That night it was a dapper Indian gentleman at a bus stop playing with a moist bud of chewing gum, who said to me: "I feel fine as fog." One Halloween I kept switching from foot to transit. On a Haight Street-bound bus, a toothless drunk boarded and greeted us all, including some bouncy out-of-towners hoping for a Haight experience, then broke into song: "I once had a horse named Sunshine / She never drank water / She only drank wine." The tourists were having their peak experience, but when the driver stopped the bus and walked the aisle, hat in hand, soliciting contributions for the homeless entertainer, a night worker behind me got restless: "You the *driver*? The fuck you *doing?* Get back there and drive me home!" Another shining night, on foot, in this purple-gartered, doll-face, kissy city, within a ten minute stretch I got caught up in three acts of near violence, one involving a hysterical bicyclist wielding a tire pump, another a smiling stranger who walked straight at me asking the time of day but then got in my face and waved his fists, screaming about gas bills, the mayor, and me.

* * *

We find our own speed. Whenever somebody says I walk fast I wonder what counts for fastness of foot compared to the twenty-mile jaunts of a Wordsworth or Keats or Coleridge. And their pace wasn't up to Audubon's: when he describes in his journals and letters the distances he covered in a day, it's clear the man wasn't walking really, he was *springing forward* in a walking kind of way. Recently, out late after a show at the Castro, powering through some neighborhood, my date and I noticed our matching martial strides. The velocity of a stride can measure a person's pace through the mined gardens of circumstance, through work and loves and changing emotional frequencies. Two persons

walking together at speed, telling stories and breathing hard, will physically draw closer, hands in pockets, bump shoulders, and the bump might incite something unexpected and intense, or not. That night, I imagined two others walking a commercial corridor anywhere: one saunters, the other marches; one constantly looks at the mirrors shop windows create; the other, not. At home, they bicker over the number and placement of mirrors.

* * *

It's hard to resist glancing at our window reflections. We check for imperfections. We evaluate the project of self-fashioning. "Where doors and walls are made of mirrors," Walter Benjamin says in *The Arcades Project*, "there is no telling outside from in, with all the equivocal illumination." Benjamin never visited New York or San Francisco; he couldn't now say that "women [in Paris] look at themselves more than elsewhere. . . . Before any man catches sight of her, she already sees herself ten times reflected." I get teased that I'll see any French movie set in Paris just to watch the glassfronts. Who cares about the plot of *Un coeur en hiver* or *Nelly et Monsieur Arnaud?* I watch them to swoon over the louvered flash and revolutions of images in restaurant windows, doors, shop windows.

* * *

Glassfronts make a city whole by fragmenting it. The anarchic multiplicities thrill me. The N Judah streetcar stops in front of Kezar's, my local drinking establishment. At night the bar mirrors flash back the streetcar's windows and airplane-metal sides that are themselves smeared with reflections of Kezar's lights washing across faces behind the streetcar windows. Benjamin again: "Let two mirrors reflect each other; then Satan plays his favorite trick and opens here in his way (as his partner does in lovers' gazes) the perspective on infinity." Around 7:00 PM, in winter, the trolley floods the corner with discharged passengers who speed or amble or drag their heels in all directions, going home to their secrets, some stopping in Kezar's to drink and recite their own or others' secrets. Walk past Kezar's windows, as I often do at this hour, and you see your reflection in the windows and, behind them, in the backbar mirrors and, wiping across both, in the reflecting surfaces of the streetcar. Fractured illumination, slashing epiphany, darkling disclosure: versions on versions of the real. In such fugitive moments, I know I'm home.

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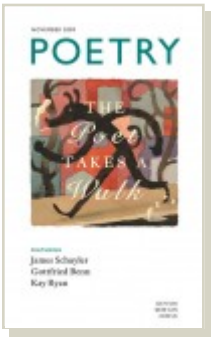

Spring
BY CHLOE HONUM

Athens: Peripatetic Fragments
BY A. E. STALLINGS

Poem (The day gets slowly started)
BY JAMES SCHUYLER

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BIOGRAPHY

W.S. Di Piero was born in 1945 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and earned degrees from St. Joseph's College and San Francisco State College. A poet, essayist, art critic, and translator, Di Piero has taught at institutions such as Northwestern University, Louisiana State University, and Stanford, where he is professor emeritus of...

Continue reading this biography

reasons that are related (dispiritedness and dullness), most of Roxbury has run down. It has become a place to leave.

I do not wish to single out Roxbury or its once fine Elm Hill Avenue section especially as a vulnerable area; its disabilities, and especially its Great Blight of Dullness, are all too common in other cities too. But differences like these in public safety within the same city are worth noting. The Elm Hill Avenue section's basic troubles are not owing to a criminal or a discriminated against or a poverty-stricken population. Its troubles stem from the fact that it is physically quite unable to function safely and with related vitality as a city district.

Even within supposedly similar parts of supposedly similar places, drastic differences in public safety exist. An incident at Washington Houses, a public housing project in New York, illustrates this point. A tenants' group at this project, struggling to establish itself, held some outdoor ceremonies in mid-December 1958, and put up three Christmas trees. The chief tree, so cumbersome it was a problem to transport, erect, and trim, went into the project's inner "street," a landscaped central mall and promenade. The other two trees, each less than six feet tall and easy to carry, went on two small fringe plots at the outer corners of the project where it abuts a busy avenue and lively cross streets of the old city. The first night, the large tree and all its trimmings were stolen. The two smaller trees remained intact, lights, ornaments and all, until they were taken down at New Year's. "The place where the tree was stolen, which is *theoretically* the most safe and sheltered place in the project, is the same place that is unsafe for people too, especially children," says a social worker who had been helping the tenants' group. "People are no safer in that mall than the Christmas tree. On the other hand, the place where the other trees were safe, where the project is just one corner out of four, happens to be safe for people."

This is something everyone already knows: A well-used city street is apt to be a safe street. A deserted city street is apt to be unsafe. But how does this work, really? And what makes a city street well used or shunned? Why is the sidewalk mall in Washington Houses, which is supposed to be an attraction, shunned? Why are the sidewalks of the old city just to its west not shunned? What about streets that are busy part of the time and then empty abruptly?

A city street equipped to handle strangers, and to make a safety asset, in itself, out of the presence of strangers, as the streets of successful city neighborhoods always do, must have three main qualities:

First, there must be a clear demarcation between what is public space and what is private space. Public and private spaces cannot ooze into each other as they do typically in suburban settings or in projects.

Second, there must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street. The buildings on a street equipped to handle strangers and to insure the safety of both residents and strangers, must be oriented to the street. They cannot turn their backs or blank sides on it and leave it blind.

And third, the sidewalk must have users on it fairly continuously, both to add to the number of effective eyes on the street and to induce the people in buildings along the street to watch the sidewalks in sufficient numbers. Nobody enjoys sitting on a stoop or looking out a window at an empty street. Almost nobody does such a thing. Large numbers of people entertain themselves, off and on, by watching street activity.

In settlements that are smaller and simpler than big cities, controls on acceptable public behavior, if not on crime, seem to operate with greater or lesser success through a web of reputation, gossip, approval, disapproval and sanctions, all of which are powerful if people know each other and word travels. But a city's streets, which must control not only the behavior of the people of the city but also of visitors from suburbs and towns who want to have a big time away from the gossip and sanctions at home, have to operate by more direct, straightforward methods. It is a wonder cities have solved such an inherently difficult problem at all. And yet in many streets they do it magnificently.

It is futile to try to evade the issue of unsafe city streets by attempting to make some other features of a locality, say interior courtyards, or sheltered play spaces, safe instead. By definition

again, the streets of a city must do most of the job of handling strangers for this is where strangers come and go. The streets must not only defend the city against predatory strangers, they must protect the many, many peaceable and well-meaning strangers who use them, insuring their safety too as they pass through. Moreover, no normal person can spend his life in some artificial haven, and this includes children. Everyone must use the streets.

On the surface, we seem to have here some simple aims: To try to secure streets where the public space is unequivocally public, physically unmixed with private or with nothing-at-all space, so that the area needing surveillance has clear and practicable limits; and to see that these public street spaces have eyes on them as continuously as possible.

But it is not so simple to achieve these objects, especially the latter. You can't make people use streets they have no reason to use. You can't make people watch streets they do not want to watch. Safety on the streets by surveillance and mutual policing of one another sounds grim, but in real life it is not grim. The safety of the street works best, most casually, and with least frequent taint of hostility or suspicion precisely where people are using and most enjoying the city streets voluntarily and are least conscious, normally, that they are policing.

The basic requisite for such surveillance is a substantial quantity of stores and other public places sprinkled along the sidewalks of a district; enterprises and public places that are used by evening and night must be among them especially. Stores, bars and restaurants, as the chief examples, work in several different and complex ways to abet sidewalk safety.

First, they give people—both residents and strangers—concrete reasons for using the sidewalks on which these enterprises face.

Second, they draw people along the sidewalks past places which have no attractions to public use in themselves but which become traveled and peopled as routes to somewhere else; this influence does not carry very far geographically, so enterprises must be frequent in a city district if they are to populate with walkers those other stretches of street that lack public places along the sidewalk. Moreover, there should be many different kinds of enterprises, to give people reasons for crisscrossing paths.

Third, storekeepers and other small businessmen are typically strong proponents of peace and order themselves; they hate broken windows and holdups; they hate having customers made nervous about safety. They are great street watchers and sidewalk guardians if present in sufficient numbers.

Fourth, the activity generated by people on errands, or people aiming for food or drink, is itself an attraction to still other people.

This last point, that the sight of people attracts still other people, is something that city planners and city architectural designers seem to find incomprehensible. They operate on the premise that city people seek the sight of emptiness, obvious order and quiet. Nothing could be less true. People's love of watching activity and other people is constantly evident in cities everywhere. This trait reaches an almost ludicrous extreme on upper Broadway in New York, where the street is divided by a narrow central mall, right in the middle of traffic. At the cross-street intersections of this long north-south mall, benches have been placed behind big concrete buffers and on any day when the weather is even barely tolerable these benches are filled with people at block after block after block, watching the pedestrians who cross the mall in front of them, watching the traffic, watching the people on the busy sidewalks, watching each other. Eventually Broadway reaches Columbia University and Barnard College, one to the right, the other to the left. Here all is obvious order and quiet. No more stores, no more activity generated by the stores, almost no more pedestrians crossing—and no more watchers. The benches are there but they go empty in even the finest weather. I have tried them and can see why. No place could be more boring. Even the students of these institutions shun the solitude. They are doing their outdoor loitering, outdoor homework and general street watching on the steps overlooking the busiest campus crossing.

It is just so on city streets elsewhere. A lively street always has both its users and pure watchers. Last year I was on such a street in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, waiting for a bus. I had not been there longer than a minute, barely long enough to begin taking in the street's activity of errand goers, children playing,

and loiterers on the stoops, when my attention was attracted by a woman who opened a window on the third floor of a tenement across the street and vigorously yoo-hooed at me. When I caught on that she wanted my attention and responded, she shouted down, "The bus doesn't run here on Saturdays!" Then by a combination of shouts and pantomime she directed me around the corner. This woman was one of thousands upon thousands of people in New York who casually take care of the streets. They notice strangers. They observe everything going on. If they need to take action, whether to direct a stranger waiting in the wrong place or to call the police, they do so. Action usually requires, to be sure, a certain self-assurance about the actor's proprietorship of the street and the support he will get if necessary, matters which will be gone into later in this book. But even more fundamental than the action and necessary to the action, is the watching itself.

Not everyone in cities helps to take care of the streets, and many a city resident or city worker is unaware of why his neighborhood is safe. The other day an incident occurred on the street where I live, and it interested me because of this point.

My block of the street, I must explain, is a small one, but it contains a remarkable range of buildings, varying from several vintages of tenements to three- and four-story houses that have been converted into low-rent flats with stores on the ground floor, or returned to single-family use like ours. Across the street there used to be mostly four-story brick tenements with stores below. But twelve years ago several buildings, from the corner to the middle of the block, were converted into one building with elevator apartments of small size and high rents.

The incident that attracted my attention was a suppressed struggle going on between a man and a little girl of eight or nine years old. The man seemed to be trying to get the girl to go with him. By turns he was directing a cajoling attention to her, and then assuming an air of nonchalance. The girl was making herself rigid, as children do when they resist, against the wall of one of the tenements across the street.

As I watched from our second-floor window, making up my mind how to intervene if it seemed advisable, I saw it was not going to be necessary. From the butcher shop beneath the tenement had emerged the woman who, with her husband, runs the shop; she was standing within earshot of the man, her arms folded and a look of determination on her face. Joe Cornacchia, who with his sons-in-law keeps the delicatessen, emerged about the same moment and stood solidly to the other side. Several heads poked out of the tenement windows above, one was withdrawn quickly and its owner reappeared a moment later in the doorway behind the man. Two men from the bar next to the butcher shop came to the doorway and waited. On my side of the street, I saw that the locksmith, the fruit man and the laundry proprietor had all come out of their shops and that the scene was also being surveyed from a number of windows besides ours. That man did not know it, but he was surrounded. Nobody was going to allow a little girl to be dragged off, even if nobody knew who she was.

I am sorry—sorry purely for dramatic purposes—to have to report that the little girl turned out to be the man's daughter.

Throughout the duration of the little drama, perhaps five minutes in all, no eyes appeared in the windows of the high-rent, small-apartment building. It was the only building of which this was true. When we first moved to our block, I used to anticipate happily that perhaps soon all the buildings would be rehabilitated like that one. I know better now, and can only anticipate with gloom and foreboding the recent news that exactly this transformation is scheduled for the rest of the block frontage adjoining the high-rent building. The high-rent tenants, most of whom are so transient we cannot even keep track of their faces,* have not the remotest idea of who takes care of their street, or how. A city neighborhood can absorb and protect a substantial number of these birds of passage, as our neighborhood does. But if and when the neighborhood finally *becomes* them, they will gradually find the streets less secure, they will be vaguely mystified about it, and if things get bad enough they will drift away to another neighborhood which is mysteriously safer.

In some rich city neighborhoods, where there is little do-it-yourself surveillance, such as residential Park Avenue or upper

* Some, according to the storekeepers, live on beans and bread and spend their sojourn looking for a place to live where all their money will not go for rent.

Fifth Avenue in New York, street watchers are hired. The monotonous sidewalks of residential Park Avenue, for example, are surprisingly little used; their putative users are populating, instead, the interesting store-, bar- and restaurant-filled sidewalks of Lexington Avenue and Madison Avenue to east and west, and the cross streets leading to these. A network of doormen and superintendents, of delivery boys and nursemaids, a form of hired neighborhood, keeps residential Park Avenue supplied with eyes. At night, with the security of the doormen as a bulwark, dog walkers safely venture forth and supplement the doormen. But this street is so blank of built-in eyes, so devoid of concrete reasons for using or watching it instead of turning the first corner off of it, that if its rents were to slip below the point where they could support a plentiful hired neighborhood of doormen and elevator men, it would undoubtedly become a woefully dangerous street.

Once a street is well equipped to handle strangers, once it has both a good, effective demarcation between private and public spaces and has a basic supply of activity and eyes, the more strangers the merrier.

Strangers become an enormous asset on the street on which I live, and the spurs off it, particularly at night when safety assets are most needed. We are fortunate enough, on the street, to be gifted not only with a locally supported bar and another around the corner, but also with a famous bar that draws continuous troops of strangers from adjoining neighborhoods and even from out of town. It is famous because the poet Dylan Thomas used to go there, and mentioned it in his writing. This bar, indeed, works two distinct shifts. In the morning and early afternoon it is a social gathering place for the old community of Irish longshoremen and other craftsmen in the area, as it always was. But beginning in midafternoon it takes on a different life, more like a college bull session with beer, combined with a literary cocktail party, and this continues until the early hours of the morning. On a cold winter's night, as you pass the White Horse, and the doors open, a solid wave of conversation and animation surges out and hits you; very warming. The comings and goings from this bar do much to keep our street reasonably populated until three in the morning, and it is a street always safe to come home to. The only instance I know of a beating in our street occurred in the dead hours between the closing of the bar and dawn. The beating was halted by one of our neighbors who saw it from his window and, unconsciously certain that even at night he was part of a web of strong street law and order, intervened.

A friend of mine lives on a street uptown where a church youth and community center, with many night dances and other activities, performs the same service for his street that the White Horse bar does for ours. Orthodox planning is much imbued with puritanical and Utopian conceptions of how people should spend their free time, and in planning, these moralisms on people's private lives are deeply confused with concepts about the workings of cities. In maintaining city street civilization, the White Horse bar and the church-sponsored youth center, different as they undoubtedly are, perform much the same public street civilizing service. There is not only room in cities for such differences and many more in taste, purpose and interest of occupation; cities also have a need for people with all these differences in taste and proclivity. The preferences of Utopians, and of other compulsive managers of other people's leisure, for one kind of legal enterprise over others is worse than irrelevant for cities. It is harmful. The greater and more plentiful the range of all legitimate interests (in the strictly legal sense) that city streets and their enterprises can satisfy, the better for the streets and for the safety and civilization of the city.

Bars, and indeed all commerce, have a bad name in many city districts precisely because they do draw strangers, and the strangers do not work out as an asset at all.

This sad circumstance is especially true in the dispirited gray belts of great cities and in once fashionable or at least once solid inner residential areas gone into decline. Because these neighborhoods are so dangerous, and the streets typically so dark, it is commonly believed that their trouble may be insufficient street lighting. Good lighting is important, but darkness alone does not account for the gray areas' deep, functional sickness, the Great Blight of Dullness.

street?" he asks. "Who puts them out if they don't belong here?"

The technique of dividing the city into Turfs is not simply a New York solution. It is a Rebuilt American City solution. At the Harvard Design Conference of 1959, one of the topics pondered by city architectural designers turned out to be the puzzle of Turf, although they did not use that designation. The examples discussed happened to be the Lake Meadows middle-income project of Chicago and the Lafayette Park high-income project of Detroit. Do you keep the rest of the city out of these blind-eyed purlieus? How difficult and how unpalatable. Do you invite the rest of the city in? How difficult and how impossible.

Like the Youth Board workers, the developers and residents of Radiant City and Radiant Garden City and Radiant Garden City Beautiful have a genuine difficulty and they have to do the best they can with it by the empirical means at their disposal. They have little choice. Wherever the rebuilt city rises the barbaric concept of Turf must follow, because the rebuilt city has junked a basic function of the city street and with it, necessarily, the freedom of the city.

Under the seeming disorder of the old city, wherever the old city is working successfully, is a marvelous order for maintaining the safety of the streets and the freedom of the city. It is a complex order. Its essence is intricacy of sidewalk use, bringing with it a constant succession of eyes. This order is all composed of movement and change, and although it is life, not art, we may fancifully call it the art form of the city and liken it to the dance—not to a simple-minded precision dance with everyone kicking up at the same time, twirling in unison and bowing off en masse, but to an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole. The ballet of the good city sidewalk never repeats itself from place to place, and in any one place is always replete with new improvisations.

The stretch of Hudson Street where I live is each day the scene of an intricate sidewalk ballet. I make my own first entrance into it a little after eight when I put out the garbage can, surely a prosaic occupation, but I enjoy my part, my little clang, as the

droves of junior high school students walk by the center of the stage dropping candy wrappers. (How do they eat so much candy so early in the morning?)

While I sweep up the wrappers I watch the other rituals of morning: Mr. Halpert unlocking the laundry's handcart from its mooring to a cellar door, Joe Cornacchia's son-in-law stacking out the empty crates from the delicatessen, the barber bringing out his sidewalk folding chair, Mr. Goldstein arranging the coils of wire which proclaim the hardware store is open, the wife of the tenement's superintendent depositing her chunky three-year-old with a toy mandolin on the stoop, the vantage point from which he is learning the English his mother cannot speak. Now the primary children, heading for St. Luke's, dribble through to the south; the children for St. Veronica's cross, heading to the west, and the children for P.S. 41, heading toward the east. Two new entrances are being made from the wings: well-dressed and even elegant women and men with brief cases emerge from doorways and side streets. Most of these are heading for the bus and subways, but some hover on the curbs, stopping taxis which have miraculously appeared at the right moment, for the taxis are part of a wider morning ritual: having dropped passengers from midtown in the downtown financial district, they are now bringing downtowners up to midtown. Simultaneously, numbers of women in housedresses have emerged and as they crisscross with one another they pause for quick conversations that sound with either laughter or joint indignation, never, it seems, anything between. It is time for me to hurry to work too, and I exchange my ritual farewell with Mr. Lofaro, the short, thick-bodied, white-aproned fruit man who stands outside his doorway a little up the street, his arms folded, his feet planted, looking solid as earth itself. We nod; we each glance quickly up and down the street, then look back to each other and smile. We have done this many a morning for more than ten years, and we both know what it means: All is well.

The heart-of-the-day ballet I seldom see, because part of the nature of it is that working people who live there, like me, are mostly gone, filling the roles of strangers on other sidewalks.

more and more intricate. Longshoremen who are not working that day gather at the White Horse or the Ideal or the International for beer and conversation. The executives and business lunchers from the industries just to the west throng the Dorgene restaurant and the Lion's Head coffee house; meat-market workers and communications scientists fill the bakery lunchroom. Character dancers come on, a strange old man with strings of old shoes over his shoulders, motor-scooter riders with big beards and girl friends who bounce on the back of the scooters and wear their hair long in front of their faces as well as behind, drunks who follow the advice of the Hat Council and are always turned out in hats, but not hats the Council would approve. Mr. Lacey, the locksmith, shuts up his shop for a while and goes to exchange the time of day with Mr. Slube at the cigar store. Mr. Koochagian, the tailor, waters the luxuriant jungle of plants in his window, gives them a critical look from the outside, accepts a compliment on them from two passers-by, fingers the leaves on the plane tree in front of our house with a thoughtful gardener's appraisal, and crosses the street for a bite at the Ideal where he can keep an eye on customers and wigwag across the message that he is coming. The baby carriages come out, and clusters of everyone from toddlers with dolls to teen-agers with homework gather at the stoops.

When I get home after work, the ballet is reaching its crescendo. This is the time of roller skates and stilts and tricycles, and games in the lee of the stoop with bottletops and plastic cowboys; this is the time of bundles and packages, zigzagging from the drug store to the fruit stand and back over to the butcher's; this is the time when teen-agers, all dressed up, are pausing to ask if their slips show or their collars look right; this is the time when beautiful girls get out of MG's; this is the time when the fire engines go through; this is the time when anybody you know around Hudson Street will go by.

As darkness thickens and Mr. Halpert moors the laundry cart to the cellar door again, the ballet goes on under lights, eddying back and forth but intensifying at the bright spotlight pools of Joe's sidewalk pizza dispensary, the bars, the delicatessen, the

the delicatessen, to pick up salami and a container of milk. Things have settled down for the evening but the street and its ballet have not come to a stop.

I know the deep night ballet and its seasons best from waking long after midnight to tend a baby and, sitting in the dark, seeing the shadows and hearing the sounds of the sidewalk. Mostly it is a sound like infinitely pattering snatches of party conversation and, about three in the morning, singing, very good singing. Sometimes there is sharpness and anger or sad, sad weeping, or a flurry of search for a string of beads broken. One night a young man came roaring along, bellowing terrible language at two girls whom he had apparently picked up and who were disappointing him. Doors opened, a wary semicircle formed around him, not too close, until the police came. Out came the heads, too, along Hudson Street, offering opinion, "Drunk . . . Crazy . . . A wild kid from the suburbs."•

Deep in the night, I am almost unaware how many people are on the street unless something calls them together, like the bagpipe. Who the piper was and why he favored our street I have no idea. The bagpipe just skirled out in the February night, and as if it were a signal the random, dwindled movements of the sidewalk took on direction. Swiftly, quietly, almost magically a little crowd was there, a crowd that evolved into a circle with a Highland fling inside it. The crowd could be seen on the shadowy sidewalk, the dancers could be seen, but the bagpiper himself was almost invisible because his bravura was all in his music. He was a very little man in a plain brown overcoat. When he finished and vanished, the dancers and watchers applauded, and applause came from the galleries too, half a dozen of the hundred windows on Hudson Street. Then the windows closed, and the little crowd dissolved into the random movements of the night street.

The strangers on Hudson Street, the allies whose eyes help us natives keep the peace of the street, are so many that they always seem to be different people from one day to the next. That does

• He turned out to be a wild kid from the suburbs. Sometimes, on Hudson Street, we are tempted to believe the suburbs must be a difficult place to

not matter. Whether they are so many always-different people as they seem to be, I do not know. Likely they are. When Jimmy Rogan fell through a plate-glass window (he was separating some scuffling friends) and almost lost his arm, a stranger in an old T shirt emerged from the Ideal bar, swiftly applied an expert tourniquet and, according to the hospital's emergency staff, saved Jimmy's life. Nobody remembered seeing the man before and no one has seen him since. The hospital was called in this way: a woman sitting on the steps next to the accident ran over to the bus stop, wordlessly snatched the dime from the hand of a stranger who was waiting with his fifteen-cent fare ready, and raced into the Ideal's phone booth. The stranger raced after her to offer the nickel too. Nobody remembered seeing him before, and no one has seen him since. When you see the same stranger three or four times on Hudson Street, you begin to nod. This is almost getting to be an acquaintance, a public acquaintance, of course.

I have made the daily ballet of Hudson Street sound more frenetic than it is, because writing it telescopes it. In real life, it is not that way. In real life, to be sure, something is always going on, the ballet is never at a halt, but the general effect is peaceful and the general tenor even leisurely. People who know well such animated city streets will know how it is. I am afraid people who do not will always have it a little wrong in their heads—like the old prints of rhinoceroses made from travelers' descriptions of rhinoceroses.

On Hudson Street, the same as in the North End of Boston or in any other animated neighborhoods of great cities, we are not innately more competent at keeping the sidewalks safe than are the people who try to live off the hostile truce of Turf in a blind-eyed city. We are the lucky possessors of a city order that makes it relatively simple to keep the peace because there are plenty of eyes on the street. But there is nothing simple about that order itself, or the bewildering number of components that go into it. Most of those components are specialized in one way or another. They unite in their joint effect upon the sidewalk, which is not specialized in the least. That is its strength.

3
The uses of sidewalks: contact

Reformers have long observed city people loitering on busy corners, hanging around in candy stores and bars and drinking soda pop on stoops, and have passed a judgment, the gist of which is: "This is deplorable! If these people had decent homes and a more private or bosky outdoor place, they wouldn't be on the street!"

This judgment represents a profound misunderstanding of cities. It makes no more sense than to drop in at a testimonial banquet in a hotel and conclude that if these people had wives who could cook, they would give their parties at home.

The point of both the testimonial banquet and the social life of city sidewalks is precisely that they are public. They bring together people who do not know each other in an intimate, private social fashion and in most cases do not care to know each other in that fashion.

Nobody can keep open house in a great city. Nobody wants

But I think that other neighborhoods than these three kinds just get in the way, and make successful self-government difficult or impossible.

The most obvious of the three, although it is seldom called a neighborhood, is the city as a whole. We must never forget or minimize this parent community while thinking of a city's smaller parts. This is the source from which most public money flows, even when it comes ultimately from the federal or state coffers. This is where most administrative and policy decisions are made, for good or ill. This is where general welfare often comes into direst conflict, open or hidden, with illegal or other destructive interests.

Moreover, up on this plane we find vital special-interest communities and pressure groups. The neighborhood of the entire city is where people especially interested in the theater or in music or in other arts find one another and get together, no matter where they may live. This is where people immersed in specific professions or businesses or concerned about particular problems exchange ideas and sometimes start action. Professor P. Sargant Florence, a British specialist on urban economics, has written, "My own experience is that, apart from the special habitat of intellectuals like Oxford or Cambridge, a city of a million is required to give me, say, the twenty or thirty congenial friends I require!" This sounds rather snooty, to be sure, but Professor Florence has an important truth here. Presumably he likes his friends to know what he is talking about. When William Kirk of Union Settlement and Helen Hall of Henry Street Settlement, miles apart in New York City, get together with *Consumers' Union,* a magazine located still other miles away, and with researchers from Columbia University, and with the trustees of a foundation, to consider the personal and community ruin wrought by loan shark-installment peddlers in low-income projects, they know what each is talking about and, what is more, can put their peculiar kinds of knowledge together with a special kind of money to learn more about the trouble and find ways to fight it. When my sister, Betty, a housewife, helps devise a scheme in the Manhattan public school which one of her children attends, whereby parents who know English give homework help to the children of parents who do not, and the scheme works, this knowledge filters into a special-interest neighborhood of the city as a whole; as a result, one evening Betty finds herself away over in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, telling a district group of ten P-TA presidents there how the scheme works, and learning some new things herself.

A city's very wholeness in bringing together people with communities of interest is one of its greatest assets, possibly the greatest. And, in turn, one of the assets a city district needs is people with access to the political, the administrative, and the special-interest communities of the city as a whole.

In most big cities, we Americans do reasonably well at creating useful neighborhoods belonging to the whole city. People with similar and supplementing interests do find each other fairly well. Indeed, they typically do so most efficiently in the largest cities (except for Los Angeles which does miserably at this, and Boston which is pretty pathetic). Moreover, big-city governments, as Seymour Freedgood of *Fortune* magazine so well documented in *The Exploding Metropolis,* are able and energetic at the top in many instances, more so than one would surmise from looking at social and economic affairs in the endless failed neighborhoods of the same cities. Whatever our disastrous weakness may be, it is hardly sheer incapability for forming neighborhoods at the top, out of cities as a whole.

At the other end of the scale are a city's streets, and the minuscule neighborhoods they form, like our neighborhood of Hudson Street for example.

In the first several chapters of this book I have dwelt heavily upon the self-government functions of city streets: to weave webs of public surveillance and thus to protect strangers as well as themselves; to grow networks of small-scale, everyday public life and thus of trust and social control; and to help assimilate children into reasonably responsible and tolerant city life.

The street neighborhoods of a city have still another function in self-government, however, and a vital one: they must draw effectively on help when trouble comes along that is too big for the street to handle. This help must sometimes come from the

by
Kuusisto, Stephen.

21. *Letter from Venice*

I came to Venice precisely because I was blind. The palazzos boasted of sunlight and stood beside the Grand Canal like wedding cakes. Water slapped the boat and somewhere a window opened and I heard a songbird. I guessed it was a Jamaican bluebird. I'd heard him before. A year ago I was standing at the Dunn's River Falls when a Jamaican minister took me by the hand. His palm was rough as a starfish. "Bluebirds sing all around here," he said. "You listen you can hear them above the falls." They were there, talking in the high, sunlit branches.

Now I heard them on the Grand Canal. Then a small girl laughed and a man sang in a baritone voice. I imagined they were on a balcony and waving at the tourists floating beneath them.

Venice has endless distractions for the listener. I'd come here, in part, to prove it. Marsilio Ficino, the Florentine translator of Plato, wrote: *The world is just shapes and sounds.* Ficino said that sound equals form. This poses a challenge—could I, for instance, listen to the accidental music of a place like Venice while my wife explored the architecture? Could I find corresponding pleasure in merely listening?

As luck would have it, my literary agent called while I was pondering this in the New York Public Library. "I have a boondoggle for you," she said. "You can think of it as a romp." What followed was so improbable I could only guess it must be true. A design firm in Milan wanted me to appear in a magazine ad for interior lighting. My memoir *Planet of the Blind* had been translated into Italian under the title *Tutti i colori dei buio* (All the Colors of Darkness). Now the Italians wanted me to pose beneath stylish lights and say: *You can't imagine how I see light.* Of course my wife Connie and I and my guide dog Corky would be flown to Milan. All our expenses would be taken care of. Yes this was a boondoggle . . . Yes they could get us tickets to La Scala . . .

That night sitting in our kitchen Connie and I folded and spindled the journey. I worried about the tactlessness of appearing in an ad for interior lighting. Blindness is not a trifling subject. In my memoir I depict the effects of light and shade as being both shocking and oddly beautiful. My version of blindness still allows me to see colors and shapes, though they are often inexact and more than a little troubling. But forget the aesthetics of the thing: over seventy percent of the blind remain unemployed in the United States. As a blind person I knew it was essential to portray the dignity of physical difference. But I also remembered the American poet Theodore Roethke, who wrote: *The eye, of course, is not enough. But the outer eye serves the inner, that's the point.* I decided that I liked the irony of the advertisement—*You can't imagine how I see light.* This was about the inner eye. Roethke also said: *Literalness is the devil's weapon.* We decided we would go.

My own hearing had become careful and algebraic. If seeing is really an epicurean experience—if a stained glass window can take us higher like the Kama Sutra—then hearing has only

its acquired nobility, sequenced and slow. I knew that I needed to go to Venice for "the Ficino Cure." I had to wander in a delirium of sound in a vast city with no cars. I had to get lost there. Connie could go her own way. We'd meet in the evening at Harry's Bar and she could tell me about San Zaccaria and I would tell her about getting lost while following the music of what happens.

First we would go to Milan. The lighting firm had retained the noted photographer Elliott Erwitt to photograph three blind artists. A Russian chess master and a concert pianist from Milan joined me in a villa on the outskirts of the city. Here we were: a crew of blind men who saw light with the inner eye. We were each in his way worried about the dignity of this enterprise. Each wondered if he'd made a mistake. We were upright and quiet. Eventually we were photographed in separate sessions and our paths never crossed again. We were free.

I was surprised by the odor of the stones. The Venetian mortar had a heady scent—the smell of galvanic particles, a chalky smell that was distinct from the ocean.

From the deck of the vaporetto I saw a sack of feathers: tropical feathers, green pastels—then, in the fast-changing light, this became a lemon dessert, a tower of ice—my blindness identified palazzos and clouds through cataracts and damaged retinas and announced that pillows were falling from a great ship. In reality the ship was a church blocking the sun. The pillows were boats piled with produce. "My Venice," it turned out, was a transparency, a slide that had been overexposed, or more properly, two slides that had been fitted neatly across my face. You can't imagine how I see light! Like the poet Wallace Stevens, I was "catching tigers in red weather." Some of the world's most renowned architecture stood before me and I was staring at the protoplasm of microbiology.

I turned to Connie, who is a resolute admirer of sunsets; a café observer—thinking to ask "What's that darkly groomed form over yonder?" but thought better of it for she was in a rapture of the quattrocento. And I, in turn, knew that I must find my own Venice because Marsilio Ficino had challenged me. The light about my head was incandescent, striking. It did not resolve into anything knowable. There was a kind of magnificence about this. I was passing through a prismatic cloud. Venice wore her mask of sea glass and I wore mine. I would dance with her. For music we'd take the ordinary buzz and din of the narrow passageways and canals.

After finding our hotel I made a solo foray into the Venetian alleys. I wasn't exclusively alone since I was accompanied by Corky. Corky was companionable, and unfazed by strange cities. She was also large and handsome with a noble head. Before I'd gone two steps a passing woman remarked: "Cane guida! Bellissima!" I nodded on Corky's behalf and then we sailed up a causeway—man and dog pushed by wind, each of us taking in the aromatic salts and musk of this place we'd never seen before. We turned left and Corky guided me through a medieval warren of slippery paving stones and jutting shops. She hugged the walls, evading a pack of schoolchildren shouting in French. I heard bells from a door, tourists speaking Japanese, and something heavy rolling on casters. The air was wet and cold. I heard caged birds from somewhere above and put out a hand. What was this, a morning glory trellis? I'd backed into a cul-de-sac, a fairy grot, a cave of waterweeds and acacia.

I was in equal parts a figure of struggle and peace; a walking lodestone of sorts. I touched my fingers to a cold window. A fine dust coated the glass. A light rain had begun falling, and since there was no one around I encouraged Corky to relieve herself there in the fairy grot. I stood listening. There

were extraordinary songbirds calling from a second-story window. Laughter from above, a woman and a child . . . I couldn't make out the words. Two poets . . . The lyrical push of ordinary Italian . . .

I had to slow down. If I was going to listen to Venice properly I needed to hear the cadences of the place. I needed to stand still. Again I thought of Theodore Roethke: *A poet must be a good reporter; but he must be something a good deal more.* Whitman called this *loafing.* I thought of Whitman observing the parade of humanity with lewd concentration. Walt had a good ear. He loved opera and knew how to sit perfectly still.

At home in New York, Corky and I raced up and down the streets at breakneck speeds. Guide dogs move fast through traffic. We sailed past the expensive couples on their Rollerblades and took the joggers in Central Park by surprise. It was obvious that here in Venice we didn't need to rush anywhere. We could prevail over chaos by means of deliberation.

We trailed the sound of footsteps through a transverse intersection of alleys. Shop bells rang . . . someone opened a door . . . Corky followed a stranger into a shop and we found ourselves in a room full of hand-blown glass. We stood completely still. There was a deep silence. All eyes were watching us. I was certain that the shop's owner was horrified—a blind man with only a dog for company had appeared amid the exquisite glass! We were literally "a bull in a china shop"!

Then there was a noise of little shoes—paper slippers—a tiny person was approaching . . . "Listen," a woman said. I heard the hum of breath moving over glass—she was playing a glass flute! Wind and sunlight pressed through dark leaves. I was sweetly transfixed. This was a shy, unasked-for gift . . . She played the delicate pipe and I imagined leaps of light on water. *A mind of grace is real and it comes by surprise*, I thought. The shop-

keeper showed me glass butterflies, a glass cricket, fish, a glass bird with wings outstretched . . .

For the next hour I walked by ear. I broke the rules for the proper use of a dog guide by issuing vague directions, letting Corky wander aimlessly. Together we got good and lost. I tracked the sounds of bells and a scattering of wings and guessed that I'd arrived at St. Mark's Square. It was good not knowing where I was. The sun had come out and a balloon seller walked about in slow circles—maybe he had seeds for the birds instead of balloons. He had a litany of amiable phrases drawn from a dozen languages but none of the words revealed what he was selling. He had a sack of coins that I imagined was hanging from his belt. The coins and the rhythm of his walk were strophe and antistrophe. He sang to the far corners of the square. "Hello! Hello! Beautiful! Beautiful! *Willkommen! Tervetuloa!*" Coins slapped against his belt.

"Are you all right?" The voice was British. Yes, I'd managed to find my way to St. Mark's Square. And Corky was standing stoically amidst thousands of pigeons. The tourists were photographing her.

Apparently a significant number of nuns were snapping our picture. Once the Englishman mentioned it I heard their cameras clicking. I told the Englishman that I was walking and listening with no true destination. He called to his wife. "These two have no idea where they're going," he said. "I mean he's just walking about and listening!" She asked if she could have my photograph. I let them take my picture and then I told them that I must run—it was time to feed the dog.

The sun was setting. I stopped on a bridge and stood for a time. A gondola slipped beneath us, the plash of its rudder sounded like the tail of a pheasant in the grass. I imagined the

gondolier was going home to his wife and children. It was twilight and cold. If he looked back he'd see me leaning on the bridge and talking to myself. He wouldn't see the dog, just a man wearing a leather jacket and sunglasses.

Twenty years ago at the Iowa Writers' Workshop I read philosophy like a halfhearted gardener. I sat under willows and read parts of Kant and Hegel. Now the gondola's hull was slapping the surface of the canal; the noise echoed under the bridge. Two women hurried past in the growing darkness; I could hear them admiring the dog in German. *Guesswork and understanding create a knowing man*, I thought. *The subjectivity of Kant . . . Why go anywhere when you can't see? Is it because the spirit of man and the world of form are identical? Because even with eyes shut my spirit and the narrow alleys of Venice were one and the same?*

I listened.

Walked.

Jazz piano drifted from somewhere. There was a nightclub nearby.

I walked some more.

The Venetians had more caged birds than any other people.

Then I was in a working-class district. The windows of the apartments were open to spring rain. Radios and televisions played from building after building. There was a clatter of dishes . . . I heard a tinny stereo playing the Rolling Stones—"Jumping Jack Flash" . . . From still another window I heard the voices of two men arguing. Wild laughter from a woman, a mezzo-soprano . . . The odd grace of being was in that laugh because the men stopped—then laughed along with her . . . They were laughing because twelve moons circled Jupiter . . . Because one of them had forgotten his left from his right . . .

Hearing poetry starts the psychological mechanism of prayer.

The phrase was Roethke's.

I sat alone in a tiny neighborhood park.

I was amazed at how quiet Venice suddenly was.

It was a city of wind . . .

Someone lowered a flag. There was the unmistakable sound of pulleys. It was time to walk.

Something strange was happening to me. I was surprisingly happy. Why not? I'd been drifting through the unfamiliar atmosphere with only the wind for a map. Was this what happened to sighted people as they wandered in churches and museums?

Corky stopped while I located a flight of steps with my foot. In the distance I heard a crowd. They were still far off. They made a strange buzz. I thought of Samson working his mill.

It appeared that I'd emerged from the vatic silence into a scene of great confusion. I wondered briefly if I'd walked onto a movie set because hundreds of people were shouting in a chorus. I had found my way into the middle of a street protest and I was completely ignorant about what was going on—I was Candide walking among the Bulgarians. Women were shouting. Gunshots rang out. No, they were firecrackers. Corky continued working and guided me through a knot of humanity as if we were in New York at rush hour. She pushed past a group of men who were banging trash can lids. I supposed that the look on my face suggested my incomprehension because someone tapped me on the arm and said: "It's a protest. The hotel workers are going on strike!" There were more firecrackers and then there were police whistles. There was a palpable feeling of anger mixed with hilarity. This was street theater and not a riot. We turned a corner and moved

quickly away. I wanted to turn and wave but Corky was going at a good clip.

I wondered if Connie was viewing the paintings of Titian and Tintoretto. Maybe she was drifting in a gondola around Santa Maria della Salute. Me? I was lost. A great baroque weather vane turned before me. Venice—"queen of the seas"—her jewelry and clouds attracting me at random . . .

The next morning I listened on the Bridge of Sighs to the conversations of tourists.

Gondolas floated beneath the bridge.

Leaning at the rail, I overheard a woman talking about her dentist.

"Honest to God!" she said. "You'd think a dentist with his reputation would have noticed by now!"

I wanted to hear the rest, but the Bridge of Sighs swallowed her story.

"It's true!" said a man in another boat. "Just look at the way she dresses!"

"Vitamins," said a different man.

"It's just schoolbook Latin," a woman said.

"The great excitement of Manzoni when Napoleon died," said another woman.

No one noticed the bridge.

"Catherine of Siena," said a man.

"I fully intend to catch up with it!" said a woman.

There were gondolas with nothing but laughing people.

Was it the influence of Disney?

This was the Bridge of Sighs!

The doges of Venice marched their subjects across this span to the waiting prison where they most certainly died from starvation and torture. Later the Austrians marched the Venetians

over this same bridge when the Austro-Hungarian Empire owned Venice during the nineteenth century. One can only imagine the Austrians and their efficient cruelties . . .

The gondolas slipped by and the tourists talked in floating zones of contentment.

The gondoliers had completely given up on their traditional role as tour guides. They worked their tillers in silence.

"She was a glowing bridesmaid," said a woman.

There were limits to how much listening I could do without the consoling balance of visual description. Connie took me to the Church of St. Mark's to see the mosaics and I listened as she described the strands of gold finer than hair that were woven through the marble floor.

The tesserae of the mosaic were smaller than chipped diamonds or the microscopic slices of platinum inside Rolex watches.

Connie's voice had a respectful softness. She was a guest. As a result she conveyed her appreciation for the things she saw.

We stood in the great church amidst a billion inlaid fragments of glass, marble, and tile.

Later we drifted through the city. Connie described the Rialto Bridge. With its baroque foppishness it looked temporary—as if it was erected for a wedding.

We saw Mozart's louvered window. The building was in the dark even at midday.

We saw a canal that had been dammed at both ends and then drained. Men were working at the foundations of a sinking palazzo with what appeared to be rubber mallets.

We noticed a horse on a thin bridge, improbable as an onion atop the queen's crown.

Three men wearing black tuxedos waved from a motorboat.

We drifted around the Church of Santa Maria della Salute. Gulls rose and fell against a backdrop of dark Adriatic clouds.

Lights appeared at the tall windows of the monastery.

We sat above the Grand Canal and sipped wine. The Venetian dusk called the bleached whiteness out of the stones. I talked about listening as a variation of sight-seeing. Connie was a professional trainer of guide dogs. Accordingly she knew a good deal about the art of hearing. More than once while training her dogs she assumed the role of a blind person by walking blindfolded through the streets of New York. As Huck Finn would say, "she has sand."

My Olympiad was to find aesthetic pleasure among the riches of the baroque with little or no visual help. The trouble with this plan was glaringly obvious—the sounds of a place were products of random nature—they were happenings of luck and factors of wind. Boats turned at their moorings. There was music from their chains. A window slid open because a little boy saw a calico cat on a ledge—the cat who got away last night—and now the boy was calling softly. This was the mysterious aleatoric work of the hourglass. But no listener could ever hear in the wind the exquisite formal arrangements of architecture. For this I would always require help. And something more—a nobility of descriptive engagement from my wife and from my friends . . .

The next morning Connie spotted a motor launch piled high with boxes of Jaffa oranges. The boat was in the hands of a single man who believed that with mind over matter he could squeeze his cargo beneath a miniature bridge. Connie described him as he drove his tower of crates into a mousehole. There was a groan, then a splintering of wood. The people atop the bridge broke into rowdy laughter. Salty, colorful words boomed back

and forth. One man shouted: "The bridge is too slight for such a thing. Back up!" All the while the reckless captain worked feverishly to break the logjam. He kicked at crates of oranges and three of them tumbled into the canal where they bobbed like deck chairs thrown from a stricken ship. Now the crowd on the bridge shouted more instructions. "You need additional weight! We'll come down!" Four stout men climbed over the railing of the bridge and dropped into the flimsy motor launch. They lay down on top of the crates. They were willing the boat to sink lower. The captain prodded the ceiling of the bridge with his skinny arms. "If the canal rises they'll be stuck in there," said Connie. "I wonder if the Venetian water patrol carries the Jaws of Life?"

We watched as five men laughed their way under a bridge. Heft and hilarity were their only tools of navigation.

Had I been walking alone I would have missed this splendid moment. The predominance of the eye—that old magician! How he snaps us to attention whenever he discovers chaos. A friend calls on the phone and says: "I just saw the damnedest thing! A white cloth seemed to be dancing by itself under the trees. For a minute I thought it was a ghost. When I looked again I saw it was a squirrel with a man's handkerchief in its mouth."

The "willing suspension of disbelief" is the very faith of poetry, as Coleridge said. But it's also a prime ingredient in the gleam of the eye. I don't think it really matters whose eyes are gleaming. As long as my companion is a talkative enthusiast of the odd apparition, everything will be okay. I can know the world by proxy.

Walking in Venice in long, slow circles, I realized that sound is to shape as thirst is to hunger. Ficino understood the nature of the meal.

Dear Marsilio Ficino,

I travel with my wife. And yes, she sees better than 20/20. Ted Williams, the baseball player, also had 20/10 sight. In his heyday with the Boston Red Sox he saw the stitches on a fastball. Connie sees blackbirds flick their wings in the corn of southern Ohio. She drives at seventy miles per hour and notices red squirrels, pheasants, bob-headed quail, Arabian horses . . . Handmade signs for Ohio Swiss cheese, sausage, fresh dill pickles . . . In Venice she spots the unhistorical shops selling faux zebra hides—"in case you need to cover your piano," she says . . . And the shop displaying handmade women's shoes, but only for the left foot, a specialty trade . . .

And yes, dear Ficino, Connie reads me the menus in comic Italian, and the waiters look on with contempt—but their scorn turns to dismay when I tell them we're only ordering for the dog. And in turn we walk the palazzos with Corky heeling beside us and I see the interiors that Connie sees, hear her voice among the dazzling arches and feel that I have stepped through a thin wall of sleep into someone else's dream. And this is all right. Why not? We train all our days in the geometry of self so as not to get lost. Why not get lost in someone else's wonder?

On our last morning in Venice I went out alone. The air was bluish in my retinas . . . Trees clicked in a small park. A frenzied Pekinese followed me. He barked like a motorized winch in need of oil. He was a stray. There were strays all over Venice. *Once*, I thought, *they lived in the palaces.*

I walked. It was early and shopkeepers swept and launches delivered goods. Once more I was in no remarkable spot, I was merely standing beside a weathered door. I pressed my palms against the wood. It was rough as pumice, or the barnacled hull

of a New England dory. Sometimes I believe that beneath the rutted surfaces of wood I can feel the grain, the pith of the tree. This was a black oak from Macedonia. In my mind's eye I could see where it stood on a great estate— saw the picnickers beneath it, some five hundred years ago.

Wanderlust : A History of Walking

by Rebecca Solnit

Chapter 1

TRACING A HEADLAND:
An Introduction

Where does it start? Muscles tense. One leg a pillar, holding the body upright between the earth and sky. The other a pendulum, swinging from behind. Heel touches down. The whole weight of the body rolls forward onto the ball of the foot. The big toe pushes off, and the delicately balanced weight of the body shifts again. The legs reverse position. It starts with a step and then another step and then another that add up like taps on a drum to a rhythm, the rhythm of walking. The most obvious and the most obscure thing in the world, this walking that wanders so readily into religion, philosophy, landscape, urban policy, anatomy, allegory, and heartbreak.

The history of walking is an unwritten, secret history whose fragments can be found in a thousand unemphatic passages in books, as well as in songs, streets, and almost everyone's adventures. The bodily history of walking is that of bipedal evolution and human anatomy. Most of the time walking is merely practical, the unconsidered locomotive means between two sites. To make walking into an investigation, a ritual, a meditation, is a special subset of walking, physiologically like and philosophically unlike the way the mail carrier brings the mail and the office worker reaches the train. Which is to say that the subject of walking is, in some sense, about how we invest universal acts with particular meanings. Like eating or breathing, it can be invested with wildly different cultural meanings, from the erotic to the spiritual, from the revolutionary to the artistic. Here this

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Isn't it really quite extraordinary to see that, since man took his first step, no one has asked himself why he walks,

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history begins to become part of the history of the imagination and the culture, of what kind of pleasure, freedom, and meaning are pursued at different times by different kinds of walks and walkers. That imagination has both shaped and been shaped by the spaces it passes through on two feet. Walking has created paths, roads, trade routes; generated local and cross-continental senses of place; shaped cities, parks; generated maps, guidebooks, gear, and, further afield, a vast library of walking stories and poems, of pilgrimages, mountaineering expeditions, meanders, and summer picnics. The landscapes, urban and rural, gestate the stories, and the stories bring us back to the sites of this history.

This history of walking is an amateur history, just as walking is an amateur act. To use a walking metaphor, it trespasses through everybody else's field—through anatomy, anthropology, architecture, gardening, geography, political and cultural history, literature, sexuality, religious studies—and doesn't stop in any of them on its long route. For if a field of expertise can be imagined as a real field—a nice rectangular confine carefully tilled and yielding a specific crop—then the subject of walking resembles walking itself in its lack of confines. And though *the* history of walking is, as part of all these fields and everyone's experience, virtually infinite, *this* history of walking I am writing can only be partial, an idiosyncratic path traced through them by one walker, with much doubling back and looking around. In what follows, I have tried to trace the paths that brought most of us in my country, the United States, into the present moment, a history compounded largely of European sources, inflected and subverted by the vastly different scale of American space, the centuries of adaptation and mutation here, and by the other traditions that have recently met up with those paths, notably Asian traditions. The history of walking is everyone's history, and any written version can only hope to indicate some of the more well-trodden paths in the author's vicinity—which is to say, the paths I trace are not the only paths.

I sat down one spring day to write about walking and stood up again, because a desk is no place to think on the large scale. In a headland just north of the Golden Gate Bridge studded with abandoned military fortifications, I went out walking up a valley and along a ridgeline, then down to the Pacific. Spring had come after an unusually wet winter, and the hills had turned that riotous, exuberant green I forget and rediscover every year. Through the new growth poked grass from the

how he walks, if he has ever walked, if he could walk better, what he achieves in walking . . . questions that are tied

year before, bleached from summer gold to an ashen gray by the rain, part of the subtler palette of the rest of the year. Henry David Thoreau, who walked more vigorously than me on the other side of the continent, wrote of the local, "An absolutely new prospect is a great happiness, and I can still get this any afternoon. Two or three hours' walking will carry me to as strange a country as I expect ever to see. A single farmhouse which I had not seen before is sometimes as good as the dominions of the King of Dahomey. There is in fact a sort of harmony discoverable between the capabilities of the landscape within a circle of ten miles' radius, or the limits of an afternoon walk, and the threescore years and ten of human life. It will never become quite familiar to you."

These linked paths and roads form a circuit of about six miles that I began hiking ten years ago to walk off my angst during a difficult year. I kept coming back to this route for respite from my work and for my work too, because thinking is generally thought of as doing nothing in a production-oriented culture, and doing nothing is hard to do. It's best done by disguising it as doing something, and the something closest to doing nothing is walking. Walking itself is the intentional act closest to the unwilled rhythms of the body, to breathing and the beating of the heart. It strikes a delicate balance between working and idling, being and doing. It is a bodily labor that produces nothing but thoughts, experiences, arrivals. After all those years of walking to work out other things, it made sense to come back to work close to home, in Thoreau's sense, and to think about walking.

Walking, ideally, is a state in which the mind, the body, and the world are aligned, as though they were three characters finally in conversation together, three notes suddenly making a chord. Walking allows us to be in our bodies and in the world without being made busy by them. It leaves us free to think without being wholly lost in our thoughts. I wasn't sure whether I was too soon or too late for the purple lupine that can be so spectacular in these headlands, but milkmaids were growing on the shady side of the road on the way to the trail, and they recalled the hillsides of my childhood that first bloomed every year with an extravagance of these white flowers. Black butterflies fluttered around me, tossed along by wind and wings, and they called up another era of my past. Moving on foot seems to make it easier to move in time; the mind wanders from plans to recollections to observations.

The rhythm of walking generates a kind of rhythm of thinking, and the pas-

to all the philosophical, psychological, and political systems which preoccupy the world.—HONORÉ DE BALZAC,

sage through a landscape echoes or stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts. This creates an odd consonance between internal and external passage, one that suggests that the mind is also a landscape of sorts and that walking is one way to traverse it. A new thought often seems like a feature of the landscape that was there all along, as though thinking were traveling rather than making. And so one aspect of the history of walking is the history of thinking made concrete—for the motions of the mind cannot be traced, but those of the feet can. Walking can also be imagined as a visual activity, every walk a tour leisurely enough both to see and to think over the sights, to assimilate the new into the known. Perhaps this is where walking's peculiar utility for thinkers comes from. The surprises, liberations, and clarifications of travel can sometimes be garnered by going around the block as well as going around the world, and walking travels both near and far. Or perhaps walking should be called movement, not travel, for one can walk in circles or travel around the world immobilized in a seat, and a certain kind of wanderlust can only be assuaged by the acts of the body itself in motion, not the motion of the car, boat, or plane. It is the movement as well as the sights going by that seems to make things happen in the mind, and this is what makes walking ambiguous and endlessly fertile: it is both means and end, travel and destination.

The old red dirt road built by the army had begun its winding, uphill course through the valley. Occasionally I focused on the act of walking, but mostly it was unconscious, the feet proceeding with their own knowledge of balance, of sidestepping rocks and crevices, of pacing, leaving me free to look at the roll of hills far away and the abundance of flowers close up: brodia, the pink papery blossoms whose name I never learned, an abundance of cloverlike sourgrass in yellow bloom, and then halfway along the last bend, a paperwhite narcissus. After twenty minutes' trudge uphill, I stopped to smell it. There used to be a dairy in this valley, and the foundations of a farmhouse and a few straggling old fruit trees still survive somewhere down below, on the other side of the wet, willow-crowded valley bottom. It was a working landscape far longer than a recreational one: first came the Miwok Indians, then the agriculturists, themselves rooted out after a century by the military base, which closed in the 1970s, when coasts became irrelevant to an increasingly abstract and aerial kind of war. Since the

THEORIE DE LA DEMARCHÉ *An Eskimo custom offers an angry person release by walking the emotion out of his*

1970s, this place has been turned over to the National Park Service and to people like me who are heirs to the cultural tradition of walking in the landscape for pleasure. The massive concrete gun emplacements, bunkers, and tunnels will never disappear as the dairy buildings have, but it must have been the dairy families that left behind the live legacy of garden flowers that crop up among the native plants.

Walking is meandering, and I meandered from my cluster of narcissus in the curve of the red road first in thought and then by foot. The army road reached the crest and crossed the trail that would take me across the brow of the hill, cutting into the wind and downhill before its gradual ascent to the western side of the crest. On the ridgetop up above this footpath, facing into the next valley north, was an old radar station surrounded by an octagon of fencing. The odd collection of objects and cement bunkers on an asphalt pad were part of a Nike missile guidance system, a system for directing nuclear missiles from their base in the valley below to other continents, though none were ever launched from here in war. Think of the ruin as a souvenir from the canceled end of the world.

It was nuclear weapons that first led me to walking history, in a trajectory as surprising as any trail or train of thought. I became in the 1980s an antinuclear activist and participated in the spring demonstrations at the Nevada Test Site, a Department of Energy site the size of Rhode Island in southern Nevada where the United States has been detonating nuclear bombs—more than a thousand to date—since 1951. Sometimes nuclear weapons seemed like nothing more than intangible budget figures, waste disposal figures, potential casualty figures, to be resisted by campaigning, publishing, and lobbying. The bureaucratic abstractness of both the arms race and the resistance to it could make it hard to understand that the real subject was and is the devastation of real bodies and real places. At the test site, it was different. The weapons of mass destruction were being exploded in a beautifully stark landscape we camped near for the week or two of each demonstration (exploded underground after 1963, though they often leaked radiation into the atmosphere anyway and always shook the earth). We—that *we* made up of the scruffy American counterculture, but also of survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Buddhist monks and Franciscan priests and nuns, veterans turned pacifist, renegade physicists, Kazakh and German and Polynesian activists living in the shadow of the bomb, and the Western Shoshone, whose land it was—had broken through the abstractions. Beyond them were the actual-

or her system in a straight line across the landscape, the point at which the anger is conquered is marked with a

ities of places, of sights, of actions, of sensations—of handcuffs, thorns, dust, heat, thirst, radiation risk, the testimony of radiation victims—but also of spectacular desert light, the freedom of open space, and the stirring sight of the thousands who shared our belief that nuclear bombs were the wrong instrument with which to write the history of the world. We bore a kind of bodily witness to our convictions, to the fierce beauty of the desert, and to the apocalypses being prepared nearby. The form our demonstrations took was walking: what was on the public-land side of the fence a ceremonious procession became, on the off-limits side, an act of trespass resulting in arrest. We were engaging, on an unprecedentedly grand scale, in civil disobedience or civil resistance, an American tradition first articulated by Thoreau.

Thoreau himself was both a poet of nature and a critic of society. His famous act of civil disobedience was passive—a refusal to pay taxes to support war and slavery and an acceptance of the night in jail that ensued—and it did not overlap directly with his involvement in exploring and interpreting the local landscape, though he did lead a huckleberrying party the day he got out of jail. In our actions at the test site the poetry of nature and criticism of society were united in this camping, walking, and trespassing, as though we had figured out how a berrying party could be a revolutionary cadre. It was a revelation to me, the way this act of walking through a desert and across a cattle guard into the forbidden zone could articulate political meaning. And in the course of traveling to this landscape, I began to discover other western landscapes beyond my coastal region and to explore those landscapes and the histories that had brought me to them—the history not only of the development of the West but of the Romantic taste for walking and landscape, the democratic tradition of resistance and revolution, the more ancient history of pilgrimage and walking to achieve spiritual goals. I found my voice as a writer in describing all the layers of history that shaped my experiences at the test site. And I began to think and to write about walking in the course of writing about places and their histories.

Of course walking, as any reader of Thoreau's essay "Walking" knows, inevitably leads into other subjects. Walking is a subject that is always straying. Into, for example, the shooting stars below the missile guidance station in the northern headlands of the Golden Gate. They are my favorite wildflower, these small magenta cones with their sharp black points that seem aerodynamically shaped for a flight that never comes, as though they had evolved forgetful of the

stick, bearing witness to the strength or length of the rage.—LUCY LIPPARD, *OVERLAY* *We learn a place and how*

fact that flowers have stems and stems have roots. The chaparral on both sides of the trail, watered by the condensation of the ocean fog through the dry months and shaded by the slope's northern exposure, was lush. While the missile guidance station on the crest always makes me think of the desert and of war, these banks below always remind me of English hedgerows, those field borders with their abundance of plants, birds, and that idyllic English kind of countryside. There were ferns here, wild strawberries, and, tucked under a coyote bush, a cluster of white iris in bloom.

Although I came to think about walking, I couldn't stop thinking about everything else, about the letters I should have been writing, about the conversations I'd been having. At least when my mind strayed to the phone conversation with my friend Sono that morning, I was still on track. Sono's truck had been stolen from her West Oakland studio, and she told me that though everyone responded to it as a disaster, she wasn't all that sorry it was gone, or in a hurry to replace it. There was a joy, she said, to finding that her body was adequate to get her where she was going, and it was a gift to develop a more tangible, concrete relationship to her neighborhood and its residents. We talked about the more stately sense of time one has afoot and on public transit, where things must be planned and scheduled beforehand, rather than rushed through at the last minute, and about the sense of place that can only be gained on foot. Many people nowadays live in a series of interiors—home, car, gym, office, shops—disconnected from each other. On foot everything stays connected, for while walking one occupies the spaces between those interiors in the same way one occupies those interiors. One lives in the whole world rather than in interiors built up against it.

The narrow trail I had been following came to an end as it rose to meet the old gray asphalt road that runs up to the missile guidance station. Stepping from path to road means stepping up to see the whole expanse of the ocean, spreading uninterrupted to Japan. The same shock of pleasure comes every time I cross this boundary to discover the ocean again, an ocean shining like beaten silver on the brightest days, green on the overcast ones, brown with the muddy runoff of the streams and rivers washing far out to sea during winter floods, an opalescent mottling of blues on days of scattered clouds, only invisible on the foggiest days, when the salt smell alone announces the change. This day the sea was a solid blue running toward an indistinct horizon where white mist blurred the transition to cloudless sky. From here on, my route was downhill. I had told Sono about an ad

to visualize spatial relationships, as children, on foot and with imagination. Place and the scale of place must be

I found in the *Los Angeles Times* a few months ago that I'd been thinking about ever since. It was for a CD-ROM encyclopedia, and the text that occupied a whole page read, "You used to walk across town in the pouring rain to use our encyclopedias. We're pretty confident that we can get your kid to click and drag." I think it was the kid's walk in the rain that constituted the real education, at least of the senses and the imagination. Perhaps the child with the CD-ROM encyclopedia will stray from the task at hand, but wandering in a book or a computer takes place within more constricted and less sensual parameters. It's the unpredictable incidents between official events that add up to a life, the incalculable that gives it value. Both rural and urban walking have for two centuries been prime ways of exploring the unpredictable and the incalculable, but they are now under assault on many fronts.

The multiplication of technologies in the name of efficiency is actually eradicating free time by making it possible to maximize the time and place for production and minimize the unstructured travel time in between. New timesaving technologies make most workers more productive, not more free, in a world that seems to be accelerating around them. Too, the rhetoric of efficiency around these technologies suggests that what cannot be quantified cannot be valued—that that vast array of pleasures which fall into the category of doing nothing in particular, of woolgathering, cloud-gazing, wandering, window-shopping, are nothing but voids to be filled by something more definite, more productive, or faster paced. Even on this headland route going nowhere useful, this route that could only be walked for pleasure, people had trodden shortcuts between the switchbacks as though efficiency was a habit they couldn't shake. The indeterminacy of a ramble, on which much may be discovered, is being replaced by the determinate shortest distance to be traversed with all possible speed, as well as by the electronic transmissions that make real travel less necessary. As a member of the self-employed whose time saved by technology can be lavished on daydreams and meanders, I know these things have their uses, and use them—a truck, a computer, a modem—myself, but I fear their false urgency, their call to speed, their insistence that travel is less important than arrival. I like walking because it is slow, and I suspect that the mind, like the feet, works at about three miles an hour. If this is so, then modern life is moving faster than the speed of thought, or thoughtfulness.

Walking is about being outside, in public space, and public space is also being

measured against our bodies and their capabilities.—GARY SNYDER, "BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSTANTLY

abandoned and eroded in older cities, eclipsed by technologies and services that don't require leaving home, and shadowed by fear in many places (and strange places are always more frightening than known ones, so the less one wanders the city the more alarming it seems, while the fewer the wanderers the more lonely and dangerous it really becomes). Meanwhile, in many new places, public space isn't even in the design: what was once public space is designed to accommodate the privacy of automobiles; malls replace main streets; streets have no sidewalks; buildings are entered through their garages; city halls have no plazas; and everything has walls, bars, gates. Fear has created a whole style of architecture and urban design, notably in southern California, where to be a pedestrian is to be under suspicion in many of the subdivisions and gated "communities." At the same time, rural land and the once-inviting peripheries of towns are being swallowed up in car-commuter subdivisions and otherwise sequestered. In some places it is no longer possible to be out in public, a crisis both for the private epiphanies of the solitary stroller and for public space's democratic functions. It was this fragmentation of lives and landscapes that we were resisting long ago, in the expansive spaces of the desert that temporarily became as public as a plaza.

And when public space disappears, so does the body as, in Sono's fine term, adequate for getting around. Sono and I spoke of the discovery that our neighborhoods—which are some of the most feared places in the Bay Area—aren't all that hostile (though they aren't safe enough to let us forget about safety altogether). I have been threatened and mugged on the street, long ago, but I have a thousand times more often encountered friends passing by, a sought-for book in a store window, compliments and greetings from my loquacious neighbors, architectural delights, posters for music and ironic political commentary on walls and telephone poles, fortune-tellers, the moon coming up between buildings, glimpses of other lives and other homes, and street trees noisy with songbirds. The random, the unscreened, allows you to find what you don't know you are looking for, and you don't know a place until it surprises you. Walking is one way of maintaining a bulwark against this erosion of the mind, the body, the landscape, and the city, and every walker is a guard on patrol to protect the ineffable.

Perhaps a third of the way down the road that wandered to the beach, an orange net was spread. It looked like a tennis net, but when I reached it I saw that it fenced off a huge new gap in the road. This road has been crumbling since I began to walk on it a decade ago. It used to roll uninterruptedly from sea to

WALKING" *Then one day walking round Tavistock Square I made up, as I sometimes make up my books,* To

ridgetop. Along the coastal reach of the road a little bite appeared in 1989 that one could edge around, then a little trail detoured around the growing gap. With every winter's rain, more and more red earth and road surface crumbled away, sliding into a heap at the ruinous bottom of the steep slope the road had once cut across. It was an astonishing sight at first, this road that dropped off into thin air, for one expects roads and paths to be continuous. Every year more of it has fallen. And I have walked this route so often that every part of it springs associations on me. I remember all the phases of the collapse and how different a person I was when the road was complete. I remember explaining to a friend on this route almost three years earlier why I liked walking the same way over and over. I joked, in a bad adaptation of Heraclitus's famous dictum about rivers, that you never step on the same trail twice; and soon afterward we came across the new staircase that cut down the steep hillside, built far enough inland that the erosion wouldn't reach it for many years to come. If there is a history of walking, then it too has come to a place where the road falls off, a place where there is no public space and the landscape is being paved over, where leisure is shrinking and being crushed under the anxiety to produce, where bodies are not in the world but only indoors in cars and buildings, and an apotheosis of speed makes those bodies seem anachronistic or feeble. In this context, walking is a subversive detour, the scenic route through a half-abandoned landscape of ideas and experiences.

I had to circumnavigate this new chunk bitten out of the actual landscape by going to a new detour on the right. There's always a moment on this circuit when the heat of climbing and the windblock the hills provide give way to the descent into ocean air, and this time it came at the staircase past the scree of a fresh cut into the green serpentine stone of the hill. From there it wasn't far to the switchback leading to the other half of the road, which winds closer and closer to the cliffs above the ocean, where waves shatter into white foam over the dark rocks with an audible roar. Soon I was at the beach, where surfers sleek as seals in their black wet suits were catching the point break at the northern edge of the cove, dogs chased sticks, people lolled on blankets, and the waves crashed, then sprawled into a shallow rush uphill to lap at the feet of those of us walking on the hard sand of high tide. Only a final stretch remained, up over a sandy crest and along the length of the murky lagoon full of water birds.

It was the snake that came as a surprise, a garter snake, so called because of the yellowish stripes running the length of its dark body, a snake tiny and en-

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In my the Lighthouse, *in a great, apparently involuntary rush.*—VIRGINIA WOOLF, MOMENTS OF BEING

chanting as it writhed like waving water across the path and into the grasses on one side. It didn't alarm me so much as alert me. Suddenly I came out of my thoughts to notice everything around me again—the catkins on the willows, the lapping of the water, the leafy patterns of the shadows across the path. And then myself, walking with the alignment that only comes after miles, the loose diagonal rhythm of arms swinging in synchronization with legs in a body that felt long and stretched out, almost as sinuous as the snake. My circuit was almost finished, and at the end of it I knew what my subject was and how to address it in a way I had not six miles before. It had come to me not in a sudden epiphany but with a gradual sureness, a sense of meaning like a sense of place. When you give yourself to places, they give you yourself back; the more one comes to know them, the more one seeds them with the invisible crop of memories and associations that will be waiting for you when you come back, while new places offer up new thoughts, new possibilities. Exploring the world is one of the best ways of exploring the mind, and walking travels both terrains.

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room, the world is beyond my understanding, / But when I walk I see that it consists of three or four hills and a

human evolutionary theory. It is the anatomical transformation that propelled us out of the animal kingdom to eventually occupy our own solitary position of dominion over the earth. Now it remains as a limitation, no longer leading us into a fantastic future but linking us to an ancient past as the same gait of a hundred thousand or a million, or if you go with Lovejoy, three million years ago. It may have made possible the work of the hands and the expansion of the mind, but it remains as something not particularly powerful or fast. If it once separated us from the rest of the animals, it now—like sex and birth, like breathing and eating—connects us to the limits of the biological.

The morning before I left I went walking in the national park, starting out from the rocks where Pat was teaching climbing, pacing myself to stay cool and hydrated. His father had told him, and he had told me, that the landscape never looks the same coming and going, so turn around periodically and look at the view you'll see coming back. It's good advice for this confusing landscape. I started amid a big cluster of rocks, an archipelago or a neighborhood of rock piles each the size of a huge building; like buildings they cut off views, so you have to know the lay of the land and local landmarks rather than counting on distant sights to steer by as in other deserts. With the morning sun at my left, I went south along a path that crossed a road to become a fainter road itself, with tufts of grass in the center; it curved along to the southwest and ended in another, much-used road. Small lizards darted into the bushes as I went by, and a faint flush of tender green grass was everywhere in the shade, spears an inch or two high from the downpour a few weeks ago. Drifting across the vast space, silent except for wind and footsteps, I felt uncluttered and unhurried for the first time in a while, already on desert time. My road reached the dead end of a private property boundary, so I circled around, guessing I could find another path back to the rock cluster, flirting with being lost. Mountain ranges appeared and disappeared on the horizon as I rotated around the plain and returned to the rocks. Eventually I met the point where my trail crossed the disused road, found my own footprints going the other way, printed crisply atop the softer footprints of people who'd passed this way on previous days, and followed that trace of my own passing an hour or so ago back to where I started.

Handkerchiefs were quite full.—EFFIE GRAY RUSKIN

You've got to walk / that lonesome valley / Walk it yourself / You've gotta gotta go / By yourself / Ain't nobody else / gonna go there for you / Yea, you've gotta go

Chapter 4

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

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 lightweight 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

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

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.

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 *ristras*. 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

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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-

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

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

counting —INSTRUCTIONS ON WALKING MEDITATION IN *THREE PILLARS OF ZEN*

Sigmund Freud believed, for

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

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

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 jubilance, 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 show 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 test 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-

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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.

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

by Solnit, Rebecca.

Chapter 11

THE SOLITARY STROLLER AND THE CITY

I lived in rural New Mexico long enough that when I came back home to San Francisco, I saw it for the first time as a stranger might. The exuberance of spring was urban for me that year, and I finally understood all those country songs about the lure of the bright lights of town. I walked everywhere in the balmy days and nights of May, amazed at how many possibilities could be crammed within the radius of those walks and thrilled by the idea I could just wander out the front door to find them. Every building, every storefront, seemed to open onto a different world, compressing all the variety of human life into a jumble of possibilities made all the richer by the conjunctions. Just as a bookshelf can jam together Japanese poetry, Mexican history, and Russian novels, so the buildings of my city contained Zen centers, Pentecostal churches, tattoo parlors, produce stores, burrito places, movie palaces, dim sum shops. Even the most ordinary things struck me with wonder, and the people on the street offered a thousand glimpses of lives like and utterly unlike mine.

Cities have always offered anonymity, variety, and conjunction, qualities best basked in by walking: one does not have to go into the bakery or the fortune-teller's, only to know that one might. A city always contains more than any inhabitant can know, and a great city always makes the unknown and the possible spurs to the imagination. San Francisco has long been called the most European of American cities, a comment more often made than explained. What I think its

There are few greater delights than to walk up and down them in the evening alone with thousands of other people,

speakers mean is that San Francisco, in its scale and its street life, keeps alive the idea of a city as a place of unmediated encounters, while most American cities are becoming more and more like enlarged suburbs, scrupulously controlled and segregated, designed for the noninteractions of motorists shuttling between private places rather than the interactions of pedestrians in public ones. San Francisco has water on three sides and a ridge on the fourth to keep it from sprawling, and several neighborhoods of lively streets. Truly urban density, beautiful buildings, views of the bay and the ocean from the crests of its hills, cafés and bars everywhere, suggest different priorities for space and time than in most American cities, as does the (gentrification-threatened) tradition of artists, poets, and social and political radicals making lives about other things than getting and spending.

My first Saturday back, I sauntered over to nearby Golden Gate Park, which lacks the splendor of a wilderness but has given me many compensatory pleasures: musicians practicing in the reverberant pedestrian underpasses, old Chinese women doing martial arts in formation, strolling Russian émigrés murmuring to each other in the velvet slurp of their mother tongue, dog walkers being yanked into the primeval world of canine joys, and access by foot to the shores of the Pacific. That morning, at the park's bandshell, the local radio variety show had joined forces with the "Watershed Poetry Festival," and I watched for a while. Former poet laureate of the United States Robert Hass was coaching children to read their poetry into the microphone onstage, and some poets I knew were standing in the wings. I went up to say hello to them, and they showed me their brand-new wedding rings and introduced me to more poets, and then I ran into the great California historian Malcolm Margolin, who told me stories that made me laugh. This was the daytime marvel of cities for me: coincidences, the mingling of many kinds of people, poetry given away to strangers under the open sky.

Margolin's publishing house, Heydey Press, was displaying its wares along with those of some other small presses and literary projects, and he handed me a book off his table titled *920 O'Farrell Street*. A memoir by Harriet Lane Levy, it recounted her own marvelous experiences growing up in San Francisco in the 1870s and 1880s. In her day, walking the streets of the city was as organized an entertainment as a modern excursion to the movies. "On Saturday night," she wrote, "the city joined in the promenade on Market Street, the broad thoroughfare that begins at the waterfront and cuts its straight path of miles to Twin Peaks,

up and down, relishing the lights coming through the trees or shining from the facades, listening to the sounds of

The sidewalks were wide and the crowd walking toward the bay met the crowd walking toward the ocean. The outpouring of the population was spontaneous as if in response to an urge for instant celebration. Every quarter of the city discharged its residents into the broad procession. Ladies and gentlemen of imposing social repute; their German and Irish servant girls, arms held fast in the arms of their sweethearts; French, Spaniards, gaunt, hard-working Portuguese; Mexicans, the Indian showing in reddened skin and high cheekbone—everybody, anybody, left home and shop, hotel, restaurant, and beer garden to empty into Market Street in a river of color. Sailors of every nation deserted their ships at the water front and, hurrying up Market Street in groups, joined the vibrating mass excited by the lights and stir and the gaiety of the throng. 'This is San Francisco,' their faces said. It was carnival; no confetti, but the air a criss-cross of a thousand messages; no masks, but eyes frankly charged with challenge. Down Market from Powell to Kearny, three long blocks, up Kearny to Bush, three short ones, then back again, over and over for hours, until a glance of curiosity deepened to one of interest; interest expanded into a smile, and a smile into anything. Father and I went downtown every Saturday night. We walked through avenues of light in a world hardly solid. Something was happening everywhere, every minute, something to be happy about. . . . We walked and walked and still something kept happening afresh." Market Street, which was once a great promenade, is still the city's central traffic artery, but decades of tearing it up and redeveloping it have deprived it of its social glory. Jack Kerouac managed to have two visions on it late in the 1940s or early in the 1950s, and he would probably embrace its freeway-shadowed midtown population of panhandlers and people running sidewalk sales out of shopping carts. Levy's downtown stretch is now trod by office workers and shoppers and by tourists swarming around the Powell Street cable car turnaround; more than a mile farther uptown, Market Street finally bursts into vigorous pedestrian life again for a few blocks before it crosses Castro Street and begins its steep ascent of Twin Peaks.

The history of both urban and rural walking is a history of freedom and of the definition of pleasure. But rural walking has found a moral imperative in the love of nature that has allowed it to defend and open up the countryside. Urban walking has always been a shadier business, easily turning into soliciting, cruising,

music and foreign voices and traffic, enjoying the smell of flowers and good food and the air from the nearby sea.

promenading, shopping, rioting, protesting, skulking, loitering, and other activities that, however enjoyable, hardly have the high moral tone of nature appreciation. Thus no similar defense has been mounted for the preservation of urban space, save by a few civil libertarians and urban theorists (who seldom note that public space is used and inhabited largely by walking it). Yet urban walking seems in many ways more like primordial hunting and gathering than walking in the country. For most of us the country or the wilderness is a place we walk through and look at, but seldom make things in or take things from (remember the famous Sierra Club dictum, "Take only photographs, leave only footprints"). In the city, the biological spectrum has been nearly reduced to the human and a few scavenger species, but the range of activities remains wide. Just as a gatherer may pause to note a tree whose acorns will be bountiful in six months or inspect a potential supply of basket canes, so an urban walker may note a grocery open late or a place to get shoes resoled, or detour by the post office. Too, the average rural walker looks at the general—the view, the beauty—and the landscape moves by as a gently modulated continuity: a crest long in view is reached, a forest thins out to become a meadow. The urbanite is on the lookout for particulars, for opportunities, individuals, and supplies, and the changes are abrupt. Of course the city resembles primordial life more than the country in a less charming way too; while nonhuman predators have been radically reduced in North America and eliminated in Europe, the possibility of human predators keeps city dwellers in a state of heightened alertness, at least in some times and places.

Those first months at home were so enchanting that I kept a walking journal and later that glorious summer wrote, "I suddenly realized I'd spent seven hours at the desk without a real interruption and was getting nervous and hunchbacked, walked to the Clay Theater on upper Fillmore via a passage on Broderick I'd never seen before—handsome squat old Victorians near the housing projects—and was pleased as ever when the familiar yielded up the unknown. The film was *When the Cat's Away*, about a solitary young Parisienne forced to meet her Place de Bastille neighbors when her cat vanishes, full of uneventful events and people with seesaw strides and rooftops and mumbling slang, and when it got out I was exhilarated and the night was dark with a pearly mist of fog on it. I walked back fast, first along California, past a couple—her unexceptional, him in a well-tailored brown suit with the knock knees of someone who'd spent time in leg braces—and ignored the bus, and did the same on Divisadero with that bus.

The sidewalks are lined with small shops, bars, stalls, dance halls, movies, booths lighted by acetylene lamps, and

Slowed down at an antique store window to look at a big creamy vase with blue Chinese sages painted on it, then a few doors down saw a balding Chinese man holding a toddler boy up to the glass of a store, where a woman on the inside was playing with him through the glass. To their confusion, I beamed. There's a way the artificial lights and natural darkness of nightwalks turn the day's continuum into a theater of tableaux, vignettes, set pieces, and there's always the unsettling pleasure of your shadow growing and shrinking as you move from streetlight to streetlight. Dodging a car as a traffic light changed, I broke into a canter and it felt so good I loped along a few more blocks without getting winded, though I got warm.

"All along Divisadero keeping an eye on the other people and on the open venues—liquor stores and smoke shops—and then turned up my own street. At a cross street a young black guy in a watch cap and dark clothes was running downhill at me at a great clip, and I looked around to suss up my options just in case—I mean if Queen Victoria was moving toward you that fast you'd take note. He saw my hesitation and assured me in the sweetest young man's voice, 'I'm not after you; I'm just *late*' and dashed past me, so I said, 'Good luck' and then, when he was into the street and I had time to collect my thoughts, 'Sorry to look suspicious, but you were kind of speedy.' He laughed, and then I did, and in a minute I recalled all the other encounters I'd had around the 'hood lately that might have had the earmarks of trouble but unfolded as pure civility and was pleased that I'd been prepared without being alarmed. At that moment, I looked up and saw in a top-floor window the same poster of Man Ray's *A l'heure de l'observatoire*—his painting of the sunset sky with the long red lips floating across it—that I'd seen in another window somewhere else in town a night or two before. This poster was bigger, and this night was more exuberant; seeing *A l'heure* twice seemed magic. Home in about twenty minutes at most."

Streets are the space left over between buildings. A house alone is an island surrounded by a sea of open space, and the villages that preceded cities were no more than archipelagos in that same sea. But as more and more buildings arose, they became a continent, the remaining open space no longer like the sea but like rivers, canals, and streams running between the land masses. People no longer moved anyhow in the open sea of rural space but traveled up and down the

everywhere are strange faces, strange costumes, strange and delightful impressions. To walk up such a street into the

streets, and just as narrowing a waterway increases flow and speed, so turning open space into the spillways of streets directs and intensifies the flood of walkers. In great cities, spaces as well as places are designed and built: walking, witnessing, being in public, are as much part of the design and purpose as is being inside to eat, sleep, make shoes or love or music. The word *citizen* has to do with cities, and the ideal city is organized around citizenship—around participation in public life.

Most American cities and towns, however, are organized around consumption and production, as were the dire industrial cities of England, and public space is merely the void between workplaces, shops, and dwellings. Walking is only the beginning of citizenship, but through it the citizen knows his or her city and fellow citizens and truly inhabits the city rather than a small privatized part thereof. Walking the streets is what links up reading the map with living one's life, the personal microcosm with the public macrocosm; it makes sense of the maze all around. In her celebrated *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs describes how a popular, well-used street is kept safe from crime merely by the many people going by. Walking maintains the publicness and viability of public space. "What distinguishes the city," writes Franco Moretti, "is that its spatial structure (basically its concentration) is functional to the intensification of mobility: spatial mobility, naturally enough, but mainly social mobility."

The very word *street* has a rough, dirty magic to it, summoning up the low, the common, the erotic, the dangerous, the revolutionary. A man of the streets is only a populist, but a woman of the streets is, like a streetwalker, a seller of her sexuality. Street kids are urchins, beggars, and runaways, and the new term *street person* describes those who have no other home. *Street-smart* means someone wise in the ways of the city and well able to survive in it, while "to the streets" is the classic cry of urban revolution, for the streets are where people become the public and where their power resides. *The street* means life in the heady currents of the urban river in which everyone and everything can mingle. It is exactly this social mobility, this lack of compartments and distinctions, that gives the street its danger and its magic, the danger and magic of water in which everything runs together.

In feudal Europe only city dwellers were free of the hierarchical bonds that structured the rest of society—in England, for example, a serf could become free by living for a year and a day in a free town. The quality of freedom within cities

quieter, more formal part of town, is to be part of a procession, part of a ceaseless ceremony of being initiated into

then was limited, however, for their streets were usually dirty, dangerous, and dark. Cities often imposed a curfew and closed their gates at sunset. Only in the Renaissance did the cities of Europe begin to improve their paving, their sanitation, and their safety. In eighteenth-century London and Paris, going out anywhere at night was as dangerous as the worst slums are supposed to be nowadays, and if you wanted to see where you were going, you hired a torchbearer (and the young London torch carriers—link boys, they were called—often doubled as procurers). Even in daylight, carriages terrorized pedestrians. Before the eighteenth century, few seem to have walked these streets for pleasure, and only in the nineteenth century did places as clean, safe, and illuminated as modern cities begin to emerge. All the furniture and codes that give modern streets their orderliness—raised sidewalks, streetlights, street names, building numbers, drains, traffic rules, and traffic signals—are relatively recent innovations.

Idyllic spaces had been created for the urban rich—tree-lined promenades, semipublic gardens and parks. But these places that preceded the public park were anti-streets, segregated by class and disconnected from everyday life (unlike the pedestrian *corsos* and paseos of the plazas and squares of Mediterranean and Latin countries and Levy's Market Street promenade—or London's anomalous Hyde Park, which accommodated both carriage promenades for the rich and open-air oratory for the radical). Though politics, flirtations, and commerce might be conducted in them, they were little more than outdoor salons and ballrooms. And from the mile-long Cours de la Reine built in Paris in 1616 to Mexico City's Alameda to New York's Central Park built during the 1850s, such places tended to attract people whose desire to display their wealth was better served by promenading in carriages than walking. On the Cours de la Reine, the carriages would gather so thickly a traffic jam would result, which may be why in 1700 a fashion for getting out and dancing by torchlight on the central round developed.

Though Central Park was shaped by more-or-less democratic impulses, English landscape garden aesthetics, and the example of Liverpool's public park, poor New Yorkers often paid to go to private parks akin to Vauxhall Gardens instead, where they might drink beer, dance the polka, or otherwise engage in plebeian versions of pleasure. Even those who wished only to have an uplifting stroll, as the park's codesigner Frederick Law Olmsted had intended them to, found obstacles. Central Park became a great promenade for the rich, and once

the city and rededicating the city itself.—J. B. JACKSON, "THE STRANGER'S PATH" *. . . after scrambling under*

again carriages segregated the society. In their history of the park and its city, Ray Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar write, "Earlier in the [nineteenth] century the late afternoon, early evening, and Sunday promenades of affluent New Yorkers had evolved into parades of high fashion; the wide thoroughfares of Broadway, the Battery, and Fifth Avenue had become a public setting in which to see and be seen. By midcentury, however, the fashionable Broadway and Battery promenades had declined as 'respectable' citizens lost control over these public spaces. . . . Both men and women wanted grander public space for a new form of public promenading—by carriage. In the mid-nineteenth century, carriage ownership was becoming a defining feature of urban upper-class status." The rich went to Central Park, and a populist journalist said, "I hear that pedestrians have acquired a bad habit of being accidentally run over in that neighborhood."

Just as poorer people continued to promenade in New York's Battery, so their Parisian counterparts strolled along the peripheries of the city, often under avenues of trees planted to shade just such excursions. After the Revolution, Paris's Tuileries could be entered by anyone the guards deemed properly dressed. Private pleasure gardens modeled after London's famous Vauxhall Gardens, including Ranelagh and Cremorne Gardens in London itself; Vienna's Augarten; New York's Elysian Fields, Castle Gardens, and Harlem Gardens; and Copenhagen's Tivoli Gardens (sole survivor of them all) sorted out people by the simpler criterion of ability to pay. Elsewhere in these cities, markets, fairs, and processions brought festivity to the sites of everyday life, and the stroll was not so segregated. To me, the magic of the street is the mingling of the errand and the epiphany, and no such gardens seem to have flourished in Italy, perhaps because they were unneeded.

Italian cities have long been held up as ideals, not least by New Yorkers and Londoners enthralled by the ways their architecture gives beauty and meaning to everyday acts. Since at least the seventeenth century, foreigners have been moving there to bask in the light and the life. Bernard Rudofsky, nominally a New Yorker, spent a good deal of time in Italy and sang its praises in his 1969 *Streets for People: A Primer for Americans*. For those who consider New York the exemplary American pedestrian city, Rudofsky's conviction that it is abysmal is startling. His book uses primarily Italian examples to demonstrate the ways plazas and streets can function to tie a city together socially and architecturally. "It simply never occurs to us to make streets into oases rather than deserts," he says at the begin-

bellies of horses, through wheels, and over posts and rails, we reached the gardens, where were already many

ning. "In countries where their function has not yet deteriorated into highways and parking lots, a number of arrangements make streets fit for humans. . . . The most refined street coverings, a tangible expression of civic solidarity—or, should one say, of philanthropy, are arcades. Apart from lending unity to the streetscape, they often take the place of the ancient forums." Descendants of the Greek stoa and *peripatos*, arcaded streets blur the boundaries between inside and out and pay architectural tribute to the pedestrian life that takes place beneath them. Rudofsky singles out Bologna's famous *portici*, a four-mile-long covered walkway running from the central square to the countryside; Milan's Galleria, less strictly commercial in its functions than the upscale shopping malls modeled and named after it; the winding streets of Perugia; the car-free streets of Siena; and Brisinghella's second-story public arcades. He writes with passionate enthusiasm about the Italian predinner stroll—the *passaggiata*—for which many towns close down their main streets to wheeled traffic, contrasting it with the American cocktail hour. For Italians, he says, the street is the pivotal social space, for meeting, debating, courting, buying, and selling.

The New York dance critic Edwin Denby wrote, about the same time as Rudofsky, of his own appreciation of Italian walkers. "In ancient Italian towns the narrow main street at dusk becomes a kind of theatre. The community strolls affably and looks itself over. The girls and the young men, from fifteen to twenty-two, display their charm to one another with a lively sociability. The more grace they show the better the community likes them. In Florence or in Naples, in the ancient city slums the young people are virtuoso performers, and they do a bit of promenading any time they are not busy." Of young Romans, he wrote, "Their stroll is as responsive as if it were a physical conversation." Elsewhere, he instructs dance students to watch the walk of various types: "Americans occupy a much larger space than their actual bodies do. This annoys many Europeans; it annoys their instinct of modesty. But it has a beauty of its own, that a few of them appreciate. . . . For myself I think the walk of New Yorkers is amazingly beautiful, so large and clear." In Italy walking in the city is a universal cultural activity rather than the subject of individual forays and accounts. From Dante pacing out his exile in Verona and Ravenna to Primo Levi walking home from Auschwitz, Italy has not lacked great walkers—but urban walking itself seems to be more part of a universal culture than the focus of particular experience (save that by foreigners, copiously recorded, and the cinematic strolls of such characters as the

thousand persons. . . . We walked twice round and were rejoiced to come away, though with the same difficulties

streetwalker in Federico Fellini's *Nights of Cabiria* and the protagonists in Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thief* and in many of Michelangelo Antonioni's films). However, the cities that are neither so accommodating as Naples nor so forbidding as Los Angeles—London, New York—have produced their own fugitive culture of walking. In London, from the eighteenth century on, the great accounts of walking have to do not with the cheerful and open display of ordinary life and desires but with nocturnal scenes, crimes, sufferings, outcasts, and the darker side of the imagination, and it is this tradition that New York assumes.

In 1711 the essayist Joseph Addison wrote, "When I am in a serious Humour, I very often walk by my self in Westminster Abbey; where the Gloominess of the Place, and the Use to which it is applied . . . are apt to fill the Mind with a kind of Melancholy, or rather Thoughtfulness, that is not disagreeable." At the time he wrote, walking the city streets was perilous, as John Gay pointed out in his 1716 poem *Trivia; or, The Art of Walking the Streets of London*. Travel through the city was as dangerous as cross-country travel: the streets were full of sewage and garbage, many of the trades were filthy, the air was already bad, cheap gin had ravaged the city's poor the way crack did American inner cities in the 1980s, and an underclass of criminals and desperate souls thronged the streets. Carriages jostled and mangled pedestrians without fear of reprisal, beggars solicited passersby, and street sellers called out their wares. The accounts of the time are full of the fears of the wealthy to go out at all and of young women lured or forced into sexual labor: prostitutes were everywhere. This is why Gay focuses on urban walking as an *art*—an art of protecting oneself from splashes, assaults, and indignities:

> Though you through cleanlier allies wind by day,
> To shun the hurries of the publick way,
> Yet ne'er to those dark paths by night retire;
> Mind only safety, and contemn the mire.

Like Dr. Johnson's 1738 poem "London," Gay's *Trivia* uses a classical model to mock the present. Divided into three books—the first on the implements and techniques of walking the streets, the second on walking by day, the third on walking by night—the poem makes it clear that the minutia of everyday life can

as at our entrance.—HORACE WALPOLE, IN A LETTER TO GEORGE MONTAGU ON A "RIDOTTO" AT VAUXHALL GARDENS, 1769 *Walking the streets so constantly as he did . . . gave him an opportunity of examining into*

only be observed scornfully. The high-flown style cannot but contrast abrasively with such small subjects, with something of the same mockery he brought to his *Beggars' Opera*. Gay tries—

> Here I remark each walker's diff'rent face,
> And in their look their various bus'ness trace.

—but he ends by despising everyone, assuming he can read their tawdry lives in their faces. At the end of Gay's century Wordsworth "goes forward with the crowd," seeing a mystery in the face of each stranger, while William Blake wanders "each charter'd street / And mark in every face I meet / Marks of weakness, marks of woe:"—the cry of a chimney sweep, the curse of a young harlot. Earlier eighteenth-century literary language was not supple enough or personal enough to connect the life of the imagination to that of the street. Johnson had been one of those desperate London walkers in his early years there—in the late 1730s, when he and his friend, the poet and rogue Richard Savage, were too poor to pay for lodgings, they used to walk the streets and squares all night talking insurrection and glory—but he didn't write about it. Boswell did in his *Life of Johnson*, but for Boswell, the darkness of night and anonymity of the streets were a less reflective opportunity, as his London diary records: "I should have been at Lady Northumberland's rout tonight, but my barber fell sick [meaning his hair was not properly powdered], so I sallied to the streets, and just at the bottom of our own, I picked up a fresh, agreeable young girl called Alice Gibbs. We went down a lane to a snug place. . . ." Of Alice Gibbs's impression of the streets and the night, we have no record.

That few women other than prostitutes were free to wander the streets and that wandering the street was often enough to cause a woman to be considered a prostitute are matters troubling enough to be taken up elsewhere. Here I merely want to comment on their presence in the street and in the night, habitats in which they more than almost any other kind of walker became natives. Until the twentieth century women seldom walked the city for their own pleasure, and prostitutes have left us almost no records of their experience. The eighteenth century was immodest enough to have a few famous novels about prostitutes, but Fanny Hill's courtesan life was all indoors, Moll Flanders's was entirely practical, and both of them were creations of male authors whose work was at least partly

speculative. Then as now, however, a complex culture of working the streets must have existed, each city mapped according to safety and the economics of male desire. There have been many attempts to confine such activity; Byzantine-era Constantinople had its "street of harlots," Tokyo from the seventeenth to the twentieth century had a gated pleasure district, nineteenth-century San Francisco had its notorious Barbary Coast, and many turn-of-the-century American cities had red-light districts, the most famous of which was New Orleans's Storyville, where jazz is reputed to have been born. But prostitution wandered outside these bounds, and the population of such women was enormous: 50,000 in 1793, when London had a total population of one million, estimated one expert. By the mid-nineteenth century they were to be found in the most fashionable parts of London too: social reformer Henry Mayhew's report refers to "the circulating harlotry of the Haymarket and Regent Street," as well as to the women working in the city's parks and promenades.

Twenty-odd years ago a researcher on prostitution reported, "Prostitution streetscapes are composed of *strolls*, loosely defined areas where the women solicit. . . . On the stroll the prostitute moves around to entice or enjoin customers, reduce boredom, keep warm and reduce visibility [to the police]. Part of most streetscapes resemble common greens, areas to which all have unimpeded access. Here women assemble in groups of two to four, laughing, talking and joking among themselves. . . . Working the same stroll infuses much needed predictability into an illegal, sometimes dangerous environment." And Dolores French, an advocate for prostitutes' rights, worked the streets herself and reports that her fellow streetwalkers "think that women who work in whorehouses have too many restrictions and rules" while the street "welcomed everyone democratically. . . . They felt they were like cowboys out on the range, or spies on a dangerous mission. They bragged about how free they were. . . . They had no one to answer to but themselves." The same refrains—freedom, democracy, danger—come up in this as in the other ways of occupying the streets.

In the eighteenth-century city, a new image of what it means to be human had arisen, an image of one possessed of the freedom and isolation of the traveler, and travelers, however wide or narrow their scope, became emblematic figures. Richard Savage proposed this early with a 1729 poem called *The Wanderer*, and the aptly named George Walker inaugurated the new century with his novel *The Vagabond*, followed in 1814 by Fanny Burney's *Wanderer*. Wordsworth had his

the condition of every poor person that he met. Which he did, with so well practiced a sagacity, as could seldom be

Excursion (whose first two sections were titled "The Wanderer" and "The Solitary"); Coleridge's Ancient Mariner was condemned like the Wandering Jew to roam; and the Wandering Jew himself was a popular subject for Romantics in Britain and on the continent.

The literary historian Raymond Williams remarks, "Perception of the new qualities of the modern city had been associated, from the beginning, with a man walking, as if alone, in its streets." He cites Blake and Wordsworth as founders of this tradition, but it was De Quincey who wrote of it most poignantly. In the beginning of *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, De Quincey tells of how at the age of seventeen he had run away from a dull school and his unsympathetic guardians and landed in London. There he was afraid to contact the few people he knew and unable to seek work without connections. So for sixteen weeks in the summer and fall of 1802 he starved, having found no other support in London but a home in an all-but-abandoned mansion whose other resident was a forlorn female child. He fell into a spectral existence shared with a few other children, and he wandered the streets restlessly. Streets were already a place for those who had no place, a site to measure sorrow and loneliness in the length of walks. "Being myself at that time, of necessity, a peripatetic, or walker of the streets, I naturally fell in more frequently with those female peripatetics who are technically called street-walkers. Many of these women had occasionally taken my part against watchmen who wished to drive me off the steps of houses where I was sitting." He was befriended by one, a girl named Ann—"timid and dejected to a degree which showed how deeply sorrow had taken hold of her young heart"—who was younger than he and who had turned to the streets after being cheated of a minor inheritance. Once when they were "pacing slowly along Oxford Street, and after a day when I had felt unusually ill and faint, I requested her to turn off with me into Soho Square," and he fainted. She spent what little she had on hot spiced wine to revive him. That he was never able to find her again after his fortune changed was, he declares, one of the great tragedies of his life. For De Quincey, his sojourn in London was one of the most deeply felt passages in his long life, though it had no sequel: the rest of his book is given over to its putative subject, the effects of opium, and the rest of his life to rural places.

Charles Dickens was different, in that he chose such urban walking and his writing explored it thoroughly over the years. He is the great poet of London life, and some of his novels seem as much dramas of place as of people. Think of

imposed upon. And every man that follows his example, will soon find, that this practice will lead him into the

Our Mutual Friend, where the great euphemistic piles of dust, the dim taxidermy and skeleton shop, the expensively icy interiors of the wealthy, are portraits of those associated with them. People and places become one another—a character may only be identified as an atmosphere or a principle, a place may take on a full-fledged personality. "And this kind of realism can only be gained by walking dreamily in a place; it cannot be gained by walking observantly," wrote one of his best interpreters, G. K. Chesterton. He attributed Dickens's acute sense of place to the well-known episode in his boyhood when his father was locked up in a debtor's prison and Dickens himself was put to work in a blacking factory and lodged in a nearby roominghouse, a desolate child abandoned to the city and its strangers. "Few of us understand the street," Chesterton writes. "Even when we step into it, we step into it doubtfully, as into a house or room of strangers. Few of us see through the shining riddle of the street, the strange folk that belong to the street only—the street-walker or the street arab, the nomads who, generation after generation have kept their ancient secrets in the full blaze of the sun. Of the street at night many of us know less. The street at night is a great house locked up. But Dickens had, if ever man had, the key of the street. . . . He could open the inmost door of his house—the door that leads onto the secret passage which is lined with houses and roofed with stars." Dickens is among the first to indicate all the other things urban walking can be: his novels are full of detectives and police inspectors, of criminals who stalk, lovers who seek and damned souls who flee. The city becomes a tangle through which all the characters wander in a colossal game of hide and seek, and only a vast city could allow his intricate plots so full of crossed paths and overlapping lives. But when he wrote about his own experiences of London, it was often an abandoned city.

"If I couldn't walk fast and far, I should explode and perish," he once told a friend, and he walked so fast and far that few ever managed to accompany him. He was a solitary walker, and his walks served innumerable purposes. "I am both a town traveller and a country traveller, and am always on the road," he introduces himself in his essay collection *The Uncommercial Traveller*. "Figuratively speaking, I travel for the great house of Human Interest Brothers, and have rather a large connection in the fancy goods way. Literally speaking, I am always wandering here and there from my rooms in Covent-garden, London." This metaphysical version of the commercial traveler is an inadequate description of his role, and he tried on many others. He was an athlete: "So much of my travelling

exercise of more charity, than is possible to be practiced in carriages of any kind.—PATRICK DELANY, OBSERVATIONS

is done on foot, that if I cherished better propensities, I should probably be found registered in sporting newspapers under some such title as the Elastic Novice, challenging all eleven stone mankind to competition in walking. My last special feat was turning out of bed at two, after a hard day, pedestrian and otherwise, and walking thirty miles into the country to breakfast. The road was so lonely in the night that I fell asleep to the monotonous sound of my own feet, doing their regular four miles an hour." And a few essays later, he was a tramp, or a tramp's son: "My walking is of two kinds: one straight on end to a definite goal at a round pace; one, objectless, loitering, and purely vagabond. In the latter state, no gypsy on earth is a greater vagabond than myself; it is so natural to me, and strong with me, that I think I must be the descendant, at no great distance, of some irreclaimable tramp." And he was a cop on the beat, too ethereal to arrest anyone but in his mind: "It is one of my fancies, that even my idlest walk must always have its appointed destination. . . . On such an occasion, it is my habit to regard my walks as my beat, and myself as a higher sort of police-constable doing duty on the same."

And yet despite all these utilitarian occupations and the throngs who populate his books, his own London was often a deserted city, and his walking in it a melancholy pleasure. In an essay on visiting abandoned cemeteries, he wrote, "Whenever I think I deserve particularly well of myself, and have earned the right to enjoy a little treat, I stroll from Covent-garden into the City of London, after business-hours there, on a Saturday, or—better yet—on a Sunday, and roam about its deserted nooks and corners." But the most memorable of them all is "Night Walks," the essay that begins, "Some years ago, a temporary inability to sleep, referable to a distressing impression, caused me to walk about the streets all night, for a series of several nights." He described these walks from midnight till dawn as curative of his distress, and during them "I finished my education in a fair amateur experience of houselessness"—or what is now called homelessness. The city was no longer as dangerous as it had been in Gay's and Johnson's time, but it was lonelier. Eighteenth-century London was crowded, lively, full of predators, spectacles, and badinage between strangers. By the time Dickens was writing about houselessness in 1860, London was many times as large, but the mob so feared in the eighteenth century had in the nineteenth been largely domesticated as the crowd, a quiet, drab mass going about its private business in public: "Walking the streets under the pattering rain, Houselessness would walk and

UPON LORD ORRERY'S "REMARKS ON THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF JONATHAN SWIFT," 1754 *They don't want*

walk and walk, seeing nothing but the interminable tangle of streets, save at a corner, here and there, two policemen in conversation, or the sergeant or inspector looking after his men. Now and then in the night—but rarely—Houselessness would become aware of a furtive head peering out of a doorway a few yards before him, and, coming up with the head, would find a man standing bolt upright to keep within the doorway's shadow, and evidently intent upon no particular service to society. . . . The wild moon and clouds were as restless as an evil conscience in a tumbled bed, and the very shadow of the immensity of London seemed to lie oppressively upon the river." And yet he relishes the lonely nocturnal streets, as he does the graveyards and "shy neighborhoods" and what he quixotically called "Arcadian London"—London out of season, when society had gone en masse to the country, leaving the city in sepulchural peace.

There is a subtle state most dedicated urban walkers know, a sort of basking in solitude—a dark solitude punctuated with encounters as the night sky is punctuated with stars. In the country one's solitude is geographical—one is altogether outside society, so solitude has a sensible geographical explanation, and then there is a kind of communion with the nonhuman. In the city, one is alone because the world is made up of strangers, and to be a stranger surrounded by strangers, to walk along silently bearing one's secrets and imagining those of the people one passes, is among the starkest of luxuries. This uncharted identity with its illimitable possibilities is one of the distinctive qualities of urban living, a liberatory state for those who come to emancipate themselves from family and community expectation, to experiment with subculture and identity. It is an observer's state, cool, withdrawn, with senses sharpened, a good state for anybody who needs to reflect or create. In small doses melancholy, alienation, and introspection are among life's most refined pleasures.

Not long ago I heard the singer and poet Patti Smith answer a radio interviewer's question about what she did to prepare for her performances onstage with "I would roam the streets for a few hours." With that brief comment she summoned up her own outlaw romanticism and the way such walking might toughen and sharpen the sensibility, wrap one in an isolation out of which might come songs fierce enough, words sharp enough, to break that musing silence. Probably her roaming the streets didn't work so well in a lot of American cities

anything to do with a roof and four walls. How can that be compared to the street? The vice of the children is the

where the hotel was moated by a parking lot surrounded by six-lane roads without sidewalks, but she spoke as a New Yorker. Speaking as a Londoner, Virginia Woolf described anonymity as a fine and desirable thing, in her 1930 essay "Street Haunting." Daughter of the great alpinist Leslie Stephen, she had once declared to a friend, "How could I think mountains and climbing romantic? Wasn't I brought up with alpenstocks in my nursery, and a raised map of the Alps, showing every peak my father had climbed? Of course, London and the marshes are the places I like best." London had more than doubled in size since Dickens's night walks, and the streets had changed again to become a refuge. Woolf wrote of the confining oppression of one's own identity, of the way the objects in one's home "enforce the memories of our own experience." And so she set out to buy a pencil in a city where safety and propriety were no longer considerations for a no-longer-young woman on a winter evening, and in recounting—or inventing—her journey, wrote one of the great essays on urban walking.

"As we step out of the house on a fine evening between four and six," she wrote, "we shed the self our friends know us by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous trampers, whose society is so agreeable after the solitude of one's room." Of the people she observes she says, "Into each of these lives one could penetrate a little way, far enough to give one the illusion that one is not tethered to a single mind, but can put on briefly for a few minutes the bodies and minds of others. One could become a washerwoman, a publican, a street singer." In this anonymous state, "the shell-like covering which our souls have excreted for themselves, to make for themselves a shape distinct from others, is broken, and there is left of all these wrinkles and roughnesses a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye. How beautiful a street is in winter! It is at once revealed and obscured." She walked down the same Oxford Street De Quincey and Ann had, now lined with windows full of luxuries with which she furnished an imaginary house and life and then banished both to return to her walk. The language of introspection that Wordsworth helped develop and De Quincey and Dickens refined was her language, and the smallest incidents—birds rustling in the shrubbery, a dwarf woman trying on shoes—let her imagination roam farther than her feet, into digressions from which she reluctantly returns to the actualities of her excursion. Walking the streets had come into its own, and the solitude and introspection that had been harrowing for her predecessors was a joy

street itself. The street is an addiction even stronger than the thinner they buy in the hardware store. . . . Only the

for her. That it was a joy because her identity had become a burden makes it modern.

Like London, New York has seldom prompted unalloyed praise. It is too big, too harsh. As one who knows only smaller cities intimately, I continually underestimate its expanse and wear myself out on distances, just as I do by car in Los Angeles. But I admire Manhattan: the synchronized beehive dance of Grand Central Station, the fast pace people set on the long grids of streets, the jaywalkers, the slower strollers in the squares, the dark-skinned nannies pushing pallid babies before them through the gracious paths of Central Park. Wandering without a clear purpose or sense of direction, I have often disrupted the fast flow of passersby intent on some clear errand or commute, as though I were a butterfly strayed into the beehive, a snag in the stream. Two-thirds of all journeys around downtown and midtown Manhattan are still made on foot, and New York, like London, remains a city of people walking for practical purposes, pouring up and down subway stairs, across intersections—but musers and the nocturnal strollers move to a different tempo. Cities make walking into true travel: danger, exile, discovery, transformation, wrap all around one's home and come right up to the doorstep.

The Italophile Rudofsky uses London to scorn New York: "On the whole North America's Anglo-Saxomania has had a withering effect on its formative years. Surely, the English are not a desirable model for an urban society. No other nation developed such a fierce devotion to country life as they did. And with good reason; their cities have been traditionally among Europe's least wholesome. Englishmen may be intensely loyal to their towns, but the street—the very gauge of urbanity—does not figure large in their affections." New York's streets do figure large in the work of some of its writers. "Paris, c'est une blonde," goes the French song, and Parisian poets have often made their city a woman. New York, with its gridded layout, its dark buildings and looming skyscrapers, its famous toughness, is a masculine city, and if cities are muses, it is no wonder this one's praises have been sung best by its gay poets—Walt Whitman, Frank O'Hara, Allen Ginsberg, and the prose-poet David Wojnarowicz (though everyone from Edith Wharton to Patti Smith has paid homage to this city and its streets).

street is theirs. It consoles them for their loneliness and lack of love. It has a dizzying appeal. It gives them the money

In Whitman's poems, though he often speaks of himself as happy in the arms of a lover, the passages in which he appears as a solitary walking the streets in quest of that lover—a precursor of the gay cruiser—ring more true. In "Recorders Ages Hence," the immodest Whitman states for the record that he was one "Who often walk'd lonesome walks thinking of his dear friends, his lovers." A few poems later in the final version of *Leaves of Grass,* he begins another poem with the oratorical address "City of orgies, walks and joys." After listing all the possible criteria for a city's illustriousness—houses, ships, parades—he chooses "not these, but as I pass O Manhattan, your frequent and swift flash of eyes offering me love": the walks rather than the orgies, the promises rather than the delivery, are the joys. Whitman was a great maker of inventories and lists to describe variety and quantity and one of the first to love the crowd. It promised new liaisons; it expressed his democratic ideals and oceanic enthusiasms. A few poems past "City of Orgies" comes "To a Stranger": "Passing stranger! You do not know how longingly I look upon you. . . ." For Whitman the momentary glimpse and the intimacy of love were complementary, as were his own emphatic ego and the anonymous mass of crowds. Thus he sang the praises of the swelling metropolis of Manhattan and the new possibilities of urban scale.

Whitman died in 1892, just as everyone else was beginning to celebrate the city. For the first half of the new century, the city seemed emblematic—the capital of the twentieth century, as Paris had been of the nineteenth century. Destiny and hope were urban for both radicals and plutocrats in those days, and New York with its luxury steamers docking and immigrants pouring off Ellis Island, with its skyscrapers even Georgia O'Keeffe couldn't resist painting during her time as a New Yorker, was the definitive modern city. In the 1920s a magazine was devoted to it, the *New Yorker,* whose Talk of the Town section compiled minor street incidents made incandescent by its writers in the tradition of eighteenth-century London's *Spectator* and *Rambler* essays, and it had jazz and the Harlem Renaissance uptown and radical Bohemia down in the Village (and in Central Park was the Ramble, an area so well known for gay cruising it was nicknamed "the fruited plain"). Before World War II, Berenice Abbott roamed New York's streets photographing buildings, and after it, Helen Levitt photographed children playing in the streets while Weegee photographed the underworld of fresh corpses on sidewalks and prostitutes in paddy wagons. One imagines them wandering purposefully like hunter-gatherers with the camera a sort of basket

they never got at home. It gives them rhythm, a tempo, and immediate compensation.—ELENA PONIATOWSKA, "IN

laden with the day's spectacles, the photographers leaving us not their walks, as poets do, but the fruits of those walks. Whitman, however, had no successor until after the war, when Allen Ginsberg stepped into his shoes, or at least his loose long lines of celebratory ranting.

Ginsberg is sometimes claimed as a San Franciscan, and he found his poetic voice during his time there and in Berkeley in the 1950s, but he is a New York poet, and the cities of his poems are big, harsh cities. He and his peers were passionate urbanists at a time when the white middle class was abandoning city life for the suburbs (and though many of the so-called Beats gathered in San Francisco, most wrote poetry about things more personal or more general than the streets they thronged, or used the city as a gateway to Asia and the western landscape). He did write about suburbs, notably in his "Supermarket in California," in which he summoned up a supermarket where the abundance of produce and shopping families makes wry comedy of the dead gay poets—Whitman and Federico García Lorca (a New Yorker from 1929 to 1930)—cruising the aisles. But otherwise his early poems burst with snow, tenements, and the Brooklyn Bridge. Ginsberg walked considerably in San Francisco and in New York, but in his poems walking is always turning into something else, since the sidewalk is always turning into a bed or a Buddhist paradise or some other apparition. The best minds of his generation were "dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix," but they immediately commenced to see angels staggering on tenement roofs, eat fire, hallucinate Arkansas and Blake-light tragedy, and so on, even if they did afterward stumble to unemployment offices and walk "all night with their shoes full of blood on the snowbank docks waiting for a door in the East River to open. . . ."

For the Beats, motion or travel was enormously important, but its exact nature was not (save for Snyder, the true peripatetic of the bunch). They caught the tail end of the 1930s romance of freighthoppers, hobos, and railroad yards, they led the way to the new car culture in which restlessness was assuaged by hundreds of miles at 70 m.p.h. rather than dozens at 3 or 4 on foot, and they blended such physical travel with chemically induced ramblings of the imagination and a whole new kind of rampaging language. San Francisco and New York seem pedestrian anchors on either side of the long rope of the open road they traveled. In the same mode, one can see the shift in country ballads: sometime in the 1950s

THE STREET" *In a charming sally, Mme de Girardin one day said that for the Parisian, walking is not taking*

disappointed lovers stopped walking away or catching the midnight train and began driving, and by the 1970s the apotheosis of eighteen-wheeler songs had arrived. Had he lived that long, Kerouac would've loved them. Only in the first section of *Kaddish*, when Ginsberg gives over singing of his generation and his pals to mourn his mother, do the act and the place remain particular. The streets are repositories of history, walking a way to read that history. "Strange now to think of you, gone without corsets & eyes, while I walk on the sunny pavement of Greenwich Village," it opens, and as he walks Seventh Avenue he thinks of Naomi Ginsberg in the Lower East Side, "where you walked 50 years ago, little girl—from Russia / . . . then struggling in the crowds of Orchard Street toward what? / —toward Newark—" in an antiphony of her city and his, joined in later sections by their shared experiences during his childhood.

Handsome as a marble statue, Frank O'Hara was as unlike Ginsberg as a gay poet born the same year could be, and he wrote about far more delicate diurnal adventures. Ginsberg's poetry was oratorical—jeremiads and hymns to be shouted from the rooftops; O'Hara's poetry is as casual as conversation and sequenced by strolls in the street (among his book titles are *Lunch Poems*—not about eating but about lunchtime excursions from his job at the Museum of Modern Art—*Second Avenue*, and the essay collection *Standing Still and Walking in New York*). While Ginsberg tended to speak to America, O'Hara's remarks often addressed a "you" who seemed to be an absent lover in a silent soliloquy or a companion on a stroll. The painter Larry Rivers recalls, "It was the most extraordinary thing, a simple walk" with O'Hara, and O'Hara wrote a poem titled "Walking with Larry Rivers." Walking seems to have been a major part of his daily repertoire, as well as a kind of syntax organizing thought, emotion, and encounter, and the city was the only conceivable site for his tender, street-smart, and sometimes campy voice celebrating the incidental and the inconsequential. In the prose-poem "Meditations in an Emergency" he affirmed, "I can't even enjoy a blade of grass unless I know there's a subway handy, or a record store or some other sign that people do not totally *regret* life. It is more important to affirm the least sincere; the clouds get enough attention as it is. . . . " The poem "Walking to Work" ends

I'm becoming
the street.

exercise—it is searching. . . . The Parisian truly seems an explorer, always ready to set off again, or, better like

Who are you in love with?
me?
Straight against the light I cross.

Yet another walking poem begins:

I'm getting tired of not wearing underwear
And then again I like it
strolling along
feeling the wind blow softly on my genitals

and goes on to speculate on "who dropped that empty carton / of cracker jacks," before turning to the clouds, the bus, his destination, the "you" to whom he speaks, Central Park. The texture is that of everyday life and of a connoisseur's eye settling on small things, small epiphanies, but the same kind of inventory that studs Whitman's and Ginsberg's poems recurs in O'Hara's. Cities are forever spawning lists.

David Wojnarowicz's *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration* reads like a summary of all the urban experience that came before him. Like De Quincey he was a runaway, but like De Quincey's friend Ann he supported himself as a child prostitute, and like Dickens and Ginsberg he brought an incandescant, hallucinatory clarity to the moods and scenes of his city. Most who took up the Beat subject of the urban underworld of the erotic, the intoxicated, and the illegal took it up in William Burroughs's amoral vein, more interested in its coolness than its consequences or its politics, but Wojnarowicz raged at the system that created such suffering, that created his suffering as a runaway child, a gay man, a person with AIDS (of which he died in 1991). He writes in a collage of memories, encounters, dreams, fantasies, and outbursts studded with startling metaphors and painful images, and in his writings walking appears like a refrain, a beat: he always returns to the image of himself walking alone down a New York street or a corridor. "Some nights we'd walk seven or eight hundred blocks, practically the whole island of Manhattan," he wrote of his hustling years, for walking remained the recourse for those with nowhere to sleep, as it had been for Johnson and Savage.

Wojnarowicz's 1980s New York had come full circle to resemble Gay's early

some marvelous alchemist of life.—F. BLOCH, *TYPES DU BOULEVARD* *To rove about, musing, that is to say*

eighteenth-century London. It had the scourges of AIDS, of the vast new population of homeless people, and of the drug-damaged staggering around like something out of William Hogarth's Gin Lane, and it was notoriously violent, so that the well-to-do feared its streets as they once had London's. Wojnarowicz writes of seeing "long legs and spiky boots and elegant high heels and three prostitutes suddenly surround a business man from the waldorf and they're saying: 'Come on honey' and rubbing his dick . . . and his wallet appears behind his back in the hands of one of them and they all drop away as he continues to giggle" and we're back to Moll Flanders stripping a passed-out trick of his silver gloves, snuffbox, and even his periwig. He writes of the years when he was suffering from malnutrition and exposure, living on the streets until he was eighteen, "I had almost died three times at the hands of people I'd sold my body to in those days and after coming off the street. . . . I could barely speak when in the company of other people. . . . That weight of image and sensation wouldn't come out until I picked up a pencil and started putting it down on paper." "Coming off the street": the phrase describes all streets as one street and that street as a whole world, with its own citizenry, laws, language. "The street" is a world where people in flight from the traumas that happen inside houses become natives of the outside.

One of the book's sections, "Being Queer in America: A Journal of Disintegration," is as tidy a chronicle of the uses of walking for a queer man of the streets in 1980s urban America as *Pride and Prejudice* is of the uses of walking for a country lady almost two centuries before. "I'm walking through these hallways where the windows break apart a slow dying sky and a quiet wind follows the heels of the kid as he suddenly steps through a door frame ten rooms down," it opens. He follows the kid into the room, which resembles the long wharves and warehouses he used to cruise, sucks him off, and a few sections later his walking becomes mourning for his friend, the photographer Peter Hujar, dead of AIDS. "I walked for hours through the streets after he died, through the gathering darkness and traffic, down into the dying section of town where bodies litter the curbsides and dogs tear apart the stinking garbage by the doorways. There was a green swell to the clouds above the buildings. . . . I turned and left, walking back into the gray haze of traffic and exhaust, past a skinny prostitute doing the junkie walk bent over at the waist with knuckles dragging the sidewalk." He meets a friend—"man on second avenue at 2:00 am"—who tells him about a third man being jumped on West Street by a carload of kids from Jersey and brutally beaten

loitering, is, for a philosopher, a good way of spending time, especially in that kind of mock rurality, ugly but odd,

for being gay. And then comes his refrain, "I walk this hallway twenty-seven times and all I can see are the cool white walls. A hand rubbing slowly across a face, but my hands are empty. Walking back and forth from room to room trailing bluish shadows I feel weak. . . ." His city is not hell but limbo, the place in which restless souls swirl forever, and only passion, friendship, and visionary capacity redeem it for him.

I began walking my own city's streets as a teenager and walked them so long that both they and I changed, the desperate pacing of adolescence when the present seemed an eternal ordeal giving way to the musing walks and innumerable errands of someone no longer wound up so tight, so isolated, so poor, and my walks have now often become reviews of my own and the city's history together. Vacant lots become new buildings, old geezer bars are taken over by young hipsters, the Castro's discos become vitamin stores, whole streets and neighborhoods change their complexion. Even my own neighborhood has changed so much it sometimes seems as though I have moved two or three times from the raucous corner I started out on just before I turned twenty. The urban walkers I have surveyed suggest a kind of scale of walking, and on it, I have moved from near the Ginsberg-Wojnarowicz end of the spectrum to that of a low-rent Virginia Woolf.

Two days before the end of the year, I went to one of the local liquor stores for milk early one Sunday morning. Around the corner a guy was sitting in a doorway drinking and singing falsetto, with that knack some local drunks have for sounding like fallen angels. The word *Aloooooone* trilled out of nowhere, echoing beautifully in the stairwell. On my way back I saw him weaving so intently down the street he didn't notice me pass a few feet away. Merely walking seemed to take all the singer's concentration, as though he were forcing himself through an atmosphere that had become thick around him. When I started watering the tree in front of my building, he was still winding around the corner. The old lady who always wears a dress and always speaks so politely in word-salad non sequiturs was walking in the other direction. I said hello to her as she passed me, but she didn't notice me any more than he did. All of a sudden, when she had reached the same point on her side of the street that he had on his, she broke into a sort of soft-shoe shuffle that carried on until she turned out of sight down the facing corner. The two of them seemed to be listening to some inaudible music that carried them along and made them joyous as well as haunted.

Later on the churchgoers would appear. When I first moved here, there were no cafés, and all the churchgoers walked—on Sunday mornings the streets were busy and sociable with black women in resplendent hats, walking in all directions to their churches, not with the dogged steps of pilgrims but with the festive stride of celebrants. That was long ago; gentrification has dispersed the Baptist congregations to other neighborhoods, from which many now drive to church. Young African-American men still saunter by, their legs nonchalant while their arms and shoulders jump around as though staking a bodily territory, but most of the churchgoers have been replaced on the sidewalks these weekend mornings by joggers and dog walkers pumping towards that great secular temple of the middle class, the garden as represented by Golden Gate Park, while the hungover drift towards the cafés. But this early the street belonged to us three walkers, or to the two of them, for they made me feel like a ghost drifting through their private lives out in public on that cold, sunny Sunday morning, in the communal solitude of urban walkers.

and partaking of two natures, which surrounds certain large cities, particularly Paris.—VICTOR HUGO, *LES MISERABLES*

Bored, we stroll aimlessly about and look at things, and by way of curing our state we buy two

Notes

1. Tracing a Headland: An Introduction

5 "An absolutely new prospect is a great happiness": Henry David Thoreau, "Walking," in *The Natural History Essays* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1980), 99.

7 It was nuclear weapons that first led: My early writing on walking and on nuclear politics appears in my 1994 book *Savage Dreams: A Journey into the Landscape Wars of the American West* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1994; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

2. The Mind at Three Miles an Hour

14 "I can only meditate when I am walking": Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1953), 382.

14 "In one respect, at least": John Thelwall, *The Peripatetic: or, Sketches of the Heart of Nature and Society* (1793; facsimile reprint, New York: Garland Publishing, 1978), 1, 8–9.

15 Felix Grayeff's history: *Aristotle and His School: An Inquiry into the History of the Peripatos* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1974), 38–39.

16 The Stoics were named: Christopher Thacker, *The History of Gardens* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 21, is my source for the information on the stoa and the Stoics. Bernard Rudofsky's *Streets for People: A Primer for Americans* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1982), also gives a précis of this information.

16 "For recreation I turn": *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Oscar Levy, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (New York: Doubleday, 1921), 23.

16 "He used to come": Bertrand Russell, *Portraits from Memory*, quoted in A. J. Ayer, *Wittgenstein* (New York: Random House, 1985), 16.

17 "In order to slacken my pace": Rousseau, *Confessions*, 327.

17 "Behold how luxury": Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "First Discourse" ("Discourse on the Arts and Letters"), in *The First and Second Discourses* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), 46.

ticism, by the Youth Hostels Association, formed in 1930, and by that great army of hikers who on high days and holidays went rambling on the mountains and moors. Hiking had a particular appeal to working-class Bohemians, as a mainly intellectual alternative to the dance hall, and one that cost no money."

165 "a genuine hatred of ramblers": Ann Holt, *The Origins and Early Days of the Ramblers' Association*, booklet published by the Ramblers' Association from a speech given April 1995.

165 "Town dwellers lived for weekends": Benny Rothman, *The 1932 Kinder Scout Trespass: A Personal View of the Kinder Scout Mass Trespass* (Altrincham, England: Willow Publishing, 1982), 12.

11. The Solitary Stroller and the City

Philip Lopate's essay "The Pen on Foot: The Literature of Walking Around," Parnassus, vol. 18, no. 2 and 19, no 1, 1993, pointed me to Edwin Denby's writings and to specific poems of Walt Whitman's.

172 "On Saturday night . . . the city joined in the promenade": Harriet Lane Levy, *920 O'Farrell Street* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1997), 185–86.

173 Kerouac managed to have two visions on [Market Street]: see *Atlantic Monthly*, reprinting a May 1961 letter, November 1998, 68: "It [*On the Road*] was really a story about two Catholic buddies in search of God. And we found him. I found him in the sky, in Market Street San Francisco (those 2 visions)."

176 how a popular, well-used street is kept safe: Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), throughout the chapter "The Uses of Sidewalks: Safety."

176 "What distinguishes the city": Moretti, quoted in Peter Jukes, *A Shout in the Street: An Excursion into the Modern City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 184.

177 little more than outdoor salons and ballrooms: *Cities and People* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 166–68, 237–38.

178 "Earlier in the [nineteenth] century," "I hear that pedestrians": Ray Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1992), 27, 223.

178 "It simply never occurs to us": Bernard Rudofsky, *Streets for People: A Primer for Americans* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1982), epigraph quoting his own *Architecture without Architects*.

179 "In ancient Italian towns the narrow main street": Edwin Denby, *Dancers, Buildings and People in the Streets*, introduction by Frank O'Hara (New York: Horizon Press, 1965), 183.

180 "When I am in a serious Humour": Addison in Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Spectator, Vol. 1* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1907), 96, from *Spectator*, no. 26 (March 30, 1711).

180 "Though you through cleaner allies": John Gay, "Trivia, or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London," book 3, line 126, in *The Abbey Classics: Poems by John Gay* (London: Chapman and Dodd, n.d.), 88.

181 "Here I remark": Ibid., ll. 275–82, 78.

181 "goes forward with the crowd": Wordsworth, *Prelude*, 286.

181 "each charter'd street": The famous opening of William Blake's "London," in *William Blake*, ed. J. Bronowski (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1958), 52.

181 one of those desperate London walkers: See Richard Holmes, *Dr. Johnson and Mr. Savage* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 44, quoting Sir John Hawkins in the chapter on these walks: "Johnson has told me, that whole nights have been spent by him and Savage in conversations of this kind, not under the hospitable roof of a tavern, where warmth might have invigorated their spirits, and wine dispelled their care; but in a perambulation round the squares of Westminster, St. James's in particular, when all the money they could both raise was less than sufficient to purchase for them the shelter and sordid comforts of a night cellar."

181 "I should have been": James Boswell, *Boswell's London Journal*, ed. Frederick A. Pottle (New York: Signet, 1956), 235.

182 50,000 [prostitutes in London] in 1793: Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, vol. 4 (1861–62; reprint, New York: Dover Books, 1968), 211, citing Mr. Colquhoun, a police magistrate, and his "tedious investigations."

182 "the circulating harlotry of the Haymarket and Regent Street": Ibid., 213. On 217, "They [the streetwalkers] are to be seen between three and five o'clock in the Burlington Arcade, which is a well known resort of cyprians of the better sort. They are well acquainted with its Paphian intricacies, and will, if their signals are responded to, glide into a friendly bonnet shop, the stairs of which leading to the coenacula or upper chambers are not innocent of their well formed 'bien chaussee' feet. The park is also, as we have said, a favorite promenade, where assignations may be made or acquaintances formed."

182 "Prostitution streetscapes are composed of *strolls*": Richard Symanski, *The Immoral Landscape: Female Prostitution in Western Societies* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1981), 175–76.

182 "think that women who work in whorehouses": Dolores French with Linda Lee, *Working: My Life as a Prostitute* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1988), 43.

183 "Perception of the new qualities of the modern city": Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 233.

183 "Being myself at that time, of necessity, a peripatetic" and following: De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (New York: Signet Books, 1966), 42–43.

184 "And this kind of realism," "Few of us understand the street": G. K. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens, a Critical Study* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1906), 47, 44.

184 "If I couldn't walk fast and far": Dickens to John Forster, cited in Ned Lukacher, *Primal Scenes: Literature, Philosophy, Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 288.

184 "I am both a town traveller": Charles Dickens, *The Uncommercial Traveller and Reprinted Pieces Etc.* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 1.
184 "So much of my travelling is done on foot," "My walking is of two kinds": Dickens, "Shy Neighborhoods," ibid., 94, 95.
185 "It is one of my fancies": Dickens, "On an Amateur Beat," ibid., 345.
185 "Whenever I think I deserve particularly well of myself": Dickens, "The City of the Absent," ibid., 233.
185 "Some years ago, a temporary inability to sleep": Dickens, "Night Walks," ibid., 127.
186 "I would roam the streets": Patti Smith, when asked what she did to prepare to go onstage, *Fresh Air,* National Public Radio, Oct. 3, 1997.
187 "How could I think mountains and climbing romantic?": *The Letters of Virginia Woolf,* vol. 3, *A Change of Perspective,* ed. Nigel Nicholson (London: Hogarth Press, 1975–80), letter to V. Sackville-West, Aug. 19, 1924, 126.
187 "enforce the memories of our own experience": Virginia Woolf, "Street Haunting: A London Adventure," in *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1961), 23.
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188 "On the whole North America's Anglo-Saxomania has had a withering effect": Rudofsky, *Streets for People,* 19.
189 "Who often walk'd lonesome walks": Walt Whitman, "Recorders Ages Hence," *Leaves of Grass* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), 99.
189 "City of orgies, walks and joys": Ibid., 102.
189 "Passing stranger!": Ibid., 103.
189 "the fruited plain": Ken Gonzales-Day, "The Fruited Plain: A History of Queer Space," *Art Issues,* September/October 1997, 17.
190 "dragging themselves through the negro streets," "shoes full of blood": Allen Ginsberg, "Howl," in *The New American Poetry,* ed. Donald M. Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1960), 182, 186.
191 "Strange now to think of you, gone": Allen Ginsberg, *Kaddish and Other Poems, 1958–1960* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1961), 7.
191 "where you walked 50 years ago": Ibid., 8.
191 "It was the most extraordinary thing": Brad Gooch, *City Poet: The Life and Times of Frank O'Hara* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 217.
191 "I can't even enjoy a blade of grass": Frank O'Hara, "Meditations in an Emergency," in *The Selected Poems* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 87.
191 "I'm becoming": O'Hara, "Walking to Work," ibid., 57.
192 "I'm getting tired of not wearing": O'Hara, "F. (Missive and Walk) I. #53," ibid., 194.
192–94 "Some nights we'd walk seven or eight hundred blocks": David Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 5; "long legs and spiky boots," 182; "I had almost died three times," 228; "I'm walking through these hallways," 64; "I walked for hours," 67; "man on second avenue," 70; "I walk this hallway twenty-seven times," 79.

12. Paris, or Botanizing on the Asphalt

196 "Now a landscape, now a room": Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 156.
197 "Not to find one's way in a city," "it had to be in Paris": Walter Benjamin, "A Berlin Chronicle," in *Reflections,* 8, 9.
197 holding an alpenstock before some painted Alps: On mountains, alpenstocks and Benjamin, see his letters of September 13, 1913; July 6–7, 1914; November 8, 1918; and July 20, 1921; and Monme Brodersen, *Walter Benjamin: A Biography* (London: Verso, 1996): "finally a crudely daubed backdrop of the Alps was brought for me. I stand there, bareheaded, with a tortuous smile on my lips, my right hand clasping a walking stick" (12), and "Another taken-for-granted feature of the boy's day-to-day life were the frequent lengthy journeys with the whole family: to the North Sea and the Baltic, to the high peaks of the Risengebirge between Bohemia and Silesia, to Freudenstadt in the Black Forest, and to Switzerland" (13).
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198 "old Scandinavian": Priscilla Park Ferguson, "The Flâneur: Urbanization and Its Discontents," in *From Exile to Vagrancy: Home and Its Dislocations in 19th Century France,* ed. Suzanne Nash (Albany: State University of New York, 1993), 60, n. 1. See also her *Paris as Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).
198 "Irish word for 'libertine'": Elizabeth Wilson, "The Invisible Flâneur," *New Left Review* 191 (1992): 93–94.
199 "The crowd is his domain": Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *Selected Writings on Art and Artists* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1972), 399.
199 "goes botanizing on the asphalt": Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism,* trans. Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1973), 36.
199 "Arcades," "The flâneurs liked to have the turtles": Ibid., 53–54.
200 he did not exist: On the nonexistence of the flâneur, see Rob Shields, who, in "Fancy Footwork: Walter Benjamin's Notes on the Flâneur," in *The Flâneur,* ed. Keith Tester (London: Routledge, 1994), remarks, "In truth, it must be acknowledged that nineteenth-century visitors and travelogues do not appear to reference flâneries other than as an urban myth. The principal habitat of the flâneur is the novels of Honore de Balzac, Eugene Sue, and Alexandre Dumas."

Chapter 13

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 TOQUEVILLE, 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

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

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.

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WALKABLE CITY JEFF SPEC

WALKABLE CITY

HOW DOWNTOWN CAN SAVE AMERICA, ONE STEP AT A TIME

JEFF SPECK
COAUTHOR OF *SUBURBAN NATION*

will quickly be outweighed by the increased car trips of residents who refuse to walk.

TINY IS TASTIER

Jan Gehl may be the world's leading observer of how people use places. In *Cities for People*, he notes how we walk just under 3 miles per hour in warm weather, and just over 3.5 miles per hour in cold weather; how we bow our heads ten degrees while walking; how we can see a person's movement at one hundred yards and recognize and hear them at about fifty.[3] These sorts of observations have powerful implications for how we should design public streets and squares and, more often than not, the lesson is to make them smaller. He shares the aphorism "When in doubt, leave some meters [yards] out," and reminds us that "if a dinner party is held at narrow tables, a festive mood quickly catches on because everyone can talk in several directions across the table."[4]

This analogy is apt. It is often surprising to measure some of America's favorite and most successful public spaces—New York's Rockefeller Center, San Antonio's Riverwalk, San Francisco's Ghirardelli Square—and discover how small they actually are. Few are much broader than sixty yards across.• And let's not forget Disney's Main Street, famously built at three-quarters scale. Large public spaces, increasingly demanded of developers by citizens' committees and planning boards, can often end up offering less of an amenity than smaller ones, especially if the buildings surrounding them are not very tall. Since the key measure of a place's spatial definition is its height-to-width ratio, wide spaces only feel enclosed when flanked by buildings of considerable height.▪

•Times Square? Sixty yards across. Rome's Piazza Navona? Sixty yards across.

▪As discussed in Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck's *Suburban Nation* (78), a width-to-height ratio above 6:1 is generally agreed to exceed the limits of spatial definition, with a 1:1 ratio historically considered the ideal.

Yet Gehl's well-earned distaste for large things extends to building heights as well. This stance puts him in the company of some of our most prominent urban thinkers while alienating him from others. In *A Pattern Language*, the bestselling design book of all time, Christopher Alexander drew the limit at four stories, noting that "there is abundant evidence to show that high buildings make people crazy."[5] The fertile-minded Leon Krier, Luxembourger godfather of the New Urbanist movement, is likewise adamant in his dismissal of skyscrapers, which he terms "vertical cul-de-sacs," arguing instead for cities limited to four stories, the convenient height for a walk-up. This position is embraced by peak-oilers like Jim Kunstler, who worry—or celebrate—that escalating energy costs will eventually put all our elevators out of service.

Gehl's beef with tall buildings comes from his concern for the public realm, and the fact that only people in the lower stories of a building can interact with people on the street. He wryly comments that "above the fifth floor, offices and housing should logically be the province of the air-traffic authorities."[6] He also notes that tall buildings capture the air currents that circulate around the ten-story level, which "can cause wind speed at the foot of tall buildings to be up to four times greater than in the surrounding open landscape." He observes that, in Amsterdam, umbrellas protect people, while in (high-rise) Rotterdam, people protect umbrellas.[7]

Gehl and Krier are probably right that the most pleasant and livable cities are those like Amsterdam and Paris that were principally built before elevators. This outcome is, of course, more dependent on the fact that they were also built before cars, but the human scale of the buildings contributes as well. The more important discussion, however, concerns whether taller buildings degrade walkability by their presence as much as they improve it with their capacity. The more people a building can hold, the more people on the street, and the superlative pedestrianism of Manhattan and Hong Kong suggests that inhumane, vortex-generating

skyscrapers have little negative effect on street life. Indeed, it is essential to recognize that, in Manhattan, it is precisely the continuous presence of tall buildings along the avenues that allows them to support a continuous array of shopfronts for block after block after block.

It is for this reason, among others, that while some urban designers rail against tall buildings, most economists clamor for more. Ed Glaeser, today's noisiest advocate for skyscrapers, insists that they are necessary for preserving affordability in our blossoming urban cores, and Chris Leinberger has notoriously dared to question Washington, D.C.'s century-old height limit. This position is right in theory, but the economists don't seem to have fully processed one thing the designers know, which is how tremendously dense a city can become at moderate heights. Boston's North End, in Jane Jacobs's day, achieved 275 dwelling units per acre with hardly an elevator in sight.[8] A ten-story city like Washington simply does not need towers to achieve great walking density. Indeed, outside of Midtown and the Financial District, most of Manhattan's lively avenues are lined by buildings closer to ten stories tall.

Ultimately, since most cities are not New York, there is a much more important argument to be made for height limits than Gehl's call for sociability and calm winds. The typical American downtown is not faced with the volume of development, even in good times, that needs tall buildings to contain it. In most places, the challenge is the exact opposite: a preponderance of vacant properties and parking lots, the missing teeth that make walking so unpleasant. Raising or abolishing the height limit, as occurred in Baton Rouge, creates the outcome of Baton Rouge, where a single skyscraper lands on an empty block and sucks up an entire year's worth of development activity, while all the surrounding blocks stay empty—or fill up with skyscraper parking.

Meanwhile, witnessing the success of the skyscraper developer, the surrounding landowners begin to speculate. They won't build a midrise on their lot, because that's not the most the lot can hold. And they won't sell it for a reasonable price, because it's "worth" building a skyscraper on.[9] The next thing you know, all the would-be urban developers have fled to the beltway.

In this context, it is tempting to do a bit of our own speculation, on how tremendous the District of Columbia's height limit has been for the city and its walkability. That limit, set at twenty feet taller than the width of each building's enfronting street, has caused new development to fill many more blocks than it would have otherwise. This strategy has created street after street of excellent urbanism, even in places where the architecture could be better. (The running joke is that Washington is the place where the best architects go to do their worst work.) A case in point would be the K Street neighborhood, northeast of the Watergate, where hardly a single building is worth a second look, but where every boring glass-and-steel-lined sidewalk is perfectly hospitable to its promenading lobbyists.

Does this experience suggest that skyscrapers are always a bad idea in typical American cities? Not necessarily, as long as they follow the Vancouver model of a skinny tower atop a broad base. While a bit more expensive than fat slabs, narrow towers create a skyline instead of blocking out the sky, and don't cause the same wind problems. They can also satisfy the developers who, far from chasing Leinberger's density or Glaeser's affordability, are most often hoping to sell luxury condos.

WEATHER OR NOT

Talking to audiences across the United States, I am always surprised to hear that—no matter where I am—their city's weather makes it somehow less capable of supporting pedestrian life than the rest of planet Earth. Never mind the crowds of happy visitors

STEP 5: PROTECT THE PEDESTRIAN

Size matters; A turn too far; Fat lanes; Keep it complicated; The safety apotheosis; The one-way epidemic; Sacred sidewalks; Senseless signals

Will the pedestrian survive? Or, more precisely: Will potential walkers feel adequately protected against being run over, enough so that they make the choice to walk?

This is clearly the central question of any discussion of walkable cities. As all the other steps make clear, pedestrian safety is not enough. But it is essential, and also so often needlessly botched by the people who build our cities. These failures stem from two principal sources: a lack of concern for the pedestrian and a fundamental misunderstanding within the professions about what makes streets safe. The first cause is political, and can be overcome through advocacy. The second cause is technical, and can be overcome by setting the record straight.

SIZE MATTERS

In his landmark book *Great Streets,* the urbanist Alan Jacobs (no relation to Jane) lays out figure-ground maps, each a mile square, of more than forty world cities. With streets in white and blocks in black, these drawings allow us to understand and compare the patterns underlying some of the planet's most walkable and unwalkable places. The lessons that emerge are unmistakable,

especially as you compare cities that you have had the pleasure or misfortune to visit. The most obvious of these lessons pertains to block size.

Generally speaking, the cities with the smallest blocks are the ones best known for walkability, while those with the largest blocks are known as places without street life—if they are known at all. The preindustrial neighborhoods of downtown Boston and lower Manhattan, like their European counterparts, have blocks that average less than two hundred feet long (and the cranky medieval street patterns to match). The most walkable grids, like Philadelphia's and San Francisco's, have blocks that average less than four hundred feet in length. And then there are the pedestrian-free zones, like Irvine, California, where many blocks are one thousand feet long or longer.

There are, as always, exceptions. Much of Berlin has surprisingly large blocks. But its street maps are effectively a lie, since so many Berlin blocks are rife with interior passages and courtyards that create a hidden network of pedestrian life. The blocks of Los Angeles aren't much bigger than Barcelona's, but the latter's streets aren't engineered for high speeds. Los Angeles demonstrates that it is possible to make a small-block city unwalkable, but the larger pool of evidence confirms that it is much harder to make a big-block city walkable.

I remember the first time I visited Las Vegas, which, aside from the Strip and the old main street (Fremont Street) is a place where nobody walks. Driving into town in my rented Mustang, I checked the Hertz map for the path to my hotel. In those days, rental-car maps typically showed only a city's major roads, skipping the fine-grained network in between for simplicity. As I entered the city, I was astounded to learn that there wasn't a fine-grained network in between: the dumbed-down rental-car map *was* the city. This explained a lot.

There are two main reasons why smaller blocks make for better cities. The first has less to do with safety and more with

convenience: the more blocks per square mile, the more choices a pedestrian can make and the more opportunities there are to alter your path to visit a useful address such as a coffee shop or dry cleaner. These choices also make walking more interesting, while shortening the distances between destinations.

The second, more important, reason is that bigger blocks mean fewer streets and thus bigger streets. Presuming a similar traffic volume, a city with twice the block size requires each street to hold twice as many driving lanes. The typical street in downtown Portland, with its two-hundred-foot-per-side blocks, holds two lanes of traffic.• The typical street in downtown Salt Lake City, with blocks over six hundred feet per side, holds six lanes of traffic.▪ And six-lane streets are much more dangerous than two-lane streets.

The definitive study on this topic was completed by Wesley Marshall and Norman Garrick at the University of Connecticut, who compared data from twenty-four medium-sized California cities. They looked at more than 130,000 car crashes that occurred over nine years, and were able to divide the subjects into twelve "safer" cities and twelve "less safe" cities. Among these two groups, they found no single variable to be more predictive of injury and death than block size. Blocks in the dozen safer cities averaged eighteen acres in size, while blocks in the dozen less safe cities averaged thirty-four acres in size. All told, a doubling of block size corresponded with a tripling of fatalities.[1]

•Portland's fine-grained network contains a remarkable six hundred intersections per square mile. You can fit nine typical Portland blocks in a typical Salt Lake City block. The block-size versus street-width math is not exact for a number of interesting reasons. Portland's blocks are generally taller than Salt Lake City's, but this factor is counterbalanced somewhat by the vicious circle that occurs in big-blocked cities, where an automotive environment causes many potential pedestrians to drive instead.

▪Each Salt Lake City street is famously 132 feet wide, thanks to the dictate by Brigham Young that streets be wide enough to turn a wagon team around without "resorting to profanity" (Mark Haddock, "Salt Lake Streets Have Seen Many Changes over Past 150 Years"). This 132 feet now includes sidewalks, but that still leaves room for a lot of lanes.

Big-block, multilane systems result in streets that are both harder to cross and easier to speed on. Here, the most significant threshold is between one lane and two lanes in any given direction, since that second lane offers the opportunity to pass and thus allows drivers to slip into a "road racer" frame of mind. Whichever lane you are in, the other one looks faster.[2] It is possible to make an eminently walkable multilane boulevard—picture Paris—but few big-block cities have the budget or the desire to buy that many trees. And even the Champs Élysées is a nightmare to cross.

Multilane streets are much more dangerous for drivers as well, thanks to the "killed by kindness" scenario. As it typically unfolds, this story line involves a motorist signaling left and an approaching car in the adjacent lane slowing down to allow the turn. As the motorist crosses the centerline, a speeding car in the far lane, hidden by the kind driver, T-bones the turning vehicle.

The good news is that four-lane streets can be as inefficient as they are deadly, because the fast lane is also the left-hand turn lane, and maintaining speed often means jockeying from lane to lane. Thanks to this inefficiency, many cities across the country are finding it politically possible to introduce something called a "road diet." In a road diet, a standard four-lane street is replaced by a three-lane street: one lane in each direction and a center lane reserved for left turns.

What is remarkable about road diets is not that they save lives—that is to be expected. In a typical road-diet conversion, Orlando's Edgewater Drive, the number of crashes fell by 34 percent and, because the crashes were slower, the number of injuries fell by an impressive 68 percent: from one per nine days to one per month. Rather, the surprising thing is that they do not reduce a street's carrying capacity. Thanks to the inherent efficiency of maintaining a dedicated turning lane, the typical road diet does nothing to lower the traffic volume on a street. Comparison of seventeen different road diets conducted by the engineering firm AECOM found that only two streets lost capacity, while five stayed the same, and ten actually handled more cars per day after the conversion.

These numbers are important, because most road-diet opponents are fearful of increased congestion. In the 1980s, 95 percent of the residents of Lewistown, Pennsylvania, came out against a road diet proposed by some progressive engineers at PennDOT, citing concerns over increased travel times. PennDOT built the conversion anyway—as DOTs will do—and travel times remained unchanged as crashes dropped to nearly zero.[3]

This story and the dozens since then represent a great opportunity for almost every American city. There is hardly a downtown in the United States that does not have a four-laner that would benefit from a road diet tomorrow. A happy by-product of the road diet is the additional ten to twelve feet of roadway freed up by the eliminated lane. This space can be used to expand sidewalks, plant trees, create a missing parking lane, or replace parallel parking with angled parking in a business district. Since most urban four-laners already have sidewalks, trees, and parking, this pavement is often redeployed as two ample bicycle lanes, further humanizing the street. This solution presents the additional benefit of avoiding the expense of rebuilding any curbs.•

A TURN TOO FAR

Now that I've fully sung the praises of turn lanes, let me attack them. Road diets aside, left-hand turn lanes have done more

•San Francisco is also no stranger to road diets of this type, having converted five important streets from four lanes to three: Dolores, Guerrero, Valencia, Mission, and South Van Ness. On all five streets, driving times remained unchanged, while bike volumes soared. On Valencia Street, for example, the number of commute-time cyclists rose from 88 to 215 per hour (Michael Rankin, presentation at New Partners for Smart Growth, February 10, 2007).

than their share to wreck a good number of American downtowns. Why? Because, by inserting them where they are not needed, or making them much longer than needed, engineering departments have caused many Main Streets to become a lane too wide.

This wouldn't be as big a problem if it were only a matter of ten feet. Unfortunately, the big problem is where those ten feet are found, in what used to be a parking lane. This is the situation in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where the once-bustling Wyandotte Street has the misfortune of also being State Route 378. Here, the same enlightened DOT engineers who brought us Lewistown's road diet decided that a two-laner needed a center turn lane, and they scraped an entire block face of its parallel parking to get it. Without convenience parking for their customers, the stores that line Wyandotte Street are all dead or dying; those that remain will not last long. And here's the kicker: the DOT's turn lane—four hundred feet long, enough for a stack of two dozen cars—serves a minor side street containing a mere eleven houses.

This is highway engineering perversity at its most wasteful . . . were it only an isolated incident! Most American downtowns suffer from unnecessary and overlong left-hand turn lanes that eliminate parking, broaden streets, speed up traffic, and otherwise detract from the pedestrian experience. While most can't be eliminated without a negative impact on traffic flow, most can be shortened. A three-car-long turn lane that eliminates three parking spaces at a corner is a vast improvement over the block-long monsters that most cities install without a second thought.

FAT LANES

Contrary to perceptions, the greatest threat to pedestrian safety is not crime, but the very real danger of automobiles moving quickly. Yet most traffic engineers, often in the name of safety,

continually redesign city streets to support higher-speed driving. This approach is so counterintuitive that it strains credulity: engineers design streets for speeds well above the posted limit, so that speeding drivers will be safe—a practice that, of course, causes the very speeding it hopes to protect against.

Even my old South Beach neighborhood, known for its walkability, was not immune to this sort of thinking. If you have seen the remake of *La Cage aux Folles,* you might remember the lively streetscape of Espanola Way, where Robin Williams buys a birthday cake for his partner. Follow that street two blocks west and you will find that already-narrow sidewalks have been cut in half in order to widen a roadway that functioned perfectly well before. Why? Because *the standards had changed*—from walkable to not.

I have never heard a proper explanation for the creeping expansion of America's street standards. All I know is that it is very real and that it has a profound impact on the work that city planners do every day. In the late nineties, I was helping to design Mount Laurel, a new town outside of Birmingham, Alabama, that was modeled on that city's most successful prewar neighborhoods. We had measured the streets of Homewood, Mountain Brook, and the city's other best addresses, and planned our thoroughfares with the same dimensions. We were then told that our streets did not meet the standard, and our engineering firm was unwilling to stamp the drawings for fear of legal liability.

I remember one particular afternoon, when we convinced the county engineer to tour these great neighborhoods with us in our van. Perhaps anticipating our consternation, he gripped the door handle with white knuckles and shouted "We're gonna die!" as we motored calmly around the narrow, leafy streets of Mountain Brook. I'm pretty sure he was joking, but his ultimate pronouncement was clear: we had to reengineer our streets with a higher design speed.

This logic—that higher design speeds make for safer

streets—coupled with the typical city engineer's desire for unimpeded traffic—has caused many American cities to rebuild their streets with lanes that are twelve, thirteen, and sometimes even fourteen feet wide. Now cars are only six feet wide—a Ford Excursion is 6'6"—and most Main Streets were historically made of ten-foot lanes. That dimension persists on many of the best, such as ritzy Worth Avenue in Palm Beach, Florida. Yet many cities I visit have their fair share of twelve-footers, and that is where much of the speeding occurs.

For me writing this and you reading it, it is undoubtedly clear that building wider lanes would cause drivers to speed. After all, if highways have twelve-foot lanes, and we are comfortable negotiating them at seventy miles per hour, wouldn't we feel the same way on a city street of the same dimension? Yet in the bizarre parallel universe of the traffic engineer, no such relationship exists: motorists will drive at the speed limit, or slightly above, no matter what sort of drag strip we lay in their path.

As with induced demand, the engineers have once again failed to comprehend that the way they design streets will have any impact on the way that people use them. By their logic, just as more lanes can't cause more driving, high-speed lanes can't cause high speeds. Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to introduce you to the second great misunderstanding that lies at the root of most urban degradation today: widening a city's streets in the name of safety is like distributing handguns to deter crime.

Just in case you think I am making this up, let's turn to the calm analysis of Reid Ewing and Eric Dumbaugh, professors at the University of Maryland and Texas A&M, respectively. In their 2009 study, "The Built Environment and Traffic Safety: A Review of Empirical Evidence," they assess the situation this way:

> Considered broadly, the fundamental shortcoming of conventional traffic safety theory is that it fails to account for the moderating role of human behavior on crash incidence. Decisions to . . . widen specific roadways to make them more forgiving are based on the assumption that in so doing, human behavior will remain unchanged. And it is precisely this assumption—that human behavior can be treated as a constant, regardless of design—that accounts for the failure of conventional safety practice.[4]

How costly is this failure? In another study, presented at the eightieth annual meeting of the Transportation Research Board, Rutgers professor Robert Noland calculated that increased lane widths could be blamed for approximately nine hundred additional traffic fatalities per year.[5]

We can only hope that these studies eventually have an impact on thoroughfare engineering as it is practiced in the typical American city. Currently, engineers still deny their stamp of approval to streets configured without "adequately" high design speeds. "We're afraid of being sued," they say. Someday, I might get up the nerve to respond as follows: "Afraid? You should be. Now that we've publicly presented to you that narrower roads save lives, we are going to sue you when people die on your fat streets."

There is some good news. Thanks to the labors of the Congress for the New Urbanism, a nonprofit focused on making more livable cities,• we have made a start in changing the standards. The CNU teamed up with the Institute of Traffic Engineers to create a new manual, *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares*, that recommends street lanes of ten and eleven feet wide.[6] With the imprimatur of the ITE, this book can now be waved at planning meetings in support of more reasonable standards. I just wish that "eleven" wasn't in there.

•Full disclosure: I am a charter member of this organization, which over the past two decades has been laboring arduously in support of the ideals presented in this book. You can join us at cnu.org.

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Another cause for hope is the growing "20's Plenty for Us" movement that, having taken the United Kingdom by storm, is just beginning to win followers in the United States. Recognizing that only 5 percent of pedestrian collisions at twenty miles per hour result in death, versus 85 percent at forty mph,[7] the British have introduced twenty-mph speed limits in many of their cities. There are currently more than eighty "20's Plenty" campaigns in the UK, and about twenty-five British jurisdictions, with a combined population of over 6 million, have committed to a twenty-mph speed limit in residential areas. In June 2011, the European Union Transport Committee recommended such a rule for the entire continent.[8] It is easy to imagine twenty mph becoming a standard throughout Europe in the near future.

On this side of the pond, Hoboken, New Jersey, may be the first city to have instituted a "20's Plenty" campaign. Unfortunately, in true Jersey fashion, the twenty is just a suggestion, while higher official speed limits remain in place. As I write this, New York City is pioneering some legitimate twenty-mph zones. These developments are important—but not as an end in themselves. As any London pedestrian will tell you, a twenty-mph sign does not a twenty-mph driver make. Most motorists drive the speed at which they feel comfortable, which is the speed to which the road has been engineered. "20's Plenty" is most useful as a first step to slower design speeds. Once twenty-mph zones proliferate, we may finally be able to convince the engineers to design twenty-mph streets.•

KEEP IT COMPLICATED

Narrower lanes are not the only way to slow traffic down. Each and every aspect of the built environment sends its own cue to

•As you might expect, this is far from likely, for the reasons already discussed. Most engineers would insist that streets posted with a twenty-mph speed limit be laid out according to a design speed of twenty-five or thirty mph so that speeders are "safe."

drivers and too many of those cues say "speed up." Most of them, unfortunately, are the law. Two more that deserve our attention are intersection geometry and sight triangles.

Recently, my wife and I took a road trip to Philadelphia. It was our first weekend alone without the two kids, and we were determined to make it count. The first stop, about a mile south of the Liberty Bell, was the intersection of Ninth Street and Passyunk Avenue. Fast-food aficionados will recognize this address as the location of Geno's Steaks and Pat's King of Steaks, the two oversized food stands that have been duking it out for decades over the title of Best Philly Cheesesteak.

I had heard about the cheesesteak duel, but I was not aware of the odd urban condition that surrounds it. As befits their embattled circumstances, the two restaurants sit nose-to-nose on opposing flatiron lots, like two skinny slices of pie, framed by two streets that cross in a sharp thirty-degree X. Pat's points north, directly at Geno's pointing south. With all their flashy signage, they look like two casino yachts playing a game of chicken.

For me, the question wasn't which sandwich was better (my vote goes to Pat's•). Rather, the question was: After all the cheesesteaks these two establishments had undoubtedly served to traffic engineers throughout the years, why is it still illegal in most of America to intersect two streets at a thirty-degree angle?

Observing the intersection at work, it would be hard to imagine a safer scene. First, there were the snaking lines of customers that made their way right into the street. We planners call this "human traffic calming"—as opposed to "human speed bumps," another common phenomenon—and the traffic was further slowed by all the cars pulling in for curbside pickups. But even without this confusion—we returned when the crowds had abated—the simple fact was that nobody drove dangerously through this intersection, precisely because the intersection felt dangerous.

•Thanks mostly to Geno's xenophobic political displays.

Welcome to the world of *risk homeostasis*, a very real place that exists well outside the blinkered gaze of the traffic engineering profession. Risk homeostasis describes how people automatically adjust their behavior to maintain a comfortable level of risk. It explains why poisoning deaths went up after childproof caps were introduced—people stopped hiding their medicines—and why the deadliest intersections in America are typically the ones you can navigate with one finger on the steering wheel and a cellphone at your ear.[9]

The best risk-homeostasis story comes from Sweden, a nation that is obsessed with traffic safety. If you look at the bar chart of Swedish traffic fatalities through the years, most of what you see is not surprising. There is the rise in deaths into the sixties, the decline as seatbelts are introduced, the leveling off in the eighties, and then a further decline as airbags become standard equipment. But, wait a minute, what happened in 1967? In a single year, fatalities dropped from more than thirteen hundred to fewer than eleven hundred, a decline of 17 percent. It turns out that, on March 9, 1967, Sweden switched from driving on the left-hand side of the road to driving on the right-hand side of the road.[10]

As might be expected, everyone was quite worried about this transition. The steering wheels were on the wrong side of the cars, a ton of signals and signs all had to be moved at once, and the government feared a bloodbath. But, precisely because people were scared, car crashes dropped precipitously, and didn't return to the prior level until 1970.

The lesson from this experience is clear: if you value the lives of your countrymen, you should switch sides of the road every three years. Since that is unlikely to win popular support, let's turn to the larger lesson: the safest roads are those that feel the least safe, demanding more attention from drivers.

This lesson has yet to crack through the ossified shell of the mainstream traffic engineering profession. In most cities, intersections are required to meet at ninety degrees or close to it.

Staggered intersections, great for slowing speeds, are strictly forbidden. Five-ways, common in older places, are also off the table. My house sits on just such a crazy intersection, and in three years we have yet to witness a crash. Actually, we have: about once a season, on the perfect ninety-degree intersection a block away.

The shape of the intersection is half the story. The other half is the visibility at that intersection, and the second rule that foils the best attempts of city planners to make memorable places: the sight-triangle requirement. This standard mandates that all vertical objects such as buildings and trees maintain a minimum distance from street corners, so that drivers can see around them. Such a requirement makes perfect sense in a world in which design can't affect behavior. But on planet Earth, it causes speeding at intersections.

Many of the best places in America, with leafy, well-shaped public spaces, violate the sight-triangle requirement.• Many of these places are located in those very cities that enforce sight triangles on all new construction. Luckily, each jurisdiction has the right to enforce its own sight-triangle rules. While they are hard to throw out entirely, they can often be rejiggered to the point where they do no harm. Hint: it all comes down to how you measure the triangle.

THE SAFETY APOTHEOSIS

If greater perceived danger leads to safer driving, how do you make the safest streets in the world? That question was probably best answered by Hans Monderman (1945–2008), the Dutch traffic engineer who pioneered two wonderful and interrelated

•See *The Boulevard Book* by Alan Jacobs for a thorough discussion of how sight-triangle requirements make great streets illegal. In one trenchant drawing, Jacobs demonstrates how applying the American standard would wipe out one-third of the trees on Barcelona's gorgeous Passeig de Gràcia (118–19).

concepts: *naked streets* and *shared space.* While not appropriate everywhere, these techniques have a lot to teach us as we work to improve our cities.

Naked streets refers to the concept of stripping a roadway of its signage—all of it, including stop signs, signals, and even stripes. Far from creating mayhem, this approach appears to have lowered crash rates wherever it has been tried. Following Monderman's advice, the Danish town of Christiansfeld removed all signs and signals from its main intersection, and watched the number of serious accidents each year fall from three to zero. The British county of Wiltshire, home to Stonehenge, pulled the centerline off a narrow street, and witnessed a 35 percent drop in the number of collisions.[11] Drivers passed oncoming cars at a 40 percent greater distance than on a striped street, even though the striped roadway was wider.[12]

Monderman described his approach this way: "The trouble with traffic engineers is that when there's a problem with a road, they always try to add something. To my mind, it's much better to remove things."[13] This makes particular sense in the Netherlands, where there is a tradition of reticent roadways—you are unlikely to see a stop sign there[14]—but the idea has also spread to Austria, France, Germany, Spain, and Sweden.[15]

Naked streets are also beginning to appear in the United States, typically in conjunction with Monderman's other big idea, *shared space.* In some ways, shared space is simply the extension of the naked streets concept to include the elimination of physical cues and barriers as well, such as curbs and distinct materials for streets and sidewalks. The goal is to create an environment of such utter ambiguity that cars, bicyclists, and pedestrians all come together in one big mixing bowl of humanity.

As David Owen notes, "This sounds to many people like a formula for disaster." Not so: "The clear experience in the (mainly) European cities that have tried it has been that increasing the ambiguity of urban road spaces actually lowers car speeds, reduces accident rates, and improves the lives of pedestrians."[16] In Monderman's terms, "Chaos equals cooperation."[17]

Monderman was a man with the courage of his convictions. One of his favorite tricks with television reporters was to speak to them while standing in front of a shared-space intersection he had built in the Dutch village of Oosterwolde. Without missing a beat, he would blindly walk backward into the flow of traffic, parting it like the Red Sea.[18]

America has no shared-space examples as pure as Monderman's, but one of the first attempts can be found on Espanola Way in Miami Beach—just two blocks from the street that was unnecessarily widened a few pages ago. In good political fashion, the city asked the street's neighbors to participate in the redesign of one of its key intersections, unaware that the neighborhood was infested with urban designers just back from Europe. "No curbs," we said. "Just pave it with bricks from building face to building face." Completed around 2000, Espanola Plaza works just fine, albeit with fairly low car counts. When the traffic engineers come to their senses, we will see Shared Streets begin to proliferate in the United States.

THE ONE-WAY EPIDEMIC

In 1918, a flu pandemic killed more than 75 million people worldwide. Almost exactly fifty years later, the United States was hit by another epidemic that, while less harmful to humans, laid waste to city after city from coast to coast. I am talking, of course, about the wholesale replacement in downtowns of two-way traffic with one-way traffic, a plight that few American cities escaped. Its impacts were profound, and haunt us to this day.

The logic was simple enough: to stay competitive in the face of suburban out-migration, cities needed to retool themselves around the goal of moving suburbanites in and out of the downtown

quickly. One part of this effort—the obvious part—involved building elevated interstates, with the near-suicidal outcomes that have been well documented. The other part, less discussed, involved the remaking of downtown street networks around free-flowing systems of one-way pairs. By replacing two-ways with one-ways, cities were able to introduce synchronized signals and eliminate the slowdowns caused by left turns across traffic.

Like the interstates, these retrofitted streets were indeed effective at speeding commuters, enough so that there was no longer any reason to live downtown. They also turned what had once been a great urban asset—the public realm—into little more than a collection of surface freeways. Thoroughfares that once held cars, pedestrians, businesses, and street trees became toxic to all but the first. Freed of other uses, they effectively turned into automotive sewers.[19]

We have already discussed how multilane streets contribute to antipedestrian driving. Add to that the elimination of all friction from cars headed in the opposite direction and the sheer momentum represented by two to four columns of unopposed traffic, and you can see why these streets quickly depopulated. It is difficult to name a midsized or larger American city that was not damaged by this technique, whether it takes the form of a largely one-way network—Saint Louis, San Diego—or just a single one-way pair—Alexandria, Virginia; Cornelius, Oregon. Indeed, driving west from Portland to the Oregon coast, I witnessed how a single DOT had managed to send a good number of a state's Main Streets onto life support with this one trick.

One-ways wreck downtown retail districts for reasons beyond noxious driving, principally because they distribute vitality unevenly, and often in unexpected ways. They have been known to kill stores consigned to the morning path to work, since people do most of their shopping on the evening path home.• They also

•Just such a numbskull move devastated Calle Ocho, the main drag of Miami's Little Havana, in the seventies (Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck, *Suburban Nation*, 161n).

create a situation in which half the stores on cross-streets lose their retail visibility, being located over the shoulders of passing drivers. They intimidate out-of-towners, who are afraid of becoming lost, and they frustrate locals, who are annoyed by all the circular motions and additional traffic lights they must pass through to reach their destinations.

Indeed, these looping motions call deeply into question the presumed greater efficiency of one-way systems. Sure, they move vehicles faster, but does that greater speed make up for the additional distances that motorists have to travel . . . especially lost motorists? While there are plenty of studies documenting the congestion-busting efficacy of one-ways, I have yet to see one that factors in the marginal congestion caused by circling.

I was reminded of this fact on my first visit to Lowell, Massachusetts, on the day I was hired to work on their downtown. After twenty minutes spent lost—despite Google Maps—I finally had to call the deputy city manager, who talked me in for a landing. For a city planner with what I thought was a well-calibrated internal compass, this was a profound embarrassment. Later, as I got to know the city, I began to feel a bit better. The superimposition of a one-way network on Lowell's cranky preindustrial grid, interrupted by canals and rivers, had created one of the most discombobulating street networks in America. In my eventual report, I took great pleasure in documenting how the drive from the Memorial Auditorium to its designated parking lot, a mere two hundred yards away, required a looping five-turn odyssey of more than a mile.

At this point, some astute readers will be asking about Portland: it has a one-way grid and it's doing great. What gives? Portland adds a major caveat to this discussion: if the grids are simple and the blocks small, corresponding to a dense network of fairly tiny streets, then one-way systems can function quite well—picture most of the residential cross-streets in Manhattan. But Portland has a number of one-ways that are simply too big to invite walking, and so does Seattle, another small-block gem.

When the streets get more than two lanes wide, it takes some pretty tall buildings to make them feel comfortable, buildings that most American cities don't have.

Take Savannah. In 1969, a one-way system was applied to many of the north-south streets in Oglethorpe's delicate grid. Most still remain, and create perhaps the only significant impediment to pleasurably strolling this otherwise eminently walkable city. Recognizing this problem, the city government commissioned the architect Christian Sottile to study what happened to just one thoroughfare, East Broad Street, when it became a speedway. He dug into the tax rolls and counted the number of active (taxpaying) addresses located along the street in 1968 and then a few years later. He learned that, as a result of its conversion, the street lost almost two-thirds of these addresses.[20]

Happily, there's a flip side to that story. Worried about speeding as it built a new elementary school, the city returned East Broad Street to two-way. In short order, the number of active addresses shot up by 50 percent.[21]

Savannah's experience is not alone. Based on a few well-publicized successes, dozens of American cities are beginning to revert their one-way systems back to two-way traffic. These include Oklahoma City, Miami, Dallas, Minneapolis, Charleston, Berkeley[22] . . . and, soon, Lowell. Perhaps the best documented of recent reversions was accomplished in Vancouver, Washington. As told by Alan Ehrenhalt in *Governing* magazine, Vancouver had "spent millions of dollars trying to revitalize its downtown," but these investments "did nothing for Main Street itself. Through most of this decade the street remained as dreary as ever."[23] He continues:

> Then, a year ago, the city council tried a new strategy. Rather than wait for the $14 million more in state and federal money it was planning to spend on projects on and around Main Street, it opted for something much simpler. It painted yellow lines in the middle of the road, took down some signs and put up others, and installed some new traffic lights. In other words, it took a one-way street and opened it up to two-way traffic. The merchants on Main Street had high hopes for this change. But none of them were prepared for what actually happened following the changeover on November 16, 2008. In the midst of a severe recession, Main Street in Vancouver seemed to come back to life almost overnight.[24]

The success has continued, and business owners remain ecstatic. Twice as many cars drive past their businesses each day and the once-feared traffic congestion has never occurred. Now the head of Vancouver's Downtown Association, Rebecca Ocken, has some planning advice for other cities: "One-way streets should not be allowed in prime downtown retail areas. We've proven that."[25]

For small and midsized cities like Vancouver (population 162,000), she is almost certainly right. For larger cities, it depends. I, for one, am not about to revert Manhattan's Columbus and Amsterdam Avenues back to two-way traffic, but it's fair to say that New York would be an even more walkable place if that change were made. Bottom line: if your downtown lacks vitality and it's got one-ways, it's probably time for a change.

SACRED SIDEWALKS

Now that we are almost done talking about pedestrian safety, maybe it is time to actually discuss where pedestrians spend most of their time. I have avoided the subject until now, because sidewalk design has almost nothing to do with pedestrian safety. Pedestrian advocates always fight for wider sidewalks, but that's largely irrelevant. Some of America's most walkable cities have some of the narrowest sidewalks—picture Charleston, Cambridge, or Georgetown. In New Orleans's French Quarter, sidewalks are seven feet across.

What makes a sidewalk safe is not its width, but whether it is protected by a line of parked cars that form a barrier of steel between the pedestrian and the roadway. Have you ever tried sidewalk dining on a sidewalk without curbside parking? Those sorry little table installations rarely last long. Whether they are two feet away or ten feet away, nobody wants to sit—or walk—directly against a line of cars traveling at sixty feet per second. On-street parking also slows traffic down, since drivers are wary of other cars potentially pulling into the roadway.[26]

Few sidewalks without parking entice walking, yet cities routinely eliminate it in the name of traffic flow, beautification, and, more recently, security. Many curbs in Oklahoma City have lost their parking spaces based on the assumption that terrorist bombers are afraid of getting a parking ticket. This line of reasoning is so patently ridiculous that it has been embraced by the federal government.• Fortunately, at least local leadership has shown a capacity for reform: our new plan for OKC's central business district more than doubles the number of on-street parking spaces—from fewer than eight hundred to more than sixteen hundred. According to the National Trust's Main Street Center program, each eliminated on-street parking space costs an adjacent business ten thousand dollars each year in sales. If the inverse is true, we've just made Oklahoma City merchants $9 million richer every year.

The latest enemies of on-street parking to make the scene are two erstwhile friends: bikeways and transit lines. Stripping a sidewalk of its protection in order to add bike lanes is just sacrificing one form of nonmotorized transportation for another. And since transit depends on walkability for its success, any trolley system that undermines pedestrian comfort is shooting itself in the foot. If they are truly to offer an alternative to the automobile, bikes and trolleys must displace moving cars, not parked ones.

•As in many American cities, it is the curbs in front of federally owned buildings that have seen the greatest application of antiterrorist parking bans.

Can trees and landscape make up for an absence of curb parking? Not completely, unless you are willing to build big, chunky planter boxes like those found on Chicago's State Street—and, even then, cars are likely to drive too fast. Trees are typically essential, however, for pedestrian comfort, as I will cover in Step 8, and they do slow drivers down a bit. They can also stop a car that has hopped the curb. For that reason, the safest sidewalks are lined by both parked cars *and* trees.•

The other great threat to pedestrians on sidewalks, beyond cars that jump the curb, is cars that are welcomed across it by drop-offs and drive-thrus. In the interest of driver convenience, most American cities handed out curb cuts in the seventies like candy at Halloween, to banks, restaurants, dry cleaners, hotels . . . anyone who asked. These now send a very clear message to pedestrians that the sidewalk does not belong to them.

Many of these can now be eliminated. If a city has rear alleys, there is no justification for providing businesses additional access at the curb. Without alleys, there are still remedies. Most bank drive-thrus—often three and four lanes wide—can be necked down at the sidewalk, to widen beyond it. Indeed, with

•One fun battle that has been raging lately is the dispute between head-in and back-in angled parking. Many cities include business districts where the width of pavement is appropriate for angled parking. The recent tradition has been for this parking to be nose-to-the-curb although, historically, many Main Streets did it the other way around. Enter the traffic engineers, and somebody's discovery that back-in parking is actually safer than head-in, and a new movement is born. Now dozens of Main Streets nationwide have reintroduced back-in parking—including Charlotte, Honolulu, Indianapolis, New York, Seattle, Tucson, and Washington—and accidents are down, especially those involving bikes. Tucson, for example, averaged about one bicycle-car crash per week before converting from head-in to rear-in parking. Now, more than four years into implementation, no such crashes have been reported (see brunswickme.org/backinparking.pdf).

It is easy to see why. With back-in parking, the reverse motion is into the curb, while head-in parking requires drivers to back into moving traffic. Back-in parking is also more convenient for loading and unloading. The only major problem with back-in parking is that almost everybody hates it, mostly because they are not used to it. This was the case in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where the typical public reaction was summed up in the online comment of one Brent B.: "Amazing, it only took the dum-dums on the city council three years to realize what an idiotic idea while those of us with common sense

the rise of online banking, many drive-thru lanes can just be eliminated. Whether or not businesses can be made to give up their current curb cuts, the best strategy now is to simply not allow any new ones. Even hotels, unless they are quite large, should be able to handle drop-offs easily at the curb, in the parking lane. In Philadelphia, we stayed at the 230-room Hotel Palomar, which welcomes all its cars this way. To be stingy with curb cuts, cities must be generous with small no-parking zones at places like hotels, where drop-offs occur continuously.

SENSELESS SIGNALS

In the last step, I mentioned the visible presence of taxis as one indicator of a city's walkability. Another reliable bellwether is the visible absence of push-button traffic signals. In my travels, it is almost always the cities with push-button crossings that need the most help. I remember when these were introduced during my

knew it was stupid to begin with" (comment to Rick Smith, "Cedar Rapids Phasing Out Back-In Angle Parking," *The Gazette*, June 9, 2011). To his credit, one council member, Jerry McGrane, said that he had voted in support of back-in parking "for the entertainment value if nothing else" (ibid.).

Back-in parking has also been implemented in some communities that are simply not ready for it. I mean this not intellectually, but urbanistically. If residents are not accustomed to parallel parking—which is more difficult than back-in—and if almost all local parking is head-in at strip malls, then reverse parking may just be too big a stretch. That was the case in Fremont, California, where back-in parking was discontinued after one year when 70 percent of poll respondents said they would be "less likely to stop" at retail shops with back-in parking (City of Fremont, City Council Agenda and Report, May 3, 2011). But take a look at Fremont: it's pure sprawl—217,000 residents without a single block of urban walkability.

The best argument I have heard against back-in parking is that the exhaust fumes can be noxious to sidewalk dining. This point makes sense and needs to be taken into account when back-in parking districts are located. As suggested by Tucson, bike routes need to be considered as well, as cycle lanes behind head-in parking are basically suicidal. With those two cautions, I am happy leaving it up to the citizens. When asked, I usually put it this way: "Back-in parking works just fine in Washington. Are you better or worse drivers than we are?"

childhood, and they seemed at the time like a gift. Wow, I can actually control the traffic light. What power! But the truth is quite the opposite. Push-buttons almost always mean that the automobile dominates, as they are typically installed in conjunction with a new signal timing in which crossing times are shorter and less frequent. Far from empowering walkers, the push button turns them into second-class citizens; pedestrians should never have to ask for a light.

It is fascinating to talk to blind people about push-button walk signals. They push the button and wait for a lull in the noise. But then they can't tell if what they hear is a red light, or just a gap in the speedy traffic. The alternative are those annoying chirping signals that now mark the pace of daily life in crunchy towns like Northampton, Massachusetts. These are unnecessary in a standard (non–push-button) crosswalk, where the visually impaired can hear and predict the direction of traffic.

Another recent favorite among traffic planners is the "Barnes Dance" intersection, popularized in the United States by Denver's Henry Barnes, in which all pedestrians wait a full cycle for all cars to stop and then are briefly given free rein over the entire intersection—including diagonally. The Barnes Dance is a sexier version of the generic "dedicated-cycle" intersection, which lacks the diagonal paint job, but functions the same way. This system was introduced to avoid conflicts between turning vehicles and pedestrians in crosswalks, another example of "pedestrian safety" being used as an excuse to limit pedestrian convenience in the service of traffic flow. There are more than three hundred of these intersections in Japan, and they do make sense in places with pedestrian crowding, like Manhattan's Union Square. But there is no pedestrian crowding in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, which is why I have an impressive photo collection of dedicated-cycle jaywalkers. Smaller cities need to be aware that some big-city best practices just aren't made for them.

What makes dedicated-cycle intersections so frustrating to

pedestrians is the likelihood that they will have to stand still at almost every street they cross. Experienced Manhattan walkers will confirm that, in a true grid with standard signals, it is possible to cover huge swaths of a city without stopping once. Most pedestrian routes are not due north-south or east-west, but diagonal, and every intersection provides the opportunity to cross in one direction at all times. Walkers like to keep walking and dedicated signals kill the momentum.

Denver has recently eliminated its diagonal Barnes Dances due to the introduction of streetcars, but it has kept its dedicated-crossing cycles and—in a horrible move—increased the length of each cycle from an already-too-long seventy-five seconds to ninety seconds.• The city claims that this change is partly due to a federal recalibration of pedestrian speed downwards from 4 feet per second to 3.5 feet per second (as Americans become fatter and slower targets). But do the math: it takes 9 seconds to cross three driving lanes at the old, fast speed, and 10.3 seconds at the new, slow one. And you need 15 more seconds why? The clear winners, as usual, are the automobiles, which the city is afraid of inconveniencing with trolleys. Let's hope that the high altitude bestows superhuman patience on Denver's pedestrians.

The other way that cities increase traffic flow at the expense of pedestrians is with the "right on red" rule. God knows, I love this as a driver, but, as Jan Gehl puts it, "the widespread American practice of allowing cars to 'turn right on red' at intersections is unthinkable in cities that want to invite people to walk and bicycle."[27] It is banned in the Netherlands.[28]

Of course, the obligatory right-on-green is even more dangerous to pedestrians—and left-on-green worse than that[29]—

•The ideal signal cycle timing is almost always sixty seconds or less. Longer signal cycles have long been favored by traffic engineers, who calculate that these contribute to system throughput. However, their calculations ignore the associated negative impacts of the speeding and road rage that result from drivers having to wait inordinately long times at stoplights, not to mention the jaywalking accidents.

since the driver is being told to go. One recent safety innovation, just implemented in Washington, D.C., is the leading pedestrian interval, or LPI, better known as the "pedestrian head start." With the LPI, the "walk" signal appears about three seconds prior to the green light, allowing pedestrians to claim the intersection before cars do. This is the ideal form of walkability enhancer, since it improves both pedestrian safety and pedestrian convenience, rather than pitting the two against each other. Meanwhile, in Los Angeles, the city's bright idea for improving pedestrian safety is to remove crosswalks.[30]

Finally, though, with signals as with road design, the safest approach may turn out to be "less is more," as embodied in the four-way stop sign. What if, instead of simply telling drivers when to go, we asked them to think for themselves? Four-way stop signs, which require motorists to approach each intersection as a negotiation, turn out to be much safer than signals.[31] Drivers slow down, but never have to wait for more than a few seconds, and pedestrians and bicyclists are generally waved through first.• Clearly, these are not possible on the busiest streets, but most cities have many intersections that would benefit from the removal of their signals in favor of stop signs.

If stop signs are so much better than signals, why do signals still proliferate on local low-traffic streets? Indeed, why does the typical corner include not just a signal in each direction, but a distinct signal in each direction over every single lane of traffic, such that the typical urban four-lane intersection now bristles with a good dozen lights? In the sixties, one signal hanging over the middle of the crossing was enough.

The answer may lie in who makes the rules. As director of the Davenport, Iowa, Design Center, Darrin Nordahl did a little

•Indeed, four-way stops are in most cases a biker's dream, as they generally allow confident bikers to blow through intersection after intersection without even having to slow down.

digging, and found out that the firm the city hired to design its signalization regime was the same firm who then sold the city its signals. Enough said.

Would most intersections be safer with one traffic signal rather than twelve? Maybe, maybe not. But many streets would be safer with four-way stop signs. And we could sure use the savings.

STEP 6: WELCOME BIKES

A better way to go; Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Portland, and other foreign cities; Hey! I'm bikin' here!; How safe is safe?; I run afoul of the vehicular cyclists; Bike lanes, separated paths, and shared routes; Advanced cycling; Don't get greedy

Perhaps the greatest revolution currently under way in—only some—American cities is the dramatic rise in biking. This has not happened by accident. New York City recently saw a 35 percent jump in ridership in one year alone, thanks specifically to its strong commitment to an ever-improving bicycle network. Almost every American city is currently well stocked with would-be bike riders who are only waiting for an invitation to hop on the saddle, and it is likely that those cities that invest now in (relatively inexpensive) biking infrastructure will have a meaningful advantage in attracting the next generation of new residents. Millennials routinely cite biking as an important motivator in location choice, and today's seventeen-year-old is a third less likely to have a driver's license than a baby boomer was at that age.

To anyone who lived in New York during the eighties, it might seem a bit odd to advocate for bicycles in a discussion of pedestrian safety. The only cyclists at that time were reckless messengers who broke every traffic law and took out pedestrians with alarming frequency. But visit the city now and it's hard to spot the messengers among the throngs of civilians, most of whom do a pretty good job of sticking to their newly minted bike lanes.

PROLOGUE

This is not the next great book on American cities. That book is not needed. An intellectual revolution is no longer necessary. What characterizes the discussion on cities these days is not a wrongheadedness or a lack of awareness about what needs to be done, but rather a complete disconnect between that awareness and the actions of those responsible for the physical form of our communities.

We've known for three decades how to make livable cities—after forgetting for four—yet we've somehow not been able to pull it off. Jane Jacobs, who wrote in 1960, won over the planners by 1980. But the planners have yet to win over the city.

Certain large cities, yes. If you make your home in New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Portland, or in a handful of other special places, you can have some confidence that things are on the right track. But these locations are the exceptions. In the small and midsized cities where most Americans spend their lives, the daily decisions of local officials are still, more often than not, making their lives worse. This is not bad planning but the absence of planning, or rather, decision-making disconnected from planning. The planners were so wrong for so many years that now that they are mostly right, they are mostly ignored.

But this book is not about the planning profession, nor is it

an argument for more planning per se. Instead, it is an attempt to simply delineate what is wrong with most American cities and how to fix it. This book is not about why cities work or how cities work, but about what works in cities. And what works best in the best cities is walkability.

Walkability is both an end and a means, as well as a measure. While the physical and social rewards of walking are many, walkability is perhaps most useful as it contributes to urban vitality and most meaningful as an indicator of that vitality. After several decades spent redesigning pieces of cities, trying to make them more livable and more successful, I have watched my focus narrow to this topic as the one issue that seems to both influence and embody most of the others. Get walkability right and so much of the rest will follow.

This discussion is necessary because, since midcentury, whether intentionally or by accident, most American cities have effectively become no-walking zones. In the absence of any larger vision or mandate, city engineers—worshiping the twin gods of Smooth Traffic and Ample Parking—have turned our downtowns into places that are easy to get to but not worth arriving at. Outdated zoning and building codes, often imported from the suburbs, have matched the uninviting streetscape with equally antisocial private buildings, completing a public realm that is unsafe, uncomfortable, and just plain boring. As growing numbers of Americans opt for more urban lifestyles, they are often met with city centers that don't welcome their return. As a result, a small number of forward-thinking cities are gobbling up the lion's share of post-teen suburbanites and empty nesters with the wherewithal to live wherever they want, while most midsized American cities go hungry.

How can Providence, Grand Rapids, and Tacoma compete with Boston, Chicago, and Portland? Or, more realistically, how can these typical cities provide their citizens a quality of life that makes them want to stay? While there are many answers to that

question, perhaps none has been so thoroughly neglected as design, and how a comprehensive collection of simple design fixes can reverse decades of counterproductive policies and practices and usher in a new era of street life in America.

These fixes simply give pedestrians a fighting chance, while also embracing bikes, enhancing transit, and making downtown living attractive to a broader range of people. Most are not expensive—some require little more than yellow paint. Each one individually makes a difference; collectively, they can transform a city and the lives of its residents.

Even New York and San Francisco still get some things wrong, but they will continue to poach the country's best and brightest unless our other, more normal cities can learn from their successes while avoiding their mistakes. We planners are counting on these typical places, because America will be finally ushered into "the urban century" not by its few exceptions, but by a collective movement among its everyday cities to do once again what cities do best, which is to bring people together—on foot.

A GENERAL THEORY OF WALKABILITY

As a city planner, I make plans for new places and I make plans for making old places better. Since the late eighties, I have worked on about seventy-five plans for cities, towns, and villages, new and old. About a third of these have been built or are well under way, which sounds pretty bad, but is actually a decent batting average in this game. This means that I have had my fair share of pleasant surprises as well as many opportunities to learn from my mistakes.

In the middle of this work, I took four years off to lead the design division at the National Endowment for the Arts. In this job, I helped run a program called the Mayors' Institute on City Design, which puts city leaders together with designers for intensive planning sessions. Every two months, somewhere in the United States, we would gather eight mayors and eight designers, lock ourselves in a room for two days, and try to solve each mayor's most pressing city-planning challenge.• As might be imagined, working side by side with a couple hundred mayors, one mayor at a time, proved a greater design education than anything I have done before or since.

•This program, now in its twenty-sixth year, has served nearly one thousand mayors, with dramatic results. More information can be found at micd.org.

I specialize in downtowns, and when I am hired to make a downtown plan, I like to move there with my family, preferably for at least a month. There are many reasons to move to a city while you plan it. First, it's more efficient in terms of travel and setting up meetings, something that can become very expensive. Second, it allows you to truly get to know a place, to memorize every building, street, and block. It also gives you the chance to get familiar with the locals over coffee, dinners in people's homes, drinks in neighborhood pubs, and during chance encounters on the street. These nonmeeting meetings are when most of the real intelligence gets collected.

These are all great reasons. But the main reason to spend time in a city is to live the life of a citizen. Shuttling between a hotel and a meeting facility is not what citizens do. They take their kids to school, drop by the dry cleaners, make their way to work, step out for lunch, hit the gym or pick up some groceries, get themselves home, and consider an evening stroll or an after-dinner beer. Friends from out of town drop in on the weekend and get taken out for a night on the main square. These are among the many normal things that nonplanners do, and I try to do them, too.

A couple of years ago, while I was working on a plan for Lowell, Massachusetts, some old high-school friends joined us for dinner on Merrimack Street, the heart of a lovely nineteenth-century downtown. Our group consisted of four adults, one toddler in a stroller, and my wife's very pregnant belly. Across the street from our restaurant, we waited for the light to change, lost in conversation. Maybe a minute passed before we saw the push-button signal request. So we pushed it. The conversation advanced for another minute or so. Finally, we gave up and jaywalked. About the same time, a car careened around the corner at perhaps forty-five miles per hour, on a street that had been widened to ease traffic.

The resulting near-miss fortunately left no scars, but it will

not be forgotten. Stroller jaywalking is a surefire way to feel like a bad parent, especially when it goes awry. The only consolation this time was that I was in a position to do something about it.

As I write these words, I am again on the road with my family, this time in Rome. Now the new baby is in a sling, and the toddler alternates between a stroller and his own two feet, depending on the terrain and his frame of mind. It is interesting to compare our experience in Rome with the one in Lowell, or, more to the point, the experience of walking in most American cities.

Rome, at first glance, seems horribly inhospitable to pedestrians. So many things are wrong. Half the streets are missing sidewalks, most intersections lack crosswalks, pavements are uneven and rutted, handicap ramps are largely absent. Hills are steep and frequent (I hear there are seven). And need I mention the drivers?

Yet here we are among so many other pedestrians—tourists and locals alike—making our way around Trastevere . . . on our toes, yes, but enjoying every minute of it. This anarchic obstacle course is somehow a magnet for walkers, recently selected by readers of *Lonely Planet* travel guides as one of the world's "Top Ten Walking Cities." Romans drive a fraction of the miles that Americans do. A friend of ours who came here to work in the U.S. embassy bought a car when he arrived, out of habit. Now it sits in his courtyard, a target for pigeons.

This tumultuous urban landscape, which fails to meet any conventional American measure of "pedestrian friendliness," is a walker's paradise. So what's going on here? Certainly, in competing for foot traffic, Anatole Broyard's "poem pressed into service as a city" began with certain advantages. The *Lonely Planet* ranking is likely more a function of spectacle than pedestrian comfort. But the same monuments, arranged in a more modern American way, would hardly compete. (Think Las Vegas, with its

Walk Score of 54•.) The main thing that makes Rome—and the other winners: Venice, Boston, San Francisco, Barcelona, Amsterdam, Prague, Paris, and New York—so walkable is what we planners call "fabric," the everyday collection of streets, blocks, and buildings that tie the monuments together. Despite its many technical failures, Rome's fabric is superb.

Yet fabric is one of several key aspects of urban design that are missing from the walkability discussion in most places. This is because that discussion has largely been about creating adequate and attractive pedestrian facilities, rather than walkable cities. There is no shortage of literature on this subject and even a fledgling field of "walkability studies" that focuses on impediments to pedestrian access and safety, mostly in the Toronto suburbs.▪ These efforts are helpful, but inadequate. The same goes for urban beautification programs, such as the famous "Five B's" of the eighties—bricks, banners, bandstands, bollards, and berms—that now grace many an abandoned downtown.[1]

Lots of money and muscle have gone into improving sidewalks, crossing signals, streetlights, and trash cans, but how important are these things, ultimately, in convincing people to walk? If walking was just about creating safe pedestrian zones, then why did more than 150 Main Streets pedestrianized in the sixties and seventies fail almost immediately?[2] Clearly, there is more to walking than just making safe, pretty space for it.

The pedestrian is an extremely fragile species, the canary in the coal mine of urban livability. Under the right conditions, this creature thrives and multiplies. But creating those conditions requires attention to a broad range of criteria, some more easily satisfied than others. Enumerating and understanding these criteria is a project for a lifetime—it has become mine—and is forever a work in progress. It is presumptuous to claim to have

•54 out of 100. See below for more on Walk Score.
▪See janeswalk.net.

figured it out, but since I have spent a lot of time trying, I reckon it is worth communicating what I have learned so far. Since it tries to explain so much, I call this discussion the General Theory of Walkability.

The General Theory of Walkability explains how, to be favored, a walk has to satisfy four main conditions: it must be useful, safe, comfortable, and interesting. Each of these qualities is essential and none alone is sufficient. *Useful* means that most aspects of daily life are located close at hand and organized in a way that walking serves them well. *Safe* means that the street has been designed to give pedestrians a fighting chance against being hit by automobiles; they must not only be safe but *feel* safe, which is even tougher to satisfy. *Comfortable* means that buildings and landscape shape urban streets into "outdoor living rooms," in contrast to wide-open spaces, which usually fail to attract pedestrians. *Interesting* means that sidewalks are lined by unique buildings with friendly faces and that signs of humanity abound.

These four conditions are mostly a way of thinking about a series of specific rules that are further organized into what I call the Ten Steps of Walkability. These will be explored later. Together, I believe that they add up to a complete prescription for making our cities more walkable.

But first, we must understand that the walkable city is not just a nice, idealistic notion. Rather, it is a simple, practical-minded solution to a host of complex problems that we face as a society, problems that daily undermine our nation's economic competitiveness, public welfare, and environmental sustainability. For that reason, this book is less a design treatise than an essential call to arms. Why we need walkability so badly is the subject of the next section.

PART I

WHY WALKABILITY?

While battle was never declared, many American cities seem to have been made and remade with a mandate to defeat pedestrians. Fattened roads, emaciated sidewalks, deleted trees, fry-pit drive-thrus, and ten-acre parking lots have reduced many of our streetscapes to auto zones in which pedestrian life is but a theoretical possibility.

The causes of this transformation are sometimes surprising. In Miami, for example, people wonder why intersections in residential neighborhoods are often so fat: two relatively narrow streets will meet in a sweeping expanse of asphalt that seems to take hours to walk across. The answer is that the firefighters' union once struck a deal that no truck would ever be sent out with fewer than four firemen on it. That's good for safety and even better for job security, but the only truck that seated four was the hook and ladder. So, for many years, one-story residential neighborhoods in Miami had to be designed around the lumbering turning radius of a truck built for tall-building fires.[1]

The above anecdote is far from unusual in today's landscape of disassociated professions and special interests that determine the shape of our communities. The modern world is full of experts who are paid to ignore criteria beyond their

professions. The school and parks departments will push for fewer, larger facilities, since these are easier to maintain—and show off. The public works department will insist that new neighborhoods be designed principally around snow and trash removal. The department of transportation will build new roads to ease traffic generated by the very sprawl that they cause. Each of these approaches may seem correct in a vacuum, but is wrong in a city.

If they are to function properly, cities need to be planned by generalists, as they once were. Generalists understand that consolidating parks means that fewer people can walk to them. Generalists understand that infrastructure organized in service of big trucks is not always inviting to small people. And generalists, finally, are coming to understand that more lanes usually just lead to more traffic.

Most significantly, generalists—such as planners and, one hopes, mayors—ask the big-picture questions that are so often forgotten among the day-to-day shuffle of city governance. Questions like: What kind of city will help us thrive economically? What kind of city will keep our citizens not just safe, but healthy? What kind of city will be sustainable for generations to come?

These three issues—wealth, health, and sustainability—are, not coincidentally, the three principal arguments for making our cities more walkable.

WALKING, THE URBAN ADVANTAGE

The walking generation; A demographic perfect storm; The walkability dividend

Many of my client cities ask me the same question: "How can we attract corporations, citizens, and especially young, entrepreneurial talent?" In Grand Rapids, Michigan, where I am employed by the city's leading philanthropists, they ask it differently: "How can we keep our children from leaving? How can we keep our grandchildren from leaving?"

The obvious answer is that cities need to provide the sort of environment that these people want. Surveys—as if we needed them—show how creative-class citizens, especially millennials, vastly favor communities with *street life*, the pedestrian culture that can only come from walkability.

A lack of street life was one reason why the leadership at Wolverine World Wide, the manufacturers of Merrell and Patagonia Footwear, was having trouble keeping new creative workers from jumping ship from their suburban West Michigan headquarters. The problem was not the company, but the impression among newly arrived spouses that they had no way to break into the social scene . . . even though West Michiganders are known for their openness and hospitality. So what was going on? It turns out that this social scene could only be accessed by car and thus by invitation. With no pedestrian culture, there were no opportunities for the chance encounters that turn into friendships.

When it came time to launch a new apparel division, they decided to base it in Portland, Oregon.

Since that time, Wolverine has set up a new innovation center along with three other top West Michigan companies in downtown Grand Rapids. According to Blake Krueger, Wolverine's president and CEO, the company needed "an urban hub that attracts and retains the millennial creative class. You need a vibrant city heartbeat for these people. Downtown, they're in a more creative live/work/play environment than if they are stuck out here in suburbia." This facility now includes designers and product developers across a dozen different brands.

For many companies, an urban satellite is not enough. Brand Muscle, formerly of leafy Beachwood, Ohio, recently relocated all of its 150 employees to downtown Cleveland, thanks in part to the desires of a largely twentysomething workforce. Now staffer Kristen Babjack brags about her urban lifestyle: "We can leave our apartment and walk five feet to a restaurant to get something to eat, or to go shopping. We have all of our arenas and sporting areas and concerts all in one pretty much walkable area."• Similar stories are making the news in Saint Louis, Buffalo, and even in beleaguered Detroit.

The economic advantage that has already begun to accrue to walkable places can be attributed to three key factors. First, for certain segments of the population, chief among them young "creatives," urban living is simply more appealing; many wouldn't be caught dead anywhere else. Second, massive demographic shifts occurring right now mean that these pro-urban segments of the population are becoming dominant, creating a spike in demand that is expected to last for decades. Third, the choice to live the walkable life generates considerable savings for these households,

•David Barnett, "A Comeback for Downtown Cleveland." United Airlines just moved thirteen hundred of its employees to downtown Chicago from suburban Elk Grove Township, Illinois (Fran Spielman, "1300 More United Jobs Downtown").

and much of these savings are spent locally. I will address each of these factors in turn.

THE WALKING GENERATION

When I worked for the town planning firm DPZ• in Miami in the nineties, everyone drove to the office, without exception. Taking transit or bicycling made no sense at all, as the buses took forever and the biking was worse than perilous. In more recent visits, I learned that a significant segment of the young designer workforce now bikes or rides the bus, even though the conditions for either are hardly better.

These are the same folks who have put a composting bin in the office kitchen . . . so are they just the exceptions to the rule?

It turns out that since the late nineties, the share of automobile miles driven by Americans in their twenties has dropped from 20.8 percent to just 13.7 percent. And if one looks at teens, future shifts seem likely to be greater. The number of nineteen-year-olds who have opted out of earning driver's licenses has almost tripled since the late seventies, from 8 percent to 23 percent.[1] This statistic is particularly meaningful when one considers how the American landscape has changed since the seventies, when most American teens could walk to school, to the store, and to the soccer field, in stark contrast to the realities of today's auto-centric sprawl.

This trend began well before the recession of 2008 and subsequent fuel spikes, and is seen as cultural, not economic. Market researchers J. D. Power—hardly part of the anticar lobby—report that "online discussions by teens indicate shifts in perceptions regarding the necessity of and desire to have cars."[2] In

•DPZ stands for Duany-Plater Zyberk & Company, the firm founded by Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, my coauthors on *Suburban Nation*.

"The Great Car Reset," Richard Florida observes: "Younger people today . . . no longer see the car as a necessary expense or a source of personal freedom. In fact, it is increasingly just the opposite: not owning a car and not owning a house are seen by more and more as a path to greater flexibility, choice, and personal autonomy."[3] These driving trends are only a small part of a larger picture that has less to do with cars and more to do with cities, and specifically with how young professionals today view themselves in relation to the city, especially in comparison to previous generations.

Born as the baby boom ended, I grew up watching three television shows almost daily: *Gilligan's Island*, *The Brady Bunch*, and *The Partridge Family*. While *Gilligan's Island* may have had little to say about urbanism, the other two were extremely instructive. They idealized the mid-twentieth-century suburban standard of low-slung houses on leafy lots, surrounded by more of the same. This was normal and good. As a would-be architect, I was particularly susceptible to the charms of Mike Brady's self-built split-level. This is not to say that there were no urban shows on my television set. I saw a good amount of four: *Dragnet*, *Mannix*, *The Streets of San Francisco*, and *Hawaii 5-0*—all focused on one subject: crime.•

Now, contrast my experience growing up in the seventies with that of a child growing up in or around the nineties, watching *Seinfeld*, *Friends*, and, eventually, *Sex and the City*. In these shows, the big city (in all cases New York) was lovingly portrayed as a largely benevolent and always interesting force, often a character and coconspirator in its own right. The most urban of American cities was the new normal, and certainly good.

The first thing that I take away from this comparison is that I watched far too much television as a child. But the real point here is that today's young professionals grew up in a mass culture—of which TV was only one part—that has predisposed them to look favorably upon cities; indeed, to aspire to live in them. I grew up in the suburbs watching shows about the suburbs. They grew up in the suburbs watching shows about the city. My complacency has been replaced by their longing.

This group, the *millennials*, represent the biggest population bubble in fifty years. Sixty-four percent of college-educated millennials choose first where they want to live, and only then do they look for a job.[4] Fully 77 percent of them plan to live in America's urban cores.[5]

• To be fair, I also caught occasional episodes of *The Honeymooners* and *The Lucille Ball Show*, in which the city took the form of a vague, sooty presence outside the window of a cramped apartment—unthreatening but also uninviting. The only memorable exception was *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. We'll talk about her later.

A DEMOGRAPHIC PERFECT STORM

Meanwhile, the generation raised on *Friends* is not the only major cohort looking for new places to live. There's a larger one: the millennials' parents, the front-end boomers. They are citizens that every city wants—significant personal savings, no schoolkids.

And according to Christopher Leinberger, the Brookings Institution economist who first brought my attention to the *Brady Bunch/Friends* phenomenon, empty nesters want walkability:

> At approximately 77 million Americans, they are fully one-quarter of the population. With the leading edge of the boomers now approaching sixty-five years old, the group is finding that their suburban houses are too big. Their child-rearing days are ending, and all those empty rooms have to be heated, cooled, and cleaned, and the unused backyard maintained. Suburban houses can be socially isolating, especially as aging eyes and slower reflexes make driving everywhere less comfortable. Freedom for many in this generation means living in walkable, accessible communities with convenient transit linkages

and good public services like libraries, cultural activities, and health care.[6]

In the 1980s, my city-planning colleagues and I began hearing from sociologists about something called a NORC, a naturally occurring retirement community. Over the past decade, I have watched a growing number of my parents' generation abandon their large-lot houses to resettle in mixed-use urban centers. My own parents finally jumped ship last year, moving from leafy Belmont Hill, Massachusetts, to only-slightly-less-leafy but much more walkable Lexington Center. For them, that increased walkability means all the difference between an essentially housebound existence and what we all hope will be several decades of continued independence.

On the cusp of their eighties, my parents could be considered late adopters. But as pre-boomers, they represent a trickle of what is to become a torrent. Leinberger notes how, starting now, an average of 1.5 million Americans will be turning sixty-five every year, quadruple the rate of a decade ago.[7] This rate will not begin to plateau until 2020 and we will not see it return to current levels until 2033.

In combination with their independent children, these retiring boomers will numerically overwhelm those families of child-rearing age who typically prefer the suburbs. This upcoming convergence represents "the biggest demographic event since the baby boom itself."[8] Of the 101 million new households expected to take shape between now and 2025, fully 88 percent are projected to be childless. This is a dramatic change from 1970, when almost half of all households included children.• These new adults-only households won't give a hoot about the quality of

•Christopher B. Leinberger, *The Option of Urbanism*, 89–90. Leinberger's book is a central source for this section, as it lays out many of the arguments and statistics surrounding the demand for walkable cities. While 4 million Americans lived alone in 1950, that number now tops 31 million (Nathan Heller, "The Disconnect," 110). According to *USA Today*, there are now more households with dogs than children (Haya El Nasser, "In Many Neighborhoods, Kids Are Only a Memory").

local schools or the size of their backyards. "This fact will open up many possibilities," Leinberger observes.[9]

As that current statistical oddity, a parent of young children, I often advocate for stronger public schools and neighborhood parks to benefit families. I remind people that a community cannot fully thrive in the absence of any generational cohort, since we all support one another. I like to quote David Byrne: "If we can build a successful city for children, we can build a successful city for all people."[10] This is true enough, but I am often reminded that I lived comfortably for a full decade in one of the most extreme exceptions to that rule, Miami's South Beach, where I could easily go for a month at a time without a stroller sighting. Not one adult in my neighborhood appeared to be between thirty-five and fifty-five, and none seemed (productively) fertile. Yet South Beach was and remains a great place physically, socially, and economically. Demographically speaking, South Beach is the future of many American cities.

That seems to be the case in walkable Washington, D.C., where the past decade has seen a 23 percent uptick in the number of residents between twenty and thirty-four, simultaneous with an increased number of adults in their fifties and early sixties. Meanwhile, the number of children under fifteen has dropped by 20 percent.[11]

Clearly, Leinberger is optimistic about the larger impact of these population trends on cities. Writing in *Grist*, he concludes that "meeting the pent-up demand for walkable urban development will take a generation. It will be a boon to the real estate industry and put a foundation under the American economy for decades, just as the construction of low-density suburbs did during the last half of the 20th century."[12] Whether or not it can salvage our struggling economy, he makes a convincing case that people will be moving back to the city.

The question that remains is: Will they be moving back to your city, or to someone else's? The answer may well lie in its walkability.

Christopher Leinberger was once the owner of Robert Charles Lesser & Co., the largest real estate advisory firm in the United States, which means that he helped to build a lot of sprawl. He is now convinced that much of suburbia is poised to become "The Next Slum."[13]

In order to study real estate performance, Leinberger divides the American built environment into two categories: *walkable urbanism* and *drivable sub-urbanism.*• In the Detroit region, he finds that housing in walkable urbanism fetches a 40 percent price premium over similar housing in drivable sub-urbanism; in the Seattle region, that premium is 51 percent; in Denver, it's 150 percent. New York City, unsurprisingly, tops the list at 200 percent—that is to say, people are paying three times as much per square foot for apartments in walkable neighborhoods as for comparable suburban houses. In most markets, the demand for walkable urbanism dramatically outpaces the supply: in Atlanta, only 35 percent of poll respondents who want to live in a walkable urban place are able to find and afford it.[14]

A similar dynamic can be found at work for commercial properties. In Washington, D.C., walkable office space recently leased at a 27 percent premium over drivable suburban office space and had single-digit rather than double-digit vacancy rates. *The Wall Street Journal* has confirmed similar trends nationwide: while the suburban office vacancy rate has jumped 2.3 points since 2005, occupancy in America's downtowns has held steady.[15]

Looking at these numbers, Leinberger concludes:

> The metropolitan area that does not offer walkable urbanism is probably destined to lose economic development opportunities; the creative class will gravitate to those metro areas that offer multiple choices in living arrangements. . . . As consumer surveys in downtown Philadelphia and Detroit in 2006 have shown, this seems to be particularly true for the well-educated, who seem to have a predilection for living in walkable urban places.[16]

•These categories are slightly misleading, since walkable urbanism is still drivable, while drivable sub-urbanism is not walkable. Or, more accurately, in walkable urbanism, driving remains a viable option for those people with disposable income and time to spend in traffic, while in drivable sub-urbanism, walking is a practice undertaken only by the least advantaged people with no choice.

This growing demand for pedestrian-friendly places is reflected in the runaway success of Walk Score, the website that calculates neighborhood walkability.• It was started on a lark in 2007 by Matt Lerner, Mike Mathieu, and Jesse Kocher, three partners in a software company with the incongruously automotive name of Front Seat. "I had heard a story on NPR about food miles in England—labeling food with how far it had to travel to get to you," Lerner told me recently, "and I thought, why not instead measure house miles: how many miles from your house you had to go for daily errands."

Addresses are ranked in five categories, with a score of 50 needed to cross the threshold from *car dependent* to *somewhat walkable.* Seventy points earns a *very walkable* ranking, and anything above 90 qualifies as a *walker's paradise.* San Francisco's Chinatown earns a 100, as does NYC's Tribeca, while Los Angeles's Mulholland Drive rates a 9. South Beach in Miami gets a 92. Nike's headquarters in Beaverton, Oregon, comes in at a *car dependent* 42, while the street address of the nationally acclaimed "Walking Guru" Leslie Sansone, of New Castle, Pennsylvania, has a Walk Score of 37.▪

•According to Lerner, once a crude version was up and running, "I emailed twenty people about the site, and we had 150,000 unique visitors the next day." Walk Score now serves up more than 4 million scores daily.

▪One of the fascinating things about Walk Score is how accurate it is, despite the fact that it currently measures only one aspect of walkability: proximity to daily destinations. Specifically, the algorithm asks how far one is (as the crow flies) from nine different "amenity categories," including shopping, dining, coffee, parks, and schools. As will be discussed ahead, true walkability depends dramatically upon so many other factors that Walk Score doesn't measure—such as the size of the blocks and the speed of the cars—but its failure (so far) to measure these attributes doesn't hurt it too much due to a convenient coincidence: almost all of the places in America with many different uses

Tellingly, Walk Score has become a big hit with real estate agents. Driven by their demand, the Front Seat team has recently developed Walk Score Professional, a subscription site that already boasts links from more than ten thousand other websites, most of them belonging to realtors.

I spoke with one of these agents, Eva Otto, whose face adorns a testimonial on the Walk Score homepage. She is confident that "in a place like Seattle, walkability is the make or break for some buyers. It can add 5 to 10 percent to a person's willingness to pay for a house." For each property she handles, she places the Walk Score website amenity map inside the house in an obvious place. She comments that her buyers are increasingly aware of "how surprising and delightful your quality of life can be when you don't have to get into a car to go every place in your life besides home."

If Walk Score is so useful in helping people decide where to live, then it can also help us determine how much they value walkability. Now that it has been around for a few years, some resourceful economists have had the opportunity to study the relationship between Walk Score and real estate value, and they

in close proximity tend to possess smaller blocks and slower-speed traffic. Mixed uses and pedestrian-friendly streets are both part of one common model (the traditional urban neighborhood), while isolated uses and unwalkable streets constitute the other (sprawl). Where the algorithm begins to fail is in high-intensity, commercial edge cities. Here, a preponderance of retail outlets cranks up the score, despite the fact that the only walking occurs in gigantic parking lots. For this reason, sprawl poster child Tysons Corner, Virginia—straight from the cover of Joel Garreau's book *Edge City*—earns an impressive 87. This puts it two points ahead of my own U Street neighborhood in Washington, D.C., even though half my neighbors don't own cars and walk to everything. Living car-free in Tysons Corner, if not actually illegal, is still a preposterous concept.

Happily, the developers are hard at work refining the algorithm. A new version called Street Smart impressively manages to take block size, street width, and vehicle speed into account. This new version will eventually replace the original one—perhaps by the time you are reading this. But Lerner and his team are wary of moving too quickly: "When we make the change over to Street Smart, a lot of people's scores will change, so we want to have a long beta period to work out any issues."

have put a price on it: five hundred to three thousand dollars *per point.*

In his white paper for CEOs for Cities, "Walking the Walk: How Walkability Raises Home Values in U.S. Cities," Joe Cortright looked at data for ninety thousand distinct home sales in fifteen markets nationwide, places like Chicago, Dallas, and Jacksonville. After controlling for all other factors that are known to impact house price, he found a clear positive correlation in all but two of those markets.• In a typical example, Charlotte, North Carolina, Cortright found that an increase in Walk Score from the metropolitan average of 54 (*somewhat walkable*) to 71 (*very walkable*) correlated with an increase in average house price from $280,000 to $314,000.[17] That's two thousand dollars per point, or two hundred thousand dollars across the full scale. Interestingly, two hundred thousand dollars is about the minimum price you can pay for an empty buildable lot in the more walkable parts of Washington, D.C.

Of course, it's generally useful to back up the data by asking real humans what they want. The market-research firm Belden Russonello & Stewart polled several thousand American adults for the National Association of Realtors, and found the following: "When selecting a community, nearly half of the public (47 percent) would prefer to live in a city or a suburban neighborhood with a mix of houses, shops, and businesses. . . . Only one in ten say they would prefer a suburban neighborhood with houses only."[18] Given that the vast majority of the American built environment is currently the latter, it is no surprise that the demand

•The outliers were Las Vegas and Bakersfield, California, two cities almost entirely lacking in traditional urbanism (Cortright, "Walking the Walk," 2). In a more recent study of the Washington, D.C., region, Chris Leinberger and Mariela Alfonzo found a positive correlation across all market segments. Referring to Walk Score's five categories, they state that "each step up the walkability ladder adds $9 per square foot to annual office rents, $7 per square foot to retail rents, more than $300 per month to apartment rents, and nearly $82 per square foot to home values" (Christopher B. Leinberger, "Now Coveted: A Walkable, Convenient Place").

for walkable urbanism already outpaces the supply. This disparity is only going to get bigger.

THE WALKABILITY DIVIDEND

In 2007, Joe Cortright, the fellow responsible for the Walk Score value study cited above, published a report called "Portland's Green Dividend," in which he asked the question: What does Portland get for being walkable? Quite a lot, it turns out.

To set the stage, we should describe what makes Portland different. Clearly, it is not Manhattan. It is not particularly big or particularly small and its residential density, by American standards, is pretty normal. It has attracted a good amount of industry lately, but has shown no great historical predisposition to do so, nor is it gifted with mineral wealth. It rains a lot in Portland and, interestingly, locals pride themselves on not using umbrellas. Perhaps most fascinating is the way that Portlanders refuse to disobey DON'T WALK signs, even if it's 1:00 a.m. on a tiny two-lane street swathed in utter silence . . . and even if a blithe east-coaster is striding happily into the intersection (I'm not naming names here).

But what really makes Portland unusual is how it has chosen to grow. While most American cities were building more highways, Portland invested in transit and biking. While most cities were reaming out their roadways to speed traffic, Portland implemented a Skinny Streets program. While most American cities were amassing a spare tire of undifferentiated sprawl, Portland instituted an urban growth boundary. These efforts and others like them, over several decades—a blink of the eye in planner time—have changed the way that Portlanders live.•

• To be accurate, Portland has not been spared its spare tire of sprawl. But thanks to the urban growth boundary, this area is smaller and more contiguous than it would have been otherwise.

This change is not dramatic—were it not for the roving hordes of bicyclists, it might be invisible—but it is significant. While almost every other American city has seen its residents drive farther and farther every year and spend more and more of their time stuck in traffic, Portland's vehicle miles traveled per person peaked in 1996. Now, compared to other major metropolitan areas, Portlanders on average drive 20 percent less.[19]

Small change? Not really: according to Cortright, this 20 percent (four miles per citizen per day) adds up to $1.1 billion of savings each year, which equals fully 1.5 percent of all personal income earned in the region. And that number ignores time not wasted in traffic: peak travel times have actually fallen from 54 minutes per day to 43 minutes per day.[20] Cortright calculates this improvement at another $1.5 billion. Add those two dollar amounts together and you're talking real money.

What happens to these savings? Portland is reputed to have the most independent bookstores per capita and the most roof racks per capita. The city is also said to have the most strip clubs per capita. These claims are all exaggerations, but they reflect a documented above-average consumption of recreation of all kinds. Portland has more restaurants per capita than all other large cities except Seattle and San Francisco. Oregonians also spend considerably more than most Americans on alcohol,[21] which could be a good thing or a bad thing, but in any case makes you glad they are driving less.

More significantly, whatever they are used for, these savings are more likely to stay local than if spent on driving. Almost 85 percent of money expended on cars and gas leaves the local economy[22]—much of it, of course, bound for the pockets of Middle Eastern princes. A significant amount of the money saved probably goes into housing, since that is a national tendency: families that spend less on transportation spend more on their homes,[23] which is, of course, about as local as it gets.

The housing and driving connection is an important one,

and has been the subject of much recent study, especially since transportation costs have skyrocketed. While transportation used to absorb only one-tenth of a typical family's budget (1960), it now consumes more than one in five dollars spent.• All told, the average American family now spends about $14,000 per year driving multiple cars.[24] By this measure, this family works from January 1 until April 13 just to pay for its cars. Remarkably, the typical "working" family, with an income of $20,000 to $50,000, pays more for transportation than for housing.[25]

This circumstance exists because the typical American working family now lives in suburbia, where the practice of drive-'til-you-qualify reigns supreme. Families of limited means move farther and farther away from city centers in order to find housing that is cheap enough to meet bank lending requirements. Unfortunately, in doing so, they often find that driving costs outweigh any housing savings.[26] This phenomenon was documented in 2006, when gasoline averaged $2.86 per gallon. At that time, households in the auto zone were devoting roughly a quarter of their income to transportation, while those in walkable neighborhoods spent well under half that amount.[27]

No surprise, then, that as gasoline broke $4.00 per gallon and the housing bubble burst, the epicenter of foreclosures occurred at the urban periphery, "places that required families to have a fleet of cars in order to participate in society, draining their mortgage carrying capacity," as Chris Leinberger notes. "Housing prices on the fringe tended to drop at twice the metropolitan average while walkable urban housing tended to maintain [its] value and [is] coming back nicely in selected markets today."[28] Not only have city centers fared better than suburbs, but walkable cities have fared better than drivable ones. Catherine Lutz and Anne Lutz Fernandez note that "the cities with the largest drops in housing value (such as Las Vegas, down

•Catherine Lutz and Anne Lutz Fernandez, *Carjacked*, 80. Vehicle miles traveled per household increased 70 percent from 1969 to 2001 (Chuck Kooshian and Steve Winkelman, "Growing Wealthier," 3).

37 percent) have been the most car-dependent, and the few cities with housing prices gains . . . have good transit alternatives."[29]

This is bad news for Orlando and Reno, but it's good news for Portland . . . and also for Washington, D.C., which continues to benefit from earlier investments in transit. From 2005 to 2009, as the District's population grew by 15,862 people, car registrations fell by almost 15,000 vehicles.▪ The National Building Museum, in its Intelligent Cities Initiative, notes that this reduction in auto use results in as much as $127,275,000 being retained in the local economy each year.▪

Those are the economic benefits of not driving. Are there additional economic benefits of walking, biking, and taking transit instead? The evidence here is a little more scarce, but the indications are positive. Ignoring the health benefits, there is a clear distinction to be made in the category of job creation. Road and highway work, with its big machines and small crews, is notoriously bad at increasing employment. In contrast, the construction of transit, bikeways, and sidewalks performs 60 percent to 100 percent better. A study of President Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act documented a 70 percent employment premium for transit over highways. By this measure, that job-creation program would have created fifty-eight thousand more jobs if its road-building funds had gone to transit instead.▲

•National Building Museum Intelligent Cities Initiative poster. By my estimate, this all occurred on January 20, 2009, when 15,000 Bushies were replaced by 30,000 Obamans. Many Bush staffers, as a point of pride, lived "beyond the beltway" in red-state Virginia.

▪Ibid. In Australia, a similar study determined that living in a transit-oriented neighborhood was likely to save a total of about $750,000 over a lifetime, most of which would be spent locally (Peter Newman, Timothy Beatley, and Heather Boyer, *Resilient Cities*, 120). And since each car removed from the typical household budget allows that family to afford a $135,000 larger mortgage, it's easy to see why Washington real estate prices have dropped only 20 percent from their peak, while housing beyond the beltway has lost half its value.

▲A study of expenditures in Baltimore showed that while each million spent on roads created about seven jobs, each million spent on pedestrian facilities generated eleven jobs, and each million spent on bike lanes created more than fourteen jobs (Heidi Garrett-Peltier, "Estimating the Employment Impacts of Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Road Infrastructure," 1–2).

How does this translate at the local level? Portland has spent roughly $65 million on bicycle facilities over the past several decades. That is not a lot of money by infrastructure standards—it cost more than $140 million to rebuild just one of the city's freeway interchanges.[30] Yet, in addition to helping to boost the number of bicyclists from near normal to fifteen times the national average,• this investment can be expected to have created close to nine hundred jobs, about four hundred more than would have come from spending it on road building.

But the real Portland story is neither its transportation savings nor its bikeway employment, but something else: young, smart people are moving to Portland in droves. According to Cortright and coauthor Carol Coletta, "Over the decade of the 1990s, the number of college-educated 25 to 34 year-olds increased 50 percent in the Portland metropolitan area—five times faster than in the nation as a whole, with the fastest increase in this age group being recorded in the city's close-in neighborhoods."■ There is another kind of walkability dividend, aside from resources saved and resources reinvested: resources attracted by being a place where people want to live. This has certainly been the case in San Francisco, where headhunters for companies like Yelp and Zynga (the social-gaming developers who created FarmVille) actively use urbanism as a recruiting tool. "We're able to attract creative and tech talent because we are in the city," acknowledges Colleen McCreary, Zynga's head of human resources.[31]

Ultimately, though, it would seem that urban productivity has even deeper causes. There is mounting evidence that dense,

•According to the census, Portland's bicycling mode share is 5.8 percent, and local studies place it at just under 8 percent. The national average is 0.4 percent.

■"The Young and the Restless," 34. As the number of college graduates in a metropolitan area increases by 10 percent, individuals' earnings increase by 7.7. This applies even to non–college graduates in the city because their productivity rises, too (David Brooks, "The Splendor of Cities").

walkable cities generate wealth by sheer virtue of the propinquity that they offer. This is a concept that is both stunningly obvious—cities exist, after all, because people benefit from coming together—and tantalizingly challenging to prove.• This hasn't kept it from the lips of some of our leading thinkers, including Stewart Brand, Edward Glaeser, David Brooks, and Malcolm Gladwell.

Speaking at the Aspen Institute, David Brooks pointed out how most U.S. patent applications, when they list similar patents that influenced them, point to other innovators located less than twenty-five miles away.• He also mentioned a recent experiment at the University of Michigan, where "researchers brought groups of people together face to face and asked them to play a difficult cooperation game. Then they organized other groups and had them communicate electronically. The face-to-face groups thrived. The electronic groups fractured and struggled."[32]

Face-to-face collaboration is, of course, possible in any setting. But it is easier in a walkable city. Susan Zeilinski, managing director of the University of Michigan's SMART Center, puts it this way: "In Europe you can get five good meetings done in a day. In Australia, maybe three, and in Atlanta, maybe two, because you've gone way, way farther and way, way faster but you haven't been in an accessible place that allows a lot to happen. You've spent a lot of time sitting in traffic."[33] This discussion raises a larger theoretical question that scientists have just begun to take on: are there underlying universal rules that govern the success of a place?

The theoretical physicists Geoffrey West and Luis Bettencourt believe so. They do not believe in urban theory—"a field without principles"—they are interested only in math. "What

•More than twenty-five years ago, William Whyte's research tracked the stock performance of thirty-eight New York City companies that chose to relocate to the suburbs, and found that they appreciated at less than half the rate of thirty-five similar companies that had stayed put (Whyte, *City: Rediscovering the Center*, 294–95).

the data clearly shows," West notes, "is that when people come together they become much more productive."[34] Do the same physical laws work in reverse? Writing about West's research in *The New York Times Magazine*, Jonah Lehrer notes:

> In recent decades, though, many of the fastest-growing cities in America, like Phoenix and Riverside, Calif., have given us a very different urban model. These places have traded away public spaces for affordable single-family homes, attracting working-class families who want their own white picket fences. West and Bettencourt point out, however, that cheap suburban comforts are associated with poor performance on a variety of urban metrics. Phoenix, for instance, has been characterized by below-average levels of income and innovation (as measured by the production of patents) for the last 40 years.[35]

These findings align with a recent Environmental Protection Agency study that found, state by state, an inverse relationship between vehicle travel and productivity: the more miles that people in a given state drive, the weaker it performs economically.• Apparently, the data are beginning to support the city planners' bold contention that time wasted in traffic is unproductive.

In contrast, the Portland metro area is now home to more than twelve hundred technology companies. Like Seattle and San Francisco, it is one of the places where educated millennials are heading in disproportionate numbers. This phenomenon is what the demographer William Frey has in mind when he says:

•Kooshian and Winkelman, "Growing Wealthier," 2. This correlation seems especially meaningful, since wealthier people have the disposable income that would allow them to drive more.

"A new image of urban America is in the making. What used to be white flight to the suburbs is turning into 'bright flight' to cities that have become magnets for aspiring young adults who see access to knowledge-based jobs, public transportation and a new city ambiance as an attraction."[36]

The conventional wisdom used to be that creating a strong economy came first, and that increased population and a higher quality of life would follow. The converse now seems more likely: creating a higher quality of life is the first step to attracting new residents and jobs. This is why Chris Leinberger believes that "all the fancy economic development strategies, such as developing a biomedical cluster, an aerospace cluster, or whatever the current economic development 'flavor of the month' might be, do not hold a candle to the power of a great walkable urban place."[37]

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PROSE FROM POETRY MAGAZINE

Athens: Peripatetic Fragments

A new world in the old.

BY A. E. STALLINGS

INTRODUCTION

Athenians cannot be proud, the joke goes. Because if their nose is in the air, they won't see the potholes under their feet. The sidewalk is the most dangerous place to walk: watch out for motorbikes, cars backing up, tree stumps, broken pavement, sunken entrances, marble slick as ice, stray dogs, other people who aren't looking up.

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* * *

All street signs are in the genitive. The road of Heraclitus. So, too, are the surnames of women. She of Psaropoulos. Patronymics. Who are you=to whom do you belong.

* * *

Here is our blue-collar neighborhood, with its incongruous view of the Parthenon, and its butcher, baker, and candlestick maker (in that order) around the corner. With its farmers' market on Mondays that trucks in at 4:00 am the autochthonous roots of things, like the roots of words, with the Attic and Laconic soil still clinging stubbornly to them. All the greens whose names I do not know.

* * *

Some call my neighborhood Neos Kosmos, the New World. But we are on the borders of Neos Kosmos. We live across the paved-over trickle that was the river, Kallirrhois ("the beautifully flowing"), from the old-town area of Athens, the Plaka, where, on Byron street, beneath the Acropolis, you can buy calendars with ancient Greek pornography. The real name of our neighborhood, known by the post office but none of the taxi drivers, is Cynosargous—the dog Argos, who waited on a dungheap for the exile's return. The exile's return, of course, is death.

Cynosargous is the ancient home of the Cynics.

* * *

We are a ten-minute walk from the Próto Nekrotapheío—the First Cemetery, on the Road of Repose. It is our nearest real park, that is, one without mopeds tearing past kids playing soccer in the dust (city grime, and the ochre dust from the Sahara that rains down twice a year), shouting Albanian obscenities. The cemetery is good for picnics: the cooing of doves under vaults of cypresses amidst the everyday bustle of death: priests, florists, marble cutters, the cafes that serve bitter coffee and brandy to mourners. Our neighbors include George Seferis, Heinrich Schliemann, and T.H. White. They are lucky: most inhabitants have to be dug up in three years to make room for the rattle of new skeletons. My therapist, Dr. Agamemnon, has his office overlooking the cemetery. Guilt, he says, is a poor counselor. O inscrutable gold mask!

* * *

"When will they return our lost marbles?"

* * *

More neighbors: Penelope has finished her web. She is cutting the threads, weaving in the loose ends. A shroud all along. She is one of those little old ladies dressed in black, in widow's weeds, who elbow me out of the way in the checkout line at the supermarket. I must learn how better to take up space.

Laertes is already planted in the ground. His heart lies there, full of seeds, ready to break open like a grenade, like a pomegranate. They break them here for luck and for new beginnings. Pomegranates, I mean, not hearts.

Telemachus runs a moving company. His truck is labeled: Metaphors.

* * *

One word means both weather and time.

* * *

Strikes, riots, protests, sit-ins, byzantine bureaucracy, strikes. Two smells of Athens: the perfume of bitter oranges casting invisible grace over visible ugliness (cracked pavement, overflowing garbage, the myriad morphologies of dog shit), and the occasional whiff of tear gas blowing past the Temple of Olympian Zeus or the Plaza of Lamentation. (Protest destination: the American Embassy.)

We have an aristocratic Hungarian acquaintance who says (you have to hear the accent), *You can't trust Greeks with concrete*.

* * *

Which is to say: the encircling marble mountains shouldn't be chipped away for gravel and cement to suffocate the many-engendering earth.

But also: the road up and the road down are both lethal with potholes.

* * *

Toss a coin to the old crone before she lays the Evil Eye on you. The Eye is what looks on you with suspicion, because you are a woman, because you have blonde hair, because you are far gone in pregnancy, because you are a foreigner. Don't compliment a baby: it can bring on the Eye. But it is only a superstition—*phtou*, *phtou*, *phtou* (turns aside, ritual spitting).

* * *

My son was born on the Road of the Muses. His name is Jason. (Hairdresser in Atlanta: *But honey, why didn't you give him a Greek name?*) At our local playground, a mother is shrilling for Orestes to come home and take a bath, for Antigone to quit digging in the sand.

* * *

On the sidewalks of Athens, two cannot walk abreast: each of a couple walks alone.

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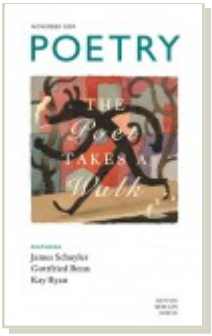

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A. E. (Alicia) Stallings studied classics in Athens, Georgia and has lived since 1999 in Athens, Greece. She has published three books of poetry, *Archaic Smile* (1999), which won the Richard Wilbur Award; *Hapax* (2000); and *Olives* (2012). Her new verse translation of Lucretius (in rhyming fourteeners!), *The Nature of Things,*...

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PROSE FROM POETRY MAGAZINE

W

Secret vices, brief encounters, and the trail of dead.

BY GEORGE SZIRTES

INTRODUCTION

Where I walk is the town of w, some nine miles south of the city of N, though W consists only of some six streets, unless you include the estates that stretch mostly northward but ever more eastward too, and I cannot help thinking of the old, of whom there are many, gathered in their sheltered housing, with their old names, the same names you see on the war memorial, since this has been a stable community for generations, some of their children and grandchildren still working in the shops, sometimes with their parents as in the case of P, the butcher, whose middle-aged daughters come in Saturdays and are particularly to be seen near Christmas when everyone is ordering turkeys and the queues extend outside the shop . . .

Where I walk is the town of w, some nine miles south of the city of N, though W consists only of some six streets, unless you include the estates that stretch mostly northward but ever more eastward too, and I cannot help thinking of the old, of whom there are many, gathered in their sheltered housing, with their old names, the same names you see on the war memorial, since this has been a stable community for generations, some of their children and grandchildren still working in the shops, sometimes with their parents as in the case of P, the butcher, whose middle-aged daughters come in Saturdays and are particularly to be seen near Christmas when everyone is ordering turkeys and the queues extend outside the shop, which is now without the services of M who had been P's assistant, both old men at the edge of retirement, M sickly and occasionally grouchy if not glum, with pains and cancers and a bad heart that eventually killed him just a few months ago leaving P with all the work, so that P no longer has time for Ping-Pong, the secret vice of the town of W, there being three divisions of eight teams each in the immediate area of

W, P being a vicious spinner of the ball, a leading member of Saints B—Saints A, B, and C as represented in each division (there was the occasion when p invited me to play on the b team that eventually won the league though I only played the once, winning one rubber and losing two, my work taking me to Ireland in that period so I only returned at the end of the season, when I was presented with an individual trophy as the fourth man, or reserve of the team, the presentation in a social club in the neighboring town of H, the evening ending with a disco)—and whenever P sees me or my wife, C, passing his window he mimes a Ping-Pong stroke and I mime back, before passing on to the two computer shops, the two electronics shops, the travel agent (The Global Booking Agency), the optician (Cecil B. Amey), the sad gift shop selling trade reject stationery where the lonely and simple go to talk to the melancholy owner who on quiet days is to be seen playing his guitar behind the counter, his glasses as sad as his mild face that always wears a clouded look, the clouds never completely shifting, except occasionally when he has to help a customer use his photocopier (more elderly people, taking copies of wills, deeds, receipts, generally following the trails of the dead), but my walk continues past them, past the jewelry shop and the shop with its cutesy figurines and medallions that remind me of the china shepherdesses and lace doilies that once filled the bourgeois apartments of the elderly in communist Budapest, then the paper shop with its jowly women, the supermarket with its slow-speaking, slow-thinking male checkout and the very old woman who has practically no voice left and is sprouting hair everywhere, hanging silently on to life by what appears a very thin thread, and the banks and the cheap supermarket, and the seventeenth-century market cross on stilts under which the kids hang around in the evenings, with chips from the chippie or a kebab from the Kurdish take-away, the owner of which, a short friendly man, once asked if I would take him on for English lessons, though he has now opened a kebab and burger and fried chicken shop farther down the same street, while on Friday and Saturday nights the criminal and would-be criminal gather outside his original shop as the police circle in their cars, on one occasion taking a gangling blond man away, his hands cuffed behind his back, past the vet's surgery with its window-display of one large plastic model flea and an equally large model louse, dangling on a string like something out of Kafka or the *Insect Play*, the images indicating and reminding us of our enemies; and then, moving out beyond the town, across the old highway, towards the railway station where d the owner keeps a piano showroom (he tunes pianos too) as well as the Brief Encounter restaurant crowded with stills of Trevor Howard and Celia Johnson and other memorabilia—posters, metal plates, tickets, menus, maps, and press notices—so there you might stand on the c-bound platform under the hanging basket of flowers and the memorial to the railwayman killed on the track in an accident some twenty years ago, looking up at the newly-installed

electronic signal that tells you whether a train is late, but if you went on beyond the railway station into the fields and lanes, the England of bicycles and hedgerows, it is almost as if the Great War had never happened, or, if you walked back down by the twelve-mile river, past the ruined abbey from whose tower the body of the hanged rebel William Kett dangled by the neck in 1549, and everywhere, every yard, foot, and inch, trodden over by the makers of the landscape, you would find their feet under your feet, even now as a great cloud, a seeping, darkening grey, plump with rain, climbs up over the horizon and the first drops begin to fall.

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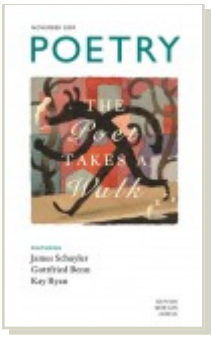

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BIOGRAPHY

George Szirtes was born in Hungary and emigrated to England with his parents—survivors of concentration and labor

camps—after the 1956 Budapest uprising. Szirtes studied painting at Harrow School of Art and Leeds College of Art and Design. At Leeds he studied with Martin Bell, who encouraged Szirtes as he...

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