

the sleep stage, allowing you more attempts at expanding the hypnagogic moment.

Now that we have landed on Earth, have centered ourselves, and know our place, we are ready to start traveling. . . . The archaic whisper's talking 'bout an old way of walking—do you want to find your mind?

3.

JOURNEYING

Healthy Outdoor Exercise for the Soul

IT WAS ONE OF THOSE PERFECT, CRYSTAL-CLEAR spring mornings, and Gustav Fechner, the nineteenth-century German poet, physicist, and psychologist, just couldn't resist taking a walk in the country. As he wandered along, he became curiously entranced by the quality of the light; it somehow transfigured the world. A strange feeling grew within him. "It was only a little bit of Earth; it was only one moment of her existence," Fechner realized, "and yet as my look embraced her more and more it seemed to me not only so beautiful an idea, but so true and clear a fact, that she is an angel. . . . I asked myself how the options of men could ever have become so chrysaloid as to deem the Earth only a dry clod, and to seek for angels above or about it in the emptiness of the sky, and find them nowhere. But an experience such as this will be deemed fantastic."¹ Whether it is considered fantastic depends on the worldview of the culture in which such an experience occurs. As it happens, it would have been a perfectly acceptable observation in Mazdean Iran, for the *Avesta* refers to a liturgy in honor of "the Earth which is an Angel."

There are unique relationships with the Earth to be had, insights to be glimpsed, and moods to be experienced only when we are walking in special ways through the natural world. Walking is the rhythm in which the human being best relates to its environment. Running comes next, though even that tends to distract from the mental effects that relaxed walking—*sauntering*, as Thoreau insisted—can cultivate. Beyond that, land locomotion occurs at faster speeds, with horse and bicycle riding, and then becomes increasingly speedier, more technological, and more shut off from the environment—motorbikes, automobiles, trains. "By increasing the speed at which we pass through the landscape," warns geographer

Jay Appleton, "... [we] may greatly alter the time-sequences which are an integral part of our perceptive experience of it."² Though the deep mind-nature relationships and insights to which I refer cannot be obtained by speedy, let alone enclosed transportation, conscious walking can often provoke them more readily than can static locations.

This kind of special walking basically involves the act of carrying the center of one's being, the portable "here," along through nature, and breaks down into three essential forms. The first is simple walking, the emphasis being on *simple*—walking for its own sake, walking as a meditation. "... the walking of which I speak," Thoreau made clear in his "Walking" essay of 1862, "has nothing in it akin to taking exercise, as it is called. . . ." Nor is it utilitarian, to do with having to get from one place to another. The second type of walking is a development of simple walking, but is still not utilitarian in the mundane sense: it is the act of pilgrimage, primarily a foot journey to a sacred place. This, as I shall argue, is the classic liminal experience (see preceding chapter). Finally, there is that special type of walk, the vision quest, in the service of the soul. Let's look at all three a little more closely.

TAKING THE SOUL FOR A WALK

Walking as an activity in its own right is considerably undervalued. It can be used as a tool for exploring our relationship with nature, with the Earth. To learn how walking can affect mind-states, hence worldview, we should listen to an expert, and what better expert than a vagrant? Philip O'Connor spent some of his life as a "way-farer," and in his *Vagrancy* wrote remarkable accounts of his experiences, some of them touching upon the sort of visionary quality experienced by Fechner. The tramp, O'Connor contends, "drifts sensuously in the rhythm of walking" and enters "a sort of stuporous generalized existence, in which the ego progressively merges its sensible outlines into the environment." There is an "immense afflatus in the heart and soul towards evening, an incomparable feeling of being at home in the outside, as though one were a prayer winding along a road; the feeling is definitely religious, in that one

feels blissfully at one with everyone and everything." (He adds pointedly that this feeling is helped if there is no one in sight!) O'Connor complains that the fascinating mental effects of walking can be likened to those of certain drugs, and have not been sufficiently researched. The prolonged act of "unproductive walking," walking that is not directed at exercise or destinations, produces cyclical alternations of thought, emotion, and sensation that are somehow linked. (This is, of course, the foundation for the apprehension of *chora* that we discussed in the preceding chapter.) He continues:

At first the walker forms, like the wake of a liner, a train of associations typically attached to bodily sensations that must have some experiential connexion with them. . . . Once the flock of associations—gulls around the ship leaving harbour—have dropped off, more stable characteristics take over.

The rhythm, eventually dominant over all perceptions, is poetic in its effects. All hard nodules of concepts are softly coaxed into disbursing their cherished contents. . . . Such dissolution of concepts induces euphoria of a kind augmented by practice. A thought may splutter up, but be drenched with emotion. . . . Maybe mental fireworks will gloriously light the mind—but quickly the world will attach the inner light to outer phenomena. . . . The speed of transit between inner state and outer appearance is a feature of tramping. . . . So one feel-thinks as a liquid fog contained in the vessel of the walking man, with sensitive frontiers, *until* the localized identity-sense is peaceably diffused into the landscape, which then becomes nebulous—colour-moods, but no lines. If lines there are, they become thoughts very quickly.³

O'Connor recalls an occasion when he walked past an uprooted tree by the roadside. "She has left me," he thought irrationally but

mythically. He noted that a feeling of pressure at the back of the head accompanied "this perversion of thought, or insight of poetry." "When I rest, the front brain switches on, and I profoundly achieve the lie that 'a tree is a tree', etc. Superstition (an insight shrouded in a rationalizing folly) may be wiser than 'thought'. Time stops in such perceptions; a high sky, a statically spread landscape."⁴ The tramp is mystical "by definition," O'Connor maintains.

It takes either heavy-duty walking of the kind O'Connor describes, or that rare happenstance of factors that gives the timeless mystical moment, as with Fechner, to produce these deep experiences of mind-nature relationships, but meditative walking can hurry the likelihood of such moments, and in the interim provides lesser but still informative and healing insights. G. Trevelyan, in his 1913 essay, "Walking," pronounced, "I have two doctors, my left leg and my right." The body's rhythmic action of walking, its natural pace and open contact with the environment it passes through, can help unravel mental knots. As the Latin tag has it, *solvitur ambulando*—"you can sort it out by walking." Theodore Roszak observes that psychiatrists are tied to cities by their careers and bank accounts, and that we have no psychiatry that calls for the specific use of nature as a healing agent, so most therapists are hardly able or likely to follow James Hillman's advice of prescribing nature. "Yet common experience," Roszak acknowledges, "tells us that a solitary walk by the river or ocean, a few calm hours in the woods restore the spirit and may produce more insight . . . than the best labors of the professional analyst."⁵ The poet John Keats, who died so young, recollected in his last writings the healing joy of watching "intently Nature's gentle doings" while on country rambles, and remarked on a sense of "excited reverie" during such walks. Ralph Waldo Emerson famously reported in his *Nature* how, when crossing a snow-puddled common at twilight under a clouded sky with no particular thought in his head, he "enjoyed perfect exhilaration" and was "glad to the point of fear."

"The simplest way to explore Gaia is on foot," James Lovelock states flatly. "How else can you so easily be part of her ambience? How else can you reach out to her with all your senses?"⁶

Where enough people walk, paths will be worn. One of the glories of the English countryside is the number of old country paths that still survive, though their number diminishes every year. Kim Taplin has conducted a charming literary study of the subject in her *The English Path*. She suggests that, "because of their removedness from the human world and their closeness to nature, footpaths often induce that contemplative state which is the soil for visionary experience."⁷ This may well be why pathways can themselves become shrines, as we saw in the preceding chapter with the pathway shrine in Russia's Kozmin Copse. Another example was a track called Yries in France, which was still being venerated with rags and old shoes as offerings as late as the seventeenth century, a pagan activity the church there finally stamped out, with difficulty. Walking a downland track in southern England, Richard Jeffries realized its origins went back into the "dimmiest antiquity." A similar realization illuminated the Herefordshire antiquary, Alfred Watkins, when as a teenager he was following an old track through the Black Mountains in Wales. The track crossed a river, and as he splashed through the ford, the young Watkins saw something gleaming. Pulling the object out of the crystal water, he found it to be a Roman coin. Watkins was overwhelmed with the thought that perhaps a Roman centurion had walked this same route nearly two thousand years earlier. Indeed, there are tracks in Britain that were first worn by the feet of Neolithic travelers, thousands of years B.C., and medieval tracks are almost commonplace. In many ways, these rural footpaths are like time lines running through the landscape, and the act of walking them can trigger a sense of transpersonal memory. This, combined with what Edmund Blunden called the "sounds, scents and seeings" to be had along the path, provides a heady brew of conditions affecting the walker's perceptions and sensibilities. Such old paths are therefore expressive space in linear form, and can be used as tools in triggering unfamiliar perceptions of the environment and insights into mind-nature relationships.

The complexity of this expressive linear space is well explored in Bobi Jones' long poem, "Small Paths."⁸ The paths "express the land and tell where / There's declivity and rise" and they define "The silence that's in the soil." By moving along them, "a civilized man

smells the earth and enjoys / Recognizing its depth." There is a reference to the "secret walkers," those who had trod and therefore shaped the path before the present traveler. (This is that "transpersonal memory" I refer to above—a curious sense of companionship with previous users of the path, even those of remote antiquity, that the sensitive walker picks up.) The use of the paths gives the time "to teach the pupils of the eyes" about the wonder and detail of nature all around. And even if one follows the path on other occasions, it is different each time: "It isn't the same shout you hear across the hedge / Calling the cattle; it isn't the same breeze. . . ." Expressive space is meaningful space, and Bobi Jones tells us that the old pathways "write their meanings" on the land; unlike modern automobile highways, they do so quietly and in a different, deeper way—"before they had length / They had worth."

There is no more direct way of allowing the Earth to heal us than to use such footpaths; because of the expressiveness inherent within them, they can often provide a more powerful and focused effect than can wandering free across the land.

But not only are the numbers of these pathways declining in Britain; where they still exist, many are fading from the memories of people local to them, as Satish Kumar discovered during a personal walking pilgrimage to a selection of ancient sites around Britain—a journey that took him over two and a half months to complete—and reported in his autobiography, *No Destination*. He was nevertheless impressed with the number of long- and short-distance paths that still manage to survive in the countryside. "On these rural paths I met the trees, animals, rocks, rivers and birds, and realized the sacredness of all Nature," he recalls. "The churches, cathedrals, mosques and synagogues, shrines and temples are not the only holy places. . . ." Kumar, a former Jain monk and now editor of the ecological journal *Resurgence*, first left India in 1962 on an eight-thousand-mile peace pilgrimage to the capitals of the four nuclear nations, Russia, France, Britain, and the United States. Apart from the crossings of the English Channel and the Atlantic, he traveled entirely on foot and without any money or logistic support across mountains and deserts to and through Russia, across Europe, and finally to America. Satish Kumar knows about walking.

To him, walking is a yoga, and this might be more than mere metaphor: the physiological effects of walking long distances, sometimes with little food, surrounded by the vistas of rural landscapes and deep wilderness, must have effects that prime the mind for shifting states. "Walking in itself was an end, a form of meditation, a way of being," he states. The outer journey became "a trigger for the inner journey."

There are old—pre-Columbian—pathways and "roads" in the Americas, too, but they are very little known about, and where surviving at all are disappearing rapidly. As different as can be imagined from the verdant, rural English footpaths, they are quite often to be found in wild mountainous or arid desert areas. Probably the most famous of these Indian "roads" are the straight line markings on the pampas above Nazca, Peru. What is not well known about these "Nazca lines," however, is that some of them contain well-worn, apparently prehistoric footpaths wandering along inside their precise, geometric outlines.¹⁰ These paths don't seem to be going to or from anywhere. And perhaps they are not, as far as this world is concerned—we are looking at otherworldly paths relating to a profoundly altered state of walking, as we shall discuss in chapter five. There are many more sets of these curious straight tracks or roads in the Americas, such as the extraordinary features that radiate out across the desert for tens of miles from Chaco Canyon, a thousand-year-old cult center of the lost Anasazi people, in New Mexico. The Anasazi, "the Ancient Ones," had neither horses nor wheeled vehicles, yet they built thirty-foot-wide, mainly dead-straight roads. These were engineered features, not mere tracks. No one knows what they were for, especially since some run in parallel sections, making no rational sense to the modern investigator. They are hardly visible now, and it needs special lighting or seasonal conditions to reveal their presence visually at ground level, but dedicated, close observation to minor cues can reveal the course of an old road. To follow one of these is to feel an awesome sense of the power of the dauntingly vast and arid surroundings, a sensation all the more unsettling because the nature of the roads is not understood. They are expressive of something almost unutterably deep and alien. The Kogi Indians of northern Colombia also have an-

cient straight roads in their remote mountain vastness. These people, who of all Native Americans best preserve pre-Colombian traits, intensively walk these archaic tracks because they say that the Earth Mother told them long ago that they must always walk her surface. But we will return to these features later, and find that they are probably "mind lines" that are the product of a deeply different worldview and hence state of consciousness.

PILGRIMAGE: WALKING THROUGH A HOLY LAND

During his British pilgrimage, Satish Kumar traveled for a while on the Pilgrims' Way to Canterbury. He had a flash of transpersonal memory that made him feel that "I was in the company of those people who had preceded me" on that medieval pilgrimage route. Pilgrimage is one of the hallmarks of religious devotion, cleansing, and healing in most of the great religions. Traditional foot pilgrimage is walking in the sacred sense, but with various ulterior motives. Essentially, the aim of a pilgrimage was, and is, to visit a specific shrine or sacred complex important to the religious life of the pilgrim, but apart from its being simply an act of devotion, the pilgrimage might also be undertaken to gain spiritual credit in the hereafter, to expiate sins, to seek healing, to be offered for the repose of dead relatives, not to mention baser motives such as pleading for greater prosperity and good luck. A strong underlying motive could also be the opportunity to "get away from it all." At its best, pilgrimage expressed "the human quest for a divine connection between man and the environment," as geographer and pilgrimage scholar Rana P. B. Singh has put it.¹¹ But the structure of pilgrimages was much more complex than just going to a shrine. There would be sacred sites en route, there would be the arduous act of traveling, often to remote and strange locations. And *the act of pilgrimage was liminal*, in that the pilgrim left his or her normal life and headed out for the sacred place, and while on the pilgrimage was neither here nor there. Because they were outside the normal social structure, pilgrims could strike up friendships with one another across social class, and a sense of comradeship, Turner's *com-*

munitas, was as much a feature of pilgrimage as it was of initiation. A pilgrimage could take days, weeks, months, even years, and would in many cases be the peak experience of a person's life, dreamed about, waited for, saved up for—a great "holiday of the soul," to use Satish Kumar's phrase. The thrust of perception and expectation was different from that in mundane life; the marvelous, the magical, and the spiritual were in the forefront of the traveler's mind. The set and setting of consciousness were therefore distinctly different for the lay person on a pilgrimage compared with his or her mind-state in everyday life. Pilgrimage was a physical act that moved the person out of the normal cultural domain and into nature, out of the routine levels of consciousness to conditions that exposed the mind to the possibility of sensibilities beyond the pale of civilized life, where mythic memory and visionary experience could be provoked.



The Pilgrim's Path along the spine of Glastonbury Tor.

The sacred places that formed the destinations of pilgrimage journeys had to be able "to absorb varieties of interpretation . . . capable of accommodating diverse meanings and practices."¹² "Why

is it that exactly this place—Ephesus, or Lourdes, or Guadalupe—over countless centuries and through vicissitudes of religious form, retains its special qualities and its power to draw crowds?" Eugene Walter has wondered.¹³ He marvels that "some sacred places never lose energy," drawing people even long after the religions that gave rise to them have long since disappeared from human knowledge. He further muses:

In perennially sacred places—the sanctuary of Delphi in Greece, the base of Ayer's Rock in Australia, the Acropolis, Chartres, the top of Glastonbury Tor as well as Stonehenge in England—certain forces in the invisible world of spirit establish a location in the physical world of the senses. The religious program of sacred place engages or disengages the senses, edifies the mind, and leads the soul back to the world of spirit. . . . Any sacred place is a specific environment of phenomena that are expected to support the imagination, nourish religious experience, and convey religious truth. It organizes sight and sound, introduces light to present clarity and order, or makes things dark to suggest unseen presences and hidden power.¹⁴

The only way truly to appreciate the similarities and differences among pilgrimages is to look, even if briefly, at a representative range of examples worldwide.

I will start us off in Ireland, if only because that was where the liminal nature of pilgrimage destinations was first impressed upon me. I was driving with two companions one summer evening at dusk along the inland roads of Galway and Mayo. We were becoming slightly anxious, because we needed somewhere to stay for the night and there were no habitations in sight. The sky was overcast, with just a rim of soft orange light ahead of us to the northwest, where the sun had set. There was a strange, almost eerie light bathing the moody landscape all around. Turning a bend, we obtained a wider view of the sunset skyline, and we all gasped simultaneously. Far away across the plains of Mayo, silhouetted against

the late sunset glow, was a huge, solitary pyramid. It was clearly artificial, for it was so perfect in outline and symmetry, and yet it had to be thousands of feet high! Was it some kind of optical illusion? We all sought in vain for answers and really couldn't understand what it was we were looking at. Some miles farther on we came across a lone farmstead that let rooms for the night. Before entering, I asked the farmer's wife just what that mesmerizing object was on the horizon. "Why—that's Croagh Patrick!" she said laughing. I was stunned. I hadn't known quite where this famous sacred Irish mountain was located, but I knew about the pilgrimage that centered on the peak every late July or early August, when sixty thousand people, some in bare feet, climb the mountain to the chapel on the summit. Though now a Catholic pilgrimage, its origins must lie in a pagan past. This is indicated by the date, Lughnasa, and the fact that until the mid-nineteenth century only women were allowed to the summit during the pilgrimage. Childless women would sleep on the summit during Lughnasa eve in the hope of encouraging fertility. Another indication is the legend of the mountain, which says that St. Patrick spent the forty days of Lent fasting and praying there in 441 A.D., banishing the pagan spirits from the place, as symbolized in the saint's removal of all the serpents in Ireland (it is a fact that there are no snakes in Ireland). All this I knew, but nothing I had read had ever mentioned that this stunning mountain was perfectly pyramidal when viewed from the east. Now I knew why it must always have been a holy mountain, from whenever human beings inhabited the region; the Christianizing of the pilgrimage was undoubtedly a relatively recent gloss. Rising up beyond any surrounding peaks, the perfection of Croagh Patrick had seemed to us twilight travelers like some fabulous Cosmic Mountain rising out of the golden light of the Blessed Lands of the west. We had involuntarily experienced the mythic power of the place, a power that had stirred human hearts down untold generations. The mountain rises dramatically from sea level on the shore of Clew Bay close to Westport. "The power that draws us toward it from the distant plains of Mayo is loric; we want to 'be there', to participate in the transcendence afforded by its ascent. . . . We are alone at Croagh Patrick, at the very westernmost edge of the world,

in a liminal position held there by the invitation to transcendence," writes scholar Walter L. Brenneman, movingly and accurately.¹⁵

Another current pilgrimage in Ireland is to St. Patrick's Purgatory at Lough Derg, in southeastern Donegal. Brenneman sees this also as powerfully liminal, though in a quite different manner from Croagh Patrick. He notes how the rust-colored waters of the lough are approached across "the emptiness, vastness and mystery of the bogland." The basilica on Station Island in the lough looks like "a castle in another world materializing out of the mists," and he recalls that the island in the lake is one of the mythic images of the Celtic otherworld. First documented in the twelfth century, the Lough Derg pilgrimage was famous throughout Europe, doubtless fulfilling "a dream that somewhere in the far western region of the world the impossible becomes possible."¹⁶ Nowadays, it is little known outside of Ireland. In today's version of the pilgrimage, the pilgrim is ferried across to Station Island and there takes part in a three-day ritual. The pilgrim goes barefoot, drinks only tea or coffee, eats oatbread once a day, makes an all-night vigil in the church, and recites specific patterns of prayers around the so-called beds (low-walled circles of stone) of various saints while facing the water of the lough and standing or kneeling at various points. This is a much-reduced version of the original practice, which lasted nine days, after many days of preparation. The modern vigil in the church replaces what had been the core of the old pilgrimage—namely, entering a cave or pit which legend says had been revealed to St. Patrick. This was closed centuries ago, and descriptions of it vary; medieval accounts of those who spent time in the "purgatory" cave describe powerful visionary experiences in which both heaven and hell were glimpsed—demons, fantastic landscapes and buildings, nightmarish horrors, and terrifying journeys.¹⁷ Though these are couched in Christian terminology, and may be somewhat embroidered, it is highly likely that they do essentially record altered states of consciousness caused by fasting, physical and mental stress, sensory deprivation, and lack of sleep. The pilgrimage seems to have grown up around an anchorite tradition at the lough, and it is thought that the "saints' beds" might be the remains of beehive huts used by the holy hermits. This tradition may in turn have sup-

planted an ancient pagan cult at the place, suggested by prehistoric monuments in the area, indicative place-names, and archaic chair-like rocks that are now named for saints (Brigit being one of them). It is even possible that the purgatory cave was in fact a prehistoric souterrain (underground chamber).¹⁸

Despite the almost certain great antiquity of both these pilgrimages, there is no actual documentation or currently confirmed archeological remains associated with either of them older than the twelfth century. Nevertheless, the tradition of the *turus*, the journey or pilgrimage, is archaic beyond reckoning in Ireland. Archeologists have been uncovering physical evidence of a very early Christian pilgrimage centered on the holy Brandon Mountain, near the end of the Dingle Peninsula, one of the five fingers of land that poke out into the Atlantic from southwestern Ireland.¹⁹ So it, too, is a typically liminal place, at the edge of the ancient world. This pilgrimage was also almost certainly based on earlier pagan practice, for Brandon Mountain seems to have been sacred to Lug, the god of light to the pagan Celts, and was a site used for Lughnasa harvest festivities. Parts of a path known as The Saint's Road lead up towards the peak from the southern coast of the peninsula, and are one of two pilgrimage routes ascending the mountain. On the way are features that give an insight into aspects of the pilgrimage. These include occasional stone pillars and natural rocks carved with leaflike crosses and archaic ogham script. One of these scripts says simply, "Colman the pilgrim." Next to the marked boulders are small hollowed-out stones known as *bulllauns*. The water that collected in them would have been considered holy, and passing pilgrims would have collected it for healing purposes.²⁰ Also on The Saint's Road is the now ruined twelfth-century church at Kilmalkedar, on the grounds of which is a stone carved with markings that have been interpreted as a sundial for telling pilgrims the hours of the day for their prayers. At this site there is also an oratory, a most ancient design of cell or religious refuge in the shape of an upturned boat, made of drystone construction. A similar but better-preserved feature, the remarkable Gallarus oratory, is set a short distance off The Saint's Road, farther along, at the precise point where the summit of Brandon Mountain is visible rising over an intervening ridge. This serves

to emphasize that the geography surrounding the pilgrim was carefully planned to be full of meaning.

One of the most famous and important of European pilgrimages was and is that to St. James at Santiago de Compostela, in north-western Spain. Here again is a site situated in a liminal position at a western extremity of the known Old World, emphasized by its proximity to Cape Finisterre—literally “land’s end.” When the pilgrimage began, in the ninth century, the location was on the borders of the world map. All roads led to Puente La Reina, the starting point of El Camino de Santiago, the pilgrims’ road, which cuts east-west across northern Spain. At the height of the pilgrimage’s popularity, multitudes were drawn to Santiago de Compostela because of the claims of miracles associated with the relics of St. James, which were lodged there. The relics had been unearthed by a farmer who had seen a “field of stars” over a burial ground. Places where religious personages had been born or died, monasteries and convents, caves used by anchorites, and sites of miracles and wonders all developed into shrines along the pilgrims’ road.

At the other extremity of the Eurasian landmass, a key pilgrimage destination from the fourth century in China was Wutaishan, one of the four sacred Chinese mountains, famous for its many temples, monasteries, caves, and shrines. It was associated with Wenshu (Manjushri), the bodhisattva of wisdom. The five-peaked mountain—a massif covering one hundred square miles—attracted pilgrims as a place of miraculous happenings. Even in quite modern times, strange light phenomena have been witnessed there,^{21,22} and there are caves exhibiting bizarre curiosities such as shallow pools of water that can never be emptied despite having apparently no water source issuing into them. It was thought to be profoundly beneficial to go to Wutaishan: one would find the truth about oneself, and at that place alone did one stand a chance of seeing the bodhisattva. Stories of the experiences of early pilgrims abound. One relates to Wu Zhuo, a keen monk of the eighth century who had already achieved the “dharma eye” and had sought final enlightenment in springs and woods without success. He came to Wutaishan in desperation. While Wu Zhuo was in meditation one day, one of Wutaishan’s mysterious lights wandered down from the

heights and touched his head, making him feel cool, clear, and filled with happiness. The next day he set off in the direction from where the light had come, and encountered an old man leading an ox, who turned out to be Wenshu himself. But despite this exalted meeting, the keen monk didn’t attain his full enlightenment, and remained at Wutaishan. In reality, many pilgrims never left the mountain, staying to have the visions and dreams that the place is said to encourage.

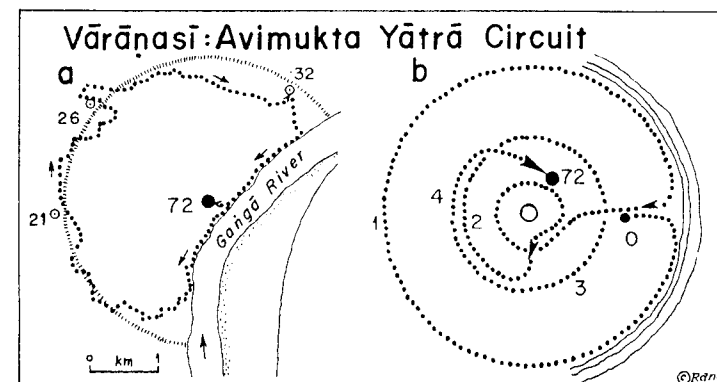
Mountains are a prime type of pilgrimage destination, and in Japan mountain pilgrimage was one of the first kinds to emerge out of the fusion of indigenous Shinto and folk religious beliefs with the incoming Chinese influences of Taoism and Buddhism. From the very earliest times in Japan, there was the tradition of the *gyo-ja*, austerity man, who was thought able to attain superhuman abilities by ascetic practice in the mountains. In the eighth century, Buddhism developed the “Nature Wisdom School,” which sought enlightenment by being close to nature in the mountains. The indigenous shamans and healers who had developed their powers by mountain asceticism became loosely associated with this, and there emerged Shugen-do, the Order of Mountain Ascetics. The Shinto *kami*, or spirits of the mountains, were subtly transformed into manifestations of Buddhist divinities, and during the eleventh and twelfth centuries pilgrims flocked to the mountains, led by experienced mountain ascetics, to seek favor from the divinities there. This continued throughout the centuries, and by the end of the nineteenth century it was estimated that there were seventeen thousand “senior guides” to sacred mountains, which gives some idea of the vast numbers of pilgrims themselves.²³ Two other types of pilgrimage developed in Japan—pilgrimage to temples and shrines, based on faith in the divinities associated with them, and pilgrimage to places believed to have been hallowed by the visits of holy men.

We saw in chapter one that Mount Kailas, in the Himalayas, was a Cosmic Mountain, and sacred to Buddhists. Even to this day, a Tibetan pilgrim will encircle the base of this exceedingly remote peak in devotional fashion, using a most severe form of pilgrimage technique. From a standing position with hands held together in prayer, he kneels, bows down, then lies on the ground, touching it with his

forehead. He marks a spot with his nose, rises again, and walks to that spot, then repeats the whole cycle. And so pilgrims proceed over the Himalayan terrain, in profound humility and literal closeness to the Earth.

Mount Kailas is also meaningful to the Hindus—to them it is the physical embodiment of the mythic Mount Meru. Hinduism has a great tradition of pilgrimage, and India can offer a huge number of examples: about 150 holy places in the subcontinent draw about twenty million people every year.²⁴ Varanasi (Benares), the ultimate sacred city of Hindu pilgrimage, has fifty-six pilgrimage circuits, of which five are the most popular and trace a sacred design or cosmogram on the landscape.²⁵ The circuits interlink a variety of temples and shrines. Some of these are sun shrines, *adityas*, and Rana P. B. Singh has discovered that these form alignments to sunrise positions on calendric or symbolic days in the year.²⁶ The pilgrims thus trace out a cosmically significant pattern during their devotional visiting of the temples, and it is most telling that the word for a cosmogram, *kashi*, was also the ancient name for the city territory of Varanasi. Singh calls such symbolic geography, strongly associated with pilgrimage centers in India, “faithscapes.” A pilgrimage complex in India is called *ksetra*, meaning the concentration of cosmic influence in the topography. Braj, a *ksetra* in Uttar Pradesh, is a zone containing the River Yamuna, desert and hill country, and the ancient city of Mathura, where myth relates that the incarnated god Krishna was born and to which he returned. During the pilgrimage circuit at Braj, devotees experience the sanctity of the landscape as expressed through place symbolism associated with the life of the young Lord Krishna as he grew up in the region. In various places he demonstrated his divinity by subduing demons, other locations were where Krishna had amorous dalliances with cowherdesses, and so on. Since medieval times, oral tradition in India has yielded a form of dance-drama, *ras lila*, and at Braj elements of the Krishna mythology are imprinted on the landscape by such performances at the spots where the legendary events were said to have happened. “This occurs annually during monsoons when pilgrimage to Braj is most frequently undertaken,” reports Amita Sinha. “For the witnessing pilgrim who is visiting the holy spots, the landscape thus

comes alive.”²⁷ The purpose of this particular pilgrimage is nothing less than for the pilgrim to experience transcendence through immersion in the Krishna mythos in the here and now. Sinha claims that a true altered state of consciousness is aimed for, and “probably occurs as a result of the combination of personal faith of the devotee and the powerful charge that the environment of the sacred place produces.”



One of the Varanasi pilgrimage circuits. This relates to a zone said never to have been forsaken by Shiva, and is called Avimukta. (a) The edges of this mythic territory are marked by three mound shrines. The focus of the territory is the shrine of Avimukteshvara, 72. (b) The final approach to Avimukteshvara is by a spiral processional route. [After Rana P. B. Singh, 1993, p. 195.]

Something similar was aimed at in the Christian tradition of pilgrimage to Jerusalem during the period of Christian authority there, between 325 and 638 A.D. Although the Persians destroyed much of Christian Jerusalem in 614, until that point churches were continually being added to the sacred cityscape. Scholar Wendy Pullan has argued that the Christians were imaging in the physical Jerusalem the lineaments of the mythic celestial city, the Heavenly Jerusalem.²⁸ The place became liminal, a sort of Christian warp between revelatory image and physical reality. Such representation at Jerusalem involved no fewer than 326 churches plus three Constantine basilicas—the Church of the Nativity in nearby Bethlehem,

the Eleona Church on the Mount of Olives, where Jesus taught the Mysteries to his disciples, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on the Hill of Golgotha in central Jerusalem, the site of the crucifixion and resurrection. This produced a spiritual geography, and the various sites were conceptually linked together in the form of the Jerusalem Liturgy, developed by Cyril, the Bishop of Jerusalem between 349 and 386. This involved movement from one church to another, with scriptural readings and prayers relating to the significance of each site recited at that place at the appropriate time of day, week, or year. At Easter, for example, all the places involved in the events of the Last Supper, Jesus' arrest, the interview with Pilate, the scourging, and final Passion were linked in sequence by processions. Pullan describes how people would have thronged the streets, the city being filled with songs and lamentations amidst the flicker of candlelight and the smell of incense. Most pilgrims spent far longer than one day traversing the sacred course through the city, and some stayed years in order to experience the Liturgy fully. Pullan points out that the symbolic geography of early Christian Jerusalem was centered on Golgotha, which is linked by processional routes to many other sacred sites. She also stresses the delicate balance between mental and physical pilgrimage. A good example of a mental pilgrimage is given by Sophronius, the Bishop of Jerusalem in the early seventh century who composed poems while in exile about walking through Jerusalem; it was a *pilgrimage in memory*, therefore, a pilgrimage conducted in *chora* without *topos*. But the delicate balance to which Pullan refers was exhibited by the physical pilgrims. They saw and touched the places where they believed Christ had been present, picturing Jesus in the physical location. Sometimes this was stronger than just imagining: for instance, St. Paula, who came from Rome, saw visions of Christ at the appropriate locations, so her contemporaries reported; Helena, mother of Constantine, had a vision on Golgotha which revealed where the cross of the crucifixion had been buried, which she authenticated by raising a dead person there by her touch.

Mountain pilgrimages in the Holy Land were also conducted during this period. Mount Sinai, the Horeb of Biblical record where Moses saw the burning bush and received the tablets of the law, was

the focus of pilgrimage from at least 380 A.D., reaching a climax in the sixth century, when the entire topography of the area was peppered with hermits' cells and marked sacred or significant spots where the pilgrim might pause to pray. This pilgrimage site, with the (still-thriving) monastery of St. Catherine at its center, became a form of theology "fixed in space," say anthropologists Simon Coleman and John Elsner.²⁹ Pilgrims moved from one sacred site to another, "tracing a biblical narrative through the landscape." They visited mythologized places such as the rock where Moses struck water, the site of the burning bush, the spring where Moses watered sheep, the cave where Elijah fled from King Ahab, and the peak of Mount Sinai itself, where a small church marked the spot on which Moses received the Tablets of the Law. A series of prayer niches was built along the pilgrimage route up the mountain. "These marked significant spots," Coleman and Elsner state, "either places where the path joined another path, or places where pilgrims might glimpse a view of the distant peak (their goal)." The pilgrims carried out various activities on their movement through the sacred landscape, such as hymn-singing, praying, weeping, cross-carrying, and pious acts like hair-cutting.

Probably the most famous Middle Eastern pilgrimage is the *hajj*, Islam's great pilgrimage to Mecca. This has a central role in Muslim life, being included as one of the five pillars of faith. It is required that each Muslim make at least one pilgrimage to Mecca unless prevented by ill health or lack of funds. Mecca, the birthplace of the Prophet Mohammed, to which he returned and where he later died, is the key direction in the compass of faith for Muslims. Prayer has to be directed towards Mecca wherever one is situated, and this sacred direction, the *qibla*, also governs the orientation of mosques. The term *hajj* derives from an ancient Semitic custom and was used to describe a journey to a sacred place.

Fragments of evidence indicate that pilgrimage also occurred in the New World. Mount Tlaloc, for instance, was the center of an annual pilgrimage made by the Aztec kings of Tenochtitlán, Tetzaco, Tlacopán, and Xochimilco. It took place in April or May, at the height of the dry season, and its purpose was to call forth rain from within the mountain. The richly attired kings proceeded in proces-

sion up the high-walled processional route leading to the temple precinct on the summit of the mountain, bearing gifts to the gods. Although empty now, the temple had stone idols in it, and these were dressed by the kings. Sacrificial offerings were made to these representations of the mountain gods, including fabulous dishes of food and the blood of a male child. The kings were perceived as active agents performing an essential part in the changing of the seasons. The Inca, too, had a range of pilgrimages, some associated with the mysterious *ceque* alignments that radiated out from the Coricancha, the Temple of the Sun, at Cuzco. These lines of sacred places, or *huacas*, seem to have served a number of functions to do with the ceremonial calendar, water sources, ancestor worship, sun watching, and ceremonial processions and pilgrimages. One such pilgrimage moved in a straight line from the sacred mountain of Huanacauri along a *ceque* passing through twenty-one sacred places to the village of Vilcanota, meaning "sun house." This particular *ceque* aligns to the midwinter sunrise position, and also points to the Island of the Sun in Lake Titicaca, over 150 miles farther on. Lake Titicaca was the birthplace of the sun, and the place from where the Inca believed they originated. Could the pilgrimage have extended that far? Some researchers find that the evidence hints it may have.³⁰

Certain pilgrimages in various parts of the world were not for religious observance and devotion in the sense that we would readily recognize such practice today; rather, direct spiritual experience was the destination of the journey. In Greece, the Mysteries were centered on the initiatory temple of Eleusis, and were a ten-day affair in September each year. The climax was the pilgrimage from Athens to the temple at Eleusis for the Mystery Night, the revelation of the Mysteries themselves. The *Mystai*, the initiatory candidates, would proceed in joyful fashion along the Sacred Way linking Athens with Eleusis, stopping to make observances at various shrines along the route. The pilgrimage took all day, and the *Mystai* arrived at the temple by nightfall. No one knows what went on there, but the candidates certainly experienced a series of initiatory trials, and may have been given a hallucinogenic drink, before entering the huge

Telesterion, a curiously plain building where the revelation, the *epopteia*, took place. A similar example in the New World is the pilgrimage of the Huichol Indians in northern Mexico. For unknown generations, the Huichol have made an annual pilgrimage of several hundred miles from their mountain homeland to a high plateau region called Wirikuta, considered their sacred land of origin. They are led by a shaman-priest, the *mara'akame*. The journey takes some weeks, for it is highly ritualized: the Indians are mythically retracing the steps of the First Huichol, and they perform various actions attributed to those mythic ancestors at specific locations. "They rejoice, grieve, celebrate and mourn appropriately as the journey progresses," anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff writes.³¹ *Primeros*, those making the pilgrimage for the first time, have their eyes covered on arriving at the edge of Wirikuta, the holy land, and the blindfold is removed only after proper ritual preparation. At Wirikuta, a hunt for and ritual consumption of the hallucinogenic peyote cactus takes place. This is the climax of the pilgrimage and the peak experience in the religious life of the Huichol. The pilgrim enters in on the inner journey to the paradisaic realms of the mind and spirit. What the pilgrim sees and hears is not spoken about; it is for the individual alone, much as was the case in the Mystery tradition of Eleusis.

It is apparent from even this brief survey that huge numbers of people around the world were walking the land in the past, in a way few members of modern Western society experience. The landscape was rendered meaningful with mythic presences and events, and the pilgrimage routes provided vistas of such landscapes for people in liminal condition, outside their normal social structures and often in psychological and physiological states that laid the groundwork for visionary insight. Perhaps we need to teach ourselves how to journey like this again, even if we strip the process of specific religious contexts and just preserve the spiritual and psychological core of the matter.

As the Koran states, "And proclaim unto mankind the Pilgrimage. . . . That they witness things that are of benefit to them . . ." (Surah 22:27-28).

VISION QVESTING

The "vision quest" involves solitary journeying in the wilderness in search of a guiding vision or meaningful dreams. Before there were religions in their names, Buddha, Christ, and the Prophet Mohammed all reportedly retreated into nature alone to achieve their definitive spiritual orientation. But we know mostly about the process of the vision quest from the archaic practices of Native Americans and Paleo-Siberian tribes. In a typical, traditional vision quest, the individual, around the time of puberty, journeys alone into the wilderness, perhaps to some special, sacred vision-questing site known to the tribe, and there fasts, prays, and goes without sleep for three or four days and nights. During this time, a vision—perhaps in the form of an animal that speaks to the visionary—or a set of visionary waking dreams may be experienced, which can give direction to the person's life. Such visions contain great medicine-power, which can be embodied in the medicine-bundle, the packet of natural objects—feathers, stones, etc.—the person finds meaningful and collects during the vision-questing period. The traditional vision quest is the celebration of the liminal: its wilderness location, its rite-of-passage status, and the state of consciousness involved. The vision quest is the central foundation of all Native American spirituality, originating in a remote period of prehistory.^{32,33}

As with pilgrimage, mountains can often be focus locations for vision questing. An example is Ninaistákis, the Chief Mountain, sacred to the Blackfoot people (the Nitsitapii), in the Rocky Mountains, on the border between the Blackfoot reservation and Glacier National Park, Montana. The mountain dominates the landscape, standing just away from the main mountain mass. From one angle, Canadian archeologist Brian Reeves notes,³⁴ it does indeed look like a capped hat on a chief's topknot, while from another view it looks like a traditional upright headdress or bonnet. When the wind blows the mountain sings, and at sunrise and sunset it shines out and is visible for over one hundred miles in many directions. It is a mythologized place, for Blackfoot legend tells of a young chief who was killed in battle, causing his grief-stricken wife to climb the

mountain with her baby in her arms and throw herself off. It is said that if one looks carefully at the face of the mountain the figure of a woman with a babe in arms can be discerned. Legend also has it that the oldest of the medicine pipes ("the Long-Time Pipe") was "visioned" here and given to the Blackfoot people by Thunderbird, the great spirit of the mountain. Ninaistákis is said to be a place of great spiritual power where exceptionally significant visions can be had, and it was and is a place of traditional Blackfoot spiritual activity. High on its ridges and buttresses, and on those of surrounding mountains, both ancient and modern vision-questing sites are to be found. These take the form of small enclosures of rocks, just big enough to sit or lie in, mounds or cairns of rocks, or platforms of flat stones. These sites are sometimes known as dream beds or prayer platforms, and are only to be found in locations from where the peaks of Ninaistákis or another sacred mountain, Sweet Pine Hills, are visible. Vision-questing structures oriented on Ninaistákis have been discovered up to fifty miles from the mountain and in spots up to ten thousand feet high. A person seeking to fast and pray for visions on Ninaistákis would often take a buffalo skull along to use as a pillow, and climbers have found several remains of these over the years, some of them of enormous antiquity.

Unfortunately, Ninaistákis is threatened by tourism, forestry, gas exploration, and other depredations of civilization. In July 1992, an earthquake shook the mountain, and this combined with heavy rains to cause a major rockfall and mudslide on the north face, the largest example of natural damage on the mountain in a thousand years. Blackfoot Elders view this with concern, feeling that it results from inappropriate activities on the sacred mountain.

Non-Native American forms of vision questing, "wilderness psychology," have become popular in recent years. Steven Foster and Meredith Little are amongst the pioneers in developing wilderness rites of passage for Westerners, and are the founders and directors of the School of Lost Borders in California. Foster tells his own story in *Vision Quest* (with Meredith Little). He pays homage to other pioneers who helped him find his way to leading others towards wilderness healing, and describes his own early, involuntary experiences in the desert, when his life seemed to be collapsing around

him. He recalls "the awesome trumpet sound of the loneliness of the wilderness—the sound of *silence*."³⁵ Like the pilgrims to Wutaishan, he marveled at—and was a little afraid of—strange lights moving on the desert horizon. He learned that nature would speak to him only when he silenced his inner dialogue, and he saw "many powerful teachings" when his eyes were not governed by his preconceptions. He never had a vision in the true sense during that initial journey into the wilderness, but when he came back from it he nevertheless felt profoundly different, and he had made that critical realization that is emphasized time and again in these pages, that the outer and inner journeys are deeply and mysteriously interactive. Foster and Little go on to describe the details and experiences of modern-day vision questing. In the wilderness experience, nature can bestow teachings, moods, and symbols on the quester. The wilderness invades the body. It lets the quester's noise finally run down, disperse, until silent running takes hold. The authors stress the liminal nature of the experience, and point out that it is not necessary to learn as such while on a vision quest but, more accurately, simply to receive. And they add important practical points: a vision quester needs to be proficient in basic survival skills; an instructor, a "midwife" to help the crossing of the threshold, is required; and when one is actually out in the wilderness there needs to be an organized way of contacting support if needed—the "buddy system" in one form or another. As time for a quest draws near, the would-be initiate may become fearful, as if facing death. If these fears gain the upper hand, the quest has to be aborted. A vision quest is not to be undertaken casually or lightly. Preparation in wilderness walking and fasting has to be undertaken. Regarding any ceremonial activity while on a vision quest, Foster and Little point out that, once the quester is alone in wild nature, almost all actions have a mythic, ceremonial cast to him or her, and the practice of contrived ceremonies can interfere with or mask the actual, raw experience that is taking place. One's field of view enlarges both physically and metaphorically as time and space dilate beyond the pale of civilization. The best way to get to know the country is to go on foot, listen to nature all around, and "dream the dreams of the night wind."

These "dreams of the threshold" can sometimes have great clarity, and offer a name, a story, or a mission, Foster and Little inform. And, they add, quite often in these wilderness conditions dreams occur when the quester's eyes are open. This, surely, is something we should be getting used to by now in these pages. The vision quester comes to inhabit the chorography of wilderness more than its geography.

We need contact with wild nature in order to learn how to apprehend it and how to relate to it. We need to know wild nature, because we also are a product of nature and have that same essential wildness within us. Our unconscious mind is wild nature. We enter wild nature when we dream. And we all have to wander into wild nature alone at death—the ultimate vision quest. That is why, in ecological and cultural terms, if we exclude the experience of wild nature we shall lose the skills we need to relate to it and to understand it. We will become exiles from nature, in both its outer and inner forms—and *these are reciprocal*, one patterning the other.

EXPERIENTIAL

Learning to Walk

Let's go for a walk. What matters is not so much where as how. If you did the earlier "Drawing the Circle" activity (chapter one), then set off as close as is possible in your good-feeling direction, just as Thoreau did on his walks. On this occasion, it doesn't matter whether your walk is in the town, the local park, or the countryside, but it would be best to try to incorporate a range of environments. Arrange to go in a circuit of some kind, at least three miles in length, so you arrive back at your start and have no element of wanting to get somewhere in particular. Don't set out until you have time to walk it in a relaxed manner (no jogging; no "exercise" as such), and walk it alone.

Walk at an easy pace—Thoreau's "saunter." If the first part of your walk is familiar territory, make a point of noticing what you haven't previously, perhaps because you normally flash by in a car, or your

eyes are fixed and you are preoccupied when you normally walk this route. I recall that for a two-year period I walked about a half-mile from a bus stop to my place of work. After about eighteen months, for no particular reason, I glanced upwards towards the rooftops, and I realized with some shock that I hadn't previously noticed anything on the walk that was higher than the ground floor of the houses and shops I passed by. My vision had been fixed at the horizontal, or even cast down to the sidewalk. From that day on, I experienced what was effectively a different walk, glancing up quite regularly, noticing the variety of apartment windows above the shops, the decoration of gable ends, the different design of buildings, birds, treetops, clouds, and so on. It is amazing what we miss, even on a route we travel regularly. On this walk, seek out those missing features; glance to your side, look above the horizontal, and if you look downwards, make sure you do *look*.

After a while, start shifting your consciousness from visual dominance to your other senses. Remember Edmund Blunden's "sounds" and "scents" as well as the "seeings." Listen to the sound of your breath as you walk, and the sound of your feet on the ground. The rustle of your clothing. The wind blowing through trees or around buildings. The buzz of insects. The hard dry scraping of dead leaves. The sounds of the day (or night) all around you: voices, vehicles, aircraft, dogs barking—or even blessed silence. Country parson Francis Kilvert recorded stopping on one of his regular nightly walks to listen to "the rustle and solemn night whisper of the wheat, so different to its voice by day." (It is instructive, indeed, to conduct walks along your selected route in the daytime and in the evening, to compare the different sensory impressions the same route can provide.) And as well as your feet, eyes, and ears, use your nose to walk—not literally, as in a Tibetan pilgrimage, but in the olfactory sense. What can you smell as you move along? The grass of lawns you pass? The smell of foliage or the scent of flowers in the hedgerow or the park? The stench of garbage, or gases from distant manufacturing processes? Or are there no smells you can particularly distinguish—are you in an olfactory desert? What does that tell you about the environment you are walking in?

Use your sense of touch as you walk as well. One way to do this is to become conscious of the air on your face or exposed arms and legs. Feel how your body cuts through the air; be aware of the direction of the breeze or wind.

Focus now on your rhythm of walking. Feel that rhythm. Is it comfortable and easy? If not, smooth off its rough edges—become conscious of your walking gait and your associated breathing. Meld them into one smooth entity. What do your feet feel as they touch the ground? And how is gravity today? Are you going up hill or down dale? Does the ground slope to your left or right—is it *really* horizontal? Notice forces of gravity on your body as you move, the subtle pull this way or that. Work it all into your gait and breathing pattern. Rhythm.

You should by now be purring along, with the bodily equivalent of Rolls-Royce locomotion. Now indulge in a "funny thought." Try to imagine that, although your body is moving in a rhythmic way, you are not actually moving through space; instead, try to feel that you are "walking on the spot," that space is passing through you—that *the route you are on is walking you*. Imagine you are the still center (you are still *here*, aren't you?) and the sensory world is just flowing on through and by. This mode of walking perception can sometimes have dramatic results. The first time it happened to me, I was hiking over heavy country far out on Dartmoor, in southern England, toting a hefty backpack. I had caught my "second wind" a long while before but was still stumbling along behind my two rugged, outdoor-type companions. Suddenly, I "clicked" into this mode of perception, and it was as if gravity had no further call on me. My breathing became easy and relaxed, and with the same effort I normally expend sitting in an armchair, I found myself moving over the moorland swiftly and easily. I felt like a feather in a breeze as I floated past my companions, their jaws agape in surprise. I felt that this must be what that weird Tibetan way of walking, *lung gom*, had to be like, when the adept bounds along the ground at an extraordinary rate while in a meditative state. And I was amazed at the state of physical relaxation I was experiencing as I moved; it made me recall Eugen Herrigel's discovery, recorded in

his *Zen in the Art of Archery*, that his small, slight Zen archery master could pull back a powerful bow while his arm muscles remained relaxed (not to mention that he could hit the bull's-eye in the dark).

Zen in the art of walking—make it a habit.

A Stroll Down Memory Lane

Another day, another walk. This time, let us take a walk aimed specifically at provoking memory and kindling the imagination—the putting together of physical and mental activities not normally associated with one another. Select a street in your town, a town local to you, your old hometown, or an accessible major city. Take a preliminary, conscious stroll along it. Then find an appropriate local library and do some local-history homework. Find out all you can about the history of the town in general, and your selected street in particular. If possible, find old photographs of the street in question. What did it look like in the 1950s? In the 1930s? At the turn of the century? In the nineteenth century? Study the pictures in great detail. What has changed? Perhaps more tellingly, what has survived through the decades? See the old cars and perhaps horse-drawn carriages in the street. Look at the people on the sidewalk, their old-fashioned clothes. Or they may just be blurs, because of the long camera exposures necessary in olden days. One of the most haunting photographs I've ever seen is Louis Daguerre's *Paris Boulevard* daguerreotype of 1839. It is said to be the first photograph of a human being. When Samuel F. B. Morse saw the daguerreotype he wrote: "The boulevard, so constantly filled with a moving throng of pedestrians and carriages, was perfectly solitary, except for an individual who was having his boots brushed."³⁶ The "moving throng" was too fast to register on Daguerre's plate, and only the fellow who stood still to have his shoes shined was destined to be the first human being to be photographed; he probably never knew of his immortalization. He seems to be standing in a deserted street—only his ghost survives to haunt us.

Armed with historic and, if possible, photographic information, take another wander along the street. Think of those old ghosts who had thronged this same street where you now walk. Imagine

the noises that would have been in the street then—the clatter of horses' hooves on cobbled streets, a newspaper boy shouting the headlines, and so forth—and switch to be conscious of the noises you can actually hear now. Make an imaginary daguerreotype as you walk and see the people around you fade away, so that in your mind's eye the street becomes eerily empty, as did that busy Paris boulevard. The buildings leave their image, because they are in a different time zone from the humans who rush by. Explore these feelings and thoughts about time and transience. Look at the buildings, the physical definition of the street. What parts have changed relative to the old photographs you looked at? Which features remain the same?

If you were not fortunate enough to find old photographs of the street, then do what Freud did and use your acquired knowledge about the place. In Vienna, he loved to take meditative walks through the city, sometimes late at night. Walking companions said he would sometimes analyze the city around him, reminding himself of its remotest past. "One sensed how easily such a recreation of the past came to him," remarked a contemporary, "and one was reminded of the antique objects in his study and that the archaeologist had created the psycho-analyst in him."³⁷ In your work, you can more modestly re-create what your documentary knowledge tells you about the changes over time in the street in which you walk. Turn it into memory lane, and closely attend the processes of cognition going on within you as you do so.

If You Go Down to the Woods Today . . .

In the course of recommending the virtues of country walking away from busy roads, the nineteenth-century rural writer William Howitt referred to "the dim solemnity of the wild wood." While walking in the Concord countryside, Thoreau saw "the setting sun lighting up the opposite side of a stately pine wood." He felt that its "golden rays straggled into the aisles of the wood as into some noble hall"; this prompted him to imagine invisible, mythical beings inhabiting the woods. Gothic cathedrals were raised, it is thought, so that their interiors would replicate the "dim solemnity" of the

forest. Certainly, a similar sense of numinosity can be obtained in both types of environment. When exploring the Zen of walking, make sure one of your routes involves a woodland walk. The best time is when the day is overcast, for then an even, soft green light will filter down through the foliage. I well remember one early overcast evening walking through a woodland at Princeton, New Jersey. I had been making my way along a woodland path for about half an hour when I suddenly experienced a dizzying shift of consciousness. I realized it had been triggered by the liminal lighting conditions and the strong verticality of the slender tree trunks flickering in my peripheral vision. For a moment the woods did become a cathedral, and I felt what I can only call an *intelligence* emanating from the collective effect of the trees. I thought of the forest spirits the Lacandon Indians had laughingly told anthropologist Christian Räsch about (see introductory chapter), and, a couple of years later, I was delighted to read John Perkins, in his *The World Is As You Dream It*, describe exactly the same feeling in the rain forests of Ecuador—"the incredible intelligence of the forest itself."³⁸ Down in the woods, your assured, late-twentieth-century Western cognition could be in for a big surprise. As you walk, concentrate on your peripheral vision. Pay attention to the margins.

Medicine Walk

I do not suggest in this book that you attempt to go on a vision quest, because no book can prepare you for that or guide you on it. You need live, highly experienced teachers for a full-blown vision-quest attempt. (The appendix does, however, provide information as to where you can find out more about going on wilderness experience quests.) In any case, you might not be ready to undertake a vision quest as yet. It is not something to be forced. What can be done, though, is what Foster and Little call a "medicine walk," a single day's journey out on the wilder face of the Earth.

This activity needs careful preparation. Get yourself to an area of moderate wilderness—hill country, moorland, deeply rural countryside, or a national-park area. Take a backpack containing basic items such as water, weatherproof clothing if appropriate, a pen-

knife, map and compass, a whistle, first-aid kit, and anything else you feel to be essential. But no food. Make sure someone will know where you are and how long you intend to be away. If you drive to the edge of the area that interests you, you might be able to persuade a friend or partner to have a lazy day staying around the vehicle. Set off alone early in the morning, ideally at sunrise, and walk into an area you have already studied on the map, even if you do not follow a precisely preplanned route. Make certain you do not journey too many miles from your starting point, avoid dangerous or exceptionally difficult country, be sure to avoid any known hazards peculiar to the area, and ensure that you have identified landmarks by eye and know where they are on the map before you start your medicine walk.

As you walk, use all the skills you have developed by practicing the activities described above. Keep your eyes, ears, nose, and skin surface alert. Let your movement and breathing get synchronized properly. Remember to let the country walk you. Don't have any hardened expectations; don't try to force the learning. Don't grab, just be in reception mode: keep yourself open to letting nature's intelligence make itself known to you. Be conscious of any unexpected images, thoughts, ideas that flash into your mind during your day's journey. Pick up a natural object—a stone, a feather, a piece of bark, whatever it might be—to bring back with you to remind you of the journey and any special insight, thoughts, or decisions that came to you. Return to your starting point, or a designated destination, by sundown.

Now that we have started journeying from here to (t)here, it is time to unfold some road maps for the soul. . . .