

Sent: Tuesday, June 11, 2002 4:28 AM
Subject: The Paris Tetralogy, Part 3

Sunday, May 19:

Physical strain, psychological distress, and emotional turmoil—what lovely embodiments of those conditions greeted us at the Musee Rodin, our first destination of the day! In the surrounding garden, Chad, Betsy, Jimmy, and I perused *The Burghers of Calais* and *The Gates of Hell* before heading indoors to escape the drizzle. Other highlights included *Walking Man*, *The Age of Bronze*, *The Hand of God*, *Count Ugolino in Prison*, *The Kiss*, lots of *Balzac*, busts of various composers, and sketches of Victor Hugo. Back outside, we studied *The Thinker* up close and posed with the "honored" namesake of our pub trivia team.

Lunchtime. Since it had always been tricky finding the right place for a meal, our hearts leapt with unfettered joy when we spotted a sign that informed us of the presence of a McDonald's just a couple of minutes away. So we trotted off...and moved on...and strolled along some more, passing Les Invalides in the process, but not those famed golden arches. When we finally found someplace decent, we were unsure whether or not Jimmy and I would be allowed in, since we had brought our own food. We decided to split up: Chad and Betsy ate in the little restaurant while the golden half of our mini-horde settled for a bench half a block away.

After the eats, we visited Les Invalides, or at least the Church of Saint-Louis, which housed the flags of peoples La France had vanquished from about 1845 on. We saved 4.50 euros by skipping Napoleon's tomb; the two-dimensional facsimile plastered on the wall by the ticket booth was enough for us.

On to the Musee de Cluny, or the Musee National du Moyen-Age, or the Middle Ages Museum, or the one with the Roman baths (not open at that time), medieval objets d'art, stained glass, and tapestries, including *The Lady and the Unicorn*. Afterward, we rested on the edge of a playground and watched little tykes fiddle with a faucet, get whiplash on animal springs, and trap themselves on an elevated platform. Meanwhile, a stream of skaters (or were they cyclists?) passed by on the road.

Enter evening. Despite our separate meals earlier that day, we followed our original plan of eating in pairs again. I believe Betsy and Chad visited the Paris Opera, but you'll have to ask them for more details. Jimmy and I searched for a phantom Vietnamese restaurant in the area along the Seine. After walking back and forth a bit, we struck gold: Asian restaurants galore lined the streets. We selected what I think was a Vietnamese-Laotian place; good food, good conversation, even with the non-Chinese, non-Vietnamese, essentially non-English-speaking waiter. Jimmy and I left hours later and veered into the Shakespeare & Co bookstore run by a grandson of Walt Whitman. Lots of titles and one hysterical woman who entered then departed without really articulating what was wrong. It must have been 'round midnight when we returned to the hostel.

You know, maybe I should have invented some cliffhangers to sustain the momentum of the whole saga, to make it a truly sensational serial, like when we descended to see dead people or encountered those aerial attackers. So as a prelude to the fourth part, I'll just say this: Reread the first seven words under Sunday's account.

You'll see.

~Ann