PART ONE

The Female Presence Today

The course of history, as it presents itself under the notion of catastrophe, can really claim the thinker's attention no more than the kaleidoscope in the hand of a child, where all the patterns of order collapse into a new order with each turn. The image is profoundly justified. The ideas of those in power have always been the mirrors thanks to which the picture of an 'order' came about - The kaleidoscope must be smashed.

Walter Benjamin
CHAPTER ONE

The Monument (New York)

A sudden burst of sunshine seemed to illumine the Statue of Liberty, so that he saw it in a new light, although he had sighted it long before. The arm with the sword rose up as if newly stretched aloft, and round the figure blew the free winds of heaven.

'So high!' he said to himself.

FRANZ KAFKA

Climb inside her head and look out of one of the jewels in her crown, and you will see a helicopter hovering opposite, and the stargazing bowls of camera lenses staring back at you. The passengers are waving, delighted by human puniness beside the looming face of the colossus. But unlike them, you are inside her and you cannot tell how small you seem. Instead you find yourself in a confined space that resembles the bridge of an old pilot boat, cramped, uneven in shape, and coated in institution-green gloss paint against corrosion. A sequence of grimy panes provide limited visibility, and are so tight-fitting and small that the kind of craft they might most appropriately belong to would be an old diving bell, an altogether inappropriate association in the radiant, exalted and upright head of Liberty Enlightening the World.

The Notices at the bottom of the one hundred and seventy-one steps warn that the view is best from Liberty’s pedestal, and that far above, inside her seven-pointed crown, vision is restricted. But everyone swarms up to the top inside her, for the voyage obeys imagination’s logic and requires ascent into the heart and mind of Liberty. Departure, sailing across an ocean, docking at a small leafy haven, gazing up at the colossus who is benign and approachable, and then, to enter her, to find that she is enfolding, even pregnable: these are the phases of a common dream of bliss.

As the Circle Line ferry rounds the island where the Statue of Liberty stands facing the Atlantic, the children thronging the deck stop taking
snapshots and bopping to their headsets and tossing candy into their still unweaned mouths, and for a moment in unison, they roar Woah, Woah. Wooooah Ah Wah! The sound comes almost from the belly, through the throat, without help of lips or tongue: a visceral response, quite like the sound of a male audience in a strip joint when one of the girls promises to uncover big boobs, but here issuing from the mouths of girls, not just boys, Japanese, Puerto Rican, black, and perhaps too young to intend anything openly dirty-minded. Their roar, which greets the first sight head on of the immense frontal view of the immense statue, fades away quickly. It occurs at the moment when every reproduction of the statue merges with the reality and is belittled by the reality: such scale is one of the few phenomena in the contemporary world that defies replication, that only the original can possess.

The children's spontaneous roar pays tribute to Liberty's recognizability, it is the way an old, famous familiar is greeted, to acknowledge that she surpasses all previous mental images. Even when you have been told and have taken in that her nose alone is four and a half feet long - the height of the children on board - she is still much bigger than you expected. Wooooah Wooooah Wooooah! You are at a loss for words.

The statue rings all day to the noise as the visitors climb: the hollow shell turns into a copper tympanum. The children teem in the last coil of the spiral companionway, then collapse on to the metal platform, shrieking their exhaustion at the climb. 'Can I die here?' begs a girl, falling against a friend and then flinging herself into a corner of the head, just above the position of the ear. But those who do not protest against the ordeal of the ascent hardly wait to take in what awaits them in the crown. They throw a quick glance at the whirring helicopter outside, at the bulkhead windows, at the cramped space and call out, 'Is this all there is?' Another shouts, 'It looks like prison up here.' Then they clatter down again, taking the downward spiral of the double stair.

Inside Liberty's crown, standing above her eyes, in her cortex, it can be comforting, even jokey, to be completely disillusioned, to resist the imagery of might and light and hardness and ascent. The kids from the Bronx and the East Village and the Lower East Side and Harlem, even from Yonkers' more salubrious suburbs and the luxury apartments of the Upper East Side need to have their personal experience confirmed as well as the identity they have been given as Americans. They see Liberty from the sea in community; but separated by the single file stairs, they voice an independent understanding that gives each of them distinction, an individual sense of separateness and uniqueness that is
also a very American tradition when they repudiate the claim the Statue of Liberty makes. Through cynicism, through disclaiming the symbol’s aptness, especially for them personally, they arrive at another form of self-affirming defence: ‘Is this all there is?’ ‘Looks like prison in here.’

Disparagement is a kind of appropriation, and the Statue of Liberty is appropriated again and again by each of her visitors. The insides of the statue bear some of their names: Helena was here from Jackson, Francisco was here from Honolulu. They are scratched in the pale green, curd-like paint, an imitation of the colour of the outside, the verdigris of oxidized copper. There are plans to strip the paint from the inside and return the shell to its primal metallic gleam for the centenary of Liberty’s installation in 1886. The present internal structure might also be changed, so that a safety lift can be operated. A few people have actually died inside the Statue of Liberty, especially in the summer when the temperature can rise into the hundreds and the statue becomes an airtight capsule to frizzle the faint-hearted. But the ordeal of the climb is part of the essential appropriation of the statue – and the statue’s meaning – on the part of each visitor. The dizziness of the tight spiral stair, the crush, the heat, the impossibility of deviance once merged with the mass rising up the steps, the steepness and the height help to reproduce, in miniature, the experience of the first makers of the statue, and to join in their imagination as they inched up the structure, hammering the copper sheets to the crane-like pylon of cast-iron struts and girders that Gustave Eiffel constructed for Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi’s sculpture.

In 1984, before restoration, this skeleton made the climb into the crown a unique journey. There is no other monument in the world that presents two such different faces simultaneously, no famous building with an interior so nakedly unadorned: the concealing, clad outer form, and the inner workings revealing the artifice. Seeing the inside recalls those large sixteenth-century northern European Paternoster rosary beads, memento moris, with the smiling dimpled faces of kissing lovers on one side, and the wormy skulls, half-devoured, on the other, or those lay figures of early medicine, when the doll of healthy imitation flesh opened up to reveal the veins and arteries, the organs, and finally the bones. Except that neither of these analogies fits the mood of the Statue of Liberty. There is nothing of mortality about her. Copper itself resists corrosion once the green patina has covered the first warm glitter of the metal. Liberty does not bear the long black streaks of acid rain that give public statues of stone a grief-stricken, careworn sophistication. The
internal structure of criss-crossing iron trusswork, the buckled straps of metal holding the sculpture's outer shell rigid, through which the stairs twist upward and downward, reveal how permanent, how impervious the statue is. To modern eyes, trained to enjoy self-revelation and inner structures, the interior of Liberty is more beautiful than the exterior. She is mechanical, strong, even though, as one engineer working on the restoration pointed out, the structure Eiffel designed was not properly assembled by the workmen who erected the statue three years after it had been crated in France for transport to America. They began attaching the copper sheets to the frame and found, as amateur paper-hangers do, that the drapery did not meet as it should have done, in the region of Liberty's right arm, which she raises to hold her torch. The facing of the statue had shifted round her body. So a few extra struts were added, just under her armpit, to accommodate the fault.

Visitors are no longer allowed to climb up the ladder in her arm to the torch, where twelve people can stand on the rim, and where Hitchcock's villain in Saboteur (1942) dangled till he fell to his death, but you can squint up the hollow of her arm towards the beacon, just as you can read her exterior from the interior on the climb, inverted as in a negative or rubber mould, the bunched draperies, the shoulders, the neck, the cheeks. The chief difference is that inside she appears to be made in strata like the earth. The sheets of copper were laid one upon the other in undulating ridges like the marks of tide on the sand, so that internally the sculpture ripples and flows more plastically than her resolute outer form would ever let one guess.

The beauty of the Eiffel Tower has been the subject of argument, but it has its aesthetic partisans; by making no distinction between internal structure and outer appearance, it is startlingly, visionarily modern in construction. The Statue of Liberty shares some characteristics with the Eiffel Tower, besides contemporaneity. Also, although Eiffel, an engineer, proposed many uses for his Paris tower, for observation, communications, meteorology, and although Bartholdi's statue functions as a beacon, the two constructions are both primarily monuments, practically without function. Stripped of use and service, they resist obsolescence. They are in the first place expressions of identity: Paris' sign has become the Eiffel Tower, though the tower's meaning is not precisely defined; but in the case of the Statue of Liberty, we have a monument with an unambiguously ascribed significance.²

Proposed by the jurist and historian Edouard de Laboulaye as a gesture of republican fellowship with the United States, the statue was formally accepted as a gift from the French-American Union in France by the
US Congress in 1877. Funds had been raised by public subscription from all over France, on the patriotic basis that as the French philosophes' idea of Liberty had been exported to America and inspired the War of Independence, so it would be fittingly commemorated by a French statue. Only Liberty's arm with the beacon was finished in time to be exhibited at the world fair in Philadelphia in 1876, the centenary of independence. Her head followed, shown at the world fair in Paris two years later, but a problem developed about erecting her in situ at New York harbour, for the French gift did not include the cost of the pedestal. Joseph Pulitzer, the proprietor of the World newspaper, hearing of the hitch in Liberty's move to her island site, started a campaign in his newspaper and raised the necessary money in small donations in a startling 147 days. The pedestal was designed by the eclectic architect Richard Morris Hunt in the style of a classical mausoleum, and in 1885, the statue, which had towered over the roofs of Paris from the workshops of Gaget, Gauthier et Cie., where Bartholdi had assembled it, was shipped to New York in 214 crates (Pl. 3). It was unveiled on 26 October 1886.

Although the political history of the statue, and its French origin, have not been erased from its story, Liberty is no longer La Liberté, but was identified from the start with an American ideal of democracy, now represented as an American gift to the world. Bartholdi created an allegory of the Republic in keeping with moderate rather than radical politics, to suit American taste and respectability in the late nineteenth century. His is a staid and matronly conception of the wild thing who surges across the barricade in Delacroix's Liberty Guiding the People, and could be guaranteed not to offend a people who had been dismayed by Horatio Greenough’s marble statue of George Washington all'antica – naked under a toga. He shifted the allusions of Liberty away from unbridled Nature in favour of an imagery of control and light, influenced by the symbols of the Freemasons, to whom Bartholdi belonged. However, as Gombrich has written, 'The balance of justice or the torch of Liberty ... are not just fortuitous identification marks. ... Their choice is rooted in the same psychological tendency to translate or transpose ideas into images which rules the metaphors of language.'

Bartholdi had been working on the idea of a colossus for some years. He had travelled to Thebes with the painter Gérôme and been much impressed by the huge statues in the desert, impassive, mighty, seemingly sovereign over time and history. He had already suggested to the ruler of Egypt, Ismail Pasha, that he build him a tomb with his portrait on a
colossal scale, sitting cross-legged on a lion over the entrance. Nothing came of this project. In 1867, Bartholdi also proposed a gigantic lighthouse for the Suez Canal: 'Egypt Bringing Light to Asia'. The maquettes for this still exist, and resemble Liberty except for their Egyptian dress. The idea of colossi was in the air, inspired by devotion to the buildings of the ancient world which the Ecole des Beaux-Arts had rekindled. In 1851–2 students had produced designs for enormous lighthouses, three of them anthropomorphic, after the famed Pharos of Alexandria crossed with the Colossus of Rhodes, two of the seven Wonders of the World (Pl. 2). 5 In 1878 the colossal Germania by J. Schilling, celebrating the foundation of the German Reich and the defeat of France, was completed on its site near Rüdesheim in the Rhineland. 6 But it is a nice irony that if the Pasha of Egypt had yielded to Bartholdi's blandishments, the Statue of Liberty under another name would now stand at the mouth of the Suez Canal.

Few people sail to Liberty Island to picnic there and climb up the statue in order to feast their eyes on its beauty. It is in fact remarkably hideous for a public sculpture of its date. The twist on the figure as she steps forward forcefully to brandish her torch provides the only movement in the statue, but it is visible, given the statue's size, from the right side only, in profile, and there it looks frozen, exaggerated and slightly vulgar, a soubrette's over-emphatic gesture. There can rarely have been so many yards of sculptured drapery that meant so little in terms of the figure they wrap, or conveyed as little sense of the material they imitate. Liberty clearly wears sheets of copper, not fabric. They are bent, rolled and pummelled, folded and tucked, but still unmistakably metallic, no kindred to cotton or linen. The only material they might recall is water proofing, the heavy stuff which cavalry officers wear in storms. Yet the ideals in Bartholdi's mind were classical, goddesses who gently filled clinging tunics, Junos in soft weaves straight from the loom.

Liberty's seven-pointed halo, a reminiscence of Helios, the sun god (a sunburst was the Bartholdi family emblem), has an unfortunate look of knife-like sharpness and rigidity. While the transition to the diadem, with its jewels serving as observatory windows, has been handled awkwardly. It grips Liberty's head like a military visor lifted by a mediaeval knight. Though classical rills have been incised into Liberty's hair, which has been dressed in the main in a loose Greek knot at the nape of her neck, Bartholdi framed the face with two kiss curls by each ear, and a bunch of sausage curls on either side of the neck, the kind of ringlets
achieved in the 1870s with curling papers, and the only tell-tale evidence in the sculpture of the exact date when it was first conceived. The face set off by these Third Republic sausage-curls is the face of a Greek god, without the redeeming sensuousness. Liberty appears here a thunderbolt judge of stern unrelenting character, upright and unmerciful (Pl. 5).

Children's books on sale at the statue describe how 'the classical features of Liberty radiate an exalted beauty as well as strength', but this is a caption to a photograph taken in soft focus through a peach filter and sharply angled from below. In illustrated books, the artists have invariably failed to reproduce Liberty's face at all accurately. They have, consciously or unconsciously, mellowed Bartholdi's vision, either by giving her a more compassionate expression, or by softening the downward curve of her lips and the beetling jut of her brows.

Bartholdi however made up in size for his lack of conviction in artistry: his macerilation of the ideal gains its energy entirely from its enormousness, its boggling hugeness. America produces many of its trademark images in the colossal, exclusive mode: the Empire State Building, the World Trade Centre's twin shafts, the Presidents of Mount Rushmore, the Statue of Liberty. Liberty's torch was perfected, after years of difficulty, by Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor who later carved the features of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt in the granite face of a Dakota mountain. The national love of gigantism has been taken to its logical and witty extreme by one of America's finest contemporary artists, Claes Oldenburg. Throughout the sixties and seventies, Oldenburg drew schemes for huge monuments, to celebrate the materialist society's inventions, appliances and domestic wonders: he transformed a lady's pantry girdle into the majestic portals of a stock exchange (Pl. 3); he captured London's atmosphere in the sixties with his project London Knees, a sketch of a mini-skirted girl's legs, lopped at mid-thigh and slightly knock-kneed, towering over the Thames skyline. Oldenburg's jokes are not frivolous, however funny; with his series of soft sculptures he has recognized metaphors axiomatic to our culture. Hardness and potency, softness and weakness belong together naturally, it seems. By making a typewriter or a kitchen beater limp and flaccid, he empties them of function and purpose, and instead bestows on them a pliant and nonsensical charm, pointing up the traditional view of what is feminine. And with his sequence of imagined colossal monuments, he comments vividly on another fundamental metaphor in the way we conceptualize the good: big and strong is better than small and feeble. Confronted with his gleaming-blue builder's trowel, of Brobdignagian dimensions, we are thrilled by its scale and
yet uneasy that mere scale can thrill us in this way. Oldenburg celebrates the hyperbolic, but biting; he is always aware of the image's internal structure and he knows how to make us aware of it, to our discomfiture.\textsuperscript{10}

By altering the sex of the more familiar antique wonders and by conceiving of his monument as a penetrable container, Bartholdi adapted the phallicracy of the ancients to create a symbol of the universal mother, of the bodily vessel as an actual temple. In this, his design recalls the most ancient edifices of the archaic past, the Stone Age temple of Skara Brae in the Orkney Islands, for instance. Arranged in the cinquefoil form of a schematic female body, the entrance lies through the birth passage into the sanctuary within.\textsuperscript{11}

Bartholdi also reveals traces of matriarchal tendencies found in utopian socialist fantasies during the earlier years of the century.\textsuperscript{12} In 1833, in a utopian plan for Paris, one of the adherents of the visionary Saint-Simon proposed for the capital's centre a colossal settlement in the shape of the 'Female Saviour' of Saint-Simonianism. He described her as so large that the mere globe under her right hand would hold a theatre. In her other hand, she would carry a sceptre and 'from the tip of this sceptre [would rise] a flame, like a drawn-out pyramid, a huge beacon, the light of which would shine out into the distance, revealing her smiling face in the depths of the darkness'.\textsuperscript{13}

After his father's death, Frédéric-Auguste, aged two, was taken to Paris by his mother, and brought up by her alone, and he never shook himself entirely free of her, as the statue makes clear. For although Bartholdi's wife posed at length for the maquettes during Liberty’s five-year gestation, it is the countenance of Mme Bartholdi, mère, which we behold in the statue.\textsuperscript{14} She was by all accounts a grim, overbearing character. Their family home in Colmar had been occupied by Prussians after the defeat of France in the war of 1870 and the annexation of Alsace, and Bartholdi experienced the full outrage of his mother at this violation.\textsuperscript{15}

The Statue of Liberty soon acquired the character of a mother, the 'Mother of Exiles'. Emma Lazarus, writing in 1883 in the context of US immigration from Russia during the Tsarist pogroms, composed the famous verses which were inscribed on a plaque on the statue's base in 1903. Liberty speaks:

\begin{quote}
Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
\end{quote}
THE MONUMENT (NEW YORK)

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tos’t to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!16

The verses catch the invitation extended by the statue’s myth to identify with her, and in so doing to ally ourselves with Liberty and distinguish ourselves from others who do not enjoy her or her fruits. We are all her children, she speaks to us in the voice of a mother, as if responding to the entreaty of the ancient antiphon to the Virgin Mary, the Salve Regina: ‘Exiled children of Eve, we cry unto thee, wailing and weeping in this vale of tears. So ... turn thy merciful eyes upon us.’ Emma Lazarus’ famous flight of rhetoric dissolves the harshness of Liberty’s countenance, and she becomes a mother of mercy. Her meaning is freedom, it is we who appropriate her, we who are free, or at least, as the children pointed out in the head, free to say we are not free. She is the container of our definitions of ourselves, not for American visitors alone, but for visitors to America who consent to American influence or reject it. Perceived either as a lie, or as a statement of the truth, the claim that the Statue of Liberty makes on behalf of the United States defines the nation’s self-image. As a children’s book, Our Statue of Liberty, says: ‘Americans love Miss Liberty because everything about her shows our freedom. The book in her left hand carries the date of our nation’s birth, July 4, 1776. The broken chain at her feet means that we became free by breaking away from England. The rays of her torch show how our liberty lights the way for the rest of the world.’17 Others interpret the statue’s attributes with less attention to the historical past: the shackles represent tyranny everywhere at any time.18 Given the vastness of the statue’s claim, and the intensity with which political America identifies with it, it is surprising that so few attempts have been made to occupy or bomb it.19

The myth reverberates and the structure incorporates: when we visit the statue, and especially when we enter into her, we are invited to merge with her, to feel at one with her. Beside the entrance to the evangelizing Museum of Immigration installed inside the plinth, there used to stand a painted image of the Statue of Liberty with a hole for a face, like a seaside photographer’s booth. You could stick your head through the hole and take home a snapshot of yourself as Liberty, carrying the caption ‘My Ideals’. Most visitors did – that was the point. The statue’s hollowness, which we occupy literally when we make the ascent to Liberty’s equally empty head, is a prerequisite of symbols with infinite powers of endurance and adaptability. She is given meaning by us, and it can change, according to what we see or want. As William Gass has written,
Great memorials are curiously non-committal. Remove Lincoln's statue and put in FDR's. No problem. Greek temples are quite general. Liberty's torch can stand for Victory. Or Fidelity. Or Truth. ... The Sphinx says nothing to us; it is blank in its stare as the sky and silent in its posture as the sand - or, if you wish: sky silent/sand blank ... the monumental monument tends to be, in this way, an open emblem. It tends to be

FOR RENT\textsuperscript{20}

We can all take up occupation of Liberty, male, female, aged, children, she waits to enfold us in her meaning. But a male symbol like Uncle Sam relates to us in a different way, and the distinction between the two figures who have become emblematic of the United States indicates a common difference between male and female figures conveying ulterior meaning. The female form tends to be perceived as generic and universal, with symbolic overtones; the male as individual, even when it is being used to express a generalized idea.

'Uncle Sam', who appeared in New York State around 1812 as the owner of the initials U.S., stamped on government supplies to the army and other goods and equipment, stands to America as John Bull stands to England, an epitome of the nation's character, a collective caricature. John Bull too, has his humorous side; like Uncle Sam he is not thought to be based on anyone in particular, but was first born in print in Dr John Arbuthnot's pamphlet of 1712: 'Law is a Bottomless Pit, exemplified in the case of Lord Strutt, John Bull, Nicholas Frog, and Lewis Baboon, who spent all they had in a Law Suit.'\textsuperscript{21}

John Bull typifies the Englishman; Uncle Sam and Brother Jonathan the US citizen. But Liberty can hardly be said to represent the typical American woman, or Britannia the Englishwoman of collective consciousness. Men are individual, they appear to be in command of their own characters and their own identity, to live inside their own skins, and they do not include women in their symbolic embrace: John Bull, however comic, can never be a cow. But the female form does not refer to particular women, does not describe women as a group, and often does not even presume to evoke their natures. We can all live inside Britannia or Liberty's skin, they stand for us regardless of sex, yet we cannot identify with them as characters. Uncle Sam and John Bull are popular figures; they can be grim, sly, feisty, pathetic, absurd, for they have personality. Liberty, like many abstract concepts expressed in the femiaine, is in deadly earnest and one-dimensional. Above all, if John Bull appears angry, it is his anger he expresses; Liberty is not representing her own freedom. She herself is caught by the differences, between the
ideal and the general, the fantasy figure and the collective prototype, which seem to hold through the semantics of feminine and masculine gender in rhetoric and imagery, with very few exceptions.

It is hard to refuse Liberty's invitation to be part of her, precisely because she is so unsuccessful as a work of art; clumsiness itself is democratic in a way a masterpiece cannot be. But the Statue of Liberty also engulfs us because she inspires one of the great sensual pleasures of the eye, dependent not upon aesthetic delight but upon the psychology of vision, inherent in the layered meaning of the very word. She gluts the eye with a sense of power, springing from the sensation of seeing the future. When we sail to the island, we know that downtown New York was not what it now is when the Statue of Liberty was made, that the tip of the island of Manhattan was wilderness not long before. When we look across from the foot of the statue towards the massed towers of steel and glass and stone, exploding as if in frozen fission, like a giant crystal's spars, we are looking at a future that has happened. We experience Manhattan paired with Liberty, twinned by upward thrust, by man-made origin, by vastness of scale. The city's pile becomes itself allegorical of human size and form: load-bearing and boned like the human body in its totality, the column that Vitruvius saw as analogous with that body, made gigantic. The city and the statue strike echoes one off the other, and both come to stand for America itself. So passengers arriving by boat and immigrants bound for Ellis Island saw Liberty as America's symbol, a version of the allegory Columbia, who had been hymned by the army during the War of Independence as the spirit of Liberty:

Hail! Columbia happy land,
Hail! Ye heroes, heaven-born band . . .
Peace and safety we shall find . . .22
Firm, united let us be
Rallying round our Liberty
As a band of brothers joined
Peace and safety we shall find . . .22

The statue raised immigrants' hearts and hopes. Kafka's protagonist mistaking her torch for a sword may appear apt, but it is not clear that the irony was intentional. Emma Goldman, the anarchist, found that her eyes filled with tears when she first saw the statue - then new - in the dawn mist in 1886: 'Ah, there she was,' she wrote, 'the symbol of hope, freedom, opportunity! She held her torch high to light the way to the free country, the asylum for the oppressed of all lands.'23 Half a century
later, towards the end of the Second World War, when the Greek immigrant Christos Gatzoiannis sent a postcard showing the Empire State Building to the family he had left behind, he said, 'I am writing this from the top of the tallest building in the world. It has 102 floors. On one side I can see the Atlantic Ocean and the statue of the woman called St Freedom, which is so big you can climb up and stand in one of her fingers. This is how America looks.' 

Since then, the outcrop of Lower Manhattan, shooting up skyscrapers in ever-increasing density, a coppice of titanic mineral growth, at once primeval, like the origin of the world before blood and lymph and vegetable matter, and futuristic, made of smooth planes and impermeable surfaces like a space capsule, appears to have given Liberty an answer, almost a reward: Manhattan seems to say, 'This is what you have brought about, this is how you have made America look.' The pledge of freedom is understood as power, not just promised, but achieved. And unlike the statue, Lower Manhattan is one of the most splendid sights in all the world and one which cannot be resisted. It offers itself to view as a planar, scenic whole. From the vantage point of the statue, itself one entity, Liberty in a single form, you contemplate the spectacle of the great computing city as another, and the effect is exhilarating, the sweep of the city unfurled as a single vista. The film Superman, the first of the series, directed by Clive Donner with a lyrical sense of fantasy, includes a long dreamy sequence in which Superman takes Lois Lane flying above New York; the city looks enchanted, the Statue of Liberty a doll in the starlit map laid out below them. But it is only fitting that the hero who fights 'a never-ending battle for truth, justice and the American way' should fly down to circle the head of Liberty. When the lamp was taken down for renewal, in the summer of 1984, a full scale ritual marked the occasion, in order to cancel any ominous resonance that the extinguishing of her precious torch might create. Speculators vied to take possession of scrap metal from her fabric, like pardoners in the Middle Ages hunting for relics, and workmen commissioned to polish and renovate were widely interviewed and spoke of the task in awed tones, as if they had heard a call, not been given a job. The statue does not record the past, except for the allusion to the Declaration of Independence. It anticipates continuously a future that is always in the process of becoming: hence Liberty's determined step forward, her lamp held up to illuminate the space we cannot see, the time to come. She expresses intention, more emphatically than act; we are all subjects of incorporation in that regard. We all hope to be free, we could all be free.
That is what the statue holds out for us to accept, as we stroll the island with the kids who scoff their 'monster crunch', their 'club' and 'hero' sandwiches and jive, on the spot, all girls together, to giant ghetto-blasters standing on the ground, while the boys line themselves up on the wall opposite Liberty's back and watch.

The Statue of Liberty has been used to legitimize political campaigns, to seal them with moral dignity, like the posters of World War One which urged Americans - especially immigrants - to remember Liberty and buy government bonds (Pl. 4). Now the cipher turns up in sunglasses and sweater, lipstick and transistor earpiece, on a poster for New York's rock radio station WAPP, in advertisements for cut-price air travel, in a publicity shot of Mae West guying the pose with her hour-glass figure, striped like the US flag in lame and satin, and a fall of blonde curls and invitingly half-parted lips. WeeGee took a photograph around 1950 of the statue warped and stretched as in a fun-fair's hall of mirrors. The children's books still aim to be edifying and patriotic to keep up the moral tone, but it is becoming harder to use Liberty for serious causes without irony. She identifies the city and by extension the nation, and she provides a benchmark of an ideal few people still believe has been upheld or will ever be fulfilled. Mae West and the rock radio sweater girl deflate all that earnest endeavour of the later nineteenth century, with its innocent optimism that looks so antiquated from our post-war vantage point.

She was not the first representation of Liberty in a public place in America. On the dome of the Capitol in Washington, DC, a bronze Freedom Triumphant, sculpted by Thomas Crawford, was raised in 1863. She is nineteen and a half feet high, compared to Liberty's one hundred and fifty-one feet one inch, but she stands at the centre of Washington, and dominates the city, visible from a great distance in a town where buildings taller than the Capitol's dome are banned. Crawford, a distinguished neoclassical sculptor based in Rome, created a more appealing figure than Bartholdi later managed. Sensitive ly modelled, in a heavy-fringed mantle, she stands in a relaxed position. On her head she wears a wreath of stars round a feathered helmet like a Renaissance allegory of the New World, the fourth continent America, but seen from the ground this headdress makes her look like a Red Indian, a heroine like Minnehaha. Crawford had wanted to cover Freedom's head with the customary liberty cap of Europe, but by then the bonnet was a sign of thoroughgoing radicalism, and the design aroused the objection from the architectural overseer of the Capitol that it was not intrinsically.
American enough. Crawford made the alteration, to feathers, and he thereby unwittingly and effectively robbed his statue of universal connotation. Any such specific historical reference to identity or history can put a strain on an image's survival as symbol; the fate of the Indian under American freedom consigned Crawford's fine interpretation to necessary oblivion.

Classical allegories, using the female form, abound in the United States' public places. In New York, Justice, holding her scales, stands over the law courts. The chapel of St Paul in the Civic Centre district, founded in 1764, is the oldest church in the city, an example of British classical architecture, stranded like an architect's model between the dizzy columns of Wall Street. It displays inside the arms of the State of New York, painted by a naive eighteenth-century artist in imitation of the highest Western models. The bearers of the arms are Justice and Freedom, the latter in rosy décolletage and carrying on her spear an uncensored liberty cap. And at night, on the downtown skyline, a single feminine form lights up and dominates the view of TriBeCa and the business district by her singularity and her height, as she stands in a gentle amber aureole among the glinting shafts of Wall Street and the Trade Centre. The windows around wink and flash in cryptograms, a galactic console of messages coded in light, in diamonds and topazes and amber. High up on the pinnacles of the grey pyramidal mass of the Civic Centre's Municipal Building there appears this single shape that recalls the human form and not the electronic impulse or the illuminated and abstract perforation. It is gilded, sinuous (especially in the context of Lower Manhattan's perpendiculadas and horizontals) and represents Civic Fame, under the aspect of a classical figure of Victory, bearing a palm to the winner. The statue was sculpted by Adolph Alexander Weinman, and erected a generation after Liberty, two generations after Freedom Triumphant on the Capitol.29

Weinman's Fame is perched too high up for us to make out the artistry of his execution but, even at such a distance from the ground, she does not move as lightly as Augustus Saint-Gaudens' uptown interpretation of Victory, in gilt and bronze on the southern corner of Fifth Avenue and Central Park (Pl. 43). She leads General Sherman's horse by the rein towards the bountiful naked nymph in front of the Plaza Hotel as if stepping forward through the throng and the traffic to drink at her fountain. Saint-Gaudens was born in Ireland in 1848, but came to New York as an infant. He returned to Europe to study, in Paris and Rome, and his graceful, precise, elegant and often elongated forms bear the imprint both of Second Empire Paris and of the Belle Epoque, and are