

Sacred Space and the Modes of Intersection in Paulo Coelho's *The Pilgrimage*

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Abstract: To analyze the depiction of sacred space and rituals in Paulo Coelho's *The Pilgrimage* is the purpose of this essay. The bulk of studies on the functions and aims of pilgrimage have produced a multifaceted field of research for the further development of both secular and religious conceptualizations of this ritualized behavior. Whether pilgrimage is a matter of ideology, union with the sacred space, spiritual enlightenment, superstition, political identity, primitive religiosity, post-mortem body, or simply a matter of our attitudes toward pilgrimage as outsiders or insiders is still unresolved. In this article, I review the significance and purpose of pilgrimage in its traditional and anthropological context and in regard to the importance of sacred space or destination in various religions. Next, I approach the tradition of pilgrimage in the novel by drawing upon Gilles Deleuze's critique of being, becoming, and animal. I subsequently explore three principal intersections that the protagonist experiences in his spiritual journey to the holy space, the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain. I discuss how *The Pilgrimage* presents a non-traditional portrayal of sacred space and pilgrimage. I also explore the reciprocity between the pilgrim's body and mind in developing a physical and mental relation with his natural environment. Whereas man's desire for the divine or holy space has received considerable attention in the studies on pilgrimage, Coelho's novel reorients the focus of attention from the final destination to the pilgrim's modes of symbiosis along the road. This article also intends to demonstrate how the novel presents a new perspective for the study of the ritual, recognized as pilgrimage.

Keywords: Animal, becoming, pilgrimage, religion, spiritual journey, sacred space.

1. INTRODUCTION

It has extensively been argued that a distinct event, recognized as pilgrimage, can be discerned not only in the practices of various religions but also in the literatures of almost all nations across the globe. Despite its singularities and the problems of conceptualization, which is often saturated with Christian terminology, the vestiges of pilgrimage are discernible in the literatures of classical Greece and Rome as well as in the literatures of other nations and ethnicities, associated with Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Elsner & Rutherford, 2005, pp. 1-2). In the pre-Christian world, some form of "sacred travel indeed existed, not only as a concrete phenomenon, but also as a rich literary tradition in the Graeco-Roman culture, possibly even paving the way for later ideas of pilgrimage in Christianity and Islam" (Kuuliala & Rantala, 2020, p. 4). Pilgrimage has had a venerable position among diverse nations. In ancient Greece, a sacred truce was announced to ensure the safety of the pilgrims' travels to the sacred sites. "Pilgrims could even make their way freely through states which were openly at war, and combatants were bound to respect the status and privileges of pilgrims" (Dillon, 1997, p. 2). Among numerous literary texts that portray some form of pilgrimage, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Dante's *Divine Comedy* are two of the well-known

renditions of this sacred travel throughout its extended history. It is also in these two texts where one can realize the efficacy of praying and the fundamental "difference between pagan prayer and Christian prayer" (Vettori, 2019, p. 141).

The theme of spiritual journey recurs in the works of Brazilian bestselling author Paulo Coelho. In his *The Alchemist*, for instance, an Andalusian shepherd boy travels to the heart of North Africa to achieve self-realization. The novel, in a broader sense, demonstrates the intersections of several religions and traditions: Arabian, Egyptian, Hebraic, Christian (Hart, 2010, p. 311). In his *Aleph*, a trans-Siberian journey across Russia engenders for the protagonist (Paulo Coelho himself) and his companion, a female Turkish musician, the opportunity of time travelling to the Spanish Inquisition era. In this novel, "Coelho capitalizes on the notion of Aleph to suggest the possibility of a shared, almost mystical, experience of time as a platform for convergence among the followers of diverse religions" (Safaei, 2018a, pp. 112). In his semi-autobiographical *The Pilgrimage*, Coelho explicitly addresses the tradition of pilgrimage to a holy place. The novel achieved "a world-wide success and Coelho was motivated to move on with his career as a writer" (Mayer, 2017, p. 54). *The Pilgrimage*, originally published in Portuguese in 1987 as *O diário de um Mago* (literally, 'Diary of a Magus'), recounts the events of his journey to the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in north-western Spain. This was a turning

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point in the author's life, for throughout the journey Coelho "experienced a spiritual awakening" (Mayer & Maree, 2018, p. 2). With this observation in mind that the depictions of pilgrims and pilgrimages in literature "vary enormously" (Scott, 2012, p. 150), I attempt, in this essay, to confine my exploration of this tradition to the significance of 'sacred space', and, more extensively, to the experience of 'becoming' through three principal intersections along the road to the sacred space in *The Pilgrimage*. I basically argue that the novel is more a depiction of various modes of intersection on the road rather than the portrayal of yearning, spiritual or not, for the sacred destination. In the following, I review the literature on sacred space and pilgrimage; I then discuss Deleuze's conception of animal and becoming and subsequently present my analysis of three modes of intersection and becoming in the novel. The concluding section discusses how Coelho's novel can be considered as a non-traditional and yet insightful approach to the holy place and pilgrimage in his novel.

2. PILGRIMAGE AND ITS LOCALITY

2.1. Sacred Space and Pilgrimage

The historian and philosopher of religion van der Leeuw (1964) defines sacred space as a selected and awe-inspiring location of some form of recurrent activity; it is endowed with some spiritual power; and it typically functions as "the place of worship, independently of whether the position is only a house, or a temple, since domestic life too is a celebration constantly repeated in the regulated cycle of work, meals, washing, etc." (p. 393). Sacred space is a fixed place of existential value and ritual orientation. It stands against the world of the profane. "*If the world is to be lived in, it must be founded— and no world can come to birth in the chaos of the homogeneity and relativity of profane space*" (Eliade, 1959, p. 22). Sacred spaces have persisted as crucial instruments for the followers of diverse religions to comprehend and interact with their world. Great cathedrals, built during the medieval period, were indeed multimedia projects and had various impacts on people's lives. "They were constructed out of a fusion of architecture, iconography, material culture, and narrative practice" (Varnam 2018, p. 3). From time immemorial, van der Leeuw (1964) argues, people have made journeys to the sacred space "where the Power of the Universe renewed itself daily, and where the heart of the world could be approached" (p. 401). The sacred space and pilgrimage are thus associated with each other, for the

locations of considerable sacrality regularly attract the faithful to themselves. In some sense, one can argue that every entrance into a holy space such as a church or a temple is a "*pilgrimage*" (p. 401).

During the Middle Ages, Europeans understood their world in terms of the place of their quotidian living; and "unless they went away to fight or on religious pilgrimage, most people remained in one location from birth to death" (Twomey, 2019, p. 7). To medieval Christians, the second greatest adventure, after war, was pilgrimage. The pilgrimage to Santiago, the shrine of Saint James the Apostle, was an extraordinary as well as grueling undertaking, as the pilgrims had to suffer the various perils of the road for religious or mere curiosity reasons (Rudolf, 2004, p. 5). A bifurcation of intentions and groupings, distinguished as spiritual versus secular, or, as devotees versus tourists, is also made in regard to the travelers to the holy sites in our era (Scott, 2012, p. 140). In general, medieval people had sundry reasons for pilgrimage: to search for a miracle, to pray at a specific shrine, or to seek atonement. Pilgrimage also functioned as a mode of penance or punishment, for the journey would sometimes entail several months of travelling thousands of kilometers on feet or horseback under exhausting, even hazardous, circumstances (Fitzpatrick, 2010, pp. 14, 16).

Pilgrimage, as a spiritual or sacred journey, cultivates a closer affinity with the aesthetics of holy landscape, intensifies the yearning for transcendence, and renews the pilgrims' awareness of, and, commitment to, the ancient roots of one's religion (Oberholzer, 2003, pp. 2-4). It "may be thought of as extroverted mysticism" (Turner & Turner, 1978, p. 33) or a fundamentally "spiritual exile" for the "reunion with the divine" (Chemris, 2008, p. 136). From a different perspective, Lefebvre (1991) conceives of pilgrimage as a means of consolidating an ideology, as it entails a journey to a representational space that informs and underscores our conception of the universe and the role that each institution (political, social, economic or educational, to name a few) performs within that universe. It is, as such, a practice not only for the entrenchment of a particular worldview but also for the production of social space in the way that the road to Compostela (literally, "the field of stars") was, to Medieval Christianity, a reflection of the Milky Way on the earth to guide the pilgrims toward redemption (p. 45). Recent research on *loci sacri* implicitly endorses Lefebvre's conception of representational space, for it is argued that vertical architectonics of holy places, for

instance, church spires or cathedral towers, function as *axis mundi*, establishing the nexus between the earthly plane and the realm of divine (Heynickx *et al.*, 2012, p. 7).

The question of body, residing in the sacred place, has also received substantial attention in the studies on pilgrimage, for cathedrals and spaces of pilgrimage are intensely associated with an individual, either alive or dead (de Dijn, 2012, p. 43). Although some conception of stationary pilgrimage existed, for example, among some antique Irish and Anglo-Saxon hermits that conceived of true life as a life of pilgrimage, “where life is seen only as a transition towards the real goal, God” (Kuuliala & Rantala, 2020, p. 6), pilgrimage is essentially concerned with a place and, as such, it is ‘place-specific’. This specificity highlights a pilgrim’s desire for proximity with a location of paramount ethical or spiritual significance. Yet, as a place of pilgrimage is commonly associated with a dead body, one can argue that what affords prominence to the place is the post-mortem body. To put this differently, the post-mortem body obliges people to perform a response, which, in one way or another, may resemble a pilgrimage in the same way that a dead body requires a friend or family member to visit its tomb (Wynn, 2007, pp. 146-147).

2.2. Coelho’s Pilgrimage

Paulo Coelho’s *The Pilgrimage* depicts a journey to a sacred space along with portraying three interrelated moments in the life of the novel’s protagonist: his aborted initiation rite, his ritualized and vicissitudinous journey to Santiago de Compostela, and eventually, his attainment of a profound self-awareness. In *The Pilgrimage*, the protagonist (Paulo Coelho himself) introduces himself as a novice magus of RAM, an obscure and highly conjectural Catholic order of probably late medieval period. The three-letter acronym RAM, standing for *Regnus Agnus Mundi*, can be “translated approximately as Kingdom of the Lamb of the World” (Morais, 2009, p. 376). As the narrator fails to resist the temptation of power, he is prescribed to undertake a journey to Compostela, in northern Spain, to regain his symbolic sword “at some point on the road” (Coelho, 2012, p.5). This renders *The Pilgrimage*, at a superficial level, an allegory of a spiritual fall and resurrection, for whereas on the day of his “Celestial Ordination,” he is lamentably brought “back to earth” (p. 4), he realizes, by the end of the journey, that “a god is reborn within” him (p. 267). The sacred journey, hence, functions as a spiritual accomplishment and a return to a holy self-realization. The protagonist is convinced

that his journey has religious as well as mythological roots, bearing resemblances to the sacred journeys in Abrahamic traditions, journeys to Jerusalem and Mecca, the adventurous voyages in Homeric literature, and Dante’s spiritual journey to the underworld in his *Divine Comedy* (pp. 12-15). With the consideration that Jerusalem, Rome, and Santiago were the three principal pilgrimage destinations during the medieval ages, one may, only initially and in a medieval sense, conceive of Coelho’s pilgrimage as prescribed punishment for his “avidity,” “pride,” and unseemly “fascination with miracles” (Coelho, 2012, pp. 3, 4).

One may also construe *The Pilgrimage* as a narrative of “*homo viator*, man the wayfarer,” a medieval notion that “has old and established credentials in Christian thought” (Olin, 1979, p. 388). Despite attempts to explain pilgrimage as the displacement of individuals across lands and borders to visit a holy place, whether a fountain, a tree, a cave, or a shrine (Couroucli, 2012, p. 6), one has to notice that pilgrimage has remained an elusive concept in religious studies as well as in the philosophy of religion. It is associated with devotion and belief in the miraculous, on the one hand; and with superstition and primitive outlooks toward the divine and its localizability, on the other (Wynn, 2007, p. 145). And while one may explain the divergence of attitudes regarding pilgrimage and its functions in terms of ‘outsiders’ and ‘insiders’ (Scott, 2012, p. 139), one cannot deny the historical and literary evidence that testify to the nexus between pilgrimage and politico-national identity. For instance, whereas during the 18th century Ireland, pilgrimage was considered as “peasant vulgarity,” the Irish nationalist struggle for independence from Britain resuscitated the social verve for pilgrimage with an embedded emphasis on the preservation of traditions (Shovlin, 1991, p. 60). The cult of Santiago, or St James, was also interconnected with the volatility of Christian identity during the years of religio-political turmoil in medieval Spain, as it struggled against the disconcerting growth of Islamic territories toward the northern Kingdoms of Castilla and Navarra (Fitzpatrick, 2010, p. 14).

The variety of ideas on the significance and function of pilgrimage (that is, whether it is a matter of superstition, political identity, sacred space, primitive religiosity, post-mortem body, spiritual enlightenment, ideology, or our attitudes toward pilgrimage as insiders and outsiders) has produced a multifaceted field of study for the further development of diverse secular and religious conceptualizations of this ritualized

behavior. Currently, there also exists a broad range of research that investigates pilgrimage, "from the perspective of a marketing strategy approach, to promote religious spectacles in different places" (Dowson *et al.*, 2019, p. 4). In the next section I discuss Deleuze's philosophy of becoming and animal as a framework to analyze a limited number of interrelated incidents along the road to Santiago. His philosophy affords crucial insights into the impacts of pilgrimage on the individual engaged in this journey.

3. BECOMING AND ANIMAL

Deleuzian philosophy of 'becoming' intends to emancipate the event of becoming from its originating, presumably transcendent, source of 'being'; his metaphysics of becoming is a secularization of the ethical dynamics of becoming and life (Colebrook, 2010, p. 134). The relation between 'becoming' and the concept of 'animal' is crucial, for animals have historically been present in humans' lives, dreams and mythologies. Hence, to approach the Deleuzian concept of becoming-animal, one also needs to observe what animal signifies and how it has appeared to human beings throughout history. Oedipal or individuated animals are those with which one fosters a sentimental relation; such animals typically function as a pet, an intimate interlocutor, a parent or a sibling. Mythical animals occur in classical mythology or divine stories and from them, we may extrapolate the Jungian archetypes or mythical patterns. In opposition to these two types, becoming-animal pertains to a third category, that is, the animals with which we contrive a pack, a bond, or a tale. These may be conceived of as demonic or 'affect' animals, for they proliferate by catastrophes or by contagion in the same manner that vampires and zombies proliferate not by filiation but by infection. The contagion is often caused by, for instance, a wolf or a dog (or a whale like that in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*) with which a person develops an ambivalent relation (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, pp. 240-241).

The event of becoming-animal appears subversive as well as alien to the traditional institutions such as the State and the Church that have always endeavored to regularize human behavior. As such, despite the reality of becoming-animal as a borderline event, there have been institutional attempts to deny, to appropriate, or to subdue the phenomenon of becoming throughout history. A case in point is the institution of Church that "has always burned sorcerers, or reintegrated anchorites into the toned-down image of a series of

saints whose only remaining relation to animals is strangely familiar, domestic" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 247-248). What is at stake in the event of becoming-animal is that animal, even a single animal, is fundamentally a pack, implying that 'animal' should not be distinguished by its features and characteristics but by its immanent capacity of forming a pack with a human being (p. 239). Therefore, one should not construe infection or contagion with the pack as the epidemic spread of a virus, but as a mode of bond, or the generation of a possibility for interaction. In other words, our becoming-animal depends on whether the contagion, that is, this mental and emotional reciprocity with the animal, culminates in the formation of a new life.

It is hence absurd to ask about the essence or whatness of 'becoming'. "For as someone becomes, what he is becoming changes as much as he does himself" (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007, p. 2). Becoming, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue, is not a matter of identification or resemblance among things. Nor does 'becoming' imply progression toward something or regression from something along a series or within a structure. Becoming is not imaginative or figurative; it is real, but its reality is not a matter of genealogy or descent. It is a creative heterogenous alliance and a matter of symbiosis among beings of diverse nature with no traces of filiation in the same manner that the alliance between an orchid and a wasp may not generate or evolve into an orchid-wasp offspring (pp. 237-238). Becoming is a paradoxical state, for it is both being something and not being the same thing. It is a state of indeterminacy when identification becomes impossible, when a phenomenon simultaneously eludes the idea (in its Platonic sense) of something and its copy (Deleuze, 1990, p. 2).

4. INTERSECTIONS

The relation between the pilgrim and the animal has specific significance to understand the nature of pilgrimage in Coelho's novel in relation to other elements across the road to the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. I confine my analysis to three intersections that are more vivid and fundamental to the pilgrim's journey in the novel. Each of these intersections demonstrates how the pilgrim is involved in the symbiotic generation of a character that cannot fall into a rigid and fixed category of identification. Each intersection, as such, is a mode of becoming as a liminal or symbiotic existence. I explore, in each intersection, how the pilgrim experiences a disparate

mode of becoming and how each becoming intensifies the experience of pilgrimage regardless of the holy destination.

4.1. Intersection with the Animal

With 'agape', defined as "the inner-Trinitarian love" encompassing "the beginning and end of Christian faith and living" (Watson, 2000, p. ix), one may claim that *The Pilgrimage* is an intensely Christian narrative, for the role of 'agape' is elaborately discussed and repeatedly experienced throughout the novel. However, what is remarkable about *The Pilgrimage* is that the enfolding of incidents on the Road to Santiago de Compostela, with "its gypsies who were devils" and "with its priests who were sorcerers" (Coelho, 2012, p. 57), accords particular insights into specific forms of demonic interaction that underlie the foundation of Coelho's pilgrimage. In fact, the recurrence of confrontations with a mysterious dog is integral to the sacred journey. On the road to Santiago, the protagonist is acquainted, in a hamlet, with the history of a religious atrocity against a gypsy who, before his tormenting death, curses the people by transferring his demons to "the youngest child in the village" who, in turn, would bequeath the curse to the next generations "for all the centuries to come" (p. 91). To nullify the curse, the people of the village isolate the youngest child who "inherited the curse" in "a house set off by itself at the side of the Road" (p. 92).

Eager to emancipate the small village from the curse, the narrator and his spiritual guide, named Petrus, determine to meet the child, now a "woman of about seventy" (Coelho, 2012, p. 92). What is striking is that the inheritor of the curse possesses "an enormous black dog" (p. 92), which appears to be "happy," "docile" and "contended" at first glance (p. 93). Nevertheless, the narrator soon perceives the sinister intent of the dog, stating that "the animal had hypnotized me and had kept my eyes fastened on him" (p. 94). The protagonist is unexpectedly suffused with "an uncontrollable desire" to evoke an incomprehensible exorcising mantra (p. 95). Deeply infuriated with the "strange words" uttered by the narrator, the dog reveals its malice and morphs into "something awful and threatening that could attack" (pp. 95-6). The encounter with the anomalous dog terminates in the beast's escape from the old woman's house.

Hence, central to the narration in *The Pilgrimage* is the formation of a new mode of being made up of man

and animal as a constitutive part of the protagonist's journey. The protagonist's second encounter with the demonic dog sheds light on the nature of this relation, for whereas in the first encounter, this is the ferocious dog which glares "fixedly" at the protagonist (Coelho, 2012, p. 138), in the second confrontation, this is the pilgrim who keeps his "gaze fixed on the dog's eyes" (p. 197). However, being "terrified" by the dog's "growl," "more threatening than a loud bark," the pilgrim desperately seeks to survive the animal's "assault" (p. 198). Conversely, the wayfarer, in his third encounter, determines to vanquish the evil dog by adopting canine attributes: "I bared my teeth and sounded a low growl" (p. 201). The pilgrim attacks the beast with his "teeth" and "nails, trying to bite the dog in the throat" (p. 202).

The dog is usually assumed to symbolize the "inner demon" within the pilgrim (Mayer, 2017, p. 332); from a different perspective, nevertheless, the transformation of the protagonist is unquestionably an imperceptible mode of transformation, for no one endures a thorough metamorphosis into a real dog or wolf, that is, a beast identified as dog or wolf as a species. This encounter with the animal is not but one of the modes of interaction along the road with its entirety of elements whether flora or fauna. Coelho recurrently highlights that the beast is more than one, as it is simultaneously "the earth and the fruits of the earth—the good fruits of the earth and the bad, but of the earth" (p. 203). This symbiosis with the animal does not, I would like to reiterate, imply a metamorphosis just as the pilgrim's intersection with a tree, probed in the next section, does not imply his morphing into a tree.

4.2. Intersection with the Plant

Mayer (2017) mentions that Coelho, on the road to Santiago, performs "meditative and spiritual exercises to develop himself spiritually and find his purpose and path in life" (p. 53). This meditative exercise, however, may have an extra layer of significance, for the protagonist's immersion in several meditative "rituals that are known as the practices of RAM" (p. 28) imply efforts for one or the other mode of intersection within the novel. The protagonist, as both his Master and Petrus clarify, has false conceptions apropos of his spiritual knowledge and potentials; and that is the reason his Master does not permit him to possess a magical "sword" (p. 28). Hence, in the first meditative exercise of his pilgrimage, named "The Seed Exercise," the protagonist empathizes with "a tiny seed" that desires "to grow" by sprouting and breaking "through the earth" (Coelho, 2012, p.32). This practice aims to

assist the pilgrim “to achieve rebirth” and emancipation from “being a prisoner of the past” (p. 30). This ritualistic meditation is inherently anti-memory, for it abates the impact of identity one often assumes under various socio-political or religious systems. The practice emphasizes a crucial theme resembling that in Coelho's *The Zahir*, where authentic life emerges as “a univocal identity-less existence that can be shared by all human beings”(Safaei, 2018b, p. 196).

In other words, Coelho is trying to present a secular vision of pilgrimage in his novel, since the process of intersecting with the tree inherently involves a departure from social identification. The narrator, in *The Pilgrimage*, underscores that with his “memories of human life” beginning “slowly to dim,” he realizes that he has “become a tree” (Coelho, 2012, p.40). Becoming a tree enables him to experience a disparate set of relations that the typical human body, regardless of one's religious orientations, is capable to grasp: “I remained there, my branches extended, my leaves trembling in the wind” (p. 40). Here the protagonist finds himself in union with “a world that was still in the process of growing and being created...always moving along” (p. 39). Intersection with the tree, in *The Pilgrimage*, is ostensibly a purely mental endeavor in the sense that there does not exist any observable material interaction or symbiosis between the protagonist and a tree. Yet it is a mode of mental and emotional relation that engages both body and mind concurrently.

Coelho, in other words, aims to emphasize an immanent aspect of pilgrimage which is almost concealed by a traditional emphasis on its final destination. Similar to his portrayal of existence in his *The Zahir* where Coelho emphasizes “a hidden layer of life or a mode of univocal being that demonstrates itself via its apparent absence” (Safaei, 2018b, p. 195), his conception of pilgrimage, beneath and beyond its ritualistic façade, involves the narrator in an experience of life's power and vitality which is profound and yet invisible to the onlookers. This brings us to the third and the most significant mode of intersection in his novel: the intersection with the road.

4.3. Intersection with the Road

A crucial mode of intersection, discernible throughout *The Pilgrimage* and yet more conspicuous in the last stages of the novel, pertains to the protagonist's symbiosis with the road to Santiago de Compostela. When the narrator proves ineligible to

receive his symbolic sword, he is recommended to “look on the map of Spain for a medieval route known as the Strange Road to Santiago” so as to regain his sword “at some point on the road” (Coelho, 2012, p.5). Just as a pilgrimage is commonly defined as an essentially spiritual journey toward an ideal or purpose, the protagonist's purpose is to find his “sword” (Coelho, 2012, pp.5, 99, 139). Throughout the journey, however, he becomes intent upon discovering “what to do with it” once he possesses the sword (p. 259). He conceives of this discovery as “the secret of any conquest we make in our lives” (p. 259). The perpetual contemplation on the sword engenders certain conflicts between the protagonist and his spiritual guide, Petrus. On the road to Santiago, the protagonist walks a portion of the route repeatedly, unaware that he is merely approaching the same region “from different angles,” absent-mindedly walking “back and forth many times” (p. 43). Petrus complains that “the process of moving along did not exist” for the pilgrim, reproaching him for being distracted by the “desire” to attain his “goal” without attention to the procedure (p. 43). To put this another way, the narrator's spiritual guide emphasizes the possibility of certain modes of interaction with the road which have been ignored by the pilgrim.

Besides having a purpose, a map is the other essential part of the pilgrimage to Santiago. Rudolf (2004) explains that on the road to Santiago all the guides possess “maps and list distances, places to stay, stores, cafés, museums, and so on” (p.106). In the final stages of his journey, when the protagonist is required to undertake the pilgrimage without the assistance of his guide, the narrator direly needs an accurate map and the pointers. He complains that “the map” he possesses is “not drawn to scale,” enforcing him “to spend a night out in the open, in a cave in the cliffs” (Coelho, 2012, p.251). Resuming the track, he discovers “on the map” that there exists “one more mountain to climb in order to complete that leg of the pilgrimage” (p. 262). The “yellow” markers or pointers “on trees, on stones, and on traffic signs” also assist the protagonist as well as other pilgrims on the road to “find a safe place” (p. 52). There are even occasions when Coelho has “to follow the yellow markers carefully” to avoid disastrous circumstances (p. 262). In general, it appears that two elements prove more fundamental in the protagonist's pilgrimage: first, a purpose, although it gradually alters throughout the journey, and second, a map, a guide, or some pointers that demonstrate the right path toward the holy destination.

It is in regard to a sense of purpose and the possession of a map or guide that a conspicuous shift emerges in the narrator's relation to the road. In the final stages of his journey, the pilgrim conceives of himself as "the instrument of the road" with an emphasis on a mode of transformation in his relation to the road, contending that "the Road was indeed 'walking me'" (Coelho, 2012, p.265). At this juncture of the pilgrimage, one can perceive an explicit affinity between the pilgrim and the road, manifesting itself in his claim of independence from his guide: "I was not without a guide. The Road was 'walking me'" (p. 267). Here emerges a particular union between the pilgrim and the road, signifying a new intersection as well as a new becoming for the protagonist. The protagonist's sense of becoming "the instrument of the road" is an emphasis on an imperceptible, and yet salient, facet of his existence of which only Coelho himself is aware. In *The Pilgrimage*, the protagonist's third intersection demonstrates his willingness to deepen his relation with the road; he compares this relation to the "miracle" of riding a bike "when you allow the bicycle 'to ride you'" (Coelho, 2012, pp.263, 264). He juxtaposes the same event with the miracle of his mental and emotional empathy with the road: "I saw that the same miracle had happened. After so much time walking the Road to Santiago, the Road to Santiago began to 'walk me'" (p. 264).

If we assume that pilgrimage, whether religious or secular, implies an action with a teleological "plan" for "the fulfilment of prophecy or mission" (Chemris, 2008, p. 136), *The Pilgrimage* is a subversion of such an assumption. The ending of Coelho's novel is imbued with an air of indifference toward the holy destination: "From the window of my hotel I can see the Cathedral of Santiago and the tourists at its main gate" (Coelho, 2012, p. 275). What is specifically noteworthy is that the protagonist's intersection with the road is not confined to the instance of his being walked by the road, for it originates from a vaster set of relations that he constitutes with his surroundings, with animals, with plants, with people, and even with sounds. For instance, while his hands are "wrapped in bandages because of the dog's attack" (p. 218), he has "to dig a hole" on the side of the road to put upright a cross (p. 220), which "had toppled over" (p. 213). He listens "to the muted sounds of the earth" and hears "the beating of the wings of birds" (p. 216). To visit some minor churches, he travels "several times over the same part of the Road" (pp. 256-7). He conceals a message "under a stone," knowing that the passage of time

"would eventually destroy the paper" (p. 260). Gradually, the pilgrim communicates with more elements on the road: "I began to talk to everything along the road: tree trunks, puddles, fallen leaves, and beautiful vines" (p. 261). Whereas the protagonist's "only concern," before his intersection with the road, is to "put an end to this crazy adventure" in the shortest time possible (p. 249), his third intersection is almost concurrent with his being "more aware" of his surroundings, his profound joy of "celebrating the life all around" (p. 261), and the affirmation of his being "capable of becoming" (p. 268). The protagonist's third intersection is the apex of his journey, a ritual depicted by Coelho to be more an expanding of the self rather than an intense urge for a sacred destination.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

I reviewed two prevalent ideas in my initial approach to the question of pilgrimage in this article: first, that pilgrimage is teleological or destination-specific, typically associated with a sacred location at the end of a road that pilgrims have to tread; second, that human beings are often identified discretely, that is, by factors generally detached from nature. In describing pilgrimage, the scholars often focus on the holy place; against this teleological approach stands Paulo Coelho's novel, for one cannot discern any conspicuous vestiges of intersection within the purlieu of the holy Cathedral. Coelho's novel, in other words, subverts the dominance of normative assumptions regarding pilgrimage. Despite its religious themes, the novel involves interaction with the animal, the plant, and the road with almost no predictable or premeditated outcome. To argue whether it is this unpredictability residing in each intersection that renders pilgrimage a singular experience for each and every pilgrim is beyond the scope of this paper. Yet it is on the road that the pilgrim, in *The Pilgrimage*, experiences a variety of emotions, including his urge for return to his homeland. Each intersection in tandem with each experience of becoming makes the pilgrim undetermined in the sense that each intersection engenders a new status of being which differs from the identity that is usually assigned to an individual. This variety of diverse intersections, in other words, highlights the possibility of uniqueness of pilgrimage for each and every individual pilgrim. The novel establishes a conceptual shift from the traditional emphasis on the holy space to the network of relations and intersections with the animals, the plants, the objects, the sounds, the rocks, and the people that

engender various forms of mental, physical and spiritual becoming for the pilgrims on the way to a holy destination.

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Received on 21-09-2023

Accepted on 16-10-2023

Published on 19-11-2023

<https://doi.org/10.6000/2817-2310.2023.02.12>

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