

2019

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### Recommended Citation

Terreault, Sara (2019) "Introduction : The Body is the Place Where Pilgrimage Happens," *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*: Vol. 7: Iss. 1, Article 2.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.21427/tm2e-c656>

Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp/vol7/iss1/2>

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# The Body is the Place Where Pilgrimage Happens: Introduction

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This paper lays the groundwork for reflection on pilgrimage in Christian and post-Christian contexts, specifically as a cluster of performative practices of movement through time and across space, originating and substantiated in the lived flesh of pilgrim bodies-in-the-world. Thinking with Eade, Sallnow, and Poteat, no less than with Badiou, Eagleton, and Ricoeur, the author theorises the pilgrim body at the nexus of *bodies*, *topographies*, *mobilities*, and *narratives*.

**Key Words:** pilgrimage, body, theorising pilgrimage, mindbody, mind-body, Christian, post-Christian, post-modern, Badiou, Poteat, topography, mobility, narrative, Eade, Sallnow, Ricoeur, embodied religion, *communitas*, embodiedness, transcendence.

**Figure 1: The Author at the labyrinth in Chatham, Cape Cod, Massachusetts**



## Introduction

This special issue of *IJRTTP* sets out to examine and reflect on pilgrimage in Christian and post-Christian contexts, specifically as a cluster of performative practices of movement through time and across space, originating and substantiated in the lived flesh of

pilgrim bodies-in-the-world. In starting to think about pilgrim bodies, I want to consider a term from philosopher and theologian William H. Poteat: ‘mindbody.’<sup>[1]</sup> Responding to the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Michael Polanyi, Poteat’s use of the term constituted refusal of both classical and modern dualist anthropologies, and of their subtler offspring, notions of embodied minds, or enminded bodies. He proposed a much more radical unity of human personhood according to which the whole human person is construed as indivisibly ‘sentient, motile, and oriented’ in dynamic relationship with the world.<sup>[2]</sup> The term ‘mindbody’ reminds us that ‘bodies’ are never *just bodies* (in the biological sense), neither are they mere subordinate containers of the ‘real’ stuff, *minds*. Rather, bodies are at once the sites, media, and means of coherent conscious and tacit *meaning* in all human experience. They are centres of feeling and thought, agents of process and mobility, vectored toward relationship with and in the world.

Accordingly, it is vital that bodies figure explicitly in thinking through the meanings of ‘pilgrimage,’ if by ‘pilgrimage’ we mean something to do with human mobility made meaningful.<sup>[3]</sup> By titling this issue ‘Pilgrim Bodies,’ we do not intend a reductive merely material body that would reinforce anthropological

1. William Poteat, *Recovering the Ground: Critical Exercises in Recollection* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), xix and *passim*.
2. Poteat, *Recovering*, 66 and *passim*.
3. I borrow the characterization from an article by professor of psychology Zachary Beckstead, ‘Liminality in Acculturation and Pilgrimage: When Movement Becomes Meaningful,’ *Culture and Psychology* 16/3 (September 2010): 383-393.

dualism; nor do we wish to disengage it from ‘mind.’ Rather, the intent is to redress the modern academic and religious emphasis on the mind (or, for some treatments of pilgrimage, the emotions) by placing the body at the heart of this collection. Our intention is to restore the very unity of personhood that Poterat intended by using the term ‘mindbody.’

In this project, we are immediately beset with definitional challenges. Here, ‘Christian’ and ‘post-Christian’ indicate spiritual conditions which have driven historical-cultural shifts in ‘the West,’ i.e. in Europe and places shaped by European worldviews. ‘Post-Christian’ points to those cultures that have been historically conditioned by Christianity and have passed through the secularising effects of modernity. Use of terms prefixed with ‘modern-’ signify the legacies of the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment Project, with their profound epistemological, technological, political, and social achievements, as well as their existential ‘malaises,’ to use Charles Taylor’s terminology: ‘alienation, meaninglessness, a sense of impending social dissolution.’<sup>[4]</sup> Likewise, ‘postmodern-’ indicates the pattern of cultural responses to these positive and negative legacies, emerging both as their refusal and their radicalisation. It includes therefore, and paradoxically: 1) both hyper-individualism *and* a (sometimes nostalgic) longing to belong; 2) both radical disenchantment with institutions, including ‘religion’ *and* a (sometimes nostalgic) longing for a sense of self-transcendence, if not for the Transcendent; and 3) both the propensity for anarchism (epistemological and political) *and* obedience on an unprecedented scale to globalised market forces. In 1975, before postmodernity had found a name for itself, Theodore Schwartz came up with the phrase ‘migrants of identity’ for the peculiar dilemma of postmodern self-identification:

*Migrants of identity wander the land, trying on this or that identity, never sure, and perhaps under the circumstances unable to attain familiar forms of authenticity.*<sup>[5]</sup>

This issue examines ways in which these cultural shifts have shaped notions, experiences, and performances of bodies, pilgrimage, and pilgrim bodies.

## Christian and post-Christian Bodies

The study of pilgrimage in Christian and post-Christian contexts necessitates a reckoning with another term that is at once apparently simple but, as evidenced by intense academic preoccupation over the past generation, turns out to be complex indeed: ‘the body.’ Bodies and ‘the body’ foreground Christianity, and traces of the Christian body still operate, if tacitly, in post-Christian postmodernity. The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation proclaims the transcendent Godhead’s assumption of the full condition of human being - sensitive, emotive, intelligent, material, i.e. *bodily* - in the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth. The doctrine reconfirms and radicalises the declaration of the cosmic creation story (Genesis 1) that material reality is *good* (seven times ‘good,’ and the seventh ‘very good’!). In the prologue of the Fourth Gospel (John 1:1-4), the Word/Logos of God, identified with Jesus Christ, *became* flesh, and *dwelt in the world* (note: not *dwelt in* the body, but *became* body and so *dwelt in* the world). According to Christian tradition, Jesus physically lived and died, constituting theologically the effective link between embodiment and redemption. For the Christian, incarnation is God’s chosen method of encounter and intercourse with the world. Christians are saved *through* and not *in spite of* bodies, human and divine. In baptism, the whole person is sacramentally incorporated - *inbodied* - into the life of the Church; thus does the Christian belong to the social and mystical *body* of Christ. In the Eucharist, the whole Christian person is sacramentally - *bodily* - fed with the *body and blood* of Christ. Finally, the Christian anticipates, after Christ’s, the promise of *bodily* resurrection. Materially, mystically, and radically, *bodies* manifest, mobilise, and realise the Christian life.

Certainly, though, while ‘the body’ has had *de jure* theological and liturgical pride of place in Christian tradition, it has had *de facto* a very fraught time of it. The same influences that shaped the dualism of classic Gnosticisms have pressed in on Christianity from its beginnings, in spite of the sometimes virulent anti-gnostic invectives written by early orthodox theologians.<sup>[6]</sup> In the letters of Paul, the earliest extant Christian writings, the interchange between *sarx*

4. Charles Taylor, ‘Modern Social Imaginaries,’ *Public Culture* 14/1 (Winter 2002): 91.  
5. Theodore Schwartz, ‘Cultural Totemism: Ethnic Identity Primitive and Modern,’ *Ethnic Identity: Cultural Continuities and Change* (eds. George De Vos & Lola Romanucci-Ross; Palo Alto: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1975), 130.

6. A very useful short introduction to Gnosticisms, or as the author prefers, to ‘gnosis,’ is Christoph Markschies, *Gnosis: An Introduction* (trans. John Bowden; London and New York: T&T Clark, 2003). Markschies looks at early heresiologists, with attention given to the work of Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus of Rome, Origen of Alexandria, and Epiphanius of Salamis.

(usually translated as ‘flesh’), and *soma* (usually translated as ‘body’) reflects (if not always consistently) a very ancient *ambivalence* toward the body. Perhaps in Paul, though, (and significantly for Christianity), *polyvalence* would be a better term. New Testament scholar James D. G. Dunn’s explanation of the subtle relationship between flesh and body in Paul’s usage is helpful:

*In short, and again in somewhat oversimplifying terms, ‘body’ denotes a being in the world, whereas ‘flesh’ denotes a belonging to the world ... [Paul] was combining elements of Hebrew and Greek anthropology into a new synthesis ... he could affirm both, the double affirmation preventing both a simplistic overvaluation of the physical and a simplistic undervaluation of the physical.*<sup>[7]</sup>

Or, as philosopher Alain Badiou insisted about Paul’s construal of human subjectivity, his ‘*opposition between the spirit and the flesh has nothing to do with the opposition between the soul and the body*’ [italics in original],<sup>[8]</sup> but rather points to two possible orientations of human beings who are ineluctably embodied and so desirous, potent, and *complicated*.

Still, ambivalence, if not outright negativity, toward the body has also persisted in varying manifestations to varying degrees throughout the history of Christianity.<sup>[9]</sup> Western culture, from Platonic metaphysics to postmodern transhumanism, betrays a weakness for the dream of immortality via immateriality, of escaping the limitations and finitude - *the ambiguity* - of bodies.<sup>[10]</sup> Within Christian traditions, undeniable pessimism about bodies has ridden shotgun with incarnational

optimism, sometimes even taking over, especially within its ascetical and puritanical expressions. Pathological instances notwithstanding,<sup>[11]</sup> the acute negative attention signals a keen awareness of the intense *power* of the body even in, indeed perhaps *because of*, its frailty and finitude. Writing about those athletes of Christian austerity, the desert fathers and mothers of the early Christian East, Rowan Williams contends that

*the surface concern . . . with asceticism conceals a sense of the immense and creative importance of the body as a way of communicating and connecting with God and the world . . . The body is never, for the Christian, something neutral, nor is it ever simply evil. It is a place where struggle goes on.*<sup>[12]</sup>

It is always human bodies that apprehend, make sense of (or not), struggle with, communicate, and perform Christian meaning.

### ***The Modern Body***

The ancient tendency to split mind from body found new increasingly secularised expression in the modern West. Cartesian anthropology radically distinguished the body as inert, material *res extensia* from the active, immaterial *res cogitans*, the ‘thinking thing’ that animates it. Charles Taylor has linked Cartesian interiority back to Augustine’s self-reflexivity and forward to Locke’s ‘punctual self.’ This lineage, according to Taylor, produced what he describes as the modern ‘buffered’ self, that is, as atomistic interiorised subjectivity radically distinct from what is ‘outside’ self, hence socially and cosmically disembedded, and, because it is in essence rational, also essentially disembodied.<sup>[13]</sup> The influence of the Romantic celebration of self-expression and personal authenticity supplements the modern notion of human identity.<sup>[14]</sup>

7. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1998, 2006), 72.

8. Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (trans. Ray Brassier; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 55-56.

9. It is important to recognise, however, even while acknowledging pathological expressions, that the spiritual purpose of ascetical practices with their ‘mortification of the flesh’ was (in best cases) not simplistic repression of the body as such, but rather formation of holy—that is, *wholepersons* conscious of and resistant to both physical and psycho-social distractions and compulsions. Pierre Hadot’s *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (ed. Arnold I. Davidson; trans. Michael Chase; Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995) goes some way to a contemporary recovery of traditions of ancient spiritual disciplines and their goals.

10. Dualism is of course not confined to Western culture, but the latter is the focus of this collection.

11. Consider the persistence, even in the face of condemnation by religious and secular authorities, of practices of corporeal self-punishment such as medieval flagellantism.

12. Rowan Williams, *Silence and Honey Cakes: The Wisdom of the Desert* (Oxford: Lion, 2003), 116.

13. Regarding the self as interior, rational, and punctual, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), especially chapters 7, 8 and 9, 127-176. For Taylor’s discussion of the ‘buffered self’, see his *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), especially 37-42 and 300-307.

The interiorising and paradoxically rationalising *and* romanticising drift of modernity has been theorized as an immanentised gnosticism in the work of philosophers Eric Voegelin and Hans Jonas among others. William Poteat diagnosed the thread of gnosticism running through contemporary culture as ‘now so ubiquitous, so commonplace, not to say, so domesticated that a feat of extraordinary perspicacity is required to see that it pervades the institutions of this culture and is rampant in the academy.’ Both Christian *and* post-Christian culture, it turns out, and perhaps especially within the academy, have been overwhelmed by the glamorous pull of disembodied dualism.

### *The Body in the Academy*

Despite, or maybe exactly *because of* this gnostic undercurrent, ‘the body’ became the seemingly ubiquitous object of academic study in the last decades of the twentieth century. Remarking on his own field in 2008, philosopher Mark Johnson quipped, ‘Judging from mainstream Anglo-American philosophy, thirty years ago people did not have bodies. But today, it seems like almost everybody has one. They’re a dime a dozen.’<sup>[15]</sup> The proliferation of thinking and writing about the body was galvanised by interest in embodied experience among existentialists and phenomenologists, (Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre especially) in the first half of the twentieth century. Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945)<sup>[16]</sup>, gave Cartesian dualism its marching orders; the steady absorption of its import among Continental and eventually Anglo-American scholars led to an opening of the academic floodgates. And yet, the more numerous the ‘bodies,’ the more elusive a simple definition of ‘body.’ In reference to her study of Simone de Beauvoir’s phenomenology of the body, Judith Butler wrote: ‘the pure body cannot be found ... what can be found is the situated body, a locus of

cultural interpretations.’<sup>[17]</sup> By the end of the twentieth century, theologian Sarah Coakley remarked how indeed: ‘there is no one regnant definition of ‘body’ now available to us.’<sup>[18]</sup>

### *The Semiotic Body*

As a term, an object of physiological and cultural study, and as a subject of experience and performance, the body *means*. On one level, as biological organism, that meaning may appear to be obvious, but under the multidisciplinary scrutiny of integrative subdisciplines - say in psycho- or socio- or neuro-biology, for instance - any such clarity is increasingly exposed as reductionist oversimplification. Critical research has confounded any naïve interpretation of the body as merely ‘natural’; rather it must be considered as much a cultural as a biological phenomenon, as much constructed - and *constructing* - as naturally appearing. In what might be called our current age of identity-transition, when social status, gender, and race<sup>[19]</sup> are radically in flux, the body continues to be deployed and read as a basic carrier of the meaning of selfhood. Still, there remains a tendency for common-sense and some materialist construals to elide the socio-cultural body, and for the humanities and social sciences to overlook the biological body, each thereby perpetuating dualisms-by-omission.<sup>[20]</sup> But ‘the body’ as experienced and as performed, as what Merleau-Ponty termed the ‘incarnate subject’<sup>[21]</sup> (*sujet incarné* in the French original, posited over against the body-as-object), not only *means*, but is also the agent that *generates meaning*. Poteat appealed for a recovery of human embodiedness not only as object of academic inquiry, but as part and parcel of holistic academic practice. Mark Johnson has likewise called for a refreshed ‘experientialist’ rethinking of ‘the body’:

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14. Again, Charles Taylor is very helpful here; he discusses the paradox of the modern self’s shaping at once by disengaged reason *and* expressivist Romanticism as one of the ‘conflicts of modernity’ (see Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 495-500). Following Lionel Trilling’s *Sincerity and Authenticity*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), Taylor’s work on the contemporary ethos of authenticity can be found in *The Malaise of Modernity*, (Concord: Anansi, 1991); see especially ‘The Sources of Authenticity,’ 25-29.
15. Mark Johnson, ‘What Makes a Body?’ *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 22/3 (2008): 159.
16. First published in French in 1945, see Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (transl. Kegan Paul; London & New York: Routledge, 2002, 2005).

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17. Judith Butler, ‘Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir’s Second Sex,’ *Yale French Studies* 72 (1986): 46.
18. Sarah Coakley, ‘Introduction: Religion and the Body,’ *Religion and the Body* (ed. Sarah Coakley; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
19. I am thinking of the case of Rachel Dolezal, former president of Spokane, Washington chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter, and her controversial 2015 claim to being ‘transracial’ in the wake of Caitlyn Jenner’s coming out as transgender. For a keen sociological examination of trans-identities, see Rogers Brubaker’s *Trans: Gender and Race in an Age of Unsettled Identities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).
20. See Mark Johnson’s discussion of this in his *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 277ff.
21. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 61 and *passim*.

*The challenge, of course, is to stop thinking of a human body as merely a thing . . . my body is never merely a thing; it is a lived body - what Merleau-Ponty called the 'phenomenal body,' the situation from which our world and our experience flows.*<sup>[22]</sup>

### **The Pilgrim Body**

In his examination of philosophies of aesthetics, literary theorist Terry Eagleton explains:

*Aesthetics is born as a discourse of the body [emphasis added] . . . the term refers not in the first place to art, but as the Greeks aisthesis would suggest, to the whole region of human perception and sensation, in contrast to the more rarefied domain of conceptual thought . . . It is the first stirrings of . . . the body's long inarticulate rebellion against the tyranny of the theoretical.*<sup>[23]</sup>

Artist Marina Abramović extracts this bodily aesthetic constituent of performance when she cites Vito Acconci's rationale for his invention of the term 'Body Art' in the Sixties: 'The body is the place where things happen.'<sup>[24]</sup> It is exactly here that we might take on the tricky task of thinking through what 'pilgrimage' might mean. I will begin by swapping out Acconci's 'things' for 'pilgrimage,' so that 'the body is the place where pilgrimage happens.' This is not to deny the importance of topographical and cultural places in pilgrimage but to centre the pilgrim's relationship with these in the pilgrim body. Further, Eagleton's 'aesthetics' might also be replaced by 'pilgrimage,' so it reads: 'Pilgrimage is born as a *discourse of the body* . . . the term refers to the whole region of human perception and sensation . . . It is the first stirrings of . . . the body's long inarticulate rebellion against the tyranny of the [religious] theoretical.' From the earliest expressions of Christian pilgrimage, Christian pilgrims sought to experience personally: physically, spiritually, emotionally, aesthetically - *full-bodily*<sup>[25]</sup> - the places associated with holy people, events, and stories, thus literally fleshing out and integrating 'person, text, place.'

22. Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body*, 275.

23. Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford and Malden: Blackwell, 1990, 2000), 1, 13.

24. Marina Abramović, 'Conversation between Marina Abramović, Peter Lodermeyer, Sarah Gold, Karlyn De Jongh, and Rene Rietmeyer,' *Personal Structures*, 4 June, 2009, <http://www.personalstructures.org/index.php?page=385&lang=en>

25. A look at such early pilgrimage literature as the *Itinerarium* of Egeria (late fourth or early fifth century) and Jerome's description of the pilgrim journeying of Paula in his *Letter 108, to Eustochium* (404 CE) attests to the deep psychosomatic engagement by these pilgrims as they actually, bodily, visit places named in scriptural narratives.

The constitutive triad of person-text-place was suggested by John Eade and Michael Sallnow in their now classic challenge<sup>[26]</sup> to the Turners' pervasive notion of *communitas* (shared experience of radical unity of purpose, homogeneity and equality among pilgrims), as explanatory model of pilgrimage. Eade, with Simon Coleman, later acknowledged that the triad neglected 'movement' as a noteworthy element of pilgrimage.<sup>[27]</sup> We see this component in our subtitle, and raise them one more element that warrants critical attention: the paradoxical experience of self-integrating transcendence that is hoped for, and sometimes realised in the confluence of the other four elements. A brief explanation is in order.

### **Parsing 'Pilgrimage'**

It is difficult to define and to clearly mark off pilgrimage from other categories of human travel, especially within cultures that are constituted by ease of mobility, relative affluence, and the destabilizing malaises of postmodernity. Pilgrimage is typically distinguished from tourism and other forms of travel such that the former is construed as religious (or perhaps by the typically postmodern term, 'spiritual') and the latter as secular; the former as reformatory and the latter as recreational; the former as ascetical or asceticised quest for some kind of self-renovation and the latter as the leisure activity of privileged consumers.<sup>[28]</sup> An attentive examination of pilgrimage practices both historical and contemporary quickly puts the lie to any such tidy categorization. The term pilgrimage has been, and still is used to describe not only overtly-religious round-trip journeys to holy places (e.g. Christians travelling to venerate relics in the High Middle Ages, or present-day Muslims making their way to Mecca), but also the one-way exilic wanderings of early medieval Celtic Christian

26. John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, 'Introduction,' *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (eds. John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow; London & New York: Routledge, 1991), 9.

27. Simon Coleman and John Eade, 'Introduction: Reframing Pilgrimage,' *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (eds. Simon Coleman and John Eade; New York: Routledge, 2004), 4.

28. See for example Nancy L. Frey, *Pilgrim Stories: On and Off the Road to Santiago* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1998) where she explains the sometimes strict categories that arise among pilgrims on the Camino: 'inauthenticity usually centres on being a tourist' (129) and she remarks on (and counters) the tendency to see tourism as 'frivolous' (228). See also 26-27 in same volume.

*peregrini* seeking their ‘place of resurrection.’<sup>[29]</sup> The term is also commonly used to describe ostensibly secular but emotionally-charged visits to, for instance, the graves of dead rock stars, or to historical battlefields.

Diversity of understanding and enacting pilgrimage notwithstanding, it seems clear to me that in that wide range of practices there is discernible a basic desire for transformative experience that transcends the quotidian, one that by its very transcendence might effect some kind of (religious? psychological? emotional?) consolidation of identity. If we take seriously the notion of the ‘buffered self’ proposed by Charles Taylor, we might reasonably wonder whether an acute desire for release from such self-enclosed individualization might not provoke and account at least in part for the recent resurgence in the popular practice of pilgrimage.<sup>[30]</sup> Whether this desire is realized, and if so, if the realisation actually amounts to lasting personal transformation is another question with undoubtedly variable answers. But the *desire* for transcendence as catalyst for integration of identity is at the very least latent in the notion and practice of pilgrimage, past and present, religious or not; it is what provokes popular characterizations of pilgrimage and it might also supply an explanatory ground for distinguishing pilgrimage as a distinct ‘cluster of performative practices of movement through time and across space, originating and substantiated in the lived flesh of pilgrim bodies-in-the-world’.<sup>[31]</sup>

### ***Pilgrimage: Bodies, Topography, Mobility, Narrative***

Appropriating and adjusting the elements of pilgrimage developed by Eade, Sallnow, and Coleman, in conjunction with Poterat’s notion of the human person

as ‘sentient, motile, and oriented in the world,’ I would like to think about *bodies, topographies, mobilities, and narratives* in the context of desires for (and sometimes experiences of) self-integrating transcendence. The human body is the agent, medium, and means of pilgrimage.<sup>[32]</sup> As the vital subject of human sentience, and of emergent human consciousness, bodies are fundamental to the formation of human identities, even (perhaps especially?) in the identity fluidity and social fragmentation of post-Christian culture. Personal and social meaning is created, enacted, and communicated by bodies. Pilgrims intentionally submit themselves to bodily and psychic dislocation and dispossession by leaving behind (whether temporarily or permanently) familiar persons, places, and things, and they journey with and toward other bodies, desiring self-transcendence in and through their bodies. Pilgrim bodies trace the lines of narratives through space and across time, and they reinscribe them with narratives of their own. Pilgrimage is about bodies all the way down.

While the body is the vital locus of individual identity, it is also thoroughly embedded in the wider material and interpersonal world. Heidegger’s notion of *Dasein* is helpful here, as precisely indicative of this temporospatialised *being-there-ness* of embodied, emplaced, dynamically relational human being, oriented in the world. The Turners’ notion of *communitas*, the much contemplated and much critiqued spontaneous fellowship that can (and apparently frequently does<sup>[33]</sup>) occur among pilgrims on the way, recognizes the embeddedness of the pilgrim in social topographies. Pilgrims grasp this embeddedness not only in the

29. See for instance the *Life* of the sixth-century Irish saint, Senán, preserved in the Book of Lismore, a manuscript compiled in the fifteenth century but whose narratives are certainly older, in Whitley Stokes, ed. and trans., *Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), 219.

30. Two interesting accounts of this resurgence can be found in recent newspaper articles by travel writer and veteran trekker Robert MacFarlane and scholar of pilgrimage Ian Bradley; the popularity is reflected in the very appearance in the popular press of many such articles. See Robert MacFarlane, ‘Rites of Way: Behind the Pilgrimage Revival,’ *Guardian* (Manchester; 15 June 2012): 20, and Ian Bradley, ‘Scotland Strides on with Creation of a Caledonian Camino,’ *Times* (London; 6 August 2016): 78. See also Ian Bradley in *Pilgrimage: A Spiritual and Cultural Journey* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2009), 9.

31. See the opening paragraph of this introduction.

32. Even imaginative pilgrimages, whether practiced by medieval monastics in their cells, or contemporary virtual pilgrims engaged in online journeying, complicate but do not obliterate the fundament of the body. For more on this, see Connie Hill-Smith, ‘Cyberpilgrimage: A Study of Authenticity, Presence, and Meaning in Online Pilgrimage Experiences,’ *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 21/2 (Summer 2009): 10, 11.

33. In spite of the contestation of the Turners’ notion of *communitas* as common component of a pilgrim’s experience (Eade and Sallnow, *Contesting the Sacred*, 4 ff), many first-person accounts and as well as scholarly studies of pilgrim travel attest to the phenomenon. See Michael Agnew’s study of Lourdes pilgrims, ‘“Spiritually, I’m Always in Lourdes”: Perceptions of Home and Away among Serial Pilgrims,’ *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 44/4 (2015): 525. I think it is not a stretch to cite Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* as an acknowledgement, even in its satirical tenor, of the potential and even likely intimate conviviality of pilgrimage.

sometimes surprisingly intimate personal relationships they develop in the process, but also with the geographical topographies through which they move, and which in turn, deeply move them. Human persons are bodies-in-places. In pilgrimage, human agency is complemented by the agency of place, by which I mean the full range of effects that environments (natural and crafted) have on the pilgrim.<sup>[34]</sup> Anthropologist Keith Basso refers to the mutual-formation that happens when persons interact with places as ‘interanimation.’<sup>[35]</sup> In and by the pilgrim journey, the *place* of home gives way to *space*, i.e. the physical expanse in which material objects are located and through which pilgrims move, which in turn becomes *place* (again), becomes a *some-where*, imbued with meaning by the *some-bodies* on pilgrimage. Writing about its psychological implications, Michael Godkin has helpfully defined *place* as a

*discrete, temporally and perceptually bounded unit of psychologically meaningful material space.*<sup>[36]</sup>

His definition underscores the connections among human experiences of time, meaning-making, and physical loci, and establishes the essential intersection between physicality, locality, and psychospirituality in human subjectivity.

By *mobility*, I mean to emphasise the *movement* of bodies across topographies and through time. Mobility in pilgrimage practices constitutes the active performance of meaning-making and meaning-appropriation, through movement and time. Merleau-Ponty’s sense of ‘body in movement’ sheds light on the special intentional activity of dislocated, dispossessed pilgrim bodies:

*By considering the body in movement, we can see better how it inhabits space (and, moreover, time) because movement is not limited to submitting passively to space and time, it actively assumes them; it takes them up in their basic significance which is obscured in the commonplaceness of established situations.*<sup>[37]</sup>

Mobility implies both movement and mutability, resonant with the agency and transformability of human beings as subjects of growth, learning, self-integration, and self-transcendence, of *being* always in the process of *becoming*. Mobility also suggests direction, *orientation*, corresponding to the vectored dynamism of the pilgrim journey, and by extension of human lives. For geographer Yi-Fu Tuan:

*... if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.*<sup>[38]</sup>

Through movement, pilgrimage transforms space into self-transformative place.

Innately both temporal *and* spatial, mobility gives rise organically to *narrative*. The lines - literal and figurative - of both story and journey unwind dramatically from the past, across the present, toward the future. Pilgrimage traditions emerge from stories, and journeying pilgrims widen the particular stories with which they engage with their own new stories. Pilgrim movement reflects and performs the essential narrativity of human experience and of the human psyche itself. Paul Ricoeur pushes narrativity to anthropological status when he suggests:

*... my basic hypothesis [is] that between the activity of narrating a story and the temporal character of human experience there exists a correlation that is not merely accidental but that presents a transcultural form of necessity. To put it another way, time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence.*<sup>[39]</sup>

34. For a comprehensive exploration of the effects of place on persons, see especially phenomenological approaches to landscape among humanistic geographers like Tim Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction* (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), and interpretive archaeologists like Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments* (Oxford and Providence: Berg Publishers, 1994).

35. Keith H. Basso, ‘Wisdom Sits in Places: Notes on a Western Apache Landscape,’ *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996), 55.

36. Michael A. Godkin, ‘Identity and Place: Clinical Applications Based on Notions of Rootedness and Uprootedness,’ *The Human Experience of Space and Place* (eds. Anne Buttimer and David Seamon; London: Croom Helm, 1980), 73.

37. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 117.

38. Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 6.

39. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative: Volume I* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1983, 1984, 1990), 52.



Narrative is a primary - and primal - repository of meaning and identity, whether the narrative 'texts' are oral, literary, musical, material, or are embodied in intentional practices. Pilgrimage *performs* the narrativity of human orientatedness and movement toward ever deeper senses of meaning and identity through the double-dynamic of self-integrating self-transcendence. The pilgrim enters the temporal and topographical flow of journey, and the narrative flow of story-borne meaning and identity.

### A Look at the Journal Issue

This curated issue of *IJRTP* addresses some of the many ways that the body is implicated in the practices of pilgrimage. It offers a collection of articles from a diversity of fields of study and artistic expressions.

The first part of the issue is focused on late antique and medieval Christian pilgrimage. It deals with explicitly religious, explicitly Christian journeys that can quite unambivalently be called 'pilgrimages.' In the traditions examined in these three articles, the body existed and acted within premodern worldviews shaped by theologies of the Incarnation, even while understandings of embodiment were ambiguous and various. Part One lays the historical and theological groundwork by: 1) establishing the foundational constitution of sacred place by bodily journey in Early Christianity; 2) presenting the 'alternative' construal of Christian pilgrimage in the Celtic tradition of *peregrinatio pro Christo*, wherein the wandering body itself (and not any geographical destination) is the dynamic place of pilgrimage experience; and 3) an exploration of the transactional meaning and performance of the body in the High Middle Ages. In 'Written By the Body,' Jenn Cianca uncovers how the journeys of the earliest Christian pilgrims constructed the very notion of sacred bodies and sacred place, consequently establishing the networks of pilgrimage routes that would be used by Western travellers from Late Antiquity onward. In 'The Eschatological Body,' I examine a differently-directed pilgrimage paradigm in the ascetically-charged practice of *peregrinatio pro Christo* among the Christians of the Insular Celtic World, identifying its centrifugal dynamism in relationship to the postmodern resurgence in the interest and practice of pilgrimage. In 'The Bartered Body,' George Greenia disentangles the complex desires and experiences of religious travellers of the High Middle Ages who were aware of the spiritual usefulness of the flesh: for them, the bodies of the saints housed in pilgrim shrines were not just remnants

of a redeemed past, but open portals through which intimate spiritual exchange could take place.

In 'Luther and the Trajectories of Western Pilgrimage,' Matthew R. Anderson treats changes to Western pilgrimage as it was transformed in the Reformation with resulting echoes into the early modern period. He examines the fragmenting, reforming, and secularising transformations of pilgrimage and of notions of the body in early modernity (from Reformation to Romanticism). This article acts as a hinge that turns the volume from pre-modern, explicitly religious, explicitly Christian pilgrimage to the diversity and subversity of notions of pilgrim bodies in postmodernity. As such, it prompts the reader forward into the second part of the collection.

Part Two of the issue consists of transdisciplinary reparings of pilgrimage as bodily performance in postmodern - and hence post-Christian - contexts. Here any essentialized notions of pilgrimage and the body have been chipped away and splintered: the terms therefore must be problematized, and their referents re-imagined so that we now deal with a multiplicity of pilgrimages and a multiplicity of bodies. These new expressions are explored, fittingly, by a wide range of methodological, theoretical, and disciplinary approaches, themselves fragments of the postmodern construal and experience of pilgrimage as meaningful mobility.

Matthew R. Anderson's second article, 'Walking to be Some Body,' presents the example of the St. Olaf Way in Norway, in order to examine the experiences of contemporary diaspora pilgrims who walk reprimed routes along ancient paths toward real or imagined homelands. These travellers literally incarnate contemporary tensions between the religious and the non-religious, the journey and the destination, and between the rootlessness of modern global tourism and the rootedness longed for in community and patrimony. In 'Pilgrimage, Existence, and Psychic Distress,' Christine Jamieson draws on the work of psychoanalyst and linguist Julia Kristeva, tracking the haunting desire for healing and liberation inherent in pilgrimage as it touches the deep and irresolutely corporeal experience of what it means to be human. M. Brennan Harris presents his kinesiological research conducted on the Camino de Santiago in 'The Healthy Body,' examining the effects of walking pilgrimage on the self-identified experience of well-being in pilgrim bodies. Janice Poltrick-Donato links pilgrimage with the trials and triumphs of the amateur event runner in

'Event Running and Pilgrimage.' She demonstrates the statistical and existential parallels between the two practices, and shows how running is experienced and understood by some runners as a form of secular pilgrimage, a 'journey to the self.' In 'Walking on Walls,' Philip Szporer brings dance and pilgrimage into fascinating relationship. He resituates American choreographer and dancer Trisha Brown's radical approach to the human body in terms of core concepts that have shaped pilgrimage theory. Stacey Engels narrates the pilgrim body in 'From the Dark Green Hill to Our Lady of the Harbour' by bringing her reader along on a pilgrimage that sprang up almost instantly in downtown Montreal on the day that Leonard Cohen's death was announced. In her travelogue-style vignettes, even a sausage sandwich becomes a sacred relic when mingled with community and intention. Finally, 'Wood Mountain Walk,' Ken Wilson's first-person reflection on a pilgrimage to Wood Mountain, ends the section on bodily performance by describing the author's 250 kilometre walk across the northern great plains as a pilgrimage performance in tribute to - and critique of - poet Andrew Suknaski.

We offer this collection as a pilgrimage of sorts into which we invite a transdisciplinary community of readers who might not commonly find themselves drawn together. In our diversity, we hope to stimulate new thinking about and new imagining of 'pilgrim bodies,' the journeys they choose, and the journeys on which they find themselves.

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