

Introduction

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A pilgrim is a person who works out an attitude to tendrils and other things that trammel the feet, what should that be? Chop them as fast as they grow with my sharp pilgrim's knife? Or cherish them, hoarding drops of water of every kind to aid their struggle? Love is the mystery inside this walking. It runs ahead of us on the road like a dog, out of the photograph.
—Anne Carson, “The Anthropology of Water.”

This is the modern-day pilgrim’s deepest melancholy, Cees Nootboom remarks in *Roads to Santiago*, that “the joy of return,” in this case to Santiago de Compostela, is mixed with “the feeling that the places you have ached for since you first saw them simply went on existing without you, that if you really wanted to hold them close you would have to stay with them forever. But that would turn you into someone you cannot be, someone who stays at home” (334–37). The motif is one to which Nootboom returns in the poetic meditation that closes this *Mosaic* issue: the traveller as “eternal pilgrim of absence, of loss” (337), with the writer himself as pre-eminent case. I can’t think of a better way to punctuate this very special issue on pilgrimage than with Nootboom’s evocative excerpt from *The Nomad Hotel*. I am grateful to him for agreeing to celebrate this issue with us. And I am most grateful to Erin Mouré for providing us with the interview that opens this special issue, *Mosaic*’s second interview in the “Crossings” series, and a perfect point of departure for a topic, pilgrimage, that is by no means unambiguous.

Between Mouré and Nootboom, you will find eleven essays that engage an astonishing theoretical and textual range and that proffer some very different takes on the pilgrimage topic. Of course, you will find references in these pages to Margery Kempe and John Bunyan, but in surprising proximity to such figures as Virginia Woolf, Antonine Maillet, Pierre Loti, and the Afro-Cuban poet Nancy Morejón. Victor Turner’s theory of ritual liminality is considered more than once, as are space-time

relations. Pilgrimage is analyzed both as a strategy of resistance to oppositional hierarchies and as riddled with problematic oppositions. Also considered are colonial and post-colonial approaches to narration, theories of the modern and postmodern, metaphor theory (particularly as concerns journey metaphors), orientalism, ethnographic writing, exile, the document, war-writing, storytelling, trauma, memory—and cyberpunk literature. Not the least, the house—house of display—is analyzed as a cultural text.

I am pleased and proud to introduce this *Mosaic* special issue.

WORKS CITED

Carson, Anne. "The Anthropology of Water." *Plainwater: Essays and Poetry*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 1995. 117–260.